

DISJECTA MEMBRA POETAE

his identity. Seven Rickmans—only think of it! And some reckon an eighth, Mr. Rickman drunk. But this is not altogether fair; for intoxication acted rather on all seven at once, producing in them a gentle fusion with each other and the universe. They had ceased to struggle. But Mr. Rickman was not often drunk, or at least not nearly so often as his friends supposed.

So it was all very well for Jewdwine, who was not so bewilderingly constructed, to talk about finding your formula and pulling yourself together. How, Mr. Rickman argued, could you hope to find the formula of a fellow who could only be expressed in fractions, and vulgar fractions, too? How on earth could you pull yourself together when Nature had deliberately cut you into little pieces? Never since poor Orpheus was torn to tatters by the Maenads was there a poet so horribly subdivided. Talk of being dissolute, dissipated! Those adjectives were a poor description of S. K. R. It was more than sowing a mere handful of wild oats, it was a disintegration, a scattering of Rickmans to all the winds of the world.

Find himself, indeed!

Still, he was perfectly willing to try; and to that end (after dining with people who were anything but cultivated, or intellectual, or refined) he turned himself loose into the streets.

The streets—he was never tired of them. After nine or ten hours of sitting in a dusty second-hand bookshop, his soul was dry with thirst for the living world, and the young joy of the world, “the fugitive actuality.” And her ways were in the streets.

Being a young poet about town, he turned to the streets as naturally as a young poet in the country turns to the woods and fields. For in the streets, if you know how to listen, you can hear the lyric soul of things as plainly, more plainly perhaps, than in the woods or fields. Only it sings another sort of song. And going into the streets was Rickman's way (the only way open to him as yet) of going into society. The doors were thrown hospitably wide to him; one day was as good as another; the world was always at home.

It was a world where he could pick and choose his