

*A. H. Mackmurdo*

In *Chaucer's Dream of Good Women* we find ourselves once more inland, in one of the most delightful dells that the country can show, curving back and away into the distance, and sloping gently up on either hand to where the sheltering woods stand looking down on it protectingly. Thence we climb to the lofty crag whence Zephyrus bears off the unconscious Psyche, but our heads perhaps are dizzy, for we do not perceive very clearly the features of the world below, nor do we often again aspire to such heights. Once when through the clearer air we gaze from the table spread for *The Feast of Peleus* upon Olympus' top down to the forest-clad hills and valleys and across to the island-studded sea. Once again when we float with Vesper high above the slumbering plain with its winding river and dome-crowned city nestling in the curve of the bay.

We are in the heart of the woods when the Egyptian princess Saba, tied to the tree, awaits the ravening dragon, and when St. George, armour-clad, slaying the monster, puts an end alike to her peril and the terror of the land.

The murky gloom of Hades, with its sluggish river and sullen cliffs, opens before us when Cupid flies down to rescue Psyche from the dire effects of her own curiosity in opening the forbidden casket, but it is not a very awe-inspiring Hades that we visit, and for drear desolation at its utmost we must seek out the grey ice-ground hills, swathed in chill mists, in that hyperborean land, where the air is full of feathers and night reigns eternal, in which Perseus stepping silently steals the single eye from the three Graiae.

Here again, however, we are really outside the limits of the land, and must return to it in the garden of Pan, where we find one of its most variegated landscapes with its softly swelling hills and winding glen, its bosky woods and upland sward; but, though the shallow streamlet sliding towards us over the many-coloured shingle is very fascinating and there is much excellent detail to call for further consideration, the general effect is one of the least happy of all that the artist has brought away with him, and neither the place itself nor the rendering of it is altogether satisfactory. One cannot but feel that this was not one of his most favoured haunts, that he visited it more rarely and knew it less well than the others, that he must have been, indeed, in some way, deceived himself, and that somewhere in the land there must have been a more luxuriant, less uninviting spot than this in which the mysterious god of wild and woodland had his veritable garden.

When we turn back, at last, to take a final survey of the beauties of the country, we must conclude that it was in its woods and coppices, beside their softly murmuring streamlets, that he best loved to linger. In especial he must have spent many a fruitful hour in that glade of blossoming hawthorns, flooded with clear spring sunlight, in which Vivien now weaves her spells around the too-confiding Merlin, and yet others in that undulating flower-decked mead on the forest-edge where the dense wood thins out into scattered clusters of birch and beech, through and among which winds the meandering path along which the angel has led the Magi to humble themselves before the Virgin and the Christ-child beneath the tree-supported roof of simple thatch.

On the whole, however, wide and difficult as is the choice, I love best the sunny landscape in which cunning Love, disguised as Reason in his doctor's hood, bewilders with his sage sophistries the unsuspecting maidens, for I do not think there is to be found in all the land, beautiful as it is, a more enchanting prospect than this, with its stretch of verdant meadows sloping down and away to the white-walled, red-roofed city perched high on the distant hilltop above the sunny sea. But this leads us to man's handiwork, the buildings of the land, to which I hope to return later.

MALCOLM BELL.

**M**R. ARTHUR H. MACKMURDO AND THE CENTURY GUILD. BY AYMER VALLANCE.

WHEN an artist has any conspicuous individuality an examination of his mature work naturally sets one wondering how, of all possible alternatives, it came to be fashioned just such as it is and no otherwise. Nor does it often happen but that the particular qualities in question may be accounted for by the influences that were brought to bear upon the man at the outset, the malleable period of his career.

In the case of Mr. Arthur Mackmurdo, however, this cannot be premised. For so entirely has he emancipated himself from the toils of prim Neo-Gothic artificiality, that no one would suspect him to have received his early training in the office of a correct Anglican ecclesiastical architect. Yet such was the fact. And Mr. Mackmurdo gratefully acknowledges the value of the example of methodical thoroughness set him by Mr. James Brooks, who made it his practice not to leave the preparation of drawings to clerks and underlings,

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