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CONTEMPORARY BELGIAN POETRY

Selected and Translated

by

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1911

To Émile Verhaeren.

Tout bouge—et l'on dirait les horizons en marche.

Now let the dead past fall into the deep,
With all its sleepy songs and churching chimes,
You are the Bell that gospels mightier times
O'er men who scale the Future's rugged steep,
Not looking back to where the weaklings creep,
But, with for battle-song your iron rimes,
Marching front forwards to the visioned climes
Where hearts are steeled and furious forces sweep.

Of Jewish idols and Greek gods they sang,
But louder than their voice hard anvils rang,
And o'er their gardens smoke trailed waving hair;
But while the old was ruined by the new,
You pointed to a City far more fair;
And, Master, with glad hearts we follow You.

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INTRODUCTION.

Otto Hauser refers the Belgian renaissance in art and literature to the influence of the pre-Raphaelites. The influence of painting is at all events certain.^[1] That of music is not less marked.^[2] Baudelaire has been continued by Rodenbach, Giraud, and Gilkin. Verlaine's method in *Fêtes galantes* is imitated in Giraud's *Héros et Pierrots* (Fischbacher, Paris). The naturalistic style of Zola was independently initiated in Belgium by Camille Lemonnier, who directly influenced Verhaeren. But the most potent influence is that of Mallarmé, whose symbolism has transformed contemporary poetry. It was a feature of the symbolists to return to the free metres and the simplicity of the folk-song; and there are echoes of popular poetry in the verse of Braun, Elskamp, Gérardy, Kinon, van Lerberghe, and Mockel.

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Belgium is a country of mixed nationalities. The two languages spoken are Flemish and French. Flemish is a Low German dialect, the written form of which is identical with Dutch. Practically all educated Flemings speak French, which is the official language; the French Belgians, who rarely know Flemish,^[3] are called Walloons. Only those authors who write in French are represented in the present volume, and they may be classed as follows:

Flemings:—Elskamp (French mother), Fontainas (French admixture), Giraud, Kinon (Walloon admixture), van Lerberghe, Le Roy, Maeterlinck, Ramaekers, Verhaeren.

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Walloons:—Bonmariage (English mother), Braun (German grandfather), Isi-Collin, Jean Dominique, Gérardy (Prussian Walloon), Gilkin (Flemish mother), Gille, Marlow (English grandfather), Mockel (distant German extraction), Rency, Séverin.

The Belgian poets are again divided into two very hostile camps with regard to metrical questions. The Parnassians (the term is used for want of a better) cling to the traditional forms of French verse (what Byron called "monotony in wire"), and to the time-honoured diction; whereas the *verslibristes* use the free forms of verse imported into France from Germany by Jules Laforgue, and perfected by (among others) the American Vielé-Griffin. It must be noted, however, that there is a tendency among the *verslibristes* to return to the classical style: Verhaeren, who wrote in *vers libres* after his first two volumes, has, in his last book, *Les Rythmes souverains*, approximated to the regular alexandrine. Van Lerberghe, in a letter written in 1905, condemns the *vers libre*; but his own work is an immortal monument of its practicability.^[4] The chief Parnassians are Giraud, Gilkin (whose *Prométhée*, however, is in *vers libres*), Gille, and Séverin, Max Elskamp is a *verslibriste* only in his use of assonance.

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Belgian literature begins, for all practical purposes, with Charles de Coster's national epic *Uylenspiegel*. De Coster died young, and was followed by the novelist Camille Lemonnier (1844-). Then comes the flood-tide, not in literature only, for Fernand Khnopff, Georges Minnes, Théo van Rysselberghe (the bosom friend of Verhaeren), and Constantin Meunier are as distinguished in painting and sculpture as, for instance, Georges Eekhoud and Joris-Karl Huysmans are in the novel.

The beginnings of the modern movement, which was directed, in the first instance, against Philistinism, may be traced back to the group of bellicose students who were gathered together at the University of Louvain about 1880.^[5] Some of them, among whom were Émile Verhaeren and Ernest van Dyk (the famous Wagner tenor) founded a magazine, *La Semaine des Etudiants*, which was soon suppressed by the University authorities. Other students who later became famous were Iwan Gilkin and Albert Giraud; and Edmond Deman, who was to become Verhaeren's publisher and a maker of beautiful books. Another student, Max Waller, who, till his early death in 1889, was the imp of mischief in the literary world of Belgium, founded, in rivalry with *La Semaine*, the magazine *Le Type*, which was also suppressed. Later on Max Waller founded, in 1882, at Brussels, together with Georges Eekhoud and Gilkin, *La Jeune Belgique*, a review to which all the young bloods contributed, making common cause until they divided into *verslibristes* and Parnassians, after which the review was carried on, under the successive editorship of Waller, Gille, and Gilkin, as the organ of the French party ("l'art pour l'art et le culte de la forme"^[6]). Other reviews which provided a battling-ground were *L'Art Moderne*^[7] to which Verhaeren contributed, and *La Wallonie*, which Albert Mockel founded at Liège in 1884.

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The exuberant vitality of these students, though it often led them into extremes, laid the foundation of a literature which is in many respects the most remarkable of contemporary Europe. Now that Tolstoy is dead, Maeterlinck and Verhaeren stand at the head of the literature of the whole world; and they are, as Johannes Schlaf has maintained, the perfect types of the "new European." It is absurd to consider them as Frenchmen; they are as much the product of

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their country as Ibsen is of Norway.

Modern Belgium, "between ardent France and grave Germany," the focus of all the roads of Europe, is as rich in intellectual gifts as it is teeming with material wealth. "The vitality of the Belgians," says Stefan Zweig in his splendid book on Verhaeren, "is magnificent. In no other part of Europe is life lived with such intensity, such gaiety. In no other country as in Flanders is excess in sensuality and pleasure a function of strength. The Flemings must be seen in their sensual life, in the avidity they bring to it, in the conscious joy they feel in it, in the endurance they show. It was in orgies that Jordaens found the models of his pictures: in every kermesse, in every funeral feast you could find them to this very day. Statistics show us that Belgium stands at the head of Europe in its consumption of alcohol. Out of every two houses one is an inn. Every town, every village has its brewery, and the brewers are the richest traders in the country. Nowhere else are festivals so animated, so noisy, so unrestrained. Nowhere else is life so loved, and lived with such superabundance, at such fever-heat." It is a land that has conquered the sea, and Spain, and is still unspent, raging with greedy appetites of body and brain. Verhaeren has vaunted it in himself:

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"Je suis le fils de cette race
Dont les cerveaux plus que les dents
Sont solides et sont ardents
Et sont voraces.
Je suis le fils de cette race
Tenace,
Qui veut, après avoir voulu,
Encore, encore et encore plus."^[8]

The greatest of all French poets, past and present, is Émile Verhaeren. He was born in 1855 at Saint Amand, a village on the Scheldt to the east of Antwerp. He has described the impressions of his childhood among the polders in his charming book *Les Tendresses premières* (1904), the processions of ships sailing, like a dream plumed with wind, down the river under the stars, the dikes, "la verte immensité des plaines et des plaines"; and in the superb symbolism of *Les Villages illusoires* he has magnified the villagers at their trades. He was educated at the Jesuit school Sainte-Barbe in Ghent, with Georges Rodenbach for a schoolfellow. Then he studied law at Louvain, made some feint of practising at Brussels, and, in 1883, burst upon his countrymen with his audacious book *Les Flamandes*, the fruit of close study of Flemish *genre*-painting and the poetry of Maupassant. An indignant critic called him "the Raphael of filth"; but he rehabilitated himself by "*Les Moines*" (1886), sonorous poems mirroring life in a Flemish monastery, painting monks whose asceticism is as savage and voluptuous as the huge joy in life illustrated in *Les Flamandes*.

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These two books glow with health. But the poet had impaired his constitution by riotous living; and the trilogy which now followed, *Les Soirs* (1887), *Les Débâcles* (1888), and *Les Flambeaux noirs* (1890), form one long elegy of disease. These years, his "pathological period," were full of the blackest pessimism and despair. He was much in London at this time, in isolation all the more desperate as he could not speak English. He was fascinated by the atmosphere of the English capital, its immensity, its desolation, its fogs, identifying his own mind with all of it: "*O mon âme du soir, ce Londres noir qui traîne en toi!*" "Je suis l'immensément perdu," he cries out in despair; he yearns for his brain to give way: "When shall I have the atrocious joy of seeing madness, nerve by nerve, attack my mind?" But the very keenness of his self-observation gradually brings him healing: a mastery of the body by the brain. This intense wrestling with disease is full of significance, and one of the lessons which Verhaeren has to teach is that new conditions of existence, the din and dust of great cities, the never-resting activity of modern brains, will create a new man whose nervous system will be able to bear the strain imposed upon it. And when one sees Verhaeren turning from self-torture to lose himself in the energy of the restlessly progressing world, one thinks of John Addington Symonds growing stronger over "*Leaves of Grass*." His recovery and reconciliation with life are symbolized in his poem *Saint George*, one of the collection *Les Apparatus dans mes Chemins* (1891).

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In his first two books he had been a realist and a Parnassian. The volumes which follow are in *vers libres*, and they are, to a certain extent, symbolistic. *Les Villages illusoires* (1894) is all symbolism: the ferryman is the stubborn artist with the green reed of hope between his teeth; the fishermen symbolize the selfish society of to-day; the ropemaker weaves the horizons of the future.

Les Campagnes hallucinées (1893) describes the desolation of the country, deserted to glut the cities; *Les Villes tentaculaires* (1895) is a cinematograph of the town, while the play *Les Aubes* (1898) completes the trilogy, and prophesies the dawn of a better day after a cleansing with blood. In these three books contemporary life is visualized, reviled, condoned, explained, and reconciled with beauty. Poets (except Walt Whitman, whom Verhaeren continues) have turned their eyes away from the present to the past, and sung of rural quiet rather than of urban roar. When Henley's poem on the motor-car appeared, there was a cry of derision; but the only thing that was wrong with the poem was that it was not poetry. Verhaeren, however, has smitten poetry out of workshops, anvils, locomotives, girders, braziers, pavements, gin-shops, brothels, the Stock Exchange—out of all that is monstrous and ugly to those who look at material things, as Ruskin did, with the eyes of the past. The accepted ideal of beauty is Grecian; but to Verhaeren the beauty of a thing is not in its outward form, but in the idea that moves it. In Greece the athlete was beautiful; but strength to-day is in the nerves; to-day we see more beauty in a face

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moulded by mind than in the thews of a discus-thrower. Smoke is beautiful in the pictures of Whistler and Monet; the toil of grimy workmen is sublime in the sculpture of Constantin Meunier.

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[9] For Verhaeren, as Stefan Zweig says, "a thing is the more beautiful the more finality, will, power, energy it contains. The whole universe at the present moment is overheated; it is straining in throes of endeavour; our great towns are nothing but centres of multiplied energy; their machines are the expression of forces tamed and organized; their innumerable crowds are joined together in harmonious action. Thus to Verhaeren all things appear full of beauty. He loves our epoch because it does not disperse effort, but condenses it, because it is not scattered, but concentrated for action. All that has will, and an aim in view, man, machine, crowd, town, capital; all that vibrates, works, hammers, travels; all that bears in itself fire, impulse, electricity, and feeling—all this rings in his verse. Everything lives its minute; in this multiple gear there is no dust, no useless ornamentation; but everywhere is creation; the feeling of the future directs all action. The town is a living being."

Verhaeren knows the great cities of Europe. He has felt the spell of Hamburg, as well as of Hildesheim and of little towns in Spain. We have seen him during his period of depression isolated in London, and while in England he was fascinated by the reek of soot and tar in Liverpool and Glasgow. In London he would take a ticket to anywhere on "the underground," and roll along for hours; he wandered about the docks, and dreamed among the mummies in the British Museum. And though the town of his poems may be any town, it is no doubt, at the back of his mind, London.

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In *Les Heures claires* (1896) and *Les Heures d'après-midi* (1905), Verhaeren sings the "douce accalmie" of his wedded life. To translate some of the poems in these collections would be like forcing one's way into a sanctuary. As this:

"Très doucement, plus doucement encore,
Berce ma tête entre tes bras,
Mon front fiévreux et mes yeux las;
Très doucement, plus doucement encore,
Baise mes lèvres, et dis-moi
Ces mots plus doux à chaque aurore,
Quand me les dit ta voix
Et que tu t'es donnée, et que je t'aime encore."

In another trilogy *Toute la Flandre* (*Les Tendresses premières*, 1904; *La Guirlande des Dunes*, 1907; *Les Héros*, 1908) he sings his native province. Of his plays, *Le Cloître*, in the translation of Osman Edwards, was staged, with honour and glory to all concerned, by the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester in 1910.

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The reputation of Verhaeren's schoolfellow, Georges Rodenbach (1855-98), has waned considerably since his death. He trails such weary Alexandrines as:

"Aux heures du soir morne où l'on voudrait mourir,
Où l'on se sent le cur trop seul, l'âme trop lasse,
Quel rafraîchissement de se voir dans la glace."

Verhaeren and Rodenbach were followed on the benches of the Collège Sainte-Barbe at Ghent by Charles van Lerberghe, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Grégoire Le Roy. Van Lerberghe's first work, *Les Fleurs* (1889), is in a style which is said to have suggested that of Maeterlinck's first plays. His comedy *Pan* (1906) is full of devilment. In his lyric verse there is no sediment; all is clear and rippling like a beck dancing down a hill-side in the sunshine of summer dawn. If poetry is music, he is a poet unparalleled. He sings

"Avec des mots
Si frais, si virginaux,
Avec des mots si purs,
Qu'ils tremblent dans l'azur,
Et semblent dits,
Pour la première fois au paradis."

What a gem is this poem:—

Elle dort dans l'ombre des branches,
Parmi les fleurs du bel été.
Une fleur au soleil se penche....
N'est ce pas un cygne enchanté?

Elle dort doucement et songe.
Son sein respire lentement.
Vers son sein nu la fleur allonge
Son long col frêle et vacillant.

Et sans qu'elle s'en effarouche,
La longue, pâle fleur a mis,
Silencieusement, sa bouche
Autour du bean sein endormi.

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"Ce que nous enseigne Charles van Lerberghe," says Albert Mockel in his masterly book on his friend, "c'est la puissance de la grâce. Le charme de ses vers est unique; le sentiment dont ils nous pénètrent a une sorte de plénitude heureuse qui console le cur en appelant l'âme vers la clarté. Une onde invisible nous rafraîchit, nous pacifie ... Mais la force des plus grands peut seule se fléchir à une pareille douceur, et il faut la sûreté d'un incomparable artiste pour faire de la parole écrite cette chose lumineuse et impondérable qui semble autour de nous comme une poussière d'or suspendue."

It is scarcely necessary to enter into details here about Maeterlinck; he needs no introduction to English readers. He has only published one volume of lyrics, *Serres Chaudes* (1889), which is now printed with the fifteen songs he wrote later. In a music laden with sleep rise the faint, forced lilies of a super-sensitive soul, looking through glass darkly at a world whose contradictions seem irreconcilable. Verhaeren has characterized these poems as follows: "C'était d'une inattendue angoisse, d'une extraordinaire et infinie tristesse, d'une plainte profonde et simple sortie de l'instinct scellé au fond de nous-mêmes. Cela ne s'expliquait pas, mais cela perforait le fond de notre âme et trouvait sa justification dans tout l'inexplicable et dans tout l'inconnu. L'inconscient ou plutôt la subconscience y reconnaissait son langage, ou plutôt son balbutiement..."

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Grégoire Le Roy has been an electrician, and is now Librarian of the *Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts* at Brussels. He is the poet of retrospection, as Maeterlinck is the poet of introspection. His heart "pleure d'autrefois." He is the hermit bowed down by silver hair, bending at eventide over the embers of the past, visited by weird guests draped with legend. The weft of his verse is torn by translation, it cannot be grasped, it is wafted through shadows.

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Max Elskamp is a poet who reminds one that Mariolatry is Minnesong. There is no reason why the devout should not be edified by his poems, but his intention is rather to give a subtle idealization of Flemish life. Those who know Flemish painting will easily read themselves into the enchanting version of Flanders that he gives us, a Flanders how different to that of Verhaeren and yet how equally true!

"Et c'est alors un pays d'ailes
Aux hirondelles,
Flandres des tours
Et de naïf et bon séjour;
Et c'est alors un pays d'ailes
Et tout d'amour."

Thomas Braun, Victor Kinon, and Georges Ramaekers are fervent Roman Catholics. Braun's *Livre des Bénédictiones* is a beautifully printed book illustrated by the quaint woodcuts of his brother, who is a Benedictine monk. It is a thoroughly Flemish book; but a volume of verse which he has just published, *J'ai plié le genou* (published by Deman), is Walloon in feeling. His other volume, *Philatélie* (Bibliothèque de l'Occident, Paris, 1910) is poetry for stamp-collectors! Braun and Kinon are bucolic poets, somewhat in the manner of the French poet Francis Jammes, who aims at uncompromising fidelity to nature and the utmost simplicity of diction. But part of Kinon's work is in the style of Max Elskamp, fascinating poetry concerning pilgrimages,^[10] and the devotional life of Flanders. Ramaekers, the editor of *Le Catholique*, is inspired "par la vision si riante et si forte du Brabant jovial, intime, et monastique." *Le Chant des Trois Règnes* is a forest of mysticism. The "Three Reigns" are those of the Father = the cult of minerals; the Son = of plants; the Holy Ghost = of Love. Some of the poems would delight an architect. His knowledge of paintings appears equally well in his other volume of verse, *Les Saisons mystiques* (Librairie moderne, Brussels, 1910).

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André Fontainas is a symbolist of the symbolists. Mallarmé himself could not have bettered the following exciting sonnet:

Le givre: vivre libre en l'ire de l'hiver,
Rumeur qui se retraits au regard d'une vitre
Où, peut-être, frémit éphémère l'élytre
De tel vol ou d'un souffle épais de menu-vair.
Le ciel gris s'est, fanfare! à soi-même entr'ouvert:
N'est-ce pas qu'y ruisselle au front morne une mitre?
Non! sénile noblesse où nul n'élude un titre
A se mentir moins vil que ne rampe le ver.
L'heure suit l'heure encore, aucune n'est la seule:
Pareille à soi, voici venir qui l'enlinceule
Pour brusque naître d'elle et pour mourir soudain.
Un chardon bleu, pas même, au suaire, ni cirse
Offrant, rêve chétif et dédain du jardin,
Ne fût-ce qu'une épine à s'en former un thyrse.

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But the great mass of his poetry is perfectly intelligible. He is a romanticist, but in a new sense; for whereas the old romanticists turned from the sordid present to the motley middle ages and the choral pomp of Rome, Fontainas haunts the labyrinths of his soul, and projects his conscience beyond the bounds of space and time. In Fontainas, as in Gérardy, knights ride through pathless forests, but these are not the knights of Spenser. The *Faëry Queen* is a record of events in the outer world; Fontainas is a *chevalier errant* in the inner world of the spirit, and his castles are

only settling-places for the dove of thought winging out of the unknown.

Iwan Gilkin and Albert Giraud are Satanists. Gilkin's *La Nuit*, "une vision terrifiante des turpitudes humaines," is the most interesting book in Baudelaire's style since Baudelaire. He began it with the intention of continuing his pilgrimage in two following books through Purgatory and Paradise; but, as he warns his readers in the preface to *La Nuit: This is Hell!* Gilkin seems to have had no aptitude for Purgatory and Paradise after Hell; at all events, his following works have nothing to make an Englishman blush. *Le Cérissier Fleuri* (1899) is a collection of verse in the classical style; but Gilkin has since given his best work to the drama: *Prométhée* (1899), *Etudiants russes* (1906), *Savonarole* (1906). *Jonas* (1900) is a satire predicting the conquest of Europe by Asia. [Pg xxxi]

Albert Giraud is undoubtedly a poet of high rank. His colouring is marvellous. Above all, he is a very personal poet; one can always hear the beating of his heart—"À maint endroit le sentiment mal contenu crève l'enveloppe de sérénité."^[11] He is a pessimist and a Baudelairian: "Il se plaît," says Désiré Horrent, "à remuer le fond vaseux des âmes, à goûter le charme morbide des voluptés rares et raffinées."

Albert Mockel is one of those very rare cases in which a good critic is at the same time a good poet. As a critic^[12] he has probably no rival except Remy de Gourmont. His hall-mark is subtlety; but his learning, too, makes one gasp. (He might, no doubt, have been a professor if he had not been so brilliant). His poetry is philosophy; and the wonderful thing is that it should be such poetry. It is as light as a breeze, and like a deep river that shows its pebbles. He has in preparation a book of verse, *La Flamme Immortelle*, which will be a magnificent realization of his doctrine of *Aspiration*. Verhaeren interprets the outer world, Mockel the inner world as reflected in the outer world: for existence is double, form and shadow. Mockel has written, too, a child's story-book, *Contes pour les enfants d'hier*^[13] which should not be given to children. [Pg xxxiii]

Paul Gérardy is a well-known German poet as well as a French one. He belongs to the school of Stefan George.

In Georges Marlow's poetry the prevailing note is refinement. He has written little, but what he has written is of the first water. Some of the verse in his collection *L'Ame en Exil* is like Brussels lace:

Aline, au fil de l'eau tremblante
Où les tourelles réflétées
Parlent d'une ville noyée,
Pourquoi baigner tes mains dolentes!

Princesse trop frêle surgie
D'un recueil de miniatures,
Gracile fée aux lèvres pures
Du vain prestige des magies,

Ta peine étrange quelle est-elle
Pour qu'en cette onde puérile
Mirant ta candeur infantile
Tu songes aux fleurs immortelles

Du jardin vague où les éphèbes
Nimbés d'équivoques lueurs,
Sur l'autel d'or de la langueur
Immolent l'ange de leurs rêves?

Fernand Séverin, who is lecturer in French literature at the University of Ghent, is a poet of great charm. His diction is apparently that of Racine, but in substance he is essentially modern. "Virginal" is the epithet the French critics apply to him, and it describes his chaste, transparent poetry very well. "Tout y est en nuances, mystérieusement fuyantes et fondues" (Victor Kinon). He dreams:

"les mains pleines de roses
Et le cur enlacé de longs rameaux de lys."

He is full of languor:

"Car mes rêves sont las comme de blancs oiseaux
En qui verse l'ennui de l'azur et des eaux
Le suprême désir de dormir sur les grèves."

Isi-Collin's *La Vallée heureuse* is full of fine things. In such a poem as *La Mort d'Ophélie* the influence of pre-Raphaelite paintings may be discerned. There is Wordsworthianism in his verse (especially *Le Pâtre*), as there is in Severin's; not a voluntary absorption into the outer world, but a passing reflection of it in the inner being; no direct message, but a statement of a state. [Pg xxxiv]

The only poetess in our collection is Jean Dominique. Besides *L'Anémone des Mers* she has published *La Gaule Blanche* and *L'Aile Mouillée* (Mercure de France, 1903 and 1909). Her verse is exquisitely feminine, shimmering like shot silk, intimately personal, and perfect in form. "She

notes the very shadow that roses cast on her soul." She has written poems which are worthy of Sappho, as that which begins:

"Dans la chaleur muette le ciel lisse ses plumes
Comme un grand épervier aux ailes floconneuses;
Mais ce soir, l'oiseau d'or entravé dans les brumes,
Blotti contre la terre humble et délicieuse,
Dormira sur le cur des femmes amoureuses."

Georges Rency's Pegasus was a delicate steed with iridescent blue wings when he took it out into the shadows, and the moonlights, and the dawns, and recorded its flights on excellent paper. Since then it seems to have died of inanition, but he himself has produced a robust body of novels and criticism. [Pg xxxv]

As to Sylvain Bonmariage, he is a prodigy. He is twenty-four years of age, and he has written twelve books. Every one of his plays has seen the footlights. "Précoce à épouvanter le diable et candide à ravir les saints," is Albert Giraud's description of him.

Our collection does not exhaust the poetry of Belgium. Perhaps no poem we have selected has so good a chance of immortality as a snatch of song by Léon Montenaeken:

La vie est vaine:
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine....
Et puis—bonjour!

La vie est brève:
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve ...
Et puis—bonsoir!

J. BITHELL.

April 1911.

- [1] Charles van Lerberghe was directly inspired by Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Verhaeren has written much art criticism. Fontainas, who has translated Keats, and Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and *Comus*, is a historian of painting (*Histoire de la Peinture française au XIX^e siècle 1801-1900*, Mercure de France, 1906). Max Elskamp illustrates his own books with quaint, mediæval woodcuts; see, especially, his *Alphabet de Notre Dame la Vierge* (Antwerp, 1901). Mockel has written a study of Victor Rousseau (1905). Le Roy is an amateur painter. [Pg xxxvi]
- [2] Verhaeren heard Wagner's *Walküre* twenty times running. Mockel is a learned musician; of his two volumes of verse *Chantefable un peu naïve* and *Clartés* contain musical notations of rhythms. Gilkin found it difficult to decide whether to be a musician or a poet.
- [3] Verhaeren, who is a Fleming *pur sang*, and who was brought up in an exclusively Flemish-speaking district, knows practically no Flemish. Maeterlinck, on the other hand, might have written equally well in Flemish.
- [4] See Georges Rency, *Physionomies littéraires*, pp. 120-122.
- [5] See Gilkin, *Origines estudiantines de la Jeune Belgique*.
- [6] Gilkin, *Quinze années de littérature*.
- [7] Founded by the lawyer Edmond Picard, who discovered "l'âme belge." He advocated a literature which should be specifically Belgian.
- [8] "Ma race," *Les Forces tumultueuses*.
- [9] Stefan Zweig. *Émile Verhaeren*.
- [10] "La Belgique sait mieux que toute autre jouer dans la paille avec l'enfant de Bethléem." (Thomas Braun.)
- [11] Grégoire Le Roy, *Le Masque*, May 1910.
- [12] *Propos de littérature*, 1894; *Émile Verhaeren*, 1895; *Stéphane Mallarmé. Un Héros*. Mercure de France, 1899; *Charles van Lerberghe*, Mercure de France, 1901.
- [13] Mercure de France (1908). [Pg 1]

Contemporary Belgian Poetry.

SYLVAIN BONMARIAGE.

AUTUMN EVENING IN THE ORCHARD.

In the monotonous orchard alley glints
 The languid sun that yet is loth to leave
 This unripe, fascinating autumn eve,
 And draws a pastel with faint, feminine tints.

Spite of the great gold fruits around us strown,
 Of the last freshly-opened roses, which
 But now we gathered, spite of all the rich
 Odour filling the dusk from hay new-mown,

Of all the ripe, warm, naked fruit thou art
 I covet nothing but the savour, while
 Thou liest in the grass there with a smile,
 Tormenting with thy curious eyes my heart.

[Pg 2]

YOU WHOM I LOVE IN SILENCE.

You whom I love in silence, as I must,
 Fain had I been in olden tournament
 To shiver lances for your eyes' content,
 Making full many a baron bite the dust.

Or rather I had been that favoured page
 Who trained your hounds and falcons that he might
 After you down the valley, o'er the height
 Go galloping in eager vassalage.

I might have heard my lord solicit bliss,
 And swear to you his vehement promises;
 And gone to mass with you at dewy prime;

And in the cool of evenings I, to woo
 The smile of your loved lips, had sung to you
 The secret love of lovers of old time.

THOMAS BRAUN.

1876—.

THE BENEDICTION OF THE NUPTIAL RING.

*"Ut quæ cum gestaverit fidelitatem integram suo sponso tenens
 in mutua caritate vivat."*

Almighty God, bless now the ring of gold
 Which bride and bridegroom shall together hold!
 They whom fresh water gave to You are now
 United in You by the marriage vow.
 The ring is of a heavy, beaten ore,
 And yet it shall not make the finger sore.
 But easefully be carried day and night,
 Because its secret spirit makes it light.
 Its perfect circle sinks into the skin,
 Nor hurts it, and the phalanx growing thin
 Under its pressure moulds itself ere long,
 Yet keeps its agile grace and still is strong.
 So love, which in this symbol lies, with no

[Pg 3]

Beginning more nor ending here below,
Shall, if You bless it, Lord, like gold resist,
And never show decay, nor flaw, nor twist,
And be so light, though solid, that the soul,
A composite yet indivisible whole,
Shall keep its tender impress to the last,
And never know the bonds that bind it fast.

THE BENEDICTION OF WINE.

"Ut vinum cor hominis lætifioret."

Lord, You who heard the prayer of Your divine
Mother, and gave Your guests that Cana wine,
Deign now to bless as well the vintage new,
Which cheers the heart of those who pray to you.
The breeze blew warm upon the flowering shoot,
And the sky coloured all the round, green fruit,
Which, guarded from oidium and lice,
Thrushes, phylloxera, and from dormice,
Ripened as You, O Lord, would have it be.
The tendril curled around the sapling tree,
And soon the shoots bent under sun-blue sheaves
With which September loads the crackling leaves.
Over the winepress sides the juice has run,
And, heavily fermenting, cracked the tun.
O Lord, we dedicate to You this wine,
Wherein is pent the spirit of the Rhine;
We vow to You the vintages of France,
Of the Moselle, Black Forest, of Byzance;
Cyprus, Marsala, Malaga, and Tent,
Malmsey, and Shiraz of the Orient;
That of the Gold Isles scented by the sea,
Sherry, Tokay, Thetalassomene;
Nectar of bishops and of kings, champagne;
The blue wine from the hill-sides of Suresnes;
The sour, white wine of Huy; Château Margaux,
Shipped to Your abbots world-wide from Bordeaux;
Oporto's wine that drives the fever out,
And gave to English statesmen rest and gout;
Lacryma Christi, Châteauneuf of Popes,
Grown, O good Lord, upon Avignon's slopes;
Whether in skins or bottles; those you quaff
With ceremonial face or lips that laugh;
Keep them still clear when cobwebs round them grow,
To make all world-sick hearts leap up and glow,
To lighten minds that carking cares oppress,
And yet not dimming them with drunkenness;
Put into them the vigour which sustains
Muscles grown flabby; and along the veins
Let them regenerate impoverished blood;
And bless the privileged pure wine and good,
Whose common, fragile colour, still unspiced,
Suddenly ceasing to be wine, O Christ,
Soon as the blest, transmuting word is said,
Perpetuates Your blood for sinners shed.

[Pg 4]

[Pg 5]

THE BENEDICTION OF THE CHEESES.

"Dignare sanctificare hanc creaturam casei quam ex adipe animalium producere dignatus es."

When from the void, good Lord, this earth You raised,
You made vast pasture-lands where cattle grazed,
Where shepherds led their flocks, and shorn their fleeces,
And scraped their hides and cut them into pieces,
When they had eaten all their nobler flesh,
Which with earth's virgin odour still was fresh.
O'er Herve's plateaux our cattle pass, and browse

The ripe grass which the mist of summer bows,
And over which the scents of forests stream.
They give us butter, curds, and milk, and cream.
God of the fields, Your cheeses bless to-day,
For which Your thankful people kneel and pray.
Let them be fat or light, with onions blent,
Shallots, brine, pepper, honey; whether scent
Of sheep or fields is in them, in the yard
Let them, good Lord, at dawn be beaten hard;
And let their edges take on silvery shades
Under the most red hands of dairymaids;
And, round and greenish, let them go to town
Weighing the shepherd's folding mantle down;
Whether from Parma or from Jura heights,
Kneaded by august hands of Carmelites,
Stamped with the mitre of a proud abbess,
Flowered with the fragrance of the grass of Bresse,
From Brie, hills of the Vosges, or Holland's plain,
From Roquefort, Gorgonzola, or from Spain!
Bless them, good Lord! Bless Stilton's royal fare,
Red Cheshire, and the tearful, cream Gruyère!
Bless Kantercaas, and bless the Mayence round,
Where aniseed and other grains are found;
Bless Edam, Pottekees, and Gouda then,
And those that we salute with "Sir," like men.

[Pg 6]

ISI-COLLIN.

1878—.

TO THE MUSE.

Skilful the rune of symbols to unravel,
And mute avowals hearkened unawares,
Before the light from lips of flowers fares
With chosen petals I have strown the gravel.

She I awaited came not to the lawn,
And, solitary, I have chased all night
The lilac's and the lily's breath in flight,
And drunk it deeply in the brimful dawn.

Upon the sand these flowers that I have strown
My foot has crushed them down with cruel force,
And I am kneeling near the mirroring source,
Where I have sought her mouth and kissed mine own.

But now I know, and sing with fire renewed
Thy mercy, and thy beauty, and thy youth
Eternal, and I love thee without ruth,
Whom Sappho the divine and Virgil wooed.

[Pg 7]

I have all odours to perfume thee here,
And dyes for mouth and eyes, and I will make
Thy looks more luminous, and deep, and clear
Than the stainless azure bathing in this lake.

Come with thy too red lips and painted eyes!
My senses wait for thee in these bright bowers,
Where they are flowering with the soul of flowers,
O mother of fables and of lyric lies,

O courtesan! Come where these willows wave,
Lie by the water, I would have thee bare,
With nothing round thine ample shoulders save
All the sun's gold vibrating in thy hair.

A DREAM.

Dream of the far hours when
We were exiled beyond the pale
Of our happiness; draw again
Over our love that ancient veil.

Offer your lips to the evening breeze
That sings among the branches and passes,
Lay back your head on my knees,
Where the river the willow glances.
Rest in my hands your head
Tired with the weight of the autumn in its tresses red,
And dream!

[Pg 8]

(A fabulous sunset bleeds
In the calm water wherein,
Among the reeds,
Our double shadow grows thin,
Bathed in the sunset's red,
And the radiant gold of your head.)

Dream of your virginal spirit's plight,
When I opened your robe in our wedding night.

(The noise of a wing that lags
Dies in the waterflags.
And the shadows which descend
With the afterglow,
Mysterious and slow,
Stay on the bank and o'er the waters bend
Their faces of silence.)

Dream of our love, of our joys,
And in the shadow sing them low;
At the rim of your naked lips
My voice shall ambush your voice.

(The moonbeams slow and white
Linger on the forest tops,
Fall and glide on the river they light,
And now a veil of radiance drops
On our protecting willow....)

Dream, this is the hour of snow.

[Pg 9]

JEAN DOMINIQUE.

1873—.

THOU WHOM THE SUMMER CROSSES, AS A FAWN.

Thou whom the summer crosses, as a fawn,
Red in the sun, through forest alleys springs,
My soul with the deep shadows round thee drawn,
Hast thou not seen the sad, blonde swarm of bees
Pass hanging on the eddies of the breeze,
Bearing on millions of exiguous wings
A little motionless and gilded queen?...

Hast thou not felt the orphan grace that starts
To life with life in any beast, and glows,
Tormented with enchantment, in the hearts
Of delicate fawns and simple eyes of does?...

My sylvan soul, so full of nests and warm,

Remembering thy flown birds with pangs how keen,
Shalt thou not ever, in parched summer's breath,
Hang like a humming heart and keep the swarm
Of gilded bees bearing their golden queen
Upon thine orphan heart more sad than death?...

And shalt thou ever of ecstatic nights,
And of the royal Summer crossing earth,
Know but the printed foot in amorous flights
Of the red fawn, and shadow-dappled mirth?...

Soul whom the Winter too shall cross ere long,
And, after, Passion's Spring as bindweeds strong,
More sad than death shall thou not ever seize
This little orphan, golden queen, in state
Borne round the world upon the eddying breeze
By many a thousand longings that vibrate?...

[Pg 10]

THE LEGEND OF SAINT URSULA.

Painted by Carpaccio.

The slender Ursula has decked her hair,
And her pale visage, and her trailing gown
With odorous collars and with shining pearls;
Her tapering hand the precious burden holds
Of a sheaf of delicately broken folds;
Her fragile temple bears the seal of God.

There comes to meet her, o'er the port's green wave,
A gallant pagan prince clad with gold hair,
And grace and love, and loveliness suave.
The maiden and the youth have mouths so grave,
That in the sleeping air on the lagoon
Already seem the harps of death to swoon....

Ursula, virgin, humble as blonde thatch,
Is earnest, and in costly raiment straight,
And like a kingdom taketh her the prince....
But she already knows love there is none!

But she already knows another youth,
The fairest archer of a lordly race,
Awaits her at another ocean's rim
To free her sovran soul to fly to God....

[Pg 11]

And yet she cometh, with her exquisite neck
Beaten by tresses garlanded with pearls,
And the golden youth who loves her with sad cheer
Hearkens approaching nigh his trembling heart,
Following her silent step, a host of wings!...

THE SOUL'S PROMISE.

If you can see my soul within my eyes,
I will be softer than a bed of down
For your fatigue to sigh in and to swoon;
I will be kinder to you and more sweet
Than after vain adieux returning soon,
And tenderer than a sky bedimmed with doves!

Ah! if you feel my heart rise in my eyes,
Like the sick perfume of the autumn rose,
If you will enter on my spirit's waste,
Upon whose stones no foot but yours shall sound,
If you will love my visions and my vows,
I will be more your kin than all your own!

Upon my soul's wild thyme and moss, and on

Its bare stones where the sun is wont to dance,
And in its wind with fire and solace laden,
In the whole desert of my crimson love,
I will immerse you in my honeycombs.

Ah! can you gaze into my blinding soul,
And know my heart has leapt into my eyes,
As the sling sends after the singing bird
A stone at the mysterious welkin thrown?...

[Pg 12]

If you will scan the desert of mine eyes,
O you will see what suffering immense,
And what vast joy and silence how divine,
When, from my soul's height I shall bear you at,
We shall feel rise in us the wondrous wave
Of scents of roses and the falling night!...

A SECRET.

I will put my two hands on my mouth, to hush
The words that, when I see you, to it rush.

I will put my two hands on mine eyes, lest you
Should in them find what I were fain you knew.

I will put them on my bosom, to conceal
That which might seem the desperate heart's appeal.

And I will put them gently into yours,
My two hands sick with grief that long endures....

And they shall come full of their tenderness,
Most silently, and even with no caress,

With the whole burden of a secret broken,
Of which my mouth, eyes, heart had gladly spoken.

Tired of being empty they to you shall come,
Heavy with sadness, sad with being dumb;

So desolate, discouraged, pale and frail,
That you may bend, perhaps, and see they ail! ...

[Pg 13]

MAX ELSKAMP.

1862—.

OF EVENING.

All at the heart of a far domain,
With those to whom our hearts do strain,
My Truelove weeps for me, distraught
By my death the week has wrought.
My heart's Belovèd grieveth sore,
And plunges her two hands like flowers
Into her eyes whose sorrow showers,
My heart's Belovèd grieveth sore.

All at the heart of a far domain,
Unto her feet her skates she ties,
Feeling that in her heart is ice,
Far unto me her tired feet strain;
My Truelove hangs to the Chapel pane,
That gazes over all the plain,
With rings, and salt, and dry bread, my

Wretched soul that will not die.

All at the heart of a far domain,
My Truelove never will weep again
The festivals the seasons bring,
With family rings on fingers twain;
My Love has seen me promising,
Like a saint, to spirits pure
A Sunday that shall aye endure,
And all at the heart of a far domain.

[Pg 14]

FULL OF GRACE.

And Jesus all rosy,
And the earth all blue,
Mary of grace, in your round hands upcurled,
As might two fruits be: Jesus and the world,
And Jesus all rosy,
And the earth all blue.

And Jesus, and Mary,
And Joseph the spouse,
For all my life I place my trust in you,
As they in Brittany and childhood do,
And Joseph the spouse,
And Jesus and Mary.

Then Egypt too,
The flight and Herod,
My old soul and my feet that tremble, seeing
Towards the distant places ambling, fleeing,
And the ass and Herod,
And Egypt too.

Now, Jesus all golden,
Like statues of Christ,
O Mary, in your hands that hold the sword,
Over my town whereon your tears are poured,
Jesus more golden
In your arms and Christ.

[Pg 15]

FULL OF GRACE.

Now more and more, fain were my lips
Your inexhaustible Grace to say,
O Mary, at the sailing-day
Of bowsprits and of all my ships

Unto the islands of the sea,
Where went my merchandize of old,
By winds on other oceans rolled
From isle to island of the sea.

But I have donned the broken shoes
Of those who dwell on land, and spent
My tongue with ash of discontent
Because my memory seems to lose

The sounding Psalm that sang You Hail,
Who decked my prows in gold attire,
When in Your hands the sheets were fire,
The sun a spreading peacock's tail.

Now be it so, since in me stays
Salvation that the sails possess
Under the wind the stars caress
Of far beyond and other days,

And let it be Your self-same Grace

In this to-day of broken shoon,
The same sky, and the same round moon
As when I sailed, O Rich in Grace.

[Pg 16]

COMFORTER OF THE AFFLICTED.

Ineffable souls are known to me,
In houses of poor bodies pent,
And sick to death with discontent,
Ineffable souls are known to me;

Known to me are poor Christmas eyes,
Shining out their little lights
As prayers go glimmering through the nights
Known to me are poor Christmas eyes

Weeping with coveting the sky
Into their hands with misery meek;
And feet that stumble as they seek
In pilgrimage the radiant sky.

And then poor hungers too I know,
Poor hungers of poor teeth upon
Loaves baked an hundred years agone;
And then poor thirsts I also know;

And women sweet ineffably,
Who in poor, piteous bodies dwell,
And very handsome men as well,
But who are sick as women be.

COMFORTER OF THE AFFLICTED.

Now Winter gives me his hand to hold,
I hold his hand, his hand is cold;

And in my head, afar off, blaze
Old summers in their sick dog-days;

And in slow whiteness there arise
Pale shimmering tents deep in my eyes

And Sicilies are in them, rows
Of islands, archipelagos.

It is a voyage round about,
Too swift to drive my fever out,

To all the countries where you die,
Sailing the seas as years go by,

And all the while the tempest beats
Upon the ships of my white sheets,

That surge with starlight on them shed,
And all their swelling sails outspread.

I taste upon my lips the salt
Of ocean, like the bitter malt

Drunk in the land's last orgy, when
From the taverns reel the men;

And now I see that land I know:
It is a land of endless snow...;

Make thou the snow less hard to bear,
O Mary of good coverings, there,

[Pg 17]

And less like hares my fingers run
O'er my white sheets that fever spun.

[Pg 18]

COMFORTER OF THE AFFLICTED.

I pray too much for ills of mine,
O Mary, others suffer keen,
Witness the little trees of green
Laid where Your altar candles shine;

For all the joys of kermesse days,
And all the roads that thither wend
Are full of cripples without end,
By night are all the kermesse ways.

And then the season grows too chill
For these consumptive steeds of wood,
Although the drunken organ should,
Alone, keep its illusions still.

Poorer than I have more endured;
Despairing of their hands and feet,
Poor folks that cough and nothing eat,
People too agèd to be cured,

With ulcers wherein winter smarts,
O Virgin, meekly, turn by turn,
They come to You and candles burn,
All in a nook of silvered hearts.

COMFORTER OF THE AFFLICTED.

Now is the legend revealed,
And my cities also are healed,

[Pg 19]

Consoled till they love each other,
Like a child that has wept, by its mother,

In the things mysterious all
Of altars processional,

And now all my country is dight
With dahlias and lilies white,

Your candles to glorify
Mary, ere May passes by.

Lo! endless the pleasure is,
May returned, and maladies

Borne to horizons blue,
On vessels simple and true,

Far away, on the sea so far
Hardly seen, or like dots they are.

Now, under trees, the time glides
In the street where my life abides;

Mary of meek workers, steep
In the May-wood my head in the sleep

And the rest that my good tools have earned;
Sound mind in a sound body urned,

In a Mary-month more splendid,
Because all my task is ended.

TO THE EYES.

Now, sky of azure
 On houses rosy,
 Like a child of Flanders preach
 The simple religion I teach,
 Like a sky of azure
 On houses rosy;

Lo, to the vexed
 I bring these roses,
 When their memory to the islands reaches,
 The voices that my gospel preaches,
 Like the gladsome text
 A child's talk glozes.

You people happy
 With very little:
 You women and men of my city,
 And of all my moments of pity,
 Be happy
 With very little;

For letters blue
 On pages rosy,
 This is all the book that I read you,
 Unto your pleasaunce to lead you,
 In a country blue
 Houses rosy.

TO THE MOUTH.

For, you my brothers and sisters,
 With me in my bark you shall go,
 And my cousins, the fishers, shall show
 Where the fin of the shoaled fishes glisters,

Whose tides the bow-nets heap,
 Till the baskets cry out, days and days,
 Darkening the blue ocean's face,
 As in a path crowded sheep.

You shall see my nets all swell,
 And St. Peter helping the fishes
 Which for the Fridays he wishes,
 Sole, flounder, mackerel.

And St. John the Evangelist
 Lending a hand with the sheets,
 At the low ebb of autumn heats,
 When haddocks come, says the mist.

And our women with tucked-up sleeves,
 Like banquets on your tables;
 And miracles, and fables
 To tell in the holy eves.

FOR THE EAR.

Then nearer and nearer yet
 To the sea in a golden fret,

On the dikes where the houses end,
 The trees to the sea-breeze that bend;

With their baptismal names anchored here,
 In the rivers to which they are dear,

The vessels my harbour loves best,
Clustered, a choir, at their rest.

Now in their festivity,
I salute you, *Anna-Marie*,

Who seem in your white sails to bear
Cherubs that flit through the air;

And with joy that I scarcely can speak
I see you again, *Angélique*,

You with no shrouds on your mast,
Safe returned from Iceland at last.

But now, like *Gabrielle*, sing
Your new sails smooth as a wing,

And weep no more, *Madeleine*,
For your nets you have lost on the main,

Since all are pardoned, even
The wind, for kisses given,

So that in kisses and glee
These visiting billows may be

Content with the homage they pay,
High the sea, to sing the May.

[Pg 23]

TO-DAY IS THE DAY OF REST, THE SABBATH.

To-day is the day of rest, the Sabbath,
A morning of sunshine, and of bees,
And of birds in the garden trees,
To-day is the day of rest, the Sabbath;

The children are in their white dresses,
Towns are gleaming through the azure haze,
This is Flanders with poplar-shaded ways,
And the sea the yellow dunes caresses.

To-day is the day of all the angels:
Michael with his swallows twittering,
Gabriel with his wings all glittering,
To-day is the day of all the angels;

Then, people here with happy faces,
All the people of my country, who
Departed one by one, two by two,
To look at life in blue distant places;

To-day is the day of rest, the Sabbath—
The miller is sleeping in the mill—
To-day is the day of rest, the Sabbath,
And my song shall now be still.

MARY, SHED YOUR HAIR.

Mary, shed Your hair, for lo!
Here the azure cherubs blow,

[Pg 24]

And Jesus wakes upon Your breast;
Where His rosy fingers rest;

And golden angels lay their chins
Upon their breathing violins.

Now morning in the meads is green,

And, Mary, look at Life's demesne:

How infinitely sweet it seems,
From the forests and the streams

To roofs that cluster like an isle;
And, Mary, see Your cities smile

Happy as any child at play,
While from spires and steeples they

Proclaim the simple Gospel peace
With their showering melodies

From the gold dawn to the sunset sky,
Greeted, Mary of Houses, by

The men of Flanders loving still
The brown, centennial earth they till.

And sing now, all ye merry men
Who plough the glebe, sing once again

Your Flanders sweet to larks that sing
With gladsome voices concerting,

And sail afar, ye ships that glass
Your flags in billows green as grass,

[Pg 25]

For Jesus holds His hands above,
Mary, this festival of love

Made by the sky for summer's birth,
With silk and velvet covering earth.

AND MARY READS A GOSPEL-PAGE.

And Mary reads a Gospel-page,
With folded hands in the silent hours,
And Mary reads a Gospel-page,
Where the meadow sings with flowers,

And all the flowers that star the ground
In the far emerald of the grass,
Tell her how sweet a life they pass,
With simple words of dulcet sound.

And now the angels in the cloud,
And the birds too in chorus sing,
While the beasts graze, with foreheads bowed,
The plants of scented blossoming;

And Mary reads a Gospel-page,
The pealing hours she overhears,
Forgets the time, and all the years,
For Mary reads a Gospel-page;

And masons building cities go
Homeward in the evening hours,
And, cocks of gold on belfry towers,
Clouds and breezes pass and blow.

[Pg 26]

AND WHETHER IN GRAY OR IN BLACK COPE.

And whether in gray or in black cope,—
Spider of the eve, good hope,—

Smoke ye roofs, and tables swell
With meats to mouths delectable;

And while the kitchen smoke upcurls,
Kiss and kiss, you boys and girls!

Night, the women, where they sit,
Can no longer see to knit;

Now, like loving fingers linking,
Work is done and sleep is blinking,

As balm on pious spirits drips,
All tearful eyes, all praying lips,

And straw to beasts, to mankind beds
Of solace for their weary heads.

Good-night! and men and women cross
Arms on your souls, or hearts that toss.

And in your dreams of white or blue,
Servants near the children you;

And peace now all your life, you trees,
Mills, and roofs, and brooks, and leas,

And rest you toilers all, between
The woollen soft, the linen clean,

And Christs forgotten in the cold,
And Magdalenes within the fold,

And Heaven far as sees the eye,
At the four corners of the sky.

[Pg 27]

ANDRÉ FONTAINAS.

1865—.

HER VOICE.

O voice vibrating like the song of birds,
O frail, sonorous voice wherein upwells
Laughter more bright than ring of wedding bells,
I listen to her voice more than her words.

Soul of old rebecs, spirit of harpsichords,
Within her voice your soft inflection dwells;
Blisses of love some ancient viol tells,
Kiss snatched by lips that swift lips turn towards.

Her voice is sweetness of chaste dreams, the scent
Of iris, cinnamon, and incense blent,
A music drunk, a folded mountain's calm;

It is within me made of living sun,
Of luminous pride and rhythms vermilion;
It is the purest, the most dazzling psalm.

[Pg 28]

COPHETUA.

With right arm on the open casement rim,
The negro King Cophetua, with sad mien,
And eyes that do not see, looks at the green
Autumnal ocean rolling under him.

His listless dream goes wandering without goal;
He is not one who would be passion's slave;
And no remorse, nor memory from its grave
May haunt the leisure of his empty soul.

He does not hear the melancholy chaunt
Of girls who beg before him, hollow, gaunt
With fasting, coughing in the mellow sun,

And unawares, he knows not how it came,
he feels within his hardened heart a flame,
And burns his eyes at the eyes of the youngest one.

DESIRES.

What does she dream, lost in her hair's cascade,
The lonely child with flowering hands as wan
As garlands pale?—Of the plains of days ago
With pools of water lilies, where she strayed

On paths of chance her hands with flowers arrayed,
And where alms welcomed her?—And never shone
As now her eyes her jewels braided on
Her gowns of gold and purple and brocade.

[Pg 29]

But she sees nothing round her. In the room
Amber and aromatics melt the gloom,
The dusk's hot odour through the window streams;

As heavy as an opal's changing fires,
Sigh in the evening mist and die desires,
While naked at her glass the maiden dreams.

ADVENTURE.

Under the diadem of rustling pearls
And sapphires in their grasp of gold,
In yellow hair that undulatingly unfurls
Over her shoulders slow and cold,
And purple cloak exulting with brocade,

The Princess of the Manor's Games and Joys.

And in the jubilant noise
Rivers of lightning flame unrolled,
And the rich purple torch sheds its delight,
And twists its rustling tresses in the night.

The Princess of the Manor's Joys
Lifts in a dawn of amethysts
Her tender visage that more sadly aches
Than gloamings on the lunar face of lakes,
With lingering smile upon her lip she lists,
And casts a call into the evening mists.

In spite of omens tragical,
All they who wait upon her come
To lawns where sistrum, fife, and drum
To revelry and dancing call.

[Pg 30]

O King! like mourning is our merry-making!
Out of our arms thou hast thyself exiled,
And by our kisses art no more beguiled!
Our hearts for thee are aching!
Thou hast fled, thou hast fled,
And in the night I raise my head,
And call for thee with sobs, and bosom sore!
But still our festivals shall be forsaken,
The mourning from our hearts shall not be taken,

My fingers nevermore
Shall o'er thy golden velvet tresses glide;
My heavy arms shall nevermore thy neck enlace
In passionate embrace
Rich with the jewels of the bracelets of my pride!

Farandola and roundelay,
And the mad songs of pride,
In sudden waves over the threshold glide,
And through the chambers sway.

Thou never shalt return from unknown lands,
O King! The sceptre is fallen from thy hands,
The lassitude that lulled thee in its lap
Has stolen from thy proud, young years their sap,
Now art thou crossing thresholds far forlorn
Of mysteries and adventures luring thee
Where monsters crouch beneath the twisted tree;
Chimeras and the pitiless unicorn
Shall belch their fire where thou thy way wouldst grope
And thou shalt nevermore have my caress
To soothe thee into happy heedlessness
Of life, and perils of inimical hope.

O come back, ere it be too late!
At evening come unto the Joys that wait,
Come to the dancing and to thy Princess,
Who cradled thee with kisses and with tenderness,
And sweet refrains of songs.
Come to thy crown and sceptre, and the throngs
Of them that love thee, and the memory
Of thine ancestors shall bring back to thee
Forgetfulness of mad adventures in the kiss
Of her who thy Princess and Sister is.

[Pg 31]

LUXURY.

How vain are songs! Can they be worth the hymn
To your ecstatic eyes of mine that swim?
The noblest song of man no bosom stirs,
Weak are sonorous words, but conquerors
Are ye, glances of amber and of fire,
Lips you, and clinging kisses slow to tire
That in my soul are scorching! You that dare
Leap out of longing, kisses! And you hair
Of virgin gold that glints like noonday suns!
And marble whiteness where, like lava, runs
Your wild blood, snow and brazier!—

Here I lie

Your slave for ever, at your feet I die
In sleepful spasms that the senses cloy,
And the slow languor of the tasted joy;
Mad with your velvety and waxen flesh
That holds my soul and body in its mesh;
I love you, I am poured out at your feet,
Your hands are with lascivious jasmine sweet,
Your beauty blooms for me! In my embrace
I feel your life blowing upon my face,
And entering into me! Your blinding eyes
Thrill me with raptures of that Paradise
Whose rubies bleed, whose yellow topazes
Sleep in the sloth of sensualities,
And where the limitless horizons hide
Our Hell of luxuries grated round with pride.
I love thee, though the kisses of thy teeth,
Cunning to bite in their red vulva sheath,
Have the allure of Lamias that enslave
With luxury swift and cruelty suave.
Through tortures from your native Orient swim
Ineffably pure o'er peaceful lakes the slim
Swans of your voice white in their wildering
And subtle scents of snow, and on their wing

[Pg 32]

Bear me towards the hope your bright eyes beam.
Now let me lie upon your breasts and dream.
Say nothing! Let us sleep in our blue bower
Under the tufted pleasures of the hour,
By the night's tranquil torpor lulled and kissed ...
Already yon far dawn of amethyst
Dyes the deep heavens, and the moon at rest
Upon her soft cloud cushions hath caressed
With argent light the forest's idle trance,
And starred the stream with eyes that gleam and glance!

And now the dawn is on our pillow—hide
Your eyes—I shiver—they are haggard, wide!

SEA-SCAPE.

Under basaltic porticoes of calm sea-caves,
Heavy with alga and the moss of fucus gold,
In the occult, slow shaking of sea-waves,
Among the alga in proud blooms unfold
The cups of pride of silent, slender gladioles....

[Pg 33]

The mystery wherein dies the rhythm of the waves
In gleams of kisses long and calm unrolls,
And the red coral whereon writhes the alga cold
Stretches out arms that bleed with calm flowers, and beholds
Its gleams reflected in the rest of waves.

Now here you stand in gardens flowered with alga, cold
In the nocturnal, distant song of waves,
Queen whose calm, pensive looks are glaucous gladioles,
Raising above the waves their light-filled bowls,
Among the alga on the coral where the ocean rolls.

A PROPITIOUS MEETING.

Propitious dawn smiles on him wandering
And fretful in the evil forest deeps;
The heavy night's long, bitter rumour sleeps;
The sun's clear song makes the horizon ring.

The scent of sage and thyme is as a sting
Unto his jaded sense, the wind that sweeps
The blue sea round the promontory steeps
Freshens with hope his fate's proud blossoming.

The glory of Joy into his soul returns,
And his heroic dream leaps up and burns,
Even as this dawn's far-flung vermilion,

And lo! at the horizon, very calm,
Pacing their steeds, and holding out their palm,
The Kings he deemed dead marching in the sun.

[Pg 34]

THE HOURS.

The tiring hour that weeps,
And the young hour gay with sun,
Hour after hour creeps,
Hours after hours run
Along the river banks.

This is an hour of dawn that vapour cloaks.
Yonder a thread, so it would seem,
Stretches a bridge across the stream.
Shadow follows shadow, the mist chokes

The water sleepy as a moat's,
A tug smokes,
And drags its heavy, grating chain,
And drags its train
Of ghostlike boats,
Walls of black
Along a hidden track
Towards the arches bleak
Where now they disappear.

Like sudden palms of gold,
Three sunbeams glide
To where the waters hide,
And all along the river in the cold
Life is again begun,
With all its joys
Of toil and noise
Awakening in the quivering, crimson sun.

The hour is rising radiant with mirth,
Beaming smiles down on the earth,
O festival of light!
Here is life that smiles upon its toil,
And with high forehead makes the night recoil
Towards the sun in heavens bright
With strength and with delight.

[Pg 35]

Life quickens on faces
Mad and fervent zest.
To live! is when the hot blood races
And swells the breast,
And makes the words leap out in ready throng!
Life is to be alone and strong,
And master of one's fate!
Ye floods of purple pour in state,
Ripen the morn, and roll men's blood along!

The wise
Have never lived and do not know what joys
Are in mad battle, carnage and great noise,
When courage with courage vies.
The wise
Are they who when the cautious eve creeps on to night
Exile themselves from the festival of light
Weeping its tears of proud gold on the river,
O'er the lamp-lit book to shiver.
To live
Is better, and to ring one's heel
On the floor of a palace won by crimsoned steel,
Or underneath a charger's hoofs to tread
The grass of roads down-trodden by the fugitive
Foe who has dyed them red.

But the young hour gay with sun,
The tiring hour that weeps,
Hour after hour creeps
Hours after hours run
Along the river banks.

[Pg 36]

Now cooler are noon's beams,
O dreams reposed with languor and with ease,
The waters creep,
O calm dreams!
Upon the moss in shade of elms and alder-trees
The peaceful fishers sleep;
A long thread swims upon the dying stream.
In the foliage never a shiver,
The sun darts never a beam,
All is dumb.
The earth around, the meadows and the river,
And the air with sunshine numb,
And the forest with its leafy houses,
Everywhere all action drowns,
And the earth hesitates with indecision,
A smoker's vague vision.

The only wisdom is to live
The hours of the river, sleeping on its slopes.
Why should we madly follow fugitive
Inclement pride and crumbling hopes
Along the precipices of the heavy night,
That swallows up all ruined light?
No! to live
Is to follow all the river's turnings,
Sailing one's life with dreams and yearnings,
With prow set to the Orient of oblivion,
To conquer all the sea and all the isles that smile,
That no discoverer will ever set foot on
Save he who kept desire a virgin, all the while,
O dream!

[Pg 37]

The young hour gay with sun,
The tiring hour that weeps,
Hour after hour creeps,
Hours after hours run,
Along the river banks.

AWAKE

Awake!
It is a joy among hibernal hours
To plunge into the pane the hoar-frost flowers;
Behold: the petals glittering on the pane
Open their wings that dream would follow fain.

Awake, and revel in the dawn's pure joys,
And smile upon the time the sun becalms:
In the bright garden, save in dream, no noise
But a long imagined shivering, O palms!

Come, and behold my love, as ever of old,
Make the vast silence flower lit by thy glance,
Glad with its peaceful pinions to enfold
Our passion soothed with rich remembrance.

LIFE IS CALM.

Life is calm,
Even as this evening of sweet summer, now
The bird is silent on the bough,
That bends above the river,
Whose reeds no longer quiver;
And the pacific night and wise
Sleeps without a shudder under cloudless skies.

[Pg 38]

Life is calm!
It is your face, O sister dear,
At happiness scarce smiling here,
Life is your face, dear sister,
So calm;
As life is and your happiness,
Your face is cloudless, calm, and passionless.

Even the river hushes
Between its banks, among its rushes;
One by one fall flowers;
Silent, gentle eventide,
Life is calm where waters glide;
By waters where the happiness that lies
Smiling, sister, in the tender flashing of your eyes,
Is wondering at the waters, and the evenings, and the hours.

FRONTISPIECE.

The gems that ivories clip,
And chrysoberyls puerile,
Mingling their gleams, beguile
The dole of the black tulip;

The fountain weeps in the old
Garden o'er flowers sad,
Which by the dawn are clad
In amethyst and in gold:

In the boxwood shadow lingers,
In sentimental *fêtes*,
The *chevalier*, and awaits
The princess whose pale fingers
Are flowers that bring relief
Unto her languorous grief.

[Pg 39]

INVITATION.

The ruby my vow desires
For your beauty smiling kind
Is surely incarnadined
By a limpid mirror's fires.

Ice with the flame interchanges,
And your eyes hard with dignity
Bruise the sobbed longing to be
A bauble your hand arranges.

But remember the waters yonder
Cradle the vessels that wander
To the isle in the bright future hidden,

And come while the winter is dark,
To sail our adventurous bark
Madly o'er oceans forbidden.

TO THE POLE.

Through fogs impassible that freeze the soul,
And under torpor-laden skies of gray,
If none can ever open out a way
To the icy horror of the reachless Pole,

[Pg 40]

Yet those who died or shall die striving thither,
In faith of victory and glory of dream,
Have known the rapturous pride of conquest gleam,
Brief flower of hope that never grief shall wither.

But thou, long cheated by the immutable thirst
Of being loved, hast too, too well rehearsed
The vanity of combats sterile all,

And dost with bitter, pitiless irony see
Those who go following ghosts that ever flee
Sink in the chasm where thyself didst fall.

PAUL GÉRARDY.

1870—.

SHE.

She whom my heart in dream already loves
Will under childlike curls have great blue eyes;
Her voice will be as sweet as that of doves,
Her skin a faint rose like a dream that dies.

So slender she will be among earth's daughters,
That you would think of lilies under glass,
Of a fountain weeping to the sky its waters,
Or the moon's beam quivering on dewy grass.

And, from her deep heart to her lips arising,
Guessing what seeds of songs are in me sown,
She will be ever humming them, disguising
My soul with the golden gamut of her own.

[Pg 41]

And never a bitter word will come from her;
Her eyes will always call to my caress,
Chaste as the eyes of my own mother were,
Melting with my own mother's tenderness.

EVIL LOVE.

I have yearned for the wicked child
With her sensual mouth's red glow,
And her restless eyes that show
How sateless her soul is and wild.

The lustful virgin, the child
With her sick flesh fainting above
The sweat of novels of love,
By which her soul is defiled.

She sins in her sleep; and in
Her evil smile there gleams,
Implacable as her dreams,
The lust of perversion and sin.

I have dreamt of the virgin impure;
The fire of her hair has profaned
My chastity with its lure—
And my eyes with tears are stained.

THE OWL.

There is a haggard flitting through the night,
And stupid wings are writhing through the wind,
And then, afar, a screeching of dark fright,
Like cries of a frail conscience that has sinned.

[Pg 42]

It is the shy owl of long moonless nights,
It is the inconsolable owl who peers
With bleary eyes through drear darkness, and who blights
The peace of sleep with stark foreboding fears.

The inconsolable night-bird weeping through
The gloam, the spectral bird who fears the day,
Whose panic flitting chills the dark, and who
Fills space with cries that quiver with dismay.

But thou, poor owl, an ivied steeple seëst,
Where thou canst hide from dawning's garish hour—
My heart, who from the kiss of woman fleëst,
Where shalt thou find the peace of some old tower?

OF SAD JOY.

I am angry with you, little girl,
Because of your gracious smiles,
And your restful lips, and teeth of pearl,
And the black glitter of your great eyes.

I am angry with you, but on my knees,
For when I went away, in happy wise,
Far from you, far as goes the breeze,
I could think of nothing but of your eyes.

I was timid, I never dared look back,
And I went singing as madmen do,
To forget your eyes, alack!
But my song was all about you.

[Pg 43]

SOME SONG OR OTHER.

The song of moonlight all
That trembles as aspens shake,
The thrush sang it at the evenfall
To the listening swan on the blue lake.

It is all of love and distress,
And of joy and of love, and then
There are sobs of gold and weariness,
And ever comes joy back again.

Far, far away flew the thrush,
And the swan went pondering
All the new words, by lily and rush,
With his head underneath his wing.

OF AUTUMN.

While the moon through the heavens glides,
With music enchanting our way,
Come in the gladness to stray
Of the gorgeous autumn-tides.

Now comes the wind, and lifts
The gold of glad forests along;
And many a mystical song
Along the breeze with it drifts.

This life is most gracious and dear,
Enchanting our way as we go
With the laughter and golden glow
Of autumns singing clear.

[Pg 44]

ON THE SEA.

Blow, blow, thou boisterous tempest,
Blow, bitter winds and stark;
The fisher, he cannot hear you,
A-sailing in his dream-bark.

He sails to what pale daughters,
To what horizons dim?
Rage, rage ye winds and climb ye waters,
But we are waiting for him.

We are the lovelorn maidens,
Alone in the wearisome dark;

You winds and you waters that love us,
Overturn him in his dream-bark.

IWAN GILKIN.

1858—.

PSYCHOLOGY.

A surgeon, I the souls of men dissect,
 Bending my feverish brow above their shameless
 Perversions, sins, and vices, all their nameless
Primitive lusts and appetites unchecked.

Upon my marble men and women spread
 Their open bellies, where I find the hidden
 Ulcers of passions filthy and forbidden,
And probe the secret wounds of dramas dread.

[Pg 45]

Then, while my arms with scrofulous blood are dyed,
I note in poems clear with scrupulous art
What my keen eyes in these dark deeps descried.

And if I need a subject, I am able
To stretch myself on the dissecting table,
And drive the scalpel into my own heart.

THE CAPITAL.

A dolorous fruit is the vast capital.
Its bursten skin and pulp too ripened dye
Opulently their rich rottenness
With green gold, violet, and red phosphorus.

Oozing a sickly sweet, thick, cancerous juice,
Its spongy flesh melts in the mouth, and in
Its pensive poisons germinate the rank,
Perverted sins of fever-tortured brains.

So strange its spice, so exquisite its taste,—
A macerated ginger in a rare elixir,—
I plunged my teeth in it with greedy haste.

But dizziness I ate, and madness drank.
And that is why I trail a debile frame,
With my youth dying in the husk of my strength.

THE PENITENT.

The penitent of cities damned am I.
In shameful taverns where rank liquors flow,
And in new Sodoms viciously aglow,
Where outrage hides its lusts with murder nigh,

[Pg 46]

I watch in flaring nights with mournful eye,
And shuddering hear what monsters still we grow.
And all the crimes of men oppress me so
I call for vengeance to the angered sky.

Wrathful as prophets went in Holy Writ,
I walk with haggard cheek in public places,
Confessing sins that I do not commit.

And the Pharisees cry out with upturned faces:
"I thank thee, God, that I am not as this
Infamous poet by thy judgment is!"

"ET ERITIS SICUT DIL."

Sick Artist, from the world around thee shrinking
To nurse the high ideal of thine Art,
Give thou no place to Nature in thy thinking,
That foolish, fertile slut obscene and stinking—
To the Artificial consecrate thy heart.

In spite of reed-pipes and loud songs of marriage,
Be thou remote, Reality desert,
The blood and flesh of women proud of carriage,
The flabby flesh of women thou disparage,
Deny their beauty which is only dirt.

Are thy tired spirit and thy parched mouth aching
For the cooling, carnal draught of their caress?
This is a thirst that thou canst best be slaking,
Swooning among thy lamp-lit bottles, breaking
The odorous seals of drunken dizziness.

[Pg 47]

Dream drunk with rum, whose tropic-heated spices
Ferment into a scented wine that joins
Thy subtle spirit in voluptuous vices
With negro women whose smooth flesh entices
Thy lubric hand to their anointed loins.

Drink kirsch, as turbulent as cascades shaded
By forests where the maidens bathe their feet;
Musked maraschino, sucked by mouths pomaded
In the sick air of brothels golden-braided
By those who queen it on the yielding seat;

And, hypocrite with ice one cannot sunder
Out of his flame, drink kümmel, whose bright feast
Of boreal snow-masked fire evokes the wonder
Of roses under snow, O roses ... under
Archangel heavens women of the East.

And, for its green of bindweed-tangled fancies,
Drink absinthe, which shall open out to thee
Those forests where the fairy Vivien dances,
And the sage Merlin with her feet entrances
In the hoarse brushwood by the bitter sea.

Then to thy reeling brain shall dreams come sailing,
Upon the calm bed where thy body sank,
And thou shalt see dissolved in shadows paling,
All earthly things around thee, failing, failing,
While brighter surge the visions rank on rank.

Behold! Among the wan blue vapours, steaming
Before the scented, sounding sunrise, glows
A belt of glaciers whose thin peaks of dreaming
Mirrored upon an azure lake are gleaming
In the tropic valley guarded by their snows.

[Pg 48]

The leaves of mangoes, palms, and fig-trees sighing
Are wafting coolness o'er the billowing grass,
Where, garlanded like flowers, are women lying,
Bathing their lily limbs, beneath the flying
Jewels of furtive humming-birds that pass.

And a cascade of dazzling nakednesses
Falls from the peaks of glaciers in shoals,
And every following body holds and presses
The one that went before, holds and caresses;
A living stream of beauty rolls and rolls.

Arms, loins, and thighs are linked and intertwining,
Lightnings are playing on a vaporous mesh
Of luminous hair and supple limbs combining,
And from the lofty peaks of glaciers shining
For ever falling are new waves of flesh.

Drink every drop of this pure wine, and waste
In thine embraces all these limbs unreal.
Lie in thy bed of snow, and, undebased,
Enjoy all flesh in thine own flesh, and taste
The monstrous joy of soiling the Ideal.

VENGEANCE.

Woman with heart stabbed by a hidden wrong,
Whose vengeful fingers, proud, and tapering long,
Have strapped thy naked lover in his sleep
Down to the bed, where now his wild eyes weep
Their scalding tears like vitriol, and stare
On broken furniture and carpets where
Weapons, clothes, flowers are in mad medley cast,
In sheets still with his kisses warm, thou hast
To soldiers prostituted thee, and spent
Their vigour with thy body's vehement
Surging of spasms quivering under them;
But what thought, like a hideous diadem
Of thorns, hath rent thy forehead, when the third,
His white flesh scarcely sated, having heard
Thy lustful moaning till his heart grew sick,
Looked, as a bitch looks beaten with a stick,
To the black, frantic face of thy betrayer,
And asked with plaintive murmur: "Shall I slay her?"

[Pg 49]

THE SONG OF THE FORGES.

O frenzied forges with your noise and blaring,
Red, reeking fires that comb dishevelled skies,
Your hollow rumbling is like stifled swearing,
And the grassed earth about you burns and dies.

When blind, mad man, intent on gain and plunder,
Thinks he is matter's master, in your maw
Lugubriously rolls a hollow thunder,
That says: We forge and forge, without a flaw,

The chains from which thou hast not wit to save thee,
O foolish man! we rivet link by link
The shackles which for ever shall enslave thee.
Sweat, pant, and fill the furnace to the brink,

Throw in the coal, and pour the crackling casting
Through the cut sand, beat, crush the pig to shape,
Temper the sword, sheet, deck, and rig with masting
The tyrant ships that sweep the sea with grape,

[Pg 50]

Crowd with machines the hamlet and the haven,
To prison thee more deep than dungeons held
In durance making thee a pauper craven...
Stupid humanity! we weld and weld

With the vile toil disease beyond reclaiming,
And imbecility, and discontent,
Murder, and hate that sets the mansion flaming,
Bloody revolt and heavy punishment.

We forge the fate of every generation;
We crush the father and the child as well,
Spitting at heavens that shake with consternation

The soot and coal of our relentless hell!

See! to the stainless blue of skies upcurling
Our towering chimneys' belched, polluted breath,
Above the waste and ravaged lands unfurling
Their sable flags of slavery and death!

HERMAPHRODITE.

Rosy and naked, pure as a flower divine,
The mystic being of old stories sleeps,
Stretched in the grass like a bough of eglantine,
In the flowery clearing in the forest deeps.

Upon his folded arm he rests his head;
The sleeping kisses of the sun repose
Upon his delicate body softly spread,
And shimmer from his shoulders to his toes.

[Pg 51]

And near him, with a murmur as of bees,
Runs the clear brook through grass and lily flowers,
Under the fig-trees' laden boughs, and flees,
Winding along the tangled secret bowers.

Sweet sorcery of the flesh! A sphinx above thee
Asks the thrilled senses to resolve desires!
With shame and terror tremble all who love thee,
And they who see thee burn with thousand fires.

Seeing thy more than human loveliness
Women and youths their envious glances dart;
They sigh with lowered eyes, and weep, and press
Sometimes their hand upon their maddened heart.

"Where is the heavenly goddess," so they cry,
"Whose loveliness can match thy perfect frame?
And what young god, all sun and spring, can vie
With all this freshness blent with tender flame?"

O to drink madly on one mouth the kisses
Of Aphrodite and Adonis both,
And, trembling, to discover all blent blisses
In the same frame to no perversions loth!

Faust had left Margaret for thee, and lewd
Anacreon had never lost a day on
Bathyllus, Sappho would not have pursued
In her escape Erinna, no nor Phaon.

Under thy foot earth lapped with pallid flames
Trembles, and all the flowers die where it hovers
Man clips no more the woman, and hot dames
Enlace their arms no more around young lover

[Pg 52]

O last ideal of decaying races,
Mortal revealer of best beauties, thy
Poisons poured lavishly in thine embraces
Have made the ancient cities rot and die.

And now to us thou comest, while uncloses
Under thy feet a dawn that pales the day's;
And poets, mad with incense and with roses,
Laud thee with chants of glory, love, and praise.

Sweet being, grant to us thy sweetest blisses!
We drag ourselves under thy conquering feet,
While, in a downy drunkenness, thy kisses
Gather our last and loveliest heart's beat.

THE DAYS OF YORE.

I have inhaled love like a garland sprent
With morning dew, and fragrant with a scent
That set my kisses fluttering over it,
As butterflies of silk and velvet flit.

And savoured it like some fruit from the South,
Whose luscious pulp melts slowly in the mouth.

And, cups of sapphire effervescing bright,
Blue eyes have made me drunk with spring's delight!
And, ruby cups brimmed with a blood that seethed,
Lips have a dizziness upon me breathed!...

—Fall o'er the past, ye mists of memory!
And now, thou deep, swart night envelop me!
In thy wan winding-sheet my heart enfold,
To sleep alone, and motionless, and cold.

[Pg 53]

VALÈRE GILLE.

1867—.

ART.

What use is action? We have thought until
The world is but the shadow of our dreams.
What if the sap in all the gardens teems,
Sunk back upon itself is our limp will.

The mind has ravaged space, and we are ill
With what we know; yet knowledge only seems,
Upon life's verge a net of cheating gleams;
And my possessions leave me tired and chill.

But thou alone, O torch of sacred Art,
With first, primeval beauty warm the heart,
And flash thy multiple glimpses of the Ideal;

And thou, O Poet, make lost Eden shine
Within us, and behind the seeming real
Show us the essences of things divine.

THERMOPYLÆ.

The sombre gorge is only lighted by
The bucklers on the beeches. Near their chief
The warriors, with no fear and with no grief,
Await their fate. And now the dawn is nigh.

[Pg 54]

To-morrow Greece shall mourn them: they must die.
The priests have read the auguries like a leaf.
Hydarnes, with the footstep of a thief,
Slinks with his traitor where the shadows lie.

So be it. Under arrows showering thick
By shadows shielded they will fight, beneath
The overhanging rocks, with pike and teeth.

And when the sword breaks they will grip the stick.
They share a few figs for their breakfast, right
Calmly. They with Pluto sup to-night.

A NAVAL BATTLE.

The fleets rush headlong o'er the sea, and lock
In a loud, long impact deafening the ear;
The hissing arrows make the heavens bleat,
The heavy waves are clashing shock on shock.

Ares is with us, driving like a flock
The Persian ships which, when they staggering rear,
The rostrum pierces till, in mad career,
They crowd the shore and shatter on the rock.

The dusk climbs, but the most illustrious chase
The coward, and thrust from every vantage-place.
But now the moon breaks through the clouds, to show

Our native land kissed by its tender ray,
The glittering summits and the silvered bay,
And the free sea flowered with corpses of the foe.

[Pg 55]

ALBERT GIRAUD.

1860—.

THE TRIBUNES.

The people have had masters whose strong faces,
Charged with imperious will, their masses cowed,
Who spoke with regal voices ringing loud
To draw out of their sleep lethargic races.

The word they cast down from the market-places
In the four winds of Heaven vibrated proud
With bitter love and majesty unbowed,
Threatening to make of cities desert spaces.

The crowd remember yet their magic names,
And echo them with thunderous acclaims
Of welcome to the coming victory.

The legendary marble where they stand
Rises on history's threshold, and their hand
Wrathfully sways the billowing days to be.

CORDOVANS.

You leathers red with autumn's, victory's dyes!
In some old oratory's night you blaze,
Where sleeps the heavy splendour of dead days;
You with your hues of epic, evening skies,
Mysterious as fiery meres of gold,
You dream of those who trailed their swords, and bowed
Above your cushions stamped with wafers proud
Their gashed, tanned faces in the days of old,
With an odour of adventure in their capes.
Red leathers whom the peace of hangings drapes,
You are like tragic sunsets, worn were ye
By legendary heroes, who enriched
The Kings they served, and all the world bewitched,
And who upon a copper, kindled sea,
You Cordovans dyed deep with war and pride,
Embarked in summer cool of eventide!
You are chimerical with gathered lives;

[Pg 56]

Of new Americas you guard the gleams,
You sunk in dazzled and vermilion dreams,
In you the soul of ancient suns survives!

FLORISE.

Richly mature, upon the bed of joy
Strown with crushed flowers, Florise bends lovingly
Her heavy-lidded great eyes o'er the boy
Whom she has made man ere his puberty.

Fair as a sunset that on roses lingers,
Sweet as the wind is he in lilac-trees.
With gratitude he fondles the deft fingers
That guided him into love's mysteries.

Heavy with glad fatigue, their senses thus
Dream, but breaking off their amorous
Embrace, as though a cry she would withhold,

She feels her heart within her pale, and presses
Her face upon the pillow, for she guesses
Her too young lover sees her growing old.

[Pg 57]

HECATE.

The moon has a kiss that clings
Like those of cold women whom
Minions with fertile womb
Drive from the bed of Kings.

She weeps her white distress
On spires, and lays a sheet
Of suppliant light at the feet
Of crosses pitiless.

But breaks her prayer, which is vain,
And raises herself again,
In pale and barren pride;

And casts, with the cruel glance
Of her lidless eye, far and wide
Hysterical radiance.

IN THE REIGN OF THE BORGHIAS.

In the gilt palace where young slave-girls show
Like bunches of gold grapes their breasts erect,
In a soft room with burning drapery decked,
The conclave's end illumines a golden glow.

Near pages who their yellow hair have smoothed,
And whom the evening's kisses feminize,
Sit, red as lava in their gorgeous dyes,
The Roman Cardinals, by music soothed.

[Pg 58]

They worship flesh; and the unnatural, thinned
Voices of eunuchs quiver o'er their napes
With a thrill of pleasure like the lust of rapes;

And Roman girls dishevel in the wind,
In the fantastic, smoky night of porches,
Their manes of fire like wildly streaming torches.

ABSORPTION.

Woman, my longing to be nothing clings
To thee, whose stagnant eyes are pools of night,
Liquid indifference, where is no light
Save the kaleidoscope of imaged things.

Thy sable hair, so sultry and so fresh,
When I untie it, billows o'er thy shape
Like evening's shadow o'er a pale landscape,
And slowly eats the whiteness of thy flesh.

The sapid kiss of thy rich-moulded mouth
Falls, with no impulse known, and with no sound,
As ripened fruit falls heavy to the ground,
In the slow silence of the autumn's drouth.

As into water I descend in thee;
And I am cradled vaguely on thy breasts,
Which are as white as billows' foamy crests,
And heave above thy breathing like the sea.

Thy cadenced walk is like old liturgies;
It trails with royal rhythm its broad verses,
And with grave grace before mine eyes rehearses
All the Gregorian chant's solemnities.

[Pg 59]

O save me from my murderous dreams, thou bright
Bosom of silence, mouth that sates the sense,
Urn of oblivion, pillow of indolence;
Annihilate me in thy bosom's night!

My weakness by thy savorous strength is nursed,
And in thy gaping love absorbing me
I taste the time when all I am shall be
In Nature's vast and flowering corpse dispersed.

THE YOUTH AMONG THE LILIES.

In the voluptuous Room of Lilies, made
As a deaf ear by the unhealthy shade
Of vinous tapestry wherein ferments
The sunset, drunk with Church and censor scents
The dying Dauphin, with his woman's slow
Eyes, sees at his feet the ermine snow
Of the hushed carpet, and the oriel's slit
Sifting a trembling glimmer on to it
Of lying lilacs and of faëry roses,
And the pale youth his heavy lids uncloses
And sees upon the heaven's crimson rim
Women whose lifted breasts call unto him.

RESIGNATION.

I have fought against myself, I have cried in pain,
Writhed breathless in my wounded spirit's night,
And with my life in rags, a piteous sight,
I come out of the Hell which is my brain.

[Pg 60]

I know full well to-day, my dream was mad;
My love of autumn was a crime, no doubt;
And like a nail I tear the yearning out
That my too simple heart for childhood had.

My cross! Lance in my side! I bring to you
This verse like Christmas evenings white and calm,
When the sovran palpitation of the palm
Hovers against the heaven's freezing blue;

This verse whereinto all my grief shall pass,
Verse of a man resigned, misunderstood,
Verse into which my love must shed its blood,
Long bleeding, like a sunset on stained glass.

VOICES.

Voice of my weeping blood, voices you of my flesh,
My panting, frantic flesh, O pensive voices,
Louder than when a surging crowd rejoices,
Hush! lest the dear, dead past should bloom afresh!

Be silent, you long voices! Memory closes
On velvet voices, voices of flowers of old
That dreamt in her flesh and sang in her voice of gold;
Voice of lascivious jasmine and moss roses,

Be silent! Hush my sorrow and my shame!
Into my heart silence and winter came:
Silence is snowing into my heart's dark vast.

[Pg 61]

Snow, snow, O silence! Spread your cool above
Hell's roses, cover up their fires at last,
And in the shadow slain my only love.
And in the shadow slain my only love.

VICTOR KINON.

1873—.

THE RESURRECTION OF DREAMS.

It is as warm as when the lilacs' scent
Is with the fragrance of magnolias blent,
When you can hear the seeds crack in the ground,
When first your face and hands are summer-browned
When every now and then in heavy drops
The rain begins, and all as sudden stops....
Slate and rust clouds voluptuously mass
Their bulk o'er the green corn and nibbled grass
Of fields that billow to yon purpled woods,
Which, through bronzed clouds, a sheaf of sunbeam floods.

Sweating, I climb the slope, where, like a long
White ribbon, runs the brook and sings his song.
A noisy cock pursues a clucking hen.
A sparrow flies with bits of hay. And then
Such is the silence you can hear from far,
Where the red roof-tiles of the village are,
The heavy, steady humming of the bees ...
(Can there be blossoms on the willow-trees?)
Here is the wood.—Pale with surprise you see
The ardent silence and the mystery
Whose sap swells in the branches which it studs
With downy catkins and with sticky buds.

[Pg 62]

Under the elm-trees' violaceous shade
The fresh anemones have snowed the glade;
The undergrowth bathes in a fawn half-light;
The pure air crackles with a lizard's flight;
And there, where on the hazel bough is poured
A ray of sunshine darted like a sword,
A trembling cloud of yellow pollen rises....

And now mysterious mirth my heart surprises
With words and cries of love and tenderness,
And an intoxicated glow and stress,
Because the spring with legendary dyes,
The white of snow and blue of Paradise,
And tender green of leaves all dewy sprent,
With nightingales, and honeysuckle's scent,
And chafers hanging heavily from blue
Lilacs, wet with rosy diamonds too,
With the clear crystal and mad pearls that gush
Out of the beak of quail and pairing thrush,
All the divine, forgotten spring reminds
My heart of ardours where the pathway winds!...
I love! My breast is full of flowers and birds!
I shall break out in ecstasy of words!
I love!—But whom?—I care not whom nor how!
I love, with all my blood in frenzy now,
And all the sighs that heave my breast, the maid

Who smiling comes beneath her cool sunshade....

[Pg 63]

MIDNIGHT.

The earth is black with trees of velvet under
A low sky laden with great clouds of thunder.
The gnomes of midnight haunt the dark, whose ears,
With luxury veiled, hear as a deaf man hears.
One is uneasy in one's stifling sheets,
And so uneasily the poor heart beats
That, bathed in sweat, at last you leave your bed,
And as in dream about the chamber tread.
You throw the window open. Not a sound.
Surely the wind is swooning on the ground,
And listening to some holy, mystic birth
Preparing in the entrails of the earth.
You listen, earnest, to your heart's loud shock
Beating with pained pulsations like a clock.
Then to the window-sill you pull a chair,
And watch the clouds weigh down the helpless air
Over the gardens whence, in sick perfumes,
Exudes the sweat of trees and wildered blooms.

HIDING FROM THE WORLD.

Shall not our love be like the violet, Sweet?
And open in the dewy, dustless air
Its dainty chalice with blue petals, where
The shade of bushes makes a shy retreat?
And we will frame our daily happiness
By joining hearts, lips, brows in rapt caress
Far from the world, its noises and conceit ...
Shall we not hide our modest love between
Trees wafting cool on flowers and grasses green?

[Pg 64]

THE GUST OF WIND.

I closed my window, lit my lamp, reclined
My temple on my hand, and sadly thought:
"Now let me read, and dream, and rest my mind ...
But, O my God, my heart is so distraught!
Yet, let me read." It was a traveller's book.

O sailing on broad rivers, on whose shore
Are baobabs and mangroves, while the song
Of curious birds wafts with the ship along,
Together with the tiger's grating roar....

A sudden gust of wind the window shook,
Followed afar off by continued whining.

I throw the window open wide, to look
Into the night, and see, with white teeth shining
In mocking grin, Death pass upon a steed
With yellow teeth, making its wet flanks bleed
With spurs of bone, and in the wind its mane
Tossing, together with his winding-sheet;
See Death, while all the trees moan out in pain,
Race under clouds lit by a livid sheet,
And brandishing above him his bright scythe!

Afar, Italian poplars curve their slim
And parallel trunks beneath the wind of him;
Dishevelled willows in the shadow writhe,
And the earth, looking at the monster, pants....

Now he is swallowed by the raucous squall.
Long I stand gazing at the rise and fall
Of foliage broken by a rending sob,
When suddenly the wind, with hollow throb,—
Lugubrious present from the Reaper!—heaves
Into the room a flight of withered leaves.

[Pg 65]

THE SETTING SUN.

The stainless snow and the blue,
Lit by a pure gold star,
Nearly meet; but a bar
Of fire separates the two.

A rime-frosted, black pinewood,
Raising, as waves roll foam,
Its lances toothed like a comb,
Dams the horizon's blood.

In the tomb of blue and white
Nothing stirs save a crow,
Unfolding solemnly slow
Its silky wing black as night.

CHARLES VAN LERBERGHE.

1861-1907.

ERRANT SYMPATHY.

From some unknown horizon,
Wafted from far away,
Fraternal sympathy flies on
The scented breath of the May.

[Pg 66]

Now dreamers in cloudland turrets,
And maidens ripe with the time,
Up the white steps of their spirits
Feel loves invisible climb.

They know not from what glances,
In the pensive peace of the hour,
There are unknown lips in their fancies
Opening with theirs in flower.

So keen and kind the bliss is,

That their foreheads, younger made
By these intangible kisses,
Guard dreams that never fade.

THE GARDEN INCLOSED.

Fulcite me floribus.

Dear is thy bandage, Love,
To my heavy lids that it closes;
It weighs like the sweet burden of
Sunshine on frail, white roses.

I walk as to voices that call,
I seem over waters to hover,
And every wave, like a lover,
Folds round my feet as they fall.

Who has unloosened my tresses,
As through the dark places I came?
Girdled with unseen caresses,
I plunge into billows of flame.

[Pg 67]

My lips, where my soul is crooning,
Open in rapt desire,
Like a burning blossom swooning
Over a river on fire.

* * * * *

Dormis et cor meum vigilat.

My hands lie for my breasts to soothe,
Of playing and of distaffs tired;
My white hands, my hands desired,
Seem asleep on waters smooth.

Far from futile, waste repining,
On this my beauty's throne,
Frail, calm, gentle Queens reclining,
My royal hands dream of their own.

And while mine eyes are closed, and still is
The golden hair my breast that robes,
I am the virgin holding lilies,
I am the infant holding globes.

* * * * *

Si floruit vinea.

In mulberry time they sang my lips that yield
To keen caresses,
And, like the rain upon the summer field,
My long, warm tresses.

In time of vintaging they sang mine eyes,
Mine eyes half-closed,
Veiled by tired lids and lashes unreposed,
Like autumn skies.

[Pg 68]

I have all gleams and savours, I am supple
As a bindweed in hedgerow bowers,
My breasts are curved as flames are, or a couple
Of sister flowers.

* * * * *

Ego dilecto meo et dilectus meus mihi.

When thou dost plunge into mine eyes thine eyes,
I am all within mine eyes.

When thy mouth unties my mouth,
My love is nothing save my mouth.

When thy fingers lightly touch my hair,
I am not if it be not there.

When they touch my breasts at any time,
Like a sudden fire to them I climb.

Is it this which is to thee most dear?
Here my soul is, all my life is here.

* * * * *

*In a perfume of white roses
She sits, dream fast;
And the shadow is beautiful as though an angel there
were glassed.*

*The gloam descends, the grove reposes;
The leaves and branches through
On the gold Paradise is opening one of blue.*

*A last faint wave breaks on the darkening shore.
A voice that sang just now is murmuring.
A murmuring breath is breathing ... now no more.
In the silence petals fall....*

* * * * *

The angel of the morning star came down
Into her garden, and he spake to her:

"Come with me, I will show thee many a lake,
Valleys delightful, secret forest bowers,
Where still, in other dreams than ours,
The subtle spirits wake
Of the earth."

She stretched her arms, with laughter
Looking between her lashes on
The angel flaming in the sun,
And, when he moved, in silence followed after.

And while they wandered to the groves of shade
The Angel round her laid
His arm, and set
Among her bright hair longer than his wings
The flowers he gathered dewy wet
Upon the branches over her.

THE TEMPTATION.

*Shapes that coiled in the woods and waters,
Glittering sons and radiant daughters.*

—D.G. ROSSETTI.

A silence softened the declining day,
A moan, and then a love-sigh died away.
Apples were falling one by one between
The grasses warm and shadows emerald green.

The sun sank down from branch to branch; a bird
Singing among the stirless leaves was heard.
A scent of soft and swooning blossoms strayed,
Like a slow sea-wave, through the deepening shade.

And, to hear better her who comes, with bent
Eyes, as in dream, and heart to meet her sent,
By paths where never sound the silence jars,

Voluptuous evening, in the heated air,
With hands of subtle and accomplice care,
Spread the insidious net of oblique stars.

ART THOU WAKING?

Art thou waking, my perfume sunny,

My perfume of gilded bees,
Art thou floating along the breeze,
My perfume of sweet honey?

In the hush of the gloam, when my feet
Roam through the rich garden-closes,
Dost thou tell I am coming, thou smell
Of my lilacs, and my warm roses?

Am I not like in this gloam a
Cluster of fruit concealed
By the leaves, and by nothing revealed,
Save in the night its aroma?

Does he know, now the hour is dim,
That I am half opening my hair,
Does he know that it scents the air,
Does its odour reach to him?

[Pg 71]

Does he feel I am straining my arms?
And that the lilies of my valleys
Are dewy with passion-balm
That for his touching tarries?

ALL OF WHITE AND OF GOLD.

All of white and of gold
Are the pinions of my angels;
But Love
Hath pinions changing.

His sweet wings are turn by turn
The colour of purple and roses,
And the crimson sea where uncloses
The kiss of the sun.

The beautiful wings of my angels
Are very slow,
And open closed.

But the agile wings of Love
Are impatient,
And like hearts never rest.

THE RAIN.

The rain, my sister dear,
The summer rain warm and clear,
Gently flees, gently flies,
Through the moist atmosphere.

[Pg 72]

Her collar of white pearls
has come undone in the skies.
Blackbirds sing with all your might,
Dance magpies!
Among the branches downward pressed,
Dance flowers, dance every nest,
All that comes from the skies is blest.

To my mouth she approaches
Her wet lips of strawberries wild;
She has touched me with a mouth that smiled,
Everywhere at once,
With her millions of little fingers.

On a lawn
Of sounding flowers,
From the dawn to the evening hours,
And from the evening to the dawn,

She rains and rains again,
She rains with might and main.

Then the sun with golden hair
Dries the bare
Feet of the rain.

AT SUNSET.

At sunset,
Swans of jet,
Or fairies sombre,
Come out of the flowers, and things, and us
These are our shadows.

[Pg 73]

They advance: the day retreats.
Into the dusk they go,
With a gliding movement slow.
They gather, to each other call,
Seek with noiseless footfall,
And together all
With their wings so light
Make the great night.

But the dawn in the sea
Awakes and takes
His torch, then he
Climbs gleam by gleam,
Climbs in a dream.
Out of the waves arise
His tresses fair,
And blue eyes.

At once, as they were blown
Away, the shadows flee.
Where? Who can see?
Into the earth? Into the sea?
Into a flower? Into a stone?
Into us?
Who knows?
Their wings they close,
And now repose.
It is the morn.

A BARQUE OF GOLD.

In a barque of the Orient
Maidens three are coming back,
Maidens three from the Orient
Are coming in a barque of gold.

[Pg 74]

One is black,
Her hands the rudder hold,
On her curving lips with their essences of roses
She brings to us strange stories,
In the silence.

One is brown,
She holds the full sail down,
And on her feet are wings,
An angel's mien to us she brings
In her motionless bearing.

But one is fair,
At the prow she is sleeping,
As from the rising sun her hair
The wave is sweeping,
She brings us back in her eyes so bright
All the light.

LILIES THAT SPIN.

Now in this April morning, sweet
With folded shadows and doves cooing,
The dear child with her shy conceit
What is she busy doing?

The blonde trace where her footsteps go
Is lost in the grated garden's alleys;
I do not know, I do not know
The meaning of her cunning sallies.

[Pg 75]

With a long gown down to her heel,
Pensive and slow, with a silent gesture
Upon the sun at a white wheel
She is spinning a blue linen vesture.

And with blue eyes of bridal bliss
Smiling at her dream that glances,
Weaving golden foliages
Among the lilies of her fancies.

GRÉGOIRE LE ROY.

1862—.

THE SPINSTER PAST.

The old woman spins, and her wheel
Is prattling of old, old things;
As though to a doll she sings,
And memories over her steal.

The hemp is yellow and long,
The old woman spins the thread,
Bending her white, weary head
Over the wheel's lying song.

The wheel goes round with a whirl,
The yellow hemp is unwound,
She turns it round and round,
She is playing like a girl.

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The yellow hemp is unwound,
She sees herself a girl,
As blonde as the skeins that whirl,
She is dancing round and round.

The wheel rolls round with a whirr,
And the hemp is humming as well,
She hears an old lover tell
And whisper his love for her.

Her tired hands rest above
The wheel, its spinning is done,
And with the hemp are spun
Her memories of love.

ROUNDEL OF OLD WOMEN.

Little old women, my thoughts,

The snow falls from the vast,
Death and uncertainty palls
All the things of the past.

Why is my heart so chill
Under these skies overcast,
In these winters that last and last,
These winters calm and still?

You little old women who glean,
Make a bonfire of your past,
Of your reeds snapped by the blast,
And of all your barren dreams.

[Pg 77]

All that your sorrow remembers,
Burn it like dry brushwood,
And sit and warm your blood
Over the dying embers.

And mumble in grief and dejection
Of the happy days of your youth,
And empty with fingers of ruth
The spindles of blue recollection.

And when the cottage is damp
With the weeping of the night,
One of you will light,
Like a shaded, smoky lamp,

—Oh! why must I weep and perish,
And nothing, nothing forget?—
The best of memories yet,
The memory of Her you cherish.

HANDS.

Glued like the eyes of a thief
At my heart's window-pane, gazing in,
Were two pale hands, hands of grief,
Hands as of Death, bone and skin.

I shivered to see them stare,
Weird as the moon in the blue,
Lifting to me their despair,
As the hands of the damned might do.

[Pg 78]

And He of those desolate hands,
Who was my visitor grim?
Death on my threshold stands,
Since I gazed on the hands of Him.

It was not a blessing they shed,
Curst of a truth were they,
For I have longed to be dead,
Since I saw their ghastly ray.

For the wine of my loving is sour,
And full of tears and of harm,
And deadens the bread of the hour
That is signed with their fatal charm.

Hands of poison! Hands of despair!
Gestures of virgins of gloom!
You have shone on my house as a pair
Of candles a corpse illumine!

I have seen Hope close her door,
And my mourning is watching Death,
While the North wind is blowing o'er
My candle dead in His breath.

MY EYES.

Poor eyes, you lamps that are failing,
How little remains of your glow?
Encroaching night is veiling
The things of the here-below.

[Pg 79]

Or is your gathering gloaming
Indifference alone?
O eyes that once went roaming
To Beauty and the Unknown!

You sink your lids like a curtain,
When Love goes by, a flame;
You know your sorrow is certain,
And age to you is shame.

And yet, my heart's best praising,
O flameless lamps, is for you;
Through you my spirit gazing
First saw, and felt, and knew!

You showed me the mountain steep, with
The sea and the stars above,
And all that my life is deep with:
My child, and death, and Love.

MY HANDS.

My poor hands, so wan and faded,
Agile once as a bird,
My rhythms of speech you aided,
And by my brain you were stirred;

Poor wrinkled hands, like two
Old women worn and wizened,
My thoughts run on, but you
In listlessness are prisoned.

[Pg 80]

Yet I bless you, my hands, now that strife
Is done, and the heart reposes;
You taught me the touch of roses;
And the caresses of life.

All the hands you touched, hands of brothers,
And of women I loved in dole,
And the faithful hands of mothers:
I bear you yet in my soul.

SILENCES.

There is an age, sad age, and hour obscure,
When man, weary of adventurous dreams,
Turns from the far horizon's lure
His eyes towards the Inn of Good Repose.
Then simple Thoughts and staid,
Like an eager, humble serving-maid,
With delicate cares discreet
Lull infinite regrets to sleep,
And kindle in the heart once more
The fire of memories of the yore,
And from the hearth drive hopes importunate,
That one by one may steal within the great
Silences.

The silence of our memories
Whereon already falls the snow of years;

Love's silence, whose abandoned tomb
No tender hand makes bloom;
Silence of hopes long seeking, which
Have died like beggars in the ditch;
Silence of faith, whose torch has been put out
By life and doubt.

[Pg 81]

These silences our brothers, in they glide,
Like white monks, rigid, stern,
And sit down, without speaking, at our side....
Then we with Truth sojourn.
Ere they had come we saw but of the world
Its flowers and orchards pasturing our eyes,
But, when they entered in, our deeper souls
Explored, together with our thought, the night.
One of life's secrets each of them reveals,
One of fate's shadows each of them dispels,
And they can tell us whether we have walked
Along the road where God's hand pointed us.
Our friends, our children, all whose life seemed bound
Together with our own most intricately,
We see them far, alone in the great fight
Waged with Infinity, and Pain, and Death.
We thought that their hands which our hands have clasped,
And the long gazing of our eyes in theirs,
And that our voices uttering one thought,
And all our common hopes and self-same griefs,
And all our evenings lived beneath one lamp,
And all those hours upon one dial told,
The self-same clock of destiny—
Sealed our converging fates for evermore!
Now suddenly we are alone, so far
From life that we can scan the vast expanse
That separates us and divides us all.
These pure child's eyes, these beautiful fondled hands,
These voices intertwined like woven flowers,
Have touched perhaps, and recognized each other,
But like to friends, or strangers almost, who
To-morrow will resume their separate way.
And now that silence from us far removes
The lies of love for which our senses longed,
Lo, in the universe our soul is lost!
The child of our own blood, who, piously,
Some last, last night will come to close our eyes,
How he is one, his fate how otherwise
Than ours, how far removed, and how alone!
He enters life! He is no more our own!

[Pg 82]

Thus shall they go towards the call,
Till, lonely and despoiled of all,
Naked and poor we face the eternal hour!
And, seeing our heart as a temple with no god,
And closed our soul to every new delight,
Empty our hands, and in our eyes no sight,
We shall make question of ourselves: What tie
Unites this lowest, lamentable thing
We are ... to Immortality?

MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

1862—.

THE HOTHOUSE.

O hothouse in the forest deeps!
And your doors for ever closed!
And all there is beneath your dome!
And under my soul in your analogies!

The thoughts of a princess who is hungry,
The weariness of a sailor in the desert,
A brass band at the windows of incurables.

[Pg 83]

Go to the wannest corners!
You think of a woman fainted on a day of harvest,
There are postillions in the courtyard of the hospital;
Afar goes by a hunter of elks, become a nurse.

Look around in the moonlight!
(O nothing here is in its place!)
You think of a mad woman before her judges,
A man-of-war at full sail on a canal,
Birds of night on lilies,
A knell at noon,
(Down yonder under these bell-glasses!)
A halting-place of sick men on the moorlands,
An odour of ether on a sunny day.

My God! my God! when shall we have the rain,
And the snow and the wind in the hothouse!

ORISON.

Pity my absence on
The threshold of my will!
My soul is helpless, wan,
With white inactions ill.

In tasks abandoned stands
My soul with sobbing pale,
O'er shut things its tired hands
Tremble without avail.

And while my heart breathes out
Bubbles of lilac dreams,
My soul is wafted about
In a wax moon's watery gleams;

[Pg 84]

In a moonlight where glimmer the lorn
Lilies of the to-morrows;
A moonlight where nothing is born
But its hands in the shadow of sorrows.

HOT-HOUSE OF WEARINESS.

O weariness blue in the breast!
Wedding the better sight,
In the weeping, wan moonlight,
Of my blue dreams with languor oppressed!

This weariness blue evermore,
Where through the deep windows green,
As in a hot-house are seen,
With moon and with glass covered o'er,

The mighty forests undying
Whose nightly forgetfulness,
Like a dream motionless,
On the roses of passion is lying;

Where rises a slow water-beam,
Mingling the moon and the sky
In a glaucous, eternal sigh,
Monotonous as a dream.

DARK OFFERING.

I bring my poor work, which
Is like the dreams of the dead,
And the moon on the fauna rich
Of my remorse is shed:

[Pg 85]

With swords my wishes crowned,
Violet snakes that creep
Through my dreams and enlase in my sleep,
Lions in sunshine drowned,

Lilies in far waters green,
Closed hands that never shall ope,
Red stems of hatred between
Sorrows of love without hope.

Pity the song, Lord God!
And let my sad prayers rise,
While the scattered moon on the sod
Keeps night at the rim of the skies.

THE HEART'S FOLIAGE.

Under the blue crystal bell
Of my reveries tired and ill,
My griefs intangible
Grow gradually still.

Plants of symbols thronging,
Lilies of pleasures of old,
The slow palms of my longing,
Bind-weeds soft, mosses cold.

Alone in the centre of them,
One rigid lily heaves
Its frail and pallid stem
Over the dolorous leaves.

[Pg 86]

And in the gleams that it pours,
Like a gradual moon, towards the bare
Blue crystal heavens, soars
Its mystical white prayer.

SOUL.

My soul!
O my soul too sheltered verily!
And these flocks of my desires in a hot-house!
Waiting for a tempest on the meadows!

Let us go to the most feverish patients!
They have strange exhalations.
In the middle of them, I cross a battlefield with my
mother.
They are burying a fallen comrade at noon,
While the sentinels are eating their repast.

Let us go also to the weakest:
They have strange perspirations!
Here is a sick bride,
Treason on the Sunday,
And little children in prison.
(And further on, through the vapour,)
Is this a dying woman at a kitchen's door!
Or a sister shelling peas at the bed's foot of an
incurable?

And last of all let us go to the most sad:
(Last of all, for they have poisons.)
O! my lips accept the kisses of a wounded one!

[Pg 87]

All the *châtelaines* have died of hunger, this summer, in
the turrets of my soul!
Here is the daybreak entering the festival!
I catch a glimpse of sheep that stray on quays,
And there is a sail at the windows of the hospital.

There is a long road from my heart unto my soul!
And all the sentinels are dead at their post!

One day there was a poor little banquet in the suburbs of
my soul!
Hemlock was being mown one Sunday morning;
And all the virgins of the convent were watching vessels
passing on the canal, one day of fasting and of
sunshine,
While the swans were pining under a poisonous bridge;
They were pruning trees round the prison,
They were bringing medicines one afternoon in June,
And meals of patients were being spread at all the
horizons!

My soul!
And the sadness of it all, my soul! and the sadness of
it all!

LASSITUDE.

These kisses know no longer where to rest,
For blind and cold the eyes were they caressed;
Henceforth asleep in splendid reverie they
Watch dreamily, as in the grass dogs may,
The grey horizon-herded sheep-folk graze
Upon the turf the moon's dishevelled rays,
Kissed by the sun, dark as their life is dark;
Indifferent, without an envious spark
For pleasure's roses under them unclosing;
And this long, green, ununderstood reposing.

[Pg 88]

TIRED WILD BEASTS.

O laughter and passion-sighs,
And sobs that the sick breast heaves!
Sick and with half-closed eyes
Among dishevelled leaves,

My hate's hyenas slouching,
My sin's yellow dogs, and, large,
At the weary, pale desert's marge,
The lions of love are crouching!

In a listless dream they lie,
And, languid and oppressed,
Under their colourless sky
They watch, and shall without rest,

Temptation's sheep together,
Or one by one, depart,
And in the moon at tether
The passions of my heart.

LUSTRELESS HOURS.

Here are old desires marching past,
Dream after dream reeling by,
Dream after dream failing fast;
Hope's days are doomed to die!

[Pg 89]

To whom must we flee to-day!
No star to show us whereto;
But ice on our hearts grown gray,
And in the moon linen blue.

Sob after sob is trapped!
Fireless the sick in the city,
The grass of the lambs is lapped
In snow, Sweet Saviour, pity!

But I, till the sleep is done,
Await, I shall waken soon,
I wait for a little sun
On my hands iced by the moon.

THE HOSPITAL.

Hospital! Hospital on the canal!
Hospital in July!
There is a fire in the room!
While ocean liners blow their whistle on the canal!

(O! do not come near the windows!)
Emigrants are crossing a palace!
I see a yacht in the tempest!
I see flocks on all the ships!
(It is better to keep all the windows closed,
One is almost sheltered from the outside.)
It is like a hot-house on snow,
You are going with a woman's churcing on a stormy day,
You have a glimpse of plants shed o'er a linen sheet,
There is a conflagration in the sun,
And I cross a forest full of wounded men.

[Pg 90]

O! now at last the moonlight!

A jet of water rises in the middle of the room!
A troop of little girls half open the door!

I catch a glimpse of lambs on an island in the meadows!
And of beautiful plants on a glacier!
And lilies in a marble vestibule!
There is a festival in a virgin forest!
And an oriental vegetation in a cave of ice!

Listen! the locks are opened!
And the ocean liners stir the water of the canal!

O! but the sister of charity poking the fire!

All the beautiful green rushes of the banks are on fire!
A vessel full of wounded men rocks in the moonlight!
All the King's daughters are in a bark in the storm!
And the Princesses are going to die in a field of hemlock!

O! do not leave the lattices ajar!
Listen: the ocean liners still are blowing their whistle on
the horizon!

Some one is being poisoned in a garden!
People are banqueting in the house of their enemies!

[Pg 91]

There are stags in a town that is besieged!
And a menagerie amid the lilies!
There is a tropical vegetation in a coal-pit!
A flock of sheep is crossing an iron bridge!
And the lambs of the meadow are coming sadly into the room!

Now the sister of charity lights the lamps,
She brings the patients their meal,
She has closed the windows on the canal,
And all the doors to the moon.

WINTER DESIRES.

I weep for lips whose brief
 Red no kisses hath known,
 And for longing left to moan
In a reaped, rich harvest of grief.

The rain must pour and pour!
 Or the snow is thick on the sward,
 While crouching wolves do ward
My threshold of dreams evermore,

And watch in my soul ever sighing,
 With eyes in the past nigh dead,
 All the blood that of old was shed
Of lambs on the hard ice dying.

Only the moon with its chill,
 Monotonous sadness lights,
 While autumn the thin grass blights,
My longing with hunger ill.

[Pg 92]

ROUNDELAY OF WEARINESS.

I sing the dirges pale
 Of kisses lost and cold;
 On love's thin grass I behold
Weddings of them that ail.

In my slumber voices sing;
 How nonchalant they are!
 And in streets without sun or star
Lilies are opening.

These things my heart desired,
 These flights that backward fall,
 Are the poor in a palace hall,
And in the dawn candles tired.

At the grim night's threshold I launch
 Mine eyes far out, and know
 That the moon, with its linen slow
And blue, my dreams will stanch.

BURNING GLASS.

Ancient hours I behold
 Under regrets ripening,
 And fairer flora spring
From their secrets' azure mould.

Desires blow through my spirit.
 O glass upon my desires!
 And the withered grass my soul fires,
When breathing memories stir it.

[Pg 93]

It grows with my thoughts for mould,
 And in the blue fleeing fast
 I see the griefs of the past
Their flower-petals unfold.

My soul through memories gropes,
Feels the touch of their
Curtaining dead mohair;
And greens with other hopes.

LOOKS OF EYES.

O these looks of poor, tired eyes!
And yours and mine!
And those that are no more and those that shall be!
And those that never shall arrive and those that notwithstanding
do exist!
Some seem to be visiting the poor on a Sunday;
Some are like sick people with no home;
Some are like lambs in a meadow covered with linen.
And these unusual looks!
There are some under whose vault are people watching
the execution of a virgin in a closed room,
And some that make one think of unknown melancholies!
Of peasants at the windows of a factory,
Of a gardener who has turned weaver,
Of a summer afternoon in a museum of waxen images,
Of the thoughts of a queen who watches a sick man in
the garden,
Of an odour of camphor in the forest,
Of shutting a princess up in a tower, some festal day,
Of sailing for a whole week on a warm canal.
Pity all those who come out with short steps like convalescents
at harvest time!
Pity all those who look like children gone astray at
meal-time!
Pity the eyes of the wounded man who looks up at the
surgeon,
His looks like tents under the storm!
Pity the looks of the tempted virgin!
(O! rivers of milk are going to flee in the darkness!
And the swans are dead amid the serpents!)
And the looks of the virgin who succumbs!
Princesses abandoned in swamps without an issue!
And these eyes wherein vessels in full sail vanish lit by
the tempest!
And the pity of all these looks which suffer with not
being elsewhere!
And all the sufferings indistinct and yet diverse!
And these that never any one will understand!
And these poor looks nigh mute!
And these poor looks that whisper!
And these poor stifled looks!

Here in our midst one thinks one is in a castle which
serves as a hospital!
And so many others look like tents, lilies of war, on the
convent's narrow lawn!
And so many others look like wounded men being
tended in a hot-house!
And so many others look like a sister of charity on an
ocean liner where there are no sick!

O! to have seen all these looks!
To have taken all these looks into oneself!
And to have exhausted mine in meeting them!
And henceforth not to be able any more to close my
eyes!

THE SOUL IN THE NIGHT.

My soul in the end is tired;
Tired of her sad, sad state,

And of being undesired.
Sad and tired I await
Your hands upon my face.

I await your pure hands, still
As angels of ice might be,
Till they bring the ring to me:
On my face your fingers chill,
Like a treasure under the sea.

I await their healing deep,
Not to die in the sun,
To die without hope in the sun!
They wash my burning eyes,
Where so many poor ones sleep.

Where so many swans on the sea,
Are stretching, lost on the main,
Their necks morose in vain,
Where along the gardens of winter,
The sick break roses in rain.

I wait for your pure fingers yet,
Like angels of ice are they,
I wait till mine eyes they wet,
The withered grass of mine eyes,
Where the tired lambs are astray!

[Pg 96]

SONGS.

I.

Into a cave the maid she threw,
A sign upon the door she drew;
The maid forgot the light, the key
Fell down into the sea.

She waited while the summer went:
More than seven years she was pent,
Every year a stranger passed.

She waited while the winter went;
And while she waited, waited yet,
Her hair the light could not forget.

It sought the light, and found it out,
It glided through the stones about,
And lit the rocks that held her pent.

One eve again a passer-by,
He knew not what the radiance meant,
And dared not come anigh.

He thinks a portent is foretold,
He thinks it is a well of gold.
He thinks the angels are at play,
He turns aside, and wends his way.

[Pg 97]

II.

And if he come back some day,
What shall be said to him?—
One for him waited, say,
Until her eyes grew dim....

And if again he spake,
And did not know me more?—
Like a sister answer make,
He might be suffering sore....

And if he would be told

Where you are dwelling now?—
Give him my ring of gold,
And bend your silent brow....

And if he miss the clock's tick,
And see the dust on the floor?—
Show him the lamp's burnt wick,
Show him the open door....

And if his last he saith,
And ask how you fell asleep?—
Tell him I smiled in death,
For fear lest he should weep....

III.

Three little maidens they have slain
To find out what their hearts contain

[Pg 98]

The first of them was brimmed with bliss,
And everywhere her blood was shed
For full three years three serpents hiss.

The second full of kindness sweet,
And everywhere her blood was shed,
Three lambs three years have grass to eat.

The third was full of pain and rue,
And everywhere her blood was shed,
Three seraphim watch three years through.

IV.

The maids with the bandaged eyes
(Do off the bands of gold)
The maids with the bandaged eyes
Are seeking their destinies....

Went in at the noon of day
(Keep on the bands of gold)
In at the gate went they
Of the palace of prairies gray....

Life saluting then,
(Tie close the bands of gold)
Life saluting then,
They never came out again.

V.

The three blind sisters,
(Let not our hope grow cold)
The three blind sisters
Have their lamps of gold.

[Pg 99]

Into the tower they climb,
(We, you, and they)
Into the tower they climb,
Wait till the seventh day....

Ah! said the first one,
(Still hopes the heart, and fights)
Ah! said the first one,
I can hear our lights....

Ah! said the second, bending,
(They, you, and we)
Ah! said the second, bending,
It is the King ascending....

Nay, said the saintliest,
(Still be our courage stout)

Nay, said the saintliest,
Our lights have all gone out....

VI.

The seven virgins of Orlamonde,
When the fairy had passed away,
The seven virgins of Orlamonde,
Sought the gates of day.

Have lit the wick of their seven lanterns,
Have opened, flight by flight,
The door of full four hundred chambers,
But have not found the light ...

[Pg 100]

They come unto the sounding caverns,
Go down, with courage cold,
And in the lock of a closed portal
Find a key of gold.

Through the chinks they see the ocean,
They are afraid of death,
Dare not ope, knock at the portal,
With bated breath.

VII.

She had three diadems of gold,
To whom did she give them?

Does one unto her parents bring:
And they have bought three reeds of gold,
And kept it till the Spring.

Gives one unto her lovers all:
And they have bought three nets of silver,
And kept it till the Fall.

One she to her children brings:
And they have brought three iron rings,
And chained it up the Winter long.

VIII.

Towards the palace she came—
The sun was scarcely rising—
Towards the palace she came,
The knights all gazed, surmising,
Silent was every dame.

[Pg 101]

She stopped before the gate—
The sun was scarcely rising—
She stopped before the gate;
They heard the Queen descending,
And the King questioning her.

Where are you wending, where are you wending?
One scarce can see, take care—
Where are you wending, where are you wending?
Does some one wait for you there?
But she made answer not.

She came down towards the Stranger,—
Take care, one scarce can see—
She came down towards the Stranger;
The Stranger kissed the Queen,
No word did either say,
But went straightway.

The King at the gate was weeping;—
Take care, one scarce can see—
The King at the gate was weeping;

They heard the Queen departing,
They heard the leaves down-sweeping.

IX.

You have lighted the lamps,—
O! the sun in the garden!
You have lighted the lamps,
The sun through the fissures slants,
Open the gates of the garden!

[Pg 102]

The keys of the doors are lost,
We must wait, we must wait always,
The keys are fallen from the tower,
We must wait, we must wait always,
We must wait for other days ...

Other days shall open the doors,
The forest keeps the bolts,
Around us burn the holts,
It is the light of the dead leaves,
Which burn on the doors' thresholds ...

The other days are wearisome,
The other days are also shy,
The other days will never come,
The other days shall also die,
We too shall die here by and bye.

X.

I have sought for thirty years, my sisters,
Where hides he ever?
I have sought for thirty years, my sisters,
And found him never ...

I have walked for thirty years, my sisters,
Tired are my feet and hot,
He was everywhere, my sisters,
Existing not ...

The hour is sad in the end, my sisters,
Take off my shoon,
The evening is dying also, my sisters,
My sick soul will swoon ...

[Pg 103]

Your years are sixteen, my sisters,
The far plains are blue,
Take you my staff, my sisters,
Seek also you ...

GEORGES MARLOW.

1872.—.

WOMEN IN RESIGNATION.

On Your poor hands pierced by the nail,
With hope's long clinging, the old
Women have rested their cold
Souls without feeling and frail,

In the hush You are dreaming in
This night, good Lord! And they sing
To the prodigals wandering
In the wildernesses of sin:

They are saying, these voices in pain,
They must suffer long until
The heavenly dawn shall fill
Their songs with brightness again,

That since You have wept above
The sins of the mad human race,
They must wash with tears their face,
And pray to You long in love.

[Pg 104]

On Your poor hands pierced by the nail,
With hope's long clinging, the old
Women have rested their cold
Souls without feeling and frail.

SOULS OF THE EVENING.

While the spindle merrily sings,
Old women sing your complaint,
The gas-lamps are misty and faint,
And the night to the water clings.

Now Jesus walks where greens
The dark, cobbled alley, and rests
His poor, pierced hands on the breasts
Of dreaming Magdalenes;

And of every orphan child,
And of houses holy with prayer,
Mary Mother has care ...
Sing, Jesus meek and mild

Stands in your doorways' gloom,
And hears your hymn beseech ...
Let the honey of His speech
Your desolate hearts perfume!—

The Shepherd of straying sheep
Shall lead you home to the fold ...
But your soul, old women, must weep,
Remembering its wounds of old,

[Pg 105]

Love, and the heart's long burn,
The wounds of hope ever sick,
And childhood's dreams falling quick,
Shed and dead turn by turn.

Lord, on old women have pity,
Whose soul, fair fragile toy,
Touched by the kiss of the city,
Dreams of the sun of joy!

ALBERT MOCKEL.

1866—.

THE GIRL.

Slender, and so virginal, but why not somewhat languid?—her casque of golden hair is starred sometimes with mellow sparks, and mellow is her mauve silk dress soft in its folds.

She is all music, in the music of her movements bathed, they also soft with pensive grace, and very slow with suppleness that undulatingly unrolls.

An evening party. She has danced, she dances still. Men dark and fair have come and led her off, under the chandeliers in this insipid music,—insipid, and amusing her. Much has she danced (O all this light!) and feels a little weary, weary. Yes, several waltzes; of her partners one could talk, or nearly could;—but he is ugly, and his fish eyes middle-class. The other, on her programme

next, is far more handsome, surely: his keen eyes have metallic glints, his hair is glossy black; he is Italian, is he not, or else from Hungary? [Pg 106]

Ah! here he comes.

Two heads incline, she takes an arm: they waltz.

This waltz, it rolls with a voluptuous rhythm, in harmony with the rhythm of the Girl, like convoluted masses, musically vaporous and very heavy, volutas without end and curve on curve. They dance, their curves leave traces of caresses in the air, their undulations are a most lascivious music. She? she is very tired, she has no strength as on her cavalier she leans! her thought is vague, so vague along the twining curves, vague in volutas without end, and with the contours of their curves. These curves are turning round lasciviously; she thinks no more, she turns, she turns, she undulates in air and in the music's kisses, tickled by something drunken, by this air which brushes her, this ball:—she shivers.

Now nothing more, her eyes see nothing; things that turn, vague things, volutas vague without an end, and curves that drag her on in velvet rhythms. But all the things around her turn too vaguely, too vaguely cycles turn barbaric, mad; all of it turning, turning; and if she look again she will be sure to fall!...

The waltz continues and lasciviously rolls, rolls in the dizziness of turning things, mad cycles, and all this softness, curves that languish fit to swoon! Feverishly and to flee the crazy dizziness of all these vague and circumambient things, as if to save her life she keeps her look on him.—He plunges his deep down into the great vague eyes before him, until he sets them shuddering ... This man, his eyes are shining; strangely beautiful, they shine with gleams fantastic, and from their fluid comes perverted charm, burning and dominating, almost animal, and with a glaucous glint that troubles her ... [Pg 107]

This well-nigh bestial look upon a somewhat pensive, handsome face.... And it is she, she ... Ashamed, in spite of all her dizziness, she takes away her eyes from him who seeks to conquer her. But all is turning, all these things, these vague things turning, turning O too much! she shuts her eyes to see them not, she could not open them again, the rhythms bear her onward crossing one another, brushing some lascivious curve again, the vagueness, O such vagueness of the crazy cycles and lascivious curves that ravish her. Delicate titillation like a feather's sudden touch electrifies her, half-fainting and surrendering she floats like flotsam on his arm; this arm, that like a very soft and powerful billow bears and cradles her; sweetly, irresistibly caresses her, bearing her onward, circling her with a voluptuous embrace, and ... no, no! his eyes through her closed lids she feels them, and their glaucous flame that pierces, conquers her. This glaucous look, this virile and determined look, it weighs upon her, haunting the soft eddyings of the waltz, —and is not this a breath that brushes her, the stifled warmth of a desiring breath, man's breath on her neck....

But the waltz bears her on in whirling, vague, voluptuousness.

THE SONG OF RUNNING WATER.

"The light that my embanking meadow laves
Over me like a purer billow glides.
Naked in its limpid and transparent waves,
It is the magnifying image wherein I
Am the diaphanous shadow of the sky.

O beam!... O dream of fire that fills me ...
He, my heroic vow that with emotion thrills me,
Comes!... but when his flame has lapped me wholly,
From over me he rises, fleeing slowly,
And in my being I can hear a being die.

Beautiful is the forest, whose
O'er-leaning leaves temper my languid heat,
Stripped by the wind of gold he strews,
And myriad leaves are from each other singled,
Dancing to fall upon their glancing selves,
And playfully to emulate the frivolous deceit
Of a bird's pinion with my waters mingled.

Breezes, trills of songbirds warbling with a breast that wells,
All that lives and makes the forest ring retells
The melody I murmur to my tall reed-grasses,
Aery music that its spirit glasses.

O forest! O sweet forest, thou invitest me to rest
And linger in thy shade with moss and shavegrass dressed,

Imprisoning me in swoon of soft caresses
That o'er me droop thy dense and leafy tresses.

But on I glide, I go, and, fretful,
Pass under thee, gliding away my life forgetful.
The evanescent soul, the soul where thou wert glassed,
Fades, and leaves my sealed eyes nothing of the past.

[Pg 109]

Far away from me are gone
All the glimpses that upon me shone.
To other forests and to other lights,
Shaking my hair from fall to fall, from spate to spate,
I glide with hands untied, and empty-eyed,
With endless hours that fetter and control my fate.

Wandering shadow of a reverie banked and pent,
Sister of all those whom my waves entrap,
Intangible as a soul, and, like a soul,
Unfit to seize, I roll
Garlands of scattered memories, whose scent
Dies in a bitter sap.

And neither who I am nor whence I am I know ...
Under my fleeting images lives but one being,
That winds with all my windings whither they are fleeing ...
O thou whose tired feet I have bathed, and heavy brow,
And the caress of avid hands,—
O passer-by, my brother listening to me now!—
Hast thou not seen, from the waste mountains' threshold
to my far sea-sands,
Born and reborn in me, strong as the whipped flood-tides
of love's emotion,
The broad, unbroken current rolling me to the ocean?

Hast thou not seen, force without end, immortal rhythm and rhyme,
Desire impelling me beyond the bounds of Time?"

[Pg 110]

THE GOBLET.

Every hand that touches me I greet
With kisses welcoming, caresses sweet.

Thus in my crystal's naked beauty, I—
With nothing save a little gold as on my lips a dye—
Give myself wholly to the mouth unknown
That seeks the burning of my own.

Queen of joy,—queen and slave,—
Mistress that taken passes on again,
Mocking the love she throws to still
Desire, I have blown madness at my pleasure's will
To the four winds that rave.

Say you that I am vain?
List!
I am feeble, scarcely I exist ...
Yet listen: for I can be everything.

This mouth, that never any kiss could close,
Capriciously in subtle fires it blows,
The jewelled garlands of a shadowy blossoming.

Tulip of gold or ruby, dense
Corolla of dark purple opulence,
Stem of a lily diamond
Flowered upon a limpid pond
That nothing save the beak of wood-doves troubles,
I am sparkling, I am singing,—and I laugh to see,
Ascending in this colourless soul of me,
As might a dream, a thousand iridescent bubbles.

[Pg 111]

For the lover drunken on my lips that burn,

Whether he pour in turn
The wines of gold and flame or love's wave to my rim,
Drinks from my soul for ever strange to him
A queenly splendour or the radiance of the skies,
Or fury scorching where the harmful ruby lies
In the bitter counsel of my jealous topazes.

And, tears or joy, delirium, daring drunkenness,
From all this passion that to his is married
Nothing of me will gush unto his arid
Lips, save the simple and the limpid light
Whose gleam is wedded to my empty chalice.

What matter? I have given Desire his cloudland palace,
And on my courtesan's bare breast
Love lets the hope of his diaphanous flight
Languish, and softly rest ...
And I laugh, the fragile, frivolous sister of Eve!
For me in nights of madness drunken hands upheave
Higher than all foreheads to the constellated skies,
And then I am the sudden star of lies,
That into troubled joys darts deep its radiant gleam—
The sweet, perfidious happiness of Dream.

THE CHANDELIER.

Jewels, ribbons, naked necks,
And the living bouquet that the corsage decks;
Women, undulating the soft melody
Of gestures languishing, surrendering ...
And the vain, scattered patter of swift words ...

[Pg 112]

Silken vestures floating, faces bright,
Furtive converse, gliding glances, futile kiss
Of eyes that flitting round alight like birds,
And flee, and come again coquettishly;
Laughter, and lying ... and all flying away
To the strains that spin the frivolous swarm around.

Lo, here the burning beauty of a rose
Has fallen ...
And feeble in its wasted grace it lies,
Exhaling its bruised loveliness, the while,
Like Love among the smiles,
It dies.

Eddying skirts, gay giddiness ... the festival is closed.
While somewhat of uneasiness still palpitates,
No void subsists of vanished voices;
And nothing on the stained boards has remained
Except a stem, a chalice,—once a rose.

But the forgotten chandelier, whose grandiose soul
Unto the eyes of beauty dedicates
Its glorious sheaf of fires without a goal,
In halls deserted charms the solitude
That nascent morning sheds his pure breeze o'er-

And the dawn weaves afar its threads of light.

* * * * *

Know you that in the Orient, simple, earnest, bright,
She whose burning soul immortal shows
Arises

[Pg 113]

... O light!

Down yonder, in the deeper solitude,
She who is born, and dies, and is renewed.
Life passionately rises under the sky!
The fleeing wave has mirrored in its sheen
The young smile of the golden morn,
That comes across the plain where wheat and rye

Grow green, and with the blonde dawn intertwine ...
Behold: consumed under the ruby shine
In which its glory's arid flame exhausts itself,
The chandelier is paling at the breath of Death,
And burns its throes out in the face of the Sun.

THE ANGEL.

Some one here has gone to sleep.

While yet the sun is at the Heaven's rim,
Under the shadows of domed ilex crests,
Innocent, tired, upon the happy grass he rests,
And the shadow, scarcely moving over him,
Prolongs around his sleep the hem of night.

Who is this child thus dawning on our sight?
Is it to any one among you known
Whence comes this adolescent, white
Traveller, who has halted with us in the night?

Comes he from seas afar,
Where islands are?
Or from unkempt
Forests, or from sterile plains,
Whose vastness never any man has dreamt?

[Pg 114]

Naked and white is he. The stones that clot
The road, his feet and knees have wounded not;
There is upon his brow something we dread ...
Whence comes he, with his beauty dight,
He who has halted with us in the night?

His hair is spread
Like a wave of light;
His closed hand holds a flower unknown;
And all his white of an enchanted thing
Is like a cloud-scape doubly shown
In waters mirroring.

O brothers, take
Care that his sleep ye do not break!

But what a snow is this that trembling gleams
Frail on his flank, and buries him in our sight?
And these strange beams,
That like a white and scintillant raiment drape
His limbs in folds of light?

O brothers! I have seen ... It is a wing ...
Look ye: this is, immortal shape,
An angel slumbering.

In the light morn, where the holm its shadow flings,
The wanderer adown Heaven's azure steep
Has closed his mystic wings:
An angel here has gone to sleep!

Never a movement quivers
To trouble the transparent, limpid air:
Not a leaf shivers ...
It is an angel sleeping there.

[Pg 115]

What silence! O what calm without an end!
Whence did the stranger unto us descend?
Did he, a weak, frail enemy advance
Before the One who strikes, and wills us prone?
Or were there monsters to be overthrown,
Some day of courage blind, pierced with his lance,
And then his wing grazed Death?
But no, for with a smile his mouth uncloses;
And in the silence he reposes.

O let us whisper! Let the shadow's dome
Lengthen the hour of sleep with its fresh gloam.
Perchance his soul loved space, but tender
And human still, grew weary of the bare
And arid splendour of unvaulted air,
And all this sun-swept ether limitless ...

Sad was his heart one day, feebler his soul,
His brow too heavy; and, without a goal,
Wandering through deathless radiance loathing it,
He closed his eyes above
The dizzy vast of love,
And, keeping at his flank his shamed wings,
Down floating, on the earth alit.

But when, awakening, to his feet he springs,
Angered, his resistless wings will soar and fly,
Resounding through the Azure they devour;
And, virgin, with a supernatural, clear cry,
He in the dawn will fade, in the infinite hour,
Like the keen dream that darts through cosmos deeps,
When a flaming meteor leaps,
And lights the worlds between.

[Pg 116]

THE MAN WITH THE LYRE.

No man knows whence, from very far,
Came a man who bore a lyre,
And his eyes were as bright as a madman's are,
And he sang a song of fire
To the short strings of his lyre,
The love of women, and vain, languishing desire,
Upon his lyre.

His lyre was frail, and flowered with roses pale;
And so sweet rose the voice of his breath,
That as far as a man's eye wandereth,
From the mountain to the vale,
From the valley to the forest, from the forest to the plain,
Ran the young men, and the lasses sprang
To hear the dulcet strain of pain he sang.

"He's a proud man," said all the men.
"Like a soul speaking is this voice of his,
So sad and tender, fit to make you swoon,
His voice is like a woman's kiss!"—
"Ho!" they said—said all the lasses then—
"He is a lover, with his lyre!
Sweetly he speaks, so sweetly with his lyre,
We fain would weep, and would be dying soon...."

But now the singer's voice has changed, he sings
Upon the long chords of his lyre
The deeds of men, and dukes, and kings,
Warring afar from Ophir to Cathay,
And over all the earth in great array,
And weapons shocked by which the soul is rocked,—
And golden oriflammes spread to the breeze's breath
To celebrate the joy of life in death.

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"O!" the men, "Alas!" the lasses said,
"We understand no longer what you say.
Your voice that soared, like any wing
Freed but now from the great paradise,
Has gone,—perhaps more proudly hovering,—
We know not in what country now it flies."
"O!" the men, "Alas!" the lasses said.
And children, string by string,
Cried under dazzled skies.

Now for his grave man's voice the singer tries

The greatest chord of all the lyre.
And to the gravest chord of all he saith
Hope that for very youth soars in a breath,
And stretching like a wakened beast desire....
And lo! already, by the willows of the river,
Beautiful Joy who passes binding crowns turns her aside.

And suddenly tempestuous grief rings far and wide,
Its strength awakening from the mystery of the chords
Dream-voices that deliver....
And lo! our fists are clenched and leaping towards
Death's iron gates, and bruised recoiling thence.

"Holla!" the men said; and the lasses laughed.
"Holla!" the men said, "surely he is daft!
He sings, he comes we know not whence;
What would he have from us? We have no pence."
(And the lasses laughed.)
"Follow," the lasses said, "the werwolf we have
started."

And men and maids stoned him with pebbles of the way,
And, twining arms and waists, so glad and gay,
Singing and laughing, all departed,
Laughing and singing, laughing all the way.

* * * * *

But now the solitude is moulding
A long music folding and unfolding.

Is it an unseen angel's touch? As in the grey
Silence might a phantom shape's,
That comes, unrolls its raiment, and escapes,
A voice flees, when the breeze has touched and passed,
And glides within the singing chords....
As a light wind sings at a vessel's mast,
The sweet breath mounting from the river towards
The singer, binds a chant on the lyre's chords.

It is a wing wrinkling the wave, and in it glassed:
It is the vague word moving Nature through and through,
And which the human lip shall never speak....

And now it bears a soul into the blue;
And of a sudden all the melody
Rings out with such a grave accord towards
The skies, that in the radiant deeps of space the chords,
Magnified, no man can fathom how,
Have brushed God's viewless brow!

SONG OF TEARS AND LAUGHTER.

Two women on the hill-side stood,
Where the long road winds through the wood,
At dusk of day.

One of them laughs, a-laughing glad and gay,
One of them sings, mocking all grisly care;
The other moans, and sighs in her despair,
The other sobs, crying her heart away.

"Ho!" (says the one) "sweet glides the breeze,
My drunken heart upon it flees...."

The other moans, "The wind blows chill,
My heart is O! so sad and ill."

One told her story to the grass-green hill:

"Years and years gone my husband went from me,
(Upon the breeze my laughter bounds and blows!)
He went to sail upon the doleful sea,
And God knows he has slain his thousand foes.
But let the drunken breeze be blowing strong,
He will come back with April's sun ere long,

And we shall laugh at troubles o'er and done,
Counting the golden booty he has won."

So glad and gay, she laughs and sings her song.

And the other moans in sorrow broken-hearted;
The words are broken in her voice that grieves.

"The wind groans; my soul with sorrow heaves;
My lord, my lover he is far departed!
His flesh with mine was one,
His soul and mine were blent.
And yet one day from me he went,
And on my lips held out in vain,
Like a drop hung on the rim
Of passion's cup filled full for him,
Is trembling still a kiss I gave not back again.

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Far, far away, upon the bloody plain,
(O! in the wind the wailing wild of pain!)
Perchance he fell and now he dies,—or some
Woman has with her love his heart o'ercome,
Some woman's eyes have robbed my happiness ...
With pain and love my heart is all forlorn;
I hear my sorrow and the wind's distress
Blent in the baleful bluster of the corn.
I know! Another woman's kisses sever
His heart from mine! But what is this disgrace
To me, the flesh of his flesh now and ever?
Let him come back! I languish for his face.
Let him come back to where his truelove lies,
And every day my tears for him shall race
Down on my pale hands from my withered eyes."

"Ho!" says the one, (a-singing glad and gay),
"Thy tears are at the wind's will borne away.
See, in the valley greens the gracious spring;
The warbling bird is gladdening the leaves!
O let the breeze blow far thy voice that grieves,
For the breeze is come, with perfumes on his wing
And the meadows bloom under the April rain.
Laughter! I know no more of tears and pain."

"Ah!" says the other, "woe and lackaday!"

"O!" says the one,—and laughing wends her way.

Two women on the hill-side stood.

[Pg 121]

And now, from the far fields and near the wood,
Two wounded men come trailing up the way.
No standard waves its joy before their face,
No sturdy mule is bearing their array.
Alone, and slowly, up the path they pace,
And, drop by drop, blood marks their every trace.

And of a sudden crying from the brant,
The blended voices of two women pant;—
And the wind may moan, and laugh the breeze,
For grief and joy mingle their ecstasies.

"It is my husband! God, scarce liveth he ...
(My laugh is stifled dying in the breeze!)
Alas! it is my husband, fainting, bruised,
Drop by drop his blood has oozed ...
Curst be the hour my husband went from me!
Curst, curst be God who hears and sees!"

Two cries of women, fury and caress,
Cry without hope and cry of happiness ...

"It is my lord, alive, my lover dear ...
(My tears are dried, and on the breeze they flee!)
O it is he indeed! My lord is here,
Bruised, wounded, pitiful, with panting breath,

But loyal to my heart that quivereth ...
Blest be the day gives my true love to me!"

And the wind may moan, and sing the breeze ...
For joy and grief have blent their ecstasies.

For mirrored in the evasive wave appears
A double brow; an angel sleeps beside
The waking angel; from the plaint that died
Thanksgiving soars; and, mingling smiles with tears,
Days with black jewels gem a diadem
For glittering Night whence Death comes unto them.

[Pg 122]

THE ETERNAL BRIDE.

I have dreamt thee kind, and dreamt thy careful eyes,
Sister unknown, eternal bride of mine.
Wife of my thought, I have bent my mouth to thine,
And slowly thou hast spoken,—in this wise:

"I flash, I glitter, I fade.

Enjoy my love ere it flees,
But seek not where I have strayed,
My trace is like sand on the breeze.

My kiss falls on thy face...
But I am unseen, a shade
That passes ... my kisses fade
Like a wing that flits through space.

Listen, and think! I am she
Who opens thine eyes in dream.
I am the wonderful beam
Of a mystery unveiled to thee.

I am hot as the sun at heaven's steep,
And more than smoke I am light;
And I glide through the odours of night
To visit thee in thy sleep."

[Pg 123]

THE BRIDE OF BRIDES.

O thou who hauntest my nights, Spectre of Time, immense,
Voiceless, eternal shadow, Monster for whose feet we hark,
And peer for thy marrowless bones in vain through the darkness dense,
I know thou art near me ... I tremble, and wait for thee in the dark.

O shame! Am I stricken with terror? Absolve with the calm of thy scorn
My soul that is dizzily whirling under thy piercing eyes!
Yet once my forehead fancied, in its tender and radiant morn,
That folded into thy bosom every sorrow dies.

I have hated thee in my terror, O Priestess of Time, O Death.
Thy fathomless anger swells and rolls a mournful sea,
And the flesh in the shock of thy billows writhes, and with stifled breath
Cries through the din of thy laughter, crying unto thee....

But come! ... O Bride of embraces twined like an octopus!
I give to thy greedy heart a valiant and quiet heart,—
Since it is true that Love soars out of Death as does
A lily out of a coil of encircling serpents dart.

[Pg 124]

THE THISTLE.

Rooted on herbless peaks, where its erect
 And prickly leaves, austerely cold and dumb,
 Hold the slow, scaly serpent in respect,
 The Gothic thistle, while the insects' hum
 Sounds far off, rears above the rock it scorns
 Its rigid virtue for the Heavens to see.
 The towering boulders guard it. And the bee
 Makes honey from the blossoms on its thorns.

MUSHROOMS.

Whether with hues of corpses or of blood,—
 Phallus obscene or volva as of glue—
 In the rank rotting of the underwood,
 And those that out of dead beasts' bodies grew,
 Fed by the effervescence
 Of poisonous putrescence,
 Flourish the saprophytes in mould and must.

Plants without roots and with no leaves of green,
 Souls without faith or hope—they thrust
 Protuberances rank with lust,
 Inert, venene.

And if there is not death in all of them,
 It is because some sect among them breeds
 From less putrescent wood fallen from the stem
 Of the Living Tree whose severed bough still feeds.

[Pg 125]

In the autumnal thicket, thinned
 Along its mournful arches by the wind,
 No longer to dead twigs but sapwood quick,
 Corrupting trunks that time left whole,
 The reeking parasites in millions stick,
 Like to the carnal ill that gnaws the soul
 Of those who at the feet of women fawn.

And Hell has blessed their countless spawn.

And though they cannot reach the surging tops
 Of the unshaken columns of the Church,
 In spreading crops
 The parasites with poison smirch
 And mottle with strange stains the fruits
 The Monstrance ripens in the groves of Rome.

Trusting that ancient orchard's sainted roots,
 Whoever of the leprous apples eats
 Shall feel his faith grow darkened with a gloam
 That filters heresy's corroding sweets.

More hideous than saprophytes,
 And therefore for the sacrilege more fit,
 Upon the Corn and Vinestock sit
 Minute and miserable parasites;
 And o'er the Eucharist their tiny bellies,
 To cat and crimson it, have crept.
 Their occult plague has for three hundred years
 Eaten the very hope of mystic ears,
 Wherever the Christian Harvester has slept.
 And while, in the land of heavy, yellow beers,
 In the brewing-vat of barren exeges
 Some new-found yeast for ever effervesces,
 The saints whose blood turns sick and rots,

[Pg 126]

Waiting till a second Nero shall
For their cremation light a golden carnival,
Behold their bodies decked with livid spots.

GEORGES RENCY.

1875—.

WHAT USE IS SPEECH?

What use is speech, what use is it to say
Words that without an echo die away,
And only leave vain sadness after?
All a forest of shadow rings with laughter,
If thou but move thy hand to grasp at life!

My love, the path on which we laugh with life
Pales in a doubt befogged with roads that leads not thorough;
The night is triumphing with stars, towards to-morrow!
In the night, thou sayest, shadowy terrors fall.
Be undeceived, there is no night:
There is only multiform, enormous light,
And the stars are there, for thee to be drunk withal!

THE SOURCE.

Our feet kiss where the source is glistening
In the glad gloaming softening the trees.
Its waters murmur mysteries to the breeze,
And we in ravishment are listening.
The leaves are paling in the twilight chill:
A mystic something in the air is swimming;
Our eyes with happy tears are over-brimming;
And now the source grows timid, and is still.
The shadow makes the world so fair and frail;
Wouldst thou not, like a banner on the gale,
Be fain to shake thy heart out tenderly?—
But no, say nothing: silence is a veil
For fervent thoughts that utterance only mars.
Let us sit hand in hand, and converse be
Without a word under the peace of stars.

[Pg 127]

THE FLESH.

O carnal love, life's laughter! Under these
Free Eden skies and on these blossomed leas,
Thy kiss is on these budding lips of ours.
The high grass is all gold, the drunken flowers
Voluptuously languish, every one,
Feverish as the earth is with the sun.

My heart leaps like a beast of light, and rears
And madly o'er the royal road careers,
Where my desires' processional altars are.
Your flesh is quivering and to mine replies,
Dearest, and glassed within your great pale eyes
Is Heaven immensely blue and deep and far.

Kiss me! The hour is sweet, and pure our kiss.
The deathless boon of living sings in us.
Let us with ravishment delirious
Possess each other, and in infinite bliss

[Pg 128]

Be born again, knowing life's mysteries!

Fold me and fill me with your hot caress,
O human goddess naked, exquisite!
I am drunken with your dazzling loveliness,
O queen of grace and beauty dowered with your
Young budding flesh so marvellously pure!

FERNAND SÉVERIN.

1867—.

THE CHAPLET.

Fiumina amem sylvasque inglorius.—VIRGIL.

My forest, winter's captive, I have seen
Softly awakening under warmer breezes:
In bluer air my forest shimmering green
Wafts down the wind the scent that in its trees is.

An olden happiness, and yet unknown:
Trembles my simple heart, these things beholding
With pearls of dew the burgeoned boughs are strown
Trembling, this morning hour, my woods unfolding,

O Muses! if so passionate a love
Survive these leaves in songs of mine that please ye,
Seek not to soften to the wrinkles of
My brow the oak's or laurel's bough uneasy.

[Pg 129]

The leaves were quivering open, frail as flowers!
O! let the light bough of this foliage, shining
With the cold tears of Night's imprisoned hours,
For ever be mine idle brows entwining!

Re manlier brows by prouder fillets swathed!
But I would live renownless, lonely-hearted,
And to those virgin haunts return unscathed
Whence my child's soul hath never yet departed.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.

I feel my heart for ever dying, bruised
By all the love it never will have used,
Dying in silence, and with angels by,
As simply as in cradles infants die,
Infants that have no speech.

O God-given heart,
Guarded by vigilant seraphim thou art!
No thing shall soil thy natal raiment! Thou,
Rest thee content with no kiss on thy brow,
Save of maternal summer eves, and die
In thy desire and thy virginity.
Thy sacrifice hath made thee shy and proud;
Thy life with very emptiness is bowed.
Made to be loved, loved thou shalt never be,
Though many maids would stretch their arms to thee,
As to the Prince who through their fancies rides.
Alas! and thou hast never known these brides;
To thee they come not when calm evening falls,
The pensive maids to whom thy longing calls;
And thou art dying of thy love unused,
Poor sterile heart, my heart for ever bruised!

SOVRAN STATE.

In nights impure moans one with fever stricken:
 "Lord! let a maiden bring me, for I sicken,
 Water and grapes, and quench my thirst with them.

Spring water! Fruits of a virgin vine! And let
 Her fresh and virgin hands lie on the fret
 Of my King's brow burnt by its diadem."

O pitiful crown upon a head so lowly!
 Does the unquiet night allegiance show thee?
 Thou King of beautiful lands that never were.

"O stars among the trees! O waters pale!
 Comes the expected dawn in opal veil?
 Pity the tired and lonely sufferer:

And grant me, Lord, after the night out-drawn,
 The sleep and boon of Thy forgiving dawn;
 And let Thy chosen heart no longer bleed!"

But answer makes the Lord in stern denial:
 "Leave thou, for nobler verse, to pain and trial
 Thy heart, the open book the angels read."

THE KISS OF SOULS.

You who have died to me, you think you live!
 Living, your squandered gems and lilies shed!
 But since the dream you were is fugitive,
 Love, calm and sad, whispers that you are dead.

[Pg 131]

She that you were survives in dreams: I press
 Her virgin hands, I hear the vows she swears.
 Hath not this evening that old loveliness?
 I seem to breathe the blossoms that she wears.

Hearts had been beating long before they spoke,
 But eyes had speech, and tender voices ringing,
 Docile to love like perfect lyres, awoke
 The forest's wondering echo with their singing.

A lovelier and a lonelier evening came;
 The sun behind the breathless forest set.
 Who was it hushed our voices? For in shame
 We bent our eyes down that by chance had met.

The treasure of our hearts this one deep look
 Delivered up! Our secrets were in this
 One look exchanged that our two spirits took,
 And wedded in their first and only kiss.

HER SWEET VOICE.

Her sweet voice was a music in mine ear;
 And in the perfume of the atmosphere
 Which, in that eve, her shadowy presence shed,
 "Sister of mystery," trembling I said,
 "Too like an angel to be what you seem,
 Go not away too soon, beloved dream!"

Then, smiling as a mother will, she seized
 My brow, and with soft hands my fever eased.

"Still, thou poor child, this childish fear of me?"

Thy forehead furrowed by sad memory,
 Are these a shadow's hands that on it rest?
 A bright May morn is dawning in thy breast:
 Is it a phantom's voice that soothes thy grief?
 But if my beauty be beyond belief,
 Breathe its terrestrial odour! Part my hair,
 And take my veil away and make me bare!
 Thou canst not soil my wings, nor stain the snow
 Of these frail flowers that in my garden blow;
 Come, in so fair an evening, spend the treasure
 Of my veiled loveliness in thy heart's pleasure."

Thus sang the tender voice that needs must fade!
 And in her kiss the soul was of a maid.
 But night came from the rim of autumn skies,
 Came from the forest's shallow, evil eyes.

THE REFUGE.

This is mine hour. Night falls upon my life.
 I must forego my part in men's keen strife.
 With conquered step resigned I reach the door,
 Beloved too late, where none awaits me more.
 An autumn shudder through the clear, cold sky
 Runs, interrupting the monotonous cry
 Shed by a horn astray and desolate,
 Making me, languidly, smile at my fate....

But all is said. Naught moves me, in the gloam,
 Save the uneasy hope of this dear home.
 She lives; my heart, and not mine eye, foresees.
 The sweetness of the moon, spread on the trees,
 Veils more and more this happy nook with peace
 And mystery that bids foreboding cease;

A counsel of forgetfulness is cast
 Around me, something pensive, good, and vast.
 And every step I take the more it thrills
 My soul which yet that ancient quarrel fills.
 But what shall summer storms betoken, when
 She breathes the autumn calm she longed for then,
 And only trembles feeling memories stir
 Of hearts that loved her well and wounded her.

NATURE.

Slow falls the eve; the hour is grave, profound.
 The sweet, sad cuckoo makes the air resound
 With his two notes with springtide languor filled;
 And the tall pines, by eddying breezes thrilled,
 Tremble, as ocean echoes in a shell.
 Else all is hushed.

I walk with heart unwell.
 Slowly the shadow on my path descends.
 I loiter o'er familiar forest bends,
 Whose calm grows deeper with the darkening west,
 O such a calm I feel my own unrest
 Melt in the peace of landscapes unforeseen;
 And in the east eve clothes with azure sheen
 The slender uplands with their billowing chain,
 Whose silhouettes shut in the distant plain;
 And on their tops their cloak of forests gleams
 Through the thin veil of mist that o'er them streams.
 And all is vague, the ideal form of things
 Shimmers divine in deep imaginings,
 Gladdening the eye with grace ineffable;
 Seeing them, in the enchanted world we dwell
 Of soulless, happy beings who possess
 The calm we cry for of forgetfulness,

We who desire in desolate hearts that pine,
This sovereign gift of peace that makes divine;
And most at eve, when quiet nights of spring
Enchant the sky, the forest, and the ling.
The forest's darkness sways me at its will;
And with a holy and unfathomed thrill
I feel a dizzy longing grow in me:
O not to think! nor wish! O not to be!...

THE HUMBLE HOPE.

Time goes, poor soul, and sterile are thy vows.
After our outwatched nights and feverish brows,
What do we know, save that we nothing know?

Even as a child a butterfly will chase,
Far have I strayed in many a flowering place,
And here I tremble in the afterglow.

Yet not despairing in my feebleness,
But hoping that the Master still will bless
The will to do good that my efforts show.

ELEONORA D'ESTE.

Does thy heart, Tasso, burn for thy Princess?
Strive to refine this obscure tenderness,
Of which she can accept the flower alone.
Save it make nobler, I no love can own.
Certes, among the gifts that fate bestows,
And the least lovely, as a poet knows,

[Pg 135]

Some are an offered prey that passions take.
But there are others which, if seized, do break;
And of these supreme gifts love is the best.
If thou indeed dost love me, 'ware thee lest
Thy heart forget the reverence it owes,
Then may it love, and in love find repose.

THE THINKER.

O thinker! Thou whose heart hath not withstood,
For the first time, Spring's beauty in the wood,
And who thyself wilt therefore not forgive,

Thy days have passed in pondering o'er the great
Enigma man proposes to his fate,
And books from life have made thee fugitive.

What boots? Leave to the gods their secret yet,
And, while thou livest, taste without regret
The sweetness of this simple word: To live.

A SAGE.

He knows dreams never kept their promise yet.
Henceforth without desire, without regret,
He cons the page of sober tenderness
In which some poet, skilled in life's distress,
Breathed into olden, golden verse his sighs.
Sometimes he lifts his head, and feeds his eyes,
With all the wonderment that wise men know,
On fields, and clouds that over forests go,

He knows how dearly fair renown is bought:
He too, in earlier days of stinging strength,
Sought that vain victory to find at length
Sadness at his desire's precipitous brink....
Of what avail, he thought, to act and think,
When human joy holds all in one rapt look?
His mind at peace reads Nature like a book.
He smiles, remembering his youth's unrest,
And, though none know it, he is wholly blest.

THEY WHO ARE WORN WITH LOVE.

When, worn with unregenerate delights,
The kisses of fair youths grow dull and sicken,
They seek, fatigued with hope and outwatched nights,
A bed of love that shall the senses quicken.

White bed of love with pillows rich with lace,
Caressing curtains sheltering dreamless blisses,
And, to grow better from the bought embrace,
Upon their wasted brows long trembling kisses.

Calmer than autumn heavens the eyes they crave,
In which the bitterness of theirs shall vanish,
Lips of a speech impassionate, suave,
Which their sick sorrows shall assuage and banish.

Love should be night, and hushed forgetfulness,
Never with follies of the past upbraided,
Hope still renewed consoling the distress
Of dreams come true and in fulfilment faded.

[Pg 137]

Nor light, nor noise; but in the happy room,
With tapestry the walls to sleep beguiling,
To kiss the long hands of the mistress whom
A plain gown clothes, and who is faintly smiling!

Once they have seen her, and to hear her speak
They hoped for her and Heaven, and knelt before her;
But love's old burden makes their soul so weak
That save with sighs they never dare implore her.

THE CENTAUR.

Oft on my rural youth I dwell in fancy.
Ye gods who for our deepest feelings care,
If fields and forests evermore entrance me,
It is because you set my birthplace there.

With what a love up-welling sweet and tender
Upon the august face of earth mine eyes
Lingered, and drank her solitary splendour,
Bathed in the radiance of calm summer skies!

All was excitement! Valleys richly rounded;
The undulating, broadly breasted hills;
The vast plains which the veiled horizon bounded,
Lit by the silver flash of restless rills.

But you, ye forests, filled me most with craving!
The pang I felt still to my memory cleaves,
When I beheld your endless tree-tops waving,
As underneath the wind the ocean heaves!

[Pg 138]

And at your wafted murmuring, I, to capture
Your reachless vast, my arms would open dart,
Crying in sudden, overpowering rapture:

"The world is less immense than my own heart!..."

Do not accuse of pride, O Nature! Mother!
My fleeting youth. Not vain was my unrest:
Of all thy mortal sons there is no other
Hath strained himself more fondly to thy breast.

The summer sun has scorched my skin, and daring
Has chiselled on my face its stubborn force;
In foaming floods I bathed, my body baring;
And on the mountains braved the tempests hoarse.

All manly pleasures that our being fashion
In the rough shock of elements uncouth,
All of them I have known with headlong passion;
With lust of struggle pulsed my arduous youth.

Intoxicating was the zest that thrilled me.
What matter if I let the fervour seize
My quivering soul? The bitter joy that filled me
Whipped and exalted me, and left no lees.

For I had dreamt all phases of existence!
All that was frail and pent in me with scorn
I cast aside, and looked towards the distance
Where dawned the fate for which my mind was born.

Was it a vain dream? O you centaurs smiting
With roving hoofs your rocks and herbless sods,
O you whose shape, a man's and beast's uniting,
Shelters a secret fire that makes you gods!

[Pg 139]

You who quaffed life with its abundance drunken!
Your transports I have known in olden days,
In evenings when, like you in silence sunken,
I drove along the darkened forest ways!

In me, ye savage gods, your strength was seething;
And, when a sacred madness through me ran,
In the pent breath the foliage was breathing
I deemed me one of you, I mortal man.

ÉMILE VERHAEREN.

1855—.

THE OLD MASTERS.

In smoky inns whose loft is reached by ladders,
And with a grimy ceiling splashed by shocks
Of hanging hams, black-puddings, onions, bladders,
Rosaries of stuffed game, capons, geese, and cocks
Around a groaning table sit the gluttons
Before the bleeding viands stuck with forks,
Already loosening their waistcoat buttons,
With wet mouths when from flagons leap the cork
Teniers, and Brackenburgh, and Brauwer, shaken
With listening to Jan Steen's uproarious wit,
Holding their bellies dithering with bacon,
Wiping their chins, watching the hissing spit.
Their heavy-bodied Hebes, with their curving
Bosoms in linen white without a stain,
Are going round, and in long jets are serving
Wine that a sunbeam filters through the pane,
Before it sets on fire the kettles' paunches
The Queens of Tippling are these women, whom
Their swearing lovers, greedy of their haunches,
Belabour as befits their youth in bloom,

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With sweating temples, blazing eyes, and lolling
 Tongue that keeps singing songs obscenely gay,
 With brandished fists, bodies together rolling,
 Blows fit to bruise their carcasses, while they,
 With mouth for songs aye ready, throat for bumpers,
 And blood for ever level with their skins,
 Dance fit to split the floor, they are such jumpers,
 And butt their dancer as around he spins,
 And lick his face in kisses endless seeming,
 Then fall with ransacked corsage, wet with heat.
 A smell of bacon fat is richly steaming
 From the huge platters charged with juicy meat;
 The roasts are passed around, in gravy swimming,
 Under the noses of the guests, and passed
 Around again, with fresh relays of trimming.
 And in the kitchen drudges wash up fast
 The platters to be sent back to the table;
 The dressers bulge, crowded with crockery;
 The cellars hold as much as they are able;
 And round the estrade where this agape
 In glowing red, from pegs hang baskets, ladles,
 Strainers, and saucepans, candlesticks, and flasks.
 Two monkeys in a corner show their navels,
 Throning, with glass in hand, on two twin casks;
 A mellow light on every angle glimmers,
 Shines on the door-knob, through the great keyhole,
 Clings to a pestle, filters through the skimmers,
 Is jewelled on the monster gala bowl,
 And slanting on the heated hearthstone sickens,
 Where, o'er the embers, turns to brown the flesh
 Of rosy sucking-pigs and fat cock-chickens,
 That whet the edge of appetite afresh.

[Pg 141]

From dawn to eve, from eve to dawn, and after,
 The masters with their women revel hold—
 Women who play a farce of opulent laughter:
 Farce cynical, obscene, with sleeves uprolled,
 In corsage ript a flowering gorge not hiding,
 Belly that shakes with jollity, bright eyes.
 Noises of orgy and of rut are gliding,
 Rumbling, and hissing, till they end in cries;
 A noise of jammed iron and of vessels banging;
 Brauwer and Steen tilt baskets on their crowns;
 Brackenburgh is two lids together clanging;
 Others with pokers fiddle gridirons, clowns
 Are all of them, eager to show their mettle;
 They dance round those who lie with feet in air;
 They scrape the frying-pan, they scrape the kettle;
 And the eldest are the steadiest gluttons there,
 Keenest in kisses, and the last to tumble;
 With greasy nose they lick the casseroles;
 One of them makes a rusty fiddle grumble,
 Whose bow exhausts itself in cabrioles;
 Some are in corners vomiting, and others
 Are snoring with their arms hung round their seats
 Babies are bawling for their sweating mothers
 To stuff their little mouths with monster teats.
 Men, women, children, all stuffed full to bursting;
 Appetites ravening, and instincts rife,
 Furies of stomach, and of throats athirsting,
 Debauchery, explosion of rich life,
 In which these master gluttons, never sated,
 Too genuine for insipidities,
 Pitching their easels lustily, created
 Between two drinking-bouts a masterpiece.

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THE COWHERD.

In neckerchief and slackened apron goes
 The girl to graze the cows at dawn's first peep;
 Under the willow shade herself she throws
 To finish out her sleep.

Soon as she sinks she snores; around her brow
And naked toes the seeded grasses rise;
Her bulging arms are folded anyhow,
And round them buzz the flies.

The insects that all heated places love
Come flitting o'er the grass to bask in swarms
Upon the mossy patch she lies above,
And by her sprawling warms.

Sometimes her arm, with awkward empty sweep,
Startles around her limbs the gratified
Murmur of bees; but, greedy still of sleep,
She turns to the other side.

The heavy, fleshy flowers the cattle browse
Frame in the sleeping woman as she dreams;
She has the heavy slowness of her cows,
Her eye with their peace gleams.

Strength, that the trunk of oaks with knots embosses,
Shines, as the sap does, in her; and her hair
Is browner than barley in the fields that tosses,
Or the sand in the pathways there.

[Pg 143]

Her hands are raw, and red, and chapped; the blood
That through her tanned limbs rolls its waves of heat,
Lashes her throat, and lifts her breasts, as would
The wind lift bending wheat.

Noon with a kiss of gold her rest surprises,
Low willow branches o'er her shoulders lean,
And blend, while heavier slumber in her eyes is,
With her brown hair their green.

THE ART OF THE FLEMINGS.

I.

Art of the Flemings, thou didst know them, thou,
Who well didst love them, wenches big of bone,
With ruddy teats, and bodies like flowers blown;
Thy proudest masterpieces tell us how.

Whether a goddess glimmers from thy painting,
Or nymphs with dripping hair a shepherd sees
Rising among the lonely irides,
Or sailors to the sirens' kisses fainting,

Or females with full contours symbolizing
The seasons beautiful, O glorious Art,
These are the Masteries love-born in thy heart,
The wenches of thy colours' gormandizing.

And to create their bodies' carnal splendour,
Naked, and fat, and unashamed, thy brush
Under their clear and glossy skin made blush
A fire of unimagined colours tender.

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They were a focussed light that flashed and glinted;
Their eyes were kindled at the stars, and on
Thy canvases their bosoms rose and shone,
Like great bouquets of flesh all rosy-tinted.

Sweating with love they rolled about a clearing
'Mid in the wood, or bathed their feet in springs,
While in the thickets full of noise of wings,
Satyrs were prowling and through branches leering,

And hid their legs, salacious, shagged, distorted;
Their eyes, like sparks holing the darkness, lit
Some leafy corner, their long mouths were slit

With greasy smiles, their lustful nostrils snorted,

Till, dogs in rut, they leapt to their bitches; these
Feign flight, and shiver coldly, blushing roses,
Pushing the satyr off the part that closes,
Squeezing their thighs together under his knees.

And some, by madness more than his ignited,
Rounding their naked haunches, and rich flesh
Of glorious croups beneath a showering mesh
Of golden hair, to wild assaults invited.

II.

You with the life with which yourselves abounded
Conceived them, masters dear to fame, with red
Brutalities of blood upon them shed,
The bodies of your beauties richly rounded.

No pallid women sunk in listless poses
Morosely on your canvases are seen,
As the moon's face shimmers in waters green,
Mirroring their phthisis and chlorosis,

[Pg 145]

With foreheads sad as is the day's declining,
Sad as a dolorous music faints and dies,
With heavy-lidded, sick and glassy eyes,
In which consumption and despair are pining,

And false, affected grace of bodies faded
Upon the sofas where their time they pass,
In scented dressing-gowns of taffetas,
And in chemises with a dear lace braided.

Nothing your brushes knew of painted faces,
Nor of indecency, nor of the nice
Hints of a cunning and perverted vice
Which with its winking eye our art debases,

Nor of the pedlar Venuses whose draping
Of curtains of the cushioned chamber hints,
Nor corners of a venal flesh that glints
In nests out of the low-necked dress escaping,

Pricking, suggestive themes you knew not, faintings
Of shepherdesses in false pastorals,
No, nor voluptuous beds in hollow walls—
The pulsing women, masters, of your paintings,

In landscapes bright, or waited on by pages
Crimsonly clad in panelled halls with gold,
Or in the purple sumptuousness unrolled
Of the god-guarded, mellow classic ages,

Your women sweated health; they were serenely
Crimson with blood, and white with corpulence;
Ruts they did hold in leashed obedience,
And led them at their heels with gesture queenly.

[Pg 146]

PEASANTS.

Not Greuze's ploughmen made insipid in
The melting colours of his pastorals,
So neatly dressed, so rosy, that one laughs
To see the sugared idyll chastening
The pastels of a Louis Quinze salon,
But dirty, gross, and bestial—as they are.

Penned round some market town in villages,
They know not them who traffic in the next,
But hold them enemies to cheat and rogue.

Their fatherland? Not one believes in it,
Except that it makes soldiers of their sons,
To steal their labour for a span of years.
What is the fatherland to yokels? They
See only, in a corner of their brains,
Vaguely, the king, magnificent man of gold,
In the braided velvet of his purple robes,
A sceptre, and gemmed crowns escutcheoning
The panelled walls of gilded palaces,
Guarded by sentinels with tasselled swords.
This do they know of power. It is enough.
And for the rest their heavy feet would march
In clogs through duty, liberty, and law.
In everything by instinct ankylosed,
A dirty almanac is all they read;
And though they hear the distant cities roaring,
So terrified are they by revolutions,
That they are riveted to serfdom's chains,
Fearing, if they should rear, the iron heel.

Along the black roads hollowed out with ruts,
Dung-heaps in front and cinder-heaps behind,
Stretch with low roofs and naked walls their huts
Under the buffeting wind and lashing rain. [Pg 147]
These are their farms. And yonder soars the church,
Stained, to the north, with ooze of verdigris,
And farther, squared with ditches, lie their fields,
Fertile in patches, thanks to fat manure,
And to the harrow's unrelenting teeth.
There they keep tilling with their obstinate hands
The black glebe mined by moles, and rotten with
Detritus, pregnant with the autumn's sperm.
With dripping brow they drive the spade in deep,
Doubled above the furrows they must sow,
Under the hail of March that whips their back.
And in the summer, when the ripe rye rocks
With golden glints under the pouring sun,
Here, in the fire of long and torrid days,
Their restless sickle shaves the vast wheat-field,
While from their wrinkled foreheads runs the sweat,
Opening their skin from shoulders down to hips;
Noon darts its brazier rays upon their heads;
So raw the heat is that in meslin fields
The too dry ears burst open, and the beasts,
Their necks with gadflies riddled, pant in the sun.
And let November slow to die arrive,
Rolling his hectic rattle through deaf woods,
Howling his sobs and ending not his moans,
Until his death-knell sounds—still runs their sweat.
Always anew preparing future crops,
Under a sky spouting from swollen clouds,
While the north wind tears big holes in the woods,
And sweeps the broken stubble from the fields,
So that their bodies soon in ruin fall:
Let them be young and comely, broadly built,
Winter that chills, summer that calcines them,
Makes their limbs loathsome and their lungs short-breathed; [Pg 148]
Or old, and bearing the down-weighting years,
With bleary eyes, broken backs, and useless arms,
And horror stamped upon their hedgehog face,
They stagger under the ruin-loving wind.
And when Death opens unto them its doors;
Their coffin sliding into the soft earth
Seems only to contain a thing twice dead.

II.

On evenings when through eddying skies the wind
Is whirling the swarming snow across the fields,
Grey-headed farmers sit in reckonings lost,
Near lamps from which a thread of smoke ascends.
The kitchen is unkempt and slatternly:
A string of dirty children by the stove
Gorge the spilt remnants of the evening meal;

Mangy and bony cats lick dishes clean;
Cocks make their beaks ring upon pewter plates;
Damp soaks the leprous walls; and on the hearth
Four flickering logs are twisting meagre shanks
Dying with listless tongues of pale red ray;
The old men's heads are full of bitter thoughts.
"For all the seasons unremitting toil,
With all hands at the plough a hundred years,
The farm has passed from father on to son,
And, with good years and bad, remains the same,
Jogging along upon the brink of ruin."
This is what gnaws and bites them with slow tooth.
So like an ulcer hate is in their hearts,
Patient and cunning hate with smiling face.
Their frank and loud good nature hatches rage;
Wickedness glimmers in their icy looks;
They stink of the rancorous gall that, age by age,
Their sufferings have collected in their souls.
Keen are they on the slightest gain, and mean;
Since they can not enrich themselves by work,
Stinginess makes their hearts hard, their hearts fetid;
And black their mind is, set on petty things,
And stupid and confounded before great;
As they had never raised their eyes unto
The sun, and seen magnificent sunsets
Spread on the evening, like a crimson lake.

[Pg 149]

III.

But kermesse is for them a festival,
Even for the dirtiest, the stingiest,
There go the lads to keep the wenches warm.
A huge meal, greased with bacon and hot sauces,
Makes their throats salty and enflames their thirst.
They roll in the inns, with rounded guts, and hearts
Aflame, and break the jaws and necks of those
Come from the neighbouring town, who try, by God!
To lick the village girls too greedily,
And gorge a plate of beef that is not theirs.

Savings are squandered—for the girls must dance,
And every chap must treat his mate, until
The bottles strew the floor in ugly heaps.
The proudest of their strength drain huge beer-mugs,
Their faces fire-plated, darting fright,
Horrid with bloodshot eyes and clammy mouth,
In the dark rumbling revels kindle suns.
The orgy grows. A stinking urine foams
In a white froth along the causey chinks.
Like slaughtered beasts are reeling toppers floored.
Some are with short steps steadying their gait;
While others solo bawl a song's refrain,
Hindered by hiccoughing and vomiting.

[Pg 150]

In brawling groups they ramble through the town,
Calling the wenches, catching hold of them,
Hugging them, shoving at them,
Letting them go, and pulling them back in rut,
Throwing them down with flying skirts and legs.
In the taverns—where the smoke curls like grey fog
And climbs to the ceiling, where the gluing sweat
Of heated, unwashed bodies, and their smells
Dull window-panes and pewter-pots with steam—
To see battalions of couples crowd
In growing numbers round the painted tables,
It looks as if their crush would smash the walls.
More furiously still they go on swilling,
Stamping and blustering and raging through
The cries of the heavy piston and shrill flute.
Yokels in blue smocks, old hags in white bonnets,
And livid urchins smoking pipes picked up,
All of them jostle, jump, and grunt like pigs.
And sometimes sudden wedges of new-comers
Crush in a corner the quadrille that looks,

So unrestrained it is, like a mixed fight.
Then try they who can bawl the loudest, who
Can push the tidal wave back to the wall,
Though with a knife's thrust he should stab his man.
But the band now redoubles its loud din,
Covers the quarrelling voices of the lads,
And mingles all in leaping lunacy.
They calm down, joke, touch glasses, drunk as lords.
The women in their turn get hot and drunk,
Lust's carnal acid in their blood corrodes,
And in these billowing bodies, surging backs,
Freed instinct grows to such a heat of rut,
That to see lads and lasses wriggling and writhing,
With jostling bodies, screams, and blows of fists,
Crushing embraces, biting kisses, to see them
Rolling dead drunk into the corners, wallowing
Upon the floor, knocking themselves against
The panels, sweating, and frothing at the lips,
Their two hands, their ten fingers ransacking
And emptying torn corsages, it seems—
Lust is being lit at the black fire of rape.
Before the sun burns with red flames, before
The white mists fall in swaths, the reeking inns
Turn the unsteady revellers out of doors.
The kermesse in exhaustion ends, the crowd
Wend their way homewards to their sleeping farms,
Screaming their oaths of parting as they go.
The aged farmers too, with hanging arms,
Their faces daubed with dregs of wine and beer,
Stagger with zigzag feet towards their farms
Islanded in the billowing seas of wheat.

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FOGS.

You melancholy fogs of winter roll
Your pestilential sorrow o'er my soul,
And swathe my heart with your long winding-sheet,
And drench the livid leaves beneath my feet,
While far away upon the heaven's bounds,
Under the sleeping plain's wet wadding, sounds
A tired, lamenting angelus that dies
With faint, frail echoes in the empty skies,
So lonely, poor, and timid that a rook,
Hid in a hollow archstone's dripping nook,
Hearing it sob, awakens and replies,
Sickening the woeful hush with ghastly cries,
Then suddenly grows silent, in the dread
That in the belfry tower the bell is dead.

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ON THE COAST.

A blustering wind the scattered vapour crowds
And shakes the horizon, where the dawn bursts, by
A charge that fills the ashen azure sky
With rearing, galloping, mad, milky clouds.

The whole, clear day, day without mist or rain,
With leaping manes, gilt flanks, and fiery croups,
In a flight of pallid silver and foam, their troops
Career across the ether's azure plain.

And still their ardour grows, until the eve's
Black gesture cuts the vast of space, and heaves
Their masses towards the squall that landward blaes,

While the ample sun of June, fallen from Heaven's vault,
Writhes, bleeding, in their vehement assault,
Like a red stallion in a rut of mares.

HOMAGE.

I.

To heap in them your heavinesses fair,
By double, frugal, savoury breasts embossed,
The rosy skin by which your arms are glossed,
Your belly's curly fleece of reddish hair,

My verses I will weave as, at their doors
Seated, old basket-makers curb and twine
White and brown osiers in a clear design,
Copying enamelled tessellated floors,

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Until your body's gold within them teems;
And like a garland I will wear them, spun
In massive blonde heaps on my head, in the sun,
Haughtily proud, as a strong man beseems.

II.

Your rich flesh minds me of the centaresses,
Whose arms Paul Rubens rounded in his dyes
Of fire beneath a weight of sun-washed tresses,
Pointing their breasts to lion-cubs' green eyes.

Your blood was theirs, when in the mazy gloaming,
Under some star that bit the brazen sky,
They heard a stranger in the sea-fog roaming,
And hailed some Hercules astray and shy;

And when with quivering senses hot for kisses,
And belly for the unknown gaping, their
Arms they were twisting, calling to mad blisses
Huge, swarthy eaters of rut on a body bare.

CANTICLES.

I.

Like lissom lizards drinking the sun's fires
Of gold, with great wide eyes and bronze-nailed feet,
Crawl towards your body my long, green desires.

In the full torrid noon of summer heat
I have bedded you in a nook at a field's edge,
Where the tanned meslin shoots a shivering wedge.

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Heat is suspended o'er us like a daïs;
The sky prolongs the vast expanse, gold-plated;
Afar the Scheldt a dwindling, silver way is;

Lascivious, huge, you lie there yet unsated;
Like lissom lizards drinking the sun's fires
Of gold, crawl back to you my spent desires.

II.

My love shall be the gorgeous sun that robes
With torrid summer and with idlenesses
Your body's naked slopes and hilly globes,

Showering its light upon you in caresses,
And this new brazier's contact shall be in
Tongues of an ambient gold that lick your skin.

The tragic, rolling red of dawn and eve,

And the day's beauty you shall be; with hues
Of splendour you a billowy robe shall weave;

Your flesh shall be like fabulous statues,
Which in the desert sang, and shone like roses,
When morning burned their blocks with apotheoses.

III.

I would not choose the sunflowers that unclose
In daylight; nor the lily long of stem;
Nor roses loving winds to fondle them;
No, nor great nenuphars whose pulp morose,

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And wide, cold eyes, charged with eternity,
Upon their imaging pond yawn idle-lipped
Their stirless dreams; nor flowers despotic, whipped
By wrath and wind along a hostile sea,

To symbolize you. No, but shivering wet
Under the dawn, with great red calyx leaves
Mingling as jets of blood are fused in sheaves,
A group of garden dahlias closely set,

Which, in voluptuous days of autumn, bright
With matter's hot maturity and heats,
Like monstrous and vermilion women's teats,
Grow stiff beneath the golden hands of light.

DYING MEN.

Sharp with their ills, and lonely in their dying,
The sceptic sick watch by their chamber fire,
With haggard eyes, the evening magnifying
The house-fronts, and the blackening church-spire.

The hour is dead where in some never-crowded
City by time extinguished, desolate,
They live immured in walls by mourning shrouded,
And hear the monumental hinges grate.

Haggard and lone, they gaze at Death unbeaten,
Like grim old wolves, the hieratic sick;
Life and its days identic they have eaten,
Their hate, their fate, diseases clustering thick.

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But shaken in their cynical assurance,
And in their haughtiness and pale disgust,
They ask: "Is happiness not in endurance
Of wilful suffering, suffering loved with lust?"

Of old they felt their hearts go out to others;
Benevolent, they pitied alien griefs;
And, like apostles, loved their suffering brothers,
And feared their pride, cabined in dead beliefs.

But now they think that love is more cemented
By cruelty than kindness, which is vain.
What of the few, chance tears they have prevented?
How many more have flowed? Deceit is pain.

Empty the golden islands are, where lingers
In golden mist Dream in a mantle spun
Of purple, skimming foam with idle fingers
From silent gold rained by a teeming sun.

Broken the proud masts, and the waves are churning!
Steer to extinguished ports the vessel's prow:
No lighthouse stretches its immensely burning
Arm to the great stars—dead the fires are now.

Haggard and lone, they gaze at Death unbeaten,
Like grim old wolves, the hieratic sick;
Life and its days identic they have eaten,
Their hate, their fate, diseases clustering thick.

With nails of wood they beat hot foreheads. Cages
Of bones for fevers are their bodies. Blind
Their eyes, their lips like withered parchment pages.
A bitter sand beneath their teeth they grind.

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Now in their extinct souls a longing blazes
To sail, and in a new world live again,
Whose sunset like a smoking tripod raises
The God of shade and ebony in its brain;

In a far land of tempests raging madly,
In lands of fury hoarse and livid dreams,
Where man can drown, ferociously and gladly,
His soul and all his heart in fiery streams.

They are the tragic sick sharp with diseases;
Haggard and lone they watch the town fires fade;
And pale façades are waiting till it pleases
Their crumbling bodies have their coffins made.

THE ARMS OF EVENING.

While the cold night stories its terrace, gored
And dying evening throws upon the heath,
And forest fringed with marshes underneath,
The gold of his armour and the flash of his sword,

Which wave to wave go floating on, too soon
Yet to have lost day's flaunting ardent glow,
But kissed already by the shadowed, slow
Lips of the pious, silver-handed moon,

The lonely moon remembering the day,
Whose brandished weapons made a golden glare,
A pale wraith in the paleness of the air,
The moon for ever pale and far away!

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THE MILL.

Deep in the evening slowly turns the mill
Against a sky with melancholy pale;
It turns and turns, its muddy-coloured sail
Is infinitely heavy, tired, and ill.

Its arms, complaining arms, in the dawn's pink
Rose, rose and fell; and in this o'ercast eve,
And deadened nature's silence, still they heave
Themselves aloft, and weary till they sink.

Winter's sick day lies on the fields to sleep;
The clouds are tired of sombre journeyings;
And past the wood that gathered shadow flings
The ruts towards a dead horizon creep.

Around a pale pond huts of beechwood built
Despondently squat near the rusty reeds;
A lamp of brass hung from the ceiling bleeds
Upon the wall and windows blots of gilt.

And in the vast plain, with their ragged eyes
Of windows patched, the suffering hovels watch
The worn-out mill the bleak horizon notch,—
The tired mill turning, turning till it dies.

IN PIOUS MOOD.^[1]

The winter lifts its chalice of pure night to heaven.

And I uplift my heart, my night-worn heart in turn,
O Lord, my heart! to thy pale, infinite Inane,
And yet I know that nought the implenishable urn
May plenish, that nought is, whereof this heart dies fain;
And I know thee a lie, and with my lips make prayer
And with my knees; I know thy great, shut hands averse,
Thy great eyes closed, to all the clamours of despair;
It is I, who dream myself into the universe;
Have pity on my wandering wits' entire discord;
Needs must I weep my woe towards thy silence, Lord!

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The winter lifts its chalice of pure night to heaven.

—OSMAN EDWARDS.

[1] *The Savoy*, No. 4, August 1896.

THE FERRYMAN.

With hands on oars the ferryman
Strove where the stubborn current ran,
With a green reed between his teeth.

But she who hailed him from the bank,
Beyond the waves, among the rushes rank
That rim the rolling heath,
Into the mists receded more and more.

The windows, with their eyes,
And the dials of the towers upon the shore,
Watched him, with doubled back,
Straining and toiling at the oar,

And heard his muscles crack.
Of a sudden broke an oar,
Which the current bore
On heavy waves down to the sea.

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And she who hailed him from the mist,
In the blustering wind, appeared
More madly still her arms to twist,
Towards him who never neared.

The ferryman took to the oar remaining
With such a might,
That all his body cracked with straining,
And his heart shook with feverish fright.

A sudden shock, the rudder tore,
And the current bore
This remnant to the sea.

The windows on the shore,
Like eyes with fever great,
And the dials of the towers, those widows straight
That in their thousands throng
A river bank, were obstinately staring
At this mad fellow obstinately daring
His crazy voyage to prolong.

And she who hailed him there with chattering teeth,
Howled and howled in the mists of night,
With head stretched out in frantic fright
To the unknown, the vast, and rolling heath.

The ferryman, as a statue stands,
Bronze in the storm that paled his blood,
With the one oar firm in his hands,
Beat the waves, and bit the flood.
His old hallucinated eyes
See the lit distances rejoice,
Whence reaches him the lamentable voice,
Under the freezing skies.

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His last oar breaks,
His last oar the current takes,
Like a straw, down to the sea.

The ferryman exhausted sank
Upon his bench, with sweat that poured,
His loins with vain exertion sore,
A high wave struck on the lee-board,
He looked, behind him lay the bank:
He had not left the shore.

The windows and the dials gazed,
With eyes they opened wide, amazed,
Where all his strength to ruin ran;
But the old, stubborn ferryman
Kept all the same, for God knows when,
The green reed in his teeth, even then.

THE RAIN.

As reeled from an exhaustless bobbin, the long rain,
Interminably through the long gray day,
Lines the green window pane
With its long threads of gray,
The reeled, exhaustless rain,
The long rain,
The rain.

It has been ravelling out, since last sunset,
Rags hanging soft and low
From sulky skies of jet.
Unravelling, patient, slow,
Upon the roads, since last sunset,
On roads and streets,
Continual sheets.

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Along the leagues that wind
Through quiet suburbs to the fields behind,
Along the roads interminably bending,
In funeral procession, drenched, resigned,
Toiling, bathed in sweat and steam,
Vehicles with tilted coverings are wending;
In ruts so regular,
And parallel so far
By night to join the firmament they seem,
The water drips hour after hour,
The spouts gush, and the trees shower,
With long rain wet,
With rain tenacious yet.

Rivers o'er rotten dikes are brimming
Upon the meadows where drowned hay is swimming;
The wind is whipping walnut trees and alders,
And big black oxen wading stand
Deep in the water of the polders,
And bellow at the writhen sky;
And evening is at hand,
Bringing its shadows to enfold the plain, and lie
Clustered at the washed tree's root;
And ever falls the rain,
The long rain,
As fine and dense as soot.

The long rain,
 The long rain falls afresh;
 And its identic thread
 Weaves mesh by mesh
 A raiment making naked shred by shred
 The cottages and farmyards gray
 Of hamlets crumbling fast away;
 A bunch of linen rags that hang down sick
 Upon a loosely planted stick;
 Here a blue dovecote to the roof that cleaves;
 Sinister window panes
 Plastered with paper rank with mildew stains;
 Dwellings whose regular eaves
 Form crosses on their gable ends of stone;
 Uniform, melancholy mills,
 Standing like horns upon their hills;
 Chapels, and spires with ivy overgrown;
 The rain
 The long rain
 Winter-long beneath them burrows.

The rain, in lines,
 The long, gray rain untwines
 Its watery tresses o'er its furrows,
 The long rain
 Of countries old,
 Torpid, eternally unrolled.

THE FISHERMEN.

Up from the sea a flaky, dank,
 Thickening fog rolls up, and chokes
 Windows and closed doors, and smokes
 Upon the slippery river bank.

Drowned gleams of gas-lamps shake and fall
 Where rolls the river's carrion;
 The moon looks like a corpse, and on
 The heaven's rim its burial.

But flickering lanterns now and then
 Light up and magnify the backs,
 Bent obstinately in their smacks,
 Of the old river fishermen,
 Who all the time, from last sunset,
 For what night's fishing none can know,
 Have cast their black and greedy net,
 Where silent, evil waters flow.

Deep down beyond the reach of eye
 Fates of Evil gathering throng,
 Which lure the fishers where they lie
 To fish for them with patience strong,
 True to their task of simple toiling
 In contradictory fogs embroiling.

And o'er them peal the minutes stark,
 With heavy hammers peal their knells,
 The minutes sound from belfry bells,
 The minutes hard of autumn dark,
 The minutes list.

And the black fishers in their ships,
 In their cold ships, are clad in shreds;
 Down their cold nape their old hat drips
 And drop by drop in water sheds
 All the mist.

Their villages are numb and freeze;
 Their huts are all in ruin sunk,
 And the willows and the walnut-trees
 The winds of the west have whipped and shrunk;

And not a bark comes through the dark,
And never a cry through the void midnight,
That floated, humid ashes blight.

And never helping one another,
Never brother hailing brother,
Never doing what they ought,
For himself each fisher's thought:
And the first draws his net, and seizes
All the fry of his poverty;
And the next drags up, as keen as he,
The empty bottoms of diseases;
Another opens out his net
To griefs that on the surface swim;
And another to his vessel's rim
Pulls up the flotsam of regret.

The river churns, league after league,
Along the dikes, and runs away,
As it has done so many a day,
To the far horizon of fatigue;
Upon its banks skins of black clay
By night perspire a poison draught;
The fogs are fleeces far to waft,
And to men's houses journey they.

Never a lantern streaks the dark,
And nothing stirs in the fisher's bark,
Save, nimbusing with halos of blood,
The thick white felt of the clustering fogs,
Silent Death, who with madness clogs
The brains of the fishermen on the flood.

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Lonely at the fog's cold heart,
Each sees not each, though side by side;
Their arms are tired, their vessels ride
By sandbanks marked on ruin's chart.

Why in the dark do they not hail each other?
Why does a brother's voice console not brother?

No, numb and haggard they remain,
With vaulted back and heavy brain,
With, by their side, their little light
Rigid in the river's night.
Like blocks of shadow there they arc,
And never pierce their eyes afar
Beyond the acrid, spongy wet;
And they suspect not that above,
Luring them with a magnet's love,
Stars immense are shining yet.

These fishers in black torment tossed,
They are the men immensely lost
Among the knells and far aways
And far beyonds where none can gaze;
And in their souls' monotonous deeps
The humid autumn midnight weeps.

SILENCE.

Since last the summer broke above her
A flash of lightning from his thunder-sheath,
Silence has never left her cover
In the heather on the heath.

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Across her refuge peers the steeple,
And with its fingers shakes its bells;
Around her prow the vehicles,
Laden with uproarious people;
Around her, where the fir-trees end,
In its rut the cart-wheel grates;

But never a noise has strength to rend
The tense, dead space where silence waits.

Since the last loud thunder weather,
Silence has stirred not in the heather;
And the heath, wherein the evenings sink,
Beyond the endless thickets, and
The purple mounds of hidden sand,
Lengthens her haunts to heaven's brink.

And even winds stir not the slim
Larches at the marsh's rim,
Where she will glass her abstract eyes
In pools where wondering lilies rise;
And only brushes her the clouds'
Shadow when they rush in crowds,
Or else the shadow of a flight
Of hovering hawks at heavens' height.

Since the last flash of lightning streaked the plain,
Nothing has bitten, in her vast domain.

And those who in her realm did roam,
Whether it were in dawn or gloam,
They all have felt their hearts held fast
In spells of mystery she has cast.
She, like an ample, final force,
Keeps on the same unbroken course;

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Black walls of pinewoods gloom and bar
The paths of hope that gleam afar;
Clusters of dreamy junipers
Frighten the feet of wanderers;
Malignant mazes intertwine
With paths of cunning curve and line,
And the sun every moment shifts
The goal to which confusion drifts.

Since the lightning that the storm forged bit,
The bitter silence at the corners four
Of the heath, has changed no whit.

The shepherds with their hundred years worn out,
And the spent dogs that follow them about,
See her, on golden dunes where shadows flit,
Or in the noiseless moorland, sometimes sit,
Immense, beneath the outspread wing of Night;
Then waters on the wrinkled pond take fright;
And the heather veils itself and palely glistens,
And every leaf in every thicket listens,
And the incendiary sunset stills
The last cry of his light that o'er her thrills.

And the hamlets neighbouring her, beneath
Their thatch of hovels on the heath,
Shiver with terror, feeling her
Dominant, though she do not stir;
Mournful, and tired, and helpless they
Stand in her presence as at bay,
And watch benumbed, and nigh to swoon,
Fearing, when mists shall lift, to see,
Suddenly opening under the moon,
The silver eyes of her mystery.

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THE ROPE-MAKER.

At the dike's foot that wearily
Curves along the sinuous sea,
The visionary, silver-haired
Rope-maker with arms bared,
Pulling backwards as he stands,
Rolls together, with prudent hands,

The twisting play of endless twine,
Coming from the far sky-line.

Down yonder in the sunset sheen,
In the twilight tired and chill,
A busy wheel is whizzing still,
Moved by one who is not seen;
But, parallel on stakes that space
The road from equal place to place,
The yellow hemp that the roper draws
Runs in a chain that never flaws.

With skilful fingers thin and old,
Fearing to break the glint of gold
That with his work the gliding light
Blends by the houses growing dim,
The visionary roper weaves
Out of the heart of the eddying eves,
And draws the horizons unto him.

Horizons? Those of red sunsets:
Furies, hatred, fights, regrets,
Sobs of beings broken-hearted,
Horizons of the days departed,
Writhen, golden, overcast;
Horizons of the living past.

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Of old—the life of strayed somnambulists,
When the right hand of God to Canaan's blue
The road of gold through gloaming deserts drew,
Through morns and evenings swayed with shifting mists.

Of old—exasperated life careering
Hanging from stallions' manes, lighting the dense
Darkness with heels that flashed out gleams immense,
Towards immensity immensely rearing.

Of old—it was a life of burning leaven;
When the Red Cross of Hell and Heaven's White
Through miles of marshalled mail that shed the light
Marched each through blood towards its victory's heaven.

Of old—it was a foaming, livid life,
Living and dead, with tocsin bells and crime,
Edicts and massacres reddening the time,
With mad and splendid death above the strife.

Between the flax and osiers,
On the road where nothing stirs,
Along the houses growing dim,
The visionary roper weaves
Out of the heart of the eddying eves,
And draws the horizon unto him.

Horizons? There they linger yet:
Toil, and science, struggle, fret.
Horizons? There at even-chime,
They in their mirrors show the mourning
Image of the present time.

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Now, a mass of fires that belch defiance,
Where wise men, leagued in mighty storm and stress,
Hurl the gods down to change the nothingness
Whereunto strives the force of human science.

Now, lo! a room that ruthless thought has swept,
Weighed and exactly measured, and men swear
The firmament is arched by empty air;
And Death is in glass bottles corked and kept.

Now, lo! a glowing furnace, and resistance
Of matter molten in fire's dragon dens;
New strengths are forged, far mightier than men's,
To swallow up the night, and time, and distance.

Here, lo! a palace tiredly built, and lying
Beneath a century's weight, bowed down and yellow,
And whence, in terror, mighty voices bellow,
Invoking thunder towards adventure flying.

Upon the regular road, with eyes
Fixed where the silent sunset dies,
And leaves the houses drear and dim,
The visionary roper weaves
Out of the heart of the eddying eves,
And draws the horizons unto him.

Horizons? Where yon sunset beams:
Combats, hopes, awakenings, gleams;
The horizons he can see defined
In the future of his mind,
Far beyond the shores that swim
Sketched in the sky of sunsets dim.

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Up yonder—in the calm skies hangs a red
Staircase of double gold with steps of blue,
With Dream and Science mounting it, the two
Who separately climb to one stair-head.

The lightning clash of contraries expires;
Doubt's mournful fist its fingers opes, while wed
Essential laws that had been wont to shed
In horal doctrines their fragmentary fires.

Up yonder—mind more strong and subtle darts
Its violence past death and what is seen.
And universal love sheds a serene
And mighty silence over tranquil hearts.

The God in every human heart, above,
Unfolds, expands, and his own being sees
In those who sometimes fell upon their knees
To worship sacred grief and humble love.

Up yonder—living peace is burning bright,
And shedding on these lands, down evening's slope
A bliss that kindles, like the brands of hope,
In the air's ash the great stars of the night.

At the dike's foot that wearily
Curves along the sinuous sea
Towards the distant eddying spaces,
The visionary roper paces
Along the houses growing dim,
And drinks the horizons into him.

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SAINT GEORGE.

By a broad flash the fog was split,
And Saint George, with gold and jewels lit,
Came down the slope of it,
With feathers foaming from his crest,
Riding a charger with a milky breast,
And in its mouth no bit.

With diamonds decked the two
Made of their fall a path of pity to
This earth of ours from Heaven's blue.

Heroes with helpful virtues dowered,
Sonorous with courage, heroes crystalline,
O through my heart now let the radiance shine
That from his aureolar sword is showered!
O let me hear the silver prattle
Of the wind around his coat of mail,
And around his spurs in battle;
Saint George, who shall prevail,

He who has heard the cries of my distress,
And comes to save from scaith
My poor arms stretched unto his great prowess!

Like a loud cry of faith,
He holds his lance at rest,
Saint George;
He passes, I behold
A victory as of a haggard gold,
I see his forehead with the Chrism blessed:
Saint George of duty,
Bright with his heart's and his own beauty.

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Sound, all ye voices of my hope!
Sound in myself, and on the sun-swept slope,
And high roads, and the shaded avenue!
And, gleams of silver between stones, be you
Joy, and you pebbles white with waters ope
Your eyes, and look
Up through the brook
Whose ripples o'er you roll,
And, landscape with thy crimson lakes, be thou
The mirror of the flights of flame that now
Saint George takes to my soul!

Against the black dragon's teeth,
Against the pustules of a leprous skin
He is the glaive and the miraculous sheath.
Charity on his cuirass burns, and in
His courage is the bounding overthrow
Of instinct swart with sin.

Fire golden-sifted, fire that wheels,
And eddying stars in which his glory lies,
Flashed from his charger's galloping heels,
Dazzle my memory's eyes.

The beautiful ambassador is he
From the white country that with marble glows,
Where in the parks, on the sea's strand, and on the tree
Of goodness, kindness gently grows.

The port, he knows it, where the vessels ride,
With angels filled, upon a rippling tide;
And the long evenings lighting islands fair
But motionless upon their waters, where,
And in eyes also, firmaments are seen.

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This kingdom hath the Virgin for its Queen,
And St. George is the humble joy of her palace,
In the air his falchion glimmers like a chalice;
Saint George with his devouring light,
Who like a fire of gold dispels my spirit's night.

He knows how far my feet have wandered,
He knows the strength that I have squandered,
And with what fogs my brain has fought,
He knows what keen assassin knives
Have cut black crosses in my thought,
He knows my scorn of rich men's lives,
He knows the mask of wrath and folly
Upon the dregs of my melancholy.

I was a coward in my flight
Out of the world in my sick, vain defiance;
I have lifted, under the roofs of night,
The golden marbles of a hostile science
To the barred summits of black oracles;
But the King of the Night is Death;
And man but in the dawning's breath
His enigmatic effort spells;
When flowers unclose, prayer too uncloses,
With the scent of prayer their lips are sweet,
And the white sun on a nacreous water-sheet
Is a kiss that on man's lips reposes;

Dawn is a counsel to be bold,
And he who hearkens is tenfold
Saved from the marsh that never yet cleansed sin.

Saint George in cuirass glittering
With leaps of fire sprung
Unto my soul through the fresh morning;
He was beautiful with faith and young;

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And more to me he bent
As he beheld me penitent;
As from an intimate golden phial
He filled me with his soaring;
Though he was proud unto my sight,
I laid the sweet flowers of my trial
In his pale hand of blest restoring;
Then signed he, ere he did depart,
My brow with his lance's cross of gold,
Bade me be of good cheer and bold,
And soared, and bore to God my heart.

IN THE NORTH.

Two ancient mariners from the Northern Main
One autumn eve came sailing home again,
From Sicily and its deceitful islands,
Carrying a shoal of sirens
On board.

Sharpened with pride they sail into their bay;
Among the mists that mark the homeward way
They cut their passage like a sword;
Under a mournful and monotonous gale,
One autumn evening of a sadness pale,
Into their northern fjord they sail.

From the safe shore the burghers of the haven
Gaze listless, cold, and craven:
And on the masts, and in the ropes, behold
The sirens covered with gold
Biting, like vines,
Their bodies' sinuous lines.

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The burghers gaze with closed and sullen mouth,
Nor see the ocean booty of the south,
Brought in the fog's despite;
The vessel seems a basket silver-white,
Laden with flesh and fruit and gold for home,
Advancing borne on wings of foam.

The sirens sing, and in the cordage they
With arms stretched out in lyres,
And lifted breasts like fires,
Sing and sing a lay
Before the rolling eve,
Which reaps upon the sea the lights of day;
The sirens sing, and cleave
Around the masts as curves the handle of the urn
And still the citizens, uncouth and taciturn,
Hear not the song.

They do not know their friends away so long—
The ancient mariners twain—nor understand
The vessel is of their own land,
Neither the foc-jibs of their own
Making, nor the sails themselves have sewn;
Of this deep dream they fathom naught,
Which makes the sea glad with its journeyings,
Since it was not the lie of all the things
That in their village to their youth were taught.
And the ship passes by the harbour mole,
Luring them to the wonder of its soul,

But none will gather them the fruits
Of flesh and gold that load the trellised shoots.

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THE TOWN.

Every road goes to the town.

Under the mist that the sun illumes,
She, where her terraces arise
And taper to the terraced skies,
Herself as from a dream exhumes.

Yonder glimmer looking down,
Bridges trimmed with iron lace,
Leaps in air and caught in space;
Blocks and columns like the head
Of a Gorgon gashed and red;
O'er the suburbs chimneys tower;
Gables open like a flower,
Under stagnant roofs that frown.

This is the many-tentacled town,
This is the flaming octopus,
The ossuary of all of us.
At the country's end she waits,
Feeling towards the old estates.

Meteoric gas-lamps line
Docks where tufted masts entwine;
Still they burn in noontides cold,
Monster eggs of viscous gold;
Never seems the sun to shine:
Mouth as it is of radiance, shut
By reeking smoke and driving smut.

A river of pitch and naphtha rolls
By wooden bridges, mortared moles;
And the raw whistles of the ships
Howl with fright in the fog that grips:
With a red signal light they peer
Towards the sea to which they steer.

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Quays with clashing buffers groan;
Carts grate o'er the cobble-stone;
Cranes are cubes of shadow raising,
And slipping them in cellars blazing;
Bridges opening lift a vast
Gibbet till the ships have passed;
Letters of brass inscribe the world,
On roofs, and walls, and shop-fronts curled,
Face to face in battle massed.

Wheels file and file, the drosky plies,
Trains are rolling, effort flies;
And like a prow becalmed, the glare
Of gilded stations here and there;
And, from their platforms, ramified
Rails beneath the city glide,
In tunnels and in craters, whence
They storm in network flashing thin
Out into hubbub, dust, and din.

This is the many-tentacled town.

The street, with eddies tied like ropes
Around its squares, runs out and gropes
Along the city up and down,
And runs back far enlaced, and lined
With crowds inextricably twined,
Whose mad feet beat the flags beneath,
Whose eyes are filled with hate, whose teeth
Snatch at the time they cannot catch.

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Dawn, eve, and night, lost in the press,
They welter in their weariness,
And cast to chance the bitter seed
Of labour that no gain can breed.
And dens black with inanity
Where poisoned sits the clerk and fasts;
And banks wide open to the blasts
Of the winds of their insanity.

Outside, in wadding of the damp,
Red lights in streaks, like burning rags,
Straggle from reeking lamp to lamp.
And alcohol goads life that lags.
The bar upon the causey masses
Its tabernacle of looking-glasses,
Reflecting drunken louts and hags.
To and fro a young girl passes,
And sells lights to the lolling men;
Debauch buys famine in her den;
And carnal lust ignited sallies
To dance to death in rotten alleys.

Lust roars and leaps from breast to breast,
Whipped to a rage uproarious,
To a blind crush of limbs in quest
Of the pleasure of gold and phosphorus;
And in and out wan women fare,
With sexual symbols in their hair.
The atmosphere of reeking dun
At times recedes towards the sun,
As though a loud cry called to Peace
To bid the deafening noises cease;
But all the city puffs and blows
With such a violent snort and flush,
That the dying seek in vain the hush
Of silence that eyes need to close.

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Such is the day—and when the eves
With ebony hammers carve the skies,
Over the plain the city heaves
Its shimmer of colossal lies;
Her haunting, guilt desires arise;
Her radiance to the stars is cast;
She gathers her gas in golden sheaves;
Her rails are highways flying fast
To the mirage of happiness
That strength and fortune seem to bless;
Like a great army swell her walls;
And all the smoke she still sends down
Reaches the fields in radiant calls.

This is the many-tentacled town,
This is the burning octopus,
The ossuary of all of us,
The carcase with solemn candles lit.

And all the long ubiquitous
Roads and pathways reach to it.

THE MUSIC-HALL.

Under the enormous fog
Whose wings the city arteries clog,
'Mid ringing plaudits, at the back
Of a radiant hall their Orientals they unpack.

The acrobat on airy trestles poises;
Great suns of strass shine o'er the scene;
Clashing their fists stand cymbal-players, lean
Breakers of cries and noises;

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And when the ballet-corps with painted faces
In a thicket of perplexing steps appear,
Tangling and disentangling labyrinthine paces,
The hall, hung with its gorgeous chandelier,
That o'er a surging sea of faces glares,
The hall with heavy velvet clad,
With balconies like pad on pad,
Is like a belly that a woman bares.

Swarming battalions of flesh and thighs
March under arches flowered with thousand dyes;
Lace, petticoats, throats, legs, and hips:
Teams of rut whose breasts, though bridled, yet
Are bounding, yoke by yoke the coiled dance trips,
Blue with paint and raw with sweat.

Hands, vainly opening, seem to seize
Only invisible desire that flees;
A dancer, darting legs her tights leave bare,
Stiffens obscenity in the air;
Another with swimming eyes and flanks that writhe
Shrinks like a trampled beast above the loud
Flare of the footlights swaying with the lithe
Lust of the gloating crowd.

O blasphemy vociferously hurled
In crying gold on the Beauty of the world!
Atrocious feint of Art, while Art sublime
Is lying massacred and sunk in slime!
O noisy pleasure singing as it treads
On tortured ugliness that twists and cries;
Pleasure against Joy's grain that nurtures heads
With alcohol, with alcohol men's eyes;
O pleasure whose rank mouth calls out for flowers,
And vomits the vile ferment it devours!

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Pleasure of old, heroic, calm, and bare,
Walked with calm hands and forehead clear as air;
The wind and the sun danced in his heart, he pressed
Divine, harmonious life, to his warm breast;
His breast that breathed it in was Beauty's source;
He knew no law that dared call Beauty coarse;
Sunrise and sunset, springs with mosses grassed,
And the green bough that brushed him as he passed,
Thrilled to his deep soul through his flesh, and were
The kiss of things that love makes lovelier.

Now senile and debauched, he licks and eats
Sin that beguiles him with her poisoned teats;
Now in his garden of anomalies
Bibles, codes, texts, and rules he multiplies,
And ravishes the faith he then denies.
His loves are gold. His hatreds? Flights unto
Beauty that grows still lovelier, still more true,
Opening in starry flowers in heavens blue.
Look where he haunts these halls of monstrous art,
Whose burning windows to the heavens dart
A restlessness by gazing still renewed:
Here is the beast transformed to a multitude.

Filled with contagion thousand eyes deflect
To find a million more they may infect;
One mind to thousands casts its brazier fire,
To be consumed the more in sick desire,
To breed new vices, unimagined Hell.
The conscience changes, and the brain as well;
Another race is bred from putrid spawn,
A writhen black totality, a sum
Of ciphers spreading in a weltering scum,
That outrages the healthfulness of Dawn.

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O shames and crimes of crowds that reek and stain
The city like a bellowing hurricane;
Gulfed in the plaster boxes tier on tier
Of theatres and halls obscene and blear!

The stage is like a fan unfurled.
Enamelled minarets grotesquely curled.
Houses and terraces and avenues.
Under the limelight's changing hues,
First in slow rhythms, then with violent sweep,
Gathering swift kisses, touching breasts that leap,
Meet the Bayadères with swaying hips;
Negro boys, whose heads with plumes are tipped,
With their foam-coloured teeth in lips
Like a red vulva open ripped,
Move all as pushed along in sluggish poses.
A drum beats, an obstinate horn cries long,
A raw fife tickles a stupid song,
And at the last, for the final apotheosis,
A mad assault over the boards is sweeping,
Gold and throats and thighs in stages heaping
In curled entanglements; and then all closes
With garments splitting offering rounded shapes
And vice half hid in flowers like tempting grapes.

And the orchestra dies, or suddenly halts,
And climbs, and swells, and rolls in whipped assaults;
Out of the violins wriggle spasms dark;
Lascivious dogs in the tempest seem to bark
Of heavy brasses and of strong bassoons;
A manifold desire swells, sickens, swoons,
Revives, and with such heavy violence heaves,
The sense cries out, and helpless reels,
And prostitutes itself to a spasm that relieves.

[Pg 185]

And midnight peals.
The dense crowd pours and at the doors unfurls.
The hall is closed—and on the black causeways,
Gaudy beneath the gaslamps' leering gaze,
Red in the fog like flesh, await the girls.

THE BUTCHER'S STALL.

Hard by the docks, soon as the shadows fold
The dizzy mansion-fronts that soar aloft,
When eyes of lamps are burning soft,
The shy, dark quarter lights again its old
Allurement of red vice and gold.

Women, blocks of heaped, blown meat,
Stand on low thresholds down the narrow street,
Calling to every man that passes;
Behind them, at the end of corridors,
Shine fires, a curtain stirs
And gives a glimpse of masses
Of mad and naked flesh in looking-glasses.
Hard by the docks.
The street upon the left is ended by
A tangle of high masts and shrouds that blocks
A sheet of sky;
Upon the right a net of grovelling alleys
Falls from the town—and here the black crowd rallies
To reel to rotten revelry.

It is the flabby, fulsome butcher's stall of luxury,
Time out of mind erected on the frontiers
Of the city and the sea.

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Far-sailing melancholy mariners
Who, wet with spray, through grey mists peer,
Cradled among the rigging cabin-boys, and they who steer
Hallucinated by the blue eyes of the vast sea-spaces,
All dream of it, evoke it when the evening falls;
Their raw desire to madness galls;
The wind's soft kisses hover on their faces;
The wave awakens rolling images of soft embraces;

And their two arms implore,
Stretched in a frantic cry towards the shore.

And they of offices and shops, the city tribes,
Merchants precise, keen reckoners, haggard scribes,
Who sell their brains for hire, and tame their brows,
When the keys of desks are hanging on the wall,
Feel the same galling rut at even-fall,
And run like hunted dogs to the carouse.
Out of the depths of dusk come their dark flocks,
And in their hearts debauch so rudely shocks
Their ingrained greed and old accustomed care,
That they are racked and ruined by despair.

It is the flabby, fulsome butcher's stall of luxury,
Time out of mind erected on the frontiers
Of the city and the sea.

Come from what far sea-isles or pestilent parts?
Come from what feverish or methodic marts?
Their eyes are filled with bitter, cunning hate,
They fight their instincts that they cannot sate;
Around red females who befool them, they
Herd frenzied till the dawn of sober day.
The panelling is fiery with lewd art;
Out of the wall nitescent knick-knacks dart;
Fat Bacchuses and leaping satyrs in
Wan mirrors freeze an unremitting grin;
Flowers sicken on the gaming-tables where
The warming bowls twist fire of light blue hair;
A pot of paint curds on an étagère;
A cat is catching flies on cushioned seats;
A drunkard lolls asleep on yielding plush,
And women come, and o'er him bending, brush
His closed, red lids with their enormous teats.

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And women with spent loins and sleeping croups
Are piled on sofas and arm-chairs in groups,
With sodden flesh grown vague, and black and blue
With the first trampling of the evening's crew.
One of them slides a gold coin in her stocking;
Another yawns, and some their knees are rocking;
Others by bacchanalia worn out,
Feeling old age, and, sniffing them, Death's snout,
Stare with wide-open eyes, torches extinct,
And smooth their legs with hands together linked.

It is the flabby, fulsome butcher's stall of luxury,
Time out of mind erected on the frontiers
Of the city and the sea.

According to the jingle of the purses
The women mingle promises with curses;
A tranquil cynicism, a tired pleasure
Is meted duly to the money's measure.

The kiss grows weary, and the game grows tame.
Often when fist with fist together clashes,
In the wind of oaths and insults still the same,
Some gaiety out of the blasphemy flashes,

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But soon sinks, and you hear,
In the silence dank and drear,
A halting steeple near
Sounding, sick with pity,
In the darkness over the city.

Yet in those months by festivals sanctified,
St. Peter in summer, in winter Christmastide,
The ancient quarter of dirt and light
Soars up to sin and pounces on its joys,
Fermenting with wild songs and boisterous noise
Window by window, flight by flight,
With vice the house-fronts glow
Down from the garret to the grids below.

Everywhere rage roars, and couples heats.
In the great hall to which the sailors throng,
Pushing some jester of the streets,
Convulsed in obscene mimicry, along,
The wines of foam and gold leap from their sheath;
Women fall underneath
Mad, brawling drunkards; loosened ruts
Flame, arms unite, and body body butts;
Nothing is seen but instincts slaked and lit afresh,
Breasts offered, bellies taken, and the fire
Of haggard eyes in sheaves of brandished flesh.

The frenzy climbs, and sinks to rise still higher,
Rolls like exasperated tides,
And backwards glides,
Until the moment when dawn fills the port,
And Death, tired of the sport,
Back to ships and homesteads sweeps and harries
The limp debauch and human weed
That on the pavement tarries.

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It is the flabby, fulsome butcher's stall of luxury,
Wherein Crime plants his knives that bleed,
Where lightning madness stains
Foreheads with rotting pains,
Time out of mind erected on the frontiers that feed
The city and the sea.

A CORNER OF THE QUAY.

When the wind sulks, and the dune dries,
The old salts with uneasy eyes
Hour after hour peer at the skies.

All are silent; their hands turning,
A brown juice from their lips they wipe;
Never a sound save, in their pipe,
The dry tobacco burning.

That storm the almanac announces,
Where is it? They are puzzled.
The sea has smoothed her flounces.
Winter is muzzled.

The cute ones shake their pate,
And cross their arms, and puff.
But mate by mate they wait,
And think the squall is late,
But coming sure enough.

With fingers slow, sedate
Their finished pipe they fill;
Pursuing, every salt,
Without a minute's halt,
The same idea still.

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A boat sails up the bay,
As tranquil as the day;
Its keel a long net trails,
Covered with glittering scales.

Out come the men: What ho?
When will the tempest come?
With pipe in mouth, still dumb,
With bare foot on *sabot*,
The salts wait in a row.

Here they lounge about,
Where all year long the stout
Fishers' dames
Sell, from their wooden frames,
Herrings and anchovies,

And by each stall a stove is,
To warm them with its flames.

Here they spit together,
Spying out the weather.
Here they yawn and doze;
Backs bent with many a squall,
Rubbing it in rows,
Grease the wall.

And though the almanac
Is wrong about the squall,
The old salts lean their back
Against the wall,
And wait in rows together,
Watching the sea and the weather.

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MY HEART IS AS IT CLIMBED A STEEP.

My heart is as it climbed a steep,
To reach your kindness fathomlessly deep,
And there I pray to you with swimming eyes.

I came so late to where you arc,
You with your pity more than prodigal's surmise;
I came from very far
Unto the two hands you were holding out,
Calmly, to me who stumbled on in doubt!
I had in me so much tenacious rust,
That gnawed with its rapacious teeth
My confidence in myself;

I was so tired, I was so spent,
I was so old with my mistrust,
I was so tired, I was so spent
With all the roads of my discontent.

So little I deserved the joy how deep
Of seeing your feet light up my wilderness,
That I am trembling still with it, and nigh to weep,
And lowly for ever is the heart you bless.

WHEN I WAS AS A MAN THAT HOPELESS PINES.

When I was as a man that hopeless pines,
And pitfalls all my hours were,
You were the light that welcomed home the wanderer,
The light that from the frosted window shines
On snow at dead of night.

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Your spirit's hospitable light
Touched my heart, and hurt it not,
Like a cool hand on one with fever hot!
A element word of green, reviving hope
Ran down the piled wrack of my heart's waste slope;
Then came stout confidence and right good will,
Frankness, and tenderness, and at the last,
With hand in hand held fast,
An evening of clear understanding and of storms grown still.

Since, though the summer followed winter's chill,
Both in ourselves and under skies whose deathless fires
With gold all pathways of our thoughts adorn,
Though love has grown immense, a great flower born
Of proud desires,
A flower that, without cease, to grow still more,
In our hearts begins as e'er before,
I still look at the little light
Which first shone out on me in my soul's night.

LEST ANYTHING ESCAPE FROM OUR EMBRACE.

Lest anything escape from our embrace,
Which is as sacred as a Temple's holy place,
And so that the bright love pierce with light the body's mesh,
Together we descend into the garden of your flesh.

Your breasts are there like offerings made,
You hold your hands out, mine to greet,
And nothing can be worth the simple meat
Of whisperings in the shade.

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The shadow of white boughs caresses
Your throat and face, and to the ground
The blossoms of your tresses
Fall unbound.

All of blue silver is the sky,
The night is a silent bed of ease,
The gentle night of the moon, whose breeze
Kisses the lilies tall and shy.

I BRING TO YOU AS OFFERING TO-NIGHT.

I bring to you as offering to-night
My body boisterous with the wind's delight;
In floods of sunlight I have bathed my skin;
My feet are clean as the grass they waded in;
Soft are my fingers as the flowers they held;
My eyes are brightened by the tears that welled
Within them, when they looked upon the earth
Strong without end and rich with festive mirth;
Space in its living arms has snatched me up,
And whirled me drunk as from the mad wine-cup;
And I have walked I know not where, with pent
Cries that would free my heart's wild wonderment;
I bring to you the life of meadow-lands;
Sweet marjoram and thyme have kissed my hands;
Breathe them upon my body, all the fresh
Air and its light and scents are in my flesh.

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IN THE COTTAGE WHERE OUR PEACEFUL LOVE REPOSES.

In the cottage where our peaceful love reposes,
With its dear old furniture in shady nooks,
Where never a prying witness on us looks,
Save through the casement panes the climbing roses,

So sweet the days are, after olden trial,
So sweet with silence is the summer time,
I often stay the hour upon the chime
In the clock of oak-wood with the golden dial.

And then the day, the night is so much ours,
That the hush of happiness around us starts
To hear the beating of our clinging hearts,
When on your face my kisses fall in showers.

THIS IS THE GOOD HOUR WHEN THE LAMP IS LIT.

This is the good hour when the lamp is lit.
All is calm, and consoling, and dear,

And the silence is such that you could hear
A feather falling in it.

This is the good hour when to my chair my love will flit,
As breezes blow,
As smoke will rise,
Gentle, slow.

She says nothing at first—and I am listening;
I hear all her soul, I surprise
Its gushing and glistening,
And I kiss her eyes.

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This is the good hour when the lamp is lit.
When hearts will say
How they have loved each other through the day.

And one says such simple things:
The fruit one from the garden brings;
The flower that one has seen
Opening in mosses green;

And the heart will of a sudden thrill and glow,
Remembering some faded word of love
Found in a drawer beneath a cast-off glove
In a letter of a year ago.

THE SOVRAN RHYTHM.

Yet, after years and years, to Eve there came
Impatience in her soul, and as a blight
Of being the sapless, loveless flower of white
And torrid happiness that cleaved the same;
And once, when in the skies the tempest moved
Fain had she risen and its lightning proved.
Then did a sweet, broad shudder glide on her;
And, in her deepest flesh to feel it, Eve
Pressed her frail hands against her bosom's heave.
The angel, when he felt the sleeper stir
With violent abrupt awakening,
And scattered air and arms, and body rocked,
Questioned the night, but Eve remained unlocked,
And silent. He in vain bespoke each thing
That lived beside her by the naked sources,
Birds, flowers, and mirrors of cold water-courses
With which, perchance, her unknown thought arose
Up from the ground; and one night when he bowed,
And with his reverent fingers sought to close
Her eyes, she leapt out of his great wing's shroud.
O fertile folly in its sudden flare
Beyond the too pure angel's baffled care!
For while he stretched his arms out she was drifting
Already far, and passionately lifting
To braziers of the stars her body bare.

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And all the heart of Adam, seeing her so,
Trembled.
She willed to love, he willed to know.

Awkward and shy he neared her, daring not
To startle eyes that lost in reveries swam;
From terebinths were fluttered scents, and from
The soil's fermenting mounted odours hot.

He tarried, as if waiting for her hests;
But she snatched up his hands, and o'er them hung,
And kissed them slowly, long, with kiss that clung,
And guided them to cool erected breasts.

But through her flesh they burned and burned. His mouth
Had found the fires to set on flame his drouth,
And his lithe fingers spread her streaming tresses
O'er the long ardour of their first caresses.

Stretched by the cool of fountains both were lying,
Seen of their passion-gleaming eyes alone.
And Adam felt a sudden thought unknown
Well in his heart to her fast heart replying.

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Eve's body hid profound retreats as sweet
As moss that by the noon's cool breeze is brushed;
Gladly came sheaves undone to be their seat,
Gladly the grass was by their loving crushed.

And when the spasm leapt from them at last,
And held them bruised in arms strained stiff and tight,
All the great amorous and feline night
Tempered its breeze as over them it passed.

But on their vision burst
A cloud far off at first,
And whirling its dizziness with such a blast
That it was all a miracle and a fright,
Leapt from the dim horizon through the night.
Adam raised Eve, and pressed unto him fast
Her shivering body exquisitely wan.
Livid and sulphurous the cloud came on,
With thundering threats o'erflowing, and red lit.
Suddenly on the spot
Where the wild grass was hot
With their two bodies that had loved on it,
All the loud
Rage of the dark, tremendous cloud
Bit.

And the voice of the Lord God in its shadow sounded,
Fires from the flowers and nightly bushes bounded;
And where the dark the turning paths submerged,
With sword in hand flamboyant angels surged;
Lions were roaring at the fateful skies,
Eagles hailed death with hoarsely boding cries;
And by the waters all the palm-trees bent
Under the same hard wind of discontent
That beat on Eve and Adam on that sward,
And in the vasty darkness drove them toward
New human worlds more fervent than the old.

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* * * * *
Now felt the man a magnet manifold
Draw out his strength and mingle it with all;
Ends he divined, and knew what gave them birth;
His lover's lips with words grew magical;
And his unwritten simple heart loved earth,
And serviceable water, trees that hold
Authority, and stones that broken shine.
Fruits tempted him to take their placid gold,
And the bruised grapes of the translucent vine
Kindled his thirst which they were ripe to still.
The howling beasts he chased awoke the skill
That in his hands had slept; and pride dowered him
With vehement strengths that foam and over-brim,
That he himself his destiny might build.

And the woman, still more fair since by the man
The marvellous shiver through her body ran,
Lived in the woods of gold by perfumes filled
And dawn, with all the future in her tears.
In her awoke the first soul, made of pride
And sweet strength blended with an unknown shame,
At the hour when all her heart was shed in flame
On the child sheltered in her naked side.
And when the day burns glorious and is done,
And feet of tall trees in the forests gleam,
She laid her body full of her young dream
On sloping rocks gilt by the setting sun;
Her lifted breasts two rounded shadows showed
Upon her skin as rosy as a shell,
And the sun that on her pregnant body glowed
Seemed to be ripening all the world as well.

How by her love the lot of men should grow,
 And of the beautiful and violent will
 Fated to tame the earth. Ye sacred cares
 And griefs, she saw you, you she saw, despairs!
 And all the darkest deeps of human ill.
 And with transfigured face and statelier bearing
 She took your hands in hers and kissed your brow;
 But you as well, men's grandeur madly daring,
 You lifted up her soul, and she saw how
 The limitless sands of time should by your tide
 Be buried under billows singing pride;
 In you she hoped, ideas keen in quest,
 Fervour to love and to desire the best
 In valiant pain and anguished joy; and so,
 One evening roving in the after-glow,
 When she beheld, come to a mossy plot,
 The gates of Paradise thrown open wide,
 And the angel beckoning, she turned aside
 Without desire of it, and entered not.

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Page 3.—"Red Cheshire." The Dutch cheese so-called is "roux." Braun suggests that the adjective should be translated "red-haired."

Page 6.—"Those that we address with 'Sir.'" The cheese sold under the name of "Monsieur Fromage."

Page 13, *seq.*—Max Elskamp's poetry is considered somewhat obscure, and students may find the following equations of help: la Vierge = la femme pure; Jésus = l'enfance délicieuse; un dimanche solaire = une joie éclatante; un dimanche de cur de bois = une joie égoïste; un soldat = brutalité; un juif = un marchand; un oiseau = la vie sous la forme du verbe; une fleur = la vie sous la forme de la senteur.

Page 13.—"Of Evening." Sunday is life, the week-days are death; the poet is the Sunday, therefore, since the week is about to begin again, he *must* die. The third stanza means that the Truelove will never again weep for the fair days of betrothal or marriage which the old family ring she wears remind her of.

[Pg 206]

Page 18.—"Full of cripples." By night, because then the regulations forbidding begging are more easily set at defiance.

Page 19, line 6.—An allusion to the painting by Seghers, which represents the Virgin Mary with lilies, dahlias, and even snowdrops.

Page 23.—"Here the azure cherubs blow." An allusion to the painting by Fouquet in the Museum at Antwerp.

Page 47.—In Huysmans' novel, *À Rebours*, liqueurs are compared with musical instruments: curaçao corresponds to the clarinet; kümmel to the nasal oboe; kirsch to the fierce blast of a trumpet, etc.

Page 100.—Song vii. "Et c'est l'esclavage, n'est-ce pas? auquel s'astreint tout être qui se dévoue." Beaunier.

Page 107.—"The running water" is the image of the human soul, constantly changing, "en devenir dans le devenir." And yet there is in it a continued, though mobile unity, a permanent *rhythm*. It objectifies itself in space, but only exists in time, and Mockel sees its vital sign in those *aspirations* which guide it towards itself, which bear it on to its fate. The unity of the mobile river, whose waves to-morrow will no longer be those they are to-day, is the continuous current that bears it, as though it aspired to the infinity of oceans.

Page 110.—The Goblet is woman, who, whether she inspires genius or sells her body, exists, for us, less by herself than by us; she is what we make her, like this goblet whose colours vary according to what one pours into it.

[Pg 207]

Page 111.—The Chandelier symbolizes the permanent drama enacted by Art, placed as it is between the frivolous world,—which tramples the rose of love under foot,—and the immortal splendour of Nature, which makes it feel its own feebleness.

Page 113.—The Angel is the legend of genius.

Page 116.—The Man with the lyre is the poet, who is less and less understood as he strikes the graver chords of his lyre.

Page 122.—The Eternal Bride is the Aspiration towards which we strive.

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