

## **The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Five Books of Youth, by Robert Hillyer**

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THE FIVE BOOKS OF YOUTH

BY ROBERT HILLYER

AUTHOR OF "SONNETS AND OTHER LYRICS"

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## **BOOK I A MISCELLANY**

### **I - LA MARE DES FEES**

The leaves rain down upon the forest pond,  
An elfin tarn green-shadowed in the fern;  
Nine yews ensomber the wet bank, beyond  
The autumn branches of the beeches burn  
With yellow flame and red amid the green,  
And patches of the darkening sky between.

This is an ancient country; in this wood  
The Druids raised their sacrificial stones;  
Here the vast timeless silences still brood  
Though the cold wind's October monotones  
Fan the enchanted senses with the dread  
Of holiness long-past and beauty dead.

How far beyond this glade the day-world turns  
Upon its pivot of reward and chance;  
Farther than the first star that palely burns  
Over the forest's meditative trance.  
First star of evening, last star of day,  
The one grows clear, the other dies away.

Will they come back who once beneath these trees  
Invoked their long-forgotten gods with tears,  
Who heard the sob of the same twilight breeze  
Blow down the vistas of remembered years,  
Beside the tarn's black waters where they stood  
Close to their god, far from the multitude?

I watch, but they are long ago departed,

Far as the world of day, or as the star;  
The forest loved her priests, and tranquil-hearted  
They stole away in dim procession, far  
Down the unechoing aisles, beyond recalling;  
The moss grows on the stones, the leaves are falling.

In vain I listen for their hissing speech,  
And seek white holy hands upon the air,  
They told their worship to the yew and beech,  
And left them with the secret, trembling there,  
Nor shall they come at midnight nor at dawn;  
The gods are dead; the votaries are gone.

A form floats toward me down the corridor  
Of mighty trees, half-visions through the haze,  
And stands beside me on that empty shore;  
So rest we there, and wonderingly gaze.  
By the dead water, under the deep boughs,  
My Love and I renew our ancient vows.

**MORET-SUR-LOING, 1918**

## **II - PROTHALAMION**

The faded turquoise of the sky  
Darkens into ocean green  
Flecked palely where the stars will rise.  
A single bough between  
The spacious colour and your half-closed eyes  
Hangs out its hazy trceries.  
Still, like a drowsy god you lie,  
My fair unbidden guest,  
Your white hands crossed beneath your head,  
Your lips curved strangely mute with peace,  
Your hair moved lightly by the breeze.  
A glow is shed  
Warm on your face from the last rays that push  
From the dying sun into the green vault of the west.

This is your bridal night; the golden bush  
Is heavy with the fruits that you will taste,  
Full ripened in desire.  
You who have hoarded youth, this is your hour of waste,  
Your hour of squandering and drunkenness,  
Of wine-dashed lips and generous caress,  
Of brows thorn-crowned and bodies crucified,—  
O bid me to the feast.

Tomorrow when the hills are washed with fire,  
Your door ajar against the flashing East,—  
O fling it wide.

**PARIS, 1919**

## **III - MONTMARTRE**

A rocky hill above the town,  
Grey as the soul of silence,  
Except where two white strutting domes  
Stand aloof and frown  
On the huddled homes  
Of world-wept love and pain,—  
They do not heed that tall disdain,  
But sleep, grey, under the stars and the rain.

A woman, young, but old in love,  
Carried her child across the square;  
Her face was a dim drifting flame  
To which her pyre of hair  
Was a column of golden smoke.

Her eyes half told the secrets of  
Gay sins that no regret defiled;  
There her heart broke  
In the little question between her eyes.  
Hearing the trees in the square she smiled,  
And sang to the child.

So passed by in the narrow street  
That climbs the steep rock over the town,  
Love and the west wind in the stars;  
The wind and the sound of those lagging feet

Died like forgotten tears.  
I waited till the stars went down,  
And I wrote these lines on a cloud to greet  
The dawn on the crystal stairs.

**PARIS, 1919**

#### **IV - A LETTER**

Dear boy, what can this stranger mean to you,  
Blown to your country by unbridled chance?  
That he should drink the morn's first cup of dew  
Fresh from the spring, and quicken that grave glance  
Wherein as rising tides on hazy shores  
Rise the new flames and colours of romance?

Ah, wise and young, the world shall use your youth  
And fling you shorn of beauty to despair,  
The sum of all that fascinating truth  
That you have gleaned, hands tangled in brown hair,  
Eyes straining into contemplative fires,—  
This truth shall not seem truth when trees are bare.

The hunger of the soul, the watcher left  
To brood the nearness of his own decay,  
Dully remarking the slow shameless theft  
Of the old holiness from day to day,  
How youth grows tarnished, wisdom changes false,—  
Till one bends near to steal your life away.

Yet who am I to turn aside the hand  
Outstretched so friendly and so humbly proud,  
Heaped up with beauty from the sunrise land  
Of hearts adventurous and heads unbowed?  
Only, look not at me with changing eyes  
When we must separate amid the crowd.

**TOURS, 1918**

#### **V - ESTHER DANCING**

Speak not nor stir. Here music is alive,  
Woven from those swift fingers, strong and light,  
Marching across those singing hands, or shed  
Slowly, like echoes down the muffled night,  
Or beautifully translated, note by note,  
Some fainter voice, rhapsodic and remote,  
Or shaken out in melodies that dive

Clear into fathoms of profounder things,  
Then suddenly again on rising wings,  
Burst into sun and hover overhead.

Incarnate music flashing into form  
Fled from the vineyards of melodious Greece,  
Feet that have flown before the gathering storm  
Or glanced in gardens of the Golden Fleece,  
Face atune to all the songs that mass  
Their gusts of passion on the sunlit grass,  
Image of lyric hope and veiled despair,  
Like them, thou shalt unutterably pass  
Into the silence and the shadowed air.

**POMFRET, 1919**

## **VI - HUNTERS**

A vase red-wrought in Athens long ago....  
The hunter and his gay companion ride  
Through the young fields of life; on every side  
Frail and fantastic the tall lilies grow.  
Her head thrown back, her eyes afraid and wide,  
Flies like a phantom the grey spectral doe,  
Her light feet scarcely bend the grass below,  
Gloriously flying into eventide.

Ahead there lies the shadow, then the dark,  
And safety in the thick forestial night,  
But nearer still she hears the bloodhounds bark,  
And horses panting in impetuous flight,  
And hunters without pity for the slain,  
Halloing shrilly over the windy plain.

Sombre become the skies, the winds of fall  
Sing dangerously through the hissing grass;  
Sunlight and clouds in slow procession pass  
Over the tress, then comes an interval  
Of utter calm, the air is a morass  
Of humid breathlessness. A dreadful call  
Rings suddenly from the onrushing squall,  
And the storm closes in a whirling mass.

And still the doe eludes the raging hounds,  
And still the youths press onward toward the woods,  
Though the world shudders with diluvian sounds  
And the rain streams in undulating floods.  
Sharp lightning splits the sky; the doe is gone.  
O follow! follow! if it be till dawn.

The hunted flees, the boyish hunters follow  
Into the forest's dripping everglades,  
The wind goes wailing through the swaying shades,  
And violent rain gushes in every hollow.  
The doe runs free, triumphantly evades  
Those straining eyes; the ghastly shadows swallow  
Her flying form; the frightened horses wallow  
Deep in the mire. Then the last daylight fades.

O Youths, turn back! the year is getting late,  
And autumn has no pity for the slain.  
Twining like serpents, the lean arms of fate  
Grope toward you through the blackness and the rain,  
Then Death, and the obliterating snow....  
A vase, red-wrought in Athens long ago.

Tours, 1918

### **VII - A WRECK**

Survivor of an unknown past,  
On this wild shore cast  
By the sad desolate tides;  
In a warm harbour long ago  
They waited you, and waited long,  
And guessed and feared at last,  
But could not know.

Now in a language strange the waves make song,  
And the flood surges round your broken sides,  
And the ebb leaves you to the burning sun.

But when the voyage of my life is done,  
And my soul puts forth no more,  
Then may I sleep  
Beneath the fathoms of the tideless deep,  
And not be cast deserted on some dark alien shore.

Cape Cod, 1916

### **VIII - GRAVE STONES IN A FRONT YARD**

Lest the swift world forget their names and pass  
Unthinking, they have set this cold dead slate  
Above their slumbers in the living grass  
To warn all comers of impending fate;

Where friends made merry once at their behest,  
Where young feet strolled about the shady lawn,  
They welcome none but one unfailing guest,  
And all the revellers but Death are gone.

Edgartown, 1916

### **IX - VIGIL**

This is the hour when all substantial foes  
Are exorcised and taunt the soul no more;  
Now thinner grows the veil between the shore  
Of vaster worlds and our calm garden close.  
Through the small exit of the open door  
We pass, and seem to feel the eyes of those  
We knew upon us; almost we suppose  
The advent of the face we tremble for.

O that through this profound serenity  
Might sound the answer to the heart's deep cry;  
If all those gracious presences might see  
That, though we hurt them once, they shall not die  
Until we also wither, we who keep  
Vigil on these sweet meadows where they sleep.

Pomfret, 1919

### **X - WHEN THE DOOR WAS OPEN**

Lonely as music from afar,  
Hung the new moon and one white star,  
Above the poplars black and tall  
That sentineled the garden wall;  
Four black poplars beyond the wall,  
Two on each side of the garden gate,

In silhouette against the wide  
Pale sky of the late eventide.  
Close was the garden and serene.  
The leaning reeds in quiet state  
About the pool, merged in the green  
Of misty leaves and hanging vines.  
The fireflies spun their silver lines  
Across the deeper atmosphere,  
And through the silence came the clear  
Persistent tuning of the frogs  
From dank recesses of the bogs.

Beyond the garden I could see  
The glimmer of uncertain meadows,  
Framed by the open doorway, wreathing  
Sarabands of ghostly shadows,  
Slowly turning, slowly breathing,  
Largely and unhastily,—  
But the garden held its breath.

Peace as profound as death, if death  
Be visited by stealthy dreams;  
A vagrant note from soundless themes  
That ring the comet-paths of space,  
Seemed vibrant in the windless air  
That trembled with its presence there.  
Out beyond the nameless place  
Where neither fields nor clouds exist,  
Grey from the background of the mist,  
I saw three vague forms drawing near.  
My sense recoiled acute with fear;  
I could not stir. As from a cage  
I watched that spectral dim cortege  
Moving inexorable and slow  
Against the ashen afterglow.  
Now caught the moon their robes in white,  
Now strode they sable through the night,  
Across the grass they came and grew  
Whiter, statelier, as they drew  
Beneath the shadow of the wall;  
Then one by one the three stepped through  
The garden door, and stood a while  
Beside the pool, their image spread  
Sombre, and menacing, and tall.  
Sombre as Priam's dreadful daughter,  
Menacing as a murderer's smile,  
Tall as the fingers of the dead,  
Stood they beside the quiet water.

The moon went out in a golden blur,  
And the small stars followed after her,  
But when the fireflies cleft the air  
I saw those three forms standing there,  
Until the night cooled, and the trees  
Shook in the strong hands of the breeze,  
And then I heard their footsteps press  
The muffled grass beyond the door,  
And so went forth for ever more,  
My three Fates to the wilderness.

Pomfret, 1919

## **XI - THE MAKER RESTS**

I have worked too long and my hands are tired,



Said the maker;  
From the earliest dawn unto deepest nightfall  
Have I laboured.

From the earliest dawn before any spirit  
Stirred from sleeping,  
When no single note from the frozen forest  
Wakened music,

Unto nightfall and the new moon rising  
When the silence  
From the valleys rose in a faint blue spiral,  
Have I laboured.

I created dawn and the new moon rising  
Out of silence;  
I have worked too long and my hands are tired,  
Said the maker.

I shall fold my hands; I shall rest till sunrise,  
Said the maker;  
In the shade of hills and the calm of starlight  
Shall I slumber.

O my night is sweet with a distant music!  
I shall hear  
The responding waves and the wind's slight murmur  
While I slumber.

O my night is fair with amazing colour!  
I shall dream  
Of the blue-white stars and the glimmering forest  
While I slumber.

O my night is rich with unfolding flowers!  
I shall breathe  
All the scattered smells of the field and garden  
While I slumber...

I will rise, O Night, I will make new beauty,  
Said the maker,  
I will make more songs, more stars, more flowers,  
Said the Lord.

Cambridge, 1920

## **XII - THE PILGRIMAGE**

Beside a deep and mossy well  
In the dark starless night I lay;  
And dropping water like a bell,  
Like a bell ringing far away,  
Struck liquid notes in monotone,—  
An echo of a distant bell  
Tolling the knell of yesterday.  
Deep down beneath the mossy ground  
The liquid notes in monotone  
Kept dropping, dropping endlessly,  
And as I listened, over me  
Crept like a mist a filmy spell;  
My spirit's waving wings were bound,  
And dreams came that were not my own.  
Half-sleeping, half-awake, I heard  
The drowsy chirp of a forest bird,  
And the wind came up and the grasses stirred  
And the curtaining woods that cluster round

That resonantly-echoing well  
Shook all their leaves with silver sound  
Like voices murmuring in a shell.  
Was it the past that lived again  
In that nocturnal murmuring,  
Waking a hidden voice to sing  
Deep in my heart of other times  
Whose memory long entombed had lain  
Covered with all the dust of the years?...  
Falling in splashing tears  
The wet notes drop in liquid chimes,  
And the white fingers of the breeze  
Gather a song from the melodious trees....

There is a hand whiter than pearl  
That plucks a lute's monotonous strings;  
O starlight phantom of a girl  
What lyric soul around thee sings,  
And what divine companionship  
Taught that entwining music to thy fingers,  
And that unearthly music to thy lips?  
She pauses, and the echo lingers  
Hovering like wings upon the air.  
I see more clearly now, her hair  
Ripples like a black water-fall  
About the pallor of her face.  
She sits beside a mossy well  
Amid some dim marmoreal place,  
Some fragrant Moorish hall  
Set all about with arabesques of stone  
And intricate mosaics of gem and shell.  
She sings again, she plays a monotone,  
Perpetual rhythm like a far-off bell,  
And someone dances, in a dancing river  
The white ecstatic limbs flutter and quiver  
Against the shadow. In the odorous flowers  
That grow about the well, still forms are lying,  
A group of statues, an eternal throng,  
Watching the dance and listening to the song;  
So shall they lie, innumerable hours,  
Silent and motionless for ever.  
The wind comes up, the flowers shiver,  
The dancer vanishes, the songs are dying;  
Night sickens into day.  
The wind comes up and blows the dust away....

Between two clouds a sullen flame  
Expands, and lo, the crescent moon  
Rides like a warrior through the sky.  
Thus long ago the warning came  
When midnight towns lay all in swoon,  
That the great gods were coming nigh  
To crush the rebellious earth.  
Now beneath the crescent moon  
No spirits stir, no wind makes mirth,  
Only a rhythmic monotone  
Of waters dropping in a well....

But who is this so broken with distress  
That steals like mist into my loneliness?  
Why art thou weeping there, disconsolate child?  
Thy tears fall like the waters of a well,  
And drip in silver notes upon the sands.  
What is thy sorrow? Ah, what man can tell  
The shapeless fancies that unwelcome dwell

Within thy brain, the spectres, dark and wild  
That haunt the spirit of a child?  
Mayhap thou weepest for the embattled lands,  
The bloody ruin of decaying realms  
That a war overwhelms  
And buries deep in the dust of history?  
He raises his wet eyes and looks at me,  
His boyish face full of a yearning,  
An ancient pain,  
As of a ghost long dead who yearns to live again,  
And answers, "In myself, thy thoughts returning  
To other times shall slumber in the past,  
And be a child again, and die at last  
In the protecting arms of our great Mother  
Who bore us both, O well-beloved brother.  
Thou in thy sorry dreams, I in my childish grief,  
Thy heart in tears, mine eyes amazed with tears,  
Thy sorrow rich with the repining years,  
My sorrow frail as childhood, and as brief."  
Who art thou, haunting boy, nocturnal elf?  
"I am the Dead; the Dead that was thyself."  
Then falls a darkness on that starless shore.  
Afar I hear the closing of a door....

I see on a sharp hill above the Styx,  
The bruised Christ upon his crucifix,  
And racked in anguish on his either side  
Hang Buddha and Mohammed crucified.  
Their heavy blood falls in a monotone  
Like deep well-water dropping on a stone.  
None moves, none breaks the silence; on those roods  
Eternal suffering triumphant broods.  
Prometheus from his cliff of wild unrest  
Mocks them and draws the vulture to his breast.  
Each year upon a darker Calvary  
Are hung the pallid victims of the tree,  
And none will watch with them, for none can see  
As I once saw, unending agony,  
Save where Prometheus from his dizzy place  
Regards those sufferers with scornful face,  
And his loud laughter rings through empty Space....

I can see nothing now, and only hear  
Through the thick atmosphere  
A deep perpetual well, that sad and slow,  
Intones the knell of ages long ago,  
And ages that no man can tell or know,  
Whose shadows roll before them on the sky,  
Black with forebodings of futurity.

Sweet sounds through midnight, liquid interlude,  
Voice of the lonely souls that yearn and brood,  
Voice of the unseen Life, the unsubdued,  
What wonder that He draweth nigh to taste  
Of your cool waters. Hail thou nameless One,  
Fair stranger from a realm beyond the Sun,  
Knowing that thou art God I do not fear,—  
Speak to me, raise me from my life's long dream.

"The whole night through thou liest here  
Beside the well that waters Lethe's stream,  
And still thou dost not drink; O Man make haste;  
Ere long the dawn will pour adown the waste,  
And show thee, reft from the embrace of night,  
The barren world, barren of revelry.  
Happy art thou, O Man, happily free,

Who wilt never see  
A thousand ages shed their life and light  
As petals fall at eventide.  
Thou shalt not see the radiant stars subside  
Into the frozen ocean of the Vast,  
Nor see thy world absorbed at last  
Into a nothingness, an airless void,  
Nor see the thoughts that Man has glorified  
Swept from the world, and with the world destroyed.  
This have I seen a thousand times repeated,  
Unhappy as I am, unhappy God!  
As many times as thou hast greeted  
The rising sun against the broad  
And tranquil clouds, so many times have I  
Greeted the dawn of a new Universe,  
And seen the molten stars rehearse  
The lives and passions of the stars gone by.  
When worlds are growing old, and there draw nigh  
The shadows that shall cover them for ever,  
(Shadows like these which doom your ancient sky)  
Then to the well that feeds the sacred river  
I come, and as the liquid music drips  
Far in the ground, I plunge my lips  
Deep in forgetfulness, and wash away  
All the stains of the old griefs and joys,  
That with His lips as smiling as a boy's,  
God may rejoice in His created day."  
He stoops and drinks; a moment the cool bell  
Pauses its ringing in the well:  
A mist flies up against the dawn; the young winds weep;  
Is it too late? I too would drink, drink deep,  
But weariness is on me and I sleep.

Cambridge, 1915

### **XIII - EPILOGUE**

Dawn has come.  
Faint hazes quiver with the faltering light;  
Some airy skein draws in the shadows from  
The broken forest where the war has passed,  
The Forest Terrible, the grey despair,  
The forest broken in the withering blight  
Of the lean years,—the blight, the years, have passed,  
Leaving a solitary watcher there,  
Silence at last.

She watches by the dead,  
Her deep white shadow overspreads their faces.  
Here in the outland places,  
She watches by the dead.

How many dawns have driven her afar  
With the loosed thunder of tempestuous wrong!  
Today she will remain.

Silence familiar to the morning star,  
Standing, her finger to her lips,  
Hushing the battle-cry, the victor's song,  
Standing inviolate above the slain.

The fugitive sunlight slips  
Over the fragment of a cloud,  
And the sky opens wide,  
Behold the dawn!

Where is the nightmare now? the angry-browed?  
The lowering imminence—the bloody eyed?  
Fled, as the threat of midnight, fled away,  
Gone, after four dark timeless ages, gone.  
Hail the day!

Silence, robed in the morning's golden fleece,  
Folding the world's torn wings to stillness, giving  
Peace to the dead, and to the living,  
Peace.

Tours, 1918

#### **XIV - THERMOPYLAE**

Men lied to them and so they went to die.  
Some fell, unknowing that they were deceived,  
And some escaped, and bitterly bereaved,  
Beheld the truth they loved shrink to a lie.  
And those there were that never had believed,  
But from afar had read the gathering sky,  
And darkly wrapt in that dread prophecy,  
Died trusting that their truth might be retrieved.

It matters not. For life deals thus with Man;  
To die alone deceived or with the mass,  
Or disillusioned to complete his span.  
Thermopylae or Golgotha, all one,  
The young dead legions in the narrow pass;  
The stark black cross against the setting sun.

Pomfret, 1919

## **BOOK II DAYS AND SEASONS**

### **I**

Winds blowing over the white-capped bay,  
Winds wet with the eager breath of spray,  
Warm and sweet from the oceans we have dreamed of;  
From gardens of Cathay.

The empty factory windows, row on row,  
Warm sullenly beneath the afterglow,  
Burn topaz out of dust and dim the flare  
Of the street-lamps below.

In the smoky park the dingy plane-trees stir,  
Green branches in the twilight fade and blur;  
A lonely girl walks slowly through the square  
And the wind speaks to her.

Speaks of the sunset scattered on the sea,  
And the spring blowing northward radiantly;  
Flaming in lightning from cyclonic dark,  
Dreams of delights to be.

Tomorrow there will be orchards filled with fruit,  
And song of meadow lark and song of flute;  
Far from the city there are lover's fields,  
Lips eloquent and mute.

Warm are the winds out of the ebbing day,  
Blowing the ships and the spring into the bay,  
I smell the cherry blossoms falling gaily  
    In gardens of Cathay.

Paris, 1919

## II

Like children on a sunny shore  
The rhododendrons thrive  
Which never any spring before  
Have been so much alive.

Each metal bough benignly lit  
With yellow candle flames;  
The tree is holy, hallow it  
With sacramental names.

Paris, 1919

## III

Against my wall the summer weaves  
Profundities of dusky leaves,  
And many-petaled stars full-blown  
In constellated whiteness sown;  
I contemplate with lazy eyes  
My small estate in Paradise,  
And very comforting to me  
Is this familiarity.

Paris, 1919

## IV

Into the trembling air,  
Calm on the sunset mist,  
Sweetness of gardens where  
The yellow slave boy kissed  
The Sultan's daughter....

Shadow of tumbled hair  
Shadow of hanging vine  
Fountains of gold that twine  
In singing water.

A secret I have heard  
From the scarlet beak of the bird  
That sings at the close of day,  
Fills me with cold unrest  
Under the open doors of the fiery west.

"O heart of clay,  
O lips of dust,  
O blue-shadowed wisteria vine;  
Youth falls away  
As petals must  
Beneath the drooping leaves in the day's decline."

Paris, 1919

## V

In gardens when the sun is set,

The air is heavy with the wet  
Faint smell of leaves, and dark incense  
Of peach-blossom and violet.

There is no lurking foe to fear,  
Only the friendly ghosts are here  
Of lazy youth and dozing age,  
Who sat and mellowed year by year,

Until they merged with all the rest  
Beneath the overhanging west,  
And took their sleep with tranquil hearts  
Safe in our Mother's mighty breast.

If there be any sound, 'tis sweet,  
The hidden rush of eager feet  
Where robins flutter in the dust,  
Or perch upon the garden-seat,

And little voices that are known  
To those who contemplate alone  
The busy universe that moves  
In gardens rank and overgrown.

Here in the garden we are one,  
The golden dust, the setting sun,  
The languid leaves, the birds and I,—  
Small bubbles on oblivion.

Tours, 1918

## VI

Now the white dove has found her mate,  
And the rainbow breaks into stars;  
And the cattle lunge through the mossy gate  
As the old man lowers the bars.

Westerly wind with a rainy smell,  
Eaves that drip in the mud;  
And the pain of the tender miracle  
Stabbing the languid blood.

Over the long, wet meadow-land,  
Beyond the deep sunset,  
There is a hand that pressed your hand,  
And eyes that shall not forget.

Now the West is the door of wrath,  
Now 'tis a burnt-out coal;  
Petals fall on the orchard path;  
Darkness falls on the soul.

Washington, 1918

## VII

When voices sink in twilight silences,  
Like swimmers in a sea of quietude,  
And faint farewells re-echo from the hill;  
When the last thrush his sleepy vesper says,  
And the lost threnody of the whip-poor-will  
Gropes through the gathering shadows in the wood;

Then in the paths where dusk fades into grey,  
And sighing shapes stir that I never see,  
I follow still a quest of old despair

To find at last,—ah, but I cannot say,  
Except that I have known a face somewhere,  
And loved in times beyond all memory.

O soulless face! white flash in solitude,  
Forgotten phantom of a moonless night,  
Shall I kiss thy sad mouth once again, or wait  
Drowned beneath fathoms of a tideless mood  
Until the stars flee through the western gate  
Driven in shivering fear before the light?

Cambridge, 1916

### VIII

When noon is blazing on the town,  
The fields are loud with droning flies,  
The people pull their curtains down,  
And all the houses shut their eyes.

The palm leaf drops from your mother's hand  
And she dozes there in a darkened room,  
Outside there is silence on the land,  
And only poppies dare to bloom.

Open the door and steal away  
Through grain and briar shoulder high,  
There are secrets hid in the heart of day,  
In the hush and slumber of July.

Your face will burn a fiery red,  
Your feet will drag through dusty flame,  
Your brain turn molten in your head,  
And you will wish you never came.

O never mind, go on, go on,—  
There is a brook where willows lean;  
To weave deep caverns from the sun,

And there the grass grows cool and green.  
And there is one as cool as grass,  
Lying beneath the willow tree,  
Counting the dragon flies that pass,  
And talking to the humble bee.

She has not stirred since morning came,  
She does not know how in the town  
The earth shakes dizzily with flame,  
And all the curtains are drawn down.

Sit down beside her; she can tell  
The strangest secrets you would hear,  
And cool as water in a well,  
Her words flow down upon your ear....

She speaks no more, but in your hair  
Her fingers soft as lullabies  
Fold up your senses unaware,  
Into a poppy paradise.

And when you wake, the evening mist  
Is rising up to float the hill,  
And you will say, "The mouth I kissed,  
The voice I heard...a dream...but still

"The grass is matted where she lay,  
I feel her fingers in my hair"...



But your lamp is bright across the way,  
And your mother knits in the rocking chair.

Paris, 1919

## IX

The trees have never seemed so green  
Since I remember,  
As in these groves and gardens of September,  
And yet already comes the chill  
That bodes the world's last garden ill,  
And in the shadow I have seen  
A spectre,—even thine,  
O Vandal, O November.

The wind leaps up with sudden screams  
In gusts of chaff.  
Two boys with blowing hair listen and laugh.  
We hear the same wind, they and I,  
Under the dark autumnal sky;  
It blows strange music through their dreams.  
Keenly it blows through mine,  
Singing their epitaph.

Tours, 1918

## X

The green canal is mottled with falling leaves,  
Yellow leaves, fluttering silently;  
A whirling gust ripples the woods, and heaves  
The stricken branches with a sigh,  
Then all is still again.  
Unmoving, the green waterway receives  
Ghosts of the dying forest to its breast;  
Loneliness...quiet...not a wing has stirred  
In the cold glades; no fish has leaped away  
From the heavy waters; not a drop of rain  
Distils from the pervading mist.  
Sluggishly out of the west  
A grey canal-boat glides, half-seen, unheard;  
The sweating horses on the towpath sway  
Backward and forward in a rhythmic strain;  
It passes by, a dream within a dream,  
Down the dark corridor of leaning boughs,  
Down the long waterways of endless fall.  
A shiver stirs the woods; a fitful gleam  
Of sun gilds the sky's overhanging brows;  
Then shadowy silence, and the yellow stream  
Of dead leaves dropping to the green canal.

Moret-sur-Loing, 1918

## XI

They who have gone down the hill are far away;  
From the still valleys I can hear them call;  
Their distant laughter faintly floats  
Through the unmoving air and back to me.  
I am alone with the declining day  
And the declining forest where the notes  
Of all the happy minstrelsy,  
Birds and leaf-music and the rest,

Sink separately in the hush of fall.  
The sun and clouds conflicting in the west  
Swirl into smoky light together and fade  
Under the unbroken shadow;  
Under the shadowed peace that is the night;  
Under the night's great quietude of shade.  
The sheep below me in the meadow  
Seem drifting on the haze, serene and white,  
Pale pastured dreams, unearthly herds that roam  
Where the dead reign and phantoms make their home.  
They also pass, even as the clear ring  
Of the sad Angelus through the vales echoing.

Montigny, 1918

## XII

Where two roads meet amid the wood,  
There stands a white sepulchral rood,  
Beneath whose shadow, wayfarers  
Would pause to offer up their prayers.  
There is no house for miles around,  
No sound of beast, no human sound,  
Only the trees like sombre dreams  
From whose bare boughs the water drips;  
And the pale memory of death.  
The haze hangs heavy without breath,  
It hangs so heavy that it seems  
To hold a silent finger to its lips.

In after years the spectral cross  
Will be quite overgrown with moss,  
And wayfarers will go their way  
Nor stop to meditate and pray.  
The spring will nest in all the trees  
Unblighted by the memories  
Of autumn and the god of pain.  
The leaves will whisper in the sun,  
Life will crown death with snowy flowers,  
Long hence...but now the autumn lowers,  
The sky breaks into gusts of rain,  
Turn thee to sleep, the day is nearly done.

Forest of Fontainebleau, 1918

## XIII

The boy is late tonight binding his sheaves,  
The twilight of these autumn eyes  
Falls early now and chill.  
The murky sun has set  
An hour ago behind the overhanging hill.  
Great piles of fallen leaves  
Smoulder in every street  
And through the columned smoke a scarlet jet  
Of flame darts out and disappears.

The boy leans motionless upon his staff,  
With all the sorrows of his fifteen years  
Gazing out of his eyes into the fall,  
A memory ineffable and sweet  
Half tinged with voiceless passion, half  
Plaintive with sad imaginings that drift  
Like echoes of far-off autumnal bells.  
He starts up with a laugh,

Binds up the last gaunt sheaf and turns away;  
Out of the dusk an inarticulate call  
Rings keen across the solemn Berkshire woods,  
And then the answer. Impotent farewells  
That eager voices lift  
Into the hush of the receding day;  
Full soon the silence surges in again,  
Peaceful, inevitable, deep as death.

The boy has lingered late in the grey fields,  
Knowing the first strange happiness of pain,  
And the low voices of October moods.  
Now comes the night, the meadow yields  
Unto the sky a damp and pungent breath;  
The quiet air of the New England town  
Seems confident that everyone is home  
Safe by his fire.  
The frosty stars look down  
Near, near above the kind familiar trees  
In whose dry branches roam  
The gentle spirits of the darkling breeze.  
Deep in its caverned heart the forest sings  
Of mysteries unknown and vanished lore;  
Old wisdom; dead desire;  
Dreams of the past, of immemorial springs....  
The wind is rising cold from the river: close the door.

Tours, 1918

#### XIV

O lovely shepherd Corydon, how far  
Thou wanderest from thine Ionian hills;  
Now the first star  
Rains pallid tears where the lost lands are,  
And the red sunset fills  
The cleft horizon with a flaming wine.

The grave significance of falling leaves  
Soon shall make desolate thy singing heart,  
When the cold wind grieves,  
And the cold dews rot the standing sheaves,—  
Return, O Thou that art  
The hope of spring in these lost lands of mine.

Chalons-sur-Marne, 1917

#### XV

O little shepherd boy, what sobs are those  
That shake your slender shoulders, what despair  
Has run her fingers through your rumpled hair,  
And laid you prone beneath a weight of woes?  
The trees upon the hill will soon be bare,  
A yellow blight is on the garden close,  
But you, you need not mourn the vanished rose,  
For many springs will find you just as fair.

Weep not for summer, she is past all weeping,  
Fear not the winter, she in turn will pass,  
And with the spring love waits for you, perchance,  
When, with the morn, faint wings stir from their sleeping,  
And the first petals scatter on the grass,  
Under the orchards and the vines of France.

**XVI**

The dull-eyed girl in bronze implores Apollo  
To warm these dying satyrs and to raise  
Their withered wreaths that rot in every hollow  
Or smoulder redly in the pungent haze.  
The shining reapers, gone these many days,  
Have left their fields disconsolate and sear,  
Like bony sand uncovered to the gaze,  
In this, the ebb-tide of the year.

My wisest comrade turns into a swallow  
And flashes southward as the thickets blaze  
In awful splendour; I, who cannot follow,  
Confront the skies' unmitigated greys.  
The cynic faun whom I have known betrays  
A dangerous mood at night, and seems austere  
Beneath the autumn noon's distempered rays,  
In this, the ebb-tide of the year.

Ice quenches all reflection in the shallow  
Lagoon whose trampled margin still displays  
Upheaval where the centaurs used to wallow;  
And where my favourite unicorns would graze,  
A few wild ducks scream lamentable lays  
Of shrill derision desperate with fear,  
Bleak note on note, phrase on discordant phrase,  
In this, the ebb-tide of the year.

Poor girl, how soon our garden world decays,  
Our metals tarnish, our loves disappear;  
Dull-eyed we haunt these unfrequented ways,  
In this, the ebb-tide of the year.

Cambridge, 1920

**XVII**

The winter night is hard as glass;  
The frozen stars hang stilly down;  
I sit inside while people pass  
From the dead-hearted town.

The tavern hearth is deep and wide,  
The flames caress my glowing skin;  
The icicles hang cold outside,  
But I sit warm within.

The faces pass in blurring white  
Outside the frosted window, lifting  
Eyes against my cheerful night,  
From their night of dreadful drifting.

Sharp breaths blow fast in a smoky gale,  
Rags wander through the dull lamp light;  
O my veins run gold with Christmas ale,  
And the tavern fire is bright.

The midnight sky is clear as glass,  
The stars hang frozen on the town,  
I watch the dying people pass,  
And I wrap me warm in my gown.

Brussels, 1919

## XVIII

Chords, tremendous chords,  
Over the stricken plain,  
The night is calling her ancient lords  
Back to their own again.

Vast, unhappy song,  
From incalculable space,  
Calling the heavy-browed, the strong,  
Out of their resting-place.

Far from the lighted town,  
Over the snow and ice,  
Their dreadful feet go up and down  
Seeking a sacrifice.

And can you find a way  
Where They will not come after?  
The vast chords hesitate and sway  
Into a sudden laughter.

Sheffield, 1917

## XIX

I have known the lure of cities and the bright gleam of golden things, Spires, towers, bridges, rivers,  
and the crowd that flows as a river, Lights in the midnight streets under the rain, and the stings Of joys  
that make the spirit reel and shiver.

But I see bleak moors and marshes and sparse grasses,  
And frozen stalks against the snow;  
Dead forests, ragged pines and dark morasses  
Under the shadows of the mountains where no men go.  
The crags untenanted and spacious cry aloud as clear  
As the drear cry of a lost eagle over uncharted lands,  
No thought that man has ever framed in words is spoken here,  
And the language of the wind, no man understands.

Only the sifting wind through the grasses, and the hissing sleet,  
And the shadow of the changeless rocks over the frozen wold,  
Only the cold,  
And the fierce night striding down with silent feet.

Chambery, 1918

## XX

We wove a fillet for thy head,  
And from a flaming lyre  
Struck a song that shall not die  
Until the echoing stars be dead,  
Until the world's last word be said,  
Until on tattered wings we fly  
Upward and expire.

And calm with night thou watchest till  
Long after we are gone,  
Not knowing how we worshipped thee;  
Serene, unfathomably still,  
Gazing to the western hill  
Where pales the moon's hushed mystery,  
White in the white dawn.

Cambridge, 1915

# BOOK III EROS

## I

Now the sick earth revives, and in the sun  
The wet soil gives a fragrance to the air;  
The days of many colours are begun,  
And early promises of meadows fair  
With starry petals, and of trees now bare  
Soon to be lyric with the trilling choir,  
And lovely with new leaves, spread everywhere  
A subtle flame that sets the heart on fire  
With thoughts of other springs and dreams of new desire.

The mind will never dwell within the present,  
It weeps for vanished years or hopes for new;  
This morn of wakened warmth, so calm, so pleasant,  
So gaily gemmed with diadems of dew,  
When buds swell on the bough, and robins woo  
Their loves with notes bell-like and crystal-clear,  
The spirit stirs from sleep, yet wonders, too,  
Whence comes the hint of sorrow or of fear  
Making it move rebellious within its narrow sphere.

This flash of sun, this flight of wings in riot,  
This festival of sound, of sight, of smell,  
Wakes in the spirit a profound disquiet,  
And greeting seems the foreword of farewell.  
Budding like all the world, the soul would swell  
Out of its withering mortality;  
Flower immortal, burst from its heavy shell,  
Fly far with love beyond the world and sea,  
Out of the grasp of change, from time and twilight free.

Could the unknowing gods, waked in compassion,  
Eternalize the splendour of this hour,  
And from the world's frail garlands strongly fashion  
An ageless Paradise, celestial bower,  
Where our long-sundered souls could rise in power  
To the complete fulfilment of their dream,  
And never know again that years devour  
Petals and light, bird-note and woodland theme,  
And floods of young desire, bright as a silver stream,

Should we be happy, thou and I together,  
Lying in love eternally in spring,  
Watching the buds unfold that shall not wither,  
Hearing the birds calling and answering,

When the leaves stir and all the meadows ring?  
Smelling the rich earth steaming in the sun,  
Feeling between caresses the light wing  
Of the wind whose gracious flight is never done,—  
Should we be happy then? happy, elusive One?

But no, here in this fragile flesh abides  
The secret of a measureless delight,  
Hidden in dying beauty there resides  
Something undying, something that takes its flight  
When the dust turns to dust, and day to night,  
And spring to fall, whose joys in love redeem  
Eternally, life's changes and death's blight,  
Even as these pale, tender petals seem  
A glimpse of infinite beauty, flashed in a passing dream.

## II

The heavy bee burdened the golden clover  
Droning away the afternoon of summer,  
Deep in the rippling grass I called to you  
Under the sky's blue flame.  
Then when the day was over,  
When petals fell fresh with the falling dew,  
Stepped from the dusk a radiant newcomer,  
Fled by the waters of the sleeping river,  
Swift to the arms of your impatient lover,  
Gladly you came.  
And the long wind in the cedars will sing of this for ever.

Thin rain of the saddest of Septembers  
Bent the tall grasses of the sloping meadows,  
But spring was with me in your slender form,  
And the frail joy of spring.  
Although the chilly embers  
Of summer vanished into the gathering storm  
And the wind clung to the overhanging shadows,  
Fair seemed the spirit's desperate endeavour,  
(And even fair to the spirit that remembers)  
Joy on the wing!  
And the long wind in the cedars will sing of this for ever.

Years, and in slow lugubrious succession  
Drop from the trees the leaves' first yellowed leaders,  
Autumn is in the air and in the past,  
Desolate, utterly.  
Sunlight and clouds in hesitant procession,  
Laughter and tears, and winter at the last.  
There is a battle-music in the cedars,  
High on the hills of life the grasses shiver.  
Hail, dead reality and living vision,  
Thrice hail in memory.  
And the long wind in the cedars will sing of this for ever.

Tours, 1918

## III

Of days and nights under the living vine,  
Memory singing from a tree has given  
The plan of my buried heaven,  
That I may dig therein as in a mine.

Did I call you, little Vigilant One, under the waning sun?  
Did you come barefooted through the dew,  
Through the fine dew-drenched grass when the colours faded  
Out of the sky?  
Who is that shadow holding over you a veil of tempest woven,  
Shaded with streaks of cloud and lightning on the edges?  
Lean nearer, I fear him, and the sigh  
Of the rising wind worries the sedges,  
And the cry  
Of a white, long-legged bird from the marsh  
Cuts through the twilight with a threat of night.  
The receding voice is harsh  
And echoes in my spirit.  
Hark, do you hear it wailing against the hollow rocks of the hill,  
As it takes its lonely outgoing towards the sea?  
Lean nearer still.

Your silence is an ecstasy of speech,  
You are the only white  
Unconquered by the overwhelming frown.  
Who stands behind you so impassively?  
Bid him begone, or let me reach  
And tear away his veil. But he is gone.  
Who was he? surely no comrade of the dawn,  
No lover from an earthly town,  
Was he then Love? or Death? . . . but he is gone.

Come, I will take your hand,—this little glade  
Of stunted trees,—do you remember that?  
You dropped the Persian vase here on this stone,  
And the white grape was spilled;  
And then you cried, half angry, half afraid;  
Yonder we sat  
And carefully took the pieces one by one,  
And tried to make them fit.  
I brought another vessel filled  
With a deeper wine, and there on that dark bank,  
When the first star stepped from immensity,  
We lay and drank....  
Do you remember it?

White flame you burned against the star grey grass.  
Drink deep and pass  
The insufficient cup to me.

Paris, 1919

#### IV

You seek to hurt me, foolish child, and why?  
How cunningly you try  
The keen edge of your words against me, yea,  
The death you would not dare inflict on me,  
Yet would you welcome if it tore the day  
In which I pleasure from my sight.  
You would be happy if that sombre night  
Ravished me into darkness where there are  
No flowers and no colours and no light,  
Nor any joy, nor you, O morning star.

What have I done to hurt you? You have given  
What I have given, and both of us have taken  
Bravely and beautifully without regret.  
When have I sinned against you? or forsaken  
Our secret vow? Think you that I forget  
One syllable of all your loveliness?  
What is this crime that shall not be forgiven?

Spring passes, the pale buds upon the pond  
Shrink under water from my lonely oars,  
The fern is squandering its final frond,  
And gypsy smoke drifts grey from distant shores.

O soon enough the end of love and song,  
And soon enough the ultimate farewell;  
Blazon our lives with one last miracle,—  
We have not long.

Genoa, 1918

#### V

By these shall you remember



The syllables of me;  
The grass in cushioned clumps around  
The root of cedar tree.

The blue and green design  
Of sky and budding leaves,  
The joyous song that in the sun  
A golden ladder weaves.

When soil is wet and warm  
And smells of the new rain,  
When frogs accost the evening  
With their recurrent strain,

Then damn me if you dare.  
I know how you will call,  
But this time I will laugh and run,  
Nor look at you at all.

Or, if you will, go walking  
With immortality,  
But never shall you once forget  
The syllables of me.

Paris, 1919

## VI

Two black deer uprise  
In ghostly silhouette  
Against the frozen skies,  
Against the snowy meadow;  
The moonlight weaves a net  
Of silver and of shadow.  
The sky is cold above me,  
The icy road below  
Leads me from you who love me,  
To unknown destinies.  
Was that your whistle?—No,  
The wind among the trees.

Sheffield, 1917

## VII

When in the ultimate embrace  
Our blown dust mingles in the wind,  
And others wander in the place  
Where we made merry;  
When in the dance of spring we spend  
Our ashen powers with the gale,  
What will these tears and joys avail,  
The winged kiss, the laughing face,  
Where we make merry?  
Save that with everlasting grace  
Thy soul shall linger in this place,  
And haunt with music, or else be  
A lyric in the memory.

Boston, 1915

## VIII

Tonight it seems to be the same  
As when we two would sit

With struggling breath beside the river.  
How slowly the moon came  
Above the hill; how wet  
With shaking silver she arose  
Above the hill.  
Now in the sultry garden close  
I hear the katydid  
Strumming his foolish mandolin.  
The wind is lying still,  
And suddenly amid  
The trembling boughs the moon expands into a scarlet flame.

What charm can bid the mind forget,  
And sleep in peace forever,  
Beyond the ghosts of ancient sin,  
Lost laughter, barren tears.

And you, my dear, have slept four thousand years,  
Beneath the Pyramid.

Brussels, 1918

## **IX**

If you should come tonight  
And say, "I could not go, and leave  
You here alone in pain,"  
How should I take delight  
In that or dare believe,  
Lest I deceive myself with dreams again?...  
If you should come tonight.

Cambridge, 1916

## **X**

You are very far to-night;  
So far that my beseeching hands  
Clasp on the bright  
Metallic lock of some forbidden portal,  
Where you alone may enter in;  
And my long gaze  
Blurs in a memory of other lands,  
And other times.  
You stand immortal.  
You have fought clear beyond these nights and days  
Whose rusty chimes  
Shake the frail, faded tapestries of sin.  
You stand immortal,  
Intense with peace, immaculate as stone,  
Raising white arms of praise,  
Far from this night, triumphantly alone.

Cambridge, 1917

## **XI**

O lonely star moving in still abodes  
Where fear and strife lie indolently furled,  
You cannot hear the rushing autumn hurled  
Against these wanderers bent with futile loads.  
Our broken dreams like withered leaves are swirled  
Where wind-dashed lanterns fail upon the roads,  
And all our tragic gestured episodes  
End in forgotten graveyards of the world.

But in those twilights where you spread your fires,  
Tempest and clarion are heard no more;  
Autumn no sorrow, spring no hope inspires,  
Nor can the distant closing of a door  
Affright the soul to dark imagining  
Beneath deflowered boughs where no birds sing.

Pomfret, 1919

## **XII**

A chalice singing deep with wine,  
Set high among the starry groves,  
Welcomes every man to dine  
With his old familiar loves.

Sheffield, 1917

## **BOOK IV THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS**

### **I**

As dreamers through their dreams surmise  
The stealthy passage of the night,  
We half-remember smoky skies  
And city streets and hurrying flight,  
Another world from this clear height  
Whereon our starry altars rise.

Beneath our towering waste of stone  
The fragile ships creep to and fro,  
By tempest riven and overthrown,  
The toys of these same tides that flow  
Against our pillars far below  
With faint, insistent monotone.

The snarling winds against our rocks  
Hurl breakers in a fleecy mass,  
Like wolves that chase stampeding flocks  
Over the brink of a crevasse,  
While thunders down the Alpine pass  
The deluge of the equinox.

Lost in that stormy atmosphere,  
Men chart their seas and trudge their roads;  
Inviolable, we scorn to hear  
Their shouted warning that forebodes

An end to these fair episodes  
Of life beneath our tranquil sky;  
Having sought only peace, then why  
Should we go down to death with fear?

Pomfret, 1920

### **II**

The thinkers light their lamps in rows  
From street to street, and then  
The night creeps up behind, and blows  
Them quickly out again.

While Age limps groping toward his home,  
Hearing the feet of youth  
From dark to dark that sadly roam  
The suburbs of the Truth.

Paris, 1919

### III

I pass my days in ghostly presences,  
And when the wind at night is mute,  
Far down the valley I can hear a flute  
And a strange voice, not knowing what it says.

And sometimes in the interim of days,  
I hear a fountain in obscure abodes,  
Singing with none but me to hear, the lays  
That would do pleasure to the ears of gods.

And faces pass, but haply they are dreams,  
Dreams of a mind set free that gilds  
The solitude with awful light and builds  
Temples and lovers, goblins and triremes.

Give me a chair and liberate the sun,  
And glancing motes to twinkle down its bars,  
That I may sit above oblivion,  
And weave myself a universe of stars.

Rome, 1918

### IV

Each mote that staggers down the sun  
Repeats an ancient monotone  
That minds me of the time when I  
Put out the candles one by one,

And left no splendour on the face  
Of Him who found His resting-place  
Upon the Cross; and then I went  
Out on the desert's empty space,

And heard the wind in monotone  
Blow grains of sand against a stone,  
Until I sang aloud, to break  
The fear of wandering alone.

There is no fear left in my soul,  
But when, to-day, an aureole  
Of sunlight gathered on your hair,  
And winking motes fled here and there,  
Like notes of music in the air,  
Suddenly I felt the wind  
Wake on the desert as I stole  
Out of that desecrated shrine,  
And then I wondered if you sinned  
As part of me, or if the whole  
Dark sacrilege were mine.

Cambridge, 1917

### V

He is a priest;  
He feeds the dead;

He sings the feast;  
He veils his head;  
The words are dread  
In morning mist,  
But the wine is red  
In the Eucharist.

Red as the east  
With sunlight spread  
Like a bleeding beast  
On a purple bed.  
O Someone fled  
From an April tryst,  
Were your lips fed  
In the Eucharist?

I, at least,  
When the voice of lead  
Sank down and ceased,  
Knew the things he said.  
That the god who bled,  
And the god we kissed,  
Shall never wed  
In the Eucharist.

Spring, give the bread  
We sought and missed,  
And wine unshed  
In the Eucharist.

Paris, 1919

## VI

Through hissing snow, through rain, through many hundred Mays,  
Contorted in Promethean jest, the gargoyles sit,  
And watch the crowds pursue the charted ways,  
Whose source is birth, whose end they only know.  
Charms borrowed from the loveliest of hells,  
And from the earth, a rhapsody of wit,  
They hear the sacramental bells  
Chime through the towers, and they smile.  
Smile on the insects in the square below,  
Smile on the stars that kiss the infinite,  
And, when the clouds hang low, they gaily spout  
Grey water on the heads of the devout  
That gather, whispering, in the sabbath street.  
O gargoyles! was the vinegar and bile  
So bitter? Was the eucharist so sweet?

Paris, 1919

## VII

Gods dine on prayer and sacred song,  
And go to sleep between;  
The gods have slumbered long;  
The gods are getting lean.

Sheffield, 1917

## VIII

A smile will turn away green eyes  
That laughter could not touch,

The dangers of those subtleties,  
The stealthy, clever hand,  
Should not affright you overmuch  
If you but understand  
How Judas, clad in Oxford grey,—  
Could walk abroad on Easter Day.

Paris, 1919

## **IX**

Two Kings there were, one Good, one Bad;  
The first was mournfulness itself,  
The second, happy as a lad,—  
And both are dust upon a shelf.

Sheffield, 1917

## **X**

I see that Hermes unawares,  
Has left his footprints on the path;  
See here, he fell, and in his wrath  
He pulled out several golden hairs  
Against the brambles. Guard them well,  
The hairs of gods are valuable.

Paris, 1919

## **XI**

Semiramis, the whore of Babylon,  
Bade me go walking with her. I obeyed.  
Philosophy, I thought, is not afraid  
Of any woman underneath the sun.  
Far up the hills she led me, where one ledge  
Thrust out a slender finger to the sky,  
Dizzy and swaying as an eagle's cry;  
Semiramis stepped to the farthest edge.

And there she danced, whirling upon her toes,  
The triumph of a flame was in her face,  
Faster and faster as the mad wind blows,  
She whirled, and slipped, and dashed down into space....  
Next day I saw her smiling in the sun,  
Semiramis, the Queen of Babylon.

Paris, 1919

## **XII**

Bring hemlock, black as Cretan cheese,  
And mix a sacramental brew;  
A worthy drink for Socrates,  
Why not for you?

Sheffield, 1917

## **XIII**

Walking through the town last night,  
I learned the lore of second sight,  
And saw through all those solid walls,  
Imbecile and troglodyte.

The vicious apes of either sex  
Grinned and mouthed and stretched their necks,  
Their little lusts skipped back and forth,  
Not very pretty or complex.

Each has five senses; every sense  
Is like a false gate in a fence,  
They think the gates are bona fide,  
Such is their only innocence.

And think themselves extremely wise  
When any sense records its lies,  
They mumble what they feel or hear,  
Unmindful still of Paradise.

When I walked through the town last night  
In vain they drew their curtains tight,  
Through walls of brick I plainly saw  
The imbecile, the troglodyte.

Paris, 1919

#### **XIV**

The change of many tides has swung the flow  
Of those green weeds that cling like filthy fur  
Upon the timbers of this voyager  
That sank in the clear water long ago.  
Whence did she sail? the sands of ages blur  
The answer to the secret, and as though  
They mocked and knew, sleek fishes, to and fro,  
Trail their grey carrion shadows over her.  
Coffer of all life gives and hides away,  
It matters not if London or if Tyre  
Sped you to sea on some remoter day;  
Beneath your decks immutable desire  
And hope and hate and envy still conspire,  
While all the gaping faces nod and sway.

Brussels, 1919

#### **XV**

Piero di Cosimo,  
Your unicorns and afterglow,  
Your black leaves cut against the sky,  
Black crosses where the young gods die,  
Black horizons where the sea  
And clouds contend perpetually,  
And hanging low,  
The menace of the night:—

They called you madman. Were they right,  
Piero di Cosimo?

Pomfret, 1919

#### **XVI**

I would know what can not be known;  
I would reach beyond my sphere,  
And question the stars in their courses,  
And the dead of many a year.  
I would tame the infinite forces  
That bend me down like the grain,

Peace would I give to the fields where the young men died,  
Peace to the sea where the ships of battle ride,  
And light again to the eyes of the beautiful slain.

This would I do, but today against the sky,  
They who were building a cross grinned as I passed them by.

Pomfret, 1919

## XVII

The yellow bird is singing by the pond,  
And all about him stars have burst in bloom,  
A colonnade stands pallidly beyond,  
And beneath that a solitary tomb.  
Who lies within that tomb I do not know,  
The yellow bird intones his threnody  
In notes as colourless as driven snow,  
Clashing with the green hush and out of key.

O cease, your endless song is out of tune,  
Where all these old forgotten things are sleeping,—  
Give back to silence's eternal keeping  
The windless pond, the hanging colonnade,  
Lest in the wane of the long afternoon,  
The Dead awake, unhappy and afraid.

Bordeaux, 1917

## BOOK V SONNETS

### I

Love dwelled with me with music on her lips;  
Beauty has quickened me to passion; prayer  
Has cried from me before I was aware  
When grief was scourging me with scarlet whips.  
The gods gave me to follies false and fair;  
Made me the object of immortal quips,  
But I am recompensed with comradeships  
That gods themselves would be content to share.

The time of play has been, of wisdom, is;  
Yet who can say which is the truly wise?  
Enough that I have stayed Love with a kiss,  
That Beauty has found welcome in my eyes;  
Though the long poplar path leads dark before,  
Up to the white inevitable door.

### II

Invoking not the worship of the crowd  
As Hadrian divulged Antinous  
Would I denote Thy sanctity, not thus  
Should Love's deep litany be cried aloud.  
There is a mountain set apart for us  
Where I have hid Thy soul as in a cloud,  
And there I dedicate as I have vowed  
My secret voice,—all else were impious.

Remote and undiscovered, rest secure



Where I have set Thee up, that I may keep  
My faith of God-in-Thee unblent and pure;  
That I may be at one with Thee in sleep;  
That waking as a mortal, I may leap  
Into immortal dreams where love is sure.

### III

And yet think not that I desire to seal  
Your earthly beauty from the eyes of praise,  
The Soul I worship hath its holy-days,  
But being God is manifestly real.  
The flesh resplendent in a lover's gaze  
Hath too its triumph; the divine ideal  
Is dual and can wonderfully reveal  
Itself in dust enriched by subtle ways.

You are no shadow, for in you combine  
Earth-music and a spirit's sanctity,  
And both are exquisite, and both are mine...  
For holier men a Beatrice, for me  
The joyous sense of your reality,  
Not half so saintly,—but far more divine.

### IV

With the young god who out of death creates  
The flame of life made manifest in spring,  
Let us go forth at day's awakening,  
The first to open wide the garden gates.  
And resting where the blowing seasons sing,  
Await the voice of god who consecrates  
The pallid hands of the autumnal fates  
That beckon from the dusk, dream-harvesting.

When comes the grey god, eager to destroy  
Our garnered hoard of wisdom and of joy,  
Fear not that phantom, desolate and stark,  
For the young god, the all-creating boy,  
Will come and find us sleeping in the dark,  
And from two deaths, bring forth life's single spark.

### V

O it was gay! the wilderness was floral,  
The sea a bath of wine to the laughing swimmer;  
Dawn was a flaming fan; dusk was a glimmer  
Like undersea where sly dreams haunt the coral.  
The garden sang of fame when the golden shimmer  
Of sun glowed on the proud leaves of the laurel,—  
But time and love fought out their ancient quarrel;  
The songs are fainter now; the lights are dimmer.

For it is over, over, and the spring  
Is not quite spring to you who sit alone;  
A paradise entire has taken wing;  
Love and her merry company are gone  
The way of all delight and lyric measures,  
And the lone miser mourns his vanished treasures.

### VI

The snow is thawing on the hanging eaves,  
The buds unroll upon the basking limb,

And hidden birds are practising a hymn  
To sing when petals fall among the leaves.  
And yet in life there is an interim  
So dull that stagnant loneliness bereaves  
Beauty of tenderness, and hope deceives  
Until the eyes grow sceptical and dim.

I know I have no right to solitude  
When every friendly grove is loud with calls  
From bird to mating bird, and all the wood  
Is throbbing with the voice of waterfalls,  
But merry song and liquid interlude  
Ring in my heart like mirth in empty halls.

## VII

So ends the day with beauty in the west,  
Bending in holy peace above the land;  
It is not needful that we understand;  
Oblivion is ours, and that is best.  
Oblivion of battles that command  
Our wan reluctance, and a starless rest  
Borne on in tideless twilight, where all quest  
Ends in the pressure of a quiet hand.

There is no morrow to this final dream  
That paints the past so wonderfully fair;  
No rising sun shall desecrate that gleam  
Of fragile colour hanging on the air.  
Enshrined in sunset are all things that seem  
Happy and beautiful; and Thou art there.

## VIII

Across the evening calm I faintly hear  
The melody you loved; a violin  
Sings through the listening air, far-off and thin,  
The infinite music of our happy year.  
The soul's dim gates are broken to let in  
That gush of memories, and you are near,  
Poised on the shadowy threshold whence appear  
The prospects of the dreams we strove to win.

Rise wistfully, and fall away, and pass,  
Frail music of impossible delight,  
Steal into silence over the dark grass,  
Dreams of the inner caverns of the night.  
Strange that in those few hesitating bars  
Are life and death, the orbits of the stars.

## IX

Calmer than mirrored waters after rain,  
Calmer than all the swaying tides of sleep,  
Profounder than the stony eyes that keep  
Afternoon vigil on the ruined plain;  
So drift they by, the cloudy forms that creep  
In stealthy whiteness through the windless grain;  
The twilight ebbs, and washed in the long rain,  
I am their shepherd, pasturing my sheep.

They can not change; they can but wander here;  
That is their destiny and also mine;  
The fuel that I was, the flames they were,

Are vanished down the lost horizon line.  
Likewise the stars have died; the silence hears  
Only the footfall of the pastured years.

## **X**

I stood like some worn image carved of stone  
Amid the thoughtful sands of eventide;  
When rolling back the grey, there opened wide  
The unsuspected gates of the Unknown.  
Long hours I stood, amazed and deified,  
Beside that singing shore; that shining zone,  
Myself like God, triumphantly alone,  
"And is this then the shore of death?" I cried.

A wind blew down from the tremendous sky,  
Fraught with a whisper fainter than a breath,  
Fanning my spirit with exalted wonder;  
But the great doors swung to with rumbling thunder;  
One more the winged faith had passed me by,  
Like unto melody, like unto death.

## **XI**

Through the deep night the leaves speak, tree to tree.  
Where are the stars? the frantic clouds ride high,  
The swelling gusts of wind blow down the sky,  
Shaking the thoughts from the leaves, garrulously.  
Through the deep night, articulate to me,  
They question your untimely passing-by;  
Your spring is still in flower, must you fly  
Windswept so soon down lanes of memory?

Through the deep night the trees recount the past,  
The lovers that have long ago gone hence,  
And whom you joined ere love had reached her prime.  
Chill with an early autumn's immanence,  
Through the dark night plunges the sudden blast,  
Sweeping the young leaves down before their time.

## **XII**

I walked the hollow pavements of the town,  
Lost in the vast entirety of night,  
The moon was cankered with a greyish blight,  
And half her face was gathered in a frown.  
A hooded watchman passed me, and his gown  
Was dyed so black it made the darkness white,  
He turned upon my face his curious light,  
And whispered as he wandered up and down.

Then there were curling lanes and then a hill,  
And sentry stars that guard the Absolute,  
And spectral feet that followed me, until  
The vapours rose, and somewhere in the mute  
And hesitating dawn, a single flute  
Piped once again the grey, and then was still.

## **XIII**

In tireless march I move from sphere to sphere.  
I turn not back nor pause; my feet are drawn  
By shining power. Master soul or pawn,  
I know not which I am; I only hear

The faint insistent world voice murmuring on  
Its pivot in another atmosphere;  
All else is silence, the pervading year  
Blows wanly through my senses and is gone.

O You who met me on the sunny lawn  
Of yesteryear, to be my true companion,  
And bade me lead you with me from the dawn  
Into the shades of my predestined canon,  
How is it that I find myself alone  
Here in this desolate and starry zone?

#### **XIV**

A while you shared my path and solitude,  
A while you ate the bread of loneliness,  
And satisfied yourself with a caress  
Or with a careless overflow of mood.  
And then you left me suddenly, to press  
Into the world again, and seek your food  
Among the mortals whom you understood,  
Instead of learning in the wilderness.

Now you return to where you fled from me,  
And find me gone. You call me from afar,  
And call in vain; I can not turn to see  
You loveliness, beloved as you are.  
Inexorably I move from sphere to sphere,  
Nor wait for any soul, however dear.

#### **XV**

There is a void that reason can not face,  
Nor wisdom comprehend, nor sweating will  
Diminish, nor the rain of April fill,  
And I am weary of this wan grimace.  
Behold I touch the garments of all ill  
And do not wash my hands; a dusty place  
Unprobed by light becomes a loud mill race  
That swirls together straw and daffodil.

It is untrue that vigil can not trace  
The orbits which upon our births distil  
The filtered dew of fate; I saw the hill  
That I must climb, and gauged the upward pace;  
And now upon the night's worn window sill,  
I wait and smile. Hail, Judas, full of grace.

#### **XVI**

The mirrors of all ages are the eyes  
Of some remembering god, wherein are sealed  
The beauties of the world, the April field,  
Young faces, blowing hair, and autumn skies.  
The mirrors of the world shall break, and yield  
To life again what never really dies;  
The forms and colours of earth's pageantries,  
Unwithered and undimmed, shall be revealed.

And in that moment silence shall unfold  
Forgotten songs that she has held interred,  
The ocean rising on the shores of gold,  
Flecked with white laughter and love's lyric word;  
All happy music that the world has heard;

All beauty that eternal eyes behold.

## XVII

We sat in silence till the twilight fell,  
And then beyond the vague and purple arc  
Where sky and ocean merge, a summons. "Hark!  
Clear notes like water falling in a well,  
Can you not hear?" "No, but a sudden dark  
Seems to enfold me, lonely and terrible."  
Out of the sunset, a black caravel  
Drew near, and then I knew I should embark.

I saw it tack against the fading skies,  
I heard its keel slide crunching up the sand,  
Then turned, and read, deep in the other's eyes,  
The pain of one who can not understand.  
Dusk deepened over the insurging seas,  
And loose sails crackled in the rising breeze.

## XVIII

He clung to me, his young face dark with woe,  
And as the mournful music of the tide  
Monotonously sang, he stood and cried,  
A silhouette against the afterglow.  
I said, "The boat has spread her pinions wide;  
The stars and wind come forth together. Go  
Back to our ivy-haunted portico,  
And place my seat as always at your side."

And so I stepped aboard and left him there.  
Farewell; the rhythmic somnolence of oars;  
Star-misty vastness; swiftly moving air;  
Then distant lights on undiscovered shores.  
This I remember, standing by the sea,  
But where was that dark land, and who were we?

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