

POEMS

by

ALFRED GORDON



THE
MUSSON
BOOK
CO.,
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TORONTO

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1915

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BY

ALFRED GORDON

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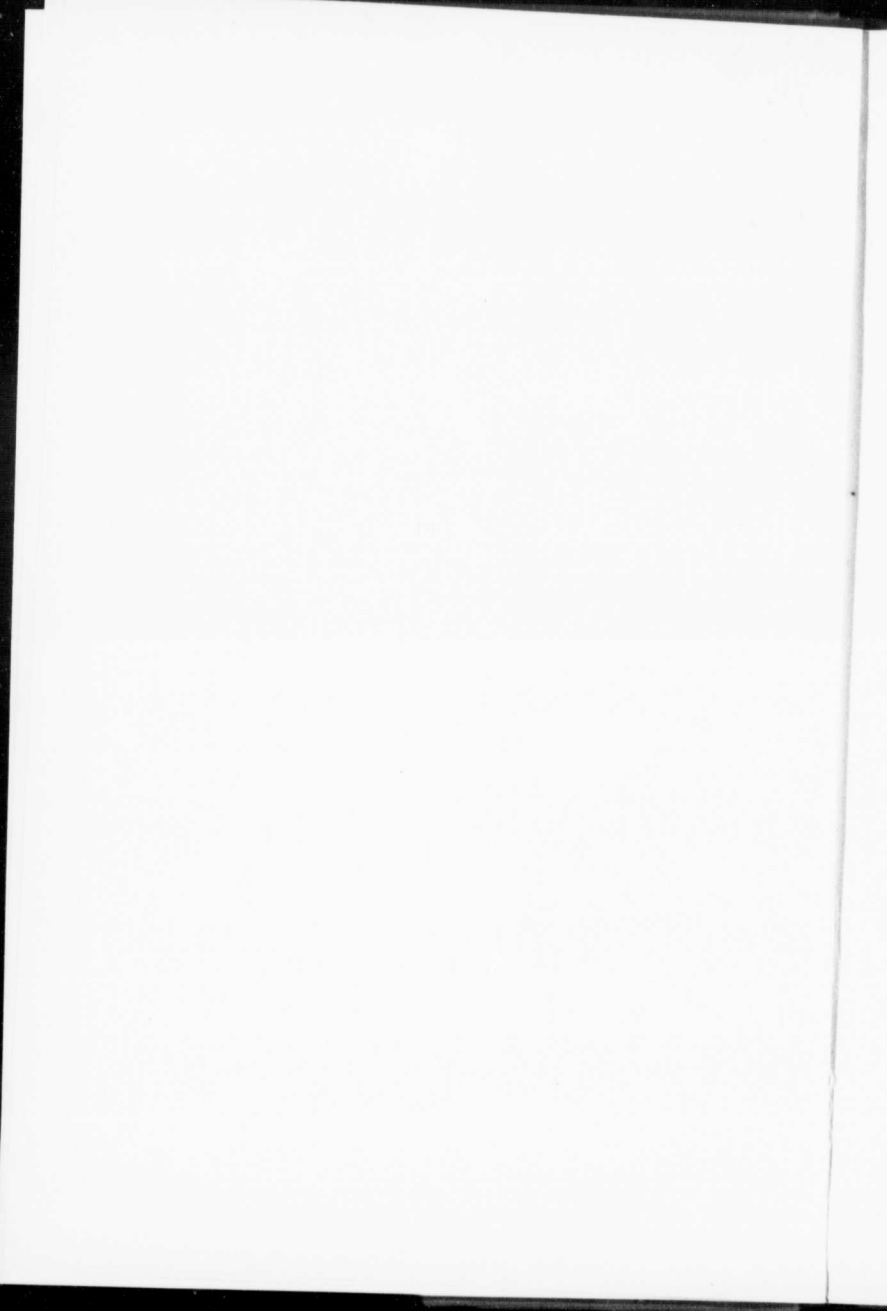
MY sincere thanks are due to the Editors of "*The University Magazine*," "*The Canadian Magazine*," and "*Beck's Weekly*" for permission to include in this book the verses which first appeared in their magazines. Mention should also be made of the fact that one of these, "The Little Church," has been slightly altered. The fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and fourteenth stanzas are additions to the poem as it first appeared in "*The University Magazine*" (February, 1913). One verse has been placed earlier in the poem, and other minor changes have been made.

I should also like to take this opportunity of thanking the many kind friends (more than I ever suspected!) who supported my privately-printed booklet, "In Prophecy and Sonnets of the European War," in the straitened times of the past winter.

ALFRED GORDON.

6 Lorne Avenue,
Montreal,
August, 1915.

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PREFACE

A VOLUME of poetry should stand or fall without any special pleading on the part of the poet.

Any annotation is a confession of either paucity of thought or inadequacy of expression.

It is therefore with great diffidence that the attention of the reader is called to the arrangement of the contents of the present volume.

Perhaps it will suffice to emphasise the poem entitled "Dedication" (page xi.) which is indeed in itself an "Apologia Pro Vita Sua."

Those who read this poem will be in no further need of explanation as to why such poems as "A Dream of Death" and "Delilah" and some others reminiscent of the aesthetic school have been included.

In contrast, this poem also explains the inclusion of the poems in the earlier pages of the book.

The foundation of this attempt at a self-estimate of the relative importance of the poems forming the collection is to be found in Mr. Arthur Ransome's essay "Art for Life's Sake," in his "Portraits and Speculations."

ALFRED GORDON.

To
W. G. M.

(x.)

DEDICATION

THERE was a time in boyhood, ere life ceased
To hold a miracle in every hour,
We saw a City shining in the East,
That drew us towards it with a magic power.

I saw its spires in glittering array,
And called you, while, with shaded sight,
We looked and wondered how far off it lay,
And looked again along the roadway white.

I told you how right fair it was, and you,
Half-willing only, placed your hand in mine—
'T was but a mirage—aye, that all men knew,
But yet none mortal ever might divine.

And now the whole width of the Atlantic main
Divides the fortune of our temporal ways;
Perhaps we shall not meet on earth again
Except in memories of those bye-gone days.

With strengthened vision you, maybe, have wrought
The consummation of that early dream,
Whilst I, too certain in Youth's pride, am brought
To cry the passing of its transient gleam.

Indeed, I think now that I did not see
The Eternal City of man's endless quest—
'T was Art, not Life, that first awakened me,
Though, once awakened, I might never rest.

I saw the beauty, first, of Form alone;
To Knowledge, not to Wisdom, I aspired:
But hardly even God to Youth makes known
The things "more excellent" of Him required.

Who were the captains of my early song?
Swinburne and Dowson, Symons, Oscar Wilde:
Sensuous or violent, but seldom strong;
By them unconsciously I was beguiled.

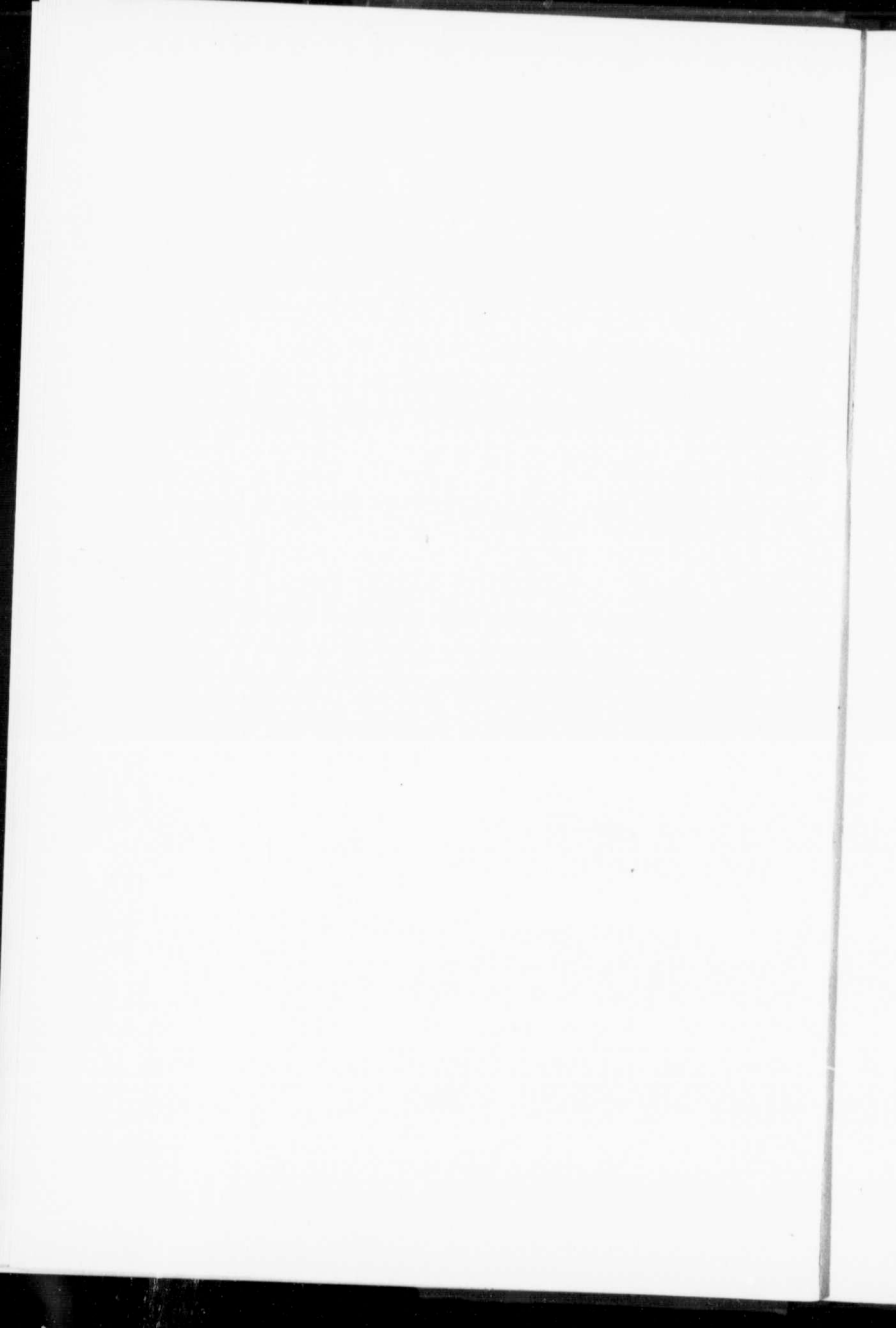
Yet it was natural I should mistake
 Their loves and lutes and towers of ivory
For that Adventure which the soul must make
 Or else for ever ignominious be.

And, at the root, the difference is not great;
 'T is but a strangeness more profound I seek:
The Boy's romance, to him, is filled with Fate,
 Although his elders of it lightly speak.

So here, inversely, and from time to time,
 Is told, dear friend, my pilgrimage since then—
From decoration and embroidered rhyme
 To some poor reading of the minds of men.

I sometimes ponder if each soul that wins
 An entrance to the far-off gates thereof,
May make atonement for a spirit's sins,
 If once it dwelt with it, on earth, in love.

I wonder if those hours, though so long past,
 When we in word and deed went hand in hand,
Will be a sacrament, and, at the last,
 Together in that City we shall stand?



VISION

AN alien peace pervades my soul,
A Heaven that knows not Hell;
I rise borne up by unseen airs
With runes no man may spell.

I break Heaven's bread and eat thereof;
Though hungered not, I eat;
I know no taste of bitterness,
And yet I find it sweet.

Such peace as is not rest from pain,
And yet as deep is mine;
I lose not my mortality,
And yet I drink Heaven's wine.

A light unlike an earthly light
Is round about me spread;
I know it not by darkness, yet
The shadowy earth I tread.

The dual strife I know no more,
The good and ill man saith;
Height known apart from depth is mine,
And life apart from death.

Across the circle of the world
On viewless wings I fly;
Mortal, I front the ranks of Heaven;
I mount—and yet not I.

I see the blinding face of God,
His hosts in countless tiers;
Yea, I who know and do not know
The measurement of years.

I am transported fearfully,
I charge Him face to face;
Yet, lowly, is my charge a prayer,
And I my soul abase.

An alien peace pervades my soul,
A Heaven that knows not Hell;
I rise borne up by unseen airs,
With runes no man may spell.

EASTER ODE, 1915

(Written for the Easter Service of Christ Church Cathedral)

O SPRING! To whom the Poets of all time
Have made sweet rhyme;
And unto Lovers, above all, most dear!
How shall they hymn thee in this latter year,
When Death, not Life, doth ripen to his prime?

What pulse shall quicken, or what eye grow bright,
With Love's delight,
Now sleepeth not the bridegroom with the bride?
What flowers shall cover, or what grasses hide
The miles of mounds that thrust upon our sight?

April's light showers, that made the sun more sweet,
Seem now to beat
In constant boding of the nations' tears:
Across the pastures, to each mother's ears,
The lambs and ewes more piteously bleat.

The fledglings fallen from the nest awake,
In hearts that break,
A new compassion for their fluttering:
The brown, soft eyes of every furry thing
Seem doubly tender for our sorrow's sake.

Pity, through Terror, hath touched every heart;
None stand apart,
In blunted sense or in the spirit's pride:
The base and gross are cleansed and purified;
Life to the lettered grows more great than Art.

Terror, of Tragedy the nether pole,
Hath purged the soul;
The priest and prophet cry not now alone:
Blood and burnt-offerings, that we thought outgrown,
Now seem the centre of a cosmic whole.

On every hill, blood stains the melting snow,
The rivers flow
Crimson and swollen with the unburied dead;
Through vale and meadow like a silver thread
The streams wind not as but a year ago.

The stolid ploughman as a rite or prayer
Doth drive his share,
But Plague and Famine in the furrows stalk;
While, in the cities, our distracted talk
Betrays the fever of a constant care.

Nay! It is Autumn, surely, and not Spring,
That we should sing?
Autumn whose breath makes every leaf forlorn!
"Put in thy sickle on the standing corn!
The sheaves are ready for the garnering!"

But, like a trumpet, even as we doubt,
A Voice rings out
Above the shrill of the increasing strife:
Lo, it is Easter! And there dawns such life,
The very stars, in exultation, shout!

Before the glory of the seraphim
Earth's hosts grow dim;
The Rights of Nations and man's empires fade:
No more from God each seeks peculiar aid;
In equal penitence all turn to Him.

And though the quickening of the countless slain
We plead in vain;
Life, and not Death, shall reap, this harvest-tide:
Love in the Pit shall seal the Prince of Pride;
The Peace we mocked, in triumph shall obtain.

Caught up in vision, lo, I dare to pen
Patmos' again!
"Behold! The kingdoms of this world shall be
Those of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He
Shall reign for ever and for evermore." Amen.

ODE FOR DOMINION DAY, 1915

(In Memory of Lieut. Guy Drummond)

*Whose quiet service of learning, in Life,
Graced him no less than the glory of his Death.*

O CANADA, forgive on this thy natal day
That one
Not born thy son
And ignorant of thee should thy praise essay.

For thou hast shrines and names and glories of thine own
Which ring,
Re-echoing,
To me but sound, to thee in clarion-tone.

Yet those most glorious sprang before thou didst assume
That name
We would proclaim
With trumpet, banner, and with crested plume.

Montcalm and Wolfe and Brock, Abra'm's and Queen-
ston's Heights—

But now

What names hast thou

To match the lustre of those ancient lights?

Peace hath her splendour, her romance and fame, no less
Than War;

Yet of her store

To-day what portion doth thy mind possess?

Thou hast waxed fat like Jeshurun, but, in soul grown
lean,

Hast sold

Thy dreams for gold,

Pricing the priceless, making all things mean.

Must man's salvation be by blood? Shall he ne'er know
God

Save by His rod,

And save the waters of affliction flow?

For Death has changed the order of this day; its boast
Falls chill—

Albeit still,

Still thy dominion is from coast to coast.

Yet not by too deep grief for thy mistaken aim
Be swept,
For thou hast stepped
Into a fate that shall outweigh all shame.

Still shall this be an high day to thee, but, this year,
Not vain
Shall be our strain,
And vulgar praises shall affront thine ear.

For lo! Thy blood is mingled with a martyred land's—
Her pains
Have loosed thy chains:
Free, now and henceforth, thy freed spirit stands!

Ypres and Langemarck shall burn like stars down time,
Whose beams
Shall fire thy dreams
Until they travail with impassioned rhyme.

No more the unrated kingdom of man's mind shall be
Thy scorn,
Whose sons have sworn,
Even to death, the cause of Liberty.

Aye, should'st thou e'er forget in days to come thy dead,
Although
We pray not so,
Thou shalt remember and shalt hang thy head.

Still in the market shalt thou buy and sell, but not
Thy soul:
Seeing life whole,
Green and secluded thou shalt keep one spot.

And now, as droop the banners on the evening air,
And shout
And pomp die out,
To that Gethsemane thou shalt repair.

And shalt not pray its cup may pass from thee, or shrink:
Ah, nay!
But rather pray
That thou the very dregs of it may'st drink.

By Belgium's Agony, her Cross, and by her Crown,
There vow
That Life from now,
Even as Death, shall have its high renown!

ENGLAND TO FRANCE

August 4th, 1915

Being a paraphrase of Mr. Clutton-Brock's splendid tribute, "France," which had the signal honour of being read by order of the French Government in all the schools of Paris.

O FRANCE! On this dire anniversary
After what fashion should we sing to thee?
Or should we sing?
Or if one sang in such an hour, should we?
For, in times past, how often have we said
But vanity and folly crowned thy head,
And that in thee there was no stable thing?

Yet thou didst judge us with like jaundiced eyes—
A people gloomy as their own grey skies,
Whom neither love
Nor hate nor fear nor death might agonise:
That never knew a lifetime in one kiss;
Deaf to all rhapsody of woe or bliss,
Of Hell beneath them, or of Heaven above.

For perfidy we were to thee a name,
As thou to us for all licentious shame,
Until that day
All such loose folly was consumed with flame:
But now, howe'er the tide of battle run,
This year for us an era has begun
Which shall not soon or lightly pass away.

As lovers' quarrels now stand forth revealed
The petty wrangles that we kept unhealed
In jealous pride,
But now for ever and for ever sealed;
Only the wasted past shall we now rue,
The love unowned which yet at heart we knew,
And which from now shall never be denied.

As Sidney hailed thee in thy fame gone by,
"France, that sweet enemy!" So now we cry,
"France, that sweet friend!"
Yet, as of old, a Queen; with fame more high.
Sweet friend for ever, yet on this high day
A Queen in meet and glorious array
To whom in homage all the nations bend.

O France! Fair land of sunlight and the vine,
To whom illusion and romance were wine,
By what new light,
High o'er the conflict, doth thy spirit shine?
We have grown old and outlived dangerous dreams,
While through thy veins the fire of youth yet streams—
How shall *we* praise thy calm restraint aright?

Girt by the sea, howe'er so greatly pressed,
Always secure we had one place of rest,
And well we doubt
If we or any had endured thy test:
Wherefore we praise thee as none else before,
And in our hearts a memory of thee store
That shall not fade till all the stars die out.

For thou not merely hast survived thine hour,
Not, in thy trial, but preserved thy power;
But hast come forth
From thine affliction with yet richer dower:
A strange, new strength thy spirit doth endue,
A strength unknown of nations hitherto—
Far from the fury of this day of wrath.

As of fair women purged by bitter ruth,
Who have outlived the passions of their youth
And find at length
Peace in the quiet sanctuaries of truth;
Who smile where once they laughed, and yet are seen
More beautiful than they have ever been
In any triumph of their former strength.

Who walk in ways so gracious and so still,
Whose mien so calm a majesty doth fill,
Their purpose seems
Not theirs, but part of the eternal will:
So thou, O France, before the world dost fight
Not for thyself alone, but that great light
In which the very flood of freedom streams.

That light indeed which always lighted thee,
Howe'er disguised or fitful it might be—
Aye, even when
The holiest things thou mad'st but mockery:
Falsehood for truth, in error, thou hast deemed,
But never the idea of truth blasphemed—
So that great light thou guardest once again.

There is no God, thou saidst, but never said
Thyself wast God, and power unlimited
Thy right divine,
That all the earth should tremble at thy tread:
Aye, with what laughter, sweetly terrible,
Voltaire had hurled this Anti-Christ to Hell,
Cleaving him shrewdly to the very chine.

How thine immortal soul in him had flamed
To see thy temples ruined and defamed;
What thing more crude
The lightning laughter of his scorn had claimed?
For though destruction overtake thy fanes,
Yet indestructible the faith remains,
Purged of its dross, and strengthened and renewed.

Barbarian hordes that have but one recourse,
How shall thy foes, O France, assail the source
Of that hid life,
Who think to slay the spirit by brute force?
Upon the glory of the past they war,
But 't is the future that thou fightest for,
And that great glory which shall crown thy strife,

For lo! Whatever wounds are this day thine,
More clear through suffering doth thy spirit shine,
Made once again
For all mankind a standard and a sign:
Aye, as of old, o'er Terror and o'er Wrath,
The clarion cry of Liberty goes forth,
And, as of old, it doth not cry in vain!

THE LITTLE CHURCH

A CHURCH there is whose members' love
Transcends all other known to man;
More deep than bond of blood could move,
Or cry of rights since strife began;
Set fast upon the world's heart's need,
And stronger than the strongest creed.

Its inmost spirit steals away,
And in calm, cloistral shadow hides;
Its lovers shun the common day,
Their temples build where peace abides;
And o'er dim streets of dreamy ways
Their fragile spires and turrets raise.

Its habitation is too shy
To bear the burden of a name,
But those that hear the human cry
Behold it as in words of flame:
The Little Church of those that fall,
And, seven times stumbling, rise withal.

The Little Church—though soon or late
 To every earnest heart 't is known—
To each a shrine so intimate
 He seems to worship there alone:
Though now and then, without a sound
The ghostly elements pass round.

There, banned from Christ's Church Visible
 By deep misgiving of their worth,
His unacknowledged followers dwell,
 And wait His Kingdom upon earth:
Whose secret acts of love alone
Their spiritual Head make known.

And, more than these, His seeming foes,
 That imprecate His Church, but yet
The heart of whose indictment shows
 It is to Him they owe their debt:
There dwell, in one communion blent,
Both furtive and implied assent.

For those that most His Church arraign,
 Beneath the sharp and bitter bruit
Sigh wistfully to find how vain
 The dust and ashes of its fruit;
And, in some silent interim,
Despite themselves, draw nigh to Him.

And there they dwell that know no creed
Save service of a narrow truth,
That ill but yet sincerely read
The riddled scripture of their youth:
Unwitting, ere earth's order stood
The Word was, and the Word was God!

Its gates are catholic and wide
To all that seek its bread and wine;
With equal yoke there, side by side,
Kneel faith and doubt before its shrine;
Yet none such strait exaction lays
As this on those that serve its ways.

Without its walls no Godhead waits
To portion out the fruit of sin,
Reproach more poignant vindicates
The judgment of the law within;
The gnawing pang that none can dull,
No sleep allay, no time annul.

It is so like a vague desire,
A baffling dream of hopes and fears,
One may have breathed its heavenly fire,
Yet feed on sorrow all the years,
At times such horrid shapes infest
The holy gloom that shrouds its rest.

Its lovers have no marching-songs,
Or stately chant of fruitless prayers;
Their cup is overfilled with wrongs,
And feast for fast is never theirs:
Cast out before the great world's eyes,
With unquenched hope they still arise.

Red drops of blood mark all the way,
Where sharp stones cut the journeying feet,
And yet no pilgrims turn or stay,
But falter on in weary heat,
With gladness for a hand's space won
Before the sun's full course is run.

No crown of glory and no palm
They look for when the end shall come,
Yet strive, spite many an inward qualm,
Until the soul itself grows dumb:
Grows dumb, grows dumb, but never dies—
In this their only guerdon lies.

Life's fixed antinomy doth chill
The passion of their endless quest;
No words of benediction still
Their mortal yearning and unrest;
A rolling Juggernaut, the brain
Moves on till all men's hearts are slain.

Within, the time-worn spirit sinks;
Remorse and sin divide their days;
While Reason, like a glacial sphinx,
With icy stare each longing slays.
Yet onward with blind steps they reel:
They felt, they felt—and still they feel.

Crying with all the ages' need,
To Galilee for peace they turn;
But Godhead there by man decreed
Confronts them, and they still must yearn:
Nor Force nor Will can cheat the toll
That Truth exacts from every soul.

Untroubled, none His face may see,
Marred by all lusts that are and were;
And all the sins that are to be
Engrave their fascination there:
Swept by that agony of love,
They would, but cannot to Him move.

Thus over them is hung no Cross,
Or Christ with crown of twisted thorn,
But there is crying of great loss,
And hungering after bliss forlorn.
What sightless wrath hath led us on
To spit on God's own dearest Son?

Why have we laid on Him the life
Of those that name Him, knowing not?
Why have we charged Him with man's strife?
Why have we added to His lot?
Lo, we have stumbled, cursing Christ,
Who was for these things sacrificed.

With molten hate of hollow creeds
We have rebelled against—what things?
With blind, stark rage, for blinder needs,
We have cursed gods and cast down kings:
Filled full of scorn of all men's lands,
What better guerdon hold our hands?

We have pulled down and builded none;
Cursed deep and have not ever blessed;
And what thing is there we have done?
And what have we achieved of rest?
We have shut out both Wrong and Right,
And murdered Anarchy and Light!

We have reached over truth, and lied;
Blasphemed like drunken men; set free
Revolt, a black, malignant tide,
To mingle with a crimson sea:
With heresy more mad than faith,
We have betrayed Love's soul to death!

Love's hands we pierced with nails, Love's feet;
Crowned Love with thorns, and pierced Love's side,
Let passion burn us up with heat,
To wake and find Love crucified—
O Love arise lest our despair
Ring madly laughing through the air!

For quick redemption of the race
We rose and brake the rod and creed,
We blindly smote Thee on the face,
The Saviour of all souls that bleed:
And what word dare we raise to Thee
But Thy first cry from Calvary?

O deathless face, twice strong with death,
Death conquers us no more than Thee!
Hear now what our repentance saith,
Assuage our soul's sharp agony!
Let now Thy Spirit in us brood,
Now stay our heart's red tide of blood!

To half a word we have been true,
For that vain half Thy vengeance spare;
Our hearts are filled with bitter rue,
Spurn not our broken, contrite prayer.
Yea! Though we pierced Thy sacred side,
There let our griefs and wild words hide!

There heal our hurts' continual fire,
From fruitless strife our spirits fold;
Let only Love be our desire
Until our tale of days is told:
Thy peace be ours, O thorn-crowned King!
Thy sacred strife, without our sting!

AT EVENING PRAYER

(In a Cathedral)

NOT in these places where the priesthood gives
Its tardy homage to earth's natural laws—
As hollow cliffs by ruining seas abased—
Not here I worship the Eternal Cause.

If there be God, His temple is not found
Save underneath the star-strewn vault of Heaven:
The sunrise and the sunset are His Mass;
His holy candles are the Pleiads seven.

Yet here within these walls a sacred sense
Mars the aloofness of my listless air,
The quiet chorale of the evening hymn
Steals through the aisles persuading me to prayer.

On the stained window fades the last, faint light;
The Cross gleams whiter as the shadows dim;
The roof grows distant till the columns seem
Like giant shafts that point aloft to Him.

So one brief space, till my light also dies,
And once again I mark illusion's power;
Mantled once more with grave indifference,
I am spectator of the tranquil hour.

A play of fancy makes it seem to me
As though the glory of the vanished day
Were now a halo round about each head
Of those who kneel here as in trust they pray.

Their faces glister with their radiant joy;
They ask not questions, for they surely know;
God's Word is theirs, His Saints, His Comforter;
And with such surety, ah, who would not glow?

A little wistfully I mark their peace—
My life-long quest, their confidence of love—
But the stern warder of my soul forbids
The fruitless seizure of the Holy Dove.

Confounded by life's fixed antinomies,
We know, yet dare not, never slain desires:
We look on them as dreamers of vain dreams,
Yet we ourselves but follow wandering fires.

Ah, like the Son of Man, we sons of men,
Having, whereon to lay our heads, no place!
'T is His hand knocking at our hearts we feel,
While, gravely pleading, we yet see His face.

Till like that Christ we loved in early faith
(Loving Him yet in our unquietness)
We draw young children to us, bidding them
Speak of those things we cannot now confess.

We worship things we have not, and we love
That which we are not, yet to be are fain:
And Truth unfound is sharp as, found, 't is sweet,
But neither Force nor Will can Truth attain.

THE NEW AGE

To W. H.

OUT of this world of bitter strife and stress,
Where Love is beaten with a thousand rods,
We drive like sand across the wilderness,
With mad, blind eyes, pursued by mad, blind gods.

The extreme West and East together cry
For one quick ending of all vain desire:
With piteous prayers to Love and Life they sigh,
With souls that writhe in their perpetual fire.

The Green God's eyes pursue some like a snake;
And Lust charms others with a crimson kiss;
Grey, sleepy flowers and magic music shake
The drowsy incense of narcotic bliss

On souls too fragile for our thin-lipped days
Whose horror over them like wings is spread;
And yet another, full of tender ways,
Plucks out his heart and sings how they are dead.

We wilt, like slaves beneath each heavy lash,
And as black beads we number every wrong;
And what some garner we for ever thrash,
We tread the winepress and cry out, "How long?"

The stark, straight order of each ponderous day
Like some slow-swinging prison-gate revolves,
And there behind it, hid from every ray,
The heart turns solid and the brain dissolves.

But ye unbowed by heavy death and doom,
Whose necks are broken not with sin and shame,
Fan Hope's dull embers smouldering in the gloom,
And bind a girdle round the world, of flame!

With Love uncantered by this leprous night,
Where shadows groan and obscene serpents hiss,
Rise up, rise up, arrayed in splendid might,
Nor heed our sighs who have not faith for this.

Salt tears have rusted nine strings of our lyre,
And one shall find delight too sweet, too sharp:
But ye with hope and dreams of wrought desire,
Take up the lute and strike the ten-stringed harp!

ON A DEAD MODERN POET

THIS man had once a marvellous lyre
 Within the heart of him;
It wailed from purgatorial fire,
 It praised the seraphim.

But, moulded by his Age, he bound
 His soul with iron chains;
Its rapturous joys he gave no sound,
 Or multitudinous pains.

His erstwhile worshipped Christ became
 A myth and muse for Art;
No other zeal burst into flame,
 Or fitfully lit his heart.

He saw, although his wrath was still,
His days' dark slavery:
Relentless laws above man's will
Would work their liberty.

He made his face a mask, whose eyes,
Like stone, no life betrayed:
And what wild love would thither rise,
He stripped and scourged and flayed.

Whatever hope might break its stare,
And let his heart be seen,
Remorselessly he bent it there
To fit that sphinx-like mien.

He bade his once storm-shaken lyre
To cease its tremorings
That quivered to his heart's desire
On sweetly muted strings.

The stifed feelings of past days
Subserved the craft of Art,
In subtly modulated ways
He salved his sorrows' smart.

He sang in lyrics light as air,
Ethereal as a mist;
Which, singing, none divined despair,
Or pent-in anguish wist.

For they were filigreed like frost,
And set with gems like dew—
A diadem the moon had lost,
Or one the stars ne'er knew.

So faultless in their grief were they,
Their form became a fashion—
This poet now beneath the clay,
He only knew their passion!

7

A FALLEN LEADER

BECAUSE my words and deeds divide,
My cry goes echoing down the wind:
Shall blindness be to blindness guide,
And both not double error find?

From reef and shoal the single light
Burns danger to the driving bark,
And may no spirit in the night
Flash fires of warning from the dark?

All vessels wrecked and broken here,
Where surf-spray spins like frozen snow,
Sailed once where skies and seas are clear—
As even I not long ago.

The strange sea's strange eternal grave
Folds round its sleepers till the end,
And scarce a mast shall mark the wave
That drowned an enemy or friend.

Yet none that knew a night in June,
And saw the rose-set evening-star,
Or heard the summer waters' tune,
Forgets where peace and quiet are.

MAGIC

TO KENNETH

COME, let me sing you a song, my lad!
But what shall the burden be?
What? "Anything not too long," my lad!
Is that what you said to me?

There was a boy with a magic ring,
And magic crystals two!
I touched the ring (or the ring touched me!)
I looked in the crystals blue.

And what did I see? Come, climb my knee
And pillow your head just so!
The wonderfulest things you ever could dream,
And more than the wisest know.

*There were fairies that dance on summer nights
In glades where the moonbeams shine,
And little brown elves and tricky sprites
Whose mischief is match for thine,
And evil witches with baleful lights
And rhymes that are worse than mine.*

*Princesses with marvellous golden hair,
Disguised as toads that croak;
Lonely turrets with never a stair;
Portals of iron and oak;
Fiery dragons on guard, till there
They die by the hero's stroke.*

*Valiant knights with lance in rest
Who go forth righting wrong;
Striplings armed on a maiden quest
Who ride with a careless song;
Kings from the East and Kings from the West,
Warriors thousands strong.*

*Carpets that fly; efreets and slaves,
Who always do as they're told;
"Open Sesames;" secret caves;
Wonderful lamps so old;
Galleons under the ocean waves
With cargoes of silver and gold.*

*Ships of the line with carven poops,
Frigates like white sea-gulls;
Death's heads; cross-bones; pirate sloops
With long, black, raking hulls;
Red-skins, scalps and wild war-whoops;
Assegais, clubs and skulls.*

*Famous admirals, westward-bound!
Ships on the open sea!
Sails all set the world to round,
Pennant and flag flown free!
Food for fishes—an unmarked mound—
Wonder and mystery!*

Heigh-ho! Who sighed? Was it you or I?
(O what was I ever wise for?)
Or perhaps it was only the wind went by,
(For what should I have such sighs for?)
Heigh-ho, for laughter and lights that die,
The glamour that youth still tries for.

Ah! What is the burden of my song?
And what is the magic ring?
And what are the wonderful crystals blue
That transform everything?

The burden's right in my arms, my lad!
Ah, sleepy-head, yes, it's you!
The magic ring is your laughter, lad!
Your eyes are the crystals blue!

MORE MAGIC

(For Grown-Ups)

SO you "made a mistake" and you kissed me,
 (To wish me good-night, that was all),
Too old to be kissed were you thinking?
 How old?—I forget!—and so tall!

And what if, in turn, lad, I kissed you,
 Surprised at your happy mistake,
Perhaps I'll confess, in a whisper,
 It was one I had wished you might make.

Could you understand, even a little,
 If I mused (as do poets) out loud,
How near to our gladness is sadness,
 How near to the sunshine the cloud?

Could you understand, even a little,
How Pierrot grows bitter at times,
The Teller of Tales becomes weary,
The Poet so tired of his rhymes?

Ah, no! So let me stop musing
And give myself up to the hour—
My bitter-sweet songs be forgotten—
I will build me up tower upon tower.

With romance, hand in hand we'll adventure,
At odds in some glorious strife,
And perhaps what with me was but dreaming
With you shall be fulness of life.

Your eyes are brimmed over with wonder,
You make me I do not know what,
But just for a night and a day, lad,
I will be all the things I am not.

As of old in the torch-race each runner,
O'ertaken, surrendered the brand,
My skill is but meet to keep living
A flickering flame for your hand.

I shall pass to the shadow and darkness,
I shall drink of oblivion's streams,
Yet still for one lingering moment
I dwell in the kingdom of dreams.

Though I by myself can avail not,
An impotent minion of clay,
Yet virtue is mine by a token
To give you whatever you say.

As a touch unaware in Arabia
Conjures slaves of that thing or this,
Your mistake all unconcious was magic,
And I am the slave of love's kiss.

Ah, what will this Jinnee, then, give you?
("Whatever you ask him") Ah, what?—
To be all the things you have deemed him—
Yes! All of the things he is not!

YOUTH AND THE POET

TO CHARLIE

*"Crabbed Age and Youth
Cannot live together."*

WHY do I linger and loiter for you as a lover,
Charlie, my lad, but a boy?
Ah folly and madness of mine, that I seek to recover
Youth's light-hearted joy.

Yet ever with you, hand in hand, I am fain to be faring,
In sun or in shower!
Possessed once more with the magic of old, and uncaring
Of aught save the hour!

As wine at a banquet of kings is poured out your
laughter,
Or streams in full flood;
I catch but one echo at dawn, and all day long after
It fevers my blood!

By the flash of your eyes as you stand like a sculptor's
study,
Or run, elate;
I see once more with the sight that the world would
muddy,
And hail my fate!

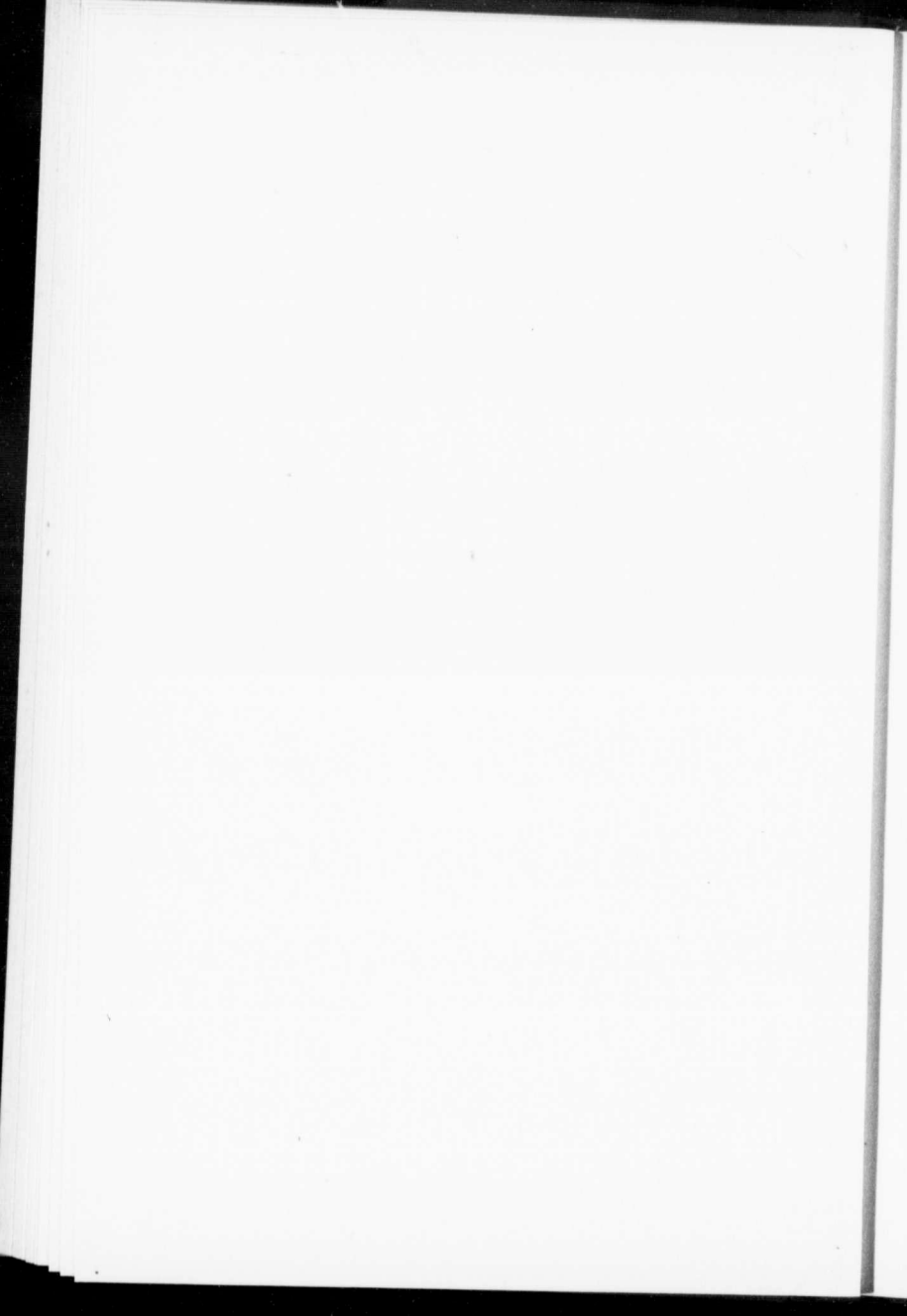
But Youth has its day, and Age, after all, has its sea-
son—
Apart should we fare?
Too soon from your sunshine I lapse to the winter of
reason—
Should I weight you with care?

I should remember the words of the greatest of sages,
And wander alone,
Or write out my heart, or turn over yellowing pages,
Unseen and unknown.

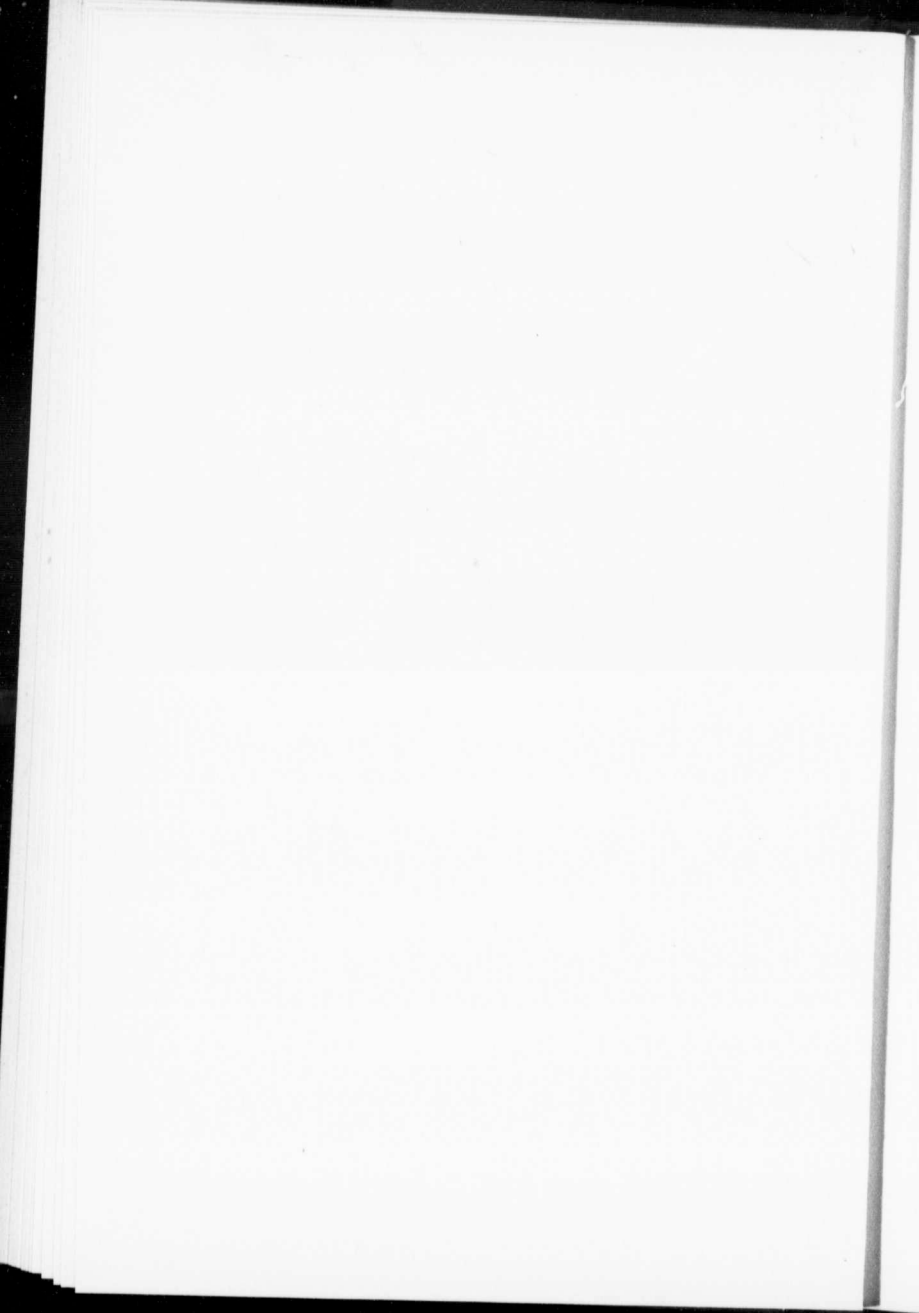
Yet surely between us are bonds of mystical union?
You dream as do I.
For Youth that with hopes and with dreams doth hold
not communion,
Must wither and die.

For true is the scripture which saith that the people must
perish
Who give them not heed:
And, Lad, that some Vision you even a little would
cherish
Is all that I plead.

Pass me by, if you will, with your mirth like a sunlit
river,
Heart-whole and care-free:
Only waste not in shallows, but flow down, deepening
ever,
To the limitless sea!



SONNETS
on
THE EUROPEAN WAR



IN HASTE:—

(i)

THE CAUSE

or

A "SCRAP OF PAPER"

A "SCRAP OF PAPER," nothing more, indeed!
A "word," a mere "word," mere "neutrality,"
So "often disregarded" (aye, in Germany!)
Did Britain of the hideous "price" take heed?
Had Britain thought where this "last step" might lead?
'Twas "life and death" to all their "strategy"
To "pass through Belgium,"—but let that be—
Of war twixt us, how "terrible," what need?

Aye, aye! For certain sums of shameful gold,
Or silenced by ignoble fear and sloth,
Nor black nor white should seem now as of old,
And we should make one damnéd grey of both:
But, God be praised that Britain yet doth hold
More dear than life or death her once-sworn oath!

(ii)

THE CALL TO ARMS

or

LE CHAMP DE MARS*

(August 14th, 1914)

THE roll of distant thunder fills the air,
A flash of lightning rends the lowering sky;
Heaven to earth's warfare seems to make reply
As though on warfare Heaven would war declare,
And with this omen bids all men prepare
To meet the judgment that is throned on high:
Until, as rank on rank of men pass by,
The full storm bursts upon the marshalled square.

Could such fit prelude, symbol so august,
For their stern mission man's own mind devise?
Stilled is the cheering of blind battle-lust
By these grave portents of their enterprise:
Yet, O my England, as thy cause is just,
Not thou shalt tremble at these ominous skies.

*The chief square of assembly in Montreal.

(iii)

THE JUDGMENT ON EARTH

or

WATERLOO

1914

TO THE KAISER

WHAT auguries and portents dost thou see,
As now thine hosts to Waterloo draw near?
What spirits in the deepening night appear,
Awaked from slumber through a century?
Doth Blücher's shade rise up and say to thee
That French by Germans first were routed here,
And those dire happenings of that fateful year
Yet once again in this our day shall be?

If so thou dreamest, 't is thine awful pride
Hath wrought the vision to thine overthrow;
Insensate power hath sight to thee denied,
And warped thy judgment so thou should'st not know—
That here nor French nor Germans fought and died,
But outraged Freedom laid a despot low!

(iv)

THE JUDGMENT IN HEAVEN

or

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

TO THE KAISER

IN vain on God for succour dost thou call,
Who mad'st thy counsellors of no degree;
Thy blind ambition His will might not see,
Thy sword-won empire by the sword shall fall.
'T is thou whom God shall smite, thou whited wall,
Who mad'st thy power but feed thy vanity,
And thine own people shall at last be free,
Whilst thou art haled to God's high judgment-hall.

Then in His Presence thou shalt stand alone,
And in His balances thou shalt be weighed;
And thou who didst but boast thee of thy throne
Shalt learn strange silence and shalt be afraid:
And as thou passest to thy doom unknown
Thou shalt look up and see—lo, Bismarck's shade!

JANUARY THE 19th, 1915

O ENGLAND! Though Revenge doth cry to thee,
Deal not in kind with a dishonoured foe:
Man reapeth surely that which he doth sow,
And nations may not turn their destiny.
Stand where thou art, in Right and Liberty,
And let him glory in each dastard blow:
Aye! Hell's own powers may seek thine overthrow;
Armed thus, thou need'st not doubt thy victory.

Not yet as cravens to thy knees we cling,
Nor shall the sons of Nelson smirch thy fame:
Watch thou in patience, Time thy day shall bring.
Scarborough and Yarmouth! Let him boast his shame!
But when thou strikest, round the world shall ring
A greater even than Trafalgar's name!

TO THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THY sons have served the Truth with single aim;
Not vainly unto them hath Freedom cried;
With no uncertain voice they have replied
To Belgium ravished by the sword and flame:
They have not feared to allocate the blame
Where Time shall prove their judgment justified,
And have set forth that judgment far and wide,
Whilst *thou* art silent till thou temptest shame.

The Hague is made a mock, a dream at best,
If those to its conventions signat'ry
Not even by one word their breach protest: `
And 't is small wonder men ask, "Is this she
Who hath so loudly Law and Right professed,
Yet takes blood-money for her usury?"

HITHERTO

TO PRESIDENT WILSON

"Recalling the humane and enlightened attitude hitherto assumed by the Imperial German Government."

TEXT OF THE AMERICAN NOTE.

MAY 13th, 1915

(i)

(May 13th, 1915)

INDEED of what doth Belgium complain?
Or what weak pity doth her fate inspire?
Her once fair land laid waste by sword and fire
Till but one strip thereof she doth retain,
Her women ravished and her children slain,
And those not murdered set to work for hire:
Yet she forgets in her unfounded ire
That "hitherto" her foe hath been "humane!"

Seven days, the ocean now hath laved thy dead,
And still the legate of the bloody Hun
Doth stand within thy courts accredited:
Seven days, seven days, and thou hast nothing done,
And, at their end, but "hitherto" hast said—
Enough! 'T is plain thou art not Lincoln's son!

(ii)

(July 21st, 1915)

I DID you wrong! In undue haste I spoke!
But at first glance my dull wit did not see
The mordant humour of your irony—
Your patent meaning only on me broke:
Possessed by Belgium, my pent anger woke
To instant fury at what seemed to me
The bitterest taunt e'er heaped on injury—
But now it stands forth as your master-stroke!

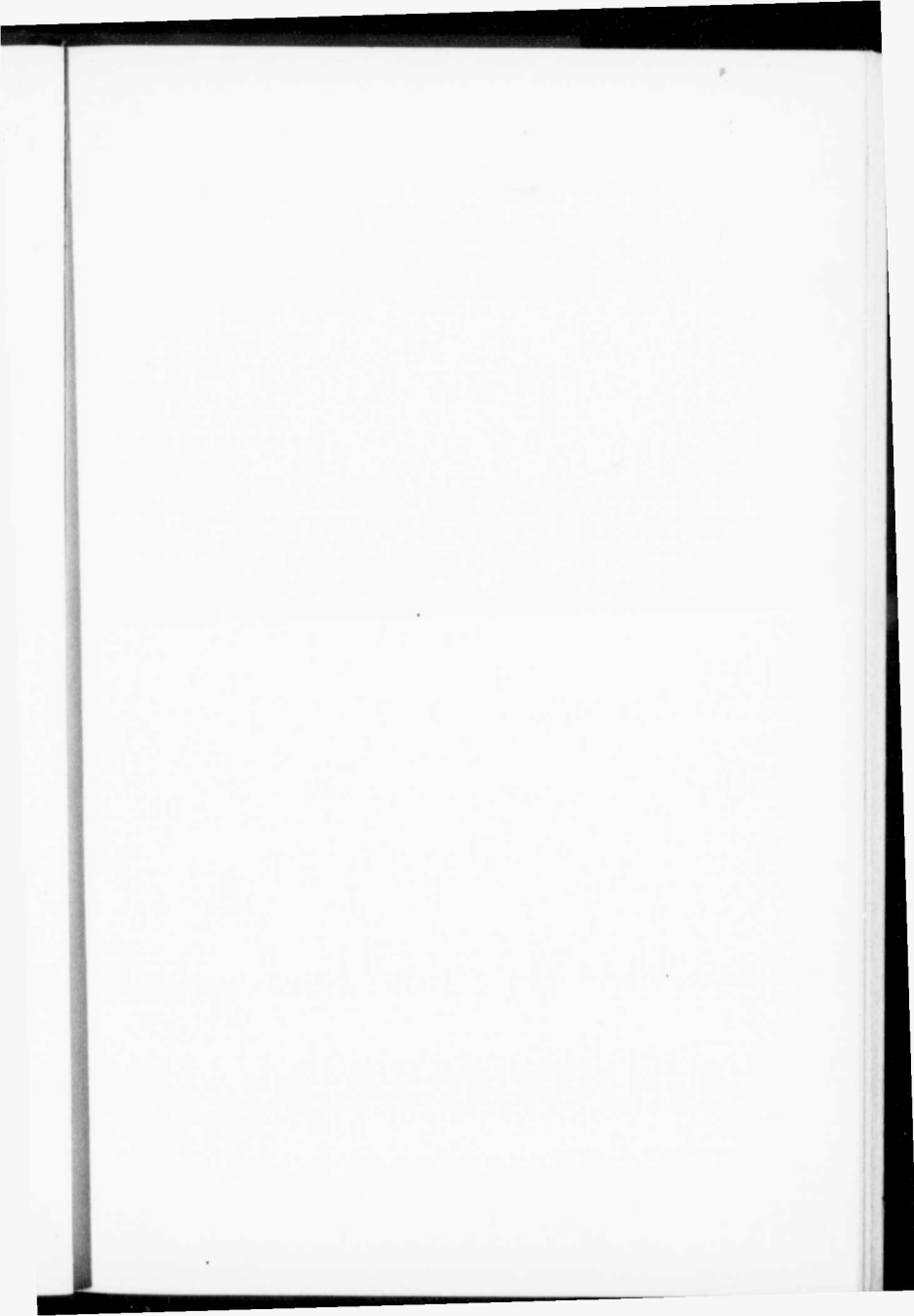
Aye, "hitherto"! I like it now so well,
Time shall not stale nor custom wither it!
Indeed I think the very fiends of Hell
Could hardly find refrain more sweet or fit—
Even the Hun might fall beneath its spell
And go down gibbering to his proper pit!

(iii)

(Three days after the sinking of the "Arabic")

NAY, but I wrong myself! In truth indeed
And righteous wrath was my indictment drawn!
Let thine own lackeys, plentiful as spawn,
So, if they will, your craven spirit read.
For me, I know not aught save Belgium's need,
And Hell's own jaws that on her ruin yawn:
And past redemption are their souls in pawn
That her deliverance will not even plead.

And, for the offices you proffer, Sir,
When victory shall crown the allied powers,
Forgive us if we should perchance demur.
We need not aid from one that hides and cowers
In gilded safety, and we may prefer
The terms of treaty to be wholly ours!

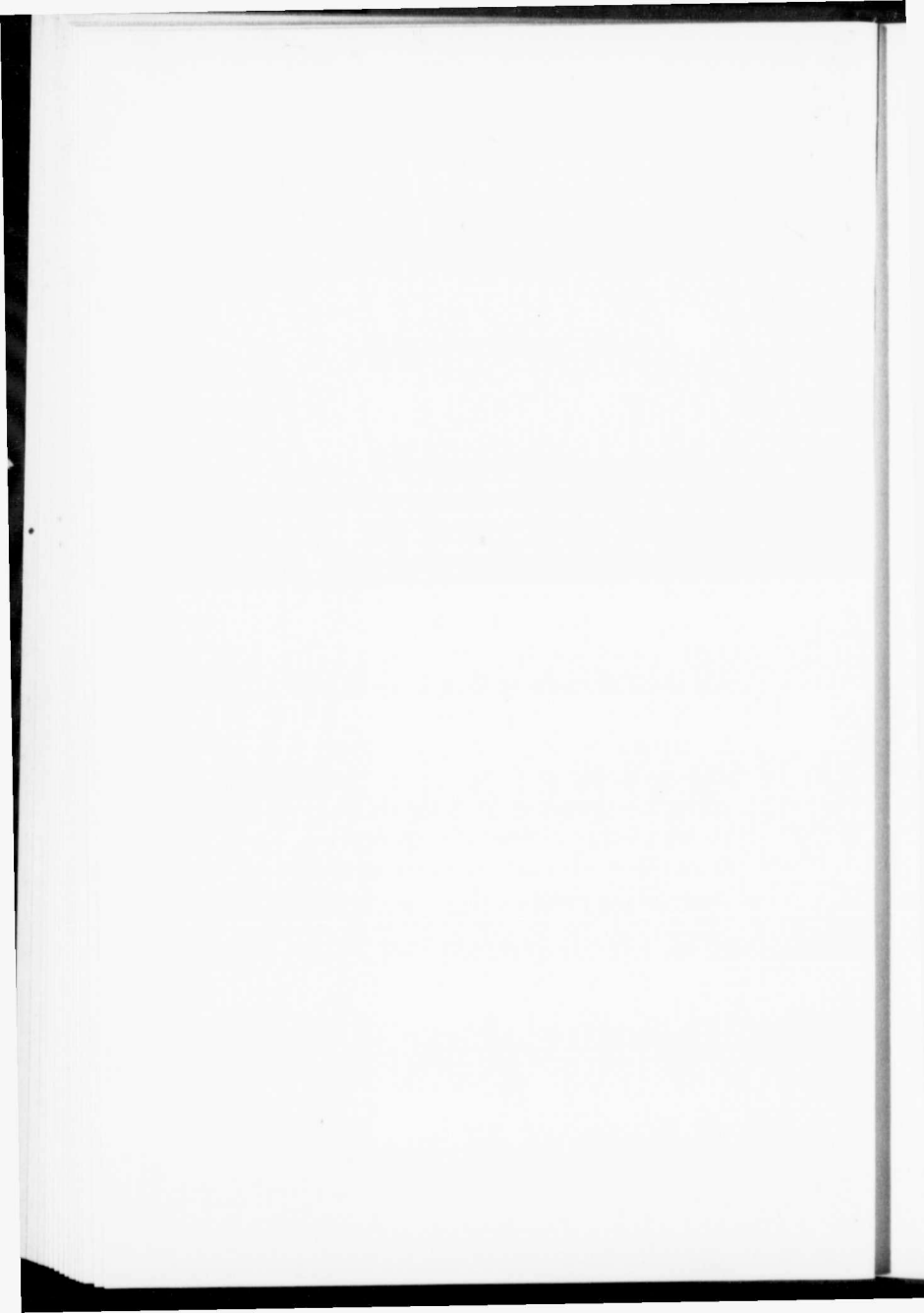


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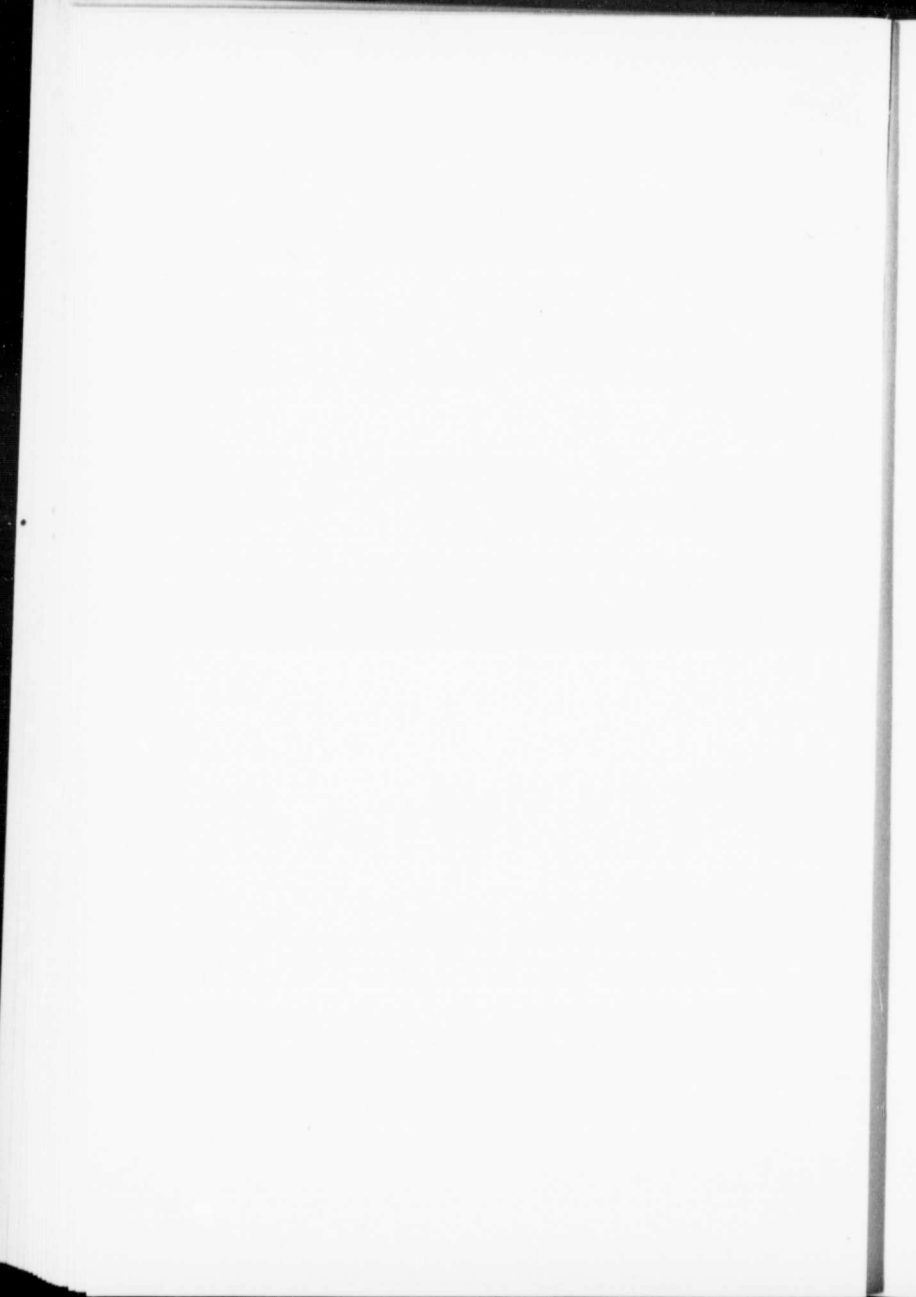
THE ANCIENT GAME

THE chess-board of the world is set for war:
The kings, that take, but may not taken be;
The queens, unprized in this hostility;
The fortress-castles in the corners four;
The cringing bishops, state-bound to the core;
The inglorious knights of trade and usury—
But at the front of this great panoply
The pawns are ranged to pay the sordid score.

By tortuous juggling, in the name of right,
The marshalled forces to the field are led;
But as they grapple in the sanguine fight,
The arch-intriguers' blood is never shed:
The pieces on the board stand, black and white—
The pawns lie scattered, black and white—both red!



FURTHER SONNETS



CHRISTMAS EVE, 1914

'T is Christmas Eve, when all men bow before
The Incarnate Christ! The Prince of Peace! Ah
me!

How full of iron is the tragedy
With all professing Him fast-locked in War.
How long, how long, we bitterly implore,
Shall this affliction of Christ's servants be?
And we forget, in our extremity,
Man's boast that might must rule for evermore.

"Peace upon earth." Nay, only peace within
Earth's very bosom doth man's striving know;
And till Christ's reign shall verily begin
There shall not cease the ensanguined rivers' flow;
But now, O Winter, for one night, our sin,
Though red like crimson, make as white as snow.

“AND THERE WAS NO MORE SEA”

A CRY of lamentation fills the air;
The world is bowed beneath Death's shadowing
wings;

Faith's own lips fail, and in Faith's ear there rings
The old, old question through her rote-wrought prayer;
Her words go wandering, and she, kneeling there,
To some frail spar of her great shipwreck clings:
What salvage shall be of her voyagings,
So swiftly ended in such great despair?

“Lie still, O trembling soul, lie still, I say:
Arraign Me not, nor justify thou Me;
To all My Will let all thy life be Yea,
O Children of Mine own Eternity.
Lie still, lie still, for thou shalt know that day
When there shall be no death and no more sea.”

THE SACRIFICE

THE bread and wine are turned to flesh and blood,
The scent of incense steals upon the air,
And, bowed in silence by the altar there,
The hungry eyes of men cry out for food.
High, steadfast souls that once with Love had stood
Forget vain hope in ways of fruitless prayer,
And age-sought Truth's lure-hazed lovers stare
With listless gaze upon the holy rood.

Christ's kingdom falls, by Mammon overthrown;
Above the town men's souls go up in smoke;
Their flesh and blood are frozen into stone;
Their rude limbs bowed by such an iron yoke
That even this dull people will not groan,
But rise and break their rulers at one stroke.

SIC ITUR AD ASTRA

To _____

(i)

COME, let us end it! Once for all, good-bye!
At last to me my littleness is plain.
If once I loved you, let that word remain,
Perchance you once loved me and marvel why.
But now, henceforward, let me mortify
Each hope and longing that would rise again
To run the cycle of its self-fed pain
And weary you with its perpetual cry.

But, ah! I cannot thus the past dismiss,
And every memory of you forswear;
That I forget you or forget your kiss,
In vain, alas, I bid myself declare;
And when, in dreams, I tread some black abyss,
'T is your kind angel holds me by the hair.



To Face Page 69.

ERRATA

Page 69, Line 2, should read,

Nay, more—I made you God—on you I laid

Page xi, Line 6, should read,

And called you to me, while, with shaded sight,

Page, 15, Line 1, should read,

There is no God, thou said'st, but ne'er hast said

Page 15, Line 21.

After "strife" read a period instead of a comma.

Page 105, Line 4.

For "would" read "should."

These are corrections, not printer's errors.

(ii)

IT was great folly! I made you a priest,
And more than priest—I made you God—on you
I laid

My sins' whole burden, and to you displayed
Each one in detail to the very least.
Till like a spectre at some worldly feast,
Whose nameless horror makes each heart dismayed,
Their dark miasma did your soul invade,
And all your youth's light, care-free laughter ceased.

And yet I would not have that time undone
When Heaven and Hell first jarred your idle day,
For out of tribulation you have won
The richer gladness of a well-fought fray:
And if through me that long war was begun,
What matters it if I be cast away?

(iii)

YOU give not of your bread one single crust—
I cannot blame you—my deserts are less—
My soul is crooked—when I fain would bless
I call down evil, and for love give lust.
And, being misshapen, I am rightly thrust
Afar from men within the wilderness
Where nought but stones my spirit shall confess
Till I am equal with the drifting dust.

The soul must go its own appointed way,
And first its own integrity defend,
And least for my blind passion should you stay
Your high, austere, inexorable end:
Yet, if God heard what I might haply pray,
Would you take pity, once more call me—friend?

(iv)

I THINK there have been none like those past days
Before you knew the twofold gift I had;
I think that you have never been so glad
As when, linked arm in arm, by secret ways,
We roamed the heath as in a magic maze
And talked like lovers, and were strangely sad:
Until the stars rose and, divinely mad,
We learned new tongues to tell each others praise.

Remembering their glamour like a flame,
My deadened spirit hopes for one brief space,
And I forget what has been, and the shame,
In vivid dreams of this and that old place:
And sometimes, waking, I cry out your name,
And feel the darkness where I saw your face.

(v)

THEY mocked my words because they could not see
The troubled waters of their secret spring,
Nor that dark shadow like a vulture's wing
Poised always in dread prescience over me.
Not mine the august impersonality
That in its own the whole world's grief doth sing,
And from the stuff of its own suffering
Reclothes the high, eternal tragedy.

But you will know me with those poets one,
Who, seeing all things broken with despair,
And finding nothing sweet beneath the sun,
Strove but that Sorrow should be passing fair,
And Death most gracious, and till Time was done,
Made of their crying music on the air.

(vi)

PERCHANCE from off the altar-fire some day
Upon my lips shall fall the living coal,
And I shall know, at last, that central soul
The sun in heaven, and all the stars obey.
That furtive word I felt, but could not say,
In radiant letters on a dazzling scroll
Shall leap forth perfect both in part and whole,
At once triumphant over Death's decay.

Then those fierce flames I could not mortify,
With sharper pangs each time inflicting me,
Shall be Love's ministers and fire the sky
With signal portents over land and sea:
I shall speak out the world's unuttered cry,
But you, in all, its undertone will be.

ENNOIA

(i)

THERE was a Woman, God's Thought, as they say,
Who unto angels gave the earth in care,
But vainly, for they found Man's daughters fair,
And, putting their high place and charge away,
In verdant groves at evening with them lay,
Siring a riotous race that filled the air
With clamorous cries of strife, while, clotted there,
Innocent blood dabbled the blackened day:

Till She, unable to unfasten Fate,
Seeing Her children in such misery thrust,
Took on their form, their sins to expiate,
An inert prey to their most violent lust—
A Queen of Beauty raised reincarnate,
Fair and more fair from each last frame of dust.

(ii)

AND you, my Love, who make my days a flame,
My soul a solitude where all things burn,
Cooled only by your kisses as you yearn
With cloying sweetness o'er my whispered name:
How shall I know that you are not the same,
Kissing Christ's Cross, though toward the South you
turn—

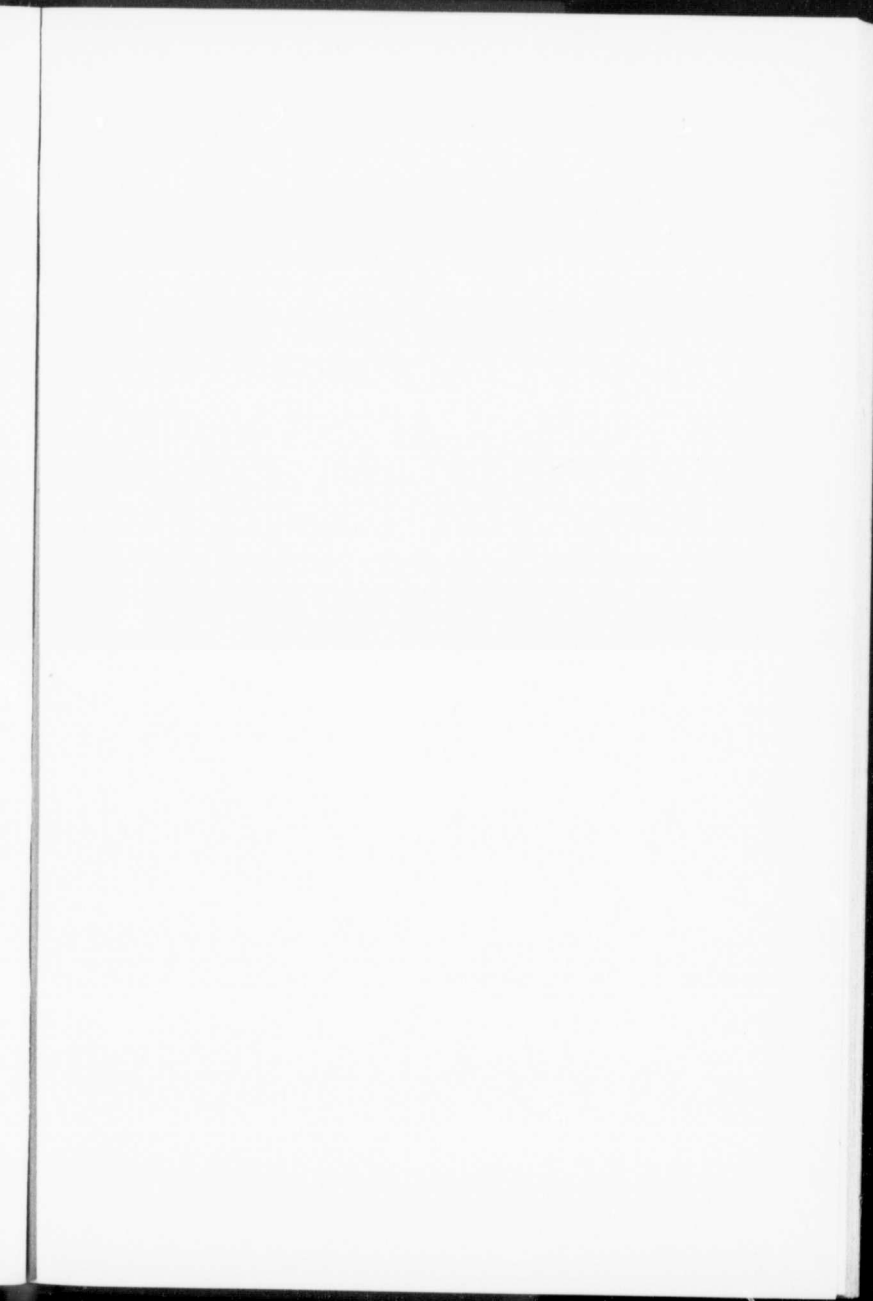
Making sin fair, until God's judgment spurn
The sudden anguish of the end of shame?

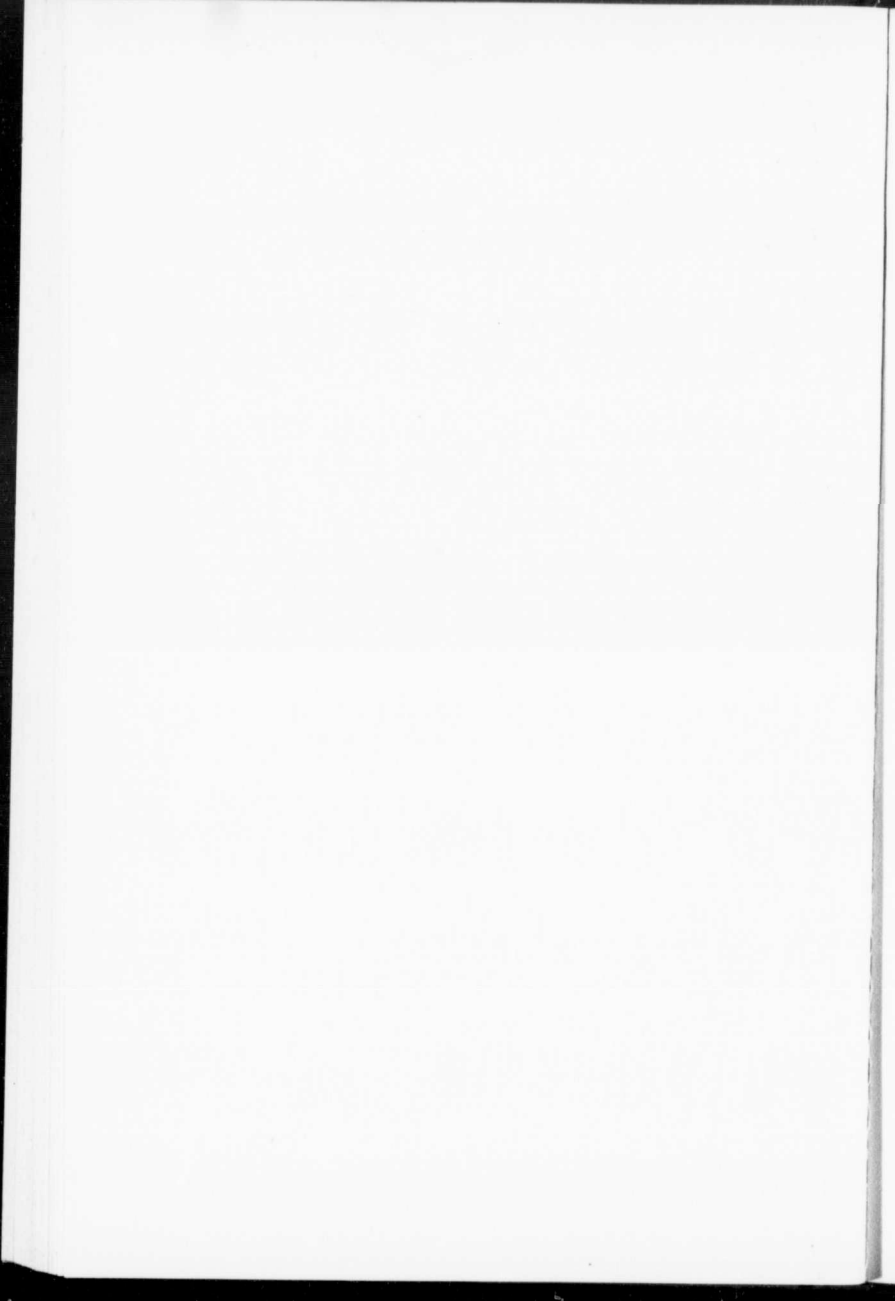
For Sappho's songs fall fainter on my ears
Than the most quiet of your love-glad sighs,
And Helen's beauty, perished not these years,
Seems but a cloud crossing your calm, deep eyes:
Yet—have they virtue, though such queens shed tears,
To win one soul from Hell to Paradise?

(iii)

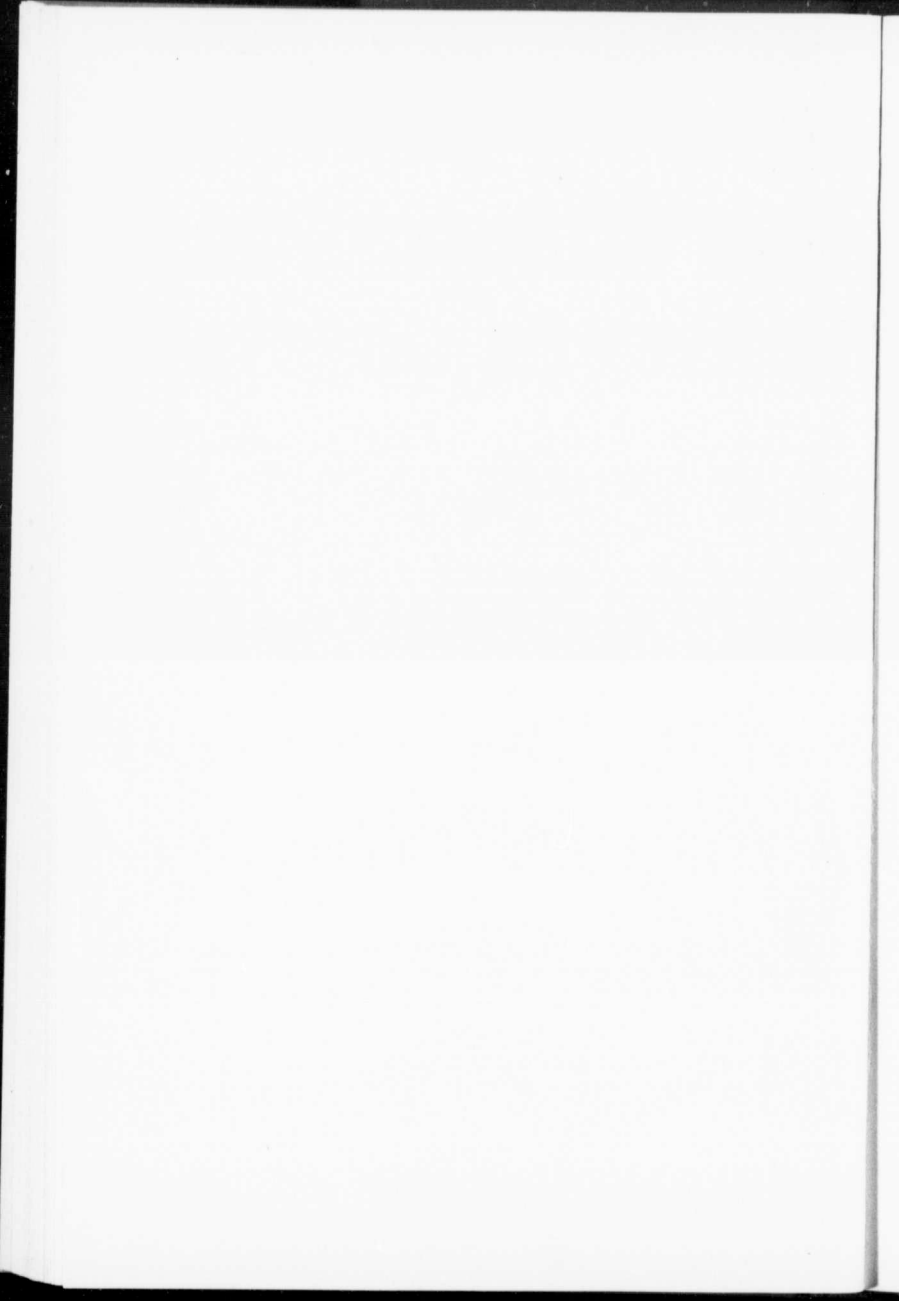
A GAELIC legend saith that one, Christ's Bride,
Shall come, even as Christ, but from the West,
And with white peace and holy quiet dressed,
Shall shepherd all the nations to her side:
And nameless longing like a child shall hide,
Forgetting the old grief, upon her breast;
There shall the infinity-worn soul find rest,
And there the sick heart shall be satisfied.

She is God's Thought, and if a Queen thou art,
As my love counts thee, thou art surely she;
For Heaven's flames, not Hell's fires, burn my heart,
Raptured with foretaste of the bliss to be,
Seeing thy beauty—and that fairer part
Which those that love not Truth can never see.





FURTHER POEMS



EX VINCULIS

TO ARTHUR SYMONS

YEA, I have been given words—
Love and Sorrow and Death;
Some far-off singing of birds,
And a shadowy star of faith.

And my rhymes, they are told and old,
Written of trodden lands;
The new on my lips lie cold,
Though they sear my soul with brands.

And I sing with the winds of sorrow;
The slave, not the lord of fair words:
But I cry in my heart for the morrow—
The dawn-raptured singing of birds!

HUNGER

I *F* you came back dear love!

We would lie side by side,
Face close to face,
Singing would be denied,
Words have no place.
Thou should'st lie still as death,
Calm in my love,
Only with quiet breath
Thy breasts should move;
Even thine eyes should be
As closed in sleep,
All the full flower of thee
Should silence keep:
I, too, would silent be,
I, too, would sleep.

Thou should'st not look at all,
Giving me grace,
Letting my kisses fall
On thy dear face,

Healing an agony
In one brief hour,
Setting my sorrows free
Shower upon shower,
Sleeping, nor seeking why
These things are so,
Trusting I do not try
Thy love by show:
Sleeping, nor seeking why
These things are so.

Thus would I lie a space
In one long kiss,
Thy cheek its burying-place,
Asleep save this,
(Lest if our eyes should meet,
Their lightnings thrust
Through thee or me O sweet
Charr one to dust),
Healing an agony
Burnt deep by years,
So setting sorrows free,
And not by tears:
Who thought such could not be
Save by dry tears.

Still would we be, no songs
Thy throat should move,
Lest they should smart old wrongs
Or deeds of love.
All our whole song would be
Sung in our eyes,
Lest break the heart of me,
If otherwise.
Even with eyelids fast,
My songs' sweet flight
Through mine and thine should cast
Their notes of light,
Burning with fiery blast
Their sad-sweet flight.

I would not let a word
Pass of things done,
One broke his heart who heard—
He was God's Son.
Not as a lover I
Thy cheek would kiss,
But one plucked suddenly
From an abyss;
Or as a child who fears,
Hiding its head;
O love beyond all tears,
O grief unshed,
I as a child who fears
Would hide my head.

Thou should'st not fear my way,
Though thy blood fled,
Leaving as white as May
Cheeks once rose-red.
Though life had given thee
Love without end,
Thou the poor life of me
At once should mend,
Letting my lips, O sweet,
Lost time make up,
Giving my starved soul meat,
A wine-filled cup,
Kissing me back, O sweet,
Healing time up!

Yea, though compassion rise
From equal pain,
It would thy tearless eyes
Fill with deep rain—
Rain for the pain of me,
Though thou hast been
Love-bound and sorrow-free,
Even Joy's Queen:
Kissing me back, O sweet,
Healing time up!

WIND AND FOAM

TO PHYLLIS

WE were only just boy and girl, Love,
And nothing of ill was done;
And you came from the waves like a naiad,
And laughing you ran in the sun.

I was nothing to you but a boy, Love,
And what did I understand?
You were swift and straight as an arrow,
And your feet flew over the sand.

You fled like a startled fawn, Love,
And your limbs were as fair as your face,
Yet though I was only a boy, Love,
I followed not after in chase.

(I had no word for it then, Love,
But I felt you a spirit, and I—
I worshipped, not daring to touch you,
Save with a kiss like a sigh.)

Till you tired and you lay down beside me,
And talked of the sea and the ships,
And I played with your hand and your hair, Love,
And longed all day for your lips.

I can remember your hair, Love,
Remember the light of your eyes,
They were brown (and your lips were red, Love),
Yes, brown and wondrously wise!

I remember so many things, Love,
So little I understand,
But most I remember you flying,
A naiad over the sand.

Yes, Love, you are always flying,
Your hair far out on the wind;
And though my heart break to follow,
I worship you time out of mind!

TO MARJORIE L. C. PICKTHALL

OUT of the snows of the North,
Over the frozen streams,
A voice from the South sprang forth,
Filled full of music and dreams.

With calm not of languor and sighing
From passion drained dry to the lees,
But so as a bird in its flying
Takes rest on the breast of the seas.

Though thy songs sing of peace like charmed
water,
Though they cling unto Love like a vine,
Yet the Southland hath not thee for
daughter,
But half of her portion is thine.

Only her flowers hast thou taken,
Her breezes and whispering streams,
Till the ears of the Northland awaken
To music, her eyes unto dreams.

Her heart with thy songs thou hast broken,
With quiet and peace she is dressed:
Austere yet, she sets for a token
A Rose on the snows of her breast.

IN MEMORY OF ERNEST DOWSON

CONTEMN me not with scornful strength
Because my songs are light as air,
Because the perfume of a flower
Invades my soul with grey despair.

Ah, mock me not with rude, rough words,
Because my songs are like a shell,
And in them like a murmuring wave
Sad sounds of sighs and sorrows dwell.

For love's fair angel came to me
With no great deathless, glorious word;
His feet no burnished sandals shod,
Nor pulse of flame his pinions stirred.

He came on me all unaware,
His wings half woke me with a kiss,
So tenderly, and then he fled—
How can I sing of more than this?

A GARDEN

GATHERING in Spring for flowers,
I found them broken,
Ruined by April's showers—
A bitter token.

In Summer sought again,
Leaf, bud and blossom,
Blackening for thirst of rain,
Died on earth's bosom.

In a wet Autumn, grey,
Crisp leaves made sodden,
Into dank rot and clay
They were down-trodden.

Winter within his grave
With strait bands bound them,
Made them a lonely cave
Where no man found them.

Ah, grief that grows not less,
Making each season
Full of great heaviness,
Untruth and treason.

What angel hath the Lord
Set by my garden,
Holding what flaming sword—
An awful warden—

That where my footsteps move,
Fleeing my visage,
In me the things of love
Find evil presage?

Is there upon my brow
A brand proclaiming
All that I would not show,
Unto my shaming?

Ah, that some love might be,
Full of sweet reason,
Redeeming sin for me,
Making each season

Full of abiding flowers,
Green leaves and grasses,
Coloured by suns and showers,
That whoso passes

Breathing their scent, his way,
(As some lone lover
Hearing old tunes) might stay
Till they were over.

ROMANCE

To C. L. W.

BENEATH a crescent moon I saw
A ship ride past the bar,
She made a way of milky white,
Each breaking spray a star:
She sailed between two gates of gold
To bear her freight afar.

The decks were made of cedar wood,
The masts were made of fir,
The sails were of the finest silk,
Which dropped with scent of myrrh:
There was no ship so beautiful,
I wept for sight of her.

But, ah! The cruel winds of heaven,
They drave her to and fro,
From north to south, from east to west,
Save where she willed to go.
She sank upon a sunken rock
Whose name no man may know.

The sun's rays burned with torrid heat
From skies like burnished brass,
The foam-flecked waves died down until
The sea was smooth as glass:
Far off from even alien ports
I saw her splendour pass.

On upright keel till eventide
Her queen-like grace she bore,
Save only round about her brows
No fillet white she wore:
But when the Star of Love appeared
She sank to rise no more.

No drifting mast there was, no sign
That might her passing tell,
Only a silver bubble rose
Upon the sphinx-like swell;
A silver bubble rose and—lo!
A miracle befell.

It burst—and strait a globe of fire
Flashed forth and passed from sight!
Some say, with earthly wisdom wise,
'T was but Saint Elmo's Light;
But I know well it was her soul
That starward sped its flight!

And there she sails in holy gales
On waters always even,
And when they die to her do fly,
Or shriven or unshriven,
All restless souls betwixt the poles,
And find in her their haven.

So now, when wanderlust and love
My very fibres grip,
And mark me from my fellow-men,
From out that ghostly ship
A viking's daughter leaneth down
To kiss me on the lip.

And then I rise up from their midst
And go out secretly,
(They deem me mad, divining not
The spell that masters me),
And run till from the highest cliff
I gaze toward the sea!

A DREAM OF DEATH

I DREAMED that love was ended,
And you and I were dead,
That all sweet words were spoken,
All faiths and futures broken,
All fruitless prayers ascended,
And all vain praises said:
I dreamed that love was ended,
And you and I were dead.

I dreamed the sea's salt kisses
Lay buried in your hair,
With her calm breathing lifting,
Like gold-brown seaweed drifting,
And drowned in grey-green hisses
I drifted with you there:
I dreamed the sea's salt kisses
Lay buried in your hair.

I dreamed, where men forget all,
Or laughter or great grief,
For pity of our passion
The gods fair flowers did fashion,
From your red lips the petal,
From my dark dust the leaf,
To grow where men forget all,
Or laughter or great grief.

I dreamed o'er Lethe's waters
With heavy scent they leant,
Like broken spirits sighing,
More glad than sad for dying,
Content with death's calm quarters,
With sterile striving spent:
I dreamed o'er Lethe's waters
With heavy scent they leant.

THE LILY LAKE

BELOVED, to-night come not baring
Thy breasts as of yore for my head:
Come not with thy breasts for my pillow,
Between them thy roses of red.

But come, if thou comest, with veiling,
And loose-flowing vesture of grey,
And place on thy breasts at their meeting
No flowers, and look not my way.

And pass as a spirit that passes
With silent, sweet motion of grace,
Till thou com'st to the flower-strewn hollow
Thou knowest, then turn thou thy face.

To the pool in the midst of the hollow
Bend downwards the light of thine eyes,
Till its pitiless terror of blackness
Is blue as the star-riven skies.

And seek thou me there by the waters,
For there my last waiting shall be;
Thou shalt single me out from the shadows
By fresh-gathered lilies for thee.

There laid on the grass with three kisses
Three sprays thou shalt find laid aside,
These three at thy breasts' tender meeting
Then place, and in silence abide.

Then when I shall see, O belovéd,
The lilies at peace on thy breast,
In the glass on the face of the waters
My lips on thy lips shall be pressed.

On the face of the water my kisses
Shall fall, and thou shalt remain,
Till lost in the lure of thy beauty
I sink and I rise not again.

Then turn from the pool and the hollow,
And let not my lilies have tears,
But rejoice that my kisses have fallen
Upon thee and shamed not thy years.

So come, if thou comest, in silence,
And bare but thy face to the wave,
Lest mad with the breath of thy body
I strew forth the flowers on thy grave!

INNOCENCE

IF I could see, as once, my face
In this clear pool of limpid rain,
My smiles like sunbeams there would chase,
And I would laugh and laugh again.

I'd strip me of my clothes and mark
My naked body mirrored there;
But I'd not blush though I were stark,
Or even think my limbs were fair.

Like some great boy let out from school,
The water through my hands I'd run;
I'd swim and dive till I were cool,
Then dry me in the air and sun.

I'd lie there happy as a king,
 With eyes of wonder at the sky,
And if a maiden wandering
 Upon my innocence should spy—

If she as I were fresh and sweet,
 She'd loose her kirtle and her hair,
And run to me with glee-spiced feet,
 As artless as a passing air.

Or were she old and cold and wise,
 And stained with this world's purity,
She'd hide and look and lose her eyes
 Like Peeping Tom of Coventry.

But ah! 'T is I am stained, alack!
 And madness drives me to this glade;
And my own eyes at me look back
 With looks that make me half afraid.

My hair is tangled like an ape's,
 My cheeks are hollow like a hag's,
My shame some wretched raiment drapes
 That hangs in holes and fluttering rags.

No rapturous pulse makes me to slip
 These rags, and laugh and dive and swim,
For through each rent and tattered strip
 I see some kinked and crooked limb.

My sad, mad eyes are riveted
 By their reflection, and they burn,
Till like Medusa's horrid head,
 My flesh and blood to stone they turn.

And if some maid on me should stray,
 With artless glance she would not run
With loosened dress and hair, to play
 Like children laughing in the sun.

Or she with this world's ways were wise,
 And from some leafy bower might see,
She would not hide with curious eyes,
 And tempt her lewd virginity.

She'd fly with only half a glance,
 Pursued by shapes of speechless dread,
Though thorn and brier her breasts should lance,
 And all the roses be more red.

A hideous laugh would pierce the air,
Succeeded by as hideous peace,
Whilst I that awful image there
Would see till Time itself should cease!

UN DES DAMNÉS

*Suggested by seeing a reproduction of A. P. Roll's pastel
"Damnée" in "The Studio" April 15th, 1914.*

IT was a soul whose hope was blotted out,
Set free from tardy agonies of doubt.

I only saw its fair, white, naked back,
Its goodly neck, and hair of raven black.

With head bowed down to earth I saw it kneel,
Its clean, sweet thighs bent back upon each heel.

From down-turned roots its hair did endwise rest,
Strained from the neck it fell before each breast.

Its hands hung listlessly on either side,
It seemed a falling spirit petrified,

Filled full of beauty as a wave of gloom
Frozen in falling on the sands of doom,

Crested with plates of brittle, frozen white,
Smooth and impassive with suspended might,

Shining like ivory lit by one pale gleam
Which haunts the dead black darkness like a dream.

It bowed in this wise, uttering not a sound,
With mad, grey eyes that looked toward the ground.

A hollow graven by incessant tears
Upheld the bitter water of the years—

A glass before it traced with shadowings,
A dull, red mirror filled with curious things,

Broken by ripples that with turbid pace
Moved from the dipping hair across its face,

In which a marvellous shape of death did pass,
Yet not that form which bowed before its glass:

It was a ghostly shadow, void of light,
From the dark regions of eternal night.

Like an illusion of disordered sleep,
Across the soul's right image it did creep,

A cloudy veil of white and livid green
Through which the bended shape was dimly seen.

It seemed like some miasmal fume of Hell
Chilled by earth's suns and rendered visible.

Its neck was headless like a spectral shape
That marks a scene of cruel, bloody rape.

It held a skull in its lean, palsied hands,
Fastened together with grey, gristly strands.

A headless Perseus with Medusa's own,
Which turned the damned soul watching into stone!

DELILAH

I WOULD I could crush Thee
And trample Thee under;
I would I could scatter
Thy bonds wide asunder!
I would I were braver
And stronger and purer;
I would I could scorn Thee,
Deceitful Allurer!

In one hand Thou bearest
Both riches and treasure,
And holdest before Thee
Wine filled to good measure:
I drink at Thy fountain,
O Charmer so artless;
I love Thee, I love Thee,
O Charmer so artless!

The dregs of Thy winepress
Are bitter with sorrow,
Thy riches and treasure
Are ashes to-morrow!
I drink at Thy fountain
O Charmer so artless;
I loathe Thee, I hate Thee,
O Charmer so heartless!

Ah, yes! Too, too often
Thy fountain I've tasted!
In sterile embraces
My strength has been wasted!
Yet vain is my reason,
And vain is my grief;
Too quick my repentance,
Its time is as brief!

The eyes of true manhood
Are pure, and Thou quailest;
Not meeting their lightnings,
Thou tremblest and palest:
But me with Thy beauty
Thou makest like water—
A sheep for the shearer,
An ox for the slaughter!

'T is but for one moment,
I touch but one finger;
And then, how I know not,
I linger and linger.
I lie down beside Thee,
And toy with Thy tresses,
Then closer I draw Thee
With fonder caresses.

Thy passion devours me,
Mine arms are around Thee;
Thou liest on my bosom,
Thine arms are around me;
Thy kisses are burning
My brow and my forehead!
My kisses are burning
Thy brow and Thy forehead!

Thine eyes rest upon me,
I hasten to kiss Thee;
Yet, loathing my madness,
I curse Thee and hiss Thee!
I bless Thee and curse Thee!
I love and I hate Thee!
Thy passion consumes me—
Will that satiate Thee?

The dregs of Thy winepress
Are bitter with sorrow;
I dash them in passion—
Yet drink them to-morrow!
Thy kisses are burning
My brow and my forehead!
O cursed Delilah!
Would God I were dead!

CIRCE

✓ A GENTLE whirr of silver wings,
More soft than any dove's,
Woke all my dead imaginings:
Alas, the wings were Love's!

✓ Like Mary's angel, veiled in light
And paradisal mist,
She leaned toward me from the height,
And little more I wist.

A face more beautiful than Death,
And lips more sweet than Life,
My panting spirit gave the breath
Of everlasting strife.

I give my soul not wine or meat,
I sleep not soon or late,
For kneeling blindly at her feet,
If she shall speak, I wait.

All night I lie awake and burn,
The day is mad with drouth,
And night and day I blindly yearn
For kisses on my mouth.

Mine eyes look blankly into space,
With fever-hollowed rims;
And mixed with one, white phantom-face,
The whole world reels and swims.

About the stars my feet are driven,
And torn with frozen snow,
Till red rain drips from all the heaven
Upon a world of woe.

Sometimes like wind-combed clouds her hair
Before my vision flies,
And in the midst like omens there,
I see her lustrous eyes.

And burnt with all the bliss of Heaven,
And all the pains of Hell.
✓ My little strength to her is given,
Who has so great a spell.

I stretch to her my futile hands,
✓ Struck dumb with withered hope;
For well I know she understands,
And laughs the while I grope!

TWO PARAPHRASES

(1)

PROVERBS

CH. III

O HAPPY he that wisdom finds,
That doth right judgment hold;
Far better is its merchandise
Than silver or fine gold.

Than rubies she more precious is,
Or woods or perfumes rare;
And all the things thou canst desire
Can not with her compare.

In her right hand is length of days,
And in her left hand wealth;
In her right hand she honour hath,
And in her left hand health.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace;
To them that lay their hold on her
A tree of life she is.

By wisdom God did found the earth,
Heaven makes his knowledge known;
By Him the depths are broken up,
The clouds their dews drop down.

Thou, having her, shalt have no fear,
Such graces in her meet;
Thou shalt not fear to lay thee down,
With her shall sleep be sweet.

For God the Lord shall be thy trust,
Thy perfect confidence:
Thy feet from snares he shall prevent
In all thy journeying hence.

ii.

PSALM CIV.

O LORD my God with honour clothed,
And splendid majesty!
My soul shall magnify Thy Name
As long as it shall be!

As with a robe Thou coverest
Thyself with glorious light,
Thou stretchest out the starry heavens
To canopy the night.

Within the waters of the deep
Thy chambers' beams are laid,
The pinions of the wind Thy path,
The clouds Thy chariot made.

Thine angels Thou dost spirits make,
To walk earth's ways within;
Thy ministers a flaming fire
To guard their gates from sin.

From Heaven Thou waterest the hills
And givest springs their birth,
Thou causest herbs to grow that man
May bring forth from the earth.

Thou bearest in Thine hand the sea
On which the ships assay;
Thou makest darkness for the night,
And light to fill the day.

The earth doth tremble at Thy look,
Thy glory, Lord, is such—
The very hills and mountains smoke
If Thou their peaks but touch.

Yet man at dawn goes forth to work,
Unbroken by Thy power;
And for his labour Thou dost give
The quiet evening hour.

In Thee we all our being have,
Thy love assigns our breath;
We wait on Thee for wine and meat,
And by Thy love is death.

With peace those bitter spirits heal,
That mock Thy gracious ways,
And fill our hearts with innocence
And joy to sing Thy praise.

PRINTED BY
THE FINANCIAL TIMES PRESS
MONTREAL