

SHIMMERING WATERS

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Shimmering waters by Cecil Adair

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CECIL ADAIR

**SHIMMERING
WATERS**

SHIMMERING WATERS (includes description of water resources)

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Shimmering Waters

by

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"Whispering Trees," "The Silence of the Hills,"
"Fire Seeds," "Gabriel's Garden," etc.



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BOOK I

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I

I.—NEVER-NEVER

"THE land of Never-Never." All of us have heard of it. We do not know where it is; but its sad name haunts us. It calls up visions of grey distances, untouched by any glow of light and colour. It seems to whisper of broken hopes, vanished illusions, lost ideals. The mists which surround this dreary land may well have been woven from the dreams which have never materialised, but have sunk and drifted away, never to know the joy or glory of fulfilment.

In Madrid's magnificent picture gallery, in a side room not quite easy to find, hangs a great canvas of Goya's, with no explanatory title to it which I have been able to find. Twice have I stood long before that weird presentment of utter dreariness and wondered what had been in the mind of the artist as he portrayed that winding procession of human creatures, with the stamp upon their strange faces as of lost souls. Whither are they wandering? Whence have they come? Hopeless, helpless desperation stamps those countenances. They might well belong to those shadowy multitudes wandering in a dreary land—the land of "Never-Never"—without so much as a gleam of expectation of ever reaching its limits.

It is a picture which haunts. There is terrible genius in its marvellous suggestion of intense, unrelieved,

unilluminated misery. Not revolt, not resistance; but absolute acceptance of something overpowering—in-avoidable. And in looking, there are words which seem to form themselves about those winding ranks, the words of a poet* whose eyes had perhaps at some time or other looked upon this very painting. Listen to his words:

"Look in my face!
My Name is Might-have-been.
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell."

Ah me! If there be this land of "Never-Never," surely its shadows must be full of ghostly whisperings—Too-late . . . No-more. . . . Its visions must mutely circle round those Might-have-beens which can never be now. To these the long Farewell has been poken. The day has passed—is beyond recall. Wandering, always wandering, in mute procession amongst the shadows. Truly a terrible presentment. Wandering through the land of "Never-Never," without hope of escape.

II.—EVER-EVER

But conversely there is surely another land—the land which we may call that of "Ever-Ever." There the sun glows with a golden lustre, with a radiance that seeks and holds. There overhead, in a quiver of azure light, rainbows rest upon shining mountain-tops. There below lie shimmering waters which reflect and transmute delicate nuances of colour and glory. There song-birds flute and flutter; flowers bloom in prismatic beauty; fair frail things dart and hover, animated fragments of

* Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Sonnet No. 97