

The Unfinished Dream

Walter De la Mare

Rare-sweet the air in that unimagined country—

My spirit had wandered far

From its weary body close-enwrapt in slumber

Where its home and earth-friends are;

A milk-like air—and of light all abundance;

And there a river clear

Painting the scene like a picture on its bosom,

Green foliage drifting near.

No sign of life I saw, as I pressed onward,

Fish, nor beast, nor bird,

Till I came to a hill clothed in flowers to its summit,

Then shrill small voices I heard.

And I saw from concealment a company of elf-folk

With faces strangely fair,

Talking their unearthly scattered talk together,

A bind of green-grasses in their hair,

Marvellously gentle, feater far than children,
In gesture, mien and speech,
Hastening onward in translucent shafts of sunshine,
And gossiping each with each.

Straw-light their locks, on neck and shoulder falling,
Faint of almond the silks they wore,
Spun not of worm, but as if inwoven of moonbeams
And foam on rock-bound shore;

Like lank-legged grasshoppers in June-tide meadows,
Amalillios of the day,
Hungriely gazed upon by me—a stranger,
In unknown regions astray.

Yet, happy beyond words, I marked their sunlit faces,
Stealing soft enchantment from their eyes,
Tears in my own confusing their small image,
Harkening their bird-like cries.

They passed me, unseeing, a waft of flocking linnets;

Sadly I fared on my way;
And came in my dream to a dreamlike habitation,
Close-shut, festooned and grey.

Pausing, I gazed at the porch dust-still, vine-wreathèd,
Worn the stone steps thereto,
Mute hung its bell, whence a stony head looked downward,
Grey 'gainst the sky's pale-blue—

Strange to me: strange....

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