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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK POEMS - FIRST SERIES ***

POEMS

FIRST SERIES

BY J. C. SQUIRE

LONDON
MARTIN SECKER
XVII BUCKINGHAM STREET
ADELPHI

LONDON: MARTIN SECKER (LTD) 1918

DEDICATION

*Lord, I have seen at harvest festival
In a white lamp-lit fishing-village church,
How the poor folk, lacking fine decorations,
Offer the first-fruits of their various toils:
Not only fruit and blossom of the fields,
Ripe corn and poppies, scabious, marguerites,
Melons and marrows, carrots and potatoes,
And pale round turnips and sweet cottage flowers,
But gifts of other produce, heaped brown nets,
Fine pollack, silver fish with umber backs,
And handsome green-dark-blue-striped mackerel,*

*And uglier, hornier creatures from the sea,
Lobsters, long-clawed and eyed, and smooth flat crabs,
Ranged with the flowers upon the window-niches,
To lie in that symbolic contiguity
While lusty hymns of gratitude ascend.*

*So I
Here offer all I have found:
A few bright stainless flowers
And richer, earthlier blooms, and homely grain,
And roots that grew distorted in the dark,
And shapes of livid hue and sprawling form
Dragged from the deepest maters I have searched.
Most diverse gifts, yet all alike in this:
They are all the natural products of my mind
And heart and senses;
And all with labour grown, or plucked, or caught.*

PREFACE

The title of this book was chosen for this reason. Had the volume been called — *and Other Poems* it might have given a false impression that its contents were entirely new. Had it been called *Collected Poems* the equally false impression might have been given that there was something of finality about it. The title selected seemed best to convey both the fact that it was a collection and that, under Providence, other (and, let us hope, superior) collections will follow it.

The book contains all that I do not wish to destroy of the contents of four volumes of verse. A number of small corrections have been made. There are added, also, a few recent poems not previously published. The earliest of the poems now reprinted is dated 1905, in which year I was twenty-one. Some of the subsequent years, such as 1914 and 1915, contributed nothing to this book: the greater number of the poems were written in 1911-1912 and 1916-1917.

Some of the poems were not written as I should now write them; and many of them reflect transient, though mostly recurrent, moods which I do not necessarily think worthy of esteem.

J. C. S.
March 1918.

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IN A CHAIR

The 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 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 thereby,
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.

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 other times forget.

Some day is done, its labour ended,
And as we sit and 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 covers 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,
We saw them long ago and 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 that ancient fortress of the soul.

And we speed onward flying, flying,
Over the sundering waves 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 files 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,
Edge beyond edge 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,
Still-poised 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.

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 a while
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 someone 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.

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 kingfishers
Across the luminous, tranquil mirror of the mind.

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."

AT NIGHT

Dark fir-tops 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.

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, and there behold
A city veiled in rainbow haze
And spangled all with gold.

The breezes waft abroad 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.

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.

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 a 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

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.

TREE-TOPS

There beyond my window ledge,
Heaped against the sky, a hedge
Of huge and waving tree-tops 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."

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!

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."

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.

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.

SONG

There is a wood where the fairies dance
All night long in a ring of mushrooms daintily,
By each tree hole 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.

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?

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 FUGITIVE

Flying his hair and his eyes averse,
Fleet are his feet and his heart apart.
How could our song 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.

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 perfumed 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 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 earèd 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; nor do 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, nameless ecstasies,
Nor can your spirit find delight
In an amorphous great 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 hope with strengthening faith
To 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 paper 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 on 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 clear-shapen 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,
Nor 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 cicerone,
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.

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.

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.

THE SHIP

There was no song nor shout of joy
Nor beam of moon or sun,
When she came back from the voyage
Long ago begun;
But twilight on the waters
Was quiet and grey,
And she glided steady, steady and pensive,
Over the open bay.

Her sails were brown and ragged,
And her crew hollow-eyed,
But their silent lips spoke content
And their shoulders pride;
Though she had no captives on her deck,
And in her hold
There were no heaps of corn or timber
Or silks or gold.

ODE: IN A RESTAURANT

In this dense hall of green and gold,
Mirrors and lights and steam, there sit
Two hundred munching men;
While several score of others flit

Like scurrying beetles over a fen,
With plates in fanlike spread; or fold
Napkins, or jerk the corks from bottles,
Ministers to greedy throttles.
Some make noises while they eat,
Pick their teeth or shuffle their feet,
Wipe their noses 'neath eyes that range
Or frown whilst waiting for their change.
Gobble, gobble, toil and trouble.
Soul! this life is very strange,
And circumstances very foul
Attend the belly's stormy howl.

How horrible this noise! this air how thick!
It is disgusting ... I feel sick...
Loosely I prod the table with a fork,
My mind gapes, dizzies, ceases to work...

* * * * *

The weak unsatisfied strain
Of a band in another room;
Through this dull complex din
Comes winding thin and sharp!
The gnat-like mourning of the violin,
The faint stings of the harp.

The sounds pierce in and die again,
Like keen-drawn threads of ink dropped into a glass
Of water, which curl and relax and soften and pass.
Briefly the music hovers in unstable poise,
Then melts away, drowned in the heavy sea of noise.
And I, I am now emasculate.
All my forces dissipate;
Conquered by matter utterly,
Moving not, willing not, I lie,
Like a man whom timbers pin
When the roof of a mine falls in.

Halt! ... as a cloud condenses
I press my mind, recover
Dominion of my senses.
With newly flowing blood
I lift, and now float over
The restaurant's expanses
Like a draggled sea-gull over dreary flats of mud.
An effort ... ah ... I urge and push,
And now with greater strength I flush,
The hall is full of my pinions' rush;
No drooping now, the place is mine,
Beating the walls with shattering wings,
Over the herd my spirit swings,
In triumph shouts "Aha, you swine!
Grovel before your lord divine!
I, only I, am real here! ..."
Through the uncertain firmament,
Still bestial in their dull content.
The despicable phantoms leer...
Hogs! even now in my right hand
I hold at my will the thunderbolts
Measured not in mortal volts,
Would crash you to annihilation!
Lit with a new illumination,
What need I of ears and eyes
Of flesh? Imperious I will rise,
Dominate you as a god

Who only does not trouble to wield the rod
Of death, or kick your weak spheroid
Like a football through the void!

* * * * *

Ha! was it but a dream?
And did it merely seem?
Ha! not yet free of your cage,
Soul, spite of all your rage?
Come now, this foe engage!

With explosion of your might
Oh heave, oh leap and flash up, soul.
Like a stabbing scream in the night!
Hurl aside this useless bowl
Of a body...

But there comes a shock
A soft, tremendous shock
Of contact with the body; I lose all power,
And fall back, back, like a solitary rower
Whose prow that debonair the waves did ride
Is suddenly hurled back by an iron tide.
O sadness, sadness, feel the returning pain
Of touch with unescapable mortal things again!
The cloth is linen, the floor is wood,
My plate holds cheese, my tumbler toddy;
I cannot get free of the body,
And no man ever could.

* * * * *

Self! do not lose your hold on life,
Nor coward seek to shrink the strife
Of body and spirit; even now
(Not for the first time), even now
Clear in your ears has rung the message
That tense abstraction is the passage
To nervelessness and living death.
Never forget while you draw breath
That all the hammers of will can never
Your chained soul from matter sever;
And though it be confused and mixed,
This is the world in which you're fixed.
Never despise the things that are.
Set your teeth upon the grit.
Though your heart like a motor beat,
Hold fast this earthly star,
The whole of it, the whole of it.

Look on this crowd now, calm now, look.
Remember now that each one drew
Woman's milk (which you partook)
And year by year in wonder grew.
Scorn not them, nor scorn not their feasts
(Which you partake) nor call them beasts.
These be children of one Power
With you, nor higher you nor lower.
They also hear the harp and fiddle,
And sometimes quail before the riddle.
They also have hot blood, quick thought,
And try to do the things they ought,
They also have hearts that ache when stung.
And sigh for days when they were young,
And curse their wills because they falter,
And know that they will never alter.
See these men in a world of men.
Material bodies?—yes, what then?
These coarse trunks that here you see
Judge them not, lest judged you be,
Bow not to the moment's curse,
Nor make four walls a universe.
Think of these bodies here assembled,
Whence they have come, where they have trembled
With the strange force that fills us all.
Men and beasts both great and small.
Here within this fleeting home
Two hundred men have this day come;
Here collected for one day,
Each shall go his separate way.
Self, you can imagine nought
Of all the battles they have fought,
All the labours they have done,
All the journeys they have run.
O, they have come from all the world,
Borne by invisible currents, swirled
Like leaves into this vortex here

Flying, or like the spirits drear
Windborne and frail, whom Dante saw,
Who yet obeyed some hidden law.

* * * * *

Is it not miraculous
That they should here be gathered thus,
All to be spread before your view,
Who are strange to them as they to you?
Soul, how can you sustain without a sob,
The lightest thought of this titanic throb
Of earthly life, that swells and breaks
Into leaping scattering waves of fire,
Into tameless tempests of effort and storms of desire
That eternally makes
The confused glittering armies of humankind,
To their own heroism blind,
Swarm over the earth to build, to dig, and to till,
To mould and compel land and sea to their will...
Whence we are here eating...
Standing here as on a high hill,
Strain, my imagination, strain forth to embrace
The energies that labour for this place,
This place, this instant. Beyond your island's verge,
Listen, and hear the roaring impulsive surge,
The clamour of voices, the blasting of powder, the clanging of steel,
The thunder of hammers, the rattle of oars...
For this one meal
Ten thousand Indian hamlets stored their yields,
Manchurian peasants sweltered in their fields,
And Greeks drove carts to Patras, and lone men
Saw burning summer come and go again
And huddled from the winds of winter on
The fertile deserts of Saskatchewan.
To fabricate these things have been marchings and slaughters,
The sun has toiled and the moon has moved the waters,
Cities have laboured, and crowded plains, and deep in the earth
Men have plunged unafraid with ardour to wrench the worth
Of sweating dim-lit caverns, and paths have been hewn
Through forests where for uncounted years nor sun nor moon
Have penetrated, men have driven straight shining rails
Through the dense bowels of mountains, and climbed their frozen tops,
and wrinkled sailors have shouted at shouting gales
In the huge Pacific, and battled around the Horn
And gasping, coasted to Rio, and turning towards the morn,
Fought over the wastes to Spain, and battered and worn,
Sailed up the Channel, and on into the Nore
To the city of masts and the smoky familiar shore.

So, so of every substance you see around
Might a tale be unwound
Of perils passed, of adventurous journeys made
In man's undying and stupendous crusade.
This flower of man's energies Trade
Brought hither to hand and lip
By waggon, train or ship,
Each atom that we eat...
Stare at the wine, stare at the meat.
The mutton which these platters fills
Grazed upon a thousand hills;
This bread so square and white and dry
Once was corn that sang to the sky;
And all these spruce, obedient wines
Flowed from the vatted fruit of vines
That trailed, a bright maternal host,
The warm Mediterranean coast,
Or spread their Bacchic mantle on
That Iberian Helicon
Where the slopes of Portugal
Crown the Atlantic's eastern wall.

O mighty energy, never-failing flame!
O patient toils and journeys in the name
Of Trade! No journey ever was the same

As another, nor ever came again one task;
 And each man's face is an ever-changing mask.
 From the minutest cell to the lordliest star
 All things are unique, though all of their kindred are.
 And though all things exist for ever, all life is change,
 And the oldest passions come to each heart in a garment strange.
 Though life be as brief as a flower and the body but dust,
 Man walks the earth holding both body and spirit in trust;
 And the various glories of sense are spread for his delight,
 New pageants glow in the sunset, new stars are born in the night,
 And clouds come every day, and never a shape recurs,
 And the grass grows every year, yet never the same blade stirs
 Another spring, and no delving man breaks again the self-same clod
 As he did last year though he stand once more where last year he trod.
 O wonderful procession fore-ordained by God!
 Wonderful in unity, wonderful in diversity.
 Contemplate it, soul, and see
 How the material universe moves and strives with anguish and glee!

* * * * *

I was born for that reason,
 With muscles, heart and eyes,
 To watch each following season,
 To work and to be wise;
 Not body and mind to tether
 To unseen things alone,
 But to traverse together
 The known and the unknown.
 My muscles were not welded
 To waste away in sleep,
 My bones were never builded
 To throw upon a heap.
 "Man worships God in action,"
 Senses and reason call,
 "And thought is putrefaction,
 If thought is all in all!"

Most of the guests are gone; look over there,
 Against a pillar leans with absent air
 A tall, dark, pallid waiter. There he stands
 Limply, with vacant eyes and listless hands.
 He dreams of some small Tyrolean town,
 A church, a bridge, a stream that rushes down.
 A frustrate, hankering man, this one short time
 Unconscious he into my gaze did climb;
 He sinks again, again he is but one
 Of many myriads underneath the sun,
 Now faint, now vivid.... How puzzling is it all!
 For now again, in spite of all,
 The lights, the chairs, the diners, and the hall
 Lose their opacity.
 Fool! exert your will,
 Finish your whisky up, and pay your bill.

FAITH

When I see truth, do I seek truth
 Only that I may things denote,
 And, rich by striving, deck my youth
 As with a vain unusual coat?

Or seek I truth for other ends:
 That she in other hearts may stir,
 That even my most familiar friends
 May turn from me to look on her?

So I this day myself was asking;
 Out of the window skies were blue
 And Thames was in the sunlight basking;

My thoughts coiled inwards like a screw.

I watched them anxious for a while;
Then quietly, as I did watch,
Spread in my soul a sudden smile:
I knew that no firm thing they'd catch.

And I remembered if I leapt
Upon the bosom of the wind
It would sustain me; question slept;
I felt that I had almost sinned.

A FRESH MORNING

Now am I a tin whistle
Through which God blows,
And I wish to God I were a trumpet
—But why, God only knows.

INTERIOR

I and myself swore enmity. Alack,
Myself has tied my hands behind my back.
Yielding, I know there's no excuse in them—
I was accomplice to the stratagem.

ON A FRIEND RECENTLY DEAD

I

The stream goes fast.
When this that is the present is the past,
'Twill be as all the other pasts have been,
A failing hill, a daily dimming scene,
A far strange port with foreign life astir
The ship has left behind, the voyager
Will never return to; no, nor see again,
Though with a heart full of longing he may strain
Back to project himself, and once more count
The boats, the whitened walls that climbed the mount,
Mark the cathedral's roof, the gathered spires,
The vanes, the windows red with sunset's fires,
The gap of the market-place, and watch again
The coloured groups of women, and the men
Lounging at ease along the low stone wall
That fringed the harbour; and there beyond it all
High pastures morning and evening scattered with small
Specks that were grazing sheep.... It is all gone,
It is all blurred that once so brightly shone;
He cannot now with the old clearness see
The rust upon one ringbolt of the quay.

II

And yesterday is dead, and you are dead.

Your duplicate that hovered in my head
Thins like blown wreathing smoke, your features grow
To interrupted outlines, and all will go
Unless I fight dispersal with my will...
So I shall do it ... but too conscious still
That, when we walked together, had I known
How soon your journey was to end alone,
I should not, now that you have gone from view,
Be gathering derelict odds and ends of you;
But in the intense lucidity of pain
Your likeness would have burnt into my brain.
I did not know; lovable and unique,
As volatile as a bubble and as weak,
You sat with me, and my eyes registered
This thing and that, and sluggishly I heard
Your voice, remembering here and there a word.

III

So in my mind there's not much left of you,
And that disintegrates; but while a few
Patches of memory's mirror still are bright
Nor your reflected image there has quite
Faded and slipped away, it will be well
To search for each surviving syllable
Of voice and body and soul. And some I'll find
Right to my hand, and some tangled and blind
Among the obscure weeds that fill the mind.
A pause....
I plunge my thought's hooked resolute claws
Deep in the turbid past. Like drowned things in the jaws
Of grappling-irons, your features to the verge
Of conscious knowledge one by one emerge.
Can I not make these scattered things unite? ...
I knit my brows and clench my eyelids tight
And focus to a point.... Streams of dark pinkish light
Convolve; and now spasmodically there flit
Clear pictures of you as you used to sit:—
The way you crossed your legs stretched in your chair,
Elbow at rest and tumbler in the air,
Jesting on books and politics and worse,
And still good company when most perverse.
Capricious friend!
Here in this room not long before the end,
Here in this very room six months ago
You poised your foot and joked and chuckled so.
Beyond the window shook the ash-tree bough,
You saw books, pictures, as I see them now,
The sofa then was blue, the telephone
Listened upon the desk, and softly shone
Even as now the fire-irons in the grate,
And the little brass pendulum swung, a seal of fate
Stamping the minutes; and the curtains on window and door
Just moved in the air; and on the dark boards of the floor
These same discreetly-coloured rugs were lying...
And then you never had a thought of dying.

IV

You are not here, and all the things in the room
Watch me alone in the gradual growing gloom.
The you that thought and felt are I know not where,
The you that sat and drank in that arm-chair
 Will never sit there again.
 For months you have lain
 Under a graveyard's green
 In some place abroad where I've never been.
 Perhaps there is a stone over you,
 Or only the wood and the earth and the grass cover you.
But it doesn't much matter; for dead and decayed you lie

Like a million million others who felt they would never die,
Like Alexander and Helen the beautiful,
And the last collier hanged for murdering his trull;
All done with and buried in an equal bed.

V

Yes, you are dead like all the other dead.
You are not here, but I am here alone.
And evening falls, fusing tree, water and stone
Into a violet cloth, and the frail ash-tree hisses
With a soft sharpness like a fall of mounded grain.
And a steamer softly puffing along the river passes,
Drawing a file of barges; and silence falls again.
And a bell tones; and the evening darkens; and in sparse rank
The greenish lights well out along the other bank.
I have no force left now; the sights and sounds impinge
Upon me unresisted, like raindrops on the mould.
And, striving not against my melancholy mood,
Limp as a door that hangs upon one failing hinge,
Limp, with slack marrowless arms and thighs, I sit and brood
On death and death and death. And quiet, thin and cold,
Following of this one friend the hopeless, helpless ghost,
The weak appealing wraiths of notable men of old
Who died, pass through the air; and then, host after host,
Innumerable, overwhelming, without form,
Rolling across the sky in awful silent storm,
The myriads of the undifferentiated dead
Whom none recorded, or of whom the record faded.
O spectacle appallingly sublime!
I see the universe one long disastrous strife,
And in the staggering abysses of backward and forward time
Death chasing hard upon the heels of creating life.
And I, I see myself as one of a heap of stones
Wetted a moment to life as the flying wave goes over,
Onward and never returning, leaving no mark behind.
There's nothing to hope for. Blank cessation numbs my mind,
And I feel my heart thumping gloomy against its cover,
My heavy belly hanging from my bones.

VI

Below in the dark street
There is a tap of feet,
I rise and angrily meditate
How often I have let of late
This thought of death come over me.
How often I will sit and backward trace
The deathly history of the human race,
The ripples of men who chattered and were still,
Known and unknown, older and older, until
Before man's birth I fall, shivering and aghast
Through a hole in the bottom of the remotest past;
Till painfully my spirit throws
Her giddiness off; and then as soon
As I recover and try to think again,
Life seems like death; and all my body grows
Icily cold, and all my brain
Cold as the jagged craters of the moon....
And I wonder is it not strange that I
Who thus have heard eternity's black laugh
And felt its freezing breath,
Should sometimes shut it out from memory
So as to play quite prettily with death,
And turn an easy epitaph?

I can hear a voice whispering in my brain:
"Why this is the old futility again!
Criminal! day by day
Your own life is ebbing swiftly away.

And what have you done with it,
Except to become a maudlin hypocrite?"

Yes, I know, I know;

One should not think of death or the dead overmuch; but one's mind's made so
That at certain times the roads of thought all lead to death,
And false reasoning clouds one's soul as a window with breath
Is clouded in winter's air,
And all the faith one may have
Lies useless and dead as a body in the grave.

THE MARCH

I heard a voice that cried, "Make way for those who died!"
And all the coloured crowd like ghosts at morning fled;
And down the waiting road, rank after rank there strode,
In mute and measured march a hundred thousand dead.

A hundred thousand dead, with firm and noiseless tread,
All shadowy-grey yet solid, with faces grey and ghast,
And by the house they went, and all their brows were bent
Straight forward; and they passed, and passed, and passed, and passed.

But O there came a place, and O there came a face,
That clenched my heart to see it, and sudden turned my way;
And in the Face that turned I saw two eyes that burned,
Never-forgotten eyes, and they had things to say.

Like desolate stars they shone one moment, and were gone,
And I sank down and put my arms across my head,
And felt them moving past, nor looked to see the last,
In steady silent march, our hundred thousand dead.

PROLOGUE: IN DARKNESS

With my sleeping beloved huddled tranquil beside me, why do I lie awake,
Listening to the loud clock's hurry in the darkness, and feeling my heart's fierce ache
That beats one response to the brain's many questionings, and in solitude bears the
weight
Of all the world's evil and misery and frustration, and the senseless pressure of fate?

Is it season of ploughing and sowing, this long vigil, that so certainly it recurs?
In this unsought return of a pain that was ended, is it here that a song first stirs?
Can it be that from this, when to-night's gone from memory, there will spring of a
sudden, some time,
Like a silver lily breaking from black deadly waters, the thin-blown shape of a rhyme?

THE LILY OF MALUD

The lily of Malud is born in secret mud.
It is breathed like a word in a little dark ravine
Where no bird was ever heard and no beast was ever seen,
And the leaves are never stirred by the panther's velvet sheen.

It blooms once a year in summer moonlight,
In a valley of dark fear full of pale moonlight:
It blooms once a year, and dies in a night,
And its petals disappear with the dawn's first light;
And when that night has come, black small-breasted maids,

With ecstatic terror dumb, steal fawn-like through the shades
To watch, hour by hour, the unfolding of the flower.

When the world is full of night, and the moon reigns alone
And drowns in silver light the known and the unknown,
When each hut is a mound, half blue silver and half black,
And casts upon the ground the hard shadow of its back,
When the winds are out of hearing and the tree-tops never shake,
When the grass in the clearing is silent but awake
'Neath a moon-paven sky: all the village is asleep
And the babes that nightly cry dream deep:

From the doors the maidens creep,
Tiptoe over dreaming curs, soft, so soft, that not one stirs,
And stand curved and a-quiver, like bathers by a river,
Looking at the forest wall, groups of slender naked girls,
Whose black bodies shine like pearls where the moonbeams fall.
They have waked, they knew not why, at a summons from the night,
They have stolen fearfully from the dark to the light,
Stepping over sleeping men, who have moved and slept again:
And they know not why they go to the forest, but they know,
As their moth-feet pass to the shore of the grass
And the forest's dreadful brink, that their tender spirits shrink:
They would flee, but cannot turn, for their eyelids burn
With frenzy, and each maid, ere she leaves the moonlit space,
If she sees another's face is thrilled and afraid.

Now like little phantom fawns they thread the outer lawns
Where the boles of giant trees stand about in twos and threes,
Till the forest grows more dense and the darkness more intense,
And they only sometimes see in a lone moon-ray
A dead and spongy trunk in the earth half-sunk,
Or the roots of a tree with fungus grey,
Or a drift of muddy leaves, or a banded snake that heaves.

And the towering unseen roof grows more intricate, and soon
It is featureless and proof to the lost forgotten moon.
But they could not look above as with blind-drawn feet they move
Onwards on the scarce-felt path, with quick and desperate breath,
For their circling fingers dread to caress some slimy head,
Or to touch the icy shape of a hunched and hairy ape,
And at every step they fear in their very midst to hear
A lion's rending roar or a tiger's snore....
And when things swish or fall, they shiver but dare not call.

O what is it leads the way that they do not stray?
What unimagined arm keeps their bodies from harm?
What presence concealed lifts their little feet that yield
Over dry ground and wet till their straining eyes are met
With a thinning of the darkness?
And the foremost faintly cries in awed surprise:
And they one by one emerge from the gloom to the verge
Of a small sunken vale full of moonlight pale.
And they hang along the bank, clinging to the branches dank,
A shadowy festoon out of sight of the moon;
And they see in front of them, rising from the mud
A single straight stem and a single pallid bud
In that little lake of light from the moon's calm height.

A stem, a ghostly bud, on the moon-swept mud
That shimmers like a pond; and over there beyond
The guardian forest high, menacing and strange,
Invades the empty sky with its wild black range.

And they watch hour by hour that small lonely flower
In that deep forest place that hunter never found.

It shines without sound, as a star in space.

And the silence all around that solitary place
Is like silence in a dream; till a sudden flashing gleam
Down their dark faces flies; and their lips fall apart
And their glimmering great eyes with excitement dart
And their fingers, clutching the branches they were touching,
Shake and arouse hissing leaves on the boughs.

And they whisper aswoon: Did it move in the moon?

O it moved as it grew!
It is moving, opening, with calm and gradual will,
And their bodies where they cling are shadowed and still
And with marvel they mark that the mud now is dark
For the unfolding flower, like a goddess in her power,
Challenges the moon with a light of her own,
That lovelily grows as the petals unclose,
Wider, more wide with an awful inward pride,
Till the heart of it breaks, and stilled is their breath,
For the radiance it makes is as wonderful as death.

The morning's crimson stain tinges their ashen brows
As they part the last boughs and slowly step again
On to the village grass, and chill and languid pass
Into the huts to sleep.

Brief slumber, yet so deep
That, when they wake to day, darkness and splendour seem
Broken and far away, a faint miraculous dream;
And when those maidens rise they are as they ever were
Save only for a rare shade of trouble in their eyes.
And the surly thick-lipped men, as they sit about their huts
Making drums out of guts, grunting gruffly now and then,
Carving sticks of ivory, stretching shields of wrinkled skin,
Smoothing sinister and thin squatting gods of ebony,
Chip and grunt and do not see.

But each mother, silently,
Longer than her wont stays shut in the dimness of her hut,
For she feels a brooding cloud of memory in the air,
A lingering thing there that makes her sit bowed
With hollow shining eyes, as the night-fire dies,
And stare softly at the ember, and try to remember
Something sorrowful and far, something sweet and vaguely seen
Like an early evening star when the sky is pale green:
A quiet silver tower that climbed in an hour,
Or a ghost like a flower, or a flower like a queen:
Something holy in the past that came and did not last.

But she knows not what it was.

A HOUSE

Now very quietly, and rather mournfully,
In clouds of hyacinth the sun retires,
And all the stubble-fields that were so warm to him
Keep but in memory their borrowed fires.

And I, the traveller, break, still unsatisfied,
From that faint exquisite celestial strand,
And turn and see again the only dwelling-place
In this wide wilderness of darkening land.

The house, that house, O now what change has come to it,
Its crude red-brick façade, its roof of slate;
What imperceptible swift hand has given it
A new, a wonderful, a queenly state?

No hand has altered it, that parallelogram,
So inharmonious, so ill arranged;
That hard blue roof in shape and colour's what it was;
No, it is not that any line has changed.

Only that loneliness is now accentuate
And, as the dusk unveils the heaven's deep cave,
This small world's feebleness fills me with awe again,
And all man's energies seem very brave.

And this mean edifice, which some dull architect
Built for an ignorant earth-turning hind,
Takes on the quality of that magnificent
Unshakable dauntlessness of human kind.

Darkness and stars will come, and long the night will be,
Yet imperturbable that house will rest,
Avoiding gallantly the stars' chill scrutiny,
Ignoring secrets in the midnight's breast.

Thunders may shudder it, and winds demoniac
May howl their menaces, and hail descend;
Yet it will bear with them, serenely, steadfastly,
Not even scornfully, and wait the end.

And all a universe of nameless messengers
From unknown distances may whisper fear,
And it will imitate immortal permanence,
And stare and stare ahead and scarcely hear.

It stood there yesterday; it will to-morrow, too,
When there is none to watch, no alien eyes
To watch its ugliness assume a majesty
From this great solitude of evening skies.

So lone, so very small, with worlds and worlds around,
While life remains to it prepared to outface
Whatever awful un conjectured mysteries
May hide and wait for it in time and space.

BEHIND THE LINES

The wind of evening cried along the darkening trees,
Along the darkening trees, heavy with ancient pain,
Heavy with ancient pain from faded centuries,
From faded centuries.... O foolish thought and vain!

O foolish thought and vain to think the wind could know,
To think the wind could know the griefs of men who died,
The griefs of men who died and mouldered long ago:
"And mouldered long ago," the wind of evening cried.

ARAB SONG

When her eyes' sudden challenge first halted my feet on the path,
I stood like a shivering caught fugitive, and strained at my breath,
And the Truth in her eyes was the portent of Love and of Death,
For I am of the tribe of Ben Asra, who die when they love.

O you who have faded because girls were contemptuous and cold,
I pitied you; but mine I have won, and her breast I enfold
Despairing, and in agony long for the thing that I hold:
For I am of the tribe of Ben Asra, who die when they love.

She is fair; and her eyes in her hair are like stars in a stream.
She is kind: never vaporous sleep-eddying maid in a dream
Leaning over my darkness-drowned pillow more tender did seem.
But her beauty and sweetness are as blasts from the sands of the South.
Drink me, palsy me, flay me, bleed my veins, chain my limbs,
choke my mouth,
And make salt to my lips the wine that should temper my drouth:
For I am of the tribe of Ben Asra, who die when they love.

Death must come: it were best by a knife in her hand or my own.
She'd not strike and I dare not, but here, as I wander alone,
Should the wood topple over at a beast flying out like a stone
I shall smile in its face at her image bending down from the sky,
And its teeth in my neck will be hers, and its snarls as I die
Will be gentle and sweet to my ears as the voice of the dove:

For I am of the tribe of Ben Asra, who die when they love.

THE STRONGHOLD

Quieter than any twilight
Shed over earth's last deserts,
Quiet and vast and shadowless
Is that unfounded keep,
Higher than the roof of the night's high chamber
Deep as the shaft of sleep.

And solitude will not cry there,
Melancholy will not brood there,
Hatred, with its sharp corroding pain,
And fear will not come there at all:
Never will a tear or a heart-ache enter
Over that enchanted wall.

But, O, if you find that castle,
Draw back your foot from the gateway,
Let not its peace invite you,
Let not its offerings tempt you.
For faded and decayed like a garment,
Love to a dust will have fallen,
And song and laughter will have gone with sorrow,
And hope will have gone with pain;
And of all the throbbing heart's high courage
Nothing will remain.

TO A BULL-DOG

(W. H. S., Capt. [Acting Major] R.F.A.; killed April 12, 1917)

We sha'n't see Willy any more, Mamie,
He won't be coming any more:
He came back once and again and again,
But he won't get leave any more.

We looked from the window and there was his cab,
And we ran downstairs like a streak,
And he said "Hullo, you bad dog," and you crouched to the floor,
Paralysed to hear him speak,

And then let fly at his face and his chest
Till I had to hold you down,
While he took off his cap and his gloves and his coat.
And his bag and his thonged Sam Browne.

We went upstairs to the studio,
The three of us, just as of old,
And you lay down and I sat and talked to him
As round the room he strolled.

Here in the room where, years ago
Before the old life stopped,
He worked all day with his slippers and his pipe,
He would pick up the threads he'd dropped,

Fondling all the drawings he had left behind,
Glad to find them all still the same,
And opening the cupboards to look at his belongings
... Every time he came.

But now I know what a dog doesn't know,
Though you'll thrust your head on my knee,

And try to draw me from the absent-mindedness
That you find so dull in me.

And all your life you will never know
What I wouldn't tell you even if I could,
That the last time we waved him away
Willy went for good.

But sometimes as you lie on the hearthrug
Sleeping in the warmth of the stove,
Even through your muddled old canine brain
Shapes from the past may rove.

You'll scarcely remember, even in a dream,
How we brought home a silly little pup.
With a big square head and little crooked legs
That could scarcely bear him up,

But your tail will tap at the memory
Of a man whose friend you were,
Who was always kind though he called you a naughty dog
When he found you on his chair;

Who'd make you face a reproving finger
And solemnly lecture you
Till your head hung downwards and you looked very sheepish!
And you'll dream of your triumphs too.

Of summer evening chases in the garden
When you dodged us all about with a bone:
We were three boys, and you were the cleverest,
But now we're two alone.

When summer comes again,
And the long sunsets fade,
We shall have to go on playing the feeble game for two
That since the war we've played.

And though you run expectant as you always do
To the uniforms we meet,
You'll never find Willy among all the soldiers
In even the longest street,

Nor in any crowd; yet, strange and bitter thought,
Even now were the old words said,
If I tried the old trick and said "Where's Willy?"
You would quiver and lift your head,

And your brown eyes would look to ask if I were serious,
And wait for the word to spring.
Sleep undisturbed: I sha'n't say that again,
You innocent old thing.

I must sit, not speaking, on the sofa,
While you lie asleep on the floor;
For he's suffered a thing that dogs couldn't dream of,
And he won't be coming here any more.

THE LAKE

I am a lake, altered by every wind.
The mild South breathes upon me, and I spread
A dance of merry ripples in the sun.
The West comes stormily and I am troubled,
My waves conflict and black depths show between them.
Under the East wind bitter I grow and chill,
Slate-coloured, desolate, hopeless. But when blows
A steady wind from the North my motion ceases,
I am frozen smooth and hard; my conquered surface
Returns the skies' cold light without a comment.
I make no sound, nor can I; nor can I show

What depth I have, if any depth, below.

PARADISE LOST

What hues the sunlight had, how rich the shadows were,
The blue and tangled shadows dropped from the crusted branches
Of the warped apple-trees upon the orchard grass.

How heavenly pure the blue of two smooth eggs that lay
Light on the rounded mud that lined the thrush's nest:
And what a deep delight the spots that speckled them.

And that small tinkling stream that ran from hedge to hedge,
Shadowed over by the trees and glinting in the sunbeams,
How clear the water was, how flat the beds of sand
With travelling bubbles mirrored, each one a golden world
To my enchanted eyes. Then earth was new to me.

But now I walk this earth as it were a lumber room,
And sometimes live a week, seeing nothing but mere herbs,
Mere stones, mere passing birds: nor look at anything
Long enough to feel its conscious calm assault:
The strength of it, the word, the royal heart of it.

Childhood will not return; but have I not the will
To strain my turbid mind that soils all outer things,
And, open again to all the miracles of light,
To see the world with the eyes of a blind man gaining sight?

ACACIA TREE

All the trees and bushes of the garden
Display their bright new green.

But above them all, still bare,
The great old acacia stands,
His solitary bent black branches stark
Against the garden and the sky.

It is as though those other thoughtless shrubs,
The winter over, hastened to rejoice
And clothe themselves in spring's new finery,
Heedless of all the iron time behind them.

But he, older and wiser, stronger and sadder of heart,
Remembers still the cruel winter, and knows
That in some months that death will come again;
And, for a season, lonelily meditates
Above his lighter companions' frivolity.

Till some late sunny day when, breaking thought,
He'll suddenly yield to the fickle persuasive sun,
And over all his rough and writhing boughs
And tiniest twigs
Will spread a pale green mist of feathery leaf,
More delicate, more touching than all the verdure
Of the younger, slenderer, gracefuller plants around.

And then, when the leaves have grown
Till the boughs can scarcely be seen through their crowded plumes,
There will softly glimmer, scattered upon him, blooms,
Ivory-white in the green, weightlessly hanging.

AUGUST MOON

(To F. S.)

In the smooth grey heaven is poised the pale half moon
And sheds on the wide grey river a broken reflection.
Out from the low church-tower the boats are moored
After the heat of the day, and await the dark.

And here, where the side of the road shelves into the river
At the gap where barges load and horses drink,
There are no horses. And the river is full
And the water stands by the shore and does not lap.

And a barge lies up for the night this side of the island,
The bargeman sits in the bows and smokes his pipe
And his wife by the cabin stirs. Behind me voices pass.

Calm sky, calm river: and a few calm things reflected.
And all as yet keep their colours; the island osiers,
The ash-white spots of umbelliferous flowers,
And the yellow clay of its bank, the barge's brown sails
That are furled up the mast and then make a lean triangle
To the end of the hoisted boom, and the high dark slips
Where they used to build vessels, and now build them no more.

All in the river reflected in quiet colours.
Beyond the river sweeps round in a bend, and is vast,
A wide grey level under the motionless sky
And the waxing moon, clean cut in the mole-grey sky.
Silence. Time is suspended; that the light fails
One would not know were it not for the moon in the sky,
And the broken moon in the water, whose fractures tell
Of slow broad ripples that otherwise do not show,
Maturing imperceptibly from a pale to a deeper gold,
A golden half moon in the sky, and broken gold in the water.

In the water, tranquilly severing, joining, gold:
Three or four little plates of gold on the river:
A little motion of gold between the dark images
Of two tall posts that stand in the grey water.

There are voices passing, a murmur of quiet voices,
A woman's laugh, and children going home.
A whispering couple, leaning over the railings,
And, somewhere, a little splash as a dog goes in.

I have always known all this, it has always been,
There is no change anywhere, nothing will ever change.

I heard a story, a crazy and tiresome myth.

Listen! behind the twilight a deep low sound
Like the constant shutting of very distant doors,

Doors that are letting people over there
Out to some other place beyond the end of the sky.

SONNET

There was an Indian, who had known no change,
Who strayed content along a sunlit beach
Gathering shells. He heard a sudden strange
Commingled noise; looked up; and gasped for speech.
For in the bay, where nothing was before,
Moved on the sea, by magic, huge canoes,
With bellying cloths on poles, and not one oar,

And fluttering coloured signs and clambering crews.

And he, in fear, this naked man alone,
His fallen hands forgetting all their shells,
His lips gone pale, knelt low behind a stone,
And stared, and saw, and did not understand,
Columbus's doom-burdened caravels
Slant to the shore, and all their seamen land.

SONG

Eyes like flowers and falling hair
Seldom seen, nor ever long,
Then I did not know you were
Destined subject for a song:
Sharing your unconsciousness
Of your double loveliness,
Unaware how fair you were,
Peaceful eyes and shadowy hair.

Only, now your beauty falls
Sweetly on some other place,
Lonely reverie recalls
More than anything your face;
Any idle hour may find
Stealing on my captured mind,
Faintly merging from the air,
Eyes like flowers and falling hair.

A GENERATION (1917)

There was a time that's gone
And will not come again,
We knew it was a pleasant time,
How good we never dreamed.

When, for a whimsy's sake,
We'd even play with pain,
For everything awaited us
And life immortal seemed.

It seemed unending then
To forward-looking eyes,
No thought of what postponement meant
Hung dark across our mirth;

We had years and strength enough
For any enterprise,
Our numerous companionship
Were heirs to all the earth.

But now all memory
Is one ironic truth,
We look like strangers at the boys
We were so long ago;

For half of us are dead,
And half have lost their youth,
And our hearts are scarred by many griefs,
That only age should know.

UNDER

In this house, she said, in this high second storey,
In this room where we sit, above the midnight street,
There runs a rivulet, narrow but very rapid,
Under the still floor and your unconscious feet.

The lamp on the table made a cone of light
That spread to the base of the walls: above was in gloom.
I heard her words with surprise; had I worked here so long,
And never divined that secret of the room?

"But how," I asked, "does the water climb so high?"
"I do not know," she said, "but the thing is there;
Pull up the boards while I go and fetch you a rod."
She passed, and I heard her creaking descend the stair.

And I rose and rolled the Turkey carpet back
From the two broad boards by the north wall she had named,
And, hearing already the crumple of water, I knelt
And lifted the first of them up; and the water gleamed,

Bordered with little frosted heaps of ice,
And, as she came back with a rod and line that swung,
I moved the other board; in the yellow light
The water trickled frostily, slackly along.

I took the tackle, a stiff black rubber worm,
That stuck out its pointed tail from a cumbrous hook,
"But there can't be fishing in water like this," I said.
And she, with weariness, "There is no ice there. Look."

And I stood there, gazing down at a stream in spate,
Holding the rod in my undecided hand...
Till it all in a moment grew smooth and still and clear,
And along its deep bottom of slaty grey sand

Three scattered little trout, as black as tadpoles,
Came wagging slowly along the glass-dark lake,
And I swung my arm to drop my pointing worm in,
And then I stopped again with a little shake.

For I heard the thin gnat-like voices of the trout
—My body felt woolly and sick and astray and cold—
Crying with mockery in them: "You are not allowed
To take us, you know, under ten years old."

And the room swam, the calm woman and the yellow lamp,
The table, and the dim-glistening walls, and the floor,
And the stream sank away, and all whirled dizzily,
And I moaned, and the pain at my heart grew more and more.

And I fainted away, utterly miserable.
Falling in a place where there was nothing to pass,
Knowing all sorrows and the mothers and sisters of sorrows,
And the pain of the darkness before anything ever was.

RIVERS

Rivers I have seen which were beautiful,
Slow rivers winding in the flat fens,
With bands of reeds like thronged green swords
Guarding the mirrored sky;
And streams down-tumbling from the chalk hills
To valleys of meadows and watercress-beds,
And bridges whereunder, dark weed-coloured shadows,
Trout flit or lie.

I know those rivers that peacefully glide
Past old towers and shaven gardens,
Where mottled walls rise from the water
 And mills all streaked with flour;
And rivers with wharves and rusty shipping,
That flow with a stately tidal motion
Towards their destined estuaries
 Full of the pride of power;

Noble great rivers, Thames and Severn,
Tweed with his gateway of many grey arches,
Clyde, dying at sunset westward
 In a sea as red as blood;
Rhine and his hills in close procession,
Placid Elbe, Seine slaty and swirling,
And Isar, son of the Alpine snows,
 A furious turquoise flood.

All these I have known, and with slow eyes
I have walked on their shores and watched them,
And softened to their beauty and loved them
 Wherever my feet have been;
And a hundred others also
Whose names long since grew into me,
That, dreaming in light or darkness,
 I have seen, though I have not seen.

Those rivers of thought: cold Ebro,
And blue racing Guadiana,
Passing white houses, high-balconied,
 That ache in a sun-baked land,
Congo, and Nile and Colorado,
Niger, Indus, Zambesi,
And the Yellow River, and the Oxus,
 And the river that dies in sand.

What splendours are theirs, what continents,
What tribes of men, what basking plains,
Forests and lion-hided deserts,
 Marshes, ravines and falls:
All hues and shapes and tempers
Wandering they take as they wander
From those far springs that endlessly
 The far sea calls.

O in reverie I know the Volga
That turns his back upon Europe,
And the two great cities on his banks,
 Novgorod and Astrakhan;
Where the world is a few soft colours,
And under the dove-like evening
The boatmen chant ancient songs,
 The tenderest known to man.

And the holy river Ganges,
His fretted cities veiled in moonlight,
Arches and buttresses silver-shadowy
 In the high moon,
And palms grouped in the moonlight
And fanes girdled with cypresses,
Their domes of marble softly shining
 To the high silver moon.

And that aged Brahmapootra
Who beyond the white Himalayas
Passes many a lamassery
 On rocks forlorn and frore,
A block of gaunt grey stone walls
With rows of little barred windows,
Where shrivelled young monks in yellow silk
 Are hidden for evermore....

But O that great river, the Amazon,
I have sailed up its gulf with eyelids closed,
And the yellow waters tumbled round,
 And all was rimmed with sky,

Till the banks drew in, and the trees' heads,
And the lines of green grew higher
And I breathed deep, and there above me
The forest wall stood high.

Those forest walls of the Amazon
Are level under the blazing blue
And yield no sound save the whistles and shrieks
Of the swarming bright macaws;
And under their lowest drooping boughs
Mud-banks torpidly bubble,
And the water drifts, and logs in the water
Drift and twist and pause.

And everywhere, tacitly joining,
Float noiseless tributaries,
Tall avenues paved with water:
And as I silent fly
The vegetation like a painted scene,
Spars and spikes and monstrous fans
And ferns from hairy sheaths up-springing,
Evenly passes by.

And stealthier stagnant channels
Under low niches of drooping leaves
Coil into deep recesses:
And there have I entered, there
To heavy, hot, dense, dim places
Where creepers climb and sweat and climb,
And the drip and splash of oozing water
Loads the stifling air.

Rotting scrofulous steaming trunks,
Great horned emerald beetles crawling,
Ants and huge slow butterflies
That had strayed and lost the sun;
Ah, sick I have swooned as the air thickened
To a pallid brown ecliptic glow,
And on the forest, fallen with languor,
Thunder has begun.

Thunder in the dun dusk, thunder
Rolling and battering and cracking,
The caverns shudder with a terrible glare
Again and again and again,
Till the land bows in the darkness,
Utterly lost and defenceless,
Smitten and blinded and overwhelmed
By the crashing rods of rain.

And then in the forests of the Amazon,
When the rain has ended, and silence come,
What dark luxuriance unfolds
From behind the night's drawn bars:
The wreathing odours of a thousand trees
And the flowers' faint gleaming presences,
And over the clearings and the still waters
Soft indigo and hanging stars.

* * * * *

O many and many are rivers,
And beautiful are all rivers,
And lovely is water everywhere
That leaps or glides or stays;
Yet by starlight, moonlight, or sunlight,
Long, long though they look, these wandering eyes,
Even on the fairest waters of dream,
Never untroubled gaze.

For whatever stream I stand by,
And whatever river I dream of,
There is something still in the back of my mind
From very far away;
There is something I saw and see not,
A country full of rivers

That stirs in my heart and speaks to me
More sure, more dear than they.

And always I ask and wonder
(Though often I do not know it):
Why does this water not smell like water?
Where is the moss that grew
Wet and dry on the slabs of granite
And the round stones in clear brown water?
—And a pale film rises before them
Of the rivers that first I knew.

Though famous are the rivers of the great world,
Though my heart from those alien waters drinks
Delight however pure from their loveliness,
And awe however deep,
Would I wish for a moment the miracle
That those waters should come to Chagford,
Or gather and swell in Tavy Cleave
Where the stones cling to the steep?

No, even were they Ganges and Amazon
In all their great might and majesty,
League upon league of wonders,
I would lose them all, and more,
For a light chiming of small bells,
A twisting flash in the granite,
The tiny thread of a pixie waterfall
That lives by Vixen Tor.

Those rivers in that lost country,
They were brown as a clear brown bead is,
Or red with the earth that rain washed down,
Or white with china-clay;
And some tossed foaming over boulders,
And some curved mild and tranquil,
In wooded vales securely set
Under the fond warm day.

Okement and Erme and Avon,
Exe and his ruffled shallows,
I could cry as I think of those rivers
That knew my morning dreams;
The weir by Tavistock at evening
When the circling woods were purple,
And the Lowman in spring with the lent-lilies,
And the little moorland streams.

For many a hillside streamlet
There falls with a broken tinkle,
Falling and dying, falling and dying.
In little cascades and pools,
Where the world is furze and heather
And flashing plovers and fixed larks,
And an empty sky, whitish blue,
That small world rules.

There, there, where the high waste bog-lands
And the drooping slopes and the spreading valleys,
The orchards and the cattle-sprinkled pastures
Those travelling musics fill,
There is my lost Abana,
And there is my nameless Pharphar
That mixed with my heart when I was a boy,
And time stood still.

And I say I will go there and die there:
But I do not go there, and sometimes
I think that the train could not carry me there,
And it's possible, maybe,
That it's farther than Asia or Africa,
Or any voyager's harbour,
Farther, farther, beyond recall....
O even in memory!

I SHALL MAKE BEAUTY

I shall make beauty out of many things:
Lights, colours, motions, sky and earth and sea,
The soft unbosoming of all the springs
Which that inscrutable hand allows to me,
Odours of flowers, sounds of smitten strings,
The voice of many a wind in many a tree,
Fields, rivers, moors, swift feet and floating wings,
Rocks, caves, and hills that stand and clouds that flee.

Men also and women, beautiful and dear,
Shall come and pass and leave a fragrant breath;
And my own heart, laughter and pain and fear,
The majesties of evil and of death;
But never, never shall my verses trace
The loveliness of your most lovely face.

ENVOI

Beloved, when my heart's awake to God
And all the world becomes His testimony,
In you I most do see, in your brave spirit,
Erect and certain, flashing deeds of light,
A pure jet from the fountain of all being,
A scripture clearer than all else to read.

And when belief was dead and God a myth,
And the world seemed a wandering mote of evil,
Endurable only by its impermanence,
And all the planets perishable urns
Of perished ashes, to you alone I clung
Amid the unspeakable loneliness of the universe.

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