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Title: The Three Hills, and Other Poems

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Release date: July 5, 2011 [EBook #36620]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Marc D'Hooghe & Andrea Ballat <http://www.freeliterature.org>

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THE THREE HILLS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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LONDON: HOWARD LATIMER LTD.

GREAT QUEEN STREET, KINGSWAY

MCMXIII

TO

FRANCIS BURROWS

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Many of the above poems have appeared in the "British Review," the "Eye-Witness," the "New Witness," the "Oxford and Cambridge Review," the "New Statesman," and the "New Age," to the Editors of which thanks are due for permission to reprint. Three of the short poems and most of the translations are extracted from an earlier volume.

ANTINOMIES ON A RAILWAY STATION

As I stand waiting in the rain
For the foggy hoot of the London train,
Gazing at silent wall and lamp
And post and rail and platform damp,
What is this power that comes to my sight
That I see a night without the night,
That I see them clear, yet look them through,
The silvery things and the darkly blue,
That the solid wall seems soft as death,
A wavering and unanchored wraith,
And rails that shine and stones that stream
Unsubstantial as a dream?
What sudden door has opened so,
What hand has passed, that I should know
This moving vision not of trance
That melts the globe of circumstance,
This sight that marks not least or most
And makes a stone a passing ghost?

Is it that a year ago
I stood upon this self-same spot;
Is it that since a year ago
The place and I have altered not;
Is it that I half forgot,
A year ago, and all despised
For a space the things that I had prized:
The race of life, the glittering show?
Is it that now a year has passed
Of vain pursuit of glittering things,
Of fruitless searching, shouting, running,
And greedy lies and candour cunning,
Here as I stand the year above
Sudden the heats and the strivings fail
And fall away, a fluctuant veil,
And the fixed familiar stones restore
The old appearance-buried core,
The moveless and essential me,
The eternal personality
Alone enduring first and last?

No, this I have known in other ways,
In other places, other days.
Not only here, on this one peak,
Do fixity and beauty speak
Of the delusiveness of change,

Of the transparency of form,
The bootless stress of minds that range,
The awful calm behind the storm.
In many places, many days,
The invaded soul receives the rays
Of countries she was nurtured in,
Speaks in her silent language strange
To that beyond which is her kin.
Even in peopled streets at times
A metaphysic arm is thrust
Through the partitioning fabric thin,
And tears away the darkening pall
Cast by the bright phenomenal,
And clears the obscured spirit's mirror
From shadows of deceptive error,
And shows the bells and all their ringing,
And all the crowds and all their singing,
Carillons that are nothing's chimes
And dust that is not even dust....
But rarely hold I converse thus
Where shapes are bright and clamorous,
More often comes the word divine
In places motionless and far;
Beneath the white peculiar shine
Of sunless summer afternoons;
At eventide on pale lagoons
Where hangs reflected one pale star;
Or deep in the green solitudes
Of still erect entranced woods.

O, in the woods alone lying,
Scarce a bough in the wind sighing,
Gaze I long with fervid power
At leaf and branch and grass and flower,
Breathe I breaths of trembling sight
Shed from great urns of green delight,
Take I draughts and drink them up
Poured from many a stalk and cup.
Now do I burn for nothing more
Than thus to gaze, thus to adore
This exquisiteness of nature ever
In silence....

But with instant light
Rends the film; with joy I quiver
To see with new celestial sight
Flower and leaf and grass and tree,
Doomed barks on an eternal sea,
Flit phantom-like as transient smoke.
Beauty herself her spell has broke,
Beauty, the herald and the lure,
Her message told, may not endure;
Her portal opened, she has died,
Supreme immortal suicide.
Yes, sleepless nature soundless flings
Invisible grapples round the soul,
Drawing her through the web of things
To the primal end of her journeyings,
Her ultimate and constant pole.

For Beauty with her hands that beckon
Is but the Prophet of a Higher,
A flaming and ephemeral beacon,
A Phoenix perishing by fire.
Herself from us herself estranges,
Herself her mighty tale doth kill,
That all things change yet nothing changes,
That all things move yet all are still.

I cannot sink, I cannot climb,
Now that I see my ancient dwelling,
The central orb untouched of time,
And taste a peace all bliss excelling.
Now I have broken Beauty's wall,
Now that my kindred world I hold,

I care not though the cities fall
And the green earth go cold.

THE THREE HILLS

There were three hills that stood alone
With woods about their feet.
They dreamed quiet when the sun shone
And whispered when the rain beat.

They wore all three their coronals
Till men with houses came
And scored their heads with pits and walls
And thought the hills were tame.

Red and white when day shines bright
They hide the green for miles,
Where are the old hills gone? At night
The moon looks down and smiles.

She sees the captors small and weak,
She knows the prisoners strong,
She hears the patient hills that speak:
"Brothers, it is not long;

"Brothers, we stood when they were not
Ten thousand summers past.
Brothers, when they are clean forgot
We shall outlive the last;

"One shall die and one shall flee
With terror in his train,
And earth shall eat the stones, and we
Shall be alone again."

A CHANT

Gently the petals fall as the tree gently sways
That has known many springs and many petals fall
Year after year to strew the green deserted ways
And the statue and the pond and the low, broken wall.

Faded is the memory of old things done,
Peace floats on the ruins of ancient festival;
They lie and forget in the warmth of the sun,
And a sky silver-blue arches over all.

O softly, O tenderly, the heart now stirs
With desires faint and formless; and, seeking not, I find
Quiet thoughts that flash like azure king-fishers
Across the luminous tranquil mirror of the mind.

ARTEMIS ALTERA

O full of candour and compassion,
Whom love and worship both would praise,
Love cannot frame nor worship fashion
The image of your fearless ways!

How show your noble brow's dark pallor,
Your chivalrous casque of ebon hair,
Your eyes' bright strength, your lips' soft valour,

Your supple shoulders and hands that dare?

Our souls when naïvely you examine,
Your sword of innocence, flaming, huge,
Sweeps over us, and there is famine
Within the ports of subterfuge.

You hate contempt and love not laughter;
With your sharp spear of virgin will
You harry the wicked strong; but after,
O huntress who could never kill,

Should they be trodden down or pierced,
Swift, swift, you fly with burning cheek
To place your beauty's shield reversed
Above the vile defenceless weak!

STARLIGHT

Last night I lay in an open field
And looked at the stars with lips sealed;
No noise moved the windless air,
And I looked at the stars with steady stare.

There were some that glittered and some that shone
With a soft and equal glow, and one
That queened it over the sprinkled round,
Swaying the host with silent sound.

"Calm things," I thought, "in your cavern blue,
I will learn and hold and master you;
I will yoke and scorn you as I can,
For the pride of my heart is the pride of a man."

Grass to my cheek in the dewy field
I lay quite still with lips sealed,
And the pride of a man and his rigid gaze
Stalked like swords on heaven's ways.

But through a sudden gate there stole
The Universe and spread in my soul;
Quick went my breath and quick my heart,
And I looked at the stars with lips apart.

FLORIAN'S SONG

My soul, it shall not take us,
O we will escape
This world that strives to break us
And cast us to its shape;
Its chisel shall not enter,
Its fire shall not touch,
Hard from rim to centre,
We will not crack or smutch.

'Gainst words sweet and flowered
We have an amulet,
We will not play the coward
For any black threat;
If we but give endurance
To what is now within—
The single assurance
That it is good to win.

Slaves think it better
To be weak than strong,

Whose hate is a fetter
And their love a thong.
But we will view those others
With eyes like stone,
And if we have no brothers
We will walk alone.

DIALOGUE

THE ONE

The dead man's gone, the live man's
sad, the dying leaf shakes on the tree,
The wind constrains the window panes and
moans like moaning of the sea,
And sour's the taste now culled in haste of
lovely things I won too late,
And loud and loud above the crowd the
Voice of One more strong than we.

THE OTHER

This Voice you hear, this call you fear, is
it unprophesied or new?
Were you so insolent to think its rope would
never circle you?
Did you then beastlike live and walk with
ears and eyes that would not turn?
Who bade you hope your service 'scape in
that eternal retinue?

THE ONE

No; for I swear now bare's the tree and loud
the moaning of the wind,
I walked no rut with eyelids shut, my ears
and eyes were never blind,
Only my eager thoughts I bent on many
things that I desired
To make my greedy heart content ere flesh
and blood I left behind.

THE OTHER

Ignorance, then, was all your fault and
filmèd eyes that could not know,
That half discerned and never learned the
temporal way that men must go;
You set the image of the world high for
your heart's idolatry,
Though with your lips you called the world
a toy, a ghost, a passing show.

THE ONE

No, no; this is not true; my lips spoke
only what my heart believed.
Called I the world a toy; I spoke not echo-like
or self-deceived.
But that I thought the toy was mine to play
with, and the passing show
Would sate at least my passing lusts, and did
not, therefore am I grieved.

What did I do that I must bear this lifelong
tyranny of my fate,
That I must writhe in bonds unsought of

accidental love and hate?
Had chance but joined different dice, but
once or twice, but once or twice,
All lovely things that I desired I should have
held before too late.

Surely I knew that flesh was grass nor valued
overmuch the prize,
But all the powers of chance conspired to
cheat a man both just and wise.
Happy I'd been had I but had my due
reward, and not a sword
Flaming in diabolic hand between me and
my Paradise.

THE OTHER

No hooded band of fates did stand your
heart's ambitions to gainsay,
No flaming brand in evil hand was ever
thrust across your way,
Only the things all men must meet, the
common attributes of men,
That men may flinch to see or, seeing, deny,
but avoid them no man may.

Fall the dice, not once or twice but always, to
make the self-same sum;
Chance what may, a life's a life and to a
single goal must come;
Though a man search far and wide, never
is hunger satisfied;
Nature brings her natural fetters, man is
meshed and the wise are dumb.

O vain all art to assuage a heart with accents
of a mortal tongue,
All earthly words are incomplete and only
sweet are the songs unsung,
Never yet was cause for regret, yet regret
must afflict us all,
Better it were to grasp the world 'thwart
which this world is a curtain flung.

CREPUSCULAR

No creature stirs in the wide fields.
The rifted western heaven yields
The dying sun's illumination.
This is the hour of tribulation
When, with clear sight of eve engendered,
Day's homage to delusion rendered,
Mute at her window sits the soul.

Clouds and skies and lakes and seas,
Valleys and hills and grass and trees,
Sun, moon, and stars, all stand to her
Limbs of one lordless challenger,
Who, without deigning taunt or frown,
Throws a perennial gauntlet down:
"Come conquer me and take thy toll."

No cowardice or fear she knows,
But, as once more she girds, there grows
An unresigned hopelessness
From memory of former stress.
Head bent, she muses whilst he waits:
How with such weapons dint his plates?
How quell this vast and sleepless giant
Calmly, immortally defiant,

How fell him, bind him, and control
With a silver cord and a golden bowl?

AT NIGHT

Dark firtops foot the moony sky,
Blue moonlight bars the drive;
Here at the open window I
Sit smoking and alive.

Wind in the branches swells and breaks
Like ocean on a beach;
Deep in the sky and my heart there wakes
A thought I cannot reach.

FOR MUSIC

Death in the cold grey morning
Came to the man where he lay;
And the wind shivered, and the tree shuddered
And the dawn was grey.

And the face of the man was grey in the dawn,
And the watchers by the bed
Knew, as they heard the shaking of the leaves,
That the man was dead.

THE ROOF

I

When the clouds hide the sun away
The tall slate roof is dull and grey,
And when the rain adown it streams
'Tis polished lead with pale-blue gleams.

When the clouds vanish and the rain
Stops, and the sun comes out again,
It shimmers golden in the sun
Almost too bright to look upon.

But soon beneath the steady rays
The roof is dried and reft of blaze,
'Tis dusty yellow traversed through
By long thin lines of deepest blue.

Then at the last, as night draws near,
The lines grow faint and disappear,
The roof becomes a purple mist
A great square darkening amethyst

Which sinks into the gathering shade
Till separate form and colour fade,
And it is but a patch which mars
The beauty of a field of stars.

II

It stands so lonely in the sky
The sparrows never come anigh,
The glossy starlings seldom stop

To preen and chatter on the top.

For a whole week sometimes up there
No wing-wave stirs the quiet air,
The roof lies silent and serene
As though no life had ever been;

Till some bright afternoon, athwart
The edge two sudden shadows dart,
And two white pigeons with pink feet
Flutter above and pitch on it.

Jerking their necks out as they walk
They talk awhile their pigeon-talk,
A low continuous murmur blent
Of mock reproaches and content.

Then cease, and sit there warm and white
An hour, till in the fading light
They wake, and know the close of day,
Flutter above, and fly away,

Leaving the roof whereon they sat
As 'twas before, a peaceful flat
Expanse, as silent and serene
As though no life had ever been.

TREETOPS

There beyond my window ledge,
Heaped against the sky a hedge
Of huge and wavering treetops stands
With multitudes of fluttering hands.

Wave they, beat they to and fro,
Never stillness may they know,
Plunged by the wind and hurled and torn
Anguished, purposeless, forlorn.

"O ferocious, O despairing,
In huddled isolation faring
Through a scattered universe,
Lost coins from the Almighty's purse!"

"No, below you do not see
The firm foundations of the tree;
Anchored to a rock beneath
We laugh in the hammering tempest's teeth."

"Boughs like men but burgeons are
On an adamant star;
Men are myriad blossoms on
A staunch and cosmic skeleton."

IN THE PARK

This dense hard ground I tread
These iron bars that ripple past,
Will they unshaken stand when I am dead
And my deep thoughts outlast?

Is it my spirit slips,
Falls, like this leaf I kick aside;
This firmness that I feel about my lips,
Is it but empty pride?

Mute knowledge conquers me;
I contemplate them as they are,
Faint earth and shadowy bars that shake and flee,
Less hard, more transient far

Than those unbodied hues
The sunset flings on the calm river;
And, as I look, a swiftness thrills my shoes
And my hands with empire quiver.

Now light the ground I tread,
I walk not now but rather float;
Clear but unreal is the scene outspread,
Pitiful, thin, remote.

Poor vapour is the grass,
So frail the trees and railings seem,
That, did I sweep my hand around, 'twould pass
Through them, as in a dream.

Godlike I fear no changes;
Shatter the world with thunders loud,
Still would I ray-like flit about the ranges
Of dark and ruddy cloud.

SONG

There is a wood where the fairies dance
All night long in a ring of mushrooms daintily,
By each tree bole sits a squirrel or a mole,
And the moon through the branches darts.

Light on the grass their slim limbs glance,
Their shadows in the moonlight swing in quiet unison,
And the moon discovers that they all have lovers,
But they never break their hearts.

They never grieve at all for sands that run,
They never know regret for a deed that's done,
And they never think of going to a shed with a gun
At the rising of the sun.

TOWN

Mostly in a dull rotation
We bear our loads and eat and drink and sleep,
Feeling no tears, knowing no meditation—
Too tired to think, too clogged with earth to weep.

Dimly convinced, poor groping wretches,
Like eyeless insects in a murky pond
That out and out this city stretches,
Away, away, and there is no beyond.

No larger earth, no loftier heaven,
No cleaner, gentler airs to breathe. And yet,
Even to us sometimes is given
Visions of things we otherwhiles forget.

Some day is done, its labour ended,
And as we brood at windows high,
A steady wind from far descended,
Blows off the filth that hid the deeper sky;

There are the empty waiting spaces,
We watch, we watch, unwinking, pale and dumb,

Till gliding up with noiseless paces
Night sweeps o'er all the wide arch: Night has come.

Not that sick false night of the city,
Lurid and low and yellow and obscene,
But mother Night, pure, full of pity,
The star-strewn Night, blue, potent and serene.

O, as we gaze the clamour ceases,
The turbid world around grows dim and small,
The soft-shed influence releases
Our shrouded spirits from their dusty pall.

No more we hear the turbulent traffic,
Not scorned but unremembered is the day;
The Night, all luminous and seraphic,
Has brushed its heavy memories away.

The great blue Night so clear and kindly,
The little stars so wide-eyed and so still,
Open a door for souls that blindly
Had wandered, tunnelling the endless hill;

They draw the long-untraversed portal,
Our souls slip out and tremble and expand,
The immortal feels for the immortal,
The eternal holds the eternal by the hand.

Impalpably we are led and lifted,
Softly we shake into the gulf of blue,
The last environing veil is rifted
And lost horizons float into our view.

Lost lands, lone seas, lands that afar gleam
With a miraculous beauty, faint yet clear,
Forgotten lands of night and star-gleam,
Seas that are somewhere but that are not here.

Borne without effort or endeavour,
Swifter and more ethereal than the wind,
In level track we stream, whilst ever
The fair pale panorama rolls behind.

Now fleets below a tranced moorland,
A sweep of glimmering immobility;
Now craggy cliff and dented foreland
Pass back and there beyond unfolds the sea.

Now wastes of water heaving, drawing,
Great darkling tracts of patterned restlessness,
With whitened waves round rough rocks mawing
And licking islands in their fierce caress.

Now coasts with capes and ribboned beaches
Set silent 'neath the canopy sapphirine,
And estuaries and river reaches
Phantasmal silver in the night's soft shine.

Ah, these fair woods the spirit crosses,
These quiet lakes, these stretched dreaming fields,
These undulate downs with piny bosses
Pointing the ridges of their sloping shields.

These valleys and these heights that screen them,
These tawnier sands where grass and tree are not,
Ah, we have known them, we have seen them
Long, long ago or ever we forgot;

We know them all, these placid countries,
And what the pathway is and what the goal;
These are the gates and these the sentries
That guard the ancient fortress of the soul.

And onward speed we flying, flying,

Over the sundering worlds of hill and plain
To where they rear their heads undying
The unnamed mountains of old days again.

The snows upon their calm still summits,
The chasms, the lines of trees that foot the snow,
Curving like inky frozen comets,
Into the forest-ocean spread below.

The glisten where the peaks are hoarest,
The soundless darkness of the sunken vales,
The folding leagues of shadowy forest,
Wave beyond wave till all distinctness fails.

So invulnerable it is, so deathless,
So floods the air the loveliness of it,
That we stay dazzled, rapt and breathless,
Our beings ebbing to the infinite.

There as we pause, there as we hover,
Moveless in ecstasy, a sudden light
Breaks in our eyes, and we discover
We sit at windows gazing to the night.

Wistful and tired, with eyes a-tingle
Where still the sting of Beauty faintly smarts,
But with our mute regrets there mingle
Thanks for the resurrection of our hearts.

O night so great that will not mock us!
O stars so wise that understand the weak!
O vast consoling hands that rock us!
O strong and perfect tongues that speak!

O night enrobed in azure splendour!
O whispering stars whose radiance falls like dew!
O mighty presences and tender,
You have given us back the dreams our childhood knew!

Lulled by your visions without number,
We seek our beds content and void of pain,
And dreaming drowse and dreaming slumber
And dreaming wake to see the day again.

A MEMORIAL

(F.T.)

The cord broke, and the tent
Slipped, and the silken roof
Lay prone beneath the viewless hoof
Of the deliberate firmament.
Yet cared we not; how should we care?
Knowing that labourless now he breathes
A golden paradisaal air
Where with more certain craft he wreathes
Bright braids of words more wise and fair
Than ever his earthly fabrics were,
That his unwavering eyes made fresh,
Purged and regarbed in fadeless flesh,
What he then darkly guessed behold,
And watch with an abiding joy
The eternal mysteries unfold
Which do his now transfigured songs evermore employ.

Brother, yet great thy power;
Thou stood'st as on a tower
Small 'neath the stars yet high above the fields;
In thy alembic song
Imagination strong
Distilled what essences the quest to mortals yields.

This thy reward well-won,
For every morning's sun
Found thy heart's firm allegiance still unshaken;
No temporal ache or smart
Drive Beauty from thy heart,
And by thy mighty mistress never wast forsaken.

Yes; for though stringent was the test,
When that thy trial was bitterest,
Steadfast thou did'st remain; unshod
The harrows of Pain thy feet once trod,
Humiliate as thy sad song tells
Before the vault's white sentinels.
Friendless and faint thou sojourned'st there,
A bowed, brave, timid wanderer,
A lonely nomad of the spirit,
Who did a triple curse inherit,
Hunger, regret and memory.
Yet never did they vanquish thee;
When nighest broken, most alone,
Thy unassuaged thoughts could clamber
To beauty on her ageless throne;
Thou wert as one in torture chamber
Who sees the blue through an open casement
And hammers his soul to endure the time
Of his corporeal abasement;
Nor writhed'st at thine or others' fault,
But with grim tenderness did salt
Thy cicatrices with a rhyme.
Not the most sable flame of gloom
Could penetrate thy inmost room;
But through the walls thy spirit sucked
Into that cloistral hermitage
Stray lovely things, moonbeams and snows
The far sky shed into thy cage,
And, from the very gutter plucked,
A lost and mired campestral rose.

Ended that purgatorial period,
Filled was thy wallet and thy feet were shod,
The leaden weights were moved, the rack withdrawn,
Thou didst traverse the dewy fields of dawn,
Watch sunsets blazoning over upland turf,
Pull poppies from the frontiers of the surf,
Dwelled'st with love and human eyes
Vigilant, calm and wise.
But still as when thy bark did ride
Derelict on the city's tide,
As then for penury now for pride
Thy bodily senses were denied;
Though they cried out and would not sleep,
Ascetic thou didst armour them
Lest acid pleasure should eat thine art's pure gem.
Hourly the tempter's ambuscades
But thou didst guard the gates and keep
Thy senses' hungry colonnades
Accessible but to Beauty's ministers,
Unlit by any ruby flame but hers.
Immuring so thy spirit eager
Within a body frail and meagre,
Far from the meads of earthly milk and honey,
Yet franchised of more wondrous territories,
Like those poor Bedouin of Arabia the Stony
Who roam spare-fed and hollow-eyed but free
By day to wander and by night to camp
In vast serenity,
Compassed by God's great silent glories
The sun's gold splendour and the moon's white lamp,
Folded and safe from harm
Beneath the mighty sky's protecting arm.

Ha! but the Titan's ardour
Wherewith thou scour'dst the vast,
To spoil the starry larder
Of fruits of heavenly taste!

Urania's fiercest servant,
With thirst as furnace fervent
And serene burning brow,
Worthy of thy great lineage, thou
Drankest without a shudder
In proud humility
Milk from that vast primæval udder
That swells for such as thee,
Milk from the fountains of the Universe
That cowards deem infected with a curse,
That flushes him who drinks
Nor shrinks
The exalted anguish of diurnal draughts
To a clear vision, more intolerable
In its blissful pain, than love's most ardent shafts,
Of the seats where she doth dwell,
She, whom thou didst confess
Enticed
Thee hot to her throne to press
For the greater glory of Christ
To uplift the curtains of her closed eyes.

Not all was for thy learning
Nor any mortal's else;
Only for thy discerning
Sporadic syllables
Of those supernal glances
Coffer of which her marble countenance is,
Yet vain was not the adventure,
Reluctant though the prize,
Thou gainedst a debenture
On the fringe of Beauty's eyes;
Such fragmentary trophy
As some cross-tunic'd knight
From Saladin or Sophy
May have won in sword's despite,
Not the dear polar shrines
Held captive by the Paynim
But still as fruit of wars
Some stone from Sion's lines,
Some relic that might sain him
Of life's uncounted scars.

Self-dedicated anchorite,
Never disdainful of the dust,
But conscious of the overcoming night
That must engulf the blooms and berries of lust,
And unforgetful of the enveloping day beyond;
Though a sweet show was spread for thy delight
Resolved not to be so fond
As, in ephemeral gauds caparisoned,
To station feet upon a world of vapour
Soft as a dream and fleeting as a taper;
Thou thoughtest nevertheless that thou shouldst occupy
Thyself, as it seemed to thee, most worthily
Until the rapid hour when thou shouldst die;
So, in a world of seemings,
Of shadows and of dreamings,
Busied thyself to fashion and record
Unto the greater glory of thy Lord,
For thy proud lady Beauty His
Most excellent and humble handmaid is.
Says one thy service was too ceremonial,
Thy vestments irised overmuch, thy ritual
Too elaborate and thy rubric too obscure,
Therefore thy gift of chant and orison
Beneath the perfect service men have done.
O but thy notes were pure,
And in a day like this we now endure
No fault it was in thee to set thy camp
Remote, aloof, aloof,
In a far fastness proof
'Gainst the mephitic odours of the swamp.
Which being so, no gain
'Twere to explain

An exquisiteness too meticulous;
Let us but say it pleased thee thus,
Dowered with imagination heavy-fruited,
To raise a column garlanded and fluted
For Him thy heavenly abacus.
This was thine offering thou didst make
In founded hope that He
The craftsman's best would take
Well knowing its unobscure sincerity.

The cord broke and the tent
Slipped and the silken roof
Lay prone beneath the viewless hoof
Of the deliberate firmament.
We still in this terrene abode
Forlorn must tread the difficult road,
And all meek thanks and all belief
Hardly suffice to rampart grief.
For gone is Beauty's votary apostolic
And are her temples now delivered over
To blindworms and libidinous goats that frolic
In places hallowed by that celestial lover.
Save only two or three
With undivided minds like thee,
None now remains that girds
The peregrinal loin,
None reverent of Beauty's holy tongue,
But counterfeiters of her imaged coin,
Iconoclasts, breakers of carven words,
Seekers of worthless treasure in the dung,
Mock mages and cacophonous charlatans,
And pismire artisans
Labouring to make
Such mirrored replicas of Nature's face
As might the surface of a stagnant lake.

Yet we should anger not,
Nor let that be forgot,
The testament of stateliest worth
He left us when he fled the earth.
The mausoleum made of rhyme,
Fair in its unfrequented field,
Which shall invulnerably shield
His memory to the end of Time;
The house with curtain-flaming halls
And roof of gold and jewelled walls
For which the fisher sank his net
Into the deepest pools of speech,
Scooping rich conchs and ribbons wet
That a less venturous could not reach,
The hunter tracked the metaphor
On many a foamy silver coast
A hundred leagues beyond the most
Fabulous Tellurian shore.

Magnificent he was and mild,
Glad to be still and glad to speak,
Daring yet delicate as a child,
Faithful, compassionate and holy,
And, being human, strong and weak,
And full of hope and melancholy.
No more than we, able to shed
Man's nature he inherited,
Neither sin's garrison to kill,
Yet at the last with constancy so great
As the world's vanities to abnegate,
Sternly to will the sacrifice of will
Upon the altars of the Uncreate,
So that he lived before he died
As one who hourly to himself denied
All joys save those that cannot pall,
Who having nothing yet had all.

FRIENDSHIP'S GARLAND

I

When I was a boy there was a friend of mine,
We thought ourselves warriors and grown folk swine,
Stupid old animals who never understood
And never had an impulse and said "you must be good."

We slunk like stoats and fled like foxes,
We put cigarettes in the pillar-boxes,
Lighted cigarettes and letters all aflame—
O the surprise when the postman came!

We stole eggs and apples and made fine hay
In people's houses when people were away,
We broke street lamps and away we ran,
Then I was a boy but now I am a man.

Now I am a man and don't have any fun,
I hardly ever shout and I never never run,
And I don't care if he's dead that friend of mine,
For then I was a boy and now I am a swine.

II

We met again the other night
With people; you were quite polite,
Shook my hand and spoke awhile
Of common things with cautious smile;
Paid the usual debt men owe
To fellows whom they used to know.
But, when our eyes met full, yours dropped,
And sudden, resolute, you stopped,
Moving with hurried syllables
To make remarks to some one else.
I caught them not, to me they said:
"Let the dead past bury its dead,
Things were very different then,
Boys are fools and men are men."
Several times the other night
You did your best to be polite;
When in the conversation's round
You heard my tongue's familiar sound
You bent in eager pose my way
To hear what I had got to say;
Trying, you thought with some success,
To hide the chasm's nakedness.
But on your eyes hard films there lay;
No mock-interest, no pretence
Could veil your blank indifference;
And if thoughts came recalling things
Far-off, far-off, from those old springs
When underneath the moon and sun
Our separate pulses beat as one,
Vagrant tender thoughts that asked
Admittance found the portal masked;
You spurned them; when I'd said my say,
With laugh and nod you turned away
To toss your friends some easy jest
That smote my brow and stabbed my breast.
Foolish though it be and vain
I am not master of my pain,
And when I said good-night to you
I hoped we should not meet again,
And wondered how the soul I knew
Could change so much; have I changed too?

III

There was a man whom I knew well

Whose choice it was to live in hell;
Reason there was why that was so
But what it was I do not know.

He had a room high in a tower,
And sat there drinking hour by hour,
Drinking, drinking all alone
With candles and a wall of stone.

Now and then he sobered down,
And stayed a night with me in town.
If he found me with a crowd,
He shrank and did not speak aloud.

He sat in a corner silently,
And others of the company
Would note his curious face and eye,
His twitching face and timid eye.

When they saw the eye he had
They thought perhaps that he was mad.
I knew he was clear and sane
But had a horror in his brain.

He had much money and one friend
And drank quite grimly to the end.
Why he chose to die in hell
I did not ask, he did not tell.

LINES

When London was a little town
Lean by the river's marge,
The poet paced it with a frown,
He thought it very large.

He loved bright ship and pointing steeple
And bridge with houses loaded
And priests and many-coloured people ...
But ah, they were not woaded!

Not all the walls could shed the spell
Of meres and marshes green,
Nor any chaffering merchant tell
The beauty that had been:

The crying birds at fall of night,
The fisher in his coracle,
And grim on Ludgate's windy height,
An oak-tree and an oracle.

Sick for the past his hair he rent
And dropt a tear in season;
If he had cause for his lament
We have much better reason.

For now the fields and paths he knew
Are confined all with bricks,
The lucid silver stream he knew
Runs slimy as the Styx;

North and south and east and west,
Far as the eye can travel,
Earth with a sombre web is drest
That nothing can unravel.

And we must wear as black a frown,
Wail with as keen a woe
That London was a little town
Five hundred years ago.

Yet even this place of steamy stir,
This pit of belch and swallow,
With chrism of gold and gossamer
The elements can hallow.

I have a room in Chancery Lane,
High in a world of wires,
Whence fall the roofs a ragged plain
Wooded with many spires.

There in the dawns of summer days
I stand in adoration,
While London's robed in rainbow haze
And gold illumination.

The wizard breezes waft the rays
Shot by the waking sun,
A myriad chimneys softly blaze,
A myriad shadows run.

Round the wide rim in radiant mist
The gentle suburbs quiver,
And nearer lies the shining twist
Of Thames, a holy river

Left and right my vision drifts,
By yonder towers I linger,
Where Westminster's cathedral lifts
Its belled Byzantine finger,

And here against my perchèd home
Where hold wise converse daily
The loftier and the lesser dome,
St. Paul's and the Old Bailey.

ECHOES

There is a far unfading city
Where bright immortal people are;
Remote from hollow shame and pity,
Their portals frame no guiding star
But blightless pleasure's moteless rays
That follow their footsteps as they dance
Long lutanied measures through a maze
Of flower-like song and dalliance.

There always glows the vernal sun,
There happy birds for ever sing,
There faint perfumèd breezes run
Through branches of eternal spring;
There faces browned and fruit and milk
And blue-winged words and rose-bloomed kisses
In galleys gowned with gold and silk
Shake on a lake of dainty blisses.

Coyness is not, nor bear they thought
Save of a shining gracious flow,
All natural joys are temperate sought,
For calm desire there they know,
A fire promiscuous, languorous, kind;
They scorn all fiercer lusts and quarrels,
Nor blow about on anger's wind,
Nor burn with love, nor rust with morals.

Folk in the far unfading city,
Burning with lusts my senses are,
I am torn with love and shame and pity,
Be to my heart a guiding star
Wise youths and maidens in the sun,
With eyes that charm and lips that sing,
And gentle arms that rippling run,

Shed on my heart your endless spring!

THE FUGITIVE

Flying his hair and his eyes averse,
Fleet are his feet and his heart apart.
How could we clear his charms rehearse?
Fleet are his feet and his heart apart.

High on a down we found him last,
Shy as a hare, he fled as fast;
How could we clasp him or ever he passed?
Fleet are his feet and his heart apart.

How could we cling to his limbs that shone,
Ravish his cheeks' red gonfalon,
Or the wild-skin cloak that he had on?
Fleet are his feet and his heart apart.

For the wind of his feet still straightly shaping,
He loosed at our breasts from his eyes escaping
One crooked swift glance like a javelin leaping.
Fleet are his feet and his heart apart.

And his feet passed over the sunset land
From the place forlorn where a forlorn band
Watching him flying we still did stand.
Fleet are his feet and his heart apart.

Vanishing now who would not stay
To the blue hills on the verge of day.
O soft! soft! Music play,
Fading away,
(Fleet are his feet
And his heart apart)
Fading away.

IN AN ORCHARD

Airy and quick and wise
In the shed light of the sun,
You clasp with friendly eyes
The thoughts from mine that run.

But something breaks the link;
I solitary stand
By a giant gully's brink
In some vast gloomy land.

Sole central watcher, I
With steadfast sadness now
In that waste place descry
'Neath the awful heavens how

Your life doth dizzy drop
A little foam of flame
From a peak without a top
To a pit without a name.

IN A CHAIR

He room is full of the peace of night,

The small flames murmur and flicker and sway,
Within me is neither shadow, nor light,
Nor night, nor twilight, nor dawn, nor day.

For the brain strives not to the goal of thought,
And the limbs lie wearied, and all desire
Sleeps for a while, and I am naught
But a pair of eyes that gaze at a fire.

A DAY

I. MORNING

The village fades away
Where I last night came
Where they housed me and fed me
And never asked my name.

The sun shines bright, my step is light,
I, who have no abode,
Jeer at the stuck, monotonous
Black posts along the road.

II. MIDDAY

The wood is still,
As here I sit
My heart drinks in
The peace of it.

A something stirs
I know not where
Some quiet spirit
In the air.

O tall straight stems!
O cool deep green!
O hand unfelt!
O face unseen!

III. EVENING

The evening closes in,
As down this last long lane
I plod; there patter round
First heavy drops of rain.

Feet ache, legs ache, but now
Step quickens as I think
Of mounds of bread and cheese
And something hot to drink.

IV. NIGHT

Ah! sleep is sweet, but yet
I will not sleep awhile
Nor for a space forget
The toil of that last mile;

But lie awake and feel
The cool sheets' tremulous kisses
O'er all my body steal ...
Is sleep as sweet as this is?

THE MIND OF MAN

I

Beneath my skull-bone and my hair,
Covered like a poisonous well,
There is a land: if you looked there
What you saw you'd quail to tell.
You that sit there smiling, you
Know that what I say is true.

My head is very small to touch,
I feel it all from front to back,
An eared round that weighs not much,
Eyes, nose-holes, and a pulpy crack:
Oh, how small, how small it is!
How could countries be in this?

Yet, when I watch with eyelids shut,
It glimmers forth, now dark, now clear,
The city of Cis-Occiput,
The marshes and the writhing mere,
The land that every man I see
Knows in himself but not in me.

II

Upon the borders of the weald
(I walk there first when I step in)
Set in green wood and smiling field,
The city stands, unstained of sin;
White thoughts and wishes pure
Walk the streets with steps demure.

In its clean groves and spacious halls
The quiet-eyed inhabitants
Hold innocent sunny festivals
And mingle in decorous dance;
Things that destroy, distort, deface,
Come never to that lovely place.

Never could evil enter thither,
It could not live in that sweet air,
The shadow of an ill deed must wither
And fall away to nothing there.
You would say as there you stand
That all was beauty in the land.

But go you out beyond the gateway,
Cleave you the woods and pass the plain,
Cross you the frontier down, and straightway
The trees will end, the grass will wane,
And you will come to a wilderness
Of sticks and parchèd barrenness.

The middle of the land is this,
A tawny desert midmost set,
Barren of living things it is,
Saving at night some vampires flit
That nest them in the farther marish
Where all save vilest things must perish.

Here in this reedy marsh of green
And oily pools, swarm insects fat
And birds of prey and beasts obscene,
Things that the traveller shudders at,
All cunning things that creep and fly
To suck men's blood until they die.

Rarely from hence does aught escape
Into the world of outer light,
But now and then some sable shape

Outward will dash in sudden flight;
And men stand stonied or distraught
To know the loathly deed or thought.

But, ah! beyond the marsh you reach
A purulent place more vile than all,
A festering lake too foul for speech,
Rotten and black, with coils acrawl,
Where writhe with lecherous squeakings shrill
Horrors that make the heart stand still.

There, 'neath a heaven diseased, it lies,
The mere alive with slimy worms,
With perverse terrible infamies,
And murders and repulsive forms
That have no name, but slide here deep
Whilst I, their holder, silence keep.

A REASONABLE PROTESTATION

[To F., who complained of his vagueness and lack of
dogmatic statement]

Not, I suppose, since I deny
Appearance is reality,
And doubt the substance of the earth
Does your remonstrance come to birth;
Not that at once I both affirm
'Tis not the skin that makes the worm
And every tactile thing with mass
Must find its symbol in the grass
And with a cool conviction say
Even a critic's more than clay
And every dog outlives his day.
This kind of vagueness suits your view,
You would not carp at it; for you
Did never stand with those who take
Their pleasures in a world opaque.
For you a tree would never be
Lovely were it but a tree,
And earthly splendours never splendid
If by transience unattended.
Your eyes are on a farther shore
Than any of earth; you not adore
As godhead God's dead hieroglyph,
Nor would you be perturbed if
Some prophet with a voice of thunder
And avalanche arm should blast and founder
The logical pillars that maintain
This visible world which loads the brain,
Loads the brain and withers the heart
And holds man from his God apart.

But still with you remains the craving
For some more solid substance, having
Surface to touch, colour to see,
And form compact in symmetry.
You are not satisfied with these
Vague throbbings, utterless ecstasies,
Void finds your spirit of delight
This great indefinite white light,
Not with such sickles can you reap;
If a dense earth you cannot keep
You want a dense heaven as substitute
With trees of plump celestial fruit,
Red apples, golden pomegranates,
And a river flowing by tall gates
Of topaz and of chrysolite
And walls of twenty cubits height.

Frank, you cry out against the age!

Nor you nor I can disengage
Ourselves from that in which we live
Nor seize on things God does not give.
Thirsty as you, perhaps, I long
For courtyards of eternal song,
Even as yours my feet would stray
In a city where 'tis always day
And a green spontaneous leafy garden
With God in the middle for a warden;
But though I trust with strengthening faith
I'll taste when I have traversed death
The unimaginable sweetness
Of certitude of such concreteness,
How should I draw the hue and scope
Of substances I only hope
Or blaze upon a mortal screen
The evidence of things not seen?
This art of ours but grows and stirs
Experience when it registers,
And you know well as I know well
This autumn of time in which we dwell
Is not an age of revelations
Solid as once, but intimations
That touch us with warm misty fingers
Leaving a nameless sense that lingers
That sight is blind and Time's a snare
And earth less solid than the air
And deep below all seeming things
There sits a steady king of kings
A radiant ageless permanence,
A quenchless fount of virtue whence
We draw our life; a sense that makes
A staunch conviction nothing shakes
Of our own immortality.
And though, being man, with certain glee
I eat and drink, though I suffer pain,
And love and hate and love again
Well or in mode contemptible,
Thus shackled by the body's spell
I see through pupils of the beast
Though it be faint and blurred with mist
A Star that travels in the East.

I see what I can, not what I will
In things that move, things that are still,
Thin motion, even cloudier rest,
I see the symbols God hath drest
The moveless trees, the trees that wave
The clouds that heavenly highways have,
Horses that run, rocks that are fixt,
Streams that have rest and motion mixt,
The main with its abiding flux,
The wind that up my chimney sucks
A mounting waterfall of flame,
Sticks, straws, dust, beetles and that same
Old blazing sun the Psalmist saw
A testifier to the law.
Divinely to the heart they speak
Saying how they are but weak
Wan will o' the wisps o'er the crystal sea;
But stays that sea still dark to me.

Did I now glibly insolent
Chart the ulterior firmament,
Would you not know my words were lies,
Where not my testimonial eyes
Mortal or spiritual lodge,
Mere uncorroborated fudge?
Praise me, though praise I do not want,
Rather, that I have cast much cant,
That what I see and feel I write
Read what I can in this dim light
Granted to me in nether night.
And though I am vague and shrink to guess
God's everlasting purposes,

And never save in perplexed dream
Have caught the least authentic gleam
Of the great kingdom and the throne
In the world that lies behind our own,
I have not lacked my certainties,
I have not haggard moaned the skies,
Now waged unnecessary strife
Nor scorned nor overvalued life.
And though you say my attitude
Is questioning, concede my mood
Does never bring to tongue or pen
Accents of gloomy modern men
Who wail or hail the death of God
And weigh and measure man the clod,
Or say they draw reluctant breath
And musically mourn that Death
Is a queen omnipotent of woe
And Life her lean ciccio,
Abject and pale, whom vampire-like
She playeth with ere she shall strike,
And pose sad riddles to the Sphinx
With raven quills in purple inks,...
Then send the boy to fetch more drinks.

EPILOGUE

Than farthest stars more distant,
 A mile more,
 A mile more,
A voice cries on insistent:
"You may smile more if you will;

"You may sing too and spring too;
 But numb at last
 And dumb at last,
Whatever port you cling to,
You must come at last to a hill.

"And never a man you'll find there
 To take your hand
 And shake your hand;
But when you go behind there
You must make your hand a sword

"To fence with a foeman swarthy,
 And swink there
 Nor shrink there,
Though cowardly and worthy
Must drink there one reward."

TWELVE TRANSLATIONS

FROM

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

TOUT ENTIÈRE

This morning in my attic high
The Demon came to visit me,
And seeking faults in my reply,
He said: "I would inquire of thee,

"Of all the beauties which compose

Her charming body's potent spell,
Of all the objects black and rose
Which make the thing you love so well,

"Which is the sweetest?" O my soul!
Thou didst rejoin: "How tell of parts,
When all I know is that the whole
Works magic in my heart of hearts?"

"Where all is fair, how should I say
What single grace is my delight?
She shines on me like break of day
And she consoles me as the night.

"There flows through all her perfect frame
A harmony too exquisite
That weak analysis should name
The numberless accords of it.

"O mystic metamorphosis!
My separate senses all are blent;
Within her breath soft music is,
And in her voice a subtle scent!"

THE ALCHEMY OF GRIEF

One, Nature! burns and makes thee bright,
One gives thee weeds to mourn withal;
And what to one is burial
Is to the other life and light.

The unknown Hermes who assists
And always fills my heart with fear
Makes me the mighty Midas' peer
The saddest of the alchemists.

Through him I make gold changeable
To dross, and paradise to hell;
Clouds for its corpse-cloths I descry.

A stark dead body I love well,
And in the gleaming fields on high
I build immense sarcophagi.

SPLEEN

When the low heavy sky weighs like a lid
Upon the spirit aching for the light
And all the wide horizon's line is hid
By a black day sadder than any night;

When the changed earth is but a dungeon dank
Where batlike Hope goes blindly fluttering
And, striking wall and roof and mouldered plank,
Bruises his tender head and timid wing;

When like grim prison-bars stretch down the thin,
Straight, rigid pillars of the endless rain,
And the dumb throngs of infamous spiders spin
Their meshes in the caverns of the brain;—

Suddenly, bells leap forth into the air,
Hurling a hideous uproar to the sky
As 'twere a band of homeless spirits who fare
Through the strange heavens, wailing stubbornly.

And hearses, without drum or instrument,
File slowly through my soul; crushed, sorrowful,
Weeps Hope, and Grief, fierce and omnipotent,
Plants his black banner on my drooping skull.

A VOYAGE TO CYTHERA

My heart was like a bird and took to flight,
Around the rigging circling joyously;
The ship rolled on beneath a cloudless sky
Like a great angel drunken with the light.

"What is yon isle, sad and funereal?"
"Cythera famed in deathless song," said they,
"The gay old bachelors' Eldorado-Nay,
Look! 'tis a poor bare country after all!"

Isle of sweet secrets and heart banquetings!
The queenly shade of antique Venus thrills
Scentlike above thy level seas and fills
Our souls with languor and all amorous things.

Fair isle and of green myrtles and blown flowers
Held holy by all men for evermore,
Where the faint sighs of spirits that adore
Float like rose-incense through the quiet hours,

And dovelike sounds each murmured orison:—
Cythera lay there barren 'neath bright skies,
A rocky waste rent by discordant cries:
Natheless I saw a curious thing thereon.

No shady temple was it, close enshrined
I' the trees; no flower-crowned priestess hither came
With her young body burnt by secret flame,
Baring her breast to the caressing wind;

But when so close to the land's edge we drew
Our canvas scared the sea-fowl—gradually
We knew it for a three-branched gallows tree
Like a black cypress stark against the blue.

A rotten carcase hung, whereon did sit
A swarm of foul black birds; with writhe and shriek
Each sought to pierce and plunge his knife-like beak
Deep in the bleeding trunk and limbs of it.

The eyes were holes; the belly opened wide
Streaming its heavy entrails on the thighs;
The grim birds, gorged with dreadful delicacies,
Had dug and furrowed it on every side.

Beneath the blackened feet there strove and pressed
A herd of jealous beasts with upward snout,
And in the midst of these there turned about
One, the chief hangman, larger than the rest....

Lone Cytherean! now all silently
Thou sufferest these insults to atone
For those old infamous sins that thou hast known,
The sins that locked the gate o' the grave to thee.

Mine are thy sorrows, ludicrous corse; yea, all
Are mine! I stood thy swaying limbs beneath,
And, like a bitter vomit, to my teeth
There rose old shadows in a stream of gall.

O thou unhappy devil, I felt afresh,
Gazing at thee, the beaks and jaws of those
Black savage panthers and those ruthless crows,

Who loved of old to macerate my flesh.

The sea was calm, the sky without a cloud;
Henceforth for me all things that came to pass
Were blood and darkness,—round my heart, alas!
There clung that allegory, like a shroud.

Naught save mine image on a gibbet thrust
Found I on Venus island desolate....
Ah, God! the courage and strength to contemplate
My body and my heart without disgust.

THE CRACKED BELL

'Tis bitter-sweet, when winter nights are long,
To watch, beside the flames which smoke and twist,
The distant memories which slowly throng,
Brought by the chime soft-singing through the mist.

Happy the sturdy, vigorous-throated bell
Who, spite of age alert and confident,
Cries hourly, like some strong old sentinel
Flinging the ready challenge from his tent.

For me, my soul is cracked; when sick with care,
She strives with songs to people the cold air
It happens often that her feeble cries

Mock the harsh rattle of a man who lies
Wounded, forgotten, 'neath a mound of slain
And dies, pinned fast, writhing his limbs in pain.

THE OFFENDED MOON

O moon, O lamp of hill and secret dale!
Thou whom our fathers, ages out of mind,
Worshipped in thy blue heaven, whilst behind
Thy stars streamed after thee a glittering trail,

Dost see the poet, weary-eyed and pale,
Or lovers on their happy beds reclined,
Showing white teeth in sleep, or vipers twined,
'Neath the dry sward; or in a golden veil

Stealest thou with faint footfall o'er the grass
As of old, to kiss from twilight unto dawn
The faded charms of thine Endymion?...

"O child of this sick century, I see
Thy grey-haired mother leering in her glass
And plastering the breast that suckled thee!"

TO THEODORE DE BANVILLE,

1842

So proud your port, your arm so powerful,
With such a grip you grip the goddess' hair,
That one might take you, from your casual air,
For a young ruffian flinging down his trull.

Your clear eye flashing with precocity,

You have displayed yourself proud architect
Of fabrics so audaciously correct
That we may guess what your ripe prime will be.

Poet, our blood ebbs out through every pore;
Is it, perchance, the robe the Centaur bore,
Which made a sullen streamlet of each vein,

Was three times dipped within the venom fell
Of those old reptiles fierce and terrible
Whom, in his cradle, Hercules had slain?

MUSIC

Oft Music, as it were some moving mighty sea,
Bears me towards my pale
Star: in clear space, or 'neath a vaporous canopy
On-floating, I set sail.

With heaving chest which strains forward, and lungs outblown,
I climb the ridgèd steeps
Of those high-pilèd clouds which 'thwart the night are thrown,
Veiling its starry deeps.

I suffer all the throes, within my quivering form,
Of a great ship in pain,
Now a soft wind, and now the writhings of a storm

Upon the vasty main
Rock me: at other times a death-like calm, the bare
Mirror of my despair.

THE CATS

The lover and the stern philosopher
Both love, in their ripe time, the confident
Soft cats, the house's chiefest ornament,
Who like themselves are cold and seldom stir.

Of knowledge and of pleasure amorous,
Silence they seek and Darkness' fell domain;
Had not their proud souls scorned to brook his rein,
They would have made grim steeds for Erebus.

Pensive they rest in noble attitudes
Like great stretched sphinxes in vast solitudes
Which seem to sleep wrapt in an endless dream;

Their fruitful loins are full of sparks divine,
And gleams of gold within their pupils shine
As 'twere within the shadow of a stream.

THE SADNESS OF THE MOON

This evening the Moon dreams more languidly,
Like a beauty who on mounded cushions rests,
And with her light hand fondles lingeringly,
Before she sleeps, the slope of her sweet breasts.

On her soft satined avalanches' height
Dying, she laps herself for hours and hours
In long, long swoons, and gazes at the white

Visions which rise athwart the blue like flowers.

When sometimes in her perfect indolence
She lets a furtive tear steal gently thence,
Some pious poet, a lone, sleepless one,

Takes in his hollowed hand this gem, shot through,
Like an opal stone, with gleams of every hue,
And in his heart's depths hides it from the sun.

MOESTA ET ERRABUNDA

Agatha, tell me, does thy heart not ache,
Plunged in this squalid city's filthy sea,
For another ocean where the splendours break
Blue, clear, and deep as is virginity.
Agatha, tell me, does thy heart not ache?

The sea, the sea unending, comforts us!
What demon gave the hoarse old sea who sings
To her mumbling hurricanes' organ thunderous
The god-like power to cradle sorrowful things?
The sea, the sea unending, comforts us.

Carry me, wagon, bear me, barque, away!
Far! Far! For here the mud is made of tears!
Does Agatha's sad heart not sometimes say:
"O far from shudderings and crimes and fears,
Carry me, wagon; bear me barque, away?"

How far thou art, O scented paradise,
O paradise where all is love and joy,
Where all is worthy love 'neath the azure skies,
And the heart drowns in bliss without alloy!
How far thou art, O scented paradise!

But the green paradise of childish loves,
The games, the songs, the kisses and the flowers,
The laughing draughts of wine in hidden groves,
The violins throbbing through the twilight hours,
—But the green paradise of childish loves,

The artless paradise of stealthy joys,
Is that already leagues beyond Cathay?
And can one, with a little plaintive noise,
Bring it again that is so far away—
The artless paradise of stealthy joys?

THE OWLS

'Neath their black yews in solemn state
The owls are sitting in a row
Like foreign gods; and even so
Blink their red eyes; they meditate.

Quite motionless they hold them thus
Until at last the day is done,
And driving down the slanting sun,
The sad night is victorious.

They teach the wise who gives them ear
That in this world he most should fear
All things which loud or restless be.

Who, dazzled by a passing shade,
Follows it, never will be free
Till the dread penalty be paid.

FINIS

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE THREE HILLS, AND OTHER POEMS ***

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