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# TOWARD THE GULF



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**TORONTO**

# TOWARD THE GULF

BY  
EDGAR LEE MASTERS

AUTHOR OF  
"SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY," "SONGS AND SATIRES,"  
"THE GREAT VALLEY"

New York  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1918

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## TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

It would have been fitting had I dedicated Spoon River Anthology to you. Considerations of an intimate nature, not to mention a literary encouragement which was before yours, crowded you from the page. Yet you know that it was you who pressed upon my attention in June, 1909, the Greek Anthology. It was from contemplation of its epitaphs that my hand unconsciously strayed to the sketches of "Hod Putt," "Serepta The Scold" ("Serepta Mason" in the book), "Amanda Barker" ("Amanda" in the book), "Ollie McGee" and "The Unknown," the first written and the first printed sketches of The Spoon River Anthology. The *Mirror* of May 29th, 1914, is their record.

I take one of the epigrams of Meleager with its sad revealment and touch of irony and turn it from its prose form to a verse form, making verses according to the breath pauses:

"The holy night and thou, O Lamp, we took as witness of our vows; and before thee we swore, he that would love me always and I that I would never leave him. We swore, and thou wert witness of our double promise. But now he says that our vows were written on the running waters. And thou, O Lamp, thou seest him in the arms of another."

[ vii ]

## TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

In verse this epigram is as follows:  
The holy night and thou,  
O Lamp,  
We took as witness of our vows;  
And before thee we swore,  
He that would love me always  
And I that I would never leave him.  
We swore,  
And thou wert witness of our double promise.  
But now he says that our vows were written on the  
    running waters.  
And thou, O Lamp,  
Thou seest him in the arms of another.

It will be observed that iambic feet prevail in this translation. They merely become noticeable and imperative when arranged in verses. But so it is, even in the briefest and starkest rendering of these epigrams from the Greek the humanism and dignity of the original transfer themselves, making something, if less than verse, yet more than prose; as Byron said of Sheridan's speeches, neither poetry nor oratory, but better than either. It was no difficult matter to pass from Chase Henry:

“In life I was the town drunkard.  
When I died the priest denied me burial  
In holy ground, etc.”

to the use of standard measures, or rhythmical arrangements of iambics or what not, and so to make a

## TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

book, which for the first third required a practiced voice or eye to yield the semblance of verse; and for the last two-thirds, or nearly so, accommodated itself to the less sensitive conception of the average reader. The prosody was allowed to take care of itself under the emotional requirements and inspiration of the moment. But there is nothing new in English literature for some hundreds of years in combinations of dactyls, anapests or trochees, and without rhyme. Nor did I discover to the world that an iambic pentameter can be lopped to a tetrameter without the verse ceasing to be an iambic; though it be no longer the blank verse which has so ennobled English poetry. A great deal of unrhymed poetry is yet to be written in the various standard rhythms and in carefully fashioned metres.

But obviously a formal resuscitation of the Greek epigrams, ironical and tender, satirical and sympathetic, as casual experiments in unrelated themes would scarcely make the same appeal that an epic rendition of modern life would do, and as it turned out actually achieved.

The response of the American press to Spoon River Anthology during the summer of 1914 while it was appearing in the *Mirror* is my warrant for saying this. It was quoted and parodied during that time in the country and in the metropolitan newspapers. *Current Opinion* in its issue of September, 1914, reproduced

## TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

from the *Mirror* some of the poems. Though at this time the schematic effect of the Anthology could not be measured, Edward J. Wheeler, that devoted patron of the art and discriminating critic of its manifestations, was attracted, I venture to say, by the substance of "Griffy, The Cooper," for that is one of the poems from the Anthology which he set forth in his column "The Voice of Living Poets" in the issue referred to. *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse*, followed in its issue of October, 1914, with a reprinting from the *Mirror*. In a word, the Anthology went the rounds over the country before it was issued in book form. And a reception was thus prepared for the complete work not often falling to the lot of a literary production. I must not omit an expression of my gratitude for the very high praise which John Cowper Powys bestowed on the Anthology just before it appeared in book form and the publicity which was given his lecture by the *New York Times*. Nathan Haskell Dole printed an article in the *Boston Transcript* of June 30, 1915, in which he contrasted the work with the Greek Anthology, pointing in particular to certain epitaphs by Carphylides, Kallaischros and Pollianos. The critical testimony of Miss Harriet Monroe in her editorial comments and in her preface to "The New Poetry" has greatly strengthened the judgment of to-day against a reversal at the hands of a later criticism.

## TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

This response to the Anthology while it was appearing in the *Mirror* and afterwards when put in the book was to nothing so much as to the substance. It was accepted as a picture of our life in America. It was interpreted as a transcript of the state of mind of men and women here and elsewhere. You called it a Comedy Humaine in your announcement of my identity as the author in the *Mirror* of November 20, 1914. If the epitaphic form gave added novelty I must confess that the idea was suggested to me by the Greek Anthology. But it was rather because of the Greek Anthology than from it that I evolved the less harmonious epitaphs with which Spoon River Anthology was commenced. As to metrical epitaphs it is needless to say that I drew upon the legitimate materials of authentic English versification. Up to the Spring of 1914, I had never allowed a Spring to pass without reading Homer; and I feel that this familiarity had its influence both as to form and spirit; but I shall not take the space now to pursue this line of confessional.

What is the substance of which I have spoken if it be not the life around us as we view it through eyes whose vision lies in heredity, mode of life, understanding of ourselves and of our place and time? You have lived much. As a critic and a student of the country no one understands America better than you do. As a denizen of the west, but as a surveyor of the east and west you have brought to the country's interpretation



## TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

a knowledge of its political and literary life as well as a proficiency in the history of other lands and other times. You have seen and watched the unfolding of forces that sprang up after the Civil War. Those forces mounted in the eighties and exploded in free silver in 1896. They began to hit through the directed marksmanship of Theodore Roosevelt during his second term. You knew at first hand all that went with these forces of human hope, futile or valiant endeavor, articulate or inarticulate expression of the new birth. You saw and lived, but in greater degree, what I have seen and lived. And with this back-ground you inspired and instructed me in my analysis. Standing by you confirmed or corrected my sculpturing of the clay taken out of the soil from which we both came. You did this with an eye familiar with the secrets of the last twenty years, familiar also with the relation of those years to the time which preceded and bore them.

So it is, that not only because I could not dedicate Spoon River to you, but for the larger reasons indicated, am I impelled to do you whatever honor there may be in taking your name for this book. By this outline confession, sometime perhaps to be filled in, do I make known what your relation is to these interpretations of mine resulting from a spirit, life, thought, environment which have similarly come to us and have similarly affected us.

## TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

I call this book "Toward the Gulf," a title importing a continuation of the attempts of *Spoon River* and *The Great Valley* to mirror the age and the country in which we live. It does not matter which one of these books carries your name and makes these acknowledgments; so far, anyway, as the opportunity is concerned for expressing my appreciation of your friendship and the great esteem and affectionate interest in which I hold you.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS.

The following poems were first printed in the publications indicated:

Toward the Gulf, The Lake Boats, The Loom, Tomorrow is my Birthday, Dear Old Dick, The Letter, My Light with Yours, Widow LaRue, Neanderthal, in Reedy's Mirror.

Draw the Sword, Oh Republic, in the Independent.

Canticle of the Race, in Poetry, a Magazine of Verse.

Friar Yves, in the Cosmopolitan Magazine.

"I pay my debt for Lafayette and Rochambeau," in Fashions of the Hour.

# TOWARD THE GULF



# TOWARD THE GULF

*Dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt*

From the Cordilleran Highlands,  
From the Height of Land  
Far north.  
From the Lake of the Woods,  
From Rainy Lake,  
From Itasca's springs.  
From the snow and the ice  
Of the mountains,  
Breathed on by the sun,  
And given life,  
Awakened by kisses of fire,  
Moving, gliding as brightest hyaline  
Down the cliffs,  
Down the hills,  
Over the stones.  
Trickling as rills;  
Swiftly running as mountain brooks;  
Swirling through runnels of rock;  
Curving in spheréd silence  
Around the long worn walls of granite gorges;  
Storming through chasms;  
And flowing for miles in quiet over the Titan basin  
To the muddled waters of the mighty river,

[ 1 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

Himself obeying the call of the gulf,  
And the unfathomed urge of the sea!

\* \* \* \* \*

Waters of mountain peaks,  
Spirits of liberty  
Leaving your pure retreats  
For work in the world.  
Soiling your crystal springs  
With the waste that is whirled to your breast as you  
run,  
Until you are foul as the crawling leviathan  
That devours you,  
And uses you to carry waste and earth  
For the making of land at the gulf,  
For the conquest of land for the feet of men.

\* \* \* \* \*

De Soto, Marquette and La Salle  
Planting your cross in vain,  
Gaining neither gold nor ivory,  
Nor tribute  
For France or Spain.  
Making land alone  
For liberty!  
You could proclaim in the name of the cross  
The dominion of kings over a world that was new.  
But the river has altered its course:

[ 2 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

There are fertile fields  
For a thousand miles where the river flowed that you  
knew.

And there are liberty and democracy  
For thousands of miles  
Where in the name of kings, and for the cross  
You tramped the tangles for treasure.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Falls of St. Anthony tumble the waters  
In laughter and tumult and roaring of voices,  
Swirling, dancing, leaping, foaming,  
Spirits of caverns, of canyons and gorges:  
Waters tintured by star-lights, sweetened by breezes  
Blown over snows, out of the rosy northlands,  
Through forests of pine and hemlock,  
Whisperings of the Pacific grown symphonic.  
Voices of freedom, restless, unconquered,  
Mad with divinity, fearless and free:—  
Hunters and choppers, warriors, revelers,  
Laughers, dancers, fiddlers, freemen,  
Climbing the crests of the Alleghenies,  
Singing, chopping, hunting, fighting  
Erupting into Kentucky and Tennessee,  
Into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois,  
Sweeping away the waste of the Indians,  
As the river carries mud for the making of land.  
And taking the land of Illinois from kings



## TOWARD THE GULF

And handing its allegiance to the Republic.  
What riflemen with Daniel Boone for leader,  
And conquerors with Clark for captain  
Plunge down like melted snows  
The rocks and chasms of forbidden mountains,  
And make more land for freemen!  
Clear-eyed, hard-muscled, dauntless hunters,  
Choppers of forests and tillers of fields  
Meet at last in a field of snow-white clover  
To make wise laws for states,  
And to teach their sons of the new West  
That suffrage is the right of freemen.  
Until the lion of Tennessee,  
Who crushes king-craft near the gulf,  
Where La Salle proclaimed the crown,  
And the cross,  
Is made the ruler of the republic  
By freeman suffragans,  
And winners of the West!

\* \* \* \* \*

Father of Waters! Ever recurring symbol of wider  
freedom,  
Even to the ocean girdled earth,  
The out-worn rule of Florida rots your domain.  
But the lion of Tennessee asks: Would you take from  
Spain  
The land she has lost but in name?

## TOWARD THE GULF

It shall be done in a month if you loose my sword.  
It was done as he said.  
And the sick and drunken power of Spain that clung,  
And sucked at the life of Chile, Peru, Argentina,  
Loosened under the blows of San Martin and Bolivar,  
Breathing the lightning thrown by Napoleon the Great  
On the thrones of Europe.  
Father of Waters! 'twas you who made us say:  
No kings this side of the earth forever!  
One-half of the earth shall be free  
By our word and the might that is back of our word!

\* \* \* \* \*

The falls of St. Anthony tumble the waters  
In laughter and tumult and roaring of voices!  
And the river moves in its winding channel toward the  
gulf,  
Over the breast of De Soto,  
By the swamp grave of La Salle!  
The old days sleep, the lion of Tennessee sleeps  
With Daniel Boone and the hunters,  
The rifle men, the revelers,  
The laughers and dancers and choppers  
Who climbed the crests of the Alleghenies,  
And poured themselves into Tennessee, Ohio,  
Kentucky, Illinois, the bountiful West.  
But the river never sleeps, the river flows forever,  
Making land forever, reclaiming the wastes of the sea.

## TOWARD THE GULF

And the race never sleeps, the race moves on forever.  
And wars must come, as the waters must sweep away  
Drift-wood, dead wood, choking the strength of the  
river—  
For Liberty never sleeps!

\* \* \* \* \*

The lion of Tennessee sleeps!  
And over the graves of the hunters and choppers  
The tramp of troops is heard!  
There is war again,  
O, Father of Waters!  
There is war, O, symbol of freedom!  
They have chained your giant strength for the cause  
Of trade in men.  
But a man of the West, a denizen of your shore,  
Wholly American,  
Compact, clear-eyed, nerved like a hunter,  
Who knew no faster beat of the heart,  
Except in charity, forgiveness, peace;  
Generous, plain, democratic,  
Scarcely appraising himself at full,  
A spiritual rifleman and chopper,  
Of the breed of Daniel Boone—  
This man, your child, O, Father of Waters,  
Waked from the winter sleep of a useless day  
By the rising sun of a Freedom bright and strong,  
Slipped like the loosened snows of your mountain  
streams

## TOWARD THE GULF

Into a channel of fate as sure as your own—  
A fate which said: till the thing be done  
Turn not back nor stop.  
Ulysses of the great Atlantis,  
Wholly American,  
Patient, silent, tireless, watchful, undismayed  
Grant at Fort Donelson, Grant at Vicksburg,  
Leading the sons of choppers and riflemen,  
Pushing on as the hunters and farmers  
Poured from the mountains into the West,  
Freed you, Father of Waters,  
To flow to the Gulf and be one  
With the earth-engirdled tides of time.  
And gave us states made ready for the hands  
Wholly American:  
Hunters, choppers, tillers, fighters  
For epochs vast and new  
In Truth, in Liberty,  
Posters from land to land and sea to sea  
Till all the earth be free!

\* \* \* \* \*

Ulysses of the great Atlantis,  
Dream not of disaster,  
Sleep the sleep of the brave  
In your couch afar from the Father of Waters!  
A new Ulysses arises,  
Who turns not back, nor stops

## TOWARD THE GULF

Till the thing is done.  
He cuts with one stroke of the sword  
The stubborn neck that keeps the Gulf  
And the Caribbean  
From the luring Pacific.  
Roosevelt the hunter, the pioneer,  
Wholly American,  
Winner of greater wests  
Till all the earth be free!

\* \* \* \* \*

And forever as long as the river flows toward the Gulf  
Ulysses reincarnate shall come  
To guard our places of sleep,  
Till East and West shall be one in the west of heaven  
and earth! •

•  
\* \* \* \* \*

## THE LAKE BOATS

In an old print  
I see a thicket of masts on the river.  
But in the prints to be  
There will be lake boats,  
With port holes, funnels, rows of decks,  
Huddled like swans by the docks,  
Under the shadows of cliffs of brick.  
And who will know from the prints to be,  
When the Albatross and the Golden Eagle,  
The flying craft which shall carry the vision  
Of impatient lovers wounded by Spring  
To the shaded rivers of Michigan,  
That it was the Missouri, the Iowa,  
And the City of Benton Harbor  
Which lay huddled like swans by the docks?

You are not Lake Leman,  
Walled in by Mt. Blanc.  
One sees the whole world round you,  
And beyond you, Lake Michigan.  
And when the melodious winds of March  
Wrinkle you and drive on the shore  
The serpent rifts of sand and snow,  
And sway the giant limbs of oaks,  
Longing to bud,

## TOWARD THE GULF

The boats put forth for the ports that began to stir,  
With the creak of reels unwinding the nets,  
And the ring of the caulking wedge.

But in the June days—

The Alabama ploughs through liquid tons  
Of sapphire waves.

She sinks from hills to valleys of water,  
And rises again,  
Like a swimming gull!

I wish a hundred years to come, and forever  
All lovers could know the rapture  
Of the lake boats sailing the first Spring days  
To coverts of hepatica,  
With the whole world sphering round you,  
And the whole of the sky beyond you.

I knew the captain of the City of Grand Rapids.  
He had sailed the seas as a boy.  
And he stood on deck against the railing  
Puffing a cigar,  
Showing in his eyes the cinema flash of the sun on the  
waves.

It was June and life was easy. . . .  
One could lie on deck and sleep,  
Or sit in the sun and dream.  
People were walking the decks and talking,  
Children were singing.  
And down on the purser's deck

## THE LAKE BOATS

A man was dancing by himself,  
Whirling around like a dervish.  
And this captain said to me:  
"No life is better than this.  
I could live forever,  
And do nothing but run this boat  
From the dock at Chicago to the dock at Holland  
And back again."

One time I went to Grand Haven  
On the Alabama with Charley Shippey.  
It was dawn, but white dawn only,  
Under the reign of Leucothea,  
As we volplaned, so it seemed, from the lake  
Past the lighthouse into the river.  
And afterward laughing and talking  
Hurried to Van Dreezer's restaurant  
For breakfast.  
(Charley knew him and talked of things  
Unknown to me as he cooked the breakfast.)  
Then we fished the mile's length of the pier  
In a gale full of warmth and moisture  
Which blew the gulls about like confetti,  
And flapped like a flag the linen duster  
Of a fisherman who paced the pier—  
(Charley called him Rip Van Winkle).  
The only thing that could be better  
Than this day on the pier



## TOWARD THE GULF

Would be its counterpart in heaven,  
As Swedenborg would say—  
Charley is fishing somewhere now, I think.

There is a grove of oaks on a bluff by the river  
At Berrien Springs.

There is a cottage that eyes the lake  
Between pines and silver birches  
At South Haven.

There is the inviolable wonder of wooded shore  
Curving for miles at Saugatuck.

And at Holland a beach like Scheveningen's.

And at Charlevoix the sudden quaintness  
Of an old-world place by the sea.

There are the hills around Elk Lake  
Where the blue of the sky is so still and clear  
It seems it was rubbed above them  
By the swipe of a giant thumb.

And beyond these the little Traverse Bay  
Where the roar of the breeze goes round  
Like a roulette ball in the groove of the wheel,  
Circling the bay,

And beyond these Mackinac and the Cheneaux  
Islands—

And beyond these a great mystery!—

Neither ice floes, nor winter's palsy  
Stays the tide in the river.

## THE LAKE BOATS

And under the shadows of cliffs of brick  
The lake boats  
Huddled like swans  
Turn and sigh like sleepers—  
They are longing for the Spring!

## CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Where are the cabalists, the insidious committees,  
The panders who betray the idiot cities  
For miles and miles toward the prairie sprawled,  
Ignorant, soul-less, rich,  
Smothered in fumes of pitch?

\* \* \* \* \*

Rooms of mahogany in tall sky scrapers  
See the unfolding and the folding up  
Of ring-clipped papers,  
And letters which keep drugged the public cup.  
The walls hear whispers and the semi-tones  
Of voices in the corner, over telephones  
Muffled by Persian padding, gemmed with brass  
spittoons.

Butts of cigars are on the glass topped table,  
And through the smoke, gracing the furtive Babel,  
The bishop's picture blesses the picaroons,  
Who start or stop the life of millions moving  
Unconscious of obedience, the plastic  
Yielders to satanic and dynastic  
Hands of reproaching and approving.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Here come knights armed,  
But with their arms concealed,  
And rubber heeled.  
Here priests and wavering want are charmed.  
And shadows fall here like the shark's  
In messages received or sent.  
Signals are flying from the battlement.  
And every president  
Of rail, gas, coal and oil, the parks,  
The receipt of custom knows, without a look,  
Their meaning as the code is in no book.  
The treasonous cracksmen of the city's wealth  
Watch for the flags of stealth!

\* \* \* \* \*

Acres of coal lie fenced along the tracks.  
Tracks ribbon the streets, and beneath the streets  
Wires for voices, fire, thwart the plebiscites,  
And choke the counsels and symposiacs  
Of dreamers who have pity for the backs  
That bear and bleed.  
All things are theirs: tracks, wires, streets and coal,  
The church's creed,  
The city's soul,  
The city's sea girt loveliness,  
The merciless and meretricious press.

\* \* \* \* \*

## TOWARD THE GULF

Far up in a watch-tower, where the news is printed,  
Gray faces and bright eyes, weary and cynical  
Discuss fresh wonders of the old cabal.  
But nothing of its work in type is hinted:  
Taxes are high! The mentors of the town  
Must keep their taxes down  
On buildings, presses, stocks  
In gas, oil, coal and docks.  
The mahogany rooms conceal a spider man  
Who holds the taxing bodies through the church,  
And knights with arms concealed. The mentors search  
The spider man, the master publican,  
And for his friendship silence keep,  
Letting him herd the populace like sheep  
For self and for the insatiable desires  
Of coal and tracks and wires,  
Pick judges, legislators,  
And tax-gatherers.  
Or name his favorites, whom they name:  
The slick and sinister,  
Servitors of the cabal,  
For praise which seems the equivalent of fame:  
Giving to the delicate handed crackers  
Of priceless safes, the spiritual slackers,  
The flash and thunder of front pages!  
And the gulled millions stare and fling their wages  
Where they are bidden, helpless and emasculate.  
And the unilluminate,

## CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Whose brows are brass,  
Who weep on every Sabbath day  
For Jesus riding on an ass,  
Scarce know the ass is they,  
Now ridden by his effigy,  
The publican with Jesus' painted mask,  
Along a way where fumes of odorless gas  
First spur then fell them from the task.

\* \* \* \* \*

Through the parade runs swift the psychic cackle  
Like thorns beneath a boiling pot that crackle.  
And the angels say to Yahveh looking down  
From the alabaster railing, on the town,  
O, cackle, cackle, cackle, crack and crack  
We wish we had our little Sodom back!

\* \* \* \* \*

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

Out of the mercury shimmer of glass  
Over these daguerreotypes  
The balloon-like spread of a skirt of silk emerges  
With its little figure of flowers.  
And the enameled glair of parted hair  
Lies over the oval brow,  
From under which eyes of fiery blackness  
Look through you.  
And the only repose of spirit shown  
Is in the hands  
Lying loosely one in the other,  
Lightly clasped somewhat below the breast. . . .  
And in the companion folder of this case  
Of gutta percha  
Is the shape of a man.  
His brow is oval too, but broader.  
His nose is long, but thick at the tip.  
His eyes are blue  
Wherein faith burns her signal lights,  
And flashes her convictions.  
His mouth is tense, almost a slit.  
And his face is a massive Calvinism  
Resting on a stock tie.

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

They were married, you see.  
The clasp on this gutta percha case  
Locks them together.  
They were locked together in life.  
And a hasp of brass  
Keeps their shadows face to face in the case  
Which has been handed down—  
(The pictures of noble ancestors,  
Showing what strains of gentle blood  
Flow in the third generation)—  
From Massachusetts to Illinois. . . .

Long ago it was over for them,  
Massachusetts has done its part,  
She raised the seed  
And a wind blew it over to Illinois  
Where it has mixed, multiplied, mutated  
Until one soul comes forth:  
But a soul all striped and streaked,  
And a soul self-crossed and self-opposed,  
As it were a tree which on one branch  
Bears northern spies,  
And on another thorn apples. . . .

Come Weissmann, Von Baer and Schleiden,  
And you Buffon and De Vries,  
Come with your secrets of sea shore asters  
Night-shade, henbanes, gloxinias,



## TOWARD THE GULF

Veronicas, snap-dragons, Danebrog,  
And show us how they cross and change,  
And become hybrids.  
And show us what heredity is,  
And how it works.  
For the secret of these human beings  
Locked in this gutta percha case  
Is the secret of Mephistos and red Campions.

Let us lay out the facts as far as we can.  
Her eyes were black,  
His eyes were blue.  
She saw through shadows, walls and doors,  
She knew life and hungered for more.  
But he lived in the mists, and climbed to high places  
To feel clouds about his face, and get the lights  
Of supernal sun-sets.  
She was reason, and he was faith.  
She had an illumination, but of the intellect.  
And he had an illumination but of the soul.  
And she saw God as merciless law,  
And he knew God as divine love.  
And she was a man, and he in part was a woman.  
He stood in a pulpit and preached the Christ,  
And the remission of sins by blood,  
And the literal fall of man through Adam,  
And the mystical and actual salvation of man  
Through the coming of Christ.

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

And she sat in a pew shading her great eyes  
To hide her scorn for it all.  
She was crucified,  
And raged to the last like the impenitent thief  
Against the fate which wasted and trampled down  
Her wisdom, sagacity, versatile skill,  
Which would have piled up gold or honors  
For a mate who knew that life is growth,  
And health, and the satisfaction of wants,  
And place and reputation and mansion houses,  
And mahogany and silver,  
And beautiful living.  
She hated him, and hence she pitied him.  
She was like the gardener with great pruners  
Deciding to clip, sometimes not clipping  
Just for the dread.  
She had married him—but why?  
Some inscrutable air  
Wafted his pollen to her across a wide garden—  
Some power had crossed them.  
And here is the secret I think:  
(As we would say here is electricity)  
It is the vibration inhering in sex  
That produces devils or angels,  
And it is the sex reaction in men and women  
That brings forth devils or angels,  
And starts in them the germs of powers or passions,  
Becoming loves, ferocities, gifts and weaknesses,

## TOWARD THE GULF

Till the stock dies out.  
So now for their hybrid children:—  
She gave birth to four daughters and one son.

But first what have we for the composition of these  
daughters?

Reason opposed and becoming keener therefor.  
Faith mocked and drawing its mantel closer.  
Love thwarted and becoming acid.  
Hatred mounting too high and thinning into pity.  
Hunger for life unappeased and becoming a stream  
under-ground

Where only blind things swim.  
God year by year removing himself to remoter thrones  
Of inexorable law.  
God coming closer even while disease  
And total blindness came between him and God  
And defeated the mercy of God.  
And a love and a trust growing deeper in him  
As she in great thirst, hanging on the cross,  
Mocked his crucifixion,  
And talked philosophy between the spasms of pain,  
Till at last she is all satirist,  
And he is all saint.

And all the children were raised  
After the strictest fashion in New England,  
And made to join the church,

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

And attend its services.  
And these were the children:

Janet was a religious fanatic and a virago,  
She debated religion with her husband for ten years,  
Then he refused to talk, and for twenty years  
Scarcely spoke to her.  
She died a convert to Catholicism.  
They had two children:  
The boy became a forgerer  
Of notorious skill.  
The daughter married, but was barren.

Miranda married a rich man  
And spent his money so fast that he failed.  
She lashed him with a scorpion tongue  
And made him believe at last  
With her incessant reasonings  
That he was a fool, and so had failed.  
In middle life he started over again,  
But became tangled in a law-suit.  
Because of these things he killed himself.

Louise was a nymphomaniac.  
She was married twice.  
Both husbands fled from her insatiable embraces.  
At thirty-two she became a woman on a telephone  
list,

## TOWARD THE GULF

Subject to be called,  
And for two years ran through a daily orgy of sex,  
When blindness came on her, as it came on her father  
    before her,  
And she became a Christian Scientist,  
And led an exemplary life.

Deborah was a Puritan of Puritans,  
Her list of unmentionable things  
Tabooed all the secrets of creation,  
Leaving politics, religion, and human faults,  
And the mistakes most people make,  
And the natural depravity of man,  
And his freedom to redeem himself if he chooses,  
As the only subjects of conversation.  
As a twister of words and meanings,  
And a skilled welder of fallacies,  
And a swift emerger from ineluctable traps of logic,  
And a wit with an adder's tongue,  
And a laugher,  
And an unafraid facer of enemies,  
Oppositions, hatreds,  
She never knew her equal.  
She was at once very cruel, and very tender,  
Very selfish and very generous  
Very little and very magnanimous.  
Scrupulous as to the truth, and utterly disregardless  
    of the truth.

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

Of the keenest intuitions, yet gullible,  
Easily used at times, of erratic judgment,  
Analytic but pursuing with incredible swiftness  
The falsest trails to her own undoing—  
All in all the strangest mixture of colors and scent  
Derived from father and mother,  
But mixed by whom, and how, and why?

Now for the son named Herman, rebel soul.  
His brow was like a loaf of bread, his eyes  
Turned from his father's blue to gray, his nose  
Was like his mother's, skin was dark like hers.  
His shapely body, hands and feet belonged  
To some patrician face, not to Marat's.  
And his was like Marat's, fanatical,  
Materialistic, fierce, as it might guide  
A reptile's crawl, but yet he crawled to peaks  
Loving the hues of mists, but not the mists  
His father loved. And being a rebel soul  
He thought the world all wrong. A nothingness  
Moving as malice marred the life of man.  
'Twas man's great work to fight this Giant Fraud,  
And all who praise and serve Him. 'Tis for man  
To free the world from error, suffer, die  
For liberty of thought. You see his mother  
Is in possession of one part of him,  
Or all of him for some time.

## TOWARD THE GULF

So he lives  
Nursing the dream (like father he's a dreamer)  
That genius fires him. All the while a gift  
For analytics stored behind that brow,  
That bulges like a loaf of bread, is all  
Of which he well may boast above the man  
He hates as but a slave of faith and fear.  
He feeds luxurious doubt with Omar Khyam,  
But for long years neglects the jug of wine.  
And as for "thou" he does not wake for years,  
Is a pure maiden when he weds, the grains  
Run counter in him, end in knots at times.  
He takes from father certain tastes and traits,  
From mother certain others, one can see  
His mother's sex re-actions to his father,  
Not passed to him to make him celibate,  
But holding back in sleeping passions which  
Burst over bounds at last in lust, not love.  
Not love since that great engine in the brow  
Tears off the irised wings of love and bares  
The poor worm's body where the wings had been:  
What is it but desire? Such stuff in rhyme  
In music over what is but desire,  
And ends when that is satisfied!

He's a crank.  
And follows all the psychic thrills which run  
To cackles o'er the world. It's Looking Backward,

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

Or Robert Elsmere, Spencer's Social Statics,  
It's socialism, Anarchism, Peace,  
It's non-resistance with a swelling heart,  
As who should say how truer to the faith  
Of Jesus am I, without hope or faith,  
Than churchmen. He's a prohibitionist,  
The poor's protagonist, the knight at arms  
Of fallen women, yelling at the rich  
Whose wicked greed makes all the prostitutes—  
No prostitutes without the wicked rich!  
But as he ages, as the bitter days  
Approach with perorations: O ye vipers,  
The engine in him changes all the world,  
Reverses all the wheels of thought behind.  
For Nietzsche comes, and makes him superman.  
He dumps the truth of Jesus over—there  
It lies with his youth's textual skepticism,  
And laughter at the supernatural.

Now what's the motivating principle  
Of such a mind? In youth he sought for rules  
Wherewith to trail and capture truths. He found it  
In James McCosh's Logic, it was this:  
Lex Exclusi Tertii aut Medii,  
Law of Excluded Middle speaking plain:  
A thing is true, or not true, never a third  
Hypothesis, so God is or is not.  
That's very good to start with, how to end,



## TOWARD THE GULF

And how to know which of the two is false—  
He hunted out the false, as mother did—  
Requires a tool. He found it in this book,  
Reductio ad absurdum; let us see  
Excluded middle use reductio.  
God is or God is not, but then what God?  
Excluded Middle never sought a God  
To suffer demolition at his hands  
Except the God of Illinois, the God  
Grown but a little with his followers  
Since Moses lived and Peter fished. So now  
God is or God is not. Let us assume  
God is and use reductio ad absurdum,  
Taking away the rotten props, the posts  
That do not fit or hold, and let Him fall.  
For if he falls, the other postulate  
That God is not is demonstrated. See  
A universe of truth pass on the way  
Cleared by Excluded Middle through the stuff  
Of thought and visible things, a way that lets  
A greater God escape, uncaught by all  
The nippers of reductio ad absurdum.  
But to resume his argument was this:  
God is or God is not, but if God is  
Why pestilence and war, earthquake and famine?  
He either wills them, or cannot prevent them,  
But if he wills them God is evil, if  
He can't prevent them, he is limited.

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

But God, you say, is good, omnipotent,  
And here I prove Him evil, or too weak  
To stay the evil. Having shown your God  
Lacking in what makes God, the proposition  
Which I oppose to this, that God is not  
Stands proven. For as evil is most clear  
In sickness, pain and death, it cannot be  
There is a Power with strength to overcome them,  
Yet suffers them to be.

And so this man  
Went through the years of life, and stripped the fields  
Of beauty and of thought with mandibles  
Insatiable as the locust's, which devours  
A season's care and labor in an hour.  
He stripped these fields and ate them, but they made  
No meat or fat for him. And so he lived  
On his own thought, as starving men may live  
On stored up fat. And so in time he starved.  
The thought in him no longer fed his life,  
And he had withered up the outer world  
Of man and nature, stripped it to the bone,  
Nothing but skull and cross-bones greeted him  
Wherever he turned—the world became a bottle  
Filled with a bitter essence he could drink  
From long accustomed doses—labeled poison  
And marked with skull and cross-bones. Could he  
laugh

## TOWARD THE GULF

As mother laughed? No more! He tried to find  
The mother's laugh and secret for the laugh  
Which kept her to the end—but did she laugh?  
Or if she laughed, was it so hollow, forced  
As all his laughter now was. He had proved  
Too much for laughter. Nothing but himself  
Remained to keep himself, he lived alone  
Upon his stored up fat, now daily growing  
To dangerous thinness.

So with love of woman.  
He had found "thou" the jug of wine as well,  
"Thou" "thou" had come and gone too many times.  
For what is sex but touch of flesh, the hand  
Is flesh and hands may touch, if so, the loins—  
Reductio ad absurdum, O you fools,  
Who see a wrong in touch of loins, no wrong  
In clasp of hands. And so again, again  
With his own tools of thought he bruised his hands  
Until they grew too callous to perceive  
When they were touched.

So by analysis  
He turned on everything he once believed.  
Let's make an end!

Men thought Excluded Middle  
Was born for great things. Why that bulging brow  
And analytic keen if not for greatness?

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

In those old days they thought so when he fought  
For lofty things, a youthful radical  
Come here to change the world! But now at last  
He lectures in back halls to youths who are  
What he was in his youth, to acid souls  
Who must have bitterness, can take enough  
To kill a healthy soul, as fiends for dope  
Must have enough to kill a body clean.  
And so upon a night Excluded Middle  
Is lecturing to prove that life is evil,  
Not worth the living—when his auditors  
Behold him pale and sway and take his seat,  
And later quit the hall, the lecture left  
Half finished.

This had happened in a twinkling:  
He had made life a punching bag, with fists,  
Excluded Middle and Reductio,  
Had whacked it back and forth. But just as often  
As he had struck it with an argument  
That it is not worth living, snap, the bag  
Would fly back for another punch. For life  
Just like a punching bag will stand your whacks  
Of hatred and denial, let you punch  
Almost at will. But sometime, like the bag,  
The strap gives way, the bag flies up and falls  
And lies upon the floor, you've knocked it out.  
And this is what Excluded Middle does

## TOWARD THE GULF

This night, the strap breaks with his blows. He proves  
His strength, his case and for the first he sees  
Life is not worth the living. Life gives up,  
Resists no more, flies back no more to him,  
But hits the ceiling, snap the strap gives way!  
The bag falls to the floor, and lies there still—  
Who now shall pick it up, re-fasten it?  
And so his color fades, it well may be  
The crisis of a long neurosis, well  
What caused it? But his eyes are wondrous clear  
Perceiving life knocked out. His heart is sick,  
He takes his seat, admiring friends swarm round him,  
Conduct him to a carriage, he goes home  
And sitting by the fire (O what is fire?  
The miracle of fire dawns on his thought,  
Fire has been near him all these years unseen,  
How wonderful is fire!) which warms and soothes  
Neuritic pains, he takes the rubber case  
Which locks the images of father, mother.  
And as he stares upon the oval brow,  
The eyes of blue which flash the light of faith,  
Preserved like dendrites in this silver shimmer,  
Some spectral speculations fill his brain,  
Float like a storm above the sorry wreck  
Of all his logic tools, machines; for now  
Since pains in back and shoulder like to father's  
Fall to him at the age that father had them,  
Father has entered him, has settled down

## EXCLUDED MIDDLE

To live with him with those neuritic pangs.  
Thus are his speculations. Over all  
How comes it that a sudden feel of life,  
Its wonder, terror, beauty is like father's?  
As if the soul of father entered in him  
And made the field of consciousness his own,  
Emotions, powers of thought his instruments.  
That is a horrible atavism, when  
You find yourself reverting to a soul  
You have not loved, despite yourself becoming  
That other soul, and with an out-worn self  
Crying for burial on your hands, a life  
Not yours till now that waits your new found powers—  
Live now or die indeed!

\* \* \* \* \*

SAMUEL BUTLER ET AL.

Let me consider your emergence  
From the milieu of our youth:  
We have played all the afternoon, grown hungry.  
No meal has been prepared, where have you been?  
Toward sun's decline we see you down the path,  
And run to meet you, and perhaps you smile,  
Or take us in your arms. Perhaps again  
You look at us, say nothing, are absorbed,  
Or chide us for our dirty frocks or faces.  
Of running wild without our meals  
You do not speak.

Then in the house, seized with a sudden joy,  
After removing gloves and hat, you run,  
As with a winged descending flight, and cry,  
Half song, half exclamation,  
Seize one of us,  
Crush one of us with mad embraces, bite  
Ears of us in a rapture of affection.  
"You shall have supper," then you say.  
The stove lids rattle, wood's poked in the fire,  
The kettle steams, pots boil, by seven o'clock  
We sit down to a meal of hodge-podge stuff.

SAMUEL BUTLER ET AL.

I understand now how your youth and spirits  
Fought back the drabness of the village,  
And wonder not you spent the afternoons  
With such bright company as Eugenia Turner—  
And I forgive you hunger, loneliness.

But when we asked you where you'd been,  
Complained of loneliness and hunger, spoke of children  
Who lived in order, sat down thrice a day  
To cream and porridge, bread and meat.  
We think to corner you—alas for us!  
Your anger flashes swords! Reasons pour out  
Like anvil sparks to justify your way:  
"Your father's always gone—you selfish children,  
You'd have me in the house from morn till night."  
You put us in the wrong—our cause is routed.  
We turn to bed unsatisfied in mind,  
You've overwhelmed us, not convinced us.  
Our sense of wrong defeat breeds resolution  
To whip you out when minds grow strong.

Up in the moon-lit room without a light,  
(The lamps have not been filled,)  
We crawl in unmade beds.  
We leave you pouring over paper backs.  
We peek above your shoulder.  
It is "The Lady in White" you read.  
Next morning you are dead for sleep,



## TOWARD THE GULF

You've sat up more than half the night.  
We have been playing hours when you arise,  
It's nine o'clock when breakfast's served at last,  
When school days come I'm always late to school.

Shy, hungry children scuffle at your door,  
Eye through the crack, maybe, at nine o'clock,  
Find father has returned during the night.  
You are all happiness, his idlest word  
Provokes your laughter.  
He shows us rolls of precious money earned;  
He's given you a silk dress, money too  
For suits and shoes for us—all is forgiven.  
You run about the house,  
As with a winged descending flight and cry  
Half song, half exclamation.

We're sick so much. But then no human soul  
Could be more sweet when one of us is sick.  
We run to colds, have measles, mumps, our throats  
Are weak, the doctor says. If rooms were warmer,  
And clothes were warmer, food more regular,  
And sleep more regular, it might be different.  
Then there's the well. You fear the water.  
He laughs at you, we children drink the water,  
Though it tastes bitter, shows white particles:  
It may be shreds of rats drowned in the well.  
The village has no drainage, blights and mildews

SAMUEL BUTLER ET AL.

Get in our throats. I spend a certain spring  
Bent over, yellow, coughing blood at times,  
Sick to somnambulist sense of things.  
You blame him for the well, that's just one thing.  
You seem to differ about everything—  
You seem to hate each other—when you quarrel  
We cry, take sides, sometimes are whipped  
For taking sides.

Our broken school days lose us clues,  
Some lesson has been missed, the final meaning  
And wholeness of the grammar are disturbed—  
That shall not be made up in all our life.  
The children, save a few, are not our friends,  
Some taunt us with your quarrels.  
We learn great secrets scrawled in signs or words  
Of foulness on the fences. So it is  
An American village, in a great Republic,  
Where men are free, where therefore goodness, wisdom  
Must have their way!

We reach the budding age.  
Sweet aches are in our breasts:  
Is it spring, or God, or music, is it you?  
I am all tenderness for you at times,  
Then hate myself for feeling so, my flesh  
Crawls by an instinct from you. You repel me  
Sometimes with an insidious smile, a look.

## TOWARD THE GULF

What are these phantasies I have? They breed  
Strange hatred for you, even while I feel  
My soul's home is with you, must be with you  
To find my soul's rest. . . .

I must go back a little. At ten years  
I play with Paula.  
I plait her crowns of flowers, carry her books,  
Defend her, watch her, choose her in the games.  
You overhear us under the oak tree  
Calling her doll our child. You catch my coat  
And draw me in the house.  
When I resist you whip me cruelly.  
To think of whipping me at such time,  
And mix the shame of smarting legs and back  
With love of Paula!  
So I lose Paula.

I am a man at last.  
I now can master what you are and see  
What you have been. You cannot rout me now,  
Or put me in the wrong. Out of old wounds,  
Remembrance of your baffling days,  
I take great strength and show you  
Where you have been untruthful, where a hater,  
Where narrow, bitter, growing in on self,  
Where you neglected us,  
Where you heaped fast destruction on our father—

SAMUEL BUTLER ET AL.

For now I know that you devoured his soul,  
And that no soul that you could not devour  
Could have its peace with you.  
You've dwindled to a quiet word like this:  
"You are unfilial." Which means at last  
That I have conquered you, at least it means  
That you could not devour me.

Yet am I blind to you? Let me confess  
You are the world's whole cycle in yourself:  
You can be summer rich and luminous;  
You can be autumn, mellow, mystical;  
You can be winter with a cheerful hearth;  
You can be March, bitter, bright and hard,  
Pouring sharp sleet, and showering cutting hail;  
You can be April of the flying cloud,  
And intermittent sun and musical air.  
I am not you while being you,  
While finding in myself so much of you.  
It tears my other self, which is not you.  
My tragedy is this: I do not love you.  
Your tragedy is this: my other self  
Which triumphs over you, you hate at heart.  
Your solace is you have no faith in me.

All quiet now, no March days with you now,  
Only the soft coals slumbering in your face,

## TOWARD THE GULF

I saw you totter over a ravine!  
Your eyes averted, watching steps,  
A light of resignation on your brow.  
Your thin-spun hair all gray, blown by the wind  
Which swayed the blossomed cherry trees,  
Bent last year's reeds,  
Shook early dandelions, and tossed a bird  
That left a branch with song—  
I saw you totter over a ravine!

What were you at the start?  
What soul dissatisfaction, sense of wrong,  
Of being thwarted, stung you?  
What was your shrinking of the flesh;  
What fear of being soiled, misunderstood,  
What wrath for loneliness which constant hope  
Saw turned to fine companionship;  
What in your marriage, what in seeing me,  
The fruit of marriage, recreated traits  
Of face or spirit which you loathed;  
What in your father and your mother,  
And in the chromosomes from which you grew,  
By what mitosis could result at last  
In you, in issues of such moment,  
In our dissevered beings,  
In what the world will take from me  
In children, in events?

**SAUMEL BUTLER ET AL.**

**All quiet now, no March days with you now,  
Only the soft coals slumbering in your face,  
I saw you totter over a ravine,  
And back of you the Furies!**

## JOHNNY APPLESEED

When the air of October is sweet and cold as the wine  
of apples  
Hanging ungathered in frosted orchards along the  
Grand River,  
I take the road that winds by the resting fields and  
wander  
From Eastmanville to Nunica down to the Villa Cross-  
ing.

I look for old men to talk with, men as old as the or-  
chards,  
Men to tell me of ancient days, of those who built and  
planted,  
Lichen gray, branch broken, bent and sighing,  
Hobbling for warmth in the sun and for places to sit  
and smoke.

For there is a legend here, a tale of the croaking old ones  
That Johnny Appleseed came here, planted some or-  
chards around here,  
When nothing was here but the pine trees, oaks and  
the beeches,  
And nothing was here but the marshes, lake and the  
river.

## JOHNNY APPLESEED

Peter Van Zylen is ninety and this he tells me:  
My father talked with Johnny Applesed there on the  
hill-side,  
There by the road on the way to Fruitport, saw him  
Clearing pines and oaks for a place for an apple orchard.

Peter Van Zylen says: He got that name from the  
people  
For carrying apple-seed with him and planting orchards  
All the way from Ohio, through Indiana across here,  
Planting orchards, they say, as far as Illinois.

Johnny Applesed said, so my father told me:  
I go to a place forgotten, the orchards will thrive and  
be here  
For children to come, who will gather and eat here-  
after.  
And few will know who planted, and none will under-  
stand.

I laugh, said Johnny Applesed: Some fellow buys this  
timber  
Five years, perhaps from to-day, begins to clear for  
barley.  
And here in the midst of the timber is hidden an apple  
orchard.  
How did it come here? Lord! Who was it here before  
me?



## TOWARD THE GULF

Yes, I was here before him, to make these places of  
worship,  
Labor and laughter and gain in the late October.  
Why did I do it, eh? Some folks say I am crazy.  
Where do my labors end? Far west, God only knows!

Said Johnny Appleseed there on the hill-side: Listen!  
Beware the deceit of nurseries, sellers of seeds of the  
apple.  
Think! You labor for years in trees not worth the rais-  
ing.  
You planted what you knew not, bitter or sour for  
sweet.

No luck more bitter than poor seed, but one as  
bitter:  
The planting of perfect seed in soil that feeds and  
fails,  
Nourishes for a little, and then goes spent forever.  
Look to your seed, he said, and remember the soil.

And after that is the fight: the foe curled up at the  
root,  
The scale that crumples and deadens, the moth in the  
blossoms  
Becoming a life that coils at the core of a thing of  
beauty:  
You bite your apple, a worm is crushed on your tongue!

## JOHNNY APPLESEED

And it's every bit the truth, said Peter Van Zylen.  
So many things love an apple as well as ourselves.  
A man must fight for the thing he loves, to possess it:  
Apples, freedom, heaven, said Peter Van Zylen.

## THE LOOM

My brother, the god, and I grow sick  
Of heaven's heights.  
We plunge to the valley to hear the tick  
Of days and nights.  
We walk and loiter around the Loom  
To see, if we may,  
The Hand that smashes the beam in the gloom  
To the shuttle's play;  
Who grows the wool, who cards and spins,  
Who clips and ties;  
For the storied weave of the Gobelins,  
Who draughts and dyes.

But whether you stand or walk around  
You shall but hear  
A murmuring life, as it were the sound  
Of bees or a sphere.  
No Hand is seen, but still you may feel  
A pulse in the thread,  
And thought in every lever and wheel  
Where the shuttle sped,  
Dripping the colors, as crushed and urged—  
Is it cochineal?—  
Shot from the shuttle, woven and merged

## THE LOOM

A tale to reveal.  
Woven and wound in a bolt and dried  
As it were a plan.  
Closer I looked at the thread and cried  
The thread is man!

Then my brother curious, strong and bold,  
Tugged hard at the bolt  
Of the woven life; for a length unrolled  
The cryptic cloth.  
He gasped for labor, blind for the moult  
Of the up-winged moth.  
While I saw a growth and a mad crusade  
That the Loom had made;  
Land and water and living things,  
Till I grew afraid  
For mouths and claws and devil wings,  
And fangs and stings,  
And tiger faces with eyes of hell  
In caves and holes.  
And eyes in terror and terrible  
For awakened souls.

I stood above my brother, the god  
Unwinding the roll.  
And a tale came forth of the woven slain  
Sequent and whole,  
Of flint and bronze, trowel and hod,

## TOWARD THE GULF

The wheel and the plane,  
The carven stone and the graven clod  
Painted and baked.  
And cromlechs, proving the human heart  
Has always ached;  
Till it puffed with blood and gave to art  
The dream of the dome;  
Till it broke and the blood shot up like fire  
In tower and spire.

And here was the Persian, Jew and Goth  
In the weave of the cloth;  
Greek and Roman, Ghibelline, Guelph,  
Angel and elf.  
They were dyed in blood, tangled in dreams  
Like a comet's streams.  
And here were surfaces red and rough  
In the finished stuff,  
Where the knotted thread was proud and rebelled  
As the shuttle proved  
The fated warp and woof that held  
When the shuttle moved;  
And pressed the dye which ran to loss  
In a deep maroon  
Around an altar, oracle, cross  
Or a crescent moon.  
Around a face, a thought, a star  
In a riot of war!

## THE LOOM

Then I said to my brother, the god, let be,  
Though the thread be crushed,  
And the living things in the tapestry  
Be woven and hushed;  
The Loom has a tale, you can see, to tell,  
And a tale has told.  
I love this Gobelin epical  
Of scarlet and gold.  
If the heart of a god may look in pride  
At the wondrous weave  
It is something better to Hands which guide—  
I see and believe.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

Look here, Jack:  
You don't act natural. You have lost your laugh.  
You haven't told me any stories. You  
Just lie there half asleep. What's on your mind?

JACK

What time is it? Where is my watch?

FLORENCE

Under your pillow! You don't think I'd take it.  
Why, Jack, what talk for you.

JACK

Let's pack no ice.

Well, never mind,

FLORENCE

What's that?

JACK

What is the time?

No quarreling—

[ 50 ]

## DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

FLORENCE

Look over towards my dresser—  
My clock says half-past eleven.

JACK

Listen to that—  
That hurdy-gurdy's playing Holy Night,  
And on this street.

FLORENCE

And why not on this street?

JACK

You may be right. It may as well be played  
Where you live as in front of where I work,  
Some twenty stories up. I think you're right.

FLORENCE

Say, Jack, what is the matter? Come! be gay.  
Tell me some stories. Buy another bottle.  
Just think you make a lot of money, Jack.  
You're young and prominent. They all know you.  
I hear your name all over town. I see  
Your picture in the papers. What's the matter?

JACK

I've lost my job for one thing.

[ 51 ]



## TOWARD THE GULF

FLORENCE

You don't mean it!

JACK

They used me and then fired me, same as you.  
If you don't make the money, out you go.

FLORENCE

Yes, out I go. But, there are other places.

JACK

On further down the street.

FLORENCE

Not yet a while.

JACK

Not yet for me, but still the question is  
Whether to fight it out for up or down,  
Or run from everything, be free.

FLORENCE

You can't do that.

JACK

Why not?

[ 52 ]

## DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

FLORENCE

No more than I.

Oh well perhaps, if a nice man came by  
To marry me then I could get away.  
It happens all the time. Last week in fact  
Christ Perko married Rachel who lived here.  
He's rich as cream.

JACK

What corresponds to marriage  
To take me from slavery?

FLORENCE

Money is everything.

JACK

Yes, everything and nothing.  
Christ Perko's rich, Christ Perko runs this house,  
The madam merely acts as figure-head;  
Keeps check upon the girls and on the wine.  
She's just the editor, and yet I'd rather  
Be editor than owner. I was editor.  
My Perko was the owner of a pulp mill,  
Incorporate through some multi-millionaires,  
And all our lesser writers were the girls,  
Like you and Rachel.

[ 53 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

FLORENCE

But you know before  
He married Rachel, he was lover to  
The madam here.

JACK

The stories tally, for  
The pulp mill took my first assistant editor  
To wife by making him the editor.  
And I was fired just as the madam here  
Lost out with Perko.

FLORENCE

This is growing funny. . . .  
Ahem! I'll ask you something—  
As if I were a youth and you a girl—  
How were you ruined first?

JACK

The same as you:  
You ran away from school. It was romance.  
You thought you loved this flashy travelling man.  
And I—I loved adventure, loved the truth.  
I wanted to destroy the force called "They."  
There is no "They"—we're all together here,  
And everyone must live, Christ Perko too,  
The pulp-mill, the policeman, magistrate,

[ 54 ]

## DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

The alderman, the precinct captain too,  
And you the girls, myself the editor,  
And all the lesser writers. Here we are  
Thrown in one integrated lot. You see  
There is no "They," except the terms, the thought  
Which ramifies and vivifies the whole. . . .  
So I came to the city, went to work  
Reporting for a paper. Having said  
There is no "They"—I've freed myself to say  
What bitter things I choose. For how they drive you,  
And terrify you, mock you, ridicule you,  
And call you cub and greenhorn, send you round  
To courts and dirty places, make you risk  
Your body and your life, and make you watch  
The rules about your writing; what's tabooed,  
What names are to be cursed or to be praised,  
What interests, policies to be subserved,  
And what to undermine. So I went through,  
Until I had a desk, wrote editorials—  
Now said I to myself, I'm free at last.  
But no, my manager, your madam, mark you,  
Kept eye on me, for he was under watch  
Of some Christ Perko. So my manager  
Blue penciled me when I touched certain subjects.  
But, as he was a just man, loved me too  
He gave me things to write where he could let  
My conscience have full scope, as you might live  
In this house where you saw the man you loved,

## TOWARD THE GULF

And no one else, though living in this hell.  
For I lived in a hell, who saw around me  
Such lying, hatred, malice, prostitution.  
And when this offer came to be an editor  
Of a great magazine, I seemed to feel  
My courage and my virtue given reward.  
Now, I should pass on poems, and on stories,  
Creations of free souls. It was not so.  
The poems and the stories one could see  
Were written to be sold, to please a taste,  
Placate a prejudice, keep still alive  
An era dying, ready for the tomb,  
Already smelling. And that was not all.  
Just as the madam here must make report  
To Perko, so the magazine had to run  
To suit the pulp mill. As the madam here,  
Assistant to Christ Perko, must keep friends  
With alderman, policemen, magistrates,  
So I was just a wheel in a machine  
To keep it running with such larger wheels,  
And by them run, of policies, and politics  
Of State and Nation. Here was I locked in  
And given dope to keep me still lest I  
Cry out and wake the copper—who's the copper  
For such as I was? If he heard me cry  
How could he raid the magazine? If he raided  
Where was the court to take me and the rest—  
That's it, where is the court?

## DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

FLORENCE

It seems to me

You're bad as I am.

JACK

I am worse than you:

I poison minds with thoughts they take as good.  
I drug an era, make it foul or dull—  
You only sicken bodies here and there.  
But you know how it is. You have remorse,  
You fight it down, hush it with sophistry.  
You think about the world, about your fellows:  
You see that everyone is selling self,  
Little or much somehow. You feed your body,  
Try to be hearty, take things as they come.  
You take athletics, try to keep your strength,  
As you hear music, laugh, drink wine, and smoke,  
Are bathed and coifed to keep your beauty fresh.  
And through it all the soul's and body's needs,  
The pleasures, interests, passions of our life,  
The cry that comes from somewhere: "Live, O Soul,  
The time is passing," move and claim your strength.  
Till you forget yourself, forget the boy  
And man you were, forget the dreams you had,  
The creed you wished to live by—yes, what's worse,  
See dreams you had, grown tawdry, see your creed  
Cracked through and crumbled like a falling house.  
And then you say: What is the difference?

[ 57 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

As you might ask what virtue is and why  
Should woman keep it.

I have reached this place  
Save for one truth I hold to, shall still hold to:  
As long as I have breath: The man who sees not,  
Or cares not for the Truth that keeps the world  
From vast disintegration is a brute,  
And marked for a brute's death—that is his hell.  
'Twas loyalty to this truth that made me lose  
My place as editor. For when they came  
And tried to make me pass an article  
To poison millions with, I said, "I won't,  
I won't by God. I'll quit before I do."  
And then they said, "You quit," and so I quit.

FLORENCE

And so you took to drink and came to me!  
And that's the same as if I came to you  
And used you as an editor. I am nothing  
But just a poor reporter in this house—  
But now I quit.

JACK

Where are you going, Florence?

FLORENCE

I'm going to a village or a farm  
Where I'll get up at six instead of twelve,

[ 58 ]

## DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

Where I'll wear calico instead of silk,  
And where there'll be no furnace in the house.  
And where the carpet which has kept me here  
And keeps you here as editor is not.  
I'm going to economize my life  
By freeing it of systems which grow rich  
By using me, and for the privilege  
Bestow these gaudy clothes and perfumed bed.  
I hate you now, because I hate my life.

JACK

Wait! Wait a minute.

FLORENCE

Dinah, call a cab!

\* \* \* \* \*



## SIR GALAHAD

I met Hosea Job on Randolph Street  
Who said to me: "I'm going for the train,  
I want you with me."

And it happened then  
My mind was hard, as muscles of the back  
Grow hard resisting cold or shock or strain  
And need the osteopath to be made supple,  
To give the nerves and streams of life a chance.  
Hosea Job was just the osteopath  
To loose, relax my mood. And so I said  
"All right"—and went.

Hosea was a man  
Whom nothing touched of danger, or of harm.  
His life was just a rare-bit dream, where some one  
Seems like to fall before a truck or train—  
Instead he walks across them. Or you see  
Shadows of falling things, great buildings topple,  
Pianos skid like bulls from hellish corners  
And chase the oblivious fool who stands and smiles.  
The buildings slant and sway like monstrous search-  
lights,  
But never touch him. And the mad piano  
Comes up to him, puts down its angry head,

## SIR GALAHAD

Runs out a friendly tongue and licks his hand,  
And lows a symphony.

By which I mean  
Hosea had some money, and would sign  
A bond or note for any man who asked him.  
He'd rent a house and leave it, rent another,  
Then rent a farm, move out from town and in.  
He'd have the leases of superfluous places  
Cancelled some how, was never sued for rent.  
One time he had a fancy he would see  
South Africa, took ship with a load of mules,  
First telegraphing home from New Orleans  
He'd be back in the Spring. Likewise he went  
To Klondike with the rush. I think he owned  
More kinds of mining stock than there were mines.  
He had more quaint, peculiar men for friends  
Than one could think were living. He believed  
In every doctrine in its time, that promised  
Salvation for the world. He took no thought  
For life or for to-morrow, or for health,  
Slept with his windows closed, ate what he wished.  
And if he cut his finger, let it go.  
I offered him peroxide once, he laughed.  
And when I asked him if his soul was saved  
He only said: "I see things. I lie back  
And take it easy. Nothing can go wrong  
In any serious sense."

[ 61 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

So many thought  
Hosea was a nut, and others thought,  
That I was just a nut for liking him.  
And what would any man of business say  
If he knew that I didn't ask a question,  
But simply went with him to take the train  
That day he asked me.

And the train had gone  
Five miles or so when I said: "Where you going?"  
Hosea answered, and it made me start—  
Hosea answered simply, "We are going  
To see Sir Galahad."

It made me start  
To hear Hosea say this, for I thought  
He was now really off. But, I looked at him  
And saw his eyes were sane.

"Sir Galahad?  
"Who is Sir Galahad?"

Hosea answered:  
"I'm going up to see Sir Galahad,  
And sound him out about re-entering  
The game and run for governor again."

So then I knew he was the man our fathers  
Worked with and knew and called Sir Galahad,

## SIR GALAHAD

Now in retirement fifteen years or so.  
Well, I was twenty-five when he was famous.  
Sir Galahad was forty then, and now  
Must be some fifty-five while I am forty.  
So flashed across my thought the matter of time  
And ages. So I thought of all he did:  
Of how he went from faith to faith in politics  
And ran for every office up to governor,  
And ran for governor four times or so,  
And never was elected to an office.  
He drew more bills to remedy injustice,  
Improve the courts, relieve the poor, reform  
Administration, than the legislature  
Could read, much less digest or understand.  
The people beat him and the leaders flogged him.  
They shut the door against his face until  
He had no place to go except a farm  
Among the stony hills, and there he went.  
And thither we were going to see the knight,  
And call him from his solitude to the fight  
Against injustice, greed.

So we got off  
The train at Alden, just a little village  
Of fifty houses lying beneath the sprawl  
Of hills and hills. And here there was a stillness  
Made lonelier by an anvil ringing, by  
A plow-man's voice at intervals.

## TOWARD THE GULF

### Here Hosea

Engaged a horse and buggy, and we drove  
And wound about a crooked road between  
Great hills that stood together like the backs  
Of elephants in a herd, where boulders lay  
As thick as hail in places. Ruined pines  
Stood like burnt matches. There was one which stuck  
Against a single cloud so white it seemed  
A bursted bale of cotton.

### We reached the summit

And drove along past orchards, past a field  
Level and green, kept like a garden, rich  
Against the coming harvest. Here we met  
A scarecrow man, driving a scarecrow horse  
Hitched to a wobbly wagon. And we stopped,  
The scarecrow stopped. The scarecrow and Hosea  
Talked much of people and of farming—I  
Sat listening, and I gathered from the talk,  
And what Hosea told me as we drove,  
That once this field so level and so green  
The scarecrow owned. He had cleaned out the stumps,  
And tried to farm it, failed, and lost the field,  
But raged to lose it, thought he might succeed  
In further time. Now having lost the field  
So many years ago, could be a scarecrow,  
And drive a scarecrow horse, yet laugh again  
And have no care, the sorrow healed.

## SIR GALAHAD

It seemed

The clearing of the stumps was scarce a starter  
Toward a field of profit. For in truth,  
The soil possessed a secret which the scarecrow  
Never went deep enough to learn about.  
His problem was all stumps. Not solving that,  
He sold it to a farmer who out-slaved  
The busiest bee, but only half succeeded.  
He tried to raise potatoes, made a failure.  
He planted it in beans, had half a crop.  
He sowed wheat once and reaped a stack of straw.  
The secret of the soil eluded him.  
And here Hosea laughed: "This fellow's failure  
Was just the thing that gave another man  
The secret of the soil. For he had studied  
The properties of soils and fertilizers.  
And when he heard the field had failed to raise  
Potatoes, beans and wheat, he simply said:  
There are other things to raise: the question is  
Whether the soil is suited to the things  
He tried to raise, or whether it needs building  
To raise the things he tried to raise, or whether  
It must be builded up for anything.  
At least he said the field is clear of stumps.  
Pass on your field, he said. If I lose out  
I'll pass it on. The field is his, he said  
Who can make something grow.

[ 65 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

And so this field  
Of waving wheat along which we were driving  
Was just the very field the scarecrow man  
Had failed to master, as that other man  
Had failed to master after him.

Hosea  
Kept talking of this field as we drove on.  
That field, he said, is economical  
Of men compared with many fields. You see  
It only used two men. To grub the stumps  
Took all the scarecrow's strength. That other man  
Ran off to Oklahoma from this field.  
I have known fields that ate a dozen men  
In country such as this. The field remains  
And laughs and waits for some one who divines  
The secret of the field. Some farmers live  
To prove what can't be done, and narrow down  
The guess of what is possible. It's right  
A certain crop should prosper and another  
Should fail, and when a farmer tries to raise  
A crop before it's time, he wastes himself  
And wastes the field to try.

We now were climbing  
To higher hills and rockier fields. Hosea  
Had fallen into silence. I was thinking  
About Sir Galahad, was wondering

## SIR GALAHAD

Which man he was, the scarecrow, or the farmer  
Who didn't know the seed to sow, or whether  
He might still prove the farmer raising wheat,  
Now we were come to give him back the field  
With all the stumps grubbed out, the secret lying  
Revealed and ready for the appointed hands.

We passed an orchard growing on a knoll  
And saw a barn perked on a rocky hill,  
And near the barn a house. Hosea said:  
"This is Sir Galahad's." We tied the horse.  
And we were in the silence of the country  
At mid-day on a day in June. No bird  
Was singing, fowl was cackling, cow was lowing,  
No dog was barking. All was summer stillness.  
We crossed a back-yard past a windlass well,  
Dodged under clothes lines through a place of chips,  
Walked in a path along the house. I said:  
"Sir Galahad is ploughing, or perhaps  
Is mending fences, cutting weeds." It seemed  
Too bad to come so far and not to find him.  
"We'll find him," said Hosea. "Let us sit  
Under that tree and wait for him."

And then  
We turned the corner of the house and there  
Under a tree an old man sat, his head  
Bowed down upon his breast, locked fast in sleep.



## TOWARD THE GULF

And by his feet a dog half blind and fat  
Lay dozing, too inert to rise and bark.

Hosea gripped my arm. "Be still" he said.  
"Let's ask him where Sir Galahad is," said I.  
And then Hosea whispered, "God forgive me,  
I had forgotten, you too have forgotten.  
The man is old, he's very old. The years  
Go by unnoticed. Come! Sir Galahad  
Should sleep and not be waked."

We tip-toed off

And hurried back to Alden for the train.

## ST. DESERET

You wonder at my bright round eyes, my lips  
Pressed tightly like a venomous rosette.  
Thus do me honor by so much, fond wretch,  
And praise my Persian beauty, dulcet voice.  
But oh you know me, read me, passion blinds  
Your vision not at all, and you have passion  
For me and what I am. How can you be so?  
Hold me so bear-like, take my lips with yours,  
Bury your face in these my russet tresses,  
And yet not lose your vision? So I love you,  
And fear you too. How idle to deny it  
To you who know I fear you.

Here am I

Who answer you what e'er you choose to ask.  
You stride about my rooms and open books,  
And say when did he give you this? You pick  
His photograph from mantels, dressers, drawl  
Out of ironic strength, and smile the while:  
"You did not love this man." You probe my soul  
About his courtship, how I ran away,  
How he pursued with gifts from city to city,  
Threw bouquets to me from the pit, or stood

[ 69 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

Like Cleopatra's Giant negro guard,  
Watchful and waiting at the green-room door.  
So, devil, that you are, with needle pricks,  
One little question at a time, you've inked  
The story in my flesh. And now at last  
You smile and say I killed him. Well, it's true.  
But what a death he had! Envy him that.  
Your frigid soul can never win the death  
I gave him.

Listen since you know already  
All but the subtlest matters. How you laugh!  
You know these too? Well, only I can tell them.

First 'twas a piteous thing to see a man  
So love a woman, see a living thing  
So love another. Why he could not touch  
My hand but that his heart went up ten beats.  
His eyes would grow as bright as flames, his breath  
Come short when speaking. When he felt my  
breast  
Crush soft around him he would reel and walk  
Away from me, while I stood like a snake  
Poised for the strike, as quiet and possessed  
As a dead breeze. And you can have me wholly,  
And pet and pat me like a favored child,  
And let me go my way, while you turn back  
To what you left for me.

## ST. DESERET

Not so with him:

I was all through his blood, had made his flesh  
My flesh, his nerves, brain, soul all mine at last,  
Dreams, thoughts, emotions, hungers all my own.  
So that he lived two lives, his own and mine,  
With one poor body, which he gave to me.  
Save that he could not give what I pushed back  
Into his hands to use for me and live  
My pities, hatreds, loves and passions with.  
I loved all this and thrived upon it, still  
I did not love him. Then why marry him?  
Why don't you see? It meant so much to him.  
And 'twas a little thing for me to do.  
His loneliness, his hunger, his great passion  
That showed in his poor eyes, his broken breath,  
His chivalry, his gifts, his poignant letters,  
His failing health, why even woman's cruelty  
Cannot deny such passion. Woman's cruelty  
Takes other means for finding its expression.  
And mine found its expression—you have guessed  
And so I tell you all.

We were married then.

He made a sacrament of our nuptials,  
Knelt with closed eyes beside the bed, my lips  
Pressed to his brow and throat. Unveiled my breast  
And looked, then closed his eyes. He did not take me  
As man takes his possession, nature's way,

[ 71 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

In triumph of life, in lightning, no, he came  
A suppliant, a worshipper, and whispered:  
"What angel child may lie upon the breast  
Of this it's angel mother."

Well, you see  
The tears came in my eyes, for pity of him,  
Who made so much of what I had to give,  
And could give easily whether 'twas my rapture  
To give or to withhold. And in that moment  
Contempt of which I had been scarcely conscious  
Lying diffused like dew around my heart  
Drained down itself into my heart's dark cup  
To one bright drop of vital power, where  
He could not see it, scarcely knew that something  
Gradually drugged the potion that he drank  
In life with me.

So we were wed a year,  
And he was with me hourly, till at last  
I could not breathe for him, while he could breathe  
No where but where I was. Then the bazaar  
Was coming on where I was to dance, and he  
Had long postponed a trip to England where  
Great interests waited for him, and with kisses  
I pushed him to his duty, and he went  
Shame stricken for a duty long postponed,  
Unable to retort against my words

## ST. DESERET

When I said "You must go;" for well he knew  
He should have gone before. And as for going  
I pleaded the bazaar and hate of travel,  
And got him off, and freed myself to breathe.

His life had been too fast, his years too many  
To stand the strain that came. There was the worry  
About the business, and the labor over it.  
There was the war, and all the fear and turmoil  
In London for the war. But most of all  
There was the separation. And his letters!  
You've read them, wretch. Such letters never were  
Of aching loneliness and pining love  
And hope that lives across three thousand miles,  
And waits the day to travel them, and fear  
Of something which may bar the way forever:  
A storm, a wreck, a submarine and no day  
Without a letter or a cablegram.  
And look at the endearments—oh you fiend  
To pick their words to pieces like a botanist  
Who cuts a flower up for his microscope.  
And oh myself who let you see these letters.  
Why did I do it? Rather why is it  
You master me, even as I mastered him?

At last he finished, got his passage back.  
He had been gone three months. And all these letters  
Showed how he starved for me, and scarce could wait

## TOWARD THE GULF

To take me in his arms again, would choke  
With fast and heavy feeding.

Well, you see  
The contempt I spoke of which lay long diffused  
Like dew around my heart, and which at once  
Drained down itself into my heart's dark cup  
Grew brighter, bitterer, for this obvious hunger,  
This thirst which could not wait, the piteous trembling.  
And all the while it seemed he thought his love  
Grew sacreder as it grew uncontrolled,  
And marked by trembling, choking, tears and sighs.  
This is not love which should be, has no use  
In this or any world. And as for me  
I could not stand it longer. And I thought  
Of what was best to do: if 'twas not best  
To kill him as the queen bee kills the mate  
In rapture's own excess.

Then he arrived.  
I went to meet him in the car, pretended  
The feed pipe broke while I was on the way.  
I was not at the station when he came.  
I got back to the house and found him gone.  
He had run through the rooms calling my name,  
So Mary told me. Then he went around  
From place to place, wherever in the village  
He thought to find me.

## ST. DESERET

Soon I heard his steps,  
The key in the door, his winded breath, his call,  
His running, stumbling up the stairs, while I  
Stood silent as a shadow in our room,  
My round bright eyes grown brighter for the light  
His life was feeding them. And then he stood  
Breathless and trembling in the door-way, stood  
Transfixed with ecstasy, then rushed and caught me  
And broke into loud tears.

It had to end.  
One or the other of us had to die.  
I could not die but by a violence,  
And he could die by love alone, and love  
I gave him to his death.

Why tell you details  
And ways with which I maddened him, and whipped  
The energies of love? You have extracted  
The secret in the main, that 'twas from love  
He came to death. His life had been too fast,  
His years too many for the daily rapture  
I gave him after three months' separation.  
And so he died one morning, made me free  
Of nothing but his presence in the flesh.  
His love is on me yet, and its effect.  
And now you're here to slave me differently—  
No soul is ever free.

\* \* \* \* \*



## HEAVEN IS BUT THE HOUR

Eyes wide for wisdom, calm for joy or pain,  
Bright hair alloyed with silver, scarcely gold.  
And gracious lips flower pressed like buds to hold  
The guarded heart against excess of rain.  
Hands spirit tipped through which a genius plays  
With paints and clays,  
And strings in many keys—  
Clothed in an aura of thought as soundless as a flood  
Of sun-shine where there is no breeze.  
So is it light in spite of rhythm of blood,  
Or turn of head, or hands that move, unite—  
Wind cannot dim or agitate the light.  
From Plato's idea stepping, wholly wrought  
From Plato's dream, made manifest in hair,  
Eyes, lips and hands and voice,  
As if the stored up thought  
From the earth sphere  
Had given down the being of your choice  
Conjured by the dream long sought.

\* \* \* \* \*

For you have moved in madness, rapture, wrath  
In and out of the path  
Drawn by the dream of a face.  
You have been watched, as star-men watch a star

## HEAVEN IS BUT THE HOUR

That leaves its way, returns and leaves its way,  
Until the exploring watchers find, can trace  
A hidden star beyond their sight, whose sway  
Draws the erratic star so long observed—  
So have you wandered, swerved.

\* \* \* \* \*

Always pursued and lost,  
Sometimes half found, half-faced,  
Such years we waste  
With the almost:  
The lips flower pressed like buds to hold  
Guarded the heart of the flower,  
But over them eyes not hued as the Dream foretold.  
Or to find the lips too rich and the dower  
Of eyes all gaiety  
Where wisdom scarce can be.  
Or to find the eyes, but to find offence  
In fingers where the sense  
Falters with colors, strings,  
Not touching with closed eyes, out of an immanence  
Of flame and wings.  
Or to find the light, but to find it set behind  
An eye which is not your dream, nor the shadow thereof,  
As it were your lamp in a stranger's window.  
And so almost to find  
In the great weariness of love.

\* \* \* \* \*

## TOWARD THE GULF

Now this is the tragedy:  
If the Idea did not move  
Somewhere in the realm of Love,  
Clothing itself in flesh at last for you to see,  
You could scarcely follow the gleam.  
And the tragedy is when Life has made you over,  
And denied you, and dulled your dream,  
And you no longer count the cost,  
Nor the past lament,  
You are sitting oblivious of your discontent  
Beside the Almost—  
And then the face appears  
Evoked from the Idea by your dead desire,  
And blinds and burns you like fire.  
And you sit there without tears,  
Though thinking it has come to kill you, or mock your  
youth  
With its half of the truth.

\* \* \* \* \*

A beach as yellow as gold  
Daisied with tents for a lovely mile.  
And a sea that edges and walls the sand with blue,  
Matching the heaven without a seam,  
Save for the threads of foam that hold  
With stitches the canopy rare as the tile  
Of old Damascus. And O the wind  
Which roars to the roaring water brightened

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## HEAVEN IS BUT THE HOUR

By the beating wings of the sun!  
And here I walk, not seeking the Dream,  
As men walk absent of heart or mind  
Who have no wish for a sorrow lightened  
Since all things now seem lost or won.  
And here it is that your face appears!  
Like a star brushed out from leaves by a breeze  
When day's in the sky, though evening nears.  
You are here by a tent with your little brood,  
And I approach in a quiet mood  
And see you, know that the Destinies  
Have surrendered you at last.  
Voice, lips and hands and the light of the eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

And I who have asked so much discover  
That you find in me the man and lover  
You have divined and visualized,  
In quiet day dreams. And what is strange  
Your boy of eight is subtly guised  
In fleeting looks that half resemble  
Something in me. Two souls may range  
Mid this earth's billion souls for life,  
And hide their hunger or dissemble.  
For there are two at least created,  
Endowed with alien powers that draw,  
And kindred powers that by some law  
Bind souls as like as sister, brother.

## TOWARD THE GULF

There are two at least who are for each other.  
If we are such, it is not fated  
You are for him, howe'er belated  
The time's for us.

\* \* \* \* \*

And yet is not the time gone by?  
Your garden has been planted, dear.  
And mine with weeds is over-grown.  
Oh yes! 'tis only late July!  
We can replant, ere frosts appear,  
Gather the blossoms we have sown.  
And I have preached that hearts should seize  
The hour that brings realities. . . .

Yes, I admit it all, we crush  
Under our feet the world's contempt.  
But when I raise the cup, it's blush  
Reveals the snake's eyes, there's a hush  
While a hand writes upon the wall:  
Life cannot be re-made, exempt  
From life that has been, something's gone  
Out of the soil, in life updrawn  
To growths that vine, and tangle, crawl,  
Withered in part, or gone to seed.  
'Tis not the same, though you have freed  
The soil from what was grown. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

## HEAVEN IS BUT THE HOUR

Heaven is but the hour  
Of the planting of the flower.  
But heaven is the blossom to be,  
Of the one Reality.  
And heaven cannot undo the once sown ground.  
But heaven is love in the pursuing,  
And in the memory of having found. . . .

The rocks in the river make light and sound  
And show that the waters search and move.  
And what is time but an infinite whole  
Revealed by the breaks in thought, desire?  
To put it away is to know one's soul.  
Love is music unheard and fire  
Too rare for eyes; between hurt beats  
The heart detects it, sees how pure  
Its essence is, through heart defeats.—  
You are the silence making sure  
The sound with which it has to cope,  
My sorrow and as well my hope.

\* \* \* \* \*

## VICTOR RAFOLSKI ON ART

You dull Goliaths clothed in coats of blue,  
Strained and half bursted by the swell of flesh,  
Topped by Gorilla heads. You Marmoset,  
Trained scoundrel, taught to question and ensnare,  
I hate you, hate your laws and hate your courts.  
Hands off, give me a chair, now let me be.  
I'll tell you more than you can think to ask me.  
I love this woman, but what is love to you?  
What is it to your laws or courts? I love her.  
She loves me, if you'd know. I entered her room—  
She stood before me naked, shrank a little,  
Cried out a little, calmed her sudden cry  
When she saw amiable passion in my eyes—  
She loves me, if you'd know. I saw in her eyes  
More in those moments than whole hours of talk  
From witness stands exculpate could make clear  
My innocence.

But if I did a crime  
My excuse is hunger, hunger for more life.  
Oh what a world, where beauty, rapture, love  
Are walled in and locked up like coal or food  
And only may he had by purchasers  
From whose fat fingers slip the unheeded gold.

## VICTOR RAFOLSKI ON ART

Oh what a world where beauty lies in waste,  
While power and freedom skulk with famished lips  
Too tightly pressed for curses.

So do men,  
Save for the thousandth man, deny themselves  
And live in meagreness to make sure a life  
Of meagreness by hearth stones long since stale;  
And live in ways, companionships as fixed  
As the geared figures of the Strassburg clock.  
You wonder at war? Why war lets loose desires,  
Emotions long repressed. Would you stop war?  
Then let men live. The moral equivalent  
Of war is freedom. Art does not suffice—  
Religion is not life, but life is living.  
And painted cherries to the hungry thrush  
Is art to life. The artist lived his work.  
You cannot live his life who love his work.  
You are the thrush that pecks at painted cherries  
Who hope to live through art. Beer-soaked Goliaths,  
The story's coming of her nakedness  
Be patient for a time.

All this I learned  
While painting pictures no one ever bought,  
Till hunger drove me to this servile work  
As butler in her father's house, with time  
On certain days to walk the galleries  
And look at pictures, marbles. For I saw



## TOWARD THE GULF

I was not living while I painted pictures.  
I was not living working for a crust,  
I was not living walking galleries:  
All this was but vicarious life which felt  
Through gazing at the thing the artist made,  
In memory of the life he lived himself:  
As we preserve the fragrance of a flower  
By drawing off its essence in a bottle,  
Where color, fluttering leaves, are thrown away  
To get the inner passion of the flower  
Extracted to a bottle that a queen  
May act the flower's part.

Say what you will,  
Make laws to strangle life, shout from your pulpits,  
Your desks of editors, your woolsack benches  
Where judges sit, that this dull hypocrite,  
You call the State, has fashioned life aright—  
The secret is abroad, from eye to eye  
The secret passes from poor eyes that wink  
In boredom, in fatigue, in furious strength  
Roped down or barred, that what the human heart  
Dreams of and hopes for till the aspiring flame  
Flaps in the guttered candle and goes out,  
Is love for body and for spirit, love  
To satisfy their hunger. Yet what is it,  
This earth, this life, what is it but a meadow  
Where spirits are left free a little while

## VICTOR RAFOLSKI ON ART

Within a little space, so long as strength,  
Flesh, blood increases to the day of use  
As roasts or stews wherewith this witless beast,  
Society may feed himself and keep  
His olden shape and power?

Fools go crop  
The herbs they turn you to, and starve yourself  
For what you want, and count it righteousness,  
No less you covet love. Poor shadows sighing,  
Across the curtain racing! Mangled souls  
Pecking so feebly at the painted cherries,  
Inhaling from a bottle what was lived  
These summers gone! You know, and scarce deny  
That what we men desire are horses, dogs,  
Loves, women, insurrections, travel, change,  
Thrill in the wreck and rapture for the change,  
And re-adjusted order.

As I turned  
From painting and from art, yet found myself  
Full of all lusts while bound to menial work  
Where my eyes daily rested on this woman  
A thought came to me like a little spark  
One sees far down the darkness of a cave,  
Which grows into a flame, a blinding light  
As one approaches it, so did this thought  
Both burn and blind me: For I loved this woman,

## TOWARD THE GULF

I wanted her, why should I lose this woman?  
What was there to oppose possession? Will?  
Her will, you say? I am not sure, but then  
Which will is better, mine or hers? Which will  
Deserves achievement? Which has rights above  
The other? I desire her, her desire  
Is not toward me, which of these two desires  
Shall triumph? Why not mine for me and hers  
For her, at least the stronger must prevail,  
And wreck itself or bend all else before it.  
That millionaire who wooed her, tried in vain  
To overwhelm her will with gold, and I  
With passion, boldness would have overwhelmed it,  
And what's the difference?

But as I said

I walked the galleries. When I stood in the yard  
Bare armed, bare throated at my work, she came  
And gazed upon me from her window. I  
Could feel the exhausting influence of her eyes.  
Then in a concentration which was blindness  
To all else, so bewilderment of mind,  
I'd go to see Watteau's Antiope  
Where he sketched Zeus in hunger, drawing back  
The veil that hid her sleeping nakedness.  
There was Correggio's too, on whom a satyr  
Smiled for his amorous wonder. A Semele,  
Done by an unknown hand, a thing of lightning

## VICTOR RAFOLSKI ON ART

Moved through by Zeus who seized her as the flames  
Consumed her ravished beauty.

So I looked,  
And trembled, then returned perhaps to find  
Her eyes upon me conscious, calm, elate,  
And radiate with lashes of surprise,  
Delight as when a star is still but shines.  
And on this night somehow our natures worked  
To climaxes. For first she dressed for dinner  
To show more back and bosom than before.  
And as I served her, her down-looking eyes  
Were more than glances. Then she dropped her napkin.  
Before I could begin to bend she leaned  
And let me see—oh yes, she let me see  
The white foam of her little breasts caressing  
The scarlet flame of silk, a swooning shore  
Of bright carnations. It was from such foam  
That Venus rose. And as I stooped and gave  
The napkin to her she pushed out a foot,  
And then I coughed for breath grown short, and she  
Concealed a smile—and you, you jailers laugh  
Coarse-mouthed, and mock my hunger.

I go on,  
Observe how courage, boldness mark my steps!  
At nine o'clock she climbs to her boudoir.  
I finding errands in the hallway hear

## TOWARD THE GULF

The desultory taking up of books,  
And through her open door, see her at last  
Cast off her dinner gown and to the bath  
Step like a ray of moonlight. Then she snaps  
The light on where the onyx tub and walls  
Dazzle the air. I enter then her room  
And stand against the closed door, do not pry  
Upon her in the bath. Give her the chance  
To fly me, fight me standing face to face.  
I hear her flounder in the water, hear  
Hands slap and slip with water breast and arms;  
Hear little sighs and shudders and the roughness  
Of crash towels on her back, when in a minute  
She stands with back toward me in the doorway,  
A sea-shell glory, pink and white to hair  
Sun-lit, a lily crowned with powdered gold.  
She turned toward her dresser then and shook  
White dust of talcum on her arms, and looked  
So lovingly upon her tense straight breasts,  
Touching them under with soft tapering hands  
To blue eyes deepening like a brazier flame  
Turned by a sudden gust. Who gives her these,  
The thought ran through me, for her joy alone  
And not for mine?

So I stood there like Zeus  
Coming in thunder to Semele, like  
The diety of Watteau. Correggio

## VICTOR RAFOLSKI ON ART

Had never painted me a satyr there  
Drinking her beauty in, so worshipful,  
My will subdued in worship of her beauty  
To obey her will.

And then she turned and saw me,  
And faced me in her nakedness, nor tried  
To hide it from me, faced me immovable  
A Mona Lisa smile upon her lips.  
And let me plead my cause, make known my love,  
Speak out my torture, wearing still the smile.  
Let me approach her till I almost touched  
The whiteness of her bosom. Then it seemed  
That smile of hers not wilting me she clapped  
Hands over eyes and said: "I am afraid—  
Oh no, it cannot be—what would they say?"  
Then rushing in the bathroom, quick she slammed  
The door and shrieked: "You scoundrel, go—you  
beast."

My dream went up like paper charred and whirled  
Above a hearth. Thrilling I stood alone  
Amid her room and saw my life, our life  
Embodied in this woman lately there  
Lying and cowardly. And as I turned  
To leave the room, her father and the gardener  
Pounced on me, threw me down a flight of stairs  
And turned me over, stunned, to you the law  
Here with these others who have stolen coal

## TOWARD THE GULF

To keep them warm, as I have stolen beauty  
To keep from freezing in this arid country  
Of winter winds on which the dust of custom  
Rides like a fog.

Now do your worst to me!

## THE LANDSCAPE

You and your landscape! There it lies  
Stripped, resuming its disguise,  
Clothed in dreams, made bare again,  
Symbol infinite of pain,  
Rapture, magic, mystery  
Of vanished days and days to be.  
There's its sea of tidal grass  
Over which the south winds pass,  
And the sun-set's Tuscan gold  
Which the distant windows hold  
For an instant like a sphere  
Bursting ere it disappear.  
There's the dark green woods which throve  
In the spell of Leese's Grove.  
And the winding of the road;  
And the hill o'er which the sky  
Stretched its pallied vacancy  
Ere the dawn or evening glowed.  
And the wonder of the town  
Somewhere from the hill-top down  
Nestling under hills and woods  
And the meadow's solitudes.

\* \* \* \*



## TOWARD THE GULF

And your paper knight of old  
Secrets of the landscape told.  
And the hedge-rows where the pond  
Took the blue of heavens beyond  
The hastening clouds of gusty March.  
There you saw their wrinkled arch  
Where the East wind cracks his whips  
Round the little pond and clips  
Main-sails from your toppled ships. . . .

Landscape that in youth you knew  
Past and present, earth and you!  
All the legends and the tales  
Of the uplands, of the vales;  
Sounds of cattle and the cries  
Of ploughmen and of travelers  
Were its soul's interpreters.  
And here the lame were always lame.  
Always gray the gray of head.  
And the dead were always dead  
Ere the landscape had become  
Your cradle, as it was their tomb.

\* \* \* \* \*

And when the thunder storms would waken  
Of the dream your soul was not forsaken:  
In the room where the dormer windows look—  
There were your knight and the tattered book.

## THE LANDSCAPE

With colors of the forest green  
Gabled roofs and the demesne  
Of faery kingdoms and faery time  
Storied in pre-natal rhyme. . . .  
Past the orchards, in the plain  
The cattle fed on in the rain.  
And the storm-beaten horseman sped  
Rain blinded and with bended head.  
And John the ploughman comes and goes  
In labor wet, with steaming clothes.  
This is your landscape, but you see  
Not terror and not destiny  
Behind its loved, maternal face,  
Its power to change, or fade, replace  
Its wonder with a deeper dream,  
Unfolding to a vaster theme.  
From time eternal was this earth?  
No less this landscape with your birth  
Arose, nor leaves you, nor decay  
Finds till the twilight of your day.  
It bore you, moulds you to its plan.  
It ends with you as it began,  
But bears the seed of future years  
Of higher raptures, dumber tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

For soon you lose the landscape through  
Absence, sorrow, eyes grown true

## TOWARD THE GULF

To the naked limbs which show  
Buds that never more may blow.  
Now you know the lame were straight  
Ere you knew them, and the fate  
Of the old is yet to die.  
Now you know the dead who lie  
In the graves you saw where first  
The landscape on your vision burst,  
Were not always dead, and now  
Shadows rest upon the brow  
Of the souls as young as you.  
Some are gone, though years are few  
Since you roamed with them the hills.  
So the landscape changes, wills  
All the changes, did it try  
Its promises to justify? . . .

\* \* \* \*

For you return and find it bare:  
There is no heaven of golden air.  
Your eyes around the horizon rove,  
A clump of trees is Leese's Grove.  
And what's the hedgerow, what's the pond?  
A wallow where the vagabond  
Beast will not drink, and where the arch  
Of heaven in the days of March  
Refrains to look. A blinding rain  
Beats the once gilded window pane.

## THE LANDSCAPE

John, the poor wretch, is gone, but bread  
Tempts other feet that path to tread  
Between the barn and house, and brave  
The March rain and the winds that rave. . . .  
O, landscape I am one who stands  
Returned with pale and broken hands  
Glad for the day that I have known,  
And finds the deserted doorway strown  
With shoulder blade and spinal bone.  
And you who nourished me and bred  
I find the spirit from you fled.  
You gave me dreams, 'twas at your breast  
My soul's beginning rose and pressed  
My steps afar at last and shaped  
A world elusive, which escaped  
Whatever love or thought could find  
Beyond the tireless wings of mind.  
Yet grown by you, and feeding on  
Your strength as mother, you are gone  
When I return from living, trace  
My steps to see how I began,  
And deeply search your mother face  
To know your inner self, the place  
For which you bore me, sent me forth  
To wander, south or east or north. . . .  
Now the familiar landscape lies  
With breathless breast and hollow eyes.  
It knows me not, as I know not

## TOWARD THE GULF

Its secret, spirit, all forgot  
Its kindred look is, as I stand  
A stranger in an unknown land.

\* \* \* \* \*

Are we not earth-born, formed of dust  
Which seeks again its love and trust  
In an old landscape, after change  
In hearts grown weary, wrecked and strange?  
What though we struggled to emerge  
Dividual, footed for the urge  
Of further self-discoveries, though  
In the mid-years we cease to know,  
Through disenchanted eyes, the spell  
That clothed it like a miracle—  
Yet at the last our steps return  
Its deeper mysteries to learn.  
It has been always us, it must  
Clasp to itself our kindred dust.  
We cannot free ourselves from it.  
Near or afar we must submit  
To what is in us, what was grown  
Out of the landscape's soil, the known  
And unknown powers of soil and soul.  
As bodies yield to the control  
Of the earth's center, and so bend  
In age, so hearts toward the end  
Bend down with lips so long athirst

## THE LANDSCAPE

To waters which were known at first—  
The little spring at Leese's Grove  
Was your first love, is your last love!

\* \* \* \* \*

When those we knew in youth have crept  
Under the landscape, which has kept  
Nothing we saw with youthful eyes;  
Ere God is formed in the empty skies,  
I wonder not our steps are pressed  
Toward the mystery of their rest.  
That is the hope at bud which kneels  
Where ancestors the tomb conceals.  
Age no less than youth would lean  
Upon some love. For what is seen  
No more of father, mother, friend,  
For hands of flesh lost, eyes grown blind  
In death, a something which assures,  
Comforts, allays our fears, endures.  
Just as the landscape and our home  
In childhood made of heaven's dome,  
And all the farthest ways of earth  
A place as sheltered as the hearth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Is it not written at the last day  
Heaven and earth shall roll away?  
Yes, as my landscape passed through death,

## TOWARD THE GULF

Lay like a corpse, and with new breath  
Became instinct with fire and light—  
So shall it roll up in my sight,  
Pass from the realm of finite sense,  
Become a thing of spirit, whence  
I shall pass too, its child in faith  
Of dreams it gave me, which nor death  
Nor change can wreck, but still reveal  
In change a Something vast, more real  
Than sunsets, meadows, green-wood trees,  
Or even faery presences.  
A Something which the earth and air  
Transmutes but keeps them what they were;  
Clear films of beauty grown more thin  
As we approach and enter in.  
Until we reach the scene that made  
Our landscape just a thing of shade.

\* \* \* \* \*

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

Well, then, another drink! Ben Jonson knows,  
So do you, Michael Drayton, that to-morrow  
I reach my fifty-second year. But hark ye,  
To-morrow lacks two days of being a month—  
Here is a secret—since I made my will.  
Heigh ho! that's done too! I wonder why I did it?  
That I should make a will! Yet it may be  
That then and jump at this most crescent hour  
Heaven inspired the deed.

As a mad younker

I knew an aged man in Warwickshire  
Who used to say, "Ah, mercy me," for sadness  
Of change, or passing time, or secret thoughts.  
If it was spring he sighed it, if 'twas fall,  
With drifting leaves, he looked upon the rain  
And with doleful suspiration kept  
This habit of his grief. And on a time  
As he stood looking at the flying clouds,  
I loitering near, expectant, heard him say it,  
Inquired, "Why do you say 'Ah, mercy me,'  
Now that it's April?" So he hobbled off  
And left me empty there.

[ 99 ]



## TOWARD THE GULF

Now here am I!

Oh, it is strange to find myself this age,  
And rustling like a peascod, though unshelled,  
And, like this aged man of Warwickshire,  
Slaved by a mood which must have breath—"Tra-la!"  
That's what I say instead of "Ah, mercy me."  
For look you, Ben, I catch myself with "Tra-la"  
The moment I break sleep to see the day.  
At work, alone, vexed, laughing, mad or glad  
I say, "Tra-la" unknowing. Oft at table  
I say, "Tra-la." And 'tother day, poor Anne  
Looked long at me and said, "You say, 'Tra-la'  
Sometimes when you're asleep; why do you so?"  
Then I bethought me of that aged man  
Who used to say, "Ah, mercy me," but answered:  
"Perhaps I am so happy when awake  
The song crops out in slumber—who can say?"  
And Anne arose, began to keel the pot,  
But was she answered, Ben? Who know a woman?

To-morrow is my birthday. If I die,  
Slip out of this with Bacchus for a guide,  
What soul would interdict the popped way?  
Heroes may look the Monster down, a child  
Can wilt a lion, who is cowed to see  
Such bland unreckoning of his strength—but I,  
Having so greatly lived, would sink away

[ 100 ]

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

Unknowing my departure. I have died  
A thousand times, and with a valiant soul  
Have drunk the cup, but why? In such a death  
To-morrow shines and there's a place to lean.  
But in this death that has no bottom to it,  
No bank beyond, no place to step, the soul  
Grows sick, and like a falling dream we shrink  
From that inane which gulfs us, without place  
For us to stand and see it.

Yet, dear Ben,  
This thing must be; that's what we live to know  
Out of long dreaming, saying that we know it.  
As yeasty heroes in their braggart teens  
Spout learnedly of war, who never saw  
A cannon aimed. You drink too much to-day,  
Or get a scratch while turning Lucy's stile,  
And like a beast you sicken. Like a beast  
They cart you off. What matter if your thought  
Outsoared the Phoenix? Like a beast you rot.  
Methinks that something wants our flesh, as we  
Hunger for flesh of beasts. But still to-morrow,  
To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow  
Creeps in this petty pace—O, Michael Drayton,  
Some end must be. But 'twixt the fear of ceasing  
And weariness of going on we lie  
Upon these thorns!

## TOWARD THE GULF

These several springs I find  
No new birth in the Spring. And yet in London  
I used to cry, "O, would I were in Stratford;  
It's April and the larks are singing now.  
The flags are green along the Avon river;  
O, would I were a rambler in the fields.  
This poor machine is racing to its wreck.  
This grist of thought is endless, this old sorrow  
Sprouts, winds and crawls in London's darkness.

Come

Back to your landscape! Peradventure waits  
Some woman there who will make new the earth,  
And crown the spring with fire."

So back I come.  
And the springs march before me, say, "Behold  
Here are we, and what would you, can you use us?"  
What good is air if lungs are out, or springs  
When the mind's flown so far away no spring,  
Nor loveliness of earth can call it back?  
I tell you what it is: in early youth  
The life is in the loins; by thirty years  
It travels through the stomach to the lungs,  
And then we strut and crow. By forty years  
The fruit is swelling while the leaves are fresh.  
By fifty years you're ripe, begin to rot.  
At fifty-two, or fifty-five or sixty  
The life is in the seed—what's spring to you?

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

Puff! Puff! You are so winged and light you fly.  
For every passing zephyr, are blown off,  
And drifting, God knows where, cry out "tra-la,"  
"Ah, mercy me," as it may happen you.  
Puff! Puff! away you go!

### Another drink?

Why, you may drown the earth with ale and I  
Will drain it like a sea. The more I drink  
The better I see that this is April time. . . .

Ben! There is one Voice which says to everything:  
"Dream what you will, I'll make you bear your seed.  
And, having borne, the sickle comes among ye  
And takes your stalk." The rich and sappy greens  
Of spring or June show life within the loins,  
And all the world is fair, for now the plant  
Can drink the level cup of flame where heaven  
Is poured full by the sun. But when the blossom  
Flutters its colors, then it takes the cup  
And waves the stalk aside. And having drunk  
The stalk to penury, then slumber comes  
With dreams of spring stored in the imprisoned  
germ,  
An old life and a new life all in one,  
A thing of memory and of prophecy,  
Of reminiscence, longing, hope and fear.  
What has been ours is taken, what was ours

## TOWARD THE GULF

Becomes entailed on our seed in the spring,  
Fees in possession and enjoyment too. . . .

The thing is sex, Ben. It is that which lives  
And dies in us, makes April and unmakes,  
And leaves a man like me at fifty-two,  
Finished but living, on the pinnacle  
Betwixt a death and birth, the earth consumed  
And heaven rolled up to eyes whose troubled glances  
Would shape again to something better—what?  
Give me a woman, Ben, and I will pick  
Out of this April, by this larger art  
Of fifty-two, such songs as we have heard,  
Both you and I, when weltering in the clouds  
Of that eternity which comes in sleep,  
Or in the viewless spinning of the soul  
When most intense. The woman is somewhere,  
And that's what tortures, when I think this field  
So often gleaned could blossom once again  
If I could find her.

Well, as to my plays:  
I have not written out what I would write.  
They have a thousand buds of finer flowering.  
And over "Hamlet" hangs a teasing spirit  
As fine to that as sense is fine to flesh.  
Good friends, my soul beats up its prisoned wings  
Against the ceiling of a vaster whorl

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

And would break through and enter. But, fair friends,  
What strength in place of sex shall steady me?  
What is the motive of this higher mount?  
What process in the making of myself—  
The very fire, as it were, of my growth—  
Shall furnish forth these writings by the way,  
As incident, expression of the nature  
Relumed for adding branches, twigs and leaves? . . .

Suppose I'd make a tragedy of this,  
Focus my fancied "Dante" to this theme,  
And leave my halfwrit "Sappho," which at best  
Is just another delving in the mine  
That gave me "Cleopatra" and the Sonnets?  
If you have genius, write my tragedy,  
And call it "Shakespeare, Gentleman of Stratford,"  
Who lost his soul amid a thousand souls,  
And had to live without it, yet live with it  
As wretched as the souls whose lives he lived.  
Here is a play for you: Poor William Shakespeare,  
This moment growing drunk, the famous author  
Of certain sugared sonnets and some plays,  
With this machine too much to him, which started  
Some years ago, now cries him nay and runs  
Even when the house shakes and complains, "I fall,  
You shake me down, my timbers break apart.  
Why, if an engine must go on like this  
The building should be stronger."

## TOWARD THE GULF

Or to mix,  
And by the mixing, unmix metaphors,  
No mortal man has blood enough for brains  
And stomach too, when the brain is never done  
With thinking and creating.

For you see,  
I pluck a flower, cut off a dragon's head—  
Choose twixt these figures—lo, a dozen buds,  
A dozen heads out-crop. For every fancy,  
Play, sonnet, what you will, I write me out  
With thinking "Now I'm done," a hundred others  
Crowd up for voices, and, like twins unborn  
Kick and turn o'er for entrance to the world.  
And I, poor fecund creature, who would rest,  
As 'twere from an importunate husband, fly  
To money-lending, farming, mulberry trees,  
Enclosing Welcombe fields, or idling hours  
In common talk with people like the Combes.  
All this to get a heartiness, a hold  
On earth again, lest Heaven Hercules,  
Finding me strayed to mid-air, kicking heels  
Above the mountain tops, seize on my scruff  
And bear me off or strangle.

Good, my friends,  
The "Tempest" is as nothing to the voice  
That calls me to performance—what I know not.

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

I've planned an epic of the Asian wash  
Which slopped the star of Athens and put out,  
Which should all history analyze, and present  
A thousand notables in the guise of life,  
And show the ancient world and worlds to come  
To the last blade of thought and tiniest seed  
Of growth to be. With visions such as these  
My spirit turns in restless ecstasy,  
And this enslavéd brain is master sponge,  
And sucks the blood of body, hands and feet.  
While my poor spirit, like a butterfly  
Gummed in its shell, beats its bedraggled wings,  
And cannot rise.

I'm cold, both hands and feet.  
These three days past I have been cold, this hour  
I am warm in three days. God bless the ale.  
God did do well to give us anodynes. . . .  
So now you know why I am much alone,  
And cannot fellow with Augustine Phillips,  
John Heminge, Richard Burbage, Henry Condell,  
And do not have them here, dear ancient friends,  
Who grieve, no doubt, and wonder for changed love.  
Love is not love which alters when it finds  
A change of heart, but mine has changed not, only  
I cannot be my old self. I blaspheme:  
I hunger for broiled fish, but fly the touch  
Of hands of flesh.



## TOWARD THE GULF

I am most passionate,  
And long am used perplexities of love  
To bemoan and to bewail. And do you wonder,  
Seeing what I am, what my fate has been?  
Well, hark you; Anne is sixty now, and I,  
A crater which erupts, look where she stands  
In lava wrinkles, eight years older than I am,  
As years go, but I am a youth afire  
While she is lean and slippered. It's a Fury  
Which takes me sometimes, makes my hands clutch out  
For virgins in their teens. O sullen fancy!  
I want them not, I want the love which springs  
Like flame which blots the sun, where fuel of body  
Is piled in reckless generosity. . . .  
You are most learned, Ben, Greek and Latin know,  
And think me nature's child, scarce understand  
How much of physic, law, and ancient annals  
I have stored up by means of studious zeal.  
But pass this by, and for the braggart breath  
Ensuing now say, "Will was in his cups,  
Potvaliant, boozed, corned, squiffy, obfuscated,  
Crapulous, inter pocula, or so forth.  
Good sir, or so, or friend, or gentleman,  
According to the phrase or the addition  
Of man and country, on my honor, Shakespeare  
At Stratford, on the twenty-second of April,  
Year sixteen-sixteen of our Lord was merry—  
Videlicet, was drunk." Well, where was I?—

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

Oh yes, at braggart breath, and now to say it:  
I believe and say it as I would lightly speak  
Of the most common thing to sense, outside  
Myself to touch or analyze, this mind  
Which has been used by Something, as I use  
A quill for writing, never in this world  
In the most high and palmy days of Greece,  
Or in this roaring age, has known its peer.  
No soul as mine has lived, felt, suffered, dreamed,  
Broke open spirit secrets, followed trails  
Of passions curious, countless lives explored  
As I have done. And what are Greek and Latin,  
The lore of Aristotle, Plato to this?  
Since I know them by what I am, the essence  
From which their utterance came, myself a flower  
Of every graft and being in myself  
The recapitulation and the complex  
Of all the great. Were not brains before books?  
And even geometrics in some brain  
Before old Gutenberg? O fie, Ben Jonson,  
If I am nature's child am I not all?  
Howe'er it be, ascribe this to the ale,  
And say that reason in me was a fume.  
But if you honor me, as you have said,  
As much as any, this side idolatry,  
Think, Ben, of this: That I, whate'er I be  
In your regard, have come to fifty-two,  
Defeated in my love, who knew too well

## TOWARD THE GULF

That poets through the love of women turn  
To satyrs or to gods, even as women  
By the first touch of passion bloom or rot  
As angels or as bawds.

Bethink you also  
How I have felt, seen, known the mystic process  
Working in man's soul from the woman soul  
As part thereof in essence, spirit and flesh,  
Even as a malady may be, while this thing  
Is health and growth, and growing draws all life,  
All goodness, wisdom for its nutriment.  
Till it become a vision paradisiac,  
And a ladder of fire for climbing, from its topmost  
Rung a place for stepping into heaven. . . .

This I have know, but had not. Nor have I  
Stood coolly off and seen the woman, used  
Her blood upon my palette. No, but heaven  
Commanded my strength's use to abort and slay  
What grew within me, while I saw the blood  
Of love untimely ripped, as 'twere a child  
Killed i' the womb, a harpy or an angel  
With my own blood stained.

As a virgin shamed  
By the swelling life unlicensed needles it,  
But empties not her womb of some last shred  
Of flesh which fouls the alleys of her body,

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

And fills her wholesome nerves with poisoned sleep,  
And weakness to the last of life, so I  
For some shame not unlike, some need of life  
To rid me of this life I had conceived  
Did up and choke it too, and thence begot  
A fever and a fixed debility  
For killing that begot.

Now you see that I  
Have not grown from a central dream, but grown  
Despite a wound, and over the wound and used  
My flesh to heal my flesh. My love's a fever  
Which longed for that which nursed the malady,  
And fed on that which still preserved the ill,  
The uncertain, sickly appetite to please.  
My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept  
Has left me. And as reason is past care  
I am past cure, with ever more unrest  
Made frantic-mad, my thoughts as madmen's are,  
And my discourse at random from the truth,  
Not knowing what she is, who swore her fair  
And thought her bright, who is as black as hell  
And dark as night.

But list, good gentlemen,  
This love I speak of is not as a cloak  
Which one may put away to wear a coat,  
And doff that for a jacket, like the loves

## TOWARD THE GULF

We men are wont to have as loves or wives.  
She is the very one, the soul of souls,  
And when you put her on you put on light,  
Or wear the robe of Nessus, poisonous fire,  
Which if you tear away you tear your life,  
And if you wear you fall to ashes. So  
'Tis not her bed-vow broke, I have broke mine,  
That ruins me; 'tis honest faith quite lost,  
And broken hope that we could find each other,  
And that mean more to me and less to her.  
'Tis that she could take all of me and leave me  
Without a sense of loss, without a tear,  
And make me fool and perjured for the oath  
That swore her fair and true. I feel myself  
As like a virgin who her body gives  
For love of one whose love she dreams is hers,  
But wakes to find herself a toy of blood,  
And dupe of prodigal breath, abandoned quite  
For other conquests. For I gave myself,  
And shrink for thought thereof, and for the loss  
Of myself never to myself restored.  
The urtication of this shame made plays  
And sonnets, as you'll find behind all deeds  
That mount to greatness, anger, hate, disgust,  
But, better, love.

To hell with punks and wenches,  
Drabs, mopsies, doxies, minxes, trulls and queans,

## TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

Rips, harridans and strumpets, pieces, jades.  
And likewise to the eternal bonfire lechers,  
All rakehells, satyrs, goats and placket fumblers,  
Gibs, breakers-in-at-catch-doors, thunder tubes.  
I think I have a fever—hell and furies!  
Or else this ale grows hotter i' the mouth.  
Ben, if I die before you, let me waste  
Richly and freely in the good brown earth,  
Untrumpeted and by no bust marked out.  
What good, Ben Jonson, if the world could see  
What face was mine, who wrote these plays and son-  
nets?

Life, you have hurt me. Since Death has a veil  
I take the veil and hide, and like great Cæsar  
Who drew his toga round him, I depart.

Good friends, let's to the fields—I have a fever.  
After a little walk, and by your pardon,  
I think I'll sleep. There is no sweeter thing,  
Nor fate more blessed than to sleep. Here, world,  
I pass you like an orange to a child:  
I can no more with you. Do what you will.  
What should my care be when I have no power  
To save, guide, mould you? Naughty world you need  
me

As little as I need you: go your way!  
Tyrants shall rise and slaughter fill the earth,  
But I shall sleep. In wars and wars and wars

## TOWARD THE GULF

The ever-replenished youth of earth shall shriek  
And clap their gushing wounds—but I shall sleep,  
Nor earthy thunder wake me when the cannon  
Shall shake the throne of Tartarus. Orators  
Shall fulmine over London or America  
Of rights eternal, parchments, sacred charters  
And cut each others' throats when reason fails—  
But I shall sleep. This globe may last and breed  
The race of men till Time cries out "How long?"  
But I shall sleep ten thousand thousand years.  
I am a dream, Ben, out of a blessed sleep—  
Let's walk and hear the lark.

\* \* \* \* \*

## SWEET CLOVER

Only a few plants up—and not a blossom  
My clover didn't catch. What is the matter?  
Old John comes by. I show him my result.  
Look, John! My clover patch is just a failure,  
I wanted you to sow it. Now you see  
What comes of letting Hunter do your work.  
The ground was not plowed right, or disced perhaps,  
Or harrowed fine enough, or too little seed  
Was sown.

But John, who knows a clover field,  
Pulls up a plant and cleans the roots of soil  
And studies them.

He says, Look at the roots!  
Hunter neglected to inoculate  
The seed, for clover seed must always have  
Clover bacteria to make it grow,  
And blossom. In a thrifty field of clover  
The roots are studded thick with tubercles,  
Like little warts, made by bacteria.  
And somehow these bacteria lay hold  
Upon the nitrogen that fills the soil,  
And make the plants grow, make them blossom too.



## TOWARD THE GULF

When Hunter sowed this field he was not well:  
He should have hauled some top-soil to this field  
From some old clover field, or made a culture  
Of these bacteria and soaked the seed  
In it before he sowed it.

As I said,  
Hunter was sick when he was working here.  
And then he ran away to Indiana  
And left his wife and children. Now he's back.  
His cough was just as bad in Indiana  
As it is here. A cough is pretty hard  
To run away from. Wife and children too  
Are pretty hard to leave, since thought of them  
Stays with a fellow and cannot be left. .  
Yes, Hunter's back, but he can't work for you.  
He's straightening out his little farm and making  
Provision for his family. Hunter's changed.  
He is a better man. It almost seems  
That Hunter's blossomed. . . .

I am sorry for him.  
The doctor says he has tuberculosis.

## SOMETHING BEYOND THE HILL

To a western breeze  
A row of golden tulips is nodding.  
They flutter their golden wings  
In a sudden ecstasy and say:  
Something comes to us from beyond,  
Out of the sky, beyond the hill  
We give it to you.

\* \* \* \* \*

And I walk through rows of jonquils  
To a belovéd door,  
Which you open.  
And you stand with the priceless gold of your tulip head  
Nodding to me, and saying:  
Something comes to me  
Out of the mystery of Eternal Beauty—  
I give it to you.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is the morning wonder of hyacinth in your eyes,  
And the freshness of June iris in your hands,  
And the rapture of gardenias in your bosom.  
But your voice is the voice of the robin  
Singing at dawn amid new leaves.

## TOWARD THE GULF

It is like sun-light on blue water  
Where the south-wind is on the water  
And the buds of the flags are green.  
It is like the wild bird of the sedges  
With fluttering wings on a wind-blown reed  
Showering lyrics over the sun-light  
Between rhythmical pauses  
When his heart has stopped,  
Making light and water  
Into song.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let me hear your voice,  
And the voice of Eternal Beauty  
Through the music of your voice.  
Let me gather the iris of your hands.  
Against my face.  
And close my eyes with your eyes.  
Let me listen with you  
For the Voice.

\* \* \* \* \*

## FRONT THE AGES WITH A SMILE

How did the sculptor, Voltaire, keep you quiet and  
posed  
In an arm chair, just think, at your busiest age we are  
told,  
Being better than seventy? How did he manage to  
stay you  
From hopping through Europe for long enough time for  
his work,  
Which shows you in marble, the look and the smile and  
the nose,  
The filleted brow very bald, the thin little hands,  
The posture pontifical, face imperturbable, smile so  
serene.  
How did the sculptor detain you, you ever so restless,  
You ever so driven by princes and priests? So I stand  
here  
Enwrapped of this face of you, frail little frame of you,  
And think of your work—how nothing could balk you  
Or quench you or damp you. How you twisted and  
turned,  
Emerged from the fingers of malice, emerged with a  
laugh,  
Kept Europe in laughter, in turmoil, in fear  
For your eighty-four years!

## TOWARD THE GULF

And they say of you still  
You were light and a mocker! You should have been  
solemn,  
And argued with monkeys and swine, speaking truth-  
fully always.  
Nay, truthful with whom, to what end? With a breed  
such as lived  
In your day and your place? It was never their due!  
Truth for the truthful and true, and a lie for the liar if  
need be—  
A board out of plumb for a place out of plumb, for the  
hypocrite flashes  
Of lightning or rods red hot for thrusting in tortuous  
places.  
Well, this was your way, you lived out the genius God  
gave you.  
And they hated you for it, hunted you all over Europe—  
Why should they not hate you? Why should you not  
follow your light?  
But wherever they drove you, you climbed to a place  
more satiric.  
Did France bar her door? Geneva remained—good  
enough!  
Les Delices close to some several cantons, you know.  
Would they lay hands upon you? I fancy you laughing,  
You stand at your door and step into Vaud by one  
path;  
You stand at your door and step by another to France—

## FRONT THE AGES WITH A SMILE

Such safe jurisdictions, in truth, as the Illinois rowdies  
Step from county to county ahead of the frustrate  
policeman.

And here you have printers to print what you write and  
a house

For the acting of plays, La Pucelle, Orphelin.

O busy Voltaire, never resting. . . .

So England conservative, England of Southey and  
Burke,

The fox-hunting squires, the England of Church and of  
State,

The England half mule and half ox, writes you down,  
O Voltaire:

The quack grass of popery flourished in France, you  
essayed

To plow up the tangle, and harrow the roots from the soil.  
It took a good ploughman to plow it, a ploughman of  
laughter,

A ploughman who laughed when the plow struck the  
roots, and your breast

Was thrown on the handles.

And yet to this day, O Voltaire,  
They charge you with levity, scoffing, when all that you  
did

Was to plough up the quack grass, and turn up the  
roots to the sun,

## TOWARD THE GULF

And let the sun kill them. For laughter is sun-light,  
And nothing of worth or of truth needs to fear it.

But listen

The strength of a nation is mind, I will grant you, and  
still

But give it a tongue read and spoken more greatly than  
others,

That nation can judge true or false and the judgment  
abides.

The judgment in English condemns you, where is there  
a judgment

To save you from this? Is it German, or Russian, or  
French?

Did you give up three years of your life

To wipe out the sentence that burned the wracked body  
of Calas?

Did you help the oppressed Montbailli and Lally, O  
well,

Six lines in an article written in English are plenty

To weigh what you did, put it by with a generous  
gesture,

Give the minds of the student your measure, impress  
them

Forever that all of this sacrifice, service was noble,  
But done with mixed motives, the fruits of your meddle-  
some nature,

## FRONT THE AGES WITH A SMILE

Your hatred of churches and priests. Six lines are the  
record

Of all of these years of hard plowing in quack-grass,  
while batting

At poisonous flies and stepping on poisonous snakes. . .

How well did you know that life to a genius, a god,  
Is naught but a farce! How well did you look with those  
eyes

As black as a beetle's through all the ridiculous show:  
Ridiculous war, and ridiculous strife, and ridiculous  
pomp.

Ridiculous dignity, riches, rituals, reasons and creeds.  
Ridiculous guesses at what the great Silence is saying.  
Ridiculous systems wound over the earth like a snake  
Devouring the children of Fear! Ridiculous customs,  
Ridiculous judgments and laws, philosophies, worships.  
You saw through and laughed at—you saw above all  
That a soul must make end with a groan, or a curse, or a  
laugh.

So you smiled till the lines of your mouth  
A crescent became with dimples for horns, so expressing  
To centuries after who see you in marble: Behold me,  
I lived, I loved, I laughed, I toiled without ceasing  
Through eighty-four years for realities—O let them pass,  
Let life go by. Would you rise over death like a god?  
Front the ages with a smile!

\* \* \* \* \*



## POOR PIERROT

Here far away from the city, here by the yellow dunes  
I will lie and soothe my heart where the sea croons.  
For what can I do with strife, or what can I do with  
hate?

Or the city, or life, or fame, or love or fate?

Or the struggle since time began of the rich and poor?  
Or the law that drives the weak from the temple's door?  
Bury me under the sand so that my sorrow shall lie  
Hidden under the dunes from the world's eye.

I have learned the secret of silence, silence long and  
deep:

The dead knew all that I know, that is why they sleep.  
They could do nothing with fate, or love, or fame, or  
strife—

When life fills full the soul then life kills life.

I would glide under the earth as a shadow over a dune,  
Into the soul of silence, under the sun and moon.  
And forever as long as the world stands or the stars flee  
Be one with the sands of the shore and one with the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

## MIRAGE OF THE DESERT

Well, there's the brazier set by the temple door:  
Blue flames run over the coals and flicker through.  
There are cool spaces of sky between white clouds—  
But what are flames and spaces but eyes of blue?

\* \* \* \* \*

And there's the harp on which great fingers play  
Of gods who touch the wires, dreaming infinite things:  
And there's a soul that wanders out when called  
By a voice afar from the answering strings.

\* \* \* \* \*

And there's the wish of the deep fulfillment of tears,  
Till the vision, the mad music are wept away.  
One cannot have them and live, but if one die  
It might be better than living—who can say?

\* \* \* \* \*

Why do we thirst for urns beyond urns who know  
How sweet they are, yet bitter, not enough?  
Eternity will quench your thirst, O soul—  
But never the Desert's spectre, cup of love!

\* \* \* \* \*

## DAHLIAS

The mad wind is the warden,  
And the smiling dahlias nod  
To the dahlias across the garden,  
And the wastes of the golden rod.

They never pray for pardon,  
Nor ask his way nor forego,  
Nor close their hearts nor harden  
Nor stay his hand, nor bestow

Their hearts filched out of their bosoms,  
Nor plan for dahlias to be.  
For the wind blows over the garden  
And sets the dahlias free.

They drift to the song of the warden,  
Heedless they give him heed.  
And he walks and blows through the garden  
Blossom and leaf and seed.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE GRAND RIVER MARSHES

Silvers and purples breathing in a sky  
Of fiery mid-days, like a watching tiger,  
Of the restrained but passionate July  
Upon the marshes of the river lie,  
Like the filmed pinions of the dragon fly.

\* \* \* \* \*

A whole horizon's waste of rushes bend  
Under the flapping of the breeze's wing,  
Departing and revisiting  
The haunts of the river twisting without end.

\* \* \* \* \*

The torsions of the river make long miles  
Of the waters of the river which remain  
Coiled by the village, tortuous aisles  
Of water between the rushes, which restrain  
The bewildered currents in returning files,  
Twisting between the greens like a blue racer,  
Too hurt to leap with body or uplift  
Its head while gliding, neither slow nor swift

\* \* \* \* \*

## TOWARD THE GULF

Against the shaggy yellows of the dunes  
The iron bridge's reticules  
Are seen by fishermen from the Damascened  
lagoons.

But from the bridge, watching the little steamer  
Paddling against the current up to Eastmanville,  
The river loosened from the abandoned spools  
Of earth and heaven wanders without will,  
Between the rushes, like a silken streamer.  
And two old men who turn the bridge  
For passing boats sit in the sun all day,  
Toothless and sleepy, ancient river dogs,  
And smoke and talk of a glory passed away.  
And of the ruthless sacrilege  
Which mowed away the pines,  
And cast them in the current here as logs,  
To be devoured by the mills to the last sliver,  
Making for a little hour heroes and heroines,  
Dancing and laughter at Grand Haven,  
When the great saws sent screeches up and whines,  
And cries for more and more  
Slaughter of forests up and down the river  
And along the lake's shore.

\* \* \* \* \*

But all is quiet on the river now  
As when the snow lay windless in the wood,  
And the last Indian stood

## THE GRAND RIVER MARSHES

And looked to find the broken bough  
That told the path under the snow.  
All is as silent as the spiral lights  
Of purple and of gold that from the marshes rise,  
Like the wings of swarming dragon flies,  
Far up toward Eastmanville, where the enclosing skies  
Quiver with heat; as silent as the flights  
Of the crow like smoke from shops against the glare  
Of dunes and purple air,  
There where Grand Haven against the sand hill lies.

\* \* \* \* \*

The forests and the mills are gone!  
All is as silent as the voice I heard  
On a summer dawn  
When we two fished among the river reeds.  
As silent as the pain  
In a heart that feeds  
A sorrow, but does not complain.  
As silent as above the bridge in this July,  
Noiseless, far up in this mirror-lighted sky  
Wheels aimlessly a hydroplane:  
A man-bestriden dragon fly!

\* \* \* \* \*

## DELILAH

Because thou wast most delicate,  
A woman fair for men to see,  
The earth did compass thy estate,  
Thou didst hold life and death in fee,  
And every soul did bend the knee.

Much pleasure also made thee grieve  
For that the goblet had been drained.  
The well spiced viand thou didst leave  
To frown on want whose throat was  
strained,  
And violence whose hands were stained.

(Wherein the corrupt spirit of privilege is symbolized by Delilah and the People by Samson.)

The purple of thy royal cloak,  
Made the sea paler for its hue.  
Much people bent beneath the yoke  
To fetch thee jewels white and blue,  
And rings to pass thy gold hair through.

Therefore, Delilah wast thou called,  
Because the choice wines nourished thee  
In Sorek, by the mountains walled  
Against the north wind's misery,  
Where flourished every pleasant tree.

## DELILAH

Thy lovers also were as great  
In numbers as the sea sands were;  
Thou didst requite their love with hate;  
And give them up to massacre,  
Who brought thee gifts of gold and myrrh.

(Delilah hath  
a taste for  
ease and lux-  
ury and wan-  
toneth with  
divers lovers.)

At Gaza and at Ashkelon,  
The obscene Dagon worshipping,  
Thy face was fair to look upon.  
Yet thy tongue, sweet to talk or sing,  
Was deadlier than the adder's sting.

(Delilah con-  
ceiveth the  
design of en-  
snaring Sam-  
son.)

Wherefore, thou saidst: "I will procure  
The strong man Samson for my spouse,  
His death will make my ease secure.  
The god has heard this people's vows  
To recompense their injured house."

Thereafter, when the giant lay  
Supinely rolled against thy feet,  
Him thou didst craftily betray,  
With amorous vexings, low and sweet,  
To tell thee that which was not meet.

(Delilah at-  
tempteth to  
discover the  
source of  
Samson's  
strength.  
Samson very  
neatly de-  
ceiveth her.)

And Samson spake to thee again;  
"With seven green withes I may be  
bound,  
So shall I be as other men."



## TOWARD THE GULF

Whereat the lords the green withes found—  
The same about his limbs were bound.

Then did the fish-god in thee cry:  
“The Philistines be upon thee now.”  
But Samson broke the withes awry,  
As when a keen fire toucheth tow;  
So thou didst not the secret know.

But thou, being full of guile, didst plead:  
“My lord, thou hast but mocked my love  
With lies who gave thy saying heed;  
Hast thou not vexed my heart enough,  
To ease me all the pain thereof?”

Now, in the chamber with fresh hopes,  
The liers in wait did list, and then  
He said: “Go to, and get new ropes,  
Wherewith thou shalt bind me again,  
So shall I be as other men.”

Then didst thou do as he had said,  
Whereat the fish-god in thee cried,  
“The Philistines be upon thy head,”  
He shook his shoulders deep and wide,  
And cast the ropes like thread aside.

(Samson retaineth his intellect and the lustihood of his body and again misleadeth the subtle craft of Delilah.)

Yet thou still fast to thy conceit,  
Didst chide him softly then and say:

## DELILAH

“Beforetime thou hast shown deceit,  
And mocked my quest with idle play,  
Thou canst not now my wish gainsay.”

Then with the secret in his thought,  
He said: “If thou wilt weave my hair,  
The web withal, the deed is wrought;  
Thou shalt have all my strength in snare,  
And I as other men shall fare.”

Seven locks of him thou tookest and wove  
The web withal and fastened it,  
And then the pin thy treason drove,  
With laughter making all things fit,  
As did beseem thy cunning wit.

Then the god Dagon speaking by  
Thy delicate mouth made horrid din;  
“Lo the Philistine lords are nigh”—  
He woke ere thou couldst scarce begin,  
And took away the web and pin.

(Delilah still  
pursueth her  
designs and  
Samson be-  
ginning to be  
somewhat  
wearied hint-  
eth very close  
to his secret.)

Yet, saying not it doth suffice,  
Thou in the chamber's secrecy,  
Didst with thy artful words entice  
Samson to give his heart to thee,  
And tell thee where his strength might be.

## TOWARD THE GULF

Pleading, "How canst thou still aver,  
I love thee, being yet unkind?  
How is it thou dost minister  
Unto my heart with treacherous mind,  
Thou art but cruelly inclined."

From early morn to falling dusk,  
At night upon the curtained bed,  
Fragrant with spikenard and with musk,  
For weariness he laid his head,  
Whilst thou the insidious net didst spread.

Nor wouldst not give him any rest,  
But vexed with various words his soul,  
Till death far more than life was blest,  
Shot through and through with heavy  
dole,  
He gave his strength to thy control.

(Samson being weakened by lust and overcome by Delilah's importunities and guile telleth herwherein his great strength consisteth.)

Saying, "I am a Nazarite,  
To God alway, nor hath there yet  
Razor or shears done despite  
To these my locks of coarsen jet,  
Therefore my strength hath known no let."

"But, and if these be shaven close,  
Whereas I once was strong as ten,  
I may not meet my meanest foes

## DELILAH

Among the hated Philistine,  
I shall be weak like other men."

He turned to sleep, the spell was done,  
Thou saidst "Come up this once, I trow  
The secret of his strength is known;  
Hereafter sweat shall bead his brow,  
Bring up the silver thou didst vow."

They came, and sleeping on thy knees,  
The giant of his locks was shorn.  
And Dagon, being now at ease,  
Cried like the harbinger of morn,  
To see the giant's strength forlorn.

(Samson having trusted Delilah turneth to sleep whereat her minions with force falleth upon him and depriveth him of his strength.)

For he wist not the Lord was gone:—  
"I will go as I went erewhile,"  
He said, "and shake my mighty brawn."  
Without the captains, file on file,  
Did execute Delilah's guile.

At Gaza where the mockers pass,  
Midst curses and unholy sound,  
They fettered him with chains of brass,  
Put out his eyes, and being bound  
Within the prison house he ground.

(Sansculotism, as it seemeth, is overthrown.)

The heathen looking on did sing;  
"Behold our god into our hand,

## TOWARD THE GULF

Hath brought him for our banqueting,  
Who slew us and destroyed our land,  
Against whom none of us could stand.”

Now, therefore, when the festival  
Waxed merrily, with one accord,  
The lords and captains loud did call,  
To bring him out whom they abhorred,  
To make them sport who sat at board.

(Samson being no longer formidable and being deprived of his eyes is reduced to slavery and made the sport of the heathen.)

And Samson made them sport and stood  
Betwixt the pillars of the house,  
Above with scornful hardihood,  
Both men and women made carouse,  
And ridiculed his eyeless brows.

(After a time Samson prayeth for vengeance even though himself should perish thereby.)

Then Samson prayed “Remember me  
O Lord, this once, if not again.  
O God, behold my misery,  
Now weaker than all other men,  
Who once was mightier than ten.”

“Grant vengeance for these sightless eyes,  
And for this unrequited toil,  
For fraud, injustice, perjuries,  
For lords whose greed devours the soil,  
And kings and rulers who despoil.”

## DELILAH

“For all that maketh light of Thee,  
And sets at naught Thy holy word,  
For tongues that babble blasphemy,  
And impious hands that hold the sword—  
Grant vengeance, though I perish, Lord.”

(Wherein by  
a very nice  
conceit rev-  
olution is  
symbolized.)

He grasped the pillars, having prayed,  
And bowed himself—the building fell,  
And on three thousand souls was laid,  
Gone soon to death with mighty yell.  
And Samson died, for it was well.

The lords and captains greatly err,  
Thinking that Samson is no more,  
Blind, but with ever-growing hair,  
He grinds from Tyre to Singapore,  
While yet Delilah plays the whore.

So it hath been, and yet will be,  
The captains, drunken at the feast  
To garnish their felicity,  
Will taunt him as a captive beast,  
Until their insolence hath ceased.

(Wherein it is  
shown that  
while the peo-  
ple like Sam-  
son have been  
blinded, and  
have not re-  
covered their  
sight still that  
their hair  
continueth to  
grow.)

Of ribaldry that smelleth sweet,  
To Dagon and to Ashtoreth;  
Of bloody stripes from head to feet,  
He will endure unto the death,  
Being blind, he also nothing saith.

## TOWARD THE GULF

Then 'gainst the Doric capitals,  
Resting in prayer to God for power,  
He will shake down your marble walls,  
Abiding heaven's appointed hour,  
And those that fly shall hide and cower.

But this Delilah shall survive,  
To do the sin already done,  
Her treacherous wiles and arts shall thrive,  
At Gaza and at Ashkelon,  
A woman fair to look upon.

## THE WORLD-SAVER

If the grim Fates, to stave ennui,  
Play whips for fun, or snares for game,  
The liar full of ease goes free,  
And Socrates must bear the shame.

With the blunt sage he stands despised,  
The Pharisees salute him not;  
Laughter awaits the truth he prized,  
And Judas profits by his plot.

A million angels kneel and pray,  
And sue for grace that he may win—  
Eternal Jove prepares the day,  
And sternly sets the fateful gin.

Satan, who hates the light, is fain,  
To back his virtuous enterprise;  
The omnipotent powers alone refrain,  
Only the Lord of hosts denies.

Whate'er of woven argument,  
Lacks warp to hold the woof in place,  
Smothers his honest discontent,  
But leaves to view his woeful face.



## TOWARD THE GULF

Fling forth the flag, devour the land,  
Grasp destiny and use the law;  
But dodge the epigram's keen brand,  
And fall not by the ass's jaw.

The idiot snicker strikes more down,  
Than fell at Troy or Waterloo;  
Still, still he meets it with a frown,  
And argues loudly for "the True."

Injustice lengthens out her chain,  
Greed, yet ahungered, calls for more;  
But while the eons wax and wane,  
He storms the barricaded door.

Wisdom and peace and fair intent,  
Are tedious as a tale twice told;  
One thing increases being spent—  
Perennial youth belongs to gold.

At Weehawken the soul set free,  
Rules the high realm of Bunker Hill,  
Drink life from that philosophy,  
And flourish by the age's will.

If he shall toil to clear the field,  
Fate's children seize the prosperous year;  
Boldly he fashions some new shield,  
And naked feels the victor's spear.

## THE WORLD-SAVER

He rolls the world up into day,  
He finds the grain, and gets the hull.  
He sees his own mind in the sway,  
And Progress tiptoes on his skull.

Angels and fiends behold the wrong,  
And execrate his losing fight;  
While Jove amidst the choral song  
Smiles, and the heavens glow with light!

—*Trueblood*

---

Trueblood is bewitched to write a drama—  
Only one drama, then to die. Enough  
To win the heights but once! He writes me letters,  
These later days marked "Opened by the Censor,"  
About his drama, asks me what I think  
About this point of view, and that approach,  
And whether to etch in his hero's soul  
By etching in his hero's enemies,  
Or luminate his hero by enshadowing  
His hero's enemies. How shall I tell him  
Which is the actual and the larger theme,  
His hero or his hero's enemies?  
And through it all I see that Trueblood's mind  
Runs to the under-dog, the fallen Titan  
The god misunderstood, the lover of man  
Destroyed by heaven for his love of man.

[ 141 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

In July, 1914, while in London  
He took me to his house to dine and showed me  
The verses as above. And while I read  
He left the room, returned, I heard him move  
The ash trays on the table where we sat  
And set some object on the table.

Then

As I looked up from reading I discovered  
A skull and bony hand upon the table.  
And Trueblood said: "Look at the loft brow!  
And what a hand was this! A right hand too.  
Those fingers in the flesh did miracles.  
And when I have my hero's skull before me,  
His hand that moulded peoples, I should write  
The drama that possesses all my thought.  
You'd think the spirit of the man would come  
And show me how to find the key that fits  
The story of his life, reveal its secret.  
I know the secrets, but I want the secret.  
You'd think his spirit out of gratitude  
Would start me off. It's something, I insist,  
To find a haven with a dramatist  
After your bones have crossed the sea, and after  
Passing from hand to hand they reach seclusion,  
And reverent housing.

Dying in New York

He lay for ten years in a lonely grave

[ 142 ]

## THE WORLD-SAVER

Somewhere along the Hudson, I believe.  
No grave yard in the city would receive him.  
Neither a banker nor a friend of banks,  
Nor falling in a duel to awake  
Indignant sorrow, space in Trinity  
Was not so much as offered. He was poor,  
And never had a tomb like Washington.  
Of course he wasn't Washington—but still,  
Study that skull a little! In ten years  
A mad admirer living here in England  
Went to America and dug him up,  
And brought his bones to Liverpool. Just then  
Our country was in turmoil over France—  
(The details are so rich I lose my head,  
And can't construct my acts.)—hell's flaming here,  
And we are fighting back the roaring fire  
That France had lighted. England would abort  
The era she embraced. Here is a point  
That vexes me in laying out the scenes,  
And persons of the play. For parliament  
Went into fury that these bones were here  
On British soil. The city raged. They took  
The poor town-crier, gave him nine months' prison  
For crying on the streets the bones' arrival.  
I'd like to put that crier in my play.  
The scene of his arrest would thrill, in case  
I put it on a background understood,  
And showing why the fellow was arrested,

## TOWARD THE GULF

And what a high offence to heaven it was.  
Then here's another thing: The monument  
This zealous friend had planned was never raised.  
The city wouldn't have it—you can guess  
The brain that filled this skull and moved this hand  
Had given England trouble. Yes, believe me!  
He roused rebellion and he scattered pamphlets.  
He had the English gift of writing pamphlets.  
He stirred up peoples with his English gift  
Against the mother country. How to show this  
In action, not in talk, is difficult.

Well, then here is our friend who has these bones  
And cannot honor them in burial.  
And so he keeps them, then becomes a bankrupt.  
And look! the bones pass to our friend's receiver.  
Are they an asset? Our Lord Chancellor  
Does not regard them so. I'd like to work  
Some humor in my drama at this point,  
And satirize his lordship just a little.  
Though you can scarcely call a skull an asset  
If it be of a man who helped to cost you  
The loss of half the world. So the receiver  
Cast out the bones and for a time a laborer  
Took care of them. He sold them to a man  
Who dealt in furniture. The empty coffin  
About this time turned up in Guilford—then  
It's 1854, the man is dead

## THE WORLD-SAVER

Near forty years, when just the skull and hand  
Are owned by Rev. Ainslie, who evades  
All questions touching on that ownership,  
And where the ribs, spine, arms and thigh bones are—  
The rest in short.

And as for me—no matter  
Who sold them, gave them to me, loaned them to me.  
Behold the good right hand, behold the skull  
Of *Thomas Paine*, theo-philanthropist,  
Of Quaker parents, born in England! Look,  
That is the hand that wrote the *Crisis*, wrote  
The Age of Reason, Common Sense, and rallied  
Americans against the mother country,  
With just that English gift of pamphleteering.  
You see I'd have to bring George Washington,  
And James Monroe and Thomas Jefferson  
Upon the stage, and put into their mouths  
The eulogies they spoke on Thomas Paine,  
To get before the audience that they thought  
He did as much as any man to win  
Your independence; that your Declaration  
Was founded on his writings, even inspired  
A clause against your negro slavery—how—  
Look at this hand!—he was the first to write  
*United States of America*—there's the hand  
That was the first to write those words. Good Lord  
This drama would out-last a Chinese drama

## TOWARD THE GULF

If I put all the story in. But tell me  
What to omit, and what to stress?

And still

I'd have the greatest drama in the world  
If I could prove he was dishonored, hunted,  
Neglected, libeled, buried like a beast,  
His bones dug up, thrown in and out of Chancery.  
And show these horrors overtook Tom Paine  
Because he was too great, and by this showing  
Instruct the world to honor its torch bearers  
For time to come. No? Well, that can't be done—  
I know that; but it puzzles me to think  
That Hamilton—we'll say, is so revered,  
So lauded, toasted, all his papers studied  
On tariffs and on banks, evoking ahs!  
Great genius! and so forth—and there's the Crisis  
And Common Sense which only little Shelleys  
Haunting the dusty book shops read at all.  
It wasn't that he liked his rum and drank  
Too much at times, or chased a pretty skirt—  
For Hamilton did that. Paine never mixed  
In money matters to another's wrong  
For his sake or a system's. Yes, I know  
The world cares more for chastity and temperance  
Than for a faultless life in money matters.  
No use to dramatize that vital contrast,  
The world to-day is what it always was.

[ 146 ]

## THE WORLD-SAVER

But you don't call this Hamilton an artist  
And Paine a mere logician and a wrangler?  
Your artist soul gets limed in this mad world  
As much as any. There is Leonardo—  
The point's not here.

I think it's more like this:  
Some men are Titans and some men are gods,  
And some are gods who fall while climbing back  
Up to Olympus whence they came. And some  
While fighting for the race fall into holes  
Where to return and rescue them is death.  
Why look you here! You'd think America  
Had gone to war to cheat the guillotine  
Of Thomas Paine, in fiery gratitude.  
He's there in France's national assembly,  
And votes to save King Louis with this phrase:  
Don't kill the man but kill the kingly office.  
They think him faithless to the revolution  
For words like these—and clap! the prison door  
Shuts on our Thomas. So he writes a letter  
To president—of what!—to Washington  
President of the United States of America,  
A title which Paine coined in seventy-seven  
Now lettered on a monstrous seal of state!  
And Washington is silent, never answers,  
And leaves our Thomas shivering in a cell,  
Who hears the guillotine go slash and click!



## TOWARD THE GULF

Perhaps this is the nucleus of my drama.  
Or else to show that Washington was wise  
Respecting England's hatred of our Thomas,  
And wise to lift no finger to save Thomas,  
Incurring England's wrath, who hated Thomas  
For pamphlets like the "Crisis" "Common Sense."  
That may be just the story for my drama.  
Old Homer satirized the human race  
For warring for the rescue of a Cyprian.  
But there's not stuff for satire in a war  
Ensuing on the insult for the rescue  
Of nothing but a fellow who wrote pamphlets,  
And won a continent for the rescuer.  
That's tragedy, the more so if the fellow  
Likes rum and writes that Jesus was a man.  
This crushing of poor Thomas in the hate  
Of England and her power, America's  
Great fear and lowered strength might make a drama  
As showing how the more you do in life  
The greater shall you suffer. This is true,  
If what you battered down gets hold of you.  
This drama almost drives me mad at times.  
I have his story at my fingers' ends.  
But it won't take a shape. It flies my hands.  
I think I'll have to give it up. What's that?  
Well, if an audience of to-day would turn  
From seeing Thomas Paine upon the stage  
What is the use to write it, if they'd turn

## THE WORLD-SAVER

No matter how you wrote it? I believe  
They wouldn't like it in America,  
Nor England either, maybe—you are right!  
A drama with no audience is a failure.  
But here's this skull. What shall I do with it?  
If I should have it cased in solid silver  
There is no shrine to take it—no Cologne  
For skulls like this.

Well, I must die sometime,  
And who will get it then? Look at this skull!  
This bony hand! Then look at me, my friend:  
A man who has a theme the world despises!

## RECESSIONAL

### IN TIME OF WAR

#### MEDICAL UNIT—

Even as I see, and share with you in seeing,  
The altar flame of your love's sacrifice;  
And even as I bear before the hour the vision,  
Your little hands in hospital and prison  
Laid upon broken bodies, dying eyes,  
So do I suffer for splendor of your being  
Which leads you from me, and in separation  
Lays on my breast the pain of memory.  
Over your hands I bend  
In silent adoration,  
Dumb for a fear of sorrow without end,  
Asking for consolation  
Out of the sacrament of our separation,  
And for some faithful word acceptable and true,  
That I may know and keep the mystery:  
That in this separation I go forth with you  
And you to the world's end remain with me.

\* \* \* \* \*

## RECESSIONAL

How may I justify the hope that rises  
That I am giving you to a world of pain,  
And am a part of your love's sacrifices?  
Is it so little if I see you not again?  
You will croon soldier lads to sleep,  
Even to the last sleep of all.  
But in this absence, as your love will keep  
Your breast for me for comfort, if I fall,  
So I, though far away, shall kneel by you  
If the last hour approaches, to bedew  
Your lips that from their infant wondering  
Lisped of a heaven lost.  
I shall kiss down your eyes, and count the cost  
As mine, who gave you, by the tragic giving.  
Go forth with spirit to death, and to the living  
Bearing a solace in death.  
God has breathed on you His transfiguring breath,—  
You are transfiguré  
Before me, and I bow my head,  
And leave you in the light that lights your way,  
And shadows me. Even now the hour is sped,  
And the hour we must obey—  
Look you, I will go pray!

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE AWAKENING

When you lie sleeping; golden hair  
Tossed on your pillow, sea shell pink  
Ears that nestle, I forbear  
A moment while I look and think  
How you are mine, and if I dare  
To bend and kiss you lying there.

\* \* \* \* \*

A Raphael in the flesh! Resist  
I cannot, though to break your sleep  
Is thoughtless of me—you are kissed  
And roused from slumber dreamless, deep—  
You rub away the slumber's mist,  
You scold and almost weep.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is too bad to wake you so,  
Just for a kiss. But when awake  
You sing and dance, nor seem to know  
You slept a sleep too deep to break  
From which I roused you long ago  
For nothing but my passion's sake—  
What though your heart should ache!

\* \* \* \* \*

## IN THE GARDEN AT THE DAWN HOUR

I arise in the silence of the dawn hour,  
And softly steal out to the garden  
Under the Favrile goblet of the dawning.  
And a wind moves out of the south-land,  
Like a film of silver,  
And thrills with a far borne message  
The flowers of the garden.  
Poppies untie their scarlet hoods and wave them  
To the south wind as he passes.  
But the zinnias and calendulas,  
In a mood of calm reserve, nod faintly  
As the south wind whispers the secret  
Of the dawn hour!

\* \* \* \* \*

I stand in the silence of the dawn hour  
In the garden,  
As the star of morning fades.  
Flying from scythes of air  
The hare-bells, purples and golden glow  
On the sand-hill back of the orchard  
Race before the feet of the wind.  
But clusters of oak-leaves over the yellow sand rim  
Begin to flutter and glisten.

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## TOWARD THE GULF

And in a moment, in a twinkled passion,  
The blazing rapiers of the sun are flashed,  
As he fences the lilac lights of the sky,  
And drives them up where the ice of the melting moon  
Is drowned in the waste of morning!

\* \* \* \* \*

In the silence of the garden,  
At the dawn hour  
I turn and see you—  
You who knew and followed,  
You who knew the dawn hour,  
And its sky like a Favrile goblet.  
You who knew the south-wind  
Bearing the secret of the morning  
To waking gardens, fields and forests.  
You in a gown of green, O footed Iris,  
With eyes of dryad gray,  
And the blown glory of unawakened tresses—  
A phantom sprung out of the garden's enchantment,  
In the silence of the dawn hour!

\* \* \* \* \*

And here I behold you  
Amid a trance of color, silent music,  
The embodied spirit of the morning:  
Wind from the south-land, flashing beams of the sun  
Caught in the twinkling oak leaves:

## IN THE GARDEN AT THE DAWN HOUR

Poppies who wave their untied hoods to the south wind;  
And the imperious bows of zinnias and calendulas;  
The star of morning drowned, and lights of lilac  
Turned white for the woe of the moon;  
And the silence of the dawn hour!

\* \* \* \* \*

And there to take you in my arms and feel you  
In the glory of the dawn hour,  
Along the sinuous rhythm of flesh and flesh!  
To know your spirit by that oneness  
Of living and of love, in the twinkled passion  
Of life re-lit and visioned.  
In dryad eyes beholding  
The dancing, leaping, touching hands and racing  
Rapturous moment of the arisen sun;  
And the first drop of day out of this cup of Favrile.  
There to behold you,  
Our spirits lost together  
In the silence of the dawn hour!

\* \* \* \* \*



## FRANCE

France fallen! France arisen! France of the brave!  
France of lost hopes! France of Promethean zeal!  
Napoleon's France, that bruised the despot's heel  
Of Europe, while the feudal world did rave.  
Thou France that didst burst through the rock-bound  
grave  
Which Germany and England joined to seal,  
And undismayed didst seek the human weal,  
Through which thou couldst thyself and others save—  
The wreath of amaranth and eternal praise!  
When every hand was 'gainst thee, so was ours.  
Freedom remembers, and I can forget:—  
Great are we by the faith our past betrays,  
And noble now the great Republic flowers  
Incarnate with the soul of Lafayette.

\* \* \* \* \*

.

BERTRAND AND GOURGAUD TALK OVER  
OLD TIMES

Gourgaud, these tears are tears—but look, this laugh,  
How hearty and serene—you see a laugh  
Which settles to a smile of lips and eyes  
Makes tears just drops of water on the leaves  
When rain falls from a sun-lit sky, my friend,  
Drink to me, clasp my hand, embrace me, call me  
Belovéd Bertrand. Ha! I sigh for joy.  
Look at our Paris, happy, whole, renewed,  
Refreshed by youth, new dressed in human leaves,  
Shaking its fresh blown blossoms to the world.  
And here we sit grown old, of memories  
Top-full—your hand—my breast is all afire  
With happiness that warms, makes young again.

You see it is not what we saw to-day  
That makes me spirit, rids me of the flesh:—  
But all that I remember, we remember  
Of what the world was, what it is to-day,  
Beholding how it grows. Gourgaud, I see  
Not in the rise of this man or of that,  
Nor in a battle's issue, in the blow  
That lifts or fells a nation—no, my friend,  
God is not there, but in the living stream

## TOWARD THE GULF

Which sweeps in spite of eddies, undertows,  
Cross-currents, what you will, to that result  
Where stillness shows the star that fits the star  
Of truth in spirits treasured, imaged, kept  
Through sorrow, blood and death,—God moves in that  
And there I find Him.

But these tears—for whom  
Or what are tears? The Old Guard—oh, my friend  
That melancholy remnant! And the horse,  
White, to be sure, but not Marengo, wearing  
The saddle and the bridle which he used.  
My tears take quality for these pitiful things,  
But other quality for the purple robe  
Over the coffin lettered in pure gold  
“Napoleon”—ah, the emperor at last  
Come back to Paris! And his spirit looks  
Over the land he loved, with what result?  
Does just the army that acclaimed him rise  
Which rose to hail him back from Elba?—no  
All France acclaim him! Princes of the church,  
And notables uncover! At the door  
A herald cries “The Emperor!” Those assembled  
Rise and do reverence to him. Look at Soult,  
He hands the king the sword of Austerlitz,  
The king turns to me, hands the sword to me,  
I place it on the coffin—dear Gourgaud,  
Embrace me, clasp my hand! I weep and laugh

## BERTRAND AND GOURGAUD

For thinking that the Emperor is home;  
For thinking I have laid upon his bed  
The sword that makes inviolable his bed,  
Since History stepped to where I stood and stands  
To say forever: Here he rests, be still,  
Bow down, pass by in reverence—the Ages  
Like giant caryatides that look  
With sleepless eyes upon the world and hold  
With never tiring hands the Vault of Time,  
Command your reverence.

What have we seen?

Why this, that every man, himself achieving  
Exhausts the life that drives him to the work  
Of self-expression, of the vision in him,  
His reason for existence, as he sees it.  
He may or may not mould the epic stuff  
As he would wish, as lookers on have hope  
His hands shall mould it, and by failing take—  
For slip of hand, tough clay or blinking eye,  
A cinder for that moment in the eye—  
A world of blame; for hooting or dispraise  
Have all his work misvalued for the time,  
And pump his heart up harder to subdue  
Envy, or fear or greed, in any case  
He grows and leaves and blossoms, so consumes  
His soul's endowment in the vision of life.  
And thus of him. Why, there at Fontainebleau

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## TOWARD THE GULF

He is a man full spent, he idles, sleeps,  
Hears with dull ears: Down with the Corsican,  
Up with the Bourbon lilies! Royalists,  
Conspirators, and clericals may shout  
Their hatred of him, but he sits for hours  
Kicking the gravel with his little heel,  
Which lately trampled sceptres in the mud.  
Well, what was he at Waterloo?—you know:  
That piercing spirit which at mid-day power  
Knew all the maps of Europe—could unfold  
A map and say here is the place, the way,  
The road, the valley, hill, destroy them here.  
Why, all his memory of maps was blurred  
The night before he failed at Waterloo.  
The Emperor was sick, my friend, we know it.  
He could not ride a horse at Waterloo.  
His soul was spent, that's all. But who was rested?  
The dirty Bourbons skulking back to Paris,  
Now that our giant democrat was sick.  
Oh, yes, the dirty Bourbons skulked to Paris  
Helped by the Duke and Blücher, damn their souls.

What is a man to do whose work is done  
And does not feel so well, has cancer, say?  
You know he could have reached America  
After his fall at Waterloo. Good God!  
If only he had done it! For they say  
New Orleans is a city good to live in.

## BERTRAND AND GOURGAUD

And he had ceded to America  
Louisiana, which in time would curb  
The English lion. But he didn't go there.  
His mind was weakened else he had foreseen  
The lion he had tangled, wounded, scourged  
Would claw him if it got him, play with him  
Before it killed him. Who was England then?—

An old, mad, blind, despised and dying king  
Who lost a continent for the lust that slew  
The Emperor—the world will say at last  
It was no other. Who was England then?  
A regent bad as husband, father, son,  
Monarch and friend. But who was England then?  
Great Castlereagh who cut his throat, but who  
Had cut his country's long before. The duke—  
Since Waterloo, and since the Emperor slept—  
The English stoned the duke, he bars his windows  
With iron 'gainst the mobs who break to fury,  
To see the Duke waylay democracy.  
The world's great conqueror's conqueror!—Eh bien!  
Grips England after Waterloo, but when  
The people see the duke for what he is:  
A blocker of reform, a Tory sentry,  
A spotless knight of ancient privilege,  
They up and stone him, by the very deed  
Stone him for wronging the democracy  
The Emperor erected with the sword.

## TOWARD THE GULF

The world's great conqueror's conqueror—Oh, I sicken!  
Odes are like head-stones, standing while the graves  
Are guarded and kept up, but falling down  
To ruin and erasure when the graves  
Are left to sink. Hey! there you English poets,  
Picking from daily libels, slanders, junk  
Of metal for your tablets 'gainst the Emperor,  
Melt up true metal at your peril, poets,  
Sweet moralists, monopolists of God.  
But who was England? Byron driven out,  
And courts of chancery vile but sacrosanct,  
Despoiling Shelley of his children; Southey,  
The turn-coat panegyrist of King George,  
An old, mad, blind, despised, dead king at last;  
A realm of rotten boroughs massed to stop  
The progress of democracy and chanting  
To God Almighty hymns for Waterloo,  
Which did not stop democracy, as they hoped.  
For England of to-day is freer—why?  
The revolution and the Emperor!  
They quench the revolution, send Napoleon  
To St. Helena—but the ashes soar  
Grown finer, grown invisible at last.  
And all the time a wind is blowing ashes,  
And sifting them upon the spotless linen  
Of kings and dukes in England till at last  
They find themselves mistaken for the people.  
Drink to me, clasp my hand, embrace me—*tiens!*

## BERTRAND AND GOURGAUD

The Emperor is home again in France,  
And Europe for democracy is thrilling.  
Now don't you see the Emperor was sick,  
The shadows falling slant across his mind  
To write to such an England: "My career  
Is ended and I come to sit me down  
Before the fireside of the British people,  
And claim protection from your Royal Highness"—  
This to the regent—"as a generous foe  
Most constant and most powerful"—I weep.  
They tricked him Gourgaud. Once upon the ship,  
He thinks he's bound for England, and why not?  
They dine him, treat him like an Emperor.  
And then they tack and sail to St. Helena,  
Give him a cow shed for a residence.  
Depute that thing Sir Hudson Lowe to watch him,  
Spy on his torture, intercept his letters,  
Step on his broken wings, and mock the film  
Descending on those eyes of failing fire. . . .

One day the packet brought to him a book  
Inscribed by Hobhouse, "To the Emperor."  
Lowe kept the book but when the Emperor learned  
Lowe kept the book, because 'twas so inscribed,  
The Emperor said—I stood near by—"Who gave you  
The right to slur my title? In a few years  
Yourself, Lord Castlereagh, the duke himself  
Will be beneath oblivion's dust, remembered



## TOWARD THE GULF

For your indignities to me, that's all.  
England expended millions on her libels  
To poison Europe's mind and make my purpose  
Obscure or bloody—how have they availed?  
You have me here upon this scarp of rock,  
But truth will pierce the clouds, 'tis like the sun  
And like the sun it cannot be destroyed.  
Your Wellingtons and Metternichs may dam  
The liberal stream, but only to make stronger  
The torrent when it breaks." Is it not true?  
That's why I weep and laugh to-day, my friend  
And trust God as I have not trusted yet.  
And then the Emperor said: "What have I claimed?  
A portion of the royal blood of Europe?  
A crown for blood's sake? No, my royal blood  
Is dated from the field of Montenotte,  
And from my mother there in Corsica,  
And from the revolution. I'm a man  
Who made himself because the people made me.  
You understand as little as she did  
When I had brought her back from Austria,  
And riding through the streets of Paris pointed  
Up to the window of the little room  
Where I had lodged when I came from Brienne,  
A poor boy with my way to make—as poor  
As Andrew Jackson in America,  
No more a despot than he is a despot.  
Your England understands. I was a menace

## BERTRAND AND GOURGAUD

Not as a despot, but as head and front,  
Eyes, brain and leader of democracy,  
Which like the messenger of God was marking  
The doors of kings for slaughter. England lies.  
Your England understands I had to hold  
By rule compact a people drunk with rapture,  
And torn by counter forces, had to fight  
The royalists of Europe who beheld  
Their peoples feverish from the great infection,  
Who hoped to stamp the plague in France and stop  
Its spread to them. Your England understands.  
Save Castlereagh and Wellington and Southey.  
But look you, sir, my roads, canals and harbors,  
My schools, finance, my code, the manufactures  
Arts, sciences I builded, democratic  
Triumphs which I won will live for ages—  
These are my witnesses, will testify  
Forever what I was and meant to do.  
The ideas which I brought to power will stifle  
All royalty, all feudalism—look  
They live in England, they illuminate  
America, they will be faith, religion  
For every people—these I kindled, carried  
Their flaming torch through Europe as the chief  
Torch bearer, soldier, representative.”

You were not there, Gourgaud—but wait a minute,  
I choke with tears and laughter. Listen now:

## TOWARD THE GULF

Sir Hudson Lowe looked at the Emperor  
Contemptuous but not the less bewitched.  
And when the Emperor finished, out he drawled  
"You make me smile." Why that is memorable:  
It should be carved upon Sir Hudson's stone.  
He was a prophet, founder of the sect  
Of smilers and of laughers through the world,  
Smilers and laughers that the Emperor  
Told every whit the truth. Look you at Europe,  
What were it in this day except for France,  
Napoleon's France, the revolution's France?  
What will it be as time goes on but peoples  
Made free through France?

I take the good and ill,  
Think over how he lounged, lay late in bed,  
Spent long hours in the bath, counted the hours,  
Pale, broken, wracked with pain, insulted, watched,  
His child torn from him, Josephine and wife  
Silent or separate, waiting long for death,  
Looking with filméd eyes upon his wings  
Broken, upon the rocks stretched out to gain  
A little sun, and crying to the sea  
With broken voice—I weep when I remember  
Such things which you and I from day to day  
Beheld, nor could not mitigate. But then  
There is that night of thunder, and the dawning  
And all that day of storm and toward the evening

## BERTRAND AND GOURGAUD

He says: "Deploy the eagles!" "Onward!" Well,  
I leave the room and say to Steward there:  
"The Emperor is dead." That very moment  
A crash of thunder deafened us. You see  
A great age boomed in thunder its renewal—  
Drink to me, clasp my hand, embrace me, friend.

## DRAW THE SWORD, O REPUBLIC!

By the blue sky of a clear vision,  
And by the white light of a great illumination,  
And by the blood-red of brotherhood,  
Draw the sword, O Republic!  
Draw the sword!

For the light which is England,  
And the resurrection which is Russia,  
And the sorrow which is France,  
And for peoples everywhere  
Crying in bondage,  
And in poverty!

You have been a leaven in the earth, O Republic!  
And a watch-fire on the hill-top scattering sparks;  
And an eagle clanging his wings on a cloud-wrapped  
promontory:  
Now the leaven must be stirred,  
And the brands themselves carried and touched  
To the jungles and the black-forests.  
Now the eaglets are grown, they are calling,  
They are crying to each other from the peaks—  
They are flapping their passionate wings in the sunlight,  
Eager for battle!

## DRAW THE SWORD, O REPUBLIC!

As a strong man nurses his youth  
To the day of trial;  
But as a strong man nurses it no more  
On the day of trial,  
But exults and cries: For Victory, O Strength!  
And for the glory of my City, O treasured youth!  
You shall neither save your youth,  
Nor hoard your strength  
Beyond this hour, O Republic!

For you have sworn  
By the passion of the Gaul,  
And the strength of the Teuton,  
And the will of the Saxon,  
And the hunger of the Poor,  
That the white man shall lie down by the black  
man,  
And by the yellow man,  
And all men shall be one spirit, as they are one  
flesh,  
Through Wisdom, Liberty and Democracy.  
And forasmuch as the earth cannot hold  
Aught beside them,  
You have dedicated the earth, O Republic,  
To Wisdom, Liberty and Democracy!

By the Power that drives the soul to Freedom,  
And by the Power that makes us love our fellows,

## TOWARD THE GULF

And by the Power that comforts us in death,  
Dying for great races to come—  
Draw the sword, O Republic!  
Draw the Sword!

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEAR OLD DICK

*(Dedicated to Vachel Lindsay and in Memory of Richard E. Burke)*

Said dear old Dick  
To the colored waiter:  
“Here, George! be quick  
Roast beef and a potato.  
I’m due at the courthouse at half-past one,  
You black old scoundrel, get a move on you!  
I want a pot of coffee and a graham bun.  
This vinegar decanter’ll make a groove on you,  
You black-faced mandril, you grinning baboon—”  
“Yas sah! Yas sah,” answered the coon.  
“Now don’t you talk back,” said dear old Dick,  
“Go and get my dinner or I’ll show you a trick  
With a plate, a tumbler or a silver castor,  
Fuliginous monkey, sired by old Nick.”  
And the nigger all the time was moving round the table,  
Rattling the silver things faster and faster—  
“Yes sah! Yas sah, soon as I’s e able  
I’ll bring yo’ dinnah as shore as yo’s bawn.”  
“Quit talking about it; hurry and be gone,  
You low-down nigger,” said dear old Dick.

Then I said to my friend: “Suppose he’d up and stick  
A knife in your side for raggin’ him so hard;



## TOWARD THE GULF

Or how would you relish some spit in your broth?  
Or a little Paris green in your cheese for chard?  
Or something in your coffee to make your stomach  
froth?  
Or a bit of asafoetida hidden in your pie?  
That's a gentlemanly nigger or he'd black your eye."

Then dear old Dick made this long reply:  
"You know, I love a nigger,  
And I love this nigger.  
I met him first on the train from California  
Out of Kansas City; in the morning early  
I walked through the diner, feeling upset  
For a cup of coffee, looking rather surly.  
And there sat this nigger by a table all dressed,  
Waiting for the time to serve the omelet,  
Buttered toast and coffee to the passengers.  
And this is what he said in a fine southern way:  
'Good mawnin,' sah, I hopes yo' had yo' rest,  
I'm glad to see you on dis sunny day.'  
Now think! here's a human who has no other cares  
Except to please the white man, serve him when he's  
starving,  
And who has as much fun when he sees you carving  
The sirloin as you do, does this black man.  
Just think for a minute, how the negroes excel,  
Can you beat them with a banjo or a broiling pan?  
There's music in their soul as original

## DEAR OLD DICK

As any breed of people in the whole wide earth;  
They're elemental hope, heartiness, mirth.  
There are only two things real American:  
One is Christian Science, the other is the nigger.  
Think it over for yourself and see if you can figure  
Anything beside that is not imitation  
Of something in Europe in this hybrid nation.  
Return to this globe five hundred years hence—  
You'll see how the fundamental color of the coon  
In art, in music, has altered our tune;  
We are destined to bow to their influence;  
There's a whole cult of music in Dixie alone,  
And that is America put into tone."

And dear old Dick gathered speed and said:  
"Sometimes through Dvořák a vision arises  
To the words of Merneptah whose hands were red:  
'I shall live, I shall live, I shall grow, I shall grow,  
I shall wake up in peace, I shall thrill with the glow  
Of the life of Temu, the god who prizes  
Favorite souls and the souls of kings.'  
Now these are the words, and here is the dream,  
No wonder you think I am seeing things:  
The desert of Egypt shimmers in the gleam  
Of the noonday sun on my dazzled sight.  
And a giant negro as black as night  
Is walking by a camel in a caravan.  
His great back glistens with the streaming sweat.

## TOWARD THE GULF

The camel is ridden by a light-faced man,  
A Greek perhaps, or Arabian.  
And this giant negro is rhythmically swaying  
With the rhythm of the camel's neck up and down.  
He seems to be singing, rollicking, playing;  
His ivory teeth are glistening, the Greek is listening  
To the negro keeping time like a tabouret.  
And what cares he for Memphis town,  
Merneptah the bloody, or Books of the Dead,  
Pyramids, philosophies of madness or dread?  
A tune is in his heart, a reality:  
The camel, the desert are things that be,  
He's a negro slave, but his heart is free."

Just then the colored waiter brought in the dinner.  
"Get a hustle on you, you miserable sinner,"  
Said dear old Dick to the colored waiter.  
"Heah's a nice piece of beef and a great big potato.  
I hopes yo'll enjoy 'em sah, yas I do;  
Heah's black mustahd greens, 'specially for yo',  
And a fine piece of jowl that I swiped and took  
From a dish set by, by the git-away cook.  
I hope yo'll enjoy 'em, sah, yas I do."  
"Well, George," Dick said, "if Gabriel blew  
His horn this minute, you'd up and ascend  
To wait on St. Peter world without end."

## THE ROOM OF MIRRORS

I saw a room where many feet were dancing.  
The ceiling and the wall were mirrors glancing  
Both flames of candles and the heaven's light,  
Though windows there were none for air or flight.  
The room was in a form polygonal  
Reached by a little door and narrow hall.  
One could behold them enter for the dance,  
And waken as it were out of a trance,  
And either singly or with some one whirl:  
The old, the young, full livers, boy and girl.  
And every panel of the room was just  
A mirrored door through which a hand was thrust  
Here, there, around the room, a soul to seize  
Whereat a scream would rise, but no surcease  
Of music or of dancing, save by him  
Drawn through the mirrored panel to the dim  
And unknown space behind the flashing mirrors,  
And by his partner struck through by the terrors  
Of sudden loss.

And looking I could see  
That scarcely any dancer here could free  
His eyes from off the mirrors, but would gaze  
Upon himself or others, till a craze

## TOWARD THE GULF

Shone in his eyes thus to anticipate  
The hand that took each dancer soon or late.  
Some analyzed themselves, some only glanced,  
Some stared and paled and then more madly  
danced.

One dancer only never looked at all.  
He seemed soul captured by the carnival.  
There were so many dancers there he loved,  
He was so greatly by the music moved,  
He had no time to study his own face  
There in the mirrors as from place to place  
He quickly danced.

Until I saw at last  
This dancer by the whirling dancers cast  
Face full against a mirrored panel where  
Before he could look at himself or stare  
He plunged through to the other side—and quick,  
As water closes when you lift the stick,  
The mirrored panel swung in place and left  
No trace of him, as 'twere a magic trick.  
But all his partners thus so soon bereft  
Went dancing to the music as before.  
But I saw faces in that mirrored door  
Anatomizing their forced smiles and watching  
Their faces over shoulders, even matching  
Their terror with each other's to repress  
A growing fear in seeing it was less

## THE ROOM OF MIRRORS

Than some one else's, or to ease despair  
By looking in a face who did not care,  
While watching for the hand that through some door  
Caught a poor dancer from the dancing floor  
With every time-beat of the orchestra.  
What is this room of mirrors? Who can say?

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE LETTER

What does one gain by living? What by dying  
Is lost worth having? What the daily things  
Lived through together make them worth the while  
For their sakes or for life's? Where's the denying  
Of souls through separation? There's your smile!  
And your hands' touch! And the long day that brings  
Half uttered nothings of delight! But then  
Now that I see you not, and shall again  
Touch you no more—memory can possess  
Your soul's essential self, and none the less  
You live with me. I therefore write to you  
This letter just as if you were away  
Upon a journey, or a holiday;  
And so I'll put down everything that's new  
In this secluded village, since you left. . . .  
Now let me think! Well, then, as I remember,  
After ten days the lilacs burst in bloom.  
We had spring all at once—the long December  
Gave way to sunshine. Then we swept your room,  
And laid your things away. And then one morning  
I saw the mother robin giving warning  
To little bills stuck just above the rim  
Of that nest which you watched while being built,  
Near where she sat, upon a leafless limb,

## THE LETTER

With folded wings against an April rain.  
On June the tenth Edward and Julia married,  
I did not go for fear of an old pain.  
I was out on the porch as they drove by,  
Coming from church. I think I never scanned  
A girl's face with such sunny smiles upon it  
Showing beneath the roses on her bonnet—  
I went into the house to have a cry.  
A few days later Kimbrough lost his wife.  
Between housework and hoeing in the garden  
I read Sir Thomas More and Goethe's life.  
My heart was numb and still I had to harden  
All memory or die. And just the same  
As when you sat beside the window, passed  
Larson, the cobbler, hollow-chested, lamed.  
He did not die till late November came.  
Things did not come as Doctor Jones forecast,  
'Twas June when Mary Morgan had her child.  
Her husband was in Monmouth at the time.  
She had no milk, the baby is not well.  
The Baptist Church has got a fine new bell.  
And after harvest Joseph Clifford tiled  
His bottom land. Then Judy Heaton's crime  
Has shocked the village, for the monster killed  
Glendora Wilson's father at his door—  
A daughter's name was why the blood was spilled.  
I could go on, but wherefore tell you more?  
The world of men has gone its olden way



## TOWARD THE GULF

With war in Europe and the same routine  
Of life among us that you knew when here.  
This gossip is not idle, since I say  
By means of it what I would tell you, dear:  
I have been near you, dear, for I have been  
Not with you through these things, but in despite  
Of living them without you, therefore near  
In spirit and in memory with you.

\* \* \* \* \*

Do you remember that delightful Inn  
At Chester and the Roman wall, and how  
We walked from Avon clear to Kenilworth?  
And afterward when you and I came down  
To London, I forsook the murky town,  
And left you to quaint ways and crowded places,  
While I went on to Putney just to see  
Old Swinburne and to look into his face's  
Changeable lights and shadows and to seize on  
A finer thing than any verse he wrote?  
(Oh beautiful illusions of our youth!)  
He did not see me gladly. Talked of treason  
To England's greatness. What was Camden like?  
Did old Walt Whitman smoke or did he drink?  
And Longfellow was sweet, but couldn't think.  
His mood was crusty. Lowell made him laugh!  
Meantime Watts-Dunton came and broke in half  
My visit, so I left.

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## THE LETTER

The thing was this:

None of this talk was Swinburne any more  
Than some child of his loins would take his hair,  
Eyes, skin, from him in some pangenesi,—  
His flesh was nothing but a poor affair,  
A channel for the eternal stream—his flesh  
Gave nothing closer, mind you, than his book,  
But rather blurred it; even his eyes' look  
Confused "Madonna Mia" from its fresh  
And liquid meaning. So I knew at last  
His real immortal self is in his verse.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since you have gone I've thought of this so much.  
I cannot lose you in this universe—  
I first must lose myself. The essential touch  
Of soul possession lies not in the walk  
Of daily life on earth, nor in the talk  
Of daily things, nor in the sight of eyes  
Looking in other eyes, nor daily bread  
Broken together, nor the hour of love  
When flesh surrenders depths of things divine  
Beyond all vision, as they were the dream  
Of other planets, but without these even  
In death and separation, there is heaven:  
By just that unison and its memory  
Which brought our lips together. To be free  
From accidents of being, to be freeing

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## TOWARD THE GULF

The soul from trammels on essential being,  
Is to possess the loved one. I have strayed  
Into the only heaven God has made:  
That's where we know each other as we are,  
In the bright ether of some quiet star,  
Communing as two memories with each other.

## CANTICLE OF THE RACE

### SONG OF MEN

How beautiful are the bodies of men—  
The agonists!  
Their hearts beat deep as a brazen gong  
For their strength's behests.  
Their arms are lithe as a seasoned thong  
In games or tests  
When they run or box or swim the long  
Sea-waves crests  
With their slender legs, and their hips so strong,  
And their rounded chests.

I know a youth who raises his arms  
Over his head.  
He laughs and stretches and flouts alarms  
Of flood or fire.  
He springs renewed from a lusty bed  
To his youth's desire.  
He drowns, for April flames outspread  
In his soul's attire.

The strength of men is for husbandry  
Of woman's flesh:

## TOWARD THE GULF

Worker, soldier, magistrate  
Of city or realm;  
Artist, builder, wrestling Fate  
Lest it overwhelm  
The brood or the race, or the cherished state.  
They sing at the helm  
When the waters roar and the waves are great,  
And the gale is fresh.

There are two miracles, women and men—  
Yea, four there be:  
A woman's flesh, and the strength of a man,  
And God's decree.  
And a babe from the womb in a little span  
Ere the month be ten.  
Their rapturous arms entwine and cling  
In the depths of night;  
He hunts for her face for his wondering,  
And her eyes are bright.  
A woman's flesh is soil, but the spring  
Is man's delight.

### SONG OF WOMEN

How beautiful is the flesh of women—  
Their throats, their breasts!  
My wonder is a flame which burns,  
A flame which rests;

## CANTICLE OF THE RACE

It is a flame which no wind turns,  
And a flame which quests.

I know a woman who has red lips,  
Like coals which are fanned.  
Her throat is tied narcissus, it dips  
From her white-rose chin.  
Her throat curves like a cloud to the land  
Where her breasts begin.  
I close my eyes when I put my hand  
On her breast's white skin.

The flesh of women is like the sky  
When bare is the moon:  
Rhythm of backs, hollow of necks,  
And sea-shell loins.  
I know a woman whose splendors vex  
Where the flesh joins—  
A slope of light and a circumflex  
Of clefts and coigns.  
She thrills like the air when silence wrecks  
An ended tune.

These are the things not made by hands in the earth:  
Water and fire,  
The air of heaven, and springs afresh,  
And love's desire.  
And a thing not made is a woman's flesh,

## TOWARD THE GULF

Sorrow and mirth!  
She tightens the strings on the lyric lyre,  
And she drips the wine.  
Her breasts bud out as pink and nesh  
As buds on the vine:  
For fire and water and air are flesh,  
And love is the shrine.

## SONG OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

How beautiful is the human spirit  
In its vase of clay!  
It takes no thought of the chary dole  
Of the light of day.  
It labors and loves, as it were a soul  
Whom the gods repay  
With length of life, and a golden goal  
At the end of the way.

There are souls I know who arch a dome,  
And tunnel a hill.  
They chisel in marble and fashion in chrome,  
And measure the sky.  
They find the good and destroy the ill,  
And they bend and ply  
The laws of nature out of a will  
While the fates deny.

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## CANTICLE OF THE RACE

I wonder and worship the human spirit  
When I behold  
Numbers and symbols, and how they reach  
Through steel and gold;  
A harp, a battle-ship, thought and speech,  
And an hour foretold.  
It ponders its nature to turn and teach,  
And itself to mould.

The human spirit is God, no doubt,  
Is flesh made the word:  
Jesus, Beethoven and Raphael,  
And the souls who heard  
Beyond the rim of the world the swell  
Of an ocean stirred  
By a Power on the waters inscrutable.  
There are souls who gird  
Their loins in faith that the world is well,  
In a faith unblurred.  
How beautiful is the human spirit—  
The flesh made the word!

\* \* \* \* \*



## TOWARD THE GULF

When the leaves of the oak are asleep.  
I will fill this birch bark full of writing  
And hide it in the cleft of an oak,  
Here where Black Eagle fell.  
Decipher my story who can:

When I was a boy of fourteen  
Tobacco Jim, who owned many dogs,  
Rose from the door of his tent  
And came to where we were running,  
Young Coyote, Rattler, Little Fox,  
And said to me in their hearing:  
"You are the fastest of all.  
Now run again, and let me see.  
And if you can run  
I will make you my runner,  
I will care for you,  
And you shall have pockets of gold." . . .

And then we ran.  
And the others lagged behind me,  
Like smoke behind the wind.  
But the faces of Young Coyote, Rattler, Little  
    Fox  
Grew dark.  
They nudged each other.  
They looked side-ways,  
Toeing the earth in shame. . . .

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## BLACK EAGLE RETURNS TO ST. JOE

Then Tobacco Jim took me and trained me.  
And he went here and there  
To find a match.  
And to get wagers of ponies, nuggets of copper,  
And nuggets of gold.  
And at last the match was made.

It was under a sky as blue as the cup of a harebell,  
It was by a red and yellow mountain,  
It was by a great river  
That we ran.  
Hundreds of Indians came to the race.  
They babbled, smoked and quarreled.  
And everyone carried a knife,  
And everyone carried a gun.  
And we runners—  
How young we were and unknowing  
What the race meant to them!  
For we saw nothing but the track,  
We saw nothing but our trainers  
And the starters.  
And I saw no one but Tobacco Jim.  
But the Indians and the squaws saw much else.  
They thought of the race in such different ways  
From the way we thought of it.  
For with me it was honor,  
It was triumph,  
It was fame.

## TOWARD THE GULF

It was the tender looks of Indian maidens  
Wherever I went.

But now I know that to Tobacco Jim,  
And the old fathers and young bucks  
The race meant jugs of whiskey,  
And new guns.

It meant a squaw,  
A pony,  
Or some rise in the life of the tribe.

So the shot of the starter rang at last,  
And we were off.

I wore a band of yellow around my brow  
With an eagle's feather in it,  
And a red strap for my loins.

And as I ran the feather fluttered and sang:  
"You are the swiftest runner, Black Eagle,  
They are all behind you."

And they were all behind me,  
As the cloud's shadow is behind  
The bend of the grass under the wind.  
But as we neared the end of the race  
The onlookers, the gamblers, the old Indians,  
And the young bucks,  
Crowded close to the track—  
I fell and lost.

Next day Tobacco Jim went about  
Lamenting his losses.

## BLACK EAGLE RETURNS TO ST. JOE

And when I told him they tripped me  
He cursed them.  
But later he went about asking in whispers  
If I was wise enough to throw the race.  
Then suddenly he disappeared.  
And we heard rumors of his riches,  
Of his dogs and ponies,  
And of the joyous life he was leading.

Then my father took me to New Mexico,  
And here my life changed.  
I was no longer the runner,  
I had forgotten it all.  
I had become a wise Indian.  
I could do many things.  
I could read the white man's writing  
And write it.

And Indians flocked to me:  
Billy the Pelican, Hooked Nosed Weasel,  
Hungry Mole, Big Jawed Prophet,  
And many others.  
They flocked to me, for I could help them.  
For the Great Spirit may pick a chief,  
Or a leader.  
But sometimes the chief rises  
By using wise Indians like me  
Who are rich in gifts and powers . . .

## TOWARD THE GULF

But at least it is true:  
All little great Indians  
Who are after ponies,  
Jugs of whiskey and soft blankets  
Gain their ends through the gifts and powers  
Of wise Indians like me.  
They come to you and ask you to do this,  
And to do that.  
And you do it, because it would be small  
Not to do it.  
And until all the cards are laid on the table  
You do not see what they were after,  
And then you see:  
They have won your friend away;  
They have stolen your hill;  
They have taken your place at the feast;  
They are wearing your feathers;  
They have much gold.  
And you are tired, and without laughter.  
And they drift away from you,  
As Tobacco Jim went away from me.  
And you hear of them as rich and great.  
And then you move on to another place,  
And another life.

Billy the Pelican has built him a board house  
And lives in Guthrie.  
Hook Nosed Weasel is a Justice of the Peace.

## BLACK EAGLE RETURNS TO ST. JOE

Hungry Mole had his picture in the Denver News;  
He is helping the government  
To reclaim stolen lands.  
(Many have told me it was Hungry Mole  
Who tripped me in the race.)  
Big Jawed Prophet is very rich.  
He has disappeared as an eagle  
With a rabbit.  
And I have come back here  
Where twelve hundred moons ago  
Black Eagle before me  
Had the knife run through his ribs  
And through his heart. . . .

I will hide this writing  
In the cleft of the oak  
By this bend in the river.  
Let him read who can:  
I was a swift runner whom they tripped.

## MY LIGHT WITH YOURS

### I

When the sea has devoured the ships,  
And the spires and the towers  
Have gone back to the hills.  
And all the cities  
Are one with the plains again.  
And the beauty of bronze,  
And the strength of steel  
Are blown over silent continents,  
As the desert sand is blown—  
My dust with yours forever.

### II

When folly and wisdom are no more,  
And fire is no more,  
Because man is no more;  
When the dead world slowly spinning  
Drifts and falls through the void—  
My light with yours  
In the Light of Lights forever!

## THE BLIND

Amid the din of cars and automobiles,  
At the corner of a towering pile of granite,  
Under the city's soaring brick and stone,  
Where multitudes go hurrying by, you stand  
With eyeless sockets playing on a flute.  
And an old woman holds the cup for you,  
Wherein a curious passer by at times  
Casts a poor coin.

You are so blind you cannot see us men  
As walking trees!  
I fancy from the tune  
You play upon the flute, you have a vision  
Of leafy trees along a country road-side,  
Where wheat is growing and the meadow-larks  
Rise singing in the sun-shine!  
In your darkness  
You may see such things playing on your flute  
Here in the granite ways of mad Chicago!

And here's another on a farther corner,  
With head thrown back as if he searched the skies.  
He's selling evening papers, what's to him  
The flaring headlines? Yet he calls the news.

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## TOWARD THE GULF

That is his flute, perhaps, for one can call,  
Or play the flute in blindness.

Yet I think

It's neither news nor music with these blind ones—

Rather the hope of re-created eyes,

And a light out of death!

“How can it be,” I hear them over and over,

“There never shall be eyes for me again?”

**“I PAY MY DEBT FOR LAFAYETTE AND  
ROCHAMBEAU”**

*—His Own Words*

**IN MEMORY OF KIFFIN ROCKWELL**

\* \* \* \* \*

Eagle, whose fearless  
Flight in vast spaces  
Clove the inane,  
While we stood tearless,  
White with rapt faces  
In wonder and pain. . . .

Heights could not awe you,  
Depths could not stay you.  
Anguished we saw you,  
Saw Death way-lay you  
Where the storm flings  
Black clouds to thicken  
Round France's defender!  
Archangel stricken  
From ramparts of splendor—  
Shattered your wings! . . .

But Lafayette called you,  
Rochambeau beckoned.

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## TOWARD THE GULF

Duty enthralled you.  
For France you had reckoned  
Her gift and your debt.  
Dull hearts could harden  
Half-gods could palter.  
For you never pardon  
If Liberty's altar  
You chanced to forget. . . .

Stricken archangel!  
Ramparts of splendor  
Keep you, evangel  
Of souls who surrender  
No banner unfurled  
For ties ever living,  
Where Freedom has bound them.  
Praise and thanksgiving  
For love which has crowned them—  
Love frees the world! . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHRISTMAS AT INDIAN POINT

Who is that calling through the night,  
A wail that dies when the wind roars?  
We heard it first on Shipley's Hill,  
It faded out at Comingoer's.

Along five miles of wintry road  
A horseman galloped with a cry,  
" 'Twas two o'clock," said Herman Pointer,  
"When I heard clattering hoofs go by."

"I flung the winder up to listen;  
I heerd him there on Gordon's Ridge;  
I heerd the loose boards bump and rattle  
When he went over Houghton's Bridge."

Said Roger Ragsdale: "I was doctorin'  
A heifer in the barn, and then  
My boy says: 'Pap, that's Billy Paris.'  
'There,' says my boy, it is again."

"Says I: 'That kain't be Billy Paris,  
We seed 'im at the Christmas tree.  
It's two o'clock,' says I, 'and Billy  
I seed go home with Emily.'

## TOWARD THE GULF

“ He is too old for galavantin’  
Upon a night like this,’ says I.  
‘Well, pap,’ says he, ‘I know that frosty,  
Good-natured huskiness in that cry.’

“ ‘It kain’t be Billy,’ says I, swabbin’  
The heifer’s tongue and mouth with brine,  
‘I never thought—it makes me shiver,  
And goose-flesh up and down the spine.’”

Said Doggie Traylor: “When I heard it  
I ’lowed ’twas Pin Hook’s rowdy new ’uns.  
Them Cashner boys was at the schoolhouse  
Drinkin’ there at the Christmas doin’s.”

Said Pete McCue: “I lit a candle  
And held it up to the winder pane.  
But when I heerd again the holler  
’Twere half-way down the Bowman Lane.”

Said Andy Ensley: “First I knowed  
I thought he’d thump the door away.  
I hopped from bed, and says, ‘Who is it?’  
‘O, Emily,’ I heard him say.

“And there stood Billy Paris tremblin’,  
His face so white, he looked so queer.  
‘O Andy’—and his voice went broken.  
‘Come in,’ says I, ‘and have a cheer.’

## CHRISTMAS AT INDIAN POINT

“‘Sit by the fire,’ I kicked the logs up,  
‘What brings you here?—I would be told.’  
Says he. ‘My hand just . . . happened near hers,  
It teched her hand . . . and it war cold.

“‘We got back from the Christmas doin’s  
And went to bed, and she was sayin’,  
(The clock struck ten) if it keeps snowin’  
To-morrow there’ll be splendid sleighin’.’

“‘My hand teched hers, the clock struck two,  
And then I thought I heerd her moan.  
It war the wind, I guess, for Emily  
War lyin’ dead. . . . She’s thar alone.’

“‘I left him then to call my woman  
To tell her that her mother died.  
When we come back his voice was steady,  
The big tears in his eyes was dried.

“‘He just sot there and quiet like  
Talked ’bout the fishin’ times they had,  
And said for her to die on Christmas  
Was somethin’ ’bout it made him glad.

“‘He grew so cam he almost skeered us.  
Says he: ‘It’s a fine Christmas over there.’  
Says he: ‘She was the lovingest woman  
That ever walked this Vale of Care.’

## TOWARD THE GULF

“Says he: ‘She allus laughed and sang,  
I never heerd her once complain.’  
Says he: ‘It’s not so bad a Christmas  
When she can go and have no pain.’

“Says he: ‘The Christmas’s good for her.’  
Says he: . . . ‘Not very good for me.’  
He hid his face then in his muffler  
And sobbed and sobbed, ‘O Emily.’”

\* \* \* \* \*

## WIDOW LA RUE

### I

#### **What will happen, Widow La Rue?**

For last night at three o'clock  
You woke and saw by your window again  
Amid the shadowy locust grove  
The phantom of the old soldier:  
A shadow of blue, like mercury light—  
What will happen, Widow La Rue?

\* \* \* \* \*

What may not happen  
In this place of summer loneliness?  
For neither the sunlight of July,  
Nor the blue of the lake,  
Nor the green boundaries of cool woodlands,  
Nor the song of larks and thrushes,  
Nor the bravuras of bobolinks,  
Nor scents of hay new mown,  
Nor the ox-blood sumach cones,  
Nor the snow of nodding yarrow,  
Nor clover blossoms on the dizzy crest  
Of the bluff by the lake  
Can take away the loneliness  
Of this July by the lake!

\* \* \* \* \*



## TOWARD THE GULF

Last night you saw the old soldier  
By your window, Widow La Rue!  
Or was it your husband you saw,  
As he lay by the gate so long ago?  
With the iris of his eyes so black,  
And the white of his eyes so china-blue,  
And specks of blood on his face,  
Like a wall specked by a shake of a brush;  
And something like blubber or pinkish wax,  
Hiding the gash in his throat,—  
The serum and blood blown up by the breath  
From emptied lungs.

## II

So Widow La Rue has gone to a friend  
For the afternoon and the night,  
Where the phantom will not come,  
Where the phantom may be forgotten.  
And scarcely has she turned the road,  
Round the water-mill by the creek,  
When the telephone rings and daughter Flora  
Springs up from a drowsy chair  
And the ennui of a book,  
And runs to answer the call.  
And her heart gives a bound,  
And her heart stops still,  
As she hears the voice, and a faintness courses

## WIDOW LA RUE

Quick as poison through all her frame.  
And something like bees swarming in her breast  
Comes to her throat in a surge of fear,  
Rapture, passion, for what is the voice  
But the voice of her lover?  
And just because she is here alone  
In this desolate summer-house by the lake;  
And just because this man is forbidden  
To cross her way, for a taint in his blood  
Of drink, from a father who died of drink;  
And just because he is in her thought  
By night and day,  
The voice of him heats her through like fire.  
She sways from dizziness,  
The telephone falls from her shaking hand. . . .  
He is in the village, is walking out,  
He will be at the door in an hour.

### III

The sun is half a hand above the lake  
In a sky of lemon-dust down to the purple vastness.  
On the dizzy crest of the bluff the balls of clover  
Bow in the warm wind blowing across a meadow  
Where hay-cocks stand new-piled by the harvesters  
Clear to the forest of pine and beech at the meadow's  
end.  
A robin on the tip of a poplar's spire

## TOWARD THE GULF

Sings to the sinking sun and the evening planet.  
Over the olive green of the darkening forest  
A thin moon slits the sky and down the road  
Two lovers walk.

It is night when they reappear  
From the forest, walking the hay-field over.  
And the sky is so full of stars it seems  
Like a field of buckwheat. And the lovers look up,  
Then stand entranced under the silence of stars,  
And in the silence of the scented hay-field  
Blurred only by a lisp of the listless water  
A hundred feet below.  
And at last they sit by a cock of hay,  
As warm as the nest of a bird,  
Hand clasped in hand and silent,  
Large-eyed and silent.

\* \* \* \* \*

O, daughter Flora!  
Delicious weakness is on you now,  
With your lover's face above you.  
You can scarcely lift your hand,  
Or turn your head  
Pillowed upon the fragrant hay.  
You dare not open your moistened eyes  
For fear of this sky of stars,  
For fear of your lover's eyes.

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## WIDOW LA RUE

The trance of nature has taken you  
Rocked on creation's tide.  
And the kinship you feel for this man,  
Confessed this night—so often confessed  
And wondered at—  
Has coiled its final sorcery about you.  
You do not know what it is,  
Nor care what it is,  
Nor care what fate is to come,—  
The night has you.  
You only move white, fainting hands  
Against his strength, then let them fall.  
Your lips are parted over set teeth;  
A dewy moisture with the aroma of a woman's body  
Maddens your lover,  
And in a swift and terrible moment  
The mystery of love is unveiled to you. . . .

Then your lover sits up with a sigh.  
But you lie there so still with closed eyes.  
So content, scarcely breathing under that ocean of  
stars.

A night bird calls, and a vagrant zephyr  
Stirs your uncoiled hair on your bare bosom,  
But you do not move.  
And the sun comes up at last  
Finding you asleep in his arms,  
There by the hay cock.

## TOWARD THE GULF

And he kisses your tears away,  
And redeems his word of last night,  
For down to the village you go  
And take your vows before the Pastor there,  
And then return to the summer house. . . .  
All is well.

### IV

Widow La Rue has returned  
And is rocking on the porch—  
What is about to happen?  
For last night the phantom of the old soldier  
Appeared to her again—  
It followed her to the house of her friend,  
And appeared again.  
But more than ever was it her husband,  
With the iris of his eyes so black,  
And the white of his eyes so china-blue.  
And while she thinks of it,  
And wonders what is about to happen,  
She hears laughter,  
And looking up, beholds her daughter  
And the forbidden lover.

\* \* \* \* \*

And then the daughter and her husband  
Come to the porch and the daughter says:

## WIDOW LA RUE

“ We have just been married in the village, mother;  
Will you forgive us?  
This is your son; you must kiss your son.”  
And Widow La Rue from her chair arises  
And calmly takes her child in her arms,  
And clasps his hand.  
And after gazing upon him  
Imperturbably as Clytemnestra looked  
Upon returning Agamemnon,  
With a light in her eyes which neither fathomed,  
She kissed him,  
And in a calm voice blessed them.  
Then sent her daughter, singing,  
On an errand back to the village  
To market for dinner, saying:  
“We’ll talk over plans, my dear.”

### V

And the young husband  
Rocks on the porch without a thought  
Of the lightning about to strike.  
And like Clytemnestra, Widow La Rue  
Enters the house.  
And while he is rocking, with all his spirit in a rhythmic  
rapture,  
The Widow La Rue takes a seat in the room  
By a window back of the chair where he rocks,

## TOWARD THE GULF

And drawing the shade  
She speaks:

“These two nights past I have seen the phantom of the  
old soldier

Who haunts the midnights  
Of this summer loneliness.

And I knew that a doom was at hand. . . .

You have married my daughter, and this is the  
doom. . . .

O, God in heaven!”

Then a horror as of a writhing whiteness

Winds out of the July glare

And stops the flow of his blood,

As he hears from the re-echoing room

The voice of Widow La Rue

Moving darkly between banks

Of delirious fear and woe!

“Be calm till you hear me through. . . .

Do not move, or enter here,

I am hiding my face from you. . . .

Hear me through, and then fly.

I warned her against you, but how could I tell her

Why you were not for her?

But tell me now, have you come together?

No? Thank God for that. . . .

For you must not come together. . . .

## WIDOW LA RUE

Now listen while I whisper to you:  
My daughter was born of a lawless love  
For a man I loved before I married,  
And when, for five years, no child came  
I went to this man  
And begged him to give me a child. . . .  
Well then . . . the child was born, your wife as it  
seems. . . .

And when my husband saw her,  
And saw the likeness of this man in her face  
He went out of the house, where they found him later  
By the entrance gate  
With the iris of his eyes so black,  
And the white of his eyes so china-blue,  
And specks of blood on his face,  
Like a wall specked by a shake of a brush.  
And something like blubber or pinkish wax  
Hiding the gash in his throat—  
The serum and blood blown up by the breath  
From emptied lungs. Yes, there by the gate, O God!  
Quit rocking your chair! Don't you understand?  
Quit rocking your chair! Go! Go!  
Leap from the bluff to the rocks on the shore!  
Take down the sickle and end yourself!  
You don't care, you say, for all I've told you?  
Well, then, you see, you're older than Flora. . . .  
And her father died when she was a baby. . . .  
And you were four when your father died. . . .



## TOWARD THE GULF

And her father died on the very day  
That your father died,  
At the very same moment. . . .  
On the very same bed. . . .  
Don't you understand?"

### VI

He ceases to rock. He reels from the porch,  
He runs and stumbles to reach the road.  
He yells and curses and tears his hair.  
He staggers and falls and rises and runs.  
And Widow La Rue  
With the eyes of Clytemnestra  
Stands at the window and watches him  
Running and tearing his hair.

### VII

She seems so calm when the daughter returns.  
She only says: "He has gone to the meadow,  
He will soon be back. . . ."  
But he never came back.

And the years went on till the daughter's hair  
Was white as her mother's there in the grave.  
She was known as the bride whom the bridegroom left  
And didn't say good-bye.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

I lectured last upon the morbus sacer,  
Or falling sickness, epilepsy, of old  
In Palestine and Greece so much ascribed  
To deities or devils. To resume  
We find it caused by morphological  
Changes of the cortex cells. Sometimes,  
More times, indeed, the anatomical  
Basis, if one be, escapes detection.  
For many functions of the cortex are  
Unknown, as I have said.

And now remember

Mercier's analysis of heredity:  
Besides direct transmission of unstable  
Nervous systems, there remains the law  
Hereditary of sanguinity.  
Then here's another matter: Parents may  
Have normal nervous systems, yet produce  
Children of abnormal nerves and minds,  
Caused by unsuitable sexual germs.  
Let me repeat before I leave the matter  
The factors in a perfect organization:  
First quality in the germ producing matter;  
Then quality in the sperm producing force,

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## TOWARD THE GULF

And lastly relative fitness of the two.  
We are but plants, however high we rise,  
Whatever thoughts we have, or dreams we dream  
We are but plants, and all we are and do  
Depends upon the seed and on the soil.  
What Mendel found in raising peas may lead  
To perfect knowledge of the human mind.  
There is one law for men and peas, the law  
Makes peas of certain matter, and makes men  
And mind of certain matter, all depends  
Not on a varying law, but on a law  
Varied in its course by matter, as  
The arm, which is a lever and which works  
By lever principle cannot make use  
And form cement with trowel to the forms  
It makes of paint or marble.

To resume:

A child may take the qualities of one parent  
In some respects, and of the other parent  
In some respects. A child may have the traits  
Of father at one period of his life,  
The mother at one period of his life.  
And if the parents' traits are similar  
Their traits may be prepotent in a child,  
Thus giving rise to qualities convergent.  
So if you take a circle and draw off  
A line which would become another circle

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

If drawn enough, completed, but is left  
Half drawn or less, that illustrates a mind  
Of cumulative heredity. Take John,  
My gardener, John, within his sphere is perfect,  
John has a mind which is a perfect circle.  
A perfect circle can be small, you know.  
And so John has good sense within his sphere.  
But if some force began to work like yeast  
In brain cells, and his mind shot forth a line  
To make a larger thinking circle, say  
About a great invention, heaven or God,  
Then John would be abnormal, till this line  
Shot round and joined, became a larger circle.  
This is the secret of eccentric genius,  
The man is half a sphere, sticks out in space  
Does not enclose co-ordinated thought.  
He's like a plant mutating, half himself  
Half something new and greater. If we looked  
To John's heredity we'd find this change  
Was manifest in mother or in father  
About the self-same period of life,  
Most likely in his father. Attributes  
Of fathers are inherited by sons,  
Of mothers by the daughters.

Now this morning

I take up paranoia. Paranoics  
Are often noted for great gifts of mind.

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## TOWARD THE GULF

Mahomet, Swedenborg were paranoics,  
Joan of Arc, and Ossawatomie Brown,  
Cellini, many others. All who think  
Themselves inspired of God, and all who see  
Themselves appointed to a work, the subjects  
Of prophecies are paranoics. All  
Who visions have of God or archangels,  
Hear voices or celestial music, these  
Are paranoics. And whether it be they rise  
Enough above the earth to look along  
A longer arc and see realities,  
Or see strange things through atmospheric strata  
Which build up or distort the things they see  
Remains the question. Let us wait the proof.

Last week I told you I would have to-day  
The skull and brain of Jacob Groesbell here,  
And lecture on his case. Here is the brain:  
Weight sixteen hundred grammes. Students may look  
After the lecture at the brain and skull.  
There's nothing anatomical at fault  
With this fine brain, so far as I can find.  
You'll note how deep the convolutions are,  
Arrangement quite symmetrical. The skull  
Is well formed too. The jaws are long you'll note,  
The palate roof somewhat asymmetrical.  
But this is scarce significant. Let me tell  
How Jacob Groesbell looked:

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## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

The man was tall,  
Had shapely hands and feet, but awkward limbs.  
His hair was brown and fine, his forehead high,  
And ran back at an angle, temples full.  
His nose was long and fleshy at the point,  
Was tilted to one side. His eyes were gray,  
The iris flecked. They looked as if a light  
As of a sun-set shone behind them. Ears  
Were very large, projected at right angles.  
His neck was slender, womanish. His skin  
Of finest texture, white and very smooth.  
His voice was quiet, musical. His manner  
Patient and gentle, modest, reasonable.  
His parents, as I learned through inquiry,  
Were Methodists, devout and greatly loved.  
The mother healthy both in mind and body.  
The father was eccentric, perhaps insane.  
They were first cousins.

I knew Jacob Groesbell  
Ten years before he died. I knew him first  
When he was sent to mend my porch. A workman  
With saw and hammer never excelled him. Then  
As time went on I saw him when he came  
At my request to do my carpentry.  
I grew to know him, and by slow degrees  
He told me of his readings in the Bible,  
And gave me his interpretations. At last

## TOWARD THE GULF

Aged forty-six, had ulcers of the stomach,  
Which took him off. He sent for me, and said  
He wished me to attend him, which I did.  
He told me I could have his body and brain  
To lecture on, dissect, since some had said  
He was insane, he told me, and if so  
I should find something wrong with brain or body.  
And if I found a wrong then all his visions  
Of God and archangels were just the fancies  
That come to madmen. So he made provision  
To give his brain and body for this cause,  
And here's his brain and skull, and I am lecturing  
On Jacob Groesbell as a paranoic.

As I have said before, in making tests  
And observations of the patient, have  
His conversation taken stenographically,  
In order to preserve his speech exactly,  
And catch the flow if he becomes excited.  
So we determine if he makes new words,  
If he be incoherent, or repeats.  
I took my secretary once to make  
A stenographic record. Strange enough  
He would not talk while she was writing down.  
And when I asked him why, he would not tell.  
So I devised a scheme: I took a satchel,  
And put in it a dictaphone, and when  
A cylinder was full I'd stoop and put

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

My hand among my bottles in the satchel,  
As if I was compounding medicine,  
Instead I'd put another cylinder on.  
And thus I got his story in his voice,  
Just as he talked, with nothing lost at all,  
Which you shall hear. For with this megaphone  
The students in the farthest gallery  
Can hear what Jacob Groesbell said to me,  
And weigh the thought that stirred within the brain  
Here in this jar beside me. Listen now  
To Jacob Groesbell's voice:

“Will you repeat  
From the beginning connectedly the story  
Of your religious life, illumination,  
What you have called your soul's escape?”

“I will,  
Since I shall never tell it again.”

“I grew up  
Timid and sensitive, not very strong,  
Not understood of father or of mother.  
They did not love me, and I never felt  
A tenderness for them. I used to quote:  
'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?'  
At school I was not liked. I had a chum  
From time to time, that's all. And I remember



## TOWARD THE GULF

My mother on a day put with my luncheon  
A bottle of milk, and when the noon hour came  
I missed it, found some boys had taken it,  
And when I asked for it, they made the cry:  
'Bottle of milk, bottle of milk,' and I  
Flushed through with shame, and cried, and to this  
hour

It hurts me to remember it. Such days,  
All misery! For all my clothes were patched.  
They hooted at me. So I lived alone.  
At twelve years old I had great fears of death,  
And hell, heard devils in my room. One night  
During a thunderstorm heard clanking chains,  
And hid beneath the pillows. One spring day  
As I was walking on the village street  
Close to the church I heard a voice which said  
'Behold, my son'—and falling on my knees  
I prayed in ecstasy—but as I prayed  
Some passing school boys laughed, threw stones at me.  
A heat ran through me, I arose and fled.  
Well, then I joined the church and was baptized.  
But something left me in the ceremony,  
I lost my ecstasy, seemed slipping back  
Into the trap. I took to wandering  
In solitary places, could not bear  
To see a human face. I slept for nights  
In still ravines, or meadows. But one time  
Returning to my home, I found the room

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

Filled up with visitors—my heart stopped short,  
And glancing at the faces of my parents  
I hurried, bolted through, and did not speak,  
Entered a bed-room door and closed it. So  
I tell this just to illustrate my shyness,  
Which cursed my youth and made me miserable,  
Something I fought but could not overcome.  
And pondering on the Scriptures I could see  
How I resembled the saints, our Saviour even,  
How even as my brothers called me mad  
They called our Saviour so.

“ At fourteen years  
My father taught me carpentry, his trade,  
And made me work with him. I seemed to be  
The butt for jokes and laughter with the men—  
I know not why. For now and then they'd drop  
A word that showed they knew my secrets, knew  
I had heard voices, knew I loathed the lusts  
Of women, drink. Oh these were sorry years,  
God was not with me though I sought Him ever  
And I was persecuted for His sake. My brain  
Seemed like to burst at times, saw sparkling lights,  
Heard music, voices, made strange shapes of leaves,  
Clouds, trunks of trees,—illusions of the devil.  
I was turned twenty years when on an evening  
Calm, beautiful in June, after a day  
Of healthful toil, while sitting on the porch,

## TOWARD THE GULF

The sun just sinking, at my left I heard  
A voice of hollow clearness: "You are Christ."  
My eyes grew blind with tears for the evil  
Of such a thought, soul stained with such a thought,  
So devil stained, soul damned with blasphemy.  
I ran into my room and seized a pistol  
To end my life. God willed it otherwise.  
I fainted and awoke upon the floor  
After some hours. To heap my suffering full  
A few days after this while in the village  
I went into a store. The friendly clerk—  
I knew him always—said 'What will you have?  
I wait first always on the little boys.'  
I laughed and went my way. But in an hour  
His saying rankled, I began to brood  
On ways of vengeance, till it seemed at last  
His life must pay. O, soul so full of sin,  
So devil tangled, tortured—which not prayer  
Nor watching could deliver. So I thought  
To save my soul from murder I must fly—  
I felt an urging as one does in sleep  
Pursued by giant things to fly, to fly  
From terror, death, from blankness on the scene,  
From emptiness, from beauty gone. The world  
Seemed something seen in fever, where the steps  
Of men are muffled, and a futile scheme  
Impels all steps. So packing up my kit,  
My Bible in my pocket, secretly

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

I disappeared. Next day took up my life  
In Barrington, a village thirty miles  
From all I knew, besides a lovely lake,  
Reached by a road that crossed a bridge  
Over a little bay, the bridge's ends  
Clustered with boats for fishermen. And here  
Night after night I fished, or stood and watched  
The star-light on the water.

I grew calmer  
Almost found peace, got work to do, and lived  
Under a widow's roof, who was devout  
And knew my love for God. Now listen, doctor,  
To every word: I was now twenty-five,  
In perfect health, no longer persecuted,  
At peace with all the world, if not my soul  
Had wholly found its peace, for truth to tell  
It had an ache which sometimes I could feel,  
And yet I had this soul awakening.  
I know I have been counted mad, so watch  
Each detail here and judge.

At four o'clock  
The thirtieth day of June, my work being done,  
My kit upon my back I walked this road  
Toward the village. 'Twas an afternoon  
Of clouds, no rain, a little breeze, the tinkle  
Of cow bells in the air, a heavenly silence

## TOWARD THE GULF

Pervading nature. Reaching the hill's foot  
I sat down by a tree to rest, enjoy  
The greenness of the forests, meadows, flats  
Along the bay, the blueness of the lake,  
The ripple of the water at my feet,  
The rythmic babble of the little boats  
Tied to the bridge. And as I sat there musing,  
Myself lost in the self, in time the clouds  
Lifted, blew off, to let the sun go down  
Over the waters gloriously to rest.  
So as I stared upon the sun on the water,  
Some minutes, though I know not for how long,  
Out of the splendor of the shining sun  
Upon the water, Jesus of Nazareth  
Clothed all in white, the nimbus round his brow,  
His face all wisdom, love, rose to my view,  
And then he spake: 'Jacob, my son, arise  
And come with me.'

“ And in an instant there  
Something fell from me, I became a cloud,  
A soul with wings. A glory burned about me.  
And in that glory I perceived all things:  
I saw the eternal wheels, the deepest secrets  
Of creatures, herbs and grass, and stars and suns  
And I knew God, and knew all things as God:  
The All loving, the Perfect One, the Perfect Wisdom,  
Truth, love and purity. And in that instant

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## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

Atoms and molecules I saw, and faces,  
And how they are arranged order to order,  
With no break in the order, one harmonious  
Whole of universal life all blended  
And interfused with universal love.  
And as it was with Shelley so I cried,  
And clasped my hands in ecstasy and rose  
And started back to climb the hill again,  
Scarce knowing, neither caring what I did,  
Nor where I went, and thinking if this be  
A fancy only of the Saviour then  
He will not follow me, and if it be  
Himself, indeed, he will not let me fall  
After the revelation. As I reached  
The brow of the hill, I felt his presence with me  
And turned, and saw Him. 'Thou hast faith, my son,  
Who knowest me, when they who walked with me  
Toward Emmaus knew me not, to whom I told  
All secrets of the scriptures beginning at Moses,  
Who knew me not till I brake bread and then,  
As after thought could say, Did not our heart  
Within us burn while he talked. O, Jacob Groesbell,  
Thou carpenter, as I was, greatly blessed  
With visions and my Father's love, this walk  
Is your walk toward Emmaus.' So he talked,  
Expounding all the scriptures, telling me  
About the race of men who live and move  
Along a life of meat and drink and sleep

## TOWARD THE GULF

And comforts of the flesh, while here and there  
A hungry soul is chosen to lift up  
And re-create the race. 'The prophet, poet  
Must seek and must find God to keep the race  
Awake to the divine and to the orders  
Of universal and harmonious life,  
All interfused with Universal love,  
Which love is God, lest blindness, atheism,  
Which sees no order, reason, no intent  
Beat down the race to welter in the mire  
When storms, and floods come. And the sons of God,  
The leaders of the race from age to age  
Are chosen for their separate work, each work  
Fits in the given order. All who suffer  
The martyrdom of thought, whether they think  
Themselves as servants of my Father, or even  
Mock at the images and rituals  
Which prophets of dead creeds did symbolize  
The mystery they sensed, or whether they be  
Spirits of laughter, logic, divination  
Of human life, the human soul, all men  
Who give their essence, blindly or in vision  
In faith that life is worth their utmost love,  
They are my brothers and my Father's sons.'  
So Jesus told me as we took my walk  
Toward my Emmaus. After a time we turned  
And walked through heading rye and purple vetch  
Into an orchard where great rows of pears

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

Sloped up a hill. It was now evening:  
Stretches of scarlet clouds were in the west,  
And a half moon was hanging just above  
The pears' white blossoms. O, that evening!  
We came back to the boats at last and loosed  
One of them and rowed out into the bay,  
And fished, while the stars appeared. He only said  
'Whatever they did with me you too shall do.'  
A haziness came on me now. I seem  
To find myself alone there in that boat.  
At mid-night I awoke, the moon was sunk,  
The whippoorwills were singing. I walked home  
Back to the village in a silence, peace,  
A happiness profound.

“And the next morning  
I awoke with aching head, spent body, yet  
With spiritual vision so intense I looked  
Through things material as if they were  
But shadows—old things passed away or grew  
A lovelier order. And my heart was full.  
Infinitely I loved, and infinitely was loved.  
My landlady looked at me sharply, asked  
What hour I entered, where I was so late.  
I only answered fishing. For I told  
No person of my vision, went my way  
At carpentry in silence, in great joy.  
For archangels and powers were at my side,



## TOWARD THE GULF -

They led me, bore me up, instructed me  
In mysteries, and voices said to me  
'Write' as the voice in Patmos said to John.  
I wrote and printed and the village read,  
And called me mad. And so I grew to see  
The deepest truths of God, and God Himself,  
The geniture of all things, of the Word  
Becoming flesh in Christ. I knew all ages,  
Times, empires, races, creeds, the human weakness  
Which makes life wearisome, confused and pained,  
And how the search for something (it is God)  
Makes divers worships, fire, the sun, and beasts  
Takes form in Eleusinian mysteries  
Or festivals where sex, the vine, the Earth  
At harvest time have praise or reverence.  
I knew God, talked with God, and knew that God  
Is more than Thought or Love. Our twisted brains  
Are but the wires in the bulb which stays,  
Resists the current and makes human thought.  
As the electric current is not light  
But heat and power as well. Our little brains  
Resist God and make thought and love as well.  
But God is more than these. Oh I heard much  
Of music, heard the whirring as of wheels,  
Or buzzing as of ears when a room is still.  
That is the axis of profoundest life  
Which turns and rests not. And I heard the cry  
And hearing wept, of man's soul, heard the ages,

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

The epochs of this earth as it were the feet  
Of multitudes in corridors. And I knew  
The agony of genius and the woe  
Of prophets and the great.

“From that next morning

I searched the scriptures with more fervid zeal  
Than I had ever done. I could not open  
Its pages anywhere but I could find  
Myself set forth or mirrored, pointed to.  
I could not doubt my destiny was bound  
With man's salvation. Jeremiah said  
‘Take forth the precious from the vile.’ Those words  
To me were spoken, and to no one else.  
And so I searched the scriptures. And I found  
I never had a thought, experience, pang,  
A state in human life our Saviour had not.  
He was a carpenter, and so was I.  
He had his soul's illumination, so had I.  
His brethren called him mad, they called me mad.  
He triumphed over death, so shall I triumph.  
For I could, I can feel my way along  
Death's stages as a man can reach and feel  
Ahead of him along a wall. I know  
This body is a shell, a butterfly's  
Excreta pushed away with rising wings.

“I searched the scriptures. How should I believe  
Paul's story, not my own? Did he not see

## TOWARD THE GULF

At mid-day in the way a light from heaven  
Above the brightness of the sun and hear  
The voice of Jesus saying to him 'Saul,'  
Why persecutest thou me?' And did not Festus,  
Before whom Paul stood speaking for himself,  
Call Paul a mad man? Even while he spake  
Such words as none but men inspired can speak,  
As well as words of truth and soberness,  
Such as myself speak now.

“And from the scriptures  
I passed to studies of the men who came  
To great illuminations. You will see  
There are two kinds: One's of the intellect,  
The understanding, one is of the soul.  
The x-ray lets the eye behind the flesh  
To see the ribs, or heart beat, choose! So men  
In their illumination see the frame-work  
Of life or see its spirit, so align  
Themselves with Science, Satire, or align  
Themselves with Poetry or Prophecy.  
So being Aristotle, Rabelais,  
Paul, Swedenborg.

“And as the years  
Went on, as I had time, was fortunate  
In finding books I read of many men  
Who had illumination, as I had it. Read

## DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

Of Dante's vision, how he found himself  
Saw immortality, lost fear of death.  
Read Swedenborg, who left the intellect  
At fifty-four for God, and entered heaven  
Before he quitted life and saw behind  
The sun of fire, a sun of love and truth.  
Read Whitman who exclaimed to God: 'Thou knowest  
My manhood's visionary meditations  
Which come from Thee, the ardor and the urge.  
Thou lightest my life with rays ineffable  
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages.'  
Read Blake, Spinoza, Emerson, read Wordsworth  
Who wrote of something 'deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue skies, and in the mind of man—  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought  
And rolls through all things.'

“And at last they called me  
The mad, and learned carpenter. And then—  
I'm growing faint. Your hand, hold . . .”

At this point  
He fainted, sank into a stupor. There  
I watched him, to discover if 'twas death.  
But soon I saw him rally, then he spoke.

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## TOWARD THE GULF

There was some other talk, but not of moment.  
I had to change the cylinder—the talk  
Was broken, rambling, and of trifling things,  
Throws no light on the case, being sane enough.  
He died next morning.

Students who desire  
To examine the skull and brain may do so now  
At their convenience in the laboratory.

\* \* \* \* \*

## FRIAR YVES

Said Friar Yves: "God will bless  
Saint Louis' other-worldliness.  
Whatever the fate be, still I fare  
To fight for the Holy Sepulcher.  
If I survive, I shall return  
With precious things from Palestine—  
Gold for my purse, spices and wine,  
Glory to wear among my kin.  
Fame as a warrior I shall win.  
But, otherwise, if I am slain  
In Jesus' cause, my soul shall earn  
Immortal life washed white from sin."

Said Friar Yves: "Come what will—  
Riches and glory, death and woe—  
At dawn to Palestine I go.  
Whether I live or die, I gain  
To fly the tepid good and ill  
Of daily living in Champagne,  
Where those who reach salvation lose  
The treasures, raptures of the earth,  
Captured, possessed, and made to serve  
The gospel love of Jesus' birth,  
Sacrifice, death; where even those

## TOWARD THE GULF

Passing from pious works and prayer  
To paradise are not received  
As those who battled, strove, and lived,  
And periled bodies, as I choose  
To peril mine, and thus to use  
Body and soul to build the throne  
Of Louis the Saint, where Joseph's care  
Lay Jesus under a granite stone."

Then Friar Yves buckled on  
His breastplate, and, at break of dawn,  
With crossboy, halberd took his way,  
Walked without resting, without pause,  
Till the sun hovered at midday  
Over a tree of glistening leaves,  
Where a spring gurgled. "Hunger gnaws  
My stomach," whispered Friar Yves.  
"If I," he sighed, "could only gain,  
Like yonder spring, an inner source  
Of life, and need not dew or rain  
Of human love, or human friends,  
And thus accomplish my soul's ends  
Within myself! No," said the friar;  
"There is one water and one fire;  
There is one Spirit, which is God.  
And what are we but streams and springs  
Through which He takes His wanderings?  
Lord, I am weak, I am afraid;

## FRIAR YVES

Show me the way!" the friar prayed.  
"Where do I flow and to what end?  
Am I of Thee, or do I blend  
Hereafter with Thee?"

Yves heard,  
While praying, sounds as when the sod  
Teems with a swarm of insect things.  
He dropped his halberd to look down,  
And then his waking vision blurred,  
As one before a light will frown.  
His inner ear was caught and stirred  
By voices; then the chestnut tree  
Became a step beside a throne.  
Breathless he lay and fearfully,  
While on his brain a vision shone.

Said a Great Voice of sweetest tone:  
"The time has come when I must take  
The form of man for mankind's sake.  
This drama is played long enough  
By creatures who have naught of me,  
Save what comes up from foam of the sea  
To crawling moss or swimming weeds,  
At last to man. From heaven in flame,  
Pure, whole, and vital, down I fly,  
And take a mortal's form and name,  
And labor for the race's needs."



## TOWARD THE GULF

Then Friar Yves dreamed the sky  
Flushed like a bride's face rosily,  
And shot to lightning from its bloom.  
The world leaped like a babe in the womb,  
And choral voices from heaven's cope  
Circléd the earth like singing stars:  
"O wondrous hope, O sweetest hope,  
O passion realized at last;  
O end of hunger, fear, and wars,  
O victory over the bottomless, vast  
Valley of Death!"

A silence fell,  
Broke by the voice of Gabriel:  
"Music may follow this, O Lord!  
Music I hear; I hear discord  
Through ages yet to be, as well.  
There will be wars because of this,  
And wars will come in its despite.  
It's noon on the world now; blackest night  
Will follow soon. And men will miss  
The meaning, Lord! There will be strife  
'Twixt Montanist and Ebionite,  
Gnostic, Mithraist, Manichean,  
'Twixt Christian and the Saracen.  
There will be war to win the place  
Where you bend death to sovereign life.  
Armed kings will battle for the grace

## FRIAR YVES

Of rulership, for power and gold  
In the name of Jesus. Men will hold  
Conclaves of swords to win surcease  
Of doctrines of the Prince of Peace.  
The seed is good, Lord, make the ground  
Good for the seed you scatter round!"

Said the Great Voice of sweetest tone:  
"The gardener sprays his plants and trees  
To drive out lice and stop disease.  
After the spraying, fruit is grown  
Ruddy and plump. The shortened eyes  
Of men can see this end, although  
Leaves wither or a whole tree dies  
From what the gardener does to grow  
Apples and plums of sweeter flesh.  
The gardener lives outside the tree;  
The gardener knows the tree can see  
What cure is needed, plans afresh  
An end foreseen, and there's the will  
Wherewith the gardener may fulfil  
The orchard's destiny."

So He spake.

And Friar Yves seemed to wake,  
But did not wake, and only sunk  
Into another dreaming state,  
Wherein he saw a woman's form

## TOWARD THE GULF

Leaning against the chestnut's trunk.  
Her body was virginal, white, and straight,  
And glowed like a dawning, golden, warm,  
Behind a robe of writhing green:  
As when a rock's wall makes a screen  
Whereon the crisscross reflect moves  
Of circling water under the rays  
Of April sunlight through the sprays  
Of budding branches in willow groves—  
A liquid mosaic of green and gold—  
Thus was her robe.

But to behold  
Her face was to forget the youth  
Of her white bosom. All her hair  
Was tangled serpents; she did wear  
A single eye in the middle brow.  
Her cheeks were shriveled, and one tooth  
Stuck from shrunken gums. A bough  
O'ershadowed her the while she gripped  
A pail in either hand. One dripped  
Clear water; one, ethereal fire.  
Then to the Graia spoke the friar:  
"Have mercy! Tell me your desire  
And what you are?"

Then the Graia said:  
"My body is Nature and my head

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## FRIAR YVES

Is Man, and God has given me  
A seeing spirit, strong and free,  
Though by a single eye, as even  
Man has one vision at a time.  
I lift my pails up; mark them well.  
With this fire I will burn up heaven,  
And with this water I will quench  
The flames of hell's remotest trench,  
That men may work in righteousness.  
Not for the fears of an after hell,  
Nor for the rewards which heaven will bless  
The soul with when the mountains nod  
And the sun darkens, but for love  
Of Man and Life, and love of God.  
Now look!"

She dashed the pail of fire  
Against the vault of heaven. It fell  
As would a canopy of blue  
Burned by a soldier's careless torch.  
She dashed the water into hell,  
And a great steam rose up with the smell  
Of gaseous coals, which seemed to scorch  
All things which on the good earth grew.  
"Now," said the Graia, "loiterer,  
Awake from slumber, rise and speed  
To fight for the Holy Sepulcher—

## TOWARD THE GULF

Nothing is left but Life, indeed—  
I have burned heaven! I have quenched hell.”

Friar Yves no longer slept;  
Friar Yves awoke and wept.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

June, but we kept the fire place piled with logs,  
And every day it rained. And every morning  
I heard the wind and rain among the leaves.  
Try as I would my spirits grew no better.  
What was it? Was I ill or sick in mind?  
I spent the whole day working with my hands,  
For there was brush to clear and corn to plant  
Between the gusts of rain; and there at night  
I sat about the room and hugged the fire.  
And the rain dripped and the wind blew, we shivered  
For cold and it was June. I ached all through  
For my hard labor, why did muscles grow not  
To hardness and cure body, if 'twere body,  
Or soul if it were soul?

But there at night  
As I sat aching, worn, before the hour  
Of sleep, and restless in this interval  
Of nothingness, the silence out-of-doors,  
Timed by the dripping rain, and by the slap  
Of cards upon a table by a boarder  
Who passed the time in playing solitaire,  
Sometimes my ancient host would fill his pipe,  
And scrape away the dust of long past years

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## TOWARD THE GULF

To show me what had happened in his life.  
And as he smoked and talked his aged wife  
Would parallel his theme, as a brooks' branches  
Formed by a slender island, flow together.  
Or yet again she'd intercalate a touch,  
An episode or version. And sometimes  
He'd make her hush; or sometimes he'd suspend  
While she went on to what she wished to finish,  
When he'd resume. They talked together thus.  
He found the story and began to tell it,  
And she hung on his story, told it too.

This night the rain came down in buckets full,  
And Claude who brought the logs in showed his breath  
Between the opening of the outer door  
And the swift on-rush of the room's warm air.  
And my host who had hoed the whole day long,  
Hearty at eighty years, sat with his pipe  
Reading the organ of the Adventists,  
His wife beside him knitting.

On the table  
Are several magazines with their monthly grist  
Of stories and of pictures. O such stories!  
Who writes these stories? How does it happen people  
Are born into the world to read these stories?  
But anyway the lamp is very bad,  
And every bone in me aches—and why always

## THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

Must one be either reading, knitting, talking?  
Why not sit quietly and think?

At last  
Between the clicking needles and the slap  
Of cards upon the table and the swish  
Of rain upon the window my host speaks:  
"It says here when the Germans are defeated,  
And that means when the Turks are beaten too,  
The Christian world will take back Palestine,  
And drive the Turks out. God be praised, I hope so."  
"Amen" breaks in the wife. "May we both live  
To see the day. Perhaps you'll get your trunk back  
From Jaffa if the Allies win."

To me  
The wife turns and goes on, "He has a trunk,  
At least his trunk went on to Jaffa, and  
It never came back. The bishop's trunk came back,  
But his trunk never came."

And then the husband:  
"What are you saying, mother, you go on  
As if our friend here knew the story too.  
And then you talk as if our hope of the war  
Was centered on recovering that trunk."

"Oh, not at all  
But if the Allies win, and the trunk is there



## TOWARD THE GULF

In Jaffa you might get it back. You know  
You'll never get it back while infidels  
Rule Palestine."

The husband says to me:  
"It looks as if she thought that trunk of mine,  
Which went to Jaffa fifty years ago,  
Is in existence yet, when chances are  
They kept it for awhile, and sold it off,  
Or threw it away."

"They never threw it away.  
Why I made him a dozen shirts or more,  
And knitted him a lot of lovely socks,  
And made him neck-ties, and that trunk contained  
Everything that a man might need in absence  
A year from home. And yet they threw it away!"

"They might have done so."

"But they never did.  
Perhaps they threw your cabinet tools away?"  
"They were too valuable."

"Too valuable,  
Fine socks and shirts are worthless are they, yes."

"Not worthless, but fine tools are valuable."  
He turns to me: "I lost a box of tools  
Sent on to Jaffa, too. The scheme was this:

## THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

To work at cabinet making while observing  
Conditions there in Palestine, and get ready  
To drive the Turks from Palestine."

What's this?

I rub my eyes and wake up to this story.  
I'm here in Illinois, in a farmer's house  
Who boards stray fishermen, and takes me in.  
And in a moment Turks and Palestine,  
And that old dream of Louis the Saint arise  
And show me how the world is small, and a man  
Native to Illinois may travel forth  
And mix his life with ancient things afar.  
To-day be raising corn here and next month  
Walking the streets of Jaffa, in Mycenæ,  
Digging for Grecian relics.

So I asked

"Were you in Palestine?" And the wife spoke quick:  
"He didn't get there, that's the joke of it."  
And the husband said: "It wasn't such a joke.  
You see it was this way, myself and the bishop,  
He lived in Springfield, I in Pleasant Plains,  
Had planned to meet in Switzerland."

"Montreaux"

The wife broke in.

"Montreaux" the husband added.  
"You said you two had planned it," she went on.

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## TOWARD THE GULF

Now looking over specks and speaking louder:  
"The bishop came to him, he planned it out.  
My husband didn't plan the trip at all.  
He knows the bishop planned it."

Then the husband:

"Oh for that matter he spoke of it first,  
And I acceded and we worked it out.  
He was to go ahead of me, I was  
To come in later, soon as I could raise  
What funds my congregation could afford  
To spare for this adventure."

"Guess," she said,  
"How much it was."

I shook my head and she  
Said in a lowered and a tragic voice:  
"Four hundred dollars, and you can believe  
It strapped his church to raise so great a sum.  
And if they hadn't thought that Christ would come  
Scarcely before the plan could be put through  
Of winning back the Holy Land, that sum  
Had never been made up and put in gold  
For him to carry in a chamois belt."

And then the husband said: "Mother, be still,  
I'll tell our friend the story if you'll let me."

## THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

“I’m done,” she said. “I wanted to say that.  
Go on,” she said.

And so he started over:

“The bishop came to me and said he thought  
The Advent would be June of seventy-six.  
This was the winter of eighteen seventy-one.  
He said he had a dream; and in this dream  
An angel stood beside him, told him so,  
And told him to get me and go to Jaffa,  
And live there, learn the people and the country.  
We were to live disguised the better to learn  
The people and the country. I was to work  
At my trade as a cabinet maker, he  
At carpentry, which was his trade, and so  
No one would know us, or suspect our plan.  
And thus we could live undisturbed and work,  
And get all things in readiness, that in time  
The Lord would send us power, and do all things.  
We were the messengers to go ahead  
And make the ways straight, so I told her of it.”

“You told me, yes, but my trust was as great  
As yours was in the bishop, little the good  
To tell me of it.”

“Well, I told you of it.  
And she said, ‘If the Lord commands you so

## TOWARD THE GULF

You must obey.' And so she knit the socks  
And made that trunk of things, as she has said,  
And in six weeks I sailed from Philadelphia."

"'Twas nearer two months," said the wife.

"Perhaps,  
Somewhere between six weeks and that. The bishop  
Left Springfield in a month from our first talk.  
I knew, for I went over when he left.  
And I remember how his poor wife cried,  
And how the children cried. He had a family  
Of some eight children."

"Only seven then,  
The son named David died the year before."

"Mother, you're right, 'twas seven children then.  
The oldest was not more than twelve, I think,  
And all the children cried, and at the train  
His congregation almost to a man  
Was there to see him off."

"Well, one was missing.  
You know, you know," the wife said pregnantly.

"I'll come to that in time, if you'll be still.  
Well, so the bishop left, and in six weeks,

## THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

Or somewhere there, I started for Montreaux  
To meet the bishop. Shipped ahead my trunk  
To Jaffa as the bishop did. But now  
I must tell you my dream. The night before  
I reached Montreaux I had a wondrous dream:  
I saw the bishop on the station platform  
His face with brandy blossoms splotched and wearing  
His gold head cane. And sure enough next day  
As I stepped from the train I saw the bishop  
His face with brandy blossoms splotched and wearing  
His gold head cane. And I thought something wrong,  
And still I didn't act upon the thought."

"I should say not," the wife broke in again.

"Oh, well what could I do, if I had thought  
More clearly than I did that things were wrong.  
You can't uproot the confidence of years  
Because of dreams. And as to brandy blossoms  
I knew his face was red, but didn't know,  
Or think just then, that brandy made it red.  
And so I went up to the house he lived in—  
A mansion beautiful, and we sat down.  
And he sat there bolt upright in a rocker,  
Hands spread upon his knees, his black eyes bigger  
Than I had ever seen them, eyeing me  
Silently for a moment, when he said:  
'What money did you bring?' And so I told him.

## TOWARD THE GULF

And he said quickly 'let me have it.' So  
I took my belt off, counted out the gold  
And gave it to him. And he took it, thrust it  
With this hand in this pocket, that in that,  
And sat there and said nothing more, just looked!  
And then before a word was spoke again  
I heard a step upon the stair, the stair  
Came down into this room where we were sitting.  
And I looked up, and there—I rubbed my eyes—  
I looked again, rose from my chair to see,  
And saw descending the most lovely woman,  
Who was"—

"A lovely woman," sneered the wife  
"Well, she was just affinity to the bishop,  
That's what she was."

"Affinity is right—  
You see she was the leader in the choir,  
And she had run away with him, or rather  
Had gone abroad upon another boat  
And met him in Montreaux. Now from this time  
For forty hours or so all is a blank.  
I just remember trying to speak and choking,  
And flying from the room, the bishop clutching  
At my coat sleeve to hold me. After that  
I can't recall a thing until I saw  
A little cottage way up in the Alps.

## THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

I was knocking at the door, was faint and sick,  
The door was opened and they took me in,  
And warmed me with a glass of wine, and tucked me  
In a good bed where I slept half a week.  
It seems in my bewilderment I wandered,  
Ran, stumbled, climbed for forty hours or so  
By rocky chasms, up the piney slopes."

"He might have lost his life," the wife exclaimed.

"These were the kindest people in the world,  
A French family. They gave me splendid food,  
And when I left two francs to reach the place  
Where lived the English Consul, who arranged  
After some days for money for my passage  
Back to America, and in six weeks  
I preached a sermon here in Pleasant Plains."

"Beware of false prophets was the text!" she said.

And I who heard this story through spoke up:  
"The thing about this that I fail to get  
Concerns this woman, the affinity.  
If, as seems evident, she and the bishop  
Had planned this run-a-way and used the faith,  
And you, the congregation to get money  
To do it with, or used you in particular  
To get the money for themselves to live on



## TOWARD THE GULF

After they had arrived there in Montreaux,  
If all this be" I said, "why did this woman  
Descend just at the moment when he asked you  
For the money that you had. You might have seen her  
Before you gave the money, if you had  
You might have held it back."

"I would indeed,  
You can be sure I should have held it back."

And then the old wife gasped and dropped her knitting.

"Now, James, you let me answer that, I know.  
She was done with the bishop, that's the reason.  
Be still and let me answer. Here's the story:  
We found out later that the bishop's trunk  
And kit of tools had been returned from Jaffa  
There to Montreaux, were there that very day,  
Which means the bishop never meant to go  
To Palestine at all, but meant to meet  
This woman in Montreaux and live with her.  
Well, that takes money. So he used my husband  
To get that money. Now you wonder I see  
Why she would chance the spoiling of the scheme,  
Descend into the room before my husband  
Had given up this money, and this money,  
You see, was treated as a common fund  
Belonging to the church and to be used

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## THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

To get back Palestine, and so the bishop  
As head of the church, superior to my husband,  
Could say 'give me the money'—that was natural,  
My husband could not be surprised at that,  
Or question it. Well, why did she descend  
And almost lose the money? Oh, the cat!  
I know what she did, as well as I had seen  
Her do it. Yes, she listened at the landing.  
And when she heard my husband tell the sum  
Which he had brought, it wasn't enough to please her,  
And Satan entered in her heart, and she  
Waited until she heard the bishop's pockets  
Clink with the double eagles, then descended  
To expose the bishop and disgrace him there  
And everywhere in all the world. Now listen:  
She got that money or the most of it  
In spite of what she did. For in six weeks  
After my husband had returned, she walked,  
The brazen thing, the public streets of Springfield  
As jaunty as you please, and pretty soon  
The bishop died and all the papers printed  
The story of his shame."

She had scarce finished  
When the man at solitaire threw down the deck  
And make a whacking noise and rose and came  
Around in front of us and stood and looked  
The old man and old woman over, me

## TOWARD THE GULF

He studied too. Then in an organ voice:  
"Is there a single verse in the New Testament  
That hasn't sprouted one church anyway,  
Letting alone the verses that have sprouted  
Two, three or four or five? I know of one:  
Where is it that it says that "Jesus wept"?  
Let's found a church on that verse, "Jesus wept."  
With that he went out in the rain and slammed  
The door behind him.

The old clergyman  
Had fallen asleep. His wife looked up and said,  
"That man is crazy, ain't he? I'm afraid."

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE BISHOP'S DREAM OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

A lassie sells the War Cry on the corner  
And the big drum booms, and the raucous brass horns  
Mingle with the cymbals and the silver triangle.  
I stand a moment listening, then my friend  
Who studies all religions, finds a wonder  
In orphic spectacles like this, lays hold  
Upon my arm and draws me to a door  
Through which we look and see a room of seats,  
A platform at the end, a table on it,  
And signs upon the wall, "Jesus is Waiting,"  
And "God is Love."

We enter, take a seat.

The band comes in and fills the room to bursting  
With horns and drums. They cease and feet are heard,  
The crowd has followed, half the seats are full.  
After a prayer, a song, the captain mounts  
The platform by the table and begins:  
"Praise God so many girls are here to-night,  
And Sister Trickey, by the grace of God  
Saved from the wrath to come, will speak to you."  
So Sister Trickey steps upon the platform,  
A woman nearing forty, one would say.

## TOWARD THE GULF

Blue-eyed, fair skinned, and yellow haired, a figure  
Once trim enough, no doubt, grown stout at last.  
She was a pretty woman in her time,  
'Twas plain to see. A shrewd intelligence  
From living in the world shines in her face.  
We settle down to hear from Sister Trickey  
And in a moment she begins:

“Young girls:

I thank the Lord for Jesus, for he saved me,  
I thank the Lord for Jesus every hour.  
No woman ever stained with redder sins  
Had greater grace than mine. Praise God for Jesus!  
Praise God for blood that washes sins away!  
I was a woman fallen till Lord Jesus  
Forgave me, helped me up and made me clean.  
My name is Lilah Trickey. Let me tell you  
How music was my tempter. Oh, you girls,  
If there be one before me who can sing  
Beware the devil and beware your voice  
That it be used for Jesus, not for Satan.”

“I had a voice, was leader of the choir,  
But Satan entered in my voice to tempt  
The bishop of the church, and in my heart  
To tempt and use the bishop; in the bishop  
Old Satan slipped to lure me from the path.  
He fell from grace for listening. And I

## THE BISHOP'S DREAM OF HOLY SEPULCHRE

Whose voice had turned him over to the devil  
Fell as he fell. He dragged me down with him.  
No use to make it long, one word's enough:  
Old Satan is the first word and the last,  
And all between is nothing. It's enough  
To say the bishop and myself eloped  
Went to Montreaux. He left a wife and children.  
And I poor silly thing with promises  
Of culture of my voice in Paris, lost  
Good name and all. And he lost all as well.  
Good name, his soul I fear, because he took  
The church's money saying he would use it  
To win the Holy Sepulchre, in fact  
Intending all the while to use the money  
For travel and for keeping up a house  
With me as soul-mate. For he never meant  
To let me go to Paris for my voice,  
He never got enough to pay for that.  
On that point he betrayed me, now I see  
'Twas God who used him to deceive me there,  
And leave me to return to Springfield broken,  
An out-cast, fallen woman, shamed and scorned."

"We took a house in Montreaux, plain enough  
As we looked at it passing, but within  
'Twas sweet and fair as Satan could desire:  
Engravings on the wall and marble mantels,  
Gilt clocks upon the mantels, lovely rugs,

## TOWARD THE GULF

Chests full of linen, silver, pewter, china,  
Soft beds with canopies of figured satin,  
The scent of apple blossoms through the rooms.  
A little garden, vines against the wall.  
There were the lake and mountains. Oh, but Satan  
Baited the hook with beauty. But the bishop  
Seemed self-absorbed, depressed and never smiled.  
And every time his face came close to mine  
I smelled the brandy on him. Conscience whipped  
Its venomous tail against his peace of mind.  
And so he took the brandy to benumb  
The sting of conscience and to dull the pain.  
He told me he had business in Montreaux  
Which would require some weeks, would there be met  
By people who had money for him. I  
Was twenty-three and green, besides I walked  
In dreamland thinking of the promised schooling  
In Paris—oh 'twas music, as I said." . . .

"At last one day he said a friend was coming,  
And he went to the station. Very soon  
I heard their steps, the bishop and his friend.  
They entered. I was curious and sat  
Upon the stair-way's landing just to hear.  
And this is what I heard. The bishop asked:  
'You've brought some money, how much have you  
brought?'  
The man replied 'four hundred dollars.' Then

## THE BISHOP'S DREAM OF HOLY SEPULCHRE

The bishop said: 'I'll take it.' In a moment  
I heard the clinking gold and heard the bishop  
Putting it in his pocket."

“God forgive me,  
I never was so angry in my life.  
The bishop had been talking in big figures,  
We would have thousands for my voice and Paris,  
And here was just a paltry sum. Scarce knowing  
Just what I did, perhaps I wished to see  
The American who brought the money—well,  
No matter what it was, I walked in view  
Upon the landing, stood there for a moment  
And saw our visitor, a clergyman  
From all appearances. He stared, grew red,  
Large eyed and apoplectic, then he rose,  
Walked side-ways, backward, stumbled toward the door,  
Rattled with shaking hand the knob and jerked  
The door ajar, with open mouth backed out  
Upon the street and ran. I heard him run  
A square at least.”

“The bishop looked at me,  
His face all brandy blossoms, left the room,  
Came back at once with brandy on his breath.  
And all that day was tipping, went to bed  
So drunk I had to take his clothing off  
And help him in.”

[ 261 ]



## TOWARD THE GULF

“Young girls, beware of music,  
Save only hymns and sacred oratorios.  
Beware the theatre and dancing hall.  
Take lesson from my fate.

“The morning came.  
The bishop called me, he was very ill  
And pale with fear. He had a dream that night.  
Satan had used him and abandoned him.  
And Death, whom only Jesus can put down,  
Was standing by the bed. He called to me,  
And said to me:

““That money’s in that drawer.  
Use it to reach America, but use it  
To send my body back. Death’s in the corner  
Behind that cabinet—there—see him look!  
I had a dream—go get a pen and paper,  
And write down what I tell you. God forgive me—  
Oh what a blasphemer am I. O, woman,  
To lie here dying and to know that God  
Has left me—hell awaits me—horrible!  
Last night I dreamed this man who brought the money,  
This man and I were walking from Damascus,  
And in a trice came down to Olivet.  
Just then great troops of men sprang up around us  
And hailed us as expecting our approach.  
And there I saw the faces—hundreds maybe,

## THE BISHOP'S DREAM OF HOLY SEPULCHRE

Of congregations who had trusted me  
In all the long past years—Oh, sinful woman,  
Why did you cross my path,' he moaned at times,  
'And wreck my ministry'

“And so these crowds  
Armed as it seemed, exulted, called me general,  
And shouted forward. So we ran like mad  
And came before a building with a dome—  
You know—I've seen a picture of it somewhere.  
And so the crowds yelled: let the bishop enter  
And see the sepulchre, while we keep guard.  
They pushed me in. But when I was inside  
There was no dome, above us was the sky,  
And what seemed walls was nothing but a fence.  
Before us was a stable with a stall  
Where two cows munched the hay. There was a farmer  
Who with a pitchfork bedded down the stall.  
“Where is the holy sepulchre?” I asked—  
“My army's at the door.” He kept at work  
And never raised his eyes and only said:  
“Don't know; I haven't time for things like that.  
You're 'bout the hundredth man who's asked me that.  
We don't know where it is, nor do we care.  
We live here and we knew him, so we feel  
Less interest than you. But have you thought  
If you should find it it would only be  
A tomb like other tombs? Why look at this:

## TOWARD THE GULF

Here is the very manger where he lay—  
What is it? Just a manger filled with straw.  
These cows are not the very cows you know—  
But cows are cows in every age and place.  
I think that board there has been nailed on since.  
Outside of that the place is just the same.  
Now what's the good of seeing it? His mother  
Lay in that corner there, what if she did?  
That lantern on the wall's the very one  
They came to see the child with from the inn—  
What of it? Take your army and go on,  
And leave me with my barn and with my cows.”

“ ‘So all the glory vanished! Devil magic  
Stripped all the glory off. No angels singing,  
No star of Bethlehem, no magi kneeling,  
No Mary crowned, no Jesus King, no mystic  
Blood for sins' remission—just a barn,  
A stall, two cows, a lantern—all the glory  
Swept from the gospel. That's my punishment:  
My poor weak brain filled full of all this dream,  
Which seems as real as life—to lie here dying  
Too weak to shake the dream! To see Death there  
Behind that cabinet—there—see him look—  
By God forsaken—all theology,  
All mystery, all wonder, all delight  
Of spiritual vision swept away as clean  
As winds sweep up the clouds, and thus to see

## THE BISHOP'S DREAM OF HOLY SEPULCHRE

While dying, just a manger, and two cows,  
A lantern on the wall.

“And thus to see,  
For blasphemy that duped an honest heart,  
And took the pitiful dollars of the flock  
To win you with—oh, woman, woman, woman,  
A barn, a stall, a lantern limned so clear  
In such a daylight of clear seeing senses  
That all the splendor, the miraculous  
Wonder of the virgin, nimbused child,  
The star that followed till it rested over  
The manger (such a manger) all are wrecked,  
All blotted from belief, all snatched away  
From hands pushed off by God, no longer holding  
The robes of God.’

“And so the bishop raved  
While I stood terrified, since I could feel  
Death in the room, and almost see the monster  
Behind the cabinet.

“Then the bishop said:  
“‘My dream went on. I crossed the stable yard  
And passed into a place of tombs. And look!  
Before I knew I stepped into a hole,  
A sunken grave with just a slab at head,  
And “Jesus” carven on it, nothing else,  
No date, no birth, no parentage.’”

[ 265 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

“I lie

Tormented by the pictures of this dream.  
Woman, take to your death bed with clear mind  
Of gospel faith, clean conscience, sins forgiven.  
The thoughts that we must suffer with and die with  
Are worth the care of all the days of life.  
All life should be directed to this end,  
Lest when the mind lies fallen, vultures swoop,  
And with their wings blot out the sun of faith,  
And with their croakings drown the voice of God.’

“He ceased, became delirious. So he died,  
And I still unrepentant buried him  
There in Montreaux, and with what gold remained  
Went on to Paris.

“See how I was marked  
For God’s salvation.

“There I went to see  
The celebrated teacher Jean Strakosch,  
Who looked at me with insolent, calm eyes,  
And face impassive, let me sing a scale,  
Then shook his head. A diva, as I thought,  
Came in just then. They talked in French, and I,  
Prickling from head to foot with shame, ignored,  
Left standing like a fool, passed from the room.  
So music turned on me, but God received me,

[ 266 ]

## THE BISHOP'S DREAM OF HOLY SEPULCHRE

And I came back to Springfield. But the Lord  
Made life too hard for me without the fold.  
I was so shunned and scorned, I had no place  
Save with the fallen, with the mockers, drinkers.  
Thus being in conviction, after struggles,  
And many prayers I found salvation, found  
My work in life: which is to talk to girls  
And stand upon this platform and relate  
My story for their good."

She ceased. Amens  
Went up about the room. The big drum boomed,  
And the raucous brass horns mingled with the cymbals,  
The silver triangle and the singing voices.

My friend and I arose and left the room.

## NEANDERTHAL

"Then what is life?" I cried. And with that cry  
I woke from deeper slumber—was it sleep?—  
And saw a hooded figure standing by  
The bed whereon I lay.

"Why do you keep,  
O spirit beautiful and swift, this guard  
About my slumber? Shelley, from the deep  
Why do you come with veiled face, mighty bard,  
As that unearthly shape was veiled to you  
At Casa Magni?"

Then the room was starred  
With light as I was speaking, and I knew  
The god, my brother, from whose face the veil  
Melted as mist.

"What mission fair and true,  
While I am sleeping, brings you? For I pale  
Amid this solemn stillness, for your face  
Unutterably majestic."

As when the dale  
At midnight echoes for a little space,  
The night-bird's cry, the god responded "Come,"

[ 268 ]

## NEANDERTHAL

And nothing more. I left my bed apace,  
And followed him with wings above the gloom  
Of clouds like chariots driven on to war,  
Between whose wheels the swift moon raced and  
swum.

A mile beneath us lay the earth, afar  
Were mountains which as swift as thought drew near  
As we passed over pines, where many a star  
And heaven's light made every frond as clear  
As through a glass or in the lightning's flash . . .  
Yet I seemed flying from an olden fear,  
A bulk of black that sought to sting or gnash  
My breast or side—which was myself, it seemed,  
The flesh or thinking part of me grown rash  
And violent, a brain soul unredeemed,  
Which sometime earlier in the grip of Death  
Forgot its terror when my soul which streamed  
Like ribbons of silk fire, with quiet breath  
Said to the body, as it were a thing  
Separate and indifferent: "How unneath  
That fellow turns, while I am safe yet cling  
Close to him, both another and the same."  
Now was this mood reversed: That self must wing  
Its fastest flight to fly him, lest he maim  
With fleshly hands my better, stronger part,  
As dragon wings my flap and quench a flame. . . .  
But as we passed o'er empires and athwart



## TOWARD THE GULF

A bellowing strait, beholding bergs and floes  
And running tides which made the sinking heart  
Rise up again for breath, I felt how close  
The god, my brother, was, who would sustain  
My wings whatever dangers might oppose,  
And knowing him beside me, like a strain  
Of music were his thoughts, though nothing yet  
Was spoken by him.

When as out of rain  
Suddenly lights may break, the earth was set  
Beneath us, and we stood and paused to see  
The Düssel river from a parapet  
Of earth and rock. Then bending curiously,  
As reaching, in a moment with his hand  
He scraped the turf and stones, pried up a key  
Of harder granite, and at his command,  
When he had made an opening, I slid  
And sank, down, down through the Devonian land  
Until with him I reached a cavern hid  
From every eye but ours, and where no light  
But from our faces was, a pyramid  
Of hills that walled this crypt of soundless night.  
Then in a mood, it seemed more fanciful,  
He bent again and raked, and to my sight  
Upheaved and held the remnant of a skull—  
Gorilla's or a man's, I could not guess.  
Yet brutal though it was, it was a hull

## NEANDERTHAL

Too fine and large to house the nakedness  
Of a beast's mind.

But as I looked the god  
Began these words: "Before the iron stress  
Of the north pole's dominion fell, he trod  
The wastes of Europe, ere the Nile was made  
A granary for the east, or ere the clod  
In Babylon or India baked was laid  
For hovels, this man lived. Ten thousand years  
Before the earliest pyramid cast its shade  
Upon the desolate sands this thing of fears,  
Lusts, hungers, lived and hunted, woke and slept,  
Mated, produced its kind, with hairy ears,  
And tiger eyes sensed all that you accept  
In terms of thought or vision as the proof  
Of immanent Power or Love. But this skull kept  
The intangible meaning out. This heavy roof  
Of brutish bone above the eyes was dead  
Even to lower ethers, no behoof  
Of seasons, stars or skies took, though they bred  
Suspicious, fears, or nervous glances, thought,  
Which silent as a lizard's shadow fled  
Before it graved itself, passed over, wrought  
No vision, only pain, which he deemed pangs  
Of hunger or of thirst."

As you have sought  
The meaning of life's riddle, since it hangs

[ 271 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

In waking or in slumber just above  
The highest reach of prophecy, and fangs  
With poison of despair all moods but love,  
Behold its secret lettered on this brow  
Placed by your own!

This is the word thereof:

*Change and progression from the glazed slough,  
Where life creeps and is blind, ascending up  
The jungled slopes for prey till spirits bow  
On Calvaries with crosses, take the cup  
Of martyrdom for truth's sake.*

It may be

Men of to-day make monstrous war, sleep, sup,  
Traffic, build shrines, as earliest history  
Records the earliest day, and that the race  
Is what it was in virtue, charity,  
And nothing better. But within this face  
No light shone from that realm where Hindostan,  
Delving in numbers, watching stars took grace  
And inspiration to explore the plan  
Of heaven and earth. And of the scheme the test  
Is not five thousand years, which leave the van  
Just where it was, but this change manifest  
In fifty thousand years between the mind  
Neanderthal's and Shelley's.

[ 272 ]

## NEANDERTHAL

Man progressed

Along these years, found eyes where he was blind,  
Put instinct under thought, crawled from the cave,  
And faced the sun, till somewhere heaven's wind  
Mixed with the light of Lights descending, gave  
To mind a touch of divinity, making whole  
An undeveloped growth.

As ships that brave

Great storms at sea on masts a flaming coal  
From heaven catch, bear on, so man was wreathed  
Somewhere with lightning and became a soul.  
Into his nostrils purer fire was breathed  
Than breath of life itself, and by a leap,  
As lightning leaps from crag to crag, what seethed  
In man from the beginning broke the sleep  
That lay on consciousness of self, with eyes  
Awakened saw himself, out of the deep  
And wonder of the self caught the surmise  
Of Power beyond this world, and felt it through  
The flow of living.

And so man shall rise

From this illumination, from this clue  
To perfect knowledge that this Power exists,  
And what man is to this Power, even as you  
Have left Neanderthal lost in the mists  
And ignorance of centuries untold.

[ 273 ]

## TOWARD THE GULF

What would you say if learned geologists  
Out of the rocks and caverns should unfold  
The skulls of greater races, records, books  
To shame us for our day, could we behold  
Therein our retrogression? Wonder looks  
In vain for these, discovers everywhere  
Proof of the root which darkly bends and crooks  
Far down and far away; a stalk more fair  
Upspringing finds its proof, buds on the stalk  
The eye may see, at last the flowering flare  
Of man to-day!

I see the things which balk,  
Retard, divert, draw into sluices small,  
But who beholds the stream turned back to mock,  
Not just itself, but make equivocal  
A Universal Reason, Vision? No.  
You find no proof of this, but prodigal  
Proof of ascending Life!

So life shall flow  
Here on this globe until the final fruit  
And harvest. As it were until the glow  
Of the great blossom has the attribute  
In essence, color of eternal things,  
And shows no rim between its hues which suit  
The infinite sky's. Then if the dead earth swings  
A gleaned and stricken field amid the void

## NEANDERTHAL

What matters it to you, a soul with wings,  
Whether it be replanted or destroyed?  
Has it not served you?"

Now his voice was still,  
Which in such discourse had been thus employed.  
And in that lonely cavern dark and chill  
I heard again, "Then what is life?" And woke  
To find the moonlight on the window sill  
That which had seemed his presence. And a cloak,  
Whose hood was perked upon the moonbeams, made  
The skull of the Neanderthal. The smoke  
Blown from the fireplace formed the cavern's shade.  
And roaring winds blew down as they had tuned  
The voice which left me calm and unafraid.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE END OF THE SEARCH

*There's the dragon banner, says Old King Cole,  
And the tiger banner, he cries.  
Pantagruel breaks into a laugh  
As the monarch dries his eyes.—The Search*

*“The tiger banner, that is what you call much  
Bad men in China, Amelica. The dragon banner,  
That is storm, leprosy, no rice, what you call  
Nature. See! Nature!”—King Joy*

\* \* \* \* \*

Said Old King Cole I know the banner  
Of dragon and tiger too,  
But I would know the vagrant fellows  
Who came to my castle with you.

\* \* \* \* \*

And I would know why they rise in the morning  
And never take bread or scrip;  
And why they hasten over the mountain  
In a sorrowed fellowship.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then said Pantagruel: Heard you not?  
One said he goes to Spain.

[ 276 ]

## THE END OF THE SEARCH

One said he goes to Elsinore,  
And one to the Trojan plain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Faith, if it be, said Old King Cole,  
There is a word that's more:  
Who is it goes to Spain and Troy?  
And who to Elsinore?

\* \* \* \* \*

One may be Quixote, said Pantagrue,  
Out for the final joust.  
One may be Hamlet, said Pantagrue  
And one I think is Faust.

\* \* \* \* \*

Whoever they be, said Pantagrue,  
Why stand at the window and drool?  
Let's out and catch the runaways  
While the morning hour is cool.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagrue runs to the castle court,  
And King Cole follows soon.  
The cobblestones of the court yard ring  
To the beat of their flying shoon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagrue clutches the holy bottle,  
And King Cole clutches his crown.



## TOWARD THE GULF

They throw the bolt of the castle gate  
And race them through the town.

\* \* \* \* \*

They cross the river and follow the road,  
They run by the willow trees,  
And the tiger banner and dragon banner  
Wait for the morning breeze.

\* \* \* \* \*

They clamber the wall and part the brambles,  
And tear through thicket and thorn.  
And a wild dove in an olive tree  
Does mourn and mourn and mourn.

\* \* \* \* \*

A green snake starts in the tangled grass,  
And springs his length at their feet.  
And a condor circles the purple sky  
Looking for carrion meat.

\* \* \* \* \*

And mad black flies are over their heads,  
And a wolf looks out of his hole.  
Great drops of sweat break out and run  
From the brow of Old King Cole.

\* \* \* \* \*

Said Old King Cole: A drink, my friend,  
From the holy bottle, I pray.

## THE END OF THE SEARCH

My breath is short, my feet run blood,  
My throat is baked as clay.

\* \* \* \* \*

Anon they reach a mountain top,  
And a mile below in the plain  
Are the glitter of guns and a million men  
Led by an idiot brain.

\* \* \* \* \*

They come to a field of slush and flaw  
Red with a blood red dye.  
And a million faces fungus pale  
Stare horribly at the sky.

\* \* \* \* \*

They come to a cross where a rotting thing  
Is slipping down from the nails.  
And a raven perched on the eyeless skull  
Opens his beak and rails:

\* \* \* \* \*

“If thou be the Son of man come down,  
Save us and thyself save.”  
Pantagrueflings flings a rock at the raven:  
“How now blaspheming knave!”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Come down and of my bottle drink,  
And cease this scurvy rune.”

## TOWARD THE GULF

But the raven flapped its wings and laughed  
Loud as the water loon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Said Old King Cole: A drink, my friend,  
I faint, a drink in haste.  
But when he drinks he pales and mutters:  
"The wine has lost its taste."

\* \* \* \* \*

"You have gone mad," said Pantagruel,  
"In faith 'tis the same old wine."  
Pantagruel drinks at the holy bottle  
But the flavor is like sea brine.

\* \* \* \* \*

And there on a rock is a cypress tree,  
And a form with a muffled face.  
"I know you, Death," said Pantagruel,  
"But I ask of you no grace."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Empty my bottle, sour my wine,  
Bend me, you shall not break."  
"Oh well," said Death, "one woe at a time  
Before I come and take."

\* \* \* \* \*

"You have lost everything in life but the bottle,  
Youth and woman and friend.

## THE END OF THE SEARCH

Pass on and laugh for a little space yet  
The laugh that has an end."

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagruel passes and looks around him  
Brave and merry of soul.  
But there on the ground lies a dead body,  
The body of Old King Cole.

\* \* \* \* \*

And a Voice said: Take the body up  
And carry the body for me  
Until you come to a silent water,  
By the sands of a silent sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagruel takes the body up  
And the dead fat bends him down.  
He climbs the mountains, runs the valleys  
With body, bottle and crown.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the wastes are strewn with skulls,  
And the desert is hot and cursed.  
And a phantom shape of the holy bottle  
Mocks his burning thirst.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagruel wanders seven days,  
And seven nights wanders he.

## TOWARD THE GULF

And on the seventh night he rests him  
By the sands of the silent sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

And sees a new made fire on the shore,  
And on the fire is a dish.  
And by the fire two travelers sleep,  
And two are broiling fish.

\* \* \* \* \*

Don Quixote and Hamlet are sleeping,  
And Faust is stirring the fire.  
But the fourth is a stranger with a face  
Starred with a great desire.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagruel hungers, Pantagruel thirsts,  
Pantagruel falls to his knees.  
He flings down the body of Old King Cole  
As a man throws off disease.

\* \* \* \* \*

And rolls his burden away and cries:  
"Take and watch, if you will.  
But as for me I go to France  
My bottle to refill.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE END OF THE SEARCH

“And as for me I go to France  
To fill this bottle up.”  
He felt at his side for the holy bottle,  
And found it turned a cup.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the stranger said: Behold our friend  
Has brought my cup to me.  
That is the cup whereof I drank  
In the garden Gethsemane.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagrue hands the cup to Jesus  
Who dips it in sea brine.  
This is the water, says Jesus of Nazareth,  
Whereof I make your wine.

\* \* \* \* \*

And Faust takes the cup from Jesus of Nazareth,  
And his lips wear a purple stain.  
And Faust hands the cup to Pantagrue  
With the dregs for him to drain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pantagrue drinks and falls into slumber,  
And Jesus strokes his hair.  
And Faust sings a song of Euphorion  
To hide his heart's despair.

\* \* \* \* \*

## TOWARD THE GULF

And Faust takes the hand of Jesus of Nazareth,  
And they walk by the purple deep.  
Says Jesus of Nazareth: "Some are watchers,  
And some grow tired and sleep."

\* \* \* \* \*

## BOTANICAL GARDENS

He follows me no more, I said, nor stands  
Beside me. And I wake these later days  
In an April mood, a wonder light and free.  
The vision is gone, but gone the constant pain  
Of constant thought. I see dawn from my hill,  
And watch the lights which fingers from the waters  
Twine from the sun or moon. Or look across  
The waste of bays and marshes to the woods,  
Under the prism colors of the air,  
Held in a vacuum silence, where the clouds,  
Like cyclop hoods are tossed against the sky  
In terrible glory.

And earth charmed I lie  
Before the staring sphinx whose musing face  
Is this Egyptian heaven, and whose eyes  
Are separate clouds of gold, whose pedestal  
Is earth, whose silken sheathéd claws  
No longer toy with me, even while I stroke them:  
Since I have ceased to tease her.

Then behold  
A breeze is blown out of a world becalmed,  
And as I see the multitudinous leaves



## TOWARD THE GULF

Fluttered against the water and the light,  
And see this light unveil itself, reveal  
An inner light, a Presence, Secret splendor,  
I clap hands over eyes, for the earth reels;  
And I have fears of dieties shown or spun  
From nothingness. But when I look again  
The earth has stayed itself, I see the lake,  
The leaves, the light of the sun, the cyclop hoods  
Of thunder heads, yet feel upon my arm  
A hand I know, and hear a voice I know—  
He has returned and brought with him the thought  
And the old pain.

The voice says: "Leave the sphinx.  
The garden waits your study fully grown."

And I arise and follow down a slope  
To a lawn by the lake and an ancient seat of stone,  
And near it a fountain's shattered rim enclosing  
An Eros of light mood, whose sculptured smile  
Consciously dimples for the unveiled pistil of love,  
As he strokes with baby hand the slender arching  
Neck of a swan. And here is a peristyle  
Whose carven columns are pink as the long updrawn  
Stalks of tulips bedded in April snow.  
And sunk amid tiger lillies is the face  
Of an Asian Aphrodite close to the seat  
With feet of a Babylonian lion amid

## BOTANICAL GARDENS

This ruined garden of yellow daisies, poppies  
And ruddy asphodel from Crete, it seems,  
Though here is our western moon as white and thin  
As an abalone shell hung under the boughs  
Of an oak, that is mocked by the vastness of sky be-  
tween

His boughs and the moon in this sky of afternoon. . . .  
We walk to the water's edge and here he shows me  
Green scum, or stalks, or sedges, grasses, shrubs,  
That yield to trees beyond the levels, where  
The beech and oak have triumph; for along  
This gradual growth from algæ, reeds and grasses,  
That builds the soil against the water's hands,  
All things are fierce for place and garner life  
From weaker things.

And then he shows me root stocks,  
And Alpine willow, growths that sneak and crawl  
Beneath the soil. Or as we leave the lake  
And walk the forest I behold lianas,  
Smilax or woodbine climbing round the trunks  
Of giant trees that live and out of earth,  
And out of air make strength and food and ask  
No other help. And in this place I see  
Spiral bryony, python of the vines  
That coils and crushes; and that banyan tree  
Whose spreading branches drop new roots to earth,  
And lives afar from where the parent trunk

## TOWARD THE GULF

Has sunk its roots, so that the healthful sun  
Is darkened: as a people might be darkened  
By ignorance or want or tyranny,  
Or dogma of a jungle hidden faith.  
Why is it, think I, though I dare not speak,  
That this should be to forests or to men;  
That water fails, and light decreases, heat  
Of God's air lessens, and the soil goes spent,  
Till plants change leaves and stalks and seeds as well,  
Or migrate from the olden places, go  
In search of life, or if they cannot move  
Die in the ruthless marches.

That is life, he said.

For even these, the giants scatter life  
Into the maws of death. That towering tree  
That for these hundred years has leafed itself,  
And through its leaves out of the magic air  
Drawn nutriment for annual girths, took root  
Out of an acorn which good chance preserved,  
While all its brother acorns cast to earth,  
To make trees, by a parent tree now gone,  
Were crushed, devoured, or strangled as they sprouted  
Amid thick jealous growth wherein they fell.  
All acorns but this one were lost.

Then he reads

My questioning thought and shows me yuccas, cactus  
Whose thick leaves in the rainless places thrive.

## BOTANICAL GARDENS

And shows me leaves that must have rain, and roots  
That must have water where the river flows.  
And how the spirit of life, though turned or driven  
This way or that beyond a course begun,  
Cannot be stayed or quenched, but moves, conforms  
To soil and sun, makes roots, or thickens leaves,  
Or thins or re-adjusts them on the stem  
To fashion forth itself, produce its kind.  
Nor dies not, rests not, nor surrenders not,  
Is only changed or buried, re-appears  
As other forms of life.

We had walked through  
A forest of sequoias, beeches, pines,  
And ancient oaks where I could see the trace  
Of willows, alders, ruined or devoured  
By the great Titans.

At last  
We reached my hill and sat and overlooked  
The garden at our feet, even to the place  
Of tiger lilies and of asphodel,  
By now beneath the self-same moon, grown denser:  
As where the wounded surface of the shell  
Thickens its shimmering stuff in spiral coigns  
Of the shell, so was the moon above the seat  
Beside the Eros and the Aphrodite  
Sunk amid yellow daisies and deep grass.

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## TOWARD THE GULF

And here we sat and looked. And here my vision  
Was over all we saw, but not a part  
Of what we saw, for all we saw stood forth  
As foreign to myself as something touched  
To learn the thing it is.

I might have asked  
Who owns this garden, for the thought arose  
With my surprise, who owns this garden, who  
Planted this garden, why and to what end,  
And why this fight for place, for soil and sun  
Water and air, and why this enmity  
Between the things here planted, and between  
Flying or crawling life and plants, and whence  
The power that falls in one place but arises  
Some other place; and why the unceasing growth  
Of all these forms that only come to seed,  
Then disappear to enrich the insatiate soil  
Where the new seed falls? But silence kept me there  
For wonder of the beauty which I saw,  
Even while the faculty of external vision  
Kept clear the garden separate from me,  
Envisioned, seen as grasses, sedges, alders,  
As forestry, as fields of wheat and corn,  
As the vast theatre of unceasing life,  
Moving to life and blind to all but life;  
As places used, tried out, as if the gardener,  
For his delight or use, or for an end

## BOTANICAL GARDENS

Of good or beauty made experiments  
With seed or soils or crossings of the seed.  
Even as peoples, epochs, did the garden  
Lie to my vision, or as races crowding,  
Absorbing, dispossessing, killing races,  
Not only for a place to grow, but under  
A stimulus of doctrine: as Mahomet,  
Or Jesus, like a vital change of air,  
Or artifice of culture, made the garden,  
Which mortals call the world, grow in a way,  
And overgrow the world as neither dreamed.  
Who is the Gardener then? Or is there one  
Beside the life within the plant, within  
The python climbers, wandering sedges, root stalks,  
Thorn bushes, night-shade, deadly saprophytes,  
Goths, Vandals, Tartars, striving for more life,  
And praying to the urge within as God,  
The Gardener who lays out the garden, sprays  
For insects which devour, keeps rich the soil  
For those who pray and know the Gardener  
As One who is without and over-sees? . . .

But while in contemplation of the garden,  
Whether from failing day or from departure  
Of my own vision in the things it saw,  
Bereft of penetrating thought I sank,  
Became a part of what I saw and lost  
The great solution.

## TOWARD THE GULF

As we sat in silence,  
And coming night, what seemed the sinking moon,  
Amid the yellow sedges by the lake  
Began to twinkle, as a fire were blown—  
And it was fire, the garden was afire,  
As it were all the world had flamed with war.  
And a wind came out of the bright heaven  
And blew the flames, first through the ruined garden,  
Then through the wood, the fields of wheat, at last  
Nothing was left but waste and wreaths of smoke  
Twisting toward the stars. And there he sat  
Nor uttered aught, save when I sighed he said  
“If it be comforting I promise you  
Another spring shall come.”

“And after that?”

“Another spring—that’s all I know myself,  
There shall be springs and springs!”

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