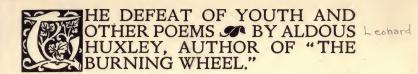


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THE DEFEAT OF YOUTH SP

I. UNDER THE TREES.

HERE had been phantoms, pale-remembered shapes of this and this occasion, sisterly. In their resemblances, each effigy Crowned with the same bright hair above the nape's

White rounded firmness, and each body alert
With such swift loveliness, that very rest
Seemed a poised movement: . . . phantoms that imBut a faint influence and could bless or hurt [pressed
No more than dreams. And these ghost things were she;
For formless still, without identity,
Not one she seemed, not clear, but many and dim.
One face among the legions of the street,
Indifferent mystery, she was for him
Something still uncreated, incomplete.

II.

Bright windy sunshine and the shadow of cloud Quicken the heavy summer to new birth Of life and motion on the drowsing earth; The huge elms stir, till all the air is loud With their awakening from the muffled sleep Of long hot days. And on the wavering line That marks the alternate ebb of shade and shine, Under the trees, a little group is deep In laughing talk. The shadow as it flows Across them dims the lustre of a rose, Quenches the bright clear gold of hair, the green Of a girl's dress, and life seems faint. The light Swings back, and in the rose a fire is seen, Gold hair's aflame and green grows emerald bright.

III.

She leans, and there is laughter in the face
She turns towards him; and it seems a door
Suddenly opened on some desolate place
With a burst of light and music. What before
Was hidden shines in loveliness revealed.
Now first he sees her beautiful, and knows
That he must love her; and the doom is sealed
Of all his happiness and all the woes
That shall be born of pregnant years hereafter.
The swift poise of a head, a flutter of laughter—
And love flows in on him, its vastness pent
Within his narrow life: the pain it brings,
Boundless; for love is infinite discontent
With the poor lonely life of transient things.

V IV.

Men see their god, an immanence divine,
Smile through the curve of flesh or moulded clay,
In bare ploughed lands that go sloping away
To meet the sky in one clean exquisite line.
Out of the short-seen dawns of ecstasy
They draw new beauty, whence new thoughts are born
And in their turn conceive, as grains of corn
Germ and create new life and endlessly
Shall live creating. Out of earthly seeds
Springs the aerial flower. One spirit proceeds
Through change, the same in body and in soul—
The spirit of life and love that triumphs still
In its slow struggle towards some far-off goal
Through lust and death and the bitterness of will.

V.

One spirit it is that stirs the fathomless deep Of human minds, that shakes the elms in storm, That sings in passionate music, or on warm Still evenings bosoms forth the tufted sleep Of thistle-seeds that wait a travelling wind. One spirit shapes the subtle rhythms of thought And the long thundering seas; the soul is wrought Of one stuff with the body—matter and mind Woven together in so close a mesh That flowers may blossom into a song, that flesh May strangely teach the loveliest holiest things To watching spirits. Truth is brought to birth Not in some vacant heaven: its beauty springs From the dear bosom of material earth.

VI. IN THE HAY LOFT.

The darkness in the loft is sweet and warm With the stored hay . . . darkness intensified By one bright shaft that enters through the wide Tall doors from under fringes of a storm Which makes the doomed sun brighter. On the hay, Perched mountain-high they sit, and silently Watch the motes dance and look at the dark sky And mark how heartbreakingly far away And yet how close and clear the distance seems, While all at hand is cloud—brightness of dreams Unrealisable, yet seen so clear, So only just beyond the dark. They wait, Scarce knowing what they wait for, half in fear; Expectance draws the curtain from their fate.

VII.

The silence of the storm weighs heavily
On their strained spirits: sometimes one will say
Some trivial thing as though to ward away
Mysterious powers, that imminently lie
In wait, with the strong exorcising grace
Of everyday's futility. Desire
Becomes upon a sudden a crystal fire,
Defined and hard:—If he could kiss her face,
Could kiss her hair! As if by chance, her hand
Brushes on his . . . Ah, can she understand?
Or is she pedestalled above the touch
Of his desire? He wonders: dare he seek
From her that little, that infinitely much?
And suddenly she kissed him on the cheek.

VIII. MOUNTAINS.

A stronger gust catches the cloud and twists
A spindle of rifted darkness through its heart,
A gash in the damp grey, which, thrust apart,
Reveals black depths a moment. Then the mists
Shut down again; a white uneasy sea
Heaves round the climbers and beneath their feet.
He strains on upwards through the wind and sleet,
Poised, or swift moving, or laboriously
Lifting his weight. And if he should let go,
What would he find down there, down there below
The curtain of the mist? What would he find
Beyond the dim and stifling now and here,
Beneath the unsettled turmoil of his mind?
Oh, there were nameless depths: he shrank with fear.

IX.

The hills more glorious in their coat of snow Rise all around him, in the valleys run Bright streams, and there are lakes that catch the sun, And sunlit fields of emerald far below That seem alive with inward light. In smoke The far horizons fade; and there is peace On everything, a sense of blessed release From wilful strife. Like some prophetic cloak The spirit of the mountains has descended On all the world, and its unrest is ended. Even the sea, glimpsed far away, seems still, Hushed to a silver peace its storm and strife. Mountains of vision, calm above fate and will, You hold the promise of the freer life.

X. IN THE LITTLE ROOM.

London unfurls its incense-coloured dusk
Before the panes, rich but a while ago
With the charred gold and the red ember-glow
Of dying sunset. Houses quit the husk
Of secrecy, which, through the day, returns
A blank to all enquiry: but at nights
The cheerfulness of fire and lamp invites
The darkness inward, curious of what burns
With such a coloured life when all is dead—
The daylight world outside, with overhead
White clouds, and where we walk, the blaze
Of wet and sunlit streets, shops and the stream
Of glittering traffic—all that the nights erase,
Colour and speed, surviving but in dream.

XI.

Outside the dusk, but in the little room
All is alive with light, which brightly glints
On curving cup or the stiff folds of chintz,
Evoking its own whiteness. Shadows loom,
Bulging and black, upon the walls, where hang
Rich coloured plates of beauties that appeal
Less to the sense of sight than to the feel,
So moistly satin are their breasts. A pang,
Almost of pain, runs through him when he sees
Hanging, a homeless marvel, next to these,
The silken breastplate of a mandarin,
Centuries dead, which he had given her.
Exquisite miracle, when men could spin
Jay's wing and belly of the kingfisher!

XII.

In silence and as though expectantly
She crouches at his feet, while he caresses
His light-drawn fingers with the touch of tresses
Sleeked round her head, close-banded lustrously,
Save where at nape and temple the smooth brown
Sleaves out into a pale transparent mist
Of hair and tangled light. So to exist,
Poised 'twixt the deep of thought where spirits drown
Life in a void impalpable nothingness,
And, on the other side, the pain and stress
Of clamorous action and the gnawing fire
Of will, focal upon a point of earth—even thus
To sit, eternally without desire
And yet self-known, were happiness for us.

XIII.

She turns her head and in a flash of laughter
Looks up at him; and helplessly he feels
That life has circled with returning wheels
Back to a starting-point. Before and after
Merge in this instant, momently the same;
For it was thus she leaned and laughing turned
When, manifest, the spirit of beauty burned
In her young body with an inward flame,
And first he knew and loved her. In full tide
Life halts within him, suddenly stupefied.
Sight blackness, lightning-struck; but blindly tender
He draws her up to meet him, and she lies
Close folded by his arms in glad surrender,
Smiling, and with drooped head and half closed eyes.

XIV.

"I give you all; would that I might give more."
He sees the colour dawn across her cheeks
And die again to white; marks as she speaks
The trembling of her lips, as though she bore
Some sudden pain and hardly mastered it.
Within his arms he feels her shuddering,
Piteously trembling like some wild wood-thing
Caught unawares. Compassion infinite
Mounts up within him. Thus to hold and keep
And comfort her distressed, lull her to sleep
And gently kiss her brow and hair and eyes
Seems love perfected—templed high and white
Against the calm of golden autumn skies,
And shining quenchlessly with vestal light.

XV.

But passion ambushed by the aerial shrine
Comes forth to dance, a hoofed obscenity,
His satyr's dance, with laughter in his eye,
And cruelty along the scarlet line
Of his bright smiling mouth. All uncontrolled,
Love's rebel servant, he delights to beat
The maddening quick dry rhythm of goatish feet
Even in the sanctuary, and makes bold
To mime himself the godhead of the place.
He turns in terror from her trance-calmed face,
From the white-lidded languor of her eyes,
From lips that passion never shook before,
But glad in the promise of her sacrifice:
"I give you all; would that I might give more."

XVI.

He is afraid, seeing her lie so still,
So utterly his own; afraid lest she
Should open wide her eyes and let him see
The passionate conquest of her virgin will
Shine there in triumph, starry-bright with tears.
He thrusts her from him; face and hair and breast,
Hands he had touched, lips that his lips had pressed,
Seem things deadly to be desired. He fears
Lest she should body forth in palpable shame
Those dreams and longings that his blood, aflame
Through the hot dark of summer nights, had dreamed
And longed. Must all his love, then, turn to this?
Was lust the end of what so pure had seemed?
He must escape, ah God! her touch, her kiss.

XVII. IN THE PARK.

Laughing, "To-night," I said to him, "the Park Has turned the garden of a symbolist. Those old great trees that rise above the mist, Gold with the light of evening, and the dark Still water, where the dying sun evokes An echoed glory—here I recognize Those ancient gardens mirrored by the eyes Of poets that hate the world of common folks, Like you and me and that thin pious crowd, Which yonder sings its hymns, so humbly proud Of holiness. The garden of escape Lies here; a small green world, and still the bride Of quietness, although an imminent rape Roars ceaselessly about on every side."

XVIII.

I had forgotten what I had lightly said,
And without speech, without a thought I went,
Steeped in that golden quiet, all content
To drink the transient beauty as it sped
Out of eternal darkness into time
To light and burn and know itself a fire;
Yet doomed—ah, fate of the fulfilled desire!—
To fade, a meteor, paying for the crime
Of living glorious in the denser air
Of our material earth. A strange despair,
An agony, yet strangely, subtly sweet
And tender as an unpassionate caress,
Filled me . . . Oh laughter! youth's conceit
Grown almost conscious of youth's feebleness!

XIX.

He spoke abrupt across my dream: "Dear Garden, A stranger to your magic peace, I stand Beyond your walls, lost in a fevered land Of stones and fire. Would that the gods would harden My soul against its torment, or would blind Those yearning glimpses of a life at rest In perfect beauty—glimpses at the best Through unpassed bars. And here, without, the wind Of scattering passion blows: and women pass Glitter-eyed down putrid alleys where the glass Of some grimed window suddenly parades—Ah, sickening heart-beat of desire!—the grace Of bare and milk-warm flesh: the vision fades, And at the pane shows a blind tortured face."

XX. SELF. TORMENT.

The days pass by, empty of thought and will: His thought grows stagnant at its very springs, With every channel on the world of things Dammed up, and thus, by its long standing still, Poisons itself and sickens to decay. All his high love for her, his fair desire, Loses its light; and a dull rancorous fire, Burning darkness and bitterness that prey Upon his heart are left. His spirit burns Sometimes with hatred, or the hatred turns To a fierce lust for her, more cruel than hate, Till he is weary wrestling with its force: And evermore she haunts him, early and late, As pitilessly as an old remorse.

XXI.

Streets and the solitude of country places
Were once his friends. But as a man born blind,
Opening his eyes from lovely dreams, might find
The world a desert and men's larval faces
So hateful, he would wish to seek again
The darkness and his old chimeric sight
Of beauties inward—so, that fresh delight,
Vision of bright fields and angelic men,
That love which made him all the world, is gone.
Hating and hated now, he stands alone,
An island-point, measureless gulfs apart
From other lives, from the old happiness
Of being more than self, when heart to heart
Gave all, yet grew the greater, not the less.

XXII. THE QUARRY IN THE WOOD.

Swiftly deliberate, he seeks the place.
A small wind stirs, the copse is bright in the sun:
Like quicksilver the shine and shadow run
Across the leaves. A bramble whips his face,
The tears spring fast, and through the rainbow mist
He sees a world that wavers like the flame
Of a blown candle. Tears of pain and shame,
And lips that once had laughed and sung and kissed
Trembling in the passion of his sobbing breath!
The world a candle shuddering to its death,
And life a darkness, blind and utterly void
Of any love or goodness: all deceit,
This friendship and this God: all shams destroyed,
And truth seen now.

Earth fails beneath his feet.

SONG OF POPLARS

HEPHERD, to you tall poplars tune your flute: Let them pierce, keenly, subtly shrill, The slow blue rumour of the hill; Let the grass cry with an anguish of evening And the great sky be mute. [gold,

Then hearken how the poplar trees unfold Their buds, yet close and gummed and blind, In airy leafage of the mind, Rustling in silvery whispers the twin-hued scales That fade not nor grow old.

"Poplars and fountains and you cypress spires Springing in dark and rusty flame, Seek you aught that hath a name? Or say, say: Are you all an upward agony Of undefined desires?

"Say, are you happy in the golden march Of sunlight all across the day? Or do you watch the uncertain way That leads the withering moon on cloudy stairs Over the heaven's wide arch?

"Is it towards sorrow or towards joy you lift
The sharpness of your trembling spears?
Or do you seek, through the grey tears
That blur the sky, in the heart of the triumphing blue,
A deeper, calmer rift?"

So; I have tuned my music to the trees, And there were voices, dim below Their shrillness, voices swelling slow In the blue murmur of hills, and a golden cry And then vast silences.

THE REEF ST

Y green aquarium of phantom fish,
Goggling in on me through the misty panes;
My rotting leaves and fields spongy with rains;
My few clear quiet autumn days—I wish

I could leave all, clearness and mistiness; Sodden or goldenly crystal, all too still. Yes, and I too rot with the leaves that fill The hollows in the woods; I am grown less

Than human, listless, aimless as the green Idiot fishes of my aquarium, Who loiter down their dim tunnels and come And look at me and drift away, nought seen

Or understood, but only glazedly Reflected. Upwards, upwards through the shadows, Through the lush sponginess of deep-sea meadows Where hare-lipped monsters batten, let me ply

Winged fins, bursting this matrix dark to find Jewels and movement, mintage of sunlight Scattered largely by the profuse wind, And gulfs of blue brightness, too deep for sight.

Free, newly born, on roads of music and air Speeding and singing, I shall seek the place Where all the shining threads of water race, Drawn in green ropes and foamy meshes. There,

On the red fretted ramparts of a tower Of coral rooted in the depths, shall break An endless sequence of joy and speed and power: Green shall shatter to foam; flake with white flake

В

Shall create an instant's shining constellation Upon the blue; and all the air shall be Full of a million wings that swift and free Laugh in the sun, all power and strong elation.

Yes, I shall seek that reef, which is beyond All isles however magically sleeping In tideless seas, uncharted and unconned Save by blind eyes; beyond the laughter and weeping

That brood like a cloud over the lands of men. Movement, passion of colour and pure wings, Curving to cut like knives—these are the things I search for:—passion beyond the ken

Of our foiled violences, and, more swift Than any blow which man aims against time, The invulnerable, motion that shall rift All dimness with the lightning of a rhyme,

Or note, or colour.- And the body shall be Quick as the mind; and will shall find release From bondage to brute things; and joyously Soul, will and body, in the strength of triune peace,

Shall live the perfect grace of power unwasted. And love consummate, marvellously blending Passion and reverence in a single spring Of quickening force, till now never yet tasted,

But ever ceaselessly thirsted for, shall crown The new life with its ageless starry fire. I go to seek that reef, far down, far down Below the edge of everyday's desire, Beyond the magical islands, where of old I was content, dreaming, to give the lie To misery. They were all strong and bold That thither came; and shall I dare to try?

H wind-swept towers,

WINTER DREAM

Oh endlessly blossoming trees,
White clouds and lucid eyes,
And pools in the rocks whose unplumbed blue
With who knows what of subtlety
And magical curves and limbs—
White Anadyomene and her shallow breasts
Mother-of-pearled with light.

And oh the April, April of straight soft hair, Falling smooth as the mountain water and brown; The April of little leaves unblinded, Of rosy nipples and innocence And the blue languor of weary eyelids.

Across a huge gulf I fling my voice
And my desires together:
Across a huge gulf . . . on the other bank
Crouches April with her hair as smooth and straight
As falling waters. [and brown
Oh brave curve upwards and outwards.
Oh despair of the downward tilting—
Despair still beautiful
As a great star one has watched all night
Wheeling down under the hills.
Silence widens and darkens;
Voice and desires have dropped out of sight.
I am all alone, dreaming she would come and kiss me.

THE FLOWERS

AY after day,
At spring's return,
I watch my flowers, how they burn
Their lives away.

The candle crocus
And daffodil gold
Drink fire of the sunshine—
Quickly cold.

And the proud tulip— How red he glows!— Is quenched ere summer Can kindle the rose.

Purple as the innermost Core of a sinking flame, Deep in the leaves the violets smoulder To the dust whence they came.

Day after day
At spring's return,
I watch my flowers, how they burn
Their lives away,
Day after day . . .

THE ELMS

INE as the dust of plumy fountains blowing Across the lanterns of a revelling night,
The tiny leaves of April's earliest growing
Powder the trees—so vaporously light,
They seem to float, billows of emerald foam
Blown by the South on its bright airy tide,

Seeming less trees than things beatified,
Come from the world of thought which was their home.

For a while only. Rooted strong and fast, Soon will they lift towards the summer sky Their mountain-mass of clotted greenery. Their immaterial season quickly past, They grow opaque, and therefore needs must die, Since every earth to earth returns at last.

OUT OF THE WINDOW

Are the little places one passes by in trains
And never stops at; where the skies extend
Uninterrupted, and the level plains
Stretch green and yellow and green without an end.
And behind the glass of their Grand Express
Folk yawn away a province through,
With nothing to think of, nothing to do,
Nothing even to look at—never a "view"
In this damned wilderness,
But I look out of the window and find
Much to satisfy the mind.

N the middle of countries, far from hills and sea.

Mark how the furrows, formed and wheeled In a motion orderly and staid, Sweep, as we pass, across the field Like a drilled army on parade. And here's a market-garden, barred With stripe on stripe of varied greens . . . Bright potatoes, flower starred, And the opacous colour of beans. Each line deliberately swings Towards me, till I see a straight Green avenue to the heart of things. The glimpse of a sudden opened gate Piercing the adverse walls of fate . . . A moment only, and then, fast, fast, The gate swings to, the avenue closes: Fate laughs, and once more interposes Its barriers.

The train has passed.

INSPIRATION ST

OONDAY upon the Alpine meadows Pours its avalanche of Light And blazing flowers: the very shadows Translucent are and bright.

It seems a glory that nought surpasses—
Passion of angels in form and hue—
When, lo! from the jewelled heaven of the grasses
Leaps a lightning of sudden blue.
Dimming the sun-drunk petals,
Bright even unto pain,
The grasshopper flashes, settles,
And then is quenched again.

SUMMER STILLNESS ST

HE stars are golden instants in the deep Flawless expanse of night: the moon is set:
The river sleeps, entranced, a smooth cool sleep Seeming so motionless that I forget

The hollow booming bridges, where it slides, Dark with the sad looks that it bears along, Towards a sea whose unreturning tides Ravish the sighted ships and the sailors' song.

ANNIVERSARIES SA

NCE more the windless days are here, Quiet of autumn, when the year Halts and looks backward and draws breath Before it plunges into death. Silver of mist and gossamers, Through-shine of noonday's glassy gold, Pale blue of skies, where nothing stirs Save one blanched leaf, weary and old, That over and over slowly falls From the mute elm-trees, hanging on air Like tattered flags along the walls Of chapels deep in sunlit prayer. Once more . . . Within its flawless glass To-day reflects that other day, When, under the bracken, on the grass, We who were lovers happily lay And hardly spoke, or framed a thought

That was not one with the calm hills And crystal sky. Ourselves were nought, Our gusty passions, our burning wills Dissolved in boundlessness, and we Were almost bodiless, almost free.

The wind has shattered silver and gold. Night after night of sparkling cold, Orion lifts his tangled feet
From where the tossing branches beat
In a fine surf against the sky.
So the trance ended, and we grew
Restless, we knew not how or why;
And there were sudden gusts that blew
Our dreaming banners into storm;
We wore the uncertain crumbling form
Of a brown swirl of windy leaves,
A phantom shape that stirs and heaves
Shuddering from earth, to fall again
With a dry whisper of withered rain.

Last, from the dead and shrunken days
We conjured spring, lighting the blaze
Of burnished tulips in the dark;
And from black frost we struck a spark
Of blue delight and fragrance new,
A little world of flowers and dew.
Winter for us was over and done:
The drought of fluttering leaves had grown
Emerald shining in the sun,
As light as glass, as firm as stone.
Real once more: for we had passed

Through passion into thought again; Shaped our desires and made that fast Which was before a cloudy pain; Moulded the dimness, fixed, defined In a fair statue, strong and free, Twin bodies flaming into mind, Poised on the brink of ecstasy.

ITALY ST

HERE is a country in my mind,
Lovelier than a poet blind
Could dream of, who had never known
This world of drought and dust and stone

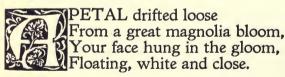
In all its ugliness: a place
Full of an all but human grace;
Whose dells retain the printed form
Of heavenly sleep, and seem yet warm
From some pure body newly risen;
Where matter is no more a prison,
But freedom for the soul to know
Its native beauty. For things glow
There with an inward truth and are
All fire and colour like a star.
And in that land are domes and towers
That hang as light and bright as flowers
Upon the sky, and seem a birth
Rather of air than solid earth.

Sometimes I dream that walking there In the green shade, all unaware At a new turn of the golden glade,

I shall see her, and as though afraid Shall halt a moment and almost fall For passing faintness, like a man Who feels the sudden spirit of Pan Brimming his narrow soul with all The illimitable world. And she. Turning her head, will let me see The first sharp dawn of her surprise Turning to welcome in her eyes. And I shall come and take my lover And looking on her re-discover All her beauty:—her dark hair And the little ears beneath it, where Roses of lucid shadow sleep; Her brooding mouth, and in the deep Wells of her eyes reflected stars . . .

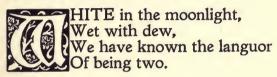
Oh, the imperishable things
That hands and lips as well as words
Shall speak! Oh movement of white wings,
Oh wheeling galaxies of birds . . .!

THE ALIEN ST



We seemed alone: but another Bent o'er you with lips of flame, Unknown, without a name, Hated, and yet my brother. Your one short moan of pain
Was an exorcising spell:
The devil flew back to hell;
We were alone again.

A LITTLE MEMORY ST



We have been weary As children are, When over them, radiant, A stooping star,

Bends their Good-Night, Kissed and smiled:— Each was mother, Each was child.

Child, from your forehead I kissed the hair, Gently, ah, gently: And you were

Mistress and mother When on your breast I lay so safely And could rest.

WAKING ST

ARKNESS had stretched its colour,
Deep blue across the pane:
No cloud to make night duller,
No moon with its tarnish stain;
But only here and there a star,
One sharp point of frosty fire,
Hanging infinitely far
In mockery of our life and death
And all our small desire.

Now in this hour of waking
From under brows of stone,
A new pale day is breaking
And the deep night is gone.
Sordid now, and mean and small
The daylight world is seen again,
With only the veils of mist that fall
Deaf and muffling over all
To hide its ugliness and pain.

But to-day this dawn of meanness
Shines in my eyes, as when
The new world's brightness and cleanness
Broke on the first of men.
For the light that shows the huddled things
Of this close-pressing earth,
Shines also on your face and brings
All its dear beauty back to me
In a new miracle of birth.

I see you asleep and unpassioned,
White-faced in the dusk of your hair—
Your beauty so fleetingly fashioned
That it filled me once with despair
To look on its exquisite transience
And think that our love and thought and laughter
Puff out with the death of our flickering sense,
While we pass ever on and away
Towards some blank hereafter.

But now I am happy, knowing
That swift time is our friend,
And that our love's passionate glowing,
Though it turn ash in the end,
Is a rose of fire that must blossom its way
Through temporal stuff, nor else could be
More than a nothing. Into day
The boundless spaces of night contract
And in your opening eyes I see
Night born in day, in time eternity.

BY THE FIRE

E who are lovers sit by the fire, Cradled warm 'twixt thought and will, Sit and drowse like sleeping dogs. In the equipoise of all desire, Sit and listen to the still Small hiss and whisper of green logs. That burn away, that burn away With the sound of a far-off falling stream Of threaded water blown to steam, Grey ghost in the mountain world of grey.

Vapours blue as distance rise Between the hissing logs that show A glimpse of rosy heat below: And candles watch with tireless eyes While we sit drowsing here. I know, Dimly, that there exists a world, That there is time perhaps, and space Other and wider than this place, Where at the fireside drowsily curled We hear the whisper and watch the flame Burn blinkless and inscrutable. And then I know those other names That through my brain from cell to cell Echo—reverberated shout Of waiters mournful along corridors: But nobody carries the orders out. And the names (dear friends, your name and yours) Evoke no sign. But here I sit On the wide hearth, and there are you: That is enough and only true. The world and the friends that lived in it Are shadows: you alone remain Real in this drowsing room, Full of the whispers of distant rain And candles staring into the gloom.

VALEDICTORY SO

HAD remarked—how sharply one observes
When life is disappearing round the curves
Of yet another corner, out of sight!—
I had remarked when it was "good luck" and

"good night"
And "a good journey to you," on her face
Certain enigmas penned in the hieroglyphs
Of that half frown and queer fixed smile and trace
Of clouded thought in those brown eyes,
Always so happily clear of hows and ifs—
My poor bleared mind!—and haunting whys.

There I stood, holding her farewell hand, (Pressing my life and soul and all The world to one good-bye, till, small And smaller pressed, why there I'd stand Dead when they vanished with the sight of her). And I saw that she had grown aware, Oueer puzzled face! of other things Beyond the present and her own young speed, Of yesterday and what new days might breed Monstrously when the future brings A charger with your late-lamented head: Aware of other people's lives and will, Aware, perhaps, aware even of me . . . The joyous hope of it! But still I pitied her; for it was sad to see A goddess shorn of her divinity. In the midst of her speed she had made pause, And doubts with all their threat of claws. Outstripped till now by her unconsciousness,

Had seized on her; she was proved mortal now. "Live, only live! For you were meant Never to know a thought's distress, But a long glad astonishment At the world's beauty and your own. The pity of you, goddess, grown Perplexed and mortal."

Yet . . . yet . . . can it be That she is aware, perhaps, even of me?

And life recedes, recedes; the curve is bare, My handkerchief flutters blankly in the air; And the question rumbles in the void: Was she aware, was she after all aware?

LOVE SONG ST

EAR absurd child—too dear to my cost I've found— God made your soul for pleasure, not for use: It cleaves no way, but angled broad obtuse, Impinges with a slabby-bellied Full upon life, and on the rind of things [sound Rubs its sleek self and utters purr and snore And all the gamut of satisfied murmurings, Content with that, nor wishes anything more.

A happy infant, daubed to the eyes in juice Of peaches that flush bloody at the core, Naked you bask upon a south-sea shore, While o'er your tumbling bosom the hair floats loose. The wild flowers bloom and die; the heavens go round With the song of wheeling planetary rings: You wriggle in the sun; each moment brings Its freight for you; in all things pleasures abound.

You taste and smile, then this for the next pass over; And there's no future for you and no past, And when, absurdly, death arrives at last, 'Twill please you awhile to kiss your latest lover.

PRIVATE PROPERTY ST

The actual men and things that pass Jostling, to wither as the grass So soon: and (be it heaven's hope,

Or poetry's kaleidoscope,
Or love or wine, at feast, at mass)
Each owns a paradise of glass
Where never a yearning heliotrope
Pursues the sun's ascent or slope;
For the sun dreams there, and no time is or was.

Like fauns embossed in our domain, We look abroad, and our calm eyes Mark how the goatish gods of pain Revel; and if by grim surprise They break into our paradise, Patient we build its beauty up again.

REVELATION ST

T your mouth, white and milk-warm sphinx, I taste a strange apocalypse:
Your subtle taper finger-tips
Weave me new heavens, yet, methinks,
I know the wiles and each iynx
That brought me passionate to your lips:
I know you bare as laughter strips

Pure knowledge from this tainted well, And now hears voices yet unheard Within it, and without it sees That world of which the poets tell Their vision in the stammered word Of those that wake from piercing ecstasies.

Your charnel beauty: yet my spirit drinks

MINOAN PORCELAIN

ER eyes of bright unwinking glaze All imperturbable do not Even make pretences to regard The justing absence of her stays, Where many a Tyrian gallipot Excites desire with spilth of nard. The bistred rims above the fard Of cheeks as red as bergamot Attest that no shamefaced delays Will clog fulfilment, nor retard Full payment of the Cyprian's praise Down to the last remorseful jot. Hail priestess of we know not what Strange cult of Mycenean days!

THE DECAMERON ST

OON with a depth of shadow beneath the trees Shakes in the heat, quivers to the sound of lutes: Half shaded, half sunlit, a great bowl of fruits Glistens purple and golden: the

flasks of wine
Cool in their panniers of snow: silks muffle and shine:
Dim velvet, where through the leaves a sunbeam shoots,
Rifts in a pane of scarlet: fingers tapping the roots
Keep languid time to the music's soft slow decline.

Suddenly from the gate rises up a cry, Hideous broken laughter, scarce human in sound; Gaunt clawed hands, thrust through the bars despair-Clutch fast at the scented air, while on the ground [ingly, Lie the poor plague-stricken carrions, who have found Strength to crawl forth and curse the sunshine and die.

IN UNCERTAINTY TO A LADY 🥒

AM not one of those who sip, Like a quotidian bock, Cheap idylls from a languid lip Prepared to yawn or mock.

I wait the indubitable word, The great Unconscious Cue. Has it been spoken and unheard? Spoken, perhaps, by you . . .?

CRAPULOUS IMPRESSION ST

(To J.S.)

TILL life, still life . . . the high-lights shine Hard and sharp on the bottles: the wine Stands firmly solid in the glasses, Smooth yellow ice, through which there passes The lamp's bright pencil of down-struck light. The fruits metallically gleam, Globey in their heaped-up bowl,

The fruits metallically gleam,
Globey in their heaped-up bowl,
And there are faces against the night
Of the outer room—faces that seem
Part of this still, still life . . . they've lost their soul.

And amongst these frozen faces you smiled,
Surprised, surprisingly, like a child:
And out of the frozen welter of sound
Your voice came quietly, quietly.
"What about God?" you said. "I have found
Much to be said for Totality.
All, I take it, is God: God's all—
This bottle, for instance . . ." I recall,
Dimly, that you took God by the neck—
God-in-the-bottle—and pushed Him across:
But I, without a moment's loss
Moved God-in-the-salt in front and shouted: "Check!"

THE LIFE THEORETIC

HILE I have been fumbling over books And thinking about God and the Devil and all, Other young men have been battling with the days And others have been kissing the beautiful women. They have brazen faces like battering-But I who think about books and such— I crumble to impotent dust before the struggling. And the women palsy me with fear. But when it comes to fumbling over books

And thinking about God and the Devil and all, Why, there I am.

But perhaps the battering-rams are in the right of it, Perhaps, perhaps . . . God knows.

COMPLAINT OF A POET MANQUÉ 🥒

TE judge by appearance merely: 🔄 If I can't think strangely, I can at least look queerly. So I grew the hair so long on my head That my mother wouldn't know me, Till a woman in a night-club said,

As I was passing by,

"Hullo, here comes Salome . . . "

I looked in the dirty gilt-edged glass, And, oh Salome; there I was-Positively jewelled, half a vampire, With the soul in my eyes hanging dizzily Like the gatherer of proverbial samphire Over the brink of the crag of sense.

Looking down from perilous eminence Into a gulf of windy night. And there's straw in my tempestuous hair, And I'm not a poet: but never despair! I'll madly live the poems I shall never write.

SOCIAL AMENITIES

AM getting on well with this anecdote,
When suddenly I recall
The many times I have told it of old,
And all the worked-up phrases, and the dying
Of voice, well timed in the crisis, the note
Of mock-heroic ingeniously struck—
The whole thing sticks in my throat,
And my face all tingles and pricks with shame
For myself and my hearers.
These are the social pleasures, my God!
But I finish the story triumphantly all the same.

TOPIARY 🥒

AlLING sometimes to understand
Why there are folk whose flesh should seem
Like carrion puffed with noisome steam,
Fly-blown to the eye that looks on it,
Fly-blown to the touch of a hand;
Why there are men without any legs,
Whizzing along on little trollies
With long long arms like apes':
Failing to see why God the Topiarist
Should train and carve and twist
Men's bodies into such fantastic shapes:

Yes, failing to see the point of it all, I sometimes wish That I were a fabulous thing in a fool's mind, Or, at the ocean bottom, in a world that is deaf and Very remote and happy, a great goggling fish. [blind,

ON THE BUS

ITTING on the top of the 'bus,
I bite my pipe and look at the sky.
Over my shoulder the smoke streams out
And my life with it.

"Conservation of energy," you say.
But I burn, I tell you, I burn;
And the smoke of me streams out
In a vanishing skein of grey.
Crash and bump . . . my poor bruised body!
I am a harp of twittering strings,
An elegant instrument, but infinitely second-hand,
And if I have not got phthisis it is only an accident.
Droll phenomena!

POINTS AND LINES

NSTANTS in the quiet, small sharp stars, Pierce my spirit with a thrust whose speed Baffles even the grasp of time. Oh that I might reflect them As swiftly, as keenly as they shine. But I am a pool of waters, summer-still, And the stars are mirrored across me; Those stabbing points of the sky Turned to a thread of shaken silver, A long fine thread.

PANIC S

HE eyes of the portraits on the wall Look at me, follow me, Stare incessantly: I take it their glance means nothing at all?

-Clearly, oh clearly! Nothing at all . . .

Out in the gardens by the lake The sleeping peacocks suddenly wake: Out in the gardens, moonlit and forlorn. Each of them sounds his mournful horn: Shrill peals that waver and crack and break. What can have made the peacocks wake?

RETURN FROM BUSINESS

VENINGS in trains. When the little black twittering ghosts Along the brims of cuttings, Against the luminous sky,

Interrupt with their hurrying rumour every thought Save that one is young and setting, Headlong westering,

STANZAS 🥒

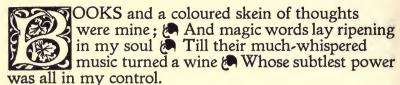
HOUGHT is an unseen net wherein our mind Is taken and vainly struggles to be free: Words, that should loose our spirit, do but bind New fetters on our hoped-for liberty:

And action bears us onward like a stream
Past fabulous shores, scarce seen in our swift course;
Glorious—and yet its headlong currents seem
Backwaters of some nobler purer force.

There are slow curves, more subtle far than thought, That stoop to carry the grace of a girl's breast; And hanging flowers, so exquisitely wrought In airy metal, that they seem possessed Of souls; and there are distant hills that lift The shoulder of a goddess towards the light; And arrowy trees, sudden and sharp and swift, Piercing the spirit deeply with delight.

Would I might make these miracles my own! Like a pure angel, thinking colour and form, Hardening to rage in a flame of chiselled stone, Spilling my love like sunlight, golden and warm On noonday flowers, speaking the song of birds Among the branches, whispering the fall of rain, Beyond all thought, past action and past words, I would live in beauty, free from self and pain.

POEM 🥒



These things were mine, and they were real for me As lips and darling eyes and a warm breast: For I could love a phrase, a melody, Like a fair woman, worshipped and possessed.

I scorned all fire that outward of the eyes Could kindle passion; scorned, yet was afraid; Feared, and yet envied those more deeply wise Who saw the bright earth beckon and obeyed.

But a time came when, turning full of hate And weariness from my remembered themes, I wished my poet's pipe could modulate Beauty more palpable than words and dreams.

All loveliness with which an act informs The dim uncertain chaos of desire Is mine to-day; it touches me, it warms Body and spirit with its outward fire.

I am mine no more: I have become a part Of that great earth that draws a breath and stirs To meet the spring. But I could wish my heart Were still a winter of frosty gossamers.

SCENES OF THE MIND

TAIHAVE run where festival was loud

With drum and brass among the crowd Of panic revellers, whose Affront the quiet of the skies; Whose dancing lights contract the deep Infinity of night and sleep To a narrow turmoil of troubled fire. And I have found my heart's desire In beechen caverns that autumn fills With the blue shadowiness of distant hills: Whose luminous grey pillars bear The stooping sky: calm is the air, Nor any sound is heard to mar That crystal silence—as from far, Far off a man may see The busy world all utterly Hushed as an old memorial scene. Long evenings I have sat and been Strangely content, while in my hands I held a wealth of coloured strands. Shimmering plaits of silk and skeins Of soft bright wool. Each colour drains New life at the lamp's round pool of gold; Each sinks again when I withhold The quickening radiance, to a wan And shadowy oblivion Of what it was. And in my mind Beauty or sudden love has shined And wakened colour in what was dead And turned to gold the sullen lead Of mean desires and everyday's

Poor thoughts and customary ways. Sometimes in lands where mountains throw Their silent spell on all below, Drawing a magic circle wide About their feet on every side, Robbed of all speech and thought and act. I have seen God in the cataract. In falling water and in flame, Never at rest, yet still the same, God shows himself. And I have known The swift fire frozen into stone. And water frozen changelessly Into the death of gems. And I Long sitting by the thunderous mill Have seen the headlong wheel made still. And in the silence that ensued Have known the endless solitude Of being dead and utterly nought. Inhabitant of mine own thought. I look abroad, and all I see Is my creation, made for me: Along my thread of life are pearled The moments that make up the world.

L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE 🥒

(From the French of Stéphane Mallarmé.)

WOULD immortalize these nymphs: so bright
Their sunlit colouring, so airy light,
It floats like drowsing down. Loved I a dream?
My doubts, born of oblivious darkness, seem
A subtle tracery of branches grown

The tree's true self—proving that I have known No triumph, but the shadow of a rose. But think. These nymphs, their loveliness . . . suppose They bodied forth your senses' fabulous thirst? Illusion! which the blue eyes of the first, As cold and chaste as is the weeping spring. Beget: the other, sighing, passioning, Is she the wind, warm in your fleece at noon? No, through this quiet, when a weary swoon Crushes and chokes the latest faint essay Of morning, cool against the encroaching day. There is no murmuring water, save the gush Of my clear fluted notes; and in the hush Blows never a wind, save that which through my reed Puffs out before the rain of notes can speed Upon the air, with that calm breath of art That mounts the unwrinkled zenith visibly, Where inspiration seeks its native sky. You fringes of a calm Sicilian lake, The sun's own mirror which I love to take. Silent beneath your starry flowers, tell How here I cut the hollow rushes, well Tamed by my skill, when on the glaucous gold Of distant lawns about their fountain cold A living whiteness stirs like a lazy wave; And at the first slow notes my panpipes gave These flocking swans, these naiads, rather, fly Or dive. Noon burns inert and tawny dry. Nor marks how clean that Hymen slipped away From me who seek in song the real A. Wake, then, to the first ardour and the sight, O lonely faun, of the old fierce white light. With, lilies, one of you for innocence.

Other than their lips' delicate pretence,
The light caress that quiets treacherous lovers,
My breast, I know not how to tell, discovers
The bitten print of some immortal's kiss.
But hush! a mystery so great as this
I dare not tell, save to my double reed,
Which, sharer of my every joy and need,
Dreams down its cadenced monologues that we
Falsely confuse the beauties that we see
With the bright palpable shapes our song creates:
My flute, as loud as passion modulates,
Purges the common dream of flank and breast,
Seen through closed eyes and inwardly caressed,
Of every empty and monotonous line.

Bloom then, O Syrinx, in thy flight malign, A reed once more beside our trysting-lake. Proud of my music, let me often make A song of goddesses and see their rape Profanely done on many a painted shape. So when the grape's transparent juice I drain, I quell regret for pleasures past and feign A new real grape. For holding towards the sky The empty skin, I blow it tight and lie Dream-drunk till evening, eyeing it.

Tell o'er

Remembered joys and plump the grape once more. Between the reeds I saw their bodies gleam Who cool no mortal fever in the stream Crying to the woods the rage of their desire: And their bright hair went down in jewelled fire Where crystal broke and dazzled shudderingly.

I check my swift pursuit: for see where lie, Bruised, being twins in love, by languor sweet. Two sleeping girls, clasped at my very feet. I seize and run with them, nor part the pair, Breaking this covert of frail petals, where Roses drink scent of the sun and our light play 'Mid tumbled flowers shall match the death of day. I love that virginal fury—ah, the wild Thrill when a maiden body shrinks, defiled, Shuddering like arctic light, from lips that sear Its nakedness . . . the flesh in secret fear! Contagiously through my linked pair it flies Where innocence in either, struggling, dies, Wet with fond tears or some less piteous dew. Gay in the conquest of these fears, I grew So rash that I must needs the sheaf divide Of ruffled kisses heaven itself had tied. For as I leaned to stifle in the hair Of one my passionate laughter (taking care With a stretched finger, that her innocence Might stain with her companion's kindling sense To touch the younger little one, who lav Child-like unblushing) my ungrateful prey Slips from me, freed by passion's sudden death, Nor heeds the frenzy of my sobbing breath.

Let it pass! others of their hair shall twist A rope to drag me to those joys I missed. See how the ripe pomegranates bursting red To quench the thirst of the mumbling bees have bled; So too our blood, kindled by some chance fire, Flows for the swarming legions of desire. At evening, when the woodland green turns gold And ashen grey, 'mid the quenched leaves, behold! Red Etna glows, by Venus visited, Walking the lava with her snowy tread Whene'er the flames in thunderous slumber die. I hold the goddess!

Ah, sure penalty!

But the unthinking soul and body swoon
At last beneath the heavy hush of noon.
Forgetful let me lie where summer's drouth
Sifts fine the sand and then with gaping mouth
Dream planet-struck by the grape's round wine-red star.

Nymphs, I shall see the shade that now you are.

THE LOUSE-HUNTERS SA

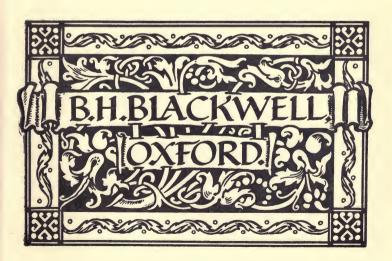
(From the French of Rimbaud).

HEN the child's forehead, full of torments red, Cries out for sleep and its pale host of dreams, His two big sisters come unto his bed, Having long fingers, tipped with silvery gleams.

They set him at a casement, open wide On seas of flowers that stir in the blue airs, And through his curls, all wet with dew, they slide Those terrible searching finger-tips of theirs. He hears them breathing, softly, fearfully, Honey-sweet ruminations, slow respired: Then a sharp hiss breaks time and melody—Spittle indrawn, old kisses new-desired.

Down through the perfumed silences he hears Their eyelids fluttering: long fingers thrill, Probing a lassitude bedimmed with tears, While the nails crunch at every louse they kill.

He is drunk with Languor—soft accordion-sigh, Delirious wine of Love in Idleness; Longings for tears come welling up and die, As slow or swift he feels their magical caress.



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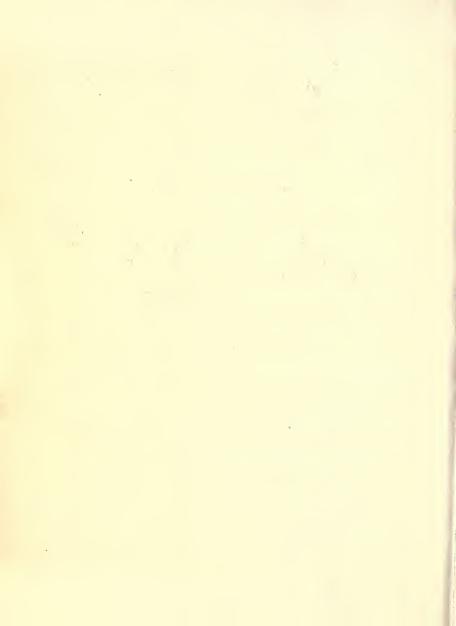
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