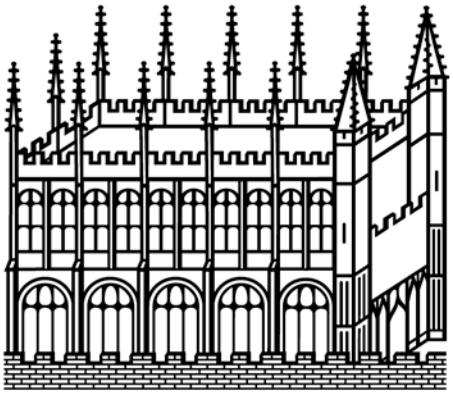


Bodleian Libraries

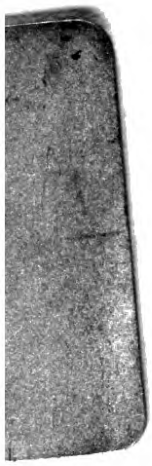
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

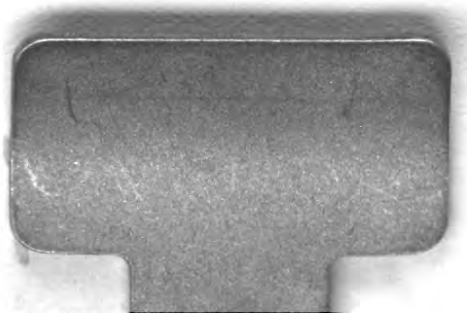
This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks

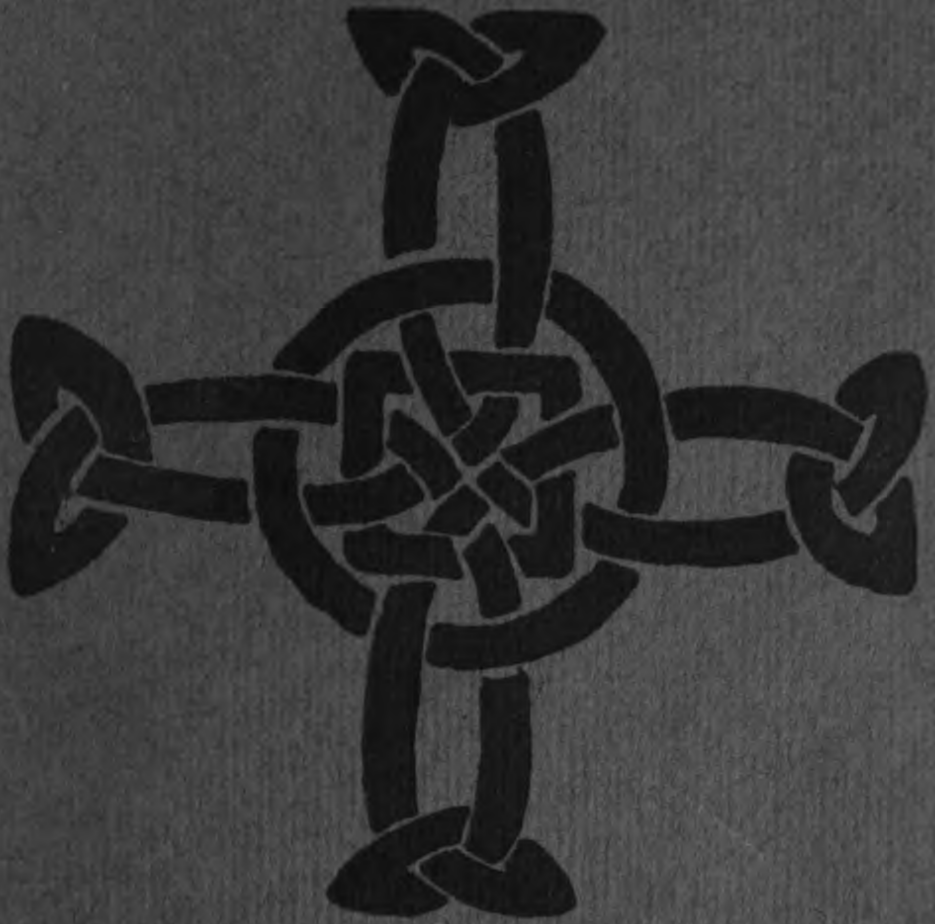
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.





THE ISLE OF DREAMS

·FIONA MACLEOD·



THE IONA BOOKS

THE IONA BOOKS

Iona's lonely isle,
Where Scotland's kings are laid.
James Grahame.

Unto this place, albeit so small and poor, great homage shall yet be paid, not only by the kings and people of the Scots, but by the rulers of barbarous and distant nations with their people also. In great veneration too shall it be held by the holy men of other Churches. *St Columba.*

This, dear children, is my last advice to you—that you preserve with each other sincere charity and peace. *St Columba.*

In this little island a lamp was lit whose flame lighted pagan Europe. . . . Here Learning and Faith had their tranquil home. . . . And here Hope waits.
To tell the story of Iona is to go back to God, and to end in God. *Fiona Macleod.*

THE ISLE OF DREAMS

THE ISLE OF DREAMS

(FROM "IONA")

BY

FIONA MACLEOD

T. N. FOULIS, PUBLISHER
15 FREDERICK ST., EDINBURGH, & 91 GT. RUSSELL ST., LONDON
1913

Published October 1913

Printed by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh

In the Isle of Dreams God shall yet fulfil Himself anew.
A Gaelic Saying.

There are moments when the soul takes wings: what it has to remember, it remembers; what it loves, it loves still more; what it longs for, to that it flies. *F. M.*

To live in Beauty, which is to put into four words all the dream and spiritual effort of the soul of man. *F. M.*

THE ISLE OF DREAMS

A FEW places in the world are to be held holy, because of the love which consecrates them and the faith which enshrines them. Their names are themselves talismans of spiritual beauty. Of these is Iona.

The Arabs speak of Mecca as a holy place before the time of the prophet, saying that Adam himself lies buried here; and, before Adam, that the Sons of Allah, who are called Angels, worshipped; and that when Allah Himself stood upon perfected Earth it was on this spot. And here, they add, when there is no man left upon earth, an angel shall gather up the dust of this world, and say to Allah, "There is nothing left of the whole earth but Mecca: and now Mecca is but the few grains of sand that I hold in the hollow of my palm, O Allah."

In spiritual geography Iona is the Mecca of the Gael.

It is but a small isle, fashioned of a little sand, a few grasses salt with the spray of an ever-restless wave, a few rocks that wade in heather and upon whose brows the sea-wind weaves the yellow lichen. But since the remotest days sacrosanct men have bowed here in worship. In this little island a lamp was lit whose flame lighted pagan Europe, from the Saxon in his fens to the swarthy folk who came by Greek waters to trade the Orient. Here Learning and Faith had their tranquil home when the shadow of the sword lay upon all lands from Syracuse by the Tyrrhene Sea to the rainy isles of Orcc. From age to age, lowly hearts have never

ceased to bring their burthen here. Iona herself has given us for remembrance a fount of youth more wonderful than that which lies under her own boulders of Dûn-I. And here Hope waits.

To tell the story of Iona is to go back to God, and to end in God.

I would write of Iona, but there are many ways of approach. No place that has a spiritual history can be revealed to those who know nothing of it by facts and descriptions. The approach may be through the obscure glens of another's mind and so out by the moonlit way, as well as by the track that thousands travel. I have nothing to say of Iona's acreage, or fisheries, or pastures; nothing of how the islanders live. These things are the accidental. There is small difference in simple life anywhere. Moreover, there are many to tell all that need be known.

There is one Iona, a little island of the west. There is another Iona, of which I would speak. I do not say that it lies open to all. It is as we come that we find. If we come bringing nothing with us we go away ill-content, having seen and heard nothing of what we had vaguely expected to see or hear. It is another Iona than the Iona of sacred memories and prophecies: Iona the metropolis of dreams. None can understand it who does not see it through its pagan light, its Christian light, its singular blending of paganism and romance and spiritual beauty. There is, too, an Iona that is more

than Gaelic, that is more than a place rainbow-lit with the seven desires of the world, the Iona that, if we will it so, is a mirror of your heart and of mine.

I would speak here of Iona as befalls my pen, rather than as perhaps my pen should go: and choose legend and remembrance, and my own and other memories and associations, and knowledge of my own and others, and hidden meanings, and beauty and strangeness surviving in dreams and imaginations, rather than facts and figures, that others could adduce more deftly and with more will.

In the *Félire na Naomh Nereunach* is a strangely beautiful, if fantastic legend of one Machoi, Abbot of N'-Aondruim in Uladh. With some companions he was at the edge of a wood, and while busy in cutting wattles wherewith to build a church, "he heard a bright bird singing on the blackthorn near him. It was more beautiful than the birds of the world." Machoi listened entranced. There was more in that voice than in the throat of any bird he had ever heard, so he stopped his wattle-cutting and, looking at the bird, courteously asked who was thus delighting him. The bird at once answered, "A man of the people of my Lord" (that is an angel). "Hail," said Machoi, "and for why that, O bird that is an angel?" "I am come here by command to encourage you in your good work, but also, because of the love in your heart, to amuse you for a time with my sweet singing." "I am glad of that," said the saint. Thereupon the bird sang a single, surpas-

sing sweet air, and then fixed his beak in the feathers of his wing. But Machoi heard the beauty and sweetness and infinite range of that song for three hundred years. Three hundred years were in that angelic song, but to Machoi it was less than an hour. For three hundred years he remained listening, in the spell of beauty: nor in that enchanted hour did any age come upon him, or any withering upon the wattles he had gathered; nor in the wood itself did a single leaf turn to a red or yellow flame before his eyes. Where the spider spun her web, she spun no more; where the dove leaned her grey breast from the fir, she leaned still.

Then suddenly the bird took its beak from its wing-feathers, and said farewell. When it was gone, Machoi lifted his wattles, and went homeward as one in a dream. He stared when he looked for the little wattled cells of the Sons of Patrick. A great church built of stone stood before his wondering eyes. A man passed him, and told the stranger that it was the Church of St Machoi. When he spoke to the assembled brothers, none knew him; some thought he had been taken away by the people of the Sidhe, and come back at fairy-nightfall, which is the last hour of the last day of three hundred years. "Tell us your name and lineage," they cried. "I am Machoi, Abbot of N'-Aondruim," he said; and then he told his tale, and they knew him, and made him Abbot again. In the enchanted wood a shrine was built, and about it a church grew, "and surpassingly white angels often alighted there, or

sang hymns to it from the branches of the forest trees, or leaned with their foot on tiptoe, their eyes on the horizon, their ear on the ground, their wings flapping, their bodies trembling, waiting to send tidings of prayer and repentance with a beat of their wings to the King of the Everlasting."

There were many who thought that Machoi was dead, when he was seen no more of his fellow-monks at the forest-monastery of *N'-Aondruim* in *Uladh*. But his chronicler knew: "a sleep without decay of the body Machoi of Antrim slept."

I am reminded of the story of Machoi when I think of Iona. I think she too, beautiful isle, while gathering the kelp of human longing and tears and hopes, strewn upon her beaches by the wild waves of the world, stood, enchanted, to listen to a Song of Beauty. "That is a new Voice I hear in the wave," we can dream of her saying, and of the answer: "We are the angelic flocks of the Shepherd; we are the Voices of the Eternal: listen awhile!"

It has been a long sleep, that enchanted swoon. But Machoi awoke, after three hundred years, and there was neither time upon his head, nor age upon his body, nor a single withered leaf of the forest at his feet. And shall not that be possible for the Isle of Dreams, whose sands are the dust of martyrs and noble and beautiful lives, which was granted to one man by "one of the people of my Lord"?

I recall one whom I knew, a fisherman of the little green island; and I tell this story of Coll here,

for it is to me more than the story of a dreaming islander. One night, lying upon the hillock that is called Cnocnan-Aingeal, because it is here that St Colum was wont to hold converse with an angel out of heaven, he watched the moonlight move like a slow fin through the sea: and in his heart were desires as infinite as the waves of the sea, the moving homes of the dead.

And while he lay and dreamed, his thoughts idly adrift as a net in deep waters, he closed his eyes, muttering the Gaelic words of an old line: "In the Isle of Dreams God shall yet fulfil Himself anew." Hearing a footfall, he stirred. A man stood beside him. He did not know the man, who was young, and had eyes dark as hill-tarns, with hair light and soft as thistledown, and moved light as a shadow, delicately treading the grass as the wind treads it. In his hair he had twined the fantastic leaf of the horn-poppy.

The islander did not move or speak: it was as though a spell were upon him.

"God be with you," he said at last, uttering the common salutation.

"And with you, Coll mac Coll," answered the stranger. Coll looked at him. Who was this man, with the sea-poppy in his hair, who, unknown, knew him by name? He had heard of one whom he did not wish to meet, the Green Harper; also of a grey man of the sea whom islemen seldom alluded to by name; again, there was the Amadan Dhu . . . but at that name Coll made the sign of

the cross, and remembering what Father Allan had told him in South Uist, muttered a holy exorcism of the Trinity.

The man smiled.

"You need have no fear, Coll mac Coll," he said quietly.

"You that know my name so well are welcome, but if you in turn would tell me your name I should be glad."

"I have no name that I can tell you," answered the stranger gravely; "but I am not of those who are unfriendly. And because you can see me and speak to me, I will help you to whatsoever you may wish."

Coll laughed.

"Neither you nor any man can do that. For now that I have neither father nor mother, nor brother nor sister, and my lass too is dead, I wish neither for sheep nor cattle, nor for new nets and a fine boat, nor a big house, nor as much money as MacCailein Mòr has in the bank at Inveraora."

"What then do you wish for, Coll mac Coll?"

"I do not wish for what cannot be, or I would wish to see again the dear face of Morag, my lass. But I wish for all the glory and wonder and power there is in the world, and to have it all at my feet, and to know everything that the Holy Father himself knows, and have kings coming to me as the crofters come to MacCailein Mòr's factor."

"You can have that, Coll mac Coll," said the Green Harper, and he waved a withe of hazel he had in his hand.

"What is that for?" said Coll.

"It is to open a door that is in the air. And now, Coll, if that is your wish of all wishes, and you will give up all other wishes for that wish, you can have the sovereignty of the world. Ay, and more than that: you shall have the sun like a golden jewel in the hollow of your right hand, and all the stars as pearls in your left, and have the moon as a white shining opal above your brows, with all knowledge behind the sun, within the moon, and beyond the stars."

Coll's face shone. He stood, waiting. Just then he heard a familiar sound in the dusk. The tears came into his eyes.

" Give me instead," he cried, "give me a warm breast-feather from that grey dove of the woods that is winging home to her young." He looked as one moon-dazed. None stood beside him. He was alone. Was it a dream, he wondered? But a weight was lifted from his heart. Peace fell upon him as dew upon grey pastures. Slowly he walked homeward. Once, glancing back, he saw a white figure upon the knoll, with a face noble and beautiful. Was it Colum himself come again? he mused: or that white angel with whom the Saint was wont to discourse, and who brought him intimacies of God? or was it but the wave-fire of his dreaming mind, as lonely and cold and unreal as that which the wind of the south makes upon the wandering hearths of the sea?

I tell this story of Coll here, for, as I have said,

it is to me more than the story of a dreaming islander. He stands for the soul of a race. It is because, to me, he stands for the sorrowful genius of our race, that I have spoken of him here. Below all the strife of lesser desires, below all that he has in common with other men, he has the livelong unquenchable thirst for the things of the spirit. This is the thirst that makes him turn so often from the near securities and prosperities, and indeed all beside, setting his heart aflame with vain, because illimitable, desires. For him, the wisdom before which knowledge is a frosty breath: the beauty that is beyond what is beautiful. For, like Coll, the world itself has not enough to give him. And at the last, and above all, he is like Coll in this, that the sun and moon and stars themselves may become as trampled dust, for only a breast-feather of that Dove of the Eternal, which may have its birth in mortal love, but has its evening home where are the dews of immortality.

The Dove of the Eternal! It was from the lips of an old priest of the Hebrides that I first heard these words. I was a child, and asked him if it was a white dove, such as I had seen fanning the sunglow in Icolmkill.

"Yes," he told me, "the Dove is white, and it was beloved of Colum, and is of you, little one, and of me."

"Then it is not dead?"

"It is not dead."

I was in a more wild and rocky isle than Iona then, and when I went into a solitary place close by my home, it was to a stony wilderness so desolate that in many moods I could not bear it. But that day, though there were no sheep lying beside boulders as grey and still, nor whinnying goats (creatures that have always seemed to me strangely homeless, so that, as a child, it was often my noon-fancy on hot days to play to them on a Celtic reed-flute I was skilled in making, thwarting the hill-wind at the small holes to the fashioning of a rude furtive music, which I believed comforted the goats, though why I did not know, and probably did not try to know): and, though I could hear nothing but the soft, swift, slipping feet of the wind among rocks and grass, and a noise of the tide crawling up from a shore hidden behind crags (beloved of swallows for the small honey-flies which fed upon the thyme), still, on that day, I was not ill at ease, nor in any way disquieted. But before me I saw a white rock-dove, and followed it gladly. It flew circling among the crags, and once I thought it passed seaward, but it came again, and alit upon a boulder.

I went upon my knees, and prayed to it, and, as nearly as I can remember, in these words:—"O Dove of the Eternal, I want to love you and you to love me; and if you live on Iona, I want you to show me, when I go there again, the place where Colum the Holy talked with an angel. And I want to live as long as you, Dove" (I remember

thinking this might seem disrespectful, and then I added hurriedly and apologetically), "Dove of the Eternal."

That evening I told Father Ivor what I had done. He did not laugh at me. He took me on his knee, and stroked my hair, and for a long time was so silent that I thought he was dreaming. He put me gently from him, and kneeled at the chair and made this simple prayer which I have never forgotten: "O Dove of the Eternal, grant the little one's prayer."

That is a long while ago now, and I have sojourned since in Iona, and there and elsewhere known the wild doves of thought and dream. But I have not, though I have longed, seen again the White Dove that Colum so loved. For long I thought it must have left Iona and Barra too, when Father Ivor died.

Yet I have not forgotten that it is not dead—"I want to live as long as you," was my child's plea; and the words of the old priest, knowing and believing, were, "O Dove of the Eternal, grant the little one's prayer."

When I think of Iona I think often, too, of a prophecy once connected with Iona, though perhaps current no more in a day when prophetical hopes are fallen dumb and blind.

It is commonly said that, if he would be heard, none should write in advance of his times. That I do not believe. Only, it does not matter how few

listen. I believe that we are close upon a great and deep spiritual change. I believe a new redemption is even now conceived of the Divine Spirit in the human heart, that is itself as a woman, broken in dreams and yet sustained in faith, patient, long-suffering, looking towards home. I believe that though the Reign of Peace may be yet a long way off, it is drawing near: and that Who shall save us anew shall come divinely as a Woman, to save as Christ saved, but not, as He did, to bring with Her a sword. But whether this Divine Woman, this Mary of so many passionate hopes and dreams, is to come through mortal birth, or as an immortal Breathing upon our souls, none can yet know.

Sometimes I dream of the old prophecy that Christ shall come again upon Iona, and of that later and obscure prophecy which foretells, now as the Bride of Christ, now as the Daughter of God, now as the Divine Spirit embodied through mortal birth in a Woman, as once through mortal birth in a man, the coming of a new Presence and Power: and dream that this may be upon Iona, so that the little Gaelic island may become as the little Syrian Bethlehem. But more wise it is to dream, not of hallowed ground, but of the hallowed gardens of the soul wherein She shall appear white and radiant. Or, that upon the hills, where we are wandered, the Shepherdess shall call us home.

A young Hebridean priest once told me how, "as our forefathers and elders believed and still believe, that Holy Spirit shall come again which

once was mortally born among us as the Son of God, but, then, shall be the Daughter of God. The Divine Spirit shall come again as a Woman. Then for the first time the world will know peace." And when I asked him if it were not prophesied that the Woman is to be born in Iona, he said that if this prophecy had been made it was doubtless of an Iona that was symbolic, but that this was a matter of no moment, for she would rise suddenly in many hearts, and have her habitation among dreams and hopes. Nor must I forget that my old nurse, Barabal, used to sing a strange *oran*, to the effect that when St Bride came again to Iona it would be to bind the hair and to wash the feet of the Bride of Christ.

And since then I have learned, and do see, that not only prophecies and hopes, and desires unclothed yet in word or thought foretell Her coming, but already a multitude of spirits are in the gardens of the Soul, and are sowing seed and calling upon the wind of the south; and that everywhere are watching eyes and uplifted hands, and signs which cannot be mistaken, in many lands, in many peoples, in many minds; and, in the heaven itself that the soul sees, the surpassing signature.

In a dream I dream frequently, that of being the wind and drifting over fragrant hedgerows and pastures, I have often, through unconscious remembrance of that image of St Bride—"Victorious Bride loved not this vain world: here, ever, she sat the seat of a bird on a cliff" (on the edge of the

cliff that is this world) felt myself, when not lifted on sudden warm fans of dusk, propelled as on a swift wing from the edge of a precipice.

I would we had these winds of dream to command. I would, now that I am far from it, that this night at least, I might pass over Iona, and hear the sea-doves by the ruins making their sweet mournful croon of peace, and lift, as a shadow gathering phantom flowers, the pale orchis by the lapwing's nest.

Strange, that to this day none knows with surety the derivation or original significance of the name Iona. Many ingenious guesses have been made, but of these some are obviously far-fetched, others are impossible in Gaelic, and all but impossible to the mind of any Gael speaking his ancient tongue. Nearly all these guesses concern the Iona of Columba; few attempt the name of the sacred island of the Druids. Another people once lived here with a forgotten faith; possibly before the Picts there was yet another, who worshipped at strange altars and bowed down before Shadow and Fear, the earliest of the gods.

I do not know on what authority, but an anonymous Gaelic writer, in an account of Iona in 1771, alludes to the probability that Christianity was introduced there before St Columba's advent, and that the island was already dedicated to the Apostle St John, "for it was originally called I'eoin, *i.e.* the Isle of St John, whence Iona." I'eoin certainly is

very close in sound, as a Gael would pronouce it, to Iona, and there can be little doubt that the island had Druids (whether Christian monks also with or without) when Columba landed. Before Conall, King of Alba (as he was called, though only Dalriadic King of Argyll), invited Colum to Iona, to make that island his home and sanctuary, there were certainly Christian monks on the island. Among them was the half-mythical Odran or Oran, who is chronicled in the Annals of the Four Masters as having been a missionary priest, and as having died in Iona fifteen years before Colum landed. Equally certainly there were Druids at this late date, though discredited of the Pictish king and his people, for a Cymric priest of the old faith was at that time Ard-Druid. This man Gwendollen, through his bard or second Druid Myrddin (Merlin), deplored the persecution to which he was subject, in that now he and his no longer dared to practise the sacred druidical rites "in raised circles"—adding bitterly, "the grey stones themselves, even, they have removed."

Again, Davies in his "Celtic Researches" speaks of Colum as having on his settlement in Iona burnt a heap of druidical books. It is at any rate certain that druidical believers (helots perhaps) remained to Colum's time, even if the last druidic priest had left. In the explicit accounts which survive there is no word of any dispossession of the druidic priests. It is more than likely that the Pictish king, who had been converted to Christianity, and gave the

island to Columba by special grant, had either already seen Irish monks inhabit it, or at least had withdrawn the lingering priests of the ancient faith of his people. Neither Columba nor Adamnan nor any other early chronicler speaks of Iona as held by the Druids when the little coracle with the cross came into Port-na-Churaich.

Again, it is said that Iona is a miswriting of Ioua, "the avowed ancient name of the island." It is easy to see how the scribes who copied older manuscripts might have made the mistake; and easy to understand how, the mistake once become the habit, fanciful interpretations were adduced to explain "Iona."

There is little reasonable doubt that Iona was the ancient Gaelic or Pictish name of the island. I have seen allusions to its having been called Innis nan Dhruidnechean, or Dhruidhnean, the Isle of the Druids; but that is not ancient Gaelic, and I do not think there is any record of Iona being so called in any of the early manuscripts. St Adamnan, ninth Abbot of Iona, writing at the end of the seventh century, invariably calls the island Ioua or the Iouan Island. Unless the hypothesis of the careless scribes be accepted, this should be conclusive.

I spoke of Port-na-Churaich, the Haven of the Coracle, a little ago. How strange a history is that of Iona since the coming of the Irish priest, Crimthan, or Crimmon as we call the name, surnamed Colum Cille, the Dove of the Church. Perhaps its

unwritten history is not less strange. God was revered on Iona by priests of a forgotten faith before the Cross was raised. The sun-priest and moon-worshipper had their revelation here. I do not think their offerings were despised. Colum, who loved the Trinity so well that on one occasion he subsisted for three days on the mystery of the mere word, did not forego the luxury of human sacrifice, though he abhorred the blood-stained altar. For, to him, an obstinate pagan slain was to the glory of God. The moon-worshipper did no worse when he led the chosen victim to the dolmen. But the moon-worshipper was a Pict without the marvel of the written word; so he remained a heathen, and the Christian named himself saint or martyr.

None knows with surety who dwelled on this mysterious island before the famous son of Feilim of Clan Domnhuil, great-grandson of Neil of the Nine Hostages, came with his fellow-monks and raised the Cross among the wondering Picts. But the furthest record tells of worship. Legend itself is more ancient here than elsewhere. Once a woman was worshipped. Some say she was the moon, but this was before the dim day of the moon-worshippers. (In Gaelic too, as with all the Celtic peoples, it is not the moon but the sun that is feminine.) She may have been an ancestral Brighde, or that mysterious Anait whose Scythian name survives elsewhere in the Gaelic west, and nothing else of all her ancient glory but that shadowy word. Perhaps, here, the Celts remembered one whom

they had heard of in Asian valleys or by the waters of Nilus, and called upon Isis under a new name.

The Haven of the Coracle! It was not Colum and his white-robe company who first made the isle sacred. I have heard that when Mary Macleod (our best-loved Hebridean poet) was asked what she thought of Iona, she replied that she thought it was the one bit of Eden that had not been destroyed, and that it was none other than the central isle in the Garden untouched of Eve or Adam, where the angels waited.

Many others have dreamed by that lonely cairn of the Irish king, before Colum, and, doubtless, many since the child who sought the Divine Forges.

For it was in Iona that, while yet a child, I set out one evening to find the Divine Forges. A Gaelic sermon, preached on the shoreside by an earnest man, who, going poor and homeless through the west, had tramped the long roads of Mull over against us, and there fed to flame a smouldering fire, had been my ministrant in these words. The "revivalist" had spoken of God as one who would hammer the evil out of the soul and weld it to good, as a blacksmith at his anvil, and suddenly, with a dramatic gesture, he cried: "This little island of Iona is this anvil; God is your blacksmith: but oh, poor people, who among you knows the narrow way to the Divine Forges?"

There is a spot on Iona that has always had a

strange enchantment for me. Behind the ruined walls of the Columban church, the slopes rise, and the one isolated hill of Iona is, there, a steep and sudden wilderness. It is commonly called Dûn-I, for at the summit in old days was an island fortress; but the Gaelic name of the whole of this uplifted shoulder of the isle is Slibh Meanach. Hidden under a wave of heath and boulder, near the rocks, is a little pool. From generation to generation this has been known, and frequented, as the Fountain of Youth.

There, through boggy pastures, where the huge-horned shaggy cattle stared at me, and up through the ling and roitch, I climbed; for, if anywhere, I thought that from there I might see the Divine Forges, or at least might discover a hidden way, because of the power of that water, touched on the eye-lids at sunlift, at sunset, or at the rising of the moon.

From where I stood I could see the people still gathered upon the dunes by the shore, and the tall, ungainly figure of the preacher. In the narrow strait were two boats, one being rowed across to Fionnaphort, and the other, with a dun sail burning flame-brown, hanging like a bird's wing against Glas Eilean, on the tideway to the promontory of Earraid. Was the preacher still talking of the Divine Forges? I wondered; or were the men and women in the ferry hurrying across to the Ross of Mull to look for them among the inland hills? And the Earraid men in the fishing-smack: were they

sailing to see if they lay hidden in the wilderness of rocks, where the muffled barking of the seals made the loneliness more wild and remote?

I wetted my eyelids, as I had so often done before (and not always vainly, though whether vision came from the water, or from a more quenchless spring within, I know not), and looked into the little pool. Alas! I could see nothing but the reflection of a star, too obscured by light as yet for me to see in the sky and, for a moment, the shadow of a gull's wing as the bird flew by far overhead. I was too young then to be content with the symbols of coincidence, or I might have thought that the shadow of a wing from Heaven and the light of a star out of the East were enough indication. But, as it was, I turned, and walked idly northward, down the rough side of Dun Bhuirg (at Cul Bhuirg, a furlong westward, I had once seen a phantom, which I believed to be that of the Culdee, Oran, and so never went that way again after sundown) to a thyme-covered mound that had for me a most singular fascination.

It is a place to this day called Dûn Mananain. Here, a friend who told me many things, a Gaelic farmer, named Macarthur, had related once a fantastic legend about a god of the sea. Manaun was his name, and he lived in the times when Iona was part of the kingdom of the Suderöer. Whenever he willed he was like the sea, and that is not wonderful, for he was born of the sea. Thus his body was made of a green wave. His hair was of wrack

and tangle, glistening with spray; his robe was of windy foam; his feet, of white sand. That is, when he was with his own, or when he willed; otherwise, he was as men are. He loved a woman of the south so beautiful that she was named Dèarsadh-na-Ghréine (Sunshine). He captured her and brought her to Iona in September, when it is the month of peace. For one month she was happy; when the wet gales from the west set in, she pined for her own land, yet in the dream-days of November she smiled so often that Manaun hoped; but when Winter was come, her lover saw that she could not live. So he changed her into a seal. "You shall be a sleeping woman by day," he said, "and sleep in my dûn here on Iona, and by night, when the dews fall, you shall be a seal, and shall hear me calling to you from a wave, and shall come out and meet me."

They have mortal offspring also, it is said.

Probably some thought was in my mind that there, by Dûn Mananain, I might find a hidden way. That summer I had been thrilled to the inmost life by coming suddenly, by moonlight, on a seal moving across the last sand-dune between this place and the bay called Port Ban. A strange voice, too, I heard upon the sea. True, I saw no white arms upthrown, as the seal plunged into the long wave that swept the shore; and it was a grey skua that wailed above me, winging inland; yet had I not had a vision of the miracle?

But alas! that evening there was not even a

barking seal. Some sheep fed upon the green slope of Manaun's mound.

So still seeking a way to the Divine Forges, I skirted the shore and crossed the sandy plain of the Machar, and mounted the upland district known as Sliav Starr (the Hill of Noises), and walked to a place to me sacred. This was a deserted green airidh between great rocks. From here I could look across the extreme western part of Iona, to where it shelved precipitously around the little *Port-na-Churaich*, the Haven of the Coracle, the spot where St Columba landed when he came to the island.

I knew every foot of ground here, as every cave along the wave-worn shore. How often I had wandered in these solitudes, to see the great spout of water rise through the grass from the caverns beneath, forced upward when tide and wind harried the sea-flocks from the north; or to look across the ocean to the cliffs of Antrim, from the Carn cul Ri Eirinn, the Cairn of the Hermit King of Ireland, about whom I had woven many a romance.

I was tired, and fell asleep. Perhaps the Druid of a neighbouring mound, or the lonely Irish King, or Colum himself (whose own Mound of the Outlook was near), or one of his angels who ministered to him, watched, and shepherded my dreams to the desired fold. At least I dreamed, and thus:

The skies to the west beyond the seas were not built of flushed clouds, but of transparent flame. These flames rose in solemn stillness above a vast

forge, whose anvil was the shining breast of the sea. Three great Spirits stood by it, and one lifted a soul out of the deep shadow that was below; and one with his hands forged the soul of its dross and welded it anew; and the third breathed upon it, so that it was winged and beautiful. Suddenly the glory-cloud waned, and I saw the multitude of the stars. Each star was the gate of a long, shining road. Many—a countless number—travelled these roads. Far off I saw white walls, built of the pale gold and ivory of sunrise. There again I saw the three Spirits, standing and waiting. So these, I thought, were not the walls of Heaven, but the Divine Forges.

That was my dream. When I awaked, the curlews were crying under the stars.

When I reached the shadowy glebe, behind the manse by the sea, I saw the preacher walking there by himself, and doubtless praying. I told him I had seen the Divine Forges, and twice; and in crude, childish words told how I had seen them.

"It is not a dream," he said.

I know now what he meant.

How great a man was the Irish monk Crimthan, called Colum, the Dove: Columcille, the Dove of the Church. One may read all that has been written of him since the sixth century and not reach the depths of his nature. I doubt if any other than a Gael can understand him aright. More than any Celt of whom history tells, he is the epitome of the

Celt. In war, Cuchulain himself was not more brave and resourceful. Finn, calling his champions to the pursuit of Grania, or Oìsin boasting of the Fianna before Patrick, was not more arrogant, yet his tenderness could be as his Master's was, and he could be as gentle as a young mother with her child, and had a child's simplicity. He knew the continual restlessness of his race. He was forty-two when he settled in Iona, and had led a life of frequent and severe vicissitude, often a wanderer, sometimes with blood against him and upon his head, once in extremity of danger, an outlaw, excommunicated. But even in his haven of Iona he was not content. He journeyed northward through the Pictish realms, a more dangerous and obscure adventure then than to cross Africa to-day. He sailed to "the Ethican island," as St Adamnan calls Tiree, and made of it a sanctuary, where prayer might rise as a continual smoke from quiet homes. No fear of the savage clans of Skye—where a woman had once reigned with so great a fame in war that even the foremost champion of Ireland went to her in his youth to learn arms and battle-wisdom—restrained him from facing the island Picts. Long before Hakon the Dane fought the great sea-fight off Largs on the mainland, Colum had built a church there. In the far Perthshire wilds, before Macbeth slew Duncan the king, the strong abbot of Iona had founded a monastery in that thanedom. At remote Inbhir Nis, the Inverness of to-day, he overcame the King of the Picts and his sullen Druids, by his daring, the fierce

magnetism of his will, his dauntless resource. Once, in a savage region far north-eastward, towards the Scandinavian sea, he was told that there his Cross would not long protect either wattled church or monk's cell; on that spot he built the monastery of Deir, that stood for a thousand years, and whose priceless manuscript is now one of the treasures of Northumbria.

Columba was at once a saint, a warrior, a soldier of Christ, a great abbot, a dauntless explorer, and militant Prince of the Church; and a student, a man of great learning, a poet, an artist, a visionary, an architect, administrator, law-maker, judge, arbiter. As a youth this prince, for he was of royal blood, was so beautiful that he was likened to an angel. In mature manhood, there was none to equal him in stature, manly beauty, strength, and with a voice so deep and powerful that it was like a bell, and could be heard on occasion a mile away, and once, indeed, at the court of King Bruidh, literally overbore and drowned a concerted chorus of sullen Druids. These had tried to outvoice him and his monks, little knowing what a mighty force the sixty-fourth Psalm could be in the throat of this terrible Culdee, who to them must have seemed much more befitting his house-name, Crimthan (Wolf), than "the Dove"!

This vocal duel was a characteristic device of the Druids. I recall one notable instance long before Colum's time, though the Leabhar na H'Uidhre in which it is to be found was not compiled till A.D.

1000. In the story of the love of Connla, son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, for a woman of the other world, a Druid asks her whence she has come, and when she answers that it is from the lands of those who live a beautiful and deathless life, he knows that she is a woman of the Sìdhe. So he chants against the fair woman till the spell of her voice is overcome, and she goes away as a mist that falls on the shore, as a Hebridean poet would say.*

Later, she comes again, and now invisible to all save Connla. Conn the king hears her chanting to Connla that it is no such lofty place he holds "amid short-lived mortals awaiting fearful death" that he need dread to leave it, "the more as the ever-living ones invite thee to be the ruler over Tethra (a Kingdom of Joy)." So once more the king calls upon the Ard-Druid to dispel the woman by his incantations. For a moment Connla wavers, but the Fairy Woman, with a music of mockery, sings to him that Druidism is in ill-favour "over yonder," little loved and little honoured "there," for, in effect, the nations of the Sìdhe do not need that idle dream. Connla's longing is more great to him than his kingdom or the fires of home, and he goes on with his leannanshee in a boat, till those on the strand see him dimly and then no more in that sundown glow, nor ever again. Columba, a poet and scholar familiar with the old tales of his beloved Eiré, probably did not forget on occasion to turn this druidic tale a-

* In a beautiful old Scoto-Gaelic ballad, the "Bàs Fhraoich," occurs the line, "Thuit iair an tràigh na neul," "she fell on the shore as a mist," though here finely used for a swoon only.

gainst Druidism itself, repeating how, in its own time, before the little bell of the tonsured folk was heard in Ireland (so little a bell to be the tocsin of fallen gods and broken nations), "Druidism is not loved, for little has it progressed to honour on the great Righteous Strand."

For one thing of great Gaelic import, Columba has been given a singular pre-eminence—not for his love of country, pride of race, passionate loyalty to his clan, to every blood-claim and foster-claim, and friendship-claim, though in all this he was the very archetype of the clannish Gael—but because (so it is averred) he was the first of our race of whom is recorded the systematic use of the strange gift of spiritual foresight, "second-sight." It has been stated authoritatively that he is the first of whom there is record as having possessed this faculty; but that could only be averred by one ignorant of ancient Gaelic literature. Even in Adamnan's chronicle, within some seventy years after the death of Columba, there is record of others having this faculty, apart from the perhaps more purely spiritual vision of his mother Aithnê, when an angel raimented her with the beauty of her unborn son; or of his foster-father, the priest Cruithnechan, who saw the singular light of the soul about his sleeping pupil; or of the Abbot Brendan who redeemed the saint from excommunication and perhaps death by his vision of him advancing with a pillar of fire before him and an

angel on either side. (When, long years afterwards, Brendan died in Ireland, Colum in Iona startled his monks by calling for an immediate celebration of the Eucharist, because it had been revealed to him that St Brendan had gone to the heavenly fatherland yesternight: "Angels came to meet his soul: I saw the whole earth illumined with their glory.") Among others there is the story of Abbot Kenneth, who, sitting at supper, rose so suddenly as to leave without his sandals, and at the altar of his church prayed for Colum, at that moment in dire peril upon the sea; the story of Ernan, who, fishing in the river Fenda, saw the death of Colum in a symbol of flame; the story of Lugh mac Tailchan, who, at Cloinfinchoil, beheld Iona (which he had never visited) and above it a blaze of angels' wings, and Colum's soul. In the most ancient tales there is frequent allusion to what we call second-sight. The writers alluded to could not have heard of the warning of the dread Mor-Rigân to Cuchulain before the fatal strife of the Táin-Bó-Cuailgne; or Cuchulain's own pre-vision (among a score as striking) of the hostings and gatherings on the fatal plain of Muirthemne; or the Amazonian queen Scathach's fore-knowledge of the career and early death of the champion of the Gaels:

> "(At the last) great peril awaits thee . . .
> Alone against a vast herd:
> Thirty years I reckon the length of thy years
> (literally, the strength of thy valour);
> Further than this I do not add";

or of Deirdre's second-sight, when by the white cairn on Sliav Fuad she saw the sons of Usna headless, and Illann the Fair headless too, but Buimne the Ruthless Red with his head upon his shoulders, smiling a grim smile—when she saw over Naois, her beloved, a cloud of blood—or that, alas, too bitter-true a foreseeing, when in the Craebh Derg, the House of the Red Branch, she cried to her lover and his two brothers that death was at the door and "grievous to me is the deed, O darling friends—and till the world's end Emain will not be better for a single night than it is to-night." Or, again, of that pathetic, simultaneous death-vision of Bailê the Sweet-Spoken and Aillinn, he in the north, she in the south, so that each out of a grief unbearable straightway died, as told in one of the oldest as well as loveliest of ancient Gaelic tales, the Scél Baili Binnberlaig.

There is something strangely beautiful in most of these "second-sight" stories of Columba. The faculty itself is so apt to the spiritual law that one wonders why it is so set apart in doubt. It would, I think, be far stranger if there were no such faculty.

That, I believe, it were needless to say, were it not that these words may be read by many to whom this quickened inward vision is a superstition, or a fantastic glorification of insight. I believe; not only because there is nothing too strange for the soul, whose vision surely I will not deny, while I accept what is lesser, the mind's prescience, and,

what is least, the testimony of the eyes. That I have cause to believe is perhaps too personal a statement, and is of little account; but in that interior wisdom, which is no longer the flicker of one little green leaf but the light and sound of a forest, of which the leaf is a part, I know that to be true, which I should as soon doubt as that the tide returns or that the sap rises or that dawn is a ceaseless flashing light beneath the circuit of the stars. Spiritual logic demands it.

It would ill become me to do otherwise. I would as little, however, deny that this inward vision is sometimes imperfect and untrustworthy, as I would assert that it is infallible. There is no common face of good or evil; and in like fashion the aspect of this so-called mystery is variable as the lives of those in whom it dwells. With some it is a prescience, more akin to instinct than to reason, and obtains only among the lesser possibilities, as when one beholds another where in the body none is; or a scene not possible, there, in that place; or a face, a meeting of shadows, a disclosure of hazard or accident, a coming into view of happenings not yet fulfilled. With some it is simply a larger sight, more wide, more deep; not habitual, because there is none of us who is not subject to the law of the body; and sudden, because all tense vision is a passion of the moment. It is as the lightning, whose sustenance is sure for all that it has a second's life. With a few it is a more constant companion, a dweller by the morning thought, by the noon re-

verie, by the evening dream. It lies upon the pillow for some; to some it is as though the wind disclosed pathways of the air; a swaying branch, a dazzle on the wave, the quick recognition in unfamiliar eyes, is, for others, sufficient signal. Not that these accidents of the manner need concern us much. We have the faculty, or we do not have it. Nor must we forget that it can be the portion of the ignoble as well as of those whose souls are clear. When it is in truth a spiritual vision, then we are in company of what is the essential life, that which we call divine.

It was this that Columba had, this serene perspicuity. That it was a conscious possession we know from his own words, for he gave this answer to one who marvelled: "Heaven has granted to some to see on occasion in their mind, clearly and surely, the whole of earth and sea and sky."

If there be any to whom the aged Colum comforting the grief of his old white pony is a matter of disdain or derision, I would not have his soul in exchange for the dumb sorrow of that creature. One would fare further with that sorrow, though soulless, than with the soul that could not understand that sorrow.

If one were to quote from Adamnan's three Books of the Prophecies, Miracles, and Visions of Columba, there would be another book. Amid much that is childlike, and a little that is childish, what store of spiritual beauty and living symbol in these three books—the "Book of Prophetic Revelations," the

"Book of Miracles of Power," the "Book of Angelic Visitations." But there, as elsewhere, one must bear in remembrance that, in spiritual sight, there is symbolic vision as well as actual vision. When Colum saw his friend Columbanus (who, unknown to any on Iona, had set out in his frail coracle from the Isle of Rathlin) tossed in the surges of Corry-vrechan; or when, nigh Glen Urquhart, he hurried forward to minister to an old dying Pict "who had lived well by the light of nature," and whose house, condition, and end had been suddenly revealed to him: then we have actual vision. When Aithnê, his mother, dreamed that an angel showed her a garment of so surpassing a loveliness that it was as though woven of flowers and rainbows, and then threw it on high, till its folds expanded and covered every mountain-top from the brows of Connaught to the feet of the Danish sea, and so revealed to her what manner of son she bore within her womb; or when, in the hour of Colum's death, the aged son of Tailchan beheld the whole expanse of air flooded with the blaze of angels' wings, which trembled with their songs: then we have symbolic vision. And sometimes we have that which partakes of each, as when (as Adamnan tells us in his third book) Colum saw angels standing upon the rocks on the opposite side of the Sound which divides Iona from the Ross of Mull, calling to his soul to cross to them, yet, as they assembled and beckoned, mysteriously and suddenly restrained, for his hour was not come.

And in all actual vision there is gradation; from what is so common, premonition, to what is not common, prescience, and to what is rare, revelation. Thus when the labourers on Iona looked up from the fields and saw the aged abbot whom they so loved, borne in a wagon to give them benediction at seed-sowing, many among them knew that they would not see Colum again, and Colum knew it and so shared that premonition. And when, many years before, he and the abbot Comgell, returning from a futile conference of the kings Aedh and Aidan, rested by a spring, concerning which Colum said that the day would come when it would be filled with human blood, "because my people, the Hy-Neill, and the Pictish folk, thy relations according to the flesh, will wage war by this fortress of Cethirn close by," Comgell learned, through Colum's foreknowledge, of what did in truth come to pass. Again, when Colum bade a brother go three days thence to the sea-shore on the west of Iona, and lie in readiness to help "a certain guest, a crane to wit, beaten by the winds during long and circuitous and aerial flights, which will arrive after the ninth hour of the day, very weary and sore distressed," and bade him to lift it and tend it lovingly for three days and three nights till it should have strength to return to "its sweet home," and to do this out of love and courtesy because "it comes from our fatherland"—and when all happens and is done as the saint foretold and commanded, then we have revelation, the vision that is absolute, the know-

ledge that is the atmosphere of the inevitable. It would take a book indeed to tell all the stories of Columba's visionary and prophetic powers. That I write at this length concerning him, indeed, is because he is himself Iona. Columba is Christian Iona, as much as Iona is Icolmkill. I have often wondered (because of a passage in Adamnan) if the island be not indeed named after him, the Dove; for as Adamnan says incidentally, the name Columba is identical with the Hebrew name Jonah, also signifying a Dove, and by the Hebrews pronounced Iona.

It is enough now to recall that this man, so often erring but so human always, in whose life we see the soul of Iona as in a glass, is become the archetype of his race, as Iona is the microcosm of the Gaelic world. That he came into this life heralded by dreams and visions, that from his youth onward to old age he knew every mystery of dream and vision, and that before and after death his soul was revealed to others through dreams and visions, is but an added hieratic grace; yet we do well to recall often how these dreams before and these visions after were angelical, and nobly beautiful; how there was left of him, and to his little company, and to us for remembrance, that last signal vision of a blaze of angelic wings, more intolerable than the sun at noon, the tempestuous multitude trembling with the storm of song.

Columba and Oran . . . these are the two great

names in Iona. Love and Faith have made one immortal; the other lives also, clothed in legend. I am afraid there is not much definite basis for the popular Iona legend of Oran. It is now the wont of guides and others to speak of the Réilig Odhrain, Oran's burial-place, as that of Columba's friend (and victim), but it seems likelier that the Oran who lies here is he who is spoken of in the "Annals of the Four Masters" as having died in the year 548, that is fifteen years before Colum came to the island. This, however, might well be a mistake; what is more convincing is that Adamnan never mentions the episode, nor even the name of Oran, nor is there mention of him in that book of Colum's intimate friend and successor, Baithene, which Adamnan practically incorporated. On the other hand, the Oran legend is certainly very old. The best modern rendering we have of it is that of Mr Whitely Stokes in his "Three Middle-Irish Homilies," and readers of Dr Skene's valuable "Celtic Scotland" will recollect the translation there redacted. The episode occurs first in an ancient Irish life of St Columba. The legend, which has crystallised into a popular saying, "Uir, ùir, air sùil Odhrain! mu'n labhair e tuille comhraidh"—"Earth, earth on Oran's eyes, lest he further blab"—avers that three days after the monk Oran or Odran was entombed alive (some say in the earth, some in a cavity), Colum opened the grave to look once more on the face of the dead brother, when to the amazed fear of the monks and the bitter anger of the abbot himself, Oran opened his

eyes and exclaimed, "There is no such great wonder in death, nor is Hell what it has been described." (Ifrinn, or Ifurin—the word used—is the Gaelic Hell, the Land of Eternal Cold). At this, Colum straightway cried the now famous Gaelic words, and then covered up poor Oran again lest he should blab further of that uncertain world whither he was supposed to have gone. In the version given by Mr Whitley Stokes there is no mention of Odran's grave having been uncovered after his entombment. But what is strangely suggestive is that both in the oral legend and in that early monkish chronicle alluded to, Columba is represented as either suggesting or accepting immolation of a living victim as a sacrifice to consecrate the church he intended to build.

One story is that he received a divine intimation to the effect that a monk of his company must be buried alive, and that Odran offered himself. In the earliest known rendering "Colum Cille said to his people: 'It is well for us that our roots should go underground here,' and he said to them, 'It is permitted to you that some one of you go under the earth of this island to consecrate it.' Odran rose up readily, and thus he said: 'If thou wouldst accept me,' he said, 'I am ready for that.' . . . Odran then went to heaven. Colum Cille then founded the Church of Hii."

It would be a dark stain on Columba if this legend were true. But apart from the fact that Adamnan does not speak of it or of Oran, the probabilities

are against its truth. On the other hand, it is, perhaps, quite as improbable that there was no basis for the legend. I imagine the likelier basis to be that a Druid suffered death in this fashion under that earlier Odran of whom there is mention in the "Annals of the Four Masters": possibly that Odran himself was the martyr, and the Ard-Druid the person who had the "divine intimation." Again, before it be attributed to Columba, one would have to find if there is record of such an act having been performed among the Irish of that day. We have no record of it. It is not improbable that the whole legend is a symbolical survival, an ancient teaching of some elementary mystery through some real or apparent sacrificial rite.

Among the people of Iona to-day there is a very confused idea about St. Oran. To some he is a saint, to others an evil-doer; some think he was a martyr, that he was punished for a lapse from virtue. Some swear by his name, as though it were almost as sacred as the Black Stone of Iona; to others, perhaps most, his is but an idle name.

By the Black Stone of Iona! One may hear that in Icolmkill or anywhere in the west. It used to be the most binding oath in the Highlands, and even now is held as an indisputable warrant of truth. In Iona itself, strangely enough, one would be much more likely to hear a statement affirmed "by St Martin's Cross." On this stone (the old Druid Stone of Destiny, sacred among the Gael before

Christ was born) Columba crowned Aidan King of Argyll. Later, the stone was taken to Dunstaffnage, where the lords of the Isles were made princes, thence to Scone, where the last of the Celtic kings of Scotland was crowned on it. It now lies in Westminster Abbey, a part of the Coronation Chair, and since Edward I., every British monarch has been crowned upon it. If ever the Stone of Destiny be moved again, that writing on the wall will be a signature of a falling dynasty; but perhaps, unlike Iona in the island saying, this can be left to the Gaelic equivalent of nevermas, "*gus am bi Mac-Cailein na' righ*," "till Argyll be a king."

Elsewhere I have told how a good man of Iona sailed along the coast one Sabbath afternoon with the Holy Book, and put the Word upon the seals of Soa; and, in another tale, how a lonely man fought with a sea-woman, that was a seal; as, again, how two fishermen strove with the sea-witch of Earraid; and, in "The Dan-nan-Ron," of a man who went mad with the sea-madness, because of the seal-blood that was in his veins, he being a Mac-Odrum of Uist, and one of the Sliochd nan Ron, the Tribe of the Seal. And those who have read the tale, twice printed, once as "The Annir Choille," and again as "Cathal of the Woods," will remember how, at the end, the good hermit Molios, when near death in his sea-cave of Arran, called the seals to come out of the wave and listen to him, so that he might tell them the white story of Christ; and how in the moonshine, with the flowing tide

stealing from his feet to his knees, the old saint preached the gospel of love, while the seals crouched upon the rocks, with their brown eyes filled with glad tears; and how, before his death at dawn, he was comforted by hearing them splashing to and fro in the moon-dazzle, and calling one to the other, "We, too, are of the sons of God."

What has so often been written about is a reflection of what is in the mind; and though stories of the seals may be heard from the Rhinns of Islay to the Seven Hunters (and I first heard that of the MacOdrums, the seal-folk, from a Uist man), I think that it was because of what I heard of the sea-people on Iona, when I was a child, that they have been so much with me in remembrance.

In the short tale of the Moon-child I told how two seals, that had been wronged by a curse which had been put upon them by Columba, forgave the saint, and gave him a sore-won peace. I recall another (unpublished) tale, where a seal called Domnhuil Dhu—a name of evil omen—was heard laughing one Hallowe'en on the rocks below the ruined abbey, and calling to the creatures of the sea that God was dead: and how the man who heard him laughed, and was there with stricken with paralysis, and so fell sidelong from the rocks into the deep wave, and was afterwards found beaten as with hammers and shredded as with sharp fangs.

But, as most characteristic, I would rather tell here the story of Black Angus.

On a day of the days, Colum was walking alone

by the sea-shore. The monks were at the hoe or the spade, and some milking the kye, and some at the fishing. They say it was on the first day of the Faoilleach Geamhraidh, the day that is called Am Fhéill Brighde, and that they call Candlemas over yonder.

The holy man had wandered on to where the rocks are, opposite to Soa. He was praying and praying; and it is said that whenever he prayed aloud, the barren egg in the nest would quicken, and the blighted bud unfold, and the butterfly break its shroud.

Of a sudden he came upon a great black seal, lying silent on the rocks, with wicked eyes.

"My blessing upon you, O Ron," he said, with the good kind courteousness that was his. "Droch spadadh ort," answered the seal, "A bad end to you, Colum of the Gown."

"Sure now," said Colum angrily, "I am knowing by that curse that you are no friend of Christ, but of the evil pagan faith out of the north. For here I am known ever as Colum the White, or as Colum the Saint; and it is only the Picts and wanton Normen who deride me because of the holy white robe I wear."

"Well, well," replied the seal, speaking the good Gaelic as though it were the tongue of the deep sea, as God knows it may be for all you, I, or the blind wind can say; "well, well, let that thing be: it's a wave-way here or a wave-way there. But now, if it is a Druid you are, whether of fire

or of Christ, be telling me where my woman is, and where my little daughter."

At this, Colum looked at him for a long while. Then he knew.

"It is a man you were once, O Ron?"

"Maybe ay and maybe no."

"And with that thick Gaelic that you have, it will be out of the north isles you come?"

"That is a true thing."

"Now I am for knowing at last who and what you are. You are one of the race of Odrum the Pagan?"

"Well, I am not denying it, Colum. And what is more, I am Angus MacOdrum, Aonghas mac Torcall mhic Odrum, and the name I am known by is Black Angus."

"A fitting name too," said Colum the Holy, "because of the black sin in your heart, and the black end God has in store for you."

At that Black Angus laughed.

"Why is there laughter upon you, Man-Seal?"

"Well, it is because of the good company I'll be having. But now, give me the word: Are you for having seen or heard of a woman called Kirsteen M'Vurich?"

"Kirsteen—Kirsteen—that is the good name of a nun it is, and no sea-wanton!"

"Oh, a name here or a name there is soft sand. And so you cannot be for telling me where my woman is?"

"No."

"Then a stake for your belly, and nails through your hands, thirst on your tongue, and corbies at your eyne!"

And, with that, Black Angus louped into the green water, and the hoarse wild laugh of him sprang into the air and fell dead upon the shore like a wind-spent mew.

Colum went slowly back to the brethren, brooding deep. "God is good," he said in a low voice, again and again; and each time that he spoke there came a daisy into the grass, or a bird rose, with song to it for the first time, wonderful and sweet to hear.

As he drew near to the House of God he met Murtagh, an old monk of the ancient race of the isles.

"Who is Kirsteen M'Vurich, Murtagh?" he asked.

"She was a good servant of Christ, she was, in the south isles, O Colum, till Black Angus won her to the sea."

"And when was that?"

"Nigh upon a thousand years ago."

"But can mortal sin live as long as that?"

"Ay, it endureth. Long, long ago, before Oisìn sang, before Fionn, before Cuchullin was a glorious great prince, and in the days when the Tuatha-de-Danann were sole lords in all green Banba, Black Angus made the woman Kirsteen M'Vurich leave the place of prayer and go down to the sea-shore, and there he leaped upon her and made her his prey, and she followed him into the sea."

"And is death above her now?"

"No. She is the woman that weaves the sea-spells at the wild place out yonder that is known as Earraid: she that is called the sea-witch."

"Then why was Black Angus for the seeking her here and the seeking her there?"

"It is the Doom. It is Adam's first wife she is, that sea-witch over there, where the foam is ever in the sharp fangs of the rocks."

"And who will he be?"

"His body is the body of Angus, the son of Torcall of the race of Odrum, for all that a seal he is to the seeming; but the soul of him is Judas."

"Black Judas, Murtagh?"

"Ay, Black Judas, Colum."

It is commonly said that the people of the Sìdhe dwell within the hills, or in the under-world. In some of the isles their home, now, is spoken of as Tir-na-thonn, the Land of the Wave, or Tir-fo-Tuinn, the Land under the Sea.

But, from a friend, an islander of Iona, I have learned many things, and among them, that the Sìdhe no longer dwell within the inland hills, and that though many of them inhabit the lonelier isles of the west, and in particular The Seven Hunters, their Kingdom is in the North.

Some say it is among the pathless mountains of Iceland. But my friend spoke to an Iceland man, and he said he had never seen them. There were Secret People there, but not the Gaelic Sìdhe.

Their Kingdom is in the North, under the Fir-Chlisneach, the Dancing Men, as the Hebrideans call the polar aurora. They are always young there. Their bodies are white as the wild swan, their hair yellow as honey, their eyes blue as ice. Their feet leave no mark on the snow. The women are white as milk, with eyes like sloes, and lips like red rowans. They fight with shadows, and are glad; but the shadows are not shadows to them. The Sìdhe slay great numbers at the full moon, but never hunt on moonless nights, or at the rising of the moon, or when the dew is falling. Their lances are made of reeds that glitter like shafts of ice, and it is ill for a mortal to find one of these lances, for it is tipped with the salt of a wave that no living thing has touched, neither the wailing mew nor the finned sgádan nor his tribe, nor the narwhal. There are no men of the human clans there, and no shores, and the tides are forbidden.

Long ago one of the monks of Columba sailed there. He sailed for thrice seven days till he lost the rocks of the north; and for thrice thirty days, till Iceland in the south was like a small bluebell in a great grey plain; and for thrice three years among bergs. For the first three years the finned things of the sea brought him food; for the second three years he knew the kindness of the creatures of the air; in the last three years angels fed him. He lived among the Sìdhe for three hundred years. When he came back to Iona, he was asked where he had been all that long night since evensong to

matins. The monks had sought him everywhere, and at dawn had found him lying in the hollow of the long wave that washes Iona on the north. He laughed at that, and said he had been on the tops of the billows for nine years and three months and twenty-one days, and for three hundred years had lived among a deathless people. He had drunk sweet ale every day, and every day had known love among flowers and green bushes, and at dusk had sung old beautiful forgotten songs, and with star-flame had lit strange fires, and at the full of the moon had gone forth laughing to slay. It was heaven, there, under the Lights of the North. When he was asked how that people might be known, he said that away from there they had a cold, cold hand, a cold, still voice, and cold ice-blue eyes. They had four cities at the four ends of the green diamond that is the world. That in the north was made of earth; that in the east, of air; that in the south, of fire; that in the west, of water. In the middle of the green diamond that is the world is the Glen of Precious Stones. It is in the shape of a heart, and glows like a ruby, though all stones and gems are there. It is there the Sìdhe go to refresh their deathless life.

The holy monks said that this kingdom was certainly Ifurin, the Gaelic Hell. So they put their comrade alive in a grave in the sand, and stamped the sand down upon his head, and sang hymns so that mayhap even yet his soul might be saved, or, at least, that when he went back to that place he

might remember other songs than those sung by the milk-white women with eyes like sloes and lips red as rowans. "Tell that honey-mouthed cruel people they are in Hell," said the abbot, "and give them my ban and my curse unless they will cease laughing and loving sinfully and slaying with bright lances, and will come out of their secret places and be baptized."

They have not yet come.

This adventurer of the dreaming mind is another Oran, that fabulous Oran of whom the later Columban legends tell. I think that other Orans go out, even yet, to the country of the Sìdhe. But few come again. It must be hard to find that glen at the heart of the green diamond that is the world; but, when found, harder to return by the way one came.

To illustrate the history of the island I select the following episode that I have narrated elsewhere:—

On the wane of the moon, on the day following the ruin of Bail'-tiorail, sails were seen far east of Stromness.

Olaus the White called his men together. The boats coming before the wind were doubtless his own galleys which he had lost when the south-gale had blown them against Skye; but no man can know when and how the gods may smile grimly, and let the swords that whirl be broken, or the spears that are flat become a hedge of death.

An hour later, a startled word went from viking to viking. The galleys in the offing were the fleet of Sweno the Hammerer. Why had he come so far southward, and why were oars so swift and the stained sails distended before the wind? They were soon to know.

Sweno himself was the first to land. A great man he was, broad and burly, with a sword-slash across his face that brought his brows in a perpetual frown above his savage blood-shot eyes.

In a few words he told how he had met a galley, with only half its crew, and of these many who were wounded. It was the last of the fleet of Haco the Laugher. A fleet of fifteen war birlinns had set out from the Long Island, and had given battle. Haco had gone into the strife, laughing loud as was his wont, and he and all his men had the berserk rage, and fought with joy and foam at the mouth. Never had the Sword sung a sweeter song.

"Well," said Olaus the White grimly, "well, how did the Raven fly?"

"When Haco laughed for the last time, his sword waving out of the death-tide where he sank, there was only one galley left. No more than nine vikings lived thereafter to tell the tale. These nine we took out of their boat, which was below waves soon. Haco and his men are all fighting the sea-shadows by now."

A loud snarling went from man to man. This became a cry of rage. Then savage shouts filled the air. Swords were lifted up against the sky; and the

fierce glitter of blue eyes and the bristling of tawny beards were fair to see, thought the captive women, though their hearts beat in their breasts like eaglets behind the bars of a cage.

Sweno the Hammerer frowned a deep frown when he heard that Olaus was there with only the Svart-Alf out of the galleys which had gone the southward way.

"If the Islanders come upon us now with their birlinns we shall have to make a running fight," he said.

Olaus laughed.

"Ay, but the running shall be after the birlinns, Sweno."

"I hear there are fifty and nine men of these culdees yonder under the sword-priest, Maoliosa?"

"It is a true word. But to-night, after the moon is up, there shall be none."

At that, all who heard laughed, and were less heavy in their hearts because of the slaying and drowning of Haco the Laugher and all his crew.

"Where is the woman Brenda that you took?" Olaus asked, as he stared at Sweno's boat and saw no woman there.

"She is in the sea."

Olaus the White looked. It was his eyes that asked.

"I flung her into the sea because she laughed when she heard of how the birlinns that were under Somhairle the Renegade drove in upon our

ships, and how Haco laughed no more, and the sea was red with viking blood."

"She was a woman, Sweno—and none more fair in the isles, after Morna that is mine."

"Woman or no woman, I flung her into the sea. The Gael call us Gall: then I will let no Gael laugh at the Gall. It is enough. She is drowned. There are always women: one here, one there—it is but a wave blown this way or that."

At this moment a viking came running across the ruined town with tidings. Maoliosa and his culdees were crowding into a great birlinn. Perhaps they were coming to give battle; perhaps they were for sailing away from that place.

Olaus and Sweno stared across the fjord. At first they knew not what to do. If Maoliosa thought of battle he would hardly choose that hour and place. Or was it that he knew the Gael were coming in force, and that the vikings were caught in a trap?

At last it was clear. Sweno gave a great laugh.

"By the blood of Odin," he cried, "they come to sue for peace!"

Filled with white-robed culdees, the birlinn drew slowly across the loch. A tall, old man stood at the prow, with streaming hair and beard, white as sea-foam. In his right hand he grasped a great Cross, whereon Christ was crucified.

The vikings drew close to one another.

"Hail them in their own tongue, Sweno," said Olaus.

The Hammerer moved to the water-edge, as the

birlinn stopped, a short arrow-flight away.

"Ho, there, priests of the Christ-faith!"

"What would you, viking?" It was Maoliosa himself that spoke.

"Why do you come here among us, you that are Maoliosa?"

"To win you and yours to God, Pagan."

"Is it madness that is upon you, old man? We have swords and spears here, if we lack hymns and prayers."

All this time Olaus kept a wary watch inland and seaward, for he feared that Maoliosa came because of an ambush.

Truly the old monk was mad. He had told his culdees that God would prevail, and that the pagans would melt away before the Cross. The ebb-tide was running swift. Even while Sweno spoke, the birlinn touched a low sea-hidden ledge of rock. A cry of consternation went up from the white-robes. Loud laughter came from the vikings.

"Arrows!" cried Olaus.

With that threescore men took their bows. A hail of death-shafts fell. Many pierced the water, but some pierced the necks and hearts of the culdees.

Maoliosa himself stood in death transfixed to the mast. With a scream the monks swept their oars backward. Then they leaped to their feet, and changed their place, and rowed for life.

The summer-sailors sprang into their galley. Sweno the Hammerer was at the bow. The foam curled and hissed. The birlinn of the culdees grid-

ed upon the opposite shore at the moment when Sweno brought down his battle-axe upon the monk who steered. The man was cleft to the shoulder. Sweno swayed with the blow, stumbled, and fell headlong into the sea. A culdee thrust at him with an oar, and pinned him among the sea-tangle. Thus died Sweno the Hammerer.

Like a flock of sheep the white-robes leaped upon the shore. Yet Olaus was quicker than they. With a score of vikings he raced to the Church of the Cells, and gained the sanctuary. The monks uttered a cry of despair, and, turning, fled across the sands. Olaus counted them. There were now forty in all.

"Let forty men follow," he cried.

The monks fled this way and that. Olaus, and those who watched, laughed to see how they stumbled, because of their robes. One by one fell, sword-cleft or spear-thrust. The sand-dunes were red.

Soon there were fewer than a score—then twelve only—ten!

"Bring them back!" Olaus shouted.

When the ten fugitives were captured, and brought back, Olaus took the crucifix that Maoliosa had raised, and held it before each in turn.

"Smite!" he said to the first monk. But the man would not.

"Smite!" he said to the second; but he would not. And so it was to the tenth.

"Good!" said Olaus the White; "they shall witness to their God."

With that he bade the vikings break up the birlinn and drive the planks into the ground and shore them up with logs. When this was done he crucified each Culdee. With nails and with ropes he did unto each what their God has suffered. They all were left there by the water side. That night when Olaus the White and the laughing Morna left the great bonfire where the vikings sang and drank horn after horn of strong ale, they stood and looked across the strait. In the moonlight upon the dim verge of the island shore they could see ten crosses. On each was a motionless white splatch.

As I write, here on the hill-slope of Dûn-I, the sound of the furtive wave is as the sighing in a shell. I am alone between sea and sky, for there is no other on this bouldered height, nothing visible but a single blue shadow that slowly sails the hillside. The bleating of lambs and ewes, the lowing of kine, these come up from the Machar that lies between the west slopes and the shoreless sea to the west; these ascend as the very smoke of sound. All round the island there is a continuous breathing, deeper and more prolonged on the west, where the open sea is, but audible everywhere. The seals on Soa are even now putting their breasts against the running tide; for I see a flashing of fins here and there in patches at the north end of the Sound, and already from the ruddy granite shores of the Ross there is a congregation of seafowl—gannets and guillemots, skuas and herring-gulls, the long-neck-

ed northern diver, the tern, the cormorant. In the sunblaze, the waters of the Sound dance their blue bodies and swirl their flashing white hair o' foam; and, as I look, they seem to me like children of the wind and the sunshine, leaping and running in these flowing pastures, with a laughter as sweet against the ears as the voices of children at play.

The joy of life vibrates everywhere. Yet the Weaver does not sleep, but only dreams. He loves the sun-drowned shadows. They are invisible thus, but they are there, in the sunlight itself. Sure, they may be heard: as, an hour ago, when on my way hither by the Stairway of the Kings—for so sometimes they call here the ancient stones of the mouldered princes of long ago—I heard a mother moaning because of the son that had had to go over-sea and leave her in her old age; and heard also a child sobbing, because of the sorrow of childhood—that sorrow so unfathomable, so incommunicable. And yet not a stone's-throw from where I lie, half hidden beneath an overhanging rock, is the Pool of Healing. To this small, black-brown tarn, pilgrims of every generation, for hundreds of years, have come. Solitary, these; not only because the pilgrim to the Fount of Eternal Youth must fare hither alone, and at dawn, so as to touch the healing water the moment the first sunray quickens it—but solitary, also, because those who go in quest of this Fount of Youth are the dreamers of the Children of Dream, and these are not many, and few come now to this lonely place. Yet, an Isle of Dream Iona is, indeed.

Here the last sun-worshippers bowed before the Rising of God; here Columba and his hymning priests laboured and brooded; and here Oran or his kin dreamed beneath the monkish cowl that pagan dream of his. Here, too, the eyes of Fionn and Oisìn, and of many another of the heroic men and women of the Fiànna, may have lingered; here the Pict and the Celt bowed beneath the yoke of the Norse pirate, who, too, left his dreams, or rather his strangely beautiful soul-rainbows, as a heritage to the stricken; here, for century after century, the Gael has lived, suffered, joyed, dreamed his impossible beautiful dream; as here, now, he still lives, still suffers patiently, still dreams, and through all and over all broods upon the incalculable mysteries. He is an elemental, among the elemental forces. He knows the voices of wind and sea; and it is because the Fount of Youth upon Dûn-I of Iona is not the only wellspring of peace that the Gael can front destiny as he does and can endure. Who knows where its tributaries are? They may be in your heart, or in mine, and in a myriad others.

I would that the birds of Angus Ogue might, for once, be changed, not, as fabled, into the kisses of love, but into doves of peace, that they might fly into the green world, and nest there in many hearts, in many minds, crooning their incommunicable song of joy and hope.

A doomed and passing race. I have been taken to task for these words. But they are true, in the

deep reality where they obtain. Yes, but true only in one sense, however vital that is. The Breton's eyes are slowly turning from the enchanted West, and slowly his ears are forgetting the whisper of the wind around menhir and dolmen. The Manxman has ever been the mere yeoman of the Celtic chivalry; but even his rude dialect perishes year by year. In Wales, a great tradition survives; in Ireland, a supreme tradition fades through sunset-hued horizons; in Celtic Scotland, a passionate regret, a despairing love and longing, narrows yearly before a dull and incredibly selfish alienism. The Celt has at last reached his horizon. There is no shore beyond. He knows it. This has been the burden of his song since Malvina led the blind Oisìn to his grave by the sea: "Even the Children of Light must go down into darkness." But this apparition of a passing race is no more than the fulfilment of a glorious resurrection before our very eyes. For the genius of the Celtic race stands out now with averted torch, and the light of it is a glory before the eyes, and flame of it is blown into the hearts of the stronger people. The Celt fades, but his spirit rises in the heart and the mind of the Anglo-Celtic peoples, with whom are the destinies of generations to come.

I stop, and look seaward from this hill-slope of Dûn-I. Yes, even in this Isle of Joy, as it seems in this dazzle of golden light and splashing wave, there is the like mortal gloom and immortal mystery which moved the minds of the old seers and

bards. Yonder, where that thin spray quivers against the thyme-set cliff, is the Spouting Cave, where to this day the Mar-Tarbh, dread creature of the sea, swims at the full of the tide. Beyond, out of sight behind these craggy steeps, is Port-na-Churaich, where, a thousand years ago, Columba landed in his coracle. Here, eastward, is the landing-place, for the dead of old, brought hence out of Christendom for sacred burial in the Isle of the Saints. All the story of the Gael is here. Iona is the microcosm of the Gaelic world.

Last night, about the hour of the sun's going, I lay upon the heights near the cave, overlooking the Machar—the sandy, rock-frontiered plain of duneland on the west side of Iona, exposed to the Atlantic. There was neither bird nor beast, no living thing to see, save one solitary human creature. The man toiled at kelp-burning. I watched the smoke till it merged into the sea-mist that came creeping swiftly out of the north, and down from Dûn-I eastward. At last nothing was visible. The mist shrouded everything. I could hear the dull, rhythmic beat of the waves. That was all. No sound, nothing visible.

It was, or seemed, a long while before a rapid thud-thud trampled the heavy air. Then I heard the rush, the stamping and neighing, of some young mares, pasturing there, as they raced to and fro, bewildered or perchance in play. A glimpse I caught of three, with flying manes and tails; the others were blurred shadows only. A swirl, and the mist

disclosed them; a swirl, and the mist enfolded them again. Then, silence once more.

Abruptly, though not for a long time thereafter, the mist rose and drifted seaward.

All was as before. The kelp-burner still stood, straking the mouldering seaweed. Above him a column ascended, bluely spiral, dusked with shadow.

The kelp-burner; who was he but the Gael of the Isles? Who but the Gael in his old-world sorrow? The mist falls and the mist rises. He is there all the same, behind it, part of it; and the column of smoke is the incense out of his longing heart that desires Heaven and Earth, and is dowered only with poverty and pain, hunger and weariness, a little isle of the seas, a great hope, and the love of love.

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF FIONA MACLEOD

(WILLIAM SHARP)

In Seven Volumes. Crown 8vo. Price 5s. net each. With Photogravure Frontispieces from Photographs and Drawings by D. Y. CAMERON, A.R.S.A.

I. PHARAIS: THE MOUNTAIN LOVERS
II. THE SIN EATER: THE WASHER OF THE FOOD AND OTHER LEGENDARY MORALITIES
III. THE DOMINION OF DREAMS: UNDER THE DARK STAR
IV. THE DIVINE ADVENTURE: IONA: STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL HISTORY
V. THE WINGED DESTINY: STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUAL HISTORY OF THE GAEL
VI. THE SILENCE OF AMOR: WHERE THE FOREST MURMURS
VII. POEMS AND DRAMAS

ALSO UNIFORM WITH THE ABOVE

SELECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM SHARP

In Five Volumes

I. POEMS
II. STUDIES AND APPRECIATIONS
III. PAPERS CRITICAL AND REMINISCENT
IV. LITERARY GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVEL-SKETCHES
V. VISTAS: THE GIPSY CHRIST AND OTHER PROSE IMAGININGS

AND

A MEMOIR OF WILLIAM SHARP

(FIONA MACLEOD)

Compiled by Mrs WILLIAM SHARP — In Two Volumes

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

THE IONA BOOKS

A series of Booklets for the Scottish Church and Scottish nation. Each is artistically produced and bound in hand-made paper wrapper with Celtic design. Crown 8vo ($7\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ inches). *Sixpence net.*

I. ANCIENT SCOTTISH PRAYERS

With Introduction by ANNIE H. SMALL, Principal of Women's Missionary College, Edinburgh. These Prayers were issued with the Scottish Psalter of 1595. 60 pages.

II. THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYER

by J. H. OLDHAM, Secretary to the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference. 42 pages.

III. A SCOTTISH ANTHOLOGY

by A. H. S. Fragments of Scottish prose and verse covering 1300 years. 68 pages.

IV. AN ACT OF PRAYER

A Guide in Intercession. Prepared by A. H. S. Introduction by Professor D. S. CAIRNS, of Aberdeen. 44 pages.
New Edition interleaved for personal use.

V. ST. BRIDE

The Greatest Woman of the Celtic Church, by JAMES WILKIE, B.L., F.S.A.

THE IONA BOOKS

VI. ST. COLUMBA

The Lord's Song in a Strange Land, by Rev. G. E. TROUP, M.A.(Oxon.), Minister of Well Road United Free Church, Moffat.

VII. THE ISLE OF DREAMS—IONA

by FIONA MACLEOD.

VIII. COMASAN NA H-URNUIGH

A Gaelic Edition of "The Possibilities of Prayer," translated by Rev. MALCOLM MACLEOD, M.A., Minister of Strath United Free Church, Broadford, Skye. *Illustrated.*

IX. ST. CUTHBERT

of Melrose, Lindisfarne, Farne, and Durham, by the Rev. DUGALD BUTLER, M.A., D.D., Galashiels, author of "Archbishop Leighton," "Abernethy Church and Parish." *With two illustrations.*

X. RELIQUES OF ANCIENT SCOTTISH DEVOTION

The Litany of Dunkeld, Queen Margaret's Prayer, and portions of the Book of Deer, by the Rev. Professor COOPER, D.D., of Glasgow University.

T. N. FOULIS, PUBLISHER

15 FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH &

91 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON