



by Marah Ellis Ryan



Decorated by Will Vreeland



Bird Publisher, 2010

CONTENTS/page

The Druid Path	4
The Enchanting of Doirenn	19
Liadan and Kurithir	49
Dervail Nan Ciar	67
Randuff of Cumanac ...	105
The Dark Rose ...	121
<i>About Marah Ellis Ryan...</i>	146

THE DRUID PATH

Alma

Traditional Air

A musical score for the piece 'Alma', labeled as a 'Traditional Air'. The score is written on seven staves of music in a single system. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 6/8. The notation includes various note values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and trills. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C'. The piece concludes with a trill and a series of six dots, indicating a repeat or continuation.

THE DRUID PATH



HADRAIG, son of Nihil of the Ua Dinan, held silent his white hound on the hill of Cromm Cru, and looked down the far valley of blue mists where the sea of the west rolled in.

Back beyond the sweet-smelling reaches of the heather he could hear the bay of the hounds of his uncle Kieran, Tiern over North Tormond. He could no longer hear the clink of their silver bridles, nor the laughter of their ladies, nor the scream of hawk on dove.

But the hill of the ancient god was a sweet place in the silence, and he rested there, and made him a pillow of fern - and listened to the soft breath of the wind in the rowan tree. Its sigh of love for the green earth was a sweet song, and he slept there to that music, while the sun rushed beyond the wide seas of the west, and soft-footed dusk crept after, filling all the hollows with the gray web in which the night is held.

A curious dream of white birds came to him there; the dream had come to him before, yet not with clearness - and in the dream was a dusk path in an ancient wood, and a well there - a well rising and sinking with the tide, and a vision of a maid moving before him into the shadows - a vision swathed in a white cloud, with hidden face but a voice in which was held all the music of beauty of life in all the world. His soul was as a harp on which that music played, and his body was but as a shell left behind while the wings of harmony lifted him - lifted until he was borne as a cloud far from the touch of the earth - and he heard a word over and over in his ear, until he strove with might to echo it, and then, in the striving, the smell of the heather was again in his nostrils, and the forefeet of the white hound were on his breast, and above him a star shone in the soft rose of the sky.

He lay entranced, thrilled by the ecstasy of the perfect dream, and somewhere from the very earth came a song to his ear and an earth echo of the word he had striven for and missed. And this was the song he heard:

*Make strong your charms against Danaan,
Danaan of the snowy breast,
Who lured the souls of the Gods of Old
To the land of the mystic west.*

The voices were those of two boys, and with them was an old shepherd who bore fire in a strange bowl of thin carven stone, and in the arms of the boys were dry heather and branches of yew. And in fear they let fall the yew at sight of Phadraig, and at sight of his white hound beside him.

"Peace to you," spake Phadraig. "And who be you to sing here a song of charms? And who is Danaan?"

"A blessing of all saints on you from Jerusalem to Innis Gluair," spake the ancient who bore the fire. "We bear here boughs for the puring fires of Beltain, and the mothers of these boys bade them make a prayer and sing the song ere they crossed the three magic circles of the Tor of Cromm Cru."

"And is this that hill?" asked Phadraig. "As a childling they tell me I was nursed in sight of it, but never before have I stood on it, and who made the song of the charm?"

"One of the anointed of the saints who loved every plain and black crag and forest dell between us and the sea. It was no other than Nihil of the Deep Wood."

"Strange, that is," said Phadraig, the son of Nihil, "other songs of that singer I have been taught, but never this one until I hear it as in a dream in this strange place; and look, there are white sea birds against the stars - and they also were of the dream."

"On the night of Beltain strange power is abroad - and strange dreams! And what is the name of you who venture to sleep on the hill of the ancient gods in the dusk of this day?"

And when Phadraig told him, the old herdsman would have knelt, but Phadraig took his hand and spoke to him in kindness, yet could get from him no other word as to the song of Danaan.

"Go to Roiseen of the Glen, the wise woman down by the sea," he said. "She was nurse to you and knows all your father Nihil would have had you know of the names of the ancient gods of the land."

"But Danaan was the name of a people - the old, old people, soul brothers to the fairies!"

"Ay - it may be. And may not a people have a spirit, as has a person? Have we not our own this day in Erin, our Mother of the Land? Ask me no more, O Lord of the Ua Dinan, but go you down to Roiseen of the Glen, and peace go with you."

And with his white hound at his heels and one of the shepherd boys as guide, Phadraig took trail to the sea glen and would have gone through a deep wood in the valley, but the boy drew back.

"Not there, my lord," said he.

"Yet it is the shorter way."

"No way is shorter if you never come out alive, O Lord of the Ua Dinan."

"What abides within the wood?"

"No living thing, my lord, but the water in the Druid's well, and it pulses there as if it might be the heartbeat of the ocean beyond, yet the water is not salt."

"This is a land of strange riddles I am coming back to this day," said Phadraig, "but do you not hear music in the wood - or is it the wind through the new buds?"

"The priest tells us it is the winds, or the waves, or the night birds in their shelter, and that is the thing we must say," said the boy, and neither of them spoke of the white birds above them against the sky.

To Phadraig it was as if he had walked into a new life from the hour he slept on the western hill of Cromm Cru. And all the path of it held music to make the heart glad of life - yet sad with inarticulate yearnings. The life of the halls of Kieran was left behind, and he trod the heath as an exile returned.

In the cot of Roiseen of the Glen there was a rabbit stewing on the hearth, and Roiseen herself spinning the silver flax at the open door in the starlight.

"Oh, is it yourself come back on your own feet to greet me this day?" she said, and wept with very gladness, and kissed the young hand of him. But he kissed her brown cheek instead, and they talked long after the shepherd boy was asleep in the forest leaves in the byre.

But it was not that night of Beltain that Phadraig asked of the unknown things, for he had noted the salt sprinkled on the threshold to bar out influences of the old gods; so that night they talked of Nihil, dead ere he had seen his son, and Kreda, his wife, dead at the birthing, and all the grandeurs of the house of the Ua Dinan where Phadraig had lived his life of training for the work of a chief. Yet out of it all he had come back with the heart of a boy, and sat on a three-legged stool at the door of Roiseen, and fashioned a flute of alder-wood, and piped on it in the sunshine of the morning.

Then, when the milk was put away, and Roiseen settled with the distaff and the whirling strands, he spoke the name singing in his heart.

"Mother Roiseen, it is to you I am coming with a thing to ask: who is Danaan of the birds of white?"

"That you should ask it, and you with the name of a saint on you! Get you to your hawking or hunting the deer! And see that you pluck primroses to scatter at your door this night that the Ancient People send you no call of Danaan - the men who follow the call wander far."

"To the land of the mystic west do they wander?"

"Ay, that they do; far over the green meadows of the waters where the horses of Lir have their pastures. From the cliff below you can see them running in races endlessly to the shore."

"I see the waves run in," said Phadraig, but she was not to be fooled.

"Ay, and more than the waves to you, as to your father! But you are idling in thought, Phadraig, son of Nihil."

"What other task when there is peace in Tormond? And the Ua Dinan, as you mayhaps have heard, cannot abide the sight of me near his ailing son, and Kethlen his wife, bitter as gall because she has borne a weakling."

"True that is. You stand in their eyes as a threat at the crowns they wear."

"To me a pipe on the hills instead, and the songs of my father to sing! Roiseen, why has the song of Danaan never been given me?"

"That name has been through the ages a hated word to the women of your house and in each generation they try to smother it out."

"And why is that?"

"It gave a youth the seeking eye and the wandering foot, and it was said to keep young the heart of a man when all his mates went tottering under the sod. No - the women could not abide the thought of that, and they smother it out. Ay, that is the way with the woman-heart."

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The books mentioned below have been of much assistance to me while preparing these tales of Ancient Ireland, and I hereby express my indebtedness to the authors of the respective volumes.

Graves, Alfred Perceval, *Songs of Erin*. Boosey & Co., London.

Gregory, Lady Isabella Augusta, *Book of Saints and Wonders*. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Hull, Eleanor, *Textbook of Irish Literature*. Benziger Brothers.

Hyde, Douglas, *Literary History of Ireland, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Joyce, Patrick Weston, *Ancient Irish, Music*. Longmans, Green & Co.

Keating, Geoffrey (1570?-1644?), *History of Ireland (Foras Feasa ar Eirinn'*, preface signed by the author in 1629).

Mangan, James Clarence, *Complete Poems*. P. J. Kenedy & Sons.

Meyer, Kuno, Translation from the *Book of Lismore*.

Petrie, George, *Ancient Collection of the Music of Ireland*.

Annals of the Four Masters. Compiled by three scholars of the historic O'Clery house and Peregrin O'Duidenan, the historian and genealogist, early in the seventeenth century, and produced by John Colgan in 1645. The annals begin with the deluge, and close with the year 1616.

The initial letters used at the beginning of the Tales, and other decorations in book and cover, are taken from *The Book of Kells*, acknowledged to be the most beautiful illuminated vellum in the known world. This ancient volume is the work of an unnamed Irish monk of Kells monastery in the seventh century. The weird and commanding beauty of the pages have been at once both the inspiration and despair of artists for centuries, and the wonder of line and color would be unbelievable but for the ancient manuscript treasured at Trinity College, Dublin. The soul of an artist went into the precious volume known even in tenth-century Europe as the "wonder of the Far Western World."

The music for the book was arranged by Geraldine G. Saltzberg.

All quoted verses or chants are in italic.

M. E. R.

About Marah Ellis Ryan

Marah Ellis Ryan was born either February 27, 1860 or 1866. As Ellis Martin, she married Samuel Erwin Ryan (b. 1834), an Irish actor and comedian, in 1883. She died July 11, 1934.

She was a popular author, actress and activist for Native Americans at the turn of the 20th century.

The New York Times published this obituary:

Los Angeles, July 11 (AP)—Mrs. Marah Ellis Ryan, writer and authority on Indians, died today at her home in the Silver Lake district from encephalitis (sleeping sickness) at the age of 68. Mrs. Ryan went to live among the Hopi Indians twenty-five years ago and claimed to be the only white woman ever admitted to the secret religious rites. She was noted as an authority on the tribal life of the Indians in the United States and Mexico. Mrs. Ryan was born in Butler County, Pa., a daughter of Graham and Sidney Mechling Martin. As a young woman she wrote a few poems and stories under the pen-name of "Ellis Martin." In 1883 she married S. Erwan Ryan of New York, an actor, who died several years ago. Among the many books by Mrs. Ryan issued over a period of thirty-six years, 1889-1925, were the following: "In Love's Domain," "Squaw Eloise," "A Flower of France," "That Girl Montana," "Indian Love Letters," "The Woman of Twilight," "The House of the Dawn," "Treasure Trail," and "The Dancer of Tuluum."

Source: [Wikipedia](#).