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MATTHEWS

The CELTIC SPIRIT

HarperOne

DAILY MEDITATIONS *for the* TURNING YEAR

The CELTIC SPIRIT

CAITLÍN MATTHEWS

MAY

Month of May—wanton is the lascivious;
Sheltering the ditch to everyone who loves it;
Joyous the aged in his robes.

—anon. Welsh poem

We welcome May and the coming of the summer season, the festival of Beltane. This month's themes include meditations upon safety and assurance, times of light and darkness, familiarity and the unexpected, holiday and recreation, plenitude, guardians of life, and the green world.

~ 1 MAY ~

May Day

The true man sings
gladly in the bright day,
sings loudly of May—
fair-aspected season.
—JOHN MATTHEWS, "From the Isles of Dream"

Since before dawn this morning, many people all over Britain and Ireland have been up to greet the May, to sing to the rising sun, and to gather greenery and flowers. Others have been preparing to celebrate with May-pole dancing and community festivities, which may include the election and crowning of a king and queen of the May. Most often the holiday royalty are a boy and girl from a local school, but once they would have been the lustiest young man and woman of the district.

This is a day that is still honored in every part of Britain. Despite many efforts to quell its rowdy good humor and lusty enjoyment down through the centuries, it has survived in very good shape up to our own time. The sheer exuberance of May overwhelms the restrictive and humorless reformers who have tried to stop it.

The explosion of May-blossom, sunlight, and burgeoning life needs expression at this time, when workday commonplaces can be thrown to the four winds and the bright joy of living can bubble up within us with natural ecstasy. All who have waited at dawn to welcome in summer have felt the sudden burst of brightness that ignites the deep happiness of the living earth as the sun rises. This brightness is the sign of the ancient Celtic god Bel, whom the Gauls called Belenos—the Shining One—the bright-faced splendor of green summer whose glad arising spreads a shining honey of golden light over the waiting earth. It is hard to witness this sunrise without feeling part of it.

Cancel work today. Go and enjoy May Day by doing something that gives you great pleasure. Try to be outdoors all day if you can. Leave formal meditation alone and let your natural joy find its best outlet.