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FRANK PEARCE STURM:
HIS LIFE, LITERARY FRIENDSHIPS
AND COLLECTED WORKS

(Abstract)

The thesis as presented consists of an introductory study of Sturm's life and thought, and a complete text of his collected works including early essays and poems published periodically but never reprinted, an unpublished play, and notes from a diary kept between 1934 and 1940, as well as the translations, essays, and original poems published in book form. In outlining the poet's life and the development of his thought what evidence remains of his personal relationship with W.B. Yeats and other literary figures of the time is reviewed, and some attention concentrated on possible exchanges of idea and expression.



Richard Dean Taylor

1 March 1966

FRANK PEARCE STURM

HIS LIFE AND LITERARY FRIENDSHIPS



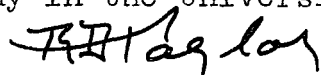
FRANK PEARCE STURM:

HIS LIFE, LITERARY FRIENDSHIPS
AND COLLECTED WORKS

Volume I

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A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the University of
Durham


by Richard Dean Taylor.

1 March 1966

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PREFACE

Preface

In presenting the material which makes up this thesis several admissions must first be made. The most important and revealing concerns the genesis of the work which began as a search for the long-missing Yeats-Sturm letters. Rumours circulating at the time of the University of Manchester exhibition 'W.B.Yeats: Images of a Poet' (May 1961) identified Dr. Sturm of Leigh with the 'learned doctor in the North of England' and there was some reference to a collection of Yeats letters, yet unpublished, reputed to be still in private hands somewhere in the area. Interested in locating this material because of its possible relevance to a project then in hand, I set out to discover as much as possible about Sturm and succeeded in collecting an appreciable amount of biographical information from acquaintances, relatives and public record, as well as early publications and surviving personal papers. The letters, I finally

discovered, had been sold some years before, together with those from Sturm formerly in the possession of Mrs. Yeats, to the University of Illinois through Mr. Rupert Hart-Davis, making a collection of forty-three letters which are being edited by Professor J. Kerker Quinn for publication by the University of Illinois Press.

Having amassed so much material, it was only logical to complete the work and impose some sort of simple order upon it. The present exercise is designed as a compendium of all pertinent information on Sturm's life and work. The object was to produce a useful reference work and a great effort was made toward completeness, but with the awesome difficulties of spreading such a project over four years and as many continents, the result is necessarily somewhat short of the goal. There are, for example, references to other newspaper articles in Aberdeen dailies which I have not been able to find and several clues to further biographical information which considerations of time and money have kept me from following. I do not believe,

however, that any of these lacunae seriously detract from the work as presented. Sturm is hardly so important a figure that his every public word and private deed need be exposed and I feel that, with one exception, the material offered is as complete as possible under the circumstances.

It is, of course, the absence of the Yeats-Sturm correspondence which makes the exception. If these few letters were edited and published, more detail would be available and accurate quotation possible. In the Spring of 1962 I did read through copies of the letters with Dr. Quinn's permission and have used the few notes then taken, but I regret the impossibility of a more extensive use of the collection. Relying on a past impression of the material is hardly a substitute for the thorough study of a properly edited text.

Another aspect of the work which requires comment is the superficial order imposed on the material collected. In both the biographical-critical chapter which introduces the Collected Works and the major divisions according to genre, I have tried to follow chronological order. It has not always been possible

to keep strictly to this principle as in the case of 'Miscellaneous Stories, Articles & Essays' where some continuity of idea could only be preserved by a rearrangement of items. In this section as well, there appear several pieces not written by Sturm out which are required as integral parts of continued discussions. It seems to me more sensible that they appear in a logical place, as should footnotes, than be buried in the obscurity of an appendix. The six poems reprinted in Eternal Helen from An Hour of Reverie appear only as originally placed in the earlier volume to avoid needless repetition, and 'Uncollected Poems' comes after the collections in published volumes, but again, in chronological order. Several series of notes and comments added to the diary after it had been discontinued are included with related but earlier entries as indicated by Sturm in the manuscript. Changes of this kind are cited in footnotes with an indication of the date of composition.

Other than the correction of obvious typographical errors, no changes have been made in published texts and only the most necessary changes were made in

manuscript or typescript material. I have tried to preserve all texts as accurately as possible with changes restricted to ensuring general accessibility and sense as in the cases mentioned.

Footnotes follow the general premise that the work is one of useful reference and duplication in full is not infrequent. The problem of the extent to which source material for biographical detail should be cited has been awkward. I have indicated many of the personal sources within the text and used nothing, even unacknowledged material, that could not be verified in some way. Quotations from the Collected Works are adequately indicated by title or date within the text. Information from such public records as are listed in the bibliography is not referred to in footnotes and for the most part concerns only Sturm's army and medical careers.

Many people have been extraordinarily kind and I should like to express my thanks especially to Mr. B.T.W. Stevenson for his generosity in allowing me free access to the MS. material in his possession and to the late Rev. Mr. Frank A. Bullock for his invaluable

knowledge of Sturm's character and interests. Professor J. Kerker Quinn must be thanked for his permission to use material from the Yeats-Sturm correspondence and both Miss Dorothy Sturm and Dr. Maxwell Sturm have been extremely helpful in supplying biographical detail. I am particularly indebted to Professor Roger Sharrock who patiently read through the whole typescript, pointing out several obvious errors, and whose advice lead to some revision of the introductory chapter, bringing about a better balance of emphasis in commentary on the study of Baudelaire and the diary. I should also like to thank Dr. Ian Fletcher for his helpful suggestions toward the placing of Sturm's work on Baudelaire in its historical context.

Schuylerville, N.Y.
1 September 1965

Frank Pearce Sturm

His Life and Literary Friendships

Some three or four references to Sturm by Yeats, only one explicitly by name, and two more in the Hone biography are all the incentive that exists for investigating this curious man. In a letter to Olivia Shakespeare dated March 4 (1926) Yeats complained that there had been no reaction to the publication of A Vision, "except from a very learned doctor in the North of England who sends me profound and curious extracts from ancient philosophies on the subject of gyres."¹ In February 1931 he wrote again:

I write very much for young men between twenty and thirty....Apart from these young men— who will only glance at A Vision— I shall have a few devoted readers like a certain doctor in the North of England who sits every night for one half hour in front of a Buddha lit with many candles—his sole escape from a life of toil. He has already found some proof, which he has not explained, that it is all 'very ancient'²

¹ Letters of W.B. Yeats, ed. Alan Wade (London, 1954), p. 712.

² P. 781.

And still later, in a letter to Ethel Mannin dated October 18 (1937) where he advised her to read only certain passages from the second edition of A Vision, he added, "The rest is not for you or for anybody but a doctor in the North of England with whom I have corresponded for years."¹

Yeats did change his mind though, about the sole dedication of A Vision to Dr. Sturm for in the copy presented to him on one of the bookplates designed by T. Sturge Moore, Yeats rather pompously wrote:

F.P. Sturm from W.B. Yeats: I said to a Dublin reporter some days ago that I had written A Vision for two people one of whom was a learned doctor in the North of England, that Doctor was the man to whom I have given this book.²

Even without this last bit of evidence Wade's identification of Sturm with the seemingly serious and ascetic doctor was simple as he had access to Yeats' papers among which were Sturm's letters, and Joseph Hone had already quoted one of these in W.B. Yeats: 1865-1939.³ In fact, Hone must have been

¹ P. 899.

² From MS. in my possession.

³ (London, 1962), pp. 407-8.

in touch with Sturm as the anecdotes he uses are taken from Sturm's diary.

One afternoon his friend, Dr. F.P. Sturm, poet and student of oriental mysticisms, was walking with him through some cloisters when a shrill whistle sounded from the street, "Did you hear that?" said W.B.Y. "Yes, some boy whistling." "Not at all, Sturm, not at all. I was just on the point of revealing to you a magical formula which would enable you to remember your past incarnations, when your daemon gave that whistle to warn me not to do so. It would be dangerous for you to know."

Upon another occasion he drew Dr. Sturm's attention to steps on the stair outside the room in which they sat. "Do you hear the daemons now?" "I do not, Yeats, it is the maid going to bed", and opening the door the doctor called: "Is that you, Mary?" or whatever her name was, and Mary replied, "Yes, sir, good night". "There are your daemons," said Sturm. "Do not be deceived," said Yeats; "remember that daemons may take any shape."¹

Amusing as these stories are, they give no accurate idea of the relationship between the two men nor of Sturm's character.

Perhaps not much more to the point is the exchange which resulted in Yeats' only direct reference to Sturm. It began when Sturm wrote advising Yeats to get a friend who knew Latin to read the proofs of the revised edition of A Vision, then in progress.

¹ Hone, p. 337. Compare with Diary entry of 3rd June '36.

I know I am a pedant, but pedants read you. We cough ~~enough~~ in the ink till the world's end, as you cruelly said, but the least of us would save you from the errors which spoil the Vision as it is now.¹

Later, after reading The Winding Stair, he wrote again:

"I see at the end of some poems published in America but written at Rapallo one of your vague notes....

The reference you want is—"2 and a passage from Macrobii Commentariorum in Somnum Scipionis is given.

Yeats corrected the note in the London edition of 1933 and added: "The 'learned astrologer' in 'Chosen' was Macrobius, and the particular passage was found for me by Dr. Sturm, that too little known poet and mystic."³

From such evidence it is difficult to imagine this man a poet, and even more so, a mystic; yet Sturm was both, though not particularly successful in either pursuit. He was a strange and fascinating man, a romantic idealist, but one who tended to doubt the actual while sustaining faith in the romantically

¹ Dated 26/8/29 as quoted by Hone, p. 407.

² Unpublished letter dated 2/1/30. University of Illinois Collection.

³ Pp. 100-1.

possible. According to his few friends, he was a man of great charm and even greater irreverence for the things that interested him. He would make up and laugh at Scottish folk-stories; cast elaborate horoscopes for astrological journals and scoff at believers. Once invited to give a series of lectures on Rosicrucianism to the London Theosophical Society, he refused to continue after meeting the first audience which he found incredibly 'stupid and moronic'. Sturm himself, had a story he loved to tell about meeting Rudolf Steiner in London and putting the master to a test of sorts by asking if he knew anything of the Greek system of musical notation. With great glee he would describe Steiner as 'the old fraud', sitting back in his chair and looking blankly into the distance for some time before announcing that he was reading the Akasic Record (Anima Mundi), and proceeding to lengthy detail about the intricacies of the notation.

Sturm's interest in literature, at first, was total and he wrote much in early adulthood with a later period of poetic achievement at the time of the Great

War, but he ultimately lapsed into silence and contemplation, living almost the life of a recluse and devoting himself to philosophical-religious studies and a medical career in which he achieved some distinction. The cessation of his creative efforts was not, I think, due to displacement of interest by his medical work, but was rather, the result of a fundamental change of emphasis in establishing a personal relationship with the created universe. More and more he withdrew from life, intent upon the search for inner simplicity, truth and meaning, and finally his meditations on religious philosophy became a way of life rather than matter for his art.

In outward appearances the pattern of his life was little different from that of his neighbours, and he would never acknowledge generally his role as author because that might produce an undesirable reflection on his work as Aural Surgeon. Beneath the public conformity, however, there were great stores of private revolt and equally characteristic of the turn of the century was the kind of mystery he

persisted in maintaining about his past. Even the two close friends he had at different periods of his life never succeeded in discovering anything of his background. When Mrs. Yeats wrote to ask his date of birth for the Oxford Book of Modern English Verse which was being arranged in chronological order, Sturm carefully noted that a reply had been sent¹ but the information must not have been forthcoming as no date is given for him in the publication.

In fact, Frank Pearce Sturm was born on 16 June 1879 in Longsight, Manchester, the son of William and Bessie Pearce Sturm; the eldest of their three children. His father, a shipping merchant who lost everything during the Boer War, came from an ostensibly Scottish family although its tradition maintains Swedish origins. The first of the family to leave any record of itself was Alex Storm (d. 7 April 1848, aged 65), merchant of Rife Street, Dufftown in Banffshire and great-grandfather to F.P.S., who is listed with his wife, Margaret Murray (d. 6 May 1847, aged 75), and six

¹ Unpublished letter dated December 11, 1935 in my possession.

children in an old parish list of 1820. Nothing seems to be known of the family before this, but they are not listed as 'incomers' as are others who settled when the village was founded in 1817.

I have found nothing at all about Sturm's early life and am forced to rely on the reminiscences recorded in Umbræ Silentes and the occasional note on this period found in his later journal. Miss Dorothy Sturm (b. 1889) tells me that after his schooling in Didsbury, her brother was apprenticed to a chemist in Manchester for two years before entering the university, but she was too young at the time to remember anything previous to that, except that "he always had a book under his arm, his head in the clouds and his thoughts full of dreams."

Sturm entered the University of Aberdeen in 1901 at the age of 22, and began a course of study in medicine which in those days took five years to complete. He must have been known in the city as his mother's family originated there and the Sturms themselves had been connected with Aberdeen since the time of Alex Storm. It was a son of this same Alex,

James Sturm, a merchant of London, who founded at the University two scholarships in 1869 of thirty pounds each, tenable for five years by a native of Mortlach, and who erected a stone in the churchyard of that village to the memory of his parents.

By the time he arrived in Aberdeen, Sturm's interest in mystical-occult philosophy and literature must have been completely formed. As soon as possible, he began to turn his hand to literary journalism and throughout his years there he continued to write and publish in the local papers, earning money to help support himself in the face of his father's financial difficulties. Apparently he did hack work of all kinds, including theatre criticism and miscellaneous articles for the daily papers, but most of these are extremely difficult to trace. Dorothy Sturm insists that he contributed a number of pieces to the weekly Bon-Accord under the name Petronius and the first of these appeared on 6 June 1901. It is obvious from the content and style of these contributions that they are his work and all are included below as 'Appendix A'; although not relevant to the more serious work, they are

interesting curiosities. Almost all of the material from this period included in the Collected Works is taken from the Bon-Accord and appeared over his initials or name from 11 July 1901.

The Bon-Accord was a lively paper, reputed at the time for its literary cleverness and the remarkable ability of its illustrators. Although the journal's general tenor was reasonably up to date for the time, Sturm's outbursts against provincialism and his adherence to decadent style and the symbolist creed produced amazing exchanges, some of which are to be found below with 'Miscellaneous Stories, Articles & Essays', since Sturm's share in the controversies would be meaningless deprived of context. Others, even more undergraduate, have been relegated to 'Appendix B'.

In general the prose pieces published in Bon-Accord are of little worth in themselves. They were turned out to provide a weekly contribution, and if anything, show only the youthful extravagance of the author. The stories, 'The Heart of the Rose' and 'Under the Moon', are perhaps more important. They may not be

the best examples of their kind, but they do present a fully developed attitude toward life, however negative it may be. 'The Heart of the Rose' is basically an allegory of union, tinged by heroic tradition, which fulfils and regenerates, but is doomed to a fall from grace and endless repetition. The hero is both artist and adventurer, creator and man of action, who seeks the eternal feminine in the figure of the woman whom he has loved in all past lives.

The artist is again the main character of 'Under the Moon', but now seen more in his relationship with society as a result of that with Eternity. The point is the revelation through vision of the separateness of the artifex from humanity through the determinism of his own desires. With rather tiresome exaggeration Sturm repeats the idea often, as for example, in 'The Glittering Road' where he praises another writer and places him among

The ill starred company of poets and dreamers on whom fall the mantles of derision and misbelief and unhappiness, and who, alas, must endure strange destinies in many lands—et ego in Arcadia!— and with their own breath keep alive the flames that consume the heart.

The vision of the dancing dead which was most probably inspired by Baudelaire is profoundly demonic and like the symbolical-allegorical union, often reappears in his work. In 'The Voices of the Gods' there is a strikingly evil sense of possession which produces depression and despair; yet, the intolerable burden of the human condition is to be borne and sustained by the promise of the "elemental, heavenly voices" mingled with the sounds of nature in the hope of a resurrection "where all sorrowful realities shall dissolve into the twilight and become beautiful illusions."

According to the aesthetic theory that is easily traced through the early articles and essays, it is not beauty alone which is the object of art, but a limited and highly qualified concept of the beautiful. In 'The Gospel of Content' Sturm writes:

All art—and poetry is surely the highest of all the arts—is the search for the elusive shadow of beauty, for the perfect expression of those dreams which haunt us, be they dreams of a façade, lost face, or dreams of "the unimaginable light of God".

And again in 'The Rose of the World':

There is nothing sinful save ugliness, nothing holy

save beauty. All waters are sweet save those into whose deeps fell the star called Wormwood, which is the star of what we call science, and progress, and success.

In this same essay he maintains that it is the conflict of cultures, or rather revulsion from the excesses of science which has focused unremittingly on the material, that has given birth to the literature of imagination and directed attention toward eternity. And, as one would guess, the same cause is attributed to the isolated condition of the artist (see 'Northern Ideals').

The few, the very few Scots, who write with any thoughts of artistic and intellectual traditions, knowing that they appeal to a so exclusive minority, have ceased even the pretence of writing for any outside this minority, and warn off the profane with the utterances of a philosophy that every day becomes remoter and more occult.

In an occasional piece entitled 'Miss Ellen Terry' there is yet another kind of statement about the nature of art. In contrasting the simplicity of Miss Terry's stage interpretation with the modern complexity of Duse, he writes:

Art holds up the mirror to Nature as of old, but we who look into the Glass are more interested in the reflections of our own neurotic faces than in the clipped hedges or the still pools or the civeted gentlemen with long rapiers who walk together on the lawns.... "The mirror of Nature",

in brief, is somewhat of a distorting mirror, with an almost Japanese grotesqueness and phantasy in its reflections, for Art, as somebody has wittily said, has become a beautiful disease.

The context of this aside is charged with a curious cynicism but the affirmation of the distortion demanded by Decadent theory as the proper mode of the modern sensibility is none the less positive. In 'A Note on the Work of Fiona MacLeod' Sturm hotly defends such exponents as Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Yeats and Maeterlinck from the popular connotations of the label, and lauds their rejection of the "trivial and ignoble", their gift of "Mystery and Beauty". He goes on to quote Verulam: "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion", and cites the doctors of the Cabbala who "held Beauty to be the mediator between Creator and created, and made her the handmaiden of the Eternal." As for the distortion of nature in the mirror of art, his quarrel with realism and psychological investigation is legitimate; that is, given his particular definition of nature. Answering criticism of his article, 'Northern Ideals', he wrote a letter to the Editor defending Yeats' intellectual strength:

W.B. Yeats has established an ideal of perfection, and has brought a power into English Literature as strong and as wholly new as the power Stéphane Mallarmé brought into French Literature. In Yeats, if you like, we have a really great poet of Nature, not of the mere husks of Nature, but of Nature in relation to the subtler moods of man; a poet who interprets those truths of which "all this ancient Exteriority" is but a symbol.

In reviewing some poems by John Watson (see 'A Book of Verse') Sturm quoted one of Yeats' more complete and lucid pronouncements on the relationship of artifex and artifact to the Eternal:

The more a poet rids his verses of heterogeneous knowledge and irrelevant analysis, and purifies his mind with elaborate art, the more does the little ritual of his verse resemble the great ritual of nature, and become mysterious and inscrutable. He becomes, as all the great mystics have believed, a vessel of the creative power of God.

It is, then, only this spiritual element which in Sturm's mind raises some contemporary literature above the old Decadence; it is only the English Symbolist Movement with its mystical-occult orientation that has any appeal for him. While writing his admirable essay on Baudelaire in 1905, he commented on the development of the movement:

The immediate result of Baudelaire's work was the Decadent School in French Literature. Then the influence spread across the Channel, and the English

Aesthetes arose to preach the gospel of imagination to the unimaginative. Both Decadence and Aestheticism, as intellectual movements, have fallen into the nadir of oblivion, and the dust lies heavy upon them, but they left a little leaven to lighten the heavy inertness of correct and academic literature; and now Symbolism, a greater movement than either, is in the ascendant, giving another turn to the wheel, and to all who think deeply about such matters it seems as though Symbolist literature is to be the literature of the future. The Decadents and Aesthetes were weak because they had no banner to fight beneath, no authority to appeal to in defence of their views, no definite gospel to preach. They were by turns morbid, hysterical, foolishly blasphemous, or weakly disgusting, but never anything for long, their one desire being to produce a thrill at any cost.

And in affirming the occult underpinⁿings of Symbolism
he continued:

The Symbolist writers of to-day, though they are sprung from him [Baudelaire], are greater than he because they are the prophets of a faith who believe in what they preach. They find their defence in the writings of the mystics, and their doctrines are at the root of every religion. They were held by the Gnostics and are in the books of the Kabbalists and the Magi. Blake preached them and Eliphas Lévi taught them to his disciples in France, who in turn have misunderstood and perverted them, and formed strange religions and sects of Devil-worshippers. These doctrines hold that the visible world is the world of illusion, not of reality. Colour and sound and perfume and all material and sensible things are but the symbols and far-off reflections of the things that are alone real. Reality is hidden away from us by the five senses and the gates of death; and Reason, the blind and laborious servant of the physical brain, deludes us into believing that we can know anything of truth through the medium of the senses. It is through the imagination

alone that man can obtain spiritual revelation, for imagination is the one window in the prison-house of the flesh through which the soul can see the proud images of eternity.

If spiritual revelation achieved through imaginative perception of symbols is taken as the function of art, it is no wonder that Sturm could write in 'A Book of Verse':

I am one of those who believe that all art, and especially the art of poetry, is less a cultured pastime than a sacred office, to be practiced almost with fear and trembling, certainly with austerity.

And again in 'A Note on the Work of Fiona Macleod', on the subject of Yeats and his work: "One needs almost to be a student of magic, certainly a mystic, to understand his art."

Besides these statements which closely parallel those of the early Yeats, Sturm makes a great point of emphasizing the idea of Unity of Culture in his continuous efforts to stimulate a Scottish literary revival. In 'Northern Ideals' he says: "Literature and art, which only come into being in moments of rapturous and deep emotion, are the essence of national life and the index of a nation's mind", and goes on to extol the depths of Celtic imagination.

He does, however, recognise the unpopularity of Celtic Renaissance attitudes which demand sympathy with sorrow and failure as well as faith in the reality of the supernatural. In 'A Note on the Work of Fiona Macleod' he writes:

If any country would make a literature out of the far-reaching passions and impulses that have made its history, and would have such a literature to be anything more than a barren record of interesting facts,...it can only do so by drawing inspiration out of the unfailing Well whence have come all impulses, all far-reaching passions, and that Well is the imagination of man. Did not the holy Saint Augustine liken the soul of man to fire, and the imagination of man to water, wherein all things are reflected? If we understand this we will understand how all history, and the impulses and passions that have made and make history, are but the shining of fire in water, and we will understand how all the moving many-coloured enchantments of life and death sprang out of nothing when "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water."

In the same essay he faces the charge that literature dominated by the will to spiritual revelation becomes in itself religion, and argues that by applying imagination to ethnic and historical passions and impulses, literature "will become the ritual of nature and man." And though it should become most supernatural in interpretation of life-mystery, he maintains that such a literature would not cease to be literature.

Actually, he would not at all have minded that literature should become religion, and goes on to say that were this the case, "it will be the greatest of all religions." One of the basic tenets of all romantic art is also cited: "To exist in the world of the imagination is to have an immortality denied to the world of nature."

The operation of imagination as an agency which brings together spiritual and temporal experience is one of the more fascinating aspects of symbolist theory, but in these early articles Sturm says little or nothing about the function of the daemon. It is in the essay on Baudelaire, written at the end of this period, that the subject is first broached and the actual mechanics of the relationship are even then ignored.

An inspired thinker, however, whether his inspiration be mighty or small, receives his thought from a profounder source than his own physical reason, and writes to the dictation of beings outside of and greater than himself. The famous Eliphas Lévi, like all the mystics who came before and after him, from Basilides the Gnostic to Blake the English visionary, taught that the poet and dreamer are the mediums of the Divine Word, and sole instruments through which the gods energise in the world of material things.

Alchemy, hieratic magic and all sorts of occult disciplines were often invoked by symbolists toward heightening perception and bringing about a sense of daemonic possession in which the artist might find poetic inspiration, but a more simple method of arriving at the ecstatic moment of creation (or re-creation, as in the perception of reality a created image may present) is through the power of verbal enchantment. As Sturm wrote in his 'Note on the Work of Fiona Macleod':

I think that this power of casting the veil of phantasy over one, of so enchanting one's imagination with the rhythm of coloured words and the beauty of far-reaching and subtle allusions that one is lured away from his momentary prison-house of the flesh, and seems to be remembering past lives and to have the sap of the Tree of Life sighing in his veins—I think that this power is the final test of a writer who would be a priest of the religion of Art.

Rhythmic beauty was, of course, the basis of his own pretention to poetry and his work surely has a sense of pre-Rap^haelite incantation, based on elaborate rhythmic ritual supporting strange subject matter and isolating the life of the poetic world from that of the mundane. The whole problem of rhythm and its effect on imagination is evoked by symbolist practice, but hardly

ever discussed, and Sturm, although obviously fascinated by it, had not really worked out his thoughts on the subject. He did, however, write that "metrical subtlety...is the only expression of passion and thought in poetry" (see 'A Book of Verse'). Passion, yes; but that rhythm should express thought can only derive from occult doctrine.

In the same review, Sturm quotes Yeats and then continues:

The writer I have already quoted, in a criticism he once made of some of my poems, advised me "to wait a little, because," he wrote, "your sense of music will gradually take to itself, in all likelihood, more passion and more thought."

It is difficult to assess the influence of Yeats on Sturm, or for that matter, the later influence of Sturm on Yeats. Obviously, the older man was much admired and imitated: the impact of the original version of The Shadowy Waters remained with Sturm until his death. But Sturm had early interested himself in the mystical-occult and was widely read in its literature by the time he came under Yeats' influence. Unlike Yeats, he knew French and was thoroughly familiar with all the Decadents, and his independence

of mind suggests some parallel development rather than complete assimilation of Yeatsean attitudes and practice.

How the two men first met is a mystery, but the quotation above which is the first evidence I have found of their relationship was published on 4 June 1903 and is most probably taken from a lost Yeats letter. Never bashful, and certainly less so in youth, Sturm may very well have just written, offering his own verse for criticism. Until the end of 1904 Sturm spent even his holidays in Aberdeen and it is unlikely that he could have got to London to meet the master. Dorothy Sturm seems to think that her brother met Yeats through theatrical friends and his part-time work as critic. Although she mentions an Abbey Theatre visit, neither the company nor Yeats came to Aberdeen during these early years, but Benson's troupe did play Paolo and Francesca there in March 1903. Sturm wrote enthusiastic notices of the production and this may have had something to do with his introduction to Yeats.

In the early poetry there are, as one would expect,

many reflections of Yeatsian images, themes and treatment. There is a constant recurrence, for instance, of "faint dew dropping to the ground", equally favoured by Yeats after 'The Indian to his Love', and other close resemblances, but Sturm's sense of music is individual and his best work does show originality and poetic sensitivity. In 'The Questing Host', for example, the treatment of images from tapestry or painting is much in advance of similar use by Yeats.

With sad thoughts drifting into dreams, with tired heart,
I turn from the white candles and the open page,
And on worn tapestries of immemorial age
See knight and saint and lady play their part.

Among the tall, straight, woven trees and turrets grey,
These hunt the leaping deer, and these make silent love;
And one ecstatic maid beneath a haloed dove,
With white face bends upon a book to pray.

Much of Sturm's best imagery, however, is more closely related to ballad literature—'The Old Woman', for example, contains traditional imagery that also reminds one of Yeats' "salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas", etc.

The waups cry to their twittering young,
The salmon swims with his three sons,
The bees are merry among the boughs
Where honey-laden flowers are hung;
And I alone, O Pitiful Ones,
Have sorrow's weight on my wan brows,
And hate to see the sun again,
And hate the tides that roll and turn,
For my tall sons I bore with pain
Grew like the rush and withered like the fern.

This particular poem was published in January 1903
and in September '04 he quoted the following ballad
stanza in 'The Mystery of the Scottish Ballads':

I wish the wind may never cease,
Nor fish be in the flood,
Till my three sons come home to me,
In earthly flesh and blood!

The process of assimilation is indeed subtle and the
result almost entirely free of the weaknesses
inherent in the poetry of the Celtic Revival. The
third and fourth stanzas of 'The Sorrow of Youth'
also have some of the strength of this ballad quality
and equally, an affinity with Yeatsean usage.

The heron stands in his pool
And dreams, spectral and tall:
The old mother nods on her stool
Maybe not dreaming at all.

And Autumn has hung the wood
With an arras of faded gold,
And even the fish in the flood
Are merry no more, grown old.

Of course, these early poems are very uneven and many of them are incredibly bad. Like the prose pieces, they were often turned out against a weekly deadline and at a time when Sturm was supposed to be devoting himself to the study of medicine. The worst of the poems echo the rhythms of the poetry of gentility or imitate the popular ballad; fortunately, none of them were ever offered for republication. In all, there is a tendency to rely too heavily on predetermined reactions to stock imagery.

The major departure from Yeatsian practice came as he developed toward concern with the human condition and the intellectualisation of poetic form. It was the original version of The Shadowy Waters that Sturm so admired, and its subsequent revision he deplored. In an unpublished letter to Yeats dated 21.12.34, he mentions not having dared to review the work when it first came out and calls each revision an outrage, "great poetry to poor pantomime."¹ It was the escape into the supernatural that Sturm loved; the

¹ University of Illinois Collection.

transformation of the Deirdre myth into elaborate alchemical allegory; the continuity of the soul through lives and worlds seeking regeneration and spiritual revelation in union with the feminine divine.

And yet, there is a love that the gods give,
When Aengus and his Edaine wake from sleep
And gaze on one another through our eyes,
And turn brief longing and deceiving hope
And bodily tenderness to the soft fire
That shall burn time when times have ebbed away.¹

The question of the place of women in late pre-Raphaelite literature and symbolist theory is again raised. Sturm, like the early Yeats, was caught up in the Celtic attitude toward idealised woman, and as Renan wrote in The Poetry of the Celtic Races:

No other [race] has conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, or been more fully dominated by it. It is a sort of intoxication, a madness, a vertigo. Read the strange Mabinogi of Peredur, or its French imitation Perceval le Gallois; its pages are, as it were, dewy with feminine sentiment. Woman appears therein as a kind of vague vision, an intermediary between man and the supernatural world.²

¹ W.B. Yeats, The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York, 1957), pp. 749-50.

² W.G. Hutchinson, Transl. (London, 1896), p.8.

In general the serious poetry published in Bon-Accord takes as subject a youthful longing for passion and meaning which existed in an antique past and centres on the evocation of love for a real woman. There is as yet neither transfer of religious adoration from the divine to a secular figure as in the later development of Amour Courtois, nor the elevation of a secular relationship to the level of the divine as was sometimes the case in Symbolist practice. The poetry is at best apprentice work in the attempt to evoke a feeling of world-weariness in the shadowy dream-land of the Celtic Twilight, and lacks conviction. Without significant content, precision of imagery or rhythmic subtlety, Sturm fails to produce much of anything but weak imitations of his models.

At the same time he was failing as a medical student and in 1904 reached a point of important decision. His interest and activity in literature must have been in constant conflict with his university work, but the added responsibility of his marriage to Charlotte Fanny Augusta Schultze in the Parish of St. Nicholas

on 30 May 1904 must have been a spur in making his choice.

Born in Stettin, Germany (now Poland) on 30 June 1884, she was the daughter of Max Schultze, a widower and man of small capital who settled at Peterhead in 1885 or 6 with his two small children in order to escape Prussian militarism, and began exporting herring to Northern Europe. One of the first women to take up the study of medicine, she entered the University of Aberdeen at the age of 16 and though missing a term's work in 1902 through illness, her examination results showed 'much distinction' and she was awarded a gold medal for excellence in Anatomy and Physiology.

Frank Sturm was not doing so well, most probably because of his absorption in literature and religious philosophy, and though he managed to pass his professional examination in Anatomy in March 1904, he was required to resit others before going on. It must have been at this time that he went up to London for some months to make an attempt at a literary career. His sister Dorothy recalls that he went to Yeats with his poetry and

translations to ask advice and was told that without a private income he should stick to medicine. While there, he arranged for the publication of some of his poems by Elkin Mathews, but however great a boost to his pride, the little volume brought in no money; in fact, Sturm was required to pay costs. The poems were brought out in 1905 as no. 32 of the VIGO CABINET series under the title An Hour of Reverie and were dedicated "To my Wife". The volume met with no success, other than the reprinting of one of the poems in Mathews' Vigo Verse Anthology of 1912. All but one of the poems included had appeared in Bon-Accord and the selection does show discernment, but there was almost no revision of pieces included, except in manner of presentation, punctuation, etc. I have been unable to discover who the 'J.S.' of the dedication to 'The Blessed Road' was, or for that matter, the 'J.G.R.' of 'Wind on the Moor' which was not included; of course, there was dedication of individual poems to Yeats.

Even though his creative work proved insufficient to support him, his translations from the French received some attention and he was eventually given the

commission for the translation of The Poems of Charles Baudelaire to appear in the CANTERBURY POETS series under the general editorship of William Sharp.

Exactly how Sturm came to the notice of William Sharp is uncertain; perhaps through Yeats, journalist friends or his own essay in praise of Fiona Macleod. Whether or not the commission was given before he left London is equally uncertain, but he did return to the north, visiting his family in Manchester with an affected hair style, floppy ties and odd jackets before collecting his wife and going off to Pont Aven to be a writer. Neither Sturm nor his wife had qualified professionally, but with a commission in hand and the economy of life abroad the future could be left to itself for the time being. Brittany may have been chosen because of a former editor of Bon-Accord, William MacKensie's, sojourn there (see 'The Glittering Road'), and Pont Aven because it was then a centre of artistic and Bohemian life, towards which Sturm had a flair always, and then more so when young.

Work progressed on the translations throughout the year and the introductory study was dated December 1905. The edition was brought out by Walter Scott and Co.

of London and New York in 1906 and carried the following note: "I dedicate to my father and mother this interpretation of a great poet." The interpretation is a fine one and many of the poems do recreate in English the feeling and intention of the originals. Even better to my mind is the introductory essay. It is hardly definitive as a study of Baudelaire's life and work, but it is an admirable effort and particularly interesting in the light it sheds on Symbolist theory and attitude.

Perhaps the essay's most significant contribution to the general state of Baudelaire criticism in England was the perception that the unconscious origin of the Symbolist Movement was to be found in The Flowers of Evil. In the introduction to The Symbolist Movement in Literature Arthur Symons had indicated Gérard de Nerval as the source of the new literature, and had said in passing of Baudelaire, whose relevance is denied by the omission of an individual study:

Even Baudelaire, in whom the spirit is always an uneasy guest at the orgie of life, had a certain theory of Realism which tortures many of his poems into strange, metallic shapes, and fills them with imitative odours, and disturbs them with a too deliberate rhetoric of the flesh.¹

¹ Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (London, 1908), pp. 4-5.

Symons was obviously not aware of Baudelaire's impassive forms as an effort to control his painfully disturbed insights and this results from his misunderstanding of Baudelaire's 'realism'. Symons' error, like that of his contemporaries, is in underestimating the extent of Baudelaire's metaphysical commitment. Even though neglecting close discussion of the relationship between manner and matter, Sturm does break new ground in discovering in Baudelaire the intellectual basis for the development of Symbolist theory.

An art like this, rooted in a so tortured perception of the beauty and ugliness of the world where the spirit is mingled indistinguishably with the flesh, almost inevitably concerns itself with material things, with all the subtle raptures the soul feels, not by abstract contemplation, for that would mean content, but through the gateway of the senses; the lust of the flesh, the delight of the eye. Sound, colour, odour, form: to him these are not the symbols that lead the soul towards the infinite: they are the soul; they are the infinite....but, unlike those later writers who have been called realists, he apprehends, to borrow a phrase from Pater, "all those finer conditions wherein material things rise to that subtlety of operation which constitutes them spiritual."

Perhaps Sturm is led to excess by his own occult orientation, but it is also true that criticism through 1900 was decidedly uneasy with mystical ideas and

neglected the implications of content in favour of the discussion of style. Making careful distinctions between the intellectual content of Baudelaire and the imaginative projections of Symbolism based on mystical practice, Sturm adroitly disposes of the intervening Decadent and Aesthetic failures, showing them as false steps in the direction of Symbolism and perversions of material derived from Baudelaire,

Like Yeats, Sturm insists on the meaninglessness of Symbolism without reference to the Reality beyond appearances, and seen as investigating an inferior and misleading reflection of that Reality, Baudelaire is said to be "one of those who take the downward path which leads to salvation". Sturm sees his poetry as an attempt at producing a testament of sin; "sin which is a metaphysical corruption, a depravity of pure intellect." Spiritual Evil, he argues, is as much a part of the shaping reality in this world of appearances as Spiritual Good, and although it must be experienced as a central attribute of the created universe, it is to be ultimately transcended through imagination. Baudelaire's demonstration of that Evil is historically significant to Sturm as the

exposure of the world of illusion which makes the literature of Symbolism possible, but he qualifies his admiration of Baudelaire's work as being 'more or less successful'. No reason is given for the qualification nor is any offered in support of his enthusiasm for Beardsley's unfinished romance, "Under the Hill", but the comment on the followers of Eliphas Lévi who were taught the doctrines of the mystics and "have misunderstood and perverted them, and formed strange religions and sects of Devil-worshippers", sheds some light on the problem. Baudelaire's obsession with the image of Evil is, in Sturm's mind, a perversion, and once recognised, the other elements of the essay fall into a pattern of re-emphasis of this point. Baudelaire's use of stimulants is disparaged as unnecessary since the mystical doctrine of universal analogy teaches as much and the discussion of the poet's theory of the artificial which is given prominence is dismissed from the beginning as perverse:

His hatred of nature and purely natural things was but a perverted form of the religious ecstasy that made the old monk pull his cowl about his eyes when he left

his cell in the month of May, lest he should see the blossoming trees, and his mind be turned towards the beautiful delusions of the world.

The last significant factor in the discussion emphasises Baudelaire's imperfect use of symbols borrowed from Poe and implies limitation in his use of tropes: "He sought more for bizarre analogies and striking metaphors than for true symbols or correspondences." One can hardly avoid the conclusion that the study is as much one of Symbolism as it is of Baudelaire. The relevance of Baudelaire to Symbolism is brilliantly perceived, and the essay does show an extremely nice understanding of his work, but it must be admitted that faulting Baudelaire for not being a Symbolist is a bit hard.

The fineness of Sturm's sympathy with Baudelaire and his own sense of poetry enabled him to produce a series of admirable translations and constituted the first attempt to render into English a sizeable portion of The Flowers of Evil. The selection of poems to be done and the relative merit of the work in comparison with the translations of other poets are problems I feel myself somewhat less than qualified to enter on, and

would, I think, involve such lengthy discussion as to be inappropriate in this essay. The quality of much of Sturm's work is obvious and the fact that he was able to recreate so faithfully such different poetic tempers as those found in 'To a Brown Beggar-maid', 'The Eyes of Beauty' and 'The Corpse', and 'The Seven Old Men' and 'The Little Old Women' speaks highly of his ability.

It is a pity that such excellent work was not better rewarded: little came of the publication and his absorption in it prevented much of anything else. The only creative work that can be traced to this period are 'Dedication for a Book of Verse', 'In a Garden' and 'The Beckoning Star'; all of which appeared in the Christmas issue of Bon-Accord, 1905.

Sturm's efforts with the translations were not, however, altogether unnoticed. The 1906 volume was republished as The Poems and Prose Poems of Charles Baudelaire by Brentano of New York in 1919 with no acknowledgement of Sturm at all, and a weak introductory essay by James Gibbon Huneker was substituted for the original. In the same year all but eleven of his translations were

included in Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry, edited by Thomas Robert Smith for Boni and Liveright. This time the introductory study was included in its entirety and the editor offered a critical judgement on the standard of translations included in the volume:

There are numerous translations from Baudelaire in English but most of them may be dismissed as being seldom successful. M. Arthur Symon's [sic] translation of some of the prose poems is a most beautiful adventure in psychological sensations, effective though not always accurate in interpretation. Mr. F.P. Sturm's effort with the Flowers of Evil and the Prose Poems is always accurate, sometimes inspired, and often a tour de force of translation. Mr. W.J. Robertson's translations from the Flowers of Evil is [sic] the most successful of all. He maintains with amazing facility all the subtlety, beauty and one might also say the perfume of Baudelaire's verse.¹

The Smith edition of Baudelaire first appeared in the original Modern Library series which Random House later took over, and the volume remained in print under the title, Prose and Poetry of Charles Baudelaire until it was discontinued in the mid-30's. From these sources Sturm's work found its way into various other publications, but as often as not, without mention of the translator.

¹ T.R. Smith, ed. Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry (New York, 1919), p.10.

The major exception is The Flowers of Evil edited by Marthiel and Jackson Mathews which includes twenty of Sturm's translations. Its editorial statement of criteria for selection is also of interest:

So far as we know and can judge, we offer here the best English translations of Baudelaire's poems done in these hundred years. They have been collected from every published and unpublished source we could find in America and England, and they range in date from 1869, two years after Baudelaire's death, to 1954. Each translation has been judged on its own merits, without regard to the translator; each has won a competition, some against as many as twenty versions of the same poem.¹

They continue:

We feel that F.P. Sturm, whose work was done about 1905, is still one of the finest of Baudelaire's translators; his understanding of the poems, his fine workmanship, his poetic sense prevail over any softness or old-fashioned diction in his work.²

With the work on Baudelaire finished and nothing else in sight, Sturm resigned himself to his medical studies in Aberdeen, bringing with him his wife and the son born to them in France: Maxwell Gerard de Lisle (29 June 1905). At first life was difficult as there

¹ (London, 1955), p.vii.

² P.viii.

was so little money, but the sale of some family jewellery enabled them to take rooms and keep going until Sturm got the post of Prosector to the Professor of Anatomy at the University. Charlotte Sturm qualified that year and graduated on 25 July 1906: the baby was then with her family in Peterhead. When F.P.S. had completed his studies and graduated (9 July 1907), they were reunited in furnished rooms at 17, Hawthorne Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester where Sturm had taken a locum. Dorothy Sturm mentions other locums at Old Trafford and Kidderminster, but I have found no record of these.

It was not until 1909 that the Sturms moved to Leigh, Lancashire as assistant to Dr. Arnold William Montfort Auden who had just bought the practice at Birch House from his principal, Dr. Edward A. Doyal. They were then living at 91, Church Street and it was in August of the same year that Sturm's first article appeared in a medical journal. He had already begun to specialise in ear, nose and throat work, an open field in an area of the country so afflicted by climate and industrial conditions, and he published

many short pieces on the subject in various journals. He also undertook study for the degree of Master of Surgery, using the facilities of the Victoria University, Manchester, and submitted his thesis on "Local Anaesthetics in Major Surgery" in 1911. On 1 October 1913 Dr. William George Gray withdrew his name from the county medical list on selling his practice at Brunswick House to the Sturms and they moved into the house at 14, North Brown Street where Mrs. Sturm shared her husband's work. Through his continued research, publications and professional activity, Sturm was made a Fellow of the British Otological-Laryngological Society in 1914 and in the same year, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, later joining the Otological and Laryngological Sections of that body.

Without dates from periodical publications it is difficult to know whether or not Sturm was doing any creative writing at this time, but the immense energy needed to launch his medical career would seem to have prohibited it. Perhaps he would never have written again had it not been for the advent of the Great War.

Sturm was appointed Lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps (Territorial Force) on 15 May 1915 and

was attached to the 2/1st North Midland Field Ambulance service of the 2/5th Battalion~~g~~, Lincolnshire Regiment. He was promoted Captain on 15 September 1915 and served at Harpenden until early 1916 when the 2/4th and 2/5th Lincolnshire were ordered to a tour of duty in Ireland. By this time he had begun to write again, and one of the poems published later bears the date, Dublin, 1916, although it completely ignores the world of rebellion and war. After their return from the Troubles, Sturm's battalion went into France with the 59th Division in February 1917.¹

Mrs. Sturm left Leigh with her son when her husband went into the army and worked with Professor McWilliam as Prosector and Assistant in the Department of Anatomy and Physiology. She stayed in Aberdeen until 1917 when Dr. Sturm, who was then attached to no. 6 General Hospital at Le Havre and Rouen, was gassed at the front and lay in hospital at Amiens. She then left the boy with her family, joined the Auxiliary R.A.M.C. (August)

¹ See The History of the Lincolnshire Regiment: 1914-1918, ed. Major-General C.R. Simpson (London, 1931), p. 50.

and was attached to the Medical Services of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps as Recruiting Medical Controller serving at Cardiff, London, Bristol and Manchester until early in 1919. Her last tour of duty seems to have been as Medical Officer in Charge, Chadderton Camp, Lanes.

I have found no precise dates for Sturm's convalescence or return to England, but it seems that he may have been stationed in London, rather than Harpenden, and it is probably at this time that he served as Resident Medical Officer at Endsleigh Palace Hospital for Officers. At any rate, he gave up his commission and retired in receipt of 'non-effective pay' with the honorary rank of Captain on 24 April 1918.

With the enforced though frustrating leisure of army life and the interruption of his medical career, Sturm had immediately returned to creative writing and, liberated from Leigh, once again came into contact with intellectual stimulation. He was in London as often as possible pursuing his interest in literature and mystical-occult tradition, becoming a

familiar at the British Museum, Theosophical Society headquarters and Watkins' bookshop in Cecil Court. I am told by Mr. John Watkins that Sturm often came to his father with Yeats and other friends during the war years, and he continued to frequent Cecil Court throughout his lifetime. It was at this time as well, that he most probably met A.P. Sinnett whose Esoteric Buddhism had so influenced his youth (see Diary entry for 19th June '36), and through Miss Dorothy Osmond who was then secretary to the Theosophical Library, he was introduced to the work of Rudolf Steiner (see Diary entry for 13th June '36). Both Dr. and Mrs. Sturm became especially interested in Anthroposophy and were equally attracted by Steiner's medical theories (especially that the Etheric Body might pulse the blood of the Physical Body and so underline an objective relationship between the spiritual and physical aspects of man) as by the more esoteric ideas of mystical Christianity.

Although he was writing poetry during the war years, his absorption in mystical-occult processes and the related theory of Symbolist method brought him

to write down his thoughts on the pre-existence of the soul. The essay, which was written in London, was documented with several of his recent poems and through the help of Miss Osmond was finally brought out under the title, Umbrae Silentes, by the Theosophical Publishing House late in 1918. The small volume is a curious document; brightly discursive, well written and wholly subjective, it outlines the spiritual experience underlying the aesthetic theory suggested in the early Bon-Accord articles. His progress is charted from the childhood conviction of pre-existence based on vivid dream and vision, through a bewilderingly wide reading of philosophy and occult tradition, to a Hermetic and universalised Christianity which centred on metempsychosis and alchemical resurrection for the individual after the example of the Christ.

As described, his religious development in childhood and adolescence made him singularly unsuited for the Presbyterianism of his background, and though predisposed to Catholicism by virtue of a great love for ritual, he was excluded from the mysteries of

orthodoxy by his insistence on the pre-existence of the soul. Charlotte Sturm shared this dilemma with her husband, but as far as I know, not the assurance of previous lives that Sturm found in hypnopompic reveries, visions or dreams between waking and sleeping, which, he wrote in Umbræ Silentes, "I take to be chapters in a long romance where the dreamer is the hero and his adventures a record of his past." It is hard to know exactly what this meant to him, but such vision had always been part of his experience and his writing had become an effort to objectify the reality of the soul's condition in the spiritual world. Citing Avicenna and Paracelsus, he emphasises the objective power of imagination in

Causing shapes to change and matter to be penetrable. And though we have for the time being lost the secret of bending this energy to obey the will, it is still the ruler of that visionary world of waking and sleeping dreams in which I believe one may read the will of the gods and sit out the drama of his own past.

Of course, hypnopompic reverie is at best unreliable and more often than not the vision may be the result of cryptomnesia. The late Rev. Mr. Frank A. Bullock, a long-time friend to Sturm, told me of the doctor's excitement and delight in a vision of the Ship of Isis

being borne in solemn ceremony through the port of an ancient town: Mr. Bullock seemed to remember the scene as well, and was able to turn to his bookshelves and find for his crestfallen friend the very description in Pater's Marius the Epicurean. It was sometime before this, however, that he had written in Umbræ Silentes:

Slowly but surely I have come to look upon the Mundus Tenebrosus of dreams as existing in the reality of its own glittering landscapes, as I have seen them, and not as psychology would have one believe, in a spurious reflex of the shabby world of external consciousness; while I think the shapes who inhabit it are, for want of a better word, Spirits who flow into the imagination as into an element of their own nature, and appear as men or gods because the human form is the one emblem by which the mind can express its knowledge of their presence.

They enter the plastic substance of the imagination as forms enter the matter, of which Plotinus wrote: "they pervade without dividing it, like images in water." They link the soul to a diviner life and a fuller energy than its own; and bring to the physical body, in the symbol-creating dreams of a sleep not unlike death itself, memories which are more or less coherent expressions of another condition of existence.

From a reading of the poems written after 1915 it is obvious that Sturm's concern with mystical-occult theory had brought about a new direction and intensity in his work. The development of the doctrine of the daemon was a central factor in Yeats' writing at this

time, and his own essay, Per Amica Silentia Lunae, was published in the same year as that of Sturm. In poetry the latter's weakness is the absence of any sense of human conflict with the spiritual world and his insistence on preserving something of the shadowy longings of the Nineties. Like AE, he became a seer, a visionary who wrote primarily of the thing seen, and never exercised the power of a mage, an artist absorbed in the thing made. The limitations of the seer as poet are the limits of his vision, and unless he manipulate the world seen, or use it as a point of departure in the struggle with life, his lifeless representations tend to repeat themselves endlessly and to lack relevance.

The spirit forms which did inspire and animate Sturm's reveries manifested themselves in his imagination and the narrative dream-sequences which resulted were taken as allegories of other conditions of existence which become symbols of Reality when ordered by art. In Umbrae Silentis the problem of the relationship between art and religion is seen in terms of the daemonic function:

The need and hunger for a habitation, a material body here or a spiritual one hereafter, is not a vice of the soul, but of the essence of it; it has, in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, a natural aptitude or exigency for existing in the body; for which very reason the imaginations of the poets are more truly spiritual than the chilly speculations of the Platonists....If the answer to the riddle of man is anywhere in this world, it will be found among images of loveliness. Poets and artists are the powerful servants of the Most High; they are image-makers by trade; their emblems give the reality of passion to abstract truths; so that looking upon their gods and heroes the soul is not lost in the limitless empyrean it is our nature to dread, but sees divinity experiencing sorrow and happiness in the adventures of a life not unlike its own.

That the soul's allegory with its inherent mythic validity can be understood to be the conscious creation of the artist is in some doubt, and Sturm, later in the essay, wrote of his conviction that "whatever is written in the trance of intense and absorbed contemplation is less an agreeable form of art than a divine revelation." On the other hand, it is somewhat ridiculous to assume that the poet is only a medium for the writing of automatic script and one would suppose that even in such a scheme, order would still have to be imposed on the dream-inspired material and patterns of image and rhythm supplied to provide the emblems used with the reality of passion.

Style and music then are the province of the poet, form and structure his major concern.

Sturm was a conscious stylist and in an unpublished letter dated 18 February 1918¹ Yeats wrote, "you have the rare gifts of a poet" and praised the "strange and vivid metaphor" of his recent verse. Going on to criticise structural weaknesses in such phrases as "parts better than whole", "imagination drifting from image to image" and "binding thread weak", he advised: "You want criticism of fellow-craftsmen; do publish." The letter had also praised Sturm's "delicate sense of rhythm", and in a later letter, dated 23 October 1918², which shows that Yeats was then reading the proof sheets of Umbrae Silentes, he wrote: "I think you have genuine music and style", but went on to criticise the failure of form and structure.

I have the impression that your nature is between two forms of synthesis. You are too subjective for a circumstantial structure and you have not yet dared a philosophical symbolic structure. The result is, in "Hermas", great sensuous beauty, and a certain lack of articulation. I feel that one passage leads to another by links of verbal and emotional suggestion

¹ University of Illinois Collection.

² University of Illinois Collection.

instead of all the passages being a part of a solitary act of will.

He was right; Sturm was not able to sustain a poem of any length or complexity, but his failure is inherent in the sensuous, floating sequence of incident in the original reverie and the fondness for elaborate rhythms of magical ritual. In this period Sturm did experiment with metre and form, but always under the tyranny of the psychopomp.

He had, indeed, long been fascinated by the relationship between rhythm and meaning; not only in poetry, but also in occult experience, and when writing on the induction of trance by attentive listening to a slowly beaten gong, he continues:

Certain words and rhythmical sentences have a similar power over my own imagination: there is a dream-like lyric of Mallarmé's that has all the mystery and beauty of a magical invocation. I have only to repeat the words of 'Soupir' to call up images that have no place in the dim garden of Mallarmé's reverie, but belong to that remoter and more shadowy world which for many years has been the background of nearly all my adventures in the spirit.

The experience must have been very real, for many years later he noted in his diary (4th June '36) the magic of Mallarmé's verse.

His verse sank into my very soul. What I saw in it then I do not now know, though I still admire it. But at that time it exerted the power of something magical, some actual enchantment which certainly caused me to live in another world. I brooded for long days over Herodiade, as remote from the world as though I had taken some powerful opium.

Still later (25th October '36) he wrote of finding comfort in reading the Horae Diurnae:

It is often a magical comfort, some wonder that has its roots in the mud of the past. I am thrilled to the bone by the rhythm of some of the prayers.

As in the earlier study of Baudelaire, the question of this relationship is only raised rhetorically.

Sturm's own sense of rhythm and style is graceful and the lyric quality of his late verse is, I think, something of a poetic achievement, at least in the sense of its development and promise. The poems which were included in Umbræ Silentes as well as the essay itself, were much appreciated within a small circle of readers and Sturm soon found himself with a close group of admirers and kindred spirits. Frederick Bligh Bond seems to have recommended the book among his friends and there was even a request for permission to set to music the dedicatory verses, 'The Tall Cairn' which were addressed to "C.S.: My Fellow Pilgrim Who

Brought Roses to the Desert".

The renewed stimulation and enthusiasm for writing filled Sturm with plans for further publications, and Umbrae Silentes carried an advertisement for a new work to be called "Rosa Aegyptica", and a "Collected Poems"; both announced as 'in preparation'. Once returned to Leigh after the war, neither of these projects was completed, but the poems which had appeared in Umbrae Silentes and the sequence now more elegantly entitled 'Rosa Aegyptiaca' were later brought out in a single volume which included other verse then completed. One of the lyrics from 'Rosa Aegyptiaca' was 'Still-heart' which Yeats later selected for inclusion in the Oxford Book of Modern Verse, and which first appears in Sturm's own hand on the fly-leaf of a presentation copy of Umbrae Silentes now in the University of London Library with an inscription which reads: "To T. Sturge Moore from the writer, one of his sincerest admirers."

Besides the major influence of the French Symbolists and, of course, Yeats, Sturge Moore's work was of no small importance in Sturm's literary development, and

the frequent lists of significant early reading which appear in the journal carry his name. Sturm even came to style himself F. Pearce Sturm, but whether in imitation of Sturge Moore is difficult to say.

One of the many areas in which Sturm, Yeats and Sturge Moore found common ground was their interest in theatre, especially in psychic drama. From the turn of the century both Yeats and Sturge Moore had been involved in a number of organisations; the Masquers, the Stage Society and the Literary Theatre Club, along with such people as John Masefield, Gordon Bottomley, Arthur Symons, Gilbert Murray, Edith Craig, W. L. Courtney, Charles Ricketts, William Sharp, Frederick Whelen and Granville Barker. The object of all this endeavour was the staging of romantic drama after the manner of Maeterlinck, as visions of Ultimate Reality which would present through symbol and allegory passions of the spirit. It was, of course, the more esoteric aspects of the revolt against intellectual realism that interested Sturm and in the newspaper article 'A Scottish Literary Theatre' he mentions his favourite plays; Paolo and Francesca,

The Shadowy Waters and Pélléas and Mélisande, all of which he would hate if played realistically. His ideal at that time, was for "plays so near eternity that half their meaning is lost when the personages walk among property trees and mountains of green and yellow paint." Long before Yeats' mumbled introduction to the Noh, experimental theatre was moving toward a kind of psychic drama which included verse, dance or mime, and music in evoking emotional response, and required a highly stylised and non-representational stage setting for its effect. Sturm also wrote in the same article:

And yet with half-a-dozen or so of amateurs who understood what they were about, and a little stage with no other scenery than a background of dim tapestry, and lights that came from the sides instead of from the front of the stage, "Pélléas and Mélisande" could be so played that we should be held breathless and hushed from act to act, and go home with the feeling that we had seen the beauty that is not of this world, and had taken part in destinies so tragical that they could never be worked out but in eternity.

The idea of stage design may not be in advance of those in Yeats' early essays, but it does echo a taste and sentiment then current.

In the foreword to 'Dramas', volume 7 of The

Collected Works of Fiona Macleod, William Sharp

takes up the words of an unnamed French critic in describing the reaction against the theatre of Ibsen.

"More intellectual than religious": that is, more persuaded by the sight that reveals the visible than by the vision that perceives what materially is not visible. "At this bitter and dry theatre of the intellect, the modern soul can not quench its thirst for the infinite and the absolute": and that is the reason, alone adequate, why to-day the minds of men are turning to a new drama, wherein thoughts and ideas and intuitions shall play a more significant part than the acted similitudes of the lesser emotions that are not so much the incalculable life of the soul as the conditioned energies of the body.¹

On his own efforts in this genre his wife, Elizabeth A. Sharp, quotes another unnamed critic on the Granville Barker production of Fiona Macleod's House of Usna, presented in London on 29 April 1900:

It had beauty and it had atmosphere, two very rare things on the stage, but I did not feel that it quite made a drama, or convince, as a drama should, by the continuous action of inner or outer forces. It was, rather, passion turning upon itself, and with no language but a cry.²

This certainly is a valid enough comment on the whole movement up through the symbolic scream which pervades

¹ (London, 1910), pp. 309-10.

² William Sharp: A Memoir (London, 1910), p. 317.

Yeats' middle period, and surely it is applicable to most of Sturm's work. Section IV of Umbræ Silentes develops the relationship between Art and Religion, not from abstract or pure speculation, but rather in the living experience or passion of the soul, and he concludes:

If ever I write the one book which every writer hopes to finish before he dies, [I] will pen no learned discussion on the Absolute, but a drama in which the soul will be the legendary Princess of Babylon who refused all lovers till one came riding upon a silver unicorn with a phoenix upon his wrist.

Sturm did write a drama, an Arabian Night in four acts, which was an allegory of the soul, but the finished work is a great deal less idealised than the story of the Princess of Babylon. The play is called "Nourmahal" after its seldom-seen central figure, and though it was never published, two of its songs appeared in revised versions in a later publication. Although the surviving typescript is not dated, I would assume that it was written, or at least conceived in outline between 1916 and 1920. 'The Only Happy Town', which appeared in Umbræ Silentes, is very closely related to the matter of the play and the songs of

Ishmael and Dervish were included in Eternal Helen. It is possible that with the help of Dr. Sackville Martin who arranged the acting version, the play was later revised and edited.

The drama itself is a strange affair which owes nothing to the Noh pattern so recently adopted by Yeats and is not even suitable for chamber presentation as were those of Sturge Moore written at the instigation of Yeats and published in 1920 under the title, Tragic Mothers. The title of the piece and the name of its Helen-like figure, happens to be that of the shrewish Empress in Dryden's Aureng-Zebe, which, besides a vaguely Mogul setting, shares only the universal desirability of Indamora with Sturm's proud and heartless Nourmahal. Dryden's Indamora is, on the other hand, of an absolute moral perfection; so pure and good, in fact, that her example brings about the regeneration of the villain, Morat, who announces his approach to mystical union through her agency as he dies:

I leave you not; for my expanded mind
Grows up to heaven, while it to you is joined:
Not quitting, but enlarged! A blazing fire,
Fed from the brand.¹

Badoura, another harlot of Samarkand, is the real heroine of Sturm's "Nourmahal" and more closely akin to Indamora. Through her genuine and consuming love for the passion-inflamed and feeble Prince Akbar, she saves him from the desperate thralldom of the bitch-goddess Nourmahal. Actually, Akbar's salvation is not so passive as this would seem. Badoura must allow him to find himself and she can only help him to an opiate dream in which he progresses toward a moment of revelation when he understands that the consummation of his desire for the ideal or divine feminine principle is a kind of spiritual death. Akbar realises that what he took to be his heart's desire is false and that spiritual fulfilment is only possible in the arms of an earthly lover. So perfect is the ensuing union between him and Badoura that they are transmuted beyond the temporal plane into the ethereal world of passion so

¹ John Dryden I, ed. George Saintsbury, THE MERMAID SERIES (London, and New York, [n.d.]), p. 347.

often described in Sturm's poetry. Unlike Yeats' shift of emphasis in revisions of The Shadowy Waters, Sturm had never affirmed direct union with the supernatural, but had, rather, recalled in reverie states of being created by intense feeling or passion which had achieved objective existence for him, and "Nourmahal" is one of the few attempts to make distinctions in the efficacy of the individual's quest for his spiritual desire and its agencies.

As a play, "Nourmahal" is fantastic, and it suffers not a little from overwriting and the effort of being clever. The detailed action of the first and last acts is unnecessary to the point of irrelevance, and the sequence of scenes in Act III which demonstrate the fateful futility of human desires seem far removed in mood and matter from any idea of spiritual quest. Perhaps the most interesting element of the play is the encyclopaedic intent of philosophical discussions between Harlot, Fakir, Sophist, Soldier, Dervish and Dwarf. 'The Song of the Sophist', a remarkably fine lyric written in Sturm's own voice,

is the best thing in the play and synthetises all belief, providing a stable frame of reference for this strange fictional world.

Why Sturm should have chosen a Mogul setting is difficult to assess, unless influenced by Aureng-Zebe and attracted by its exotic possibilities, but whether significant or not, it is interesting to note that Yeats' first Arab reference appears in 'Solomon to Sheba' which was written together with 'Solomon and the Witch' in 1918¹, and the "Nourmahal" also carries a reference to Harun Al-Rashid. Yet another curious similarity is the use of the whirling sun and moon figures in 'The Song of the Dervish' which was later revised and included in Eternal Helen under the title, 'Darweesh'.

Round stalks the lordly sun,
Following the Lady Moon;
Clad all in Garments white,
Clasping each other's hands,
Dance the bright day-time hours,
Seeking the hours of night.

Yeats describes a similar vision in 'Under the Round Tower' which was written in March 1918.

¹ Richard Ellmann, The Identity of Yeats (London, 1964), pp. 289-90. Subsequent dates for composition of Yeats' poems follow Ellmann; see pp. 287-94.

He stretched his bones and fell in a dream
Of sun and moon that a good hour
Bellowed and pranced in the round tower;

Of golden king and silver lady,
Bellowing up and bellowing round,
Till toes mastered a sweet measure,
Mouth mastered a sweet sound,
Prancing round and prancing up
Until they pranced upon the top.

That golden king and that wild lady
Sang till stars began to fade,
Hands gripped hands, toes close together,
Hair spread on the wind they made;...¹

Whether or not Yeats ever saw "Nourmahal" or even the poems written for it is unknown and without accurate dates for comparison it is impossible to say whose influence is seen in which poem. Some similarity of image and idea does exist; one interesting example is found in the opening lines of 'The Soldier's Song' from "Nourmahal".

The camp awakes, Hark! The deep boom of gongs!
The dragon-throated war-horns bellow and snarl!
The leathern drums purr, holy tongues of war,
Greadily raving for death.

The poem is a thoroughly bad one, but the conception and movement of these lines are, I think, temptingly like certain Yeatsean forms. The awakening of a "drowsy

¹ Yeats, Variorum, pp. 331-2.

soldiery" and the cry of a "dragon-throated horn", together with Yeats' comment on his delight in Sturm's image of "dancers to the 'beaten gong'"¹ from the poem entitled 'Dancers', all seem to find place in 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' which was begun in the year of its title, but not finished until 1922.

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery...²

And also:

All men are dancers and their tread
Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong.³

'A Prayer ~~f~~or my Daughter' written between 26 February and June 1919 has the phrase "dancing to a frenzied drum"⁴ and the opening of 'All Souls' Night' written on 2 (?) November 1920 rings to the sound of a bell.

Midnight has come and the great Christ Church Bell
And many a lesser bell sound through the room;...⁵

¹ As quoted above from unpublished letter of 18 February 1918. University of Illinois Collection.

² Yeats, Variorum, p. 429.

³ p. 430.

⁴ p. 403.

⁵ p. 470.

The obvious conclusion to this progression is the imagery of 'Byzantium', and the question is whether any of the images so brilliantly developed could have been suggested to Yeats in his reading of Sturm.

The unpurged images of day recede;
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
Night resonance recedes, night-walker's song
After great cathedral gong.¹

In 'Hermas and the Daemon' the speaker rejects the visionary figures revealed by the Daemon as not being "my brothers of the holy fire,/ Whose brightness is the shadow of their lord", and when Yeats wrote in 1918 of his pleasure in Sturm's imagery, he also mentioned delight in "burning cinnamon boughs"² from 'To the Angel of the Sun'. The actual lines which contain the image,

our words
Remember what ~~they~~ holy birds
Sang in the burning cinnamon boughs:
'Torches of dreamland flare in vain
About the passing heart of dust;
Man's labour is a heavy pain,
His sword is lifted but to rust;
The Temple crumbles as he builds,
And Time devours the Mask of Stone,
The mummy the embalmer gilds
Is but a pattern for his own.!

¹ P. 497.

² Unpublished letter of 18 February 1918. University of Illinois Collection.

are again similar to the imagery of both Byzantiums, but like so much of the phrasing under consideration, they are also found in occult tradition where both men were widely read. All kinds of cases can be made with this kind of material, but at best it is inconclusive, and most often only reveals ingenuity of analysis.

With all Sturm's literary efforts at this time, his primary interest in occult theory and religious philosophy was in no way diminished, and there is evidence that a volume to follow Umbræ Silentes was projected. Among his surviving papers was an undated letter from Sturge Moore written at Hillcroft, Steep, Petersfield, Hants., a house not occupied by the family until 1919. According to Mrs. Ursula Bridge who manages the literary affairs of the family, the letter could not have been written before October.

I find myself on the eve of a departure for a month in Paris, without having hit upon a design or motive which please me for your cover. I shall be away one month. I hope there is no hurry and that if I put the thing in hand when I return it will be time enough.



As to your other question about the diagrams for "Clavis Absconditorum" I could only undertake these if I had complete control of the build of the whole book chose type etc. etc. If you should think of this I

think your best way would be to have it done by the Favil Press, who have leanings toward Occult sciences and with whom I think I could agree, an ordinary publisher & printer would only mean throwing energy and time away. The book & the designs ought to be all of a piece and considered together as to choice of format, margins, cover everything. Nothing is good except what is really good throughout especially when the limits of choice are so narrow as they would have to be.¹

The mention of diagrams leads one to think that "Clavis Absconditorum" was to have been another prose work concerning the pre-existence of the soul, but even the reference to the occult-leaning Favil Press may be misleading and the work in question the volume of poems published in 1921 under the title, Eternal Helen. The poetry of that collection is mainly concerned with a revelation of passion in a spirit world normally hidden from all but the seer-poet; no key is given the average reader with which to gain access to this world but the poetry itself.

Sturge Moore did design the cover and decorations for Eternal Helen and through the help of Yeats, the book was published by Basil Blackwell at the Shakespeare

¹ From Sturm papers in the possession of Mr. B.T.W. Stevenson.

Head Press. The design of the blue and gold cover is appropriately allegorical and suggests Heraclitus: "The way up and the way down are ^{one and} the same", with its ladders and mountain peaks ascending from  and descending from  into a starry night. These reverse images with minor motifs of monoliths and loosed fetters in the right and left hand pannels are unified by a heart suspended over a cobweb at the centre.

Passionate love in an antique past is the repeated theme of these poems and after a longish quotation from the Book of the Dead the dedicatory verses are addressed "To C.S., In memory of the night we fled from Babylon by way of the King's garden through the gate between two walls." The identification of a real woman, in this case the poet's wife, with the ancient lover and ideal woman suggests reconciliation between the forces of life and the romantic quest of the spirit.

Whether or not this conflict is in fact resolved and the poetry of Eternal Helen does constitute a final position, is for the moment beside the point. The more interesting question to be considered concerns the poet's attitude toward the artifact created: in

personal terms what is its significance? Of course, it is an emblem of Reality, etc., but more importantly it is a perpetuation of contact with Reality which is the poet's escape from Time, his joy and safeguard against the future. Although the phrases are borrowed, they are appropriate, for the relevance of Sturm's experience to his art is made clear in the frame of reference Proust uses when discussing the famous 'madeleine'. Writing of his liberated inner being which could only feed on the essence of things for its sustenance and delights, he said:

Il languit dans l'observation du présent où les sens ne peuvent la lui apporter, dans la considération d'un passé que l'intelligence lui dessèche, dans l'attente d'un avenir que la volonté construit avec des fragments du présent et du passé auxquels elle retire encore de leur réalité en ne conservant d'eux que ce qui convient à la fin utilitaire, étroitement humaine, qu'elle leur assigne. Mais qu'un bruit, qu'une odeur, déjà entendu ou respirée jadis, le soient de nouveau, à la fois dans le présent et dans le passé, réels sans être actuels, idéaux sans être abstraits, aussitôt l'essence permanente et habituellement cachée des choses se trouve libérée, et notre vrai moi qui, parfois depuis longtemps, semblait mort, mais ne l'était pas entièrement, s'éveille, s'anime en recevant la céleste nourriture qui lui est apportée. Une minute affranchie de l'ordre du temps a recrée en nous, pour la sentir, l'homme affranchi de l'ordre du temps. Et celui-là, on comprend qu'il soit confiant dans sa joie, même si le simple goût d'une madeleine ne semble pas contenir logiquement les raisons de cette joie, on comprend que le mot de "mort"

n'ait pas de sens pour lui; situé hors du temps, que pourrait-il craindre de l'avenir?¹

The publication of Eternal Helen met with reviews which ranged from fair to excellent, and show an amusing divergence in literary taste which depended on the modernity of the critic. The Times Literary Supplement for 20 October 1921 asserted that "He strives for the pure gold of poetry" and that "His images and the invocation to his love are dreamlike visions clothed in stately moving verse: or figures as of an illuminated manuscript or a tapestry."² Another reviewer remarked:

Mr. Sturm sees life in the mirror of the pre-Raphaelites or the mirror of Mr. Yeats. No reader will meet with any surprises in this book—the very title should warn him—but he will find old ideas put once more into quiet, guarded words, without much passion or individual sense of truth, yet with a feeling for the precious quality of syllabic beauty.³

The Observer for 23 October 1921 maintained that

¹ Marcel Proust, A La Recherche du Temps Perdu, T. III (Bruges, 1963), pp. 872-3.

² No. 1,031, 683.

³ 'Decorations,' Weekly Westminster Gazette, I, 2 (25 February 1922), 21.

"the book, in spite of some really exquisite short 'adaptations' and fragments, is not a book of echoes. An original imagination informs it", and ends triumphantly: "In an age when words are tortured because men can only wring the truth from them by torture, a real singer to whom truth comes in music is a pearl."¹

The Pall Mall Gazette and Globe thought Sturm a poet but not one "who will ever be popular so long as he resorts to classical themes and remote sources of inspiration"² while the Oxford Chronicle said: "It only needs, indeed, these fragments and little dramas and reveries, clothed magically in rhyme, of Mr. Sturm to reveal how arid and ineffectual are the gestures of the new poetry."³

The reviewers may have disagreed over new directions in poetry but all admitted Sturm's evident talent and praised his controlled lyricism. 'The Only Happy Town' was cited several times for its imaginative power and originality, without the knowledge that like 'Darweesh'

¹ No. 6,804, 4.

² No. 17,663 (10 January 1922), 15.

³ No. 4,196 (28 October 1921), II (18).

it owed its singularity to the unpublished "Nourmahal", and 'The Slain Courtesan' which purported to be from the Greek of Amphidamas was praised without anyone realising that no~~g~~ poet of that name had ever existed. The 'Chinese' and 'Japanese' fragments were also extolled and they are, of course, even less oriental than those of Ezra Pound. What appealed in these poems as in others, was the effort made toward the tightening of image and pattern, following the direction of the new poetry. Many of the other pieces would even then, have appeared old-fashioned but Sturm was advancing from the slackness of his earlier work, and with his amusing hoaxes undiscovered, it must have been gratifying that his work should finally receive some notice and that its merits be appreciated.

I doubt that Eternal Helen would have been so widely reviewed had it not been brought out by Blackwell or a house of comparable reputation, and although there is no evidence, I feel sure that it was through Yeats' influence that the arrangements were made. The two men had seen much of each other in

London during the war years and Yeats seems to have read almost everything that Sturm was then writing. As early as February 1918 he was exhorting Sturm to publish and later in that year corrected the proofs of Umbrae Silentes. Throughout this time their friendship had grown and, as seen in the letters which survive, mutual respect established: Sturm admired Yeats' art, and Yeats Sturm's esoteric knowledge. In mid-February 1921 Sturm went up to Oxford for a weekend with Yeats and it is probable that the Shakespeare Head publication was concerned in the invitation.

The stay in Oxford gave rise to the stories recorded in Sturm's journal for 3rd June '36 which were later supplied to Joseph Hone for his biography of Yeats. The following was written at the same time but not offered for publication:

I was proud of Eternal Helen, but now I think my chief pleasure in it was the fact that Yeats admired it and wrote enthusiastically about it. He was always my favourite poet and now is the only one who interests me at all. We have written to one another for thirty-five years. All that he writes I admire. But his famous power of talking bores me so much that one night in Oxford I suddenly yawned so prodigiously that I had to make the

excuse of an imaginary cold and ask to go to bed, though it was only ten. I am still ashamed of that involuntary yawn.

On the following day, still filled with memories of that visit, he wrote:

Yeats must be mediumistic for he has told me of blossoms which materialise when he is abstracted by writing. Sometimes he finds the pockets of his jacket full of flowers, in the depth of winter, and sometimes his room is suddenly flooded with the scent of jasmin or heliotrope. During my stay with him in Oxford he found a spray of flowering hawthorne in his pocket, though it was February. He laid it on his writing table so that I might see it and be convinced, and went on correcting his proofs, but when I returned from my walk the blossom had disappeared as mysteriously as it had come. I do not doubt the reality of these apports, for I believe him to live in another state of consciousness, in which they are actually objective, and I know, though I have never had similar experiences, of states of consciousness in which more extraordinary happenings are not only possible but commonplace.

At any rate, Yeats was interested in Sturm and willing to help with criticism and advice. Obviously, he didn't find Sturm's verse derivative, but again, in Eternal Helen there are a number of striking parallels, especially in imagery, with some of Yeats' work written at about the same time. Of course, there are some obvious overtones of Yeats in much of Sturm and the opening lines of 'The Archangels':

To-night I saw in the mind's eye
All the archangels hurrying by
With holy eyes too hard to weep
Jehovah's downfall.

as well as its general matter, are taken directly
from 'The Magi' which was written in September 1913 and
published in the next year.

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye,
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.¹

There are other echoes from occult tradition and some
out of Baudelaire, such as the confusion of sight and
sound in 'An Air on a Lute' and the vision of death in
'The Dead Came Dancing' which had already been used in
the early Bon-Accord story, 'Under the Moon', but none
so striking as those of Yeatsean formula and image.
Antithetical dialogue is also introduced in Eternal
Helen and Sturm took mummy wrappings as a symbol for
the net of karma which, if examined, reveal esoteric
truth in 'The Reflection', and especially, 'Dedication'

¹ Yeats, Variorum, p. 318.

(Compare with use of silkworm's cocoon and garments of the Magi in Umbræ Silentes, XII).

As the wrappings of death are unwound
When the grave is rent
And the gilded mummy is found,
A passion unspent
Here opens the grave of the past
For the mummy gold
Of the treasures we looked upon last
In a world of old.

In 'All Souls' Night' which Yeats wrote in November 1920 similar ideas occur in such lines as "I have mummy truths to tell" and "As mummys in the mummy-cloths are wound."¹ The completion of the pattern is the assimilation of the gyre as perne into the symbolism of 'Byzantium'.

For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
May unwind the winding path;...²

More important still is the clue to the possible origin of the extraordinary beast-figure of 'The Second Coming'. Sturm had examined the daemon-man relationship in 'Hermas and the Daemon' and at one point Hermas speculates:

¹ Pp. 471-4.

² P. 497.

Maybe you are my shadow, and we are one
As voice and echo, or as placid cloud
And its reflection on the broken shallows;¹

but in 'To the Angel of the Sun' the idea of union
between the two is expanded.

O pacing Lion of the Sun,
Who meets his shadow in the sea,
Where in the desert, when all's done,
Shall my own Image run to me?

The image of the objective man is found in the waters
of generation, that of the subjective man in the
desolation of the desert. Within the enormity of
Yeats' imagination the figure becomes "a vast image
out of Spiritus Mundi" antithetical to the Christ and
herald of a new era:

 somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.²

Perhaps the Yeatsean image is become a bit top-heavy
and overly complex, though the passion of language and

¹ Compare also the image of the soul at death
meeting its double and entering the presence of
the Absolute walking in flames of its own
kindling. See Umbræ Silentæ, XV.

² P. 402.

the poem's movement tend to carry it well. However this may be, I do think there can be little doubt that here it is Sturm who influenced Yeats, especially when considering that both the Sturm poems were first published in Umbrae Silentes and 'The Second Coming' was not written until January 1919.

Another close resemblance, and one not so easily resolved in point of time and influence, exists between Sturm's 'An Offering at the Tomb', first published in Eternal Helen, and Yeats' 'An Image from a Past Life', which was written in September 1919 but not published until 6 November 1920. Although its dramatic element is rather badly contrived and its lyric validity impaired by a halting movement between circumstantial imagery and philosophical idea, 'An Offering at the Tomb' has passages of some beauty; especially as the shade of Hermas and Myrrha recall scenes of quiet joy at sea from a dim past when their love was in itself fulfilment. One of the details of the remembered bliss introduces the idea of impending evil and death:

And I remember how, a phantom dawn
When sea and sky were one dim lake of gold,
The scarlet crane that flew upon the mast
Danced, flapped and screamed with a foreboding cry
Until an arrow brought him fluttering down,
And how you wept to see the handsome plumes
Stiffen in death and the fierce eye grow dim.

Not knowing when the poem was written or whether
Yeats saw it before writing 'An Image from a Past
Life' makes the curious similarity of situation and
character between the two even more interesting.

He. Never until this night have I been stirred.
The elaborate starlight throws a reflection
On the dark stream,
Till all the eddies gleam;
And thereupon there comes that scream
From terrified, invisible beast or bird:
Image of poignant recollection.¹

Besides the timorousness of the women in both poems
there is the idea so common to the two poets that
intensity of passion encumbers the soul even after
death and slowly dissipates in reliving the experience
before the spirit can return to the Absolute and be
again reborn. This general similarity of content is
most probably due to concern with esoteric lore, but
the point of interest here is the origin of this

¹ P. 389.

first appearance of the symbolic scream which subsequently becomes so important and indefinable an image in the poetry of Yeats. As an image of poignant recollection, quite inexplicable in terms of the poem itself, the scream, and in general, the whole movement of the poem, tends to gain in meaning from a reading of Sturm's infinitely weaker effort.

At the same time, like Yeats, Sturm was moving towards an investigation of the conflict between the physical and spiritual worlds. The more important poems in Eternal Helen show a rhetorical resolution of the problem which is heavily weighted on the side of conscious joy in the human condition. Such a poem as 'The Cry of the Ravens at the Approach of Night', originally published in Umbræ Silentes, extols both necessity and fulfilment in man's quest for meaning, and in thoroughly Yeatsean formulae:

We whom he [Time] haunts and fears have never blenched,
We whom he cannot slay escape him yet.
Under the earth they hid our heavy bones
When we were men and mortal long ago;
They raised the cromlech and the cairn of stones,
For what, being men and mortal, could they know,
who live wingless and weak and cease to be?
O Ravens, cry one cry for men who climb
The stoney hills to where beside the sea
Our ancient voices croak the end of Time.

'Hermas and the Daemon' which was placed last in the
1918 publication is yet another complete and considered
statement of the poet's attitude toward total escape
from the bitterness of generation. Hermas confronts the
Daemon who offers immortality:

And once at dawn, upon the windy beach,
Beating my brains over a difficult thought,
The keen salt air grew on a sudden soft
With languid breaths of summer roses blowing,
And the monotonous voices of the gulls
Became the amorous moan of restless doves,
Whose coral feet and hyacinth-coloured breasts
Were lovely to the eye, O envious Daemon;
But when She passed who treads all hearts alike:
Venus, who else? I saw Myrrha's deep eyes.
So are all shades men burn their hearts before:
Phantoms of thought in flight, arrested suddenly
Before us on a mirror of still air.

The avatar, in love with fate, makes his choice and
affirms faith in the gnosis.

But these tired bones that cry against the choice,
Have lifted too hard burdens through the world,
And would not now be cheated of the grave.

...

The soul has chosen: through the grave's grey door
With all my kin I'll fare the adventurous way,
And free the god who sleeps, if dreams be true,
Not only in the passionate hearts of men and women,
But in each tree, dumb beast, and shapeless stone,
The Portion of captive light that awaits deliverance.

The last speech of Hermas in this poem is, I think, significant, as is the general tone and content of 'The Last Fragment of Hermas', in emphasising the poet's despair over the implied inability to recreate images and dreams of beauty from the past. There is a kind of acknowledged futility in the poetic quest and yet the expression of this feeling is accomplished with more control and precision of language and line than any of his more visionary work.

Now he has gone and I will cry a human cry;
I will sing the song I made when Myrrha went,
Whose pretty fingers closed the ugly books
That now are all I have. Dreams and a song!
A cry going after her to the Abyss!
'She will not come, she will not smile any more;
I shall not see her again, she who was mine;
I have laid offerings under the Sycamore:
A ruby, a robe of silk, a jar of wine,
Her favourite fan, her lute ready to hand;
But one hot noon has drained the wine-jar dry,
My gifts are hidden in the wind-blown sand,
The lute-strings broke at sunset with a cry.'

The rejection of his gifts wrought in verse is also the subject of 'The Cup of Dreams' and like 'The Last Fragment of Hermas', the void of non-being is the

only consolation. A romantic death-wish is perhaps appropriate for Hermas, the principal persona of the 1921 volume, but the poet himself is more readily identified with Myrrha's statement in 'An Offering from the Tomb'.

Henceforth let life be such a tideless flood,
Lit by such fire.

O Hermas, share we here
Some quiet years of undelirious joy,
For wandering discontent offends the gods.

In his own voice, Sturm even makes a statement in favour of worldly or mundane contentment.

Penates

Nothing is better in life
Than our own hands have built,
With here and there a touch
Of hard-won scarlet and gilt,
And here and there a flower
Or even a precious stone,
Books all dreaming together,
Buddha dreaming alone
On his ivory throne,
A fire in wintry weather
For these are our own.

However many refuges from romantic frustration might be suggested, the important factor in terms of Sturm's poetry is the existence of that frustration and his inability to give up the desire already rejected, for the spiritual ideal of the eternal feminine principle.

One of his best poems, 'The End of the Argument', written in Dublin following the Rising of 1916 and given prominence in Eternal Helen as the ultimate piece of the collection, is, like 'Demon and Beast', wholly concerned with the preservation of a hard-won truce between conflicting desires. Although it is a very fine poem and obviously done in the Yeatsian manner, it loses nothing in comparison with the even later Yeatsian dialogues. The operative passage in the poem is the man's penultimate speech:

Drowsily smiling Buddha whom
Your bronze chrysanthemums adore,
Though he maintain religious gloom
In ivory silence evermore,
Was not yet born a holy man,
Much less the universal thought
Of half the East when I began
To follow that Egyptian girl
Through all the deeps of death's abyss;
And, having found her in this life,
To barter her eternal kiss
Because you have a sunlit curl
Would rouse that nightmare hunt again.

The volume ends as it had begun (see 'Dedication') with the identification of a real woman, the poet's wife, and the spiritual ideal of woman. With his poetry apparently arising from desire to escape the evils of existence in the arms of a lost lover from

previous lives, the implications of such an identification tend to suggest exhaustion of material, at least a kind of temporary impasse.

The necessity for rejection of the obsessive feminine figure before finding fulfilment is actually presented in 'Harps of Memphis' which was finally published in the 1921 volume as part of 'Rosa Aegyptiaca/Hermas to the Singer of Sais', a work which had been advertised in Umbræ Silentes as being "in preparation".

I heard the harps of Memphis ring:
'Dream-dark heavy Egyptian eyes,
Brown hair, sleek as a hawk's shut wing,
How many lives have made you wise
Since Time, who buried out of mind
Your dim sarcophagus of gold,
Drowsed for an age and woke to find
Your beauty sterile as of old?'
And bowed my head to recollect
That she who rules my reveries,
The sad Egyptian intellect,
A petrification of the moon
Rigid as her own images
Imprisoned in a trance of stone,
Shall never flower till overthrown.

Oddly enough, Yeats had appended a note to 'An Image from a Past Life' in the Michael Robartes volume of 1920 which dealt, in part, with the frustration of natural instinct through an obsession for the object of a past passion.

Those whose past passions are unatoned seldom love living man or woman but only those loved long ago, of whom the living man or woman is but a brief symbol forgotten when some phase of some atonement is finished; but because in general the form does not pass into the memory, it is the moral being of the dead that is symbolised....and this ideal form becomes to the living man an obsession, continually perplexing and frustrating natural instinct. It is therefore only after full atonement or expiation, perhaps after many lives, that a natural deep satisfying love becomes possible, and this love, in all subjective natures, must precede the Beatific Vision.¹

Yeats may have been merely rationalising his own experience and even so. the statement has a certain pseudo-psychological validity, but rather than attach importance to the idea in justifying Sturm's position, it is more useful to see it as yet another instance of the intricate relationship which existed between the two men during the war years and following.

Obviously, there had been much personal contact between them from 1915 and with the freedom from intellectual isolation in Leigh and from concern with his medical career, Sturm had experienced a burst of creative energy and accomplishment. The poems in Eternal Helen are the best he had ever done and in

¹ Michael Robartes and the Dancer (Dundrum, 1920), pp. 28-29.

the shorter lyrics especially, there is a technical control of language and matter which shows promise of further development.

Once returned to Leigh after the war, it is inevitable that involvement in medical work should have demanded more and more of his time and energies. Besides a growing general practice he was named Consulting Surgeon for Diseases of the Ear and Throat at the Leigh Maternity and Child Welfare Service and the School Medical Service (21 June 1921), and was later appointed Surgeon to the Aural Clinic, Borough of Leigh (1923).

Still, he was writing occasionally and kept in touch with Yeats, who was yet concerned with furthering his interest. Whether or not Yeats was influential in L.A.G. Strong's decision to include poems from Eternal Helen in his anthology, Eighty Poems, published in 1924, is unknown, but Sturm readily agreed to the request. Strong's letter to Sturm, dated November 19th. 1923 is the only part of the exchange which has come to light.

I enclose the copy of my last book you are good enough to desire, with very many thanks for your permission to reprint the poems from "Eternal Helen".

I fear you will find my work on a far humbler plane than yours: the only qualities we share are a certain tightness of grip, in epigrams especially, and—I think—a veneration for Mr. Yeats, which is sufficiently strong to keep us from imitating him!

However, as I have found so much delight in your book, I should not be human if I did not hope you would find some pleasure in mine.¹

Another letter found among Sturm's papers, that from H. Stuart, Roebuck House, Clonskeagh, Dublin and dated November 7, 1924, shows a more direct effort on the part of Yeats.

I am sending you the second number of 'To-Morrow.' I must apologise for not thanking you for your subscription earlier.

Mr. W.B. Yeats has given us some of your poems which he thinks you might let us print in a future number. There is one I would be especially glad of called 'London Square.' Perhaps you will let me know about this.²

Whether Sturm gave his permission or not is unknown but none of his work ever did appear in the very short-lived London weekly, and whatever poems were written after the publication of Eternal Helen,

¹ Unpublished letter in possession of Mr. B.T.W. Stevenson.

² Unpublished letter in possession of Mr. B.T.W. Stevenson.

including 'London Square', are lost.

Other than the two short pieces entered in the later journal, Sturm wrote no more poetry, but given his circumstances, character and particular aesthetic attitude, the cessation of creative endeavour seems a natural consequence. Having withdrawn from all manner of worldly contact and seemingly incapable of commitment to any cause but detached speculation on the romantic possibilities of esoteric doctrine, he presents himself as a kind of religio-literary dilettante. Certainly, he was talented, but unlike Yeats who was more gifted and possessed of a nature more strongly fibred, he came to reject any positive involvement with the distasteful experience of living and to find solace in musing on religious philosophy. Even the early enthusiasm for the poetic expression of his visions and beliefs dried up, and the significant poems of his last published volume tend to demonstrate the unhappy resolution of earlier desires and passions into a sad, grey tolerance of the mundane. The expression of such a final position is not even convincing, but perhaps, spiritual peace and quietude

were worth some insincerity. His own version of reasons for giving up poetry are stated in the journal entry for 3rd June '36:

Fifteen years ago Eternal Helen was published. Since then I have written nothing, nor had any desire to write. Meditation is the death of art. It is rightly called by the Chinese the philosophy of the Empty Gate. Meditation drains the illusory objective world of all colour and enchantment, and without these what is the poet?

It is indeed, a vicious circle: the original interest through personal experience of previous existences was toward the investigation of subjective truth through religious philosophy, and in recognising the artistic possibilities implied in secret doctrine, poetry became a valid religious exercise as suggested by A.E. Waite, one of the most important and serious commentators on the Mystical-Occult Revival.

The doctrine of universal analogy as the basis of progressive revelation is a noble and beautiful hypothesis which eminently recommends itself to reason, and once properly understood it would be an inexhaustible fountain of purest inspiration for the poetry of the age to come; it transforms the whole visible universe into one grand symbol, and the created intelligence of man becomes a microcosmic god whose faculties are in exact though infinitesimal proportion with the uncreated and eternal mind.¹

¹ Eliphas Lévi (Alphonse Louis Constant), The Mysteries of Magic, a Digest of the Writings of Eliphas Lévi with a Biographical and Critical Essay by Arthur Edward Waite (London, 1886), p. xxxii.

The defeat of poetic impulse and reason why the doctrine of universal analogy did not prove an inexhaustible fountain of inspiration for Sturm is because he chose to concentrate on that aspect of Eastern philosophy which denies the relevance of life processes in the perfecting of spirit. In effect, he acknowledges the necessity of a life-death cycle but chooses to ignore the life struggle altogether, and possibly for reasons too personal to divine. Yeats' strength was in his persistence of purpose to resolve and control his struggle with life and to use it as matter for his poetry. Sturm broke away at this point of decision, gave up poetry and withdrew into meditation.

Besides the material in Umbræ Silentæ concerning his youthful experiences of Reality, the diary entry for 19th June '36 records his introduction to the literature of the Occult Revival.

Forty years ago, or a little more, I read a book called Esoteric Buddhism. The author of it was a person for whom I had no admiration when I met him long after, but that book changed my life, for it started me on the study of Eastern philosophy. All my leisure has been devoted to that, and now, growing old, I am keener than ever, and care less than ever for other reading.

How influential that now forgotten publication actually was, is inestimable. Yeats, like AE and so many others, came across it in youth and all were changed utterly. The movement was spurred on by the work of Sinnett, and Sturm passed through nearly all of its progressive phases; from astrology and spiritualism, through theurgic magic, alchemy and Rosicrucianism, to Hermeticism, mystical Christianity and Buddhist philosophy.

In the diary entry for 30th July '36 he set down the traditional view on the verification of dogma:

Buddhism, in common with the Eastern Church, teaches that personal experience is the one means of learning the truth of dogma. Nothing is true until the individual has experienced it as true.

His own experience had always included vision and bemused reverie, and as late as 11th June '36 he recorded in his diary that he was still in communication with the spirit world.

I have a teacher whom I contact imperfectly and occasionally, but he is there. Sometimes he seems to be Christ, sometimes Buddha, often Krishna, but these are various names of the same being.

While Yeats was busy ordering a system based on his wife's automatic writing, Sturm wrote to him of his

own daemonic possession by the spirit of a 13th century monk who, burned for heresy and dying with a philosophical system preying on his mind, caused Sturm to jot down sentences out of the unfinished book. Sturm gave the phantom his own name dog-latinised and believed the monk to be one of his own pre-existences. He must have tired of collecting the maddeningly arcane fragments as nothing survives of the effort but the few specimen notes copied out for Yeats and the title of the great work: "Incipit a 1230 A Nativitate D.M.I.E. Explicatio Fr. Francisci De Procellis Renato in Quicate Ex Sphaera Angelorum".¹

Sturm's reading in mystical-occult tradition continued and through the early 1920's he regularly met with a very small and select circle in his study at Brunswick House where the talk was serious and centred on literature and esoteric mysteries. Mrs. Sturm, whose interest in mystical Christianity equalled that of her husband and who had independently written a long and searching article on "The Two

¹ Unpublished letter dated 27/x/24. University of Illinois Collection.

Jesuses" of the New Testament, often made one of the group; the two most regular members of the 'Lodge' were both Unitarian ministers. Although all were fascinated by spiritualism, magic and alchemy, no experiments were ever attempted and their interest remained primarily in the literary and spiritual qualities of such discipline.

Sturm had once been very badly frightened by a seemingly innocent bit of experimenting and though he would later tell the story of the 'chipmunk' as a joke on himself, it had put an end to his role as a practitioner of magic. While playing idly with a planchette one evening he found that the unexpected words "Beware the Egyptian", had been written. As he stared at the writing, his wife could see that he was falling deeper and deeper into a reverie or trance and frightened by the uncanny void at his withdrawal from human contact, she began to rouse him from it. They both heard light footsteps on the floor, pattering about the edge of the room and in terror they fled upstairs. Catching breath at the top and ready to laugh at their panic, the footsteps

began to mount the stair and followed them into the farthest room where they shut themselves. By this time they were really terrified and the steps continued to circle them, moving slowly up the walls and finally expiring on the ceiling with a distressed cry like that made by air escaping from a child's balloon.

Shaken by the experience, Sturm suffered a seizure in the night, caused by pressure from an expanded artery on the brain and was forced to a month's holiday in order to recover; doing nothing and reading nothing; his only exercise an occasional walk on the moors near Huddersfield where Mrs. Sturm was then acting as Assistant Medical Officer of Health. He swore never again to play about with the arcane, but as I was told by the late Rev. Mr. Bullock, he plunged back into medicine and philosophy with as much energy as ever when well.

Sturm had always been a restless, almost compulsive man who consumed his vast energies in tireless efforts and had come to rely somewhat on drink and drugs to keep pace with his over-stimulated mind. Mrs. Sturm

worried about the strain on his health and once plotted with Mr. Bullock to get him away for another holiday. Pleading overwork, Mr. Bullock asked the doctor to come with him to Paris where, among other amusements, the two men visited the Musée Gustave Moreau, in whose work Sturm had become mildly interested through reading Huysmans. Delighted by nothing so much as his own performances, Sturm could hardly resist when shown into the first salle by the Curator, who grandly gesturing at the collection from the middle of the room, said: "Is this Art?" Very decisively Sturm replied, "NO", and quietly walking toward a particular work in the disconcerted silence, exploded: "It's Literature!" Throughout the afternoon they moved through the exhibition, arm in arm, the warmest of friends, while Sturm revelled in leading the unsuspecting enthusiast from extravagance to excess in praise of the master.

The only really literary project actually in hand through these years was a play, "Helen in Egypt", suggested by Sturge Moore and mentioned in the journal entry for 14th October '36. Having only got

to the end of the first act after 10 years, the attempt was abandoned as was an earlier novel also mentioned in the diary. His more scholarly activities were focused on a translation of Dr. Dee's Monas Hieroglyphica (1564) which is mentioned in an unpublished letter to Yeats dated 7/2/26.¹ This work was given up, however, after only a third of the text had been attempted because of its overpowering obscurity.

At the same time Sturm was publishing learned articles in leading medical journals on subjects arising from his research toward a Doctorate in Medicine. His reputation as a specialist was growing and in 1927 he was named Clinical Assistant in the Central London Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital, a position he appears to have held from Leigh. In the same year the British Medical Journal announced his invention of "a graduated carrier and flexible Eustachian sound of stainless steel."²

¹ University of Illinois Collection.

² 1, 1927 (12 March), 477.

Pedantry and amused intolerance crop up even in his medical work; the following letter appeared in the Medical Journal;

I agree with every word of Mr. C. Hamblen Thomas's timely communication on "The effect of bathing on the ears" (B.M.J., July 9th, p. 78), with the single exception of the word 'meati.' Used as the plural of 'meatus,' which it is not, 'meati' is as obnoxious to the mental ear as contaminated sea water to the physical organ.¹

Sturm completed his thesis, "The Adenoid Child," for the M.D., and the degree was conferred in 1928 by the University of Aberdeen with 'highest honours.' He was enormously pleased with his success and proud to have been asked by The Practitioner for an article on adenoids. His medical work was receiving wide recognition and without prior knowledge on his part, he was named Membre Honoraire du Carrefour de Cos, Paris, in 1931.²

His relationship with Yeats through these years as shown in their unpublished correspondence was mainly concerned with an exchange of ideas having to do with

¹ 2, 1927 (30 July), 196.

² See British Medical Journal, 1, 1931 (21 February), 335.

A Vision. At first Sturm was thinking of writing a commentary, but Yeats was already busy with a complete revision of the quasi-philosophical system. Sturm occupied himself from time to time with casting horoscopes, drawing diagrams and supplying Yeats with necessary documentation from obscure sources, but the collaboration was of a very general nature and the surviving letters give no new insight into the origins or meaning of A Vision. As seen in the letter quoted by Joseph Hone, Sturm couldn't bear the sloppy scholarship of the first edition and didn't really approve of the idea anyway.

I know I am a pedant, but pedants read you. We cough in the ink till the world's end, as you cruelly said, but the least of us would save you from the errors which spoil the Vision as it is now. Personally I think your philosophy smells of the fagot. Some dead or damned Caldean matematikoi have got hold of your wife and are trying to revive a dead system. All these gyres and cones and wheels are parts of a machine that was thrown on the scrap-heap when Ptolemy died. It won't go. There is no petrol for such. The ghosts of the matematikoi are weeping over their broken toy universe: the Primum Mobile no longer moves, the seven planetary spheres of crystal are dull as a steamy cookshop window—so they are trying to speak through your wife and are using much that she has read in the past. However, all that you write is letters. No doubt many an Inquisitor has sighed as he condemned some author to the flames. You would not have escaped.... My new book, when I write it, is to

be called Seven Fagots for the Burning of the Great Heretic Yeats, or The Wheel Dismantled—printed for the author by Michael Paleologus, and is to be purchased at the Sign of the Screaming Seraph in Byzantium.¹

Yeats replied, asking Sturm to correct the typescript of the new Vision, and enclosed an aphoristic summation of his philosophy which he had prepared for AE. Without the trappings of the complex mandala he was creating, Yeats obviously hoped that his system might gain the support of such people as AE and Sturm. It is significant that he should want the validity of his ideas recognised and yet be unable to resist the construction of a bewildering and fantastic structure on which to hang them; perhaps what he was writing was letters, after all. The early aphoristic statement of the "first justification of Astrology made in modern times"² is of interest, however, and shows a remarkable consistency in his world-view when compared with

¹ Letter dated 26/8/29 as quoted in W.B. Yeats: 1865-1939 (London, 1962), p. 407-8.

² Unpublished letter of 9 Oct. 29. University of Illinois Collection.

the later summations of his belief as published by Richard Ellmann and Virginia Moore.¹

Although the script Sturm was to proofread had not yet been finished, he continued to keep a tight rein on Yeats' vagueries. As quoted earlier, he supplied a passage from Macrobian Commentariorum in Somnum Scipionis in 1930 to substantiate a contrived footnote printed in the American edition of The Winding Stair and a few years later, still interested in the Commentary, he wrote to the Editor of the Sunday Times:

I am interested in the Latin writer Macrobius, and contemplate an English version of his Commentary on "The Dream of Scipio." Is there any translation of Macrobius in English or French; and if there is, where can it be obtained?²

Several replies were printed giving the required information but no evidence exists to show that the project was ever begun.

¹ See The Identity of Yeats (London, 1964), pp. 236-7 and The Unicorn (New York, 1954), pp. 378-9. Compare Sturm's summation of belief in Diary entry of 3rd November '35.

² 'Readers' Queries', no. 5,768 (29 October 1933), 14.

Another letter, this time "to the Editor of the London Forum," brings up a subject even more central to Sturm's interest.

In a pamphlet entitled The Philosophy of Yoga, by Elizabeth Sharpe (Luzac & Co., 1933) reference is made to a Sanskrit "Gospel of Isnara Christna, whom they call Jesus Christ", the date of which is stated to be "about the year 1,200 B.C." This document is known to a Mr. Sanjivi, an orthodox Brahmin. The author quotes a letter in which Mr. Sanjivi describes the Gospel in some detail.

Presuming that this "ancient, rare, unpublished text in Sanskrit" actually does exist, it should be possible to trace it and make it available for those of us who for various reasons have long suspected some such hidden source of the Gospels as we know them.

During the past thirty years I have several times heard rumours of this document, but now for the first time information comes from a source apparently untainted by "theosophy" or "anthroposophy", or any form or variety of charlatan uplift.

If this gospel can be found, and is genuine, its importance obviously can not be exaggerated. Personally I have little faith in unknown Sanskrit documents of "about the year 1,200 B.C.", but The Philosophy of Yoga, in which it is described, bears such internal evidence of serious scholarship that I hope the matter may be thought worthy of investigation.¹

The identification of the Christ with gods of Eastern religion is a recurring theme in the diary Sturm

¹ Text from cutting found among Sturm papers in possession of Mr. B.T.W. Stevenson. I have been unable to verify the date penned in the margin—March 1934.

began keeping in 1934, and the doctrine of cyclic manifestations of a spiritual teacher or saviour resurrected in the eternal world of Reality is central to all mystical-occult tradition. A few years later (diary entry of 26th May '38) he wrote of his reaction to the discovery of the Apollonian-Dionysiac Christ:

The discovery of this identification of Christ with the Bacchic mysteries moved me so profoundly when I made it, now ~~so~~ many years ago, that all my outlook upon religion underwent a spiritual change. I became a partaker of the mystery of Christ. I saw the descent of the cosmic sun-spirit into the earth and into the soul of man, and realised the reality of the Apollonian and Dionysian Christ. To experience Christ both within the soul and as a concrete figure in the objective world is to undergo the Rosicrucian initiation.

Yeats had been much interested in the same concepts during his early Golden Dawn period and used these ideas in his later plays, but he had moved away from Steiner's interpretation of Christianity and now Sturm was moving towards it. The journal entry for 13th June '36 extols Steiner's work, saying: "He brought the only complete and satisfying philosophy the West has known.... Twenty centuries have produced but one person who has explained Christianity in

universal terms."

As was the case with most of his enthusiasms, Sturm soon progressed to hyperbole, and a few days later (18th June '36) wrote: "For three years I have been reading a little pamphlet by Steiner. It is all underlined, and I have read it twenty times, but am yet only dimly conscious of its meaning." With his penchant for exaggeration and cool insistence on fantasy, it is not at all unlikely that, as several of his acquaintances believe, he is the "old doctor of my acquaintance, a great liar, but a man of wide and strange knowledge" mentioned by L.A.G. Strong in connection with the false verification of some particular psychic phenomena.¹ However that may be, his mind was torn between the metaphysics of East and West, and he often said that his religion was Christianity; Buddhism his philosophy.

Sometime after he had given up the diary at the death of his wife, he wrote down his final views on the spiritual function of the daemon while taking

¹ Green Memory (London, 1935), p. 253.

notes on his study of McTaggart and Hegelian philosophy (see journal entry for 17th October '36).

The human soul, even while in the body, or being the form of the body, belongs simultaneously to two worlds, the temporal world of Manifestation and the eternal world of Reality. There is timeless self as well as a temporal self. The timeless self is by its very definition eternal, the temporal self is but its hand stretched down into the manifested body. When the body dies the temporal self is no longer temporal, but retreats into timelessness. The two are again one, not a dew drop slipped into the shining sea but a crystallisation within the Absolute; one with God and yet an individual personality. It is this belief in the retention of personality even after absorption in the Godhead which separates Western religion and philosophy from the metaphysics of the East: Nirvana from the Beatific Vision. During the span of bodily life the temporal self is not aware of its timeless counterpart, though it longs for it without knowing for what it longs, or but vaguely and intermittently, yet strives to climb to the Absolute by the path of prayer or deeds or meditation.

The effect of Buddhist philosophy with its insistence on the illusory nature of temporal existence is another major theme in the diary. I find his acceptance of so foreign a doctrine the key to understanding much of his strange life. As one can easily see from the following diary entries, the kind of meditation to which he gave himself was surely the death of his art.

Long ago I used to write and even publish what I wrote. Now I can write nothing, for nothing seems worth while. I do not even think.

(5th July '36)

Nulla dies sine linea used to be my motto in the days when I never wrote a line from year to year. At that time I would not write unless I could accomplish something that mattered, or that I thought mattered, but now that I know that nothing matters I write this diary.

(15th August '36)

Sturm's philosophical position affected every area of his life and not just his attitudes toward art. His early withdrawal from society is a sign of concentrated introspection and some time in the mid-30's he resigned his position as Senior Surgeon in the Aural Department of the Leigh Infirmary. The decision to give up operating was originally told me in confidence as an almost incomprehensible quirk of character, and one can see that few would understand a man with a reputation for brilliance as a surgeon who felt that he couldn't cure but only 'did violence' by cutting away. The annual reports of the Board of Management of the Infirmary as well as the Medical Directory entries show his resignation, but it is not until he touches on the subject in his diary that the reasoning becomes clear.

I spent the best years of my life studying the Kabala Denudata and the Upanishads, and had turned fifty before I discovered that it was all inside one. As a doctor of medicine I have given most of my leisure hours to reading medicine, because that is partly an objective science; no meditation will teach a man to pass Eustachian Catheter or accurately read a Blood Pressure, and when I was doing surgery I operated best when I meditated least, not because meditation hinders the skilled fingers or dulls the quick perception of what is needed at the moment, but because it says to the mind all this is useless. Death unstitches the cleanest wound in time and drags the surgeon down to the grave to join his failures and successes, which seem, looking back upon them, to be of equal value.

(7th August '36)

His career suffered in no way from the decision, and although he had resigned as Honorary Aurist and Laryngologist to the Infirmary in 1931 because of the pressure of his work in the Child Welfare and School Medical Service, he accepted several later appointments. In 1934 he was made Medical Referee under the Workman's Compensation Act of 1925 for the Altrincham, Warrington (Circuit No. 7) and Leigh (Circuit No. 8) County Court Districts, and was appointed Consulting Laryngologist to the Sanatorium for Infectious Diseases at Astley, Lancs. in 1936. In the following year he became Consulting Physician and Laryngologist at Leigh Infirmary and was named an

Advisory Member of the Health, Education and Research Council of London and Geneva.

All this time Yeats was patiently reworking A Vision and he renewed the request that Sturm see the proofs before publication. An unpublished letter from Sturm dated 20/3/35 accepts the reading of the final proofs and another from Yeats dated 17th Sept. 1935 offers to send page proofs.¹ What exactly did happen is not at all clear, nor can I be certain that Sturm actually did see the work in proof, but the impression I have from his letter of 16 Nov. 37² which thanks Yeats for the inscribed presentation copy, is that Sturm had not seen the contents before publication. He did add, however, that he would not be able to resist a commentary on the system, but his failing health and ensuing personal difficulties made this impossible.

In 1935, of course, such limitations had not yet appeared and as his modest success in medicine was becoming more and more apparent, his long-since

¹ University of Illinois Collection.

² University of Illinois Collection.

abandoned career in letters was momentarily resuscitated when Yeats included one of his poems, 'Still-heart', in the Oxford Book of Modern English Verse. Yeats' choice was a good one, but having decided to include Sturm, several other poems of equal merit might have been used as well, certainly with no ill effect on that extraordinary collection.

The Rev. Mr. Bullock was prompted by the publication to write Sturm a note of congratulation on December 23rd. 1936.

As it is ten years ago that I left Leigh and we are at Christmastide once more I felt that piety demanded the ritual of a letter as an expression of gratitude and remembrance to a beloved master.

When I bought Yeats' Oxford Anthology of Modern Verse recently Alan¹ and I were thrilled to find that one of your poems was included, we felt that we could have spared quite a number of those included if we could have had more of yours, nevertheless the perfection of the one compensated in quality for the lack of quantity, and we are honoured that you are honoured.

I wonder what you are doing in the Lodge these days, still moving about in the ancient world of dreams, so much more real than anything in our modern world, I expect, which seems in fact only in love with violence and death. Nevertheless the things I learnt from you have multiplied and grown and today quite a large number of people are fed with the spiritual bread

¹ Alan Louis Charles Bullock, son of Frank A. Bullock and Master of St. Catherine's College, Oxford.

first broken to me by your hands; and in many ways my work here must be counted a success, while the source of it lies hidden in Leigh. I trust Mrs. Sturm is well and that she still follows the path of Catholic mysticism. I should love to listen to you both again. Apart from the Wentz Evans book,¹ I have not found anything very new on the Doctrine and if you have time I should be awfully glad to receive a list of books which you may feel worth recommending. Fortunately I can afford to buy a few books nowadays and my modest library has grown to quite respectable dimensions.

The Buddha you gave me still smiles serenely upon my books and by now I hesitate to imagine how many will adorn your sanctuary.

I trust that your work in Leigh is not so heavy as it used to be and that you are able to find time for rest and reading—if you can rest that is—as I remember you that was a gift beyond your reach.²

Sturm answered with the habitual extravagance that by now had become so much a part of his very nature and included his own appraisal of the Oxford Book.

I read old books mostly. I read Dahlke continually. His Buddhism & Science has been my Bible for nearly ten years. In another ten years I may begin to master it. Perhaps I had it when you were here. You may have it yourself. I can't remember.

I meditate much and read but little. A sentence from St. John or the Gita lasts me for months. Since Shri Purohit Swami published his translation of the Mandookya Unpanishad in the Criterion of July 1935 I have wanted little else. Though I have known the Mandookya I can honestly say by heart for forty years,

¹ Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, ed. Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz (Oxford, 1935).

² Unpublished letter in possession of Mr. B.T.W. Stevenson.

the present translation brought it to life again. Probably Jesus took a copy in his pocket when he went solitary in the wilderness.

I don't think Yeats had much to do with the Oxford Anthology. He has been ill and maybe left parts of the work to others. He certainly left some of it to his wife. She has told me so.

So many fine poets are left out entirely, and so many tootlers of tin horns and penny whistles are included that Yeats can not be altogether responsible. It is a sad production. But I am not angry when I read its dismal pages. Neither anger nor gratification are compatible with the convinced, hard-won, ineradicable, and never-to-be-shaken knowledge that the Buddha teaching is the only doctrine of actuality the mind of man can rest upon.¹

That Mrs. Yeats had told Sturm some of the work for the Oxford Book had been left to her is perfectly true—she had written to him on December 11, 1935:

The OXFORD BOOK OF MODERN ENGLISH VERSE is being arranged in chronological order; might I have your date?

WBY has gone to Majorca for the winter, to the sun, with some friends. He has left me in charge of the purely practical side of the anthology.²

Sturm's attempt to excuse Yeats from full responsibility for the anthology is mere wishful thinking and it is well that he could be comforted by the Buddha Word.

Sturm wrote again to Bullock on 1/1/37:

¹ Unpublished letter dated 26/12/36 in possession of Mrs. F.A. Bullock.

² Unpublished letter in my possession.

I find that I did not answer your chief question; about the books I have found useful. Here is a list of some that I cannot do without.

1. An Indian Monk, his life & adventures; by Shri Purohit Swami, with introduction by W.B. Yeats. Very interesting, but rather unbelievable. Yeats goes in off the deep end. He will believe ~~in~~ anything, provided it is strange enough.

2. The Secret of the Golden Flower, A Chinese Boon of Life.

3. Yoga as Philosophy and Religion by Prof. Surendranath Dasgupta, of the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Calcutta. This is an essential book. You must have it or remain forever ignorant of Eastern Philosophy.

4. Buddhism & Science, by Paul ~~Dhalke~~.
Buddhism, by Paul ~~Dhalke~~.

These two books, for me, are the end all & be all of my intellectual life. I have been studying them for ten years. Whatever I believed, or thought I believed, before I read ~~Dhalke~~, doesn't matter at all now.

It is no good getting these books from a library. You must have them for your own, and read them year by year, at first understanding nothing, then dimly hating what you do understand, then accepting some of it and being afraid, & then accepting all and not caring one damn for anything the world can do to you, & finally settling down to study ~~Dhalke~~ seriously. Anyhow, that has been my history.

Several times Sturm listed in his diary the books which had most influenced him and even recorded the twenty volumes he would most like to take into retirement with him, that is, if he could ever bring himself to give up his extensive library. The lists

¹ Unpublished letter in possession of Mrs. Bullock.

are important as they show something of the scope of his reading at different periods, and his habit of copying out passages from current reading gives even more insight into his interests.

The journal itself, begun in 1934 and kept up at intervals through 1940, is a startling document and in completing our knowledge of his later development makes him a viable object of interest and study to anyone with enthusiasm for the period. There can be little doubt that he wanted even those private jottings preserved, for all the comments he made on their worthlessness. True, there are entries which insist on the folly of sharing with others the random observations of the moment, but in his last illness he did give his papers into safe-keeping and earlier had done some minor editing in the already discontinued work; ostensibly changing nothing, but rewording inelegant passages and reaffirming his recorded thoughts. He did destroy a page in order to conceal an all too personal confession which caused the loss of the other folio leaf, but otherwise the diary remains, as he wished it, exactly as it was written.

In the course of his random comments there are many biographical hints, as well as significant statements of aesthetic principle and philosophical position, but more importantly, there is a revelation of character, hardly intended, which forcibly demonstrates the kind of flabby degeneration into which he had descended through the weakness of his particular aesthetic attitudes. The diary is an intensely sad, even distressing document which brings one into uneasy contact with the naked fears and failings, limitations and frustrations of a man long hidden behind a controlled and mannered mask. Unlike the yet unpublished correspondence with Yeats, where he seems a clever and amusing personality, Sturm emerges from the pages of his journal as a not altogether likeable person. Neither his outbursts of bitterness and hatred nor the consciousness of failure and futility are buoyed up by the passages of serious speculation and spirited nonsense. Even the kitten, so often described and discussed, becomes an inimical and vaguely symbolic presence as are the moths battering themselves to death in a lamp globe.

It is very awkward to say anything significant about the diary; it is not art in any conventional sense of the word, and yet it is often enormously effective, defying the while, representation by quotation. Perhaps it is enough to say that its importance is as a personal document which demonstrates the causes for Sturm's decline as a poet. His loose and eclectic philosophy deprived him of any real commitment to life and yet was not sufficient to stop him from caring about his failure.

It is also difficult to assess exactly Sturm's place as a literary figure. One readily sees that his only work of lasting significance is the interpretation of Baudelaire and that his importance to the history of literature will remain his relationship with Yeats, but there is perhaps a point of interest, however negative, in his development and failure as a poet within the Symbolist group. When a definitive work is done on the minor writers of the movement, Sturm should have a prominent place as a poet both theoretically sound and artistically competent who succumbed to the weaknesses

inherent in that body of thought.

His continued exertions over thirty years did finally break his health and in early November 1937 he entered the nursing home of Sir Edmund Sprigg at Ruthin Castle, North Wales suffering from heart disease. It was there that he received the presentation copy of A Vision and the last letter of the Illinois Collection dated January 25, 1938 was written from the converted 13th century building. Yeats was again in touch with Sturm in the Spring of the same year with more enquiries about occult and mystic lore; this time on behalf of William Force Stead. His letter of thanks for the information supplied through Yeats is hardly important information to quote here, and I mention it only as the last known instance of their contact.

Suffering from an incurable heart condition, Sturm was forced to give up medicine and on 7 April 1938 his practice was sold to Dr. Norman Goldstone, then an assistant. On 30 April Sturm's name was withdrawn from the Lancashire Insurance Committee's ^{Medical} List and there was nothing left but to go into retirement.

The Sturms chose Southport where they had occasionally taken brief holidays; with them went the entire library which Sturm could not bear to part with and the choicest of their many religious carvings and pictures. At first they stayed at the Royal Hotel on the sea-front, and finally found rooms at Bell's Private Hotel, 12 Albert Road where Mrs. Sturm died of cancer on 18 November 1940.

The distress of his wife's final illness and the horror of the war inform the last entry in the diary, but his faith in religion and philosophy was unshaken, his mind as speculative as ever. He later occupied himself in making a study of McTaggart and Hegelian philosophy as well as noting the passages in the Bible which might support his thesis that the Christ explicitly taught the doctrine of metempsychosis. He began studying Le Thomisme of Etienne Gilson, and made copious notes, citing other philosophers as well as his own thought in support of, or against St. Thomas.

In May 1941 he considered joining his son's family in Trinidad but such a move was put out of the question by the ever-present war. Perhaps the idea of leaving the

country was prompted by necessity; he may already have known that the private hotel where he was living was about to be taken over by a governmental agency, forcing him to find someplace else to go to. In June he inquired about official papers for travelling to Peterhead and though none were required, he never did go to his brother-in-law, Max (Schultze) Saunders, in Scotland. It was at this time that he sold the bulk of his library to Sutton's of Manchester whose buildings were blitzed the day after the books were stored there. A few of the more valuable volumes of early arcana went back to the shop of Mr. John Watson in Cecil Court who still has them in his private collection, and Sturm kept some twenty-five or thirty books with him. In many cases the titles were those of reference works listed as indispensable in the diary entries made so long before. The Collected Poems of Yeats and A Vision also stayed with him and works by Suzuki, Ouspensky, Vonier, Sir Oliver Lodge and Santayana. Even Light on the Path and Edith Oliver's Adventure appear among those volumes in his possession at death, as well as Poetry of Today:1940 and works

by T.S. Eliot, Bourget, Racine and Anatole France.

The Ministry of Health did commandeer Bell's Private Hotel at the beginning of July 1941 and Sturm found a room at 3 Alexandra Road where he could house what was left of his life. Mr. Watkins happened to be close by later in the year and called on his old acquaintance just before he died; the impression was that Sturm was then very feeble and seemed to have given up most of his former interests.

Sturm's condition grew worse and he was taken to the Hollies Nursing Home, 19 Leyland Road, where he died some weeks later on Monday, 23 February 1942 of cerebral haemorrhage and coronorary thrombosis. He was buried on the 26th beside his wife in the Church of England Division of the Birkdale Cemetery (Liverpool Road), Southport.

The following letter to his sister, Dorothy, with whom he had avoided contact for many years was begun on 11 January 1942 and continued the following day; it is probably the last he wrote:

When we came to Southport four years ago Lottie was apparently in good health and had been assured by the specialist, after re-examinations, that she was completely cured.

In November 1937 Dr. Creighton Bramwell of Manchester sent me to Sir Edmund Sprigg's Nursing Home at Ruthin Castle in North Wales, where I was for several months. Spriggs told Lottie that my only hope of survival was to give up work entirely. So Lottie sold my practice & house for what she could get and we came here.

Being certified as permanently incapable of work I receive five pounds a week from the Medical Insurance Society, of which I have been a member for many years. But the Income Tax takes half of that now, so from time to time I have to draw on my savings. My own and Lottie's illness cost me many hundreds of pounds. The sick pay ceases when I reach 65.

Dr. Cairns who examines me from time to time on behalf of the Insurance Society sent a heart specialist to see me last summer. He told me that my heart disease was incurable and advised me to make my will. That is why I wrote to Harold¹ for some news of you. I do not suffer from any kind of "nerves", but just plain heart disease. I get attacks of angina pectoris, if you know what that is.

Your letter of 10/1/42 just arrived. Your offer to take me in is a kindness that I value very much, but you must not be in a hurry—don't rush your fences. When the Spring comes and it is possible for me to have a few days at Thornton or Cleveleys, we can meet and talk things over and perhaps come to an agreement that will suit us both.

I am certainly sick of dreary lodging-house life. It is not even a question of money. Southport is so packed with evacuees, civil servants, etc., that one could not get decent rooms at any price whatever. But there are many fine libraries and numberless shops (with nothing to sell), a lovely park with a lake of swans where one can sit in fine weather & wonder what it is all about. In times of peace it is a beautiful place, and, in spite of anything you ~~may~~ have been told to the

¹ William Harold Sturm (1885-1950), brother to F.P.S.

contrary, living is as cheap as anywhere in England. There are of course swanky shops where you pay 5/- for the same pair of socks that you can buy round the corner for 2/-. There are numberless cinemas, which I never go to since Lottie died, and two excellent theatres. There is a great deal to be said for peace-time Southport. At the present time it is of course just a dreary dump.

So do not contemplate any changes until we have met and thrashed it all out in the Spring.

I am glad that you are very fit and not very fat, but you certainly wrote "very fat".

I don't need cheering up. I am as cheerful as circumstances permit. When one knows the worst there is nothing further to fear.

An accountant is straightening out my affairs, which are in a state of disorder due to the long illness of myself and Lottie. I have not forgotten you. But the longer I live the less there will be left.

The first Snow of the year is falling.¹

¹ Unpublished letters in my possession.

COLLECTED POETRY

La poésie est semblable à l'amandier: ses fleurs
sont parfumées et ses fruits sont amers.

Gaspard de la Nuit

The Mirror reflects everything but itself. But if
its surface is tarnished, it reflects the stain.

F.P.S.

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AN HOUR OF REVERIE

1905

To my wife

1

Dedication

I send my beggar folk to you,
My verses, lame and halt and blind,
Across the thunder, through the dew,
To seek your throne, Young Queen, be kind;

For though they shrink before your face,
Clutching their tattered rags of rhyme,
They too come of a kingly race,
And wore crowns in the olden time.

Nine aeons ago these faded eyes
Were keener than your brightest gem;
When younger moons lit lovelier skies
The kings of Edom bowed to them.

They bring you neither gold nor myrrh,
But piteous words on trembling lips,
Yet in their hearts faint memories stir,
Of Ophir and her ivory ships.

O cheer them with a brimming cup,
And maybe, as the viols complain,
Music will blow some ember up
Into the flame of song again;

And wavering voices out of tune
Shall tell how passion softly stole
To your cold Eden, when the moon
Wove that bright body for your soul.

And if they speak but foolish things,
Still let your kindly feast be spread,
For these old beggars have been kings,
And shall be, when the world is dead.

2

The Questing Host

With sad thoughts drifting into dreams, with tired heart,
I turn from the white candles and the open page,
And on worn tapestries of immemorial age
See knight and saint and lady play their part.

Among the tall, straight, woven trees and turrets grey,
These hunt the leaping deer, and these make silent love;
And one ecstatic maid beneath a haloed dove,
With white face bends upon a book to pray.

And near them hover in the still, dream-haunted room,
The spirits of forgotten times, the host of night:
Helen's red lips and glorious eyes are faded quite,
And Palomide beneath his shadowy plume

Rides through gaunt spectral woods upon his hopeless quest;
Unnumbered phantoms of old heroes hurry by:
The candles flicker, the dreams vanish, and I cry:
'Not even in dreams is any peace or rest.'

3

The Sorrow of Deirdre

To W. B. Yeats

She smoothed her dark hair from her brow,
And gazing in the mirror sighed:
"O, Nurse, where is that beauty now,
For which the sons of Usna died?"

"Lady," the nurse replied, and spread
Weak hands above the waning fire,
"The gods who strike man's body dead
May not extinguish man's desire.

"And though that beauteous bosom fall,
And fade away those eyes of flame,
Your love shall be a trumpet-call,
And eyes grow tender at your name.

"Musk-fragrant maidens faint with bliss,
Sighing: Ah, Love, I understand,
Shall dream not that their lovers kiss
Deirdre's eyes, Deirdre's hand.

"And poets yet to come shall sing
The doom that white Deirdre knew;
And hold joy as a worthless thing,
And smile at pain, remembering you.

"Your lover in a hero's tomb
Sleeps as great warriors ever slept—"
She ceased and sighed, for in the gloom,
Deirdre, all unheeding, wept.

The Lute-Player

Beloved, when I see your face
Move through this green and sunlit place,
Where the cool morning-thoughts of Spring
Passing, remember no past thing,
Where feathered tumult shakes the leaves,
But no lamenting lute-string grieves,
My heart is troubled: the tall grass
That bends and whispers while you pass
Would fade, did not your secret eyes
Hide their dreams from the open skies
Beneath drooped lids, did not your hands
Bind your strange heart with occult bands.
And the light sprays that bend green tips
To touch your pale brows and red lips,
Shrink and draw back in fear or shame,
For like some white immortal flame
That burns while Time is withering,
You stand among the buds of spring.

Ah, take your seven-stringed lute whose wires
Once wakened green and crimson fires
Out of the slumbering gems you wore,
And when my heart awakes once more
And the flame trembles, I will sing
How fugitive are Youth and Spring:
While scented blossoms from above
Drop down faint petals on our love,
And grief becomes a gray content,
Seven strings, seven sorrows, lament, lament.

5

Cease to be Wise

Cease to be wise; your wisdom only brings
A sad self-knowledge, whence is surely born
Hate of all wisdom, and a wrinkled scorn
Of the world's beautiful and secret things.

The moving music of a windy shore;
The sighing of dead leaves that whirl around
Upon a breeze, shall dull the heavy sound
Of Sorrow knocking at your chamber door.

Open your twilight casement; close your books;
And dream of glories gathering in the west;
And fill your mind with sunset and with rest;
And hear the low cry of the homing rooks.

Then you shall know, sad heart, how the World sings
For ever and for ever her deep song;
And all your heavy cares shall fade among
The shadow of her fair and secret things.

I saw the white face of a god with half-closed eyes,
Thorn-crowned and clothed with sorrow like a pall;
Through an incense drift and murmured litanies
A little shivering flame did rise and fall.
It rose and fell, and sorrowing figures came
And knelt, saying a prayer, and day by day
There in the dim shrine glowed the sacred flame,
One after one the worshippers fell away.
And year by year the world wore on to her end,
Chill grew the stars and deadlier white the moon;
And I said as I closed the eyes of my only friend:
The oil is dry in the lamp; let the end be soon,
For I tire of life, and the women I loved are dead,
My heart is fading away like a dropping fire,
And weariness comes from the wings of the dreams overhead;
Darkness is best; let the lamp of my life expire.

But one dim phantom stooped from the hurrying dreams,
And I saw my dead love's face and her ashen lips,
Her death-cold hair fell over my face in streams,
She smoothed my face with her shuddering finger-tips;
And said: Pray never for death: for the path we trod
Was harsh, but easier far than the path I tread;
For the dead are blown through the flame of the wrath of God—
Love that I lived for, was lost for, pray for me dead.
She faded, drifting away in a veil of myrrh—
The organ thundered Laudamus, the dream had flown,
But the sad sweet moment's vision I had of her,
Troubled my heart as I went on my way alone.

7

Green Boughs

Dark boughs of trees are reawakening,
A ripple of shadowy green moves on the earth,
A light wind lifts the boughs, the wind of birth,
Blowing to bud the tremulous flames of Spring.

Music of youth, thrill the green earth, the gray sea;
White plover, cry your low, sweet-throated cry:
And be you silent, voices of prophecy,—
I remember, too, when it was spring with me.

Three Poems from the French of Paul Verlaine

I

8

A Dialogue of the Dead

Along the drear paths of the frozen park
Two forms have stepped this moment from the dark.

Dead are their eyes, and from their nerveless lips
Word by slow word upon the silence slips.

In the drear park by winter overcast,
Two spectral lovers have evoked the past.

"Hold you in mind our ancient passion yet?"
"Why do you wish that I should not forget?"

"Love, does your heart, as in the days of yore,
Dream of me trembling?"—"Now I dream no more."

"Ah, those bright days our love was built upon,
When lip met passionate lip!"—"Those days are gone."

"Great were our hopes then, and our skies how blue!"
"Yes, but all hope has fled from me and you."

Thus walk these lovers through the faded grass,
Where night alone can hear what secrets pass.

II

9

Wisdom

Over the roof is the sky.
So ~~clam~~am, so blue!
Shadows of boughs on the sky
Come trembling through.

The clock overhead that I see
Tolls the hours spent,
A bird in the boughs of the tree
Sobs her lament.

Ah, God, life is tranquil out there,
Simple and holy,
The murmur of peace from out there
Whispers me slowly:

"Thou there, alone and afraid,
Tell it in truth,
Weeper, ah, what hast thou made,
Thou, of thy youth?"

III

10

Song of Autumn

When autumn sings,
Her viol strings
 By the wind blown,
My torn heart throng
With languid song
 And monotone.

Pale and outworn,
Mine eyes forlorn
 Watch the hours creep.
In swift still gleams
Old days, dead dreams,
 Pass while I weep.

Sad and alone,
By the wind blown,
 The wind of grief—
Hither and thither
Who knoweth whither
 Drifts the dead leaf?

A Night in December

The fire-lit peace of night is brief,
Then, ere the weary day begin,
Hide we the voices of our grief
With lute and viol and violin,
Whose musical faint sighs forget
The pale and misty month December,
The day's desire, the day's regret,
And sweetly breathing but remember
Sorrows as olden as the stars,
Feigned loves and legendary wars.

Dream, for the whole world wrapped in dreams
Mars not the quiet with a sound;
Even the lulled lute-music seems
Like faint dew dropping to the ground
In the wet woodlands of December,
Does it not murmur without cease
How love is cold and life an ember
And many dreams the only peace?

Go bid the tired musicians rouse
Their fallen spirits with a cup,
And while the firelight gilds your brows,
And while the flame of song leaps up,
Dream the old days have never died,
Dream the old sunsets we remember
Have lost no colour of their pride
Nor faded into wan December:
For dreaming only we forget
Regret's desire, Desire's regret.

12

Love in Autumn

The dying fires of autumn softly fold
The time-worn woods in gold;
Like our swift lives the waters of the river
Drift from our sight for ever;
The setting sun has drawn a misty veil
Over the waters pale,
And bathed your hands and brows in dreamy light,
Fading and bright.

So let us, love, in these dream-haunted ways,
Remember those bright days
When love awoke beneath the whispering pine,
And your brow drooped to mine—
For though life be at autumn-time or spring,
And joy or sorrow bring,
You are the Queen of each enchanted hour,
O breathing flower.

13

Palomide Remembers the Quest

To W. B. Yeats

The chapel bell is beating for the Mass
This midnight of the Vigil, and folk pass
Beneath my window in the narrow street,
I hear the lute-string and the taboring sweet;
And leaning from the casement open wide
See the pale priest, robed, stoled, and lowly-eyed,
And the enraptured acolytes who bear
Tapers whose faint sweet flames consume the air
And mock with holier fire the Paynim stars.
And I alone have neither place nor part
With them that cry, "Lo, there is he whose wars
Are endless as the surge, whose lonely heart
Burns, a dull ember in his mailed breast,
Lo, Palomide, he of the Hopeless Quest,
A wandering loneliness."

I, Palomide,
Who bear in mine own heart One crucified
Upon the Cross of Time, can bend the knee
Before no shrine of lesser mystery.
Nor do I bow to human love: my lot
Is not to worship, as doth Launcelot,
The proud pale face, the profile like a flower,
Of any Guenevere of an hour,
Or any woman's proud or humble face.

I am the last of my mysterious race,
And when the earth shall gather up these bones,
The last throne falls or many ancient thrones
That were built up with wisdom by a King,
Whose ears had heard the morning planets sing
Praise to the elder gods, upon whose crown
The first pale moons of mystery looked down;
And kings and priests and wise magicians feared
His stony eyes of eld, his misty beard.
And lo, his wisdom and his bones lie hid
In some age-long forgotten pyramid,
Blown over with the dust of many years.

O ye who share the agony and tears
And kiss the five wounds of the Sacrificed,
Leave me to wend upon the Hopeless Quest,
Leave me to follow one less mild than Christ,
I, Palomide, a fire within my breast.

14

The Shrine

Bow down, beloved, and let your trouble cease;
Here for one moment, if no more, is peace,
Here are poured holy waters of sweet sound,
Droop your tired eyes and let the world be drowned.

Dream for one moment only in the shine
Of altar-candles, rapturous and divine,
That life's pale taper bears as clear a flame
And shall not smoke nor gutter out in shame.

And pray; ah, fervently, to Her who knows
How Time has robbed the pride from that proud Rose
Your mouth; for She is mild and sad and sweet,
And the Three Wisest worshipped at Her feet,

Dreaming of those dim treasures brought to Her,
The Holy Gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
Forget your own dark hair is touched with grey,
And dream your beauty shall not pass away.

15

The Spirit hath also her Treasures

When our feet tread the inviolable way,
The hidden path our frailty may not storm
Till the dim garment of the outworn clay
Has fallen palely to the bitter worm;
Will not the image of the beckoning star
That lured the proud magician kings of old,
Fade out unless we also bring from far,
Gifts of high thought: myrrh, frankincense, and gold?

16

Dusk of Day

Sorrowful things and things grown old,
I put you by when I lay me down
To watch the autumn twilight fold
Tower by tower the old gray town;

To watch the seagulls wheel and dip
In circles o'er the shadowy sand,
And see the ocean's hungry lip
Caress the white throat of the land.

Then lo! a clock-tower far away
Chimes out the hour of vespers done;
And on my face the flying spray,
And on my cheek the yellow sun

Throws one last lingering touch of gold,
As o'er the sea I look and sigh:
"Sorrowful things and things grown old,
You are with me still for you may not die."

17

Motley Fool

Under the scented apple-trees,
Over the moon-gray whispering grass,
Motley Fool a-dreaming knew
The shadow of her beauty pass.

Just beyond those apple-trees
Dimly hung with green and white,
Flute and faint string called in vain,
Twinkled many a window-light.

Motley Fool shook his wise head.
"Why does Princess Adene sigh?"
"Why?" his sad heart answered him,
"Do the night airs drifting by,

"Only for a pulse's beat
Answer flute's voice and faint string,
Then die out among the frail
Apple-blossom quivering?"

Through the cool leaves his long face
Moon-lit, sad, a thing of woe,
Ignoble in cap and bells,
Watched the Princess Adene go;

Heard her low, dream-laden cry,
Part the lips no lips had kissed,
Answer some unearthly voice
Mocking in the haunted mist:

"To the Many-Coloured Land
In the sea beyond the sea,
Take me, I am sick of Time,
Red-capped Riders of the Shee!

"I grow tired of human things,
Take me to the Hazel Wells,
I would wash this flesh away!"—
Here he shook his cap and bells.

Broke her dream; awakened her
As she touched the trellis gate,
Then she turned, and laughed, and said:
"'Tis Motley Fool, disconsolate."

Back she went to human mirth
Where the flute and faint string sang;
And the sad Fool's bells behind her,
Nodding slowly, faintly rang.

The Sleeper in Sarras

In the tall town of Sarras
My lady lies and dreams,
In her quiet room the arras,
With woven colour gleams;
For images of splendour
Pure faces pale and tender,
And flaming swords defend her,
And murmuring of streams.

She has no cares to thwart her;
No strife to mar the hours;
For she, the Dream King's daughter,
Sleeps, crowned with sleepy flowers.
Deep peace her soul possesses,
None knoweth her caresses,
No cold wind stirs her tresses
From this gray world of ours.

She waits, O star of wonder!
Beyond the flaming west—
Break, break the bars asunder
That guard her place of rest.
Though all have vainly sought her,
Once more upon the water
Lift sail, the Dream King's daughter
Has peace in her white breast.

19

Cap and Bells

Sneer at my cap and bells, it matters not:
King in your crown you will bow down
To one grave Jester some day, whether or not.

Laughing or weeping, King, it matters not:
The winds blow and the tides flow
And the years pass, whether or not.

Sigh if you will, bright Queen, it matters not:
Others before you sighed when beauty died—
And beauty still shall perish, whether or not.

Poor Cap-and-Bells may jest, it matters not:
All roads wend to one cold end
Under a grey stone, whether he jest or not.

20

The Old Woman

The waups cry to their twittering young,
The salmon swims with his three sons,
The bees are merry among the boughs
Where honey-laden flowers are hung;
And I alone, O Pitiful Ones,
Have sorrow's weight on my wan brows,
And hate to see the sun again,
And hate the tides that roll and turn,
For my tall sons I bore with pain
Grew like the rush and withered like the fern.

I

Life like a dream shall wither away,
And the eyes of beauty be dimmed in death;
But the love that stirs in your bosom to-day
Shall live forever, a wandering breath.
The warriors sleeping beneath the sod
Shall sigh as it passes them overhead;
It shall blow through the world and awaken God,
Dreaming forever among his dead.
He shall awaken and understand
Why sins have troubled his calm repose;
Because of the foam-pale bosom and hand
That he made when he made you, O Northern Rose !

II

When passion shall depart
And all your dreams be done,
 And love no more endure,
Earth will fade with your heart,
And deathlier grow the moon,
 The star of eve less pure.

Your soul, bright Queen, is part
Of all pure things that are;
 The heaven's holy blue,
The deep sea's pulsing heart,
White moon and wandering star,
 Have wrought the soul in you.

22 Launcelot Tells of the Enchanted Islands

"Those isles are far away," he sang,
"And I would be ~~fore~~ever there,
Where silver boughs red-blossomed hang
Unwithering on the golden air;
And in the heavy-laden trees
Birds mock the passing of the hours;
And swarms of wild brown forest bees
Thunder and drone amid the flowers.
And half-asleep and half-awake
We sing and wander on the shore,
Where crystal-dripping combers break,
And melancholy breathes no more."

"And who," the Queen said, wondering,
"Are the indwellers of your isle?
And what the lineage of their King?"

The grave knight answered with a smile:
"Their King is god of all the sea—
Mananan, son of Lir, who sways
The host of the immortal Shée,
And gives them peace and plenteous days,
And loving wives and easy ways.
There are three isles beneath his hand,
But dearest of them all I hold
Ildath, the many-coloured land,
Where never windy spring doth shine,
Nor summer's heat, nor winter's cold:
But ever wrapped in a divine
Pale afternoon or autumn gold,
We hear sweet music and drink wine."

"In that strange land," said Guenevere,
"Is there not war and toil and fear?"

"Heavy with many a flowering wreath
Are the long warships' idle keels;
And though the plains resound beneath
The thunder of their chariot wheels,
The tramping of their horses' feet,
Those heroes ride to war no more;
To them the fight is no more sweet,
Nor the loud battle's breaking roar;
Beneath the isle's enchanted star
Quiet sleep has quenched the flames of war.

"Pale Guenevere, I would that we
Might wander by that glimmering sea,
Might wander in that moon-lit land,
And watch upon the level sand
The clustering foam-drops fall and break;
And dream no more of hopes that die,
Of loves that fade, and hearts that ache;
But ponder on the heavy sigh
Breathed by the waters moving round
Forever with a sleepy sound,
Until the day that time shall cease,
And death's white poppies crown the brow,
And our sad hearts be wrapped in peace—
Ah, Guenevere, why weepest thou?"

23

The Monk Launcelot Remembers Guenevere

At the tower's base, the misty sea
Answered the murmuring northern rain:
"I shall not hear," said Launcelot,
"The murmur of her voice again."

He drew the monk's hood round his face,
That was so strangely worn and thin,
Not worn—God pardon him—with prayer,
But by the fierce desire within.

He cried: "Would God that I might die,
And not remember any more."
He loosed the Missal's brazen clasp,
And turned the painted pages o'er.

With aching eyes he read the words:
To weary souls, O Lord, give rest;
But in his heart he cried: "The Queen
IN Glastonbury beats her breast,
And ceaseless penance, endless prayer,
Pale the red lips my lips have pressed.

"And I too suffer, night by night,
In this fierce mind that sleepeth not;
A tall, pale woman slowly moves
Across a sunny garden-plot;
Or beckons me among the trees
At Caerleon and Camelot;

"Or seated by the bloodless King
She glances with low-lidded eyes—
God! she is now as far from life
As silken queens on tapestries.

"What are these monkish tales to me
Of saintly lives and holy tears?
Or Mary's hands or Mary's eyes,
I who remember Guenevere's?
Lost Queen, it is to you I tell
The rosary of the sliding years.

"I would die gladly could I see
Your white face in the dusk once more
Bend over me—" With trembling hands
He turned the Missal's pages o'er.

"I would die gladly could I hear
The murmur of your voice again."
At the tower's base the misty sea
Answered his voice amid the rain.

24

In the Starlight

The shadowy foliage of the glade,
Within whose starlit deeps you trod,
Whispered and sighed: Behold a shade
From the dream-laden heart of God.

A curlew flying forth to sea,
Hung for a moment in the dome
Of Heaven, calling, Follow me,
O phantom goddess of the foam.

The golden moon, the starry rout,
The wind-awakened woods and streams,
Sang till you passed and faded out
Like foam on some pale sea of dreams.

25

Beyond

Shatter the wine-cup and come forth with me
To the long ship and shake the sails unfurled,
And seek beyond the sunsets of the world
The amber seas that shine beyond the sea.

Greatly we long, Time's weary sons and daughters,
At length to cease hither and thither drifting,
And wander where the winds of dream are lifting
The low boughs mirrored in the haunted waters.

There the unheeded wraith of Beauty goes,
And flowers that withered on the trees of sorrow
Blossom again, and Time's swift spear To-morrow,
Drowsed with the poppy, no more stabs the rose.

26

The Blessed Road

To J.S.

Though we must toil among a folk
Whose god is not our god,
Some day we'll tread the wandering road
Old friends before us trod.

Together east, together west,
Through the half-light of dreams,
We'll seek the old things of the world,
Quiet trees and silent streams;

And hill-side cairns to rest awhile,
And from afar look down
On the dim spires and sunset roofs
Of some old market town.

And if we pray in holy kirk,
Where shriven people are,
On the hill-side we'll kiss our hands
To sun and moon and star.

And lights nor music, eyes nor lips,
No web the gods can wind
Shall snare our dream: we will pass on
And leave all towns behind.

27

The Hour of Beauty

The stars have risen, the world is faint with sleep,
And I am weary of all things mortal and sad;
But hide, Beloved, with your enfolding arms
And shadowy hair, all mortal things away,
That peace may once more find us at the hour
When sleep and languor and the desire of love
Shine in the stars and stir among the winds,
And breathe forth from the roses of the feast.
O I am folded round with memories old
Of tranquil eves beside the Autumn lake,
When first I praised your beauty with a sigh,
As we two softly trod beneath our feet
The red dead leaves and smiled to call them woes.
There first I took your hand and love awoke
Among the sighing reeds. O wonder new,
O golden flame, that lit the faded earth
With the wild beauty of an olden dream!
Then when you spoke the wavering air was filled
With dreamy wings and voices; when you sighed
An odorous wave of sorrow, sweeter far
Than breathes the enchanted flower that rules the dusk
Rose to the weeping stars.

In all my dreams
Your proud pure face, star-crowned and aureoled,
Came with pained eyes upon the midnight hour,
To gaze on me and rouse the seed of fire
Won from the stars, the flame we call a soul,
Against the sleepy prison of the flesh,
So that I laboured till at length my eyes
Looked unashamed in your true eyes of blue.
Yet even now I sigh to think that flower,
That amulet, your breathing loveliness,
The burning dream I cherish like a flame;
The proud red lips; unfathomable eyes;
Hands that have crowned the god-like brows of love,
So oft with passion's fading coronal
Of dark strange roses, gathered with old songs
Beneath the setting moon—is all no more
Than the pale dew that drinks the starlight up,
And fades in silence at the appointed hour,
The breath that blew the old-world's dreams to flame
And ruined lofty Troy, is but the sigh
By the flower breathed into the pitiless storm.
O gaze at your imponderable image,
The dreamy shadow of your beauty strange,
That smiles at you out of the drifting stream;
For all your body's pride is such a shade,
Seen by your soul that leans in reverie
Out of Eternity, to watch the flow
Of those swift bitter waters men call Time.
And souls do soon tire of the bitter flood,
Folding their silver wings in age-long sleep;
And then the beauty that belongs to Time
With Time shall perish utterly, and be
A ruined splendour, a remembered joy,
That breathed upon the hour and was no more.
Beloved, it may be that strange destinies
Will claim us both, and dark seas sunder us;
But even beyond the last dark sea my soul
Will seek your wandering soul. Have we not sought
From life to life, across the gaps of death,
Each one the other? Shall we not still seek
Through other lives, braving a hundred deaths,
Until that day when there is no more sea?

28

The Sorrow of Youth

My cheek like the moon is pale
The heart is faint in my breast;
I have waited too long for a sail,
A spot in the golden west.

I alone, of all things, am full
Of sorrow and youth and tears;
Old things are drowsy and dull,
Content with the drifting years:

The heron stands in his pool
And dreams, spectral and tall:
The old mother nods on her stool
Maybe not dreaming at all.

And autumn has hung the wood
With an arras of faded gold,
And even the fish in the flood
Are merry no more, grown old.

I know he will never lift sail
For the old wood under the hill,
The stars are too pale, too pale,
And the world is too still.

29

The Mirror

My vision pierced both Time and Death;
I said: "I will all wisdom prove";
For I had seen the holy breath
The melancholy waters move.

The waters melted into flame,
And the pale seraphim in flight
Moved their bright wings, for one whose name
Was Tumult mingled day and night.

I trembled till the wakening breath
Of my blood murmured: Lo, the glass
Is dark with dreams; but brood no more
And the high gods themselves shall pass.

30

The Last Shipwreck

The same wind blows across the starry flood,
The lights of old lure my sea-wandering sail,
But now your eyes have made the sea-fire pale,
Your lips breathed wilder music in my blood.

Still, as of old, I watch the kingly ships,
Like far and fallen stars their lanterns gleam
Where I no more may follow; I who dream,
The conqueror and the captive of your lips.

I knew, when first your eyes met mine, despair;
Dreamed all the hidden sorrow of the sea—
O stars of my last shipwreck, let them be
Drowned with my heart deep in your golden hair!

31

Song

The wild bee swarms go drifting by
In thunder through the odorous flowers,
But all unknown, untasted die
The blossoms of our withering hours.
Then ere it slip
Lift to your lip
The rose of passion, lest you be
Less wise than the wild brown bee.

Lay by, lay by the tangled skein
You weave of scorn and bitter words,
And come where forest boughs are green
And clamorous with sweet-throated birds.
In a green cloak
The ancient oak
Dreams he is young, and shall we be
Less wise than a crooked tree!

32

The Crucified

Here many hearts have bowed, and I will bow
Beneath the one lamp's pale and steadfast gleam,
Before the altar: quiet enfold me now,
And like the smoke of myrrh fade the world's
 passionate dream.
The heart's desire, the rose of longing dies,
Flames of sad thought-consume the body's pride,
The thorn-crowned brow is mine, the expiring eyes,
The thin palms pierced with nails, the wounded side.

33

Credo

There is a holier god within my mind
Than in the sacramental bread and wine,
His ritual is the chanting of the wind,
 Among the solemn pine.

His are the mightier silences that drowse
Upon lone waters where no sea-birds call;
To him the moss-gray, ancient, forest boughs
 In worship rise and fall.

Before his face incense and myrrh drift high
From the white rose upon my lattice-bars,
And he has consecrated with a sigh
 The priesthood of the stars.

THE POEMS OF CHARLES
BAUDELAIRE. SELECTED
AND TRANSLATED FROM
THE FRENCH, WITH AN INTRO-
DUCTORY STUDY, BY F. P. STURM.

[1906]

I dedicate to
my father and mother
this interpretation
of a great poet.

The Flowers of Evil

34

The Dance of Death

Carrying bouquet, and handkerchief, and gloves,
Proud of her height as when she lived, she moves
With all the careless and high-stepping grace,
And the extravagant courtesan's thin face.

Was slimmer waist e'er in a ball-room wooed?
Her floating robe, in royal amplitude,
Falls in deep folds, around a dry foot, shod
With a bright flower-like shoe that gems the sod.

The swarms that hum about her collar-bones
As the lascivious streams caress the stones,
Conceal from every scornful jest that flies,
Her gloomy beauty; and her fathomless eyes

Are made of shade and void; with flowery sprays
Her skull is wreathed artistically, and sways,
Feeble and weak, on her frail vertebrae.
O charm of nothing decked in folly! they

Who laugh and name you a Caricature,
They see not, they whom flesh and blood allure,
The nameless grace of every bleached, bare bone,
That is most dear to me, tall skeleton!

Come you to trouble with your potent sneer
The feast of Life! or are you driven here,
To Pleasure's Sabbath, by dead lusts that stir
And goad your moving corpse on with a spur?

Or do you hope, when sing the violins,
And the pale candle-flame lights up our sins,
To drive some mocking nightmare far apart,
And cool the flame hell lighted in your heart?

Fathomless well of fault and foolishness!
Eternal alembic of antique distress!
Still o'er the curved, white trellis of your sides
The sateless, wandering serpent curls and glides.

And truth to tell, I fear lest you should find,
Among us here, no lover to your mind;
Which of these hearts beat for the smile you gave?
The charms of horror please none but the the brave.

Your eyes' black gulf, where awful broodings stir,
Brings giddiness; the prudent reveller
Sees, while a horror grips him from beneath,
The eternal smile of thirty-two white teeth.

For he who has not folded in his arms
A skeleton, nor fed on graveyard charms,
Recks not of furbelow, or paint, or scent,
When Horror comes the way that Beauty went.

O irresistible, with fleshless face,
Say to these dancers in their dazzled race:
"Proud lovers with the paint above your bones,
Ye shall taste death, musk-scented skeletons!"

Withered Antinoös, dandies with plump faces,
Ye varnished cadavers, and grey Lovelaces,
Ye go to lands unknown and void of breath,
Drawn by the rumour of the Dance of Death.

From Seine's cold quays to Ganges' burning stream,
The mortal troupes dance onward in a dream;
They do not see, within the opened sky,
The Angel's sinister trumpet raised on high.

In every clime and under every sun,
Death laughs at ye, mad mortals, as ye run;
And oft perfumes herself with myrrh, like ye;
And mingles with your madness, irony!"

Rubens, oblivious garden of indolence,
Pillow of cool flesh where no man dreams of love,
Where life flows forth in troubled opulence,
As airs in heaven and seas in ocean move.

Léonardo da Vinci, sombre and fathomless glass,
Where lovely angels with calm lips that smile,
Heavy with mystery, in the shadow pass,
Among the ice and pine that guard some isle.

Rembrandt, sad hospital that a murmuring fills,
Where one tall curcifix hangs on the walls,
Where every tear-drowned prayer some woe distills,
And one cold, wintry ray obliquely falls.

Strong Michelangelo, a vague far place
Where mingle Christs with pagan Hercules;
Thin phantoms of the great through twilight pace,
And tear their shroud with clenched hands void of ease.

The fighter's anger, the faun's impudence,
Thou makest of all these a lovely thing;
Proud heart, sick body, mind's magnificence:
Puget, the convict's melancholy king.

Watteau, the carnival of illustrious hearts,
Fluttering like moths upon the wings of chance;
Bright lustres light the silk that flames and darts,
And pour down folly on the whirling dance.

Goya, a nightmare full of things unknown;
The foetus witches broil on Sabbath night;
Old women at the mirror; children lone
Who tempt old demons with their limbs delight.

Delacroix, lake of blood ill angels haunt,
Where ever-green, o'ershadowing woods arise;
Under the surly heaven strange fanfares chaunt
And pass, like one of Weber's strangled sighs.

And malediction, blasphemy and groan,
Ecstasies, cries, Te Deums, and tears of brine,
Are echoes through a thousand labyrinths flown;
For mortal hearts an opiate divine;

A shout cried by a thousand sentinels,
An order from a thousand bugles tossed,
A beacon o'er a thousand citadels,
A call to huntsmen in deep woodlands lost.

It is the mightiest witness that could rise
To prove our dignity, O Lord, to Thee;
This sob that rolls from age to age, and dies
Upon the verge of Thy Eternity!

36

The Sadness of the Moon

The Moon more indolently dreams to-night
Than a fair woman on her couch at rest,
Caressing, with a hand distraught and light,
Before she sleeps, the contour of her breast.

Upon her silken avalanche of down,
Dying she breathes a long and swooning sigh;
And watches the white visions past her flown,
Which rise like blossoms to the azure sky.

And when, at times, wrapped in her langour deep,
Earthward she lets a furtive tear-drop flow,
Some pious poet, enemy of sleep,

Takes in his hollow hand the tear of snow
Whence gleams of iris and of opal start,
And hides it from the Sun, deep in his heart.

37

Exotic Perfume

When with closed eyes in autumn's eves of gold
I breathe the burning odours of your breast,
Before my eyes the hills of happy rest
Bathed in the sun's monotonous fires, unfold.

Islands of Lethe where exotic boughs
Bend with their burden of strange fruit bowed down,
Where men are upright, maids have never grown
Unkind, but bear a light upon their brows.

Led by that perfume to these lands of ease,
I see a port where many ships have flown
With sails outwearied of the wandering seas;

While the faint odours from green tamarisks blown,
Float to my soul and in my senses throng,
And mingle vaguely with the sailor's song.

38

Beauty

I am as lovely as a dream in stone,
And this my heart where each finds death in turn,
Inspires the poet with a love as lone
As clay eternal and as taciturn.

Swan-white of heart, a sphinx no mortal knows,
My throne is in the heaven's azure deep;
I hate all movements that disturb my pose,
I smile not ever, neither do I weep.

Before my monumental attitudes,
That breathe a soul into the plastic arts,
My poets pray in austere studious moods,

For I, to fold enchantment round their hearts,
Have pools of light where beauty flames and dies,
The placid mirrors of my luminous eyes.

The Balcony

Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses,
O thou, my pleasure, thou, all my desire,
Thou shalt recall the beauty of caresses,
The charm of evenings by the gentle fire,
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses!

The eves illumined by the burning coal,
The balcony where veiled rose-vapour clings—
How soft your breast was then, how sweet your soul!
Ah, and we said imperishable things,
Those eves illumined by the burning coal.

Lovely the suns were in those twilights warm,
And space profound, and strong life's pulsing flood,
In bending o'er you, queen of every charm,
I thought I breathed the perfume in your blood.
The suns were beauteous in those twilights warm.

The film of night flowed round and over us,
And my eyes in the dark did your eyes meet;
I drank your breath, ah! sweet and poisonous,
And in my hands fraternal slept your feet—
Night, like a film, flowed round and over us.

I can recall those happy days forgot,
And see, with head bowed on your knees, my past.
Your languid beauties now would move me not
Did not your gentle heart and body cast
The old spell of those happy days forgot.

Can vows and perfumes, kisses infinite,
Be reborn from the gulf we cannot sound;
As rise to heaven suns once again made bright
After being plunged in deep seas and profound?
Ah, vows and perfumes, kisses infinite!

40

The Sick Muse

Poor muse, alas, what ails thee, then, to-day?
Thy hollow eyes with midnight visions burn,
Upon thy brow in alternation play,
Folly and Horror, cold and taciturn.

Have the green lemur and the goblin red,
Poured on thee love and terror from their urn?
Or with despotic hand the nightmare dread
Deep plunged thee in some fabulous Minturne?

Would that thy breast where so deep thoughts arise,
Breathed forth a healthful perfume with thy sighs;
Would that thy Christian blood ran wave by wave

In rhythmic sounds the antique numbers gave,
When Phoebus shared his alternating reign
With mighty Pan, lord of the ripening grain.

41

The Venal Muse

Muse of my heart, lover of palaces,
When January comes with wind and sleet,
During the snowy eve's long wearinesses,
Will there be fire to warm thy violet feet?

Wilt thou reanimate thy marble shoulders
In the moon-beams that through the window fly?
Or when thy purse dries up, thy palace moulders,
Reap the far star-gold of the vaulted sky?

For thou, to keep thy body to thy soul,
Must swing a censer, wear a holy stole,
And chaunt Te Deums with unbelief between.

Or, like a starving mountebank, expose
Thy beauty and thy tear-drowned smile to those
Who wait thy jests to drive away thy spleen.

42

The Evil Monk

The ancient cloisters on their lofty walls
Had holy Truth in painted frescoes shown,
And, seeing these, the pious in those halls
Felt their cold, lone austereness less alone.

At that time when Christ's seed flowered all around,
More than one monk, forgotten in his hour,
Taking for studio the burial-ground,
Glorified Death with simple faith and power.

And my soul is a sepulchre where I,
Ill cenobite, have spent eternity:
On the vile cloister walls no pictures rise.

O when may I cast off this weariness,
And make the pageant of my old distress
For these hands labour, pleasure for these eyes?

43

The Temptation

The Demon, in my chamber high,
This morning came to visit me,
And, thinking he would find some fault,
He whispered: "I would know of thee

Among the many lovely things
That make the magic of her face,
Among the beauties, black and rose,
That make her body's charm and grace,

Which is most fair?" Thou didst reply
To the Abhorred, O soul of mine:
"No single beauty is the best
When she is all one flower divine.

When all things charm me I ignore
Which one alone brings most delight;
She shines before me like the dawn,
And she consoles me like the night.

The harmony is far too great,
That governs all her body fair,
For impotence to analyse
And say which note is sweetest there.

O mystic metamorphosis!
My senses into one sense flow--
Her voice makes perfume when she speaks,
Her breath is music faint and low!"

44

The Irreparable

Can we suppress the old Remorse
Who bends our heart beneath his stroke,
Who feeds, as worms feed on the corse,
Or as the acorn on the oak?
Can we suppress the old Remorse?

Ah, in what philtre, wine, or spell,
May we drown this our ancient foe,
Destructive glutton, gorging well,
Patient as the ants, and slow?
What wine, what philtre, or what spell?

Tell it, enchantress, if you can,
Tell me, with anguish overcast,
Wounded, as a dying man,
Beneath the swift hoofs hurrying past.
Tell it, enchantress, if you can,

To him the wolf already tears
Who sees the carrion pinions wave
This broken warrior who despairs
To have a cross above his grave—
This wretch the wolf already tears.

Can one illume a leaden sky,
Or tear apart the shadowy veil
Thicker than pitch, no star on high,
Not one funereal glimmer pale?
Can one illume a leaden sky?

Hope lit the windows of the Inn,
But now that shining flame is dead;
And how shall martyred pilgrims win
Along the moonless road they tread?
Satan has darkened all the Inn!

Witch, do you love accursèd hearts?
Say, do you know the reprobate?
Know you Remorse, whose venom'd darts
Make souls the targets for their hate?
Witch, do you know accursèd hearts?

The Might-have-been with tooth accursed
Gnaws at the piteous souls of men,
The deep foundations suffer first,
And all the structure crumbles then
Beneath the bitter tooth accursed.

II

Often, when seated at the play,
And sonorous music lights the stage,
I see the frail hand of a Fay
With magic dawn illume the rage
Of the dark sky. Oft at the play

A being made of gauze and fire
Casts to the earth a Demon great.
And my heart, whence all hopes expire,
Is like a stage where I await,
In vain, the Fay with wings of fire!

45

A Former Life

Long since, I lived beneath vast porticoes,
By many ocean-sunsets tinged and fired,
Where mighty pillars, in majestic rows,
Seemed like basaltic caves when day expired.

The rolling surge that mirrored all the skies
Mingled its music, turbulent and rich,
Solemn and mystic, with the colours which
The setting sun reflected in my eyes.

And there I lived amid voluptuous calms,
In splendours of blue sky and wandering wave,
Tended by many a naked, perfumed slave,

Who fanned my languid brow with waving palms.
They were my slaves—the only care they had
To know what secret grief had made me sad.

46

Don Juan in Hades

When Juan sought the subterranean flood,
And paid his obolus on the Stygian shore,
Charon, the proud and sombre beggar, stood
With one strong, vengeful hand on either oar.

With open robes and bodies agonised,
Lost women writhed beneath that darkling sky;
There were sounds as of victims sacrificed:
Behind him all the dark was one long cry.

And Sganarelle, with laughter, claimed his pledge;
Don Luis, with trembling finger in the air,
Showed to the souls who wandered in the sedge
The evil son who scorned his hoary hair.

Shivering with woe, chaste Elvira the while,
Near him untrue to all but her till now,
Seemed to beseech him for one farewell smile
Lit with the sweetness of the first soft vow.

And clad in armour, a tall man of stone
Held firm the helm, and clove the gloomy flood;
But, staring at the vessel's track alone,
Bent on his sword the unmoved hero stood.

47

The Living Flame

They pass before me, these Eyes full of light,
Eyes made magnetic by some angel wise;
The holy brothers pass before my sight,
And cast their diamond fires in my dim eyes.

They keep me from all sin and error grave,
They set me in the path whence Beauty came;
They are my servants, and I am their slave,
And all my soul obeys the living flame.

Beautiful Eyes that gleam with mystic light
As candles lighted at full noon; the sun
Dims not your flame phantastical and bright.

You sing the dawn; they celebrate life done;
Marching you chaunt my soul's awakening hymn,
Stars that no sun has ever made grow dim!

48

Correspondences

In Nature's temple living pillars rise,
And words are murmured none have understood,
And man must wander through a tangled wood
Of symbols watching him with friendly eyes.

As long-drawn echoes heard ~~from~~ far-off and dim
Mingle to one deep sound and fade away;
Vast as the night and brilliant as the day,
Colour and sound and perfume speak to him.

Some perfumes are as fragrant as a child,
Sweet as the sound of hautboys, meadow-green;
Others, corrupted, rich, exultant, wild,

Have all the expansion of things infinite:
As amber, incense, musk, and benzoin,
Which sing the senses and the soul's delight.

The Flask

There are some powerful odours that can pass
Out of the stoppered flagon; even glass
To them is porous. Oft when some old box
Brought from the East is opened and the locks
And hinges creak and cry; or in a press
In some deserted house, where the sharp stress
Of odours old and dusty fills the brain;
An ancient flask is brought to light again,
And forth the ghosts of long-dead odours creep.
There, softly trembling in the shadows, sleep
A thousand thoughts, funereal chrysalides,
Phantoms of old the folding darkness hides,
Who make faint flutterings as their wings unfold,
Rose-washed and azure-tinted, shot with gold.

A memory that brings languor flutters here:
The fainting eyelids droop, and giddy Fear
Thrusts with both hands the soul towards the pit
Where, like a Lazarus from his winding-sheet,
Arises from the gulf of sleep a ghost
Of an old passion, long since loved and lost.
So I, when vanished from man's memory
Deep in some dark and sombre chest I lie,
An empty flagon they have cast aside,
Broken and soiled, the dust upon my pride,
Will be your shroud, beloved pestilence!
The witness of your might and virulence,
Sweet poison mixed by angels; bitter cup
Of life and death my heart has drunken up!

Reversibility

Angel of gaiety, have you tasted grief?
Shame and remorse and sobs and weary spite,
And the vague terrors of the fearful night
That crush the heart up like a crumpled leaf?
Angel of gaiety, have you tasted grief?

Angel of kindness, have you tasted hate?
With hands clenched in the shade and tears of gall,
When Vengeance beats her hellish battle-call,
And makes herself the captain of our fate,
Angel of kindness, have you tasted hate?

Angel of health, did ever you know pain,
Which like an exile trails his tired footfalls
The cold length of the white infirmity walls,
With lips compressed, seeking the sun in vain?
Angel of health, did ever you know pain?

Angel of beauty, do you wrinkles know?
Know you the fear of age, the torment vile
Of reading secret horror in the smile
Of eyes your eyes have loved since long ago?
Angel of beauty, do you wrinkles know?

Angel of happiness, and joy, and light,
Old David would have asked for youth afresh
From the pure touch of your enchanted flesh;
I but implore your prayers to aid my plight,
Angel of happiness, and joy, and light.

51

The Eyes of Beauty

You are a sky of autumn, pale and rose;
But all the sea of sadness in my blood
Surges, and ebbing, leaves my lips morose,
Salt with the memory of the bitter flood.

In vain your hand glides my faint bosom o'er,
That which you seek, beloved, is desecrate
By woman's tooth and talon; ah, no more
Seek in me for a heart which those dogs ate.

It is a ruin where the jackals rest,
And rend and tear and glut themselves and slay—
A perfume swims about your naked breast!

Beauty, hard scourge of spirits, have your way!
With flame-like eyes that at bright feasts have flared
Burn up these tatters that the beasts have spared!

52

Sonnet of Autumn

They say to me, thy clear and crystal eyes:
"Why dost thou love me so, strange lover mine?"
Be sweet, be still! My heart and soul despise
All save that antique brute-like faith of thine;

And will not bear the secret of their shame
To thee whose hand soothes me to slumbers long,
Nor their black legend write for thee in flame!
Passion I hate, a spirit does me wrong.

Let us love gently. Love, from his retreat,
Ambushed and shadowy, bends his fatal bow,
And I too well his ancient arrows know:

Crime, horror, folly. O pale marguerite,
Thou art as I, a bright sun fallen low,
O my so white, my so cold Marguerite.

53

The Remorse of the Dead

O shadowy Beauty mine, when thou shalt sleep
In the deep heart of a black marble tomb;
When thou for mansion and for bower shalt keep
Only one rainy cave of hollow gloom;

And when the stone upon thy trembling breast,
And on thy straight sweet body's supple grace,
Crushes thy will and keeps thy heart at rest,
And holds those feet from their adventurous race;

Then the deep grave, who shares my reverie,
(For the deep grave is aye the poet's friend)
During long nights when sleep is far from thee,

Shall whisper: "Ah, thou didst not comprehend
The dead wept thus, thou woman frail and weak"—
And like remorse the worm shall gnaw thy cheek.

54

The Ghost

Softly as brown-eyed Angels rove
I will return to thy alcove,
And glide upon the night to thee,
Treading the shadows silently.

And I will give to thee, my own,
Kisses as icy as the moon,
And the caresses of a snake
Cold gliding in the thorny brake.

And when returns the livid morn
Thou shalt find all my place forlorn
And chilly, till the falling night.

Others would rule by tenderness
Over thy life and youthfulness,
But I would conquer thee by fright!

(An Ex-Voto in the Spanish taste.)

Madonna, mistress, I would build for thee
An altar deep in the sad soul of me;
And in the darkest corner of my heart,
From mortal hopes and mocking eyes apart,
Carve of enamelled blue and gold a shrine
For thee to stand erect in, Image divine!
And with a mighty Crown thou shalt be crowned
Wrought of the gold of my smooth Verse, set round
With starry crystal rhymes; and I will make,
O mortal maid, a Mantle for thy sake,
And weave it of my jealousy, a gown
Heavy, barbaric, stiff, and weighted down
With my distrust, and broider round the hem
Not pearls, but all my tears in place of them.
And then thy wavering, trembling robe shall be
All the desires that rise and fall in me
From mountain-peaks to valleys of repose,
Kissing thy lovely body's white and rose.
For thy humiliated feet divine,
Of my Respect I'll make thee Slippers fine
Which, prisoning them within a gentle fold,
Shall keep their imprint like a faithful mould.
And if my art, unwearying and discreet,
Can make no Moon of Silver for thy feet
To have for Footstool, then thy heel shall rest
Upon the snake that gnaws within my breast,
Victorious Queen of whom our hope is born!
And thou shalt trample down and make a scorn
Of the vile reptile swollen up with hate.
And thou shalt see my thoughts, all consecrate,
Like candles set before thy flower-strewn shrine,
O queen of Virgins, and the taper-shine
Shall glimmer star-like in the vault of blue,
With eyes of flame for ever watching you.
While all the love and worship in my sense
Will be sweet smoke of myrrh and frankincense.
Ceaselessly up to thee, white peak of snow,
My stormy spirit will in vapours go!

And last, to make thy drama all complete,
That love and cruelty may mix and meet,
I, thy remorseful torturer, will take
All the Seven Deadly Sins, and from them make
In darkest joy, Seven Knives, cruel-edged and keen,
And like a juggler choosing, O my Queen,
That spot profound whence love and mercy start,
I'll plunge them all within thy panting heart!

56

The Sky

Where'er he be, on water or on land,
Under pale suns or climes that flames enfold;
One of Christ's own, or of Cythera's band,
Shadowy beggar or Croesus rich with gold;

Citizen, peasant, student, tramp; whate'er
His little brain may be, alive or dead;
Man knows the fear of mystery everywhere,
And peeps, with trembling glances, overhead.

The heaven above? A strangling cavern wall;
The lighted ceiling of a music-hall
Where every actor treads a bloody soil—

The hermit's hope; the terror of the sot;
The sky: the black lid of the mighty pot
Where the vast human generations boil!

57

Spleen

I'm like some king in whose corrupted veins
Flows aged blood; who rules a land of rains;
Who, young in years, is old in all distress;
Who flees good counsel to find weariness
Among his dogs and playthings, who is stirred
Neither by hunting-hound nor hunting-bird;
Whose weary face emotion moves no more
E'en when his people die before his door.
His favourite Jester's most fantastic wile
Upon that sick, cruel face can raise no smile;
The courtly dames, to whom all kings are good,
Can lighten this young skeleton's dull mood
No more with shameless toilets. In his gloom
Even his lilled bed becomes a tomb.
The sage who takes his gold essays in vain
To purge away the old corrupted strain,
His baths of blood, that in the days of old
The Romans used when their hot blood grew cold,
Will never warm this dead man's bloodless pains,
For green Lethean water fills his veins.

58

The Owls

Under the overhanging yews,
The dark owls sit in solemn state,
Like stranger gods; by twos and twos
Their red eyes gleam. They meditate.

Motionless thus they sit and dream
Until that melancholy hour
When, with the sun's last fading gleam,
The nightly shades assume their power.

From their still attitude the wise
Will learn with terror to despise
All tumult, movement, and unrest;

For he who follows every shade,
Carries the memory in his breast,
Of each unhappy journey made.

59

Bien loin d'Ici

Here is the chamber consecrate,
Wherein this maiden delicate,
And enigmatically sedate,

Fans herself while the moments creep,
Upon her cushions half-asleep,
And hears the fountains plash and weep.

Dorothy's chamber undefiled.
The winds and waters sing afar
Their song of sighing strange and wild
To lull to sleep the petted child.

From head to foot with subtle care,
Slaves have perfumed her delicate skin
With odorous oils and benzoin.
And flowers faint in a corner there.

60

Music

Music doth oft uplift me like a sea
Towards my planet pale,
Then through dark fogs or heaven's infinity
I lift my wandering sail.

With breast advanced, drinking the winds that flee,
And through the cordage wail,
I mount the hurrying waves night hides from me
Beneath her sombre veil.

I feel the tremblings of all passions known
To ship before the breeze;
Cradled by gentle winds, or tempest-blown

I pass the abysmal seas
That are, when calm, the mirror level and fair
Of my despair!

61

Contemplation

Thou, O my Grief, be wise and tranquil still,
The eve is thine which even now drops down,
To carry peace or care to human will,
And in a misty veil enfolds the town.

While the vile mortals of the multitude,
By pleasure, cruel tormentor, goaded on,
Gather remorseful blossoms in light mood—
Grief, place thy hand in mine, let us be gone

Far from them. Lo, see how the vanished years,
In robes outworn lean over heaven's rim;
And from the water, smiling through her tears,

Remorse arises, and the sun grows dim;
And in the east, her long shroud trailing light,
List, O my Grief, the gentle steps of Night.

62

To A Brown Beggar-maid

White maiden with the russet hair,
Whose garments, through their holes, declare
That poverty is part of you,
And beauty too.

To me, a sorry bard and mean,
Your youthful beauty, frail and lean,
With summer freckles here and there,
Is sweet and fair.

Your sabots tread the roads of chance,
And not one queen of old romance
Carried her velvet shoes and lace
With half your grace.

In place of tatters far too short
Let the proud garments worn at Court
Fall down with rustling fold and pleat
About your feet;

In place of stockings, worn and old,
Let a keen dagger all of gold
Gleam in your garter for the eyes
Of roués wise;

Let ribbons carelessly untied
Reveal to us the radiant pride
Of your white bosom purer far
Than any star;

Let your white arms uncovered shine,
Polished and smooth and half divine;
And let your elfish fingers chase
With riotous grace

The purest pearls that softly glow,
The sweetest sonnets of Belleau,
Offered by gallants ere they fight
For your delight;

And many fawning rhymers who
Inscribe their first thin book to you
Will contemplate upon the stair
Your slipper fair;

And many a page who plays at cards,
And many lords and many bards,
Will watch your going forth, and burn
For your return;

And you will count before your glass
More kisses than the lily has;
And more than one Valois will sigh
When you pass by.

But meanwhile you are on the tramp,
Begging your living in the damp,
Wandering mean streets and alleys o'er,
From door to door;

And shilling bangles in a shop
Cause you with eager eyes to stop,
And I, alas, have not a sou
To give to you.

Then go, with no more ornament,
Pearl, diamond, or subtle scent,
Than your own fragile naked grace
And lovely face.

The Swan

Andromache, I think of you! The stream,
The poor, sad mirror where in bygone days
Shone all the majesty of your widowed grief,
The lying Simois flooded by your tears,
Made all my fertile memory blossom forth
As I passed by the new-built Carrousel.
Old Paris is no more (a town, alas,
Changes more quickly than man's heart may change);
Yet in my mind I still can see the booths;
The heaps of brick and rough-hewn capitals;
The grass; the stones all over-green with moss;
The débris, and the square-set heaps of tiles.

There a menagerie was once outspread;
And there I saw, one morning at the hour
When toil awakes beneath the cold, clear sky,
And the road roars upon the silent air,
A swan who had escaped his cage, and walked
On the dry pavement with his webby feet,
And trailed his spotless plumage on the ground.
And near a waterless stream the piteous swan
Opened his beak, and bathing in the dust,
His nervous wings, he cried (his heart the while
Filled with a vision of his own fair lake):
"O water, when then wilt thou come in rain?
Lightning, when wilt thou glitter?"

Sometimes yet
I see the hapless bird—strange, fatal myth—
Like him that Ovid writes of, lifting up
Unto the cruelly blue, ironic heavens,
With stretched, convulsive neck a thirsty face,
As though he sent reproaches up to God!

II

Paris may change; my melancholy is fixed.
New palaces, and scaffoldings, and blocks,
And suburbs old, are symbols all to me
Whose memories are as heavy as a stone.
And so, before the Louvre, to vex my soul,
The image came of my majestic swan
With his mad gestures, foolish and sublime,
As of an exile whom one great desire
Gnaws with no truce. And then I thought of you,
Andromache! torn from your hero's arms;
Beneath the hand of Pyrrhus in his pride;
Bent o'er an empty tomb in ecstasy;
Widow of Hector—wife of Helenus!
And of the negress, wan and phthisical,
Tramping the mud, and with her haggard eyes
Seeking beyond the mighty walls of fog
The absent palm-trees of proud Africa;
Of all who lose that which they never find;
Of all who drink of tears; all whom grey grief
Gives suck to as the kindly wolf gave suck;
Of meagre orphans who like blossoms fade.
And one old Memory like a crying horn
Sounds through the forest where my soul is lost ...
I think of sailors on some isle forgotten;
Of captives; vanquished ...and of many more.

The Seven Old Men

O swarming city, city full of dreams,
Where in full day the spectre walks and speaks;
Mighty colossus, in your narrow veins
My story flows as flows the rising sap.

One morn, disputing with my tired soul,
And like a hero stiffening all my nerves,
I trod a suburb shaken by the jar
Of rolling wheels, where the fog magnified
The houses either side of that sad street,
So they seemed like two wharves the ebbing flood
Leaves desolate by the river-side. A mist,
Unclean and yellow, inundated space—
A scene that would have pleased an actor's soul.
Then suddenly an aged man, whose rags
Were yellow as the rainy sky, whose looks
Should have brought alms in floods upon his head,
Without the misery gleaming in his eye,
Appeared before me; and his pupils seemed
To have been washed with gall; the bitter frost
Sharpened his glance; and from his chin a beard
Sword-stiff and ragged, Judas-like stuck forth.
He was not bent but broken: his backbone
Made a so true right angle with his legs,
That, as he walked, the tapping stick which gave
The finish to the picture, made him seem
Like some infirm and stumbling quadruped
Or a three-legged Jew. Through snow and mud
He walked with troubled and uncertain gait,
As though his sabots trod upon the dead,
Indifferent and hostile to the world.

His double followed him: tatters and stick
And back and eye and beard, all were the same;
Out of the same Hell, indistinguishable,
These centenarian twins, these spectres odd,
Trode the same pace toward some end unknown.
To what fell complot was I then exposed?
Humiliated by what evil chance?
For as the minutes one by one went by
Seven times I saw this sinister old man
Repeat his image there before my eyes!

Let him who smiles at my inquietude,
Who never trembled at a fear like mine,
Know that in their decrepitude's despite
These seven old hideous monsters had the mien
Of beings immortal.

Then, I thought, must I,
Undying, contemplate the awful eighth;
Inexorable, fatal, and ironic double;
Disgusting Phoenix, father of himself
And his own son? In terror then I turned
My back upon the infernal band, and fled
To my own place, and closed my door; distraught
And like a drunkard who sees all things twice,
With feverish troubled spirit, chilly and sick,
Wounded by mystery and absurdity!

In vain my reason tried to cross the bar,
The whirling storm but drove her back again;
And my soul tossed, and tossed, an outworn wreck,
Mastless, upon a monstrous, shoreless sea.

Deep in the tortuous folds of ancient towns,
Where all, even horror, to enchantment turns,
I watch, obedient to my fatal mood,
For the decrepit, strange and charming beings,
The dislocated monsters that of old
Were lovely women—Làis or Eponine!
Hunchbacked and broken, crooked though they be,
Let us still love them, for they still have souls.
They creep along wrapped in their chilly rags,
Beneath the whipping of the wicked wind,
They tremble when an omnibus rolls by,
And at their sides, a relic of the past,
A little flower-embroidered satchel hangs.
They trot about, most like to marionettes;
They drag themselves, as does a wounded beast;
Or dance unwillingly as a clapping bell
Where hangs and swings a demon without pity.
Though they be broken they have piercing eyes,
That shine like pools where water sleeps at night;
The astonished and divine eyes of a child
Who laughs at all that glitters in the world.

Have you not seen that most old women's shrouds
Are little like the shroud of a dead child?
Wise Death, in token of his happy whim,
Wraps old and young in one enfolding sheet.
And when I see a phantom, frail and wan
Traverse the swarming picture that is Paris,
It ever seems as though the delicate thing
Trod with soft steps towards a cradle new.
And then I wonder, seeing the twisted form,
How many times must workmen change the shape
Of boxes where at length such limbs are laid?
These eyes are wells brimmed with a million tears;
Crucibles where the cooling metal pales—
Mysterious eyes that are strong charms to him
Whose life-long nurse has been austere Disaster.

II

The love-sick vestal of the old "Frascati";
Priestess of Thalia, alas! whose name
Only the prompter knows and he is dead;
Bygone celebrities that in bygone days
The Tivoli o'ershadowed in their bloom;
All charm me; yet among these beings frail
Three, turning pain to honey-sweetness, said
To the Devotion that had lent them wings:
"Lift me, O powerful Hippogriffe, to the skies"—
One by her country to despair was driven;
One by her husband overwhelmed with grief;
One wounded by her child, Madonna-like;
Each could have made a river with her tears.

III

Oft have I followed one of these old women,
One among others, when the falling sun
Reddened the heavens with a crimson wound—
Pensive, apart, she rested on a bench
To hear the brazen music of the band,
Played by the soldiers in the public park
To pour some courage into citizen's hearts,
On golden eves when all the world revives.
Proud and erect she drank the music in,
The lively and the warlike call to arms;
Her eyes blinked like an ancient eagle's eyes;
Her forehead seemed to await the laurel crown!

IV

Thus you do wander, uncomplaining Stoics,
Through all the chaos of the living town:
Mothers with bleeding hearts, saints, courtesans,
Whose names of yore were on the lips of all;
Who were all glory and all grace, and now
None know you; and the brutish drunkard stops,
Insulting you with his derisive love;
And cowardly urchins call behind your back.
Ashamed of living, withered shadows all,
With fear-bowed backs you creep beside the walls,
And none salute you, destined to loneliness!
Refuse of Time ripe for Eternity!
But I, who watch you tenderly afar,
With unquiet eyes on your uncertain steps,
As though I were your father, I—O wonder!—
Unknown to you taste secret, hidden joy.
I see your maiden passions bud and bloom,
Sombre or luminous, and your lost days
Unroll before me while my heart enjoys
All your old vices, and my soul expands
To all the virtues that have once been yours.
Ruined! and my sisters! O congenerate hearts,
Octogenarian Eves o'er whom is stretched
God's awful claw, where will you be to-morrow?

A Madrigal of Sorrow

What do I care though you be wise?
Be sad, be beautiful; your tears
But add one more charm to your eyes,
As streams to valleys where they rise;
And fairer every flower appears

After the storm. I love you most
When joy has fled your brow downcast;
When your heart is in horror lost,
And o'er your present like a ghost
Floats the dark shadow of the past.

I love you when the teardrop flows,
Hotter than blood, from your large eye;
When I would hush you to repose
Your heavy pain breaks forth and grows
Into a loud and tortured cry.

And then, voluptuousness divine!
Delicious ritual and profound!
I drink in every sob like wine,
And dream that in your deep heart shine
The pearls wherein your eyes were drowned.

I know your heart, which overflows
With outworn loves long cast aside,
Still like a furnace flames and glows,
And you within your breast enclose
A damned soul's unbending pride;

But till your dreams without release
Reflect the leaping flames of hell;
Till in a nightmare without cease
You dream of poison to bring peace,
And love cold steel and powder well;

And tremble at each opened door,
And feel for every man distrust,
And shudder at the striking hour—
Till then you have not felt the power
Of Irresistible Disgust.

My queen, my slave, whose love is fear,
When you awaken shuddering,
Until that awful hour be here,
You cannot say at midnight dream:
"I am your equal, O my King!"

67

The Ideal

Not all the beauties in old prints vignetted,
The worthless products of an outworn age,
With slippered feet and fingers castanetted,
The thirst of hearts like this heart can assuage.

To Gavarni, the poet of chloroses,
I leave his troupes of beauties sick and wan;
I cannot find among these pale, pale roses,
The red ideal mine eyes would gaze upon.

Lady Macbeth, the lovely star of crime,
The Greek poet's dream born in a northern clime—
Ah, she could quench my dark heart's deep desiring;

Or Michelangelo's dark daughter Night,
In a strange posture dreamily admiring
Her beauty fashioned for a giant's delight!

68

Mist and Rain

Autumns and winters, springs of mire and rain,
Seasons of sleep, I sing your praises loud,
For thus I love to wrap my heart and brain
In some dim tomb beneath a vapoury shroud

In the wide plain where revels the cold wind,
Through long nights when the weathercock whirls round,
More free than in warm summer day my mind
Lifts wide her raven pinions from the ground.

Unto a heart filled with funereal things
That since old days hoar frosts have gathered on,
Naught is more sweet, O pallid, queenly springs,

Than the long pageant of your shadows wan,
Unless it be on moonless eves to weep
On some chance bed and rock our griefs to sleep.

69

Sunset

Fair is the sun when first he flames above,
Flinging his joy down in a happy beam;
And happy he who can salute with love
The sunset far more glorious than a dream.

Flower, stream, and furrow!—I have seen them all
In the sun's eye swoon like one trembling heart—
Though it be late let us with speed depart
To catch at least one last ray ere it fall!

But I pursue the fading god in vain,
For conquering Night makes firm her dark domain,
Mist and gloom fall, and terrors glide between,

And graveyard odours in the shadows swim,
And my faint footsteps on the marsh's rim,
Bruise the cold snail and crawling toad unseen.

70

The Corpse

Remember, my Beloved, what thing we met
By the roadside on that sweet summer day;
There on a grassy couch with pebbles set,
A loathsome body lay.

The wanton limbs stiff-stretched into the air,
Steaming with exhalations vile and dank,
In ruthless cynic fashion had laid bare
The swollen side and flank.

On this decay the sun shone hot from heaven
As though with chemic heat to broil and burn,
And unto Nature all that she had given
A hundredfold return.

The sky smiled down upon the horror there
As on a flower that opens to the day;
So awful an infection smote the air,
Almost you swooned away.

The swarming flies hummed on the putrid side,
Whence poured the maggots in a darkling stream,
That ran along these tatters of life's pride
With a liquescent gleam.

And like a wave the maggots rose and fell,
The murmuring flies swirled round in busy strife:
It seemed as though a vague breath came to swell
And multiply with life

The hideous corpse. From all this living world
A music as of wind and water ran,
Or as ~~of~~ grain in rhythmic motion swirled
By the swift winnower's fan.

And then the vague forms like a dream died out,
Or like some distant scene that slowly falls
Upon the artists canvas, that with doubt
He only half recalls.

A homeless dog behind the boulders lay
And watched us both with angry eyes forlorn,
Waiting a chance to come and take away
The morsel she had torn.

. . .

And you, even you, will be like this drear thing,
A vile infection man may not endure;
Star that I yearn to! Sun that lights my spring!
O passionate and pure!

Yes, such will you be, Queen of every grace!
When the last sacramental words are said;
And beneath grass and flowers that lovely face
Moulders among the dead.

Then, O Belovèd, whisper to the worm
That crawls up to devour you with a kiss,
That I still guard in memory the dear form
Of love that comes to this!

71

An Allegory

Here is a woman, richly clad and fair,
Who in her wine dips her long, heavy hair;
Love's claws, and that sharp poison which is sin,
Are dulled against the granite of her skin.
Death she defies, Debauch she smiles upon,
For their sharp scythe-like talons every one
Pass by her in their all-destructive play;
Leaving her beauty till a later day.
Goddess she walks; sultana in her leisure;
She has Mohammed's faith that heaven is a pleasure,
And bids all men forget the world's alarms
Upon her breast, between her open arms.
She knows, and she believes, this sterile maid,
Without whom the world's onward dream would fade,
That bodily beauty is the supreme gift
Which may from every sin the terror lift.
Hell she ignores, and Purgatory defies;
And when black Night shall roll before her eyes,
She will look straight in Death's grim face forlorn,
Without remorse or hate—as one new-born.

Like pensive herds at rest upon the sands,
These to the sea-horizons turn their eyes;
Out of their folded feet and clinging hands
Bitter sharp tremblings and soft languors rise.

Some tread the thicket by the babbling stream,
Their hearts with untold secrets ill at ease;
Calling the lover of their childhood's dream,
They wound the green bark of the shooting trees.

Others like sisters wander, grave and slow,
Among the rocks haunted by spectres thin,
Where Antony saw as larvae surge and flow
The veined bare breasts that tempted him to sin.

Some, when the resinous torch of burning wood
Flares in lost pagan caverns dark and deep,
Call thee to quench the fever in their blood,
Bacchus, who singest old remorse to sleep!

Then there are those the scapular bedights,
Whose long white vestments hide the whip's red stain,
Who mix, in sombre woods on lonely nights,
The foam of pleasure with the tears of pain.

O virgins, demons, monsters, martyrs! ye
Who scorn whatever actual appears;
Saints, satyrs, seekers of Infinity,
So full of cries, so full of bitter tears;

Ye whom my soul has followed into hell,
I love and pity, O sad sisters mine,
Your thirsts unquenched, your pains no tongue can tell,
And your great hearts, those urns of love divine!

In a burnt, ashen land, where no herb grew,
I to the winds my cries of anguish threw;
And in my thoughts, in that sad place apart,
Pricked gently with the poignard o'er my heart.
Then in full noon above my head a cloud
Descended tempest-swollen, and a crowd
Of wild, lascivious spirits huddled there,
The cruel and curious demons of the air,
Who coldly to consider me began;
Then, as a crowd jeers some unhappy man,
Exchanging gestures, winking with their eyes—
I heard a laughing and a whispering rise:

"Let us at leisure contemplate this clown,
This shadow of Hamlet aping Hamlet's frown,
With wandering eyes and hair upon the wind.
Is't not a pity that this empty mind,
This tramp, this actor out of work, this droll,
Because he knows how to assume a rôle
Should dream that eagles and insects, streams and woods,
Stand still to hear him chaunt his dolorous moods?
Even unto us, who made these ancient things,
The fool his public lamentation sings."

With pride as lofty as the towering cloud,
I would have stilled these clamouring demons loud,
And turned in scorn my sovereign head away
Had I not seen—O sight to dim the day!—
There in the middle of the troupe obscene
The proud and peerless beauty of my Queen!
She laughed with them at all my dark distress,
And gave to each in turn a vile caress.

The Soul of Wine

One eve in the bottle sang the soul of wine:

"Man, unto thee, dear disinherited,
I sing a song of love and light divine—
Prisoned in glass beneath my seals of red.

"I know thou labourest on the hill of fire,
In sweat and pain beneath a flaming sun,
To give the life and soul my vines desire,
And I am grateful for thy labours done.

"For I find joys unnumbered when I lave
The throat of man by travail long outworn,
And his hot bosom is a sweeter grave
Of sounder sleep than my cold caves forlorn.

"Hearest thou not the echoing Sabbath sound?
The hope that whispers in my trembling breast?
Thy elbows on the table! gaze around;
Glorify me with joy and be at rest.

"To thy wife's eyes I'll bring their long-lost gleam,
I'll bring back to thy child his strength and light,
To him, life's fragile athlete I will seem
Rare oil that firms his muscles for the fight.

"I flow in man's heart as ambrosia flows;
The grain the eternal Sower casts in the sod—
From our first loves the first fair verse arose,
Flower-like aspiring to the heavens and God!"

75

The Wine of Lovers

Space rolls to-day her splendour round!
Unbridled, spurless, without bound,
Mount we upon the wings of wine
For skies fantastic and divine!

Let us, like angels tortured by
Some wild delirious phantasy,
Follow the far-off mirage born
In the blue crystal of the morn.

And gently balanced on the wing
Of the wild whirlwind we will ride,
Rejoicing with the joyous thing.

My sister, floating side by side,
Fly we unceasing whither gleams
The distant heaven of my dreams.

76

The Death of Lovers

There shall be couches whence faint odours rise,
Divans like sepulchres, deep and profound;
Strange flowers that bloomed beneath diviner skies
The death-bed of our love shall breathe around.

And guarding their last embers till the end,
Our hearts shall be the torches of the shrine,
And their two leaping flames shall fade and blend
In the twin mirrors of your soul and mine.

And through the eve of rose and mystic blue
A beam of love shall pass from me to you,
Like a long sigh charged with a last farewell;

And later still an angel, flinging wide
The gates, shall bring to life with joyful spell
The tarnished mirrors and the flames that died.

77

The Death of the Poor

Death is consoler and Death brings to life;
The end of all, the solitary hope;
We, drunk with Death's elixir, face the strife,
Take heart, and mount till eve the weary slope.

Across the storm, the hoar-frost, and the snow,
Death on our dark horizon pulses clear;
Death is the famous hostel we all know,
Where we may rest and sleep and have good cheer.

Death is an angel whose magnetic palms
Bring dreams of ecstasy and slumberous calms
To smooth the beds of naked men and poor.

Death is the mystic granary of God;
The poor man's purse; his fatherland of yore;
The Gate that opens into heavens untrod!

78

The Benediction

When by the high decree of powers supreme,
The Poet came into this world outworn,
She who had borne him, in a ghastly dream,
Clenched blasphemous hands at God, and cried in scorn:

"O rather had I borne a writhing knot
Of unclean vipers, than my breast should nurse
This vile derision, of my joy begot
To be my expiation and my curse!

"Since of all women thou hast made of me
Unto my husband a disgust and shame;
Since I may not cast this monstrosity,
Like an old love-epistle, to the flame;

"I will pour out thine overwhelming hate
On this the accursed weapon of thy spite;
This stunted tree I will so desecrate
That not one tainted bud shall see the light!"

So foaming with the foam of hate and shame,
Blind unto God's design inexorable,
With her own hands she fed the purging flame
To crimes maternal consecrate in hell.

Meanwhile beneath an Angel's care unseen
The child disowned grows drunken with the sun;
His food and drink, though they be poor and mean,
With streams of nectar and ambrosia run.

Speaking to clouds and playing with the wind,
With joy he sings the sad Way of the Rood;
His shadowing pilgrim spirit weeps behind
To see him gay as birds are in the wood.

Those he would love looked sideways and with fear,
Or, taking courage from his aspect mild,
Sought who should first bring to his eye the tear,
And spent their anger on the dreaming child.

With all the bread and wine the Poet must eat
They mingled earth and ash and excrement,
All things he touched were spurned beneath their feet;
They mourned if they must tread the road he went.

His wife ran crying in the public square:

"Since he has found me worthy to adore,
Shall I not be as antique idols were,
With gold and with bright colours painted o'er?

"I will be drunk with nard and frankincense,
With myrrh, and knees bowed down, and flesh and wine.
Can I not, smiling, in his love-sick sense,
Usurp the homage due to beings divine?

"I will lay on him my fierce, fragile hand
When I am weary of the impious play;
For well these harpy talons understand
To furrow to his heart their crimson way.

"I'll tear the red thing beating from his breast,
To cast it with disdain upon the ground,
Like a young bird torn trembling from the nest—
His heart shall go to gorge my favourite hound."

To the far heaven, where gleams a splendid throne,
The Poet uplifts his arms in calm delight,
And the vast beams from his pure spirit flown,
Wrap all the furious peoples from his sight:

"Thou, O my God, be blest who givest pain,
The balm divine for each imperfect heart,
The strong pure essence cleansing every stain
Of sin that keeps us from thy joys apart.

"Among the numbers of thy legions blest,
I know a place awaits the Poet there;
Him thou hast bid attend the eternal feast
That Thrones and Virtues and Dominions share.

"I know the one thing noble is a grief
Withstanding earth's and hell's destructive tooth,
And I, through all my dolorous life and brief,
To gain the mystic crown, must cry the truth.

"The jewels lost in Palmyra of old,
Metals unknown, pearls of the outer sea,
Are far too dim to set within the gold
Of the bright crown that Time prepares for me.

"For it is wrought of pure unmingled light,
Dipped in the white flame whence all flame is born—
The flame that makes all eyes, though diamond-bright,
Seem obscure mirrors, darkened and forlorn."

The tribe prophetic with the eyes of fire
Went forth last night; their little ones at rest
Each on his mother's back, with his desire
Set on the ready treasure of her breast.

Laden with shining arms the men-folk tread
By the long wagons where their goods lie hidden;
They watch the heaven with eyes grown wearied
Of hopeless dreams that come to them unbidden.

The grasshopper, from out his sandy screen,
Watching them pass redoubles his shrill song;
Dian, who loves them, makes the grass more green,

And makes the rock run water for this throng
Of ever-wandering ones whose calm eyes see
Familiar realms of darkness yet to be.

80

Franciscae Meae Laudes

Novis te cantabo chorâis,
O novelletum quod ludis
In solitudine cordis.

Esto sertis implicata,
O foemina delicata
Per quam solvuntur peccata

Sicut beneficum Lethe,
Haurian oscula de te,
Quae imbuta es magnete.

Quum vitiorum tempestas
Turbabat omnes semitas,
Apparuisti, Deitas,

Velut stella salutaris
In naufragiis amaris...
Suspendam cor tuis aris!

Piscina plena virtutis,
Fons aeternae juventutis,
Labris vocem redde mutis!

Quod erat spurcum, creasti;
Quod rudius, exaequasti;
Quod debile, confirmasti!

In fame mea taberna,
In nocte mea lucerna,
Recte me semper gubernas.

Adde nunc vires viribus,
Dulce balneum suavibus,
Unguentatum odoribus!

Meos circa lumbos mica,
O castitatis lorica,
Aqua tinctoria seraphica;

Patera gemmis corusca,
Panis salsus, mollis esca,
Divinum vinum, Francesca!

81

Robed in a Silken Robe

Robed in a silken robe that shines and shakes,
She seems to dance whene'er she treads the sod,
Like the long serpent that a fakir makes
Dance to the waving cadence of a rod.

As the sad sand upon the desert's verge,
Insensible to mortal grief and strife;
As the long weeds that float among the surge,
She folds indifference round her budding life.

Her eyes are carved of minerals pure and cold,
And in her strange symbolic nature where
An angel mingles with the sphinx of old,

Where all is gold and steel and light and air,
For ever, like a vain star, unafraid
Shines the cold hauteur of the sterile maid.

I would, when I compose my solemn verse,
Sleep near the heaven as do astrologers,
Near the high bells, and with a dreaming mind
Hear their calm hymns blown to me on the wind.

Out of my tower, with chin upon my hands,
I'll watch the singing, babbling human bands;
And see clock-towers like spars against the sky,
And heavens that bring thoughts of eternity;

And softly, through the mist, will watch the birth
Of stars in heaven and lamplight on the earth;
The threads of smoke that rise above the town;
The moon that pours her pale enchantment down.

Seasons will pass till Autumn fades the rose;
And when comes Winter with his weary snows,
I'll shut the doors and window-casements tight,
And build my faery palace in the night.

Then I will dream of blue horizons deep;
Of gardens where the marble fountains weep;
Of kisses, and of ever-singing birds—
A sinless Idyll built of innocent words.

And Trouble, knocking at my window-pane
And at my closet door, shall knock in vain;
I will not heed him with his stealthy tread,
Nor from my reverie uplift my head;

For I will plunge deep in the pleasure still
Of summoning the spring-time with my will,
Drawing the sun out of my heart, and there
With burning thoughts making a summer air.

The Voyage

The world is equal to the child's desire
Who plays with pictures by his nursery fire—
How vast the world by lamplight seems! How small
When memory's eyes look back, remembering all!—

One morning we set forth with thoughts aflame,
Or heart o'erladen with desire or shame;
And cradle, to the song of surge and breeze,
Our own infinity on the finite seas.

Some flee the memory of their childhood's home;
And others flee their fatherland; and some,
Star-gazers drowned within a woman's eyes,
Flee from the tyrant Circe's witcheries;

And, lest they still be changed to beasts, take flight
For the embrasured heavens, and space, and light,
Till one by one the stains her kisses made
In biting cold and burning sunlight fade.

But the true voyagers are they who part
From all they love because a wandering heart
Drives them to fly the Fate they cannot fly;
Whose call is ever "On!"—they know not why.

Their thoughts are like the clouds that veil a star;
They dream of change as warriors dream of war;
And strange wild wishes never twice the same:
Desires no mortal man can give a name.

II

We are like whirling tops and rolling balls—
For ever when the sleepy night-time falls,
Old Curiosity still thrusts us on,
Like the cruel Angel who goads forth the sun.

The end of fate fades ever through the air,
And, being nowhere, may be anywhere
Where a man runs, hope waking in his breast,
For ever like a madman, seeking rest.

Our souls are wandering ships outwearied;
And one upon the bridge asks: "What's ahead?"
The topman's voice with an exultant sound
Cries: "Love and Glory!"—then we run aground.

Each isle the pilot signals when 'tis late,
Is El Dorado, promised us by fate—
Imagination, spite of her belief,
Finds, in the light of dawn, a barren reef.

Oh the poor seeker after lands that flee!
Shall we not bind and cast into the sea
This drunken sailor whose ecstatic mood
Makes bitterer still the water's weary flood?

Such is an old tramp wandering in the mire,
Dreaming the paradise of his own desire,
Discovering cities of enchanted sleep
Where'er the light shines on a rubbish heap.

III

Strange voyagers, what tales of noble deeds
Deep in your dim sea-weary eyes one reads!
Open the casket where your memories are,
And show each jewel, fashioned from a star;

For I would travel without sail or wind,
And so, to lift the sorrow from my mind,
Let your long memories of sea-days far fled
Pass o'er my spirit like a sail outspread.

What have you seen?

IV

"We have seen waves and stars,
And lost sea-beaches, and known many wars,
And not withstanding war and hope and fear,
We were as weary there as we are here.

"The lights that on the violet sea poured down,
The suns that set behind some far-off town,
Lit in our hearts the unquiet wish to fly
Deep in the glimmering distance of the sky;

"The loveliest countries that rich cities bless,
Never contained the strange wild loveliness
By fate and chance shaped from the floating cloud—
And we were always sorrowful and proud!

"Desire from joy gains strength in weightier measure.
Desire, old tree who draw'st thy sap from pleasure,
Though thy bark thickens as the years pass by,
Thine arduous branches rise towards the sky;

"And wilt thou still grow taller, three more fair
Than the tall cypress?

—Thus have we, with care,
"Gathered some flowers to please your eager mood,
Brothers who dream that distant things are good!

"We have seen many a jewel-glimmering throne;
And bowed to Idols when wild horns were blown
In palaces whose faery pomp and gleam
To your rich men would be a ruinous dream;

"And robes that were a madness to the eyes;
Women whose teeth and nails were stained with dyes;
Wise jugglers round whose neck the serpent winds—"

V

And then, and then what more?

VI

"O childish minds!

"Forget not that which we found everywhere,
From top to bottom of the fatal stair,
Above, beneath, around us and within,
The weary pageant of immortal sin.

"We have seen woman, stupid slave and proud,
Before her own frail, foolish beauty bowed;
And man, a greedy, cruel, lascivious fool,
Slave of the slave, a ripple in a pool;

"The martyrs groan, the headman's merry mood;
And banquets seasoned and perfumed with blood;
Poison, that gives the tyrant's power the slip;
And nations amorous of the brutal whip;

"Many religions not unlike our own,
All in full flight for heaven's resplendent throne;
And Sanctity, seeking delight in pain,
Like a sick man of his own sickness vain;

"And mad mortality, drunk with its own power,
As foolish now as in a bygone hour,
Shouting, in presence of the tortured Christ:
'I curse thee, mine own Image sacrificed.'

"And silly monks in love with Lunacy,
Fleeing the troops herded by destiny,
Who seek for peace in opiate slumber furred—
Such is the pageant of the rolling world!"

VII

O bitter knowledge that the wanderers gain!
The world says our own age is little and vain;
For ever, yesterday, to-day, to-morrow,
'Tis horror's oasis in the sands of sorrow.

Must we depart? If you can rest, remain;
Part, if you must. Some fly, some cower in vain,
Hoping that Time, the grim and eager foe,
Will pass them by; and some run to and fro

Like the Apostles or the Wandering Jew;
Go where they will, the Slayer goes there too!
And there are some, and these are of the wise,
Who die as soon as birth has lit their eyes.

But when at length the Slayer treads us low,
We will have hope and cry, "'Tis time to go!"
As when of old we parted for Cathay
With wind-blown hair and eyes upon the bay.

We will embark upon the Shadowy Sea,
Like youthful wanderers for the first time free--
Hear you the lovely and funereal voice
That sings: O come all ye whose wandering joys
Are set upon the scented Lotus flower,
For here we sell the fruit's miraculous boon;
Come ye and drink the sweet and sleepy power
Of the enchanted, endless afternoon.

VIII

O Death, old Captain, it is time, put forth!
We have grown weary of the gloomy north;
Though sea and sky are black as ink, lift sail!
Our hearts are full of light and will not fail.

O pour thy sleepy poison in the cup!
The fire within the heart so burns us up
That we would wander Hell and Heaven through,
Deep in the Unknown seeking something new!

Little Poems in Prose

84 The Stranger

Tell me, enigmatic man, whom do you love best?
Your father, your mother, your sister, or your brother?

"I have neither father, nor mother, nor sister, nor
brother."

Your friends, then?

"You use a word that until now has had no meaning
for me."

Your country?

"I am ignorant of the latitude in which it is
situated."

Then Beauty?

"Her I would love willingly, goddess and immortal."

Gold?

"I hate it as you hate your God."

What, then, extraordinary stranger, do you love?

"I love the clouds—the clouds that pass—yonder—
the marvellous clouds."

Beneath a broad grey sky, upon a vast and dusty plain devoid of grass, and where not even a nettle or a thistle was to be seen, I met several men who walked bowed down to the ground.

Each one carried upon his back an enormous Chimaera as heavy as a sack of flour or coal, or as the equipment of a Roman foot-soldier.

But the monstrous beast was not a dead weight, rather she enveloped and oppressed the man with her powerful and elastic muscles, and clawed with her two vast talons at the breast of her mount. Her fabulous head reposed upon the brow of the man like one of those horrible casques by which ancient warriors hoped to add to the terrors of the enemy.

I questioned one of the men, asking him why they went so. He replied that he knew nothing, neither he nor the others, but that evidently they went somewhere, since they were urged on by an unconquerable desire to walk.

Very curiously, none of the wayfarers seemed to be irritated by the ferocious beast hanging at his neck and cleaving to his back: one had said that he considered it as a part of himself. These grave and weary faces bore witness to no despair. Beneath the splenetic cupola of the heavens, their feet trudging through the dust of an earth as desolate as the sky, they journeyed onwards with the resigned faces of men condemned to hope for ever. So the train passed me and faded into the atmosphere of the horizon at the place where the planet unveils herself to the curiosity of the human eye.

During several moments I obstinately endeavoured to comprehend this mystery; but irresistible Indifference soon threw herself upon me, nor was I more heavily dejected thereby than they by their crushing Chimaeras.

How admirable the day! The vast park swoons beneath the burning eye of the sun, as youth beneath the lordship of love.

There is no rumour of the universal ecstasy of all things. The waters themselves are as though drifting into sleep. Very different from the festivals of humanity, here is a silent revel.

It seems as though an ever-waning light makes all objects glimmer more and more, as though the excited flowers burn with a desire to rival the blue of the sky by the vividness of their colours; as though the heat, making perfumes visible, drives them in vapour towards their star.

Yet, in the midst of this universal joy, I have perceived one afflicted thing.

At the feet of a colossal Venus, one of those motley fools, those willing clowns whose business it is to bring laughter upon kings when weariness or remorse possesses them, lies wrapped in his gaudy and ridiculous garments, coiffed with his cap and bells, huddled against the pedestal, and raises towards the goddess his eyes filled with tears.

And his eyes say: "I am the last and most alone of all mortals, inferior to the meanest of animals in that I am denied either love or friendship. Yet I am made, even I, for the understanding and enjoyment of immortal Beauty. O Goddess, have pity upon my sadness and my frenzy."

The implacable Venus gazed into I know not what distances with her marble eyes.

One must be for ever drunken: that is the sole question of importance. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time that bruises your shoulders and bends you to the earth, you must be drunken without cease. But how? With wine, with poetry, with virtue, with what you please. But be drunken. And if sometimes, on the steps of a palace, on the green grass by a moat, or in the dull loneliness of your chamber, you should waken up, your intoxication already lessened or gone, ask of the wind, of the wave, of the star, of the bird, of the time-piece; ask of all that flees, all that sighs, all that revolves, all that sings, all that speaks, ask of these the hour; and wind and wave and star and bird and time-piece will answer you: "It is the hour to be drunken! Lest you be the martyred slaves of Time, intoxicate yourselves, be drunken without cease! With wine, with poetry, with virtue, or with what you will."

The Moon, who is caprice itself, looked in at the window as you slept in your cradle, and said to herself: "I am well pleased with this child."

And she softly descended her stairway of clouds and passed through the window-pane without noise. She bent over you with the supple tenderness of a mother and laid her colours upon your face. Therefrom your eyes have remained green and your cheeks extraordinarily pale. From contemplation of your visitor your eyes are so strangely wide; and she so tenderly wounded you upon the breast that you have ever kept a certain readiness to tears.

In the amplitude of her joy, the Moon filled all your chamber with a phosphorescent air, a luminous poison; and all this living radiance thought and said: "You shall be for ever under the influence of my kiss. You shall love all that loves me and that I love: clouds, and silence, and night; the vast green sea; the unformed and multitudinous waters; the place where you are not; the lover you will never know; monstrous flowers, and perfumes that bring madness; cats that stretch themselves swooning upon the piano and lament with the sweet, hoarse voices of women.

"And you shall be loved of my lovers, courted of my courtesans. You shall be the Queen of men with green eyes, whose breasts also I have wounded in my nocturnal caress: men that love the sea, the immense green ungovernable sea; the unformed and multitudinous waters; the place where they are not; the woman they will never know; sinister flowers that seem to bear the incense of some unknown religion; perfumes that trouble the will; and all savage and voluptuous animals, images of their own folly."

And that is why I am couched at your feet, O spoiled child, beloved and accursed, seeking in all your being the reflection of that august divinity, that prophetic god-mother, that poisonous nurse of all lunatics.

It is a superb land, a country of Cockaigne, as they say, that I dream of visiting with an old friend. A strange land, drowned in our northern fogs, that one might call the East of the West, the China of Europe; a land patiently and luxuriously decorated with the wise, delicate vegetations of a warm and capricious phantasy.

A true land of Cockaigne, where all is beautiful, rich, tranquil, and honest; where luxury is pleased to mirror itself in order; where life is opulent, and sweet to breathe; from whence disorder, turbulence, and the unforeseen are excluded; where happiness is married to silence; where even the food is poetic, rich and exciting at the same time; where all things, my beloved, are like you.

Do you know that feverish malady that seizes hold of us in our cold miseries; that nostalgia of a land unknown; that anguish of curiosity? It is a land which resembles you, where all is beautiful, rich, tranquil and honest, where phantasy has built and decorated an occidental China, where life is sweet to breathe, and happiness married to silence. It is there that one would live; there that one would die.

Yes, it is there that one must go to breathe, to dream, and to lengthen one's hours by an infinity of sensations. A musician has written the "Invitation to the Waltz"; where is he who will write the "Invitation to the Voyage," that one may offer it to his beloved, to the sister of his election?

Yes, it is in this atmosphere that it would be good to live,—yonder, where slower hours contain more thoughts, where the clocks strike the hours of happiness with a more profound and significant solemnity.

Upon the shining panels, or upon skins gilded with a sombre opulence, beatified paintings have a discreet life, as calm and profound as the souls of the artists who created them.

The setting suns that colour the rooms and salons with so rich a light, shine through veils of rich tapestry, or through high leaden-worked windows of many compartments. The furniture is massive, curious, and bizarre, armed with locks and secrets, like profound and refined souls. The mirrors, the metals, the silver-work and the china, play a mute and mysterious symphony for the eyes; and from all things, from the corners, from the chinks in the drawers, from the folds of drapery, a singular perfume escapes, a Sumatran revenez-y, which is like the soul of the apartment.

A true country of Cockaigne, I have said; where all is rich, correct and shining, like a beautiful conscience, or a splendid set of silver, or a medley of jewels. The treasures of the world flow there, as in the house of a laborious man who has well merited the entire world. A singular land, as superior to others as Art is superior to Nature; where Nature is made over again by dream; where she is corrected, embellished, refashioned.

Let them seek and seek again, let them extend the limits of their happiness for ever, these alchemists who work with flowers! Let them offer a prize of sixty or a hundred thousand florins to whosoever can solve their ambitious problems! As for me, I have found my black tulip and my blue dahlia!

Incomparable flower, tulip found at last, symbolical dahlia, it is there, is it not, in this so calm and dreamy land that you live and blossom? Will you not there be framed in your proper analogy, and will you not be mirrored, to speak like the mystics, in your own correspondence?

Dreams!—always dreams! and the more ambitious and delicate the soul, the farther from possibility is the dream. Every man carries within him his dose of natural opium, incessantly secreted and renewed, and, from birth to death, how many hours can we count that have been filled with positive joy, with successful and decided action? Shall we ever live in and become a part of the picture my spirit has painted, the picture that resembles you?

These treasures, furnishings, luxury, order, perfumes and miraculous flowers, are you. You again are the great rivers and calm canals. The enormous ships drifting beneath their loads of riches, and musical with the sailors' monotonous song, are my thoughts that sleep and stir upon your breast. You take them gently to the sea that is Infinity, reflecting the profundities of the sky in the limpid waters of your lovely soul;—and when, outworn by the surge and gorged with the products of the Orient, the ships come back to the ports of home, they are still my thoughts, grown rich, that have returned to you from Infinity.

I once knew a certain Benedicta whose presence filled the air with the ideal and whose eyes spread abroad the desire of grandeur, of beauty, of glory, and of all that makes man believe in immortality.

But this miraculous maiden was too beautiful for long life, so she died soon after I knew her first, and it was I myself who entombed her, upon a day when spring swung her censer even in the burial-ground. It was I myself who entombed her, fast closed in a coffin of perfumed wood, as uncorruptible as the coffers of India.

And, as my eyes rested upon the spot where my treasure lay hidden, I became suddenly aware of a little being who singularly resembled the dead; and who, stamping the newly-turned earth with a curious and hysterical violence, burst into laughter, and said: "It is I, the true Benedicta! It is I, the notorious drab! As the punishment of your folly and blindness you shall love me as I truly am."

But I, furious, replied: "No!" The better to emphasise my refusal I struck the ground so violently with my foot that my leg was thrust up to the knee in the recent grave, and I, like a wolf in a trap, was caught perhaps for ever in the Grave of the Ideal.

A hundred times already the sun had leaped, radiant or saddened, from the immense cup of the sea whose rim could scarcely be seen; a hundred times it had again sunk, glittering or morose, into its mighty bath of twilight. For many days we had contemplated the other side of the firmament, and deciphered the celestial alphabet of the antipodes. And each of the passengers sighed and complained. One had said that the approach of land only exasperated their sufferings. "When, then," they said, "shall we cease to sleep a sleep broken by the surge, troubled by a wind that snores louder than we? When shall we be able to eat at an unmoving table?"

There were those who thought of their own firesides, who regretted their sullen, faithless wives, and their noisy progeny. All so doted upon the image of the absent land, that I believe they would have eaten grass with as much enthusiasm as the beasts.

At length a coast was signalled, and on approaching we saw a magnificent and dazzling land. It seemed as though the music of life flowed therefrom in a vague murmur; and the banks, rich with all kinds of growths, breathed, for leagues around, a delicious odour of flowers and fruits.

Each one therefore was joyful; his evil humour left him. Quarrels were forgotten, reciprocal wrongs forgiven, the thought of duels was blotted out of the memory, and rancour fled away like smoke.

I alone was sad, inconceivably sad. Like a priest from whom one has torn his divinity, I could not, without heartbreaking bitterness, leave this so monstrously seductive ocean, this sea so infinitely various in its terrifying simplicity, which seemed to contain in itself and represent by its joys, and attractions, and angers, and smiles, the moods and agonies and ecstasies of all souls that have lived, that live, and that shall yet live.

In saying good-bye to this incomparable beauty I felt as though I had been smitten to death; and that is why when each of my companions said: "At last!" I could only cry "Already!"

Here meanwhile was the land, the land with its noises, its passions, its commodities, its festivals: a land rich and magnificent, full of promises, that sent to us a mysterious perfume of rose and musk, and from whence the music of life flowed in an amorous murmuring.

A chamber that is like a reverie; a chamber truly spiritual, where the stagnant atmosphere is lightly touched with rose and blue.

There the soul bathes itself in indolence made odorous with regret and desire. There is some sense of the twilight, of things tinged with blue and rose: a dream of delight during an eclipse. The shape of the furniture is elongated, low, languishing; one would think it endowed with the somnambulistic vitality of plants and minerals.

The tapestries speak an inarticulate language, like the flowers, the skies, the dropping suns.

There are no artistic abominations upon the walls. Compared with the pure dream, with an impression unanalysed, definite art, positive art, is a blasphemy. Here all has the sufficing lucidity and the delicious obscurity of music.

An infinitesimal odour of the most exquisite choice, mingled with a floating humidity, swims in this atmosphere where the drowsing spirit is lulled by the sensations one feels in a hothouse.

The abundant muslin flows before the windows and the couch, and spreads out in snowy cascades. Upon the couch lies the Idol, ruler of my dreams. But why is she here?—who has brought her?—what magical power has installed her upon this throne of delight and reverie? What matter—she is there; and I recognise her.

These indeed are the eyes whose flame pierces the twilight; the subtle and terrible mirrors that I recognise by their horrifying malice. They attract, they dominate, they devour the sight of whomsoever is imprudent enough to look at them. I have often studied them; these Black Stars that compel curiosity and admiration.

To what benevolent demon, then, do I owe being thus surrounded with mystery, with silence, with peace, and sweet odours? O beatitude! the thing we name life, even in its most fortunate amplitude, has nothing in common with this supreme life with which I am now acquainted, which I taste minute by minute, second by second.

Not so! Minutes are no more; seconds are no more. Time has vanished, and Eternity reigns—an Eternity of delight.

A heavy and terrible knocking reverberates upon the door, and, as in a hellish dream, it seems to me as though I had received a blow from a mattock.

Then a Spectre enters: it is an usher who comes to torture me in the name of the Law; an infamous concubine who comes to cry misery and to add the trivialities of her life to the sorrow of mine; or it may be the errand-boy of an editor who comes to implore the remainder of a manuscript.

The chamber of paradise, the Idol, the ruler of dreams, the Sylphide, as the great René said; all this magic has vanished at the brutal knocking of the Spectre.

Horror; I remember, I remember! Yes, this kennel, this habitation of eternal weariness, is indeed my own. Here is my senseless furniture, dusty and tattered; the dirty fireplace without a flame or an ember; the sad windows where the raindrops have traced runnels in the dust; the manuscripts, erased or unfinished; the almanac with the sinister days marked off with a pencil!

And this perfume of another world, whereof I intoxicated myself with a so perfect sensitiveness; alas, its place is taken by an odour of stale tobacco smoke, mingled with I know not what nauseating mustiness. Now one breathes here the rankness of desolation.

In this narrow world, narrow and yet full of disgust, a single familiar object smiles at me: the phial of laudanum: old and terrible love; like all loves, alas! fruitful in caresses and treacheries.

Yes, Time has reappeared; Time reigns a monarch now; and with the hideous Ancient has returned all his demoniacal following of Memories, Regrets, Tremors, Fears, Dolours, Nightmares, and twittering nerves.

I assure you that the seconds are strongly and solemnly accentuated now; and each, as it drips from the pendulum, says: "I am Life: intolerable, implacable Life!"

There is not a second in mortal life whose mission it is to bear good news: the good news that brings the inexplicable tear to the eye.

Yes, Time reigns; Time has regained his brutal mastery. And he goads me, as though I were a steer, with his double goad: "Woe, thou fool! Sweat, then, thou slave! Live on, thou damned!"

Alone at last! Nothing is to be heard but the rattle of a few tardy and tired-out cabs. There will be silence now, if not repose, for several hours at least. At last the tyranny of the human face has disappeared — I shall not suffer except alone. At last it is permitted me to refresh myself in a bath of shadows. But first a double turn of the key in the lock. It seems to me that this turn of the key will deepen my solitude and strengthen the barriers which actually separate me from the world.

A horrible life and a horrible city! Let us run over the events of the day. I have seen several literary men; one of them wished to know if he could get to Russia by land (he seemed to have an idea that Russia was an island); I have disputed generously enough with the editor of a review, who to each objection replied: "We take the part of respectable people," which implies that every other paper but his own is edited by a knave; I have saluted some twenty people, fifteen of them unknown to me; and shaken hands with a like number, without having taken the precaution of first buying gloves; I have been driven to kill time, during a shower, with a mountebank, who wanted me to design for her a costume as Venustà; I have made my bow to a theatre manager, who said: "You will do well, perhaps, to interview Z; he is the heaviest, foolishest, and most celebrated of all my authors; with him perhaps you will be able to come to something. See him, and then we'll see." I have boasted (why?) of several villainous deeds I never committed, and indignantly denied certain shameful things I accomplished with joy, certain misdeeds of fanfaronade, crimes of human respect; I have refused an easy favour to a friend and given a written recommendation to a perfect fool. Heavens! it's well ended.

Discontented with myself and with everything and everybody else, I should be glad enough to redeem myself and regain my self-respect in the silence and solitude.

Souls of those whom I have loved, whom I have sung, fortify me; sustain me; drive away the lies and the corrupting vapours of this world; and Thou, Lord my God, accord me so much grace as shall produce some beautiful verse to prove to myself that I am not the last of men, that I am not inferior to those I despise.

How penetrating is the end of an autumn day! Ah, yes, penetrating enough to be painful even; for there are certain delicious sensations whose vagueness does not prevent them from being intense; and none more keen than the perception of the Infinite. He has a great delight who drowns his gaze in the immensity of sky and sea. Solitude, silence, the incomparable chastity of the azure—a little sail trembling upon the horizon, by its very littleness and isolation imitating my irremediable existence—the melodious monotone of the surge—all these things thinking through me and I through them (for in the grandeur of the reverie the Ego is swiftly lost); they think, I say, but musically and picturesquely, without quibbles, without syllogisms, without deductions.

These thoughts, as they arise in me or spring forth from external objects, soon become always too intense. The energy working within pleasure creates an uneasiness, a positive suffering. My nerves are too tense to give other than clamouring and dolorous vibrations.

And now the proiundity of the sky dismays me; its limpidity exasperates me. The insensibility of the sea, the immutability of the spectacle, revolt me. Ah, must one eternally suffer, for ever be a fugitive from Beauty?

Nature, pitiless enchantress, ever-victorious rival, leave me! Tempt my desires and my pride no more. The contemplation of Beauty is a duel where the artist screams with terror before being vanquished.

What is a thyrsus? According to the moral and poetical sense, it is a sacerdotal emblem in the hand of the priests or priestesses celebrating the divinity of whom they are the interpreters and servants. But physically it is no more than a baton, a pure staff, a hop-pole, a vine-prop; dry, straight, and hard. Around this baton, in capricious meanderings, stems and flowers twine and wanton; these, sinuous and fugitive; those, hanging like bells or inverted cups. And an astonishing complexity disengages itself from this complexity of tender or brilliant lines and colours. Would not one suppose that the curved line and the spiral pay their court to the straight line, and twine about it in a mute adoration? Would not one say that all these delicate corollae, all these calices, explosions of odours and colours, execute a mystical dance around the hieratic staff? And what imprudent mortal will dare to decide whether the flowers or the vine branches have been made for the baton, or whether the baton is not but a pretext to set forth the beauty of the vine branches and the flowers?

The thyrsus is the symbol of your astonishing duality, O powerful and venerated master, dear bacchanal of a mysterious and impassioned Beauty. Never a nymph excited by the mysterious Dionysus shook her thyrsus over the heads of her companions with as much energy as your genius trembles in the hearts of your brothers. The baton is your will: erect, firm, unshakeable; the flowers are the wanderings of your fancy around it: the feminine element encircling the masculine with her illusive dance. Straight line and arabesque—intention and expression—the rigidity of the will and the suppleness of the word—a variety of means united for a single purpose—the all-powerful and indivisible amalgam that is genius—what analyst will have the detestable courage to divide or to separate you?

Dear Listz, across the fogs, beyond the flowers, in towns where the pianos chant your glory, where the printing-house translates your wisdom; in whatever place you be, in the splendour of the Eternal City or among the fogs of the dreamy towns that Cambrinus consoles; improvising rituals of delight or ineffable pain, or giving to paper your abstruse meditations; singer of eternal pleasure and pain, philosopher, poet, and artist, I offer you the salutation of immortality!

As the carriage traversed the wood he bade the driver draw up in the neighbourhood of a shooting gallery, saying that he would like to have a few shots to kill time. Is not the slaying of the monster Time the most ordinary and legitimate occupation of man?—So he gallantly offered his hand to his dear, adorable, and execrable wife; the mysterious woman to whom he owed so many pleasures, so many pains, and perhaps also a great part of his genius.

Several bullets went wide of the proposed mark, one of them flew far into the heavens, and as the charming creature laughed deliriously, mocking the clumsiness of her husband, he turned to her brusquely and said: "Observe that doll yonder, to the right, with its nose in the air, and with so haughty an appearance. Very well, dear angel, I will imagine to myself that it is you!"

He closed both eyes and pulled the trigger. The doll was neatly decapitated.

Then, bending towards his dear, adorable and execrable wife, his inevitable and pitiless muse, he kissed her respectfully upon the hand, and added, "Ah, dear angel, how I thank you for my skill!"

"Cemetery View Inn"—"A queer sign," said our traveller to himself; "but it raises a thirst! Certainly the keeper of this inn appreciates Horace and the poet pupils of Epicurus. Perhaps he even apprehends the profound philosophy of those old Egyptians who had no feast without its skeleton, or some emblem of life's brevity."

He entered: drank a glass of beer in presence of the tombs; and slowly smoked a cigar. Then, his phantasy driving him, he went down into the cemetery, where the grass was so tall and inviting; so brilliant in the sunshine.

The light and heat, indeed, were so furiously intense that one had said the drunken sun wallowed upon a carpet of flowers that had fattened upon the corruption beneath.

The air was heavy with vivid rumours of life—the life of things infinitely small—and broken at intervals by the crackling of shots from a neighbouring shooting-range, that exploded with a sound as of champagne corks to the burden of a hollow symphony.

And then, beneath a sun which scorched the brain, and in that atmosphere charged with the ardent perfume of death, he heard a voice whispering out of the tomb where he sat. And this voice said: "Accursed be your rifles and targets, you turbulent living ones, who care so little for the dead in their divine repose! Accursed be your ambitions and calculations, importunate mortals who study the arts of slaughter near the sanctuary of Death himself! Did you but know how easy the prize to win, how facile the end to reach, and how all save Death is naught, not so greatly would you fatigue yourselves, O ye laborious alive; nor would you so often vex the slumber of them that long ago reached the End—the only true end of life detestable!"

Unhappy perhaps is the man, but happy the artist, who is torn with his desire.

I burn to paint a certain woman who has appeared to me so rarely, and so swiftly fled away, like some beautiful, regrettable thing the traveller must leave behind him in the night. It is already long since I saw her.

She is beautiful, and more than beautiful: she is overpowering. The colour black preponderates in her; all that she inspires is nocturnal and profound. Her eyes are two caverns where mystery vaguely stirs and gleams; her glance illuminates like a ray of light; it is an explosion in the darkness.

I would compare her to a black sun if one could conceive of a dark star overthrowing light and happiness. But it is the moon that she makes one dream of most readily; the moon, who has without doubt touched her with her own influence; not the white moon of the idylls, who resembles a cold bride, but the sinister and intoxicating moon suspended in the depths of a stormy night, among the driven clouds; not the discreet peaceful moon who visits the dreams of pure men, but the moon torn from the sky, conquered and revolted, that the witches of Thessaly hardly constrain to dance upon the terrified grass.

Her small brow is the habitation of a tenacious will and the love of prey. And below this inquiet face, whose mobile nostrils breathe in the unknown and the impossible, glitters, with an unspeakable grace, the smile of a large mouth; white, red, and delicious; a mouth that makes one dream of the miracle of some superb flower unclosing in a volcanic land.

There are women who inspire one with the desire to woo them and win them; but she makes one wish to die slowly beneath her steady gaze.

There are some natures purely contemplative and anti-pathetic to action, who nevertheless, under a mysterious and inexplicable impulse, sometimes act with a rapidity of which they would have believed themselves incapable. Such a one is he who, fearing to find some new vexation awaiting him at his lodgings, prowls about in a cowardly fashion before the door without daring to enter; such a one is he who keeps a letter fifteen days without opening it, or only makes up his mind at the end of six months to undertake a journey that has been a necessity for a year past. Such beings sometimes feel themselves precipitately thrust towards action, like an arrow from a bow.

The novelist and the physician, who profess to know all things, yet cannot explain whence comes this sudden and delirious energy to indolent and voluptuous souls; nor how, incapable of accomplishing the simplest and most necessary things, they are at some certain moment of time possessed by a superabundant hardihood which enables them to execute the most absurd and even the most dangerous acts.

One of my friends, the most harmless dreamer that ever lived, at one time set fire to a forest, in order to ascertain, as he said, whether the flames take hold with the easiness that is commonly affirmed. His experiment failed ten times running, on the eleventh it succeeded only too well.

Another lit a cigar by the side of a powder barrel, in order to see, to know, to tempt Destiny, for a jest, to have the pleasure of suspense, for no reason at all, out of caprice, out of idleness. This is a kind of energy that springs from weariness and reverie; and those in whom it manifests so stubbornly are in general, as I have said, the most indolent and dreamy beings.

Another so timid that he must cast down his eyes before the gaze of any man, and summon all his poor will before he dare enter a café or pass the pay-box of a theatre, where the ticket-seller seems, in his eyes, invested with all the majesty of Minos, Aecus, and Rhadamanthus; will at times throw himself upon the neck of some old man whom he sees in the street, and embrace him with enthusiasm in sight of an astonished crowd. Why? Because—because this countenance is irresistibly attractive to him? Perhaps; but it is more legitimate to suppose that he himself does not know why.

I have been more than once a victim to these crises and outbreaks which give us cause to believe that evil-meaning demons slip into us, to make us the ignorant accomplices of their most absurd desires. One morning I arose in a sullen mood, very sad, and tired of idleness, and thrust as it seemed to me to the doing of some great thing, some brilliant act—and then, alas, I opened the window.

(I beg you to observe that in some people the spirit of mystification is not the result of labour or combination, but rather of a fortuitous inspiration which would partake, were it not for the strength of the feeling, of the mood called hysterical by the physician and satanic by those who think a little more profoundly than the physician; the mood which thrusts us unresisting to a multitude of dangerous and inconvenient acts.)

The first person I noticed in the street was a glass-vendor whose shrill and discordant cry mounted up to me through the heavy, dull atmosphere of Paris. It would have been else impossible to account for the sudden and despotic hatred of this poor man that came upon me.

"Hello, there!" I cried, and bade him ascend. Meanwhile I reflected, not without gaiety, that as my room was on the sixth landing, and the stairway very narrow, the man would have some difficulty in ascending, and in many a place would break off the corners of his fragile merchandise.

At length he appeared. I examined all his glasses with curiosity, and then said to him: "What, have you no coloured glasses? Glasses of rose and crimson and blue, magical glasses, glasses of Paradise? You are insolent. You dare to walk in mean streets when you have no glasses that would make one see beauty in life?" And I hurried him briskly to the staircase, which he staggered down, grumbling.

I went on to the balcony and caught up a little flowerpot, and when the man appeared in the doorway beneath I let fall my engine of war perpendicularly upon the edge of his pack, so that it was upset by the shock and all his poor walking fortune broken to bits. It made a noise like a palace of crystal shattered by lightning. Mad with my folly, I cried furiously after him: "The life beautiful! the life beautiful!"

Such nervous pleasantries are not without peril; often enough one pays dearly for them. But what matters an eternity of damnation to him who has found in one second an eternity of enjoyment?

Vauvenargues says that in public gardens there are alleys haunted principally by thwarted ambition, by unfortunate inventors, by aborted glories and broken hearts, and by all those tumultuous and contracted souls in whom the last sighs of the storm mutter yet again, and who thus betake themselves far from the insolent and joyous eyes of the well-to-do. These shadowy retreats are the rendezvous of life's cripples.

To such places above all others do the poet and philosopher direct their avid conjectures. They find there an unfailing pasturage, for if there is one place they disdain to visit it is, as I have already hinted, the place of the joy of the rich. A turmoil in the void has no attractions for them. On the contrary they feel themselves irresistibly drawn towards all that is feeble, ruined, sorrowing, and bereft.

An experienced eye is never deceived. In these rigid and dejected lineaments; in these eyes, wan and hollow, or bright with the last fading gleams of the combat against fate; in these numerous profound wrinkles and in the slow and troubled gait, the eye of experience deciphers unnumbered legends of mistaken devotion, of unrewarded effort, of hunger and cold humbly and silently supported.

Have you not at times seen widows sitting on the deserted benches? Poor widows, I mean. Whether in mourning or not they are easily recognised. Moreover, there is always something wanting in the mourning of the poor; a lack of harmony which but renders it the more heart-breaking. It is forced to be niggardly in its show of grief. They are the rich who exhibit a full complement of sorrow.

Who is the saddest and most saddening of widows: she who leads by the hand a child who cannot share her reveries, or she who is quite alone? I do not know....It happened that I once followed for several long hours an aged and afflicted woman of this kind: rigid and erect, wrapped in a little worn shawl, she carried in all her being the pride of stoicism.

She was evidently condemned by her absolute loneliness to the habits of an ancient celibacy; and the masculine characters of her habits added to their austerity a piquant mysteriousness. In what miserable café she dines I know not, nor in what manner. I followed her to a reading-room, and for a long time watched her reading the papers, her active eyes, that once burned with tears, seeking for news of a powerful and personal interest.

At length, in the afternoon, under a charming autumnal sky, one of those skies that let fall hosts of memories and regrets, she seated herself remotely in a garden, to listen, far from the crowd, to one of the regimental bands whose music gratifies the people of Paris. This was without doubt the small debauch of the innocent old woman (or the purified old woman), the well-earned consolation for another of the burdensome days without a friend, without conversation, without joy, without a confidant, that God had allowed to fall upon her perhaps for many years past—three hundred and sixty-five times a year!

Yet one more:

I can never prevent myself from throwing a glance, if not sympathetic at least full of curiosity, over the crowd of outcasts who press around the enclosure of a public concert. From the orchestra, across the night, float songs of fête, of triumph, or of pleasure. The dresses of the women sweep and shimmer; glances pass; the well-to-do, tired with doing nothing, saunter about and make indolent pretence of listening to the music. Here are only the rich, the happy; here is nothing that does not inspire or exhale the pleasure of being alive, except the aspect of the mob that presses against the outer barrier yonder, catching gratis, at the will of the wind, a tatter of music, and watching the glittering furnace within.

There is a reflection of the joy of the rich deep in the eyes of the poor that is always interesting. But to-day, beyond this people dressed in blouses and calico, I saw one whose nobility was in striking contrast with all the surrounding triviality. She was a tall, majestic woman, and so imperious in all her air that I cannot remember having seen the like in the collections of the aristocratic beauties of the past. A perfume of exalted virtue emanated from all her being. Her face, sad and worn, was in perfect keeping with the deep mourning in which she was dressed. She also, like the plebeians she mingled with and did not see, looked upon the luminous world with a profound eye, and listened with a toss of her head.

It was a strange vision. "Most certainly," I said to myself, "this poverty, if poverty it be, ought not to admit of any sordid economy; so noble a face answers for that. Why then does she remain in surroundings with which she is so strikingly in contrast?"

But in curiously passing near her I was able to divine the reason. The tall widow held by the hand a child dressed like herself in black. Modest as was the price of entry, this price perhaps sufficed to pay for some of the needs of the little being, or even more, for a superfluity, a toy.

She will return on foot, dreaming and meditating —and alone, always alone, for the child is turbulent and selfish, without gentleness or patience, and cannot become, any more than another animal, a dog or a cat, the confident of solitary griefs.

101 The Temptations; or, Eros, Plutus, and Glory

Last night two superb Satans and a She-devil not less extraordinary ascended the mysterious stairway by which Hell gains access to the frailty of sleeping man, and communes with him in secret. These three postured gloriously before me, as though they had been upon a stage—and a sulphurous splendour emanated from these beings who so disengaged themselves from the opaque heart of the night. They bore with them so proud a presence, and so full of mastery, that at first I took them for three of the true Gods.

The first Satan, by his face, was a creature of doubtful sex. The softness of an ancient Bacchus shone in the lines of his body. His beautiful languorous eyes, of a tenebrous and indefinite colour, were like violets still laden with the heavy tears of the storm; his slightly-parted lips were like heated censers, from whence exhaled the sweet savour of many perfumes; and each time he breathed, exotic insects drew, as they fluttered, strength from the ardours of his breath.

Twined about his tunic of purple stuff, in the manner of a cincture, was an iridescent Serpent with lifted head and eyes like embers turned sleepily towards him. Phials full of sinister fluids, alternating with shining knives and instruments of surgery, hung from this living girdle. He held in his right hand a flagon containing a luminous red fluid, and inscribed with a legend in these singular words:

"DRINK OF THIS MY BLOOD: A PERFECT RESTORATIVE";

and in his left hand held a violin that without doubt served to sing his pleasures and pains, and to spread abroad the contagion of his folly upon the nights of the Sabbath.

From rings upon his delicate ankles trailed a broken chain of gold, and when the burden of this caused him to bend his eyes towards the earth, he would contemplate with vanity the nails of his feet, as brilliant and polished as well-wrought jewels.

He looked at me with eyes inconsolably heartbroken and giving forth an insidious intoxication, and cried in a chanting voice: "If thou wilt, if thou wilt, I will make thee an overlord of souls; thou shalt be master of living matter more perfectly than the sculptor is master of his clay; thou shalt taste the pleasure, reborn without end, of obliterating thyself in the self of another, and of luring other souls to lose themselves in thine."

But I replied to him: "I thank thee. I only gain from this venture, then, beings of no more worth than my poor self? Though remembrance brings me shame indeed, I would forget nothing; and even before I recognise thee, thou ancient monster, thy mysterious cutlery, thy equivocal phials, and the chain that imprisons thy feet, were symbols showing clearly enough the inconvenience of thy friendship. Keep thy gifts."

The second Satan had neither the air at once tragical and smiling, the lovely insinuating ways, nor the delicate and scented beauty of the first. A gigantic man, with a coarse, eyeless face, his heavy paunch overhung his hips and was gilded and pictured, like a tattooing, with a crowd of little moving figures which represented the unnumbered forms of universal misery. There were little sinew-shrunken men who hung themselves willingly from nails; there were meagre gnomes, deformed and under-sized, whose beseeching eyes begged an alms even more eloquently than their trembling hands; there were old mothers who nursed clinging abortions at their pendant breasts. And many others, even more surprising.

This heavy Satan beat with his fist upon his immense belly, from whence came a loud and resounding metallic clangour, which died away in a sighing made by many human voices. And he smiled unrestrainedly, showing his broken teeth—the imbecile smile of a man who has dined too freely. Then the creature said to me:

"I can give thee that which gets all, which is worth all, which takes the place of all." And he tapped his monstrous paunch, whence came a sonorous echo as the commentary to his obscene speech. I turned away with disgust and replied: "I need no man's misery to bring me happiness; nor will I have the sad wealth of all the misfortunes pictured upon thy skin as upon a tapestry."

As for the She-devil, I should lie if I denied that at first I found in her a certain strange charm, which to define I can but compare to the charm of certain beautiful women past their first youth, who yet seem to age no more, whose beauty keeps something of the penetrating magic of ruins. She had an air at once imperious and sordid, and her eyes, though heavy, held a certain power of fascination. I was struck most by her voice, wherein I found the remembrance of the most delicious contralti, as well as a little of the hoarseness of a throat continually laved with brandy.

"Wouldst thou know my power?" said the charming and paradoxical voice of the false goddess. "Then listen." And she put to her mouth a gigantic trumpet, enribboned, like a mirliton, with the titles of all the newspapers in the world; and through this trumpet she cried my name so that it rolled through space with the sound of a hundred thousand thunders, and came re-echoing back to me from the farthest planet.

"Devil!" cried I, half tempted, "that at least is worth something." But it vaguely struck me, upon examining the seductive virago more attentively, that I had seen her clinking glasses with certain drolls of my acquaintance, and her blare of brass carried to my ears I know not what memory of a fanfare prostituted.

So I replied, with all disdain: "Get thee hence! I know better than wed the light o'love of them that I will not name."

Truly, I had the right to be proud of a so courageous renunciation. But unfortunately I awoke, and all my courage left me. "In truth," I said, "I must have been very deeply asleep indeed to have had such scruples. Ah, if they would but return while I am awake, I would not be so delicate."

So I invoked the three in a loud voice, offering to dishonour myself as often as necessary to obtain their favours; but I had without doubt too deeply offended them, for they have never returned.

ETERNAL HELEN

By Frank Pearce Sturm
The Cover and Decorations
Designed by T. Sturge Moore

M•DCCCC•XXI

I am the vine in the wilderness and the blossom of
the hidden horizon.

I am yesterday, to-day and to-morrow, and I have
the power to be born many times.

Let me eat my food under the sycamore tree of my
lady the goddess Hathor, and let my times be among
the divine beings who have alighted thereon.

Her beauties are a stream bearing things which bring
rest; they are like unto water which floweth nearer.

Send forth thy light upon me, O unknown soul, for
I am of those who are about to enter in, and the
divine speech is in my ears in the underworld. Let
not the deeds of my ancestors be laid upon me, but
let me be delivered from him whose divine eyes sleep
at eventide when he gathereth together and finisheth
the day in night.

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

102

Dedication

To C.S

In memory of the night we fled from
Babylon by way of the King's garden
through the gate between two walls.

Once in a world of old
When the gods were young
Who are dead, with their masks of gold
On their altars hung,
You sighed that my tales were told
And my songs were sung.
As the wrappings of death are unwound
When the grave is rent
And the gilded mummy is found,
A passion unspent
Here opens the grave of the past
For the mummy gold
Of ~~the~~ treasures we looked upon last
In a world of old.

103

The Cup of Dreams

I bring you all that ever was romance,
Since Eros, crowned with laurels and decay,
Bore his dark torch the legendary way,
Where naiads plunge and merry satyrs dance.
I brim the cup of dreams, blown bubble-fine,
That your lips touched a thousand years ago;
The same dark fires of immemorial wine,
Pressed from forgotten vineyards, flame & glow.
Drink, and remember all the wandering soul
Has suffered on this exile from the stars,
In shadowy galleys on the long sea's roll
Tossed, or in tumult of forgotten wars,
Or strayed with ghostly huntsmen in enchanted
Forests that wait the winding of a horn—
Drink, and behold ambiguous and forlorn
Shades of the past, and know the world is haunted.

2

Come to the lone beach where spare grasses blow,
And the gray sea-gull stoops with a mournful cry,
Where our tall triremes, black against the sky,
Came with blown sails and gilded oars arow,
And throb of drums lamenting, long ago;
Where still, between dark sea and windy dune,
I hear by night the curved keels grate the sand,
And shadows plot strange woes beneath the moon,
And stranger voices out of faery-land
Bid us, long driven by love's all-various quest,
From the hushed Garden and the haunted Tree,
Lift sail once more for that funereal West
Where Eden glows with moonstones by the sea.

3

But if these dreams in rhyme and reverie clad
Are less to you than wreathes in evening air
Above the cloudy torch, smouldering and sad,
Or seem but empty mummers clothed in vair,
Sorrowing to order on dejected lutes,
Then I many know what fools have called despair,
For these gray songs have old and stony roots;
Life after life I wove them out of air,
And foam and spindrift and the dreamy lore
Heard in the dark beside a faery's grave—
And could the dupe of planets offer more
Even to Helen or world-wandering Maeve?
Time has appeased the eternal cark with these
Since hearts broke at the oar in Helen's fleet,
Or kingly rovers of the antique seas
Died for a song at Mæve's indifferent feet.

4

She will not heed you, star-bewildered kings;
The wilderness awaits, the desert hides
Your cups of gold beneath her sandy tides;
Bid your dark dreams fold up their phoenix wings.
Tread out your Torches, leave your Gifts, & come
With the lone caravan that never hears
Love, the mad dervish, on his ghostly drum
Low tapping with a steady sound of tears.

Rosa Aegyptiaca

Hermas to the Singer of Saïs

I

104

Ex Abyssso Maris

Out of the dark abyss of water comes
Slow Night the hierophant with far-off drums
Beating like hearts, and starry flares that burn
Where the cold crescent lifts a hollow urn
Above the priest whose chanting acolytes
Are pale with memories of Egyptian nights.
These are my dreams, the shapes of fire and wind,
And earth and water, passionate and blind;
My dreams, my rhymes, my memories: shadows cast
By far-off fires that have consumed the past:
Hear them, O master of the ways of fate;
Hear them, O guardian of the ivory gate;
And you, pale face that I have found too fair,
Dark eyes beneath the shadow of dark hair,
Dim loveliness that is an odour shed,
Strange as the gums men burn before the dead:
Hear them; hear me; for Time will soon recall
The weaving moon that must unravel all.

II

105

Harps of Memphis

I heard the harps of Memphis ring:
'Dream-dark heavy Egyptian eyes,
Brown hair, sleek as a hawk's shut wing,
How many lives have made you wise
Since Time, who buried out of mind
Your dim sarcophagus of gold,
Drowsed for an age and woke to find
Your beauty sterile as of old?'
And bowed my head to recollect
That she who rules my reveries,
The sad Egyptian intellect,
A petrification of the moon
Rigid as her own images
Imprisoned in a trance of stone,
Shall never flower till overthrown.

III

106

The Shadow of Helen

You haunt the way of dreams when every rose
Is aureoled with sleep;
When meditation into memory flows,
And deep embraces deep;
You haunt the heart that wonders in the night
Why love wore wings and fled;
The heart where sorrow that is half delight
Dreams of the lonely dead.
You haunt the world: the honey of your breath
Gathers the stars like bees;
There is no King but would lift sail for death
On those enchanted seas
Whose foaming waters as they hurry past
Our tumults and our wars,
Cry that your soul is crowned with jewels cast
Down by adoring stars;
And one who saw your pilgrim torches flare
On Troy's disastrous walls
Lights this dim lamp to your new beauty where
The Shadow of Helen falls.

IV

107

White Cranes

The white cranes wandering by,
Breaking the twilight's rest
With a sorrowful cry,
Disappear in the West,
Spots on the desert sky.

Stars flowering one by one
Out of heaven's blue deep,
Bring no oblivion,
Bring no quiet sleep,
To me whom they shine upon.

How can the rent heart know
Peace, when cold stars above,
And burning sands below,
Are perishing of the slow
Hurt of rejected love?

V

108

The Amber Cup

Your body is an amber cup
Brimming with passions's heady wine,
I drained the whole world's wonder up
The night I made your beauty mine.
If you were dead the haunted dusk
Were hollow as a broken shell;
And all Arabia, breathing musk
That blossoms where your beauty fell,
And all the lovely shades who pace
In golden dreams from lawn to lawn,
Would vanish with the sorrowful face
That broods beside me in the dawn.
But while flame treads the burning sands,
Or cold stars silver reedy streams,
Or a wave breaks, or temple stands,
Your body paler than the moon,
Your lotus breasts and lovely hands
Are mine, because one night in June
I knew all else for empty dreams;
And knew you were whom Time has spared
From some ruined Eden, mine to hold,
While your dark beauty shadowy-haired
Bears that proud spirit plumed with gold.

VI

109

The Comforters

One frail foam-drop blown over the deep
Mirrors a world of stars;
One song awakens from enchanted sleep
The whole world's sorrows and wars;
One rose, the least rose, fallen in disarray
And ruined, brings to mind
How many passionate faces pale decay
Has hurried down the wind.
But flower and song and fading foam-drop cry:
'Your beauty shall not fade,
God is too proud a craftsman to destroy
The loveliest thing he made.'

VII

110

Flames and Embers

When the violin throbs and sings,
Wakening bodily desire,
Love the Spirit flies away,
Trembling lest his lucent wings
Shrivel in the cruel fire
Wakened in the heart of clay.

When your golden voice replies,
Like a heavenly messenger
Uttering divine commands;
All the fire of passion dies
To a glowing ember where
Love the Spirit warms his hands.

VIII

111

Still-heart

Dread are the death-pale Kings
Who bend to the oar,
Dread is the voice that sings
On the starless shore,
Lamentations and woes:
Cold on the wave
Beautiful Still-heart goes
To the rock-hewn grave.
The limbs are bound, and the breasts
That I kissed are cold;
Beautiful Still-heart rests
With the queens of old.

112

Hermas and the Daemon

Hermas

By the calm, mask-like, unrelenting face,
That you have borrowed from some Egyptian tomb,
I know you for a Daemon; and by your eyes
Still as a lizard's; and by your rigid feet
Sandalled with gold, that do not touch this earth.

Daemon

Listen to me.

Hermas

I listen unafraid.
You are the tempter who comes once to all.

Daemon

Call me the tempter if you will; I see
Gray in your hair, and in your eyes a hint
Of courage and wisdom that might call me here,
As your Imagination gives me shape;
And I am bidden invite you, chosen of many,
To join our company in a secret place,
Where all my comrades with their mortal friends
Prepare the hour that frees us from the stars
And wearisome Time; so come, elected brother,
To share my deathless body. Ten thousand years
The lawns whose pearl-gray dew no feet have trod
Await our steps where the first Ocean laves
The green-tressed agate rocks with salty life;
And sycamores older than Dodona's oaks
Among oracular foliage mutter wisdom
That has escaped you all your toilsome days.

Hermas

I hear their leafy murmur in your voice,
And through your eyes, as in those watery deeps
Fronds wave and fishes move, see human forms
Who labour in a visionary light,
Armoured with phosphorescence like the sea's:
Some pour dark wine from old urns into bowls;
Some, at the feet of a dark shape of stone,
Feed crackling tongues of flame with blossomy boughs;
Billows of heavy smoke roll lazily seaward.
Who are the shadows, Daemon? Do they live?

Daemon

Players of instruments pour out sound like wine,
And poets cast the coloured boughs of spring
Into the fire of reverie; smoke of dreams
Flows to the mother of all dreams, the Sea.

Hermas

How do the shadows name the gray stone shape?

Daemon

They name her Silence.

Hermas

Do the shadows exist
Because your eyes have frightened thought to sleep,
Daemon whose eyes are crystals in the Sun?

Daemon

You see them in the emblematic shapes
Their hearts prepare, as the ripe acorn pours
An oak in some invisible mould of form.
These are the labourers who receive for hire
The moon's unquarried silver; thirsty dreamers
Who found, being still entravelled by the stars,
Intolerable venom to the flesh
In the olympian hydromel, yet drank deep;
Their lips have shrivelled on the edge of the cup.

Hermas

Have I not drunk as deep as any there?
But not, O Daemon, your deluding wine,
Nor in their company whom my heart cries
Are your co-evals; daemons of earth, air, water;
Not my lost brothers of the holy fire,
Whose brightness is the shadow of their lord.
These are but phantoms whom your subtle will
Has clad in some illusion of romance
To lure, as charms the glittering snake a bird,
My wonder-loving spirit to its fall.

Daemon

Would you tread fear, the midnight toad, to death?
And wander living through the underworld,
And be no more the sport, as now you are,
Of diverse essences? O unhappy, wavering
Mortal, vain as a wave!
Chained to corruption by the gyves of terror!
A hissing torch borne through a storm of rain!
I offer you the cup that magian Kings,
And all the dusty alchemists you dream of,
Sought sleeping and awake when the white Moon
That now rides dead was once a living world;
Do you refuse, as though decay's dull candle
Would outshine heaven's tall beacon in the end?

Hermas

Spirit, you rave in your daemonic mind!
Not the seven planets with their captive stars
Goaded along the turquoise floors of space,
Could fill the cup that Eden's revel drained.
I look beyond the accidental beauty
Of all bewildering emblems of the gods,
To that great stormy threshold of the Sibyl
Whose lips betray the invisible source of life.
All must drink there, save only the deathless ones;
Perhaps they also: Once when I was young
I thought I saw the changeable forms of gods
Moving at high noon in an ilex grove,
Calm, awful, cold, too beautiful for life;
Their hard eyes shone like suns mirrored in ice!
And once at dawn, upon the windy beach,
Beating my brains over a difficult thought,
The keen salt air grew on a sudden soft
With languid breaths of summer roses blowing,
And the monotonous voices of the gulls
Became the amorous moan of restless doves,
Whose coral feet and hyacinth-coloured breasts
Were lovely to the eye, O envious Daemon;
But when She passed who treads all hearts alike:
Venus, who else? I saw Myrrha's deep eyes.
So are all shapes men burn their hearts before:
Phantoms of thought in flight, arrested suddenly
Before us on a mirror of still air.
We give the immortals bodies like our own;
For how can man, who dares the grave, adore
A phantom god who neither suffers nor dies?

Deamon

There is a restless Image in your heart
Who will not stay a moment in one dream,
Nor leave one thought unravelled and at peace,
But wanders like the sea's edge after the Moon's
Sleep-wandering feet.

Hermas

An Image that remembers
Its transcendental fall; wherefore I move
Beneath the drifting changes of time and sky,
Among sublunary images, whether of daemons
That vanish cloud-like, or of Pyramids,
Temples or Cities, built with hands like these,
As among emblems in a happy dream:
They are no more.

Daemon

They are indeed no more,
But I would lift you out of time and sky,
Free from the burden of these many dreams,
To share with you a throne that is not least
Among daemoniac thrones, for we are one.

Hermas

Maybe you are my shadow, and we are one
As voice and echo, or as placid cloud
And its reflection in the broken shallows;
But not as flame and light are, nor the holy
Inseparable mystery of Being
With Beauty one when child or woman smiles.
Daemon, you are a servant of despair,
Your heart a hollow shell echoing the sad
Plaint of a sea where never mariner sings
Contempt of death in high adventure won,
But careful cowards hug the stormless beach
With ragged sails, gathered in some disastrous
And never-sated comradeship of wrong.
You offer me the withered leaves of magic,
The tattered lure of 'Ye shall never die';
But these tired bones that cry against the choice,
Have lifted too hard burdens through the world,
And would not now be cheated of the grave.
Or even did the flesh, as it does not,
Desire to lie for ever in the Sun,
A stagnant pool, and not become a cloud;
Soul and not Body is master in this House.
The Soul has chosen: through the grave's grey door
With all my Kin I'll fare the adventurous way,
And free the god who sleeps, if dreams be true,
Not only in ~~the~~ passionate hearts of men and women,
But in each tree, dumb beast, and shapeless stone,
The portion of captive light that awaits deliverance.

Daemon

I fade away: your thrice-bewildering god
Has made of this most passionate adventure
An accidental energy of the mind:
I fade, I fade...into my own despair...

Hermas

Now he has gone I will cry a human cry;
I will sing the song I made when Myrrha went,
Whose pretty fingers closed the ugly books
That now are all I have. Dreams and a song!
A cry going after her to the Abyss!
'She will not come, she will not smile any more;
I shall not see her again, she who was mine;
I have laid offerings under the Sycamore:
A ruby, a robe of silk, a jar of wine,
Her favourite fan, her lute ready to hand;
But one hot noon has drained the wine-jar dry,
My gifts are hidden in the wind-blown sand,
The lute-strings broke at sunset with a cry.'

113

A Dream

The dreamer heard beneath the boughs of sleep
An Arabian bird crying over the deep;
And saw the ships of dream with foam-starred bows,
And saw their lanterns gleam on the hands and brows
Of sirens laughing abeam.

He sang a happy tune till on the great sea's rim
The vast half Moon and silence beckoned him;
Then cried: 'Here ends the task, the secret's won;
Your star-bewildered mask remove, beloved one!'

Even as he spoke the strange white Moon became
An opening Rose of Flame, and he awoke;
And wakening heard the voice of the Arabian bird
Crying: 'Not here nor yet, nor while the knot of fate
Binds you, can amulet resolve her ivory gate.'

Dancers

When you sighed and smiled
I saw your thoughts in the glass
Of your gaze: they are white
Delicate dancers who pass
On the dim blue curtain of night;
Dancers by music beguiled
Down from the high sad hills
Over the pallor of grass
To hyacinth lawns bestrewn
With dapple of boughs and moonlight
Under the Moon.

Pure as cold fountains,
Delicate dancers with nude
Bodies of maidens
Blown through the glimmering wood,
Dancing under the mountains,
Drifting as blossoms do
When boughs are shaken,
Swaying white roses of sleep,
Till the red rose waken
Sleepy with dew.

Dance in your secret grove
Hidden apart,
Moving with white arms lifted
And cool white feet,
Hearing the flute that the faun
Who is hid in my heart
Breathes upon, weary and sweet.

Dance on the shining ground
Till the shadows are gray
In the misty dawn,
Then, beautiful dancers,
Hurry away
From the laughing faun.

115

An Air on a Lute

'Et ta voix rappelant voile et clavecin.' Mallarmé

Beneath one phantom star
The cloudy moths are a-wing,
And bent above the pool
Where their drowned shadows are,
The shadowy branches swing
Ghostly and beautiful.

Vague in the violet dusk
White roses wait the moon,
A far lute sighs on the wind
Or is it a breath of musk
That changes from odour to tune
In the brooding mind?

The sounds and odours die,
The mad moths quench the star,
Each rose is a pallid light
Fading upon a sky
Where dreaming shadows are
Awakened in mid-flight.

I also wake, for mute
Lies all that held me bound,
Petal-pale delicate fingers
Fall from a silent lute;
Is it a scent or a sound
Or a flame that lingers?

116

The Tall Cairn

On the tall cairn the light lies wist and eerily
In the hush of the fallen day;
The gray gull wheels, and calls to the gray sea wearily,
Calls and passes away.

While the tall cairn stands, or dew lies cold on the heather,
Or a bird has wings,
You and I shall wander the dusk and the starlight together,
To the end of things.

117

Darweesh

I stricken of God,
Ever in praise of Him
Whirl like a giddy star,
Whirl like a potter's wheel,
Whirl in His praise.
Round stalks the lordly Sun
Following his love the Moon,
I follow God.
Round and round hand in hand
Clad all in joyful white,
Dance the bright hours of day
After the hours of night
Garmented darkly:

They too spin giddily
Whirling His praise.
Faster than hour and hour,
Faster than life and death,
Swifter than love dances done
I whirl God's praise.
Time laughs and whips me round,
Time is the child of God,
I am the top he spins
Whipping me round.
Lo! I am stricken of God.
All I can do is spin
Whirling His praise.

I dreamed dark Isis, wrapped in her simarre
That is a dead world's cere-cloth, suddenly stood
High in the air, while angels, each a star,
Leaned on their spears about her solitude,
And dreaming so, was wakened by the sea,
And looking heavenward saw the ancient, proud,
Cold pensive moon above a hawthorn tree,
Wrapped in the silver tissue of a cloud.

The Dead Came Dancing

With swan-shaped lutes and serpent flutes,
And sun-and-moon-shaped tambourines,
The dead came dancing down the hill
Among the dark-leaved evergreens;
And those who went behind were Kings,
And those before were beggar-men;
But all sang to the jangling strings,
And I who listened sang with them.

On drumming skins of tambourines
Lean knees and elbows thudded oft,
And heels were lifted from the ground,
And feet and hands were flung aloft.
The shawl with silver fringes span,
The grey cloak whirled a tattered hem,
All hurrying to the stormy tune,
And I arose and danced with them.

Down the blue-shadowed cypress groves
We danced beside a dream-lagoon,
Where shells lay in the silver sand
Like spirals fallen from the Moon;
And lamp-like flowers on emerald stems
Rose, pale with beauty and with pain,
As though the shells had breathed and lived
And rose towards the Moon again.

And this I know, we danced to show
How Death within his purple vat
Shall tread the fruit of all the hills
From Cloch-na-Ben to Ararat;
The clustered grapes are good to see,
But better still the wine within
When Time's white feet have trod the world
And cast away the flaggy skin.

Their voices told how bravely flings
The soul of man his eagle wings
From peak to peak of night and day
Across the empty void of things,
And how his anger rends the sky,
And overturns a thousand thrones,
Before he folds his heavy plumes
And sinks and builds a house of bones,
And paints his walls with starry fire,
And weaves a flower-embroidered mesh,
A golden net for wandering dreams,
And tapestries the house with flesh,
And dwells therein to nod and brood
A discontented tale of years
Before his god-like wings renewed
Bear him again among his peers;
Then ~~still~~ will he tear his dwelling down,
And cast the raiment of the clay
Upon the burial ground of Time,
And Time shall bury it away.

The dead men sang, the curved lutes rang,
The long flutes blew, and none took breath,
Music and voices cried and cried:
There is no Death, There is no Death,
Till every drop of dew took fire,
And every pale flower lifted up
Her pearly face as though to drink
Deep life from music's brimming cup;
And every shell in whose curved heart
A sea-voice cries: Forlorn, Forlorn,
Shone like a faery lamp and rang
With music like a faery horn.

Still singing the musicians passed
The gates invisible to me,
And as the Moon bent low to hear
Their music fade across the sea,
I heard lone Beauty's golden voice:
'Go, seek me where my faithful are,
Deep in the dreamy night of death
Where man's dim heart becomes a star.'

120

Flamel

He has hailed sea-beaches where
The mask-like faces of the dead
Put on eternity to stare
With sightless eyes from wave to wave
And gathered nightly round his bed
Dumb with the wisdom of the grave.

121

Virgilius

When I cried to the setting Moon but to remain,
The Mother of Chaos said:
'I must leave you a little while though I come again,
For there are poets who love me among the dead.'

122

The Last Fragment of Hermas

'Far on the verge of the desert, a world away,
Where the palms ended, there where the void began,
Like shadows cast on the fallen curtain of day
Trailed the last caravan,
With soft-footed camels of patience,
Pacing horses of pride,
And sorrowful man...'
So he wrote, as he died.

123

The Poplar Alley

Above the shivering poplar alley
The lonely heaven bends chill and dun;
Over the one-time summer valley
The dull red circle of the sun
Sinks, mantling with the last cold gleam
The naked branches fleeced with snow,
And yet in their unbroken dream
The phantom roses breathe and blow;
The phantom voices sing and sigh,
Vague wavering blossom shines and stirs,
And when the wandering airs go by
I hear those murmuring silks of hers.
For here, though summer time is over,
And only phantom roses blow,
Dreaming she still awaits her lover,
Ghost looks for ghost among the snow.

124

From the Japanese

Now he has gone: shame, bolt my chamber door;
O will his love be as constant as he swore?
He has gone: his footsteps die upon the stair
Leaving my heart as tumbled as my hair.

125

From the Chinese

I sought her while a thousand years took flight,
Through lonely lives too bitter to recall.
I held her in my arms for one brief night,
And was repaid for all.

126

Penates

Nothing is better in life
Than our own hands have built,
With here and there a touch
Of hard-won scarlet and gilt,
And here and there a flower
Or even a precious stone,
Books all dreaming together,
Buddha dreaming alone
On his ivory throne,
A fire in the wintry weather,
For these are our own.

127

The Slain Courtesan

Women of Troy, cast flowers, not shards, upon her,
Who loved and was so frail;
Here now she lies, she is cleansed of all dishonour,
Death's bride, so virgin pale.

Carry her forth with reverence, softly weeping,
You women newly wed,
Lull her with dreaming songs, for she is sleeping,
Only her grief is dead.

From the Greek of Amphidamas

128

The Adventurer

When the grey gull tires of the tumbling waste of the seas,
My wings may weary of beating the bounds of space;
When the grey gull builds her nest in the apple trees,
I may build a house among trees and rest in a place.

But if I were in Parædise garden under God's wing
And the seven planets were empty of folk at last,
I would steal from the fold of the blest and their sleepy King
To wander once more through the time-eaten worlds of the past.

129


The Restless Heart

The stars that bind us, heart and will,
To a stone circle in a wood,
Or a gray cairn upon a hill,
Know all the wickedness and good
That we have wrought in times gone by,
Who are older than the hills we tread,
And older than the starry sky
Or all the Babylonian dead.
They know why hearts that never rest
Must live in emblems not in things,
And why the saddest road's the best
And sorrow's tatters are a King's.

130

Had Homer Known

What though the opening lotus of the dawn
Unfolded, brought to birth
Sheba, Astarte, Hathor: all are one
Since your feet trod the earth,
Who have made dim the beauty that old songs
Praise when the lute-strings wake,
And music brings to mind the heavy wrongs
Endured for beauty's sake.
Had Homer known you, he had bidden tire
And bind your loosened hair,
That proud Greek girl who set the world on fire
And is gray Time's despair.



131

The Archangels

To-night I saw in the mind's eye
All the Archangels hurrying by
With holy eyes too hard to weep
Jehovah's downfall. Chaos was deep
Beneath them, and the deeps were torn
By a dragon-throated horn
Held in vast hands, blown by wild breath
To cheer their multitude to death.
What hunt was up, or what great wars
They waged, whose passing shook the stars,
Dreams have not told, but they went by
And vanished with a lonely cry.
They are gone maybe to uproot
The Tree of Evil with its fruit;
They are gone maybe to make fast
The old foundations of the past;
Or maybe they will overthrow
All that we are and all we know.
But though they battle as they will,
Until the heart of God is still,
Their end shall be to cry aloud
That she is beautiful and proud;
Their end shall be, when their last breath
Sighs through the silver mask of death,
To speak the Word that will remake
The dead world for her beauty's sake.

132

By Candle Light

In the soft candle light at the close of day,
When your white hand on the ivory keyboard gleams,
And the sorrowful old sweet music, burdened with dreams
In the hush of its dim plumes hidden, wanders away;
Does never a whisper waken, a voice in your heart,
To tell how the ancient songs that you sing for me,
Songs that murmur a moment and cease to be,
Call up a host of dreams where you have no part?

133

The Only Happy Town

It is a town where merchants meet,
And lovers tap at secret doors
And shaded from the desert's heat
The beggar squats and counts his sores;

And smiling women, at their ease,
Proud as the scarlet bird who preens
Her plumage in Arabian trees,
Pass in their silken palanquins;

The fighting man forgets the war,
The dark sea-rover joins the throng,
Where, in the shadow-striped bazaar,
Love dances to a beaten gong.

All these are happy as they go
Across the sleepy peacock fan,
By Allah painted long ago
To wave before the eyes of man;

With greed and tumult never done,
With songs and kisses never stale,
All these are happy; never one
Has rent illusion's heavy veil;

For when blue shadows turn to grey,
And night's gold bugles blow retreat,
These, who are dream-folk, fade away
Down the somnambulistic street.

134

The Cry of the Ravens
at the Approach of Night

Time rolls the world along his dusty way,
And snuffs the smoky candle of the sun,
And overthrows the battlements of day,
And heaps the earth on empires just begun;
But let him toil till all the fires are quenched,
And Sun and Moon outgrow their ancient fret,
We whom he hunts and fears have never blenched,
We whom he cannot slay escape him yet.
Under the earth they hid our heavy bones
When we were men and mortal long ago;
They raised the cromlech and the cairn of stones,
For what, being men and mortal, could they know,
Who live wingless and weak and cease to be?
O Ravens, cry one cry for men who climb
The stony hills to where beside the sea
Our ancient voices croak the end of Time.

135

An Offering at the Tomb

Myrrha

Here surely we have found our long-sought peace...

Hermas

Lovely indeed the dew-cooled garden-dusk,
Where the dark rose, an Ethiopian queen
Swathed in ner scarlet, dreams the night away
By fretted trellisses of time-worn stone.

Myrrha

A fallen petal in the moss-hung basin,
Lone as a frail boat on a desperate gulph,
Floats among isles of outspread water lilies,
As you and I once sailed the Grecian sea
By starlight, in our youth, a world away.
And, Hermas, see, a fish with luminous eyes
Out of the water's emerald shade floats up
And disappointed sulky turns away
With jewels bubbling round his silver tail:
Such beauty saddens peace with nameless thoughts.

Hermas

I see the square sail blotting out the stars,
And hear the creak of cordage, and the songs
Of those bronze-throated sailors from the isles,
And smell the flowering citron as we passed
Shady Zacynthos, when a land-breeze blew.
And I remember how, a phantom dawn
When sea and sky were one dim lake of gold,
The scarlet crane that flew upon the mast
Danced, flapped and screamed with a foreboding cry
Until an arrow brought him fluttering down,
And how you wept to see the handsome plumes
Stiffen in death and the fierce eye grow dim.

Myrrha

Such memories shared with one we love are life.
And life is joy, and what is joy but peace,
A slow procession from the crowded past
Of old events time-purged of all their dross?

Hermas

Myrrha, dear comrade of the pilgrimage
Trodden since time began, and trodden yet,
Do not the endless, ever endless murmurings
Of singing water, the cold fountain voices,
The spectral roses and the buried garden,
All this that is illusion and decay,
And all the glittering pomps that memory
Happily feeds on and yet half distrusts
For their unnatural beauty, do not these
Warn hearts like ours that peace is not their home?

Myrrha

No, peace is all. Look, Hermas, look, the Moon
The setting moon, dark Hathor's floating shrine,
Seen through yon row of broken colonnades
Pours her wan fire upon the sleeping sea.
Henceforth let life be such a tideless flood,
Lit by such fire.

O Hermas, share we here
Some quiet years of undelirious joy,
For wandering discontent offends the gods.

Hermas

Indeed, indeed; but is there any cure?
Has man one moment of unmixed content
Till the abhorred embalmer gilds the face
And binds the shrunk arms to the parchment chest
With resined bandages, and hides away
For ever in a Baylonian night
The husk he shall become?

Myrrha

And then? Tell on.

Hermas

Then, then at last, the spirit like a hawk
Freed from the sad necessity of life,
A sleek hawk, tameless, taloned, amber-eyed,
Poised for a moment on his broken cage
Of fallen bones, lifts wings and with a cry,
As when a silver harp-string tightened snaps,
Climbs to his home through leagues of diamond sky,
Icy-cold or molten hot,
But that wild spirit as he springs,
Wondering to diviner things,
He knoweth not
Light, darkness, cold or heat,
Only the beat, beat, beat,
Of his great wings!

Myrrha

When we long dead shall gaze in wonder back
Upon this painted dream, shall we remember
The little things that make the dream so sweet?
Shall I know why the moon that tames the tide
Of the great sea, should stoop from heaven to lift
Drops from my heart to shed them in these tears?
Or why the snow-white thorn tree burning there
In lamp-like beauty, scenting all the dark,
Now fills with such unbearable delight
This heart that then will long have ceased to beat?

Hermas

We may know all or nothing. Those who know,
Or say they know, and are accounted wise
Hold that the dead are so beyond the reach
Of mortal thought that man can only say
The dead are dead and death is nothingness;
But in that nothingness, and there alone,
True being is, and there we find our peace.
Hush, some one comes!

Myrrha

Where? From the sycamore wood?

Hermas

No, by the path
Between the cypress and white-flowering thorn;
The moon now carves a shape against the pale
Background of light. It should, if shaven head,
High shoulders and thin flanks
Tell what I think they tell, be one of those
Priests of the old religion who still dream
By fallen tomb and broken monument
Of things best left forgotten.

Myrrha

Let us wait
Near the old grave among the myrtle bushes,
Whose worn inscription puzzles even you,
Wise as you are. The priest is nearer now.
I am afraid...if it should prove a ghost...

Hermas

It is a priest, and timid as a hare,
Mark how he trembles and would surely run,
Did not his leaden foot-sole cling to earth
As in an evil dream: But have no fear...

The Priest

You holy Sisters
Protect your servant
From all evil:
From the long dead
And from the newly dead,
Goddesses, shield him.

Myrrha

He calls on Isis and her darker sister
I am half dead with terror...hold me closer,
An evil thought has crept into my blood
And I am in the shadow of cold wings,
The dark and stagnant twilight of the grave
Clings to my skin. O would that I might swoon...

Hermas

Be still...

Myrrha

I cannot. That is not a priest.
It is the Ka of some one ages dead
And buried in this grave, who now returns;
Or some unshackled fiend with teeth of stone
Out of the Lake of Fire to eat my soul.

Hermas

No, no, dear love. It is a pilgrim priest,
One of those wanderers from nome to nome,
Who sacrifice at altars else deserted
And lay kind offerings on neglected tombs:
I see his iron-shod stave and wicker basket.

Myrrha

O let it **not** contain a strangled babe!
Sweet Mother Hathor, why does starry night
Loose such a terror on my peaceful dream?
And you, O Hermas, do you tremble also?

Hermas

I dare no more deny that there is that
About this priest that makes his presence feared:
Daemon or mortal, do not dream I fear him.
This body wavers like wind-ruffled water
But my strong will is granite to protect you.

Myrrha

I knew it. I am lost. It is a ghost.
Your terror doubles mine and I shall die.

Priest (singing to himself)

Too faint even to bear
The burden of the thought
That once they lived and kissed,
They tread the thin night air
Who are but memories caught
In bodies woven of mist.
And I, grown old with thought
Before my hair is grey,
Because the dream I brought
Into the light of day
Has withered, has withered away...

Alas, I cannot sing any but sad songs. There is a cold breath in the back of my neck. It is a strange hour of the night to be here. Hold me, O heart of Ra! What did the mariners at Naucratis sing?

Protect us, O Lord,
When the moon sets
And the tide turns
And the dead are abroad...

No, no, that is an embalmer's song. I will make my offering and say my prayer, and be gone.

Hermas (after a pause)

He has approached the tomb. He now kneels down
And opens his round basket. He draws forth
Small bowls of red baked clay. In one neat row
He lays them on the sepulchre. He fills
Some with small wheaten cakes, in some pours wine,
An offering to the dead.

Myrrha

Need I not fear?

Hermas

'Tis but a priest who thus fulfils some vow
To visit long-deserted burial-grounds
And make sepulchral offerings to the dead
Who have no friends to serve their shadowy needs.
Let us not greet him till his prayers be done.

Priest (before the tomb)

Hermas and Myrrha, may your shades devour
The spiritual substance of the offerings
I lay upon your tomb: the little loaves
Of consecrated bread, the ancient wine
That has been used in temple services
Time out of mind. And Hermas, if you meet
Among the shades who are your comrades now
A shade more beautiful than your own Myrrha
That is my lost Aola; bid her wait;
Tell her that Manetho has kept his word,
Given at Susa underneath the palms.
Hermas and Myrrha, dead five centuries,
If in your wanderings you meet a god
Offer a prayer for Manetho the priest
Who now salutes your Manes. Be at peace.

(A cloud covers the moon. Darkness.)

136

To the Angel of the Sun

O glittering Angel of the Sun,
Whose fiery labours never cease,
Send me the phoenix-dream of peace
When this long pilgrimage is done;
For we who turn the world to rhymes
Are lone stars mourning what is gone,
Dreaming of merry Babylon,
Desolate in these broken times.
The ancient mark is on our brows,
Men hate our foreign thoughts, our words
Remember what thy holy birds
Sang in the burning cinammon boughs:
'Torches of dreamland flare in vain
About the passing heart of dust;
Man's labour is a heavy pain,
His sword is lifted but to rust;
The Temple crumbles as he builds,
And Time devours the Mask of Stone,
The mummy the embalmer gilds
Is but a pattern for his own.'
O pacing Lion of the Sun,
Who meets his shadow in the sea,
Where in the desert, when all's done,
Shall my own Image run to me?

137

The End of the Argument

Dublin 1916

She

Though on the whole I hardly doubt
But when at length this body lies
A sacrifice to Hathor's moon
I shall have other hands and eyes,
These eyes grow weary copying out
Your scholar's thoughts and learned words
And looking through the window see
The green leaves and the singing birds.

He

But what have these to do with me
Who have grown gray in wisdom's cause
And withered in latinity?

She

The life I serve has other laws,
And you who write of things above
Youth's giddy whirlwind in my head,
And sacrifice a present love
To some Egyptian ages dead,
May know by sunlight in my hair
Spring treads this old gray Dublin square.

He

Spring wore her mask in Memphis once
And danced brown-footed...

She

Here I know
Rises some reflex of a dream,
Torch-bearing slumber's afterglow;
Spring flamed by some blue lotus-stream
You were to say, but what of that?

He

This, that the sunlight in your hair
Seems a faint candle to that gleam
Whose glory has not dimmed through many
Lives, or what I imagine lives;
And all your lure of kissing lips
Beside it is a beggar's penny
Weighed from the wealth that drew the ships
Of heroes through Homeric seas.

She

The goddesses that were their wives
Have filled your head with fantasies.

He

Drowsily smiling Buddha whom
Your bronze chrysanthemums adore,
Though he maintain religious gloom
In ivory silence evermore,
Was not yet born a holy man,
Much less the universal thought
Of half the East when I began
To follow that Egyptian girl
Through all the deeps of death's abyss;
And, having found her in this life,
To barter her eternal kiss
Because you have a sunlit curl
Would rouse that nightmare hunt again.

She

Now you would taunt me with your wife;
The devil wring her heart with pain,
And yours, because you let an old
Passionate memory turn you cold,
And hide my beautiful sun
With the past, till my youth be done;
May she grow evil and pale,
A witch in a fairy tale.

He

A cloud comes over the sun.

SALUTATION TO THE MANES

UNCOLLECTED POEMS

a

To A Seagull

O'er what dead seas have you flown to-night,
And wherefore seek this place of graves!
O flashing wonder of soft sad white!
These brown sands bare to the wash of waves?

Have you not passed in the dim red West
The rock-bound ribs of a scattered fleet,
Where the light of a lingering sun caressed
Ancient galleys and obsolete?

They were the ships that were sent of old
To seek the Isles of Eternal Ease,
Mighty with mariners, gallant with gold—
Riven and routed on chartless seas.

Turn and go ere the wings are worn
That brought you hither, and take your flight
From the grim grey mists of a land forlorn,
The barren abode of no delight.

Indolent islands in sunnier seas
Would give more rest to your weary wings
Than these chill shores where the sea-blown breeze
Sings of forgotten and faded things.

Finis

b

"The Rest is Silence"

I will arise ere the songs are ended,
Leave the loud feast before the harpers tire,
Lest I should see the flowers her fingers tended
Die like the roses of my own desire.

I will go hence, the wind-worn waters call me,
Put out once more upon the Sea of Dreams;
Shall I not find, whatever storms befall me,
Peace in some silent isle of lawns and streams?

Let me flee swiftly ere she see my sorrow;
I go where she no longer laughs or sings,
I seek in some far-off, unknown To-morrow
The last sad goal of many wanderings.

c

A Vision in July

I saw her sleeping, calm and white,
Her hands lay still as blossoms dead;
A bowl of roses in the night,
Had withered near her bed.

The morning sun with sweet desire
Rifled her tresses lying wild;
Then in the garden trees, a choir
Of birds sang, and she smiled.

And through the sleepless night, as I
Knew to my sorrow she was fair,
She saw, perchance, my roses die,
And knew in dreams of my despair.

d

Summer Sadness

Do you not hear the deep
Dread droning of the sea,
And the white rains that weep
For you, for me?

Do you not hear the wind among the leaves,
The birds that wail about the gloomy eaves...
Do you not hear the heart of one who grieves?

O! Let us mount the slow
Sad wings of waning days,
And bow our heads and go
To where no rays

From any sun shine bright across the rain,
And where no shower beats any window-pane...
Where gods have rest and dead dreams live again.

e

The Beggar

With pitiful, shaking hand and wistful eyes,
He begged an alms, a copper—nothing more;
Careless I gave, and then with great surprise
Saw him approach the door,
Not of the glittering gin-shop whose red light
Illumes the sordid path so often trod,
But he, before my unbelieving sight,
Entered the house of God.

The great Cathedral doors stood open wide,
A sudden impulse bade me follow him
To where a perfumed quiet reigned inside,
As though the seraphim
Had shed the dusk upon it from their wings;
A mighty and an everlasting sign
That peace shall come to him who prays or sings
Before the jewelled shrine.

And in his rags he knelt and told his beads,
Before the Mournful Mother of the World;
The waxen candles shone like holy deeds,
The mystic incense curled
Upward to heaven with the beggar's prayer;
He gave his offering when the plate came round,
And then—"Ah, would were mine," I whispered there,
"The peace this man has found."

f

The Twilight

I stood in a dusk of dreams by the lone deep lake,
At an hour when sad thoughts come with the flickering moths,
And the soft night wind that I love for a memory's sake
Went by with a sound like the sighing of burial cloths.
The dream came over my eyes and the wind blew past,
Singing among the reeds by the water side,
And the voices came, and the voices passed,
And a curlew cried.
The willow tossed her leaves like a dying flame,
I thought of you in the south with your wind-blown hair;
The old desires awoke and the old dreams came,
In the twilight there.

g

The City of Dreams

The silken awning, silver-looped,
Was wet with mist, a corner trailed
Over the side; the canvas drooped
Empty of wind, as in a dream
Our listless, drifting galley sailed
At midnight down the moon-lit stream.

So hand in hand with never a sigh
For Passion dead or the world behind,
We sailed together, you and I,
And watched the far-off, fading light
That sank and swept in a wandering wind
On the lost isle of love's delight.

We sailed to a land far, far away,
To a dim City by the sea,
Where all are dreamers and the spray
Of the pale white, wind-driven waves,
Sings a sad song eternally
Over the lilies on the graves.

h

A Song

I tire of life in cities, I am tired of hope deferred,
Of thinking, dreaming, brooding on the days of long ago,
O laughing, chaffing sailor-men I take you at your word,
I sail with you far eastward where the spice-winds blow—
Ah, sailors, I am ready, let us go.

The harbour lights upon our lee are fading one by one,
Sad women bow their heads and pray for you, but not for me,
And no one gives me welcome home or sighs when I am gone,
And no one shades her eyes to watch the ships come home from sea
You ask if I am happy?—I am free.

1

The Hopeless Quest

We have long sought the Princess of our dreams,
Through many wars, through many a land;
No god has stretched through any sky that gleams,
A helping hand.

We have not asked for help, we stand alone;
Wherefore should we be sorry, wherefore glad?
Our hearts are soft like wax, our faces stone,
We are not sad.

In many courts of long-forgotten kings
We have played harps and sang to ladies fair,
To scornful knights with perfumes and gold rings—
She was not there.

Our comfort is that she will never know
How weary was the path whereon we trod,
For she is pure, and far, and white like snow,
And calm like God.

This is our utmost hope, that far away,
Perchance beyond the sunset in the West,
There may be garlands for our brows some day,
There may be rest.

j

The Old Piper to His Country

A piper wandered through the night,
His ragged tartan blew behind;
He raised an aged, shaking voice
And flung this song upon the wind:

Ah, Scotland, thy great days are dead,
Thy beauty is a twice-told tale,
Where are thine iron-handed kings,
The ancient glory of the Gael?

The old red warrior-gods are gone
Who trod the battle-plains of old,
And flung the lightning of their spears
Through shields of blood-bespattered gold.

Dark Ossian of the floating hair,
Pale Enya of the dusky eyes,
Where are they now, or who gives heed
To legends that ye hold as lies?

There was a time when ye forgot
The world's sad ways of evil chance,
And rose above the flying stars
Upon the pinions of Romance.

But ye have left the ancient path
Of warlike spirits clothed in pride,
And warriors bow to weakling gods
Who bid them cast their strength aside.

There was a time when I drew tears,
And turned at will men's hearts about;
Did I but pipe a battle tune?—
Eyes flashed! and every sword leapt out!

No more the glimmering milk-white feet
Of maidens gather on the grass,
The crafty grim kirk-ridden folk
Throw no "God bless you" as I pass.

Did Wallace die, did Scotland's bards
Immortalise his deeds in song,
That ye might cast your swords aside
And haggle in a foreign tongue?

Remember! ye were fighters once,
Now ye are slaves—yet wherefore part
With that for which our fathers died,
The brave outspoken Gaelic heart?

Fawn if ye will, and bow to gods
Whereof I know not nor will know,
For I am near my end of days
And pass to where the sea-winds blow.

Another Piper pipes to me
A thin, keen tune, a wailing breath;
And I must dance his solemn dance,
For he is great, his name is Death.

k

A Farewell

I smote a harp of diverse strings,
I sang you songs of many things,
I piped to you, O, brothers, did you dance?
Now I throw my pen aside,
For the sailors, eager-eyed,
Shake out the flapping canvas wide
upon the wings of chance.

1

Sonnet

Beneath these gloomy northern skies
There is no hope; our youth's desire
Has fled, as fleeting summer flies,
To some far isle of tropic fire.
Fling to the winds, O ship, thy sail,
Stream thy taut cordage to the breeze;
My heart shall lose its anguish pale
In the calm depths of sun-lit seas.
There are fair isles in beauty dressed,
And willing bosoms, eager hands,
Low laughter light and undistressed:
Ah, bear me to those faery lands
Where grief is not, south sliding wind,
Upon thy wandering wings, the World behind!

m

To Moira

Of old you led a jewelled throng
Of countries in the courtly dance,
And shone in ancient days among
The cavaliers of France.

Beneath your curtained casement rang
In sarenade the light guitar,
You slept while love-sick gallants sang
The love songs of Navarre.

Your tedious days too slowly ran,
With petted pug and parroquet;
At night you waved a languid fan,
Or trod the minuet.

Fled are the days of courtly France,
Long dead the gallants of Navarre,
The revel and the midnight dance—
I love you better as you are!

n

Fin and his Faery Wife¹

I was a king of many men,
Through half the land my word held good;
I had a palace of white stone—
I have forgotten where it stood.

And skilful harpers sang to me
Till one day, mid the throb and ring
Of many harps, I rose and cried,
"Cease playing, am I not the king?"

The crown slid sideways from my head,
And fell upon the skin-strewn floor;
I thrust the frightened guards aside,
And fled, and wandered on the shore.

They could not find me, I had fled
So far away, as was most meet;
The seagulls called, "The king is free!"
The waters whispered round my feet.

¹ See 'Frank and his Faery Godmother,' Appendix B.

I think I wandered many days
Along a pale tumultuous sea,
Till one day, singing to the winds,
I heard a sweet voice answer me;

And through the moon-enchanted mist
I saw a Fairy Princess stand;
Foam-pale, with starlight in her eyes
And flickering gems upon her hand.

The dusk was folded in her robe,
The twilight woven in her hair,
She came towards me o'er the sea,
With arm and shoulder shimmering bare;

She glided past me, pale as death,
There was no smile upon her face,
I turned and followed, for I felt
Her immortality of grace.

She led me to a hilly land,
A place of dancing and delight,
And there I made her many a song,
Through many a languid autumn night.

And all the elfin people came,
And bowed before us, King and Queen;
They clad me in pale fairy robes,
And murmuring silks of cloudy green.

We drank strange wine at eventide,
When the broad sun hung low and red,
With silken grass beneath our feet,
And rowan berries overhead.

I led the elfin hosts to war,
Immortals, passionate and proud,
And even now I sometimes hear
Their battle-bugles bray aloud.

In peace and war two hundred years
I lived, and loved, and laughed, and sang;
With never a care in time of fight,
When the loud beat of battle rang

Along the windy plains of war;
Nor when in peace the harping sweet
Echoed along the lawns that shook
Beneath the pulse of dancing feet;

Till at a wild and shouting feast—
When wine-drowsed heads began to nod—
I rose, forgetting whom they were,
And blessed them in the name of God.

I blessed them, calling upon God,
With drunken lips I spoke the Name,
And bride and banquet, man and maid,
Had vanished like a blown-out flame;

And I was standing all alone
Upon the middle of a road,
With muddy rags upon my back,
Upon my head the weary load

Of twice a hundred years gone by,
And O, it is a dreesome thing
To be a beggar who has been
Always a Warrior, twice a King.

o

The Lost Cause

Said Moira, sadly: "In the far-off West,
I see the glare of ruin; and the sun,
That shone upon our cause, a rose of day
Dropping cloud-petals, fade upon the sea,
While the white blossom of the dreaming moon,
Shines on the hill-tops where our dead shall lie,
Only to-morrow. Let our warriors sing
This night the battle-songs they love so well.
To-morrow they shall sing among the stars
Where none shall hear them."

Then with one white hand
She brushed the bright hair from her cheek, and passed
Out of the room; and as the curtain fell
About the door behind her, Ian thought
Of horsemen fleeing among the desolate hills;
Of women weeping in the desolate halls;
Of Moira with a pale, unbending face,
Long hence, among her orchards, touched with years,
Reading her Missal and remembering him.
So brooding on the fortunes of his race
He sat before the fire until the dawn
Shone like a pallid phantom through the glass,
Upon the arms, the vases, coats of mail,
And arras brodered with the knightly quest.
Then the swart horsemen gathered in the court,
And rode away with Ian at their head;
Speaking no word, veiled in a mist of rain—
So rode they, speaking not; and ere next day
They died like wolves upon the English spears.

p

The White Rose

The leaves are down, the bare dry branches rattle,
And all the North is emptied of her pride,
Since the White Rose was trampled down in battle,
And all the comrades of her Kingdom died.

And, O, gay Prince across the Southland waters,
Sheltered among the high-born dames of France;
Do you not sometimes dream of Scotland's daughters?
Do you not sometimes weary in the dance?

Does not the White Rose rise in dreams before you,
Beckon and fade, and bid you north again?
Forget not, Prince, the love we faithful bore you—
Do not forget the tally of our slain!

Come back, our hope, to us across the water,
Lead us in fight though we be faint and few,
Weary of peace and longing for the slaughter,
Come back, come back that we may die with you!

q He is a Dreamer, Let Him Pass

I walk at night beneath the moon,
The dew flames underneath my feet,
And all around me, sighing in tune,
The unseen harps of faery gold
Sing with whispering faint and sweet
The loves and wars that were of old.

The fading legends from the past,
Of love-lorn lady, errant knight;
And wizard workings overcast
By lance and pennon battle-bright.

Your ways, O men, are nought to me,
I only seek to see in dreams,
Strange sunsets on a desolate sea,
Or the pale banner floating o'er
The ghostly fray that shifts and gleams
Upon a dim Arthurian shore.

Or stalwart steel-clad men-at-arms
Who dream for ever, hand in hand,
Beneath the roses, drowsed with charms,
In some deep glade of faeryland.

Or ancient chapels grim with gloom,
Where black-haired queens with brooding eyes
Tread softly over tomb by tomb,
And kneel in that prayer-weary place
And watch the heavy incense rise
In clouds before God's lonely face.

r

The Heart of the Rose

I've wandered many a weary mile
on many a weary road,
My thoughts have been a bitter tide,
my heart a bitter load;
And I have sought through all the world
with many a tear and sigh,
One who would place her hand in mine
and watch the world drift by.
The running waters have whispered me,
the stars have been my guide,
And now at last, White-handed One,
I kiss away your pride.
The yellow flames of daffodils
about you in the grass,
Are tapers lit by God's own hand
to light you as you pass;
But the pale lily in your breast,
the roses in your hair,
Trouble my heart for you alone
of all the flowers are fair,
Cast them aside or only keep
the dark rose glowing red,
For I would twine a heavier wreath
to bind about your head.
A wreath of scarlet poppy-cups
and rowan berries bright
Shall bind the ivory brows that dream
beside me all the night.
Take up your dew-damp silken cloak,
call to your long-eared hound,
And we will fill your silent halls
with revelry and sound.
O wandering heart and wandering feet,
your slumber has begun,
I stay with you, White-handed One,
till all the world be done.

s

The Worker

He walks on the floor of the earth,
He sows in the earth his grain,
He is free from the folly of birth,
From pride the stain.

Singer and sage pass by
What are their ways to him?
Glad if the corn stand high
When his life burns dim.

Garnered and stacked and stored,
Rest after labour done;
And over his face a board,
And over his grave the Sun.

t

At Dawn

At dawn, when stars were fading on the sea,
A half-awakened wind said unto me:
"O mortal heart, you shall not long be proud,
Time and the stars have woven you a shroud;
And soon no longer love, and hate, and trust
Shall goad you on, white heap of ashen dust.
And when the last wind through the garden blows,
The flower you seek, the one immortal Rose,
Shall fade; and when nor life nor perfume cleaves
To you, pale dust, or to the drift of leaves;
The drift of leaves and the pale dust shall lie
Blown in one heap beneath the dawn-white sky
Whence come we sundering winds who keep apart
Lover and loved, till all be vain, O heart."
Then answered I the voice: "If this be so
I am content, let the last wind now blow."

u

Romance

A king and queen in the days of old,
Side by side on an ancient throne,
Weary of royalty robed in gold,
Sat together, and dreamed alone.

Out in the sunshine, under the trees
Rose the knight of the nodding plume;
One heart followed him overseas,
One sigh fell in the silken room.

Hushed in a hillside belt of pine,
Green is the grave of one who died—
"Rose of the world, you were never mine"—
Wherefore the king grows tender-eyed.

v

The Sin of Cumhail

I came to Conn of a Hundred Fights,
And cried: False-hearted, crafty king,
I have outworn my heart for you,
And you have wrought me a shameful thing.

Lo, while I drove the spears of Rome
Out of your country into the sea,
You gave my lands to my bitter foe,
And took all honour away from me.

Conn looked this way, and Conn looked that,
Smoothed his beard and weakly smiled;
So I and my devoted laid
Conn's dominions waste and wild.

But Conn has gathered his fighting men,
And ere the noon of another day
The battle-birds will peck my face,
For all my valour has fled away.

All the courage has gone from me,
I scarce can heave my battle-blade,
For day and night I see the face
And the wild wet eyes of a weeping maid.

I met her where my host was set
To wait the host of crafty Conn;
O, red her lips, her rapturous face
Fairer than day to look upon.

I craved her grace, she smiled on me
With shy and innocent heavenly eyes;
Not dreaming her great beauty made
A storm of evil passion rise.

She came down with me to my camp,
The great war-horses stamped and neighed;
She calmly eyed my heroes all,
A queenly maiden, unafraid.

O how the torches flared, and how
The harps rang o'er the horns of wine;
And: Cumhail, would my brothers had
Hearts half as kingly as is thine.

I raised my hand, the harpers went
And left us; every torch burnt low;
She gathered up her silken gown
And smiling on me, turned to go.

Grant me a guard, my friend, she said,
To lead me to my father's rath,
For moonless is the mountain-side
And robbers haunt the forest path.

With one fierce stride I barred her way,
I cannot tell what thing I seemed,
But twice she looked into my eyes,
Then shrank away from me and screamed.

And ever, ever, night and day,
Haunted by memories of her shame,
I brood apart and pray for death,
And long to feel its purging flame.

O, fierce will be the morrow's fight;
I'll crave no mercy, grant no grace,
But fling myself among the spears,
And sleep, un haunted by her face.

Note.—Cumhail was captain of the Fionna in the reign of Conn of the Hundred Battles. While he was in Alba checking the Romans, Conn transferred his honours to Crimthan. Cumhail, hearing of this, came back and raided the country. Defiance was made, and a pitched battle was decided on. During the preparations for this fight, Cumhail met Maureen, daughter of a Druid whose fortress was the Rath of Allan. She went with him to the camp, where he made a feast in her honour, but when she wished to go, he refused, and forgot the knightly oath he had taken. On the following day he rushed into the press of fight and died. Before the battle he was seized with a great remorse, and sent a messenger to Maureen, asking her forgiveness, which she did not refuse: but when the messenger returned they were singing the coronach over Cumhail's dead body.

W

The Call of the Sea

The round of days in an ordered house
Dulls the pulse and banishes sleep;
And I long to feel my aching brows
Wet with the wind of the star-lit deep.

I long, O God, how I long to feel
The deck beneath my feet aslope;
To take my turn at the jarring wheel,
And a long, strong pull at the humming rope.

Cities of stone, and women and men,
Passionate eyes and clinging lips,
I would barter you all for a month again
Of the open life in the deep-sea ships.

x

Wind O' the Waves

Of all the roads in this weary world, there is only one
road for me,
An' that is the long white road that leads to the lips
o' the gray-beard sea;
The sky is hot an' the cheery inns are far between an' few,
But there away on the dim sky-line is a glimmer o'
dancin' blue.

I'll go to the waters once again, an' under an open sky
I'll loose my sails to the winds o' God, an' wander till
I die.

I ha' sown the seed o' the world's delight, an' heaped her
bitter grain,
But the wind that whips the flyin' foam shall cleanse my
heart again,
I will spin the yarns that I used to spin to the men that
I used to know,
An' we'll sing while our old skipper fiddles soft an'
fiddles low.

I'll go to the waters once again, an' under an open sky
I'll loose my sails to the winds o' God, an' wander till
I die.

An' when I've spun my last old yarn, an' turned to my last
sleep,
The boys'll weight me down wi' shot an' give me to the deep;
An' as I'm sinkin' fathoms down, to peace an' rest below,
I'll hear my sad old skipper fiddlin' soft and fiddlin' low.

I'll go to the waters once again, an' under an open sky
I'll loose my sails to the winds o' God, an' wander till
I die.

y

The Ancient Wisdom

The trees about Balgownie's shady pool
Murmured of many dreams, bowing their heads;
And from the drowsy sea the lips of foam
Sang answering snatches in that ancient tongue
The sea was taught when this gray world was young.
And I that stood upon Balgownie's bridge,
Saw one pale moon mirrored beneath my feet,
And overhead a golden sister moon;
And heard the oldest voices in the world
Crying and crying of the days gone by.
And from the trees and from the drowsy sea,
Out of the shadows and the waters came
A dim enchantment, soft as falling dew,
And heavy as a woman's loosened hair,
That sheds its twilight over her and hides
Her neck and bosom from her lover's eyes.
The shadows gathered round me and I knew
The wisdom of the woodlands and the sea,
The wisdom that has faded from our hearts
Amidst the din of cities and the shouts
Of men who buy and sell, and never dream
That planets roll above their foolish roofs.
The voices cried my heart awake that night,
And taught me that the only peace is hid
Deep in the green hills and the forest paths,
And in the pools where finny creatures move
Among the tangled weeds like restless dreams;
And then I knew the wisdom of the world
Is foolish wisdom, fit for merchant men,
And fit for those who sell the seed of fire
Won from the stars, the flame we call a soul,
For comfort and soft raiment. As for me
I would forget the wisdom of the world.

z

The Rose of Passion

Of all the sorrowful ones who dream
Under the low-hung evening star,
When gray bats flutter, and white wings gleam,
You, Rose of Passion, the loveliest are.

The Sea that murmurs and takes no rest,
The Dews that drop in the forest dim,
Because of the sorrows that shake your breast,
Are sighing while singing their evening hymn.

The new moon waxes, the old moon wanes,
The dead leaves drop and the green buds grow;
When the grave is filled by the flashing rains
The red flower springs from the corpse below.

But Time, that withers the world away,
And Age, that harries the ancient stars,
Shall pass you by till the last grim day
When God rides forth to his final wars.

aa

Seafaring

Good-bye, my bonny lass, the sea-wind's a-callin',
The harbour lights are twinklin' out, the twilight's fallin';
Dry your eyes an' say good-bye; for since the world began
The same old cry has moved the heart of the sailor-man.

Look at the old ships an' the white gulls wheelin' round;
They're wanderers like me, my lass; they're aye for
outward bound;
They'll follow us a thousand miles into the risin' sun,
An' when they cry I'll think of you, an' the old life done.

We seafarers are all the same, the restless foam is in our
 hearts;
An' that is why we wander till we die in foreign parts;
Ah, lass o' mine, though we're held a day by pretty lips,
The only loves we stick to are the deep-sea ships.

Good-bye, my bonny lass, the sea-wind's a-callin',
The harbour lights are twinklin' out, the twilight's fallin';
Dry your eyes an' say good-bye; for since the world began
The same old cry has moved the heart of the sailor-man.

bb

The Parting

We spoke no vain regrets that night; too well
We knew the hour had come;
And when we parted on the midnight bell
Our lips were all but dumb.

'Good-night, dear friend,' she said; and I
 Answered 'Good-night.'
 Her low voice faded to no farewell sigh,
 But her brave cheek was white.

The gray sea rolls between us, life has flown
On careless wings unscathed through many wars;
And far apart we dream our dreams alone,
Under the same dim stars.

cc

A Fragment

"The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

And her elusive beauty led me on
Through war in Thrace and feast in Babylon;
Her shadowy hair shut out the dawn; her lips
Pressed my dead cheek at Troy beside the ships;
And it was she, the Mystical, whose breath
First freed my spirit from the web which Death
Through long oblivious years with numbing hands
Had woven round me in the hidden lands,
Where by tall sighing reeds, through dolorous glades,
Haunted by dreams, a shadow among shades,
I sought the memories I had lost, the eyes
No man has gained by prayer or sacrifice.
And then—the woven colours shift and gleam,
Dimming the frozen mirror of my dream—
Shapes come and go, and ships beat out to sea
With drums and music, and the hopeful glee
Of venturous hearts upon a perilous quest
To sunset islands fading in the west—
And, passing overseas to many wars,
Unscathed, unsung, I battled with the stars.
Ah, sad prophetic Stars, who weave in fire,
Somehow, someday, the shroud of all desire;
Do trampled battles war with your repose?
Stars, are you ever sorrowful for those
Who meet to part for ever, those who meet
Silent for honour? Do the flying feet
And failing hearts cry to you on the wind,
When gasping runners hear the Slayer behind?
Unpitying Stars, be pitiful to me,
Who know no gods but you, who only see

ee

At Mass

Serenely calm as any sculptor's dream,
Wrought of pale marble, there she sits apart,
The organ thunders and the tapers gleam,
And she broods deep within her secret heart.

But is no more than weariness revealed,
Behind that subtle mask of calm disdain?
Methought the droop of that red mouth revealed
An unacknowledged memory of pain.

Droop your pale lids upon your sombre eyes—
How can I worship God, O my desire?
Heaven fades away and all repentance dies,
When your sad beauty turns my soul to fire.

ff

The Voice

I said: I will go forth, go forth,
Her voice shall no more trouble me.
But when our galley clove the north,
It mingled with the murmuring sea.

I hurried to the shock of wars,
Ah, surely now that voice is fled.
But no, it whispered from the stars,
That blinked upon the dreamy dead.

And in these cloisters cool and deep,
Though I dream out my life alone,
It comes like some faint sigh of sleep
And murmurs in the antiphone.

Till God shall wake and with his hand
Wipe out the world, and wave apart
His dream of sea and sky and land,
That voice shall sing in my sad heart.

88

A Man Went Forth

To J.S.

A man went forth to die—
One who had not loved priests nor their degree,
And said: "I shall find comfort in the sky,
And when Our Lady Death shall come for me
On some cold hillside fretted by the stars
And the hoarse ritual of the chaunting sea,
I shall find peace, a warrior worn by wars,
Like them of old that died in Arcady."

That man of many dreams went forth alone,
And, ever dreaming, wandered in the woods,
Till his sad heart, as heavy as a stone,
Grew merry in those ancient solitudes.
Still seeking Death, he watched the world grow green
In Spring, or when the Autumn corn was ripe
Answered the plover's cries, and heard between
Some merry shepherd blow his oaten pipe.
And aye and evermore, and day by day,
The burden of his dreaming dropped away.

At length it chanced, outworn by that sad quest,
On the cold hillside underneath a moon
That seemed like some pale ship of sleep to rest
On the dim waters of a dream lagoon,
There stood by him, star-haloed like a saint,
The maiden Death, and as his heart was stilled
By her cold hand he heard a murmuring faint:
"Be not afraid, for I am Life fulfilled."

hh

A Song

When the night is on the deep,
And the stars are in the sky;
And the world is faint with sleep,
And the owlets cry,
A voice is in my ears
That is silent all the day:
"Passion-pale and full of tears,
Come away.
Leave the world and all its woe,
And the cities full of ease,
For the ebb and the flow
And the swing of the seas.
And white, white stars above,
And the free winds in the sail
Are better far than love,"
Says the voice in the gale.

ii

Wind on the Moor

To J.G.R.

The curlews wheel above the darkening moor,
And the winds cry along the wintry shore,
Blowing the white foam under the wan moon,
And mingling with the far, forgotten tune
That shrilled long since on lonely Lochnagar
From gathering-pipes that called the clans to war,
But now is silent. Wind and curlew cry
O'er grey cairns heaped under the desolate sky,
Where sleep our dead, each in his belted plaid,
Brave hearts that perished for the White Cockade.
They are forgotten; and shall none arise?
Are we alone to pour no sacrifice?

I think of mournful women robed in black,
Who from high turrets saw their sons brought back
One after one upon their soldiers' spears;
Or through the slow flight of dark-hooded years,
Stretched their white hands across the weary foam
For ships that beat to sea and came not home.
And we, unmindful of our mighty dead,
And of the cause for which our people bled,
For which they wrought and sang and drew their breath,
And with set, scornful faces rode to death—
We have forgotten all. White birds, sad wind,
Cry no more of the old times out of mind;
Cease! you but waken memories that seem
Faint, mournful songs half-murmured in a dream.
Ah, cease! for on the lone and windy shore
The banners of the Gael shall pass no more.

jj

The Fisherman

When I look over the side of my boat,
I see far down in the shimmering deep,
With drifting limbs and hair afloat,
Smiling and beckoning up to me,
Laughing half and half asleep,
The moon-white Women of the Sea.
They wave their arms in a dreamy pride
At their own strangeness; to and fro
Drifting with the drifting tide
They watch the fishers come and go.
Sea-faeries, I will ever pray
For your lost souls while I have breath,
For though you beckon me away
To lure me to a cold sea-death,
The poor old fisher can't forget
You drive the fish within his net.

kk

Ossian Sings

Tarry one moment, O my star,
Trembling on the grey sea's rim:
For I who ride no more to war,
I, Ossian, mine eyes fallen dim,
Once more would touch the murmuring strings,
Would raise one rune of battle yet;
And harken! mournful Ossian sings
Of those far days the young forget.

I cannot pluck these wires aright—
But in the days when there were men,
If the wild war-horn screamed at night,
By dawn my spears filled every glen;
And on the hill-sides fold by fold,
My silken banners blew unfurled,
In those fierce, fighting days of old
When there were heroes in the world.

My war-ships clove the whistling sea,
And harried all the Lochlann towns;
And my strong captains brought to me
Gem-crusted, crimson-threaded gowns;
And all our maidens moved in silk—
White-handed queens where are ye now?
Those limbs are dust that were as milk,
And Ossian wears a wintry brow.

Strong foes of mine, your galleys all
Are ribs of wreck upon the shore;
Your standards droop upon my wall,
And cheer the broken ranks no more.
But mock me, foes of my lost youth,
In your chill graves beneath the moon,
Life is a dream, yet this is truth
That Ossian comes to seek ye soon.

11

The Torch-Bearers

Youth and Spring pass by,
Flame-bearing, hand in hand,
Youth to light the eye,
Spring to paint the land.
Spring returns alone,
Flame-bearing as of yore,
But Youth returns, once gone,
No more, no more.

mm

"And he ate husks"

Soft and smooth is the southern tongue,
I shall not hear its like again;
The long road south is over long,
And bitten with the Scottish rain.

If I might leave this sea-girt town
Of toiling men and wandering ships,
And tread once more a Devon down,
A southland song upon my lips;

I'd see frail blossom white as foam
Swang slowly on a sun-warmed breeze—
And O, the red-tiled roofs of home
Among those ancient apple trees!

nn

Mortuus Est Leo

July 20, 1903

"Desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home,
and the mourners go about the streets."

A bier: pale lights: the organ's requiem stir:
Bowed heads and many priests and clouds of myrrh:
And a dead man with faint and shrunken hands:
And lamentations over many lands—
And Death.
But through funereal lights and sorrowing sound
Another vision wraps my spirit round:

With clangour of broad shields and glint of spears,
Worn by the sad wars of a million years,
Mighty, innumerable, thunder-shod,
The grim, proud warring hosts that side with God,
Until the terrible bonds wherein we groan
Be rent and burst, and Satan's iron throne,
Built in the deep foundations of the world,
Be rooted up and into darkness hurled,
Ride forth to greet you; and the pealing notes
Leap from the brazen trumpets' twisted throats
To greet you; light and music in a tide
Flood from the doors of God flung open wide
To greet you; and high up and crowned with stars,
Leaning from heaven's luminous window-bars,
The mild proud Mary in her hood of blue
Waits with a kiss of peace to welcome you,
O faithful servant, who has fought her fight,
Then laid down arms and passed into the night:
Weary, alone, and white with many years,
And blinded with a storm of human tears.
While we, the few, who gather round the Rood
The world would overthrow; in solitude
And weariness can only watch and pray,
Scattering lustral water on your clay.

oo

The Autumn of the World

The last proud stars bow down
Where the tides fret an ancient shore,
The leaves of the world are brown,
The locks of the world are hoar.

The world is weary and old,
Withered and still and gray,
Dimness is over her gold,
Her glory has fallen away.

Not again shall her furrows be trod
By youth or beauty or pride;
For man, that crucified God,
God has crucified.

pp

Ballad of the Queen's Secret

Among her women, bowed in prayer,
The sad Queen kneeled at Holy Mass,
And through the chapel's open door,
And through the open windows came
Light whispers from the summer grass:
Too faint to stir a candle-flame,
Too light to mar the low-breathed hymn,
Their blossomy odours sweeter made
The slow-swung censers' vapour dim.

Palely the Queen's face seemed and sad,
So frail within her silken hood,
That one had said, but for her eyes,
She had been of some sisterhood,
Some faint prayer-murmuring choir of pale
Rapt vestals of the solitude,
Whose care is ever with holy sighs
And low-dropped lids to bow and adore
A brooding god who is young no more,
Whose pale gold dims the autumn wood
When love is over and summer dies.

Soon the monk Olaf, heavy-eyed
Turned from the altar with lifted hands,
And murmured the ancient words of peace,
The blessing of the Crucified:
A boon upon the fruitful lands,
A boon upon the wandering seas,
Bidding their blessings multiply;
The birds that cleave the bright blue air
He blessed: and with a heavy sigh
He blessed the sad Queen kneeling there.

He blessed the King; but as he spoke
Iron feet rang on the chapel floor,
A tumult and a clamour woke,
And Oscur stood by the altar-rail,
And Oscur's warriors held the door,
And the Queen's cheek went red and pale.

Back sank the white-robed acolytes,
Fear did not spare them voice to sing;
Calm and alone and unafraid,
With eyes as pure as altar-lights,
The mild monk Olaf faced the King.
"I am God's man, but still I wait,"
He said, "O King, to know your will,
To learn why such importunate
Armed clangour has disturbed the still
Quietude of this holy place?
Why have you dared, King though you be,
To stand before God's holy face
With high looks and unbended knee,
With head uncovered in your pride,
Braving His hushed divinity?"

"No more, frocked fool!" Red Oscan cried,
"I come not here to play with words—
My Lochlann heathen hold the door—
I swear by Aengus and his Birds!
I swear by sun and moon and star!
Your Wine shall stain this temple floor,
Your Bread be trodden under foot,
And your new gods be plunged in war,
Your faith be withered leaf and root,
The old gods shall awake unless
You tell what thing my Queen hath said,
What secret whispered at your knee,
White coward in a woman's dress!
You shall go whine among the dead,
You who know what she hides from me.
Speak now! what has my Queen confessed?"

The mild monk Olaf crossed his breast:
"Blaspheme the Faith no more, small King!
God holds you in His closing hand,
And though your heathen bar His door,
He counts you but a piteous thing,
A clod of earth, a grain of sand,
A spot of rust on his bright sword!
Kings? they shall wither and be no more!
I have despised them, saith the Lord.
King Oscan, I am priest of Christ,
Then think you I will break my vow!
I, Warden of the Sacrificed,
Fear neither your storm-laden brow,
Nor your wild heathen from the sea...."

"Hither!" cried Oscan: at the word
Those lean north heathen grimly came—
"Strip off this babbler's frock for me,
Pluck this dark-feathered secret bird,
This guardian of a woman's shame!
And so it was.

"Now," the King cried,
"Tear down yon Image from the Rood,
The monk shall die as his god died,
The man of peace shall taste of blood...
Tear down the Christ from the high Cross
And nail the white monk there instead!"

The mild monk Olaf bent his head:
He heard the whispering of the trees,
And a bird singing in the boughs,
And the low music of the bees,
He saw the sad Queen's passionate brows
Death-pale; and saw her trembling hands
Bathed in the red rays of the sun.
"I have preached God to the Northern Lands,
Take ye my ashes, Flame and Flood,
Misereatur, my days be done."

They nailed him to the empty-Rood,
And laughed, and left the place of prayer;
Her women fled with a shivering cry;
But the sad Queen kneeled, and wept, and clung
To the black Rood, and loosed her hair
Over the dreadful wounded feet—
"Olaf!" she cried, "I curse the God
Whose heart is bitter, whose voice is sweet,
Who leaves His own priest dying there—
Now by the nails on which He hung,
And by His own proud Name I swear
That I will not be His: the sod
Shall take my bones, my soul shall go
To that dark place where torturing fires
Whisper forever to and fro,
Fed with lost hearts and great desires!"

Note.—The story woven into these verses was given to me by the editor of the paper. He believes it is to some extent historical; I am quite sure that it might well be so; and in any case I have to thank him for a good story. I wanted to make a prose tale of it, but was reminded that many readers are like Polonius: they are for a jig, or they sleep.

qq

All Saints Day

Beati qui lugent quoniam ipsi consolabuntur

To-day the priestly robes are gray and gold:
Gold for the pageant of the world; and gray
For Time's proud heart, out-burnt and fallen cold,
And earth's last empires vanishing away,
Weary, decrepit, old.

Outside the world spins on and on to Death;
Here on faint hands we bow the weary head,
And mingle with the ritual's holier breath
A prayer of peace for our forgotten dead,
A requiem of death.

Maid, bow you down, though musically rave
The singing pulse of life, your heavy hair
Shall be a ruined splendour when the grave
Has taken all your lover dreams so fair,
But may not hold, nor save.

Pray for the troubled dead, sad hearts of yore,
That went of old to where the slow worm crawls—
Old Earth, have all your sea-throned kings left more
Than a worm's track on your embattled walls?
So much, no more.

rr

Dedication for a Book of Verse

When the night falls, and we are far apart,
And many cares have overthrown your heart,
Sit by the fire with this thin book of dreams,
And think how each reflected light that gleams
In the vain shadow of the printed leaves,
And every verse that sings or sighs or grieves,
And all the faint rhymes ringing false or true,
Are altar-candles I would burn to you;
Words I would plume with fire—ah, wings too weak
To soar so high! dumb tongues that may not speak
The thoughts rare music only might express:
The secret of your starry loveliness.

Sit by the fire, and think how Palomide
Sought you through haunted centuries and died;
Or think of those to whom the world was naught,
Nor the world's weary glories worth a thought,
Because a fire consumed them. Am I not
Burned in the same sad flame as Launcelot
When your voice falters and your breast is near,
More beautiful, more proud, than Guenevere?
Or in dim Sarras at the close of day,
Go lift the spell-bound Sleeper's veil away,
Gaze at the sacred face that dreams alone,
But stir not, start not, when you see your own!

ss

In a Garden

Here is quiet: not a sound
But the whisper of the dew
Dropping slowly to the ground,
And a frail wind breaking through
Wintry boughs the twilight covers.
"Ah, but whom, dew softly falling,
Do you weep for, what dead lovers?"
What old passions past recalling?
Mournful wind, what ancient city
Overthrown, are you lamenting?
Can you wake dead Queens with pity?
Cover sins long past repenting?

The dew answered: "Lo, I weep
For the flowers Time may not keep.
Though the lilies proudly wave,
Pure as candles on God's altar,
Even praising God they falter,
For their roots are in the grave.
And the proud rose set apart,
Pale for love or red for passion,
Withers in the same sad fashion,
For the worm is at her heart."

And the wind cried: "Lo, I sorrow
For the petals of the flowers
I must breathe on ere to-morrow;
Pallid leaves and paler hours
Swirling, whirling, many a million,
Down the winds and wintry waters;
Lo, I weep the lily's daughters,
And the rose's vain vermillion."

Can it be that wind and dew,
Weeping in your autumn garden,
Ere keen Winter comes as Warden,
Weep, O my beloved, for you?

tt

The Beckoning Star

I saw the moon pale, pale as a rose unfold,
And pour the light from her heart on the hills of old,
And shine on the Tyrian sea by the city of Tyre;
My merchant-heart awoke, and I cried: "Dull moth,
Grow bright on my looms of silk and my bales of cloth!"
And I lifted sail and followed a new desire.

The horns cried high in the lists; and a painted shield
Was gay to behold, a bright sword goodly to wield;
But, lo, a voice, as I pressed for the laurels, cried:
"Beauty and Peace await by the western bay
In dreamy Sarras!" I cast the spear away,
And sought for the city of Sarras, and, seeking, died.

The same wan moon floats up when the sun goes down,
And pours the light from her heart on London town,
But where is the dream that fled through the dark from me?
The heart is shrivelled, the flame is dead in my breast,
For no voice calls, and no star beckons to rest
Where Beauty and Peace await by the western sea.

Poems from a Play

I

uu

Zeyn Alasman to Badoura

What heart desires thee, Rose of the Bazaar?
Thou sad, dishevelled flower!
For thee, no sun, nor moon, nor any star
Brings the propitious hour,
When hot love waxeth sleepy with delight,
Lulled by the sound of kisses in the night,
Sad girl, that faded face has lost its power.

II

vv

Badoura's Song

O, my swift-setting star, teach me to fashion
Some place of dreams where my beloved may rest,
With thy dark petals, foolish rose of passion,
Strewn for one hour upon his lips and breast.

For though like leaves we are blown apart hereafter,
Stricken with ruin, and sorrowing as we go,
There shall be one bright hour of mingled laughter
Ere Death's wind wakens or her waters flow.

Here, though the dream fades, the palace moulders,
Here where the gods do nought their Saints have vowed,
Brief love is still a golden spark that smoulders
Along the bleak edge of the embattled cloud.

Love like a flame lights up our perishing faces,
One moment in our eyes her planets gleam,
Sighing, we kiss in sorrow-haunted places,
And part, the vain, sad people of a dream.

III

ww

The Sophist

This is the Wisdom given to me,
By voices of the muttering sea,
At twilight, when the Autumn moon
Watched the slow death of afternoon;
By silence, when the night was still,
And all the flowers had drunk their fill
Of the intoxicating dew.

[no break]

And faint stars pierced the darkness through
With their soft flush; by mine own heart
When the soul's deeps were cloven apart
By the dark spirit whose sword gleams
Before the Mecca of our dreams;
For joy and sorrow, rapture, pain
And love and hate, the same refrain
With iterate voices over and over
Murmur unto every flower.
All ye whose spirits have been hurled
Into the darkness of this world;
All ye who seek in life's brief measure
To wring the last sweet drops from pleasure;
Who pray the empty skies above
To add one pang to sated love;
Know this; between hope and despair
There is not space for one gold hair
From beauty's head; no interlude
Breathes music between mood and mood,
For sad moods come and gay moods go,
And all are ripples on the flow
That some call life and some call death;
Allah, who knows the rose's breath
Only as starry music, knows
No difference between the rose
That withers in a night between
The breasts of harlot or of queen,
And queen or harlot, cold and dead,—
The flower-crowned or sin-crowned head.
There is no choice. Our love and hate
And life and death belong to fate.
The joy that wakes, the pain that stirs,
Are her indifferent ministers.
We are the sacrifice; and she
The one to whom, with trembling knee
Allah bows low, and offers up
The star-encrusted, dim gold cup
Of day and night, brimmed with your tears,
Blind agonies, and helpless fears.
And ye, O shining spectres, hurled,
Into the dark night of the world,
Tremble and sing and laugh and sigh,
And watch the phantom hours go by
With silent lips and mocking eyes,
Intolerable mysteries.

Yet know that in your hands ye hold
The silver moon, the sun of gold,
And all the multitude of heaven,
The virtues and the vices seven,—
Allah and Kishmet, Time and Chance
Are painted shadows in a dance,
Are phantoms delicately made,
Your own dreams in a masquerade
That shall die out and cease to be
When ye attain the ecstasy
Of dreamless sleep, where no warm breath
Stirs the indifference of death.

IV

xx

The Soldier

The camp awakes, Hark! The deep boom of gongs!
The dragon-throated war-horns bellow and snarl!
The leathern drums purr, holy tongues of war,
Greedy raving for death.
The captains wake, they call the drowsy ranks,
The soldiers waken, eagerly they leap,
They shake their limbs free from the weeds of dream
They rise like divers from the gulfs of sleep,
They stretch their arms and drink the morning air.
They munch their bread and dates, and wait the word.
Lo! See the shaken banners rise and fall.
Hark to the twanging of the stretched bow-strings.
Cry, musical harps of death!
Scream, hawks of battle, scream!
A rain of arrows! A storm of spears!
They blot out the sun. This is to live, indeed!
I have but dreamed of shame and misery,—
I am a man again!
I am a captain of Iskander Beg!
Sons of the crescent! Follow me to death!
Charge on them! Islam! Paradise awaits
Beneath the shadow of Iskander's sword.

V

yy

Badoura

Strange little lute of scented wood,
Now touched by my unskilful hand,
Will you not answer to my mood,
Poor courtesan of Samarkand?

Tell me, O sweetly smelling lute,
Upon what star-lit deed intent,
Did your last lover's lips fall mute?
You sad, Arabian instrument!

Whisper your secret, though it stings,
None list save I, and the crescent moon.
Be not ashamed of your jangled strings,
For my heart too is out of tune.

VI

zz

Akbar

Now ye musicians with your dreamy faces,
Lords of the tympan, dulcimer and shawn,
Ye who dance taboring, ye who blow long flutes,
And ye, Egyptian harpers, crouching low,
Ye whose blood moves to undulating music,
Ye whom I love because ye hate harsh sounds,
Wake now your willing slaves of string and wind,
Bid them vibrate beneath your learned hands,
To weave a web of music round her heart,
A shadowy fane where lute and viol complain
Against the world; there be her dwelling place,
Surrounded, Music, by thy ministers.
Blow, blow, soft flutes, and ye wild harps, cry on,
Build battlements of music to the stars,
Love dwells in Palaces not reared by hands.

(The musicians play. Pause. There is no
answer from the casement of Nourmahal)

Alas musicians, she hath overthrown
Your battlements of sound with silent scorn,
And Akbar, he who sent a thousand ships
Across ten thousand leagues of alien sea,
To bring strange foreign poets to his court,
Akbar, whose caravans have trailed the world,
Laden with jewels to bring all singers hither;
Akbar's a beggar when he doth beseech
One smile from one frail girl in Samarkand.
The footsore beggar, all befouled with mire,
Who leads his hungry wife from town to town,
And loves her under hedges in the rain,
He is my Lord! He has what he desires;
While I, whose spoken titles make him blench
Would give him all he envies, could he give
His woes to me, and with them, Nourmahal.
Now leave me sorrowing, music-making friends,
Scorn is a hurt that's best endured alone,
When Love's proud pinions that should fan the stars
Trail crippled thus, disserviceably lame.
Go and make merry.

A Musician

Nay, if thou be sad,
The silver unison and grave sweet pause,
The tunable and dulcet ebb and flow
Of all Arabia's wandering seas of song,
Would grate and creak in stridulous discord
On the jarred ears of us who are thy friends.
If thou art sad, we will go pray. Come brethren!

VII

222

Akbar to Nourmahal

Nourmahal, light as a leaf, dancer out of a dream,
Nourmahal, lo, it is I! here in the still bazaar,
Here in a world that has withered, awaiting the gleam,
Of your jewelled hand at the lattice, Nourmahal,
woman or star.

Nourmahal, waken and wonder, great are the gifts
that I bring,
Richer than merchants bear in caravans from the south.
Kings may hang you with jewels, but I am more than a king.
I will give you the world and the stars for the honey
and musk of your mouth.

VIII

bbb

Badoura and the Shadows

Who are ye that wander by,
Grey in the greyest hour of night?
Do ye sing on muted strings
Of the end of all delight?

A Shadow
(To Akbar who sleeps)

Wrapt in folds of slumber we
Lay dreaming by the Arabian sea,
But sighs awoke us, and we came,
Swifter than wind, brighter than flame,
We rode the storm, we swam the flood,
With laughter alight in our sleepy blood,
With beaks and claws and wings and fins,
Bright feathered bodies and women's eyes,
Akbar, we are thy merry sins,
Whirled in the wind of Akbar's sighs.

(Badoura draws closer to Akbar, as though
to protect him. He raises his head drowsily
and looks about him, oblivious of the shadows.)

A Second Shadow

Master of hearts, do you dream no more
Of the Tamarisk grove by the Lake of Wine,
And the red flamingoes that paced the shore,
And the lutes that sang when your heart was mine?
Master, I give you the knotted string
That stilled the voice you had taught to sing.

Another Shadow

I was the wife of a Prince of Ind.
You ate his salt and broke his bread,
And called him brother, and struck him dead,
And who dare say that Akbar sinned?
Akbar, son of the Kaleeph, see
The serpent's tongue that you gave to me.
Whose but Akbar's secret kiss
Turned my voice to a lying hiss?
Akbar's love, and Allah's scorn
Covered me with scales of horn.
Heaven's justice and Akbar's lust
Turned my heart to this ball of dust.

ccc

Merchants of a Dream City

A Butcher

I deal in flesh.
I sell the hearts of men in Ur-quadesh.
My takings hardly pay my shop's upkeep.
Hearts are so cheap!

Buy, buy, buy, buy. Hearts for sale. Hearts for
sale here! Buy, buy, buy, buy!

An Apothecary

I deal in drugs!
Crystals of dead sea salt and bitter bark.
Moon stricken flowers, gathered in the dark.
Dried cauls and graveyard slugs
In wine concocted are a cure for pain.
Do dreams oppress ye? Take of dragon's brain
One scruple, and a drachm of mummy dust;
Or of this wondrous gum,
Gathered at midnight by a maid born dumb:
One grain in milk will stir old age to lust.
Come buy, buy, buy! But no one ever buys,
And no drug here will dry my weeping eyes.
Oh sad physician, weary and alone,
With drugs to heal all sorrows but his own.

A Merchant

I deal in silk!
Here in my shop are purple shawls from Tyre;
Fine wool as white as milk;
Rare Persian cloth of gold
Centuries old,
That shines like water woven into fire.
Here are pale silks as lucent as the dawn;
Garments for brides with falling sleeves of lawn;
Here are tain tunics, fit for amorous girls,
Finer than web, all sewn with little pearls;
Bright green and scarlet turbans for the Brave,
And soft Egyptian linen for the grave.
Come buy, buy, buy. None buys, alas!
Will proud youth ever pass,
Pass on the other side?
Alas for the eyes of pride!

X

ddd

Vishumara

Silence! List and understand,
Citizens of Ur-quadesh,
In the spirit or the flesh,
Bow and harken, I command.

Merchant, Prince and Courtezan,
Wife and widow, bride to be,
Hush ye all and list to me,
Every woman, every man.

Listen to my lofty rhyme,
List or perish without pity
To the Herald of the City
That is twice as old as Time.

Bow ye low and bate your breath,
Dead or living, man or wife,—
If ye listen, I am Life;
If ye list not, I am Death.

When my horn cries, from the gutters
All the trampled beggars rise,
Sleepy Allah, rubs his eyes,
Frightened Satan stirs and mutters.

Now the sea no longer moans,
Now the stars desert their ways,
Now the last Redeemer lays
Down his disregarded bones.

Heaven and Hell and Earth are hurled
In the melting pot of Time—
List ye tremblers, while my rhyme
Strikes the last hour of the world!

In the spirit or the flesh,
Souls, your final song is sung,
Souls, your final hour has rung
On the songs of Ur-quadesh!

XI

eee

The Dwarf

The trumpet, the trumpet is mine!
The Horn of God is my own!
And Ur-quadesh, the divine
Will rebuild when the trumpet is blown.

Ur-quadesh that has flown
Shall arise at the note of the horn,
From its echoes her walls be rebuilt,
In its cries shall her joys be reborn.

In chambers of silver and gilt
Her lovers shall wake in the morn!
I, Vishnumara, the dwarf,
The folder of Allah's scarf,

The Chamberlain of His bed,
By me, it is said,
By me, the possessed, the divine,
For the trumpet is mine!

fff

My gods are the inanimate

My gods are the inanimate
Beautiful grave images
Contemplative and inarticulate
Of that great sage
The utterly passed-away Gotama Buddha.

ggg

I know cyclopean gates of stone

I know cyclopean gates of stone
On one is a great Mastodon
On one a stamping Unicorn,
The gates are Ivory and Thorn
Out of them true and untrue dreams
Run cheek by jowl, companion streams.

hhh

Dead so many times

Dead so many times
In so many climes
Child and man and woman
Animal and human.

iii

Who has living friends

Who has living friends
So wise as those who come
Is it for their own ends
Out of their garden tomb?

I love the dead who creep
Between awake and asleep
Whispering round my bed
For I belong to the dead.

j j j

I woke at dawn beneath a tree

I woke at dawn beneath a tree
In whose bright boughs an Angel sang
Lost music of a melody
That first on Eden's harp-strings rang.

Until by that old music fed
Flowers broke upon the bough above
Whereon the Angel weeping said:
The blossom of the tree is love.

I did not dream, drunken from youth
And the intoxicating breath
Of that brief blossom, the sad truth:
The fruit it ripens to is Death.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS¹

- A. The Bon-Accord (Aberdeen)
- B. Glimpses O'Auld Lang Syne
- C. An Hour of Reverie
- D. The Poems of Charles Baudelaire
- E. The Vigo Verse Anthology
- F. Umbræ Silentes
- G. Baudelaire, His Prose and Poetry
- H. The Poems and Prose Poems of Charles Baudelaire
- I. Eternal Helen
- J. Eighty Poems
- K. The Golden Book Magazine (New York)
- L. The Oxford Book of Modern Verse
- M. Flowers of Evil. ed. Laver
- N. The Flowers of Evil. ed. Mathews
- O. Master Works of World Literature

¹ For detail see Bibliography, Primary Sources, (a) & (c).

PRINTINGS AND VARIANT READINGS¹

1. printings: C, I.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', I.
1. 22. Will tell... C.
2. printings: A (8 May 1902), C, I.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', I.
3. printings: A (1 May 1903), C.
text: no dedication, A.
4. printings: A (30 April 1903), C.
text: entitled 'Dea Sylvia', from 'Under the Evening Star', A.
5. printings: A (6 February 1902), C, I.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', I.
1. 8. ...at your closet door. A, C.
6. printings: A (10 April 1902), C.
7. printings: A (30 April 1903), C.
text: from 'Under the Evening Star', A.

¹ Only unpublished material and poems published more than once are noted. Pagination or partial bibliographical information is given where editions lack indexes and in case of periodical publication, even though the poem may have been published only once. Minor variants, such as changes in punctuation, spelling and manner of presentation, are not recorded. Texts are those of last supervised publication or authorial revision.

8. printings: A (15 December 1904), C.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie: Three Poems from
the French of Paul Verlaine', A.
9. printings: A (15 December 1904), C.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie: Three Poems from
the French of Paul Verlaine', A.
10. printings: A (15 December 1904), C.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie: Three Poems from
the French of Paul Verlaine', A.
11. printings: A (17 December 1903), C, I.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', I.
12. printings: A (15 September 1904), C.
13. printings: A (24 December 1903), C.
text: no dedication, A.
14. printings: A (25 December 1902), C, E, I.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', I.
 1. 6. ...rapturous, divine, A, C, E.
 1. 10. ...Rose A, C, E.
 1. 13. Then, thinking of the treasures... A, C, E.
15. printings: A (20 August 1903), C.
16. printings: A (28 November 1901), C.
17. printings: A (4 June 1903), C.
18. printings: A (15 December 1904), C.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', A.
19. printings: A (14 May 1903), C.
20. printings: A (8 January 1903), C.
21. printings: A (5 January 1905), C.
text: from 'Poems from the Mort D'Arthur', A.
22. printings: A (5 January 1905), C.
text: from 'Poems from the Mort D'Arthur', A.

23. printings: A (5 January 1905), C.
text: from 'Poems from the Mort D'Arthur', A.
24. printings: A (24 July 1902), C.
25. printings: A (9 July 1903), C.
text:
 1. 6. ...our endless, aimless drifting, A.
26. printings: A (25 June 1903), C.
28. printings: A (18 June 1903), C.
text: entitled 'The Drifting Years', A.
29. printings: A (12 February 1903), C.
30. printings: A (15 December 1904), C.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', A.
31. printings: A (11 June 1903), C.
32. printings: A (2 April 1903), C, I.
text: from 'An Hour of Reverie', I.
33. printings: A (5 February 1903), C.
34. printings: D, G, H.
35. printings: D, G, H.
36. printings: D, G, H.
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39. printings: D, G, H, N.
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46. printings: D, G, H.
47. printings: D, G, H.
48. printings: D, G, H, O (Vol. II, p. 951).
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50. printings: D, G, H, N.
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58. printings: D, G, H, K (II, 11—November, 1925—,
p. 579).
text: no title, first verse only, K.
59. printings: D, H.
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- 65. printings: D, G, H.
- 66. printings: D, G, H, N.
- 67. printings: D, H, N.
- 68. printings: D, G, H.
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- 70. printings: D, G, H.
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- 74. printings: D, G, H.
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- 76. printings: D, G, H.
- 77. printings: D, G, H, N, O (Vol. II, p. 952).
- 78. printings: D, H.
- 79. printings: D, G, H.
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87. printings: D, H.
88. printings: D, H, N.
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89. printings: D, H.
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98. printings: D, G, H.
99. printings: D, G, H.
100. printings: D, G, H.
101. printings: D, G, H.
107. printings: I, J, another version in unpublished
typescript of "Nourmahal, an Arabian Night in
four acts"; 'Ismael's Song'.
text:
1. 11. There is no peace, ah no! "Nourmahal".
1. 12. Those cold cold stars above "Nourmahal".
1. 13. And the desert sands below "Nourmahal".
1. 15. Sweet melody of love! "Nourmahal".
111. printings: I, J, L, ms. text inscribed on fly-leaf
of Umbræ Silentes as presented to T. Sturge
Moore; copy now in University of London Library.

112. printings: F (pp. 84-98), I.
text:
1. 11. As your imagination F.
1. 46. The Moon's... F.
1. 96. But when she... F.
1. 110. ...drifting change... F.
1. 134. ...'ye shall... F.
115. printings: A (21 December 1905), I.
text: from 'A Page of Poems', A.
1. 11. That wakens from... A.
1. 12. Within the dreamer's mind? A.
1. 13. The sounds, the odours, die; A.
1. 16. That fades against the sky A.
1. 17. Where the wild shadows are, A.
1. 19. I too waken: mute A.
1. 20. Is the spell that held me bound, A.
1. 21. I see your delicate... A.
1. 22. Over the silent lute... A.
1. 23. Is it a flame, or a sound, A.
1. 24. Or an odour, that lingers? A.
116. printings: F (no pagination), I.
text: dedicatory verses; 'To C.S.: My Fellow Pilgrim
Who Brought Roses to the Desert', F.
117. printings: I, another version in unpublished
typescript of "Nourmahal, an Arabian Night in
four acts; 'Song of the Dervish'.
text:
1. 7. Following the Lady Moon; "Nourmahal".
1. 8. (omitted) "Nourmahal".
1. 9. Clad all in garments white, "Nourmahal".
1. 10. Clasp each other's hands, "Nourmahal".
1. 11. Dance the bright day-time hours, "Nourmahal".
1. 12. Seeking the hours of night. "Nourmahal".
1. 13. Clad all in black, "Nourmahal".
1. 17. Swifter than life and death, "Nourmahal".
1. 18. Faster than Love's dances done, "Nourmahal".
1. 26. Humming the Praise of God. ALLAH RASOUL!!
"Nourmahal".
129. printings: F (p. 40). I.
text:
1. 5. ...time gone by, F.
1. 8. Or all... F.

132. printings: A (15 December 1904), I.
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1. 1. ...candle-shine at close... A.
1. 2. ...upon the keyboard... A.
1. 3. When old airs vague and tender, full
of dreams, A.
1. 4. With sound of light wings moving float
away; A.
1. 5. Did you but know (what then would be
your thought?) A.
1. 6. That all the sad sweet airs you sing
to me, A.
1. 7. So faintly sweet as almost not to be, A.
1. 8. Evoke old dreams in which you are
forgot. A.
133. printings: F (pp. 49-50), I.
134. printings: F (pp. 16-7), I.
135. printings: I, J.
136. printings: F (pp. 82-3), I.
- a. printings: A (11 July 1901).
 - b. printings: A (18 July 1901).
 - c. printings: A (25 July 1901).
 - d. printings: A (8 August 1901).
 - e. printings: A (15 August 1901).
 - f. printings: A (29 August 1901).
 - g. printings: A (5 September 1901).
 - h. printings: A (12 September 1901).
 - i. printings: A (26 September 1901).
 - j. printings: A (24 October 1901).
 - k. printings: A (31 October 1901).

- l. printings: A (7 November 1901).
- m. printings: A (21 November 1901).
- n. printings: A (19 December 1901).
- o. printings: A (23 January 1902).
- p. printings: A (30 January 1902).
- q. printings: A (13 February 1902).
- r. printings: A (6 March 1902).
text: untitled. from the short story, 'The Heart
of the Rose'.
- s. printings: A (13 March 1902), B (p. ix).
text: untitled, B.
l. 9. Gathered and... A.
- t. printings: A (27 March 1902).
- u. printings: A (3 April 1902).
- v. printings: A (15 May 1902).
- w. printings: A (22 May 1902).
- x. printings: A (29 May 1902).
- y. printings: A (12 June 1902).
- z. printings: A (31 July 1902).
- aa. printings: A (7 August 1902).
- bb. printings: A (14 August 1902).
- cc. printings: A (21 August 1902).
- dd. printings: A (4 September 1902).
- ee. printings: A (2 October 1902).

- ff. printings: A (2 October 1902).
- gg. printings: A (6 November 1902).
- hh. printings: A (11 December 1902).
- ii. printings: A (18 December 1902).
- jj. printings: A (1 January 1903).
- kk. printings: A (19 March 1903).
- ll. printings: A (23 April 1903).
- mm. printings: A (7 May 1903).
- nn. printings: A (23 July 1903).
- oo. printings: A (6 August 1903).
- pp. printings: A (3 September 1903).
- qq. printings: A (5 November 1903).
- rr. printings: A (21 December 1905)
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- ss. printings: A (21 December 1905).
text: from 'A Page of Poems', A.
- tt. printings: A (21 December 1905).
text: from 'A Page of Poems', A.
- uu-eee. Unpublished texts from typescript of "Nourmahal,
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- fff. unpublished text from diary entry of 5 September
1935.
- ggg. unpublished text (corrected) from diary entry of
5 September 1935.
text:
1. 4. The gates of Ivory...

- hhh. unpublished text from diary entry of 5 September 1935.
- iii. unpublished text (corrected) from diary entry of 5 September 1935.
text:
1. 5. I welcome ghosts that creep
- jjj. unpublished text (corrected) found among Sturm Papers.
text:
1. 5. ...strange music fed
1. 7. At which the Angel...
1. 9. How could I know,...
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COLLECTED PROSE

MISCELLANEOUS STORIES, ARTICLES & ESSAYS

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¹ For page numbers see Index—II, p. 527 below.

1

The Heart of the Rose¹

A beautiful, imperious lady walked about her twilight garden in a land sloping to the sea. A great white road crept past the garden and disappeared among the dark trees that shut out the sky on the crest of a distant hill. The lady walked in her garden between lines of heavy roses and tall, dreaming lilies, and listened to the mournful whispering of the sea and sighed with the winds that moved the white leaves of the birch trees to a fitful dance, or blew a strand of hair across her cheek; and as she wandered slowly hither and thither she was followed by the faithful eyes of a great hound who lay on a silken cloak his mistress had let fall upon the grass.

The house within the garden was of an immemorial age; it stood gray and silent among its trees; and it seemed in some way to have shared the passions and desires of

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXII, 10 (6 March 1902), pp. 8-9.

the race who had lived in it for so many centuries:
their fierce longings had whitened its ancient walls;
their hopes and good deeds and quiet thoughts had
gathered about its gardens as an eternal, brooding peace.
Its roses for ever dreamed of the passionate lips of the
women who had bent over them and whispered to the heart
of the flower in days of war when rumours of shattered
ranks came from the south by the great white road. At
nightfall the ghostly rooks who lived beyond the garden
would sail about the whitened turrets and tell one
another of sorrows to come.

The shadows faded from black to grey, and of all things
only the lady and her hound seemed alive. Her white face
shone against the dark green of the yew tree hedges as she
passed by them busy with her dreams. Here and there she
would bend over a rose-bush, or touch a lily with finger-
tips no less pearly than itself. And everywhere she
carried with her the cloud of an unbendable pride, the
atmosphere of a sorrowful loveliness which in itself was
sufficient for itself.

At length she plucked a great crimson rose that hung
like a glowing ember upon its bush, and fastened it in
her dark hair. Another rose, cream-pale, she wove into

her hair beside it; and with a sigh thrust a lily in her bosom. The world seemed to sigh with her, and the day to dissolve in a sigh; the sun drifted away beneath a sea of amber; the woods became full of hollows, and shadows, and glimpses of another and^a/ghostlier world.

The lady heard voices in the road, and calling her dog, stood by the wrought-iron gate to watch the harvesters walking home from the yellow fields, for she did not often see the common people, and greatly wondered at their condition and their strange, happy manner of speech.

A young lad came down the road, his thumbs in the arm-holes of his sleeveless coat, and his head thrown back, for he was whistling "On Tullos Hill Beside the Sea" like any bird. His whistling ceased when he saw the great lady, and his body no longer rose to a joyous step, but he went past shyly, with a pull at his rough cap and a sidelong glance at her silks and at the flickering jewels upon her hands, with perhaps a beating of the heart when he saw her red lips and the red rose woven in her hair. So he passed down the road and became one with the shadows.

Then came, a little behind him, a man and his young

wife. Their clothes were coarse and poor, but they walked hand in hand, looking into one another's faces, and all the time laughed and chattered in a way that the watcher could by no means understand. Nor could she understand why they also became silent as soon as they caught sight of her standing in the shadows of the trees beside the gate. Soon they became but shadows on the white road.

In a little while moths came fluttering out of the trees, and sad thoughts came with them. The pale harvest moon silvered the foliage, becoming every moment of a whiter brilliance as the sun went down. A bat flew overhead, and the lady spoke softly to it, for she loved all shadowy things, but the creature wheeled away with a soft flapping of its membraneous wings. She touched the chill flower in her bosom, and would have turned into the house, which now began to show pale lights as servants moved amongst the candles, had not the hound lifted his head and growled. Someone was coming down the road. The lady waited: something deeper than a listless curiosity had been wafted from the wings of the moths.

He was no peasant, the newcomer, but of grand and courtly presence, and his clothes were of material that

might have come from the looms of Tyre, though worn with travel and stained with the dust of many roads. The stranger swung along, humming to himself, the leaves a-whisper over his head: he did not at once cease when he saw the lady, but finished out his strophe as a free-lance who should say: "The world knows me". The verse finished, he bowed, sweeping his plumed hat in the dust of the great white road.

The lady regarded him somewhat curiously, she had never seen so elegant a mixture of vagabond and courtier. But for her unbendable pride she would have spoken to one so handsome; but for the cold lily in her bosom she would have spoken kindly to one so debonair. His dreamy eyes were casting her into a trance, they shone like star reflecting pools. The whispering of the leaves and the fluttering of the brown moths and all the distant sounds of the night became merged into a deep golden voice telling her how like a queen she stood, and how men's hearts beat only to the murmur of her proud imperious lips, and how dreary was the house of her banishment into the kingdom of loveless pride, and how all the flowers held their breath to see her in a place of soft lights, and sighing strings, and compelling arms: my arms, said the voice.

"Surely", she whispered at last, "it is none other than he."

"Surely", he answered, "it is none other than I."

"Only this morning," she said, "a great lord strode past my gate, striking at his dogs, and I thought how noble he was and how grand. Yet three times I have refused him the flower he would pluck with his white shapely hand that has killed men."

The man replied: "I have refused no woman, for all women have been you since God set the moon in the sky. You were the stately woman for whom I gathered my spears and harried Troy. Were you not the nut-brown Egyptian woman who leant toward me among the olive trees of Mareotis? Were you not Iseult and Beatrice? And are you not Moira?"

She heard, and touched the lily in her bosom. The petals of the flower of chastity seemed to be carved of ice. But the flaming rose shone amid the gloom of her hair, and in the heart of the rose was a tumult of warring hopes, and, far deeper than her pride, the tumult in the heart of the woman answered them. Her fingers left the petals of the lily.

"I am indeed Moira," she answered, "and you are none other than wandering Ian whom I have never seen."

"I am Ian, the wandering poet, the scholar, the swordsman, and (as men say) the madman. But I can see into the future and know all my past lives; I can read the stars, and I make songs like no other songs in the whole world. And I am truly a madman, for I am mad with the scent of the Rose."

He bent forward and would have kissed the rose in her hair, but the heart of the woman spoke, and it was the rose of her lips that clung to his.

All the windows of the house now blazed with a myriad lights. Beyond the yew trees they could see the door and the great hall with its precious hangings and vases. "Let us go in together," said Moira. "The house shall be no more gloomy for ever."

"I will make you a rhyme of my wanderings as we go," he said.

And here is the poem he murmured softly into her ear before the door of the house shut them away from all things save shaded lights, and sighing strings, and mutual deeds:

I've wandered many a weary mile
on many a weary road,
My thoughts have been a bitter tide,
my heart a bitter load;
And I have sought through all the world
with many a tear and sigh,
One who would place her hand in mine
and watch the world drift by.
The running waters whispered me,
the stars have been my guide,
And now at last, White-handed One,
I kiss away your pride.
The yellow flames of daffodils
about you in the grass,
Are tapers lit by God's own hand
to light you as you pass;
But the pale lily in your breast,
the roses in your hair,
Trouble my heart for you alone
of all the flowers are fair,
Cast them aside or only keep
the dark rose glowing red,
For I would twine a heavier wreath
to bind about your head.
A wreath of scarlet poppy-cups
and rowan berries bright
Shall bind the ivory brows that dream
beside me all the night.
Take up your dew-damp silken cloak,
call to your long-eared hound,
And we will fill your silent halls
with revelry and sound.
O wandering heart and wandering feet,
your slumber has begun,
I stay with you, White-handed One,
till all the world be done.

As they passed the last of all the ancient yews, Moira
dropped something from her bosom to the ground. The door
shut behind them, and all that night a lily on the garden
path gave up her faint sweetness to the moon, and died;

and a rose, woven into the dark hair, shed all its petals among the scattered tresses, and died. At the first red touch of dawn the ancient rooks sailed about the turrets of the house and told one another of sorrows to come.

It was with a weary heart that I pushed my books aside, for the night was far advanced, and it seemed as though the dawn again was to come unaccompanied by sleep or by any hope of respite from the fever of restlessness that consumed me. I had so long held myself aloof from human destiny that human passions had at last forsaken me, and when in the pride of my learningⁿ I imagined that I knew all things, and that even death could hold no further adventures for me, I had suddenly awakened to find that there is no hell equal to the dawn which follows the sleep of those who drug themselves with the wine of forbidden knowledge. Too often and too recklessly the doors of the other world had swung open at my command, and now the evil things that thronged about the threshold were taking their revenge upon the mind that had too curiously regarded them.

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIII, 9 (28 August 1902), p. 8.

clock became every moment a more immediate menace to my nerves, and when the lamp, which now burnt low and dim, began to throw wavering shadows upon the ceiling and on the walls, I suddenly remembered that I had run short of oil, and that my choice lay between spending a sleepless night amongst surroundings that for the time were hateful to me, and walking myself tired amidst the country lanes and under an autumn moon. It did not take me long to decide, and putting on my hat, I walked rapidly down the road, away from the town and towards the open country, hoping that the fresh night air and the odour of the pines would sooth my quivering nerves into at least a momentary peace.

After walking for perhaps an hour, deep in thought, I found myself in the thick of a wood, the trees crowded around me like threatening demons, the lights of the town nowhere visible. All about were the indefinite voices of the night, the low whisperings of leaves, the sound of running water somewhere to my right, and the ceaseless unquiet movements of the night creatures who haunt woods and desolate places. The sound which troubled me most, unaccountably enough, was the sound of the running water; and I took great care to keep to

the left, for I feared that if I suddenly came upon the banks of the water, I should see a woman sitting there; and then I thought of the woman who is said to haunt the banks of midnight streams, washing the shrouds of those who are to die. I shivered a little at this thought, and wondered whether I should be able to recognise my own shroud when I saw it.

The moon was behind a thick bank of cloud, and except for a pale starlight, the night was quite black. A strange unaccountable feeling of terror was speedily mastering all my self-control, and had it not been for the thickness of the wood I should have broken into a run. I made a great effort to shake off my fear, but with no avail; and when, after once or twice losing the path in the darkness and amongst the trees, I at last came to the border of the wood, and found that a stone wall was all that separated me from the road, I was drenched with the cold sweat of terror and trembled in every limb.

Once upon the road, and away from the influence of the trees, a saner mood took possession of me, and I laughed aloud, inviting all the dead to dance attendance if they would, for I speedily became ashamed of my late cowardice,

and wished to prove to myself that I had been but the victim of my nerves.

I was suddenly startled out of my self-possession by hearing music like the faint blowing of flutes, and then to my horror I saw a ghostly company, with livid faces and shrunk hands, walking down the road to meet me. Some of them were men and some were women, but they were all dead, and as they came near, the churchyard mould was still visible on face and hair. Three of them in front, who had died no kindly death by the look in their eyes, were blowing long flutes, and I could see their bony chests rise and fall with the efforts of their breathing. Those behind bore a kind of litter on their shoulders, and in the litter was a pale, handsome man, with black hair falling over his broad white forehead, and on his face such an expression as can be seen on the face of One alone. Immediately I knew the Master I had served so long, and as I looked upon that face, so remote, so serene, and yet with such an awful look of unimaginable despair in the cold, cruel, black eyes with their half-closed lids, I forgot the presence of those who had first terrified me, and felt a kind of joy in knowing that I was at last face to face with the Ancient Evil I had sought

with tribulation all my days.

The procession stopped, the flutes ceased blowing, and as the dead gathered round me with sightless eyes, the One in the litter rose on his elbow and spoke, and as he spoke his voice was mingled with the sound of the wind moving the grass and rustling the garments and the decaying shrouds of that mirthless company. The fear had left me, and it was in a half dream that I heard him say:

"Of all the immortals who moved about the throne of God, and served him, there was none greater than I; and to none had he given an ampler heart or a mightier brain. But the things I had I despised, and longed to overthrow God and the Angels and to rule in Heaven alone, that I might shape all things to my desire, and my desire was evil. And now behold my servants, I who would equal God."

As he spoke I knew the mystery of my life, and saw how the man who despises friendship and love and kindly human things, puts himself beyond the power of either good or evil, and is borne through this world and the next by the worn corpses of his own desires, which have never been warmed by any breath of life.

I cried aloud to the stars in the agony of this revelation, the speaker sank back in his litter, the flutes blew once more, and the mournful procession moved on, leaving me with the Darkness and with my Terror. And now I have two friends, I who was friendless. They are Darkness and Terror.

An old Latin writer, speaking of the universal nature of his interests, has said: Nihil humani a me alienum puto; which may be translated: Nothing human is out of the range of my interests. For my own part I can gladly subscribe to his sentiment, only adding that my interests are even more catholic, that nothing Aberdonian is out of their range.

My chiefest pleasure is to wander at night-time about the city; to explore its less known nooks and corners as well as the much-trodden ways. I like to glance at passing faces; to seek the ashes of a dead romance beneath the rags and wrinkles of the beggar, no less than the tragedy often hidden by the smile and the rustling silks of some high-born dame who stops to give him alms. Either alone or with a friend it is my custom to walk through the town when all more conventional

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXI, 19 (15 August 1901), p. 5.

people have long sought their beds, when the streets are seemingly given up to the policeman on his beat and the meagre cat that slips past one through the darkness, on his way home from a midnight orgie.

One night in particular I remember as being rich in all that beauty for which Devana is famous; rich also in those quiet adventures which lend colour to one's dreams and cast light upon the twisted riddle of human life. For a long time we had wandered, my friend and I, through the white streets of the deserted city, on the night to which I refer. Tired at last of the almost terrible beauty of the moon-lit granite, we turned into that dark street which is known as ^{the} Shiprow, and which has been so named, says my friend, since the times when the monks of the Holy Trinity chanted masses for the repose of the soul of John Barbour, that learned Aberdonian, poet and scholar, whose bones now rest in the place he so loved. We entered then into the Shiprow, and no sooner had its walls closed in upon us than we were in another world, a world where there was no glittering splendour of granite, no Athenian beauty of architecture or magnificence of star-lit columns, but a rank darkness that the moon was afraid to pierce; thick shadows in whose depths moved

unseen shapes dimly descried, and from whence came faint whisperings and rustlings as though primeval horrors were stirring in the slime of Acheron, or as though some harpy moved her feathers in an evil dream.

On the crumbling steps of one of the houses sat a wicked audience of shaggy creatures, who encouraged with low cries and muttered words of praise the steps of a girl who was dancing in a patch of light thrown by the moon between the sides of the houses. The girl swayed and reeled with drunken steps, now and again tossing up her arms with a shrill cry that drew a ripple of delight from her shadowy audience. It was like a scene from some devil's comedy to see this poor ruined daughter of Herodias dance to the twinkling of her attendant shadow; one almost expected to see some sordid Herod step forth to offer her the gratification of her wishes, even to the half of his kingdom, as of old.

Presently the dancer ceased, tired out, and slunk into the shadows among her companions. We heard movements in the darkness, and coarse laughter; then a match was struck and the white faces of debauchery glared at us with weary eyes through a cloud of pungent smoke. A window opened overhead and a face leaned into the moonlight; a face

with sick white lips and brow beaded with the sweat of unwholesome sleep. We passed on, wondering, followed by a chorus of laughter and the memory of a face. When we once more reached the clean and beautiful places, we suddenly laughed aloud, both together, remembering those who say we have no slums in the Silver City. The dreamer of dreams and the wanderer by night often gains knowledge denied to the strong men who scorn him.

4

Round the Fire¹

I. The People of Peace

In the Highland places, now that winter is here, and days grow dark even before the cattle are driven home, the dwellers in the glens no longer care to leave their hill-side cabins at night, but prefer rather to gather about a clean-swept hearth, before a clear peat fire, and tell one another stories of times out of mind, or sing songs, or listen to the wild fiddling of some vagabond musician who, long ere the last candle is blown out, becomes very drunk, and is put to bed upon a heap of clean straw in the loft.² At such gatherings one will hear much and see much that gives the lie to those who have misnamed the Celt for dour, or secretive, or even worse. The songs, mostly in Gaelic, are difficult to

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 9 (26 February 1903), pp. 4-5.

² This article was written at the beginning of January. (ED. B-A.)

understand, but the tales, the romances, the ghostly legends that creep up at Christmas time and at New-Year, are interesting beyond belief; the last-named especially, for the Highland ghost-story has a horror all its own. The ghosts are no mere bogies with any stale paraphernalia of clanking chains, but are veritable creatures of dream: mournful, wicked, sometimes even full of^a/ghastly merriment, but always terrible.

There is an old man of my acquaintance who tells how he once saw an apparition when he was little more than a youth. He was going to visit his sweetheart in a neighbouring village, and set out on his journey at nine o'clock one wintry, moonlight night. About half-way he had to cross a shallow stream by means of stepping-stones, but when he came to the place, overhung by dark trees, he saw an old woman, to use his own expression, "Like a small pitiful child," sitting on the opposite bank of the stream and washing some white article in the running water. This at first did not strike him as being very peculiar, but on looking closely at the woman's face when she raised it in the moonlight, he saw that she was dead, and the article she washed in the stream he recognised as a shroud. He cried out in terror, and the

woman vanished. Fear kept him from crossing the haunted stream, so he turned back home, and meeting some friends, spent the night with them, forgetting his terror in their company. On the same day, a week later, his sweetheart died in a fit.

When the old man had told me this tale his sister broke in, and said that no man need pretend such apparitions and creatures of fantasy do not exist, because she herself had met a water-kelpie on the banks of the Loch-na-clachan, the Pool of Stones. I asked her about this, and could not get her to speak of it, but she told a long rambling tale about a farm servant who had met what appeared to be a lame old woman, limping over the stones of the moor and weeping because of her age and infirmity. The farm servant offered to give her a lift on his back. When he had walked a few paces with her he noticed that she had the feet of a bird sticking from beneath her ragged petticoats, so he immediately flung the creature from his back and ran home on the heels of fear, the eldritch yells of the half-stunned faery raising the hair under his bonnet.

If you happen to be going along a road with a Highlander who believes in the existence of powers outside

the limits of material circumstance^s, and there should pass by one of those little inexplicable eddies of wind so common on still Autumn evenings, you will be surprised to see him throw his cap at it, or perhaps his knife. The belief is that the faeries—the People of Peace we call them here, in order to give them no offence—ride abroad upon such eddies of wind, and that if a bare knife, or a man's bonnet, or left-foot shoe be thrown at the eddy the enchantment will be broken, and the faeries forced to drop whatever they may have stolen.

A man's wife disappeared one day from the house and was not to be found anywhere whatever. Thirty years passed, and the husband, now an old man, chanced to throw his cap at a faery eddy that met him in the road, when his wife immediately dropped at his feet. She was still only twenty years old, the age at which she had been stolen, because among the People of Peace there are no moths of time to batten upon the vivid tapestry of life; no worms to make corruptible the unwrinkled brows of youth.

Very often, and for a reason that is but darkly hinted at among the frightened peasants, the faeries will steal a human child from its mother, leaving in its place some

shape of goblin evil, like the stolen child in general appearance, but wizened and precocious, always wailing and peevish, and never growing any bigger. Here is the story of such a theft, told me by a young woman who held her own child passionately to her bosom while she spoke, as though to protect it from any malignant powers who might be wandering abroad in the wintry twilight. Two children, twins, belonging to a farmer in Caithness, gave much anxiety to their parents by reason of an unnatural appearance of old age which troubled the imaginations of all who saw them. They had large heads and thin, wrinkled faces, with ashen lips and light blue eyes of a supernatural tranquillity; they never grew any bigger or merrier, but on the contrary became more shrivelled and solemn with every day that passed. A wise woman who was at length called in, for a physician can be of no use in such a case, at once suspected them to be faery changelings, and gave the farmer's wife instructions how to set about discovering their true character and recovering her own babies. The mother, when everyone else was out of the house, filled an empty eggshell with water and scraps of meat and set it on the fire as though to make broth. The children in the cradle watched her

intently for some time and then inquired what she was about. "Making broth for the hungry men who will soon be in from the harvest," was her reply. The elves in the cradle, for they were no less, taken completely by surprise, screamed out

"We rode the wind that stirred Noah's flood,
We are ancient now, we were ancient then;
But we never have seen an eggshell yet
That would hold a dinner for harvest men."

When the woman heard this she was sure of their evil origin, and threw them both down a deep well in the yard, where they made a most horrible outcry, and from whence their unearthly relatives, the faeries, speedily rescued them. The woman, on returning to the kitchen, found that her true children had been restored, and lay both fast asleep in the cradle, strong and healthy, and evidently none the worse for their visit to the land of clouds and shadows.

A tailor from the Lowlands who was present when one of these tell-tellings was held, gave as his share of the evening's entertainment a tale about the devil that is well worth repeating, not only because of its own individual humour, but also because it well illustrates the gap between the Highland and Lowland thought and

imagination. The Celt builds a temple of fantasy and romance where he may offer the incense of belief to creatures begotten of his own dreams; while the Lowlander, gold-greedy and canny (canny is the very word), delights to poke fun at the very personages of the dour religion that has made him what he is. Here, then, is the tailor's story.

A certain laird was much put about to find sleeping room for a minister who was staying with him for a few days. Every bedroom was occupied save one, and that, as he explained to his reverend guest, was a haunted chamber at the far end of the house, at the end of a lonely corridor, which had for many years been locked up and avoided. The holy man enquired as to the exact nature of the ghostly occupant of the room, and when informed that the Prince of Evil himself haunted the chamber, expressed his determined opinion to sleep there, come what might. "Auld Hornie" proved true to his reputation, for at twelve o'clock exactly he appeared at the bedside with all the grisly and traditional accessories of his office: clanking chains and blue fire, screams of hatred and horrible maledictions, evidently intent ^{up}on frightening the good man to death. The minister, however, quite

equal to the occasion, promptly tackled his visitor with a sermon on riotous conduct under seventeen heads, and ere the first cock crew had extracted a more than substantial subscription from the infernal coffers, "for the purpose," as his reverence very tersely put it, "o' spreadin' the licht o' education and the word o' the gawspel."

Round the Fire¹

II. Seafaring

Some months back I passed many days on a ship that sails about the islands of the north and west seeking fish, and there learned many strange and marvellous things about the sea, and learned^{also}/to envy the happy laborious lives of sailors and fishermen. A Highlander on board, a deck-hand, who had a wonderful Gaelic name of his own, but who was called Paddy M'Kie by his shipmates, became my fast friend, and never wearied of teaching me his sea-lore and destroying one by one all my book-learned theories about heaven and earth and the waters under the earth.

When the trawl-net was dragged in at night-time, dripping with sea-fire, he would ask what was the cause of the phosphorescence, and would be shaken with laughter and scorn when I told him about the innumerable small

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 13 (26 March 1903), p. 5.

creatures that are said to make the sea glimmer like fire, and tried to explain how minute and how multitudinous they are. The appearance, he said, is caused by fire in the water, and this fire is the life of the sea, causing it to ebb and flow, and giving life to fishes and sea-weed and crabs. He would not believe the moon has anything to do with the tides, because the tides run back and forth even when there is no moon. He denies the existence of mermen, but he believes in the women of the sea, and once saw one of them sitting on a rock and shamelessly making eyes at the mariners. If it had not been that she looked very dank, and wet, and uncomfortable, Paddy M'Kie says there might have been a mutiny. It is only likely that they should make love to sailors, having no men at all down in the sea, and now and again they will come to live on dry land for the love of some human being. Paddy M'Kie tells about a man who married a sea-woman and had a family by her, and lived quite happily until one night a creature of the waters came and tapped at her window so that she fled back to her sea-folk, unable to resist the temptation. I did not find the story too hard to believe, because when one lives upon the waters one's imagination suffers a sea-

change and borrows a little of the immensity of the sea and sky, and learns to hold all things without brimming over into ridicule, remembering that no miracle can be more astonishing than the ever-changing miracle of storm and calm. An old seaman once told me, or maybe I read the tale, how he suffered wreck in the Indian Ocean, and swam with great comfort in the warm sea for three days, and was entertained by the sweet singing of the barnacle-geese that were hatched from barnacles growing on the soles of his feet, and how he made friends with a whale, and how when a great water-spout was about to destroy him the whale dived beneath it and gulphed it down in a hurry, Nothing is but thinking makes it so.

M'Kie and his friends are great men with the bottle. One time I saw the island of Iona away on the horizon, and asked Paddy M'Kie if he had ever been there. "No, sir, I have not," he replied, "but I have been to a much better place whatever; to Long Hope, where we shall be tomorrow, and where one gets drunk for no more than sixpence." The whole crew went ashore at Long Hope, and broached a cask of liquor and danced reels with the hussies of the place, for all the world like buccaneers in a sea-story. Next day they were very ill and drank

sea-water as an antidote to the whisky. Paddy M'Kie also drank oil he had stolen from the engine-room, and thereby moved me to great admiration. Oil, he says, is very searching and a fine cure. I think it would have killed most people, but it certainly cured him, for in no time whatever he was showing me how to dance a sword dance with two crossed deck-mops for swords, and he went on dancing, oblivious to everything save the ecstasy of movement, until a pot/^{which} he had been set to watch boiled over and nearly put out the galley fire. He was a child in many ways, with a child's sudden and inexplicable shifts of temper; and though he would swear and fight for the least cause, or for no cause at all, I have seen him weep when he told of his own many sorrows and misadventures.

One night when it rained heavily, and when everybody except the hand at the wheel sat round the table in the warm fo'c'sle, and smoked, or tried to read tatters of old newspapers in the insufficient light of the swinging oil lamp, Paddy M'Kie suddenly put his pipe down and began to tell about a girl who had lived at the same farm where he was a farm-servant before he went to sea. She was the most beautiful girl in the world, and whatever

was reddest that is what her lips were like, and whatever is softest is harder than her breast was. She and Paddy M'Kie drove a cow to market one day, and when they were coming home through the Autumn twilight he kissed her and asked her to marry him. She refused, but cried when she did so, and begged my friend not to ask her any questions about it, but to forget all about her. He did not understand then, but afterwards he understood, and even at the end of twenty years he could not find it in his heart to forgive destiny, and the tears gathered in his eyes and in his voice at the end of the story. No man spoke for a little while; even in their rough sailor hearts there was no will to mock at his tears; and then the skipper rose up with "Well, boys, it's a nasty, dirty night, and we'd best all turn into w^e'er bunks, I'm thinkin'."

For a long time that night I lay awake, and the last sound I heard before I lost consciousness was the sound of Paddy M'Kie swearing in his sleep.

Round the Fire¹

III. A Forgotten Vagabond

Habbie Simson, the Piper of Kilbarchan, a little of whose story I have gathered from chap-books and from the uncertain lips of tradition, was one of many tatterdemalion adventurers whose doings enlivened Scotland at the end of the sixteenth century, and who left behind them an inheritance of songs, bag-pipe tunes, the priceless Scottish ballads, and a long record of fascinating misdeeds. Their race is extinct: law and order and the arid desire for respectability have left no corner in our hearts for anything that is not commonplace; though I believe that not very many years ago there might have been found in Ireland men who were their direct descendants; and, certainly, a century back that unhappy land could boast of Raftery and O'Sullivan Rua, and many another poet to whom the goddess ~~had~~

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 16 (16 April 1903), p. 9.

had whispered that it is a better thing to live than to be thought well of by stolid folk.

Habbie Simson certainly lived. When he died somewhere about the beginning of the year 1600, less, I fear, in the odour of sanctity than of barley-bree, he could boast with his last breath of a life that can only be called astounding in its exuberance of adventure. His loves were as numberless and as erratic as his friendships were few and imperishable, and that he never died of steel is due, one is assured, to his being as ready with a claymore as with a compliment. His affairs of honour were many, and one of them was like to have been disastrous to Habbie, for he slew some potwalloping Laird who scornfully edged him off an ale-house bench where he was piping to his friends, and but for the influence of one Robert Sempill of Beltrees, a gentleman of position who seems to have been his friend and a sharer of his wild ongoings, Habbie Simson would have headed a dismal pilgrimage to Gallows Hill.

At Habbie's death this same Robert Sempill wrote a "Lament for the Piper of Kilbarchan," one of the quaintest and most interesting pieces of early Scottish poetry, though I have seen it in no collection of ballads.

It is to be found, I think, in a somewhat rare chap-book published at Paisley a hundred and fifty years ago, and has the renown of being the first poem written in the metre Burns made so peculiarly his own, for Robert Sempill of Beltrees is the inventor of that metre.

I quote the second, the fourth, the sixth, and the thirteenth stanza of the lament—

"Now quha sall play The day it dawis,
or Hunt up quhan the red cock crawis,
Or quha can for our Kirk-townis cause,
Stand us in steid?
On bag-pypis now na bodie blawis,
Sen wild Hab's deid.

"Sa kyndly to his nichtbouris neist,
At Beltane or Sanct Barchan's feast
He blew and then hald up his breist
As he war weid;
Bot now we neid not him arreist,
For Habbie's deid.

"At Clark-playis quhan he wont to come,
His Pype plait trimlie to the drum,
Lyke bykes o' bees he gart it bum,
And tuneit his reed,
Bot now our pypis may a' sing dum,
Sen Habbie's deid.

"Aye quahan he plaid the gaitlings gedderit,
And quhan he spak the carlins bledderit,
On Sabbath-day his cap was fedderit
A seimlie weid.
In the kirk yaird his meir stude tedderit,
Quhair he lies deid."

At the time when the piper was in the blossom of his days, Scotland was still shivering from the effects of

the unpalatable spiritual purge ~~of~~ Doctors Knox and Calvin had poured down her unhappy throat, and in a mood to hang one man because he was a Papist, and to burn his neighbour for having forsaken the old faith, so that people trod a very narrow path indeed—the fires of purgatory gleaming on the one hand—the unclean waters of the Institutio on the other. Hab Simson thought not at all of these matters. He took folk as he found them; if he heard mass in one village he was equally ready to chaunt the psalms in metre when he came to a place sanctified by the new dispensation. In his heart, I think, he was a pagan, worshipping with perhaps the most fervour at the feet of a certain comely Mysie Stragahan, or Strachan, the dearest of his many loves; of whom only this is known with certainty, that she was charged with sorcery, and so burned.

One time when he was a piper at a bridal where one half the guests were Catholic, the remainder Protestant, he did not pipe so gaily as he was wont, for his mind was running upon the unhappy fate of his sweetheart, and he was in no mood to set the feet of the wedding guests a-dance. So melancholy was the droning of his chaunter that folk murmured, many of the women wept and sighed,

and the bridegroom, a plain man of no subtlety, straightly gave Habbie to understand that he had been paid to divert the guests, and a diversion was therefore expected. The gloomy piper, immediately mounting a chair upon the table, sang the first verse of a terrible composition of his own, entitled "Tryme Goe Trix"-

"The Paip, that Pagan full of pryde
He hes us blindit lang,
For quhair the blind the blind does gyde,
Na wondir thay goe wrang:
Like prynce and kyng he led the ring
Of all iniquitie
Hey, trix, tryme goe trix, under the grene-wod trie!"

Somebody flung a stool at the mad singer, but it was too late to do any good. The drunken wits of the wedding guests caught fire like dry flax, and before half the women had time to faint, or ^{to} pick up their skirts and scuttle into safety, steel was drawn and Catholic and Protestant were at one another's throats.

Habbie Simson, half-crazed with drink and sorrow, caught up his pipes and urged the fray with a pibroch of gathering, and when at length he ceased, eleven bloody murders had been committed, and the bodies of the fallen lay rolled over one another among broken chairs and the scattered remnants of the wedding-supper.

A wild life, truly; and a wild age, but genuine withal,

and as unlike these bloodless times as one can imagine. Our mad piper knew life to its deeps, and was not made afraid by the coming of death. He died, we are told, singing his old songs, and calling upon Mysie Straguhan and other women he had loved in his youth.

Round the Fire¹

IV. The Voices of the Gods

Last night, just as I had drawn the lamp to my elbow, and was preparing to spend the evening with a book and with my thoughts, I suddenly became aware that I was again to be visited by one of those paroxysms of terrible depression, or inexplicable horror of life and of destiny, that every now and again come upon me to destroy content and peace and almost reason itself.

There is a daemon behind the chair of each one of us; and at times, growing forgetful of his presence, we look round to see whence comes this shadow that falls across the book we read, or between us and the friend we talk with, and we see his face and are driven forth. My daemon is enigmatic and terrible, but it seems he has power only within the four walls of a room or the streets of a town, for if I but get into ~~the~~ country lanes, the

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 18 (30 April 1903), p. 11.

stars above me and a free wind on my cheek, the voices of the night whisper an incantation too strong for him to withstand, and I am at peace.

I extinguished my lamp, therefore, and took the road that goes westward out of ^{the}/town, past the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and towards the Hill of Brimmond. When I was at length far out in the country, on a lonely road where the great trees on each side shone grey in the moonlight, ^{and}/threw wizard shadows across the path, and whispered in their boughs the wisdom that would make us contented for ever could we but grasp its meaning, I experienced once again a serenity of mind, and thanked the powers who open the gates of twilight that they have left us at least one exit from the unlovely and overbearing circumstances of daily life.

I am in love with the twilight at all times, but especially when the burden of the flesh becomes too grievous a thing to be borne, and the crown of thorns too agonising for the brows of mortality, for then the eternal priesthood of the glimmering stars chants the praises of God, who is present wherever he has consecrated a woodland shrine, a cathedral of pine and fir.

When I came to the bend of the road and saw a couple

of white cottages behind their trees, a little shut-in garden in front of each, the very sign and character of peace, it seemed to me that destiny had brought me thither for no other purpose than to draw comfort from the sight of so simple and perfect a beauty, and to forget for a little while the invisible worm of subtlety that lies at the heart of every rose in this sad garden of the world.

We have lost, alas, the triumphant faith of our fathers; we can never wholly attain the peace that died out of the world in the old time, and we must forever hear the satyr call to his fellow in the ruined cities of our imagination, but there is this left us still: to listen to the voices of the earth and to the beating of the heart of the sea, and to remember that the Lord speaks to his chosen in dreams and in the sacrament of night. For my part, though this poor body grow like a worn-out cloak that can no longer shield its owner from the cold winds, I would not willingly lay it down while there is a murmur among the trees, a whisper in the grass, or the call of a sea-bird over moon-lit waters, for with these sounds mingle the elemental, heavenly voices. They bid man endure his hard destiny yet a

little. They promise, when the last sun has set,

"One faint, eternal eventide of gems,"

where all sorrowful realities shall dissolve into the twilight and become beautiful illusions, like the dim trees and the white cottages I passed at the bend of the road.

Round the Fire¹

V. Rose of the World

A friend of mine, who is a student of natural science, and who believes, among other excellent theories, that he has no soul, came to my lodgings a night or two ago and took up a white rose which stood in a glass of water upon my writing-table. He asked me if I knew anything about its "natural order," and when I said that a white rose is sacred to Harpocrates, the god of silence, and to the Virgin Mary, he laughed a little scornfully and began to pluck the flower to pieces, now and then naming some part of it with a learned name, destroying, in my mind, not alone the visible beauty of the petals, but also the beautiful multitude of ideas that gather about the rose in one's imagination.

My friend could not understand why I care nothing about "natural orders" or "floral formulae," or any other item

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXV, 1 (2 July 1903),
p. 8.

of the long scientific catalogue of unlovely words. He forgets that when the last botanist dies unwept the world will not miss his dusty lore, but that if the Ancient Gardener were to crush the last rose the world would be without an image of beauty. Science has so long busied herself with the merest externals of circumstances, with the dullest and most unimportant things of the material world, and has illuminated her own hopeless nudity with so vivid a light, that men are beginning to turn away from her with something not unlike contempt. They are beginning to seek comfort in the world of the imagination, which is, we are told, the world of eternity. Everything we see in this world, says William Blake, is but a reflection of the permanent realities that exist in the world of the imagination, the world of eternity.

No man can possibly be the better for being able to describe badly, and at great length, what can be described with excellent simplicity by saying "a rose". All the ponderous explanations of science fail to satisfy the man who wonders why some roses are red and some roses white; but he will be satisfied, unless he belong to the cold generations of the Sophists, with the explanation of Constantine, who makes the god Eros a great dancer,

and tells how, when he was dancing in the company of the other gods, he slipped and spilled wine upon the rose, ^{that} changing/ to red which before was white—Craterem nectaris evertit saltans apud deos, qui in terram cadens, Rosam prius albam rubore infecit.

I cannot believe that destiny was ever turned aside by the barren rituals of science, for if one reads only a few of those learned and colourless sentences to be found in such exuberance in the pages of its canonical books, one is swift to cry with Jaques "'Tis a Greek invocation, to call fools into a circle." But I am quite ready to believe that the sight or the memory of some symbol of beauty, a rose, for instance, may start a train of thought in one's mind, that shall so grow and increase that its influence will still be working subtle changes upon the imaginations of the world when many years have passed and one is dead.

The Rose is not, after all, a flower belonging to this or that catalogue of unhappy names one has learned to despise as the science of botany, but is a divine idea made visible to our senses, and belongs to a divine order that is nameless and eternal. When I see a rose upon a brier, or in a vase, or read of a rose in a line of poetry,

I remember that Eve in one legend is said to have sinned by plucking the rose, and in another legend, which makes the avenging angel give her the choice of carrying one flower away from Eden, she chooses the Scarlet Rose, and so brings the beautiful, fading desires and passions of mortality into the world. According to eastern symbolism the god Indra was crucified for stealing a Rose from the garden of heaven, and in the centre of the Brahmin paradise is a Silver Rose containing "the images of two women, as bright and fair as a pearl," and in the centre of this rose God has his unchanging abode. When I shut my eyes in the quietude of contemplation, or when I gaze with open eyes through rising incense clouds upon glimmering altar-candles, I can see this Silver Rose as Dante maybe saw it; and among the common things of the daily world it is never far absent from my thoughts, for do not some of us know that even the sad rose of human passion has Divinity at its heart, and encloses Him in a million veils?

There is nothing sinful save ugliness, nothing holy save beauty. All waters are sweet save those into whose deeps fell the star called Wormwood, which is the star of what we call science, and progress, and success,

falling into the souls of men and making them bitter. If the world had heeded the voice which cried, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not," the footsteps of Divinity would still be heard among the ancient trees, and my learned friend would cease to tear apart the rose leaves, and would believe, maybe, that he has a soul. I can only imagine the sciences, as they are understood now, as gaunt and famished riders spurring about the world on dark horses, consumed with a fierce hatred of all beauty and all emotion, and warring against that ill-starred company of poets, and dreamers, and visionaries who could remake the Golden Age if the world would but turn against the dark horsemen. It is not the man with a bank-book who is to break the snares that close about us, but the man with a song in his heart and a dream in his mind,

"Who present, past, and future sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy word
That walked among the ancient trees;

"Calling the lapsed soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control
The starry pole,
And fallen, fallen light renew,"

as was written by Blake, who had heard the Holy Word if ever man had.

A writer whom I suppose to be the greatest of all modern writers and the most profound, in a recent essay in one of the monthlies very beautifully and truly says of a certain poet: "He may not have been, indeed he was not, among the very greatest of the poets, but he was among the greatest of those who prepare the last reconciliation when the Cross shall blossom with roses."¹ If we continually despise all that is base, and material, and insignificant, and continually seek after their antipodes, guarding always the secret flame of the imagination, and writing our poems and plays, nay, even our dramatic criticisms, with a wise austerity, may not the Cross blossom with roses in our hearts, even now?

¹ W.B. Yeats, 'The Happiest of the Poets,' Ideas of Good and Evil (London, 1903), p. 89. Reprinted from The Fortnightly Review (March, 1903).

The Gospel of Content¹

With certain reservations, which will be referred to, "Songs in Season"² contains some of the most promising local work that has appeared for a long time. There are only a few poems in this elegant little booklet, and many of them show traces of having been written with a too strenuous faith in the easiness of writing verse, yet there is so pure a stream of thought running through them, so delicate a fancy, and, here and there, such an intimate touch of true poetical expression, that it would be unjust to pass them over without paying a tribute to the very evident good which they contain.

Miss Anderson is really a poet, but a poet in the making. At present she is weaving a cocoon of pleasant thoughts and hopeful philosophy, from which she will

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXII, 2 (9 January 1902), p. 19.

² By Jessie Annie Anderson. Milne & Stephen, The Claxton Press, Aberdeen. (ED. B-A.)

before long emerge, let us hope, in all the glory of the perfect butterfly. Let her be very careful over the weaving of that silken envelope. Nothing can make it aright save a woof of moonshine and a weft of dreams. She has more than her share of brains, she has literary ability, and she has the keen inward ecstasy of the poet, but she lacks knowledge of technique, of the mere manipulative processes by which language is moulded into those subtleties of rhythm and metre necessary for the adequate expression of poetical thought. It must be remembered that form is the very soul of poetry. All art—and poetry is surely the highest of all the arts—is the search for the elusive shadow of beauty, for the perfect expression of those dreams which haunt us, be they dreams of a far, lost face, or dreams of "the unimaginable light of God." It is the unimaginable light for which this poet is yearning; she awaits the light which shall renew all faded things and send a new wind to blow weariness out of the heart of man. Hers is the philosophy of contentment, of resignation, and, above all, of belief and hope. The blossom of amaranthe which signifies an ever-renewed spiritual youth is itself an immortal growth:

Time after time have its bloom been shed;
Time after time we have wept and said—
"Our days are winter; the flower is dead";
But, lo! in unlooked-for time and place
'Twould rise with other and stronger grace,
And a deeper meaning on each flower face.

So she sings, very calmly and very sweetly, till we are almost led to believe her.

There is a lyric entitled "Healing" which is worth quotation in full were space available. Here, at any rate, is the first verse:

Oh, world of life exhaustless,
So little understood!
For all our mad undoing
Love re-creates it good.
Its soul of subtle healing
I know it close by me—
Whoso hath ears may listen
Whoso hath eyes may see.

There is the whole Gospel of Content there.

Here again, in the second verse of "For Courage" is found one of these true touches which are never accidental, which never come from the pen of any save the true wanderer in the twilight of dreams:

I sang of life in spring-time,
To see God's shadow pass,
A sacrament of sunshine
Across the lowly grass.

The whole visible world is a sacrament, perhaps of penance; it is something to have discovered that. In such glimpses

one sees a little beyond the mercifully drawn veil. To see hope beyond it is indeed an achievement and a victory. Would that we all could.

And now I must leave "Songs in Season" with a true regret. It is hardly yet an attainment, but it is a promise of attainment which I hope to see fulfilled before long. Miss Jessie Annie Anderson will go far if she but treat her art with the reverence due to all beautiful and suggestive things. It is so easy to write bad verses that when ^{one} comes across matter of promise one always has a great fear lest the writer should give way to the fatal felicity of writing for the sake of rhyme. The words in a poem are ~~like~~ the jewels in a diadem, and with no less care should they be chosen, and polished, and fitted into place. Exegi monumentum aere perennius wrote a great Latin poet at the end of his book; to write such a motto should be the aim of all of us who write at all.

"The Glittering Road"¹

A New Book by W.A. Mackenzie²

To most people Mr. Mackenzie will be remembered as the author of the delightful "Shon Campbell" and one-time editor of Bon-Accord, who went to London to take over the editorship of Black and White, and who thereafter disappeared among the apple-orchards of Brittany. For several years he lived the life of a recluse in that fragrant retreat, a veritable philosopher among the foliage, with no signs of activity save the publication of one or two small volumes of strange woodland poems of too remote an outlook and of too unorthodox a philosophy to tickle the ears of the infuriated groundlings, but so delicately perfect (some of them), that the very few readers who still prefer poetry to

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 15 (9 April 1903), p. 8.

² The Glittering Road, by W.A. Mackenzie, author of His Majesty's Peacock, Poems, etc. Ward, Lock, & Co., Limited, London. (ED. B-A.)

comic opera have been looking forward with hope to some work more sustained, and of more ambitious circumstances^g. It has come. It has taken the form of "The Glittering Road". Romance—novel—fantasy—I scarce know what to call it, for all these factors Mr. Mackenzie has mingled in the crucible of his imagination. The result is a bit disappointing, but so well worth reading that one does not feel inclined to scare away the least of the author's admirers with the chill waters of critical pedantry.

A friend of mine who has read "The Glittering Road" says it reminds him of the Christian Religion, because it can be comprehended with delight by the man in the street and yet give food for thought to the philosopher. That is a happy saying. Mr. Mackenzie has taken a threadbare plot, "frayed at the edges" even, as though in defiance of criticism; a plot, in fact, that is frankly melodramatic and unashamed; but he has woven such a pleasant garment of good writing for his lay-figure that one forgets one is cultured, and superior, and all that, and reads the book with unassumed satisfaction and forgives the author his plot. In any case, it would be ^{has done} useless to remonstrate; Mr. Mackenzie/it on purpose, and done it well.

I am not to say anything about the story he embodies in his book, except that it is "breathless from start to finish," as my newspaper friends have it, but I should like to quote a beautiful fragment of verse that ends the last chapter like a fading sunset. Here it is—

Here lies a little heap of dust that was a man,
Whose hand but rarely finished what his dreams began,
He took his fortune as he took the sun and wind,
A trifle sad, a trifle glad, a trifle blind.
Whether a palace housed him or a wayside tent,
He had for comrades Love and Dreams and was content,
He asked for little; all his days he had his crust,
His cup of wine—and now thanks God that he is dust.

Mr. Mackenzie is before all things a poet; and in this glory is also his sorrow. His prose is rhythmical, cadenced, often ecstatic. He expresses the many-coloured incidents of daily circumstance by a wild imagery all his own, surely learned in the melancholy Highlands of his childhood, in the "grey quadrangle of the hills" that were his Almae Nutrices, and surely destined to place him at last, not among romancers, and novelists, and such-like creatures, but among the ill-starred company of poets and dreamers on whom fall the mantles of derision and misbelief and unhappiness, and who, alas, must endure strange destinies in many lands—et ego in Arcadia!—and with their own breath keep alive the flames that consume the heart.

"A Book of Verse"

A Critical Note upon Mr. John Watson's Poems¹

I.

It is on record that some satirical rogue, with more humour than decency, once called Aberdeen the Oxford of the North. That she has effectively lived down the accusation will be granted by whosoever reviews the local literature of the past any number of years. Once upon a time, when I believed a lot of things about Aberdeen that I have since forgotten, I resolved to write a series of articles for these columns upon local literature and literary men, and often talked about my plan with a friend who knew the literary history of the town better than many men know their Creed, and who, being a humorist, treated me with great gentleness, and offered to lay all his

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 23 (4 June 1903), p. 5.

information at my feet. The editor of this paper must be a humorist also, because I still remember that when I communicated my intention to him he made some show of enthusiasm, and said he would publish the articles as soon as they were written. Need I say those articles have not yet appeared?

II.

The only local book published in my time that compels attention by any admirable qualities of thought or form is Mr. John Watson's volume of poems, which I briefly reviewed when it appeared some months ago. I did not greatly care for the book at that first hurried reading, partly because it contains some poems I then considered and must still consider unfortunate, and partly, perhaps, because I was like Nathanael, unable to believe any good could come out of Nazareth; and so it happened that my review gave too slight and too superficial a justice to some very excellent work.

Last night, as I was walking in a country lane at an hour when the light of one star that hung fluttering moth-like beyond the vaporous green sky in the west, made the solid world seem fragile and momentary, and made the purple cloud islets among which the star sailed

seem the only realities, certain fragments of poetry
kept running through my mind:

"Bewildered-like ye stray
As the wayward, wandering star,
Fugitive among the spheres. . . "

And again:

"Thoughts like Autumn leaves are blown
Through silence to the great unknown . . . "

and I could not remember where I had seen those beautiful
and visionary words.

When I got home I looked through my books in vain, and
it was only by chance that I picked up Mr. John Watson's
poems, and found what I needed. I read the book through
with great care, studiously avoiding the Preface and
certain verses which seem to have been admitted by some
inexplicable oversight, and I repented that I had passed
over almost in silence the work of a poet who is a true
artist in spite of defects and limitations.

Certain qualities in the rhythmical structure of some
of these poems, and certain subtleties of thought in this
verse or that, suggest so much latent power that I cannot
believe we have here Mr. Watson's best, nor can I help
thinking that his book would have been perfect had he

written less lavishly and published with a more eclectic hand. I hope he will forgive me for mingling a little blame with much genuine admiration, for I am one of those who believe that all art, and especially the art of poetry, is less a cultured pastime than a sacred office, to be practiced almost with fear and trembling, certainly with austerity, and I would quote the words of the subtlest poet and most impeccable artist of our time. He says: "The more a poet rids his verses of heterogeneous knowledge and irrelevant analysis, and purifies his mind with elaborate art, the more does the little ritual of his verse resemble the great ritual of nature, and become mysterious and inscrutable. He becomes, as all the great mystics have believed, a vessel of the creative power of God; and whether he be a great poet or a small poet, we can praise the poems, which but seem to be his, with the extremity of praise that we give this great ritual which is but copied from the same eternal model."¹

¹ W.B. Yeats, 'The Return of Ulysses,' Ideas of Good and Evil (London, 1903), p. 318. Reprinted from The Bookman (June, 1897). See 'Mr. Robert Bridges.'

To my mind Mr. Watson's greatest weakness is carelessness and facility, and a way of being content with something a little below the best that is in him; and his greatest power, I take it, is that truly mystical power of becoming one with the mood of Nature, of sharing the dreams the old trees have, of making a lonely sea-bird's cry echo the lamentations of all the gathering sorrows of Time. He has walked about in beauty's hour, and he has heard, maybe, among the "many voices bidding us goodbye" the voice so many of us who dream have heard, telling us how sea and sky and wandering bird are but shadows of eternity mirrored in Nature's glass, and how some day when the world we tread has gone down the wind like a handful of whirling dust, we shall see "the headlands of content" glimmer before our eyes, and walk under the trees whose leaves are thoughts that were blown before us into the great unknown.

The writer I have already quoted, in a criticism he once made of some of my poems, advised me "to wait a little, because," he wrote, "your sense of music will gradually take to itself, in all likelihood, more passion and more thought." I would now pass that excellent advice on to Mr. Watson, for though he by no means lacks

thought, he lacks passion and the metrical subtlety which is the only expression of passion and thought in poetry.

III.

The poem "To Autumn", which at first I did not like because it is written after the manner of Keats, now seems to me one of the best poems in the book, though I still believe the writer commits a grave artistic error in copying from any source, however excellent. The opening lines:

"Of aspect grave, soft, dim, and russet-clad
Serenely moving down the passing year;"

are conventional in texture, but they are truly beautifully descriptive; and the lines:

"Season of quietude and withering leaf
Thou hast a power in every varied tint
To blend a pensive pleasure with our grief,"

are so laden with a meditative beauty that I cannot but regret Mr. Watson binds himself to conventional and outworn metres.

I do not like, and never did like, the long alexandrine line with which he ends each verse of this poem, because it is foreign to our language and reminds one too strenuously of the artificial eighteenth century school

that even Pope, himself the most artificial of writers,
mocks in the famous couplet

"A useless alexandrine ends the song,
And like a wounded snake drags its slow length along;"

but at the same time I cannot deny that Mr. Watson, in
one of these verses, where he tells how the winds cloud
the face of day

"With leaves that whirl adown the lone, forgotten way,"
writes one of the best alexandrine lines I know in English
poetry.

Of the many other excellent poems I cannot speak as I
would, for my space is filled. I would urge Mr. Watson
to guard the flame of imagination that is surely within
him, and I would urge him, when he publishes a new
edition of these poems, to make his selection with the
wise austerity of the artist who knows that though he can
never please the mob, he can find a fitting and appreciative
audience among those few whose appreciation is alone
worth having, who are martyrs of the mob, but who find
a little time to throw a word of praise one to the other
even in the midst of the tumults of this odd and
bewildering world.

A Contribution to the Annual Resurrection²

For the past week all my friends have been telling me that Robert Burns—they call him Robbie with a fine air of familiarity—is the greatest poet the world has ever seen; and with each repetition of the fact I have been invited to drink a glass of whisky in his honour, as though the shade of the poet had risen before his admirers with an Horatian Nunc est bibendum and a glance at the decanter. Had I accepted every invitation, I might now be of one opinion with my friends and think that Robbie's poetry can awaken every emotion known to

¹ Our esteemed contributor F.P.S. sees but one side of the Immortal Robbie. When we were reading his "Contribution to the Annual Resurrection," which appears on this page, we were irresistibly reminded of the following passage in Mr. John Morley's "Voltaire":—"Alas, why after all should men from Moses downwards, be so cheerfully ready to contemplate the hinder parts of their divinities?" (ED. B-A.)

² Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 5 (29 January 1903), p. 8.

emperor or apple-wife, but that suppers, celebrations, and centenaries awaken only the emotion of penitence and the pressing need for soda water.

I have a great respect for Burns as a writer of dialect songs, and have no doubt they served excellently well at a convivial evening with the Tarbolton Bachelors' Club, of which the poet was so worthy a member; and I ^{even} am/prepared to accept him as our national poet, he being our only poet; but I do most strenuously object to the frothy trash that is yearly written about him and his work. Except in the imaginations of his half-educated admirers, commercial travellers and the like for the most part, who quote him in bar parlours, he is not a great poet; and what has been said about Thomas Moore, another popular idol, applies very well to Robert Burns: "Poetry has cast him out because he lacks distinction of style."

He is hardly even superior to such ordinary characters as Homer, and Virgil, and Shakespeare, who were accounted somewhat in their day, I believe, notwithstanding the animadversions of Peter Birse, or of the second Mrs. M'Whisht, who derived much comfort, one is informed, from "The Cottar's Saturday Night" when she was troubled

with indigestion, and who told the minister that some parts of Burns were nearly as uplifting as the Psalms of David in metre.

In spite of his really poetical successes, "The Jolly Beggars" for instance, and even in spite of his ability to write such anaemical stuff as the famous "Cottar's Saturday Night," Burns never got away from a certain native vulgarity and grossness, a certain stale air of the bothie, quite different, be it noted, from the ample grossness of a Rabelais or of a Swift, who could be indelicate without raising a bad odour. One feels that many of Burns' poems, like the majority of his desires, were porridge-begotten and a shade lewd, and that if they were stripped of their Lowland-Scotchy dialect, and put into clean English, they would make very fit contributions to "The Tin Treasury of the Worst Poets" that is some day to be published.

However, much bombast may pass for current coin in Scottish literary circles, the last word about Burns was said by Mr. W.E. Henley, in his excellent study of the man, and to this last word a tag has recently been added in the shape of a very clever, if somewhat cruel epigram: "An incontinent yokel with a taste for metricism".

Yokel or not, however much he may ape the gentleman, however skilfully he may "tie his hair, and arrange his plaid in a peculiar way," the peat reek still dogs his footsteps into the drawing-room, of snobbery, and the ploughman leers behind the smirk of the beau.

13

Robert Burns: A Reply to

"A Contribution to the Annual Resurrection, by F.P.S."¹

Dear Editor,—Should not the article under the above heading, published in your last week's issue, have^{had}/an explanatory note attached indicating that said contribution was not to be taken seriously? And yet, that it was merely penned as a literary pastime, and meant to be funny, is hardly conceivable, it being quite as destitute of humour as of sense. That the production is the effort of an embryo essayist and critic may be assumed from the writer's gross violation of the sage precept—"Say nothing of the dead but what is favourable."

"F.P.S." at once assumes the air of a literary censor, and "most strenuously objects to the frothy trash that is yearly written about the poet and his works." It might well be asked what avails the sorry objections

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 6 (5 February 1903), p. 9.

of this maudlin critic when pitted against the verdict of a whole world of literary men?

"For," he proceeds, "except in the imagination of his half-educated (sic) admirers, he is not a great poet." "Poetry has cast him out because he lacks distinction of style." What fate may his less than half-educated detractors look for, then, at the hands of prose, judging from the sample before us? "In spite of his ability to write such anaemical stuff as the famous 'Cottar's Saturday Night', Burns never got away from a certain native vulgarity and grossness, a certain stale air of the bothie." This is probably the first time on record that "The Cottar's Saturday Night" has been characterised as "stuff", or that its author has been suspected of lacking the true Promethean fire. But, indeed, how can the cold-blooded critic be expected to judge of the warmth of genius? The shade of Burns might well say of "F.P.S.", "Oh that mine adversary had written a poem!" But witness further—"However much bombast may pass for current coin in Scottish literary circles, the last word about Burns was said by Mr. W.E. Henley in his excellent study of the man, and to this last a tag has recently been added, in the shape of a

very clever, if somewhat cruel epigram," to wit, "An incontinent yokel with a taste for metricism."

If Mr. W.E. Henley's excellent study (so-called) was written in the spirit of the tag quoted, nobody will regret that he made it his "last word". And may it be hoped that he will spare martyred humanity the horror of additional "tags" even. "Clever, but cruel", says "F.P.S." Crude and impertinent, although not so alliterative, would better describe it. But, hear the end of the whole matter, according to "F.P.S.", "Yokel or not, however skilfully he may 'tie his hair, and arrange his plaid in a particular way,' the peat reek still dogs his footsteps into the drawing-rooms of snobbery, and the ploughman leers behind the smirk of the beau." This caddish reference to the poet's manner of dress is beneath contempt. As to his manners and address, the bard's bitterest revilers, with the single exception of "F.P.S.", will scarcely accuse him of toadyism or servility. And in spite of the old taunt which "F.P.S." has revived and revised, by innuendo, to read, "Is not this the ploughman?" Burns could mingle in the society of the most cultured of his time without exhibiting the air of an apologist or requiring to assume the smirk of

affectation which this, his latest smiter, attributes to him. Professor Dugald Stewart, an illustrious contemporary of the poet, says of him—"From his conversation, I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel/ in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities."

Carlyle characterises the songs of the ploughman poet as "by far the best that Britain has yet produced." Of "Scots Wha Hae," in particular, he adds—"So long as there is warm blood in the hearts of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war ode, the best, we believe that was ever written by any pen."

To sum up, Carlyle credits him with having "a soul like an aeolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passes through them, changed itself into articulate melody." "F.P.S." assures us that his compositions were "porridge-begotten, and a shade lewd." There is always room for difference of opinion among critics, as well as doctors. But it would be more becoming if "F.P.S.," instead of hurling poisoned shafts of abuse, would, in order to make his calumnies more convincing, quote freely from the poems or correspondence of Burns in justification of his sneering accusations. When he has done this, and

explained the meaning of his flippant fling at Homer, Virgil, and Shakespeare, he may then retire into the obscurity from which he has just emerged, there to squirm under the, to him, galling assurance that, as "T.P." says, "Scotsmen to-day celebrate Burns's memory in a spirit of intense gratitude, which even these yearly outpourings can never exhaust."

J.W.

14

Robert Burns:

The Maudlin Critic and the Outraged Patriot¹

My Lord the Editor,—One who signs himself—or herself—"J.W." has been calling me names in the columns of your paper. Can I not claim habeas corpus or something?

"J.W." says I am an embryo essayist, a maudlin critic, a cold-blooded critic, a detractor, a bitter reviler, a smiter (smiter is rather choice), ~~and~~ several other things, and that my article on Burns is as devoid of humour as of sense. I do not complain of that; though witless myself, I can enjoy wit in a fellow-creature. But when "J.W." proceeds to say I have committed "a gross violation of the sage precept," etc., and accuses me of "hurling poisoned shafts of abuse", I begin to feel hurt. It is evident that "J.W." has been reading the evening papers. "Gross violations" and "poisoned shafts

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 7 (12 February 1903), p. 8.

of abuse" are kept set up in type by every compositor who knows his business, to be brought out on the lamentable occasions when the junior reporter's copy has escaped sub-editing. They are in the same case-box with "mighty conflagrations" and "the genial Dr. F—." There let them rest. But I do feel hurt. As "J.W." would say, I am smarting under the rebuke.

But it is not, after all, with "J.W." that I am chiefly concerned. He is an outraged patriot, aghast at my audacity in laying hand upon the Ark of the Covenant, and demands that I produce some evidence to support my accusations of vulgarity and grossness. Dear "J.W.," I might quote the classic "Ode to a Louse," or I might quote another piece I have in my mind, and a nasty piece it is, but it would serve no good purpose. Anybody can buy the poems for sixpence, and read for themselves.

It is not my intention to enter into any lengthy discussion with "J.W.", or to nauseate him with any more extracts from his own well-meaning letter. The few quotations I have given will amply serve to show how useless such a discussion would be. "J.W." writes in sentences, not in words; and most of his sentences unfortunately mean nothing at all. They have long since

been worn transparent in the columns of the daily press. It would not be far from the truth to say that I knew his letter by heart when I had read the first sentence.

Even at the risk of another epithetical vocabulary, I must hold^{to}/the opinions I have already expressed. Burns was a fine writer of sentimental and convivial songs in the Lowland dialect, but a poet, in the highest meaning of the word, he was not. His was not the "search for the high, austere, and lonely way" of great poetical imagination, but the search rather for friendship, and fame, and the clapping of hands as the glass went round and his songs were sung. He gave pleasure to simple hearts, and poked fun at Scotland's unhappy, unlovely religion. A famous man, to be sure. But a great poet? I think not.

And now, having flung my last poisoned shaft, and committed my final gross violation, I will take "J.W.'s" advice and\retire into the obscurity from which I have just emerged, there to squirm under the, to me, galling assurance," etcetera. O, "J.W."!—outraged patriot!—unhappy stylist!—I can no more.

Perhaps it is because the juice of Eve's apple runs in our veins that we never lose our delight in tales of unlawful love. The men whose lives have most deeply moved our hearts—Paris, and Launcelot, and Tristan—are those great men who loved the wives of others in the past; and the women—Helen, and Guenevere, and Iseult—are beautiful, faithless women from whom the hand of a great passion plucked the conventions that choke our hearts as weeds choke a pool by the wayside, and whose souls Dante, in his vision of Hell, saw blown hither and thither continually by fierce winds. To these unhappy ones the hand of a poet of our day has added yet two more lovers, whose sin was desire, and whose melancholy history is, I think, beautiful enough to give them a place for ever in that immortal company.

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 11 (12 March 1903), p. 11.

For the great portion of Stephen Phillips' work I have little admiration, because it seems to me that his poems have been made beautiful by too obvious a labour, and his emotions gathered from many books rather than from life itself, but in "Paolo and Francesca," at least, he has made a poem whose value as literature one can hardly over-rate, and whose value as drama has been proved by that most destructive of all tests, production upon the stage. From beginning to end the play, as I saw it produced at Her Majesty's on Tuesday night, is a piece of beautiful dramatic poetry, and although it doubtless gains a deal from the almost flawless acting of Mr. Benson and his Company, it has an abstract artistic value that is altogether independent of acting or of stage-craft of any kind.

There is an intensity of passion, a storm of high emotion and poetic ecstasy running through it such as I cannot remember in any other modern play. One sees in Francesca da Rimini and her lover how love may indeed become a flame to burn away the earthly shell; and one almost understands how in those far-off times, when our lives were less colourless than they are now, and our hearts perhaps less cold, the beauty of a woman's body and the

low thrill of a woman's passionate voice could so work upon a man's desire that the fame of an ancient house and a brother's honour became obstacles to be trodden down as small and inconsiderable things.

If I remember right, Dante tells of Paolo and Francesca in his book; and they must surely be in Joachim of Flora's book, and Paolo's name be inscribed in that wonderful illuminated chapter with a pale star at the close which "has the names of the noble youths who loved the wives of others and were transformed into memories, that have transformed many poorer hearts into sweet flames." There has never before been such a love-making mirrored in the heart of any poet. Read the beautiful words I have taken from among many still more beautiful:

PAOLO O face immured beside a faery sea
 That leaned down at dead midnight to be kissed!
 O beauty folded up in forests old!
 Thou wast the lovely quest of Arthur's knights.

FRANCESCA Thy armour glimmered in a gloom of green.

PAOLO Did I not sing to thee in Babylon?

FRANCESCA Or did we lift a sail in Carthage bay?

← Their history is briefly this. Giovanni, Tyrant of Rimini, a fierce brooding soldier, well past his youth, and whose greatest humanity is his love for his younger

brother Paolo, has married Francesca da Rimini, a girl fresh from the care of nuns and full of convent thoughts. The marriage was entered upon for political reasons, but Francesca's purity and beauty stir up the life-long repressed affections of her moody husband, and he tries to make her regard him not only as a husband and master, but as a friend and lover as well. Often away at his wars, quelling those who are forever seeking to cast off the heavy burden of his supremacy, he leaves his young wife to the care of his brother Paolo, who, alas, is of about an age with her. "Youth goes towards youth," and unhappy Paolo, after long struggling against the spell of Francesca's daily companionship and her beauty, flees from temptation to the wars. But he finds no peace: Francesca's face haunts him; and he returns to Rimini resolved to see her once again and then to save his brother's honour by his own death. Like Romeo he seeks an apothecary whom he knows will sell him some drug that shall open the easy gate of death. But destiny, Junonis ob iram, will not permit her puppets so easily to escape, and while Paolo knocks at the door of the apothecary's shop Giovanni is bargaining within for a magical essence to keep Francesca's wandering desires to himself. At the sound of the knocking he bids the

apothecary hide him behind a curtain. When Paolo has bought his draught he tells the apothecary why he desires to be done with life, and Giovanni behind the curtain sees his brother go forth to death and may not save him—cannot save him—dare not save him—there is Fransesca.

Paolo enters the palace garden intending to end his life, but finds sleepless Francesca sitting in an arbour and reading a book by the light of a lamp. They sit together, and together read the story of Launcelot and Guenevere; Francesca's tremulous voice tells Paolo too plainly how deeply his return has moved her, and how passionately she desires him. When the tale they read comes to that part where Launcelot kisses the Queen, their faces droop together, and Francesca with but one word—"Launcelot!"—yields her body to her lover's arms, and they kiss the honour from each other's lips.

But Giovanni is now aroused, and when he finds that Paolo has not killed himself, makes a pretence of going on a journey and returns suddenly, and surprising the lovers, slays them in one another's arms. Upon one bier they are carried from the bed-chamber to the great hall; and Giovanni kneels down and kisses them both ~~as~~ as they lie dead, and the curtain drops upon one of the

most beautiful plays in modern literature.

The acting of the piece is, as I have said, well nigh flawless. Mr. Benson himself works out the character of Giovanni in a most satisfying manner. His acting is full of those little touches of truth that go to make really great acting; as for instance the weary little gesture he makes when he takes his brother's arm after they have crossed themselves at the sound of the Kyrie Eleison. He has a clear and characteristic manner of enunciation, and some idea of the value of each individual word in a line of poetry.

Mr. Cyril Keightly played Paolo in a masterful, straight-forward way, but hardly, I suspect, quite as the part was conceived. Paolo in his hands becomes just an honest, hot-blooded lad, really sorry that he cannot help himself, and loses most of that legendary remoteness with which one clothes him after reading the play in book form.

Mrs. Benson's Francesca is not very satisfying. She speaks every word in a weary sing-song voice that becomes most irritating when one's attention is not diverted by

the exigenc^{ies}/ of the situation. But she has her great moments; when she gives herself up to Paolo in the garden scene, and again when she returns his passionate caresses in the chamber scene, she plays her part in a true and touching manner.

Miss Alice Arden is a really passionate actress. Her part of the childless, disappointed Lucrezia was played with no little beauty and conviction.

The other players one most remembers are Messrs. Edgar, Nicholson, and Herbert, as the merry officers of Paolo's company; and Mr. Arthur Whitby, who hardly gets a chance in the character of Pulci, the drug-seller. Miss Mabel Moore plays the part of "Angela the old," "shuffling along on an ivory-headed cane"; and says what little she has to say very well.

I want to write about everybody, because everybody deserves it, but I have no more space. But Aberdeen should be grateful to Mr. Benson, who has been so able to lure us from the selling of tea and sugar into the world that has no faded days, where men are men and women sincere of heart, and life worth laying aside for the Heart's Desire.

16

Domestic Virtue and the Drama¹

A Further Note on "Paolo and Francesca"

To the Editor.

Sir,—Many people who read my article on "Paolo and Francesca" have since told me I did an unwise act in praising such a play, and my friend "X," who writes theatre-notices himself, was so shocked that he printed a little paragraph about it in last week's number of this paper.²

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 13 (26 March 1903), p. 8.

² See 'Becky Sharp,' Bon-Accord, XXXIV, 12 (19 March 1903), p. 11.

Having no ambition to emulate Paris and Launcelot, and Tristan and F.P.S., and all the other folks whose lives have most deeply moved our hearts (as per last week's issue), nor seeing any reasonable prospect of our name being placed in that wonderful volume of Joachim of Flora with the dacying (and decadent) star at the end, our views about other men's wives are commonplace to a degree. Similarly other ladies' husbands command our respect. Hence it is that the morality, or rather the want of it, on the part of that modernised female Paolo, Becky Sharp, does not move us to dithyrambic sentences. Wherein lies the special halo emanating from loving another man's wife or flirting with another woman's husband escapes us.

It all appears just a trifle commonplace and

Perhaps I do wrong in upraising the tattered banner of such an outworn discussion as that of the morality of certain dramatic emotions, but the vision of the impeccable "X" yapping at the heels of the Scarlet Woman is too delicately humorous to be passed over entirely without comment.

I hope "X" does not think I pretend to his knowledge of dramatic criticism, or to his literary ability, and I hope he will forgive me if I cling to my opinion that "Paolo and Francesca" is one of the most beautiful plays in modern literature. It cannot be denied that both Paolo and Francesca were very improper people, and that if they had lived in Aberdeen we should have thought twice before we asked them to tea. I see that now, but when I wrote my criticism in dithyrambic sentences I had in my mind only the literary and dramatic aspects of the story, and tried to reproduce its atmosphere for those

trite and Shuttle-Laneish. Similarly the amours of Becky require a good deal of the poetic and lofty temperament to live up to. We do not possess the poetic (and lofty) temperament. Moreover we have a wholesome respect for keeping off the grass, and we therefore feel unequal to the proper sort of sentence expressive of appreciation of the rather limp morality of Rebecca.

who were not able to be present, as well as for those advocates of domesticity who kept away on principle.

"X", and they who think as he does, are entirely right from the point of view of respectability; but if we take their advice and do away with all literature that is not respectable, we may burn all our libraries and turn our classical universities into homes for inebriates. No great literature is respectable: Homer's "Iliad" is not; and the greater number of Shakespeare's plays would be ^{the} better of a revision by the Rev. Mr. Stoddart. "X" might edit the series. Even Tennyson, whose biography I see is included in "Blameless Lives", does not escape blame, for when he wrote the "Idylls of the King" he chose for a subject the deplorable scandal that gathered around Launcelot and Guenevere. Thereafter came Mr. Stephen Phillips with another little contribution to immorality. The shame is that educated people seem to prefer these trifles to really smart things like Gilbert and Sullivan's Operas. I can imagine how infuriating this must be, but I am unable to explain it, and must confess with tears that I also have the ignoble mind of such a preference.

Let "X" no longer so publicly lament his lack of "the

poetic (and lofty) temperament." We must remember that literature, after all, is not life: and whether we see Paolo loving the woman he had no right to love, and being slain for his sin; or Sir John Falstaff drinking himself sodden with ale, and being carried away in a basket of foul linen; we know that they have no place in life, but are the shadows of a dream, and concern us not.

In any large town there are always a few people who dislike the noise and vulgarity of the modern stage, and who go to the theatre no more than once or twice a year when some great actor is to be seen or some noble play has crept in between "The Geisha" and "Who's Brown?". A night or two ago I was told by a dramatic critic, who knows the stage as perhaps no other in the north knows it, that when a certain poetical play came here a few years ago it was played before a rapt audience of folk whom he had never seen at the theatre at any other time, and that the usual audience, the admirers of comic opera, and melodrama, and my-lady's-chamber plays, and so forth, kept away altogether, or if they came, did not return.

It is hard to understand why a few such enthusiasts, who know literature from play writing, and acting from gesticulation and bombast, have never founded a Scottish

¹ Published Aberdeen Free Press, No. 10,740
(24 June 1903), p.5.

Literary Theatre where they might hear poetical plays well acted; where men and women who spoke their words rightly because they became for a little while the characters they seemed to be, would play "Pélléas and Mélisande," or "The Shadowy Waters," or even "Paolo and Francesca," and forget the footlights in the lights that shone palely on Forgael's gallery, or on the water of the well in Mélisande's castle garden, or on the bier where Paolo and Francesca lay dead, and would move their hearers to a worthier emotion than the turbulent excitement of the senses which is the aim of the modern stage.

A few people who had this good taste, this ability to distinguish art from artifice, founded the famous Théâtre Libre in France, with a company of amateur actors, and people of a like mind founded the Irish Literary Theatre, also with amateur actors, except when Mr. Benson played "Diarmuid and Grania" last autumn, and even then his company was but half professional, I believe. Both theatres have done much good work and given pleasure to who do not hate a play because it cries to the intellect, but who take no pleasure in seeing a robustious, periwig-pated fellow tearing passion to tatters in a play written

for the multitude of worthy folk whose literature is the daily press.

A Scottish Literary Theatre, though it had its small beginnings among the many Aberdeen amateurs who at present delight in scrappy opera and society plays made in London, would gather about it writers who would make plays in the true sense national, and who might even recapture the lost magic of the Scottish ballads, so that we could see Glasgerion harping in the Queen's chamber "where cup and candle stood," or the harper of Binnorie with his hand upon those accusing strings woven from a murdered girl's hair, and be moved as we are all moved by the haunting cadence of the lines—

And sune the harp sang loud and clear,
Binnorie, O, Binnorie!
"Farewell my father and mither dear!"
By the bonney mill-dams o' Binnorie.

And neist when the harp began to sing,
Binnorie, O, Binnorie!
Twas "Farewell, sweet heart!" said the string,
By the bonney mill-dams o' Binnorie.

And then as plain as plain could be,
Binnorie, O, Binnorie!
"There sits my sister wha drowned me!"
By the bonney mill-dams o' Binnorie.

We would have plays, too, of Jacobite times, so that folk who still cling to the subtler traditions of the past, might hear of men and women who gave up love and life and goods to follow the withering fortunes of the Stuarts. Maybe the common people would come to hear these plays and in time forget the things they have learned in music halls, and cease to ape the vulgarity of the middle classes.

There are a number of people in Aberdeen who know more about the stage than I can ever hope to know, and who may think I tread upon forbidden ground in writing this article. I would tell them I do not write of the stage as admirers of melodrama and light opera understand the word, but of a new stage altogether, which would never draw a single playgoer away from the innocent delights of "The Girl from Down There" or what not.

So long as there is one reader who will read what I have written, who will know what I mean without the aid of many footnotes, which some, it seems, require, and who is willing, perhaps, to help the spreading of literature among the "little clan" the poet Keats wrote of, so long must I write, or be like John-a-Dreams, unpregnant of my cause.

Let no man think the Scottish Literary Theatre that I hope yet to see will seek to play Shakespeare, or will bother itself with the pomp and glorious circumstance of the world. It will seek only to interpret those plays written by men who have looked a little above or beneath the pomp and glorious circumstance; plays so near eternity that half their meaning is lost when the personages walk among property trees and mountains of green and yellow paint.

I prefer no play in modern literature to "Pélléas and Mélisande," and but one play, "The Bacchae" of Euripides, in antique literature, but I am sure I should never care for "Pélléas and Mélisande" again if I saw it played by actors who were as palpably flesh and blood as their surroundings were palpably pasteboard and limelight. And yet, with half-a-dozen or so of amateurs who understood what they were about, and a little stage with no other scenery than a background of dim tapestry, and lights that came from the sides instead of from the front of the stage, "Pélléas and Mélisande" could be so played ~~so~~ that we should be held breathless and hushed from act to act, and go home with the feeling that we had seen the beauty that is not of this world, and had

taken part in destinies so tragical that they could never be worked out but in eternity.

Will not some dramatic society consider these things, and at least try an experiment of importance and interest? Now is the accepted time, when men's thoughts grow green with the trees, when whitening blossom gives up a little of its fragrance to men's hearts.

To the Editor.

Sir,—No recent communication in your pages has roused so much sympathetic interest in me as the article by "F.P.S.", for it came to me in the midst of a task of indexing the programmes of all the plays I had seen at Her Majesty's Aberdeen, between the years 1886-92—as dreary a desert as I ever hope to march across. Reminded of that awful period, and writing from the vantage ground of the capital where the gratifying of every artistic instinct is possible, I felt a peculiar sympathy with "F.P.S.", as indeed with every serious dramatic student, in having to put up with the one week-stand of commercial touring drama. Nor is his attempt to seek sanctuary a bit of individual crankism, for at this moment there lie before me invitations to join two societies which wish to produce what for want

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of a better name, one must call "exotic" drama—
namely, The Mermaid Society, which ^{will}/revive our own
Elizabethan masterpieces, and The Masquers, who run
very much on the same lines, though including modern
work.

My sympathies are entirely with "F.P.S.", for,
during the last 10 years, I have taken the greatest
trouble to see every back street effort to produce
plays which do not appeal to the general public. I
take the present opportunity of writing, not to throw
cold water on "F.P.S.'s" aspirations, but simply to
keep it within sight of facts, the appreciation of
which will save his enthusiasm from ultimate destruction
and repudiation.

In the first place, I think there is a very small
section of the British public interested in the theatre,
and a still smaller section of it interested in anything
that bears an analogy to even average intellect. More
and more people are going to the playhouse to be amused,
for even in the provinces the melodramas which used to
be the vogue, with their appeal to the great primitive
passions, are not making so much money as the musical
comedies. People don't want to be moved; still less to

think. They want to laugh. It is the same in London, and I am told that New York has given itself over to the craze of musical comedy. That stage product is not nasty, it is simply stupid; and so far from making me laugh bores me to death. But the "public" like it. Let there be no mistake about that. I know for a fact that a musical comedy which has been running in London the better part of two years is at this moment playing to £300 a night, while a Shakespearean comedy has played on some occasions to a little more than as many shillings!

Long ago, when I was as enthusiastic as "F.P.S.", I used to rail (inwardly) at the local management for treating me to dreary successions of mawkish melodramas and trunk-burlesques; but now I recognise that the manager is really a tradesman, and like any other tradesman he supplies what the public demands; and I believe that I am right in saying that the response of Aberdeen to the best work of even the commercial stage has been extremely disappointing.

Not only is the audience for delicate drama small all over the country, but I believe that the Scottish public—and particularly the Aberdeen public, with all its

excellencies—is specially impervious to the art of the theatre. I am forced to this admission by "F.P.S.'s" mention of the Théâtre Libre and the Irish Literary Theatre, both of which have made their mark. The French and the Irish, and indeed the Celtic and Latin peoples generally, are surely far more amenable to emotional art, and any analogy between them and the Northern Scot is to my mind perfectly fallacious. Scotland has never produced a dramatist worth the name—we blush nowadays even to mention Douglas—and the actors it has produced of the first rank can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Let us frankly make the admission that we can't have our cake and eat it; that the instinct for acted drama and the theatre is simply wanting in our northern temperament; the mere fact that we, as a people, have adopted so unemotional a creed as Presbyterianism, in preference to Catholicism (and its Anglican compromise) goes far to prove my point.

Let "F.P.S.", therefore, start in the smallest way so that he shall not be disappointed, for even in London, with its 4,000,000 people, "exotic" drama appeals only to a specially selected audience. I remember the awful experience of Mr. Yeats's little masterpiece "The Land

of Heart's Desire," with its beautiful story, and its more beautiful cadences. I sat in the gallery of the Avenue, next a large perspiring butcher, who approached the fairy story with the chilling common sense of his nation—he simply sniggered, loudly. "Pélléas and Mélisande," indeed, proved a draw with the average playgoer, but mainly I think by virtue of the intensely interesting personality of Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Indeed, so much depends on the selected audience that even with the ordinary play the first nighter is far more intelligent than the audience of any other night, and is, therefore, no gauge whatever of the commercial success of the play. Over and over again I have seen a play which made a profound impression on the first night, and at particular points on a second or third night's performance the audience had laughed, where it should have cried or remained stock still. The art of the theatre must be taken in hand uncommercially like the graphic in plastic arts of your Gallery. The same enthusiasm which has given birth to the Sculpture Gallery could, I feel sure, bring it about that "Pélléas and Mélisande" might be heard in Aberdeen as well as "Hearts of the Police" or "The New Barmaid," and that

people would get to feel that there has been music
written since "The Messiah." —I am, etc.,

J.M. Bulloch.

Ernest Renan, in his classical essay "The Poetry of the Celtic Races," has told how the Celtic imagination has worn itself out "in mistaking dreams for realities;" and how the Celtic race has worn itself out "in the defence of desperate causes;" and how its songs "weep more defeats than they sing victories;" and how its history "is itself one long lament, still recalling its exiles, its flights across the seas." "It is time to note," he says, "before they shall have passed away, the divine tones thus expiring on the horizon, before the growing tumult of uniform civilization."

Those "divine tones" are surely growing fainter; that dreamy race with its lofty idealism, its noble literature, is fading and vanishing and becoming one with a more energetic and less venerable race; but of all Celtic lands it is only in Scotland, where the

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXV, 8 (20 August 1903),
Pp. 8-9.

~~where the~~ noblest of the world's intellectual and historical heritages is perishing before the ignoble ambitions of the counting-house, that no hand is lifted, no resistance made.

A race, after all, is known not by the vastness of its wealth, nor by the space of its possessions overseas, but by its literature and art; for wealth and possessions are no more than the accidental circumstances of national life, while literature~~and~~ art, which only come into being in moments of rapturous and deep emotion, are the essence of national life and the index of a nation's mind.

The imagination of the Scot was chilled to death by the pious Knox and his like, and Scottish literature began to be a thing of shreds and patches when Robert Burns published the verses he had written about "the sentiments and manners"—I quote his own words—"he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language." When Bishop Carswell, so long ago as 1576, published his Gaelic translation of Knox's "Forms of Prayer and Catechism," he wrote a devout preface and sternly condemned all Gaelic traditions and customs, all poems and histories


"concerning warriors and champions, and Fingal the son of Cumhail, with his heroes," and hundreds of years later Burns completed the shameful work by setting up an artistic standard that was trivial and commonplace. It is because of this unworthy standard, this penurious literary outlook, that Scottish poets have come to imagine they can do no diviner work than write verses about kirk-sessions, or kirk elders, or about Willie and Tam, who drank more than enough whisky on such and such a night, and tragically quarrelled with their wives; and Scottish readers, who do not care much for imitation when they have "the real thing" in Burns, go to England for their literature and forget their own traditions, or still worse, dip into the vapid chronicles of the kailyard novelists, and so soon cease to read at all.

The oracles of the old days are silent or they might tell of that vast history and mythology which moved Renan to say, "compared with the classical imagination the Celtic imagination is indeed the infinite compared with the finite." Scottish literature is, alas, the voice of a high and romantic past that is silent, or that only speaks to lament in ever more and more

sorrowful accents of ideals we have forgotten, of old thoughts and passions and customs we have cast upon the dust-heaps of oblivion, and replaced by thoughts and passions and customs that have grown too ordered and respectable to be other than ignoble.

The unfading literatures of Greece and Rome can boast of but a cold and sterile loveliness when compared with the all but forgotten literature of the Celt. Wandering Odysseus is but a crafty and earthly-minded barbarian compared with Bran or with Ossian; and the vision of the goddess Aphrodite herself, casting the shadow of her beauty upon the Golden Age, is not more imperishable than the vision of the fragile human Deidre, for whose beauty the Sons of Clan Usnach died gladly and who was "the most perfect of the daughters of earth, and a flame of sorrow to the Gael." We who have forgotten Bran and Ossian and Deirdre and all the glittering pageantry of those noble days, have given our hearts to tales of Willie and Tam and a teeming bottle; and the descendants of the men who died on Flodden Field have exchanged the claymore and the white cockade for an umbrella and a tram-ticket, which they carry not only in their hands but in their hearts,

the emblems of civilization and decay.

It is not that there are no Scotch writers. There are too many, and they are too well "educated"  Whenever they set pen to paper they write, with barren precision, of facts so useful and undeniable that nothing can give them the breath of life, till a miracle happens not less wonderful than the miracle the prophet saw in the valley of dry bones; and the few, the very few, who write with any thoughts of artistic and intellectual traditions, knowing that they appeal to a so exclusive minority, have ceased even the pretence of writing for any outside this minority, and wanned off the profane with the utterances of a philosophy that every day becomes remoter and more occult.

The name of Fiona MacLeod stands alone in the pitiful wilderness of modern Scotch literature, but not very many Scotch readers know her work; a great number have never heard her name; and none, I imagine, outside that exclusive minority which seeks in literature a deliverance from mortality, would prefer "The Dominion of Dreams" to "A Window in Thrums." Mr. W.B. Yeats, of course, is not read here at all; but then Mr. Yeats is an Irish Celt, and as I heard a good citizen say in

the car: "The Irish make such poor business men"; which seems to dispose of the Celtic Movement.

Mr. Bulloch has told us, in his reply to an article of mine in a local daily on a Scottish Literary Theatre, how he sat next to a perspiring butcher in the Avenue Theatre, and how the butcher, when he found he could not understand Mr. Yeats's beautiful drama, "The Land of Heart's Desire," dissolved into complacent mirth, like his betters.

I have seen that butcher, or his brother, in the dress-circle at Her Majesty's, and I have heard him discuss art during the interval. Here is a lyric from the "Land of Heart's Desire", the play he cannot understand and does not like; surely one of the most exquisite lyrics in the English tongue:

"The wind blows out of the gates of day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away
While the Faeries dance in a place apart;
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air,
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung
The lonely of heart shall wither away."

Our friend the butcher prefers a lyric from "San Toy."

Happily, he is not lonely of heart. He is a power and has dominions, and his willing servants have made him an art and a drama and a criticism to please his taste.

Can it be wondered that some of us would "seek sanctuary" from the onrush of this art, of this drama, of this criticism?

It is not well, my friends tell me, to cry out against an evil unless one has a remedy. The remedy, as I cannot but believe, lies only in the uprooting of base ideals from our minds; in the overthrow, for one thing, of the Burns superstition; in the rejection of those writers who pander to noisiness and vulgarity; in the purification as by fire of that commonplace critical outlook, which makes it profitable for the sentimental novelist and the writer of melodrama to spread the compost on the weeds; and lastly, in the revivification of the art that was able to produce the Scottish ballads in days when the sword was never sheathed, and when the hand that held the pen or touched the strings might have fired a town but a little time before.

To the Editor.

Sir,—Your correspondent F.P.S. cannot, I think, be Scotch, as in his article "Northern Ideals" he makes it plain that he fails to understand that there are two peoples in Scotland of different temperaments and sympathies. I thought, at first, that his article dealt only with Celtic Scotland, but he mentions Burns, who had, of course, little influence indeed over the Celts, so that "Northern" means Scottish.

But why all this wailing over the lack of imagination? Even before Knox it never existed in Scotland except in the Highlands, and the few real Celts that are left have a good representative in Fiona MacLeod. The visionary poetry of fable and superstition never appealed to the Lowland mind to the same extent

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXV, 9(27 August 1903), p.8.

that the poetry of reality did. The one ideal is as worthy as the other. The poetry of the Lowlander must be ^{of} something he understands, and he understands Nature. I hope F.P.S. will pardon my writing it, but Burns was the greatest poet of Nature. He sang of "the loves, the joys, the rural scenes, and rural pleasures of his native soil, in his native tongue." By these songs he became endeared to the Scottish heart (always excepting the Celts), and what poet desires more than to be loved by his own nation. What though he did not introduce a new standard. It did not alter his ideal or the people's. I feel tempted to say a great deal more about Burns, but I fear the editor might use his blue pencil, since it would not deal with the point under discussion.

F.P.S. praises the poetry of Fiona MacLeod and W.B. Yeats. They are, of course, very good of their kind, But I fear few of their readers can enter into the spirit of their works: certainly few Anglo-Saxons can. But they are not great poets; there are a good many Anglo-Saxon poets of equal merit, and a few of greater. The latter include Stephen Phillips, William Watson, W.E. Henley, and John Davidson. These poets have also

the additional merit of being able to be understood by the great majority of readers. None of these poets, unfortunately, can be claimed as Scotch, but three of them are of Scotch descent. Shall I say ^{that} / the Scotch spirit lives with them?

"Our friend ~~the~~ the butcher prefers a lyric from 'San Toy'". He always did and always will, but he can also understand good poetry put to him in the way Burns did. A butcher, of course, has no imagination. The only difference between his ideal and that of F.P.S. is that the former's springs from his heart and that of the latter from his imagination. Is either of these ideals baser than the other?

I am one with your correspondent in the matter of banishing the writers of "sickly sentimentality," either in the form of novels or melodramas. But surely he does not class these as Northern Ideals.

In conclusion, I would say that there is probably, with the spread of education, a higher ideal among all classes. The races in Great Britain are ~~not~~ so bound together now that there are no essentially Scotch ideals or literature. "A Window in Thrums" is English literature. Fiona Macleod's works are written in

English, not Gaelic. Even W.B. Yeats condescends to write English, and does so remarkably well.

I am, Sir, yours, etc., A.B.

P.S. It would be interesting to know the views of F.P.S. upon R.L. Stevenson as an idealist.—A.B.

To the Editor.

Sir,—Your correspondent A.B. who replies, in last week's issue of this paper, to my article "Northern Ideals," wonders whether or no I will forgive him for calling Burns "the greatest poet of Nature." It is a hard thing to forgive, but after suffering much from the efforts of incompetent people who would set me right about Burns, it is so great a relief to get A.B.'s precise, well-written column, that my heart is softened and I can refuse him nothing. A.B., I forgive you. Prosper you, sweet sir!

Now, dear Editor, it seems to me that A.B. sees my purpose but darkly when he accuses me of failing to understand that there are two peoples in Scotland, Highlanders and Lowlanders, of quite different

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXV, 10 (3 September 1903), p.5.

temperaments, and with quite different ideals and ambitions. I understand this indifferently well, but I also understand that if a man be made a Lowlander by an admixture of Anglo-Saxon blood, it is the strong Celtic undercurrent, running through the blood of the Highlander and Lowlander alike, which makes him a Scotchman.

One has, I grant you, in many cases to dive through deep and muddy waters before one reaches this pure racial undercurrent, but it must be there: I hope it must be there. I am even willing to admit that Robert Burns perhaps had it in some hidden and secretive way. Maybe this Celtic strain inspired what was best in his work, just as the Saxon admixture may have driven him to exult in so much dull vulgarity; for he is vulgar, ineradicably vulgar, stodgily vulgar, sometimes: even so perfervulant an admirer as A.B. can hardly deny that. I am reminded of a tale, no doubt sufficiently well known, though I read it for the first time a few days ago, which tells how one of Virgil's friends saw him with the works of Ennius (a kind of Roman Burns), ~~and~~ and asked him what he was about. The author of the Eclogues gave an answer which had best be left in the

original. Said he: Aurum colligo de stercore Ennii!
which might justly be said by any man who admires
Burns.

The Lowlander, says A.B., has no imagination. Burns, says A.B. again, is the poet who appeals to the Lowlander. The inference is too obvious to call for amplification. Not all observers, however, agree with the somewhat hasty statement that imagination "even before the time of Knox never existed in Scotland except in the Highlands." Aeneas Silvius, who seems to have been Papal Nuncio to Scotland some time before Knox brought his "Reformation" along, found the Lowlander a merry, light-hearted creature, fond of the old ways and striving towards the old ideals. It may have been about this time that "Christ's Kirk on the Green" was written, which shows no lack of imagination, and is certainly the work of a Lowlander.

A.B. does not consider W.B. Yeats a great poet, and quotes a few poets whom he considers greater. I cannot think his list well chosen, for though it includes Stephen Phillips, who gave us "Marpessa" and "Christ in Hades" and (if I can mention it without shocking any of my friends) "Paolo and Francesca," it includes

~~it includes~~ no writer of the intellectual strength of W.B.Yeats. W.B.Yeats has established an ideal of perfection, and has brought a power into English Literature as strong and as wholly new as the power Stéphane Mallarmé brought into French Literature. In Yeats, if you like, we have a really great poet of Nature, not of the mere husks of Nature, but of Nature in relation to the subtler moods of man; a poet who interprets those truths of which "all this ancient Exteriority" is but a symbol, who has learned the great secret\of enclosing in the subtle pages of a book," "not the dense intrinsic wood of the trees," "but the horror of the forest; the silent thunder afloat upon the leaves."

Can A.B. mention anything by Burns to equal in rapt visionary truth, or in subtle pictorial beauty, the poem by W.B.Yeats, of which I have room for the first verse?

"The island dreams under the dawn
And great boughs drop tranquillity;
The peashens dance on a smooth^h lawn,
A parrot sways upon a tree,
Raging at his own image in the enamelled sea."

A.B., no doubt, knows the poem, and I am sure he must admire it. If he prefers Burns he is lost: there are heresies beyond praying for. I hope, however, he will brave the Editor's ungovernable blue pencil, and write again.

To the Editor.

Sir,—It will, doubtless, come with a shock of wonderment to F.P.S. and those readers who are interested that, despite the former's brilliant display of sarcasm, I am still alive. I can only suppose that the compliments which he showers on me at the commencement of his letter have buoyed up my drooping spirits and saved my life. May the gods make me truly grateful for these and other mercies! I am also deeply sensible of the fine condescension shown throughout his latest contribution.

F.P.S. contends that there is a strong Celtic undercurrent in the Lowlanders of Scotland. This, I submit, is not borne out by the records of Scottish history. Then, in a somewhat questionable figure of

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXV, 12 (17 September 1903), p.8.

speech, he disparages the "Anglo-Saxonism" that is within them. Yet, it is hardly necessary to remark, these same Anglo-Saxons have produced all that is greatest in our literature. I cannot think that F.P.S. meant to use the unhappy phrase.

F.P.S. quarrels with my contention that imagination never existed in Scotland even before the Reformation, and quotes Aeneas Silvⁱus to support his view. (By the way, he was no Papal Nuncio.) Without going deeply into the matter of the character of this licentious Italian, who, politically, was a kind of Vicar of Bray, let me say that Ayala, the Spanish Ambassador, held quite contrary views. Aeneas Silvⁱus, therefore, is unreliable. Furthermore, let me add, Dunbar and Lindsay, both satirists, lived before the Reformation.

If the tale of Virgil and his friend is true, it merely proves that even that great Roman could be vulgar when he chose. I fancy that F.P.S. is mistaken when he mentions Ennius is a "kind of Roman Burns" for we are told that he was the father of Roman/^{epic} poetry, and by temperament in thorough sympathy with the dominant aristocratic element in Roman life; under his influence, literature became "less suited to the popular taste."

He was a writer of tragic and narrative poetry; his attempts at comedy were failures. It will surprise F.P.S. to learn that some authorities contend that his works influenced the great Virgil himself—so much so, indeed, that he followed the style of Ennius in some of his poetry. Doubtless it is my understanding that is at fault, but I fail to detect any affinity between the Scot and this Roman.

Your correspondent is very Henleyesque in his choice of words. "Ineradicably" and "stodgily" are excellent—in their proper places; in this case they are hardly applicable even from F.P.S.'s standpoint. But I will not quarrel upon this point—I am conceited enough to think I understand his meaning. Burns certainly wrote some vulgar poems, but they are in the great minority; to describe all his poetry as vulgar is mere extravagance of language. There are many of his works published which were never intended for the public eye. Considering his environment during the most impressionable years of his life, it is hardly surprising that his muse should sometimes sing of sordid subjects. Whatever their station in life, few poets, either before or after Burns, were free from this taint. I have never claimed Burns

as perfect, but I do affirm that his ideals were noble and understood of the people.

I congratulate Mr. Yeats on his doughty champion, but his statements are rather misleading. "W.B.Yeats has established an ideal of perfection," etc. Surely so ardent an admirer of Yeats as F.P.S. has not forgotten that this was accomplished by Blake, upon whose style that of W.B.Yeats is modelled. All the same, I cannot enter into the spirit of this new power; it seems to me to be an ideal of affectation, the "bane of poetry." I suppose it is because of my phlegmatic nature that I do not know that books have "subtle pages"; or what are the "horror of the forest" and the "silent thunder afloat upon the leaves." Yeats and his like, in many cases, give new meanings to English words and call it poetry.

F.P.S. quotes (not quite correctly)¹ the first verse of "The Indian to his Love," and asks if I still prefer Burns. I am proud to say I do. Instead of quoting a verse from Burns, I ask F.P.S. to read "A Winter Night"

¹ Two slight errors did appear in the original which I have corrected according to the most recently revised text available to F.P.S. See Poems (London, 1901).

and "The Brigs of Ayr"; I feel sure he does not know these poems. If he still thinks Burns vulgar, further discussion is useless.

Now, I suppose, I am lost. There is the consolation, however, of knowing that I shall go down with a glorious band and large. Away with these, thou iconoclast!

A.B.

A Note on the Work of Fiona Macleod¹

I have lately re-read Fiona Macleod's beautiful and strange Gaelic tales and legends for the third time, and I am convinced, more than ever before, that Scotland has here the root of a literature that may grow into as perfect a tree as the tree Homer planted in ancient Greece. All Scottish writers up to the present have dealt, perfectly or imperfectly, with the fascinating externals of life, the glittering pageantry of action, and perhaps because Scottish history is so rich in the elements of romantic and heart-moving tragedy, have been content to forget imperishable things in the illusions of a moment, and have moved us, as Sir Walter Scott in his finer romances, to a delight in great and perilous deeds, or to an admiration of majestic natural scenery, and have held the mirror up to nature until we have

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXV, 25 (17 December 1903), pp. 12-3.

grown weary of contemplating no more than nature; until we have cried out, some of us, for a less perishable drama.

Fiona Macleod, first of all writers out of this gray land, belongs by right to the age of faith, and to the martyred company of them that are born of the spirit. She has rejected all externals, whether of the world or of the weary drama that must be played out in the world, and holds^{up}/her mirror to the eyes of faith alone, that we may turn from buying and selling and from all things that come and go with our unhappy lives and perishing hopes, and follow, as the only worthy quest, the more affluent beauty of dreams. And when all is weighed in the balance, it is to no renunciation that we are called, for we but leave our unlovely dreams of worldly success and mortal happiness that perish with our corruptible bodies, to follow after dreams that are as imperishable as our souls, for like our souls they are rooted in the mind of God. If you say that such a dreamer but lures us after illusion, I would answer, "Illusion for illusion, let us choose the worthier."

I have been told by people who do not like to be deeply moved, and who ask no more from a book than that

it shall amuse an empty moment, that if the writers I
care for had their ^{own}/way, literature would cease to be
literature and would become a religion. Well, it seems
to me that if any country would make a literature out of
the far-reaching passions and impulses that have made
its history, and would have such a literature to be
anything more than a barren record of interesting facts,
like a history book, or a more barren record of
uninteresting falsehoods, like a modern novel or a
melodrama, it can only do so by drawing inspiration out
of the unfailling Well whence have come all impulses, all
far-reaching passions, and that Well is the imagination
of man. Did not the holy Saint Augustine liken the soul
of man to fire, and the imagination of man to water,
wherein all things are reflected? If we understand this
we will understand how all history, and the impulses and
passions that have ^{and make} made/history, are but the shining of
fire in water, and we will understand how all the moving
many-coloured enchantments of life and death sprang out
of nothing when "the Spirit of God moved upon the face
of the water". Our literature will then cease to be no
more than a catalogue of the appearances of nature and
the deeds of man: it will become the ritual of nature

and man, interpreting to our eyes of clay and pride the many mysteries we have so far passed by, or regarded with dull amazement, or interpreted in the light of scientific misunderstandings and dark theologies.

"We are woven into one loom," writes Fiona Macleod in one of her beautiful prologues, "and the Weaver threads our being with the sweet influences, not only of the Pleiades, but of the living world of which each is no more than a multi-coloured thread; as, in turn, He threads the wandering wind with the inarticulate cry, the yearning, the passion, the pain of that bitter clan, the Human."

Surely, then, if we are labouring to make literature a religion, it will be the greatest of all religions, for it will be the most supernatural, nor need it cease on that account to be literature.

Many readers, even those who are not merely newspaper readers, and some writers too, who speak with the easy fluency of journalism, have not scrupled to label as "Decadents" all writers who, like Fiona Macleod, or like Villiers de l'Isle Adam, or like W.B. Yeats, or like Maeterlinck, reject the trivial and ignoble circumstances

that we have with us always, and are tired of, and give us, instead, Mystery and Beauty. These readers and these writers may complain against literature, if they will, but I prefer to think, with Verulam, that "there is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion," and to remember, also, how the learned doctors of the Cabbala held Beauty to be the mediator between Creator and created, and made her the handmaiden of the Eternal.

II

One cannot but confess that the point of view, the outlook upon life, which makes it possible for one to sympathise with the spirit of the Gaelic renaissance, is exceptional enough to be unpopular; for it means that one must sympathise with lost causes, with unhappy destinies, with all hopes and desires that are for ever unaccomplished. One must sympathise with sorrow rather than with happiness, with failure rather than with success, and one must above all have an enduring faith in the reality of supersensual things and in the truth of all rumours from the distant "country of Splendour and Terror."

The Scottish Gael of the Islands, living remote from all we dream is actual, shut in by creeping mists, hearing always the boom of the hollow sea, and the mournful cry of the sea-bird; remembering, too, the strange histories and the legendary phantasies that have gathered like clouds about the sunset of his race, is almost by necessity a dreamer, whether he will or no; and though he ponders life orient and occident, and sees everywhere around him the unending inexplicable cruelties of destiny, it is always with an unshaken faith that he looks beyond these voices to the Celtic Paradise, "The Land of the Living Heart." We also might have as unshaken a faith if we lived as far from the roar of cities as he lives, and looked with his unquestioning eyes upon the spacious sea-sunsets and the mysterious pale dawns of the north; and we might happily lose as we listened to the murmuring undertones of nature, to the voice of the green world, a few of our opinions of this and that, a little of our foolish surety that we are but breathing images of earth and water, and be able to say with Thomas A' Kempis, "He to whom the eternal word speaketh is delivered from a multitude of opinions."

When I read these tales, especially the dreamy legends Fiona Macleod has woven around supernatural beings like the Midnight Shepherd, who drives a flock of shadows through the moonlight, among them the shadow of a man who had died in a corrie; or when I read of Dalua the Fool, who is one of a brotherhood of supernatural fools, gifted, like Shakespeare's fools, with a strange wisdom more than the wisdom of kings, but whom it is unlucky or worse to meet; or of the wood-people Cathal the Monk saw—"the tall, fair, pale-green lines . . . moving this way and that in the moonshine, pale-green as the leaves of the lime, soft shining, with radiant eyes, and delicate earth-brown hair"—some obscuring veil partly falls from the mind, and I seem to be forgetting many things that are true on stone pavements between gray walls, and to be remembering faintly other things I held and lost in another life than this, where all things were perfect and affluent, and when the world had not yet died out of beauty into a dream of "civilisation", and "progress", and "the eternal fitness of things," and vulgarity.

I think that this power of casting the veil of phantasy over one, of so enchanting one's imagination with the rhythm of coloured words and the beauty of far-reaching

and subtle allusion that one is lured away from his momentary prison-house of the flesh, and seems to be remembering past lives and to have the sap of the Tree of Life sighing in his veins—I think that this power is the final test of a writer who would be a priest of the religion of Art. It has been the gift of so few moderns that one who has it can be placed among the immortals without fear.

Rossetti, whose imagination folds one away in a reverie of mediaeval mysticism whenever one reads his poems, or contemplates the half-evil and Lilit¹-like loveliness of the women he painted, surely has this power of enchantment; and William Morris has it, one need but read The Wondrous Isles or The Sundering Flood to know that; and Edgar Allan Poe has it, together with the many French writers who founded their style upon his; and W.B. Yeats, though one needs almost to be a student of magic, certainly a mystic, to understand his art, has it nobly; and Fiona Macleod, I think, may be said to have it too.

There is a sensuousness, almost a sensuality, about

¹ Lilit is a figure out of cabbalistic tradition representing maya or illusion.

certain aspects of her work that is more akin to the art of Rossetti than to the devilry of Poe or the occult asceticisms of Yeats, but while Rossetti was complex with the complexity of an autumnal and fallen civilisation, Fiona Macleod is complex with the wild complexity of the woods, and the creatures of the woods, and of elemental passions, and of a kind of pantheistic nature-worship. She holds one by the spell of the throbbing blood of man or the rising green sap of trees, by the yearning thrill of passions too great for humanity, by the music of sword blades on sunlight beaches in the days when a kind of noble cruelty was a kingly virtue, and when the Norse rovers troubled the Islands and crucified the silent monks head-downwards, over brushwood fires. The mystery she preaches is not the sorrowful mystery of Christ—it is the mystery of gods—less pale, less weary with pain, the old Celtic gods the Druids chaunted to. It is the mystery of Keithoir, the god of the green world, who dreams: "And his dreams are Springtide^{and Summertide}/and Appletide. When he sleeps without dream there is winter." It is the mystery of Angus, the lord of love and music and song, and of eternal youth, and of the loveliness of desires our faith would have us mortify. It is the mystery of

Orchil, the hidden goddess, the mistress of the unhappy dead, who is the decay behind all that we dream will endure, who weaves forever at the looms of life and death, busy with the shrouds of our mortality.

There is another aspect of her work, too; a more human and more popular though not a less perfect aspect, which one sees in such tales as The Sin Eater—one of the most tragical romances in literature—and in The Archer, a love story with all the pity and despair of humanity in it; in Morag of the Glen, in Silk o' the Kine, in The Washer of the Ford, and in many others. But it is perhaps when she writes of the sea that she is most truly filled with the power of enchantment. She has captured the mystery of the infinite ungovernable waters with a perfect art. Deep calls unto deep, and the cry of humanity answers all. It is almost certainly by these tales of lonely island fishers, with their long sorrows and brief rejoicings, that her work will become popular, if literature can ever become popular. I do not know if such folk as the island folk she writes of really exist in the flesh, I am told not, but they certainly exist for me and for all who read of them, and to exist in the world of the imagination is to have an immortality denied to the world of nature.

The quality of dreamy strangeness that has frightened so many excellent people away from Fiona Macleod's work would become its greatest charm if they could only realise the truth she herself has so firmly insisted on, "There is no mystery in them, or anywhere, except the eternal mystery of beauty."

III

Some months ago a writer in these columns made the statement that most Anglo-Saxons were unable to enter into the spirit of Fiona Macleod's work. He thought that they might care for Burns, though. Burns had a deal of the so-called Anglo-Saxon temperament, which is but another name for the commercial temperament, whether it be in Modern Scotland or Ancient Greece; and perhaps he too was entering his protest against the ideal when he wrote in his address to the Jacobites—

"Then let your schemes alone,
Adore the rising sun,
And leave a man undone
To his fate."

The spirit of the Celtic renaissance has no such advice to offer. It will not better your account at the bank, but it swings open the twin gates of dream, the geminae Somni portae of Virgil, that you may wander in the vistas of peace, the happy valleys.

". For I have seen
In lonely places, and in lonelier hours,
Beyond the involving veils of day and night
Circumfluent o'er the shadowy drift of years,
My vision of the rainbow-aureoled face
Of her whom men name Beauty; proud, austere,
Inviolata, immortal, undismayed
By the swift-eddyding dust of wandering Time—
Dim vision of the flawless, perfect Face,
Divinely fugitive, that haunts the world
And lifts man's spiral thought to lovelier dreams."

When I am told, as I was told by a clever landscape
painter, that the poem I have quoted is "mystical rubbish,"
I begin to wonder if the prophet of the Lamentations
was thinking of the goddess of art turned beggar-woman
when he wrote O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,
attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus—"O all
ye that pass by the way, turn and see if there is any
grief like unto my grief."

One night a little while ago I got lost among the hills. I tried for a long time to make out where I was, with but small success, for these roads winding among the hills are all the same to a stranger. The night was dark and misty, with no sound but the continual dripping of the trees, or the falling of a dead leaf from branch to branch. It must have been at least an hour that I was walking before I bethought me of a travellers prayer I have heard often among my own folk in the south—

"Hornèd owl and burrowing mole,
And gray bat in the tree-bole,
Cry together and bid your moon
Lead me to my hearthstone.
In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.
Amen."

The creatures of the night heard the prayer, as they always do if you pray with a good heart. At a sudden turning in the road the moon slid from behind a big cloud

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXV, 19 (5 November 1903),
p.9.

and stood solemnly over a field of corn-sheaves, and I saw the lights of a cottage on the far side of the field.

A bat fluttered overhead, with a soft, strange whirring of leathern wings. "O, bat!" I called after him, "tell your sister the owl and your brother the mole how grateful I am that you listened to me. Peace be with you, poor animal."

The people at the cottage were kind and hospitable, as Scotch country people always are. A tall girl came to the door when I knocked. "I am lost," I said. She held a candle to my face and examined me with shrewd, kind eyes. "There's a body here says he's lost." "Bid him come ben, then," replied an old woman's voice from the room, "an' dinna keep fowk standin'."

In the house I found the old mother and father and two big bearded shepherds who perhaps had come to court the girl. In England I would have made many apologies for disturbing them, and so forth, but in the hills they do not care much for apologies, so I sat by the fire and drank whisky and water with my new friends. In a little while we all began to talk ^{about} ~~of~~ this thing and that, and though the men seemed to think my town's tobacco but poor stuff, they cared a great deal for my town's talk, and

for anything I could tell them about the hurried ever-changing life we live in cities. They saw the streets of a town but on rare holidays, and then, I expect, they looked through somewhat of a mist. The girl alone took no part in the conversation, but sat apart, and leaned her head against the fire-side, watching us. One of the big shepherds was called Donald, the name of the other I did not learn.

I was telling them how the King of England had reached Ballater but a few days before.

"Ou ay, the King," said the girl's father, and smoked his pipe. Donald and the other shepherd stared into the fire without speaking. The old woman said something to her daughter, who nodded in reply.

I said, "I did not hear whether or no the Queen of England was with him, but I expect she was." For some reason I began to feel not quite easy. Hoping to turn the conversation I spoke to the silent girl.

"Do you know any songs?" I asked her.

"I can sing a wee," she answered. "I sing in the chapel choir."

"Well, will you not sing something to us?"

"If you like I will. We've been learning Rossini's

Tantum Ergo in the choir. Will I sing you that?"

I was going to say how much rather I would hear one of the songs of her own country, for the song she offered to sing was connected in my mind with memories I would not have awakened, but the old man her father interrupted me, banging his fist on the table.

"Dinna sing ony sic foreign trash, lassie," he said fiercely. "If ye'll sing onything ava till's, sing Wha wouldn't die for Charlie."

The old mother and the two shepherds turned their faces towards the girl, who flushed a little and rose from her seat. When she had ended her song, which she sang very beautifully and touchingly, there was a deep silence, broken only by the monotonous ticking of the old "wag-at-the-wa'" clock, but in the depths of that silence, and beyond it, I seemed to hear the beating of the immemorial, unchanging heart of a people.

Everybody who has read Huysmans' La Cathédrale will remember how he makes his hero Durtal long for a reform in the liturgical music of the church, and readers of George Moore's Evelyn Innes will have memories of some excellent writing upon the same subject. We are to have the reform. Our new Pope, Pius Decimus, has written a couple of letters (motu proprio) in which he does away once and for all with the trivialities that have disgraced the liturgy for years. We are to have no more erotics, no more opera tunes; "interminable musical compositions modelled on old theatrical works," His Holiness calls them, and adds, "most of them are of such meagre artistic value that they would not be tolerated for a moment even in second-rate concerts." He confesses that "they feed the curiosity of the less intelligent, but disgust and scandalise the majority, who wonder how such an abuse can still survive."

¹ Published Bon-Accord, XXXVI, 7 (18 February 1904), p.9.

The Papal Letter contains a definition of Sacred Music. His Holiness writes, "It must be holy, and must therefore exclude all profanity, not only in itself, but in the manner in which it is presented by those who execute it. It must be true art, for otherwise it will be impossible for it to exercise on the minds of those who listen to it that efficacy which the Church aims at obtaining in admitting into her liturgy the art of musical sounds."

The Pope goes on to explain that the Gregorian Chant is the only "supreme model for sacred music," and "proper to the Roman Church," for it is "the only chant she has inherited from the ancient fathers." Side by side with the solemnity of the ancient chant we are to have the beautiful music of Palestrina, and whatever of modern music is thought worthy of being admitted into the sacred ritual. "The Church has always recognised and favoured the progress of the arts (writes the Pope), admitting to the service of the cult everything good and beautiful discovered by genius in the course of ages; always, however, with due regard to the liturgical laws. Consequently modern music is also admitted into the Church, since it, too, furnishes compositions of such excellence, sobriety and gravity, that they are in no

way unworthy of the liturgical functions.

There is to be no delay in the carrying out of the reform. The Pope bids the Cardinal-Vicar of Rome "neither grant indulgence nor concede delays"—"since the thing is to be done let it be done immediately and resolutely."

"At first the novelty will produce some wonder among individuals , . . . but little by little things will right themselves, and in the perfect harmony between the music with the liturgical rules and the nature of the psalmody, all will discern a beauty and a goodness which have perhaps never before been observed."

Women can no longer be admitted to form part of the choir or of the musical chapel, for the office of a singer in church is a real liturgical office, which women are incapable of exercising. "Whenever, then, it is desired to employ the acute voices of sopranos and contraltos, these parts must be taken by boys, according to the most ancient usage of the church."

I have preferred rather to give a mere summary of the Papal Letter than to obscure its intention with any commentary of my own. In case the gentlemen who write to the papers discover any slips in my quotations from

the encyclical, I hereby declare, orbi et urbi/sic/
that it is two o'clock in the morning, and I am
nodding over my copy. I mention this to save correspondence.

A friend came into my lodgings the other night, and as we sat over the fire we began to talk books, as men who write always do, and my friend said he wondered why the old Scottish Ballads were such good literature and all modern Scotch poetry not literature at all, even bad literature, and he wondered who could have written those old ballads so charged with the wild and whirling passions of an earlier day, so full of atmosphere and beauty.

It is indeed a question and a mystery. The best of the ballads might have come out of the brown earth as simply as the flowers, for no man can name their author, although they almost seem to have been all the work of a single mind and imagination, so alike are they in artistic simplicity of treatment and in the inexplicable charm of their style. It is not very difficult to trace

¹ Published Bon Accord, XXXVII, 13 (29 September 1904), p.6.

the origin of the tales these ballads tell, for they are for the most part variants of the ancient folk tales common to all northern countries; but their style is of its kind so extremely beautiful and touching, so truly imaginative in the best sense of that ill-used word, that one finds it hard to accept the common belief that they are native to a land like Scotland, whose only poet is James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. And even Hogg gets most of his inspiration and all his style from the ballad literature, not so widely known in his day as in our own. Take any of Hogg's poems; take these lines out of "The Queen's Wake"—

"Kilmeney has been where the cock never crew,
Where the rain never fell and the wind never blew,
A land of love and a land of light,
Withouten sun or moon or night,
A land of vision it would seem,
A still, an everlasting dream;"

And you have just the description of the land of phantasy, of faery, the land east of the sun west of the moon, whose description takes up so many verses in the ballads.

Where, we must ask ourselves, did these wonderful Scottish Ballads get their magic? What forgotten poet was able to put such passion and unlimited desire into the mouth of a woman that she could say,

"I wish the wind may never cease,
Nor fish be in the flood,
Till my three sons come home to me,
In earthly flesh and blood!"

or whence came the almost Blake-like imagination of such lines as,

"The cock doth crow, the day doth daw,
The channering worm doth chide,"

with all their unearthly and sepulchral suggestiveness?

I have said the ballads "seem to have been the work of one individual mind," but I do not thereby mean the work of the individual mind of one man, but rather the mind of the turbulent and romantic times that produced the ballads and a trend of thought that made their appreciation possible. Scholars have even supposed that Homer's "Iliad" was at one time no more than a floating mass of such ballads, all dealing with the romantic wars and legends of Greek history in much the same manner as these ballads deal with Scottish history, and it may be that the same blind hand of destiny that has shaped the ignoble literature of to-day, and is forever stirring the waters of national life, was at one time busy lighting the flame that casts upon our dawn the vehement shadows of these harpers and kings and jesters.

I have an idea that a ballad came into being somewhat

in the following manner. One of the many wandering poets of those days would come across some romantic story and make a ballad of it. This ballad, good or bad as it might be, would be sung at firesides or festivals or in the halls of the great all over the country until it was well known, and then a second poet would take up the ballad, making here and there a little alteration in a line that did not flow smoothly, or substituting for one word another that seemed to him more charged with colour or more emphatic. As time passed another and another poet would make alterations, until at last one poor ballad or poem had passed through the hands of a whole generation of poets, and each had given his best, and what had at first been perhaps but a halting story without imagination and without beauty had become a perfect piece of literature like "The Harper of Binnorie" or "The Twa Corbies," that tragical bit of verse whose last two lines,

"O'er his white bones, as they lie bare,
The wind shall blaw for evermair."

were used with such dramatic effect by Stevenson in "The Master of Ballantrae."

The popular taste, which is the best of criticism in

some matters, would keep such alterations within bounds, for any changes that did not please the hearers would not be tolerated by them; so we may look upon the ballads not ^{merely} ~~only~~ as a fine poetical literature in themselves, but as more than that, as a true index of the popular taste of Scotland in the days when they were all the people had in the way of literature and drama. Compare the ballads, even the poorest of them, with the taproom doggerel of Robert Burns, and you will see how the popular imagination has come to enjoy the husks that the swine do eat.

It does not appear that Miss Ellen Terry will ever cease to delight her public, or ever suffer the least abatement in her glory. When I first became acquainted with the stage, people were asking themselves how much longer she would be able to take such parts as Imogen or Beatrice. That is many years ago, but this gifted, wonderful woman still plays with a grace and charm that bid defiance to time and criticism. She is still Beatrice, and we fall in love with her whether we will or no, like Benedick. Or she is grave, golden-tongued Portia, and one can but marvel that so much wit and eloquence have survived one's own illusions; one feels, shall we say, a new and more perfect illusion: the past lives again, with a glamour beyond the wit of man to discover.

¹ Published Boh-Accord, XXXVI, 4 (28 January 1904), p.9.

Miss Ellen Terry in a Shakespearean part gives us the the kind of interpretation we shall never see again. She is the last of the long line of actresses which began with Mrs. Siddons; the perfectly natural actresses who play the part as Shakespeare wrote it, and not as our own decadent imagination would have it played. Modern weariness and stoicism have read many things into Shakespeare that maybe he never dreamed. Maybe when he wrote Hamlet he had no more in his mind than a lamentable tale, a very tragical affair of love and treachery. It is nearly certain that he had no thought of a psychological treatise. It is quite certain that his women, with one or two possible exceptions, were meant to show us no more than a woman angry, or a woman in love, or a woman in love with her own husband, or a woman eloquent, tearful, sorrowful, and the like. Miss Ellen Terry is the last of them that can reveal to us this simplicity, and she does it with the perfectly natural art that belongs to a simpler day than ours, that we shall see no more.

We look to Duse for our highest dramatic expression now, because the new thought that is rooted in modern complexity can take no delight in natural simplicity. Art holds up

the mirror of Nature as of old, but we who look into the Glass are more interested in ^{the reflection of} our own neurotic faces than in the clipped hedges or the still pools or the civeted gentlemen with long rapiers who walk together on the lawns. We are no longer interested in a story or in things for their own sake. Certainly we are no longer interested in a heroine of romance, even Shakespeare's romance, until she be presented to us with a little of the morbidness that is in our own hearts, for all the nice women we can think of nowadays are a little morbid. "The mirror of Nature," in brief, is somewhat of a distorting mirror, with an almost Japanese grotesqueness and phantasy in its reflections, for Art, as somebody has wittily said, has become a beautiful disease.

It is this very contrast that holds us charmed with the acting of Ellen Terry. She is perfectly a woman, one of Shakespeare's delightful women, in her art. We roar applause at her verve as Imogen, and wonder all the time why we can no longer understand her. We are led into an uncomprehending captivity, like shivering old men who read a story of passion and tragedy, and have dim memories of twenty-one. Miss Terry's world is still twenty-one, and none of the roses have faded. One can never cease to

marvel at her unfading youth and enthusiasm. She has put to shame the prophecies of many melancholy heads, and will see many more into their grave, I feel sure, before she herself has need to fear the limelights.

She may suffer from the criticisms of the profane, for up in the north here you are not very enthusiastic about even the melodramas you love, but it is not likely her heart will be broken because of that. It is you who are the mimes, and when she smiles at you across the footlights, her eyes are heavy with the memories of generations of men who have applauded and gone their way. She has taken part in greater destinies than will ever over-shadow her critics, and perhaps Shakespeare's phantasmal companies of soldiers and ladies and lovers have a more real existence in the Divine imagination than the trivial multitudes who live soberly and are well thought of by the minister. I am quite sure who are the most real in the eyes of this great actress. You may clap your hands or remain silent, but you cannot pluck the heart out of her mystery.

Go and see her as Beatrice, and say, if you dare, that any woman of twenty-five could take the part more lightly and delicately, or could put into it more of the

femininity and grace that delights every heart that is not bond-slave to the unhappy devil of criticism. I suppose I have contradicted myself in the last sentence; but indeed I will contradict myself many times before all my gods rather than cease to praise the last of the great English actresses. The crumpled old Tree of Life must wither and blossom many times before we see another Ellen Terry; if indeed we ever do until Plato's year, "when all things are to return to their former ^estate, and he be again teaching in his school, as when he delivered this opinion."

Preface¹

He walks on the floor of the earth,
He sows in the earth his grain,
He is free from the folly of birth,
From pride the stain.

Singer and sage pass by
What are their ways to him?
Glad if the corn stand high
When his life burns dim.

Garnered and stacked and stored,
Rest after labour done;
And over his face a board,
And over his grave the Sun.

Last June I went with a friend to see Mr. Watson, who was in ill-health and living on the far side of the Hill of Brimmond. We found him busy at work upon the closing chapters of this book; sitting, with his writing tablets upon his knee, before an open window that looked into a wood of pine and fir. He took us down to a little cottage under the Hill, where there is a large garden full of old-fashioned aromatic herbs and country flowers, and where

¹ Published as Preface to William Watson's Glimpses o' Auld Lang Syne, ed. Alex. Mackie (Aberdeen, 1903), pp. ix-xiii.

one can sit under the blossoming apple-trees, and have tea and bread and honey. We talked together all the afternoon (a breathless sultry afternoon it was, I remember; and I remember, too, the golden shadow of the gorse on the slope of the Hill), and we heard many things from our host, who was as ready to quarrel with me over the immortality of the soul as to make us laugh with stories about the old gardener, a curious gnome-like ancient, who dug up the garden behind us with much vigour, forgetful, as it seemed, of his eighty years.

After a little while we naturally enough began to speak about the publication of this book, for Mr. Watson was at that time lingering upon the edge of indecision, and needed much persuasion before his modesty could be brought to acknowledge that his "Glimpses" of the old times were good enough to deserve perpetuation in a volume. He wouldn't promise this and he wouldn't promise that, but was at length goaded into saying he would think the matter over. The eventual result was that he decided to publish his book.

He asked me to write an introduction. I pointed out that no one ever reads an introduction. "I will read it," said Mr. Watson. "Good wine needs no bush," I urged. "It is

none the worse for it," said he. So here is the introduction—poor bush, I fear, to my friend's good heather ale.

II

I like these "Glimpses o' Auld Lang Syne" because they are true—true in the sense given to that word when applied to literature. They have none of the washed-out sentimentality of the "Kail-yard" school. It is true that Mr. Watson's literary ideal is the exact opposite of my own; but I count that only to his credit, for have I not been told, "in print o' life,"¹ that my own ideal is the ideal of decadence? It is hard to say what "decadence"² means exactly, but it certainly does not apply to Mr. Watson. His work is at least full of vigour and life. When I read such a book as, for instance, Mr. Barrie's "Auld Licht Idylls," I can feel but a half-hearted enthusiasm for men and women who are as unreal as the people of a melodrama, but when I read Mr. Watson's tales I can feel a very real enthusiasm, however much I may at times find fault with his literary method; for his people are real people; they disengage themselves from the pages of the book; one seems almost to have met them in the flesh.

They become memories, they walk to and fro in the twilight of one's imagination, saying things pitiful or humorous, suffering and rejoicing. Their young folk marry, and there is a penny wedding with candles and a fiddler; their old folk die, and there is a decorous burying, not entirely without its smile, its joy even; for at the foot of Benachie, the "Mountain of Light", people do not die, Mr. Watson tells us, they just "wear awa'".

It is this intimate personal quality, this humility, as it were, that will endear these tales to all who read them—to all Scots especially. Some one said of Balzac that each of his tales had been dug out of a woman's heart, and it seems to me that each of these tales has been dug out of William Watson's heart, for it is his pride to claim these folk for his own folk, never for one instant letting the reader forget that he is one of them, that their joys and sorrows are his also, so that one becomes almost painfully aware of the smile or the tear that arose as memory went groping among the things of the past, and each remembered incident arose "trailing clouds of glory"; invoking, with subtle enchantment, vision after vision of the days that are so sweet to us all because they are no more.

Mr. Watson, remembering how "the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy" over great and small alike, has written about a folk who are rapidly dying away, and he is the only one who has written about them. His book is valuable if only for the reason that he has kept for us something well worth keeping, something that makes for good literature: the lives and thoughts of a people who till the ground, who are full of the wisdom of the fields, who know the ways of our wiser brothers the beasts, and have not yet altogether lost their ancient simplicity.

Some of these people of his are as typical human beings as the people the great poets and novelists have given to literature, and I cannot but believe that they will take their places in the eternal pageant of literary characters, to have their share of immortality. Mr. Watson may say, not without truth, Exegi monumentum aere perennius. I believe that his book, whether it be great or little, will be looked back upon in future days as the county's classic; and if ever Aberdeenshire gets a literature of its own, these tales will have been its beginning.

Who can forget "Fœl Jock", who replied when he was asked if he ever thought about dying—"Ou ay, I fyles thinks God'll tak' me amon' the lave some day fin He's

gyaun's roun's"? Nor can we forget "Tam Souter", that bibulous oaf and human document, who would talk to his whisky bottle "in the language of warmest friendship and endearment;" nor his wife, Baubie, who sold him a dram when he had the horrors, and bombarded him so with quotations from Baxter's Call to the Unconverted (delicious book) that he would say to his friends, Auld Cothal and Willie Mull, "Weel, sirs, deil tak' oor wife gin I think she's a' thegither soun'".

I might go on multiplying instances until I too had written a book. This, however, as a preface, has already overtrodden its boundaries. Turn over the page and you will find Mr. Watson ready to tell you all about those quaint folk who dwelt at the foot of the Mountain of Light, and he will tell you as I could not, for they who are his kinsfolk are aliens to me, and their very tongue, alas, is a strange thing that after much laborious toil I can but imperfectly comprehend.

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