

The Last of the Druids

A Lyric of a Man a Maid and the Mistletoe Bough



Silence! his foot on the path of her dreaming—
A silence and pause at the symbol and sign—
One little berry has dropt from the green-bough,
Dropt like a bead from a goblet of wine,
Or the welcome that falls from her lips with a curtsy—
Her curtsy and lips that are tender and sweet
As the grace of the leaves from the quiver of Cupid,
Or the berry that falls to the grace of her feet!

HALF of her beauty her faith in his ardor,
Half of her faith in the berries above,
Last of the Druids, she waits for his coming
Under the mystical symbol of love;
While Cupid, her ally, with quiver and yarrow
Hidden away in the leaves of his screen,
Has tightened his bowstring and fitted an arrow
To shoot from his ambush of silver and green!



"Nay, Sir Impetuous!—Think you to gather
The rose of desire in the winter of love?
Wouldst know how the heart of a maiden is ripened?—
Look to the leaves and the berries above;
By tears of the April awakened to pity,
By dread of the lightning and thunder undone,
Coaxed into blossom and blush of the summer—
At last are they ripe for the kiss of the sun!



"But ah, though denying, I know that they fear it—
That day when the bough shall hang dreary and low,
And only the passionless knights of the woodland
Shiver and quake in the wind and the snow;
And I, like the blossom that treasures her honey
And baffles the bee for an hour or a day—
Ah—learn you a lesson; the hive of the winter
Is full with the flowers and the sweets of the May!"

How can he know that she waited his coming,
And measured her pause to the woodcraft and art—
The flutter of leaves and the fall of ripe berries
That dropt to her feet at the call of her heart?
And how can she guess that the lure of her fancy
Brought him a slave to her dream of desire?—
Pursued and pursuing a moment delaying
Love's roses aswoon in a garden of fire!

Shoot! Cupid, shoot from the green of your ambush!—
Now, while the berries lie tender and warm—
Warm on her tips, and ablush with his breathing,
And faint as a leaf in the power of a storm!
The lightning has struck, and the wind of the summer
Blows in her hair from the mistletoe now;
Shoot! ere the leaves of love's magic have withered,
And the berries untasted fall dead from the bough!

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