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A BARDIC PILGRIMAGE

Second Selection of the Poetry of

— JAMES H. COUSINS —



ROERICH MUSEUM PRESS
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NOTE

The contents of this book and of its precursor, "A Wandering Harp," include most of the poetry that I have written since I became a neophyte in the bardic office in Ireland and published my first volume of verse in 1894.

In this collection, as in "A Wandering Harp," I have slightly altered the expression and place of a few poems; but the general chronology of the two books is the same, and its phases are indicated by the groupings in the list of contents. These groupings coincide with the environment of the various hostleries around the world in which I have sojourned on my bardic pilgrimage.

Certain poems written before and during my twenties, that were excluded from "A Wandering Harp," have not been included in this volume, for certain reasons in addition to juvenility of craft or content. I learned from experience that there is a love and a war of higher origin and import than that which the bards had sung and which I had essayed to sing in

the first imitative years of my poetical novitiate; a love that survives the passionate mendacity of youth, and a war of the spirit in which the victor resigns at least half of his chaplet to the vanquished; and I came to realize that such love and such war are the only subjects worthy of poetical celebration or remembrance.

Three decades have passed since the early days of the Irish literary and dramatic revival in which I received, from poets who have taken their places among the Masters of enduring Song, the keys to the mystery of creative art, and august initiation, both visible and invisible, into the hierophantic service of poetry. My life in the interval has been blessed by the friendship of some of the creative illuminati of three continents, and exalted by the recurrent airy or flaming touch of one or other of the Hierarchy of participants in the beautiful declaration of Truth or the truthful disclosure of Beauty, Who partially uncover the glory of Their countenances to the purified and consecrated imagination.

It rests with others to say to what extent I have lived up to my poetical privileges. But I think I may without impropriety, in this afterword to a life's effort in song, say that my aspiration has always been to put into the highest expression at my command my

purest response to the interfusion of Music and Light that sound and shine through the dissonance and darkness of our time from the Sanctuary of the Soul.

And as my effort has been in the past, so will it be in the singing intervals of the pilgrimage that may still be before me.

J. H. C.

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A BARDIC PILGRIMAGE

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THE QUEST

They said: "She dwelleth in some place apart,
Immortal Truth, within whose eyes
Who looks may find the secret of the skies
And healing for life's smart."

I sought Her in loud caverns underground;
On heights where lightnings flashed and fell.
I scaled high Heaven; I stormed the gates of Hell;
But Her I never found,

Till through the tumults of my Quest I caught
A whisper: "Here, within thy heart,
I dwell; for I am thou. Behold, thou art
The seeker—and the sought!"

HEAVEN AND EARTH

After a South Sea legend

Truth in untruth, wisdom on folly's tongue,
And substance in a shadow! Hear ye this.
Once on a time, amid primeval bliss,
In starry ears a bridal song was sung;
And Heaven and Earth in mutual rapture strung
Ethereal harps, and bartered kiss for kiss,
Till, sated with much joy, Earth grew remiss,
And fell from grace,—but ah! the Earth was young!

O trembling tears of dawn in Nature's eyes!
Forget your sadness. Lo! the happy hour
When penitent love turns loveward thrills the dome.
Earth lifts mute praying hands in tree and flower,
And Heaven in all the windows of the skies
Hangs nightly lamps to light the wanderer home!

THE COMING OF NIAV

Softly as comes a wind across the sea
And thrills the waves to music on the beach,
And stirs the trees to whisperings each to each,
And bids the birds to scatter songs of glee;
So, in the heart's deep quiet, came to me
Niav the Fair, Niav the Wise. Her speech
Exhaled a lineage longer than the reach
Of memory, older than all thrones that be.

And through dark tumults that around me rise
She hints of hidden and tremendous things,
Grails yet unwon and quests that never cease;
And calls me on to where with quenchless eyes
She with the deathless dwells, and folds her wings
Enthroned in vast unutterable peace.

Niav (Irish, *Niamh*)^{*} is the consort of Lir, the sea-god, and a figure of the soul.

IN THE CAVES OF KESH

In and out among the caverns
You and I in gladness flit;
At the door of rocky taverns,
Panting, pause, a moment sit
Drinking from the bowl of silence
All the solemn joy of it.

Here unheard the wild wind rages.
Here in peace austere, profound,
Mighty Shades of warring ages
Gather silently around
Just within the shadowy portals
Of the doors of sight and sound.

One by one a cloudy finger
Beckons them to rest again
Where in deeper darkness linger
Sounds as if some ancient strain
Whispered through the hollow vastness
Of some dead old poet's brain.

ON SLIEVE CULLEN

The dusk fell grey on Cullen
When we climbed, my love and I.
Like a dream the dim world faded,
And the lonely stars drew nigh.
Oh! our thoughts were full of labour,
Weary limbs and shattered spears,
While the face of Ireland darkened
As it darkened through the years,
Through the broken, bleeding years.

The night lay deep on Cullen
When we slept, my love and I,
On the fragrant whispering heather,
With our faces to the sky.
Oh! our dreams were full of longing,
Full of ancient woes and tears,
While the heart of Ireland slumbered
As it slumbered through the years,
Through the slow and heavy years.

The dawn broke sweet on Cullen
When we woke, my love and I,
And the mists like marching heroes
Swiftly, silently went by.

Oh! we sent three shouts to heaven,
And we snapped the chain of fears,
For the soul of Ireland rises
To possess the coming years,
Rises, triumphs through the years!

1908.

Slieve Cullen is now known as the Sugarloaf Mountain, County Wicklow.

SIRIUS

The Sun, a ruddy-visaged sower
Pacing backward toward the west,
Scatters prodigally o'er
Furrowed fields his feet have pressed,
Seeds that quicken
In an hour;
Quicken, thicken,
Bud and flower
For a nosegay for my dearest.
Which, love! shall I gather?—
Pale pure buds far north? or, rather,
That one shining clearest;
Fluttering flowerlike on its stem,
Red and green;
Sparkling like a diadem
On the forehead of a queen;
Changing with the changeless grace
Of thy face,
My dearest, nearest;
Throbbingly, with stop and start
Like the heart
Of a frail and human
Woman
Pausing, pausing,

Slyly slanting
Roguish glance—
Then away with a leap and a laugh in a dance
Delirious?
Sirius!

THE YOUNG SAGE TO THE OLD SCHOLAR

Paraphrased from the Irish

Heap thy learning stone on stone—
It shall grind thee to the bone!
But give wisdom wing awhile—
It shall pluck thee from the pile;
Set thee straightly on thy feet,
Lord of little, but complete!
Sup no more thy bitter curd.
Fling thy brain into a word.
Cast thy heart upon the fire
Of a foolish kind desire.
Spread thy beard upon the wind
Ere thou, wholly deaf and blind,
Fumble round a stony sky
While the Chase goes wildly by!
Who would scan a wizened page
When, across the Field of Age,
Up and down the Hill of Youth,
Feet are flying after Truth?
Out! and fill a clamourous place
In the ageless endless Chase
After One who speeds alone
Silently from throne to throne

Through the doors of death and birth
In the crumbling house of earth
Where a little space we spend
Between the candle and its end!

RESURRECTION

I heard them sing their Easter hymn:
"He is not here, for He is risen."
I saw new light in eyes grown dim
With burdening years that bow and wizen.

But what to me is that event
Which one may hold, and one deny?
For me, Death's fabled power is spent:
I am eternal. I am I.

Beyond the bounds of death and birth
I move unmindful, unafraid.
I am the God, and I the Earth;
And life and death myself have made.

Then seek me not among the clay;
But on each step from this my prison
Read there in blood from day to day:
"He is not here, for He is risen."

THE NEW CENTURY

Thou comest as the angel came
To him of old, unseen, unknown;
And thew to thew we wrestling groan
To win the secret of thy name:
Nor shall we let thee go unless
In going thou dost bless.

Hark how the sounds of strife increase,
And man on man doth draw the sword!
Thy mouth can shape the perfect word
To speak among the nations "Peace!"
We dare not let thee go unless
In going thou dost bless.

Behold the little grain of good
That struggles into feeble bloom!
Behold hung high o'er winter's gloom
The flickering star of brotherhood!
We cannot let thee go unless
In going thou dost bless.

Somewhere within thy garment's fold
Are hidden keys to nature's store.
Thine eyes are burdened with the lore

That all eternity doth hold.
Oh! go not thou from us unless
In going thou dost bless.

We look and long for larger sight,
Yet do not plead, although we pray.
Through tears we've found the better way—
We seize and grapple with thy might
And shall not let thee go unless
In going thou dost bless!

LOVE ENTHRONED

I set my love upon a throne whose height
Out-topped the world; and fitly to adorn
Her brow, old Balor from his ancient horn
Poured forth the glittering jewels of the night.
Then, wrapped in solemn joy from sound and sight,
We ruled the deathless realm where dreams are born,
Till Lugh, across the golden shield of morn,
Smote us from slumber with his spear of light.

Yet not for glories that have come and gone
We climbed, beloved! and evermore shall climb.
What is must pass: what is not, it shall stay.
Our search is for the timeless heart of time;
Our eyes are on a day that shall not dawn;
Our dreams are in a night that knows no day.

Balor is the Celtic God of Night; Lugh of Day.

LOVE'S PEACE

Glencar, Sligo

Hushed with the mellow minstrelsy of rills
That on cool piney summits laughing wake,
And swan-like sing themselves away, the lake
Like a soft eye with quiet rapture fills;
And of its fullness overflows, and thrills
Seaward to mingle where loud billows break,
And tell, when tempests their harsh clamour make,
Of peace enfolded in these happy hills.

So, love! may we, from each exalted hour,
Go forth with hearts filled full of quiet power
That to the powerless hope and solace brings;
And mingle with the world's tempestuous days
Rumours of song by sunlit mossy ways,
And peace that dwelleth at the heart of things.

FIVE YEARS

Again the lips of April blow
On golden trumpet daffodils.
Awake! my love, for we must go
And build our altar on the hills,
Where breaks the foamy mist when dawn
Comes white and bosomed as a swan.

Take, sweet, thy hand from off my breast,
And mine shall leave thy fragrant hair.
Open thy lips in happy jest,
And mine shall set a token there.
Then forth! where cloud and leaf and wing
Speed, shine and tremble with the spring.

There we shall find a place of shade
Where round the oak's gigantic foot
The primrose blossoms unafraid,
And scented winds have made a lute
Of leaves to sing of 'stablished power
And loveliness that lasts an hour.

There we shall raise a hallowed shrine
Where we may sing our marriage hymn,
And taste Love's mystic bread and wine,

Nor envy even the Seraphim
Round God, who bends and smiles and hears
The voice of five melodious years:

Five years with overflowing store
Of Love that mingles mind with mind;
That, giving, gathers more and more,
And, taking, leaves not less behind;
And rolls the clouds from Truth's majestic sun,
And finds the One in all, the All in one.

THE GOING FORTH OF DANA

Wrapped in His robes of everlasting light
Whose shadow is the splendour of the noon,
The Nameless One, out of a lonely dream
Of suns and stars that pulsed along the veins
Of uncreated night, awoke and said:
One for the seed, but for the sowing, twain:
And Dagda stood with Dana by His side.

Then spake the Nameless One: *Behold! I am;
But Thou shalt be. Eternal spring is nigh;
And who would hold it needs must sow and sow
Unceasingly.*" So Dagda and Dana passed
Forth from the Presence, He to find the seed,
And She to scatter; one, yet ever twain.
And, as They passed, the eternal Silence moved,
Trembled, and flowed into a mighty Word
Wherein all expectation gathered up
A rumour as of spring, and sundering earth,
And opening things, and under moist young leaves
Thin pipings, and a going to and fro
Of tender shades.

Across ethereal fields
Dana moved slowly, scattering the seed
That fell and flamed in gold of heavy corn,

Nor paused till over the fields a Shadow passed,
As might some strange new thought across a face
Wrapped in a waking dream;—and by Her side
One stood and said: *Thy hand doth heavy grow,
Thine eyes wax weary of the flaming gold
That burns along Thy fields unquenchably,
And burns into Thy heart. Rest Thee a while.
From whence Thou camest I too came, and fain
Would sow Thy seed for Thee.* But Dana said:
*I sow and sow that spring may thus endure;
For if I pause, the harvest will be here,
And million-mouthed will cry within my heart
For toiling hands and heavy-beaded brows
And bending backs and hot and aching feet,
And all the world that now is folded up
Within me. Therefore do I sow and sow.*
Then He who moved beside Her spake again:
*Since rest may not be Thine, my feet shall tread
From furrow unto furrow with Thine own,
And handful for Thy handful scatter far,
If so Thou wilt it.* He stretched His hand
As though He tenderly would touch Her arm
That wave-like rose and fell, white as the moon
Glimmering between the boughs of some deep wood
When odourous winds breathe morning, and the firs
Obeisant bend and rise, and fill the eye

With silver glories broken by eclipse.
Then She, within Whose bosom sorrow and joy,
All wisdom and all folly, peace and strife,
Mingled, and set within Her steadfast eyes
The passion of divine dispassion, turned,
And tenderly unto His tenderness
Inclined Her head. He from Her basket took
A handful of the seed that, more and more
Broad-scattered, grew no less, and o'er the fields
Flung it afar,—and, when it fell, laughed loud,
And vanished.

Straightway sprang to fullest bloom
Innumerable flowers. About Her feet
Violet and pansy trembled with delight
At such great life. Across the farther fields
The hyacinth trailed like a faint blue mist;
While, at the foot of heavy-fronded ferns,
The cowslip's little rocket skyward shot
And earthward fell in throbbing yellow stars;
And, through the marigold's low-smouldering fire,
The crimson tulip flickered like a flame.
Then, as a babe uplifts ecstatic hands
And downward draws a face that smiling bends
Above its own, and takes a proffered kiss,
So the fair flowers the fairer Dana drew

And drank Her rapturous kisses as She knelt
And buried Her immortal face for joy
Among their young sweet splendours.

Suddenly,
As if a Voice had leaped from highest Heaven
To deepest Hell, and on the nether floor
Rebounded Heavenwards, smitten sore and scarred,
And scattered in a myriad babbling tongues,
Though none had spoken, Dana raised Her head,
Her fingers lingering in the lovely flowers;
And through a sudden guilt that rioted
Along Her veins and burned upon Her cheeks,
Saw Dagda standing where, a moment past,
One else had stood. A trouble in Her face
Troubled His heart; yet motionless He stood,
Nor spake a word, but over ripened fields
Cast His all-seeing and all-knowing eyes,
And mused in silence till the silence broke
Wave-like in one loud Word in Dana's heart,
And, million-mouthed, cried out for toiling hands
And aching feet and heavy-beaded brows,
For spring had passed, and harvest was at hand.

Then Dagda stooped, and touched Her bended head,
And said: *The Day is passing into days,*

*And all that Is, to all that is to be,
For spring has passed, and harvest is at hand,
And who shall gather but the scatterer?*

Then all Her soul went out in one great sigh
As earthward Dana sank, and left Her face
Pale with majestic sorrow unexpressed,
And eloquent of the multitudinous world
Of unbegotten things that in Her heart
Clamoured to be.

Prostrate among the flowers
Wherein all beauty bloomed, and all delight
Danced to the reed of newly wakened winds,
She quenched Her burning eyes, and round their stems
Bent like a scythe Her arm, whereon Her head
Rested, but found no rest, for rest was o'er,
And in Her ears a Voice far inward called:
*One for the seed, and for the sowing twain;
But for the ripening, three; for reaping, seven;
And seven times seven for the garnering.*

Then Dana wept. But Dagda, bending low,
Smoothed the wet locks that clung about Her face,
And voiced the thoughts that stumbled round her brain
Like steeds o'erladen: "*Whoso scattereth
Must reap; and reaping calls for many hands*

*To cut, to bind, and on the threshing-floor
Beat out the grain, and garner. Therefore Thou
Within Whose breast all sorrow, all delight,
All weakness and all strength commingle, Thou
Who from unutterable Light cam'st forth
With me co-equal, co-eternal, Thou
Shalt break Thy virgin cincture, and shalt give
Seven sons to reap Thy harvest; Thou shalt tread
The weary wheel that spins the whirling worlds
Till Thine almighty sons shall come again
With shoutings when, across the farthest fields,
The latest wain brings home its glittering load
Of sheaves that quicken for a spring to be.*
He paused; and Dana, smiling through Her tears,
Raised to His proffered hand Her own, and rose,
And stood erect, and said: *The way is long,
And I must go alone: yet not alone,
For that which moves within me to its birth
Is Thou.* He kissed Her forehead.

In the east
A crimson glory flashed along the fields,
And from its heart a burning spear out-leaped
And struck Her brow with palpitating fire,
So that Her eyes, smitten with sudden Light,
Moved darkly to and fro, and, seeing nought

Save darkness, turned unto the fire again,
And gazed until the fire itself grew dark,
And in its heart, mirrored in blackest night,
She saw the smoke of battles yet to be,
And heard harsh voices crying after peace:
Whereunto Dana, stretching yearning hands,
Moved as a sleeper passing from a sleep.

At length, foot-weary, Dana sought the shade
Of whispering trees, beside a cataract
Whose flashing waters, gathered by the sun
And cloud-borne to a sheer white summit, fell
And foamed among tall ferns, and laughing leaped
From rock to rock, and whirled at Dana's feet
In glistening garrulous eddies: thence they flowed
Among the mellow glooms of budding oaks,
And slipped into the silence of a lake
On whose drowsed bosom dreaming lilies lay
Pure as the cool white blossom of the dawn.
Upon a bank o'erlaid with moss and thyme,
Dewy at noon, but softened by the sun
To odourous warmth, She sat. Above Her head
A hazel rustled, shattering heavy sheaths
From which ripe fruit fell flashing in the pool
Beneath Her, as She laved Her burning feet
And rested.

But across Her rest there came
A murmur of Seven Names as yet unnamed;
And with the wind that bore it came the scent
And sound of seething billows of bursting corn,
But never voice of reaper. Dana rose
Saying: *The way is long, and I alone*
Must tread it and the wheel that spins the worlds.
But, ere She went Her way, thirsting She bent
And from the glittering circles of the pool
Lifted unto Her lips a cooling draught
That spun within Her pearly hollowed hand.
Through Her white fingers fell a sparkling shower
That broke in plummy sprays, and caught the light
In seven little rainbows which Her eyes
Wove into one.

She drank the draught, and turned
And crossed the deepening gloom of leafing oaks,
And touched the margin of the silent lake
Where in the reeds a heron silver-white
Waited and watched with sidelong searching eye
The pebbly shallows. On the grassy marge
Dana moved mournfully, nor raised Her head
Till in the reeds a shudder of silver broke
In one soft wave that laughed across Her path,
Tinkling in tiny tumults about Her feet,

And sighing passed away. Then Dana looked
And marked where, high upon a rocky ridge,
The heron stood, jet-black against the moon
That, vapour-veiled and blanching like a bride
Within whose heart a terrible delight
Woos and repels, rose rounding to the full,
And with it a chill mist.

Then Dana turned
For comfort to the west. Upon the hills
A passionate glory like a lover lay,
Stretching wild arms that burned along the sky,
And, closing round Her, clasped Her in a thrill
Of flaming ecstasy, so that Her feet,
Weary no more, but swift with all desire,
Flew like a glimmer of light along the grass,
And vanished in the flame upon the hills.

Note: "The Going Forth of Dana" follows Irish mythological precedents, but has no original, save in the illuminated imagination from which the Irish myths also came. Dagda and Dana are the primal Father and Mother of the Universe.

TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND

Concerning Freedom

“Free as the waves” (they sang) “the waves that swell
And break in large free laughter round her coasts,
Is England!” sang the dedicated hosts
That for her sake went forth and bravely fell.
But now a word like some heart-breaking knell
Stirs with mute agony their solemn ghosts,
For England—England that of Freedom boasts—
For Freedom’s champions finds—a prison cell! *

Oh! cease your mocking, England! of the name
Of Her whose face shall never bless your sight
Till man and woman, sharing equal right,
And linked in equal honour, equal shame,
Move as of old twin orbs in God’s clear light,
And purge the world with one unwavering flame.

TO CERTAIN LEGISLATORS

*Who waxed wrathful at the "violence"
of the Suffragettes*

You, from whose lips the words of cold disdain
Have stung with bitterness, but not dismayed,
Those hearts who, for their birthright, would invade
The hollow sanctities of your domain!
Have you forgot what *men* have done to gain
Your freedom? Think of many a bloody blade
Struck home in silence, many a barricade
That stemmed the tide of proud Oppression's reign.

Now Freedom's dawn for Womankind has come;
And if their souls, that long in silence yearned,
Break into flame and shame your feeble spark,
Keep you your scorn: remember, and be dumb:
Not yet man's fullest lesson they have learned—
Pillage and fire, and murder in the dark!

A HOME-COMING

What flags are these? what trumpets? Oh! what drums?

What pride august? what solemn minstrelsy?

Hush! drums, ecstatic drums! Say, who is she
That in the midst majestically comes?

Is she some queen whose haughty eye benumbs
Proud potentates? whose word can lift the sea
Of shattering war, and fling red misery
Across the world? Speak! drums, Oh! aching drums!

Hush! hush! wild drums! drums in my happy heart!
Not thus she comes, my life's exalted queen,
But in deep silence far outlauding praise.
Hers not the flaming sword that puts apart,
But Right's resistless blade whose stroke unseen
Wounds but to heal and crown with Freedom's bays!

December 24, 1910.

On the return of Margaret E. Cousins to Ireland from Holloway prison, London, during the women's suffrage agitation.

THE NEW MADONNA

I heard a Voice commanding: Tell
For who has ears, a parable!

A mother, hard upon her hour,
Seeks refuge in the halls of power,
Where, closed mayhap in friendly shade,
Sweetly her burden may be laid.
But sternly goes the word around:
“No place for her can here be found.
Hence! nor disturb our festive strain
With the sharp cry of mother-pain.”
Now sunk in utter lowlihead,
With lowly things she makes her bed.
Yet is her heart with vision stirred
Because of a remembered word
Heard here (or once in Bethlehem):
“O you who bear Hope’s diadem!
Crowned outcast whom the ages wait
To lift the things of low estate!
Behold in you the work begins
To save the people from their sins.
In you the great new age of Earth
Is labouring slowly to its birth!”

Written at Christmas, 1912, during the struggle of the women of
Great Britain and Ireland for political liberation.

IRELAND TO ENGLAND

*Addressed to William Watson in reply to a poem
of his in the daily press*

I

“O come thou forth and put the Past away.”
W. W.

Not once the admonition we have heard:
Forget the past, our wrongs, our ancient name;
Forget those hearts that burned with Freedom's flame,
And for their faith your bloody forfeit dared.
And we the Lethé-draught might have prepared,
Had you unwrit the scroll of your own shame:
So might we stand, diverse in common aim,
Free, in one glad renunciation shared.

Yet not, though mortals cunningly conspire,
Fails in one tittle the eternal law:
Deep in the past the future has its rise.
What is the dawn but sunset's risen fire?
And from our yesterdays we needs must draw
The spark that kindles in tomorrow's eyes.

II

“And with thy conquered conqueror speed thou on.”

W. W.

Lo! at a smooth-tongued word the flaming past
Must die down to a tale that has been told;
And we your scroll of blood must calmly fold,
And, for a smile, to black oblivion cast!
Had you your will, and at your chariot-mast
Ran your chained freeman, all his birthright sold,
Nor you nor he could hush the Voice of old
That said: Be thou thyself until the last!

Who shall make one what God has fashioned twain
To serve His dark inexorable need
Till they, self-perfect, mix in love and power?
Free hands alone can forge a mutual chain,
And mine, by yours, are full of wounds that bleed,
And yours of sins that wait His reckoning hour.

III

“Now is the hour for closer bonds of soul.”

W. W.

You in my heart planted oppression's sting,
And through my breast the sword of sundering drive;
Gave stones for bread, and sorrow to the brave;
And set my feet in slavery's galling ring.
But, far from you, my soul had found its wing,
Chainless as light along a breaking wave.
So much, for solace, God in mercy gave:
You could not touch that shy immortal thing!

Yet, if repentance now, in very deed,
Move you, and Strength, by Beauty strangely drawn,
Yearn for her smile, and yield to Love the whole;
Then, with abashless eyes, from bondage freed,
We, in some odourous and melodious dawn,
Might find “the hour for closer bonds of soul.”

IV

“Foul Hate is dying: let Ignorance, Mother of Hate,
Follow her leprous daughter through Hell’s gate.”

W. W.

Hardly the thief of honesty may prate,
Nor you of love; you, whose most gentle care
Was wounds for faith, and death for lips that dare
To speak the dreadful saga of my fate;
You who had striven to quench my ancient date,
And strew my dust upon the voiceless air,
Lest Time should lay your hellish scriptures bare,
And *Knowledge* prove the fruitful “Mother of Hate.”

And, though your gentle Spenser’s murderous
thought *
Found not its end, still moves your ancient feud
O’er fields made desolate for your desire.
Yet, in the Wisdom out of Knowledge wrought,
I, from purgation rising now renewed,
Pray for your soul that passes to its fire!

* To solve the Irish problem by exterminating the Irish people.
Edmund Spenser.
July, 1910.

A SCHOOLBOY PLAYS CUCHULAIN

'Way there! for one who hastens forth
To guard the marches of the North,
While Connacht's hosts with flame and brand
Hurl menace towards his native land,
And Macha's Curse on arm and will
Hangs dreadfully from hill to hill!

'Way there! Four valourous feet of height,
Twelve long long years of age and fight,
He fronts without a thought of fear
Ten thousand with his wooden spear.
Soon shall he fling the charging field
Back with his puissant pasteboard shield;
And soon shall haughty Maeve bend down,
A vassal to his tinsel crown!

'Way there! Who laughs has hardly heard
A hidden trumpet's secret word,
Or glimpsed through those poor arms he bears
The weapons that the spirit wears.
In that wild breast a thousand years
Rise from their ineffectual tears,
And kindle once again the flame
Of freedom at a burning name!

What if for him no flag unfurled
Should shake red battle on the world; *
On other fields in other mood
The ancient conflict is renewed;
And Michael and his warring clan
Tramp onward through the heart of man.
At life's loud fires he shall anneal
A subtler blade than transient steel,
When love, invincible in faith,
Shall smile upon the face of death,
And will and heart, as one, conspire
To dare the utmost of desire.
Then shall he with his spirit's lance
Unhorse cold pride and circumstance,
Shake wrong's old strongholds to the ground,
And right's victorious trumpet sound,
And light Earth's ramparts with the gleam
Of Ireland's unextinguished dream
That burned in him who hastened forth
To guard the marches of the North
When Macha's Curse on arm and will
Hung dreadfully from hill to hill!

* July, 1910. Before the Irish Rebellion of 1916.
Cuchulain is the Irish type of the perfect hero. The references
are to certain legendary tales.

DEATH AND LIFE

To the memory of Eveleen Nicolls

The long dark slope is topped with mist,
But here the sun is on the grass.
Beneath, the sea-waves break, and twist
Backward like snakes of molten glass.
Across an ancient sand-heaped wall
The foot through graves forgotten goes,
And stops where old old voices call
Through generations of repose.
But where a sorrow of today
Has set a freshly fashioned mound,
A bird slides down his airy way
And makes the silence ring with sound.

What gloom might now our spirits balk
Fades out before that high reproof;
And through the fabric of your talk
Go light and shadow, warp and woof,
With something deeper than the word,
Some stately certitude of faith
Whose eye at life had never blurred
Nor quivered at the eye of death,
But saw in that swift woman's way
Through changings to the changeless Whole,

And life and death as waves that sway
Across the ocean of the soul.

Then when the hill was lost in mist,
And in the sea the sky was glassed,
We wandered home in amethyst;
And you upon the morrow passed
On that last journey to the west
Whose end was in the Atlantic wave,
Where, on your youth's triumphant crest,
One stroke, another's life to save,
With glory crowned your life complete,
Proud as the horsed and pluméd seas
That laid your body at my feet,
A wonder past Praxiteles.

Oh! bear her body by the crest
And past the fields of fallen ears
On its last journey from the west
This holy Lady Day of tears.
But yet, though heads are bared and bowed,
And down the road the keeners keen,
Some spirit-music, deep and proud,
Slips out their shrill thin cries between;
And, like the bird that other day,
That made the silence ring with sound,

It floats along the sunset way,
A joy above our sorrow's mound.

What grief might now our spirits balk
Fades out before that high reproof;
And through the hushed and wavering talk
That fills the streets from roof to roof,
A fire from your high altar shines,
And kindles through our dusk of strife
A faith whose inner eye divines
That Death is minister to Life,
And all our years a moment's dream
In one vast Mind that grasps the whole,
And life and death but waves that gleam
Along the ocean of the soul.

Ventry, Kerry, August 13, 1909.

Eveleen Nicolls was drowned in an effort to save a village girl who was bathing with her in the sound between the Great Blasket Island and the mainland.

THE CROSS AND THE BOOK

To the memory of Annie Pielou

Here we have raised rough-hewn our granite cross,
And set her name upon a marble book
Open forever, where the solemn rook
Sways on the branch that mountain breezes toss.
And when the twilight shadows take the gloss
From day's pale cheek, O you who, pausing, look,
Say: "For the love she gave, great love she took:
Lo! here in dust are wedded gain and loss!"

For us—a tear. For her—Oh! music make!
Death has unclothed from vesture of decay
The shining Self that knows not death or birth!
She is not here! Yet here, for Love's sweet sake,
Stand cross and book to mark the honoured clay
That holds the form she honoured once on Earth!

Deansgrange, Dublin.
December 23, 1912.

THROUGH THE BLACK NIGHT

Through the black night
The sad wave turned.
The phosphor light
Along it burned,
A sickle-curve
Where gleam and sigh
Through ear and eye
Touched brain and nerve.

Through the black night,
Made palpitant
By sound and sight
Reiterant,
Lo! there, twin-made,
The sound of care,
And symbolled there
The harvest blade.

Through the black night,
My heart, awake!
Instant with light
Thy sorrows break.
Seek thou no ends
Reaped far or nigh.
Lo! in each sigh
The sickle bends.

DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

The builder of the Cretan labyrinth and his son

Quoth Daedalus to Icarus:

“With rule and plumbline (thus—and thus)

We space and build our labyrinth;

And build, besides, a graven plinth

To bear the future fame of US,”

Quoth Daedalus to Icarus.

Quoth Icarus to Daedalus:

“Before these Cretans make a fuss,

And set our names up with a shout,

Perhaps we’d better first get out,

And show the master-mind of Us,”

Quoth Icarus to Daedalus.

Then round and round went Daedalus,

And out and in went Icarus.

They parted for an hour’s whole space . . .

They met upon the selfsame place!

“I think we’re stuck,” quoth Icarus.

“I think we are,” quoth Daedalus.

In short (to be perspicuous

Like this old tale of Icarus),

Despite our mouths with freedom filled,
From life's poor trivial things we build
A maze about the feet of us
That shuts us in like Daedalus.

But Daedalus and Icarus
Made wings, and set them thus—and thus;
And that blind maze that hemmed them in
They sloughed as drops the snake its skin;
And so at last shall all of us,
Like Daedalus and Icarus.

TREES IN WINTER

Gaunt and spare,
The silly trees
Strip them bare
To winter's breeze;

Yet when July
Sweltered red,
Dressed unduly
Heel to head!

Who will whisper
Unto me
Why is this
Perversity?

Bent his head
A stately beech:
Slowly said
In rustling speech:

“Why, O man! not
Find a moral
(Though you cannot
In the laurel)

“In our vigour
And our pelf,—
Type and figure
Of yourself?

“Sun-kissed amity
Conceals
What calamity
Reveals:

“Summer glozes
Stain and scar;
Winter shows us
As we are.

“Well if thou,
In trying hour,
Stand or bow
In naked power,

“Like the spare
But sinewy trees
Standing bare
To winter’s breeze!”

THE FAIRY RING

Enfolded in the Fairy Ring
My loved one sleeping lies;
To simple souls a dreadful thing,
For half a hundred eyes
Peep out from where among the grass
Floats up a magic lay
To call the souls of all who pass,
To Fairyland away.

But I, who know her heart's desire,
Fear neither spell nor frown;
For not till fire can stifle fire,
Or water water drown,
Or love hate love, can any harm
In kindred hearts abide.
Oh! she can combat charm with
My fairy-hearted bride!

And ye whose minds are set to win
Fame's leaf or fortune's prize!
Beware the spell that lurks within
The circle of her eyes;
For she has power to blow like straws
Earth's baubles from the hand,
And call the souls of all who pause,
Away to Fairyland!

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

A Kerry Legend

“Now I shall build a house of stone,
With lock and bar and slated roof;
Of toil and thrift the offspring grown,
The solid recompense and proof,”
He boasted . . . But with greedy sight
He set a scheme and marked his ground;
And in a clouded silent night
He stripped stone-bare the fairies’ mound;
And through the dark, with sideways look
Like a lean dog that steals a bone,
The fairies’ hoarded spoil he took,
Cursed it . . . and built his house of stone.
. . . Then, when a single glittering star
On Eagle Hill fell evil-eyed,
He signed the Cross, set lock and bar,
And fell asleep well satisfied . . .
. . . He slept—till midnight wildly broke
In frightful tumult on his brain.
On every stone a hammer-stroke
Rang with a sharp unearthly strain;
And shining through the clashing gloom
Stern eyes were floating round his bed;

And with a frown of awful doom
Two figures held him feet and head,
While one, the spokesman of the rest,
With folded arms and tragic pique,
Strutted across his heaving breast,
And uttered in a bat's thin squeak
These words: "It is an evil thing
To mint the golden fairy-weed,
And consecrated powers to bring
Under the chain of mortal greed.
It is an evil thing to bind
Limbs that have Love's free service wrought,
Or from the niggard leash of mind
To slip the hounds of selfish thought:
Evil when life's poor pots are filled
With purpose thin and stagnant grown,
And holy things are bent to build
A locked and darkened house of stone.
No rest from labour, sound and sweet,
Night to the builder shall accord,
But on his maddened brain shall beat
The fairy hammers of the Lord!"
. . . He woke, and wondered whence the guilt
That through his being seemed to sound.
Then up he got, his house unbuilt,

And built again the fairies' mound.
. . . And when his whispering neighbours drew
A sign that called him foolish-brained,
He smiled because within he knew
A deeper wisdom he had gained.

A GYPSY DANCE IN KERRY

The fiddle squeaked by Ventry shore,
The fiddler beat with heavy boot,
And on the road the kitchen door
Lay out to tempt the jigging foot;

When suddenly across the ditch
Two women sprang with eager eyes;
So like, you knew not which was which,
Being both accoutred vagrant-wise

With shawl and clout and hair gone wild,
And loud with mutual brazen jest;
But one was heavy with a child,
And one a child held to her breast.

The fiddle yelped, the fiddler beat,
The gypsies jumped upon the board
And danced with such most frantic feet
The gaping village clapped and roared.

But while the dancers danced and smiled,
One sound went deeper than the rest—
The whimper of a frightened child
That leaped against a leaping breast

Till round the bend a frowning priest
Came jaunting down the Dingle road.
The fiddle choked; the dancers ceased:
With shame and sweat their faces glowed.

But I, who from my window watched,
Upraised no voice to join rebuke,
As those wild creatures, sunned and patched,
Their pathway westward slowly took.

For, deep in life's most hidden page,
I read the joy, whose primal urge
Through myriad form and countless age,
Upyearning from the plasmic surge

To find fit Bride for Him who weds
Creation with a holy kiss,
Steadfast in single purpose treads
Unnumbered various paths to bliss.

I shall not ask the giddy gnat
To outblow the trumpets of the storm,
Nor count the chirping staggering bat
More praiseful than the quiet worm.

Nay, from sea's depth to mountain-top
Joy at each step finds fitting throat

To drown the voice that fain would stop
Her gamut to a single note.

Nor shall I chide those vagrant hearts
That dance, nor heed a whimpering child,
While Nature plays her stormy parts
Through human dreams in ruins piled;

And on the floor of east and west
Spins in her dance the joyous Earth,
The infant Present at her breast,
The Future quickening to its birth.

AT A HOLY WELL

He dragged his knees from flag to flag,
And prayed for health with awe-struck brow;
Then hung his ill's discarded rag
On the o'erhanging hawthorn bough.

And in the adoring hush that fell,
I, from the form set inly free,
Knelt at my heart's most holy well,
And worshipped mine own mystery.

A DONEGAL SKETCH

“God save you kindly, sir,” she said,
And opened wide the low half-door.
Her hair was white, her eyes were red,
Her feet were naked on the floor.

But such a heart beat in her breast
To Ireland’s friendly heritage,
It set her worst past others’ best,
And scattered poverty and age.

We sat beside her fire of turf
And talked of crops . . . and fairy-lore . . .
Weather . . . and dress . . . The Atlantic surf
Far off made muffled roar on roar.

Half stifling reminiscent moans
She gossiped of the famine times;
Then sang in thin and wavering tones
Some ancient nameless poet’s rhymes;

Until the slow and scented night
Silenced the voice of gnat and frog,
And dimmed to unfamiliar sight
The pathway home across the bog.

She rose, and surely as a bat
Marked various pathways through the dark:
This “roundabout and aisy,” that
“No longer than a beagle’s bark.”

“Goodbye,” she said, at parting loth:
“God bless ye, ma’am:” a warm hand-shake:
“An’ sure if He does bless ye both,
It matters not what road ye take.”

FIELD LABOURERS

Rondeau

“To labour is to pray.” We heave
The heavy clay. We dig and cleave;
And, knees and hands deep in the sod,
Search out and shape the Will of God
Creation’s purpose to achieve.
Slant showers may wound, sharp winds bereave:
We lift no soiled or suppliant sleeve:
Sure God and Mary bless the rod:

To labour is to pray.

And so we are content to leave
Prayers for long-headed folk to weave.
We work His Will in ear and pod;
And when His harvest-eyes applaud,
We know—what others but believe—

To labour is to pray.

OPTIMISM—GALWAY STYLE

Thanks to the Lord and the Blessed Virgin for all the
grace

They gave me, as girl and woman, though now my
wrinkled face

Is withered and cracked like a leaf; and my back,
that was flat as a book,

Is doubled in two like a gapped and rusted reaping
hook.

And there is the bed in the corner where the young
girl died in the spring,

And the older went in the winter. Indeed 'twas a
lonesome thing

To be missing the stir of my daughters and the strong
arm quick at the churn.

'Tis not easy for one both to dig and to watch that the
bread won't burn,

When himself is out on the mountain to gather the
sheep in the fog,

And the turf that was cut for the winter is lying wet
on the bog.

But I daren't complain, though I miss them, for sure
they were only a loan,

And the Lord in His merciful wisdom has wanted
back His own.

It was bad on myself and my man, but it might have
been twice as bad;
And I'm thankful to God and His Mother for the
share of joy that I had.
Sure, things will be always somehow; and why should
we lose our rest,
But make the best of the worst, for the worst is may-
be the best.

THE LOVING CUP

I

I raise to you, O Queen! this loving
cup, this methers,
Filled with mead
Made from honey of the heather
Brought by many a humming wing,
And with water from the spring;
Mixed by cunning hands together
In a foamy ferment
That would lead
Sullen tongues to song
If along
Harpstrings now a rousing air went.

II

But in this our souls' espousal,
Axe nor skeen
Throb or bleed
For the spear-crash of carousal,
Spoils of slaughter
Ravening:
No! for peace has mixed our methers,
O my Queen!

With its mead
Made from honey of the heather
And with water
From the spring.

III

Ah! but what avail
Song and ale,
If beneath our quaffing
Moves not something deeper than our
laughing?

IV

So to you, O Queen!
Here with hands unseen
I raise my heart's deep mether
Where together
Sweetness brought on fancy's wing
From the flowers
Of happy hours,
And a draught from thought's cool spring,
Blend in song's melodious ferment,
With an undertone
Caught in deeper hours alone,
When along Life's solemn harp the
Spirit's air went.

A PAIR OF SABOTS

Head on your foot,* I lay in moss,
And traced with musing eye
Your long light arms that seemed to toss
Pure joy against the sky.

But that lithe stem that swayed in air
The shining axe brought low,
And gave my feet a sounding pair
Of Normandy sabots.

Strange doom is ours, O friend! We spread
Proud branch and grasping root;
And you that soared above my head
Are now beneath my foot;

While I, with fettered urge to flight,
Strain up through grave and gay
To reach as high above your height
As you sprang from the clay;

And learn, as Time with axe in air,
Each branching year brings low,
To shape and wear it—like my pair
Of Normandy sabots.

A beech-tree at Balleroy, Normandy.

FROCKEN-GATHERING

In Normandy

Sing a song of girl and boy
In the woods of Balleroy!
He—a score of him—burnt brown,
She—the same—in thorn-ripped gown,
Tried companion of his breeches
Clawed by briars, through the beeches
Dart and shout; on hands and knees
Swim the dark-green swaying seas,
Where in waves the frocken spreads
Dark-blue bubbles on their heads;
And the swimmers lift and dip,
Purple foam on hand and lip,
Purple prows on purple tide,
Purple cargo stowed inside;
Hailing each from sea to sea
In language meaningless to me,
Here in leafy Normandy.

Ah! not meaningless; for this,
No more dumb than is a kiss,
Speaks the primal meaning stirred
Past the gripping, clanking word
Man has put on heart and brain.
Out upon the noisy chain!

Bid the loud confusion go.
Here, in Nature's face, we know
Were life simple, sweet and young,
Brain and heart should find a tongue
Native, as a smile or dance,
Round the poles, or here in France,
Where the shout of girl and boy
Speaks the word of human joy
Heard of all, ere foolish eyes
Set themselves to scale the skies
Babel-wards, and from the ground
Built them past the clear, profound
Beatings of the ageless mirth
In the simple heart of Earth.

ABELARD TO HELOISE

Notre Dame, Paris, Twelfth Century

A fool sang past the cloister wall:
"Ask all of love, for love knows all."
And lo! my questions of the Soul,
—The how and whence? the source and goal?
And why this bubble blown of space?—
Are asked and answered in your face!
Love puts this wise man's heart to school
To learn the wisdom of the fool!

"Ask not the skies; delve not the land:
Love's answer lies within your hand,"
The fool sang on. Oh! very sweet
The shuffle of the brethren's feet
Along the floors: a woman's dress
Was in the sound; the *no* and *yes*
Of all desire; and in the swerve
Of the swung bell a bosom's curve;
And ruin in your dream-found eyes
For the proud folly of the wise!

THE MILL

One thing forever fixed is set—
The love between us two,
Though thought revolve, and friends forget,
And old give place to new.

So 'twixt this nether stone that stands
And this that moves so fleet,
Life sifts our harvest through his hands
And grinds it like the wheat.

THE DOUBLE STREAM

On the misty hills
where the wild deer dizzily goes
the Genius of Earth distils
from the skyey vapours
the magical draught that flows
in a hundred rills
straight and tall as tapers
dropping down through the firs
leftwise rightwise swung
as the great-browed boulders
mighty-handed shapers
fling from their giant shoulders
lances of silver that splinter
on silver shields and blend
in a whirl of glistening snow
in the heart of summer a winter
and melt in a moss-rimmed pool and go
slowly and slower down
to the long broad pebbly bends
at the dingy querulous town
where the river seaward wends
burdened and soiled and dark
in the sombre valley
save where a wandering spark

from the smoke-stained sun
some shadowy memory stirs
like a rhyme that a poet forgot
and links its fate in one
with its far-off skyey lot
on the misty hills
with a hint that through the din
of a murky alley
in the heart of human ills
or high where the seer goes
from Spirit to Spirit flows
one stainless cleansing stream
on the height of the dreamer's dream
in the depth of the sinner's sin.

IN PRAISE OF COUNTRY LIFE

Oh! at last farewell,
City and smoke and crowd.
Here with the spacious sky and cloud
Heart and soul may swell.

Here are lake,
Lake and river,
Mountain and forest and fell.

Oh! the odourous bloom
By spendthrift Nature spread.
Lilac and chestnut overhead;
Under, in spangled gloom,
Bracken and heath,
Heath and bracken,
Poppy and bluebell and broom.

Oh! the jewelled rush
Of life into music glad—
Mad as my heart with summer is mad—
From furrow and sedge and bush;
Robin and wren,
Wren and robin,
Blackbird and linnet and thrush.

Oh! the word and the smile
Where labour and life are one,
Cleansed by the wind and warmed by the sun,
Simple and free from guile;
 Harrow and plough,
 Plough and harrow,
Scythe and timber pile.

Oh! that this day might cease
Not while the days endure:
Here might we, far from the world's loud lure,
Win for the soul's increase
 Laughter and life,
 Life and laughter,
Worship and work and peace.

TALK TO A FIELD-MOUSE

You pass me like a deeper shade
Of twilight where I musing lie
In grass and hedges mingling jade,
Then stop, and with a beady eye
Scan me, till something in me stirs
To give you look for look, and see
Your secret, under spectral firs,
Linked in our mutual mystery.

Time was when in my childhood's days
It was a fearful thing to lie
In a wild creature's winkless gaze,
Dumb strangeness holding eye to eye.
But growing love and wisdom caught
The secret writ in Nature's book:
Our thinkings atomize one Thought;
Our eyes are fragments of one Look.
So, past imprisoning hands and feet,
Blent in the Spirit, equal, free,
Deep in one Being we may meet,
And touch a purer ecstasy
Than the loud storm of kindred blood
That strains to mingling, mad and blind,
Or the fantastic echoing flood
In shifting channels of the mind.

Yea, through far strangeness we may rest
In nearness that would miss our ken
Were I a mouse to claim your nest,
Or you a man who preyed on men!

Lo! now, across our sundering grooves
There comes a power that shakes us free.
In you some prophet impulse moves,
Some hidden retrospect in me;
And, where our pathways meet and merge,
We pierce the myth of earth and sky,
And mingle on the fluctuant verge
Where lives, in one vast Living, die.

That was a link of midnight snapped!
Now revelation, clearly terse,
Shows us as wild-heart creatures trapped
Within the shuttered universe.
Yet for our solace we may smile,
Since He who our immurement wrought
Pulls on Himself the sky's huge pile,
And fast in His own trap is caught;
And all those brazen-headed stars
Are nails that hold His wrestling Powers,
Nor shall He slip His prison bars
While you and I are held in ours:
For (mystery, of light assured

In times far off we both shall see,)
Himself with us He has immured:
We are not parts of Him, but He!
Yea He, the Lion of the World,
Shares here our hunger and our drought;
With us in life's vast net is curled,
And we must slowly gnaw Him out.
For this the wheels of being turn.
For this the seer and the mole
And you and I with ardours burn
Caught palely from the labouring Soul
That beats upon life's yielding gates,
And shreds the veil by midnight drawn,
And confidently calm awaits
The slow disclosure of the Dawn.

. . . Meanwhile, good friend, we are agreed
That Life has music in her face,
To joy's fulfilment surely keyed,
And we are passing-notes in place.
And as these branches, lifted far,
Spurn not the clay from which they grew,
We love not less the things that are,
But more for what they lead us to.

IN TIME OF WAR

I will raise my voice in thanksgiving, I will utter my
heart in praise
That mine eyes have seen the salvation of God as the
seers of ancient days;
That mine ears have heard, as they heard through
the thunder of men who warred,
The trumpet of Michael that rallies the unseen hosts
of the Lord.

For long had the Lord in Heaven bent eyes on Adam's
seed
In search of the hoped-for ending of hate and lust
and greed;
And now, in Love's red anger, He has filled their
mouths for meat
With bitter herbs of healing: but the end thereof shall
be sweet.

Oh! not in the word soft-spoken, or the tears of friend
and friend
For the blood-red grief of battle, shall battle and
grief have end.
Nay, deeper than these and deeper must the spring
of these be sought:

The work men's hands have fashioned they fashioned
first in thought.

Within is without, tomorrow. Slay inly, and thou
art slain.

They have crowned their feasts with slaughter, their
joy with creature-pain;

They have scorned the Master's warning, as with
blood they defiled his board:

"Lo! they who the sword do handle shall feel the
sting of the sword."

Oh! vain is the trifler's question: Whose hand rose
murdering first?

The accurst one shall be smitten—and the hand that
smites be accurst;

For the smiter in turn is smitten in hardened heart
and brain,

And the mail'd feet wander blindly round the fiery
ring of pain.

Who boasts of quarrels cancelled in the face of a
ravening foe?

The beasts of the burning forest, do they not
even so?

Ah! ne'er shall your housetops tremble with the
shout of wisdom near
Till you work for the heart's high pleasure the things
you have wrought in fear;

Till never a man wax lusty on man his brother's
need,
Or a woman's neck be bent 'neath the heel of woman's
seed;
Till Earth be Man's in its fullness, free, boundless,
sea and sod,
And the voice of the sovereign People be one with
the Voice of God.

CASTLES IN SPAIN

Those are the very hills of Spain
That lift their spears in morning light
Full-bladed to the charging main,
Like old Cervantes' gallant knight.

Could we but pierce the golden mist,
Now might we scan some castle wall
Made sweet by waking maid, sun-kissed
On lips most pure, most musical.

Yet, had we Druid power to leap
The waves, or travel Israel's way,
Would we from fancy's dream-lit sleep
Call you into our glaring day;

And bid your storied galleons sail
Pale phantoms down a long dead wind,
Laughed by our lithe lean ships of mail
Out of the harbour of the mind?

Nay! not one oar's-length nearer come,
Lest, for the dream that round you clings,
We take the hard insistent drum
And shameless pipe of present things.

Set on imagination's verge
That holds and shapes the wandering will,
Where sense and vision subtly merge,
Your mystery be mystery still;

And still your fabled sunken gold
Let gleam through deeps of heart and brain,
And we our magic castles hold
Dream-built in an unsullied Spain.

TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Dedicating a book of prose

I thought for golden poetry
In dedicated prose to pay,
Veiling impossibility
In that old kindly courteous way.

But all your flowing tide of fame
Went singing round my echoing shore
When on my page I put your name—
And made my debt but tenfold more!

Yea, and the world that holds your praise
Moves thus between two powers at feud:
Speech that undoes what it essays,
And silence like ingratitude.

Yet since a sacramental hand
May sanctify the humblest weed,
I lift my love's transforming wand
And give intention for the deed;

With one deep wish that, till the set
Of sun across your song's wide sea,
Our backs may bend with growing debt
For your pure golden poetry!

THE MYSTIC CHURN

*Paraphrased from the Tamil of Appar,
early Seventh Century*

O ye whose feet all Godward run!
Pause, for the ever-shining One
Comes not for drum or perfumed silk.
He hides as *ghi* within the milk,
Essence enfolded, unexpressed.
Would you behold Him manifest?
Gather your eyes from quests above:
Take you the churning-rod of Love:
Wrap round its upright stem the tense
Two-ended cord, Intelligence . . .
Pull! . . . and for Wisdom loving-eyed,
And Love in Wisdom purified,
Unto your eyes made clear by grace
He shall unveil His shining Face.

THE PURCHASE

*Paraphrased from the Hindi of Queen Mirabai,
Fifteenth Century*

I have bought the Herdsman who guards my soul.
“He is light,” some state;
Some, “Heavy His weight.”
I know, who have purchased the whole.

I have bought Govinda, and mine He is made.
“He is cheap,” some fear;
And some, “He is dear.”
I know, for the price I have paid.

I have bought the Lord, and I wear His sign.
With smiling face
In the market-place
At the beat of my drum He was mine.

I have gazed on the Hidden One eye to eye;
And the price I told
In His palm was gold
I gathered in lives gone by.

Govinda is Sri Krishna in his aspect as the Hindu “Good Shepherd” of souls.

The paraphrase reproduces the structure of the original.

THE BARGAIN

*Paraphrased from the Marathi of Tukaram,
Seventeenth Century*

Tuka to Ishwara saith:
We shall take, if so Thou will,
Birth; and learn of life and death.
But we ask that Thou shalt fill
All our life-ways, dark and long,
With remembrance of Thy Face,
And with comrades rich in song
Mindful of our heavenly place.
Thus, in frailty of the flesh
We may travel free from stain;
Miss the snaring senses' mesh,
Aye, and freedom's subtle chain.
Song, and Thee the song to fill
In the space from birth to death,
Grant us these—then have Thy will,
Tuka to Ishwara saith.

Ishwara is the Lord of the universe.

NALA MAKES A MISTAKE

*Paraphrased from the Marathi of Raghunatha
Pandit, Seventeenth Century*

So kindly me my lady eyed,
Come on love's glad mission,
All my being laughed, and cried:
"Love has found contrition!"
Oh! so bright her eye-beam glanced
That in love's delirium
All my happy fingers danced
Shining with collirium
Offered not with hope to make
Beauty beautifuller,
But for old sweet custom's sake
To my heart's proud ruler.
. . . Ah! such fancies us o'ertake
Who to love devote us!—
What I looked on was—a lake,
And her eye—a lotus!
Stooping mazed I quickly learned
Life's cold erudition:
Quenching flood on love that burned!
Pity my condition.

Nala, the type of the devoted lover, is the subject of innumerable songs in all the languages of India.

A GOPI-SONG

To Sri Krishna

*Paraphrased from the Tamil of C. Subramania
Bharati, Twentieth Century*

Someone spake of moon and sun;
But to me, in love grown wise,
Through the dark and light made one
Only shone your searching eyes.

What, to those who never knew,
Was the midnight sky's expanse,
Looked my throbbing spirit through
With your comprehending glance.

And the loud cloud-plaited air,
That to others spread beyond,
Wrapped me in your silken hair
Gemmed with pearl and diamond.

Now along the flowery grove
By the champak's odourous pile,
Eyes made vision-full of love
See your deep alluring smile.

Koel's note from tree to tree
Speaks your voice with sweetest smart,
And the dark blue rolling sea
Tells the pulsing of your heart.

And for me my happy doom
Shines upon your ageless face,
Bride of your eternal bloom
Held in your divine embrace.

Sri Krishna is the Hindu Lord of Love. Radha, his beloved, is an embodiment of the spiritual nature of humanity which recognises the divine lover in all nature. She and her attendants are called Gopis.

SONG AT DAWN

Voice of the Dawn, resistless voice
Through harmonies of sun and wave!
I hear you, and my limbs and veins rejoice
Resurgent from the night's deep grave.

I hear you, and my heart is glad
To feel your keen awakening lance.
No sweeter joy the dreamful darkness had
Than bulbul's song or insect's dance.

Roll up the gaudy scroll of dreams,
The tangled skein of vision-stuff:
Under the morning's branched and flowering beams
Life wholly lived is life enough.

Why look for deeper, fuller hours,
With hours about us unfulfilled?
The wiser mango greenly breaks in flowers
Though not a cloud its rain has spilled.

But when the thankful arid ways
Have drunk its perfume sweetly spread,
God shall bestow a recompense of days
That pour refreshment on its head.

O ye who seek the far-described,
With nearness void! hear wisdom's art:
Ye shall not lift from joy's exhaustless tide
More than the measure of the heart.

Vainly for larger life we yearn,
Or queenlier blooms of truth to blow,
Till we in life's least moments gladly learn
To live the little truth we know.

THE HIGHER STOICISM

How shall I sing of others' woe,
I who mine own have left unsung?
Through sorrowing strings ungainly go
My hands, and hold in leash my tongue.
I with such joy have lived so long
It stills the harp of mournful song.

Yet think not grief has passed me by.
I too have tasted life's unease;
Have known death's blank and pain's deep cry;
But, deeper than the depth of these,
Some glance of vision still has caught
Love's purpose through disaster wrought.

Not faith alone has edged the glance
That looks beyond life's growing pile,
And in destroying Shiva's dance
Has glimpsed preserving Vishnu's smile.*
Powers men deny or darkly pray
Have touched me in the full of day.

And though the *Why* and *Whence* be dark,
And questions *Witherward* avail
No jot, I feel behind my barque

A homing wind that swells its sail.
What fellow-voyagers crowd the air
I know—and cast away despair.

I cannot hold it grievous doom
That source and end are out of sight;
Rather, give thanks that these have room
To pull us past our ring of night;
Twin-faced, but single purposed both
To rouse the soul from sensual sloth.

Therefore it is not mine to raise
The chant of passing and revolt
With prophets of chill coming days
In which their birds of passion moult.
I give, for glooms in which they live,
The young-eyed Soul's affirmative.

They miss the forest-secret quite
Whose eyes are fixed on branch or bole.
They only read Fate's book aright
Who not in fragments see the whole,
But feel the sap of life's deep root
Flow on to feed sky-hidden fruit.

Thought-free from every burning hour,
They find cool shaded space to fill
The heart's deep urn from wells of power
Whose draught has grace to heal, and thrill
With gentleness their stoic hand
Who stand—because they understand.

* When the world needs castigation, Vishnu puts on His mask as Shiva to shake it for its regeneration. *A Hindu scripture.*

FLIGHT

Blue bird on the mango bough!
Teach me how
I may spread my wings like you
In the blue;
For I think I too can fly
If I only try.
Why? you question, *Why?*
I shall tell you why.

Sometimes in the quiet night
Comes a light
In the middle of my head;
Then I spread
Arms to left and right wing-wise,
Slowly, slowly rise
From the ground
Without a sound;
Hang a dizzy foot or so,
Then let go
And sail away
Like a flake of day
Blown across the wondering dark
Till my spark
Lengthens, flickers into tails,

Shakes and fails,
And I waken with a start
At my heart!

And as now in sunset rays
On you I gaze and gaze and gaze,
I begin to think
I feel the round world sink;
Yes! I leave the ground, I rise
Through my dazzled eyes
To become a part of you,
Of the very jumping heart of you,
The fearless outward spring of you,
The spread glad wing of you!
Bird, O bird! that now
Leaves the mango bough,
See me, see me panting at your side
Swimming down the swirling flashing sunset tide!

Alas!
In the whispering grass
I am spread
As one dead.
Overhead
You are but a turquoise gleam
Chuckling at my fallen dream.

Yet I seem
In my mind to find the print
Of a hint
Of a deep infolded Power
That shall flower
Not alone to flight
At your cloudy height,
But along a singing way
Through and past the cage of clay;
Yea a Power that yet will spread
Rainbow wings of Godlihead,
When the inner has come out,
Routing Doubt;
Routing Doubt's twin-hearted wraith,
Blindman Faith;
When we leave control
With the Soul
—Wisdom's goal—
And have wrought with will unshaking
All our dreaming into waking!

Madanapalle, South India.

BALANCE

Wail not that the thorny spear
Pricks about this Persian rose.
Rather count it good that here
Beauty out of harshness grows.

Though the feathery tamarind
Acid fruitage hangs in air,
Spiny cactus, leather-skinned,
Gives a sweetly scented pear.

Let the parrots, gorgeous-hued,
Sharply scold across the sky:
Plain-robed warblers of the wood
Sweetness out of shadow cry.

What if sunlight, fostering
Nested frailty shut from sight,
Strikes in gold along the wing
Of the circling slaughterous kite!

Thus—and in the human heart
Where across a swinging gate
Joy and sorrow meet or part—
Nature holds her balance straight;

Wheels us in a roundabout,
Each to others' purpose pressed,
As our sun-screen, shredded out,
Makes a thieving squirrel's nest.

Yet, look deeper; you may know
Something subtly intertwined
In the clash of foe and foe,
Or the link of kind with kind;

Something that untwists the Rope,
And through slits in sound and shape
Finds toward a larger scope
Hidden pathways of escape.

Hold this truth: the maze of things
Is by one deep rapture stirred—
As a poet soothly sings
Meanings past his wisest word.

UNITY

High on the rock-paved praying-ground
The sons of Allah stand,
Then in obeisance soul-profound
Bend earthward head and hand.

In robe and turban many-hued
They bloom upon the mind,
A bank of flowers in prayerful mood
Bending before a wind.

And here, beside the white-towered shrine,
God Shiva's ancient seat,
Field-blossoms in the sunlight shine
About my wandering feet;

And, as a breeze across my brow
On some glad errand runs,
They bow, as in devotion bow
Allah's and Shiva's sons.

So calm the encircling hills, so sweet
The jasmine-scented air,
God, man and nature seem to meet,
And cancel *here* and *there*;

And show that, underneath their mask,
One holy impulse stirs
Those flowers that grace from Allah ask,
These clay-born worshippers.

In such clear glimpses of the Whole
Our foolish barriers fall;
For who finds kinship with the soul
Is kindred unto all.

THREE WHITE EAGLES

Three white eagles looked at me
From a tall palmyra tree.
That was all.—But suddenly
I went dark with lightning glaring
In my head; and thunder blaring
Shook me to my bended knee
At the foot of some strange Tree,
Bare save for one criss-cross bough
Where, with spikes about each brow,
God the Father, God the Mother,
God the Son and Elder Brother,
Three in One and One in Three,
Looked and looked and looked at me.
. . . I woke, and with new washen eyes
Saw the last wrinkle of disguise
Fold on a Face that hid away
Behind the vizor Night-and-day . . .
And from the tall palmyra tree
Only three eagles looked at me.

HALF-PAST FIVE

Beetles with midriff ringed with red,
Pendulous bodies, sunset stains
In flickering wings, and overhead
Leftward and rightward—spreading planes,
Bursting the day's hot brassy gyve,
Buzz briskly forth at half-past five.

Rivers that never knew a fish,
Bone dry, save once or twice a year
When heaven crowds seaward with a swish,
Hold for these hosting clans no fear.
“God wills we soar while others dive.
We cross the stream at half-past five.”

Round here lies Arcot. History's sleeve
Wipes out the mark of sword and flame.
They came, they saw—they went; and leave
India and beetles much the same.
These chant an older name than Clive
As they fly forth at half-past five:—

“*Om!* Over, out! Who whimpers ‘Night,
Night comes with rain and jackal’s yell’?
God gave us wings to give Him flight.

That our sole care is.” Which is well,
For swift birds punctually arrive
Whose dinner-time is half-past five.

Beetle and river-bed and bird,
And goat-boy with his bamboo flute,
In a lone poet’s heart have stirred
Things that are wild to be afoot;
High dreams and songs that ache and strive
To find *their* wings at half-past five.

BITTER AND SWEET

Bitter aloes give a flower—
Pendant bells waxen white.
Here the honeybirds have dower
Of the honeybird's delight.
Black beneath from beak to tip
Of a joyous jerking tail,
Yellow-necked with yellow wing
On the aloe stem they swing,
Sip and cheep, and sip, and sail
Out and back, cheep and sip,
Till the eye of one who sees
Glimpses Beauty's mysteries;
And the joy of wing and leaf,
Swinging spray and waxen bell,
Through the thrilling heart-strings tell
Tears have other springs than grief.
Now they scan the bells with ear
Sideways set as if to hear
Honey-music crystal strains
Echoed from the Earth's deep veins;
Singing, crystal beat by beat,
Through the heart of all that lives;
Ringing through the swinging sweet
Flower the bitter aloe gives.

LOVE ANTIPHONAL

Just as the first faint thought of light
Disturbs the dreaming head of night,
A koél in the sandal tree
Cries *Love, O love!* in ecstasy.
And far away, past peering eyes,
Love, love! a koél's note replies.
'*O my wee dear!* a faint voice calls,
And from the dim-seen mango falls
Love's instant answer, *My wee dear!*
And everywhere the far and near
Join through the voice of rock and dove
In morn's antiphonal of love.

Ah! shall the love-song of the bird
Lack the full finish of a word
Of heartfelt conscious human speech
Æons beyond bird-meaning's reach?
Nay! let love's circle be complete,
And you and I call *Sweet!* to *Sweet!*
While the enfolding arms of light
Take to day's heart the dreams of night.

THE COIN

A beggar, through the fields I passed,
Craving some boon to solace grief;
And Nature blew a laugh, and cast
Into my hat—a withered leaf!

Now I the young and gay will join,
And spend my wealth, and sing in glee,
Because of that exhaustless coin
That spendthrift Nature threw to me!

THE POET TO HIS OTHER SELF

Other Self

When I walk along the street,
Every human face I meet
Seems a trivial burdened elf
Mimicking my baser self!
Between me and the dream I made
They have set a palisade.
I go vainly up and down
Shut in a beleaguered town.

The Poet

Brother! if you would escape
From the chain of size and shape,
And behold your guiding star—
Leave the perpendicular
Where your eye's earth-levelled lance
Breaks on phantom circumstance,
And your ocean-peace is lost
In its shore-waves' clamouring host.
Find a place of grass, and lie
Looking straight into the sky;
Stretched (the thought comes with a shock)
Like Prometheus on his rock.—

Yet, if you the fire would find,
You must pay the price in kind,
Since life's tree must yield as dower
Wood for crucifixion's hour,
Ere the sky-stair can be made
For the soul's high escalade;
Ere the thorny circlet blows
To the Spirit's living rose.
Then, your back to solid ground,
You shall know the peace profound,
When your eyesight's mystic Tree
Blooms toward the Mystery
God in Farness writeth clear
For the measure of the Near;
Setting Vastness as a ring
On the hand of Everything;
Furnishing the Whole to house
Great, with Littleness for spouse.
Finding this, your heart will find
Wisdom past the sundering mind.
Eyes of God-ward-groping men
Brotherly will greet you . . . Then,
Rise, and take among the throng
Deeper vision, sweeter song.

LATE MONSOON

No blade of song parched fingers pluck.
No thought-cloud cools the red-rimmed eye.
Life's quenchless burning sun-lips suck
The heart-fruit cracked and dry!
Down to her core the soul shall rend
In awful thirsting pain
Unless God in His mercy send
The singing rain!

O God! write, write in gathering shade
Thy cloud-account across the sky.
The price be set, the bargain made;
I ask not how or why,
But this: let passionate lightning rend,
Thought's thunder shake the brain,
If these must come before Thou send
Song-giving rain!

THE KING'S WIFE

[The traditional story on which this drama-poem is based is not in accord with history. The Hindu Queen Mirabai attained renown as a poetess and saint at the end of the fifteenth century, and the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who made an abortive effort to create an eclectic religion for his vast empire, began his reign in the middle of the sixteenth century. They were therefore not contemporaries. Nor is it certain that Queen Mirabai was the wife of King Kumbha of Merwar in Rajputana. Some records name her as his daughter. I hope, however, that the presentation in an Indian setting of three types of religious temperament (the breadth of Akbar, the devotion of Mirabai, the fanaticism of Kumbha) that are always contemporaneous, may, by the evocation of some measure of æsthetical pleasure, compensate for historical discrepancy, and for such liberties as I have taken with a story that had already taken liberties with facts. One such liberty I have taken in declining to carry on the drama-poem to a miraculous rescue, and an ending in reconciliation and domestic felicity. . . . The songs in the drama-poem are paraphrases from traditional originals of Queen Mirabai in the Hindi language which are still sung all over northern India. The paraphrases follow both the outer and inner structure of the originals.]

I

Outside a temple to Sri Krishna at Chitorgarh in Rajputana. Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, and his favourite court poet, Tansen, a convert from Hinduism to Islam, come in. Akbar is partially disguised as a Hindu, Tansen wholly so.

TANSEN. Here is our journey's end.

AKBAR. So this is the temple
That all the world is seeking for the sake
Of a queen's songs.

TANSEN.

It is, your majesty,
And it would be a song most pitiful
That Akbar's legs were traitors to his feet,
And after these long miles of journeying
Flaunted discovery. An hour ago
I died to Islam and was reborn a Hindu;
But you are stuck half way from life to life,
Loins downward shamelessly a Mussulman.

AKBAR. I have seen Hindus trousered.

TANSEN.

Very true;

But there is something deeper than the fact
That has escaped you. Take the baggy trousers
From Muslim legs and put them on a Hindu's,
And they will seem like aliens of the race
Or perverts from the Faith. No no! too much
Hangs from your waist to risk. Here, take this
cloth
And reincarnate quickly.

AKBAR.

If my limbs

Could ape the Hindu as glibly as your tongue
Resumes his language, I far more would fear
To lose myself in that which we assume
Than be unmasked. And so I rather choose
To don the Hindu than to slough the Muslim,
And being both, be either at the need.

He has put a Hindu curtha (skirt) over his trousers.

TANSEN. Well well, at least the risk is covered up.

AKBAR. Twice you have spoken of risk. You are not fearful?

TANSEN. Hardly would fear have driven me on this chase

After a songbird for an emperor's game,
To turn at the door of the nest; but I remember
The sanctity in which these Hindus hold
Their women. I have sung to you my song
Of how a Rajput and a Mughal king
Sprang to the embrace of death when kin of
yours

Desired to look upon the haughty kin
Of her whose songs have drawn you here disguised.

Are *you* so bloody minded for a look
To tempt red fate?

AKBAR (*proceeding to squat on the ground awkwardly in the unaccustomed Hindu skirt*).

I think fate's embassy
Comes round the corner. Allah keep away
Occasion for a hasty rising!

TANSEN (*squatting beside Akbar*). Aye,
And Allah banish "Allah" from your tongue,

And give your majesty a proper God
To swear by——

AKBAR. And to rinse “your majesty”
Out of your mouth whose word should but be-
come

Pilgrim to pilgrim on a holy quest.

TANSEN. Farewell, O king! Hail, brother!

*He makes a Muslim salaam, hand to ground and
up to forehead.*

AKBAR (*grasping Tansen's hand*). There is less risk
In my two legs than your one hand. Narayana!
You will salaam us into the gaping jaws
Of these proud Rajput tigers. Brother, thus! . . .
*He puts his two palms together and raises his
hands with the thumbs close to the forehead
in a Hindu salutation.*

Now sing a song of Mirabai's.

TANSEN *sings*:

Flowers plucked at dawn of day,
Garlanded love's glad way,
Lord! at Thy threshold I, Thy flower-girl, lay.

Yea, and a fairer flower
From my heart's hidden bower.
Ah! let Thy lips now speak the word of power.

Breaking to finer mould
The earth of me, to unfold
Fit blooms of grace for Thee, Lord! to behold.

So shall my beaded throat
Find fuller, purer note
To sing Thy name; and I to Thee devote

My house of nights and days
In song; and of life's ways,
Joyous or sad, weave garlands in Thy praise.

TWO CITIZENS *come in.*

FIRST CITIZEN (*finishing an argument*). There is the
proof

Straight to the hand! Her songs are in the mouth
Of high and low. (*To Tansen*) A pretty looking
flower-girl

You'd make, my man!

TANSEN. Who knows, brother, who knows?

For contradiction lives but on the lips,
And when the heart goes with the song, ah! then
The past sings in the present, and may bring
A flower-girl's music, or perhaps a queen's,
Into the roughest voice; and one life back
My brother here may have been a king, or worse.

I am myself a poet. I shall sing
Something of my own making.

SECOND CITIZEN. Spare us, no!

FIRST CITIZEN. Brindaban on your way
Is a more sacred shrine than Chitor.

TANSEN. Aye,

But one is a silent flute, and one a flute
Filled with melodious breath. I am myself
A poet——

FIRST CITIZEN. You have told us that already,
And doubtless you have come so far to learn
How much more sweetly than a queen you sing.
“Only a poet is jealous of a poet!”

TANSEN. That is no harm, since there is waiting us
The future that will give us all our place?
I count no poet worthy of the craft
Whose aim is not pitched higher than the highest.
But what of that! I have not journeyed here
We have enough trouble in the kingdom
From two already. It is bad enough
That the king's temper thins with every song
That bears Queen Mira's name from lip to lip
Like leaves whose whispers waken jealousy.

TANSEN. Only a poet is jealous of a poet,
And how is this? *Her* songs alone have reached
us,
Or have kings grown presumptuous?

SECOND CITIZEN.

There again

His jealousy is fed. Have you not heard
King Kumbha's chants of his high lineage
And his divine ancestor?

TANSEN.

We are pilgrims

From Akbar's country.
From choice, but by compulsion of the will
Of this my brother.

FIRST CITIZEN.

He is given to little speech,

If he be judge of song.

TANSEN.

Ah! but he thinks

And thinks, and holds his thought with vast
control.

SECOND CITIZEN. A power, no doubt, he gained by
sovereign rule

In that last life!

TANSEN.

Who knows, brother, who knows?

A king's deep homage would not bend amiss
Before a singing queen.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Not in the mood

Of the queen's husband!

TANSEN. He takes a rival badly?

FIRST CITIZEN. That is but half the trouble. Long
ago,

Before their youth had felt the weight of rule,
Mira and Kumbha with their blossoming songs

Pelted each other, with laughter and high looks
That made the kingdom all one voice in joy.

SECOND CITIZEN. But when the prince was lifted to
the king

With Mirabai beside him, there came a change.

FIRST CITIZEN. You know the Indus mouth, how it
has piled

Kingdom to kingdom in its royal way

Gathered from far and near, yet like a king

Whose conquests crowd about him till his path

Must sideways find a way to the great sea?

So with these two. One life in them had flowed

Sweet as a singing river in the hills;

But with new power new appetite for power

Grew in King Kumbha, piling in his way

Obstruction to the soul.

SECOND CITIZEN. So it is said

By those who move nearer the king than we

Plain citizens.

FIRST CITIZEN. And while the king, aloof,

Passed through ambition into discontent,

Hating the thing he coveted, whose gain

Made loss in the heart, and turned the stream of
love

To peevish eddies, jealous undertow

That pulled their lives apart, the gentle queen

Gathered the world about her with her songs,
And grew in saintliness that stung the king
With dumb rebuke of what had passed him by.

SECOND CITIZEN. You come from Akbar's country.
Have you not heard
How the Great Mughal whispers his desire
To hear Queen Mirabai's music from her own
lips?

TANSEN. It was for such a rumour we have come.

SECOND CITIZEN. Just so! and so King Kumbha
broods and chafes
With memory of an ancient bloody strife
Because a Mughal emperor essayed
To taste the beauty of a Rajput queen
With his own eyes.

TANSEN. And what if Akbar by stealth
Should see the Queen?

SECOND CITIZEN. Our kings would rather die
Than let pollution from an alien glance
Like subtle poison pass into the blood
Of their untainted race. And who shall say
What penalty might fall on one removed
One step from kingship, since the scale of pride
Holds life but lightly, that the throne be clean?
But that is out of count! We are at peace
With Akbar. Emperors do not leave their thrones

But rumour takes the vanguard, and no sound
Of such import has reached us.

FIRST CITIZEN.

So let be

What will be; you have headed circumstance.
The Queen comes now to worship, and may bring
A song to God, new-budded on the lake
Of her calm soul; a lotus in the dawn,
That smiles to heaven, but holds a shining tear.
Oh! she has brought strange quiet on the world,
The exquisite sadness of things beautiful
That is more sweet than laughter. She has made
The heart's pure conquest lightly as a breath,
Because her hands are eloquent with love;
While power, that thunders on the stubborn will,
Smites the response—that leaps to her in joy.
Farewell. Our business takes us elsewhere,
But we shall come again.

SECOND CITIZEN.

And you, good friends,

Let go humility, and put on pride
Because, for that past kingship you have left,
You shall forestall an emperor's desire,
And know perhaps what Akbar cannot know
Till he, like you, in some succeeding life,
Drop the rude mask of kingship, and, like you,
Put on the pilgrim's garb. Farewell.

AKBAR AND TANSEN.

Farewell.

The TWO CITIZENS go out, making the Hindu salutation, to which Akbar and Tansen reply.

TANSEN. Brother, we sit in garments rather thin
Against a searching wind.

AKBAR. Yet thus we learn
The taste of the wind. So knowledge grows.

TANSEN. Is this
Close to your taste, or shall we tread no more
The hidden edge of danger?

AKBAR. Fearful again?

TANSEN. Not for myself, for I can sing myself
Through any hole in a wall; and not for you,
For you have all the ready wit of the rook.

AKBAR. But not its conversation!

TANSEN. Aptly said.
But why so silent?

AKBAR. Shall I shout my name
In ears that may have heard my voice in battle?

TANSEN. O well of wisdom! not for you I fear,
But fear for all the flame of jealous pride
That may consume her.

The music of a stringed instrument is heard.

AKBAR. Listen! (*He rises*)

A WOMAN'S VOICE (*singing to stringed music a song to the Lord Krishna*).

Here in our courtyard, where the breeze
Bears odours of the champak trees,
And high in blue unclouded calm
Sways leisurely the fruiting palm;
Come, Little One, at cool of day,
And on your flute soft music play.

AKBAR AND TANSEN *listen, Akbar with growing rapture. The VOICE ceases, but the stringed music continues softly.*

AKBAR. If such can be
The disembodied spirit of her song,
What must its fulness be, when eye to ear
Adds beautiful to beauty?

TANSEN. We came to hear,
And hearing is all coolness to the flesh,
And sets the hand of distance on desire;
But sight may put the tinder's kindling spark
Against dried leaves.

AKBAR. O dull of comprehension!
Have you not learned that sight is half of
hearing,
And men in the dark hear less or more than real,
And mock the truth of day. No! We have come
For all Fate carries in her knotted cloth.

He proceeds to go out with the kingly stride of Akbar.

TANSEN (*stopping him*). Brother, I have wiped majesty off my lips.

Now take it from your step. We are pilgrims.

AKBAR.

Yes,

We are pilgrims, everyone of us, all pilgrims—
And all disguised. There is not a man or woman
But seeks some other than the thing that's
sought for.

All is ulterior. Nothing is itself—
Unless itself be nothing. She too seeks
An end beyond the ending of her song,
And past the silence that her song has made
More lovely and more lonely than the dusk
Whose heart goes with the day upon its quest,
As hers goes questing on the spirit's way
Through the small gate of music. She too is dis-
guised;

Aye, God himself, who heads the pilgrim line,
Is no more honest than the rest of us.
He puts a band of cloud about his head,
And nature's coloured cloths about his limbs;
And when we tear away one or the other
In agony of search, we only find
Another and another disguise beneath

For our frustration. He too is beyond.
Well have these Hindus called the universe
The Play of Brahma. Poor maskers, we are
driven

From act to act; and that were happy and well
Had we but wit to hold ourselves no more
Than ripples upon Jamuna. But alas!
We pin our souls unto our masks, and turn
God's play to earnest, setting tragedy
In place of laughter.—You think I have come
To listen to a song, perhaps to look
Upon a queen. That is the father-lie
That has begotten this (*indicates disguise*). No,
I have come .

To seek an ancient solitary path
All must in season tread, and hereabout
May be a glimpse or entrance.

TANSEN. Brother, brother!

Why have you hidden yourself from me till now?

WOMAN'S VOICE (*singing to stringed music*).

Oh! fresh as music-haunted wind,
Come, thou enchanter of my mind!
Lift up thine ageless infant glance,
And in my heart's cool courtyard dance
The joy that foots the years along
Till all my being break in song.

AKBAR goes slowly out.

TANSEN follows.

The stringed music continues into the next scene.

II

In front of the temple. A flight of steps leads up to the interior.

The stringed music continues from the previous scene.

AKBAR AND TANSEN come in and seat themselves on the ground to right and left of the steps. They make offerings of rice, coconuts and jasmine blossoms.

MIRABAI (*Queen of Merwar in Rajputana, within singing*).

Dance, Holy Child! My melody
Shall speak our joy, who inly see
Heaven's courtyard here on earthly ground,
And hear a music past our sound;
And know, in every joy and woe
God's onward footsteps dancing go.

The stringed music continues for a short time.

AKBAR has listened intently, and fallen into abstraction.

TANSEN. Brother! your eyes are closed.

AKBAR.

Brother! a door

Has opened. In the darkness all disguise
Falls from the soul, and that great liar, sight,
Is silenced. Those who look shall never see
Beyond the eye's horizon. Those who see
Have no more need for looking.

TANSEN.

You speak in riddles.

AKBAR.. Because all things are plain; and that one
Truth

Which I have sought through many clamouring
truths

Has grown as simple as a blade of grass,
As clear as a child's open-handed smile.
So much her song has taught me.

TANSEN.

She comes herself.

MIRABAI *is seen above the steps approaching still feeling the ecstasy of worship.*

AKBAR *rises, and as she comes down the steps, prostrates, and when she reaches the ground touches her feet with his hands, and rises.*

TANSEN *prostrates a little distance away.*

MIRABAI. I am unworthy in heart of such obeisance:
Much more unworthy then my wayward feet.

AKBAR. Oh! they have led me through a holy song
Unto the vision of the Feet of God.

MIRABAI. That is great joy. May he well prosper
you
To lift your face up to the Face Divine.
So shall you reach what is beyond the power
Or purchase of earth's kings. Great Akbar's
eyes
Have longed for that in vain.

TANSEN. Must Akbar, then,
Because he is Akbar and a Mussulman,
Be held for ever from his heart's high wish?

MIRABAI. No! No! all paths will find the inner
shrine,
Though there be many openers of the gate.
"However men approach, I welcome them,
For all the paths are mine." So says the Lord.*

TANSEN. How then shall he attain?

MIRABAI. When he shall wield
An unseen sceptre on the throne of nothing.

AKBAR. Alas! Alas!

MIRABAI. Your sorrow for another
Will clear your way.

TANSEN. My brother was a king
In a past life.

MIRABAI. We have all been kings and queens
At one time or another. It is a habit

* This and other quotations are from the "Bhagavad Gita."

Most hard to break; for power to human hand
Is its great weakness, wealth its poverty.

TANSEN. Your Majesty is rumoured through the
world

To have escaped both.

MIRABAI. Here there is no majesty,

Nor less than majesty. Here all are one.

There is one Lover here, Sri Krishna, and we
Are all his maidens, I of all the least,

Though elsewhere I may wear a crown, and rule
The household of a king; for who would serve

Most faithfully the Lord, must faithfully

Serve life in all its fulness, knowing it

His bride, whom he has wooed from shape to
shape

Toward some far consummation beyond the
dream

Of mortal sense or vision. I am but

A singing-girl at that perpetual marriage.

AKBAR. That is an office past the power of kings
Whose thrones are reared on dust.

MIRABAI. Ah! Your past life
Must whisper closely to your inner ear.

AKBAR. My words are birth-proud echoes of your
own

Out of your songs that go from mouth to mouth

Along the caravans, from silent deserts
Eastward and westward to the palm-fringed
waters,

And over the waters, and under in many a brain
That meets the silence with remembered music
After the lips are blue. You draw the world
By wizardry of song, and set a throne
Invisibly established on a strength

Beyond the mightiest prince of all the Rajputs.

MIRABAI. I am my husband's most obedient wife.

AKBAR. And his greatest rival.

MIRABAI. His least word is law.

AKBAR. Your word is source and arbiter of law,
Being creation. You poets are in league
With God. You set his thoughts in beauty's
mould,

Speeding fulfilment of his ancient dream.

You are sworn foe of those whose hearts are set
On building life in their own likeness—kings
And those whose passions king it over them,
Who count the world their sustenance.—I have
taken

Out of the far-off echoes of your songs
Great beauty and great wisdom; and now that I
Have looked upon their source, something within
Would almost dare the peril of plain speech

Where humbly now it strains itself to break
The shackles of impossibility.

You on the surface are a queen, and I
Am but a beggar—

MIRABAI. But underneath the surface
We may be different; and deeper still
Be no more different than that great Life
That comes and goes, that feeds and sins and
 prays,
And is, ah! slowly slowly, gathered home
By the awakened soul, that like a goat-herd
Scans the wide plains under a downward palm
For his hungry flock that wandered while he
 slept.

AKBAR. Ah! how we all are stifled by disguise,
And barter for a name or pride of race
The splendid jewel of the spoken heart.
We grasp at gilded vanities, and miss
God's orphaned and outcast simplicities
That cry for home and love. Were I but free
To serve my heart's high purpose, I would set
A crown upon your head, and lay a kingdom
Here at your feet.

MIRABAI. I have no need of either.

AKBAR. Oh! truth to you so sweet, to us most bitter,

Damming the stream whereof yourself are
spring.

You have no need to *take*, but pity us
Whose hearts cry out *Give! give!*—the little cry
That holds all healing for all human ill,
All sanctuary from self; permit us then
To leave our gifts, though poor, to bless your
shrine.

MIRABAI. Ah! when the heart is pure, and all the
mind

Held to one holy end, the meanest gift
Is pleasing to the Lord. Did he not say
A cup of water offered in his name
Had sure acceptance? A handful of sweet
flowers

May breathe a fragrance past a royal boon.

TANSEN *moves towards Mirabai to offer flowers.*

MIRABAI *closes her eyes in devotion and holds out her
hands.*

TANSEN (*putting the flowers in Mirabai's open hands*).

The flowers of the earth are His; we give His
own.

AKBAR (*bringing from his coat a necklace of jewels
rolled up which he lays on the flowers in
Mirabai's hands*).

The stones of the earth are His; we give His own.

MIRABAI *turns toward the inner shrine elevating her hands above her bowed head as she offers the gifts to Sri Krishna.*

AKBAR *signifies silently to Tansen to go.*

They both go quickly and silently away, dropping into the attitude of pilgrims.

THE TWO CITIZENS *enter and watch Queen Mirabai.*

MIRABAI *after a moment's silence lowers the gifts in her hands and looks at them; then exclaims*

Brothers! a miracle! a miracle!

Immortal Love has changed your humble stones
To glittering stars, a milky way of gems
Across the sky. (*She turns to the front again.*)

SECOND CITIZEN. Pardon, O Queen! these gems
Look much too real to be miraculous.

FIRST CITIZEN. May we have leave to ask whose gift
they are?

MIRABAI. The givers to the Lord give not for name.
Who gives for name gives only to himself
A gift of nothing.

FIRST CITIZEN. We are well rebuked
For over-boldness. It was the glittering stones
Drew question from us, being worth the revenue
Of a mountain kingdom, hinting that a king
Had passed on pilgrimage—

SECOND CITIZEN.

Or if not a king,

Then one who had robbed a king.

MIRABAI.

Could so much truth

Live on the lips, and yet the heart be dark
Either with falsehood or with violence,
Or does the world's illusion fall upon us?
He spoke of being a king in a past life,
And of disguises and imprisonment
In harsh impossibility—such words
As the dark heart breaks gladly through to light.
And now his words too seem to turn to stones
Richer than beggar's garb, but beggar poor
Beside my simple reading of them. Still,
The gift is God's, and he will sanctify
If need be— Need be! Who am I to ask
The whence or how? All comes alone from him,
And all by many ways goes back to him,
And peace comes only to the open hands
That are but highways for his passing will.
Has not all trouble come upon the world
Through questioning? Are not life's pains and
woes

But smittings back of her own faithlessness?
O brothers! we shall never leave the wheel
Of birth and death, and find our liberation,
While that slim prying serpent of the mind

Puffs out his hood, and darts from side to side
Sharp questioning. No! let us take what is
With calmness. Thus the things that are to come,
Finding no strong repulsion or desire,
May err no whit beyond, nay nor beneath,
His purpose; for the thing itself is nought;
Only the heart's intention counts with Him.
She takes the necklace into the temple.

SECOND CITIZEN. He spoke of being a king in a past
life.

FIRST CITIZEN. It must have been those pilgrims
from the north

We talked with hereabout a while ago.

SECOND CITIZEN. How think you they came by it?

FIRST CITIZEN. If by true means
There is mystery about, for it is worth
Uncounted wealth, and those poor worshippers
Are not what they appear. If by false means
We should bestir ourselves to track it out
Lest some misfortune should overtake the queen
If crime would make a silent hiding-place
Out of God's habitation. Come away.

SECOND CITIZEN. So great a gift could hardly have
its equal

Knotted in the same kerchief, think you so?

FIRST CITIZEN. It may be a ninth wave with followers;

One shout of trouble with an echoing train.

SECOND CITIZEN. Even its shadow would be wealth enough.

FIRST CITIZEN. Let's go, for we are on the shaking verge

Of revelation, when thin poverty

Breeds wealth beyond a prince's treasure-house—

SECOND CITIZEN. And honest men turn thief to punish thieves.

They go out.

III

The assembly hall of King Kumbha of Merwar at Chitorgarth. KING KUMBHA, QUEEN MIRABAI, and TWO ATTENDANT MINISTERS *come in.*

KUMBHA (*seating himself on a dais*). Let the two citizens

Be brought into our presence.

First Minister goes out.

Send at once

For the Court Jeweller.

Second Minister goes out.

MIRABAI (*standing*). There was a time
When no exalted place your presence graced
Was fully furnished lacking one you loved.

KUMBHA. My time is brief: what would you?

MIRABAI. Life after life
Was once too brief for love. I come to ask
Why you have taken from the temple shrine,
With clouded brows and mutterings, the gift
Of 'gems one gave to God.

KUMBHA. I have taken it
Because I have chosen to take it.

MIRABAI. Once your choice
Went comradely with mine in love and song;
But now your will is grown as bitter and sharp
As a clean-shearing blade that goes through life
Sundering past and future.

KUMBHA. We have our ways
And we must tread them. I have left you free:
What more is needed?

MIRABAI. Something less is needed;
For freedom that is fond of its own name
Has not yet shed its chains. But perfect love
Makes happy bonds that are but anchorage
To the free soul. Something more deep than
choice
Has moved you to such harshness.

KUMBHA.

Who gave the gift?

MIRABAI. Surely the Lord Himself in pilgrim guise,
A moment seen, the next invisible
To the most searching look.

KUMBHA.

Just such a tale

You told me when within your curtained room
I heard you hold hushed talk with one unseen.
It was the Lord, you said. It is the Lord.
That is your constant song; and that refrain
May cover much that there is need to cover.
I want no word that may be this or that,
Bending its branch to every wind that blows,
Yet rooted darkly past the common sight
Of blunt and simple eyes. I want plain truth.

MIRABAI. Yet seek it out from every mouth but that
Which in no single thought, no slightest word
Has erred against its marriage vow, but here
Lays all my life before you for your will,
In full obedience. Something in your mind
Bends its once quiet mirror to rude shapes
That turn life's face to twisted mocking mouths,
Eyes that but see the thing they mean to see,
Ears deaf but to themselves; and round my feet
They leer and mutter. Oh! it is pitiful
When what was fair goes foul, and that straight
mind,

Mate of my softness, turns on its own face
Disfiguring hands, and in the seat of power
Justice now does injustice to itself.
Oh! that is pitiful.

KUMBHA. I need no pity
Till I have searched about the whispering world
For truth's full substance, not a shadowy phrase.

MIRABAI. I have told the truth.

KUMBHA. And underneath your "truth"
Lies the clear challenge of a princely gift
Wrapped in such circumstance as holds a threat
I may not pass. A kingdom's treasury
Goes not for nothing. To your shadowy truth
I shall search out the mate. If that be clean
I shall have need for pity.

MIRABAI. Ah! that *if*
Is dagger-pointed.

KUMBHA. Not for innocence.

MIRABAI. Doubt holds its haft.

KUMBHA. But waits the rigid proof.

MIRABAI. That dagger *if* wounds first and after
strikes.

KUMBHA. If "after" find occasion.

MIRABAI. And if not,
Still that sharp hurt must quiver in the heart
And scar forgiveness.

KUMBHA.

I must do my duty.

MIRABAI. That were sweet medicine if love and love

Set lips to the one draught; but now for me,

Shut by suspicion from your inmost thought,

It flings chill mockery on the flame of love,

And makes past vows ring hollow. Ah me! to
have lived

Through love's pure greenness, when the happy
rains

Made life a full glad river; to have lived

Into the dry and shrivelled aftertime;

That were indeed poor ending to our song—

Were it the end: but past our little reach

I hear invisible compassionate lips

Laugh softly, and in comprehending eyes

Catch a far meaning to the shadow-dance

Of children who have hurt themselves in play,

And shall have sleep, and waken, and forget.

KUMBHA. My business is with stern and present
things,

Not with pale phantoms and futurity.

*(He gives three claps with his hands, on which
the MINISTER and TWO CITIZENS come in.)*

No more of words. Leave me; my time is brief.

MIRABAI. And mine has ages in each hour.

KUMBHA *(impatiently)*.

Go, Go!

MINISTER *observes the tension, and as Queen Mirabai passes him on her way out, he bows very low with a glance of faithfulness. The two CITIZENS make profound obeisance to Queen Mirabai and then to King Kumbha.*

MINISTER. These are the men, Your Majesty, who spread
The news about the city.

KUMBHA. Let it spread
Self-procreant as gossip. The fact is nothing,
But what hangs on it. Have you news of
strangers?

MINISTER. None but the passage of two Muslim
traders Eastward.

SECOND CITIZEN. Most gracious king! the men who
brought
The gift of gems were Hindu pilgrims.

KUMBHA. So—
To your keen sight.

MINISTER. I had them closely watched.

KUMBHA. The pilgrims?

MINISTER. No, the traders.

KUMBHA. So your mind
Runs that way too?

MINISTER. But in the crowded streets
They mixed themselves and vanished clean away.

KUMBHA. And then?

MINISTER. Their story sprawled about the streets
Much like the spiny cactus that spreads out
From some disordered thought stalk sprung from
stalk

Haphazard; but the roots are in our hands,
The simple first of complicated last.

Tell out your tale. (*To the Two Citizens.*)

FIRST CITIZEN. May it please Your Majesty,
We have no tale but that which speaks itself;
The jewelled gift, and such poor inference
As our unfurnished minds may straighten out
From word to word. We spoke most brotherly
To two poor pilgrims at the temple gate.
One sang a song made by the queen, and said
His brother was a king in a past life,
And other words one reads in holy books.

SECOND CITIZEN. We went our way, and when we
came again

Queen Mirabai stood on the temple steps
Alone, and rapt in some ecstatic dream,
Holding upon her hands that priceless gift.
A miracle, she thought, had changed dead stones
To living jewels.

FIRST CITIZEN. We could not but hold
That such a gift came through no heavenly
dream,

But out of human hands, and showed a king
On pilgrimage.

SECOND CITIZEN. Or one who had robbed a king.

KUMBHA. Where did they come from?

SECOND CITIZEN. From the Mughal country.

KUMBHA. Ha! and you followed them?

FIRST CITIZEN. We sought them out
Because the queen in soft bewilderment
Counted their words as it were to value them,
How they had said that one had been a king
In a past life.

SECOND CITIZEN. From that we knew the gift
Came from the pilgrims, but we sought in vain
To find them.

KUMBHA. Fools! O fools! Half way to
wisdom
Is folly's rest-house. There are two certain ways
Of holding back suspicion that a man
Is a wild ass from the hills; one is, to lop
One's ears, fold up one's tail, and make such
sounds

As dullards may applaud for human speech.

FIRST CITIZEN. We have offended Your Majesty.

KUMBHA. Not of you
I speak, for you are not wild asses. You
Are tame ones. How domestication rusts

The edge of sight and hearing! The other way
Of holding back suspicion, is to bray
That you *are* wild asses. Then no one will be-
lieve,
But take your word as masking. These wild asses
Out of the north have taken a middle way.
They have put their hoofs in sandals, and have
brayed
Most philosophically; and you bats
Have neither seen nor heard. There is no use
In being burdened with such eyes and ears
As miss their proper function.

SECOND CITIZEN. O King! have mercy.

KUMBHA. I will have mercy. Nature has denied
My merciful hand the power to stretch your ears
To their true length; and since they but abuse
Their human shape, I shall relieve you of them.

SECOND CITIZEN. Mercy O King!

FIRST CITIZEN. Or if you grant not mercy,
Surely our prayer will put it in the hand
Of the king's minister!

KUMBHA. Such futile prayer
But shows my wisdom deeper than it seemed,
And you as doubly deaf and more than blind
Who think by prayer to move the hidden will
That mine but shadows. I am God's minister,

In every tested blade; but it is there,
Eternal threat against security
And ancient order, which alone the will
Of God, and God's own minister, myself,
May hold in place by rule so granite firm
It shakes not though the eye of Justice point
Even against the throne to save the throne.

SECOND MINISTER. Your words, O King! but speak
the ancient truth:

A Rajput prince would sooner slay himself
Than bring dishonour on his lineage.

KUMBHA. Aye, and if thus the law be firmly set
To rid the person, that the house be safe,
Justice at home will be at home abroad,
Nor softer handed if pollution came
By one just less than king.

FIRST CITIZEN (*To the other Citizen*). That strikes the
queen.

(*To King Kumbha*) Those are the very words, Your
Majesty,

I gave the pilgrims, now I think of it,
When one made question what the king would do
If Akbar stealthily should see the queen.

KUMBHA. Ha! Akbar! Now these arid wells yield
water.

Your ears shall be forgiven because your mouths

And felt its sweetness; for the word *you* bring
Is double-faced, and either way it frowns.

SECOND MINISTER. How so? There is no threat: all
is at peace

Outside the kingdom, and at peace within.

KUMBHA. There is within my kingdom a within
That knows no peace. I hear the tap, tap, tap
Of some woodpecker at the tree of life, .
Shredding its bark until the shrinking flesh
Is bare to wind and rain, and rottenness
Creeps up its bole and feeds on leaf and flower.
Oh! that tree's fall will bring a kingdom's fruit
Into the dust. Now speak.

CROWN JEWELLER. Your Majesty,
I have searched out the brethren of my craft
From here to Delhi, till at last I found
Him who had made the necklace.

KUMBHA. Ha! for whom?

CROWN JEWELLER. For Akbar!

KUMBHA. Now red judgment is afoot.
The arch stone falls, the seed of hatred breaks;
Only the sword remains! (*He writes.*)

MINISTERS. The sword! The sword!

FIRST MINISTER. We shall avenge this insult to your
throne.

SECOND MINISTER. Aye, with shed blood shall purity
pollution.

KUMBHA. There the true heart goes straightly to my
own

Counting no cost.

FIRST MINISTER. Whatever be the cost,
Akbar shall die.

KUMBHA. Akbar? O mighty Gods!
What blindness and what deafness have you
spread

Across the world, that I alone must move
Clear-eyed before your purpose, holding death
Less than dishonour, though it strike my throne?
Why, what has Akbar done but be himself,
Pollution's minister, to hold its test
Against sweet-mouthed pretension, aye, a stone
To ring the silver of the world, and part
God's minting from the false? Leave *him* alone,
And put the bitter edge of condemnation
To that which wrongs its nature; nay, more vile,
Tunes the kite's beak to give the bulbul's note,
And lure the world with mimicry of good
To share its own pollution. O great Gods!
Strengthen my hand to work thy solemn will
On that which soils thy kingdom.—She must die!
This is our will: you are its ministers.

He sets Queen Mirabai's death-warrant before them.

MINISTERS. The Queen! The Queen?

CROWN JEWELLER.

Queen Mirabai?

KUMBHA.

Aye, the queen,

And quickly.

FIRST MINISTER. May it please Your Majesty—

KUMBHA. That “please” is most displeasing, for it means

Unstable purpose.

FIRST MINISTER. Nay, O King! it means

Most certain purpose. I have never yet

Set hand upon a woman save in love

And courtesy. I am too old to learn

The sharp extremity of kingly wrath—

Whose end has louder threat against the throne

Than her “pollution.”

KUMBHA. Then you disobey me,

And set a rival on my outraged throne?

FIRST MINISTER. To serve the king I disobey the king.

Farewell. (*He goes out.*)

KUMBHA. Your punishment will follow you.

SECOND MINISTER. Mine will precede me.

KUMBHA. What! You too will fail me

To rid my throne of this ignoble taint?

SECOND MINISTER (*discarding his insignia of office*).

First I would rid myself of royal favour
And my exalted office, that my tongue
May freely serve my mind, and serving it,
Serve you.

KUMBHA. Your service is to do my will.

SECOND MINISTER. Aye, and most gladly were my
service given
Had I but certainty it was your will
That spoke.

KUMBHA. What is it else?

SECOND MINISTER. A gadfly thought
Fixed in the quivering tissue of the soul;
A thought that stings so near the eye of the mind
It hides the world with swollen mountainous
nothing,
And sets your brain on fire.

KUMBHA. And thus my will
Is countered by a handful of grey words
Out of the mouth of age; my solid thought
Is narrowed to a fever; and her ill
Stands clear in virtue. Ah! right well I know
What whispers give the common people sport
Of "How the queen grows saintly,—how the king
Waxes in worldliness." So be it. I hold
No less disloyal than the body's taint

This passionless concubinage of mind
That splits my kingdom, and I shall root it out.

(SECOND MINISTER *goes out.*)

My words are deeds. (*To the CROWN JEWELLER*)

You are not such as these
Dull-witted echoes. You are one who shapes
Crudeness to beauty, casting out the stone
That flaws the perfect circlet for a king,
Sharing God's merciful medicine of death
To that which mars his purpose.

CROWN JEWELLER.

It is true

My hand is firm in beauty's fashioning,
But, that it harm not Beauty for her own sake,
The eye must go more deeply than the surface;
For who would quench the sun because a cloud
Threatens the stainless azure of the dawn,
Or dry a river for a passing taint
That it will sing away with cleansing song?
Oh! in this desert pilgrimage of life
Through harshness to some distant kindlier time,
What soul-refreshment have we but the songs
That she has set within our hearts, like wells
Filled from deep springs beneath our heavy
clay?

I cannot stop their source.

KUMBHA.

And oozes green corruption.

Her purity

Would turn corruption to its likeness.

KUMBHA.

And leave it still corruption.—Her purity!

Are you so muddy-veined that in your mind

No comprehension gleams of what may hang

On kings disguised, or what may lie between

A woman and an emperor's flattery?

CROWN JEWELLER. Ah! now comes hope, when folly
takes a tongue

Most sensible, being most human: jealousy,

O King! has put your world upon its head,

Making good evil, evil good; but that

Will pass in season. It is a changeable spirit,

And full of contradiction, hating most

Where most it loves. Bid me now tear in pieces

Your hot decree; nor heed that fabled power

That none can touch, but priests from hoary
books

Let loose upon the world: a mocking god

That is less god than devil; a painted mask

To intimidate the childhood of the world,

And now grown bloody with men's bloody
thoughts,

And sanctified with age.

KUMBHA.

A garrulous fool!

Whose words are fagots to her funeral pyre,
Not counters against judgment. Not alone
She draws my kingdom sideways, but has put
Some witchcraft on men's minds, and through its
mists

God's face is pulled awry. O blasphemy,
Take yourself hence.

CROWN JEWELLER. I had already gone:

Only my body lags. (*He goes.*)

FIRST CITIZEN.

We too must go.

KUMBHA. You! you whom I have housed with my
strong arm,

Fencing you round with safety! Must I plead
Beggary unto beggars? Must I drag
A king's high will down to the market-place,
And slime it over with conspiracy?
You know the common mind; and it must know
How small a thing may flaw the majesty
That keeps a throne unshaken; how much more
Must judgment use extremity when one
Who lived with greatness, fed on it, drank it,
breathed it,

Stoops from her height, and, in her stooping,
trails

A long divinely-fathered lineage

Into pollution. Then what should stay the hand
Even against a queen?

FIRST CITIZEN. Oh! she has touched
Austerity with human love, and made
More broad the way for men unto the feet
Of God.

SECOND CITIZEN. And she has touched the common
life
With saintliness more strong than iron law
Against all violence. Her gentleness
Has joined in peace and brotherhood our hands
That once were murderous with ancient strife.

FIRST CITIZEN. How can we raise them, then, against
herself?

We humbly take out leave.

KUMBHA. Aye, humbly, humbly,
In such deep humbleness as counts for nothing
The will of majesty! Oh! well you have learned
Your lesson. Well you talk of saintliness—
That has dethroned its God, made purity
The name for alien taint, and, for completion,
Has left a king his throne, but taken all
That stands for kingship—loyalty, obedience,
And taken it “most humbly.”

SECOND CITIZEN. In all things else
But this, O King! our wills are yours to death.

KUMBHA. In all things else . . . one thing . . .
just short of that . . .

And then? Oh! now a firefly streaks the dark
With sudden burning wire, and here and there
Pricks the night's tent with living silver points,
Letting the light that is behind all darkness
Gleam through an instant . . . She has vowed
obedience

To God—and I to her am God on earth.

What if obedience be to her the grace
Of utmost merit that shall cancel all
Pollution's debt, sweetening the spirit's way
Through death to life? Oh! then, Oh! then,
we two

Who were twin strings on life's new zither; we
Who watched the flickering pleiades in a palm
Hang like a bunch of glow-worms; we who
dreamed

What beauty presses close against the eyes,
Sings in the ears, beats on the heart—ah! vain
Because the blood is quick and full of tumult
In love's first flood, and in the aftertime
Runs heavy with life's dull sediment; we two
May feel with mutual hands from life to life,
And meet beyond earth's shadows . . . You
have pledged

Your service in all else but one thing. That
I set aside. Take this to the queen herself,
That she be both priestess and sacrifice,
And God be satisfied—and man have peace.

He gives the death-warrant to the Second Citizen.

SECOND CITIZEN (*after an instant's doubt*). Our
word is given, O King!

FIRST CITIZEN. Aye, aye, the queen
Shall do the thing that's right. Farewell.

They go slowly out.

KUMBHA. Farewell.

Go! and my day go with you. I have come
Into the twilight, when the drunken sun
Has drained the vats of day, and left the world
Clear-edged and hard; and like a widowed rook
I sit on a bare branch and caw at nothing.

IV

A path among trees on the outskirts of the royal demesne of King Kumbha at Chitor. Night.

MIRABAI *enters, dressed in a rough garment. She glances furtively around, reads the death-warrant, then turns towards the place from whence she came, makes the Hindu salutation, and says,*

The king's wife shall obey her husband.

*She turns to proceed on her way, putting her
cloak over her head and obscuring her face.*

BEGGAR (*approaching on the opposite side*). Where
are you going, mother?

MIRABAI. I am not a mother.

BEGGAR. All women are mothers.

MIRABAI. One or other of us
Is speaking folly.

BEGGAR. There is but one mother
In all the world, and she is every woman
Though she be childless.

MIRABAI (*handing the Beggar a coin*). Take this for
your wisdom,
For there is kindness in your voice, and that
Is much to the beggared heart, and makes poor
speech
More wise than sages know whose hearts are
dead.

BEGGAR. Aye, what have we to help us on the road
But words and a little kindness, we who make
The thin companionship of utter need
Whose one fast law is great necessity
And friendliness. Have you had luck to-day?

MIRABAI. I have had the greatest luck in all my life.

BEGGAR. Where have you come from?

MIRABAI. Have you never heard
Of the Brindaban built within the heart
That one may reach through water or through
flame?

BEGGAR. I have heard priests and minstrels sing of it
In songs Queen Mirabai has made, but that
Is only poetry, and I hear the king
Holds it in no great favour—

MIRABAI. Nor the queen
Since Akbar looked upon her. Have you heard
this?—

Only on my constant prayer
Lord, to thee, my soul relies.
I no purpose proudly bear,
Nor the burden of the wise.

Me no deep-eyed fastings waste,
Seeking thus a swifter goal;
Only day and night I taste
Quenchless hunger of the soul.

No consoling boast is mine
Won from sacred pilgrimage;
Only to an inner shrine
Go my feet from youth to age.

I shall finish it at Brindaban.

BEGGAR (*overcome*).

For my word

That may be wise or foolish, as the moon
Waxes or wanes, you gave me recompense
Out of your little wealth; but I have nothing,
Even if I had luck as great as yours,
And had a queen's song pat upon my tongue,
To pay for wisdom that is wholly wise,
I know not why—and that is why I know.
Oh! you have touched me somewhere with a wave
Of sanctity.—Here take your own reward
That is grown richer than a royal gift
Because your hand has made it fabulous
With some strange beauty that is not of earth,
Some heavenly kindness.

*(He tries to put the coin in her hand. She tries
to prevent him doing so. He catches hold
of her hand, then lets it go with a start.)*

That is no beggar's hand!

That is no outcaste hand! That is a hand
That speaks without a tongue, that princely
dreams

Would flock around! What are you?

MIRABAI.

I am a woman.

BEGGAR. Who are you?

MIRABAI.

For the first time in my life
Solely and utterly I am myself,

And go on my own way.

*She goes off quickly towards the river and is lost
in the darkness.*

BEGGAR (*mazed*). O God! O God!

Surely I dreamed a goddess in beggar's garb
Spoke with me here? and yet this coin is real,
And she must be as real unless this world
Is mixed of true and false. Why, so it is,
But I have not before seen it so plain—
If I do see it. Some deep mystery
Has passed me with bewilderment.

GUARD (*coming in*). Hi! fellow,
Clear off this path, for only kings and queens
May tread it. You are the second of your tribe
On it to-night.

BEGGAR. The other was a woman?

GUARD. A friend of yours, no doubt. Begone at once
And seek your alms elsewhere.

BEGGAR. She was a vision . . .
Was she a vision? Did she give *you* a coin
Before she went?

GUARD. No!

BEGGAR. Why, of course not; she
Gives coins for wisdom, and wisdom only comes
To the free soul, and you are tied and bound
To tyrant duty. See, she gave me this

For a poor mouthful of untutored words!

He shows the coin.

GUARD (*snatching it*). Half is for me for sending
her your way.

(He examines the coin.)

O fool of a wise man, this is not a coin!

This is a holy medal that the queen

Had made of silver. That woman has stolen it!

Which way did she go? Quick! I must arrest
her.

She has been in the queen's chamber. I shall lose
My place if this is known.

BEGGAR (*indicating the path to the river*). She went
that way.

GUARD. Ah, good! That way leads only to the river,
And it is in flood. We shall have more than one
Fat coin to halve when I have handed her
To the king's jailer.

BEGGAR. Give me back my coin.

It was the price of wisdom, my first fee.

GUARD. And it is likely it will be your last.

You are no whit less wealthy than you came.

What if I now arrest you for trespassing?

BEGGAR. One or the other fills your hunter's bag,
And she is the better game—if she be flesh
And blood, and not some spectre of the brain.

Take me—you miss her. Take her and my coin,
And you leave loose a tongue that may denounce
You for a thief, and she will bear me witness—
If she be innocent. If not,—well then . . .

What a queer mixture is this world! and you
Split a dead coin while some poor mortal drowns,
Or a great angel treads the swirling flood,
Or maybe a thief slips from you in the dark.

GUARD (*hurrying towards the river*). Wait till I
come again, then you shall have

The coin I hold as hostage for a witness.

BEGGAR. Speed there and back.

MAID (*coming in hurriedly, dishevelled, carrying a lantern*). Where is the queen? the queen?

BEGGAR. I gather many things on my lone way,
But queens are not among them.

MAID. O Hari! Hari!

This is no time for jesting. Where is she?

BEGGAR. How should I know?

MAID. She must have passed this way.
She has left her chamber. She has put her robes
aside.

I do not know where she is gone—or how—
Or wherefore, but my heart is full of dread.
There are dark rumours that the king is angry.
His ministers have left him with drawn brows,

And there are whisperings and threatening looks.
Oh! it is all so different, so different!

Once she would sing when in her bed-chamber
I readied her for sleep, but not a song
She sang to-night. Her eyes were full of thought.
They looked beyond this world—so calm, so
calm.

And once she sighed and murmured, “The king’s
wife

Shall obey her husband,”—and now I cannot
find her,

And I am shaken with fear.

BEGGAR. May God preserve her!

MAID. Then you know something?

BEGGAR. Maybe I do—or don’t;

I cannot tell; but one, shaped like a woman,
Beggar in dress, but wearing little hands
Such as God makes to hold big destinies,
Went by me with kind words.

MAID. It may be the queen.

BEGGAR. She was a thief; so says the guard, and he
Is very wise. They are all very wise
These people who know nothing. He has gone
To capture her, but there is that about her
May beat him at his trade. Oh! there’s a chain
Falls from her lips in wisdom and sweet sound

Upon the soul, and takes it prisoner
Out of that little darkened room of sense
That men call freedom.

MAID. Oh! it is the queen!
And you are calm, and talk, when we should cry
For some calamity that gathers fast
About us in the darkness! Where is she?

BEGGAR. Gone to Brindaban.

MAID. That was her last song.
Which way?

BEGGAR *indicates the path to the river.*

MAID. Alas! the river is in flood
And she will surely perish!

GUARD (*coming back*). Pah! I missed her,
But the rogue's destiny took her by the hair.

MAID *breaks into sobs.*

GUARD. Why, what's the matter—crying?

MAID. Where is the queen?

GUARD. The queen! That is a question you should
answer

Better than I. I have enough to do
To keep these beggars off the royal paths.
This one I lock up safely. The other one
Will trouble us no more.

MAID. Merciful God!

BEGGAR. What have you done to her?

GUARD.

Nothing. It was she

Did all the doing. I caught up on her
Just as she reached the river side. I called,
"Stop in the king's name!" She called back at
me,

"In the king's name I go on!" I made a snatch
And caught her dress; then she, to wrench her
free,

Took both her hands, and dropped this piece of
paper.

Then in the flood she sprang, and with spread
arms

Floated away in moonlight.

BEGGAR.

O blind fool!

Seeing with outer eye the thing unseen,
But with the inner, dark. Had you but known
The face of heaven comradely as we
Who have no roof to shut us in from God,
Then you had known the dark half of the moon
Is turned to us.

GUARD.

That's truth, there is no moon!

And yet I could have sworn she swam in moon-
light;

And, now I measure out the eye's first look,
It was less moonlight than outspreading wings
That moved with her, and she was like a lotus

That slips away from muddy anchorage.
What can this mean? Are we all dream-ridden,
Or is it something we had thought was far
Comes very near? What's wrong?

MAID. Read us the paper?

GUARD. Read it yourself.

MAID. I cannot.

BEGGAR. Her eyes are wet.

GUARD. How do you know they are wet?

BEGGAR. I do not know

How I knew anything, but mine are dry
With some great sorrow that has more sweetness
in it

Than vina-strings or dances, or the food
That rich men scatter at a festival.

GUARD. Will you be plain, what's wrong?

MAID. The queen is drowned.
You might have saved her.

GUARD. God! was *she* the queen!

BEGGAR. Give me the paper.

*(Guard gives it to him, and he tears it in pieces
which he scatters.)*

GUARD. You have not read it!

BEGGAR. No,
I am not skilled in letters, but I have learned
That when the wife of a king goes over in sighs

A GOLDEN LILY

On the side of the volcano Asamayama in Japan

From life's dark wind-swept woods I came,
A moth to Beauty's altar doomed.
I flit about your throbbing flame—
Yet I am not consumed!

Nay, for one purpose here doth meet:
Out of life's clay I lift my wing,
As you of buried fires the sweet
Apotheosis spring.

O all whose hearts have known eclipse,
Come! barefoot stand on hallowed sod,
And take from Beauty's holy lips
The very Kiss of God.

POET AND CICADA

In a Japanese Garden

Poet

What a funny song you sing
In the giant *sungi* tree:
Me me me me meeeeeee!
Always, on your lofty shelf,
Are you thinking of yourself?
(*Me me me me meeeeeee.*)
Does not something thrill your wing
For another brown blind thing
Singing in another tree:
Me me me me meeeeeee?
Cool of twilight, heat of noon,
Till the death of sun and moon
Will you never, never, never,
Never change your tune:
Me me me me meeeeeee?

Cicada

What a funny song *you* sing,
Poet! in your tree of life:
Joy, sorrow, sweetheart, wife,
Or some distant misty thing.
Aye, for all your haughty airs,

Swung 'twixt blasphemy and prayers,
Who sings nearer to the truth?—
Not your burning lie of youth,
Or your age's mumbled tooth:
Morning spent in blind desire;
Evening grudging morn its price:
Fire, that has contempt for ice,
Turned to ice contemning fire!
Morn or dusk or night or noon,
Always *you* are in your tune:—
“Whence *we* come, whither *we* go,”
Or “*We* know not what *we* know.”
Chut! your versing, rhymed or free,
Rings but change: on *me me!*
Who then has the braver breath,—
You whose song is one long strife
With some shadow you call death?
I who nothing know but life?
Who is wiser, you or I?

Poet

I shall think of a reply.

FUEL

A Japanese legend of the woodiness of wood

Paper windows—bulging cracks;
Lips gone blue and nose gone red;
Takuanwosho took his axe,
Split his Buddha through the head,
Saying, between puffs and whacks,
“God, who made the winter cruel,
Snowing up the pinewood tracks,
Finds fit nemesis as fuel.”

“Sacrilege!” yelled one who stood
Blinking at the axe’s flashes.
. . . “Nay, I seek the jewels strewed
In cremated Buddha’s ashes.”
. . . “Meditation strains your mood!
Here, O fool! you’ll find no jewel!”
. . . “’Tis no Buddha, then, but *wood!*—
Come then, warm you with my fuel!”

A FLOWER-OFFERING

From the Japanese of the Empress Komio

Flowers for the Lord!—Yet wherefore spread
Defilement from unworthy hands,
Or to the Living give the dead?—
Here in the windy meadow-lands
I offer these ungathered flowers
To Buddhas whom the past set free,
To Buddhas of the present hours,
Wild flowers for Buddhas yet to be.

A Buddha is one who has reached spiritual illumination.

COUNSEL

From the Japanese of the Empress Haruko

The diamond's rays
Come after the cutter's stroke.
Look not for praise
Till the end of thy labour's yoke.

The clock's sure feet
On their day's march do not tire.
So thou, complete
The circle of thy desire.

The drinking-bowl
Gives form to the juice of the grape.
So shall thy soul
From its rounding life have shape.

Then, with the wise
And good live thou thy days.
Thou, reaching toward their skies,
Thyself shalt raise.

MOON-WORSHIP

In the Japanese spirit

Day's lord forgets, but night's dear queen remembers.
Brothers! rejoice that from our fiery past
Faithfully doth last
One of all its dead and scattered embers.

Moon, O Moon ash-white!
Thou dost call
Thy true lovers all
Round the legend-haunted hearth of night,
Friend with friend, not rival;
Living sharers in thy grace;
Yea, and in thine unforgetting face
Long dead lovers of thee find survival.
Round thine enthronéd feet a wind hath stirred
Full of the passion of the quick and dead
Who whisper toward thee, and with lifted head
Await thy sweet confiding word.

Alas! ungifted like a mortal woman,
Language thy snow-chaste lip eschews:
Only the lonely dedicated muse
Thou dost silently illumine.
Yet, to him who prayeth,

Dreading the chill of dark oblivion:
“Fade all, if thy remembrance be but won!”
Something secret sayeth
For his heart’s deep recompense:
“None who worship me
Shall forgotten be.”

Wherefore, brother ages hence!
Spreading, as once I spread, a praiseful wing,
When in love’s ritual you con her,
Singing then as now I sing
At the evening’s fall,
Ah! recall
That worshipfully I too looked upon her.

VOX POPULI—VOX DEI

1914-1918

“The People’s voice,
Is the Voice of God.”
O ancient boast
Fulfilled in bleeding host
And cross-crowned sod!
Yea, from thy piercé side
Whence blood and water flow
From death and grief, we know,
People! we know
Thou art a God—and crucified
Between a thief and thief:
Shape-changing greed
And blindness called Belief!

A MASTER FIDDLER

Henry Eichheim

God drew His bow across a cloud
In token of departed ire;
Yet, for the nations' warning, vowed
When next He speaks He speaks in fire.

So be it. Fortified I go
High kinship with that fire to claim,
Since on your strings you set your bow
And turned my blood to flame.

A PASSING THOUGHT

This is the China Sea—and *that*,
The land where stands the Angkor Wat,
Where he who has the eye may see
The monumental heraldry
In which Man's vision sought to limn
The lineaments of Seraphim,
And, from God-fashioned rocks and clods,
In his own likeness made his Gods,
Closing the cycle that began
When, Godlike, God created Man.

There learns he, never hammer-stroke
Only on its own era broke;
Nor sculptures only sprang surprise
On wide contemporaneous eyes;
But that, when Art with substance wars,
Invisible conspirators
Flourish the mallet, wield the haft
In ardour of creation-craft,
And smite an energy divine
Into the gesture of a line,
Passing along from age to age
The soul's creative heritage,
That through some spendthrift heart and brain

Shall rise into a future fane,
And, housing any God or creed,
Stand on Art's dedicated deed.

BRAHMA

Lovingly now I come into your midst, my sisters and
brothers,
For the time of love's forgetting again comes round.
I shall draw you close to my heart as the hearts of
unborn children to the hearts of their mothers;
And of all you were, I shall lose the sight and sound.
We shall be as one; yea, you the mesh will be one
with me the encircling net,
And, being one, forget.

But when again I am wishful to know you as you are,
And knowing you as you are, to know myself as I am,
I shall roll between us a dark and a flaming star,
And a whirlwind's dance, and a grey sea's ghastly
calm;
I shall find me a hiding-place in a shattered rock,
And a dark place under a blasted tree;
And there your daylit assurance shall tease and mock
With my twilit mystery.
For I am the Voice that calls, and I am the Silence
that, after the Voice, denies;
The Shade that allures your search, and the Blaze
that darkens your eyes;

The Anchorite who scars my flesh (that is yours) with
my whips of joy and pain,
Till out of my depths I turn my face to the height
(that is yours) again.

Then lovingly shall I come into your midst, my sisters
and brothers, as the blood to the heart,
When love's white night of oblivion dawns beyond the
sundering day that sets;
For love that remembers is love that is driven apart,
But love at one, forgets.

KARTIKEYA

I

When you, O battling legions! were at peace,
I waged stout war against you; smote you deep,
Deep in the brain; and left your hungry hand
Less powerful by the powerful strokes I gave.
But now you are at war, I kiss your lips,
I stroke your hand, I speak you fair. But now
My kiss is falsely flavoured, and my hand
Goes furtively at night across your fields,
Streaking with weeds the harvest of your dreams.
My foot moves close with yours. Lo! I am one
With your proud marching hosts. But they, being
blind,

See not the hidden circuit of my tread,
The subtle pull of the vast quiet sun
On your dull earthiness, that silently
Shapes to a circle your fool-vaunted line,
And leads you home through triumph to defeat.
O red, far-gazing eyes, how dark, how dark!
That mark not in your strength's most prosperous
hour

The upward push of a deep-hidden shoot
Whose fruit is death to death; a little thought
Green and all noiseless, whose invincible

Young weakness puts its shoulder to all power
To render it implacably to dust.
Wherefore I shall not waste myself in blows
That would but smite you into hardness,
Provoking you to life. Nay, wiselier, I
Shall push you softly down the way to death
With a thin silent dagger in your back,
My blade of acquiescence. For white death
Comes not by imposition of red hands;
But springs from inner seed. So surely I
Shall round you, goad you, smiling brotherly,
To that deep hour of self-discovery
Which shall be loud with laughter that brings peace.

KARTIKEYA

II

Thus saith the Lord of Learning and of War:
“O ye who seek a path to perfect life!
It runs not through the brain’s dark caverns, nor
Along the ruined fields of flaming strife.

“Behold! I show the ancient double path
Of Power and Knowledge moving in accord.
Each in the other its fulfilment hath.
Tread ye that way to Life!” Thus saith the Lord.

AN INDIAN LAMP

With Tamil New Year wishes

What wish has man that time undimmed will cherish,
That moth and rust will not in season claim?
Our mortal hands proffer poor gifts that perish.
Our best desire is but a dying flame.

Better to ask, as cover for life's starkness,
Robes of pure purpose, beautiful and bright;
And, for the dissipation of our darkness,
Wisdom's unwavering light.

ECLIPSE

Spirit of the Earth

What shadow spreads across thy face,
O Moon beloved! and veils the grace
Once on thy lover Earth bestowed?
Hast thou, on thy celestial road,
Come on a rumour, comet-spread,
That all thy youthful fire is dead?
Or blurs thine eye with smoky smart
Of conflagration in the heart
Lit from anticipation's rage
At passionless approaching age?
Or dost thou at mine ardour quail,
And take the chaste monastic veil
As refuge for thy mystery
From eyes that seek the soul of thee,
And count their age-long search undone
Till, as of old, we twain are one?
Ah love, dark love! perhaps thy mood,
As test for love's dear plenitude,
Hides thy fair face that I may seek
With thine unbodied self to speak;
Or chants a curtained palinode
For love unworthily bestowed.
Whate'er it be—desire or dread

Of cold or heat—that hides thy head;
Oh! from thy tower of darkness lean
And say what shadow falls between
Thee and thy lover's hungry moan.

Spirit of the Moon

Beloved! the shadow is—thine own!

THE POET TO HIS YOUTH

No, youth! we have no need to part,
Although the years pile up behind.
Rather, we swear to keep a heart
Responsive, and resilient mind.

For this I bound you close to truth;
Smiled at your hungers and your rage,
Knowing that sober age-in-youth
Would round to happy youth-in-age.

Time can no disenchantment bring
To those whose vision passes time;
But yield more vast adventuring
In deeper ocean, richer clime;

And, for the blood's lost gusty whims,
Give steadier sight of loftier goal;
And, for the fever of the limbs,
The strong clear passion of the soul.

THE PARADOX

One who on Earth had plenitude of power
Said: "See, the sharp disclosure of the sun
I shut in darkness." Lo! the selfsame hour
Ten thousand stars in glittering protest run.

"See, with my wand I smite and chase away
This ocean galling me with widening rings."
Lo! far and near come stirrings through the clay,
And dry earth bubbles with ten thousand springs.

So through God's paradox creation goes;
Death flowers to life, and loss is root of gain;
The captive Titan, laggard in repose,
Is driven toward freedom by his clanking chain.

The poem refers to the unintended effect of the internment of certain patriots in India in 1917 by the British Governor of Madras.

TO IRELAND

Before December 6, 1921

Not the loud songs of joyful ease
I give, as once on morning's wing;
But, for your night of agonies,
I give dark songs I cannot sing.

Take them, beloved! and, deeper far
Than moods that wear a transient name,
Take love whose wordless poems are
The throbbing silence round a flame;

Love that my veins with passion thrids,
Kindling your candles in my eyes,
And from my heart's red censer bids
Perpetual worship rise.

THE SIRENS

To AE

One cried: "Come! break us strange new ways of
song,
And leave the out-trodden paths of pulse and rhyme";
And one; "Call back your eyes from other time,
And scan the deeds that to our age belong";
Another: "Speed your blood; take hold of the strong
Brave urge of the senses that through passion climb.
Loading with deep-eyed thought, albeit sublime,
Your beast of verse, you work it cruel wrong!"

And then you spoke, great brother! "You have re-
mained
True to the spirit: your reward is sure."
Yea, howsoever the sirens may allure,
For song beyond their singing our ears are strained,
Knowing that, whatsoever may pass or endure,
Only within the spirit reward is gained.

GULISTAN

I

Saadi has sung his Garden of the Rose.
Time (Philistine!) on Saadi and Rose has flung
Its dust. Yet from the heap a wild flower grows—
The song by Saadi sung.

II

I blamed my days
That had not hours
Enough
For my demands.
God slowly shaped
Mimosa flowers
Of fluff
With patient hands.

ARCHERY

A wily archer is the rain
Stalking shy beauty on a lake.
No arrow fails his mark to gain.
They, where they strike, their centre make,
And thence, with ever widening marge,
Spread his inevitable targe.

And next in archer-craft, I think,
Is love, the glimmer of whose dart
Feints at the eyes until they blink,
But pins you squarely in the heart,
And, circling thence, his way expands
To hastening feet and yearning hands.

MORNING WORSHIP

In front of Kinchinjunga

Something my wakening soul has stirred!
Is it the dawn-sweet sun,
Or songs of a sweet-hearted bird
That through the sweet air run?

These: but some deeper spell is cast!
Look up! See, tipped with rose,
White on the sky's blue lake, the vast
Himalayan lotus blows!

O perfect Beauty's loftiest mood!
O Peace that shall endure!
O high unsullied Solitude!
O Purity most pure!

Surely to thee Earth's morning prayers
With song and incense rise.
Behold upon thy temple stairs
My lifted hands and eyes,

No less devout, if inner sight
In deeper worship goes
To something higher than your height
And purer than your snows!

ON THE ROAD TO SHIGATZE

From Kalimpong, Bengal

This is the way the wanderers have trod;
Armed men to seek a snowbird's hidden nest;
The men who hoped to humble Everest;
The pilgrims on the march to gaze on God;
The slit-eyed, rose-cheeked races, rainbow-shod;
The red-robed lama on the ancient quest,
Scattering something beautiful and blessed
Among the crowd who dig and sing and plod.

I too have gone that road: a little length
After my heart's far-travelling desire,
Dreaming a man of men perchance to meet;
To look upon his sweetness mixed with strength;
To bend before his eye's compassionate fire,
And take the dust of his most quiet feet.

TREE-SACRIFICE

“Lop me that towering tree,” I said,
“That shuts the snow-peaks from the eye.”
But when his heavenward lifted head
Went earthward with a groan and sigh,
At that most lamentable sound
I could have cried with sudden guilt
To see that regal thing discrowned,
And know my joy on suffering built.

But Nature said: “Who mars to make,
Sinless though sinning moves and lives.
They only err who only take.
Who gives, my offered hand forgives.
Take thou on trust my subtle laws
Writ past the reach of mortal wing.
Get thou and spend in Beauty’s cause,
But leave with me the reckoning.

“Lo! I who spurred the bramble weed,
And bade the sinuous leopard creep;
Who made the green grasshopper feed,
And on his gnawed snapdragon sleep;
Who fanged the snake and hued the flower,

And taught the river how to run,
Am master of the simple power
To sink a star and raise a sun.

“My ancient fiat bodied forth
The jackal’s hole, the squirrel’s nest.
My breath embalmed both South and North,
And golden-girdled East and West.
Yon proud wing flashing overhead
Leaves on the ground its home in trust;
And Heaven and Earth are meetly wed
When takes the bird its bath of dust.

“Who listens well, my flowers will find
No less articulate than birds.
My rock is vocal as the wind.
My silences are secret words.
A myriad shapes, but one in soul,
They come and go in shade and sun.
My Beauty calls throughout the whole,
And all desire of me is one.

“Who then a fallen bough shall grieve?
In me all separations meet.
Of hill and wood the end shall leave

One equal dust about my feet.
Your tree with many-fingered roots
Close clasps the ground with brother hand;
And through his veins Earth's ichor shoots
And lifts his bird-enchanting wand.

“For love's pure purpose bole and branch
With gladness break their veiling ranks.
Their angels shall their suffering stanch.
They feel the mountain-spirit's thanks
Broadcast from happy peaks and slopes
For Beauty-worship's larger sight,
And sacrifice that sweetly opes
Unreckoned doorways of delight.”

TREE-TALK OVERHEARD

*When in the woods I musing walk,
I sometimes hear arboreal talk,*

As thus: Come not across my bound,
O friend! with hands that stretch and strain.
Love has its own appointed ground,
Though blessed with common sun and rain.

Your branch, though feathered as the dove,
Would barricade the light from me;
And your soft scattered leaves of love
Would round my roots a burden be.

Nor shall my quivering arms invade
Your peace with laughter or with moan;
Or cast across your place of shade
A shadow other than its own.

You in your portion, I in mine,
Must grow alone in rain and sun;
But Oh! where root and root entwine,
We in the dark dear earth are one!

SONG BY A HIMALAYAN RIVER

Out of some vast æonian dream
I woke to being with a start.
Men write me down a mountain stream
Who am a pulse of some deep Heart,
Of some high Thought a questing gleam!

Who cares may question, who reply:
I only hear a Voice say *Go!*
To turn or linger were to die.
My life is in my forward flow.
I hail as friend a threatening sky.

My music is perpetual thanks.
With it I move from small to large,
Many to one with widening banks;
While, stem to branches, on my marge
Life lifts the trees in rooted ranks.

Their life my life's reversal seems.
Yet we have heard beneath our moods
One Voice enchant our various dreams.
My song is like the wind in woods,
And wind in woods like song of streams.

And we have felt the tender sting
Of joy in life mixed through our own
In comradeship of sheltering
The resting fish beneath my stone,
Within their bark the nesting wing.

One purpose serve we, fixed or free:
My life some solemn Joy fulfils,
Fulfilling its own destiny:
Behind, the push of ancient Hills;
Before, the ancient calling Sea.

The Teesta, Bengal.

KALYANA RAGAM

The marriage pipe
Plays up with glee.
All things are ripe
For what may be.

The ancient fire
Is lit again—
A man's desire
A woman's pain.

Ripe goes to ripe
For what must be.
Play up the pipe
Of marriage glee.

Kalyan, marriage; *ragam*, a musical mode. The scale to which marriage music is played in India.

HINDU OBSEQUIES

Bring casuarina fagots. Bring
Flowers of sweet odour. One shall say
Words that refill our emptied breasts
And bid the fire-bird lift its wing.
Then, with a thought to speed his way
After the spirit's high behests,
We part; and at the dawn shall fling
His latest dust upon the Bay.
We shall not build against the sky
An empty monumented lie
Binding out thoughts of him to clay;
Nor carve of him of endless quests
The foolish legend: "Here he rests."

After a cremation near the Bay of Bengal at Madras.

BHARATA-VARSHA

Paraphrased from the Vishnu Purana, II, 3

Bharata-Varsha! happy land
Through which the patient ages roll;
Where strives the tense ascetic hand
To serve the purpose of the soul;
Where men their offerings Godward lift;
Where largesse reverently is given;
And penance, sacrifice and gift
Are measured by the gauge of Heaven.

Elsewhere, in chant and skilled device,
One God is called by many a name.
Unto the Lord of Sacrifice
Thy children light the living flame.
Praise them who will those dreamy lands
That steep the senses in delight:
Thou art revered by strenuous hands
That labour Godward day and night.

Through many a birth and many a death,
By merit won in service spent,
Men draw to thee for power and breath
To face the spirit's steep ascent.
"Happy ev'n we," the Gods declare,

“If born upon that holy ground;
For the swift Way to Bliss is there,
And there the Path to Freedom found.

“Blessed are they who have resigned
Deeds and desires, aflame or dim,
And in that land of labour find
The Path from God leads back to Him.
We know not what Fate’s hand may hold,
What bindings to what realm of Earth;
But happy they who, perfect-souled,
In Bharata-Varsha gain their birth.”

Bharata-Varsha was the original territory of the Vedic colony in northern India.

LIFE

I

Have mercy, Lord! on the mad multitude
Who smear Love's holy name with fleshly lust,
Who trade men's bodies and souls for gilded dust,
And quench a creature's life for blood-stained food:
Mercy on trivial thought, on language lewd,
On star-made souls who choose the moth and rust,
And on stiff-tegmented men who must
Slay and be slain to hit the hero mood.

But mercy most because their mouths blaspheme
With dissonance Thy symphony of Names,
Breaking with bigotry their deep accord,
Leading through life the error-poisoned stream
That fructifies our myriad woes and shames.
For this, man's sin of sins, have mercy, Lord!

II

I am in love with life! This very hand
Has stroked a foot carved by Praxiteles.
Oh! I have swum on circling music-seas
Under the dome Angelo greatly planned;

At Leonardo's Supper ta'en my stand;
Before the Dark Madonna bent my knees;
Have thrilled to Delville's lofty mysteries,
And swayed to Toscanini's magic wand!

O shining spirits lifting Beauty's light
Against the new black threat of battle's drum!
Your coming day shall drown the dark of strife!
One star denies the regnance of the night:
Many are ye, and more are yet to come.
I too shall come: I am in love with life!

Europe, 1925.

Michelangelo planned the dome of St. Peter's, Rome.

Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" in Milan.

The Dark Madonna in a side chapel in St. Mark's, Venice.

Jean Delville's murals on the progress of justice in the Law Courts,
Brussels.

Toscanini in La Scala Theatre, Milan.

DISCOVERIES

When I was very young I read and read
Gorham, M'Cabe and Lang; and profited
So wondrously that, under each man's shape
I saw the gibbering fundamental ape.

At fifty-two I stood in Pompeii,
And saw Apollo, hidden since B. C.,
And knew that, had I skill to cleave man's clod,
I should unearth the fundamental God.

The authors mentioned were amongst the "rationalist" writers of the late nineteenth century through whom the author for a time sought for truth.

GRAVEN IMAGES

A hundred years ere Christ was born,
A carven faun upon a floor
In Pompeii danced night and morn,
Till burst the mad Vesuvian roar,
And fiends of flame outdanced him quite,
And shut him in millennial night.

At Herculaneum, on a rock,
Swift Mercury from flight reposed
A moment. But the fiery shock
His heavenly commission closed—
Unless a graven God may go
Scathless through ash and lava-flow.

And scathless came they, God and faun,
And glazed the diggers' gloating eye
When eighteen centuries had gone
And more, and to the ancient sky
The faun still wafted hand and foot
Unto an undiscovered lute;

And on his rock, poised zephyr-light,
His heel-wings visibly astir
With zest of yet unfinished flight,

Sat the celestial messenger;
A silent sign of beauty's sum
Still housed in Herculaneum.

To those at rest, to those afoot
Vesuvius spake the self-same word,—
And dream and deed were levelled mute.
Men's eyes a bitter moment blurred
Before, in mercy, out of flame
Silence and utter darkness came . . .

Time passed . . . and Rome . . . The delver rings
The bell of joy's discovery;
Scarce scans the huddled human things,
But to an icon bends the knee;—
So low in worth God's image stands;
So high—the labour of his hands!

God made the savage and the sage,
Fashioned the fool, and lit the wise.
But worth lies not in lineage.
Only through rising deeds we rise
Godward, when we, with hearts elate,
Gods, or in moods of Gods, create.

Not in the blood-beat swift and warm
Shall man life's purpose all fulfil;
Nor weight the spirit with the form
If he would top his utmost hill,
And greet the Masters of the Flame,
And know the Splendour whence he came.

Through jungle-glooms, o'er flocks that blind,
He sought a sure ascensive way;
Haply did Art's allurements find,
And at the end of striving day
Touched the dim ladder-foot of dream,
Its rungs with angel-forms agleam.

From dissonant life's untutored noise
He learned to feather music's wing;
Bid arch and spire in equipoise
From anarchy shape and substance spring;
And conjure out of passion's rage
The ordered traffic of the stage.

By these, through wavering *Where?* and *Whence?*
He reached a coign of spirit-rest;
Through chaos glimpsed Intelligence

No darker than himself possessed;
And starred the margin of his night
With names of everlasting light.

Equal in Turner's golden gleam
And Wagner's heaven-ascending shout,
In Benvenuto's jewelled dream
And gates Ghiberti hammered out,
In Shakespeare's hoard of human lore
And spirit-singing of Tagore,

Art seeks, in script that shall endure,
To write across the page of death
Beauty's immortal signature.
This well accomplished, vision saith,
Body with soul shall sweetly walk,
And God and man hold friendly talk.

It glances from the ritual foot
Of Nataraja's grave eclat.
It signals deeply through the mute
Trance-blinded Chandrasekhara,
In lands where myriads bend their knees
To honour graven images.

Now, to the sound of Indian drums
In praise of Gods they never knew,
One waits a start that never comes,
One finds not labour's restful due,
As on my table God and faun
Drowse and dance on, and on, and on.

Nataraja is the Hindu Lord of the Cosmic Dance. Chandrasekhara is the Hindu embodiment of repose. Both are aspects of one deity, Shiva.

PREPARATION

I must get busy, dear! to stretch my eyes
Toward their full sight, so that, if heaven should mark
You first for entrance, they should cross the dark
And glimpse the glittering crown you wear for prize;
Or, should I first find wing in Paradise,
They, from the sheer perspective of the lark,
Should watch through far old glooms your spirit's
 spark
Rise toward its orbit in applauding skies.

And I must tune my ears that they may hear
From this or that side of the soundless dearth
A while between, music remembered well;
Through clangour of Earth an angel-accent near;
Or on my harp an echo of dear Earth—
And which were sweeter sorrow hardly tell.

PROSPECTION

To Nathalia Crane, American poetess, aged 15

Nothing that we shall see and hear
That hour when we each other greet
Shall break the crystal atmosphere
Where comprehending spirits meet.

Nay, we shall let clear laughter flow
Across vain talk of age and youth,
We who in flaming moments know
The instantaneousness of Truth;

Who watch, from somewhere near the sun,
The Parters of the grain and husk;
And estimate an era done
A firefly's glimmer in the dusk.

Therefore have I your earliest rhyme
Extolled, because it spoke to me,
Through your vernacular of time,
The language of eternity;

And closed a trivial era's toll
With your great gift of glad surmise;
The oldest vision of the soul
Rekindled in the youngest eyes.

Off Cape Guardafui, May, 1928.

RETROSPECTION

To Nathalia Crane

Round the rich table rumour stalked
Through gossip of the town
To snare what things two poets talked,
White head by curly brown.

And what we talked was—tigers, snakes,
Snow summits, storm-torn bay,
And the vague wilderness that shakes
Men's hearts as sure as they.

We talked of whales, and parrot wings,
Rope-trick and poisoned dart;
Of everything—except the things
Nearest a poet's heart.

For that which moves past life and death
—Rapt thought, exalted mood—
We took as simply as our breath,
Accepted, understood.

We met as comrades of the craft,
But doffed the craftsman's gown,
And over solemn trifles laughed
Each other's secret down.

Yet in each instant something stirred
In depths no eye could see,
That asked no hushed mysterious word,
All Speech being Mystery!

After a Poetry Dinner, Philadelphia, February, 1929.

ROMANCE

In a steamer on Lake Geneva

Beauty from sapphire lake and heaven calls,
And calls from emerald hill and silver stream;
But calls in vain to eyes that are a gleam
With eager search for sight of Chillon's walls,
Unto a Word of Power these souls are thralls.
Romance is tyrant in the seat supreme.
The mood and magic of a poet's dream
Across the heart in dim enchantment falls.

O Beauty, beckoning from floor to dome!
Forgive those eyes if, turned from thee, they sin.
The human spirit's instinct seeks as home
Places made sacred by its singing kin;
There tastes what powers in its own being sit,
And through the finite feels its infinite.

Near the castle of Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon."

IN A DANCE-HALL

Here through your glaring heaven of sound
I pass like Dante through his hell.
Yet here is hint of holy ground,
And some high tale that you could tell
Had you but vision to surmise
What Gods the God-in-you would greet,
What exile hunger lights your eyes,
What cosmic impulse moves your feet.

In your most dark desires I see
Of spirit-blooms the breaking shards.
Your drink apes ecstasy to be,
Your very smoke gropes heavenwards.
Something up-calls you from the brute,
And casts you an inviting glance
To blow with Krishna on His Flute
And dance with Shiva in His Dance!

THE OUTCAST

The Shelley Memorial at Oxford

Not in a century have they outgrown
Their blindness to your spirit's dazzling wing,
Who lay your body out in graven stone,
A beautiful but a defeated thing.

O God-Man throned above time's noisy rout!
Surely you smile that thus most fittingly
They who from their dull shallows cast you out
Should image you as outcast of the sea!

REACTION

Because I have grown tired of empty power
And painted faces stalking trivial fame,
While the white soul is left in rags to cower
And mouldering flesh is flaunted without shame;
I would draw near the silence of a flower
And the majestic posture of a flame,
That I might find for speech its perfect hour,
And look on Beauty wholly free from blame.

Hollywood, California, 1929.

THE GIRDLE

To the beloved comrade

Dear! by God's grace and our good luck,
We, trusting Fate to fill our need,
Essayed the enterprise of Puck,
But not at Puck's enchanted speed.
He had winged magic at command
To cleave the air with flying robe.
Our way was close to sea and land
To draw love's girdle round the globe.

I think that wiser eyes than ours
A subtler Earth than ours must see,
And map by their exalted powers
A more divine geography:
For ocean lone and mountain stark—
Love's depth and aspiration's height;
And on that spirit-map must mark
A path of rose-and-golden light.

That is the trail beloved! we blazed
Through dread of war to dream of peace;
From ancient realms where eyes are raised
To scan dim signals of release,

Through lands on whose bent shoulders rest
The burdens of the sorrow-wise,
To the young titan of the west
Who holds the future in his eyes.

O love! our love around the globe
Girdles all souls on sea and land;
Though with no flying wizard robe
Or fairy magic at command,
But only at love's lingering speed,
We end the enterprise of Puck,
Through labour for the body's need,
And by God's grace and our good luck.

Madras, April, 1928–November, 1929, via Europe and America.

POEMS

NOT PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

FAREWELL—YET NOT FAREWELL

To India

Farewell!—yet not farewell, O land
That lit my brain and holds my heart!
We who have grasped the spirit's hand
Are not divided when we part,
Though men, by ghostly shapes possessed,
Map their false bounds of "East" and "West."

Farewell! and Hail! Whatever sky
Draws now my spirit's wandering wind,
Thou dost await me there; for I
Have found, what all shall surely find
Somewhere ere life or lives have ceased,
The soul's inevitable East.

Leaving Madras, April 27, 1930.

A SUN SPARKLE AT SEA

A wind ancestored by the wind
That cooled creation's morn;
A wave of molten jade inclined
By waves ere Venus born;
A sunray angling straight to me
Æons of light and dark;
Out of their vast conspiracy
Produce—a golden spark
That springs in a prismatic jet
To my predestined cheek;
Its history one pulsation, yet
Eternally unique.
No power that phantom thing could hold
From its fulfillment's date;
Nor could man's genius or his gold
That instant recreate,
Unless with necromantic rod
He cancelled Nature's ways,
And trod again the paths she trod
Through myriad miles and ways;
And entered life by my life's door;
A life of upward stress
That is than that sun-spark no more,
And, heart! O heart! no less;

For on the waters of my mind
When Beauty's light is born,
Come gleams from waves that feel a wind
Old as creation's morn!

THE HIGHER MAGIC

A Villanelle

Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought,
I offered at a secret shrine
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought.

A sudden hand of lightning caught
And lifted in a dazzling shine
Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought.

Someone behind the veil of nought
Did to Her lips a draught incline
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought.

I was with ecstasy distraught
As though they mixed with magic wine
Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought.

For these were so divinely fraught
With ardours from a drink divine
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought,

That I since then have only sought
One answer: Be they hers or mine,
Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought,
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought?

GLADIOLUS

In an occidental garden

With what word canst thou console us?
Queried I of gladiolus,
As I mused in mood Uranian
Soothed in shadows Penn-sylvanian;
Thinking revelation lit
Shape and hue so exquisite;
And that through her upward reach
Strove interpretable speech.

But my brain's petition stirred
No illuminating word.
Only through the throbbing air
Glowed her torch's crimson flare.

Yet it lit a way from strife
To the peace of perfect life,
Where, forgetting even her,
Something in me seemed to stir,
Telling inner ear and eye:
"Silence is her deep reply;
Silence, whence all meanings come
When the gossip mind is dumb;
When thy heart has found release

At the touch of nature's peace;
And, with cheek to spirit-cheek,
I, thy Self, with thee may speak."

Then I knew whence come the moods
I have known in quiet woods;
And the holiness of hours
With the sisterhood of flowers;
Whence that look that understands,
And that laying on of hands!

WOODLAND JOY

Lightly a breeze the nervous poplars thrills,
Yet their leaf-cymbals no heard music make.
Out of their sleep the hid cicadæ break
And flutter their tambourines with tremulous trills.
All things with joy the rhythmic moment fills.
The flowering weed-communities awake
To dance where golden-rod his head doth shake,
And lace-wort wears Queen Anne's white-spreading
frills.

Wingless and winged their ecstasy combine.
Three yellow moths with life's keen joy conspire.
Out of the grass they rise and flicker and shine,
Up, up and up, in glimmering frantic gyre;
And with my heart's high yearnings intertwine,
Spiralling sparks toward our ancestral flame.

CROSSED PURPOSES

God, at the First, resolved His shaping Thought
Into things motionless (hills, forests, flowers);
And into moving things (winds, lightnings, showers,
Creatures of earth and sky) his Feeling wrought.
But seeing that each might foil the end He sought
If chained unto its own perfected powers
(Thought to cold thinking; feeling, to its hours
Of flame, in its own conflagration caught);—

He sent the spur of earthquake, tempest, fire,
To rouse rigidities to fluctuant moods;
And laid upon the shiftings of desire
The sweet stabilities of nests and broods.
And Man, with double urge to speed and sloth,
Slave unto either, loses joy of both.

BIRTHDAY ODE

For Edwin Markham's eightieth anniversary

"For the days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."—PSALM XC, 10.

Homage and gratitude we offer thee,
Prophet who falsifies old prophecy
Of labour, sorrow, flight,
As the poor ultimate of fourscore years;
Who fillest thy days with toil that is delight;
And for thy destined flying hast no fears,
Thy singing heart being ever on the wing.

Aptly thy spirit sent thee with the spring
To break the prison-silence of the earth
With song's rebirth;
True comrade of the trumpet daffodil,
The silent herald, symboling
The deep indignant music of the song
That thou shouldst bugle at the gates of wrong.
And all the vigour of that vernal will
Is with thee still.
On thy twin-branching heart and mind
Perpetual song-buds burst.
No second childhood canst thou find
Who hast not lost thy first.

Homage and gratitude we bring for this:
That thy crusading song took not the kiss
Of sense unsanctified;
But, with the spirit's pride,
Unmarred by warp or scathe
Held fast the faith
In love and righteousness,
In Man's frustrated will-to-bless,
And the close comradeship of suns and soûls.

Yet though thy minstrelsy applauds
The humblest servitor on land and sea,
Thou, like thy Phidias who, with inner eyes
On the Celestials, wrought celestially,
Singest no song to please the ears of men;
But with an ardour Shelleyan
Chantest the tragic hope of Man,
The eagle in the barnfowl's pen,
Chained to the clay, and hungering for the skies.*

In thee are life and song wed with a glance,
O brave apostle of dynamic dream!
Who countest lofty utterance a deed
No less than labour for Man's fleshly need;
And holdest only worthy of esteem
The deed that is the spirit's utterance.

Therefore, on thy heroic brow, where long
Thou hast endured the circlet of Man's woes,
Behold a mystery!
From thorn to thorn a springtime glory goes,
And through the magic of redemptive song
Breaks into bays of immortality!

* "The Man With the Hoe."
New York, April 23, 1932.

THE TESTING OF FINN *

To Mabel Wood-Hill, New York

*If any man would travel free
From the remonstrance of the Shee,
Let not his thoughts go wandering
From this to that unsteady thing
Of duty or desire.*

This rule

Was learned by Finn, the son of Cool,
When for his chiefs he laid a feast
Would cheer the heart of man and beast.

Because of something on the wind,
Two dogs went hunting through his mind,
And split his thought and deed, until
He let the honey-liquor spill
Out of the loving-cup that passed
From lip to lip. Then, at a blast
That smelt of space and chase, he slipped
Unnoticed from the feast, and gripped
His hunting-gear, and swiftly stepped
Along the scent his hunters kept
After a slender flying doe.

*Ah! Finn, the wise one, did not know
The thing that stirred his hunting-lust*

*Was but a shape of light and dust
Such as the shrewd Immortals plan
To test the wavering heart of man.*

Swiftly he sped by marsh and brake
Till, on the margin of a lake,
Dead went the rapture of the chase
Before a lovely troubled face,
And bountiful dishevelled hair,
And hands uplifted in despair.

*Unruffled must the vision be
To catch the glimmer of the Shée;
And Finn's, being muddied and unfixed,
With feast and chase and beauty mixed,
Too clouded with desire to know
A woman from a slender doe,
Could only see the thing he saw!*

“O mighty hero without flaw!
Help me,” she cried, “for pity’s sake!
My ring has fallen in the lake!”
Finn’s hero-figure left the ground,
And struck the water with a sound
That shook Slieve Guilin’s rocky wall
And echoed round the feasting-hall

Far-off, and stilled the feasters' din
With glance and question: "Where is Finn?
Or is he sitting in his chair
Turned for a Druid jest to air?"

*For Finn, they knew, was magic-skilled
When he was rapt and single-willed.*

But elsewhere, like a mighty fish,
Finn, at the lovely lady's wish,
Dredged the deep lake from shore to shore
Until upon its sandy floor
He found the object of his search.

Then shoreward, like a monstrous perch,
Line-fagged, and ready to be gaffed,
He swam. The lovely lady laughed—

*And there was something in her face
That showed her not of mortal race,
But such as the Immortals plan
To try the moody heart of man.*

And when great Finn would stroke her hair,
She was a whirl of leaves and air.

And, being neither old nor young,
She pushed her hand through time, and flung
Finn's share of years upon his head,
And laughed a windy laugh, and fled,
And left him in decrepitude!

Across the land Finn's chiefs pursued
The tracks of huntsman and of hound
By stony field and marshy ground
Until, beside the lake, they ran
Upon the ruins of a man,
An ancient memory of Finn,
That croaked: *This day I sinned a sin
In slipping from the feasting-place
At the allurement of the chase;
And thus I lost the single will
That would have matched her magic skill!*

Thereat, upon their close-hooked shields
They bore Finn's remnant over fields,
With labouring breath from jolts and jogs
Through woods and weeds and sliding bogs,
By heathery slope and stony ditch,
To find Slieve Guilin's subtle witch;
For well they knew, with angry grief,
Who put enchantment on their chief.

At length, before the fairy-place
They laid him down. A lovely face
Moon-calm, and bounteous shining hair,
And hands that knew not human care,
Upon the threshold of her cave

Met them with welcome kind and grave;
And stilled their pleading, threatening cries
With symbolled language in her eyes,
That said: *Now Finn the secret knows:*
 And knowledge is the end of woes;
 And fairy hands are robbed of skill
 Before the rapt and single will.
And, being neither old nor young,
She broke the spell of time, and flung
Finn's share of years from off his head,
And laughed a windy laugh, and fled,
While her dim cave dissolved from sight.

Then Finn arose in hero-might—
And echoes answered down a glen
The homeward march of brooding men.

A free interpretation of *Laoi na Seilge* (Song of the Hunt), an Irish bardic tale.

Shée—Gaelic *sidhe*, people of the wind, fairy-people.

The Celtic Immortals are the Tuatha De Danann, the people of the Goddess Dana.

A whirl of dust and leaves is regarded as a passing fairy.

A BARDIC CHANT

When, in hedge and haggard,
Laggard leaf and wing
Unto song awaken,
Shaken by the spring;
Death, who, stormy-worded,
Lorded hills and plains,
Falleth pale and pronely;—
Only life remains.

Life, released, resurgent,
Urgent, hero-willed,
Marches where the larches
Arches bravely build;
Hears rain-lances, slanting,
Chanting through the glen:
“Though the summer closes,
Roses bloom again.”

Chestnut stems, carousing,
House the drowsy strains
Where the generous Mother
Other lives sustains.
And the wise, who wonder
Under oaks and firs,
Know the life unending,
Blending theirs with Hers.

After the metrical manner of the Irish bards.

ALL SOULS' DAY ON CAPRI ISLAND

What if the scientist has shown
All final in the grave;
That all your dead have dreamed or known
Was light along a wave;

That memory's wreath and candle-fire
In consecrated scone
Only within your heart's desire
Have reason or response?

Your dead have lived and wept and laughed,
And joyed in day and dark;
Have shot their aspiration's shaft,
And bid it seek its mark;

Felt life invest a trivial hour
With meanings that enthrall,
Which no annihilating power
May cancel, or recall.

Let death their dust, and ours, disperse
In water, earth, or flame;
Since, once we were, the universe
Can never be the same!

November 2, 1932.

This and the following six poems were written at Anacapri, Capri,
and are dedicated to Emilie Van Kerckhoff and Sara de Swart.

NATURE-MOODS

Hyacinth calyces at dawn were ponds
Of dew in solemn adoration quaffed,
At which the gaping cactus-audience laughed—
Flat-visaged clowns bearded with diamonds.
Iris, in salutation to the sun,
A furled upstanding banner proudly bore;
But, sober-minded, at the noon-hour wore
A white-eared wimple humbly as a nun.
The sea, that patiently had borne a crowd
Of feline breezes that its face had mauled,
At evening, a light-spotted leopard, crawled
Quivering under a forest of low cloud,
Until the cloud became, in after-light,
A saurian fossil in the cliff of night.

AFTER STORM

All day the sea
Chorused around the wall
Of high Capri;
But at the evening's fall
The maestro wind
Let fall his waving arms,
And left—behind
Exultings and alarms
Round cliffs and caves
When wildly sang the blast—
White hints of waves
After the waves had passed.

Round my heart's beach
Moved the striated swells
Of ocean-speech;
Remembered syllables
That held the hint
Of bloom when blooms are shed,
And roseate tint
When day's red rose is dead;
After the throng
The calm wide heart of one,
And silent song
When singing-time is done.

INCOMPLETE SPRING

Morning awoke in mood tempestuous.
Greyly the Mediterranean strove and seethed,
As whelps of wind, hungry and newly toothed,
Worried the olive trees in rowdy fuss.
But evening came serenely luminous;
And from the hill the wild narcissus breathed
Shrewd fragrance among violet shadows wreathed
With Dionysian convolvulus.

Stands the mimosa like a gold-robed queen
Wakened from winter's Herculaneum.
Light-edged on dark, the fresh acacia-green
Shades and shows out the red geranium.
All beautiful—but strangely incomplete!
Ah! yes, my heart misses its Marguerite!

ELEUSINIA

I

Last night I marched in vision with a crowd,
Bearing my branch with ritual gesturing,
Because Persephone had felt the spring,
And dark Demeter shed Her wintry shroud.
There was a mother-mood upon the cloud,
And infant lips in Earth's new burgeoning.
More than mere flight was in the halcyon's wing.
All life Life's ancient victory avowed.

I woke as one who his own phantom finds
Initiate in immortal Mystery
Whose Earthward masks are moulded of the mind's
Collaboration with Reality;
And knew that in the primal Mother's veins
The Eleusinian ecstasy remains.

II

Abas, an urchin in a scanty suit,
When lone Demeter stooped to quench Her thirst
Beside a spring, his lips in mockery pursed—
And found himself changed to a water-newt!
And She shall darken eyes that dare dispute

Lewdly the sanctuaries where life is nursed;
And muteness cast on mouths that have aspersed
Her mysteries on a lascivious lute.

But they are Her branch-bearers, who would break
No least integrity of shape or soul;
Who not mere knowing for true knowledge take;
But, reaching wholly towards Life's perfect whole,
Look not too coldly on the distant skies,
And not too warmly in Love's asking eyes!

TRANSFERRED ALLEGIANCE

I came, a strayed ambassador
Out of a kingdom cursed by war,
Upon the queendom of a queen
Whose court was carpeted in green
Whereon, in varied vesture, stood
Courtiers in ceremonial mood,
While their sweet sovereign, at her throne,
Stood gazing heavenward, to own
Her Apollonian vassalage
To him who came, no war to wage,
Over Solaro's serried crest
In glittering gold and crimson dressed,
But to advance into her realm
A glance from underneath his helm
That claimed no tribute won in strife,
But her liege-loyalty of life,
And in his claiming would confer
All that her heart desired on her.

Right quickly her response she made
In beauty fearlessly displayed,
Taking his ardent eye's caress
With simple regal saintliness;—
And on my brooding spirit spilled
Their surplusage of joy fulfilled.

Then I, a strayed ambassador
Out of a world confused by war,
Where the gross cloud of selfish strife
Conceals the countenance of life;
Seeing their easy opulence
Who little seek and much dispense,
Possessing all, who all confer,
Transferred allegiance unto her
Because of what she gave to me—
That purple wild anemone
Who met the morning sun's caress
With her unfolded loveliness,
And imaged to my inner sight
The rich response of life to light.

ITERATION

Copper of withered oaks between
Olive-grey and cypress-green
Signal to watchers wisdom-capped
Winter and spring have overlapped.
But intervals of earthen-brown,
Where the seeds of hope are down,
Say that in intermingled strife
Of cold and heat, of death and life,
Are signals of a subtler thing—
That victory is with the spring.

Now what the outer eye saw clear
Is carried to the inner ear
By the exquisite absurd
Iterations of a bird
That from a flowered mimosa-tree
Chatters, with shining eye on me:

“Hearken, Oh! hearken, birds and men!

*Spring . . . spring! . . . the spring has come
again!!*

Has come with dream

Of home, and gleam

Of breast

On nest

Soft laid

*In shade,
When summer says
May's deeper word
That makes the heart
Start in a bird;
And wing and beak
Seek to fulfill
Love's new and fleet
Sweet tender will!"*

And then he stops . . .

And hops . . .

And turns

Another eye on me, that burns

With news that *Spring has come again!*

Listen! LISTEN!! birds and men!

. . . As if a poet did not know

What makes the heart of nature glow

And sing—

The spring

Has come again!

As if . . . Oh! hearken, BIRDS and men!

. . . As if a poet had not heard

A deeper song for man and bird;

A song whose inner vision knows

That springtime neither comes nor goes;

That earth and man and bud and wing,

For all their talk of travelling,
Forever wander towards the spring;
And errant feet, where'er they tire
Around the orbit of desire,
And break the ring
Of wintry care,
Shall find the spring
Await them there.

March, 1933.

SONNETS WRITTEN IN EUROPE
1932-1933

I

Once more a myriad birds and beasts are slain
To greet Christ's Day; and pious hands have blessed
The gory orgies of the cruel West,
Their feasts of flesh poisoned by fear and pain.
The double kiss of Judas and of Cain
Defiles His brow, where love alone should rest.
Of His heart-kindred He is dispossessed;
And, vainly sacrificed, seems born in vain.

O outcast Christ! how can they find Thy peace,
Whose veins are charged with creatures' agony?
How from their fratricidal conflict cease,
Unless again Thou take nativity?—
Oh! not in flesh, by flesh to be forsworn,
But in man's heart, a flame of love reborn.

Christmas, 1932.

II

Now they have passed beyond their Christmas feast;
And, fleshly-willed, resume their fleshly care
That mocks the Message and the Messenger;
And turn to you, O Wise Men from the East!
They hear the drone of parson and of priest
Telling of gold and frankincense and myrrh;

And think your gifts no richer gifts declare,
And you and them a tale that long has ceased.

Oh! Wisdom, Aspiration, Purity
Bring once again for One who newly comes,
And give to Earth a new Epiphany;
For in the scroll of creature-martyrdoms
Perpetual Good Friday had sufficed—
The Christian crucifixion of the Christ!

III

Scanning the tale of human turpitude—
Dearth mocked by plenty, art with the pander's leer,
Statecraft suborned by avarice, faith at feud,
World-murder waiting the feared beck of fear—
Almost my hand clasps his who would invoke,
On ill too vast for easy penitence,
The drastic therapy of seismic stroke
To rid Earth's body of man's corrupt offence,
Or the Atlantean foundering of a sin
Too deep for aught save that stern surgery
To cast its lopped memorials within
The unremembering archives of the sea.—
Ah! ere in speech the dreadful prayer is wrought,
Let love and wisdom slay the murderous thought!

Epiphany, 1933.

The gold, frankincense and myrrh in the story of the Magi were symbols of wisdom, aspiration and purity.

IV

Swiftly Thy love's immunity impart,
Lord! to my veins against the infectious broods
Of taloned greed and power without a heart,
That would, in my uncareful interludes,
To the dire drum-beat of their bloody faith
Make dance the untransmuted residue
That haunts my brain, the jungle tribal wraith
That can some ancient animus renew;
I being not yet a hierophant of grace
Gifted the certainties of dawn to see
Across the darkness of this interspace
In hope's bright dream of human destiny,
Where now, with supplicating eye and hand,
Master of Light! avid for light I stand.

V

O heart! where hope's high vision smites and breaks
Against the blinding barriers of sight;
Where our most starry dreams are fading flakes
Of phosphorescence on the sea of night;
Let us seek out the comradeship of powers
That, unperturbed by human perfidies,
Yield to the Will that sovereign is of ours
Their incorruptible allegiances.

And, heart! where thou art mercifully still
Under the unsophisticated sky,
Blessed by the company of wood and hill,
Cleansed by a blossom's scrutinizing eye,
Let us await His sign, and haply reach
The shrouded sense of life's oracular speech.

VI

I heard a Voice whose utterance includes
Thunder intoning a tremendous Name
Round altar-rocks in mountain solitudes
After the revelation of swift flame.
I felt a Silence where the silver-lipped
Wavering whisper of a falling leaf
Scrawled zig-zag on the air invisible script
That sighed a secret intimately brief.
Set thus between Thy Silence and Thy Sound,
O Master of the Word that speaks the whole!
I tread expectantly Thy sacred ground,
Hoping, in accents native to the soul
That listens through the body's brooding stance,
To catch the purport of Thine utterance.

Ascona, Switzerland.

VII

Pink almond blossom looks in wondering mood
Over a wall on that hard mystery:
A death in spring! death in the time of glee!
Death of a maiden fair and kind and good!
Behind the chanting priests and bier and rood
Stumbles a grief that stabs the heart to see:
Spouse of her mother, her own spouse-to-be,
Made brothers in frustrated fatherhood.

White on her catafalque the marriage veil
Hangs of the bride of Jesus, newly-wed—
Solace for broken life's unwritten tale;
Sign of the soul's perfected Godlihead;—
Vain breath (some say) to fan hope's wavering spark;
Vain wistful whistle in the dreadful dark!

Anacapri, Italy.

VIII

One who was dead (they said) a thousand days,
Finding a winding path which hither led,
Paused on the margin of remembered ways
An hour of Earth, and held my hand, and said
(After much else): “. . . Then, when I broke life's
link,

I laughed aloud, though I could feel you cry,
You four about my bed.—*I did not think
It would be such an easy thing to die!*”

Out of her spring of love and loveliness
She bloomed into the comradeship divine;
Bound not to Earth, but Earth to her no less
Bound fast in love for love; and with a sign
Across our shortening severance witnesseth
Unto the verity of spring in death!

A memory of A. L. P.

IX

When I have watched Thee scatter through the grass
Autumn's mauve crocus—doubly treacherous
Where hungry jangling Alpine cattle pass,
Being not only fair but poisonous;
Then watched Thee conjure, for the curious soul,
A poignant joy from sore necessity
Where fading life upon the plane-tree's bole
Pictures a loveliness of leprosy;
My heart with strong misgiving has been stirred,
Master of deadly beauty, beautiful death!
Lest I mishear Thy Voice that some deep word
Seemeth to say—then unsay what it saith;
Lest I misread the riddle of Thy Will
Wrought out through ill in good, through good in ill.

Geneva, Switzerland.

X

Oh! then, since dubious ill, precarious good,
Less in their deed than its directions lie,
And in bright reason's comprehending eye,
Beyond the hasty heart's refractive mood,
Fame lifts a laurel for the infamous
Who, though unwittingly, Thy Will subserve,
Provoking power in powerless limb and nerve
For life's ascension, sheer and perilous;
I ask not that, in the Jehovan way,
Thou shouldst make bare, O Lord! Thy righteous arm
Against those brethren who have offered harm
Unto their brethren. Rather do I pray
For the transfiguration of their sin
Through perfect Love's alchemic discipline.

XI

If leashed they must be, let it be with Light,
The burning lariat of Intelligence,
Leading from power's unsure omnipotence
To the staunch throne of friendship's touch and sight.
If Thou must curse them, be it with the curse
Of keen tormenting Beauty that shall fire
With virgin joy the ardours of desire,
And spirit-gold conjure from life's poor purse.

Burst, Lord! their hearts' clogged sluices with the
flood

Of Love fulfilled in Magnanimity
That shall the bitter desert bid to bud
And laugh in blossomy sweetness that sets free
Odours and tinctures affluent to bless
The dwellers in the dreadful wilderness.

XII

If Thou must smite them, smite them in the brain
With flagellations of relentless Thought
Eager as bees after a week of rain,
Till out of sunlit ecstasy is wrought
Sweetness and substance—exquisitely blent
From bloom and wing, confederate rest and flight—
For life embodied, blameless nourishment;
And for the heart, impeccable delight.
And on the shoulders of the powerful cast
The burden of high purpose bent to plan
Earth's future, fed but foiled not by the past;
To reinvest the royalty of man
With the free sceptre of his spirit's will
Life's sovereign admonitions to fulfil.

XIII

Is it of deeper speech a paraphrase,
Bravely trumpeting triumph in defeat,
I hear the marching chanting ocean raise,
Though all its waves end as the sickled wheat?
Yea, though no ripened ear, from swath on swath
Tumultuously harvested, remains,
Thy pulse, that raised them, endless circuit hath,
Master of Life! through tideways of Thy veins.
Now is thought's trouble spume-washed from the
brow,
Calmed in the clamours of the equinox
In whose defeat o'erta'en by triumph Thou
Resolvest Thine æonian paradox
Of Death-in-life, with Life acclaimed supreme,
Outrunning Death around Thy spiral dream.

XIV

Peace, then, O soul that mourned the spirit's loss
When sceptred power, renouncing reason, fell
Into Herodian pride too blind to tell
Barabbas from the bearer of a cross;
And sought to silence with jangle of jailers' keys
An orient hope—alas! a hopeless dream—
That lips long eloquent with Freedom's theme

Would Freedom's call answer with splendid ease;
Fell, in imperious whim, too prone to face
Woman's heroic new-enfranchised thought
Into the patriot's ardent purpose wrought,
With loftier answer than the felon's place;
And sought to still a wakened people's need
With statute-rhetoric framed by fear and greed.

About five thousand women were imprisoned in India during the political struggle of 1930 to 1933.

XV

Hush, heart!—In circumstance ambiguous,
Where in the light the curd-white butterfly
Sheds a grey shadow as it blunders by,
And, moon-enchanted, rock is luminous,
Comes the high hope that, past the sight of us,
Down ways our blind foretelling cannot spy,
Repentant Jove will leave his throne on high
To fraternize with freed Prometheus.

Yea, doth not, even now, to eyes that see,
The rod of iron serve Life's purpose well,
Being but shepherd-staff to Devaki
Seeking once more the consecrated cell

Where She at the sure hour shall bring to birth
The Holy Child that bringeth heaven to earth?

Vasudeva and Devaki, the father and mother of the foretold avatar, Sri Krishna, were imprisoned by King Kangsa in order to frustrate a prophecy of his overthrow through the coming divine child. The prophecy was not frustrated.

XVI

When in the phantom aeroplane of thought
I reach the mearings of a million years,
And ask for news of us, and our compeers
Whose deeds with such high destiny seemed fraught;
And, having vainly for remembrance sought,
Fly back from alien laughter, alien tears;
I ask my oracle, with lonely fears,
To what eternal purpose we have wrought.

Oh! then I shed the bonds of date and clime,
Seeing the answer shining on her brow
That greets the eternal in the heart of time,
Where life and love have their perpetual Now;
And festive flags and doleful drums retreat
With youth's false triumph, age's false defeat!

THE BELOVED CAPTIVE

REVELATION

A Memory

I

. . . And there She stood, where culmination sheers
Beyond all ends! Call Her my Self, my Soul—
But God alone has record on His roll
Of Her high cognomen among Her peers.
Her hands were filled with fruitage of my years;
And on Her heart was transcript of their toll
Drawn starward up my life's arterial bole
From transmutations of my smiles and tears.

Under a *chennar* in the Nishat Bagh
I woke. The tree was throbbing, leaf to root!
I heard him touch a string and hum a *rāg*.
Straightway I set my forehead to his foot,
Then lurched by hinting lake and talking streams,
Drunken with dreams that are not only dreams.

II

Drunken with dreams that are not only dreams
I went. And the low earth became a height
Vast with the purport of an instant's sight
Beyond the edge of rumours and of gleams.

I knew why man's imagination teems
With Gods on thrones and Seraphim in flight;
How, though in darkness, out of hidden light
He frames his fabric of celestial themes.

Lift up the heart, then, lift it up as a bird
Whose song is heard because of silences;
Salute between our palms a present Third;
Step with what Foot our foot accompanies
Between the ambiguous deep and certain land
Where Time and Timelessness walk hand in hand!

December 10, 1932.

Chennar, the Indian maple. *Nishat Bagh*, the "Garden of Bliss" in Kashmir. *Rag* (pronounced with broad *ah*), the Indian equivalent to the occidental *scale* in music.

While the last six lines were being composed on Capri Island, Italy, the author's wife was being tried in Madras police court for speaking against Ordinance rule in India. On declining to be bound not to speak thus for a year, she was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment.

THREE SISTERS

Ah, Love! though my unknightly hand unfolds
No puissant banner in the van of life,
Nor lifts a trumpet wild with worthy strife;
Yet may my heart stand upright, since it holds
Greatness enough thy greatness to acclaim,
And set with hers of the much troubled heart,
And hers who chose the quiet better part,
The noble kinship of thy fadeless name.
Yea, I will call thee, with a heart grown proud,
Christ's sister in redemptive sacrifice,
O strong and tender spirit! thrice-endowed—
To serve, to hear, or, counting not the price,
To head the swordless liberating deed
Even to Calvary were that the need!

Martha, Mary, Margaret.

THE TRIPLE VOW

Master Gitiádes at Sparta built
A temple to Athene, legend-hung
In bronze; and carved her icon, fair among
Fair forms, in cedar, ivory and gilt.
Then, that his soul in service might not wilt
In self-applause from silent substance wrung,
His heart into her canticle he flung—
A Dorian brook buried in history's silt.

And I, a new Gitiádes, in vows
Thrice-bound—to make my life my lady's fane
Worthy her worthy counterpart to house,
And to her spreading praise expand my strain,
Shall toil till speech goes dumb and sight goes dim
To make her shrine, her image and her hymn.

TRINITY

Set in a niche above
The Middle Sea
(A little shrine to Love
Contrived by me),
Parnassian Pegasus,
Athene's owl,
Your face love-luminous,
Stand cheek by jowl.

Yet not until today
Was I aware
That in some hidden way
My hands had there
Combined of casual things
The trinity
Of Beauty on the wings
Of Poetry,
Wisdom that would restrain
The crookéd-willed,
Goodness that is these twain
In deed fulfilled.

Thus, in a niche above
Virgilian sea,
Set in a shrine to Love

Devised by me,
Parnassian Pegasus,
Athene's bird,
Your face love-luminous
The binding third,
Are now made three-in-one;
And, of the three,
My praises swiftest run,
Beloved, to thee!

SPRING IN WINTER

Spring through December warmth unwonted pours.
White butterflies, bewildered by sorceries
Of sunlight, blunder by like spume of seas
That scatter softness round hard-visaged shores.
Ah! while such vernal prophecy implores
All things to joy, why, heart! this dark unease,
This inner listening for the grind of keys
Turned in the wards of unrelenting doors?

O heart! to be worthy of *her*, stand up in sight
Of all the world, and cry this confident thing:
“A seed of day, set in the soil of night,
Shall break earth’s bonds at touch of coming spring!”
Cry: “God, when He His labour had but begun,
To make a shadow had to make a sun!”

Anacapri, December 18, 1932.

DOUBLE VISION

“Look, love!” I called: “that sky! We never knew
Sapphire so like to sapphire! No one said
The salvia could achieve such utter red,
Or the plumbago be so heavenly blue!
See, sweet! that robin like a swallow flew!
Light is not light, but lambent amber spread!
Oh! surely, underfoot and overhead,
The spirit of the season shimmers through!”

Christmas—and Capri! Love! I seek your hand—
And life turns hollow as a blighted tree!
Not here—but captive in a far-off land!
Why, then, that double rapture? Lustrously
Insight, for the heart’s solace, gives the clue,
That with the eyes of one I saw for two!

LOVE'S HERESY

For my heart's sin, if it be counted sin
To hazard love's most holy heresy
In vowing itself not to the Lord but thee,
I have good hope I shall forgiveness win;
For I have seen how life in twain has rent
—To find completion more completely whole
Beyond the achievement of the separate soul—
The spirit's orient and occident.
And I have hope that, for my sight's reward,
Our here disjoined unperfect hearts may reach
Through fugal song's diversified accord,
One high, harmonious, consecrated speech;
And, when our love goes silent at its brim,
We may present one perfect heart to Him!

LOVE'S PERFECTION

I

Time was when love's young fancy, eager-hooved,
Sped loveward; but on joy's hushed margin learned
Love may not, though it may have purely yearned,
Lightly approach the mightily removed.
For onward, ineradicably grooved,
Go the splayed pathways of the heaven-externed,
Till fleshless purpose is in flesh discerned,
And spirit-service in the body proved.

Ah! though some recreance of incarnate will
In presence veils what I in absence know,
And exile asks, Love's mystery to fulfil;
Still on towards Love's perfection glad I go,
Even through death, if death may be alone
My postern to the footstep of thy throne.

II

Even to death, if death lead to thy throne,
Gladly I go. Yet, since my days are spent
In banishment beyond thy stars' intent,
Life is but death by space and silence known.
Then, since no light hath death or life alone,

Here will I reach beyond their mere event;
Guess thy soul's stature by its pediment,
And, stretching unto thine, upraise mine own.

Come, love! let us outwit both life and death,
That are but lackeys to Reality;
Outsoar the severance of blood and breath
Upon the parallax of love made free;
And, met within the undivided deep,
The spirit's tryst in spirit-silence keep!

HOMeward BOUND

I

I stood where Cæsar stood to look towards Rome
When on his isle he yearned for Italy;
And San Michelé's sphinx looked out with me
Across the realms of undine and of gnome.
Then came a prow pushing a swath of foam
Towards India through the lustrous indigo sea
Under the swart Vesuvian canopy,
Bound for the land that is our spirits' home.

And suddenly the sun's last level beam
Made a gold gangway shipward on the Bay;
And from the isle's jade shallows, in a dream
My feet went forth impetuous Peter's way,
And caused the roster of that craft to err
Inscribing not a phantom passenger.

II

Bound for the land that is our spirits' home
She passed. O love! we named at Rinkingpong
Two trees for you and me, and watched the strong
Cloud-horses rear around their hippodrome;
Laughed at our image on a bubble-dome

A stream down Dodabetta built of song;
Yet felt through Earth one life-tide flow along
And struggle starward from a common loam.

Yes, Earth is home! Whether your mad monsoon
Rant on the monstrous harp-strings of the rain,
Or I go frenzied by a Bacchic moon;
Above, our heavenly amplitudes remain,
And 'underfoot, as Capri's cliffs I climb,
Bones of our Earth stripped by the vulture Time

Rinkingpong is near Kalimpong, Lower Himalayas.
Dodabetta is a peak of the Nilgiri Hills, South India.

SONG ON SONG'S LACK

My heart is in the south,
My face is to the north;
Therefore my famished mouth
Can utter nothing worth.

Lies the twain-cloven will
Responseless to the sky.
White-turbaned mountains fill
An unadmiring eye.

Shepherds go shuffling on,
Whistling, their flocks to cheer.
This, and a chant at dawn,
I give but half an ear.

The whirling revelry
Of winds in misty shrouds,
The flashing colloquy
Of angry wrangling clouds,

Find not upon my mouth
Echoes of any worth,
My thought being in the south,
My body in the north.

Parting has song for some;
Distance a lyric dream:
My pilgrim harp is dumb
By a stone-harassed stream

That chants: "Through fen and field
Silent I slipped along:
Hear now frustration yield
The recompense of song."

Well, let who will employ
Their strings in praise of pain:
A jongleur I of joy,
I seek another strain;

And, lacking the delight
That mingles deed and dream—
Love's lyric touch and sight
That form and fire my theme—

My spirit's fingers slake
Their need on subtler wire,
And unheard music make
To stanch the soul's desire.

For song draws nothing worth
From the bewildered mouth
When life is in the north
And love is in the south.

Kangra Valley, Punjab, May, 1933.

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ARABESQUE

When I have scanned your pictured face
Enshrined in a most quiet place
Till visionary hands unroll
The splendid pageant of your soul
Whose passionate dream has turned to deed
In woman from subjection freed
Because of all you shared and bore
In Holloway and Tullamore;
I wonder now if then I saw
The orbit of your spirit's law
Cast round your dim evolving spheres
The arabesque of coming years;
Or if my fingers truly told
The count of your unminted gold
When the great signet of my dream
I set on its young laughing gleam.
That vernal day has withered by,
But left the pathways of the sky
Littered with rose-leaves though the rose
Has gone the way all flowering goes;—
And what was done has less avail
For joy than telling of the tale.
For while I scan your pictured face
Enshrined in a most quiet place,
Once more I feel down starry ways

The throb of benedictive rays
Around your head converging fall
To make a nimbus on the wall
Where, in an Indian prison-cell,
You speak the silent oracle
Of passionate dream whose waking deed
Shall be a people purged and freed
To know the soul's authentic gains,
Self-breaking self-inflicted chains.
Yet, when the sceptred Will they bear,
You will adventure elsewhere,
Because of something in your eyes
That look from their own paradise,
That see in dark reptilian things
The bright incipience of wings,
And count the robes the heavens wear
Less than the Glory they declare.
So, as I scan your pictured face
That glorifies a quiet place,
Till visionary hands unroll
The splendid pageant of your soul,
And with majestic gesture draw
The orbit of your spirit's law
That casts around evolving spheres
Your arabesque of coming years,
I wonder now if proudly then

My harp shall resonate again
With echoes of your soul's emprize
When, from some stellar cell, your eyes
Shall turn on the galactic blaze
Their unintimidated gaze,
And the starred heavens interrogate
For other worlds to liberate.

Margaret E. Cousins served a month's imprisonment in Holloway Jail, London, in 1910, and a month in Tullamore Jail, Ireland, in 1913, during the woman's suffrage agitation. She was released from Vellore Jail, Madras, India, on October 21, after serving ten months and ten days imprisonment in the cause of freedom.

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