



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Song of the Deathless Voice

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'Twas the dusky Hallowe'en —
Hour of fairy and of wraith,
When in many a dim-lit green,
'Neath the stars' prophetic sheen,
As the olden legend saith,
All the future may be seen,
And when — an older story hath —
Whate'er in life hath ever been
Loveful, hopeful, or of wrath,
Cometh back upon our path.
I was dreaming in my room,
'Mid the shadows, still as they;
Night, in veil of woven gloom,
Wept and trailed her tresses gray
O'er her fair, dead sister — Day.
To me from some far-away
Crept a voice — or seemed to creep —
As a wave-child of the deep,
Frightened by the wild storm's roar
Creeps low-sighing to the shore
Very low and very lone
Came the voice with song of moan,
This, weak-sung in weaker word,
Is the song that night I heard:



How long! Alas, how long!
How long shall the Celt chant the sad song of hope,
That a sunrise may break on the long starless night of our past?
How long shall we wander and wait on the desolate slope
Of Thabors that promise our Transfiguration at last?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long, O Fate! How long!
How long shall our sunburst reflect but the sunset of Right,
When gloaming still lights the dim immemorial years?
How long shall our harp's strings, like winds that are wearied of night,
Sound sadder than moanings in tones all a-trembling with tears?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long, O Right! How long!
How long shall our banner, the brightest that ever did flame
In battle with wrong, droop furled like a flag o'er a grave?
How long shall we be but a nation with only a name,
Whose history clanks with the sounds of the chains that enslave?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long! Alas, how long!
How long shall our isle be a Golgotha, out in the sea,
With a cross in the dark? Oh, when shall our Good Friday close?
How long shall thy sea that beats round thee bring only to thee
The wailings, O Erin! that float down the waves of thy woes?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long! Alas, how long!
How long shall the cry of the wronged, O Freedom! for thee
Ascend all in vain from the valleys of sorrow below?

How long ere the dawn of the day in the ages to be,
When the Celt will forgive, or else tread on the heart of his foe?
How long, O Lord! How long!

Whence came the voice? Around me gray silence fall;
And without in the gloom not a sound is astir 'neath the sky;
And who is the singer? Or hear I a singer at all?
Or, hush! Is't my heart athrill with some deathless old cry?

Ah! blood forgets not in its flowing its forefathers' wrongs —
They are the heart's trust, from which we may ne'er be released;
Blood keeps in its throbs the echoes of all the old songs
And sings them the best when it flows thro' the heart of a priest.

Am I not in my blood as old as the race whence I sprung?
In the cells of my heart feel I not all its ebb and its flow?
And old as our race is, is it not still forever as young,
As the youngest of Celts in whose breast Erin's love is aglow?

The blood of a race that is wronged beats the longest of all,
For long as the wrong lasts, each drop of it quivers with wrath;
And sure as the race lives, no matter what fates may befall,
There's a Voice with a Song that forever is haunting its path.

Aye, this very hand that trembles thro' this very line,
Lay hid, ages gone, in the hand of some forefather Celt,
With a sword in its grasp, if stronger, not truer than mine,
And I feel, with my pen, what the old hero's sworded hand felt —

The heat of the hate that flashed into flames against wrong,
The thrill of the hope that rushed like a storm on the foe;
And the sheen of that sword is hid in the sheath of the song
As sure as I feel thro' my veins the pure Celtic blood flow.

The ties of our blood have been strained o'er thousands of years,
And still are not severed, how mighty soever the strain;
The chalice of time o'erflows with the streams of our tears,
Yet just as the shamrocks, to bloom, need the clouds and their rain,

The Faith of our fathers, our hopes, and the love of our isle
Need the rain of our hearts that falls from our grief-clouded eyes,
To keep them in bloom, while for ages we wait for the smile
Of Freedom, that some day — ah! some day! shall light Erin's skies.

Our dead are not dead who have gone, long ago, to their rest;
They are living in us whose glorious race will not die —
Their brave buried hearts are still beating on in each breast

Of the child of each Celt in each clime 'neath the infinite sky.

Many days yet to come may be dark as the days that are past,
Many voices may hush while the great years sweep patiently by;
But the voice of our race shall live sounding down to the last,
And our blood is the bard of the song that never shall die.

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