

BLUE SPECTACLES AND ROSE COLOR

There may be heaven; there must be hell,
Meantime there is earth here.

—BROWNING.

"When fire wrought fierce with fire,
Twin mixed with the mists of the deep,
Did the fates wax glad when man emerged
To eat and to drink and to sleep?
To darken the day with toil,
And to blacken the night with sin—
To grope and never find the path
To the royal life within?
To crush and be crushed in the crowds
That beggar the world for bread—
To crawl in the dust of the earth and die
Like a worm that dies and is dead?"

WHY do preachers, teachers, and
poets prate of hope, of optimism,
of joy?

It is because they, good souls, would
turn our anguished eyes from our jagged,
bleeding wounds, because they would have
us look away from the owl and bittern of
anguish that haunt for ever the ruins of our
nature.

And we listen while they prophecy
smooth things, and laugh, but our laughter
holds a sorrow deeper than the sea. They
speak of our joys, but down in the unre-
vealed, unspeaking recesses of our hearts,
we know "the trail of the serpent is over
them all."

We fear to love the closest ones for ever,
the "thin black lines" move graveward.
There are flowers on it, but somewhere in
life's garden a sepulchre is digged, and
"Love is lying low, where human kisses
cannot reach the face."

The life-loving, wonder-eyed child we
romped with in the morning is this even-
ing a clod of flesh. We are defeated, de-
spoiled, and homesick. We strain for the
sound of the voice that is still.

The last entry in Walter Scott's diary
reads: "We slept reasonably, but on the
next morning—"

And so death has everywhere the last
word.

Do we hope for wealth? Then are we
chums of poverty who skulk and shamble
through life.

"Our sons are the rich man's serfs by day.
And our daughters his slaves by night."

Living on the raw edge of want, we pur-
sue false grails and glittering will-o'-the
wisps. We find the stream, but the waters
are bitter; the cistern, but it is broken; the
apples, but they are dust and ashes. Daily,
like Tantalus, we find the waters of life
rolled to our lips, and then withdrawn. He
is an experienced philosopher who teaches
that life is a progress from want to want,
an oscillation between boredom and bore-
dom.

But, mayhap, we are lucky miners, and
heap up shining treasure from the sweat
of our fellows. Then it is that Fate points
her yellow finger, and sneers:

"You get some gold dug from the mud,
Some silver ground and crushed from stones;
Your gold is red with dead men's blood,
Your silver black with oaths and bones."

Or, do we press up life's luring heights
to the sweetness of the upper air? Then
do we find fear crouching in our path, and
care dogging our footsteps.

We are confounded by the perils of the
path, and its perplexed meanings. Sin-
sick, pain-sick, heart-sick, we blunder and
stumble on. The way is a bayonet charge,
a push, and a stab, and oft-times in our
dense, besotted ignorance, we strike our
bleeding heads against a blind wall of
mystery. In the dark clefts of the rock,
Temptation spreads her net for our bleed-
ing feet, or, mayhap, we stretched it our-
selves, for—

"So prone are mortals to their own damnation,
It seems as though a devil's use were gone."

Where we propose to nestle, there we
find a thorn growing. We take a thousand
right steps; but one mis-step, and there is
no angel of mercy to rescue us as we crash
on the rocks below.

But what of it?

"The external Sa'ki from his bowl has pour'd
Millions of bubbles like us, and shall pour."

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No, a thousand times, no! We will not
hug to our souls this melancholy of "black-
est midnight born." We will list the