I
BELIEVE IN THE PRACTICE and philosophy of what
we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the
evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they
are, in the power of creating magical illusions, in the
visions of truth in the depths of the mind when the
eyes are closed; and I believe in three doctrines, which
have, as I think, been handed down from early times,
and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices.
These doctrines are:

1. That the borders of our mind are ever shifting,
    and that many minds can flow into one another, as it
    were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.

2. That the borders of our memories are as shifting,
    and that our memories are a part of one great
    memory, the memory of Nature herself.

3. That this great mind and great memory can be
    evoked by symbols.

I often think I would put this belief in magic from
me if I could, for I have come to see or to imagine, in
men and women, in houses, in handicrafts, in nearly all
sights and sounds, a certain evil, a certain ugliness, that
comes from the slow perishing through the centuries of
a quality of mind that made this belief and its evidences
common over the world.

II

Some ten or twelve years ago, a man with whom I
have since quarrelled for sound reasons, a very singular
man who had given his life to studies other men
despised, asked me and an acquaintance, who is now
dead, to witness a magical work. He lived a little way
from London, and on the way my acquaintance told me
that he did not believe in magic, but that a novel of
Bulwer Lytton's had taken such a hold upon his ima-
gination that he was going to give much of his time
and all his thought to magic. He longed to believe in
it, and had studied, though not learnedly, geomancy,
astrology, chiromancy, and much cabalistic symbolism,
and yet doubted if the soul outlived the body. He
awaited the magical work full of scepticism. He ex-
pected nothing more than an air of romance, an illusion
as of the stage, that might capture the consenting ima-
gination for an hour. The evoker of spirits and his
beautiful wife received us in a little house, on the edge
of some kind of garden or park belonging to an ec-
centric rich man, whose curiosities he arranged and
dusted, and he made his evocation in a long room that
had a raised place on the floor at one end, a kind of dais,
but was furnished meagrely and cheaply. I sat with my
acquaintance in the middle of the room, and the evoker
of spirits on the dais, and his wife between us and him.
He held a wooden mace in his hand, and turning to a
tablet of many-coloured squares, with a number on
each of the squares, that stood near him on a chair, he
repeated a form of words. Almost at once my ima-
gination began to move of itself and to bring before me
vivid images that, though never too vivid to be imagina-
tion, as I had always understood it, had yet a motion
of their own, a life I could not change or shape. I
remember seeing a number of white figures, and wondering whether their mitred heads had been suggested by the mitred head of the mace, and then, of a sudden, the image of my acquaintance in the midst of them. I told what I had seen, and the evoker of spirits cried in a deep voice, 'Let him be blotted out,' and as he said it the image of my acquaintance vanished, and the evoker of spirits or his wife saw a man dressed in black with a curious square cap standing among the white figures. It was my acquaintance, the seeress said, as he had been in a past life, the life that had moulded his present, and that life would now unfold before us. I too seemed to see the man with a strange vividness. The story unfolded itself chiefly before the mind's eye of the seeress, but sometimes I saw what she described before I heard her description. She thought the man in black was perhaps a Fleming of the sixteenth century, and I could see him pass along narrow streets till he came to a narrow door with some rusty ironwork above it. He went in, and wishing to find out how far we had one vision among us, I kept silent when I saw a dead body lying upon the table within the door. The seeress described him going down a long hall and up into what she called a pulpit, and beginning to speak. She said, 'He is a clergyman; I can hear his words. They sound like Low Dutch.' Then after a little silence, 'No, I am wrong. I can see the listeners; he is a doctor lecturing among his pupils.' I said, 'Do you see anything near the door?' and she said, 'Yes, I see a subject for dissection.' Then we saw him go out again into the narrow streets, following the story of the seeress, sometimes merely

following her words, but sometimes seeing for myself. My acquaintance saw nothing; I think he was forbidden to see, it being his own life, and I think could not in any case. His imagination had no will of its own. Presently the man in black went into a house with two gables facing the road, and up some stairs into a room where a hump-backed woman gave him a key; and then along a corridor, and down some stairs into a large cellar full of retorts and strange vessels of all kinds. Here he seemed to stay a long while, and one saw him eating bread that he took down from a shelf. The evoker of spirits and the seeress began to speculate about the man's character and habits, and decided, from a visionary impression, that his mind was absorbed in naturalism, but that his imagination had been excited by stories of the marvels wrought by magic in past times, and that he was trying to copy them by naturalistic means. Presently one of them saw him go to a vessel that stood over a slow fire, and take out of the vessel a thing wrapped up in numeless cloths, which he partly unwrapped, showing at length what looked like the image of a man made by somebody who could not model. The evoker of spirits said that the man in black was trying to make flesh by chemical means, and though he had not succeeded, his brooding had drawn so many evil spirits about him that the image was partly alive. He could see it moving a little where it lay upon a table. At that moment I heard something like little squeals, but kept silent, as when I saw the dead body. In a moment more the seeress said, 'I hear little squeals.' Then the evoker of spirits heard them, but
said, 'They are not squeals; he is pouring a red liquid out of a retort through a slit in the cloth; the slit is over the mouth of the image and the liquid is gurgling in rather a curious way.' Weeks seemed to pass by hurriedly, and somebody saw the man still busy in his cellar. Then more weeks seemed to pass, and now we saw him lying sick in a room upstairs, and a man in a conical cap standing beside him. We could see the image too. It was in the cellar, but now it could move feebly about the floor. I saw fainter images of the image passing continually from where it crawled to the man in his bed, and I asked the evoker of spirits what they were. He said, 'They are the images of his terror.' Presently the man in the conical cap began to speak, but who heard him I cannot remember. He made the sick man get out of bed and walk, leaning upon him, and in much terror till they came to the cellar. There the man in the conical cap made some symbol over the image, which fell back as if asleep, and pulling a knife into the other's hand he said, 'I have taken from it the magical life, but you must take from it the life you gave.' Somebody saw the sick man stoop and sever the head of the image from its body, and then fall as if he had given himself a mortal wound, for he had filled it with his own life. And then the vision changed and fluttered, and he was lying sick again in the room upstairs. He seemed to lie there a long time with the man in the conical cap watching beside him, then, I cannot remember how, the evoker of spirits discovered that though he would in part recover, he would never be well, and that the story had got abroad in the town and

shattered his good name. His pupils had left him and men avoided him. He was accursed. He was a magician. The story was finished, and I looked at my acquaintance. He was white and awestruck. He said, as nearly as I can remember, 'All my life I have seen myself in dreams making a man by some means like that. When I was a child I was always thinking out contrivances for galvanising a corpse into life.' Presently he said, 'Perhaps my bad health in this life comes from that experiment.' I asked if he had read Frankenstein, and he answered that he had. He was the only one of us who had, and he had taken no part in the vision.

Then I asked to have some past life of mine revealed, and a new evocation was made before the tablet full of little squares. I cannot remember so well who saw this or that detail, for now I was interested in little but the vision itself. I had come to a conclusion about the method. I knew that the vision may be in part common to several people. A man in chain armour passed through a castle door, and the seeress noticed with surprise the bareness and rudeness of castle rooms. There was nothing of the magnificence or the pageantry she had expected. The man came to a large hall and to a little chapel opening out of it, where a ceremony was taking place. There were six girls dressed in white, who took from the altar some yellow object—I thought it was gold, for though, like my acquaintance, I was told not to see, I could not help seeing. Somebody else thought that it was yellow
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flowers, and I think the girls, though I cannot remember clearly, laid it between the man’s hands. He went out for a time, and as he passed through the great hall one of us, I forget who, noticed that he passed over two gravestones. Then the vision became broken, but presently he stood in a monk’s habit among men-at-arms in the middle of a village reading from a parchment. He was calling villagers about him, and presently he and they and the men-at-arms took ship for some long voyage. The vision became broken again, and when we could see clearly they had come to what seemed the Holy Land. They had begun some kind of sacred labour among palm-trees. The common men among them stood idle, but the gentlemen carried large stones, bringing them from certain directions, from the cardinal points, I think, with a ceremonious formality. The evoker of spirits said they must be making some Masonic house. His mind, like the minds of so many students of these hidden things, was always running on Masonry and discovering it in strange places.

We broke the vision that we might have supper, breaking it with some form of words which I forget. When supper had ended the seeress cried out that while we had been eating they had been building, and that they had built not a Masonic house but a great stone cross. And now they had all gone away but the man who had been in chain armour and two monks we had not noticed before. He was standing against the cross, his feet upon two stone restless a little above the ground, and his arms spread out. He seemed to stand there all day, but when night came he went to a little cell, that

was beside two other cells. I think they were like the cells I have seen in the Aran Islands, but I cannot be certain. Many days seemed to pass, and all day every day he stood upon the cross, and we never saw anybody there but him and the two monks. Many years seemed to pass, making the vision flutter like a drift of leaves before our eyes, and he grew old and white-haired, and we saw the two monks, old and white-haired, holding him upon the cross. I asked the evoker of spirits why the man stood there, and before he had time to answer I saw two people, a man and a woman, rising like a dream within a dream before the eyes of the man upon the cross. The evoker of spirits saw them too, and said that one of them held up his arms and they were without hands. I thought of the two gravestones the man in chain mail had passed over in the great hall when he came out of the chapel, and asked the evoker of spirits if the knight was undergoing a penance for violence, and while I was asking him, and he was saying that it might be so but he did not know, the vision, having completed its circle, vanished.

It had not, so far as I could see, the personal significance of the other vision, but it was certainly strange and beautiful, though I alone seemed to see its beauty. Who was it that made the story, if it were but a story? I did not, and the seeress did not, and the evoker of spirits did not and could not. It arose in three minds, for I cannot remember my acquaintance taking any part, and it rose without confusion, and without labour, except the labour of keeping the mind’s eye awake, and more swiftly than any pen could have written it
out. It may be, as Blake said of one of his poems, that the author was in eternity. In coming years I was to see and hear of many such visions, and though I was not to be convinced, though half convinced once or twice, that they were old lives, in an ordinary sense of the word life, I was to learn that they have almost always some quite definite relation to dominant moods and moulding events in this life. They are, perhaps, in most cases, though the vision I have but just described was not, it seems, among the cases, symbolical histories of these moods and events, or rather symbolical shadows of the impulses that have made them, messages as it were out of the ancestral being of the questioner.

At the time these two visions meant little more to me, if I can remember my feeling at the time, than a proof of the supremacy of imagination, of the power of many minds to become one, overpowering one another by spoken words and by unspoken thought till they have become a single, intense, unhesitating energy. One mind was doubtless the master, I thought, but all the minds gave a little, creating or revealing for a moment what I must call a supernatural artist.

IV

Some years afterwards I was staying with some friends in Paris. I had got up before breakfast and gone out to buy a newspaper. I had noticed the servant, a girl who had come from the country some years before, laying the table for breakfast. As I had passed her I had been telling myself one of those long foolish tales which one tells only to oneself. If something had happened that had not happened, I would have hurt my arm, I thought. I saw myself with my arm in a sling in the middle of some childish adventures. I returned with the newspaper and met my host and hostess in the door. The moment they saw me they cried out, 'Why, the bonne has just told us you had your arm in a sling. We thought something must have happened to you last night, that you had been run over maybe'—or some such words. I had been dining out at the other end of Paris, and had come in after everybody had gone to bed. I had cast my imagination so strongly upon the servant that she had seen it, and with what had appeared to be more than the mind's eye.

One afternoon, about the same time, I was thinking very intently of a certain fellow-student for whom I had a message, which I hesitated about writing. In a couple of days I got a letter from a place some hundreds of miles away where that student was. On the afternoon when I had been thinking so intently I had suddenly appeared there amid a crowd of people in a hotel and as seeming solid as if in the flesh. My fellow-student had seen me, but no one else, and had asked me to come again when the people had gone. I had vanished, but had come again in the middle of the night and given the message. I myself had no knowledge of either apparition.

I could tell of stranger images, of stranger enchantments, of stranger imaginations, cast consciously or unconsciously over as great distances by friends or by myself, were it not that the greater energies of the mind
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seldom break forth but when the deeps are loosened. They break forth amid events too private or too sacred for public speech, or seem themselves, I know not why, to belong to hidden things. I have written of these breakings forth, these loosenings of the deep, with some care and some detail, but I shall keep my record shut. After all, one can but bear witness less to convince him who won't believe than to protect him who does, as Blake puts it, enduring unbelief and disbelief and ridicule as best one may. I shall be content to show that past times have believed as I do, by quoting Joseph Glanvil’s description of the Scholar-Gypsy. Joseph Glanvil is dead, and will not mind disbelief and disbelief and ridicule.

The Scholar-Gypsy, too, is dead, unless indeed perfectly wise magicians can live till it please them to die, and he is wandering somewhere, even if one cannot see him, as Arnold imagined, ‘at some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors, on the warm angle-bench,’ or ‘crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock Hithe,’ or trailing his fingers in the cool stream, or giving ‘store of flowers—the frail-leaf’d white anemone, dark blue-bells drenched with dews of summer eves,’ to the girls ‘who from the distant hamlets come to dance around the Fyfield elm in May,’ or ‘sitting upon the river bank o’ergrown,’ living on through time ‘with a free, onward impulse.’ This is Joseph Glanvil’s story:—

There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford who, being of very pregnant and ready parts and yet wanting the encouragement of preferment, was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there, and to cast himself upon the wide world for a livelihood. Now his necessities growing daily on him, and wanting the help of friends to relieve him, he was at last forced to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies, whom occasionally he met with, and to follow their trade for a maintenance. . . . After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. The scholars quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies, and their amazement to see him among such society had wellnigh discovered him; but by a sign he prevented them owning him before that crew, and taking one of them aside privately, desired him with his friend to go to an inn, not far distant, promising there to come to them. They accordingly went thither and he follows: after their first salutation his friends inquire how he came to lead so odd a life as that was, and so joined himself into such a beggary company. The scholar-gipsy having given them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them and could do wonders by the power of imagination, and that himself had learned much of their art and improved it further than themselves could. And to evince the truth of what he told them, he said he’d remove into another room, leaving them to discourse together; and upon his return tell them the sense of what they had talked of; which accordingly he performed, giving
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them a full account of what had passed between them in his absence. The scholars being amazed at so unexpected a discovery, earnestly desired him to unriddle the mystery. In which he gave them satisfaction, by telling them that what he did was by the power of imagination, its phantasy leading theirs; and that himself had dictated to them the discourse they had held together while he was from them; that there were warranteable ways of heightening the imagination to such pitch as to bend another's, and that when he had compassed the whole secret, some parts of which he was yet ignorant of, he intended to leave their company and give the whole world an account of what he had learned.'

If all who have described events like this have not dreamed, we should rewrite our histories, for all men, certainly all imaginative men, must be for ever casting forth enchantments, glamour, illusions; and all men, especially tranquil men who have no powerful ego-tistic life, must be continually passing under their power. Our most elaborate thoughts, elaborate purposes, precise emotions, are often, as I think, not really ours, but have on a sudden come up, as it were, out of Hell or down out of Heaven. The historian should remember, should he not? angels and devils not less than kings and soldiers, and plotters and thinkers. What matter if the angel or devil, as indeed certain old writers believed, first wrapped itself with an organised shape in some man's imagination? what matter 'if God Himself only acts or is in existing beings or men,' as Blake believed? we must none the less admit that invisible beings, far-wandering influences, shapes that may have floated from a hermit of the wilderness, brood over council-chambers and studies and battlefields. We should never be certain that it was not some woman treading in the wine-press who began that subtle change in men's minds, that powerful movement of thought and imagination about which so many Germans have written; or that the passion, because of which so many countries were given to the sword, did not begin in the mind of some shepherd boy, lighting up his eyes for a moment before it ran upon its way.

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We cannot doubt that barbaric people receive such influences more visibly and obviously, and in all likelihood more easily and fully than we do, for our life in cities, which deafens or kills the passive meditative life, and our education that enlarges the separated, self-moving mind, have made our souls less sensitive. Our souls that were once naked to the winds of heaven are now thickly clad, and have learned to build a house and light a fire upon its hearth, and shut to the doors and windows. The winds can, indeed, make us draw near to the fire, or can even lift the carpet and whistle under the door, but they could do worse out on the plains long ago. A certain learned man, quoted by Mr. Lang in his Making of Religion, contends that the memories of primitive man and his thoughts of distant places must have had the intensity of hallucination,
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because there was nothing in his mind to draw his attention away from them—an explanation that does not seem to me complete—and Mr. Lang goes on to quote certain travellers to prove that savages live always on the edges of vision. One Laplander who wished to become a Christian, and thought visions but heathenish, confessed to a traveller, to whom he had given a minute account of many distant events, read doubtless in that traveller’s mind, ‘that he knew not how to make use of his eyes, since things altogether distant were present to them.’ I myself could find in one district in Galway but one man who had not seen what I can but call spirits, and he was in his dotage. ‘There is no man mowing a meadow but sees them at one time or another,’ said a man in a different district.

If I can unintentionally cast a glamour, an enchantment, over persons of our own time who have lived for years in great cities, there is no reason to doubt that men could cast intentionally a far stronger enchantment, a far stronger glamour, over the more sensitive people of ancient times, or that men can still do so where the old order of life remains unbroken. Why should not the Scholar-Gipsy cast his spell over his friends? Why should not Saint Patrick, or he of whom the story was first told, pass his enemies, he and all his clerics, as a herd of deer? Why should not enchanters like him in the Morte d’Arthur make troops of horse seem but grey stones? Why should not the Roman soldiers, though they came of a civilisation which was ceasing to be sensitive to these things, have trembled for a moment before the enchantments of the Druids

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of Mona? Why should not the Jesuit father, or the Count Saint-Germain, or whoever the tale was first told of, have really seemed to leave the city in a coach and four and by all the Twelve Gates at once? Why should not Moses and the enchanter of Pharaoh have made their staffs, as the medicine-men of many primitive peoples make their pieces of old rope, seem like devouring serpents? Why should not that mediaeval enchanter have made summer and all its blossoms seem to break forth in middle winter?

May we not learn some day to rewrite our histories, when they touch upon these things?

Men who are imaginative writers to-day may well have preferred to influence the imagination of others more directly in past times. Instead of learning their craft with paper and a pen they may have sat for hours imagining themselves to be stocks and stones and beasts of the wood, till the images were so vivid that the passers-by became but a part of the imagination of the dreamer, and wept or laughed or ran away as he would have them. Have not poetry and music arisen, as it seems, out of the sounds the enchanter made to help their imagination to enchant, to charm, to bind with a spell themselves and the passers-by? These very words, a chief part of all praises of music or poetry, still cry to us their origin. And just as the musician or the poet enchants and charms and binds with a spell his own mind when he would enchant the mind of others, so did the enchanter create or reveal for himself as well as for others the supernatural artist or genius, the seeming transitory mind made out of many minds,
whose work I saw, or thought I saw, in that suburban house. He kept the doors, too, as it seems, of those less transitory minds, the genius of the family, the genius of the tribe, or it may be, when he was mighty-souled enough, the genius of the world. Our history speaks of opinions and discoveries, but in ancient times when, as I think, men had their eyes ever upon those doors, history spoke of commandments and revelations. They looked as carefully and as patiently towards Sinai and its thunders as we look towards parliaments and laboratories. We are always praising men in whom the individual life has come to perfection, but they were always praising the one mind, their foundation of all perfection.

VI

I once saw a young Irishwoman, fresh from a convent school, cast into a profound trance, though not by a method known to any hypnotist. In her waking state she thought the apple of Eve was the kind of apple you can buy at the greengrocer's, but in her trance she saw the Tree of Life with ever-sighing souls moving in its branches instead of sap, and among its leaves all the fowls of the air, and on its highest bough one white fowl wearing a crown. When I went home I took from the shelf a translation of The Book of Concealed Mystery, an old Jewish book, and cutting the pages came upon this passage, which I cannot think I had ever read: 'The Tree, . . . is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. . . . in its branches the birds

1 Translated by Mathers in The Kabbalah Unveiled.
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in my diary that on December 27, 1897, a seer, to whom I had given a certain old Irish symbol, saw Brigid, the goddess, holding out 'a glittering and wriggling serpent,' and yet I feel certain that neither I nor he knew anything of her association with the serpent until Carmina Gadelica was published a few months ago. And an old Irishwoman who can neither read nor write has described to me a woman dressed like Dian, with helmet, and short skirt and sandals, and what seemed to be buskins. Why, too, among all the countless stories of visions that I have gathered in Ireland, or that a friend has gathered for me, are there none that mix the dress of different periods? The seers when they are but speaking from tradition will mix everything together, and speak of Finn mac Cumhal going to the Assizes at Cork. Almost every one who has ever busied himself with such matters has come, in trance or dream, upon some new and strange symbol or event, which he has afterwards found in some work he had never read or heard of. Examples like this are as yet too little classified, too little analysed, to convince the stranger, but some of them are proof enough for those they have happened to, proof that there is a memory of Nature that reveals events and symbols of distant centuries. Mystics of many countries and many centuries have spoken of this memory; and the honest men and charlatans, who keep the magical traditions which will some day be studied as a part of folk-lore, base most that is of importance in their claims upon this memory. I have read of it in Paracelsus and in some Indian book that describes the people of past days as still living within

it, 'thinking the thought and doing the deed.' And I have found it in the 'Prophetic Books' of William Blake, who calls its images 'the bright sculptures of Los's Hall'; and says that all events, 'all love stories,' renew themselves from those images. It is perhaps well that so few believe in it, for if many did many would go out of parliaments and universities and libraries and run into the wilderness to so waste the body, and to so hush the unquiet mind that, still living, they might pass the doors the dead pass daily; for who among the wise would trouble himself with making laws or in writing history or in weighing the earth if the things of eternity seemed ready to hand?

vii

I find in my diary of magical events for 1899 that I awoke at 3 A.M. out of a nightmare, and imagined one symbol to prevent its recurrence, and imagined another, a simple geometrical form, which calls up dreams of luxuriant vegetable life, that I might have pleasant dreams. I imagined it faintly, being very sleepy, and went to sleep. I had confused dreams which seemed to have no relation with the symbol. I awoke about eight, having for the time forgotten both nightmare and symbol. Presently I dozed off again and began half to dream and half to see, as one does between sleep and waking, enormous flowers and grapes. I awoke and recognised that what I had dreamed or seen was the kind of thing appropriate to the symbol before I remembered having used it. I find another record, though made some time after the event, of having imagined
over the head of a person, who was a little of a seer, a combined symbol of elemental air and elemental water. This person, who did not know what symbol I was using, saw a pigeon flying with a lobster in his bill. I find that on December 13, 1898, I used a certain star-shaped symbol with a seeress, getting her to look at it intently before she began seeing. She saw a rough stone house, and in the middle of the house the skull of a horse. I find that I had used the same symbol a few days before with a seer, and that he had seen a rough stone house, and in the middle of the house something under a cloth marked with the Hammer of Thor. He had lifted the cloth and discovered a skeleton of gold with teeth of diamonds, and eyes of some unknown dim precious stones. I had made a note to this last vision, pointing out that we had been using a Solar symbol a little earlier. Solar symbols often call up visions of gold and precious stones. I do not give these examples to prove my arguments, but to illustrate them. I know that my examples will awaken in all who have not met the like, or who are not on other grounds inclined towards my arguments, a most natural incredulity. It was long before I myself would admit an inherent power in symbols, for it long seemed to me that one could account for everything by the power of one imagination over another, or by telepathy, as the Society for Psychical Research would say. The symbol seemed powerful, I thought, merely because we thought it powerful, and we would do just as well without it. In those days I used symbols made with some ingenuity instead of merely imagining them. I used to give them

to the person I was experimenting with, and tell him to hold them to his forehead without looking at them; and sometimes I made a mistake. I learned from these mistakes that if I did not myself imagine the symbol, in which case he would have a mixed vision, it was the symbol I gave by mistake that produced the vision. Then I met with a seer who could say to me, ‘I have a vision of a square pond, but I can see your thought, and you expect me to see an oblong pond,’ or, ‘The symbol you are imagining has made me see a woman holding a crystal, but it was a moonlight sea I should have seen.’ I discovered that the symbol hardly ever failed to call up its typical scene, its typical event, its typical person, but that I could practically never call up, no matter how vividly I imagined it, the particular scene, the particular event, the particular person I had in my own mind, and that when I could, the two visions rose side by side.

I cannot now think symbols less than the greatest of all powers whether they are used consciously by the masters of magic, or half unconsciously by their successors, the poet, the musician and the artist. At first I tried to distinguish between symbols and symbols, between what I called inherent symbols and arbitrary symbols, but the distinction has come to mean little or nothing. Whether their power has arisen out of them-

\[1\] I forgot that my ‘subconsciousness’ would know clairvoyantly what symbol I had really given and would respond to the associations of that symbol. I am, however, certain that the main symbols (symbolic roots, as it were) draw upon associations which are beyond the reach of the individual ‘subconsciousness’.
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selves, or whether it has an arbitrary origin, matters little, for they act, as I believe, because the Great Memory associates them with certain events and moods and persons. Whatever the passions of man have gathered about, becomes a symbol in the Great Memory, and in the hands of him who has the secret it is a worker of wonders, a caller-up of angels or of devils. The symbols are of all kinds, for everything in heaven or earth has its association, momentous or trivial, in the Great Memory, and one never knows what forgotten events may have plunged it, like the toadstool and the ragweed, into the great passions. Knowledgeable men and women in Ireland sometimes distinguish between the simples that work cures by some medical property in the herb, and those that do their work by magic. Such magical simples as the husk of the flax, water out of the fork of an elm-tree, do their work, as I think, by awakening in the depths of the mind where it mingles with the Great Mind, and is enlarged by the Great Memory; some curative energy, some hypnotic command. They are not what we call faith cures, for they have been much used and successfully, the traditions of all lands affirm, over children and over animals, and to me they seem the only medicine that could have been committed safely to ancient hands. To pluck the wrong leaf would have been to go uncured, but, if one had eaten it, one might have been poisoned.

VIII

I have now described that belief in magic which has set me all but unwilling among those lean and fierce minds who are at war with their time, who cannot accept the days as they pass, simply and gladly; and I look at what I have written with some alarm, for I have told more of the ancient secret than many among my fellow-students think it right to tell. I have come to believe so many strange things because of experience, that I see little reason to doubt the truth of many things that are beyond my experience; and it may be that there are beings who watch over that ancient secret, as all tradition affirms, and resent, and perhaps avenge, too fluent speech. They say in the Aran Islands that if you speak over-much of the things of Faery your tongue becomes like a stone, and it seems to me, though doubtless naturalistic reason would call it auto-suggestion or the like, that I have often felt my tongue become just so heavy and clumsy. More than once, too, as I wrote this very essay I have become uneasy, and have torn up some paragraph, not for any literary reason, but because some incident or some symbol that would perhaps have meant nothing to the reader, seemed, I know not why, to belong to hidden things. Yet I must write or be of no account to any cause, good or evil; I must commit what merchandise of wisdom I have to this ship of written speech, and after all, I have many a time watched it put out to sea with not less alarm when all the speech was rhyme. We who write, we who bear witness, must often hear our hearts cry out against us, complaining because of their hidden things, and I know not but he who speaks of wisdom may sometimes, in the change that is coming upon the world, have to fear the anger of the people of Faery, whose country is
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the heart of the world—'The Land of the Living Heart.' Who can keep always to the little pathway between speech and silence, where one meets none but discreet revelations? And surely, at whatever risk, we must cry out that imagination is always seeking to remake the world according to the impulses and the patterns in that Great Mind, and that Great Memory? Can there be anything so important as to cry out that what we call romance, poetry, intellectual beauty, is the only signal that the supreme Enchanter, or some one in His councils, is speaking of what has been, and shall be again, in the consummation of time?

1901

The Happiest of the Poets

THE HAPPIEST OF THE POETS

Rossetti in one of his letters numbers his favourite colours in the order of his favour, and throughout his work one feels that he loved form and colour for themselves and apart from what they represent. One feels sometimes that he desired a world of essences, of unmixed powers, of impossible purities. It is as though the Last Judgment had already begun in his mind and that the essences and powers, which the Divine Hand had mixed into one another to make the loam of life, fell asunder at his touch. If he painted a flame or a blue distance, he painted as though he had seen the flame out of whose heart all flames had been taken, or the blue of the abyss that was before all life; and if he painted a woman's face he painted it in some moment of intensity when the ecstasy of the lover and of the saint are alike, and desire becomes wisdom without ceasing to be desire. He listens to the cry of the flesh till it becomes proud and passes beyond the world where some immense desire that the intellect cannot understand mixes with the desire for a body's warmth and softness. His genius like Shelley's can hardly stir but to the rejection of Nature, whose delight is profusion, but never intensity, and like Shelley's it follows the Star of the Magi, the Morning and Evening Star, the mother of impossible hope, although it follows through deep woods, where the Star glimmers among dew-drenched boughs, and not through 'a wind-swept valley.