

TIGHT BINDING BOOK

THE ORACLE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JAMES H. COUSINS

GANESH & COMPANY, MADRAS

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Author Cousins, James. H.

Title *Prack and other poems*

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Hearken unto a verser who may chance
Rhyme thee to good . . .

GEORGE HERBERT

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1938

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PROEM

**BECAUSE I was not wise
As other poets be,
And had not sense to see
Beauty in women's eyes
As Beauty's end and sum ;
Nor gathered song to feed
Imagination's fire
With the incongruous weed
Of bodily desire ;
But shrewdly sought to thresh
Out of the husks of flesh
Soul-profitable grain,
And shake from withering things
Unwithering winnowings,
My foolish feet have come
On unexpected pain.
For now, when years in front
Grow fewer than behind,
Song-comrades of my youth,
Re-living the old hunt
For life's futilities,
A grim new pleasure find,
That is to me denied,
In growling at the tooth
Of time and slow disease
Gnawing their wrinkling rind.
With Jeremian joy
They chant of things that cloy,
What dies and what has died ;
While I, condemned to sing**

What knows no perishing,
The winging, not the wing,
Monotonously go
My spirit-way. And so,
When age's breath benumbs
Feet that have grown uncouth,
And fingers are all thumbs ;
Outcast, as man and boy,
From their lugubrious joy,
I shall pass through a door,
And perish in my youth—
At seventysix or more ;
Because I was not wise
As other poets be,
And, seeking but to see
In Beauty's glamorous eyes
Immortal enterprise,
Perversely chose to sing
What knows no perishing,
The winging, not the wing,
And sang in man and maid
Beauty that cannot fade.

THE ORACLE

THE ORACLE

TO G.

" . . . AFTER a wavering time
I died from feet to head ;
Then floated free to climb
Beyond long clouds of dread
Into a place that had
The sun and moon for doors ;
Where Shapes austerely glad
On constellated floors
Wove in zodiacal dance
From threads of midnight and morn
The cradling circumstance
Of worlds that would be born.

And, passionately grave,
With eyes that held the sea,
One moved as moves a wave,
And held out hands to me,
White hands of Goddess-mould ;
And in a voice that swelled
To ocean-deeps, ' Behold !'
She said. And I beheld
—Raised from my knees by Her
As tangles on a tide—

What set my veins astir
With wonder. Side by side,
Close in a casket wrought
By Danaan smiths from spray
That moon- and sun-light caught,
A pearl and ruby lay—
Twin gems of heavenly mould
By their own radiance lit ;
Enshrined, ensphered, ensouled ;
Mightily exquisite ;
Holy impregnable white,
Haughty implacable red !
' Goddess ! unseal my sight,
My soul's true sight !' I said.

Then She, in rhythmic speech
That the sea-murmuring had
Of surf along a beach,
Made me divinely glad
With the uncovered sense
Of cloud-wrapped mysteries
That through the brain condense
To words that might be these.—

' Who deem the Gods are dead,
Or born of haunted brain

Out of primeval dread,
Have their own Godhood slain.
Because their feet have flown
From ancient innocent ways,
Their eyes too guilty grown
Into themselves to gaze,
Lest on their darkness break
Sudden disturbing day,
And spirit-vision shake
Alliances with clay.

Think not the suppliant fire
Was lit in vain to Powers
Fashioned from man's desire :
Lo ! that desire is ours ;
Sparks of our noonless dawn
Dropped from ancestral skies
That we shall blow upon
Till flame to flame arise,
And the tumultuous
Dreams and desires of men
That wandered forth from us
Shall wander home again.

O you whose feet have climbed
Our hidden citadel 1

Time's eye on the untimed,
Behold, remember, tell
How they who bravely win
High aspiration's wings
Shall reach our heaven within
Far or familiar things.

The Danaan Godhead we,
Shadowed in song and tale,
Who touch with ecstasy
The dreaming of the Gael ;
Yet on dim banners, torn
Or lost in history's flames,
Age after age have worn
Known or forgotten names
That still with chants divine
Can fill the opened ear :
The moon-white Niav mine ;
My Lord's, the boundless Lir.
To us the Dagda gave
For mutual empery
The realm of tide and wave—
And seas within the sea,
Whose crests and hollows flash
Under celestial wind,
Whose crystal waters wash
Man's sullied heart and mind

**Age after patient age
We wait our witnesses ;
And unto eyes grown sage
Our secret signs confess.
Mine is the ultimate calm ;
Struggle and conquest his ;
The pearl of pearls I am ;
My Lord the ruby is.
These glyphs of Soul and Mind
In consecrated hands
Bear back to Earth, and find
A bard who understands.
He shall incarnate strong
Lovely detergent Powers
Through ceremonial song
That echo is of ours.'**

With that the vision broke
In silence vastly sweet;
And slowly I awoke,
Reborn from head to feet,
Out of a place that has
Birth, death, for swinging doors ;
Where Shapes ancestral pass
Along star-stippled floors,

**Weaving in holy dance
From threads of night and morn
The cradling circumstance
Of worlds that will be born."**

Danaan: "the people of Dana," the ancient Irish pantheon.

Dagda : the Irish all-Father.

Gael : here used for the Irish branch of the Celtic race.

Dublin 1904,
Kotagiri, India, 1934.

OTHER POEMS

NOTE TO "SOUNDLESS MUSIC"

During the Viceroyalty in India of one who, in his early manhood, had been a maker of lyrical music, order was maintained in a period of political excitement by Emergency Ordinances which superseded the usual process of law. These Ordinances were ultimately pressed into the ordinary Penal Code. Against this procedure, which she regarded as an unnecessary extremity of severity, a western lady, who, like the Viceroy, was a musician, publicly protested. On declining to give heavy bonds to keep silence for a year, she was sent for that period to the Madras Presidency Jail for Women at Vellore.

This is the factual background of the story of how a musician met the deprivation of prison-life imposed by another musician, and kept up her pianoforte practice by using the edge of her prison bed as an imaginary keyboard.

SECTION I. The Puranas are ancient Hindu stories that figuratively express cosmic and psychological ideas.

The shanachie is a traditional story-teller of Ireland.

According to Hindu lore, the universe is a play created by Brahma for the diversion of the Immortals.

Karma is the Hindu law of cause and effect in action.

The vina is a stringed musical instrument which stands to India as the harp does to Ireland.

Palestrina was one of the greatest composers of Catholic Church music.

SECTION II. The yogis of India usually sit for meditation on a deer-skin.

The Question alights on the Himalaya (accent on *ma*) Mountains, which physically, as the highest ranges on the planet from which the soundless music rises, and spiritually, as the habitations of seekers after spiritual perfection, are specially accessible to the heaven-world. From thence the Question proceeds to tropical South India where Vellore Jail is situated.

SOUNDLESS MUSIC

To the Musician

I

STRIPPED of circumstance and name,
All our stories are the same ;
Symbolling the spirit's trial
Through assertion and denial,
In the tales of God and Man as
Chanted by the wise Puranas,
Homer by the Grecian sea,
And the Irish shanachie.

For there is no plot but that
Spun by the Playwright when He sat
By the primal Wheel of Life
Out of strands of calm and strife,
Downward pull, ascensive curve,
Bovine torpor, artist-nerve,
Freezing hilltops, burning levels,
Dreams of gods, desires of devils,
Joy that has riposte in pain,
Spur and countermanding rein,
Crystal vision, muddied wits—
All the pairs of opposites.
These rehearsed and garmented,
" The Play begins," the Playwright said.

Forth they fare into the lists,
Life's assigned protagonists ;

Partners in the cosmic drama,
Born within the brain of Brahma,
Helping out each other's karma ;
And in Brooklyn or in Burma
Finding stage and audience ample
For their mumming. For example—

Two, whose thoughts on Duty run,
Willing, or unwilling, done,
Pause no moment to regret a
Stroke or thrust in the vendetta
Life plays outwards through its
prism

In affined antagonism.
One of these, whose heart had long
Sentimentalized in song,
Now, in proud vicegerency,
Promulgates the stern decree
That with iron Ordinance
Would retard life's quickening dance
In a people casting age,
Tasting freedom's beverage :
While the other, born to be
Music's life-long devotee,
Breaks the paralysing ring
With intrepid challenging
Till she finds her fate—to dwell
Solus in a granite cell,
Exiled from her life's oblation,
And from music's ministration.

Yet, when day has clashed its door
In the hills behind Vellore,
And the warder turns the key
On the nightly mystery
Where her lamp-light sharply glows,
That unprisoned spirit knows
Through deprivation secret bliss
Won by simple artifice,
Wit that bends the things that be
To the spirit's needs, as she
Feeds the famished music-mood
On imagination's food.
Seated lowly by her bed,
She, with swaying greying head
Timing hands that swing like sedge
Left and right along its edge,
Simulates the sister-fire
Paderewski strikes from wire,
Conjures heat without the flame,
And the soul behind the name,
Making soundless music there
For no earthly listener.

Now, upon that spirit-strain,
She has passed the prisoning brain,
Burst the bars of nerve and tissue,
Climbed the clouded peak whence issue
The primordial Ordinances
Of creation's circumstances,
Life's definitive designs—

Rhythms, gestures, tinctures, lines,
That, through mingled brain and heart
Make the ritual of Art.
Thus absolved from hand and ear,
She through subtler sense can hear
Tones more tenuous than the vina's,
More ensouled than Palestrina's ;
And can feel the wind that stirs
Round celestial auditors.

II

God from ecstasy profound
Wakes at an unusual sound,
Saying : "Not the wave that swings
Brazenly from Saturn's rings
Smitten cymbal-wise, or far
Chorusing of star and star,
Or galactic utterance,
Shatters my aeonian trance;
But a speech that has no need
For the cry of winded reed,
Sob of string, or tympan's roll,
Being Music's naked soul
As within my heart it stirred
When I shaped the primal Word."

Then the Arch-Musician turns
Sight that through the systems burns
Questioning each singing sphere

For the sound that strikes His ear
Far more inly than the hymn
Of His flashing seraphim,
Being music that has found
Voice beyond the need of sound.

Forth the flaming Question sweeps ;
Down the stellar stairway leaps ;
On the fluctuating verge
Where the glittering systems merge
Tracks a gleam whose throb apprizes
Whence that soundless music rises
Flanked by those distracting stars,
Passionate Venus, puissant Mars.

Now the Question hides from sight
In the deep disguise of light,
Lest its inner radiance be
Darkened by mortality,
And the mist from human draff
Blur its heavenward heliograph ;
Tacks from sky to sky until
Pilgrims to a snow-cowled hill
Where Himalayan winters melt
Round the yogi's sambur-pelt,
See a glory dropping sheer
From a cloud-built belvedere,
And in reverence profound
Put their foreheads to the ground.

When they **cease to bend and pray,**
Thunder thumping far away
Is the cipherless reply
Of a spirit vanished by,
Southwards to a place of palms,
Where escape from sunshine crams
Night with commerce, bandied words,
Chantings, cries of sleepy birds,
Mixed with music thinly clear
Only spirit-ears can hear
When the day has clashed its door
In the hills behind Vellore,
And the warder turns the key
On an artist's mystery.

There that embassy from Light,
Lucid Day to lurid night,
Diamond Skies to dusty ground,
Tracking that unbodied sound,
Masks its glory to engage
In celestial espionage ;
Moves by metamorphosis
Into flames that shake and hiss,
Till it finds its fate—to fall
As a lamp-gleam on a wall,
And a poignant parable
Signal from a granite cell,
Where a woman's greying head
Sways beside her penal bed
As her hands, like wind-blown **sedge**

Glimmering on its iron edge,
Make the soundless music there
That awoke the Listener.

III

Thus (or haply otherhow)
Past the Pleiads and the Plough
Went the news, translating clear
For the universal Ear
Earthly jargon into pure
Heavenly nomenclature.

And (if mortal speech may tell
Mystery ineffable,
Like the saga that the sun
Tells to Jeans and Eddington)
Clouds that on the hills came down
Paraphrased a god-like frown
That, a cosmic instant after,
Melted in celestial laughter
As the sun-god, rearsen,
Glorified a granite prison,
And, with eyes washed clean of malice.
Smiled on a viceregal palace.

For the Playwright in the wings
Watching how the Play of things
Moves through happiness or hurt in
Oscillations towards the curtain

That shall close the Story planned,
Raised a momentary hand
Thrilled with threat—but let it fall
As a lamp-gleam on a wall
Told how prison bars could be
Freedom's blind accessory,
By evoking in a cell
Soundless music's miracle
That had broadcast through the night
Mingled loveliness and light,
And beyond the planets seven
Mixed the souls of earth and heaven.

HAREM

NOW that I have a while to spare,
And rhymes are dancing round my head,
Strange, for a theme, I do not care
If France go blue, or Spain go red ;

And count of little consequence
What Gandhi says, or does not say,
Or Wilhelm's lost omnipotence,
Or the Dictators' ruthless way.

For all these things will gorge the heap
Time will into oblivion shove.
Only one theme its place will keep,
The ancient garbled theme of love.

No I not the sentimental whine
With which the crooner smears the air,
Making of song a concubine,
And life a sly philanderer.

Oh ! what has he of love to tell ?
And what have they to tell of love
Who kneel not in its chasuble,
Nor in its holy ritual move ?

Oh I I could croon, nor be believed,
Of love that makes their passion pale :
For I have loved, and love received
From women, in the heart's entail,

Not one by cancelled one, but six,
And all at once, and all the time :
Each my whole heart's imperatrix
In the precession of a chime :

Each over-toned and under-toned
By all the rest ; so that no more
The heart of varied rapture owned
At thirty than at sixtyfour.

These will suffice as theme for song,
Now that I have a while to spare,
And for the kinks of right and wrong
Less than a withered rose-leaf care.

One is a whetstone making keen
The sickle of the reaping mind :
And one life's highways brushes clean
With music's paradisal wind.

One the dull air divinely shakes
With the soft stir of spirit-wings :
And one into her being takes
And gives the joy of natural things.

One can the veins to valour start
With chivalry for wrong's redress :
And one can pacify the heart
With love's all-saying silentness.

Day brings no ennui while the sun
From solstice unto solstice swings ;
Nor night, while stellar athletes run
Around the planetary rings.

And while these women share my bread,
Small chance has love of going stale,
Or a spent heart to blur the head
With shreadings of illusion's veil.

Yet, though each silently resolves
A seeming separate intent,
Each the soul-sisterhood involves,
Subtly the same, though different.

Each in her own unique dear way
Looks through the same brown-brilliant eye
As when we wed, one April day ;
And each on the one day will die,

And go where Light all shades will drown
(And may my death-day be the same !)
And God will crown them with one crown,
And call them by one flowery name.

And you who would my myth construe,
And learn love's never-ageing lore
Wherein the old remains the new,
And spending only swells its store,

Must ponder Ireland's trampled times,
When, to elude the invader's flames,
The patriot poets warmed their rhymes
With half a dozen worshipped names—

" Daughter of Sorrow," " Little black Rose,"
And others that the heart-strings thrill :
Yet the one love of loves they chose
Was Ireland, Ireland, Ireland still !

Even thus my stainless loves I hymn,
Changing, unchanged, till song be done,
Since God, in a celestial whim,
Enshrined them in the form of one I

LONGWOOD SHOLA

Kotagiri, Nilgiris

DAWN, that calls the soul from sleep,
Brings the hungry bulbul's *yeep* . . .
Yeep . . . , and that most final sound,
Peaches plumping on the ground
As his reckless slashing sabre
Ends a season's cosmic labour,
Laying low high fruitage ripened
For the early riser's stipend.

And, in truth, why should there be
Less than prodigality
When the wakening woods are choric,
And the firmament plethoric,
With the promise of abundance
After all things step to one dance
When the domineering rain
Drowns all else in its own strain ?

Meanwhile, morning's invitation
Calls, through garden and plantation.
To the shades of Longwood *shola*,
Where the feet weigh scarce a *tola*
Poised on pathways thickly strown
With the leaves of seasons gone,
Stirring from deciduous death
Nature's vitalising breath.

Overhead slim branches swirl
As the bright-brown barking squir'l
Plays at gentleman-and-lady
To and fro, and shy cicadae
Bandy wiry-shrill persuading
(*Twing twing TWANG*, such serenading !)
Universal invitation
Myriad-masked throughout creation.

Here and there fawn-flowered spirea
Stand as an inspired idea
In the brain of earth, a relic
Of the ministry angelic
From whose touch all beauty springs
Into joy of leaves and wings.

Even such rapture raises me,
All becomes a Mystery.
Water among pebbles tinkling
Needs no ceremonial sprinkling
Here to consecrate an altar,
Holy scripture, holy psalter.
Yea, beyond dogmatic fission,
Here is ritual provision :
Multi-coloured cloths and bands,
Holy water for the hands
Flowing neither cold nor torrid,
Sacred ashes for the forehead
Gathered where the flame of day
Burns a glory into clay.

Yea, when hearts have learned the craft
That **can** break love's casual shaft,
And **can** rise in quiet woods
Into Love's immortal moods,
Such exalted tenderness
Seems the dreaming brow to bless
That the dragons of desire
Vanish in creative fire,
And futilities of thought
Scatter dustily to nought,
While the soul, in deep repose
Lifted into vision, knows
Spirit-freedom, loosed from sense,
Joy that needs no penitence.

Ah ! such moments yet must fade
Till the soul all debts has paid
Unto darkness, and can look
On the earth as on a book
Shining, throbbing with the hymn
Of its heavenly paradigm.

Still, a reminiscent beat
Times a poet's homing feet
Where a mountain-forest river,
Swift on sand, round granite sliver,
Chants high deeds for panegyrics,
Lilts **alluring themes for lyrics,**

Under boughs that richly shed
Nourishment for heart and head,
Fancy's fruitage roundly ripened
As the early riser's stipend.

Bulbul, not the Persian nightingale, but a favourite crested bird in India.

Shola, ancient forests on the Nilgiri Mountains, South India.

Tola, Indian unit of weight, three eighths of an ounce.

" IN THE HOUR OF THE PASSING OVER . . . "

To Humayun Mirza

IN the hour of the passing over from night to day
My heart with the heart of nature moved in play ;
In blind-man's-buff between the sightless and sight,
The dance of light with darkness, of darkness with
light

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
A breeze came up in the consequential way
Of youth on naive adventure—and passed me by
With a wistful, unaccomplished old-man sigh.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
A crystal peace in folded creek and bay
And on broad-spread water, a light washed clean of
fire,
Reflected a sky of unfulfilled desire ;

Till the mouths and hands of the wizards, wind and
dawn,
Transformed pure crystal to unreflecting fawn
That told how earth with water mingled lay
In the hour of the passing over from night to-
day.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day,
At the shake of dawn on its shoulder, a granite-grey

Right royal hill, that had slept the sleep of the
proud,
Resigned its haughty dreams to a melting cloud ;

A cloud that wrapped the dreams in a magian
cloak

Invisibly, and, as waving camphor-smoke
Before an image of Godhead, faded away
In the hour of the passing over from night to day.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
Two owls from somewhere to somewhere had some-
thing to say
Of night near gone that must wait for another
night :
Meanwhile, snug sleep in the dark sweet heart of
light.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
Two birds besprinkled the thinning darkness with
spray
Of cascades of song to empty the heart's delight
In the dimness before the dumbness that comes
with sight.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
I heard one Voice through myriad voices say :
" Give ear to the silent, as unto that which
speaks.
All life with life a rich communion seeks."

**And as this was only saying that life is love,
A thing I have always known, like a mated dove
My heart to the heart of nature chanted this lay
In the hour of the passing over from night to day.**

**Thippagondanahalli, Mysore,
September 24, 1936.**

IN MEMORY OF GOYINDA KRISHNA
CHETTUR

I

THIS is the season when he raised his eyes
Unto the hills, and the dim *sholas* sought
Where winging singing meanings might be caught
And caged in lyrics beautiful and wise,—
A man who was a sonnet in disguise :
Body and brain the octave strongly wrought ;
Soul the sestet that took his fledgling thought
And sent it singing somewhere in the skies.
He loved the light of dawn, the rainy gloom,
The tints wherewith the Nilgiri summer pied
Hill-ways and wood-ways ; loved the cataract's
plume ;
But, since his spirit was cerulean-skied,
Chiefly he loved the jacaranda's bloom
Of paradisal blue . . . And then he died.

II

He died when dreaming youth had made an end
Of nature's roseate subterfuge and lure ;
And manhood, fixed in that which shall endure,
Questions the dooms that life and death portend.
Life, proffering its ladder, said : " Ascend
To thine own eminence, assigned, secure,
Thou who are princely-statured, spirit-pure,
Noble as son, as lover, father, friend."
Ah God ! when fullness empties, before time
Can ease the slow subsidence of the sea
Unto its natural ebb, what broken chime
Jangles the gloom, what subtle agony
Of vision quenched and uncompleted rhyme
Haunts the dim margin of mortality.

III

Yet may we the heart's indigence attire
In faith that Death no warrant hath to kill
Incarnate spirit's unaccomplished will
To reach perfection's purifying fire ;
That with Great Life our little lives conspire
Through time a timeless Purpose to fulfil,
And from eternities of cloud distil
The definitions of the heart's desire.
Oh ! ends not all in the untoward event
That gives rich Death the richer half of life.
With his the hidden destinies are blent
Of all who shared his dreams with beauty rife,
Participants in calm accomplishment
Beyond the clamant borders of our strife.

IV

And if our eyes, grief-curtained, now are blind
To all save death's immobile mystery,
Yet may imagination soar and see
A poet, premature to heaven, find
Some lack of honey in unearthly wind,
Some tincture absent in immensity ;
And high blue hills and a blue-blossoming tree
In hungry reminiscence call to mind.
Then, surely, God, in unfulfilled desire
That dead young poets bear beyond death's hour,
Finds hints how heaven may be shaped entire,
And life through lyric forms reach purer power,
And pours through earth-made moulds celestial fire—
And lo ! a jacaranda breaks in flower !

AGNOSIS

I

HE watched a magian weave a potent spell
To guard a region sacred and apart ;—
But lived to see uncharmed rebellion start
And lay in dust a ravaged citadel.
He heard a pythoness assuredly tell
Of Argo homing on a doubtless chart ;—
And asked if Gods, or man's God-hungry heart,
Fashioned the dream that in confusion fell.
And when his own 'tranced ear grew almost glad
At phantom words that promised crown and throne
And orb and his own will's delight, a gad
Silenced the flattering Voice with doubt full-grown
That he, by self-made sorceries, being mad
For the divine, but divinised his own.

II

Rivers that heed not from what springs they start,
But only run and sing, would fain coerce
My blood with their wild race, and make my verse
Chant the sufficing dogma of the heart.
But in the brain the silent Watcher seeks
To know what Hands, outliving quick and dead,
Love's patina on life's rude metal spread,
And know what Voice beyond love's uttering speaks.
Only in that discovery shall we,
Beloved ! find sure retort when doubt assails
Of love that faileth as the body fails ;
Thus meet corruption incorruptibly,
And step, beyond all planetary snares,
With confident feet up the sidereal stairs.

A POETESS ATTAINS TWENTYONE

To Nathalia Crane

I SAW the setting sun and rising moon
Look on each other through declining light,
And dying Day bequeath his golden boon
Changed into silver currency of night.
But after sleep and dreaming-time were done
Under night's rich star-teaseled coverlet,
I saw reversed in place the moon and sun ;
And what had set now rose, what rose now set.
And both were beautiful alluring lies
To assuage the loneliness of time and space ;
But past the need of uncorrupted eyes
That look undazed the eternal in the face ;
That in your youth surmised the ancient sage,
As yours, young wisdom masked in laughing age.

FOR A MARRIAGE ANNIVERSARY

J. H. C.—M. E. G.—APRIL 9, 1903

1

THE vase's umbra, cast upon the wall,
Swings slowly left and right—which is absurd
Seeing the vase no gossamer's breadth has stirred.
Yet thus the dawn-man saw things magical !
And shall we break such moments that enthrall,
Merely because a wandering wind has purred
Through leaves that sentinel the sleeping bird,
And swung a hanging lamp ?—and that is all.
All ? Nay, no wind yet flurried land or sea
Lacking assents from here to Capricorn ;
Nor ever stirred a spirit-breeze unborn
Out of the soul's aeonian wizardry !—
Ah love ! when first your heart by mine reposed,
Somewhere twin stars a sundered cycle closed 1

Rikiu, the choice tea-master¹, for his prince
 Laid out the daily ceremonial tea
 Approached through Morning-glories. But, lest he,
 His lord, at too much loveliness might wince,
 The master suffered not his sword to mince
 Its whetted speech, and slashed the garden free
 Of blooms—save one to deck triumphantly
 The tokonoma', matchless then or since.
 . . . And as Noguchi³ the quaint story told,
 I thought of one (I cannot name his name,
 Since modesty forbids) who did the same
 In an invisible garden, to unfold
 Before a princess, hour by common hour,
 His heart's unchallenged and unwithering flower.

¹ Japan, sixteenth century.

² The corner in a Japanese guest-room for one picture, one vase, one flower.

³ Yone Noguchi, the Japanese poet : a memory of 1919-1920.

Had I but loved you in the way of men
Of sensual mind, and worshipped not your soul,
Well might I dread the lees in passion's bowl,
Their jaded palate wishing now was then.
But, love! your spirit's highlands glimpsed at dawn
Have still at dusk a distant virgin peak,
With hints of culminations yet to seek
Round crystal streams from cloud-hid fountains
drawn.
Oh ! freed from tyrannies of touch and sight,
Yet from their sweetness feathering love's wing,
Shall my heart quail from our dear earth to spring
When you take off upon your heavenward flight ?
Nay, but in highest heaven where you shall bide,
My soul, ascending, shall be at your side.

South India, 1987.

BEAUTY'S EXILE

BECAUSE I have loved Beauty for the sake
Of Beauty alone, nor ever yet mistook
For her true self the loveliest, wisest book,
OP anything the hand of man can make,
OP Kinchinjunga's peak, or Leman lake,
But all men's local zealotry forsook ;
On every path for hint of her I look,
And from all boughs hep rumouring blossom shake
Traitor to all allegiances of mind,
Truant from every house and school and mart,
Apostate from all scriptures save her tome,
I follow Beauty down each veering wind,
From land, from faith, from all but one great heart
Exiled—with Beauty's universe for home !

INVITATION AT SUNSET

COME where the coriander its aromatic breath
Exhales as a loosened spirit that seeks **not** the **boon**
of rest ;
Where, high in the tamarind, mews like a kitten the
bird of death,
Its eye on the chittering weaver-bird that shrinks to
its nest.

Holy the daylight was. As holy shall be the dark.
Holy the place and the moment where life to life
now calls.
Holy the shrine-topped *kondas* that east and west-
ward mark.
The Day-God's myriad births and myriad burials.

Shall we hold that the day's fulfilment is all on the
forehead bowed
Of Light by Darkness dethroned and humbled in
red retreat ?
Nay, look you! above the standards of Night a
crimson cloud
Floats as a flag from a bastion denying the Day's
defeat.

A million days . . . and a million . . . and
the end thereof who knows ?
What will be, will be. What is, **our** lifted hands
acclaim.

Lost not in the sweet and splendid sadness of how
Day goes,
We lose not the joy of the triumph and wonder of
how it came.

Kondas—Telugu, hills ; Basanikonda and Maliakonda as seen
from Madanapalls on the southern Deccan.

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—SRIAUROBINDOGHOSE in *Arya*.

