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THE DARK FIRE

By the same Author

The Hunter, and Other Poems

THE DARK FIRE

By
W. J. Turner

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TO MY MOTHER

Several of these poems have appeared in the *New Statesman*, and are here reprinted by the kind permission of the Editor.

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HAYSTACKS

WINDING across a highland on a wild
October day,
By small and yellow haystacks the road crept
humbly on,
Blue herds of dark-maned stallions tossed
madly in the sky,
And raced across the blots of woods and fields
of wind-quiet stone.

Purple and gold and violet greys and gleaming
shades-unknown
Leaped up and flashed and faded out within
the marvelling soul
That, creeping on that narrow road, passed
brooding squat and still
Those small dim stacks as dreams heaped up
by men in bitter toil:

As dreams heaped up, as memoried hills, as
generations gone
Into the ground, and here arisen as quiet as
hills of stone ;
But linked along the roads they built to catch
each human sound
That quavering in the cold wind-light is sink-
ing to its doom.

And still the dark blue stallions race and toss
white flakes of foam,
And still the dark fields lie as quiet as wind-
forsaken stone,
And still along that humble road the silent
soul plods on,
And still the small dim stacks lie there, the
dreams of men unknown.

THE MUSIC OF A TREE

ONCE, walking home, I passed beneath a
Tree,
It filled the air like dark stone statuary,
It was so quiet and still,
Its thick green leaves a hill
Of strange and faint earth-branching melody :

Over a wall it hung its leaf-starred wood,
And as I lonely there beneath it stood,
In that sky-hollow street
Where rang no human feet,
Sweet music flowed and filled me with its
flood;

And all my weariness then fell away,
The houses were more lovely than by day ;
The Moon and that old Tree
Sang there, and secretly,
With throbbing heart, tip-toe I stole away.

THE SHEPHERD GOES TO WAR

WHEN Dawn drew near and tree or hill
Stood slowly bright, and clear, and still,
It lit the Shepherd, a dark rock
Amid his wide, grey, tumbling flock:

He stands as stand great ancient trees
When streams leap loud about their knees ;
And he moves slow and tranquilly
As clouds across a peaceful sky.

There is no voice for him to hear,
Save from men coming once a year
Beyond that haze-blue mountain bar,
Where the eastern cities are.

In still repose his features sleep,
He grows to look like his own sheep ;
And priestlike at each dawn he stands,
An ancient blessing on those lands.

The days, the years, half life slips by
Under that bright Australian sky :
The gum trees are a rustling dream
Upon the sunshine's golden stream :

The whip-bird and the cockatoo.
They are the cries of dream-birds too,
And more unearthly and unreal
Grows Kookaburra's mocking peal.

Still magic is the country round,
Dead branches strew the snake-bright ground :
In luminous transparency
Quivers each thin-leafed, blue-green tree:

There is an ecstasy of light,
And Silence is as lightning bright:
The earthflower, air, a still, blue blaze
Springs from earth's pot those rainless days.

The Shepherd sees as in a glass
The flitting lyre-birds soundless pass,
The Trees in sunlight standing deep,
A world in an enchanted sleep.

Nor ice, nor snow, nor rough winds come
Unto him from his father's home,
Old and remote in that grey sea
Of cold, mist-haunted memory.

But the men coming once a year
Tell tales incredible to hear,
Tales that sound legendary and dim,
From long-dead camp fires brought to him.

And, brooding when the men have done
How fifty happy years are gone,
Not knowing how, not knowing why,
He turns toward the eastern sky :

There, clasped with towns, meet land and sea,
Thence sail the ships of destiny—
They also sail those ships on high,
Winged with deep purpose, through the sky :

He gazed at that immenser sea,
And those travelling worlds gleamed steadily ;
Then, shouting faintly from a star,
A voice called that old man to war.



The Shepherd reached the coast,—amazed
On Sydney's crowded streets he gazed ;
On Circular Quay, with parted lips,
He stared upon the thronging ships.

But he soon sailed across the sea,
And, fighting through Gallipoli,
He often hungered and thirsted till
Nought stirred in him save human will.

To France from Suvla they were brought,
Time faded from them as they fought

And scratched and dug with only the sky
To stare at as they fall and die.

For long he bore an armoured life,
While chums went West in that ceaseless strife,
Then on the Somme was hit, and lay
At Denmark Hill for many a day.

One of his countrywomen found
Him there, and twice a week came round—
But he spake little, and 'twould mostly be
About their own far-off country :

And in a silence 'twould appear
Glittering with light and ghostly clear;
And she secretly wondered it should seem
So strange, so beautiful a dream.

And Winter passed and Spring returned,
When the Shepherd one day learned
His fighting strength for good was spent
And homewards he would soon be sent :

And when she came again next day
He said : " In a month I shall sail away,
These cities and armies then shall seem
More far, more faint than any dream :

And I shall stand amid my sheep,
In that still light I shall sink deep,
The shouting of nations clashed in war
Shall not a leaf or feather jar ;

But as the days pass I shall stand
Lost between dream and dream; no land,
No thing at all shall solid be,
But cries of joy and mystery :

For I shall see behind my sheep
Tall ships on death-pale oceans leap;
Dark hulls with armed men's faces white,
Crowded beneath the star's cold light.

And ships that gape and shudder down,
And soft, bright bubbles of men that drown,
And the same calm, watching Moon_v o'erhead
My sheep and those wide-eyed, drifting dead :

And the dim hordes of men that sigh
Moon-tossed, sun-cracked, uneasily,
Shall move amid my sightless sheep
When women long have ceased to weep ;

And this vast city's terrible roar
Shall be silent there as it was before,
Though dark among the summer's flowers
Hang its streets, its steeples and its towers ;

And faces that were torn from speech
And in a dream the soul beseech,
My comrades of a month or day,
With me a little while shall stay.

And that still place shall be the cup
Where this world's spirit gathered up
Will be lifted silently
Day by day unto the sky:

Until the brightness of the stars
Is gone from me, and all the wars
Of earth cannot refill my eyes
Again with sheep and trees and skies."

A RITUAL DANCE

(i) THE DANCE

IN the black glitter of night the grey vapour
forest
Lies a dark Ghost in the water, motionless,
dark,
Like a corpse by the bank fallen, and hopelessly
rotting
Where the thin silver soul of the stars silently
dances.

The flowers are closed, the birds are carved on
the trees,
When out of the forest glide hundreds of
spear-holding shadows,
In smooth dark ivory bodies their eyeballs
gleaming.
Forming a gesturing circle beneath the Moon.

The bright-eyed shadows, the tribe in ritual
gathered,
Are dancing and howling, the embryo soul of
a nation :
In loud drum-beating monotonous the tightly
stretched skins
Of oxen that stared at the stars are singing wild
paeans :

Wild paeans for food that magically grew in
the clearings
When he that was slain was buried and is resur-
rected,
And a green mist arose from the mud and shone
in the Moon,
A great delirium of faces, a new generation.

The thin wafer Moon it is there, it is there in
the sky,
The hand-linked circle raise faces of mad
exaltation—
Dance, O you Hunters, leap madly upon the
flung shields,
Shoot arrows into the sky, thin moon-seeking
needles :

Now you shall have a harvest, a belly-full rap-
ture,
There shall be many fat women, full grown,
and smoother than honey,
Their limbs like ivory rounded, and firm as a
berry,
Their lips full of food and their eyes full of
hunger for men !

The heat of the earth arises, a faint love mist
Wan with over-desiring, and in the marshes

Blindly the mud stirs, clouding the dark shining
water,
And troubling the still soft swarms of fallen
stars.

There is)right sweat upon the bodies of cattle,
Great vials of life motionless in the *moon-*
light,
Breathing faint mists over the warm, damp
ground ;
And the cry of a dancer rings through the
shadowy forest.

The tiger is seeking his mate and his glassy
eyes
Are purple and shot with starlight in the grass
shining,
The fiery grass tortured out of the mud and
writhing
Under the sun, now shivering and pale in the
Moon.

The shadows are dancing, dancing, dancing,
dancing :
The grey vapour arms of the forest lie dream-
ing around them ;
The cold, shining moonlight falls from their
bodies and faces,
But caught in their eyes lies prisoned and
faintly gleaming:

And they return to their dwellings within the
grey forest,
Into their dark huts,, burying the moonlight
with them,
Burying the trees and the stars and the flowing
river,
And the glittering spears, and their dark, evocative
gestures.

(2) SLEEP

Hollow the world in the moonlit hour when
the birds are shadows small,
Lost in the swarm of giant leaves and myriad
branches tall ;
When vast thick boughs hang across the sky
like solid limbs of night,
Dug from still quarries of grey-black air by
the pale transparent light,
And the purple and golden blooms of the sun,
each crimson and spotted flower.
Are folded up or have faded away, as that still
intangible power
Floats out of the sky, falls shimmering down,
a silver-shadowy bloom,
On the spear-pointed forest a fragile crown, in
the soul a soft, bright gloom;
Hollow the world when the shadow of man
lies prone and still on its floor,

And the moonlight shut from his empty heart
 weeps softly against his door,
And his terror and joy but a little dream in the
 corner of his house,
And his voice dead in the darkness 'mid the
 twittering of a mouse.

(3)

*Hollow the world ! hollow the world !
 And its dancers shadow-grey ;
And the Moon a silver-shadowy bloom
 Fading and fading away ;
And the forest's grey vapour, and all the trees
 Shadows against the sky ;
And the soul of man and his ecstasies
 A night-forgotten cry.
Hollow the world ! holloio the world !*

IN THE CAVES OF AUVERGNE

HE carved the red deer and the bull
Upon the smooth cave rock,
Returned from war, with belly full.

And scarred with many a knock,
He carved the red deer and the bull
Upon the smooth cave rock.

The stars flew by the cave's wide door,
The clouds wild trumpets blew,
Trees rose in wild dreams from the floor,
Flowers with dream faces grew
Up to the sky, and softly hung
Golden and white and blue.

The woman ground her heap of corn,
Her heart a guarded fire ;
The wind played in his trembling soul
Like a hand upon a lyre,
The wind drew faintly on the stone
Symbols of his desire :

The red deer of the forests dark,
Whose antlers cut the sky,
That vanishes into the mirk
And like a dream flits by,
And by an arrow slain at last
Is but the wind's dark body.

The bull that stands in marshy lakes
As motionless and till
As a dark rock jutting from a plain
Without a tree or hill,
The bull that is the sign of life,
Its sombre, phallic will.

And from the dead, white eyes of them
The wind springs up anew,
It blows upon the trembling heart,
And bull and deer renew
Their flitting life in the dim past
When that dead Hunter drew.

I sit beside him in the night,
And, fingering his red stone,
I chase through endless forests dark
Seeking that thing unknown,
That which is not red deer or bull,
But which by them was shown.

By those stiff shapes in which he drew
His soul's eialted cry,
When flying down the forest dark
He slew and knew not why,
When he was filled with song, and strength
Flowed to him from the sky.

The wind blows from red deer and bull,
The clouds wild trumpets blare,
Trees rise in wild dreams from the earth,
Flowers with dream faces stare—
*O Hunter, your own shadow stands
Within your forest lair.*

SONG

THE Sun has come I know.
But yesterday I stood
Beside it in the wood—
But O how pale, how softly it did glow.

I stooped to warm my hands
Before its rain-washed gold,
But it was pebbly-cold,
Startled to find itself in these dark lands !

THE ROBBER

THE Trees were taller than the night,
And through my window square,
Earth-stupefied, great oranges
Drownsed in the leaf-carved air.

Into that tree-top crowded dream
A white arm stretched, and soon^y
Those greeiy-gold oranges were plucked,
Were sucked pale by the Moon.

And white and still that robber lay
On the frail boughs asleep,
Eating the solid substance through
In silence clear and deep.

Suddenly he went, and then
The wood was dark as death :
Come back, O robber ; robber, come ;
These grey trees are but breath :

These grey trees are but breath, the Night
Is a wind-walled, dream-filled Hall !
But on the mirror of the air
The wood wreathed dark and tall.

No movement and no sound there was
Within that silent House,
Behind a cloud the Robber laughed
In a mad white carouse.

KENT IN WAR

THE pebbly brook is cold to-night,
Its water soft, as air,
A clear, cold, crystal-bodied wind
Shadowless and bare,
Leaping and running in this world
Where dark-horned cattle stare :

Where dark-horned cattle stare, hoof-firm
On the dark pavements of the sky,
And trees are mummies swathed in sleep,
And small dark hills crowd wearily :
Soft multitudes of snow-grey clouds
Without a sound march by.

Down at the bottom of the road
I smell the woody damp
Of that cold spirit in the grass,
And leave my hill-top camp
With its long gun pointing in the sky—
I take the Moon for lamp.

I stop beside the bright cold glint^v
Of that thin spirit in the grass,
So gay it is, so innocent!
I watch its sparkling footsteps pass
Lightly from smooth round stone to stone,
Hid in the dew-hung grass.

My lamp shines in the globes^a of dew,
And leaps into that crystal wind
Running along the shaken grass
To each dark hole that it can find—
The crystal wind, the Moon my lamp,
Have vanished in a wood that's blind.

High lies my small, my shadowy camp,
Crowded about by small dark hills ;
With sudden small white flowers the sky
Above the woods' dark greenness fills ;
And hosts of dark-browed, muttering trees
In trance the white Moon stills.

I move among their tall grey forms,
A thin moon-glimmering, wandering Ghost,
Who takes his lantern through the world
In search of life that he has lost,
While watching by that long lean gun
Up on his small hill post.

DEATH'S MEN

UNDER a grey October sky
The little squads that drill
Click arms and legs mechanically,
Emptied of ragged will:

Of ragged will that frets the sky
From crags juts ragged Pines,
A wayward immortality,
That flies from Death's trim lines.

The men of Death stand trim and neat,
Their faces stiff as stone,
Click, clack, go four and twenty feet
From twelve machines of bone.

" Click, clack, left! right! form fours ! incline!"
The jack-box sergeant cries ;
For twelve erect and wooden dolls
One clockwork doll replies.

And twelve souls wander 'mid still clouds
In a land of snow-drooped trees,
Faint, foaming streams fall in grey hills
Like beards in old men's knees.

Old men, old hills, old kings, their beards
Cold stone-grey, still cascades /

Hung high above this shuddering earth
Where the red blood sinks and fades.

Then the quietness of all ancient things
Their jound and full repose
As balm upon twelve wandering souls
Down from the greasy flow flows.

• • • • •
The rooks from out the tall, gaunt trees
In shrieking circles pass ;
Click, clack, click, clack go Death's trim men
Across the Autumn grass.

SUNFLOWERS

IN Erith's streets I saw them come,
I saw them come ;
They stood against a villa wall,
They were as strangers mournful all,
Far from their home ;
With dust blew down the dirty streets,
The eager children's call.

In Erith's streets where hovels lie,
Close packed and trim
They came, feeling the unseen sky,
In that sad street where a child's bright cry
Grows quickly dim,
And Slatternly women sit and stare,
And then go in and die.

I saw their faces when they woke
In Erith's streets ;
It was a wonder men could see
Those golden sons of misery
In Erith's streets,
In Erith's streets and marvel not
At such a mystery !

RECOLLECTING A VISIT TO W. B. YEATS

IT is most pitiful to watch men go
In search of beauty with despairing eyes,
And what it is they lack as this world lies
Open before their gaze they do not, know.
These porcelain skies with billows of graven
snow
They paint on cold, thin cups, and draw from
strings
Voices of mourning winds and sense of wings ;
From woods rob sad-faced flowers and bid
them grow
Nearer their souls; ay, creep out in the night
And steal the stars and the bright Moon from
Heaven,
And bring them home to decorate their dreams—
My God it is a strange and pitiful sight
To see the treasury of a poet's room
And him alone there shrouded in beauty's
gloom !

MUSIC

WHEN the last note is played and void the
hall

I sometimes think that then music begins,
Scattered on chairs lie horns and violin^',
The Harp droops silent, standing by the wall ;
On the live ear no sounds of music fall,
The organ sleeps, coiled in its branching wood ;
But this deep soundlessness is music's food,
This quiet is big with thunder, if I call
At once a thousand spirits rave and cry,
Those instruments gape, quivering helplessly,
With strangled voices vibrant and wild they
lie;

And I can hear in that great solitude
Madness and grief, not the smooth harmony
That presently, subdued, they'll sing to me.

THE VOYAGE

WHEN I remember how the bark of Youth
Left port invited by the smooth bright
 sea,
With white wings stretched, to find the goddess
 Truth
Rise from deep waters shining magically ;
And how his eyes dimmed with the ache of
 staring,
And how his ears deafened by roaring spray
Seek still a track dark water-hills o'er-faring,
Still strain to catch her music in some bay:
And his bright years all sunk in the cold wave,
And love's most fair soft-glinting armoury
Lying salt-rusted in a watery grave ;
His voyage but an arabesque upon the sea—
I think, finding such beauty is in this,
That, loving Truth, Truth had been always his.

EPITHALAMIUM FOR A MODERN WEDDING

*“WE that so long have held each other dear,
Join hands, Beloved ; purposing to be
One hand and life, one effort and career,
One soul and Self, into eternity”*

Can the lover share his soul,
Or the mistress show her mind ;
Can the body beauty share,
Or lust satisfaction find ?

Marriage is but keeping house,
Sharing food and company,
What has this to do with love
Or the body's beauty ?

If love means affection, I
Love old trees, hats, coats and things.
Anything that's been with me
In my daily sufferings.

That is how one loves a wife—
There's a human interest too,
And a pity for the days
We so soon live through.

What has this to do with love,
The anguish and the sharp despair,
The madness dwelling in the blood
Because a girl or hill is fair ?

I have stared upon a dawn
And trembled like a man in love,
A man in love I was, and I
Could not speak and could not move.

I no longer seek to hold
Beauty with enchanted eyes ;
'Tis vain for beauty dies, I know,
I know beauty dies.

Ring the merry marriage bells,
That most melancholy sound !
When the bridegroom and the bride
Go to find what none has found.

All the old wives grimly there
Pleased to see love's sudden end,
Beauty's last wild wood-note blown,
Death the solitary friend.

Ay ! Death sitting in the church,
Busy getting breath anew,
Tuning up the magic horn
That the old lust blew.

FAREWELL!

THE warm flesh speaks against my hand
and then
My friend is but a shadow down the street,
The air is very still, the houses seem
On either hand aloof and desolate :

And now the street is empty, but I stand
As though my soul had left my body here,
And I was one with this stiff furniture,
These lamp-posts and these rows of faceless
brick.

SOLDIERS IN A SMALL CAMP

THERE is a camp upon a rounded hill
Where men do sleep more closely to the
stars,

And tree-like shapes stand at its entrances,
Beside the small, dark, shadow-soldiery.

Deep in the gloom of days of isolation,
Withdrawn, high up from the low, murmuring
town,

Those shadows sit, drooping around their fires,
Or move as winds dark-waving in a wood:

Staring at cattle on a neighbouring hill
They are oblivious as is stone or grass—
*The clouds passed voiceless over, and the sun
Rose, and lit trees, and vanished utterly.*

Then in the awful beauty of the world,
When stars are singing in dark ecstasy,
Those ox-like soldiers sit collected round
A thin, metallic echo of human song :

And click their feet and clap their hands in
time,

And wag their heads, and make the white ghost
owl

Flit from its branch—but still those tree-like
shapes

Stand like archangels dark-winged in the sky.

And presently the soldiers cease to stir;
The thin voice sinks and all at pnce is dead ;
They lie down on their planks and hear the
wind,
And feel the darkness fumbling at their souls.

They lie in rows as stiff as tombs or trees,
Their eyeballs imageless, like marble still;
And secretly they feel that roof and walls
Are gone and that they stare into the sky.

It is so black, so black, so black, so black,
Those black-winged shapes have stretched
across the world,
Have swallowed up the stars, and if the sun
Rises again, it will be black, black, BLACK.

SONG

GENTLY, sorrowfully sang the maid
Sowing the ploughed field over,
And her song was only:
"Come! O my lover!"

Strangely, strangely shone the light,
Stilly wound the river :
"Thy love is a dead man,
He'll come back never."

Sadly, sadly passed the maid
The fading dark hills over;
Still her song far, far away said:
"Come! O my lover!"

SILENCE

IT was bright day and all the trees were still
In the deep valley, and the dim Sun glowed ;
The clay in hard-baked fire along the hill
Leapt through dark trunks to apples green and
gold,
Smooth, hard and cold, they shone like lamps
of stone :

They were bright bubbles bursting from the
trees,
Swollen and still among the dark green boughs;
On their bright skins the shadows of the leaves
Seemed the faint ghosts of summers long since
gone,
Faint ghosts of ghosts, the dreams of ghostly
eyes.

There was no sound between those breathless
hills,
Only the dim Sun hung there, nothing moved ;
The thronged, massed, crowded multitude of
leaves
Hung like dumb tongues that loll and gasp for
air:
The grass was thick and still, between the
trees.

There were big apples lying on the ground,
Shining, quite still, as though they had been
stunned

By some great violent spirit stalking through,
Leaving a deep and supernatural calm
Round a dead beetle upturned in a furrow.

A valley filled with dark, quiet, leaf-thick trees,
Loaded with green, cold, faintly shining suns ;
And in the sky a great dim burning disc !—
Madness it is to watch these twisted trunks
And to see nothing move and hear no sound !

Let's make a noise, Hey! . . . Hey ! . . . Hullo!
Hullo !

SOLDIERS

TREES struggling fiercely to the sky, and
winds that leap and cry,
Are soldiers of the spinning earth, and images
of beauty,
They are the songs of maddened clay, the wild
delirious dreams,
That, clothed in khaki, storm a hill, and melt
away in blood.

Like rocks and crags, their limbs are torn from
depths of outward calm,
Let them embrace their agony, and weep, and
kiss their hands,
And gaily seize what rapture lies in banners
and in drums,
For youth was meant to bleed and die, or sorrow-
fully grow old.

They are but common anguished men, waked
from an opiate dream
To see the lightning flash of life, ere they sink
down again,
Securer from its misery, its beauty and its
grief—
They are like ancient songs that speak and
then lie long unsung.

It matters not what symbols are inscribed upon
their van,
They are the symbols and the songs. Gesticu-
lating trees
Thus stand upon the hills and rave towards
the speechless sky,
But in the end sink feebly down and fade into
the ground.

And from the bodies of sweet girls as fair and
white as flowers,
The soldiers rise to storm foul hills, in search
of words and dreams,
And ebb away among the stones to feed the
gleaming corn,
That with their beauty shall arise and quiver
in the wind.

O you wise stones that lie and soak the beau-
teous blood of men,
The loveliness of all earth's crops, the soft
entreating eyes
Of fawn-like girls, have you no tale, no sweet
consoling hope
To utter as we stand in pain, and gaze upon the
dead?

Exultantly you seem to stare, and wilder wave
the trees,
There is some joy in this fierce earth that echoes
in my soul.
Soldiers arise ! stand up you slain ! stand up,
the silence fills !
The trumpet of immortal Death rings in the
crumbling hills.

TALKING WITH SOLDIERS

THE mind of the people is like mud,
From which arise strange and beautiful
things,
But mud is none the less mud,
Though it bear orchids and prophesying Kings,
Dreams, trees, and water's bright babblings.

It has found form and colour and light,
The cold whiteness of the Arctic Pole ;
It has called a far-off glow Arcturus,
And some pale weeds, lilies of the valley.

It has imagined Virgil, Helen and Cassandra ;
The sack of Troy, and the weeping for Hector—
Rearing stark up 'mid all this beauty
In the thick, dull neck of Ajax.

There is a dark Pine in Lapland,
And the great, figured Horn of the Reindeer
Moving soundlessly across the snow,
Is its twin brother, double-dreamed,
In the mind of a far-off people.

Aristocrat and democrat!
It is strange that a little mud
Should echo with sounds, syllables, and letters,

Should rise up and call a mountain Popoca-
tapetl,
And a green-leafed wood Oleander.

These are the ghosts of invisible things ;
There is no Lapland, no Helen and no Hector,
And the Reindeer is a darkening of the brain,
And Oleander is but Oleander.

Mary Magdalena and the vine Lachrymae
Christi,
Were like ghosts up the ghost of Vesuvius,
As I sat and drank wine with the soldiers,
As I sat in the Inn on the mountain,
Watching the shadows in my mind.

The mind of the people is like mud :
Where are the imperishable things,
The ghosts that nicker in the brain—
Silent women, orchids, and prophesying Kings,
Dreams, trees, and water's bright babblings !

DESPAIR

THE girl that I shall marry stands waiting
in the hall,
She's tall and, oh ! she's pretty, but my eyes
are far away ;
We'll go to tea and chatter, and her hands are
white and small,
They remind me of the butterflies I saw in
Quaya's bay.

But if I hold or kiss them, darkness falls upon
that scene,
Its beauty fades for ever as the day fades
under rain ;
And her hair's a faint, faint memory of the soft
night in the trees,
Of the beauty that I sought for but shall
never see again.

And I listen to her talking, and I dream of
winds that came,
About those hills at morning ringing cold
enchanted bells,
And I tremble to go to them and to leave this
fluttering soul
That gaily sits beside me breaking beauty's
cobweb spells.

And as I sit beside her after kissing her red
mouth

I step back, vainly wishing that I stood on
Quaya's shore,

When I saw such hills of beauty, such strange
flowers and shapes of death

That a nameless grief pierced through me,
ay, pierced through me to the core.

Here I sit, and here my voice sounds like the
droning of a fly,

And no doubt I'll often come here, half-
forgetting and half gay ;

You'll say the place is stuffy, or complain the
cakes are dry—

But then I'll never see you or hear the words
you say.

O how and why was it I left that far-off Quaya
bay!

O do not let me touch your hands but let
them flutter by,

For I would hunt those butterflies that droop
down from the hills,

And I would hear the singing sea on Quaya's
margin cry!

ILLUSION

SHE stood like Spring before my Winter
door,
Paler than dawn, wind-swept and delicate ;
And her small hands, clasped like twin fragile
shells,
Were white as Spring skies faintly veined with
blue.

Years had she flown upon the moorland's edge,
Graven upon some sleeping ploughland scene ;
And I with parted lips would stand and gaze,
While clouds breathed huge still outlines in the
sky:

And she was not on moor or field or hill;
Perhaps a plough was dark against the air ;
And night would come, and the pale blossom-
ing moon
Shining upon that carven, furrowed sea.

Yet once she stood, thin, pale, a rain-clear
dream,
With skyey white arms at my Winter door;
But when I rose the air was desolate,
With thin tree-fingers frozen in the sky.

PEACE

IN low chalk hills the great King's body lay,
And bright streams fell, tinkling like polished
tin,
As though they carried off his armoury,
And spread it glinting through his wide domain.

Old bearded soldiers sat and gazed dim-eyed
At the strange brightness flowing under trees,
And saw his sword flashing in ancient battles,
And drank, and swore, and trembled help-
lessly.

And bright-haired maidens dipped their cold
white arms,
And drew them glittering colder, whiter, still ;
The sky sparkled like the dead King's blue eye
Upon the sentries that were dead as trees.

His shining shield lay in an old grey town,
And white swans sailed so still and dreamfully ;
They seemed the thoughts of those white,
peaceful hills
Mirrored that day within his glazing eyes.

And in the square the pale cool butter sold,
Cropped from the daisies sprinkled on the
downs;

And old wives cried their wares, like queer day
owls,
Piercing the old men's sad and foolish dreams.

And *Time flowed on* till all the realm forgot
The great King lying in the low chalk hills ;
Only the busy water dripping through
His hard white bones knew of him lying there.

HARP, FLUTE AND VIOL

THE Harp was silent in the chamber
Where there danced the wavering shadow,
Shadow of the flute-player,
Fitful as the fall of water
Dreaming—
Then the shadow of the viol
Stole upon the people's faces,
Played with fainter, fainter shadows
Of the day beyond, the day of sky and street,
Of illimitable airy shining,
Walls and Pinnacles and Clouds
Dreaming on the pavement.

* * * *

No wind but only light reflected
On the ivory walls and ceiling,
And the globes of porphyry
Silently and softly shining,
And the shadow-fountain flute,
Rippling, murmuring and lolling
There amid white dreamy faces—

* * * *

Gazing on the scenery
Of the viol,
In a land enchanted, weary,
In a land of beauty disillusioned

The Harp began.

Its music was as is the song of jasmine
Slender and faint among the dark of trees,
Winding a stair ·

From the dark earth towards the cold white
stars.

And whiter than the stars the arms of her
That plucked the strings and gazed into her
soul,

Where all the Trees of the round earth were
clustered,

Whose Foliage,

Heavy and calm leaf-hammered thunder, filled
That silver mirror lying in the world !

* * * * *

Gaze on into your soul, O Harp-player,

Those Trees that weep,

Those flowers that twining hang

Dream-faces vapour-crumbling in blind woods
Are mirrored there and in that land we gaze!

O bright thy soul that Moon of quicksilver !

Lovely the falling shadow of the flute,

Amid the viol's quiet scenery !

MID-DAY

THE lilac blows in my heart;
Deep within the park
The trees drip soft and dark—
The lilac blows, the lilac blows
Within my heart.

It is mid-day, no Sun
Is shining in this place,
Lit with grey dove-soft grace
Of Water, Cloud, and dripping, drooping
Trees;
No Moon, no Sun.

Silence, a willow bough
Hangs in the moving stream ;
Bend low my Soul, a Dream
On visionary banks of life,
Art standing now !

As water dark with Trees
I see Time flowing by,
The woods flower up and die,
Faint shadowy water-blooms that fade away,
Lovelier than these.

Art thou, O Spirit, mirrored like a Bough
In the dark tide,
The Spring thy white, white bride ;
The lilac in her heart that blows
Thy vow !

SOLITUDE

WHEN the sun is sunk and the woods wave
Their dark boughs to the sky,
And the sea leaps sullen and quiet,
And the birds sit silently,
Jewel-eyed and carved on the dreamlike
boughs,
My heart beats restlessly.

O, in the quiet of the dove-grey sky
Some holy land there may be,
Where a man may ride in solitude,
Yet not unhappily—
But to ride through this shadow-crowded
world
God it is lonely !

The singing, the laughter, men's clear eyes,
Hollow as elfin bells,
Slim girls, falling rain, friends drinking
But air-linked syllables—
They are more wandering than any voice
Of cuckoo in hill-heaped dells.

And even this dove-grey sea and sky
Is so quiet a mystery,
That I feel it may suddenly fade away
With its carved mountain imagery ;

And I close my eyes and it disappears
And chill it is and airy !

And the shadows flock to my ears and touch
In soft and populous cries,
My heart is beleaguered in the dark ;
A crowd pushes close and sighs—
Very still, wide-awake and watchful,
The lonely sentinel dies.

THE DARK FIRE OF SORROW

THE dark fire of Sorrow is burning in my
brain,
And its glow dwells softly on the hills—
The amber hills, the hills translucent, hills of
mellow light
Guaya's still, lake-reflected hills.

There love is like a golden bird that leaps
among dead trees,
The old and withered thoughts of men;
Dark scenery of passion in the land of the ideal,
Dark like a little mad glen.

And in that calmer, magic light I see the bright
wild bird
Flitting through the peace of Guaya's hills ;
And could I leave this narrow glen branched
thick with tortured thought,
And wander in those plains the dark fire
fills.

Yes, wander to those hills of peace that glow
like strange sad jewels,
And enter their calm supernatural day.
That fire would die, that glow depart, and that
bright, bright bird love
Would have quietly and for ever flown away.

For the dark fire of Sorrow burns not upon
those hills,
There's but peace there and loveliness afar;
And the radiance of that country is the sad,
still light that fills
This glen of human sorrow where we are.

MIRAGE

WHOSE was the melody
In the still wood?
From a small bell it rang
Close where I stood,
Windlessly trembling
Its bright blue hood.

Blue in the green of leaves,
Blue in the grass
The dark sea flashes
In memory's glass,
In the still wood its foam
White as I pass.

Through the still trees it rolled
Once long ago,
Great sea-bells are tolling
Hidden below,
Ringing clear bells in summer,
Muffled bells in snow.

ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

ON Chag6la the air was full of butterflies,
They fluttered down the valleys of bright
blue ;

White they were, snow-tinted, soft as the soft
sea-foam

That far inland breaks in mysterious bloom;

Invisibly, as Spring lapping dark hills,
It breaks into a billow pale as snow;
From Chagola there rolls a shadowy tide
Of harebell drops of brightly quivering blue.

The sky it had not rained its azure down
But hoarded still its deep soft purple air ;
A glacier shone, a cold, a cold white bride
From some dark home of earth there raptly
flown:

O Chagola, Chagola come! descend !
Into the lowlands, the dark and windy plains
Where my house is, my fireside and my home,
My harbour and the net about my soul!

ON PERSIAN HILLS

ON Persian hills the Moonlights shadowed
roses
Still as the stone walls ; their pale dream-swept
faces
Hang in soft clusters weary and dusty grey.

A lattice lies wide open on those hills :
Who looks upon that carven soundless scene—
The Tree, the Peacock and the shining Moon ?

It is jet dark that small high window square;
The shadowed roses dream, the Moon is still;
Without a sound the Peacock now has flown.

THE PRINCESS

THE stone-grey roses by the desert's rim
Are soft-edged shadows on the moonlit sand,
Grey are the broken walls of Conchubar
That haunt of nightingales, whose voices are
Fountains that bubble in the dream-soft Moon.

Shall the Gazelles with moonbeam pale bright
feet

Entering the vanished gardens sniff the air—
Some scent may linger of that ancient time,
Musician's sone, or poet's passionate rhyme,
The-Princess dead, still wandering love-sick
there.

A Princess pale and cold as mountain snow,
In cool, dark chambers sheltered from the sun,
With long dark lashes and small delicate hands:
All Persia sighed to kiss her small red mouth
Until they buried her in shifting sand.

And the Gazelles shall flit by in the Moon
And never shake the frail Tree's lightest leaves,
And moonlight roses perfume the pale Dawn
Until the scarlet life that left her lips
Gathers its shattered beauty in the sky.

THE POMPADOUR IN ART

(Vide an article in " The Times" Literary Supplement of 8th August, 1917.)

(I)

WOULD'ST thou go back to that white
nakedness

Among the dark trees glinting in the sun,
Their feet white marble where the cool brooks
run,

Their frail, light fingers flushed with happiness?

A white dream in the hot day's breathlessness
Would'st thou enfold in thy hot, lustful arms?
Or would'st thou have no traffic with these
charms,

Dost then indeed love primitive ugliness?

" To Nature " is thy cry, " abandon all
Voluptuous ornament and toilet tricks ! "

Back to the healthy days before the fall
When mother Eve her food-foul fingers licks
And recks not of her heavy shapelessness,
Her dirty nails, her dark skin's hairiness ?

(2)

Because thou knowest well that Grecian dream
Of white Fauns in a wood, and slender girls,
Frail, laughing lilies shaking their bright curls
Among the trees, is an unnatural dream;
The soft, white skin which has so bright a
gleam,
Those slender limbs and delicate, manicured
hands
Have they not been desired in ancient lands—
A part of that strange lure, that mystical beam
Of beauty, which on many a drab old tower
At sunset casts a fairy artifice,
Lending rough bricks a sudden magic power
So that dead clay becomes beauty's device
For coquetry in clothes and hair and hands
Is the quick spirit loosening matter's bands !

(3)

As for myself, proudly I confess
I love not matter lumped and unadorned,
Five feet of flesh is but a cow unhorned g
If the quick spirit shew not in the dress ;
Blushes are roses in a wilderness,
And pencilled eyebrows are the soul's delight;
The Moon is not more lovely in the night
Than are white shoulders in a shadowy dress :
And in silk stockings frailly gleam white limbs
Like candles drawing painted butterflies ;
And dressed hair gives the soul an earthless
 flower
That shines into our eager, seeking eyes—
For now she speaks and moves beyond all
 dreams
A Focus where some wild world radiance
 streams.

(4)

The flesh has no expression in the mind
Unless it be shot through with subtle thought.
An honest wife is all too easily bought,
A ten-stone animal that's deaf and blind,
Who dresses plainly, plainly cooks, is kind—
And knows her husband's income to a nought ;
Wears calico, flat shoes, is heard to snort
At vice, but knows not virtue or mankind ;
A cow, a bitch, a sense-dulled lump of clay
Were virtuous as she, for art as ripe ;
And in her sense's flesh-dimmed, feeble ray
Her husband is a thing who smokes a pipe—
Such is the wife, das Weib, die deutsche Frau,
Formed to stir clay, but only with the plough.

(5)

But Beauty is more delicate than the wind,
Trackless and as intangible as light;
It cannot be pinned down for common sight;
Like violets in a wood it haunts us blind,
Though scentless trees are mirrored in our mind.
A girl's dress is a lovely wood, a night
Of flowing clouds and shattered, shaken light ;
An arabesque of dust to dust resigned,
With cloud and wood and star, and her bright
love :

And in these rags, and in the dust of worlds,
Beauty departed lies as lies the dove
In a few feathers bleaching in the sun—
As the form crumbles so the spirit wanes
And we'll not find it more for all our pains.

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