

# **The Nuts of Knowledge eBook**

## **The Nuts of Knowledge by George William Russell**

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# Page 1

FOR BRIAN WHEN HE IS GROWN UP THIS HANDFUL OF THE NUTS OF KNOWLEDGE I HAVE GATHERED ON THE SECRET STREAMS.

I thought, beloved, to have brought to you  
A gift of quietness and ease and peace,  
Cooling your brow as with the mystic dew  
Dropping from twilight trees.

Homeward I go not yet; the darkness grows;  
Not mine the voice to still with peace divine:  
From the first fount the stream of quiet flows  
Through other hearts than mine.

Yet of my night I give to you the stars,  
And of my sorrow here the sweetest gains,  
And out of hell, beyond its iron bars,  
My scorn of all its pains.

## THE NUTS OF KNOWLEDGE

A cabin on the mountain side hid in a grassy nook  
Where door and windows open wide that friendly stars may look.  
The rabbit shy can patter in, the winds may enter free,  
Who throng around the mountain throne in living ecstasy.

And when the sun sets dimmed in eve and purple fills the air,  
I think the sacred Hazel Tree is dropping berries there  
From starry fruitage waved aloft where Connla's Well o'erflows;  
For sure the enchanted waters pour through every wind that blows.

I think when night towers up aloft and shakes the trembling dew  
How every high and lonely thought that thrills my being through  
Is but a ruddy berry dropped down through the purple air,  
And from the magic tree of life the fruit falls everywhere.

## IMMORTALITY

We must pass like smoke or live within the spirit's fire;  
For we can no more than smoke unto the flame return  
If our thought has changed to dream, our will unto desire,  
As smoke we vanish though the fire may burn.

Lights of infinite pity star the grey dusk of our days:  
Surely here is soul: with it we have eternal breath:

In the fire of love we live, or pass by many ways,  
By unnumbered ways of dream to death.

### **THE HERMIT**

Now the quietude of earth  
Nestles deep my heart within;  
Friendships new and strange have birth  
Since I left the city's din.

Here the tempest stays its guile,  
Like a big kind brother plays,  
Romps and pauses here awhile  
From its immemorial ways.

Now the silver light of dawn  
Slipping through the leaves that fleck  
My one window, hurries on,  
Throws its arms around my neck.

Darkness to my doorway hies,  
Lays her chin upon the roof,  
And her burning seraph eyes  
Now no longer keep aloof.

Here the ancient mystery  
Holds its hands out day by day,  
Takes a chair and croons with me  
By my cabin built of clay.

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When the dusky shadow flits,  
By the chimney nook I see  
Where the old enchanter sits,  
Smiles, and waves, and beckons me.

### THE GREAT BREATH

Its edges foamed with amethyst and rose,  
Withers once more the old blue flower of day:  
There where the ether like a diamond glows  
Its petals fade away.

A shadowy tumult stirs the dusky air;  
Sparkle the delicate dew, the distant snows;  
The great deep thrills for through it everywhere  
The breath of beauty blows.

I saw how all the trembling ages past,  
Moulded to her by deep and deeper breath,  
Neared to the hour when Beauty breathes her last  
And knows herself in death.

### THE DIVINE VISION

This mood hath known all beauty for it sees  
O'erwhelmed majesties  
In these pale forms, and kingly crowns of gold  
On brows no longer bold,  
And through the shadowy terrors of their hell  
The love for which they fell,  
And how desire which cast them in the deep  
Called God too from his sleep.  
O, pity, only seer, who looking through  
A heart melted like dew,  
Seest the long perished in the present thus,  
For ever dwell in us.  
Whatever time thy golden eyelids ope  
They travel to a hope;  
Not only backward from these low degrees  
To starry dynasties,  
But, looking far where now the silence owns  
And rules from empty thrones,  
Thou seest the enchanted halls of heaven burn



For joy at our return.  
Thy tender kiss hath memory we are kings  
For all our wanderings.  
Thy shining eyes already see the after  
In hidden light and laughter.

## THE BURNING GLASS

A shaft of fire that falls like dew,  
And melts and maddens all my blood,  
From out thy spirit flashes through  
The burning glass of womanhood.

Only so far; here must I stay:  
Nearer I miss the light, the fire:  
I must endure the torturing ray,  
And, with all beauty, all desire.

Ah, time-long must the effort be,  
And far the way that I must go  
To bring my spirit unto thee,  
Behind the glass, within the glow.

## A VISION OF BEAUTY

Where we sat at dawn together, while the star-rich heavens shifted,  
We were weaving dreams in silence, suddenly the veil was lifted.  
By a hand of fire awakened, in a moment caught and led  
Upward to the wondrous vision: through the star-mists overhead  
Flare and flaunt the monstrous highlands; on the sapphire coast of night  
Fall the ghostly froth and fringes of the ocean of the light.  
Many coloured shine the vapours:

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to the moon-eye far away

'Tis the fairy ring of twilight mid the spheres of night and day,  
Girdling with a rainbow cincture round the planet where we go,  
We and it together fleeting, poised upon the pearl glow;  
We and it and all together flashing through the starry spaces  
In a tempest dream of beauty lighting up the place of places.  
Half our eyes behold the glory: half within the spirit's glow  
Echoes of the noiseless revels and the will of beauty go.  
By a hand of fire uplifted—to her star-strewn palace brought,  
To the mystic heart of beauty and the secret of her thought:  
Here of yore the ancient mother in the fire mists sank to rest,  
And she built her dreams about her, rayed from out her burning breast:  
Here the wild will woke within her lighting up her flying dreams,  
Round and round the planets whirling break in woods and flowers and streams,  
And the winds are shaken from them as the leaves from off the rose,  
And the feet of earth go dancing in the way that beauty goes,  
And the souls of earth are kindled by the incense of her breath  
As her light alternate lures them through the gates of birth and death.  
O'er the fields of space together following her flying traces,  
In a radiant tumult thronging, suns and stars and myriad races  
Mount the spirit spires of beauty, reaching onward to the day  
When the Shepherd of the Ages draws his misty hordes away  
Through the glimmering deeps to silence, and within the awful fold  
Life and joy and love forever vanish as a tale is told,  
Lost within the mother's being. So the vision flamed and fled,  
And before the glory fallen every other dream lay dead.

## REST

On me to rest, my bird, my bird:  
The swaying branches of my heart  
Are blown by every wind toward  
The home whereto their wings depart.

Build not your nest, my bird, on me:  
I know no peace but ever sway:  
O, lovely bird, be free, be free,  
On the wild music of the day.

But sometimes when your wings would rest,  
And winds are laid on quiet eves:





Come, I will bear you breast to breast,  
And lap you close with loving leaves.

### THE EARTH BREATH

From the cool and dark-lipped furrow breathes a dim delight  
Through the woodland's purple plumage to the diamond night.  
Aureoles of joy encircle every blade of grass  
Where the dew-fed creatures silent and enraptured pass.  
And the restless ploughman pauses, turns, and wondering,  
Deep beneath his rustic habit finds himself a king;  
For a fiery moment looking with the eyes of God  
Over fields a slave at morning bowed him to the sod.  
Blind and dense with revelation

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every moment flies.

And unto the mighty mother, gay, eternal, rise  
All the hopes we hold, the gladness, dreams of things to be.  
One of all thy generations, mother, hails to thee.  
Hail, and hail, and hail for ever, though I turn again  
From thy joy unto the human vestiture of pain.  
I, thy child who went forth radiant in the golden prime,  
Find thee still the mother-hearted through my night in time:  
Find in thee the old enchantment there behind the veil  
Where the gods, my brothers, linger. Hail, for ever hail!

## DIVINE VISITATION

The heavens lay hold on us: the starry rays  
Fondle with flickering fingers brow and eyes:  
A new enchantment lights the ancient skies.  
What is it looks between us gaze on gaze?  
Does the wild spirit of the endless days  
Chase through my heart some lure that ever flies?  
Only I know the vast within me cries  
Finding in thee the ending of all ways.  
Ah, but they vanish; the immortal train  
From thee, from me, depart, yet take from thee  
Memorial grace: laden with adoration  
Forth from this heart they flow that all in vain  
Would stay the proud eternal powers that flee  
After the chase in burning exultation.

## THE MASTER SINGER

A laughter in the diamond air, a music in the trembling grass;  
And one by one the words of light as joydrops through my being pass.  
I am the sunlight in the heart, the silver moonglow in the mind;  
My laughter runs and ripples through the wavy tresses of the wind.  
I am the fire upon the hills, the dancing flame that leads afar  
Each burning-hearted wanderer, and I the dear and homeward star.  
A myriad lovers died for me, and in their latest yielded breath  
I woke in glory giving them immortal life though touched by death.  
They knew me from the dawn of time: if Hermes beats his rainbow wings,  
If Angus shakes his locks of light, or golden-haired Apollo sings,  
It matters not the name, the land; my joy in all the gods abides:



Even in the cricket in the grass some dimness of me smiles and hides.  
For joy of me the day star glows, and in delight and wild desire  
The peacock twilight rays aloft its plumes and blooms of shadowy fire,  
Where in the vastness too I burn through summer nights and ages long,  
And with the fiery footed Watchers shake in myriad dance and song.

## APHRODITE

Not unremembering we pass our exile from the starry ways:  
One timeless hour in time we caught from the long night of endless days.  
With solemn gaiety the stars danced far withdrawn on elfin heights:  
The lilac breathed amid the shade of green and blue and citron lights.

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But yet the close enfolding night seemed on the phantom verge of things,  
For our adoring hearts had turned within from all their wanderings:  
For beauty called to beauty and there thronged at the enchanter's will  
The vanished hours of love that burn within the Ever-living still.  
And sweet eternal faces put the shadows of the earth to rout,  
And faint and fragile as a moth your white hand fluttered and went out.  
Oh, who am I who tower beside this goddess of the twilight air?  
The burning doves fly from my heart and melt within her bosom there.  
I know the sacrifice of old they offered to the mighty queen,  
And this adoring love has brought us back the beauty that has been.  
As to her worshippers she came descending from her glowing skies  
So Aphrodite I have seen with shining eyes look through your eyes:  
One gleam of the ancestral face which lighted up the dawn for me:  
One fiery visitation of the love the gods desire in thee!

### ILLUSION

What is the love of shadowy lips  
That know not what they seek or press,  
From whom the lure for ever slips  
And fails their phantom tenderness?

The mystery and light of eyes  
That near to mine grow dim and cold;  
They move afar in ancient skies  
Mid flame and mystic darkness rolled.

O, beauty, as thy heart o'erflows  
In tender yielding unto me,  
A vast desire awakes and grows  
Unto forgetfulness of thee.

### BABYLON

The blue dusk ran between the streets; my love was winged within my mind;  
It left to-day and yesterday and thrice a thousand years behind.  
To-day was past and dead for me for from to-day my feet had run  
Through thrice a thousand years to walk the ways of ancient Babylon.  
On temple top and palace roof the burnished gold flung back the rays



Of a red sunset that was dead and lost beyond a million days.  
The tower of heaven turns darker blue; a starry sparkle now begins;  
The mystery and magnificence, the myriad beauty and the sins  
Come back to me. I walk beneath the shadowy multitude of towers;  
Within the gloom the fountain jets its pallid mist in lily flowers.  
The waters lull me, and the scent of many gardens, and I hear  
Familiar voices, and the voice I love is whispering in my ear.  
Oh real as in dream all this; and then a hand on mine is laid:  
The wave of phantom time withdraws; and that young Babylonian maid,  
One drop of beauty left behind from all the flowing of that tide,  
Is looking with the self-same eyes, and here in Ireland by my side.  
Oh, light our life in Babylon, but Babylon has taken wings,  
While we are in the calm and proud procession of eternal things.



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### ALTER EGO

All the morn a spirit gay  
Breathes within my heart a rhyme,  
'Tis but hide and seek we play  
In and out the courts of Time.

Fairy lover, when my feet  
Through the tangled woodland go,  
'Tis thy sunny fingers fleet  
Fleck the fire dewes to and fro.

In the moonlight grows a smile  
Mid its rays of dusty pearl—  
'Tis but hide and seek the while,  
As some frolic boy and girl.

When I fade into the deep  
Some mysterious radiance showers  
From the jewel-heart of sleep  
Through the veil of darkened hours.

Where the ring of twilight gleams  
Round the sanctuary wrought,  
Whispers haunt me—in my dreams  
We are one yet know it not.

Some for beauty follow long  
Flying traces; some there be  
Seek thee only for a song:  
I to lose myself in thee.

### KRISHNA

'I am Beauty itself among beautiful things.'  
Bhagavad-Gita

The East was crowned with snow-cold bloom  
And hung with veils of pearly fleece:  
They died away into the gloom,  
Vistas of peace—and deeper peace. And earth and air and wave and fire  
In awe and breathless silence stood;  
For One who passed into their choir  
Linked them in mystic brotherhood.



Twilight of amethyst, amid  
Thy few strange stars that lit the heights,  
Where was the secret spirit hid?  
Where was Thy place, O Light of Lights?

The flame of Beauty far in space—  
Where rose the fire: in thee? in me?  
Which bowed the elemental race  
To adoration silently?

## SYMBOLISM

Now when the spirit in us wakes and broods,  
Filled with home yearnings, drowsily it flings  
From its deep heart high dreams and mystic moods,  
Mixed with the memory of the loved earth things;  
Clothing the vast with a familiar face;  
Reaching its right hand forth to greet the starry race.

Wondrously near and clear the great warm fires  
Stare from the blue; so shows the cottage light  
To the field labourer whose heart desires  
The old folk by the nook, the welcome bright  
From the house-wife long parted from at dawn—  
So the star villages in God's great depths withdrawn.

Nearer to Thee, not by delusion led,  
Though there no house fires burn nor bright eyes gaze,  
We rise, but by the symbol charioted,  
Through loved things rising up to Love's own ways  
By these the soul unto the vast has wings  
And sets the seal celestial on all mortal things.

## SUNG ON A BY-WAY

What of all the will to do?  
It has vanished long ago,  
For a dream-shaft pierced it through  
From the Unknown Archer's bow.

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What of all the soul to think?  
Some one offered it a cup  
Filled with a diviner drink,  
And the flame has burned it up.

What of all the hope to climb?  
Only in the self we grope  
To the misty end of time:  
Truth has put an end to hope.

What of all the heart to love?  
Sadder than for will or soul,  
No light lured it on above;  
Love has found itself the whole.

### THE HUNTER

Twilight, a timid fawn, went glimmering by,  
And night, the dark blue hunter, followed fast:  
Ceaseless pursuit and flight were in the sky,  
But the long chase had ceased for us at last.

We watched together while the driven fawn  
Hid in the golden thicket of the day:  
We from whose hearts pursuit and flight were gone  
Knew on the hunter's breast her refuge lay.

### THE VISION OF LOVE

The twilight fled away in pearl on the stream,  
And night, like a diamond dome, stood still in our dream.  
Your eyes like burnished stones or as stars were bright  
With the sudden vision that made us one with the night.

We loved in infinite spaces, forgetting here  
The breasts that were lit with life and the lips so near;  
Till the wizard willows waved in the wind and drew  
Me away from the fulness of love and down to you.

Our love was so vast that it filled the heavens up:  
But the soft white form I held was an empty cup,  
When the willows called me back to earth with their sigh,  
And we moved as shades through the deep that was you and I.



**A CALL OF THE SIDHE**

Tarry thou yet, late lingerer in the twilight's glory:  
Gay are the hills with song: earth's faery children leave  
More dim abodes to roam the primrose-hearted eve,  
Opening their glimmering lips to breathe some wondrous story.  
Hush, not a whisper! Let your heart alone go dreaming.  
Dream unto dream may pass: deep in the heart alone  
Murmurs the Mighty One his solemn undertone.  
Canst thou not see adown the silver cloudland streaming  
Rivers of faery light, dewdrop on dewdrop falling,  
Starfire of silver flames, lighting the dark beneath?  
And what enraptured hosts burn on the dusky heath!  
Come thou away with them, for Heaven to Earth is calling.  
These are Earth's voice—her answer—spirits thronging.  
Come to the Land of Youth: the trees grown heavy there  
Drop on the purple wave the starry fruit they bear.  
Drink: the immortal waters quench the spirit's longing.  
Art thou not now, bright one, all sorrow past, in elation,  
Made young with joy, grown brother-hearted with the vast,  
Whither thy spirit wending flits the dim stars past  
Unto the Light of Lights in burning adoration.

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### JANUS

Image of beauty, when I gaze on thee,  
Trembling I waken to a mystery,  
How through one door we go to life or death  
By spirit kindled or the sensual breath.

Image of beauty, when my way I go;  
No single joy or sorrow do I know:  
Elate for freedom leaps the starry power,  
The life which passes mourns its wasted hour.

And, ah, to think how thin the veil that lies  
Between the pain of hell and paradise!  
Where the cool grass my aching head embowers  
God sings the lovely carol of the flowers.

### THE GREY EROS

We are desert leagues apart;  
Time is misty ages now  
Since the warmth of heart to heart  
Chased the shadows from my brow.

Oh, I am so old, meseems  
I am next of kin to Time,  
The historian of her dreams  
From the long forgotten prime.

You have come a path of flowers.  
What a way was mine to roam!  
Many a fallen empire's towers,  
Many a ruined heart my home.

No, there is no comfort, none;  
All the dewy tender breath  
Idly falls when life is done  
On the starless brow of death.

Though the dream of love may tire,  
In the ages long ago  
There were ruby hearts of fire—  
Ah, the daughters of the dawn!



Though I am so feeble now,  
I remember when our pride  
Could not to the Mighty bow;  
We would sweep His stars aside.

Mix thy youth with thoughts like those—  
It were but to wither thee,  
But to graft the youthful rose  
On the old and flowerless tree.

Age is no more near than youth  
To the sceptre and the crown.  
Vain the wisdom, vain the truth;  
Do not lay thy rapture down.

## THE MEMORY OF EARTH

In the wet dusk silver-sweet,  
Down the violet scented ways,  
As I moved with quiet feet  
I was met by mighty days.

On the hedge the hanging dew  
Glassed the eve and stars and skies;  
While I gazed a madness grew  
Into thundered battle cries.

Where the hawthorn glimmered white,  
Flashed the spear and fell the stroke—  
Ah, what faces pale and bright  
Where the dazzling battle broke!

There a hero-hearted queen  
With young beauty lit the van.  
Gone! the darkness flowed between  
All the ancient wars of man.

While I paced the valley's gloom  
Where the rabbits pattered near,  
Shone a temple and a tomb  
With the legend carven clear:

'Time put by a myriad fates  
That her day might dawn in glory.  
Death made wide a million gates  
So to close her tragic story.'

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### BY THE MARGIN OF THE GREAT DEEP

When the breath of twilight blows to flame the misty skies,  
All its vaporous sapphire, violet glow, and silver gleam,  
With their magic flood me through the gateway of the eyes;  
I am one with the twilight's dream.

When the trees and skies and fields are one in dusky mood,  
Every heart of man is wrapt within the mother's breast:  
Full of peace and sleep and dreams in the vasty quietude,  
I am one with their hearts at rest.

From our immemorial joys of hearth and home and love  
Strayed away along the margin of the unknown tide,  
All its reach of soundless calm can thrill me far above  
Word or touch from the lips beside.

Aye, and deep and deep and deeper let me drink and draw,  
From the olden fountain more than light or peace or dream,  
Such primeval being as o'erfills the heart with awe,  
Growing one with its silent stream.

### THREE COUNSELLORS

It was the fairy of the place,  
Moving within a little light,  
Who touched with dim and shadowy grace  
The conflict at its fever height.

It seemed to whisper 'Quietness,'  
Then quietly itself was gone:  
Yet echoes of its mute caress  
Were with me as the years went on.

It was the warrior within  
Who called 'Awake, prepare for fight:  
Yet lose not memory in the din:  
Make of thy gentleness thy might:

'Make of thy silence words to shake  
The long-enthroned kings of earth:  
Make of thy will the force to break  
Their towers of wantonness and mirth.'



It was the wise all-seeing soul  
Who counselled neither war nor peace:  
'Only be thou thyself that goal  
In which the wars of time shall cease.'

## DESIRE

With thee a moment! Then what dreams have play!  
Traditions of eternal toil arise,  
Search for the high austere and lonely way  
The Spirit moves in through eternities.  
Ah, in the soul what memories arise!  
And with what yearning inexpressible,  
Rising from long forgetfulness I turn  
To Thee, invisible, unrumoured, still:  
White for Thy whiteness all desires burn.  
Ah, with what longing once again I turn!

## THE PLACE OF REST

'The soul is its own witness and its own refuge'

Unto the deep the deep heart goes,  
It lays its sadness nigh the breast:  
Only the Mighty Mother knows  
The wounds that quiver unconfessed.

It seeks a deeper silence still;  
It folds itself around with peace,  
Where thoughts alike of good or ill  
In quietness unfostered cease.



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It feels in the unwounding vast  
For comfort for its hopes and fears:  
The Mighty Mother bows at last;  
She listens to her children's tears.

Where the last anguish deepens—there  
The fire of beauty smites through pain:  
A glory moves amid despair,  
The Mother takes her child again.

### SACRIFICE

Those delicate wanderers,  
The wind, the star, the cloud,  
Ever before mine eyes,  
As to an altar bowed,  
Light and dew-laden airs  
Offer in sacrifice.

The offerings arise:  
Hazes of rainbow light,  
Pure crystal, blue, and gold,  
Through dreamland take their flight;  
And 'mid the sacrifice  
God moveth as of old.

In miracles of fire  
He symbols forth his days;  
In gleams of crystal light  
Reveals what pure pathways  
Lead to the soul's desire,  
The silence of the height.

### RECONCILIATION

I begin through the grass once again to be bound to the Lord;  
I can see, through a face that has faded, the face full of rest  
Of the Earth, of the Mother, my heart with her heart in accord:  
As I lie mid the cool green tresses that mantle her breast  
I begin with the grass once again to be bound to the Lord.

By the hand of a child I am led to the throne of the King,  
For a touch that now fevers me not is forgotten and far,



And His infinite sceptred hands that sway us can bring  
Me in dreams from the laugh of a child to the song of a star.  
On the laugh of a child I am borne to the joy of the King.

Well, when all is said and done  
Best within my narrow way,  
May some angel of the sun  
Muse memorial o'er my clay:

'Here was beauty all betrayed  
From the freedom of her state;  
From her human uses stayed  
On an idle rhyme to wait.

Ah, what deep despair might move  
If the beauty lit a smile,  
Or the heart was warm with love  
That was pondering the while.

He has built his monument  
With the winds of time at strife,  
Who could have before he went  
Written in the book of life.

To the stars from which he came  
Empty handed he goes home;  
He who might have wrought in flame  
Only traced upon the foam.'

### THE NUTS OF KNOWLEDGE

'Sinend daughter of Lodan Lucharglan, son of Lir, out of the Land of Promise went to Connlas' Well which is under the sea, to behold it. That is a well at which are the hazels of wisdom and inspiration that is, the hazels of the science of poetry; and in the same hour their fruit and their blossom & their foliage break forth, and then fall upon the well in the same shower, which raises upon the water a royal surge

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of purple.'

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