

DRUIDS.

*A Memory of an old Sacrifice. The sacred Victim is slain for an Omen. It is the End of an Age: being released the Ghost foretells the Passing of the old Worship, the Death of his cult.*

*The Sacrifice is made at the Summer Solstice, at Night.*

## DRUIDS.

**I**n the soul's twilight broods the glittering core  
Of wonder ; all the stirring of the sea  
At dawn, and all the yearning of the shore  
At evening, and all the mystery  
Of Time, at odds with his eternity.  
Wherefore the shadows as they lift anew  
From the waking mind disclose the ancient woods ;  
The white-robed Masters stare into the blue  
Entrails of ravens : as dim multitudes  
Of strange souls gather round, to watch the moods  
Of large and yellow-silver flames of fire,  
And brown-grey smoke, and perfumes of sweet  
breath.

Even so lightly once I struck the lyre  
At evening, before a magic death.  
Back from my breast I drew the heavy robe,  
Baring the curving belly, the sun's globe.  
The silver knife was over me : I lay  
In ecstasy of life-in-death : away  
Faded the silly world : again I knew

The source of living, as they shaved the hair,  
From breast and belly and all; luminous blue  
Swathed round me; I was dead, no longer there  
Before the knife had split my navel: far  
Away I heard arise the ancient prayer,  
Scarcely I knew a pang. From some dim star  
I saw: and how they caught the scarlet flood  
That pulsed from gasping thighs: I saw the blood  
Crimson the flame. Then suddenly there fell  
The old god's glory on me. Earth was mud,  
And I was swimming, easy as the spell  
The priestly voices roared. Then, a white flash,  
I stood before the flame, like living ash  
Gifted with speech. The song died down, and I  
Was the sole voice of that tremendous sky  
Over the sacred wood. Now I knew all  
The Druid mystery: the festival  
Of blood was bared. It was my blood that gave  
The answer of the night, the bitter call  
Of death, responding of the restless wave  
To life. Around me stared a living wall  
Of waiting, hungry shadows, by that flame  
Tempted to the old life. I was a lord  
Of shadows, and a god. Then the Voice roared:  
Speak! And I saw my body's last blood-spasm  
As the old priests bent over it. A name  
They skirled. Should I reply? I saw a chasm  
Before the Altar, invisible to all  
Of flesh. Then flared the thought: The altar's dead.

Then came the word: Woe! was the word I said;  
It was an age's end. I saw them fall,  
Fearful beneath a towering grey of sky;  
This was the omen: Woe. An age to die,  
I the last victim. So I passed from them  
For ever, and I haunted the dark hem  
Of the forest, for an age ere birth to rove,  
The Sacred Victim of an Holy Grove.  
Then was I born anew; from that old birth  
I culled this vision of forgotten earth.