WONDERLAND
IN
BNGLISH LITERATURE

THE WONDERLAND IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, McGill University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English.

April 29th, 1931.

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The Idea of Wonderland - Chapter I.

From the earliest times we find people in many countries believing in some Earthly Paradise where there is no death or sorrow, but everlasting joy and bliss. The Greeks, among others, held this opinion; Homer writes about the Elysian fields in the Odyssey:-

"There is never snow, never winter, nor storm, nor
streaming rain,

But Ocean ever sends forth the light breath of the
west wind

To bring refreshment to men".

After Homer, Hesiod describes the "Isles of the Blest" as places, lying in the western ocean, where there were no cares. They were inhabited by the souls of those who had departed this life and who were worthy to go to a Paradise. The Romans, as we see from Horace and others, also had the same idea. Sertorius, Plutarch tells us, met, on his voyaging, some mariners from the "Atlantic Islands" - probably the Canaries, - which Plutarch calls the "Fortunate Isles", saying that they were believed to be the Elysian Fields of Homer. They were reported as being very fertile, and watered by dews brought by the breezes, rather than by rain. The soil there was so rich that crops and fruits grew without the labour of men, so the inhabitants had nothing to do. "Thulé" was another name given by the ancients to the Earthly Paradise. This land they always placed as far to the north-west as possible, and as their knowledge of the world grew, so the

island retreated before them, till it rested somewhere in the far north, near the Pole.

To the people in Europe in the Middle Ages, too, this paradise was a very common conception. Each country had its own name, and its own particular location for this mysterious land, but on the whole they agreed in placing it in the west, and believed it to be a beautiful island where the climate was mild, the soil fruitful, the trees green all the year round, and the people happy and contented with nothing to do but eat and make merry, and with all eternity in which to do it.

This belief in a western land or island was prevalent among the Celts, as well, where it was part of their religion, and gave rise to many superstitious practices.

It may at first seem strange that a fantastic belief such as this should be held by people in so many and such widely separated countries, but the natural explanation is that people, finding a great deal of pain and misery mixed with the joy of this life, imagined a region of bliss where there was no sorrow or pain. These regions were sometimes set aside as the abodes of the gods, and sometimes as the places to which the souls of the good should go after this life. They were always beautiful places full of joy, and were usually pictured as islands very far away to the west, where they would continue to enjoy the light of the sun after it had set on earth, and thus would never know darkness and night.

As though by way of proof of the actual existence of these lands to people of the Middle Ages, certain foreign objects, - carved wood, pines and bamboos, canoes, nuts and even the bodies of two men with strange un-European features, - were washed up from time to time on the west coast of England and the Continent. (1)

One of the Celtic names for the Isles of the Blest is "Avallon", (2) or "Avilion", which is best known to us through the Arthurian legend. It was believed to be a valley in an island to the far west, across the sea, whither Arthur and other heroes were taken after their time on earth. In Tennyson's words it is:-

"The island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, nor rain, nor any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea".

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(1) "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages" by S.Baring-Gould (1881)

(2) The origin of the name "Avallon" has given rise to some controversy, the majority of people believing that it means "apple island" and comes from the Welsh 'aval' - an apple, and 'Yn' - island. This name may have arisen as the result of a vague memory of some fruitful continent known before the tribe settled in England, or it may have been because colonies from Gaul introduced apples into Somerset, or again, it may have come from a King Avallon or Avalloc, who ruled the isle at Glastonbury. In any case it seems that while Arthur at his death in 542 is claimed to have known of Avallon, and while Mallory and others evidently did know of it as a distant isle, Giraldus Cambrensis in 1190 was the first to identify it with Glastonbury.

and Arthur, in going there, expects to be healed of his "grievous wound", and, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, to spend the time (1) in joy and feasting in a beautiful island ruled by nine sisters, where the soil brought forth corn and fruit without tillage.

Gildas, in the 12th Century, describes this island as a place full of good things, where no thief, no robber, no enemy pursues one; where there is no violence, no winter, no immoderate summer, but where all is peace and concord, where it is always spring, where the apple trees bear fruit and flowers at the same time; where there is no sin, old age, sickness or sorrow, but where all is joy.

This isle is also described (2) as a place where the knights of old stepped ashore in darkness across the wrecks of ships which surrounded it, to enter a lighted castle filled with beautiful men and maidens.

According to the Arthurian legend, Arthur, after his last battle, is placed on a barge which bears him to Gladerhaf and thence to Avalon, a distant isle in the ocean. But at the same time there was a theory that he and Guinevere were buried in Glastonbury, and, according to Giraldus Cambrensis who claims to have been present at the opening of the tomb in 1190 (3)

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(1) According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, a hundred years was the length of time one lived in Avallon.

(2) In Chambers' Journal, 1882. Vol. 59. P. 454.

(3) According to Giraldus' own account it was 1177.

the two bodies were found there, and an inscription which read:- "Hic jacet sepultus inclitus Rex Arturius in Insula Avalonia". This inscription seems to indicate that Glastonbury is Avallon, which indeed is its ancient name. Now, however, the name is met with in a great many places. There is a peninsula at Glastonbury called the "Isle of Avalon", while the name is borne by a peninsula and an island on the coast of Brittany, a French Commune, and a town in Burgundy. As many of these places are said to be Arthur's burial site, it is difficult to know what to conclude, but it seems safe to suppose that, wherever Arthur's body may actually have been buried, the imaginary isle of bliss lay far to the west beneath the sunset, an idea arising perhaps from the glimpses of the peaks of the Isle of Man which can be obtained about sunset from parts of Strathclyde and Cumbria where Arthur's legendary battles were fought.

What, we may ask, is the legendary origin of this isle? According to the Irish saga, Ireland was first inhabited by a race of Giants. They were conquered and driven out by the "Tuatha De Danann" who in their turn were overcome by the sons of Milá who became the ancestors of the Gaels. In return, however, for the land, these conquerors agreed to worship the Tuatha De Danann who thus became the Celtic gods, and who sought refuge from the upper earth, some (the Sidh) hiding underground, and some going to a western paradise where they live on for eternity in joy and bliss.

Avalon is one such paradise, and to it the souls of noble knights are carried at death, while in very rare instances some favoured mortal is allowed to visit it and return. But as the place casts oblivion on its visitors, the mortal, be he so rash as to return to his home, finds that his friends and kin have all died in the interim, which seemed short to him, but which probably was/hundreds of years, - as for instance in the case of Ogier the Dane, who was carried off to Avalon by Morgan le Fay, sent back after 200 years to rout the infidels, and then taken back to Avalon by Morgue, since when he has never reappeared in this world.

Another name used by the Celts, particularly in Ireland, for an Earthly Paradise was "O'Brazil", or sometimes "Hy Breasail". This island was supposed to have originated as a floating island which appeared off the coast of Ireland every seven years, and sank back into the sea when approached. It seems probable that it was fixed finally by a device often used in the case of floating islands, - that of firing a red-hot arrow into it, which, as fire is an enemy to phantoms, broke the spell. In any case this isle seems to have become very real to our forefathers, who supposed it to be inhabited by living people, and who marked it on their maps. It appears on Dalorto's map of 1325, as a round island to the west of Ireland, and is found on other maps as late as the 17th Century, some even showing several such lands. It is usually drawn as absolutely round, sometimes with a channel across the middle, probably a survival of Styx, the river of death, which we find

also as "Hop" a river in the Scandinavian "Wineland", and in the Irish Bran's "Terra Repromissionis". That its existence was firmly believed in at some time is proved by the fact that in 1480 Bristol fitted out a ship, or ships, to discover this "Isle of Brasylle". John Jay sailed on July 15th in an 80 ton ship, but was driven back to port after nine weeks, without obtaining a sight of the island; and we are told that in 1498 Spain had fitted out two, three or four ships under Cabot every year for seven years, to seek the Isle of Brazil. That it was a subject of familiar discourse is shown by Jeremy Taylor's remarking in the introduction to his "Dissuasive from Popery" in 1667: "And I will not be asking any more odd questions, as why J.S., having so clearly demonstrated his religion by grounds firm as the land of Delos or O'Brasile, he should now be content to argue his cause at the bar of probability". Then again, there came out in 1675 a pamphlet called: "O'Brazile; or the Enchanted Island: Being a perfect relation of the discovery and Wonderful Disenchantment of an Island in the north of Ireland".

In the face of such evident belief in its existence we may ask whether this island may not at one time, centuries ago, have been actual fact. In answer to this question we have the opinions in particular of two men. W. Frazer (1) in a pamphlet written in 1879 on Hy Brazil, is convinced that an island must have existed at a very recent period where the Porcupine Bank now is known to be placed, (i.e. to the west of

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(1) In Notes & Queries, Series VI, Vol.VIII, P. 475.

Ireland) because shells have been discovered there of the periwinkle, which, it is known, requires occasional exposure to the atmosphere for its existence. This would point to the bank's having been actually raised land at a recent date. Another possible explanation is put forward by George Sigerson (1) in 1892 when he says: "It has seemed to me probable that there were of old, beyond our west coast, islands, which, owing to the same seismical course [i.e. the action of the sea, tides, etc., and phenomea which resemble those accompanying earthquakes] have sunk beneath the ocean level. The memory of their existence and the fact of their absence might well give rise to these strange and beautiful traditions of the Lands of Youth, of Life, of Virtues". These remote isles, filled perhaps with early invaders driven out from the mainland, assumed mythical proportions, and became the property of phantoms.

"Tir-nan-og", which means in English "The Land of Youth", was another Irish name used to designate that isle of bliss, that Other World, in which our forefathers believed so firmly. This name has been applied to one of the many beautiful lands supposed to lie beneath the earth, or under the sea itself. In this last metamorphoses it lies beneath the Atlantic, and is a wonderful place with magnificent palaces in which live kings and ministers; while as a land under the earth it is a lovely country whence spring the sturdy trees, the green grass, and the bright flowers of our world.

Another conception of this land is the one we have

(1) In Contemporary Review (1892) Vol.82. p.505.

already seen in the case of Avalon and O'Brazil, that of a far distant isle in the west. It is to this isle that Bran sails.

Bran, or St. Brendan is a rather interesting figure. He was an Irish monk of the 6th Century, and whether or not he was an explorer is uncertain, but in the 11th Century interest in him revived and he became a legendary traveller to many isles of wonder and mystery. The legend, which was first published as a Latin narrative in the 10th or 11th centuries, was later translated into all the languages of Western Europe, and credits Bran with most of the traditional stories of men at sea, some of whom had perhaps reached the Canaries or America; so that it is not surprising that the islands visited by him are so many and so varied.

In the pagan myth of Bran, retold in the 7th Century, Elysium is described as a hazy land where wailing, treachery, grief, sorrow, sickness, age and death are unknown, but where there is always beautiful music, feasting and wine, laughter and joy.

According to the 11th Century legend of Bran's voyage, one island which he called "Insula Uvarùm" or "Grape Island" is "covered with the thickest forest of vines, which bore grapes with such incredible fertility that all the trees were bent to the earth; all with the same fruit and the same colour; not a tree was unfruitful, and there were none found there of any other sort."

Wherever this illusive land was situated it was regarded as a blessed land in which dwelt the Sidh, or elder gods, and to which a few very favoured mortals had penetrated during their lifetime, - but it was not a place of the dead. Among these favoured mortals were Bran, whom we have already mentioned, Ossian, Cuchullain and Cormac.

According to some forms of this legend of Bran, it is a country called "Manannan's Land" that he visits. It is a land which bears a close resemblance to Tir-nan-og, and is probably in reality one and the same idea. It is ruled by Manannan Mac Lir, the son of the Sea-god, who is sometimes called King of the Sea People or Lord of the Land of the Dead. It is one of the many lands to which the Sidh or elder gods were driven, and where they lived as noble creatures capable of superhuman feats. Bran was called to this land which lay in the western sea, shrouded by mist so as to be invisible, while it cast oblivion on its visitors. It is a level land of every colour, where there are games and racing; where delight is common; where there is no treachery, grief, keening, sorrow, sickness or death, but where all is bright with music and wine, riches and treasures, in the Gentle Land, the Bountiful Land. There is always good weather, and silver dropping on the land, in the Many Coloured Land, the Land of Women.

To Cormac, another Celtic hero, also came the call of Manannan, the King of the Land of Promise: "I come from a land where there is nothing but truth, neither age, nor withering away, nor heaviness, nor sadness, nor envy, jealously, or pride."

Cormac is given a branch of golden apples which bring joy and sleep for twenty-four hours. He also goes to this land to seek his wife, and finds it a beautiful country with plenty of food, wine and music. To roast a pig one had but to tell four truths; and the next day the pig would be alive again, while the cows gave infinite quantites of milk and the corn sowed itself.

This country does not resemble the one visited by Bran so much as another conception of Manannan's Land which we find in a translation by Lady Gregory. Manannan chose the most beautiful of the hills and valleys of Ireland to settle in, and placed hidden or invisible walls about it. Here he made a Feast of Age for the Sidh or "Ever-Living Living Ones", where they drank ale which kept whoever tasted of it from sickness and age and death. For food they had his own swine, which, though killed and eaten one day, would be alive and running about the next.

Oisin, or Ossian, was another favoured visitor in the Happy Isles, to which he was taken, about 284 A.D., and which he describes as the Country of the Young, the Country of Victory, a delightful place, full of blossoms, with smooth plains, where there is a King's dun of every colour, and palaces of shining stones. Here live a King and Queen, three fifties of armed men, very lively and handsome, and a hundred beautiful girls. Here no delight was lacking and one remained young forever. Ossian married the King's daughter, and remained there very

happily for what seemed to him a short time, but what was in reality hundred of years. Finally, however, he grew homesick, and in spite of his wife's warnings he returned to Ireland in 440, in the time of St. Patrick. Here he found all changed, and, falling by accident from his magic steed, he instantly became old, withered and blind, and finally died, - but apparently not before he and St. Patrick had had some very interesting arguments on the subject of Christianity.

Cuchulain, another famous Celtic hero, was invited to the Plain of Delight, where there were fair horses, sweet-voiced birds, trees of glittering metal, and where he could forever enjoy the inexhaustible mead-vat, and the hand of Fand, the princess. (1)

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(1) Among other voyages to the Happy Isles were:-
(a) A Druid of Sken who was carried in a boat to the "Isle of Green" in seven days. This was the "Isle of the Departed". It basked in golden light, its hills sloped gently to the shore, its mountain-tops were enveloped in bright transparent clouds, it was full of green trees and limpid streams. It was a calm bright land where the sun never set, and where it was always autumn. Here the spirits of the departed, ever beautiful and gay. dwelt in radiant halls.
(b) Teig, son of Cian, sailed to the "Enchanted Islands". They were fruitful and lovely, with clear streams, grapes, birds and purple-topped trees. There was no cold, fatigue or hunger, and they lived on perfumes instead of food. There were three houses set with jewels, and here dwelt the Kings and nobles from the "dark unquiet land of Erinn".
(c) Dagda, and Angus the Young speak of an Otherworld full of good things, whence come cattle, magic fruit, draughts of wisdom, and of poesy, whence streams and lochs rise.
(d) Etain, having been in the Happy Isles, is born again, but is easily won back to the simple joys of the Great Plain under the hills, where there is no sorrow or death.

As though by way of contrast to these happy lands which we have been considering, we have the more modern Celtic idea of Fairyland, as a land, usually underground, inhabited by a degenerate form of the Sidh, - little creatures, often kind, but apt to be malicious towards mortals. These are the "little people" responsible for such tricks as stealing children and leaving changelings in their place. Their lands, while beautiful, are at the same time fleeting. Elidor's (1) visit to this Fairyland may perhaps be taken as typical - He is found by the fairies who take him to a land underground full of delights and sports. A beautiful land, though dull from lack of sunshine. Here he is fed on milk mixed with saffron, and lives for a while with these little beings who detest lies and who never take an oath. Elidor is allowed, however, to visit his home now and then, and finally, at the instigation of his mother, he steals a golden ball from the fairies. On entering his home with it, he is tripped up, loses the ball, and is never after able to find the way back to fairyland.

In addition to the Happy Lands which we have been considering, the Celts believed in other wonderful lands not necessarily happy. Some of these were islands, or floating islands, and some were sunken lands, while others were actual places in the British Isles. Of these regions, some were inhabited by the Sidh, while others were the abode of dead spirits, and some belonged to both together, The

(1) See:- Ritson: "Fairy Tales now first collected" 1831, "Elidor or the Golden Ball", trans. from Giraldus Barry (Cambrensis) Itinerary through Wales. (Latin) "Elidorus and the Fairies"

legends concerning such lands are so confused that it has proved impossible for scholars to form any clear distinction between them. Bran, Maelduin, Snaedgus, and other travellers of the time visited a great many of these strange lands, among others an island of women, an isle of wailing, and one of laughter; a land full of wine and self-sown wheat, and one with a silver weir full of salmon. They saw men with cat's heads, and came to an isle of ants and an isle of birds. There was one isle of wonder, where nothing could die, but, as the inhabitants were not immune from illness, the result was that when they were so ill that they wished to die they were ferried over to the mainland, where they expired. There were also two isles, one inhabited by people full of life and joy, and the other steeped in death and sorrow; but the living people in the joyful isle grew weary of their joy and longed to join their neighbors.

In considering these wonderlands, especially the Tir-nan-og idea of an Earthly Paradise, it is interesting to compare the ancient Celtic conception of Paradise with the Christian idea, as set forth for instance in the Anglo-Saxon poem, "De Phœnice", or in the poem in 15th Century English, which tells of Sir Owain's visit to the Earthly Paradise, where he forgot pains and sorrows. There was a ravishing perfume, the people were beautifully dressed, the country was green and full of flowers, the trees were full of fruit, the tree of life and the tree of wisdom grew there, and there was "no wrong but ever right, ever day and never night". This influence of

Christianity shows itself also in some of Bran's descriptions of his "Terra Repromissionis", and in many later Celtic descriptions of the Lands of Promise which came to be practically identified with the Christian Paradise or Heaven.

How were these wonderlands of the Celts reached? Apparently in many ways. The far distant isles were usually reached in boats, as with Bran and Maelduin, and the lands underground were approached through dark holes either natural caves, or smaller holes made by pulling up a root, while the sunken lands were of course reached by diving down into the water. People sometimes found these lands of feerie on their own account, but more often they were invited to visit them, or were stolen away while asleep; often also the land appeared to them in visions or dreams before they had actually seen it. A general idea of the way to Fairyland was that it could only be reached by sea or by mist and darkness, while it was often surrounded by a wall of glass or mist, or an invisible wall. In the fairy tale of "Becuma of the White Skin" (1) we have the following classification:-

(a) The World of the Sidh lies across clay.

(b) The Many-Coloured Land lies across water.

(c) The Land of Wonder is reached through fire.

(d) but The Land of Promise no one knows how to reach.

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(1) See:- "Irish Fairy Tales". James Stephens (1920)

The ideas which give rise to the Celtic Wonder-lands which we have been discussing may perhaps be classified under the following four divisions:-

1. Longing for happy lands far away which are of two kinds, one superior to the other. The first is a beautiful land where the gods, or the noble dead, and certain favoured mortals spend their time in uplifting talk and sport and feasting. In the second conception the stress is laid, not on the spiritual pleasures, so much as on the fact that all food can be obtained without effort, and there is nothing to do but eat and take one's ease. This idea later developed into the "Land of Cockaigne".

2. Desire for eternal youth, something which people in all climes have longed for through the ages, is to be found in most of these happy lands. Here the mortal visitor lives through centuries in joy without growing any older, and it is not until he returns to his native land to find his friends all dead, that he realises how long he has been away. Once in this land, however, return is either impossible or penal, (as in the case of Ossian), so the gods evidently do not take mortals away with the intention of deceiving them.

3. Belief in the survival of the old spirits, or elder gods was an important feature of those lands. These were the great and noble race of the Tuatha de Danann or Sidh, whose reign in Ireland was as the Saturnian reign in the Age of Gold. They are pictured as inhabiting certain enchanted

lands where all is joy and beauty, and where they spend eternity feasting, and wearing gorgeous clothes and living in beautiful palaces built of gems.

4. Belief in a Fairyland of Glamour, a cheaper sort of land, inhabited by a degenerate race of fairies. They are the Sidh, or elder gods, but grown small and petty, with a land of which the beauty is more a glamour that fades and leaves the unfortunate visitor worse off than before. These fairies are tricky, the gold with which they pay their ferry-man at night, turns to dead leaves in the morning, while he is mocked by their laughter, though he cannot see them. These are the modern fairies of Ireland, - how changed from the Sidh of old!

CHAPTER II

The Reappearance of Wonderland in the Nineteenth Century.

Part I The Contest with Rationalism

Having described the various ideas of wonderland held by people in Medieval times, we will now trace briefly the gradual decline in these beliefs and in the belief in fairies in general during the 17th century, and the revival of interest in the supernatural in the 18th century, leading to the Romantic Revival, and finally to the Celtic Revival at the end of the 19th century.

In the literature of the first quarter of the 17th century the topic of fairies and supernatural occurrences was quite usual as we see by the way in which Shakespeare uses these ideas in his plays and lyrics, though, unless we admit the Forest of Arden and the island in "The Tempest", he says nothing of wonderlands.

At this time, too, we find fairies, and also happy islands, referred to by Ben Jonson in his Court Masques. In the "Masque of Oberon" we find a combination of the fairy-land ruled over by Oberon and a happy land of eternal youth, such as Tir-nan-og or Avalon, where the noblest knights go at their death:-

"Yonder with him [Oberon] live the knights,
Once the noblest of the earth
Quickened by a second birth:
Who for prowess and for truth,
There are crowned with lasting youth:

And do hold by fate's command
Seats of bliss in fairyland".

Another wonderland where all is made of clouds is described by Jonson in "The World in the Moon". For this he drew the idea from Lucian's "Icaromenippus". Two other masques show his ideas of floating isles. One, "Neptune's Triumph" shows the island of Delos which is floated on to the stage; and the other, "The Fortunate Isles", describes the classical conception of these as places of gentle winds, fruitful soil and many flowers, where the time is spent in joy and feasting.

Another proof that fairies were still a topic of interest at this time is found in Drayton's "Nymphidia" (1627) - a light and delicate picture of the land of small beings ruled over by Oberon and Titania. He describes this land as being held in the air by magic, "somewhat southward towards the moon", with paths from it to the moon and to earth. While not, of course, believing in this land, Drayton still considers it a topic of interest and not beneath his notice. He is evidently very much interested in what he is writing and expects others to be so too.

After this, however, interest in such subjects waned rapidly, and we find various people giving voice to the belief that the fairies had gone, - had left England forever, driven out by Protestantism, which would not admit the old Catholic superstitions. Perhaps the best known example of this belief is in Corbet's "Fairies Farewell", which begins - "Farewell rewards and fairies", and goes on to say that they

"Were of the old profession,
Their songs were Ave Maries,
Their dances were procession
But now, alas! they all are dead,
Or gone beyond the seas,
Or farther for religion fled,
Or else to take their ease".

After noting this decline of interest during the early 17th century, we can pass on to the following century before we find the tide turning, and a gradual growth of interest taking place.

Theodore Watts-Dunton, in his essay on "The Renaissance of Wonder in English Poetry", asserts that the minds of men throughout the ages have reached alternately the extremes of "acceptance", as in the Augustan and Victorian epochs, and of "wonder", as in the Greek and Elizabethan periods. However that may be, it certainly seems as though the pendulum, having by the beginning of the 18th century swung as far as possible towards "acceptance", began to revert to the other extreme. The outstanding examples of this change do not come until the last half of the century, but even before that we find a growth of interest in folk-lore and primitive poetry.

At the beginning of the 18th century the general attitude of writers was that fairies and such topics were amusing, but beneath their notice. We see the effect of this

aloofness in Thomas Tickell's poem, "Kensington Garden" (1722) The theme here also is the flight of the fairies, but no real regret is expressed at their departure, the events are placed in a far distant past, and the fairies are not the fairies of popular belief as with Drayton, but resemble more Pope's sylphs, in "The Rape of the Lock", a rationalistic conception of beings which exist only in the poet's mind.

Towards the end of the century, writing on folk superstitions seems to have reached a low-water mark, but after this, interest in primitive poetry and in primitive ideas began to arise, and later led once more to an enthusiasm for folk beliefs. The incentive in this case came, however, more from the critical than from the imaginative writings. Even before the beginning of the century, in 1690, we have Sir William Temple, in his essays "Of Poetry" and "Of Heroic Virtue" mentioning Ancient Scandinavian and other primitive poetry.

More definite examples of the rising interest, however, are to be found in some letters by John Toland (1726) called: "A Specimen of the Critical History of the Celtic Religion and Learning", containing an account of the bards of the ancient Gauls, Britons, Irish and Scots. Then in 1731 John Husbands, following Temple's lead, shows himself to be an enthusiast for Primitive Poetry in his Preface to a miscellany of Poems which he collected and published.

That this rising tide of interest was very gradual is shown by the fact that, in 1750, Collins considers it necessary to urge a friend to write on superstitions, in his "Ode on the popular superstitions of the Highlands".

A great stimulus was given to the taste for primitive poetry by several publications. The first of these was Macpherson's so-called Ossianic fragments, which came out in 1760, and which immediately raised such enthusiasm in Gray and others. These were followed in 1764 by some "Specimens of the Welsh Bards" translated by Evan Evans; while in the following year came the famous "Reliques", or collection of ballads, by Bishop Percy.

After this many other scholars showed their interest by publishing collections of one kind and another, as, for instance, Joseph Ritson's collection in 1787 of "Ancient English and Scottish Popular Ballads, - from the Reign of Henry II to the Revolution", and his "Fairy Tales now first collected", which included, besides the earlier tales referred to above, the fairy poems by Drayton, Corbet and Tickell.

From these examples we can see the general trend of the increased interest in folk superstitions which will later culminate in the Celtic Revival and in interest in wonderlands once more.

Turning now to the imaginative writers we see what a stimulus was given to this growth of wonder by the poets of the Romantic Revival who wrote under the influence of the critical works we have just mentioned.

At the very beginning of the Revival we can see the increasing interest in the supernatural in such poems as Burns' "Hallowe'en" (1785) and "Tam O'Shanter" (1790), both of which recount the superstitions of the country folk of Scotland.

Blake was another poet of this time who shows the influence of "Ossian" and of Celtic myth and ideas. He is a mystic who creates an original universe of his own, based on a fourfold system, the symbolism of which he works out for himself and uses in many of his prophetic poems, such as: "The Book of Thel" and "Jerusalem". The scene of his eternal drama is the mind of man. The countries and cities which he presents are shadowy, spiritual states.

The interest in the supernatural of course influenced Coleridge greatly as "The Ancient Mariner", "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel" bear witness. "Kubla Khan" being in its own way almost a vision of a wonderland.

Southey, while interested also in mythology, turns to Hindoo myths for his poem "The Curse of Kehama". In "Madoc" written at the very end of the century, he retells the story of the discovery of a new land, possibly Mexico.

Scott, however, in his "Lay of the Last Minstrel" (1805) uses the superstitions of his own country, when he depicts the fairy page who steals away the heir and takes him to fairyland, leaving a changeling in his place.

Poems which verge more on the fairy type are found in Shelley's , "Queen Mab" (1812) and "The Witch of Atlas" (1820). In the first of these a girl's spirit is taken by the Queen of the Fairies in her chariot to her palace among the stars. Hence they look back upon the earth and see the tragic past, the inglorious present, and the glorious future, when all men will be pure and happy and all the earth fair

and peaceful. In "The Witch of Atlas", too, Shelley mentions fairies and gnomes and describes shadowy regions; but these poems show no direct debt to folk-lore.

Interest in the supernatural is also shown by Keats, especially in three poems of 1819: "The Four Fairies", "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", and "Lamia", though the last named is based on classical legend.

Part II - The Wonderland from Hogg to the Celtic Revival.

This growth of interest in the supernatural led, in the early 19th century, to interest in various folk superstitions, including the belief in a wonderland. In 1813 we find at least three examples of wonderlands: two in James Hogg's poems, "Kilmeny" and "The Pilgrims of the Sun", and one in a poem by Connolly.

Hogg's poetry in general is noted for its fanciful humour, its love of the weird and wonderful, and its pictures of brownies and fairies. "The Pilgrims of the Sun" tells the story of Mary Lee's visit to Heaven. She reaches it by flying eastward, and on the way she looks down upon earth:-

"The first green world that they passed by
Had 'habitants of mortal mould
For they saw the rich men and the poor,
And they saw the young and they saw the old.

"But the next green world the twain passed by
They seemed of some superior frame;

For all were in the bloom of youth,
And all their radiant robes the same."

After seeing heaven she returns to earth to find that her mother supposes her dead.

In "Kilmeny" we find the same idea of a girl whose spirit goes on a journey, this time to a Land of Thought, an Elysium where only the good may go, and from which one can look down upon the sorrows of this earth. She stays seven years, and returns home only to go back again forever, after a month and a day, to the land of thought. This ending is rather unusual, as such people usually stayed on earth if they came back at all, but the story itself is based on a regular ballad theme, - only substituting the Elysium for the underworld of pagan myth.

The third of the wonderlands which we find in 1813 is in "The Enchanted Isle" a poem by an Irishman, Luke Aylmer Connolly, who tells of a legendary isle at Rathlin which is supposed to rise at sunset to the music played on a shell by a mermaid. This isle could be fixed if some earth or a stone from Ireland were to be thrown on it, but, as it always sank when approached, this was impossible, The idea of "fixing" the isle goes back to the early legends when floating lands could be fixed by iron, - such as a red-hot arrow.

After this date, an increasing number of writers began to contribute imaginative works on the subject of wonderlands and other superstitions, while among the critical writers of the time we find many scholars continuing the work of their

predecessors. In the second quarter of the century alone there are several outstanding works. In 1825 Thomas Crofton Croker published his "Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland", and later brought out songs, ballads, keens and folk tales in the Percy Society Publications. He has been called by Elton, the first collector of Irish songs.

Another signpost of the revival of interest in fairies is Keightley's "Fairy Mythology" in 1828, which shows us that a scholar considered this a fit subject for serious study. In his book he mentions Avalon in connection with Ogier the Dane, and discusses the various conceptions of fairyland, of fairies in Great Britain, and of their departure. He includes several stories - among others, a translation of "Elidurus" from Giraldus.

Scott, who, before 1813, had written many tales in verse which show his interest in the supernatural and in old beliefs, now comes into the ranks of the critics with his "Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft", written in 1830. While these letters are concerned chiefly with the origin and history of belief in witches, they also include references to ghosts, apparitions, elves, fairies, and so on. Among people carried off to fairyland Scott mentions Thomas the Rhymer, or Thomas of Erceldoune, of the legend, and, as a later case, a Mr.Kirke, who, after writing "with undoubting mind" about fairies before 1691 is finally carried off to fairyland himself. Scott's work shows a great interest in his subject and bears evidence of a good deal of research into old writings.

In the following year James Logan brought out a book called, "The Scottish Gael", in which he studies the history of this race. He believes in the authenticity of the Ossianic Fragments, and praises them highly. In discussing religion he says that: "A general belief was that the future state of permanent happiness was in 'Flath-innis' a remote isle in the west". He also mentions the fact that certain clans had certain hills to which the spirits of their members were attached.

The fact that Ireland was beginning to take a front place in this revival is shown by two books published at this time: Carleton's "Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry", which came out in 1836 and Lover's "Legends and Stories of Ireland", in 1848, - while after the half-century such publications were even more frequent.

Interest in Celtic poetry taken by Irishmen is shown in George Sigerson's, "Poets and Poetry of Munster" (1860) and in Sir Samuel Ferguson's, "Lays of the Western Gael" (1864) and "Hybernian Night's Entertainment" (1867). Then, too, Arnold's Essays, "On the Study of Celtic Literature" (1867) in which he urges its importance, and advocates among other things, a Chair of Celtic at Oxford, show an Englishman's interest in this subject.

This rising interest in things Celtic was greatly stimulated in the third quarter of the century by two important publications: Dr. Joyce's collection of "Ancient Celtic Romances" in 1879, and Standish James O'Grady's, "History of Ireland (Heroic Period)" which appeared from 1878 to 1880. Both these

books dealing with the Celtic past inspired many poets of the time in England and in Ireland. In fact some critics date the Celtic Revival from the publication of the latter book.

From these examples we may consider that interest in myths and folk-lore, especially in connection with the Celt, is now (1880) an established fact. Let us see what is the general trend in the imaginative writings of the century we have just discussed.

That Scottish and Irish writers began early to show an interest in the wonderlands of ancient tradition, we have already seen in Hogg and Connolly. Gerald Griffin, writing soon after 1813 retells the legend of "Hy Brasail" in his poem of that name:-

"On the Ocean that hollows the rocks where ye dwell
A shadowy land has appeared, as they tell;
Men thought it a region of sunshine and rest,
And they called it O'Brazil - the Isle of the Blest.
From year unto year, on the ocean's blue rim
The beautiful spectre showed lovely and dim;
The golden clouds curtained the deep where it lay
And it looked like an Eden, away, far away." (1)

In the poem a peasant sets sail to seek this land, but perishes in a storm.

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(1) See: "A Book of Irish Verse" W.B.Yeats (Ed) (1900) or, "Golden Treasury of Irish Verse" (1925) Lennox Robinson. (Ed.)

The English poets of this time were also interested in the Celtic legends, as is shown by Tennyson's "Voyage of Maelduin, which he wrote after reading Joyce's "Ancient Celtic Romances", where he found the legend. His interest in the Arthurian Legends is, of course, well known, and his rendering of Mallory in his "Morte d'Arthur" includes a description of the Isle of Avallon.

Another English poet to write of these legendary Celtic voyages was Arnold, whose poem "St. Brandan" is, however, not a retelling of the old Voyage of Bran, but is of a later incident, based on foreign versions, telling of the Saint's meeting with Judas Iscariot. (1) Arnold borrowed again from Celtic sources in "The Forsaken Merman" (1849) in which we have a being corresponding to the Irish "merrow".

The writers of the 19th century, up to the Celtic revival, when they referred to a fairyland at all, usually meant the fairyland of popular superstition, - an invisible land on the earth, or in the hills, inhabited by the people of the Sidh (or mounds) the mischievous little folk who stole children and sometimes older people, and were up to many other tricks. Perhaps the most outstanding poet of the century to write much about these fairies was William Allingham, who describes them in his poems, in one of which, "The Fairies" (1883) he tells the story of "Little Brigit" who was stolen away for seven years, and came back to earth only to die of sorrow. Another Irish writer of this time, Aubrey de Vere,

(1) It is interesting to notice at this point that Charles Kingsley in his "Water Babies", 1863, also refers to Bran's isle which he uses as the home of the Water Babies.

affords an example of those poets who, while attracted by the ancient Celtic legends, yet did not, in their writings, include any mention of the Celtic fairy lands or isles of bliss.

So far, while many writers have been attracted by the ancient legends, and while a few of these have recounted tales of the happy isles, and of fairyland, yet none seem to have contributed anything original in this line. Now, however, we come to an English poet of the end of the century, William Morris, whose extraordinary imagination seemed to create for him a vague and mysterious land, shadowy, yet bright, where all were young and happy and beautiful. We see different pictures of this land in his different stories, yet in its general characteristics it is the same. Perhaps the best pictures are found in "The Glittering Plain" and "The Hollow Land". The first of these is a distant isle which lies always under a summer sunshine, and where the old become young and beautiful once more. In the second story the hero reaches this misty land by falling over a cliff, and there he finds his love and is happy, while time passes in a dream. In some of Morris's other romances "The Water of the Wondrous Isles", "The Well at the World's End", and "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon", he tells of various other marvellous lands, such as "The Island of the Young and Old", the "Island of Nothing", "The Land of the Innocent Folk", and so on. None of these lands, however, have the glamour of his happy land, they are curious places rather than ideal lands. In the Introduction to his

long series of poems called "The Earthly Paradise" Morris again shows the influence of the Celtic legends. Here the root idea is from St. Brandan's voyage in the "Golden Legend". Some mariners set out to find a happy isle of which they have heard. They seek this dreamland for years, until age forces them to cease from the search. In this series we find the story of Ogier the Dane, the material for which, however, did not come directly from Celtic sources, but from the old French legend of Ogier Le Danois.

Morris also writes of a wonderworld of a different type, a Utopian conception of England as he wishes it could be in the future. His ideas on this are set forth in "News from Nowhere" in which we find ourselves in an England which has given up commerce and returned to the simple country life, and where the people are all happy and contented, living a long time, and hardly knowing illness.

After considering all these stories of Morris, we see that they fall into two classes, a conception of a shadowy land of bliss inhabited by vague unearthly beings, and a more practical Utopian land of everyday humans, and it is in this land that Morris seems to put the most faith and take the most interest. Even he, the only one of all these poets who come near to being dominated by the idea of a wonderland, prefers the practical Utopian conception. In all his writing he is a story-teller first and foremost. Later, when we come to "AE", we shall notice how he typifies the other extreme, the mystic as opposed to the practical man, and the believer as opposed to the storyteller.

PART III

The Celtic Revival

While no definite date can really be set for the beginning of any literary movement, yet many have taken the year 1889 to mark as nearly as possible, the beginning of the Celtic Revival.

As we have just seen, the interest in things Celtic was gradually becoming more and more pronounced, especially among the critical writers of the time, and in 1878 O'Grady's "History of Ireland" gave such an impulse to the movement that this book has sometimes been regarded as marking the beginning of the revival. However, there is equally good authority for the later date. While the earlier is marked by one outstanding contribution, there are several to lend weight to the later. In 1888, one year before our date, a book was brought out, called, "Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland", and to this many writers contributed whose interest in Ireland was just beginning, but who were later to be well known among the revivalists. Among these were Yeats, Douglas Hyde, George Sigerson, T.W. Rolleston, Kathrine Tynan Hinkson and John Todhunter. In this same year, too, Yeats edited the "Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry".

The following year was again marked by a book of Yeats' and a volume of poetry done in collaboration. Yeats' book was "The Wanderings of Oisin", and the collaborators for the "Lays and Lyrics of the Pan-Celtic Society" included Hyde,

Katherine Tynan Hinkson, A. P. Graves, and Dora Sigerson Shorter. Besides these two productions, Hyde published a "Book of Gaelic Stories".

The writers of this revival fall naturally into two classes: those who reproduced the old material; and the creative writers who formed their own conceptions from this material. The first division includes translators and adapters, such as Hyde and Lady Gregory, while the creative class includes the poets and dramatists of the period, - chief among whom are Yeats and AE. (George Russell)

Of the work of these two translators Hyde's is the earlier. We have seen that he was interested in the revival in 1888 and 1889. After that he took a front place in the movement to revive the ancient Gaelic tongue, and many of his creative works are written in this language. Of his English works, however, we have in 1889, a "Literary History of Ireland" which is the first attempt to treat this subject in a definitely critical light. After that he published many of the old legends and stories, besides writing plays, poems and criticisms.

Second in importance to Hyde is Lady Gregory, whose "Cuchulain of Muirthemne" (1902), "Gods and Fighting Men" (1904) and "Book of Saints and Wonders" (1906) give us so many of the old legends and stories, retold in the Kiltartan dialect which she has introduced and made popular. Besides these books of tales Lady Gregory has given us many plays, but it is in her narratives that other writers have sought their material. "Gods and Fighting Men" in particular is noted for its accounts

of voyages to happy lands, as in the legends of Oisin, Maelduin, Bran, Manannan and Cormac.

Besides these there are innumerable other books which retell the old tales. Among them are A. P. Graves' "Irish Fairy Book" (1909), and Rolleston's "Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race" (1911), both of which include the legend of Oisin, while the latter also includes "The Voyage of Maelduin", and Legends of Manannan, Cuchullain, Finn and the Fairy Folk.

Turning from these to our second division, the creative writers of the Revival, we find as the outstanding poets and leaders, - W.B.Yeats, AE., and Synge. Synge, however, does not enter into this discussion as he is a realist.

The voices which we heard in the ancient legends calling mortals to that elusive land and the twilight of the gods, we hear again in many of Yeats' poems. But here the note is more the call of the Sidh to mortals luring them away from this life to a glamorous life in some mysterious country, which is in some ways more like the shadowy and fading world of fairyland than like the glorious Land of the Young. The mortal who is lured or stolem away to this land, while gaining everlasting life and freedom from the cares and sorrows of this world, pays for this by losing his soul. Hence the call of the Sidh is regarded as something evil, and to be withstood by all means in one's power. But the allure of the call makes those who hear it careless of all else. They care not

for their souls, but grasp at the shadowy, eternal, care-free existence of the Sidh. We see this attitude very well illustrated in Yeats' play "The Land of Heart's Desire", where Mary Bruin, who hears the call of the Sidh and falls into their power, is careless of her husband, and her hopes on this earth, and is nothing loth to leave all and follow her beckoning visions to

"A land where even the old are fair
"And even the wise are merry of tongue".

because she is weary of this earth and is

"right weary of four tongues
A tongue that is too crafty and too wise,
A tongue that is too godly and too grave,
A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,
And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love
Of drowsy love and my captivity".

Because she feels this and hears the call of the Sidh, she is willing to follow, but to the other actors in this drama her choice has a tragic and fatal aspect. They see her lost soul and her wasted life, and do all in their power to avert the catastrophe, but the Sidh are stronger.

In many of Yeats' other poems we hear the sad yet alluring call of the Sidh. Perhaps the best example is in "The Hosting of the Sidh":

.... "Away, come away:
Empty your heart of its mortal dream.
The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,
Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,
Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are agleam,
Our arms are waving, our lips are apart;
And if any gaze on our rushing band,
We come between him and the deed of his hand,
We come between him and the hope of his heart."

In "The Everlasting Voices", too, the poet hears the call and bids them be still:-

"Have you not heard that our hearts are old,
That you call in birds, in wind on the hill,
In shaken boughs, in tide on the shore?
O sweet everlasting Voices be still."

As a result of the call many people long for and seek this elusive land.

In "The White Birds" the lover says:-

"I am haunted by numberless islands
and many a Danaan shore,
Where time would surely forget us
and sorrow come near us no more".

While in "The Man who Dreamed of Fairyland", Yeats shows us the sorrow which accompanies this longing. In his poem

a man is on the point of falling in love, when the call comes to him and makes him forget his love. As he is just beginning to have a care for his welfare in this world, he again hears the call

"And at that singing he was no more wise".

His anger is rising against his mockers, and he is about to revenge himself, but again the call "drove his fine angry mood away". At last, even in his grave, he is not to know peace, for even there the very worms sing to him of the isle so blessed,

"That none may feel the power of squall and wave,
And no one any leaf-crowned dancer miss".
.....
"The man has found no comfort in the grave."

Some of those, however, who desire to be taken to this land have their wish granted, as we saw in "The Land of Heart's Desire"; and often those are taken who perhaps have not longed to go, as in "The Stolen Child" who is taken.

"To the waters and the wild
With a fairy, hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping
than he can understand".

Again in "The Host of the Air" we have the story of a lover whose bride is snatched away from him by a throng of fairy dancers, while in another poem Yeats tells the legend

of the lovers Baile and Aillinn whom Aengus the Master of Love caused to die that they might be eternally happy in his own land among the dead.

From these illustrations we see how popular the theme is with Yeats. His conception seems to suggest the ancient conception of the fairyland of glamour inhabited by the "Little People", but Yeats' Sidh are not necessarily small, nor are they noble gods surviving; they are shadowy beings, gay and sad with an unearthly sadness and gaiety, dancing eternally and eternally calling to humans to join in their dance, but their sadness seems rather causeless, while their gaiety strikes one as hollow. They lead a motonous and never-ending existence, and have no souls. They are not evil, nor are they good.

In very few other poems does Yeats make reference to lands which might differ in any way from this land of the Sidh. In the "Wandering of Oisin"; where we would look for a definite description of the ancient conception of the Tir-nan-og, we find instead an account of three lands: Lands of Dancing, of Victories and of Forgetfulness. In each of these Oisin spends a century, and in none of them is he entirely happy for very long, though he has youth, strength and love. Oisin's glorious Land of Youth seems to lean slightly towards the glamorous fairyland we find in Yeats' other poems.

In a poem about Michael Robarts, Yeats mentions Manannan as reigning over the Country of the Dead, and here Yeats regards the sea as the symbol of the drifting, indefinite

bitterness of life, and states in a note that this was the original conception in ancient Irish Myths.

In another poem, "Under the Moon", Yeats mentions various happy lands by name, - but gives no description. He includes in his list Avalon, the Land under Waves, and lands ruled by Aengus and by Ulad.

Yeats' conception of a happy land has been expressed by AE in these words:

"Southward and in the warm west are the Happy Isles among the Shadowy Waters. The pearly phantoms are dancing there with blown hair amid cloud-frail daffodils. They have known nothing but beauty, or at the most a beautiful unhappiness. Everything there moves in procession according to ritual, and the agony of grief, if it is felt, must be concealed. There are no faces blurred with tears there, some traditional gesture signifying sorrow is all that is allowed. I have looked with longing eyes into this world. It is Ildathach, the Many-Coloured Land, but not the land of the Living Heart. That island where the multidudinous beatings of many hearts become one is yet unvisited; but the isle of our poet is the most beautiful of all the isles the mystic voyagers have visited during the thousands of years literature has recorded in Ireland. What wonder that many wish to follow him, and already other voices are singing amid its twilights". (1)

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(1)"Imaginations and Reveries": p. 24.

This conception, together with his great influence on the other writers of the Celtic Revival, has made Yeats the leader of those who hold the peasant tradition of a happy land. While those who belong to a more practical side have Synge for their model.

At the close of the last chapter we found that the ancient conception of a wonderland fell into four divisions: the longing for a happy land; the desire for eternal youth; the belief in the Survival of the old Spirits; and the belief in a fairyland of glamour. How does this conception compare with that of Yeats? Has he altered it, and if so, in what way? The longing for a happy land is certainly present in his poems, though the actual land for which he longs seems to differ somewhat from the old conception. It is more shadowy, and resembles rather the glamorous fairyland which, with the ancients, was distinct from the happy lands. The desire for eternal youth is in Yeats' poems also, and his "Land of Heart's Desire" is a land,

"Where nobody gets old and godly and grave
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue."

The third of our divisions, a belief in the survival of the old spirits or elder gods as a great and noble race, does not seem to be brought out by Yeats to the same extent. His Sidh are ageless, but lack the grandeur and the history that makes the ancient gods so distinctive. Yeats seems to

combine this fairyland of glamour with the nobler and more remote happylands in his ideal kingdom.

In conclusion, then, we see that Yeats, in using the ancient beliefs, changes them into something more shadowy, less definite. His land is more a land of the spirit than of the flesh.

George Russell, or, as he signs himself, "AE", besides being an economist, is a mystic, and it is his mystic side which interests us in the present discussion. He, perhaps more than the other great figure of the Celtic Revival, Yeats, has tried to tell us of his thoughts and emotions, and of his expeditions into the world of symbolism and mysticism. In his two books of essays, "Imaginations and Reveries", and "The Candle of Vision", he gives us a very clear idea of his conception of a wonderland. His poems, too, reflect this in a score of places.

Whether AE's visions or his interest in eastern beliefs came first, is not quite clear, but it seems probable that it was the former. AE, in his youth, showed his desire for a wonderland by imagining one for himself. This land he describes for us in an essay: "My dream-world was self-shining. Light was born in everything there at dawn and faded into a coloured gloom at eve, and if I walked across my lawns in darkness the grasses stirred by my feet would waken to vivid colour, and glimmer behind me in a trail of green fire; or if a bird was disturbed at night in my shadowy woods it became

a winged jewel of blue, rose, gold and white, and the leaves tipped by its wings would blaze in flakes of emerald flame, and there were flocks of wild birds that my shouts would call forth, to light with glittering plummage the monstrous dusk of the heavens." (1)

This idea of an imaginery world in which light and colour are the dominating notes, leads us on to his later visions of that "Many-coloured land", as he calls it. This he believes to be one of the four worlds of the eastern seers, which they called the Earth-World, the Mid-World, the Heaven-World, and the God-World. According to AE this conception was shared also by the Celts, and he shows a relationship between the two by saying that the Earth-World is our World; the Mid-World, which is also called, because of its fluctuating properties, the World of the Waters, is a world peopled by shining beings whom AE has seen in his visions; the Heaven-World is the World of Immortal Youth, and is peopled by beings lit from within by a bright glow. These also AE has seen, more rarely.

Taking this as his plan of the worlds, AE explains that Oisin, or Usheen, in travelling to the Heaven-World of Tir-nan-og saw, on the way, the wonders of the Mid-World. In other words, he takes the tale of the actual physical journey to Wonder-Worlds to be a symbol of a journey of the mind in visionary lands.

That AE believes in his visions there can be no reasonable doubt, and these visions have convinced him that

(1) "The Candle of Vision". p.68.

there are other worlds than ours, more beautiful and more to be desired. Of the three Worlds above ours in perfection, he has had glimpses into two, the Mid-World and the Heaven-World. The first of these especially, which he has seen most often, he has described for us in many essays. He calls it the Many-Coloured Land, and it corresponds to the World of Immortal Youth. In one of his early visions he heard bells, and the heart of the hills opened to him, and he saw that for the dwellers in them, there were no hills. Later, when his power of concentration became greater, he saw "Pure shining faces, dazzling processions of figures, most ancient/ancient places and peoples and landscapes lovely as the lost Eden". (1) Once he seemed to be in a city whose hills were covered with glittering temples, and whose ways were thronged with beautiful people who flowed towards him with outstretched hands and looked upon him with eyes of love. Of another vision he says: - "I could see valleys and hills; lustrous as a jewel, where all was self-shining, the colours brighter and purer, yet making a softer harmony together than the colours of the world I know. The winds sparkled as they blew hither and thither, yet far distances were clear through that glowing air." (2) In this same vision he saw the inhabitants of this land, - a shining folk who seemed to draw their life

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(1) ibid. p.28.

(2) ibid. p.32.

from fountains of luminous mist, and who, while they appeared more beautiful than human beings, yet seemed to have no thoughts or individualised life. They were perfect in beauty, yet less than human.

Another feature of AE's wonderlands is a belief in the survival of the ancient gods. He thinks that they are not gone, but live on in that other world which people are seeking. They typify the past greatness of our race. In an essay, "On an Irish Hill", he says:-

"After all is not this longing but a search for ourselves, and where shall we find ourselves at last? Not in this land - but wearing the robes of space whither these voices of the illimitable allure us. In our past the mighty ones came glittering across the foam of the mystic waters and brought their warriors away,

"Perhaps, and this also is my hope, they may again return; Mannanan and his ocean-sweeping boat, a living creature, diamond-winged, or Lu bright as the dawn ..... or some hitherto unknown divinity may stand suddenly by me on the hill, and hold out the Silver Branch with white blossoms from the Land of Youth, and stay me ere I depart with the sung call as of old." (1)

AE, in describing his visionary lands to us, does not stop there, He is not content merely to see visions and to tell us of them, he draws from these an inspiration

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(1) "Imaginations and Reveries". p. 116.

and an ideal, and he wishes to inspire us also that we may work with him to attain his ideal, As he believes in these worlds of the spirit, so he believes that we can all go unto them by exercising the power which is in each one of us. Besides believing in the existence of this spirit world, and holding out the hope that we may some day, by effort, realise it, AE believes that we do, in fact, visit this world ourselves in sleep, though we have no recollection of it. He believes, with the folk, that men are really gods in exile, and that there are times in the lives of even the lowliest when they take their rightful places among the gods and heroes, in that world of spirits. "At times men do not remember, in dreams and in the deeps of sleep, they still wear the sceptre and diadem, and partake of the banquet of the gods. The gods are still living, they are our brothers. They await us. They beckon us to come up to them and sit upon equal thrones".(1) In several of his poems AE repeats this idea. In "On a Hillside" he says:-

"I was with you long ago;
My soul from your heart out-came,
Mountain is that not so?

.....

"Sometimes on flaming wings
I sit upon a throne.

.....

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(1) "The Candle of Vision". p. 144.

"Only I needs must lay
My royal robes aside
To toil in a world of grey
Grey shadows by my side."

While in "The Heroes" he compares the squalor of the modern city with the beauty of that imaginary "Faery land of Heart's Desire". He says:-

"Those who are lost and fallen here, tonight in
sleep shall pass the gate,
Put on the purples of the king and know them
masters of their fate
Each wrinkled hag shall reassume the plumes and
hues of paradise:
Each brawler be enthroned in calm among the
children of the wise,
Yet in the council with the gods no one will
falter to pursue
His lofty purpose, but come forth the cyclic
labours to renew;
And take the burden of the world and veil his
beauty in a shroud,
And wrestle with the chaos till the anarch to
the light be bowed,
We cannot for forgetfulness forego the reverence
due to them
Who wear at times they do not know the sceptre
and the diadem."

In "The Dream of the Children" also we find the idea. Here the children go out to the hillside at night, and are taken down into the hill by the "good people" who live there as "kings unattended"; and here the children are called "by older names", and become as mighty gods for an hour.

While AE evidently has faith in the divinity in all of us, even the "brawlers", and believes that we return, unconsciously, to the spirit world of the gods, yet he would not have us rest content with that. He believes that by conscious and concentrated effort we can succeed in attaining to this land not only in our sleep, but in our waking moments. In each one of us, he says, lies the power to reach this land, and "only by mastery of this power will men be able to ascend to the ancestral Paradise". (1) He firmly believes that the Golden Age which was in the beginning will also be in the end, and that man may bring it about by creating these ideal worlds, by making them come true. "If you will but awaken the inner sight, Hy Brazil, Ildathach, all the lands of Immortal Youth will build themselves up anew for you, not only in fantasy, but in vivid actuality." (2)

The Golden Age, he says, is not really gone, but we are blind to it, and only by earnestly striving can we recover it. In many of his poems he calls to us to join him in his

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(1) ibid. p. 141.

(2) ibid. p. 144.

effort to bring the world back to its Age of Gold. In "A Call" he appeals to us to accompany him to "the underland" which rings with faery chimes:

"There the bright ones call us waving to and fro -
Come, my children, with me to the ancient go".

Also in "The Twilight of Earth" he says that the world is all explored, that we can no longer do battle with the gods. The power of love has gone and we are shrunk and weak, We need to be roused, and recalled to our former greatness. He declares that we have power and light in the spirit if we will but use it, and urges us to follow our glory,

"where it flies, and win
The glow again, and may we find
Beyond the Gateways of the Day
Dominion and ancestral sway".

Whether AE thinks of his ideal world as an actual land, or as a world of the spirit, it is difficult to discover. In many of his poems and essays he pictures the gods as living in the mountains, and he suggests that there might be a world interpenetrating ours, with other stars, other woods, other people, and another sun. Whether it is to a world of this type that we are to attain, or to some purely spiritual world is not clear, but whatever or wherever this land is he feels it to be a perfect state "which has been and may be again".

He says, "We are all seeking today for some glimpse of the fairyland our fathers knew, but all the fairylands, the Silver Cloud World, Tir-nan-og, the Land of Heart's Desire rose like dreams out of the human soul". (1) And again: "What a man thinks, that he is: 'that is the old secret', said the wise. We have imagined ourselves into this pitiful dream of life. By imagination and will, we re-enter true being, becoming that we conceive of". (2)

"To childhood once again. We must regain the lost state. But it is to the giant and spiritual childhood of the young immortals we must return. The men of old were intimates of wind and wave, and playmates of many a brightness long since forgotten. We shall go back to the world of the dawn, but to a brighter light than that which opened up this wondrous story of the cycles". (3)

Finally, this is his challenge to the world:- "I would cry out to our humanity sinking deeper into the Iron Age, that the golden world is all about us, and that beauty is open to all, and that none are shut out from it who will turn to it or seek for it." (4)

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(1) "Imaginations and Reveries", p.78.
(2) "The Candle of Vision", p. 29.
(3) "Imaginations and Reveries", p. 141.
(4) "The Candle of Vision", p. 34.

From this we see that many of the ancient beliefs appear in AE's wonderlands. The longing for a happy land is there undoubtedly as we have seen in several poems; but as with Yeats, this land is more shadowy, less definitely pictured than in tradition. It is a land of the spirit rather than of the flesh. AE's faith, however, in our ability to create this land seems to be an original idea, not a tradition. The Desire for Eternal Youth is present with AE, also, and he calls one of his spirit worlds the Land of Immortal Youth. The Idea of the Survival of the Ancient Gods is an idea which we find not at all in Yeats, but which is very prominent in a modified form in AE's work. Where we also find the belief that each one of us - and even "each brawler" is really a god in exile, and returns in sleep to that former greatness. In fact AE's ideal land is much more the land of the gods than is Yeats', consequently there is less in it of the glamour of fairyland. That land, which forms the last of our divisions, is practically non-existent with AE, the land which he strives to reach is not a fleeting, misty place, inhabited by tricky fairies, - it is a beautiful and glorious world of the spirit, shared with the noble gods of ancient days.

Lloyd Morris in his book, "The Celtic Dawn", has said of AE: "he represents the spirit of Ireland to a peculiar degree, for he is the singer of that other world of which this is but the shadow, that universe of the spirit that in Ireland, because of her wrongs, has dominated the mind of men to the

exclusion of the material world of existence". (1) But while he represents this spirit, he is not influenced by Ireland only. "To comprehend his view of life one must return by way of Blake ..... to Plato himself, and to the sacred books of the east; for his philosophy of life is not a product of Ireland although he has profoundly influenced the literature that we are considering." (2)

AE, while reflecting to a certain extent the ancient Celtic traditions, brings to these a belief in a world of the spirit, of ideal shapes, founded on Plato, and on his own visions, which latter he is willing to believe in the face of anything anybody, even the seers of old, may say to the contrary, In fact he probably changes the Celtic ideas more than he is influenced by them. As they fit into his scheme already formed he uses them, as they do not fit he rejects or alters them.

These two spokesmen of the Celtic Revival typify in their conception of a wonderland two ways of treating the happy lands of old. Yeats regards it as literary material. He makes of it a beautiful and mysterious place of the fancy. AE on the other hand makes of it something higher, more philosophical. He himself, in speaking of Yeats, contrasts the two conceptions. In "Imaginations and Reveries" he says: "I confess I have feared to linger too long in the Many-Coloured Land of Druid Twilights and Tunes. A beauty not

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(1) Lloyd Morris, "The Celtic Dawn", p. 37.

(2) ibid, p. 26.

our own, more perfect than we ourselves can conceive, is a danger to the imagination. I am too often tempted to wander with Usheen in Tir-nan-og and to forget my own heart and its more rarely accorded visions of truth. I know I like my own heart best, but I never look into the world of my friend without feeling that my region lies in the temperate zone and is near the Arctic Circle; the flowers grow more rarely and are paler, and the struggle for existence keener."(1) AE claims, however, that his land comes closer to the ancient conception. "This inner Ireland which the visionary eye saw was the Tir-nan-og, the Country of Immortal Youth, for they peopled it only with the young and beautiful. It was the Land of the Living Heart". (2)

These two great figures of the Celtic Revival so overshadow the minor writers of the time that, in turning to these, we need not expect to find anything which we have not already found in their models. Let us see how our four ancient beliefs are shown among the minor writers.

The general belief in a happy land, not the fairyland of glamour, is very popular. We find descriptions of such ideal lands usually modelled on the ancient description of Tir-nan-og. James Stephens' poem, "The Fairy Boy", for instance, tells the story of a child being stolen away, to a sunny land where it was always summer; and in the story of "Honora Butler and the Lord Kenmare" he describes a happy isle in the sea where there was no sorrow, and which was full

(1) "Imaginations and Reveries", p.24.
(2) ibid, p. 18.

of birds and joy. Here the sun goes when it sets on our earth. Other descriptions of these lands are more or less on the same lines. There is another group of these poems of happy lands which, while often not describing them definitely, yet represents them as very desirable. In these poems the writers express their longing for such lands, which they seem to hear calling them, - as, in the old legends, Mannanan called to Bran, Cormac and others. We hear this call in two of Sigerson's poems: "The Calling", where he says:-

"Oh sigh of the sea from luminous isles far away,
Why callest thou me to sail the impassable way?"

and in "Far Away" where he asks others to go with him to the "Golden Shore of Far-Away", where there is no care, age or death, but where all is love and joy. "Fiona Macleod," in "I Brasil" listens to the wind which calls him to "that land of peace", and O'Sullivan in "A King of Dreams", says:-

"Castles in Spain, sheep-walks in Arcady
Cloud fortressed palaces, these I have known
And, in addition, being a Celt, I own
An Apple garden somewhere easterly".

He goes on to say that he prefers to dream, and be a King in his dreamland, than to wake and live.

These descriptions and this longing are usually expressed as personal emotions and ideas, but sometimes they retell the old stories, as in T.W.Rolleston's "Song of Maelduin", where he tells of the calls and the "rainbow gleams of a world unknown" - which lured away the legendary explorer.

While many writers, as we have seen, describe these lands, there are many, and many more who simply mention them in a casual way, taking it for granted that they will be understood. In fact the longing for some happy land is so universal, and the knowledge of these Celtic ideal lands in particular so wide-spread, that no explanations are necessary. The knowledge of the reader is equal to that of the writer. An instance of this casual mention is found in O'Sullivan's "Nelson St", where he names an organgrinder's song, called, "There's a land that is fairer than this", and contrasts this belief with the squalor amid which the tune is heard. In "In Memorium to J.B.E." also, he speaks of his friend as having gone to the "summer isles" at his death, while Fiona Macleod speaks of "The Dream Wind" as coming at evening, "Out of the Gardens of Sleep in the West", and de La Mare in "Will Ever?" wonders if we shall ever go

"To where in the clouds of the West
The Islands are?"

The longing for eternal youth is also present in a good many of the poems mentioned above, as for instance in Stephens' "The Fairy Boy", where the stolen child is taken to a land

"Where no child may older grow."

and George Sigerson's "Golden Shore of Far Away" is a land of youth and eternal life. On the whole the idea of eternal youth is one of the attractions of all these wonder-lands.

While the belief in Happy Lands and the longing for Eternal Youth seem very popular among these writers, the belief in the survival of ancient gods is met with only occasionally.

An explanation of this may be that the popular idea of a degenerate race of fairies took hold more easily among the writers who derived their ideas and stories from the folk. The fact that this is Yeats' conception of fairies may have had its influence on the minor writers who looked for the most part to him for guidance, while not so many looked to AE, whose treatment of the survival of the ancient gods, and whose desire to create an ideal world is too lofty and philosophical to appeal to the reading public. We do find this idea, however, to a certain extent in Martyn's play "Maeve", where the girl, Maeve, sees a vision of the old kings and heroes, including her namesake, the great Queen of the Sidh, and follows the troop into their kingdom in the hills. The same idea of the Sidh in their noble form, not as diminutive fairies, is found also in Stephens' novel, "In the Land of Youth", which really contains all four elements of the ancient beliefs. It is an account of ancient battles between the Sidh and men, and it pictures these Sidh as living inside the hills, in a beautiful bright land where everything could be had by wishing, if you were capable of wishing hard enough; where all was joy and love, and where none grew old and died. It resembles more the happy land than the glamorous fairyland, but its

inhabitants are more human than those in the ideal lands usually were. Some of the descriptions of, and explanations about this land are rather interesting. Nera, a human, follows the band of the Sidh into their mound:

"They went into a hill apparently, but, once entered, the hill was as translucent as air. It ceased to be a hill. There was no feeling or evidence of being underground, for when he looked about he saw the conditions and phenomena to which he was accustomed in the world that he had left.

"Here was space and trees. Water splashed along in a moody brook, moody only, perhaps, because it was night time, and when he looked up he saw through the darkness a faint far glitter of stars, and he noted a silvery radiance in the sky which might tell of an obscured moon, or might be the first delicate intimation that dawn was on the way." (1)

"This world is called Tir-na n-Og, the Land of the Young. It is within the world you have left, as an apple is within its skin, and all who die in your world come to this one. But within this world there is another called the Land of Wonders. Within the Land of Wonders there is yet another world, called the Land of Promise, and those who die in the Land of Wonders are born into the Land of Promise, but they cannot die there unless they can wish to do so....After the

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(1) James Stephens: "In the Land of Youth", p.23.

Land of Promise there is your world again." (1) This classification of the four worlds is more definite than anything we find in the other poets, and bears more resemblance to AE's four worlds of the spirit, both conceptions probably being based on a common legendary source. The second part of the book gives an account of the rebirth of Etain, and ends with Midir's description of the land to which he calls her.

As the belief in a happy land was popular, so we find was the belief in the glamorous world of the Sidh, but in this case we are not given descriptions of the land so much as accounts of people who have fallen under its influence in one way or another.

Sometimes they feel impelled to find it, and waste their lives in vain search, as in a poem by Norah Hopper Chesson:-

"All the way to Tir-na-nog are many roads that run
But he has ta'en the longest lane, the King of Ireland's Son.
He follows after shadows, the King of Ireland's Son.

"To the Lenan Sidh", by Thomas Boyd, is another poem of this type, where the victim seeks the Fairy Bride through the world, though he does not know where she lives.

"He shuts Life's door and fares into the night".

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(1) ibid, p. 39

Another type, and one reminiscent of Yeats, shows the treachery of the Sidh, as in such poems as "The Man who Trod on Sleeping Grass", by Dora Sigerson Shorter, and "The Short Cut to Rosses", by Norah Hopper Chesson, which describe how those who have had dealings with the Sidh, either by meeting them or by going to their land, are no longer of this world. They cannot love, or bless, or pray; their hearts and souls have been taken from them. There are many poems of people being stolen away by the fairies, as in "Down, Adown Derry" by de La Mare, And in many others, for example, in Stephens' "The Twilight People", we hear the restless calling of the Sidh to mortals, to lure them away, as in the "Land of Heart's Desire". Of course there are many other poems describing the fairies themselves, or telling of their passing, but we need not include those here as they say nothing of the fairies' land.

These examples are sufficient to show the popularity of the happy isle or fairy land idea among a certain group of Celtic writers, and they show,too, that there is nothing important found in them which is not to be found in the two leaders, - AE and Yeats, and in the old legends. So that we may conclude that,while these writers eagerly read the legends of the ancient Celts and revived the interest in their beliefs,yet they added nothing, although they frequently, especially as in the case of AE, looked at those conceptions with other eyes, and adapted them to their own beliefs and purposes. The best of these poets have used these legends as

an incentive to aim higher and to cling to the ideals of our ancestors.

CHAPTER III

The Wonderland for Children

Nowadays, so many books are written for children, and so many of these are imaginative, that it seems strange to think that up to the 17th century, except for educational purposes, children had no books of their own. When story-books did begin to appear, they took the form of moral tales, and these by far outnumbered any other type. During the 18th century, however, a more imaginative element crept into children's literature, and a revival of interest in magic came over from France with the fairy tales. This new type was, naturally, not compatible with the didactic tale, and the fight between them continued until 1825 when, with Cruikshank's publication of Grimm, the fairy tales won, (1) thus establishing magic and wonder as an important element in children's literature. From this we may date the modern era in children's books. The less serious tone of the fairy tales paved the way for tales of pure wonder and nonsense.

Although 1825 marks the establishment of the fairy tale as a literary form for children, we must not suppose that other fanciful works sprang up immediately. In fact some of the first story-books of importance were Hawthorne's "Tanglewood Tales", and "The Wonder Book", not published until 1856. After this, however, it began to be considered less "infra dig." to write for children, with the consequences that several good authors turned their attention in this

(1) See: Cambridge History of English Literature: Vol.XI, Chap.XVI.

direction, and a few children's classics came into being.

Among these classics we find three wonderlands, differing considerably on from the other. The first of these was Charles Kingsley's "The Water Babies" (1863), to be followed by Lewis Carroll's two books "Alice in Wonderland" (1865), and "Alice Through the Looking Glass" (1871). The wonderlands created by these two authors are of two distinct types, while Barrie in "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens" (1904), and "Peter and Wendy" (1911) creates still another type.

The long gap of nearly fifty years between the first two works mentioned and the last, may seem surprising, but the fact is that the good books which we have for children can be counted on the fingers of two hands, and though there may have been many books during these years, yet none of them have lived as have these three. Many also are the books of thrilling adventure, but these adventures all take place on the surface of the earth, not in a fanciful wonderland.

These wonderlands, we notice, do not resemble in any outstanding way the happy lands and worlds of the spirit, we have just been discussing. How then do they differ from them? What difference is there between the world that appeals to us and that which appeals to the child?

Let us look at each of these wonderlands with this question in mind.

The first, and perhaps the most outstanding difference

between the two, is in the degree of concreteness, That vague, idealised type of happy land which appeals so much to poets would not appeal in the same way to children. Neither the high philosophy of AE, nor the sad shadowiness of Yeats would appeal to them. Their land must be more definite. It must not be serious, or at any rate not serious all the time. It must differ from our world in being full of marvels of which we, in this everyday existence, know nothing. The three worlds we are considering all appeal to the child mind, while differing considerably from the poet's land, and also from each other. Kingsley's wonderland is perhaps the most serious of the three. It is the land at the bottom of the sea, and we are shown the wonders of the deep, which, though they are wonders, are yet true to Nature,

The home of the Water Babies, however, is rather interesting to us. It is in St. Brandan's fairy isle, so Kingsley says. And he tells the tale of St. Brandan preaching in vain to the wild Irish, and finally, in despair, sailing away to the golden fairy island which he sees in the west. Arrived at the isle the Saint preached to the birds and fishes and water-babies for a hundred years, until he "fell asleep".

This isle, as Tom finds it, stands on carved pillars, and its roots are full of beautiful caves, looking like cosy rooms, with curtains of seaweed, and decorated with sea-anemones

and coral, and guarded by beautiful velvety water-snakes.

Another marvellous place which we hear about in this book is the "Other end of Nowhere". Here are many strange and curious lands. Waste Paper Land, where the ground is paved with all the stupid books of the world. The Territory of Tuck, full of bad toffee, and other things which children should not eat; the Centre of Creation. The Island of Polupragmosyne, where ploughs draw horses, nails drive hammers, and everyone trys to do something which he has not learnt. Here also are the Island of Hearsay, the Land of the Tomtoddies; and Oldwives Fabledom.

Life in this wonderland, however, is quite a serious affair. One has the choice of being good or bad. The good are rewarded and the bad punished, as Tom finds out when he grows all prickly after stealing sweets, and loses the prickles when he confesses his fault. Even his adventurous journey has its serious aspect. It is something which he does not like, but which he must do in order to be worthy of a reward, in this case Ellie.

In short, the atmosphere of the moral tale still clings about this story of Kingsley's. As a humanitarian he could not resist, indeed he probably did not try to resist, introducing a serious and moral element. He is teaching a lesson both to the child and to mankind. In spite of this seriousness there is nothing sad about this tale, It has its pathetic touches, particularly at the

beginning, when Tom is a poor ill-treated human boy, and later when he is a lonely water-baby seeking his comrades. But all this leads up to a happy ending when our hero learns to be good, and in consequence finds happiness.

In distinct contrast to this semi-moral wonder-land we have Carroll, only two years later, creating that wildly and deliciously impossible dream-world, through which Alice moves. In his first Alice book, which was originally called, "Alice's Adventures Underground", the adventures take place in some strange land under the earth. There is nothing very unusual about the nature of this land itself. The wonder lies more in the strange and unforeseen events which occur in it, the queer people whom Alice meets there, and the ridiculous situations which arise. It is this humour of situation which appeals to the child reader,- and indeed to most grown-ups too. In the second book, however, "Alice Through the Looking-glass", part of the wonder lies in the land itself. We all have seen bits of that land through the looking-glass, but how many of us have gone beyond the bit that you can see, and in which things are just the same as with us, only backwards? With Alice we explore further and find that this land goes on working backwards. To reach a place you must walk in exactly the opposite direction; while every now and then the land itself may begin to move, and you will have to run very fast indeed to keep up

with it at all. Eating, there, quenches one's thirst, - at least, it should, - though Alice herself did not find the dry biscuit very satisfactory. Here, trials come after the sentence, while the crime comes last of all. The strange habit which Looking-glass people have of remembering best those things which will happen the week after next, comes from Carroll's interest in questions connected with mathematics and relativity. In this land, too, flowers talk, and chess-men grow to human size and walk about, while the country itself is marked out in squares like a chess-board for them to move about on. Truly a strange country, and one whose strangeness would appeal to any child even if he had not, like Alice, played chess at an early age.

Distinct, again, from this humourous creation of a wonderland, we find Barrie's "Never-Neverland", where all the make believe adventures of children come true. All the stories and fairy-tales that children delight in repeat their adventures in this land. Here the Pirates and Indians are a real menace, while the tricks of fairies and mermaids must also be guarded against.

This Neverland is Barrie's map of a child's mind, His own words give us a comprehensive picture of it:- "The Neverland is always more or less of an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking crafts in the offing, and savages

and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors, and caves through which a river runs, and princes with six elder brothers, and a hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose..... Of course the Neverlands vary a good deal. John's, for instance, had a lagoon with flamingoes flying over it at which John was shooting, while Michael, who was very small, had a flamingo with lagoons flying over it. John lived in a boat turned upside down on the sands, Michael in a wigwam, Wendy in a house of leaves deftly sewn together. John had no friends, Michael had friends at night, Wendy had a pet wolf forsaken by its parents; but on the whole the Neverlands have a family resemblance ..... Of all the delectable islands, the Neverland is the snuggest and most compact; not large and sprawly, you know, with tedious distances between one adventure and another, but nicely crammed. When you play at it by day with the chairs and table-cloth it is not in the least alarming, but in the two minutes before you go to sleep it becomes very nearly real. That is why there are night-lights". (1)

This land is not serious in the moral sense, as is "The Water Babies", nor is it a carefree land like that of Alice. It has its terrifying aspect, especially after sunset, when one would really be glad to find that it were

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(1) "Peter and Wendy", Hodder and Stoughton, London, pp.9 & 10.

still only make-believe. But in the daytime, encounters with pirates are eagerly sought and enjoyed, giving the land a thrilling and pleasant aspect, for all it is tinged with pathos. The pathos of the lost children who still sometimes feel deep down inside a longing for home and mother.

Even the touch of morality in Kingsley, and the note of sadness in Barrie, do not constitute in these children's wonderlands that serious, idealistic land of our poets.

How does life in these children's lands differ from the life which would appeal to their parents? Would a child be content to sit down with folded hands in a land of peace; or partake in a continuous banquet with the gods? Most emphatically not! There must be action in his land and thrilling adventures. Tom in "The Water Babies" has interesting adventures with sea creatures in his search for the other water-babies. When he does find them, he finds that life in St. Brandan's isle has its work and its play, as does real life, but is, on the whole, much pleasanter in spite of occasional punishment and trials. The most exciting of Tom's adventures, however, come on his journey to the Other end of Nowhere. To reach this fantastic place Tom had to go to Shiny Wall, and through the great white gate that never was opened, to Peacepool, and Mother Cary's Haven, where the good whales go when they die. It took him

seven days and seven nights to swim under the gate of the Shiny Wall, and even then his journey was not finished. To reach the Other End of Nowhere it seems one must walk backwards, and this Tom does, all the way, through the many strange lands we mentioned above, where he has to have a care to himself lest he come to any harm, though with the protection of the fairies this is not likely. The people of Polupragmosyne do their best to set him in the wrong road, while the Examiner in the Land of the Tomtoddies nearly catches him, as do the Pow-wow man and the other foolish inhabitants of Oldwives-fabledom. Finally, however, he reaches Grimes' chimney, and, his mission done, he is taken back by the backstairs to the home of the water-babies, and there we leave him. No doubt most of the children, especially nowadays, who read this story of Tom, do not care a rap for the moral aspect of his journey, but his adventures on the way still interest them tremdously.

Carroll, in catering to the child's desire for action and adventure, has not given his tale a moral aspect, as has Kingsley. On the contrary, he is more inclined to laugh at moral tales, as we see in several places. Here we are flung headlong into a series of impossible events. In one book, Alice's strange habit of growing taller or shorter at almost any moment gives rise to many ridiculous situations; as, for instance, her nearly being drowned in

her own tears; becoming wedged in the Rabbit's house; chatting with a caterpillar; or being called "Serpent" and accused of wriggling down from the sky to steal pigeon's eggs! What child would not be fasinated at the idea of taking tea with a Mad Hatter and a March Hare; or playing croquet with hedgehogs for balls, flamingoes for mallets and soldiers for hoops? What could be sillier than the trial in which most of the evidence consists of a nonsense rhyme? - And yet what more delightful? The humour alone amuses the child, while grown-ups see in it also the delicate satire on the law itself.

In the Looking-glass world, too, Alice has many strange adventures on her way to that eighth square, where she becomes a Queen. Most of Carroll's material is entirely new to the child, but lest he should feel too hopelessly bewildered in this new world, a few familiar things are introduced. Here Alice is plunged into some of the momentous events which are dismissed so lightly in the nursery rhymes. The battle between Tweedledum and Tweedledee promises to be much fiercer than we ever imagined it, and the "monstrous crow" is more terrifying, while the fight between the Lion and the Unicorn is much more important than we thought, especially when the rightful owner of the crown sits between the two trembling, and when we find that the plum-cake is looking-glass cake, which has to be

passed around first, and cut afterwards. Compared with these momentous happenings such little transformations as that of the White Queen into a sheep, knitting-needles into oars, or an egg into our well-known Humpty-Dumpty, do not surprise us in the least. We almost feel with the White Queen, that, with a little more practice we could believe "as many as six impossible things before breakfast". These ridiculous events which, however, always end well, have fascinated children ever since this wonderland was first created.

The Neverland is another land in which the appeal to the child rests largely on the action. The thrilling flight through the air with Peter as guide, giving such alluring but vague directions as "Second to the right, and straight on till morning", pretence family life in the little house underground with Peter and Wendy as the pretence father and mother; and where you never quite knew whether your next meal was to be a real or an imaginery one; the adventures in the mermaid's lagoon when they rescue the Indian Princess and are nearly drowned themselves in consequence, and finally the grand and bloody fight on the pirate ship, each lost boy fighting for his life; all these and many other adventures occur in the Neverland. These events are of a different type from those in Alice, - not so ridiculous, but more exciting. Alice's adventures have originated with her, but those in the Neverland come from

all the story books and fairy tales that children read. That is not to say that they are a repetition of them, for they are not. But they deal with the same land of pirates, indians and fairies. They are adventures which the child has half imagined for himself before.

Action, then, judging from these books, is a necessary and welcome factor in any children's wonderland, though this factor would not appeal particularly in a maturer conception of wonderland.

There must be action in the child's wonderlands, continual and thrilling action. But even action would not be enough without a hero. Each of these books has its hero or heroine, - its main character through whose eyes we see the land of marvels,and whom we see taking part in all the adventures. The mind of childhood needs this golden thread to hold fast to on the journey through wonderland.

. How much more personal and satisfactory it is to follow Tom on his travels, - to seek, with him, the other Water Babies in their homes under the sea, and finally, to rejoice with him over his successful journey to the Other end of Nowhere. How much clearer this is to the child's mind than some underlying connection which would be apparent only to the grown-up. Each child, as he reads, feels that he himself might almost be Tom, - so human is this Water Baby. In fact if Water Babies differ at all from Land Babies, except in size, we are not told of it, so that the child finds no difficulty in understanding them. He

sympathises with Tom's desire to play tricks on the sea-aenemonies by dropping pebbles into their mouths, his weakness for sea-bullseyes and sea-lollipops, his loneliness and sorrow when he has done wrong, and his dread of setting out on his perilous journey to find Mr. Grimes.

Alice is another very human child. She is, and will always remain, a child of the middle 19th century, rather quaint and prim though she may seem to us sometimes, yet she is a delightful, lovable child. Self-possessed, - quite capable of taking care of herself in Wonderland, always considerate, respectful and courteous to those whom she meets, no matter how strange they may be, what nonsense they talk, or how peremptory are their orders. She is trustful enough to obey, and curious enough to want to explore further. On the whole she is not so different from the child of to-day, that he will not follow her gladly as his guide through Wonderland. And, indeed, in this strange land of her dreams we stand badly in need of a guide. Where should we be among all these curious creatures, where anything may turn into anything else at any moment, if we had not that calm little Alice to lead us safely on to the end, and to defy the fierce Queen of Hearts, when her would-be executions become too numerous?

Barrie, when he first created Peter Pan, in "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens", shows him as the hero of the story, a human little boy, who, by refusing to grow up, and escaping back to the gardens, becomes a "half-and-half",

that is, not quite human, nor yet quite bird. Later, in "Peter and Wendy" Peter seems a different person in a great many ways. He has become a cocky youngster, young maybe, but quite able to take care of himself and hold his own against the fierce pirates, treacherous indians and tricky fairies, while his lack of knowledge of our world and such usual but important things as mothers, makes him seem inhuman; as does his inability to distinguish between things which are real and those which are only pretence. Realizing this, perhaps, Barrie has introduced in this second book a definitely human element. Wendy, John and Michael Darling are quite real children, there can be no doubt about that; and we see the Neverland, not through Peter's eyes, but through theirs. We tremble with them in fear of the pirates, while Peter, who apparently does not know fear, lusts for the battle. With them we love Peter because we must, even while we deplore his conceit. Their occasional longing for home, and belief that they have not left it forever, makes the Neverland more attractive by emphasising a little the fact that it is after all only make-believe, and that none, except Peter, can remain forever. For though all children love to wander in Wonderland, very few of them really wish to forsake this world for that one, and it is comforting to know that Wendy and her brothers fly in again at the nursery window, and that Alice wakes from her dreams, and all live to grow up as every-day human-beings.

The Happy Lands of the poets lacked, in many cases, this human adventurer, but they were peopled. How? Some with the great gods of old; some with the shades of the noble departed; some with shadowy and tricky fairies. No very young child, however, would enjoy conversing with the ancient gods, and even the fairies, to appeal to children, must be adapted. The Sidh were too grown-up to appeal to the child who wanted something happier and more lively. Let us look for a moment at the creatures in these children's wonderlands.

The only strange thing about the sea-creatures in "The Water Babies" is that they can talk, but that is an attribute common to all wonderland creatures. The Water Babies themselves are, as we have seen, merely diminutive children, but on his travels Tom meets many strange people and creatures. He sees Mother Carey, looking like a great statue of ice, in the middle of the Peacepool. He meets many of the silly people of this world who are all herded together at the Other end of Nowhere: the people who all know each other's business better than their own; those whose chief mission in life seems to be to frighten little children into fits; and people who do not wish to be told the truth but run away screaming, "Oh, don't tell us!" He finds, in the Isle of Tomtoddies, the children who, through too much studying, have turned into vegetables, but who go on trying to amass information, most of it perfectly

useless, against the dreaded coming of the examiner. At the end of his journey Tom meets some other surprising creatures in the animated truncheons which act as very efficient arms of the law, while the whole story is dominated by the figures of "cuddley", Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby and severe Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid.

Even these, however, seem almost commonplace when we come to the creatures which people Alice's wonderlands. These creatures are each so individual that they do not fall into groups in one's mind, the White Rabbit is just as much a person as the Duchess, or the playing-card Queen. For convenience, however, we will divide them into groups. There are real creatures such as the White Rabbit, the mouse, the fish and frog footmen, and the caterpillar so ready with advice. In a group only slightly different from these come animals which, while fictitious, are not so very out-of-the-way. This includes the Dodo and Gryphon; the Cheshire Cat which could grin, and could vanish and appear when it liked; and the March Hare, and the Mock Turtle, (the kind used in Mock Turtle soup!), bearing a superficial resemblance to an all-the-year-round hare and a real turtle. Several of these queer animals arise from such popular sayings as "Mad as a March Hare", "Sleepy as a Dormouse", and so on. In "Through the Looking-Glass" the beasts become "curiouser and curiouser". Here we meet the "Jabberwock with eyes of flame", and such "portmanteau"

creatures as the "slithy toves", "mimsey borogroves" and "mome raths". Here also we learn the habits of those marvels of insect life: the Bread-and-butter-fly, the Rocking-horse fly, and the Snap-dragon-fly. Other creatures, some of whom are animals, belong in a group by themselves as they all come from nursery rhymes. These are Tweedle-dum and Tweedledee, Humpty Dumpty, and the Lion and the Unicorn. In each of his books, too, Carroll has drawn upon inanimate objects for some of his most important characters. The King and Queen of Hearts, - that fierce Queen whom, it is said, Carroll modelled on Queen Victoria, and whose one cry was "Off with his head!" - the thieving knave of Hearts, and all the members of Her Majesty's Court, are, as Alice herself perceives, "only a pack of cards after all", while the imperious Red Queen, The timid and untidy White Queen, The snoring Red King, and the inventive and lovable White Knight, - who are they but animated chessmen? Nothing seems to be inanimate in this wonderland, where even the roast and pudding can bow to one from the dish, nor is any form of life excluded. We even find a few characters in human form, such as the Carpenter; the Duchess, with her morals and her sharp chin; and the Mad Hatter, who is actually modelled on a member of Carroll's Mess at Oxford, and who later becomes Hatta, one of the King's two messengers. The way in which these groups are intermingled, hap-hazard, all through the two books, is well illustrated in the case of the Carpenter and the Hatter.

Can we think of them without the Walrus and the March Hare? Of course not. Yet in the catalogue which we made above they appear in quite different groups.

These creations of Carroll's are the most astonishing things about his whole wonderland. They control the action and the conversation. Alice does not "run" them, they "run" her, and she is ever obedient to their curt command to "Come on!"

Peter, on the other hand, is much more able to manage the Pirates and other inhabita nts of his island, which one almost feels were originally created by his imagination, but have got rather out of hand. These beings are, for the most part,human. The fierce Pirates with their dread Captain Hook, and the silent, treacherous Redskins are taken straight from the story-books of childhood; while fictitious creatures like the mermaids, do not begin to rival Carroll's for strangeness. No doubt one of the reasons for this is that Carroll, owing to the dearth of children's literature, had to create his own people and creatures, whereas Barrie, writing in 1904, had the pirates and Indians of such authors as Stevenson, Ballantyne and Henty to fall back on. The fairies on the other hand are not the Celtic Sidh. They are tricky, but are small and beautiful, and in every way the typical fairy of childhood. Their thoughts run on such subjects as balls, dresses and flowers, and the human race does not interest them. One of the few places in which Barrie does introduce creatures not

to be found in story books, is when he animates the trees in the Gardens, - and crusty enough they are too.

The real inhabitants of the Neverland, while less fantastic, are more terrifying than Carroll's creatures, who, on the whole, are a friendly crew for all their domineering ways. In all these books, however, the child adventurer seems to be protected against all harm, - even in the Neverland, no wounds seem to be fatal even though inflicted by a pirate sword, and the wolves, though fierce, are sure to run away if one stops and looks at them through one's legs. And the man-eating crocodile publishes his presence by the ticking of a clock he has swallowed.

What, then, are the main points in which the ideal wonderland for children differs from that for grown-ups? Judging from these three wonderlands we find that it must first of all be less serious in tone, and, in fact, the more nonsensical the better; it must have action, and in this action there must be a central figure who is sufficiently human to win the sympathy and understanding of the young readers, but apart from this hero or heroine, the other actors may be as ridiculous and impossible as can be imagined, so long as they are not too terrifying, and one can always be sure of the ultimate victory and safety of the human character. These wonderlands, we notice, too, are not lands to which the child wishes to go forever. The poets and seers of old who imagined Tirnanog and other Happy

Lands, longed to leave this world altogether, never to return, but not so the child. His wonderland is a Land of Youth in that it is a land for Youth, as only youth may enter into it. Wendy when she grew up had to be content to let Jane go to the Neverland. She herself could not hope to revisit it. It is a land in which youth is retained, but not regained.

Naturally, outstanding works such as those we have been discussing, are not without their imitators. But though many other writers have ventured into wonderland none have made such fascinating discoveries.

In 1864 Thomas Hood, the younger, published "From Nowhere to the North Pole", which has been compared to "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by a critic (1), who, while he does not accuse Carroll of imitation, yet claims that his land is not particularly original. The fact, however, that the story of Alice, though not written until 1865, was actually told in 1862, obviates this possibility. We have Carroll's own word, also, for the originality of his work. And who, after reading his life and letters, could doubt him when he says: "I distinctly remember, now as I write, how, in a desperate attempt to strike out some new line of fairy lore, I had sent my heroine straight down a rabbit hole, to begin with, without the least idea what was to happen afterwards..... Every idea came of itself"?(2)

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(1) Edward Salmon:"Juvenile Literature As It Is" (1888) p.171.
(2)"The Lewis Carroll Picture Book" Collingwood, p. 165

He speaks of himself later, moreover, as "The writer of two stories thus adapted, [i.e. dramatised] and the originator (as I believe, for at least I have not consciously borrowed them) of the 'airy nothings'." (1) Other critics seem to agree with Carroll on this point.(2) Carroll's creation has, of course, been imitated, from "Alice in Blunderland", which appeared in "Punch" soon after the original, down to John Rae's, "New Adventures of Alice", a fairly recent publication; while Cochrane's "Down the Snow Stairs" also belongs to the same type, as does a much older book, "Johnnykin and the Goblins", by Charles G. Leland, (1877).

A wonderland which cannot be said to owe a great deal to those we have been discussing, is the "Land of Oz", created by the American author, L. Frank Baum. This strange land, which lies in the middle of the desert, is divided into four parts, each of its own colour: blue, red, yellow, and green. Thus in the blue section everything is blue, - trees, grass, clothes, houses and so on. This land is also peopled with many strange creatures, and animated objects, such as a Tin Woodman, and a Scarecrow; while it is ruled over by a gentle Queen. Many thrilling adventures

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(1) ibid, p.164.
(2) For example, E.W.Edmunds, in his "History of English Literature", says of him that he gave the world two quite original fantasies full of quaint humour and wit. E.G.Johnson in "The Dial", 1899, vol.26, p. 192 says, "Lewis Carroll may be numbered among those writers of our day who have added a new note to literature." J.L.Gilder,in "The Critic" 1899, vol.34, p.137, calls him "The Creator of Wonderland".

are experienced in this land by the human visitors, Dorothy and Trot; and, while they are sometimes in grave danger, they never come to any harm. It is a land of eternal youth, too, and of health and happiness, so that, besides appealing to children, it resembles in many respects the Happy Lands of Celtic imagination.

Another writer of our day, who, although he has not exactly created a wonderland, has taken an ordinary bit of countryside and cast a glamour over it. This author is A. A. Milne, who, in his delightful "Winnie the Pooh", and "The House of Pooh Corner", has given us fanciful tales which appeal as much to the grown-up as to the child. His characters, the animated toys: Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore and the rest, are as delightful as one could wish; while in Christopher Robin we have our human hero.

There is still room, however, for more wonderlands, Emile Cammaerts claims that the exploration of wonderland is hardly begun. Should we hope for more of these creations? Are they of value to the child? A child, after it has begun to get used to the wonders of this world still craves novelty and adventure. These it finds in wonderland. Again, in this age which is so often termed "prosaic", it is important that the child's imagination be stimulated. Surely after meeting the Queen of Hearts no child will look on a pack of cards as quite such a lifeless thing as it seemed before; and if Humpty Dumpty can be so engaging, what about the Cow

that jumped over the moon? One feels certain that any child's imagination would be stimulated by reading of these magic lands. That, on the other hand, far from looking on this everyday world as dull and uninteresting, he will, rather, welcome it as a relief from Topsy-Turvydom. But in encouraging a child to wander in these fanciful lands, it need not be feared that we are playing too strongly on his credulity, for he is very discriminating, and will always realise, at the back of his mind, that this is the Neverland, and that it has not come true. Surely any work which stimulates in a healthy way the mind and imagination of our youth, while at the same time satisfying their craving for action and novelty, is not to be despised or passed over lightly, especially if, as in the case of Kingsley, Carroll and Barrie, they are written in a beautiful and lasting literary style.

CONCLUSION

The subject of Wonderland is a very large one, and in this discussion it has not been possible to deal with it in all its aspects. I have tried, however, to show that conceptions of wonderlands fall into two divisions according as the creators look to the past or to the future. The first of these, which looks to the Golden Age of the past for inspiration, is the type of land which inspired Yeats and many of the other writers of the Celtic Revival. They are attracted by the legendary tale of the gods of old, of the noble warriors and kings long since departed, and on these they base their wonderlands. This idea, while noble and inspiring in its way, allows no room for new material. The ancient gods, the happy lands of old, and even the Sidh cannot be portrayed other than as tradition has pictured them; yet the survival of animism in man is so strong still, in spite of our increased civilization, that he persists in reproducing these well-known figures. The primitive instinct, however, is dying out slowly, and with it will go the desire to recreate the wonderlands of old.

The second group includes a more original style of wonderland, that which is created by a longing for better things in the future. It is not a vain regret for the "good old days", it is a looking forward into the days to come, and a desire to better our present condition. These wonderlands are a reflection of people's wants. What we

What we lack here, we imagine ourselves as possessing in some ideal land. The Utopias, and other practical conceptions of happy lands, belong to this group; as do also the visionary lands of AE, for, although his visions are of a land which existed in the past, yet his call to humanity is to make this land once again, in the future. Because of its very nature, this type of wonderland, an ideal land of the future, is becoming more popular, and will continue to do so in proportion as the happy land of the past fades from men's minds. It is to this group then that we must turn for new material. There is plenty of room here for more wonderlands visionary or practical, and it is this inspiring conception which probably is of more benefit to the world than is the first type.

We mentioned, above, the Utopias. Besides the aspects of wonderland we have discussed, there is a large group of more or less practical wonderlands. These are of two kinds, the Utopian idea of advanced civilization, of which More's "Utopia" is the most famous, and an opposing type which, far from picturing a more highly civilized state, wishes for a return to nature, and to a simplified form of life. This group, however, I have omitted here, partly from considerations of space, and partly because it is a field in which a considerable amount of work has already been done.

Other wonderlands which I have not dealt with above are those which are portrayed in satires of the

"Gulliver" type. Here the writers aim at a Utopian idea of reform by criticising the existing scheme of things.

Besides these there are innumerable wonders and strange lands described in tales of imaginary voyages, from Mandeville on, but none of these are sufficiently important or creative to merit a place in this discussion of Wonderland. Though they tell of strange lands and curious folk, yet the stories are, for the most part, based on traveller's tales, while many go back as far as Lucian for their inspiration.

There can be no doubt that these ideal lands are comforting and inspiring to the human race. For those who are weary or unhappy in this life comes the vision of a better and happier land, and if, by their works, poets and other writers can inspire people to work towards creating that land on earth, they will have done mankind an invaluable service. Many of the Utopian reforms, which seemed revolutionary and idealistic at the time of writing, have since been realized, thus proving the value of this type of literature.

The more visionary wonderlands are also of infinite value in their way. It may not be possible to realize them in the same way in which we hope to realize the Utopias, but they stimulate men's imaginations in a way which in these days of increased civilization and mechanism, is surely a very necessary and desirable thing.

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