**“Addio Bella!”** by Rainis (1920)

(“Sketch-books of Dagda”, 1)

The “Five Sketch-books of Dagda” consist of five parts, written in different periods of time — “Addio Bella!”, “Serpent Incantation” (*„Čūsku vārdi”*), “Going Home” (*„Uz mājām”*), “A Silvery Light” (*„Sudrabota gaisma”*) and “Little Girl of the Moon” (*„Mēness meitiņa”*). Rainis himself named these poem collections *novellas* (in Latvian terminology, it’s a short piece of prose with an unexpected, often tragic ending) by which a novel about the life of the lyrical hero Dagda is created. “This unity was felt from the inside at first, as the fate of Dagda that was taking place in the relationship between his soul and the outside world. From the beginning there was nether any intention to use the form of a novel. The poems emerged by themselves, like how grass grows out the earth, without the artistic choosing of the gardener. The poems were a continuation of days and the emotional experience of the soul, told in a form similar to a diary. […] it turned out that it is a novel about a single life, an organic creature”, the poet admitted.

The collection “Addio Bella!” was composed from 1916 to the autumn of 1920. Rainis decided to write a poetic diary type novella about an exile named Dagda. The plot line tells the story of Dagda, who while living in a foreign place happens to come face to face with the beauty, the responsiveness of people and the love of the lovely Olīvija. This life is torn apart by Olīvija’s death. After losing her, Dagda begins to travel until all trace of him is lost. Rainis gave a distinctive Italian feel to this part of the novel. The text is entwined with Italian phrases, ritornelle, place-names, names of women and flowers. It is a new approach to poetry — in which one can create not only a finished poem, but also an impressionistic flow of poetry. It captures the feelings of the moment, atmosphere, and scenes of nature. The poetry of this collection is one of the most beautiful pages of romance poetry in Latvian literature:

“Oh, how could I — endure and carry through life?

If had there not been — ahead of me beauty strewn on fields:

Down here are flowers, above are stars,

The beauty of women beyond it all —“

“Addio Bella!“ was published by the publishing house “Anša Gulbja apgāds” in 1920. The cover illustrations were made by Vilhelms Purvītis. The collection of the first three parts is also printed at the same time, under the title “Three Circles” (*„Treji loki”*).