

THE EXPERIMENT 3

but as he answered Clarke and faced him, there was a flush on his cheek.

'Look about you, Clarke. You see the mountain, and hill following after hill, as wave on wave, you see the woods and orchards, the fields of ripe corn, and the meadows reaching to the reed-beds by the river. You see me standing here beside you, and hear my voice; but I tell you that all these things—yes, from that star that has just shone out in the sky to the solid ground beneath our feet—I say that all these are but dreams and shadows: the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes. There *is* a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision, beyond these "chases in Arras, dreams in a career," beyond them all as beyond a veil. I do not know whether any human being has ever lifted that veil; but I do know, Clarke, that you and I shall see it lifted this very night from before another's eyes. You may think all this strange nonsense; it may be strange, but it is true, and the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan.'

Clarke shivered; the white mist gathering over the river was chilly.

a fire kindled, dancing, and prayers; and round the earth in North America the Cherokees believed they brought the sun back upon its northward path by the same means of rousing its curiosity, so that it would come out to see its counterpart and find out what was going on.

All the more important church festivals are survivals of old rites to the sun. "How many times the Church has decanted the new wine of Christianity into the old bottles of heathendom." Yule-tide, the pagan Christmas, celebrated the sun's turning north, and the old midsummer holiday is still kept in Ireland and on the Continent as St. John's Day by the lighting of bonfires and a dance about them from east to west as the sun appears to move. The pagan Hallowe'en at the end of summer was a time of grief for the decline of the sun's glory, as well as a harvest festival of thanksgiving to him for having ripened the grain and fruit, as we formerly had husking-bees when the ears had been garnered, and now keep our own Thanksgiv-

HALLOWE'EN IN IRELAND 37

they offered a reward to the man who should tie a bundle of twigs about the feet of a criminal who had been hanged by the gate. It was dangerous to go near dead bodies on November Eve, but a bold young man named Nera dared it, and tied the twigs successfully. As he turned to go he saw

"the whole of the palace as if on fire before him, and the heads of the people of it lying on the ground, and then he thought he saw an army going into the hill of Cruachan, and he followed after the army."

GREGORY : *Cuchulain of Muirthemne.*

The door was shut. Nera was married to a fairy woman, who betrayed her kindred by sending Nera to warn King Ailill of the intended attack upon his palace the next November Eve. Nera bore summer fruits with him to prove that he had been in the fairy sid. The next November Eve, when the doors were opened Ailill entered and discovered the crown, emblem of power, took it away, and plundered the treasury. Nera never returned again to the homes of men.

10 THE BOOK OF HALLOWE'EN

down by word of mouth. They taught the immortality of the soul, that it passed from one body to another at death.

“If, as those Druids taught, which kept
the British rites,
And dwelt in darksome groves, there
counselling with sprites,
When these our souls by death our
bodies do forsake
They instantly again do other bodies
take ——”

DRAYTON : *Polyolbion*.

They believed that on the last night of the old year (October 31st) the lord of death gathered together the souls of all those who had died in the passing year and had been condemned to live in the bodies of animals, to decree what forms they should inhabit for the next twelve months. He could be coaxed to give lighter sentences by gifts and prayers.

The badge of the initiated Druid was a glass ball reported to be made in summer of the spittle of snakes, and caught by the priests as the snakes tossed it into the air.

“The wind-flower and the violet, they perished
long ago,
And the wild rose and the orchis died amid
the summer glow :
But on the hill the golden-rod, and the aster in
the wood,
And the yellow sun-flower by the brook in au-
tumn beauty stood,
Till fell the frost from the cold clear heaven,
as falls the plague on men,
And the brightness of their smile was gone
from upland, glade, and glen.”

BRYANT : *Death of the Flowers.*

In the same state as those who are dead,
are those who have never lived, dwelling right
in the world, but invisible to most mortals at
most times. Seers could see them at any time,
and if very many were abroad at once others
might get a chance to watch them too.

“There is a world in which we dwell,
And yet a world invisible.
And do not think that naught can be
Save only what with eyes ye see :
I tell ye that, this very hour,
Had but your sight a spirit’s power,
Ye would be looking, eye to eye,
At a terrific company.”

COXE : *Hallowe'en.*

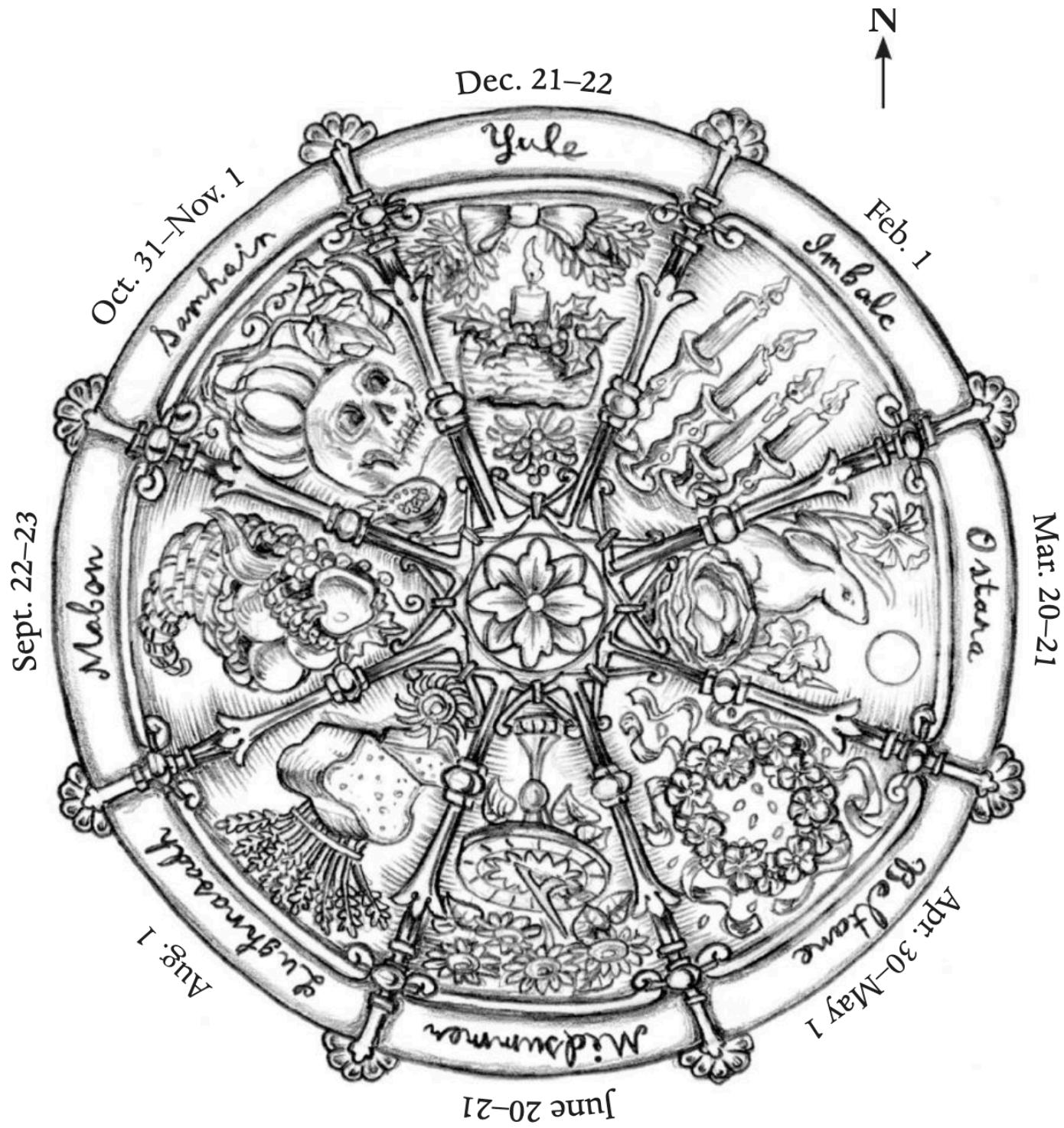
or even the departed ones we wish so much to see again. This veil also makes Samhain season ideal for magick and divination. Halloween coincides with Samhain. Consequently, many Pagans see Halloween as half of the whole celebration. This time of costumes, revelry, and social inversion grew from the same traditional roots. Samhain is serious and loving—Grandma might visit—while Halloween releases our restrained wildness. Many Pagans revere both agricultural cycles and the processes of nature; this dichotomy manifests in this sometimes two-sided celebration. Both the reverent and the silly have their place on October 31.

Samhain is Gaelic and usually pronounced SOW-win. Most Gaelic speakers translate it to mean “summer’s end.” In the early twentieth century, some scholars argued that the name for the holiday came from the word *samhthine*, meaning “fire of peace” (MacLean). Modern Celtic and Druidic Pagans may have several other names for this day as well, depending on the flavor of their Celtic roots. The Welsh may call it *Calan Gaeaf* (or *Nos Calan Gaeaf*), and the Manx *Oie Houney* or *Hop-tu-naa*. The Welsh, Scottish, and Irish customs were often about ensuring home and hearth had protection through the winter. The Manx saw (and still see) *Oie Houney* as a new year celebration. These are not all the same holidays as Samhain exactly—but perhaps around this time of year with the veil so thin, the division of meaning and practice between different cultures thins as well.

*A*t SAMHAIN, THE circle of the year has come to its final spoke in the Wheel. At this time, the harvest has finished, the dying god interred, and the goddess has descended to the underworld to be with her beloved. Above, her people prepare for the veil between the worlds to thin; dead ancestors will be visiting, and with the harvest tools put away, there’s a new year to think about, resources to manage, goodbyes to say, and plans to make. Meanwhile, the now barren land gives way to the rulership of the Crone.

In some climates, October is a sad and beautiful time. Autumn leaves cover the ground like bright bleeding, leaving the trees bare. The grass fades from green to brown and in mornings carries the white hoar of frost. The temperatures grow colder, forcing more and more time indoors, and with what we have gathered, we have just a bit more time to remember the loved ones we no longer have. Many Pagans believe a membrane-like veil separates the world of spirit from the physical world and that it thins the most in late autumn. Things pass through that membrane. Those things might be spirits, faeries,

16
.....
OLD WAYS



Wheel of the Year—Northern Hemisphere

(All solstice and equinox dates are approximate, and one should consult an almanac or a calendar to find the correct dates each year.)