

Aleister Crowley

Collected Works, Volume II, Part 2



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THE WORKS OF ALEISTER CROWLEY Vol. II, part 2 of 3 XYWrite
VERSION

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File 2 of 3.

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Pages in the original are marked thus at the bottom: {page number} or {page number A} and {page number B}.

Comments and descriptions are also set off by curly brackets {}

Comments and notes not in the original are identified with the initials of the source: *e.g.* WEH note = Bill Heidrick note, *etc.* Descriptions of illustrations are not so identified, but are simply in curly brackets.

Text Footnotes have been expanded at or near the point of citation within double angle brackets, *e.g.* <<footnote>>. For poems, most longer footnotes are cited in the text to expanded form below the stanzas.

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THE ARGONAUTS<<1>>

1904 {columns commence}

<<1. This play, written when Crowley was studying Hindu religion, derives much of its colour and philosophical import from Patanjali, the Upanishads and Sankaracharya's commentary, Shaivite mysticism, the Bhagavat Purana, Bhagavat Gita, and Vedantist literature in general.>>

ARGONAUTAE.

“ACTUS PRIMUS.”

JASON.

PELIAS. JASON. “Semi-chorus of Iochian” Men. “Semi-chorus of Iolchian”

Women.

SCENE: “The Throne-chamber of” KING PELIAS.

SEMICHORUS OF MEN.

THE prophecies are spoken in vain,

The auguries vainly cast,

Since twenty years of joyous reign

In peace are overpast;

And those who cursed our King’s desires

Are branded in the brow for liars.

SEMICHORUS OF WOMEN.

We heard the aged prophet speak

The doom of woe and fear.

We wait with blanched and icy cheek

The one-and-twentieth year:

For Justice lies, as seeds lie, dead,

But lifts at last a Gorgon head!

MEN.

What fear can reach our Thessaly?

What war disturb our peace?

Long stablished is young amity

Maid-blushing over Greece:

And fair Iolchus stands sublime,

A monument to lesson time. {86A}

WOMEN.

But if such fear were come indeed,

Who reads the riddle dread

Spoken in frenzy by the seer

Against the royal head?

We know the Rhyme's involving spell —

Its purport? Irresolvable!

MEN.

We heard his foolish maundering:

But, bred in wiser ways,

We have forgotten: do ye sing

The rune of ancient days!

To-day his curse cacophonous

Shall earn at least a laugh from us!

WOMEN.

“O! when the armed hand is nigh,

Iolchus shall not see

Peace shining from Athena’s sky

Until the Fleece be free;

Until the God of War shall scorn

The sting, and trust him to the horn.

“Until the Sun of Spring forsake

His eastern home, and rise

Within our temple-walls and make

One glory of the skies —

Until the King shall die and live,
Athena never shall forgive.”

MEN.

Surely, O friends, at last ‘tis clear
The man was mad indeed!
Such nonsense we did never hear
As this prophetic screed!
More, as ‘tis never like this land
Should ever see an armed hand. {86B}

JASON.

Where is the son of Tyro and Poseidon?

MEN.

Iolchus’ King has here a dwelling-place.

WOMEN.

See you the sword shake — and the iron hand

Not shaking? The man's mood is full of wrath.

MEN.

Peace, foolish! Were it so, we would not see.

WOMEN.

Ay me! this stranger seems most ominous.

JASON.

Where is the son of Tyro and Poseidon?

MEN.

This is the Palace-place of Pelias,

Son of Poseidon, Of Iolchus King.

JASON.

Iolchus' King is here, in very truth.

Where is the son of Tyro?

MEN.

Who art thou?

JASON.

Know me for Jason and great Aeson's heir.

MEN.

We learn good news, most enviable sir;
That Aeson hath such grand inheritance.

JASON.

You have grown fat beneath an evil rule.
Your period is at hand. Go, one of you,
And drag the impious wretch before my sight!

MEN.

Aeson? Thy father? {87A}

JASON.

Play not with my wrath!

My mood is something dangerous.

MEN.

Dangerous sir,

I go indeed, to bring some danger more

Hither.

JASON.

Poltroonery dislikes the wise.

Fair maidens, I salute you pleasantly.

WOMEN.

Welcome, O welcome to the land,

Young heir of prophecy!

The armed hand, the glittering brand,

The scabbard's jewellery!

That wealth avails not: cast it down!

The sword alone may win the crown!

JASON.

Ye languish wretched in the tyrant's rule?

WOMEN.

Most happy are we, King. But change is sweet.

JASON.

A short-lived omen of success to me.

WOMEN.

Nay, but adventure and the prophecy!

JASON.

I see I have but small support in you.

WOMEN.

Not so, great Jason! Had I suffered much,

My spirit had been broken to the scourge.

Now, being strong and happy, with what joy

I cry: Evohe! Revolution!

I have grown weary of this tiresome peace.

JASON.

I promise you intense unhappiness. {87B}

WOMEN.

Here is the ugly monster! Out! To think
We once believed him reverend and refined,
Saw majesty in all that tottering gait,
And honour in the goat-like beard of him!

FIRST WOMAN.

A week ago your blue eyes were in tears,
Sidelong regarding the old montebank.

SECOND WOMAN.

To-day I would not be his concubine
For all Iolchus — for all Thessaly!

THIRD WOMAN.

I see the same glance seek out Jason now.

SECOND WOMAN.

Ay, there's a man! What muscles! What fine fire
In the quick eye! What vigour and warm strength!

FIRST WOMAN.

Yes, in your wishes. But indeed he is
A proper man. Away, you ancient egg!

PELIAS.

With what audacious foot and impious voice
Strides this young man and talks? Let him advance,
Trembling at our offended majesty.
Who art thou whose rude summons startles us
From work of state to listen a young mouth
Beardless? Speak, man, for shortly thou shalt die.

JASON.

Athena speaks.

WOMEN.

Ah, there's a fine retort!

PELIAS.

Goddesses speak and men list reverently.

Could he not find a fitter messenger? {88A}

JASON.

Her cause is Jason's. Jason therefore speaks.

PELIAS.

Aha! A suppliant to our clemency!

I did mistake the gesture and the sword

Angrily gripped, the foot flung terribly

Foremost, the fierce, constrained attitude.

But — as a suppliant! Tell thy woeful tale,

Sad youth! Some woman thou hast loved and lost?

JASON.

Thou hast robbed me of this kingdom. Thou hast kept

My father (poor half-witted man!) a slave

And parasite about thy court (one grief

The more I add to this account of thine!)

Myself a babe thou didst seek out to slay,

And, I being hid, with fish-hooks bent with lies

And gilded with most spacious promises,

Cunningly angled for old Chiron's<<1>> grace

To catch me yet. Athena hears me swear

To right all this — nay, answer me before

Anger get all the spoil of me, and drink

Thy life-blood in one gulp! Descend that dais!

Bend thou a suppliant at my awful knee,

And thus — perhaps — at least get grace of life.

<<1. A Centaur who hid the child Jason.>>

PELIAS.

And if I say I will not yield the throne?

JASON.

I am of force to take it.

PELIAS.

Are my friends

Not faithful? Who draws sword for Pelias?

MEN.

Shall we not slay thee this presumptuous fool? {88B}

JASON.

I am of force, I say. I wrestled once

From sunrise to sunset with Heracles,

Great Heracles! Not till the full moon rose

Availed his might to lay me prone. Beware!

Ye weakling knaves! I am of force, I say.

PELIAS.

Rebellious youth, the justice of thy cause
And force I will admit — where force goes far.
But think'st thou wait no wild Erinyes
For thee a guest in these my halls, for thee
Whose hands are dipped not yet in blood so deep
As to have murdered an old man, and him
Thy father's brother?

JASON.

Justice covers all.
The Furies cannot follow if a man
To his own heart be reconciled. They feed
On his own bosom, nay! are born thereof.
An alien clan he might elude, but these,
Blood of his blood, he shall nor slay nor 'scape.
My heart hath never pastured on regret
Or pang for thee. My justice covers all.

PELIAS.

That one word "justice" covers all indeed

To thine own self. But think'st thou for a word
To ruin many years of commonweal,
And poison in an hour the politics
Of states and thrones for — justice? Thou art just;
But wisdom, but the life of innocents,
The happiness of all, are better served
By solemn thought and weighty counsel held.

JASON.

This is more simple. I abolish thee —
One sword-sweep — and assume thy “politics.” {89A}

PELIAS.

Thou art this “simple”! Will my liege allies
(Willing with age and wisdom to accord)
Not tremble at thy firebrand breed, not think
Who hath in blood, an old man's blood, made fast
A perilous footing, may betimes discover
More “justice” — and invasion footing it
Hard after? Wilt thou plunge all Thessaly,

All Greece, in haste and sudden armament,
Fury of thought and frenzy of deed, at once
For justice? Wouldst thou be so violent
For justice, save in thine own cause, O boy?
And wilt thou pity not the happy days
And storm-unshattered abodes of Greece?

JASON.

Athena, who is Justice, also is
Wisdom: and also “She who buildeth towns.”

PELIAS.

Think also, I am born of deity.
I am inured to majesty; I know
How venerable is the sight of Kings,
And how the serpent Treason writhes beneath
The royal foot, conscious of its own shame,
And how the lion of Rebellion cowers
Before the presence of a king unarmed,

Quelled by one mild glance of authority.

JASON.

A king unjust is shorn of majesty.

PELIAS.

Still the one fool's word — justice — answers all.

Would thou wert older and more politic!

JASON.

Would I were liar with thine own foul brand!

The gods are weary of thy cozening. {89B}

PELIAS.

To proof, then, boy. I lay my sceptre by,

Put off my crown, descend the steps to thee.

Here is my breast. Look firmly in my face,

And slay me. Is there fear writ large and deep

In mine old eyes? Or shudderest thou with fear?

JASON.

More hate than fear. In sooth, I cannot strike.

PELIAS.

A king is not so slain — except a madman

May fall upon him with averted head.<<1>>

Indeed, I conquer. [“Aside.”] Even so, beware!

Victory ill-nurtured breeds the babe defeat.

[“Aloud.”] Listen, my brother’s son! Nay, stoop not so,

Bending ashamed brows upon the earth!

I am well weary of the world of men.

I grow both old and hateful to myself,

Most on the throne: power which to youth is sweet

To age looks fearful. Also I have wept —

Alas! how often! — and repented me

Of those unkingly deeds whereby I gained

This throne whose joy is turned to bitterness.

I will make peace with thee, and justice still

Shall have a home and shrine in Thessaly.

Be patient notwithstanding! Prove thyself

Valiant and wise — and reign here! If in sooth
An aged counsellor, whose reverend hair
Commands a hearing, may assist at all,
Wisdom to wisdom added, I am here.
Yet would I rather slide into my grave,
Untroubled with the destinies of states,
Even of such an one so dear to me
Who thus a score of years have nurtured it. {90A)

<<1. These two lines are directly taken from Eliphaz Levi.>>

JASON.

I hear thee. Thou art grown like royal wine
Better with age. Forgive my violence!

PELIAS.

[“Aside.”] The fish bites hard. [“Aloud.”] There is a prophecy:

“Once stirred, Iolchus never shall know peace
Till in its temple hangs the Golden Fleece.”

Now thou hast so disquieted our days,

The time is come: seek thou Aea's<<1>> isle,

And hang this trophy on our temple walls!

<<1. Colchis, a county of Asia, bounded on the W. by the Euxine, on the N. by the Caucasus, and on the E. by the Iberia. Distinguished for Aeaea.>>

JASON.

Tell me what is this fleece.

PELIAS.

Let women sing.

WOMEN.

In Ares' grove, the sworded trees,

The world's heart wondering,

Hangs evermore the Golden Fleece,<<1>>

The glory of the spring,

The light of far Aea's coast.

Such glamour as befits a ghost.

<<1. The symbolism of the Fleece and its guardians is curious. The Fleece is of (Aries) Ares the Ram, the sign of the spring. The sun being exalted in this sign, the fleece is called golden. Ares or Mars (Mars) is in Astrology the ruler of this sign. His other house is Scorpio (Scorpio) the Dragon. The whole legend is thus a glyph of the Magnum Opus. That Crowley neglects this is a significant mark of the change to his maturer manner.>>

Before that glittering woof the Sun

Shrinks back abashed in shame,

The splendour of the shining one,

One torrent-fleece of flame!

What heart may think, what tongue may sing

The glory of the golden thing? {90B}

About the grove the scorpion coils

Inextricably wind

Within the wood's exceeding toils,

The shadow hot and blind;

There lurk his serpent sorceries,

The guardian of the Golden Fleece.

The dragon lifts his nostrils wide

And jets a spout of fire;
The warrior questing turns aside,
Not daring to desire;
And Madness born of Ares lurks
Behind the wonder of his works.

Be sure that were the woodland way
Tracked snakewise to the core,
The dragon slain or driven away,
The good Fleece won by war,
Not yet should Ares sink his spear,
Or fail of flinging forth a fear.

The torch of Madness should be lit,
And follow him afar:
Upon his prow should Madness sit,
A baleful beacon-star;
And in his home Despair and strife
Lie in his bosom for a wife!

But oh, the glory of the quest,
The gainless goodly prize!
The fairest form man e'er caressed,
The word he heard most wise; —
All lures of life avoid and cease
Before the winning of the Fleece!

O nameless splendour of the Gods,
Begotten hardly of Heaven!
Unspoken treasure of the abodes
Beyond the lightning levin!
No misery, no despair may pay
The joy to hold thee for a day!

JASON.

Athena's servant recks not much of Ares.

PELIAS.

Are thine eyes kindled at the golden thought? {91A}

JASON.

Mine eyes see farther than the Fleece of Gold.

PELIAS.

What heroes can attain so fair a thing?

JASON.

I have some friends who would esteem this quest

Lightly — a maiden's pleasure-wandering

Through liliated fields a summer's afternoon.

PELIAS.

The Gods give strength! I pray them send thee back

Safe to this throne.

JASON.

I will not see thy face

Ever again until the quest be won.

Rule thou with justice in my sacred seat

Until I come again.

PELIAS.

The Gods thy speed.

MEN.

The hardy hero goes to find

The living Fleece of Gold;

Or else, some death may chance to bind

Those limbs of manly mould.

In sooth, I doubt if I shall earn

The singer's fee for his return.

PELIAS.

Think now — I feared that fool. It must be true

That guilt is timorous. Ay! when danger's none!

Let but swords flash — and guilt grows God for might!

Indeed I rule — until he come again.

Ay, when the stars fall, Jason shall be king!

EXPLICIT ACTUS PRIMUS. {91B}

ARGONAUTAE.

“ACTUS SECUNDUS.”

ARGO.

ARGUS “the son of” PHRIXUS, JASON, HERACLES, CASTOR,
POLLUX, THESEUS,

ORPHEUS. “Chorus of” Heroes. “Chorus of” Shipbuilders.

SCENE “An open place near Iolchus.”

CHORUS OF SHIPBUILDERS.

THE sound of the hammer and steel!

The song of the level and line!

The whirr of the whistling wheel!

The ring of the axe on the pine!

The joy of the ended labour,
As the good ship plunges free
By sound of pipe and tabor
To front the sparkling sea!

The mystery-woven spell!
The voyage of golden gain!
The free full sails that swell
On the swell of the splendid main!

The song of the axe and the wedge!
The clang of the hammer and chain!
Keen whistle of chisel and edge!
Smooth swish of the sliding plane!

Hail to the honour of toil!
Hail! to the ship flown free!
Hail! to the golden spoil,
And the glamour of all the sea!

HERACLES.

A good stout song, friend Argus, matching well

The mighty blows thou strikest: yet methinks

One blow should serve to drive yon nail well home

Where thou with tenfold stroke — {92A}

THESEUS.

Good Heracles!

Not all men owe thy strength —

ARGUS.

Nay, let him try!

Take my toy hammer!

HERACLES.

I have split the wood!

THESEUS.

Vexation sits tremendous on his brow.

Beware a hero's fury! Thou art mad,

Argus, to play so dangerous a trick.

ARGUS.

True, Theseus — if he had but hit his thumb!

CASTOR.

Cease this fool's talk. The moon waits not the work.

POLLUX.

The sun will sink no later for your pleasure.

on to thy work, man.

THESEUS.

He that traps a lion

And baits him for an hour, and lets him go,

Does well to think before he tempt again

The forest paths.

HERACLES.

The wise man wisely thinks

That nothing is but wisdom — and myself
Think strongly that no other thing exists
But strength: so with his subtleties of mind
He baffles me; and I lift up my club,
And with one blow bespatter his wise brains.

JASON.

Ay, not for nothing did the darkness reign
Those eight-and-forty hours,<<1>> O Zeus-begot! {92B}

<<1. Zeus caused a night to extend to this length, that he might efficiently
beget Hercules.>>

THESEUS.

Tell me, friend master, how the work goes on.
When shall our gallant vessel breast the deep?
When shall we see the sun sink o'er the poop,
And look toward moonrise, and the land be lost,
And the perched watcher on the mast behold
The melting mirror of the ocean meet

The crystallising concave of the sky?

ARGUS.

All this shall happen when the work is done.

JASON.

How many moons, friend fool, before that day?

ARGUS.

These things are known not even to the Gods,

Except the Father only.<<1>>

<<1. The satire is on Matthew xxiv. 36.>>

HERACLES.

Fools must talk,

ARGUS.

I talk, divulging nothing.

HERACLES.

I strike thee,

Yet act not.

ARGUS.

Hero, stay that heavy hand!

The ship shall sail ere spring.

THESEUS.

But now you talk

More as befits a workman to a king. {93A}

JASON.

Be gentle now, my friends! These shipbuilders,

Reared in the rugged borders of the North,<<1>>

Have northern manners; surly if attacked,

But genial when –

<<1. Argus is wittily characterised as a Scottish shipbuilder.>>

ARGUS.

The proper treatment is

Kindness — like lions whom Demeter tamed.

THESEUS.

I promise thee, the next time thou art wroth,

A second kindness from Alcides' hand.

ARGUS.

Spare me that, King, and take, thyself, a club.

JASON.

King Theseus, thou art far reputed wise.

Hast thou not learnt a lesson from the hap

Of Heracles supreme in — shipbuilding?

I by my meekness will abash thy strength.

Good Argus, thou art unsurpassed in art

To curve the rougher timbers, to make smooth

The joints and girders, and to plane and work

The iron and the nailheads, and to lift

Row after row the tiers of benches thrice
In triple beauty, and to shape the oars,
To raise the mast —

ARGUS.

Thy knowledge staggers me!
How wast thou thus instructed?

JASON.

By much thought.
To clamp the decks — {93B}

ARGUS.

I stand with brows abashed.
Thou art the master — build the ship thyself.

JASON.

Nay, but my knowledge is of mind alone.
I cannot so apply it as to build
An Argo.

ARGUS.

Yet I verily believe

Such mind must pierce far deeper than these names,

Seeking the very nature of the things

Thou namest thus so pat. Perchance to thee

These logs, nails, bolts, tools, have some life of sense,

Some subtle language. Tell us what they say!<<1>>

<<1. The gibe in these twenty lines is against Rudyard Kipling's silly vitalisation of machinery, and his ignorance even of the correct terms.>>

THESEUS.

'Tis but a giber — leave the churl alone.

JASON.

Indeed I spake of things I knew not of.

ARGUS.

You speak more wisely when you float away

Into pure dream, and talk of mystic things
That no man born of woman understands,
And therefore does not dare to contradict.

JASON.

He who speaks much and bitterly at last
Lays himself open to retort. I think
I never heard such contradictions fly
As when men talk of gods — that never were!

ARGUS.

Thou wouldst do better to leave man alone.
The wisest talk is folly when work waits.
Look! how these sturdy villains gape around,
Fling down their task, and hang upon the words
That flow like nectar from your majesty. {94A}

CASTOR.

In truth, my friend, if you would wear your crown
This side of Orcus, you should go away.

POLLUX.

Ay! let the men work! For a mind as yours
Is good, and skill as theirs is also good.

CASTOR.

But mix the manual and the mental — well,
No ship was built by pure philosophy.

POLLUX.

Nor yet designed by artisans.

JASON.

Enough!

Come, great Alcides, it is time to go.

ARGUS.

A fool allows a moment's irritation
To move the purpose of a thousand years.
Go, go!

HERACLES.

Remember! We are met this day

To call upon the name with praise and prayer

Of great Athena, since our ship is built

With sculptured olive pregnant in the prow,

And all the length of pine is coiled and curled

With the swift serpent's beauty, and the owl

Sits in huge state upon the midmost bench.

Thus, therefore, by the manifest design,

Joining the wisdom to the power and will,

We build the Argo.

ARGUS.

What a heavy club

We carry! And how well becomes our figure

The lion's skin!

HERACLES.

Be still, thou art an ass! {94B}

ARGUS.

The fabled, ass, O Zeus-descended one?

HERACLES.

What ass?

ARGUS.

The one that wore the lion's skin!

THESEUS.

This fellow were beneath a man's contempt.

How should a God-born heed him?

JASON.

We are here,

Then, to invoke Athena, immolate

the sacred cock upon her altar-stone,

That She, who sprang in armour from the brain

Of the All-Father, may descend to bless
Our labours, since delay grows dangerous,
If haply by Her power and subtlety
She please to aid the work, and to perform
A prodigy to save us! Mighty Queen,
That art the balance and the sword alike
In cunning Argus' brain —

HERACLES.

Ay! Mighty Wisdom,
Who thus can overshadow such a fool,
And make him capable to build a ship.

ARGUS.

O thou! Athena, whose bright wisdom shone
In this beef-witted fellow, making him
Competent even to sweep a stable out!
Glorious task! — I shall return anon.

JASON.

Nay, follow not! The Goddess were displeased,
Coming, to find our greatest hero gone.

THESEUS.

This is the midmost hour of day. {95A}

JASON.

Arise,

All heroes, circling round the sacred stone

In beautiful order and procession grave,

While our chief priest, our mightiest in song,

The dowered of Phoebus, great Oeager's heir,

Invokes that glory on the sacrifice

That kindles all its slumber into life

And vivid flame descending on the wheel

And chariot of lightning, licking up

The water of the loud-resounding sea

Lustral, poured seven times upon the earth,

And in one flash consuming wood and stone

And the sweet savour of the sacrifice.

ORPHEUS.

But when the flame hath darted from the eye
Of my divine existence, and hath left
Nothing, where was the altar and the earth,
The water and the incense and the victim —
Nothing of all remains! Then look to it
That ye invoke not Wisdom by the Name
Of bright Athena!

JASON.

We are here to call
Upon that Wisdom by that mighty Name!

ORPHEUS.

Who calleth upon Wisdom is not wise.
Is it not written in the Sibyl's book<<1>>
That Wisdom crieth in the streets aloud
And none regardeth her? Obey my voice.

<<1. Actually Proverbs i, 20.>>

JASON.

O master of Apollo's lyre and light!

We are not wise — and for that very cause

We meet to-day to call on Wisdom.

ORPHEUS.

Well!

The altar stands, shadowing the Universe

That with my fire of Knowledge I destroy —

And there is Wisdom — but invoke Her not,

Friends, who is only when none other is. {95B}

JASON.

Let us begin: the hour draws on apace.

Drive off the demons from the sacrifice!

ORPHEUS.

Let all the demons enter and dwell therein!

My friends, ye are as ignorant as priests!

Let there be silence while the sleeper<<1>> wakes!

<<1. The Hindus hold that the Kundalini, the spring of spiritual power, lies coiled and sleeping upon a lotus-flower at the base of the spine. She may be aroused by various methods.>>

O coiled and constricted and chosen!

O tortured and twisted and twined!

Deep spring of my soul deep frozen,

The sleep of the truth of the mind!

As a bright snake curled

Round the vine of the World!

O sleeper through dawn and through daylight,

O sleeper through dusk and through night!

O shifted from white light to gray light,

From gray to the one black light!

O silence and sound

In the far profound!

O serpent of scales as an armour
To bind on the breast of a lord!
Not deaf to the Voice of the Charmer,
Not blind to the sweep of the sword!
I strike to the deep
That thou stir in thy sleep!

Rise up from mine innermost being!
Lift up the gemmed head to the heart!
Lift up till the eyes that were seeing
Be blind, and their life depart!
Till the eye that was blind<<1>>
Be a lamp to my mind! {96A}

<<1. The “third eye,” that rudimentary eye called the pineal gland.>>

Coil fast all they coils on me, dying,
Absorbed in the sense of the Snake!
Stir, leave the flower-throne, and upflying
Hiss once, and hiss thrice, and awake!

Then crown me and cling!

Flash forward — and spring!

Flash forth on the fire of the altar,

The stones, and the sacrifice shed;

Till the Three Worlds<<1>> flicker and falter,

And life and her love be dead!

In mysterious joy

Awake — and destroy!

<<1. Of gods, men, and demons.>>

JASON.

It is enough!

HERACLES.

Too great for a god's strength!

THESEUS.

Speak!

CASTOR.

Change! Not to be borne!

POLLUX.

But this is death!

ORPHEUS.

Let the light fade. The oracle is past.

JASON.

The Voice is past. We are alive again.

ORPHEUS.

What spake That Silence?

HERACLES.

“This is not a quest

Where strength availeth aught.” I shall not go. {96B}

JASON.

Nay, brother. The voice was: “The end is sorrow!”

THESEUS.

Ye heard not, O dull-witted! Unto me

(Alone of all ye wise) the great voice came,

“The Gates of Hell shall not in all prevail.”

CASTOR.

I heard, “Regret not thy mortality!

Love conquers death!”

POLLUX.

But I, “Regret not thou

Thine immortality! Love conquers life!”<<1>>

<<1. Pollux being immortal, and Caster mortal, at the former's request Zeus allowed them to pool their fates, and live alternate days in Hades and Olympus.>>

ORPHEUS.

A partial wisdom to a partial ear.

JASON.

But what speech came to thee?

ORPHEUS.

I heard no voice.

ARGUS.

What means the? Here's my labour thrown away,

My skill made jest of, all my wage destroyed

At one fell stroke.

JASON.

What? Is the Argo burnt? {97A}

ARGUS.

Burnt! Should I then complain? The ship is finished.

JASON.

The Goddess, furious at thine absence, Argus,
Hath frenzied thee with some delusion.

HERACLES.

Calm!

Control thy madness! I am sorry now
My pungent wit so shamed his arrogance
As made him seem to scorn Athena.

ARGUS.

Thou!

But see me, I am ruined. The good ship
Is finished! Where's my daily wage?

JASON.

Be sure

I pay thee treble if thy tale be true.

ARGUS.

Ay! treble nothing! I shall buy a palace.

JASON.

Treble thine utmost wish.

ARGUS.

Two evils then

Thou pilest on one good! But come and see!

[“The Argo is discovered.”

CHORUS OF HEROES.

By wisdom framed from ancient days

The stately Argo stands above;

Too firm to fear, too great to praise,

The might of bright Athena’s love!

Oh! ship of glory! tread the foam,

And bring our guerdon from its home! {97B}

The silent thought, the hand unseen,
The rayless majesty of light
Shed from the splendour of our Queen
Athena! mystery and might;
These worked invisibly to bring
The end of triumph to our King.

Great Jason, wronged by hate of man,
Shall pass the portals of the deep;
Shall seek the waters wide and wan;
Shall pass within the land of sleep;
And there the guardians of the soil
Shall rest at last from pain and toil.

O ruler of the empyrean,
Behold his fervour conquering
The fury of the breed Cadmean,
The dragons of the Theban king;

And armed men shall spring from earth
In vain to ward the gloomy girth!

But thou, Athena, didst devise
Some end beyond our mortal ken,
Thy soul impenetrably wise
Shines not to us unthinking men.
O guard the warrior band of Greece,
And win for us the Golden Fleece!

By miracle this happy day
The ship is finished for our quest.
Bring thou the glory from the gray!
Bring thou our spirits into rest!
O Wisdom, that hast helped so far,
Sink never thou thy guiding star!

CHORUS OF WORKMEN.

Then let us gather one and all,

And launch our dragon on the main
With paeans raised most musical,
Until our heroes come again.
With watching and with prayer we wait
The imperious Destinies of Fate!

EXPLICIT ACTUS SECUNDUS. {98A}

ARGONAUTAE.

“ACTUS TERTIUS.”

MEDEA.

AEETES, JASON, MEDEA, Messengers,

“Chorus of” Heroes.

SCENE: “The Palace of “AEETES.

AEETES.

Were this man son of Zeus, beloved of Heaven,
And skilled with very craft of Maia's son,
Stronger than Phoebus, subtler than the Sphinx,
This plague should catch him, nor my wisdom spare.

CHORUS OF HEROES.

Thus hast thou sent him unto Hades, king.

AEETES.

Not otherwise were such gain possible.
Ye are the witnesses that with much skill,
And eloquence of shining words, and thought
Darkling behind their measured melody,
I did dissuade him.

CHORUS.

Such an enterprise
After such toils no man should lightly leave.
Remember all the tasks impossible
This hero hath already done, before

He ever touched this sounding coast of thine.

AEETES.

Alas! but now his weird is loneliness!

CHORUS.

Was that from Destiny, or will of thine? {98B}

AEETES.

I love him little. Yet my words were true,

Nor would it skill him aught if myriad men

Bucklered his back and breast. For when a man

Batters with sword-hilt at the frowning gates

That lead to the Beyond, not human force —

Hardly the favour of the gods themselves —

Shall stead him in that peril.

CHORUS.

Yet we know

Courage may conquer all things.

AEETES.

Such a man

Is greater than the gods!

CHORUS.

If only he

Know who he is — that all these gods and men

And things are but the shadows of himself!

AEETES.

I cannot give you hope. Await the end.

CHORUS.

We fear indeed that in the trap

Of wiles our king is taken.

Lachesis shakes a careless lap

And dooms divine awaken!

A desolate and cruel hap

In this sad hour is shaken.

The desperate son and violent
Of Helios hath designed
A fate more hard than Pelias meant,
Revolving in his mind
Mischief to catch the coiled ascent
Of groaning humankind.

O bright Athena, hitherto
Protectress of the quest,
Divide the deep descending blue!
Be present, ever-blest!
Bring thou the hero Jason through
To victory — and rest! {99A}

MEDEA.

Not by Athena's calm omnipotence,
O heroes, look for safety! Little men,
Looking to God, are blinded; mighty ones,
Seeking His presence, reel before the glance;

And They, the greatest that may be of men,
Become that light, and care no whit for earth.
But all your prayers are answered by yourselves,
As I myself achieve this thought of mine.

CHORUS.

To me thou seemest to blaspheme the gods.

MEDEA.

Belike I seem, O ye of little wit.

CHORUS.

Surely thy tender years and gentle looks
Belie such hatred to our king! I scorn
To triumph on an enemy once fallen.

MEDEA.

Fools always! I am tenderer than my years,
And gentler than my glances.

CHORUS.

Sayst thou — what?

MEDEA.

Ye know me a most powerful sorceress.

CHORUS.

So I have heard, O lotus-footed<<1>> one!

Nathless I see not any miracle.

<<1. An epithet common in the East, conveying a great compliment.>>

MEDEA.

Last night the heavy-hearted audience

Broke up, and Jason wended wearily

His way, oppressed by direful bodements of

The fate of this forenoon. I saw him go

Sad, and remembered how sublime he stood, {99B}

Bronzed with a ruder sun than ours, and scarred

(Rough tokens of old battles) yet so calm

And mild (with all that vigour) that to me
Came a swift pity — the enchanter's bane.
That I flung from me. But my subtle soul
Struck its own bosom with the sword of thought,
So that I saw not pity, but desire!

CHORUS.

Surely a bane more potent than the first.

MEDEA.

Love is itself enchantment!

CHORUS.

Some kind god

Whispers from this a little light of hope.

MEDEA.

Only the hopeless are the happy ones.<<1>>

<<1. “The hopeless are happy, like the girl Pingala” (Buddhist Proverb).
Pingala waited for her lover, and mourned because he came not. But, giving
up hope at last, she regained her cheerfulness. “Cf.” 2 Samuel xii, 15-23.>>

CHORUS.

But didst thou turn him from his gleaming goal?

Cover that shame with sweeter shame than this?

MEDEA.

Thou knowest that his vigil was to keep,

Invoking all Olympus all the night,

And then to yoke the oxen, and to plough

The fearful furrow, sow the dreadful seed,

Smite down the armies, and assuage the pest

Of slime thrice coiled about the sacred grove.

CHORUS.

Thy bitter love disturbed that solitude?

MEDEA.

Not bitter, heroes. See ye yet the end? {100A}

CHORUS.

Our good quest ended by thy father's hate,
And by thy own hour's madness! This I see.

MEDEA.

But if he gain the Fleece?

CHORUS.

A blissful end.

MEDEA.

This end and that are moulded diversely.

CHORUS.

Riddle no more, nor ply with doubtful hope
Hearts ready to rejoice and to despair
Equally minded.

MEDEA.

At the midmost hour,

His mind given up to sleepless muttering

Of charms not mine — decrees Olympian —

All on a sudden he felt fervent arms

Flung round him, and a hot sweet body's rush

Lithe to embrace him, and a cataract

Of amber-scented hair hissing about

His head, and in the darkness two great eyes

Flaming above him, and the whole face filled

With fire and shapen as kisses. And those arms

And kisses and mad movements of quick love

Burnt up his being, and his life was lost

In woman's love at last!

CHORUS.

Unseemly act!

Who dared thus break on meditation?

MEDEA.

I.

CHORUS.

Surely thy passion mastered thee, O queen! {100B}

MEDEA.

I tell you — thus the night passed.

CHORUS.

Verily,

The woman raves.

MEDEA.

Such victory as this

Outsails all shame. before the dawn was up

I bound such talismans about his breast

That fire and steel grow dew and flowery wreaths

For all their power to hurt him. Presently

I made a posset, drugged with somnolence,

Sleepy with poppy and white hellebore,

Fit for the dragon. This was my design.

CHORUS.

Beware thy father's anger when he finds
His plans thus baffled! He will murder us.

MEDEA.

Heroes indeed ye are, and lion hearts.

CHORUS.

No woman need school me in bravery.

MEDEA.

Rather a hare.

CHORUS.

Most impudent of whores!

MEDEA.

But when my husband comes victorious

Fleece-laden, he will rather —

CHORUS.

Wilt thou then

Further my ruin, making known this shame!

MEDEA.

Here is the Argive sense of gratitude.

Let me stir up its subtler thought, and show

What favours ye may gather afterward

From hands and lips ye scorn — not courteously. {101A}

CHORUS.

What? Canst thou save us from this newer doom?

MEDEA.

I love your leader with no mortal love,

But with the whole strength of a sorceress.

CHORUS.

It seems indeed thy hot will can bewitch
Our chaste one with one action impudent.

MEDEA.

I will not leave him ever in the world.

CHORUS.

Persistence in these ills — will cure them not.

“Worst” is the hunter, “worse” the hound, when “bad”
Is the stag’s name.

MEDEA.

We rule Iolchus’ land.

CHORUS.

Indeed the hunter follows. I despise
Lewd conduct in the lowest, and detest
Spells hurtful to the head, when ancient hags
Brew their bad liquors at the waning moon,
Barking their chants of murder. But to rule

A land, and wive a king, and bread to him
Kings — then such persons are unsuitable.

MEDEA.

Unless these words were well repented of
I might transform ye into - —

CHORUS.

Stay, great queen!

MEDEA.

Well for your respite comes this messenger. {101B}

MESSENGER.

Queen and fair mother of great kings unborn,
And mighty chosen of the land of Greece,
A tidings of deep bliss is born to you.

CHORUS.

Tell me that Jason has achieved the quest.

MESSENGER.

Truth is no handmaid unto happiness.

CHORUS.

What terror dost thou fill my heart withal?

MEDEA.

O timorous heroes! Let the herald speak!

Who meets fear drives her back; who flees from fear

Stumbles; who cares not, sees her not.

Speak on!

THE MESSENGER.

Terrible bellowings as of angry bulls

Broke from the stable as the first swift shaft

Of dawn smote into it: and stampings fierce

Resounded, shaking the all-mother earth.

Whereunto came the calm and kingly man,

Smiling as if a sweet dream still beguiled
His waking brows; not caring any more
For spring or summer; heeding least of all
That tumult of ox-fury. Suddenly
A light sprang in his face; the great hand shot
Forth, and broke in the brass-bound door; the day
Passed with him inwards; then the brazen hoofs
Beat with a tenfold fury on the stone.
But Jason, swiftly turned, evaded these,
And chose two oxen from that monstrous herd
To whose vast heads he strode, and by the horns
Plucked them. Then fire, devouring, sprang at him
From furious nostrils: and indignant breath,
Fountains of seething smoke, spat forth at him. {102A}
But with no tremor of aught that seemed like fear
Drew them by sheer strength from their place, and joked
Their frenzy to his plough, and with the goad
Urged them, thrice trampling the accursed field
Until the furrows flamed across the sun,
Treading whose glory stood Apollo's self

As witness of the deed. Then at last thrust
Savage, drove them less savage to their stalls,
And Jason turned and laughed. Then drew he out
The dreadful teeth of woe, Cadmean stock
Of Thebes' old misery, and presently
Pacing the furrowed field, he scattered them
With muttered words of power athwart the course
Of the bright moon, due path of pestilence
And terror. Ere the last bone fell to earth
The accursed harvest sprang to life. Armed men,
Fiery with anger, rose upon the earth
While Jason stood, one witnessing a dream,
Not one who lives his life. The sword and spear
Turn not to him, but mutual madness strikes
The warriors witless, and fierce wrath invades
Their hearts of fury, and with arms engaged
They fell upon each other silently
And slew, and slew. As in the middle seas
A mirage flashes out and passes, so
The phantoms faded, and the way was clear.

Thus, stepping ever proud and calm, he went
Unto the grove of Ares, where the worm,
Huge in his hatred, guarded all. But now
Sunk in some stupor, surely sent of Zeus,
He stirred not. Stepping delicately past
The dragon, then came Jason to the grove
And saw what tree umbrageous bore the fruit
That he had saddened for so long. And he,
Rending the branches of that wizard Oak,
With a strong grasp tore down the Fleece of Gold.
Then came a voice: "Woe, woe! Aea's isle!
Thy glory is departed!" And a voice
Answered it "Woe!" Then Jason seemed to see
Some Fear behind the little former fears; {102B}
And his face blanched a moment, as beholding
Some Fate, some distant grief. Then, catching sight
Now of the glory of his gain, he seemed
Caught in an ecstasy, treading the earth
As in a brighter dream than Aphrodite
Sent ever to a man, he turned himself

(We could not see him for the golden flame
Burning about him!) moving hitherward.
But I took horse and hasted, since reward
May greet such tidings, and for joy to see
Your joy exceed my joy.

MEDEA.

Reward indeed
Awaits thee from such folk as us, who stand
In fear of life, when great Aeetes hears
This news, and how all came.

MESSENGER.

My lady's smile
Is the reward I sought, not place nor gold.

MEDEA.

Thou hast it, child.

SECOND MESSENGER.

The hero is at hand.

CHORUS.

O happy of mortals!

O frontier of fear,

The impassable portals!

Our song shall be rolled in the praise of the gold, and its glory be told
where the heavenly fold rejoices to hold the stars in its sphere.

O hero Iolchian!

Warrior king!

From the kingdom Colchian

The Fleece dost bring!

Our song shall be sung and its melody flung where the Lure and the
Tongue

are fervid and young, all islands among where the Sirens sing. {103A}

Thou bearest, strong shoulder,

The sunbright fleece!

Glow swifter and bolder

And brighter — and cease!

O glory of light! O woven of night! O shining and bright! O dream of
delight! How splendid the sight for the dwellers of Greece!

Gained is the guerdon!

The prize is won.

The fleecy burden,

The soul of the sun!

The toil is over; the days discover high joys that hover of lover and
lover, and fates above her are fallen and done.

JASON.

Queen of this people! O my heart's desire

Spotless, the Lady of my love, and friends

By whose heroic arduous I am found

Victor at last, well girded with the spoil

Of life in gleaming beauty, and this prize

Thrice precious, my Medea — all is won!

Needs only now the favouring kiss of Eurus,

Bright-born of Eos, to fulfil for us

The last of all the labours, to inspire
The quick-raised sail, and fill that flushing gold
With thrice desired breath, that once again
Our prow plunge solemn in the Argive waters
To strains of music — victory at peace
Mingling with sweeter epithalamy —
To tell our friends how happy was the quest.

MEDEA.

But not those strains of music, though divine
From Orpheus' winged lyre, exalt at all
Our joy to joy, beyond all music's power!

CHORUS.

I fear Aeetes, and the Pelian guile.

JASON.

Fear is but failure, herald of distress!

MEDEA.

What virtue lives there in the coward's hate? {103B}

CHORUS.

In sooth, I have no fear at all — to flee.

JASON.

Night, like a mist, steals softly from the East.

the hand of darkness gathers up the folds

Of day's gold garment, and the valleys sink

Into slow sadness, though the hills retain

That brilliance for a little.

CHORUS.

Let us go!

Methinks that under cover of the night

I may escape Aeetes.

JASON.

If he chase,

Our Argo is not battered by rough winds

So far but what some fight were possible

MEDEA. ["Leads forward" ABSYRTUS.]

I know a better way than that, my lord.

This boy shall come with us.

JASON.

Ah, not to Greece!

Aea needs to-morrow's king.

MEDEA.

"With us"

I said. "To Greece" — I said not.

CHORUS.

What is this?

Thou hintest at some dangerous destiny.

MEDEA.

Come love, to the long years of love with me!

JASON.

Form, heroes, and in solemn order stride;
The body-guardians of the Golden Fleece!

MEDEA.

Guarding your king and queen on every side — {104A}

CHORUS.

We sail triumphant to the land of Greece.

MEDEA.

A woman's love, a woman's power be told
Through ages, gainers of the Fleece of Gold.

EXPLICIT ACTUS TERTIUS.

ARGONAUTAE.

“ACTUS QUARTUS.”

SIRENAE.

JASON, MEDEA, ORPHEUS, THESEUS, HERACLES, “Chorus of”
Heroes, “The” Sirens.

SCENE: “The Argo.”

MEDEA.

Ay! I would murder not my brother only,

But tear my own limbs, strew them on the sea,<<1>>

To keep one fury from the man I love!

<<1. The Argonauts being pursued by Aeetes, Medea threw the severed limbs and trunk of Absyrtus upon the sea, so that the father, stopping to perform the sacred duties of burial, was left behind.>>

CHORUS.

This act and speech are much akin to madness.

MEDEA.

Remember that your own skins pay the price.

CHORUS.

I now remember somewhat of the voice

Of the oracle, that Madness should hunt hard

On the thief's furtive track, upon the prow

Brooding, and at the table president,

And spouse-like in the bed. {104B}

MEDEA.

But this is like

That Indian fable<<1>> of a king: how he,

Taking some woman — an indecent act

Not proper to be done! — against the will

Of priests or princes, sought the nuptial bed

And

“Climbed the bed's disastrous side,

He found a serpent, not a bride;

And scarcely daring to draw breath,

He passed the dumb night-hours with death,
Till in the morning cold and gray
The hooded fear glided away.
Which morning saw ten thousand pay
The price of jesting with a king!" —

<<1. The "fable" is Crowley's own.>>

JASON.

Indeed these toils and dangerous pursuits,
Labours and journeys, go to make one mad.
Well were it to beguile our weariness
With song.

MEDEA.

And here is the sole king of song.

ORPHEUS.

My song breaks baffled on the rocks of time

If thy bewitching beauty be the theme.

MEDEA.

Sing me thy song, sweet poet, of the sea,
That song of swimming when thy love lost sense
Before the passion of the Infinite.

JASON.

The more so as my master warns me oft
Of late how near that island is, where dwell
The alluring daughters of Melpomene. {105A}

ORPHEUS.<<1>>

Light shed from seaward over breakers bending
Kiss-wise to the emerald hollows; light divine
Whereof the sun is God, the sea his shrine;
Light in vibrations rhythmic; light unending;
Light sideways from the girdling crags extending
Unto this lone and languid head of mine;
Light, that fulfils creation as with wine,

Flows in the channels of the deep: light, rending

The adamantine columns of the night.

Is laden with the love-song of the light.

<<1. The song describes Waikiki Beach, near Honolulu.>>

Light, pearly-glimmering through dim gulf and hollow,

Below the foam-kissed lips of all the sea;

Light shines from all the sky and up to me

From the amber floors of sand: Light calls Apollo!

The shafts of fire fledged of the eagle follow

The crested surf, and strike the shore, and flee

Far from green cover, nymph-enchanted lea,

Fountain, and plume them white as the sea-swallow,

And turn and quiver in the ocean, seeming

The glances of a maiden kissed, or dreaming.

Light, as I swim through rollers green and gleaming,

Sheds its most subtle sense to penetrate

This heart I thought impervious to Fate.

Now the sweet light, the full delight, is beaming {105B}
Through me and burns me: all my flesh is teeming
With the live kisses of the sea, my mate,
My mistress, till the fires of life abate
And live me languid, man-forgotten, deeming
I see in sleep, in many-coloured night,
More hope than in the flame-waves of the light.

Light! ever light! I swim far out and follow
The footsteps of the wind, and light invades
My desolate soul, and all the cypress shades
Glow with transparent lustre, and the hollow
I thought I had hidden in my heart must swallow
The bitter draught of Truth; no Nereid maids
Even in my sea are mine; the whole sea's glades
And hills and springs are void of my Apollo —
The Sea herself my tune and my desire!
The Sun himself my lover and my lyre!

CHORUS.

This song is sweeter than the honeycomb.

MEDEA.

Nearly as sweet as good friends quarrelling.

JASON.

Look, friends, methinks I see a silvern shape

Like faint mist floating on the farthest sea.

MEDEA.

I see a barren rock above the tides.

JASON.

I hear a sound like water whispering.

MEDEA.

I hear a harsh noise like some ancient crone

Muttering curses. {106A}

JASON.

Now I hear a song.

‘Tis like some shape of sleep that moans for joy,

Some bridal sob of love!

MEDEA.

O Son of God!

My poet, swiftly leap the live lyre forth!

Else we are all enchanted — yet to me

This song is nowise lovely. But in him

I note the live look of the eyes leap up,

And all his love for me forgotten straight

At the mere echo of that tune.

ORPHEUS.

Hark, friends!

Aea’s tune — my Colchian harbour-song!<<1>>

<<1. The harbour in which this lyric was written was that of Vera Cruz.>>

I hear the waters faint and far,

And look to where the Polar Star,
Half hidden in the haze, divides
The double chanting of the tides;
But, where the harbour's gloomy mouth
Welcomes the stranger to the south,
The water shakes, and all the sea
Grows silver suddenly.

As one who standing on the moon
Sees the vast horns in silver hewn,
Himself in darkness, and beholds
How silently all space unfolds
Into her shapeless breast the spark
And sacred phantom of the dark;
So in the harbour-horns I stand
Till I forget the land.

Who sails through all that solemn space
Out to the twilight's secret place,
The sleepy waters move below

His ship's imaginary flow.
No song, no lute, so lowly chaunts
In woods where still Arsibe haunts,
Wrapping the wanderer with her tresses
Into untold carresses. {106B}

For none of all the sons of men
That hath known Artemis, again
Turns to the warmer earth, or vows
His secrets to another spouse.
The moon resolves her beauty in
The sea's deep kisses salt and keen;
The sea assumes the lunar light,
And he — their eremite!

In their calm intercourse and kiss
Even hell itself no longer is;
For nothing in their love abides
That passes not beneath their tides,
And whoso bathes in light of theirs,

And water, changes unawares
To be no separate soul, but be
Himself the moon and sea.

Not all the wealth that flowers shed,
And sacred streams, on that calm head;
Not all the earth's spell-weaving dream
And scent of new-turned earth shall seem
Again indeed his mother's breast
To breathe like sleep and give him rest;
He lives or dies in subtler swoon
Beneath the sea and moon.

So standing, gliding, undeterred
By any her alluring word
That calls from older forest glades,
My soul forgets the gentle maids
That wooed me in the scarlet bowers,
And golden cluster-woof of flowers;
Forgets itself, content to be

Between the moon and sea.

No passion stirs their depth, nor moves;

No life distrubs their sweet dead loves;

No being holds a crown or throne;

They are, and I in them, alone:

Only some lute-player grown star

Is heard like whispering flowers afar;

And some divided, single tune

Sobs from the sea and moon.

Amid thy mountains shall I rise,

O moon, and float about thy skies?

Beneath thy waters shall I roam,

O sea, and call thy valleys home? {107A}

Or on Daedalian oarage fare

Forth in the interlunar air?

Imageless mirror-life! to be

sole between moon and sea.

CHORUS.

No song can lure us while he signs so well.

JASON.

But look! I see entrancing woman-forms

That beckon — fairy-like and not of earth.

So, fitter than the bed of this my queen

To rest heroic limbs!

MEDEA.

The wretched one!

Thou knowest that their kiss is death!

JASON.

Perhaps.

It were their kiss.

MEDEA.

Are not my kisses sweet?

JASON.

Listen, they sing. This time the words ring true,

Sailing across that blue abyss between.

Like young birds winging their bright flight the notes

Glimmer across the sea.

MEDEA.

They sing, they sing!

PARTHENOPE.

O mortal, tossed on life's unceasing ocean,

Whose waves of joy and sorrow never cease,

Eternal change — one changeless thing, commotion!

Even in death no hint of calm and peace! — {107B}

Here is the charm, the life-assuaging potion,

Here is a better home for thee than Greece!

Come, love, to my deep, soft, sleepy breast!

Here is thy rest!

O mortal, said is life! But in my kisses

Thou may'st forget its fever-parched thirst.
Age, death, and sorrow fade in slender blisses:
My swoon of love drinks up the draught accurst.
And all thy seasons grow as sweet as this is,
One constant summer in sleep's bosom nursed.
All storm and sunlight, star and season, cease,
Here is thy peace.

O mortal, sad is love! But my dominion
Extends beyond love's ultimate abode.
Eternity itself is but a minion,
Lighting my way on the untravelled road.
Gods shelter 'neath one shadow of my pinion.
Thou only tread the path none else hath trode!
Come, lover, in my breast all blooms above,
Here is thy love!

MEDEA.

My poet, now! The one song in the world!

ORPHEUS.

Above us on the mast is spread

The splendour of the fleece!

Before us, Argive maidens tread

The glowing isles of Greece!

Behind us, fear and toil are dead:

Below, the breakers cease!

The Holy Light is on my head —

My very name is Peace! {108A}

The water's music moves; and swings

The sea's eternal breast.

The wind above us whistles, rings,

And wafts us to the West.

Greece lures us on with beckonings

And sighs of slumber blest.

I am not counted with the kings —

My very name is Rest!

Medea shoots her sweetest glance

And Jason bends above —
Young virgins in Iolchus dance,
Hearing the news thereof.
The heroes — see their glad advance!
Hath Greece not maids enough?
I lie in love's ecstatic trance.
My very name is love!

LIGIA.

Come over the water, love, to me!
Come over the little space!
Come over, my lover, and thou shalt see
The beauty of my face!
Come over the water! I will be
A bride and a queen and a lover to thee!

Come over the water, love, and lie!
All day and all night to kiss!
Come over, my lover, an hour to die
In the language-baffling bliss!

Come over the water! Must I sigh?

Thy lover and bride and queen am I!

Come over the water, love, and bide

An hour in my swift caress!

So short is the space, and so smooth the tide —

More smooth is my loveliness!

Come over the water, love, to my side!

I am thy lover and queen and bride!

MEDEA.

Sing, poet, ere the rash fool leap!

JASON.

Ah, Zeus! {108B}

ORPHEUS.

The hearts of Greeks with sharper flames

Burn than with one fire of all fire,

We have the Races and the Games,

The song, the chisel, and the lyre;
We have the altar, we the shrine,
And ours the joy of love and wine.

Why take one pleasure, put aside
The myriad bliss of life diverse?
Unchanging joy will soon divide
Into the likeness of a curse.
Have we no maidens, slender, strong,
Daughters of tender-throated song?

I swear by Aphrodite's eyes
Our Grecian maids are fairer far!
What love as sweet as their is lies
In Sun or planet, moon or star?
What nymphs as sweet as ours are dwell
By foreign grove and alien well?

With every watchman's cheery cry,
"Land ho!" through all the journeying years

Our ever-hoping hearts reply,
“A land of bliss at last appears.”
But what land laps a foreign foam
So sweet as is the hero’s home?

At every port the novel sights
Charm for an hour — delusive bliss.
On every shore the false delights
Of maidens ply the barbarous kiss.
But where did hero think to stay
Lulled in their love beyond a day?

No shoreland whistles to the wind
So musically as Thrace: no town
So gladdens the toil-weary mind
As brave Athenae: no renown
Stands so divine in war and peace
As the illustrious name of Greece. {109A}

This island of the subtle song

Shall vanish as the shaken spray
Tossed by the billow far and strong
On marble coasts: we will not stay!
Dreams lure not those who ply the sail
Before, the home! behind, the gale!

JASON.

Ah! I am torn, I am torn!

MEDEA.

God's poet, hail!

Help us, Apollo! Light of Sun, awake!

This is the desperate hour.

JASON.

I have no strength.

MEDEA.

Beware the third, the awful ecstasy!

ORPHEUS.

A higher spell controls a lower song.

Listen, they sing!

JASON.

Joy! Joy! they sing, they sing!

LEUCOSIA.

O love, I am lonely here!

O love, I am weeping!

Each pearl of ocean is a tear

Let fall while love was sleeping.

A tear is made of fire and dew

And saddened with a smile;

The sun's laugh in the curving blue

Lasts but a little while.

The night-winds kiss the deep: the stars

Shed laughter from above;

But night must pass dawn's prison bars:

Night hath not tasted love. {109B}

With me the night is fallen in day;

The day swoons back to night;

The white and black are woven in gray,

Faint sleep of silken light.

A strange soft light about me shed

Devours the sense of time:

Hovers about my sleepy head

Some sweet persistent rhyme.

Beneath my breast my love may hear

Deep murmur of the billows —

O gather me to thee, my dear,

On soft forgetful pillows!

O gather me in arms of love

As maidens plucking posies,

Or mists that fold about a dove,

Or valleys full of roses!

O let me fade and fall away

From waking into sleep,

From sleep to death, from gold to gray,

Deep as the skies are deep!

O let me fall from death to dream,

Eternal monotone;

Faint eventide of sleep supreme

With thee and love alone!

A jewelled night of star and moon

Shall watch our bridal chamber,

Bending the blue rays to the tune

Of softly-sliding amber.

Dim winds shall whisper echoes of

Our slow ecstatic breath,

Telling all worlds how sweet is love,

How beautiful is death.

MEDEA.

Sing, Orpheus, this doth madden them the most.

Should one man leap — This tune is terrible!

ORPHEUS.

I am not moved, although I am a man.

So strong a safeguard is cool chastity. {110A}

MEDEA.

But love thou me! My husband is distraught.

ORPHEUS.

Madness is on him for thy punishment.

MEDEA.

Sing, therefore!

ORPHEUS.

This last song of theirs was sweet.

MEDEA.

Thine therefore should be sweeter.

ORPHEUS.

The Gods grant it!

Lift up this love of peace and bliss,
The starry soul of wine,
Destruction's formidable kiss,
The lamp of the divine;
This shadow of a nobler name
Whose life is strife, whose soul is fame!

I rather will exalt the soul
Of man to loftier height,
And kindle at a livelier coal
The subtler soul of Light.

From these soft splendours of a dream

I turn, and seek the Self supreme.

This world is shadow-shapen of

The bitterness of pain.

Vain are the little lamps of love!

The light of life is vain!

Life, death, joy, sorrow, age and youth

Are phantoms of a further truth.

Beyond the splendour of the world,<<1>>

False glittering of the gold,

A Serpent is in slumber curled

In wisdom's sacred cold.

Life is the flaming of that flame.

Death is the naming of that name. {110B}

<<1. The theory of these verses is that of certain esoteric schools among the Hindus.>>

The forehead of the snake is bright
With one immortal star,
Lighting her coils with living light
To where the nenuphar
Sleeps for her couch. All darkness dreams
The thing that is not, only seems.

That star upon the serpent's head
Is called the soul of man;
That light in shadows subtly shed
The glamour of life's plan.
The sea whereon that lotus grows
Is thought's abyss of tears and woes.

Leave Sirenusa! Even Greece
Forget! they are not there!
By worship cometh not the Peace,
The Silence not by prayer!
Leave the illusions, life and time
And death, and seek that star sublime —

Until the lotus and the sea
And snake no longer are,
And single through eternity
Exists alone the Star,
And utter Knowledge rise and cease
In that which is beyond the Peace!

JASON.

Those isles have faded: was this vision true?

HERACLES.

I know not what hath passed: I seem asleep
Still, with the dream yet racing in my brain.

THESEUS.

There was a sweetness: whether sight or song
I know not.

JASON.

But my veins grew strong and swollen

And madness came upon me.

MEDEA.

You are here,

Let that suffice. Remember not! {111B}

ORPHEUS.

But now

I see the haze lift on the water-way,

And hidden headlands loom again.

JASON.

I know

The pleasant portals.

CHORUS.

Here is home at last.

ORPHEUS.

The sunset comes: the mist is lifted now

To let the last kiss of the daylight fall

Once ere night whisper “Sleep!”

JASON.

And see! the ship

Glides between walls of purple.

MEDEA.

The green land

Cools the tired eyes.

CHORUS.

The rocks stand sentinel.

MEDEA.

Let still the song that saved us gladden us.

Lift up thy lyre, sweet Orpheus, on the sea.

ORPHEUS.<<1>>

Over a sea like stained glass
At sunset like chrysopras: —
Our smooth-oared vessel over-rides
Crimson and green and purple tides.
Between the rocky isles we pass,
And greener islets gay with grass;
Between the over-arching sides
Our pinnacle glides. {111B}

<<1. The song describes the approach to Hong Kong Harbour.>>

Just by the Maenad-haunted hill
Songs rise into the air, and thrill,
Like clustered birds at evening
When love outlingers rain and spring.
Faint faces of strange dancers spill
Their dewy scent; and sweet and chill
The wind comes faintly whispering
On wanton wing.

Between the islands sheer and steep
Our craft treads noiseless o'er the deep,
Turned to the gold heart of the west,
The sun's last sigh of love expressed
Ere the lake glimmer, borrow sleep
From clouds and tinge their edges; weep
That night brings love not to his breast,
But only rest.

We move toward the golden track
Shed in the water: we look back
Eastward, where rose is set to warn
Promise and prophecy of dawn
Reflected, lest the ocean lack
In any space serene or slack
Some colour, blushing o'er the fawn
Dim-lighted lawn.

And under all the shadowy shapes
Of steep and silent bays and capes

The water takes its darkest hue;
Catches no laughter from the blue;
No purple ray or gold escapes,
But dim green shadow comes and drapes
Its lustre: thus the night burns through
Tall groves of yew.

Thither, ah thither! Hollow vales
Trembling with early nightingales!
Languish, O sea of sleep! Young moon!
Dream on above in maiden swoon!
None daring to invoke the gales
To shake our sea, and swell our sails.
Not song, but silence, were a boon —
Save for this tune.

Round capes grown darker as night falls,
We see at last the splendid walls
That ridge the bay; the town lies there
Lighted (the temple's hour for prayer) {112A}

At grave harmonious intervals.
The grand voice of some seaman calls,
Just as the picture fades, aware
How it was fair.

JASON.

A thousand victories bring us to the shore
Whence we set out: look forth! The people come
Moving with lights about the anchorage
To greet the heroes of the Golden Fleece.
My Queen! Medea! Welcome unto Greece!

EXPLICIT ACTUS QUARTUS.

ARGONAUTAE.

“ACTUS QUINTUS.”<<1>>

<<1. The legend is grotesque, and the poet’s power is strained — perhaps overstrained — to be faithful without being ridiculous. Only the tragic necessity of avenging the indignity done to Ares compelled this conclusion

of the drama, and the somewhat fantastic and unreal machinery of the catastrophe.>>

ARES.

JASON, MEDEA, PELIAS, ACASTUS, ALCESTIS “and her” Sisters,
MADNESS

SCENE: “The Palace at Iolchus.”

MADNESS.

Black Ares hath called

Me forth from the deep!

Blind and appalled,

Shall the palace high-walled

Shake as I leap

Over the granite,

The marble over,

One step to span it,

One flight to hover,

Like a moon round a planet,

A dream round a lover! {112B}

How shall I come?

Shrieking and yelling?

Or quiet and dumb

To the heart of the dwelling?

Silently striding,

Whispering terror

Into their ears;

Watching, abiding,

Madness and error,

Brooder of fears!

Thus will I bring

Black Ares to honour,

Draw the black sting

Of the serpent upon her!

How foolish to fight

With the warrior God

Who brings victory bright

Or defeat with a nod,
Who standeth to smite
With a spear and a rod!
Here is the woman,
Thinking no evil,
Wielding the human
By might of a devil!
But I will mock her
With cunning design,
In my malice lock her.
The doom is divine!

MEDEA.

Ai! Ai! This rankles sorely in my mind
That Pelias should wander, free to slide
His sidelong looks among our courtiers
Ripe ever for some mischief. Yet methinks
There is a wandering other than this present —
Say, by the Stygian waves, unburied corpse! —
But, for the means? It ill befits our power

And grace — my husband's honour — to stretch forth
The arm of murder o'er the head of age.
But surely must be means —

MADNESS.

The prophecy! {113A}

MEDEA.

Happy my thought be! I have found it. Ha!
“Athena shall relent not till the king
Shall die and live.” Vainly the prophet meant
Mere transference of the crown. I'll twist his saying
To daze the children — fools they are! So mask
Evil beneath the waxen face of Good,
Trick out Calamity in robes of Luck —
Come, children! Is the sun bright? And your eyes?

ALCESTIS.

Dear queen, all's well with us. Such happiness
Crowds daylight — even sleep seems sorrowful,

Though bright with dainty dreams!

FIRST DANAID.

But you are sad!

MEDEA.

I meditate the ancient prophecy.

Thus a foreboding is upon my heart,

Seeing some danger follow yet, o'erhang

Our heads, poised gaily in incertitude!

SECOND DANAID.

Nay, grieve not, dear Medea! All men say

The prophecy is well fulfilled.

MEDEA.

Ay me!

“Until the king shall die and live again.”

ALCESTIS.

What means that?

MEDEA.

I have meditated long.

SECOND DANAID.

To what sad end? {113B}

MEDEA.

At the full end I see

Allusion to my magic — to that spell

Whereby an old man may renew his youth.

ALCESTIS.

Our father!

MEDEA.

You have guessed aright, my child.

Your father must abandon his old age

And — by my magic — find sweet youth again!

DANAIDES.

But this is very difficult to do.

MEDEA.

For me such miracles are merely play,

Serving to while away the idle hours

While Jason hunts —

ALCESTIS.

How grand it were to see

Our aged father rival the strong youths

In feats of great agility!

MEDEA.

Agreed!

But surely you should work the charm yourselves.

For children magic is a blithesome game!

DANAIDES.

Dear lady! teach us how to say the spell!

MEDEA.

Words must be aided by appalling deeds!

ALCESTIS.

O! O! you frighten us.

MEDEA.

Be brave, my child!

I too passed through unutterable things!

ALCESTIS.

Let me fetch father! {114A}

MEDEA.

Nay, consider first.

would he consent? The process is severe!

DANAIDES.

We know the sire is not exactly brave,

Though very wise and good.

MEDEA.

‘Tis clear to me;

Without his knowledge we must do the deed.

ALCESTIS.

What is this “deed”?

MEDEA.

A caldron is prepared;

And, having hewn your father limb from limb,

We seethe him in a broth of magic herbs.

ALCESTIS.

And then?

MEDEA.

The proper incantations said,
There rises from the steam a youthful shape
More godlike than like man. And he will fall
In kind embraces on his children's necks.

ALCESTIS.

O queen, this process seems indeed severe.

MEDEA.

Without his knowledge must the thing be done.

DANAIDES.

This also seems to us no easy task.

MEDEA.

He sleeps through noon, while others are abroad.

ALCESTIS.

Let us make haste! Dear queen, how good you are! {114B}

MEDEA.

One thing remember! While you say the spell —

Here is the parchment! — let no thought arise

In any of your minds!<<1>>

<<1. It is a common jest among the Hindus to play this trick on a pupil, “i.e.”. to promise him magical power on condition that during a given ceremonial he abstains from thinking of a certain object (“e.g.”, a horse). He fails, because only the training of years can enable a student so to control his mind as to accomplish this feat of suppressing involuntary thought.>>

ALCESTIS. [“To her Sisters.”]

Remember that!

MEDEA.

Else — Ototototoi

FIRST DANAID.

What woe is this?

MEDEA.

The charm is broken.

SECOND DANAID.

And our father —

MEDEA.

Lost!

DANAIDES.

Ai Ai! Ai Ai! Ai Ai!

MEDEA.

Ai Ai! Ai Ai!

ALCESTIS.

Be brave, dear sisters, pluck your courage up!

Easy this one condition! All is safe.

MEDEA.

Haste then! Good luck attend you! When the hunt

Returns, how joyful — {115A}

FIRST DANAID.

Striding vigorous,

The man renewed grasps Jason in embrace

Worthy of Heracles.

ALCESTIS.

Thanks, thanks, dear queen!

We go, we go!

MEDEA.

The Goddess be your speed!

Thus will the danger pass! That vicious fool

Shall cease his plots against my best beloved.

No taint of fell complicity shall touch

My honour in this matter. I will sleep

Through the delicious hours of breezy noon,

Lulled by sweet voices of my singing maids;

Secure at least that no one will attempt

To wreck my virtue or — restore my youth!

CHORUS.

O sleep of lazy love, be near

In dreams to lift the veil,

And silence from the shadowy sphere

To conjure in our lady's ear! —

The voices fall and fail;

The light is lowered. O dim sleep,

Over her eyelids creep!

The world of dreams is shapen fair

Beyond a mortal's nod:

A fragrant and a sunny air

Smiles: a man's kisses vanish there,

Grow kisses of a god;

And in dreams' darkness subtly grows

No Earth-flowered bloom of rose.

O dreams of love and peace, draw nigh,

Hover with shadowy wings!
Let shining shapes of ecstasy
Cover the frail blue veil of sky,
And speak immortal things!
Dream, lady, dream through summer noon,
Lulled by the sleepy tune! {115B}

The sense is riven, and the soul
Goes glimmering to the abode,
Where aeons in one moment roll,
And one thought shapes to its control
Body's forgotten load.
Our lady sleeps! Our lady smiles
In far Elysian isles!

FIRST WOMAN.

Thrice Have I crept towards the bed, and thrice
An unseen hand has caught the uplifted knife,
A grinning face lurked out from the blank air

Between me and that filthy sorceress.

SECOND WOMAN.

Daily I poison the she-devil's drink,

An nothing harms her!

THIRD WOMAN.

I have a toad whose breath

Destroys all life —

CHORUS.

Thou dealest in such arts?

THIRD WOMAN.

Ay! for this hate's sake. Are we sisters all

Herein?

CHORUS.

True sisters!

THIRD WOMAN.

The familiar soul

Sucks at her mouth — She sickens not nor dies;

More poisonous than he.

FIRST WOMAN.

Ah! beast of hell!

What may avail us?

SECOND WOMAN.

Jason is quite lost

In her black sorceries. {116A}

FOURTH WOMAN.

Our chance gone!

FIRST WOMAN.

Our life

Degraded to her service.

SECOND WOMAN.

We, who are

Born nobly, are become her minions.

THIRD WOMAN.

Slaves, not handmaidens!

ALCESTIS.

Ototototoi!

Ai Ai! What misery!

FIRST WOMAN.

See! the lady weeps!

ALCESTIS.

Ai Ai! the black fiend, how he dogs my feet!

The fatal day! Ai! Ai!

CHORUS.

What sorrow thus,

Maiden, removes the feet of fortitude?

ALCESTIS.

Who shall arouse him?

CHORUS.

Peace, our lady sleeps.

ALCESTIS.

Ah me! but she must wake! A black, black deed

Hangs on the house.

MEDEA.

What meets my waking ear?

Alcestis! {116B}

ALCESTIS.

Ah, dear queen, lament, lament!

I am undone by my own —

MEDEA.

What! the work?

ALCESTIS.

Alas! Alas! the work!

MEDEA.

Thy father?

ALCESTIS.

Slain!

CHORUS.

Ai Ai! the old man slain!

MEDEA.

Ai Ai!

ALCESTIS.

Ai Ai!

MEDEA.

The strong spell broken?

ALCESTIS.

Nay, but thoughts arose,

So many thoughts — or ever I was ware —

And he — the caldron seethes —

MEDEA.

He rises not?

ALCESTIS.

Nought but moist smoke springs up.

MEDEA.

Alas! for me!

All is but lost.

ALCESTIS.

Canst thou do anything? {117A}

MEDEA.

Nothing. Ai Ai!

ALCESTIS.

Ai Ai!

CHORUS.

Ai Ai! Ai Ai!

JASON.

What! Shall the hunter find his joy abroad,

And sorrow in his house?

MEDEA.

Thy very hearth

Polluted with the old man's blood!

ACASTUS.

What blood?

Answer me, woman!

MEDEA.

To thy knees, false hound,

Fawning to snap!

ACASTUS.

What misery, pale slaves,

Lament ye?

CHORUS.

Ah! the ill omen! Ah, the day!

Alcestis hath her sire in error slain.

ACASTUS.

Sister!

ALCESTIS.

O brother, bear thine anger back!

ACASTUS.

Speak!

ALCESTIS.

Ah, the prophecy! Ai Ai!

CHORUS.

Ai Ai! {117B}

ACASTUS.

What folly masks what wickedness? Speak on!

ALCESTIS.

I cannot speak.

JASON.

Speak thou, Medea!

MEDEA.

The child

Hath hewn her sire asunder, seething him

In herbs of sacred power.

ACASTUS.

By thy decree?

MEDEA.

Nay!

MADNESS.

Safer is it to admit to these

Fools — charge the child with lack of fortune!

MEDEA.

Yea!

I bade her take a waxen shape, carved well

To look like the old man —

ALCESTIS.

Nay! nay! the Sire

Himself we stole on sleeping –

CHORUS.

Hewn apart!

Ai Ai!

MEDEA.

I said not thus!

ALCESTIS.

I am so wild,

Bewildered with these tears.

ACASTUS.

Enough of this!

It is the malice of that sorceress

Disguised - she well knows how. {118A}

CHORUS.

Thus, thus it is!

We know the witch's cunning.

JASON.

dogs and fools!

For this ye die.

MEDEA.

Nobility and love

Urge my own sanction to support the wife!

JASON.

I bade me queen prepare this spell. Disputes

Your arrogance my kingship?

ACASTUS.

Ay, indeed!

Now justice turns against thee, fickle jade

As fortune. Mine is a boy's arm, but I

Advance against thee an impervious blade,
And give thee in thy throat and teeth the lie!

JASON.

Boy's bluster!

MEDEA.

Justice will be satisfied.

It will be best to flee!

JASON.

But what is this?

A sword? I scorn a sword. I scorn a boy.

Let none suppose me fearful!

MEDEA.

give not back!

MEDEA.

I will be finer far to go away

As those disdaining aught but their own love.

MEDEA.

Ay! let us leave these folk's ingratitude,

My husband! in thy love alone I rest.

This splendour and this toil alike resume

Our life from the long honeymoon of love

We wish at heart. {118B}

JASON.

To Corinth!

MEDEA.

Creon bears

The name of favourable to suppliants.

ACASTUS.

How virtue tames these tameless ones! To-day

I am indeed a man.

MEDEA.

Thou brainless boy!

Thus, thus, and thus I smite thee on the cheek —

Thus, thus I spit upon thy face. Out, dog!

SEMICHORUS I.

His patience shows as something marvellous.

SEMICHORUS. 2.

Virtue takes insult from the fortuneless.

MEDEA.

The curse of Ares dog you into Hades!

I have my reasons [“doubtfully”], ay, my reasons plain!

Going, not forced.

CHORUS.

Yet going — that is good!

JASON.

To Corinth! Bride of my own heart, Medea,
Well hast thou put thy power off for the time
Preferring love to pomp, and peace to revel —

MEDEA.

And the soft cushions of the moss-grown trees
To royal pillows, and the moon's young light
To gaudy lamps of antique workmanship — {119A}

JASON.

And music of the birds to harps of gold
Struck by unwilling fingers for gold coin.

MEDEA.

Come! lest the curse I call upon this house
Eat us up also! May the red plague rot
Their bones! I lift my voice and prophesy:
The curse shall never leave this house of fear;
But one by treachery shall slay another,
And vengeance shall smite one, and one lay bare

Her beasts in vain for love: until the house

Perish in uttermost red ruin.

CHORUS.

Bah!

Speared wild-cats bravely spit!

JASON.

To Creon, come!

MEDEA.

Black Ares hath chosen

Me wisely, to send

A doom deep-frozen

From now to the end.

Never the curse

Shall pass from the house,

But gather a worse

Hate for a spouse.

The lovers are better

Escaped from my toils
Than these in the fetter
Of the golden spoils.

Yet still lies a doom
For the royal lovers.
Time bears in her womb
That darkness covers
A terror, and waits
The hour that is Fate's.

The work is done. Let miracle inspire
Iolchian voices to the holy hymn,
Praise to black Ares, echo of this doom. {119B}

CHORUS.

So fearful is the wrath divine,
That once aroused it shall not sleep,
Though prostrate slaves before the shrine
Pray, praise, do sacrifice, and weep.

Ten generations following past
Shall not exhaust the curse at last.

From father unto son it flees,
An awful heritage of woe.
Wives feel its cancerous prodigies
Invade their wombs; the children know
The inexpiable word, exhaust
Not by a tenfold holocaust.

Thus let mankind abase in fear
Their hearts, nor sacrilege profane
The awful slumber of the seer,
The dread adytum of the fane;
Nor gain the mockery of a fleece,
Loosing reality of peace. {120A}

Hail to wild Ares! Men, rejoice
That He can thus avenge his shrine!
One solemn cadence of that voice

Peal through the ages, shake the spine
Of very Time, and plunge success
False-winged into sure-foot distress!

Hail to black Ares! Warrior, hail!
Thou glory of the shining sword!
What proven armour may avail
Against the vengeance of the Lord?
Athena's favour must withdraw
Before the justice of thy law!

Hail to the Lord of glittering spears,
The monarch of the mighty name,
The Master of ten thousand Fears
Whose sword is as a scarlet flame!
Hail to black Ares! Wild and pale
The echo answers me: All Hail!

EXPLICIT ACTUS QUINTUS.

{120B}

{full page below}

AHAB

AND OTHER POEMS {columns commence}

DEDICACE.

TO G. C. J.

PILGRIM of the sun, be this thy scrip!

The severing lightnings of the mind

Avail where soul and spirit slip,

And the Eye is blind.

PARIS, "December" 9, 1902.

RONDEL.

BY palm and pagoda enchanted o'ershadowed, I lie in the light

Of stars that are bright beyond suns that all poets have vaunted

In the deep-breathing amorous bosom of forests of amazon might

By palm and pagoda enchanted.

By spells that are murmured and rays of my soul strongly flung, never
daunted;

By gesture of tracery traced with a wand dappled white;

I summon the spirits of earth from the gloom they for ages have haunted.

O woman of deep-red skin! Carved hair like the teak! O delight

Of my soul in the hollows of earth — how my spirit hath taunted —

Away! I am here, I am laid to the breast of the earth in the dusk of the
night,

By palm and pagoda enchanted. {121A}

AHAB.

PART I.

THE polished silver flings me back

Dominant brows and eyes of bronze,

A curling beard of vigorous black,

And dusky red of desert suns
Burnt in my cheeks. Who saith me Nay?
Who reigns in Israel to-day?

Samaria in well-ordered ranks
Of houses stands in honoured peace:
Sweet nourishment from Kenah's banks
Flows, and the corn and vine increase.
In two pitched fields the Syrian hordes
Fled broken from our stallion swords.

Ay me! But that was Life! I see
Now, from that hill, the ordered plain;
The serried ranks like foam flung free,
Long billows, flashing on the main.
Past the eye's grip their legions roll —
Anguish of death upon my soul!

For, sheltered by the quiet hill,
Like two small flocks of kids that wait,

Going to water, ere the chill
Flow from the East's forsaken gate,
Lie my weak spears: O trembling tide
Of fear false-faced and shifty-eyed!

God! how we smote them in the morn!
Their ravening tides rolled back anon,
As if the cedared crest uptorn
Roared from uprooted Lebanon
Down to the sea, its billows hurled
Back, past the pillars of the world! {121B}

Ah, that was life! I feel my sword
Live, bite, and shudder in my hand,
Smite, drink, the spirit of its lord
Exulting through the infinite brand!
My chariot dyed with Syrian blood!
My footmen wading through the flood!

Ay! that was life! Before the night

Dipped its cool wings, their hosts were stricken

Like night itself before the light.

An hundred thousand corpses sicken

The air of heaven. Yet some by speed

Escape our vengeance — ours, indeed!

Fate, the red hound, to Aphek followed.

Some seven and twenty thousand died

When the great wall uprising hollowed

Its terror, crashed upon its side,

And whelmed them in the ruin. Strife,

Strength, courage, victory — that is Life!

Then — by my father's beard! What seer

Promised me victory? What sage

Now in my triumph hour severe

Spits out red oracles of rage?

Jehovah's. The fanatic churl

Stands — see his thin lips writhe and curl!

“Because thou has loosed the kingly man,
To uttermost destruction’s dread
In my almighty power and plan
Appointed, I will have thy head
For his, thy life for his make mine,
And for his folk thou hast spared, slay thine.”

But surely I was just and wise!
Mercy is God’s own attribute!
Mercy to noble enemies
Marks man from baser mould of brute,
To fight their swordsmen — who would shirk?
To slay a captive — coward’s work!

“I have loved mercy,” that He said;
Nor bade me slay the Syrian Chief.
Yet my head answers for his head;
My people take his people’s grief.
Sin, troth, to spare one harmless breath,
Sith all my innocents earn death! {122A}

By timely mercy peace becomes,
And kindly love, and intercourse
Of goodly merchandise, that sums
Contention in united force.

“Praise who, relenting, sheweth pity;
Not him who captureth a city!”

A wild strong life I’ve made of mine.
Not till my one good deed is done —
Ay! for that very deed divine —
Comes the fierce mouth of malison.
So grows my doubt again, so swell
My ancient fears for Israel.

I hurled Jehovah’s altars down;
I slew and I pursued his priests;
I took a wife from Zidon Town;
I gave his temple to the beasts;
I set up gods and graven shapes

Of calves and crocodiles and apes.

Myself to sorceries I betook;

All sins that are did I contrive,

Sealed in the Thora's dreadful book —

I live, and like my life, and thrive!

Doth God not see! His ear is dull?

Or His speech strangled, His force null?

Nay, verily! These petty sins

His mercy and long-suffering pardon.

What final crime of horror wins

At last His gracious heart to harden?

What one last infamy shall wake

His anger, for His great Name's sake?

Is there on sin so horrible

That no forgiveness can obtain,

That flings apart the bars of hell,

For which repentance shall be vain?

Ay! but there is! One act of ruth
Done in my rash unthinking youth!

Who wonders if I hold the scale
Poised in my deep deliberate mind,
Between the weight of Zidon's Baal
And Judah's God — each in his kind
A god of power — each in his fashion
The hideous foeman of compassion? {122B}

The blood alike of man and beast
The worship of each God demands.
All priests are greedy — gold and feast
Pour from the poor folk to their hands.
The doubtful power from heaven to strike
The levin bolt they claim alike.

I take no heed of trickery played
By cunning mad Elijah's skill,
When the great test of strength was made

On Carmel's melancholy hill,
And on the altar-stone the liar
Cried "Water," and poured forth Greek fire!

Then while the fools peer heavenward,
Even as he prays, to see the skies
Vomit the flash, his furtive sword
Fast to the flinty altar flies.
Whoof! the wild blaze assures the clods
Jehovah is the God of gods!

Nor do I set peculiar store
By tricks twin-born to this they show
When, with well-simulated lore
Of learning, Baal's great hierarchs go
Into the gold god's graven shell
And moan the ambiguous oracle.

In my own inmost heart I feel,
Deep as a pearl in seas of Ind,

A vision, keen as tempered steel,
Lofty and holy as the wind,
And brighter than the living sun:
If these be gods, then there is none!

Baal and Jehovah, Ashtoreth
And Chemosh and these Elohim,
Life's pandars in the brothel, Death!
Cloudy imaginings, a dream
Built up of fear and words and woe.
All, all my soul must overthrow.

For these are devils, nothing doubt!
Yet nought should trouble me: I see
My folk secure from foes without,
Worship in peace and amity
Baal and Jehovah, sects appeased
By peace assured and wealth increased. {123A}

Yet am I troubled. Doubt exists

And absolute proof recoils before me.
Truth veils herself in awful mists,
And darkness wakens, rolling o'er me
When I approach the dreadful shrine,
In my own soul, of the divine.

And what cries laughing Jezebel?
Golden and fragrant as the morn,
Painted like flames adorning Hell,
Passions and mysteries outworn,
Ever enchanting, ever wise,
And terror in her wondrous eyes!

Her fascination steals my strength,
Her luxury lures me as she comes;
Reaches her length against my length,
And breaks my spirit; life succumbs —
A nameless avatar of death
Incarnate in her burning breath.

I know her gorgeous raiment folded
In snaky subtle draperies,
All stalwart captains mighty-moulded
To lure within her sorceries,
Within her bed — and I, who love,
See, and am silent, and approve!

Strange! Who shall call the potter knave
Who moulds a vessel to his will?
One, if he choose, a black-browed slave;
One, if he choose, a thing of ill,
Writhing, misshapen, footless, cruel:
One, like a carved Assyrian jewel?

Shame on the potter heavy sit,
If he revenge his own poor skill
That marred a work by lack of wit,
By heaping infamy and ill
On the already ruined clay.

Shame on the potter, then, I say!

But what cries laughing Jezebel?

Scornful of me as all her lovers,

More scornful as we love her well!

“Good king, this rage of doubt discovers

The long-hid secret! All thy mind

A little shadow lurks behind.” {123B}

Hers are the delicate sorceries

In black groves: hers the obscure, obscene

Rites in dim moonlight courts; the wise

Dreadful occasions when the queen

Like to a bat, flits, flits, to gloat

Blood-drunk upon a baby’s throat!

Therefore: all doubt, this fierce unrest

Between the knowledge self bestows

And leaves of palm, and palimpsest,

Scrawled sacred scrolls, whose legend goes

Beyond recorded time, and founts

Its age beyond all history's bounds;

Therefore: all search for truth beyond

The doubtful cannon of the law,

The bitter letter of the bond

Given when Sinai shook with awe,

They swear; all wit that looks aslant

Shamed at the shameful covenant;<<1>>

<<1.Circumcision, medically commendable, is both ridiculous and obscene if considered as a religious rite. Gen. xviii. 9-14.>>

Therefore: this brooding over truth

She much avers cuts short my day,

Steals love and laughter from my youth,

Will dye my beard in early grey.

“Go forth to war! Shall Judah still

Set mockery to thy kingly will?”

May be. I often feel a ghost
Creeping like darkness through my brain;
Sensed like uncertainty at most,
Nowise akin to fear or pain.
Yet it is there. To yield to such
And brood, will not avail me much.

Ho! harness me my chariot straight,
My white-nmaned horses fleet and strong!
Call forth the trumpeters of state!
Proclaim to all Samaria's throng:
The King rides forth! Hence, slaves! Away!
Haste ye! The King rides forth today. {124A}

PART II.

WOULD God that I were dead! Like Cain,
My punishment I cannot bear.
There is a deep corrosive pain
Invades my being everywhere.

Spring from a seed too small to see,
A monster spawns and strangles me.

‘Tis scarce a week! In power and pride
I rode in state about the city;
Took pleasure in the eager ride,
Saw grief, took pleasure in my pity;
Say joy, took pleasure in the seeing,
And the full rapture of well-being.

Would God that I had stayed, and smote
My favourite captain through the heart,
Caught my young daughter by the throat,
And torn her life and limbs apart,
Stabbed my queen dead; remorse for these
Might aye, not match, these miseries.

For, hard behind the palace gate,
I spied a vineyard fair and fine,
Hanging with purple joy, and weight

Of golden rapture of the vine:
And there I bade my charioteer
Stay, and bid Naboth to appear.

The beast! A gray, deceitful man,
With twisted mouth the beard would hide,
Evil yet strong: the scurril clan
Exaggerate for its greed and pride,
The scum of Israel! At one look
I read my foe as in a book.

The beast! He grovelled in the dust.
I heard the teeth gride as he bowed
His forehead to the earth. Still just,
Still patient, passionless, and proud,
I ruled my heavy wrath. I passed
That hidden insult: spake at last.

I spake him fair. My memory held
Him still a member of my folk;

A warrior might be bold of eld,
My hardy spearman when we broke
The flashing lines of Syrians. Yea!
I spake him fair. Alas the day! {124B}

“Friend, by my palace lies thy field
Fruitful and pleasant to the sight.
Therefore I pray thee that thou yield
Thy heritage for my delight.
Wilt thou its better? Or its fee
In gold, as seemeth good to thee?

“Content thyself!” As by a spell
He rears his bulk in surly rage.
“The Lord forbid that I should sell
To thee my father’s heritage!”
No other word. Dismissal craves?<<1>>
Nay, scowls and slinks among his slaves.

<<1. In the East the inferior dare not leave the presence of his superior without permission.>>

Hath ever a slave in story dared

Thus to beard openly his lord?

My chariot men leapt forth and flared

Against him with indignant sword.

Why wait for king's word to expunge

Live so detested with one lunge?

“Cease!” My strong word flamed out. The men

Shook with dead fear. They jumped and caught

With savage instinct, brutal ken,

At what should be my crueller thought:

Torture! And trembled lest their haste

Had let a dear life run to waste.

They argued after their brute kind.

I have two prides; in justice, one:

In mercy, one: “No ill I find

In this just man," I cried; "the sun
Is not defiled, and takes no hurt
When the worm builds his house of dirt.

"Curse ye Jehovah! He abides,
Hears not, nor smites; the curse is pent
Close with the speaker; ill betides
When on himself the curse is bent,
And like the wild man's ill-aimed blow,<<1>>
Hits nought, swerves, swoops, and strikes him low. {125A}

<<1. Another reference to the boomerang.>>

"Let the man go!" The short surprise
Sinks in long wonder: angrily
Yet awed they spurn him forth. "Arise!
O swine, and wallow in thy sty!
The King hath said it." Thus the men
Turned the beast free — to goad again.

For not the little shadow shapes
An image ever in my brain;
Across my field of sight there gapes
Ever a gulf, and draws the pain
Of the whole knowledge of the man
Into its vague and shifting span.

Moreover, in that gulf I see
Now the bright vineyard sweet and clean,
Now the dog Naboth mocking me
With rude curt word and mouth obscene
Wried in derision — well relied
Dog's insolence on monarch's price.

Ah, friend! Some winds may shake a city!
Some dogs may creep too near a feast!
Thou, reckoning on my scorn, my pity,
Thine own uncleanness as a beast:
Wilt thou not take thy count again?

Seest thou the shadow on my brain?

It grows, it grows. Seven days slide past:

I groan upon an empty bed:

I turn my face away: I fast:

There cometh in my mouth no bread.

No mad dare venture near to say:

“Why turns the King his face away?”

It grows. Ah me! the long days slide;

I brood; due justice to the man

Dogging desire. A monarch's pride

Outweighs his will: yet slower ran

To-day the thought: “I will no wrong:”

“The vines are cool,” more sweet and strong

There is no sleep. All natural laws

Suspend their function: strange effects

And mighty for so slight a cause!

What whim of weakling strength protects

This dog of Satan at my gate
From the full whirlwind of my hate? {125B}

What mighty weakness stays the king
If he arise, and cast desire
Far from its seat and seed and spring
To Hinnom the detested fire?
Ay! both were wise. Madness alone
Sits throned on the king's vacant throne.

Dogs! Who dares break on me? "Dread lord!
Mightiest of monarchs!" — "Cease, thou crow!
Thine errand! ere the eunuch's sword
Snatch thy bald head off at a blow."
"Mercy, World's Light!" Swings clear and clean
The call "Room for the Queen! The Queen!"

Strong as a man, the Queen strides in.
Even she shrank frightened! — my aspect
More dreadful than all shapes of sin

Her dreams might shape or recollect,
Hideous with fasting, madness, grief,
Beyond all speaking or belief.

But the first glance at those bold eyes!

Ah! let me fling me at her feet!

Take me, O love! Thy terror flies.

Kiss me again, again, O sweet!

O honeyed queen, old paramour,

So keen our joy be and so sure!

“The king would be alone!” Fast fly

The trembling lackeys at her voice.

Lapped in her billowy breasts I lie,

And love, and languish, and rejoice,

And — ah — forget! The ecstatic hour

Bursts like a poppy into flower.

Back! thou black spectre! In her arms

Devouring and devoured of love,

Feeding my face in myriad charms,
As on a mountain feeds a dove,
Starred with fresh flowers, dew-bright, and pearled
With all the light of all the world: {126A}

Back! With the kisses ravening fast
Upon my panting mouth, the eyes
Darting hot showers of light, the vast
And vicious writings, the caught sighs
Drunk with delight, on love's own throne,
The moment where all time lies prone:

Back! At the very central shrine,
Pinnacled moment of excess
Of immolation's blood divine:
Back! from the fleshy loveliness:
Back! loved and loathed! O face concealed!
Back! One hath whispered "Naboth's field."

I am slain. Her body passion-pearled

Dreams her luxurious lips have drawn
My spirit, as the dust wind-whirled
Sucks up the radiance of the dawn
In rainbow beauty<<1>> — yet remains
Mere dust upon the barren plains.

<<1. “Dust-devils” show opalescence in certain aspects of light.>>

Reluctance to reveal my grief
Is of my sickness a strange feature.
Yea, verily! beyond belief
Is the machinery of man’s nature!
If thus spake Solomon in kind
Of body, I of soul and mind!

The lazy accents stir at last
The scented air: “Oh, wherefore, lord,
Is thy soul sad? This weary fast
Strikes to my heart a lonely sword!”
In brief words stammered forth I spoke

My secret; and the long spell broke.

And now the gilded sin of her

Leapt and was lambent in a smile:

“Give me but leave to minister

This kingdom for a little while!

The vineyard shall be thine. O king,

This trouble is a little thing!” {126B}

I gave to her the signet’s gold

Carved in the secret charactery,

Whose flowers of writing bend and fold

The star of Solomon, the eye

Whence four rays run — the Name! the seal

Written within the burning wheel.

And now I lean with fevered will

Across the carven screen of palm.

All nature holds its function still;

The sun is mild; the wind is calm;

But on my ear the voices fall
Distant, and irk me, and appal.

Two men have sworn the solemn oath:
“God and the king this dog blasphemed,”
Two judges, just, though little loth,
Weigh, answer. As on one who dreamed
Comes waking — in my soul there groaned:
“Carry forth Naboth to be stoned!”

Nine days! And still the king is sad,
And hides his face, and is not seen.
The tenth! the king is gaily clad;
The king will banquet with the queen;
And, ere the west be waste of sun,
Enjoy the vinyard he hath won.

All this I hear as one entranced.
The king and I are friend and friend,
As if a cloud of maidens danced

Between my vision and the end.

I see the king as one afeared,

Hiding his anguish in his beard.

I laugh in secret, knowing well

What waits him in the field of blood;

What message hath the seer to tell;

What bitter Jordan holds its flood

Only for Ahab, sore afraid

What lurks behind the vine's cool shade.

Yet — well I see — the fates are sure,

And Ahab will descend, possess

The enchanting green, the purple lure,

The globes of nectared loveliness,

And, as he turns! who wonders now

The grim laugh wrinkles on my brow? {127A}

I see him, a fantastic ghost,

The vineyard smiling white and plain,

And hiding ever innermost
The little shadow on his brain;
I laugh again with mirthless glee,
As knowing also I am he.

A fool in gorgeous attire!
An ox decked bravely for his doom!
So step I to the great desire.
Sweet winds upon the gathering gloom
Bend like a mother, as I go,
Foreknowing, to my overthrow.

NEW YEAR, 1903.

O FRIENDS and brothers! Hath the year deceased,
And ye await the bidding to fare well?
How shall ye fare, thus bound of fate in hell?
How, whom no light hath smitten, and released?
Yet trust perchance in God, or man, or priest?
Ay! Let them serve you, let them save you! Spell

The name that guards the human citadel,
And answer if your course hath checked or ceased.

Path of the eightfold star! Be thou revealed!
Isle of Nirvana, be the currents curled
About thee, that the swimmer touch thy shore!
Thought be your sword, and virtue be your shield!
Press on! Who conquers shall for evermore
Pass from the fatal mischief of the world.

MELUSINE.

TO M. M. M.

HANGS over me the fine false gold
Above the bosom epicene
That hides my head that hungereth.
The steady eyes of steel behold,
When on a sudden the fierce and thin
Curled subtle mouth swoops on my breath, {127B}
And like a serpent's mouth is cold,

And like a serpent's mouth is keen,
And like a serpent's mouth is death.

Lithe arms, wan with love's mysteries,
Creep round and close me in, as Thule
Wraps Arctic oceans ultimate;
Some deathly swoon or sacrifice,
This love — a red hypnotic jewel
Worn in the forehead of a Fate!
And like a devil-fish is ice,
And like a devil-fish is cruel,
And like a devil-fish is hate.

Beneath those kisses songs of sadness
Sob, in the pulses of desire,
Seeking some secret in the deep;
Low melodies of stolen gladness,
The bitterness of death; the lyre
Broken to bid the viol weep:
And like a Maenad's chants are madness,

And like a Maenad's chants are fire,
And like a Maenad's chants are sleep.

A house of pain is her bedchamber.
Her skin electric clings to mine,
Shakes for pure passion, moves and hisses;
Whose subtle perfumes half remember
Old loves, and desolate divine
Wailings among the wildernesses;
And like a Hathor's skin is amber,
And like a Hathor's skin is wine,
And like a Hathor's skin is kisses.

Gray steel self-kindled shine her eyes.
They rede strange runes of time defiled,
And ruined souls, and Satan's kin.
I see their veiled impurities,
An harlot hidden in a child,
Through all their love and laughter lean;
And like a witch's eyes are wise,

And like a witch's eyes are wild,

And like a witch's eyes are Sin.

She moves her breasts in Bacchanal

Rhymes to that music manifold

That pulses in the golden head, {128A}

Seductive phrase perpetual,

Terrible both to change or hold;

They move, but all their light is fled;

And like a dead girl's breasts are small,

And like a dead girl's breasts are cold,

And like a dead girl's breasts are dead.

Forests and ancient haunts of sleep

See dawn's intolerable spark

While yet fierce darkness lingereth.

So I, their traveller, sunward creep,

Hail Ra uprising in his bark,

And feel the dawn-wind's sombre breath.

Strange loves rise up, and turn, and weep!

Our warm wet bodies may not mark
How these spell Satan's shibboleth
And like a devil's loves are deep,
And like a devil's loves are dark,
And like a devil's loves are death.

THE DREAM.

BEND down in dream the shadow-shape
Of tender breasts and bare!
Let the long locks of gold escape
And cover me and fall and drape
A pall of whispering hair!
And let the starry eyes look through
That mist of silken light,
And lips drop forth their honey-dew
And gentle sighs of sleep renew
The scented winds of night!
As purple clusters of pure grapes
Distil their dreamy wine

Whose fragrance from warm fields escapes

On shadowy hills and sunny capes

In lands of jassamine!

So let thy figure faintly lined

In pallid flame of sleep

With love inspire the dreamer's mind,

Young love most delicate and kind,

With love — how calm and deep!

Let hardly half a smile revive

The thoughts of waking hours.

How sad it is to be alive!

How well the happy dead must thrive

In green Elysian bowers! {128B}

A sleep as deep as their bestow,

Dear angel of my dreams!

Bid time now cease its to-and-fro

That I may dwell with thee, and know

The soul from that which seems!

The long hair sobs in closer fold

And deeper curves of dawn;

The arms bend closer, and the gold
Burns brighter, and the eyes are cold
With life at last withdrawn.
And all the spirit passing down
Involves my heart with gray:
So the pale stars of even crown
The glow of twilight; dip and drown
The last despairs of day.
Oh! closer yet and closer yet
The pearl of faces grows.
The hair is woven like a net
Of moonlight round me: sweet is set
The mouth's unbudded rose.
Oh never! did our lips once meet
The dream were done for ever,
And death should dawn, supremely sweet,
One flash of knowledge subtle and fleet
Borne on the waveless river. {129A}
And therefore in the quiet hour
I rose from lily pillows

And swiftly sought the jasmine bower
Still sleeping, moonlight for a dower,
And bridal wreaths of willows.
And there I laid me down again:
The stream flowed softly by:
And thought the last time upon pain,
Earth's joy — the sad permuted strain
Of tears and ecstasy.
And there the dream came floating past
Borne in an ivory boat,
And all the world sighed low "At last."
The shallop waited while I cast
My languid limbs afloat
To drift with eyelids skyward turned
Up to the shadowy dream
Shaped like a lover's face, that burned;
To drift toward the soul that yearned
For this — the hour supreme!
So drifting I resigned the sleep
For death's diviner bliss;

As mists in rain of springtide weep,

Life melted in the dewfall deep

Of death's kiss in a kiss. {129

{full page below}

THE GOD-EATER<<1>>

1903

<<1. For the foundations of this play the student may consult any modern treatises on Sociology.>>

[The idea of this obscure and fantastic play is as follows: —

By a glorious act human misery is secured (History of Christianity).

Hence, appreciation of the personality of Jesus is no excuse for being a Christian.

Inversely, by a vile and irrational series of acts human happiness is secured (Story of the play).

Hence, attacks on the Mystics of History need not cause us to condemn Mysticism.

Also, the Knowledge of Good and Evil is a Tree whose fruit Man has not yet tasted: so that the Devil cheated Eve indeed; or (more probably) Eve cheated Adam. Unless (most probable of all) God cheated the Devil, and the fruit was a common apple after all. Cf. H. Maudsley, "Life in Mind and Conduct."]

{columns commence}

"PERSONS."

CRIOSDA, "aged" 33.

MAURYA, "his sister, aged" 16.

RUPHA, "the Hag of Eternity."

"The scene of the Tragedy is laid in an ancient Scottish Hall, very remote".

"The time is the One-and-Twentieth Century after Christ."

"The action of the play occupies many years."

THE GOD-EATER.

ACT I.

CRIOSDA, MAURYA.

[“The Scene is an old Baronial Hall, elaborately, yet somewhat grotesquely

(from the incongruity), fitted up as an antique Egyptian temple.

Centre: an altar between two obelisks; on it a censer vomits smoke in great volumes. Above at back of stage is a stately throne, square and simple, on steps. In it sits” MAURYA, “quiet and silent. She is dressed in sombre green robes, lightened with old rose facings. She is heavily braceleted and ankleted with gold, and her crown is a gold disc, supported in silver horns, rising” {130A} “from her forehead.

Above her is a rude painted board, representing the Winged Globe in many colours. Before the altar” CRIOSDA “is kneeling; he is dressed in a white robe fastened by a blue sash. A leopard’s skin is over his shoulders, clasped with a golden clasp about his neck. He bears an “ankh” in his left hand, in his right a caduceus<<1>> wand. On his head is the winged helmet of Mercury, and his sandals are winged also.

He is muttering low some fervent prayer, and anon casts incense upon
the censer. The low muttering continues for a considerable time,”
MAURYA “remaining quite still, as one rapt in her own thoughts.
Suddenly, with startling vehemence, the song breaks out.”

<<1. The wand of Mercury.>>

CRIOSDA.

HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!

[MAURYA, “startled, looks up and half rises. Then sits again, with a
strange sweet smile of innocence and tenderness.”

CRIOSDA. [“Lower.”]

The world is borne upon thy breast

Even as the rose. {130B}

Wilt thou not lull it into rest,

Some strong repose

More satisfying than pale sleep;

Than death more long, more deep?

Hail! at the twilight as at dawn!

The sunset close
Even on the lake as on the lawn!
The red ray glows
Across the woven stardrift's ways
In mystery of Maurya's praise.

Hear me, thy priest, at eventide!
These subtler throes
Than love's or life's, invade, divide
The world of woes.
Thy smile, thy murmur of delight, be enough
To fill the world with life and love!

[“He bends over into deep reverence, yet with the air of one
expecting a grace.”

[MAURYA, “like one in trance, rises slowly, gathers her robes about
her, and descends to the altar. Reaching over it, she bends and
lifts him by his outstretched arms. She puts her lips to his
forehead, and he, with a deep gasp, as of one in ecstasy not to be
borne, drops back, breathing deeply. She lifts her hands, and
brings them slowly, very forcibly, forward, and says solemnly:”

The Blessing of Maurya.

Blessed be the House of the Servants of Maurya.

Blessed be the Stones of the House.

Blessed be the Tree of the House.

Blessed be the Food of the House.

Blessed be the Men of the House.

Blessed be all the Universe for their sakes.

The Blessing of Maurya.

[“A short silence.”

[MAURYA “goes back and lays her crown and robes on the throne. She is now dressed in wonderful close-fitting crimson silk, trimmed with ermine. Her bronze-gold hair is coiled wonderfully about her head.” {131A} “She comes down stage to” CRIOSDA, “who rises on one knee and takes her thereon. She removes his helmet and strokes gently his hair.”

Criosda, my brother!

CRIOSDA. Maurya, little sister!

[“He smiles with deep tenderness; suddenly a pang catches him; he strikes at his throat, and cries sharply:”

Ah! [“Shivers with terrible emotion.”

MAURYA. Criosda, ever the same! The old world runs

On Wheels of laughter for us little ones;

To you, whose shoulders strain, the chariot seems

A poised fiend flogging you to hell.

CRIOSDA. These thoughts,

Maurya, — Maurya! they become you not.

Child, to see sorrow is to taste it.

MAURYA. No;

For such a sorrow is its own calm joy.

But — share me now your pain.

CRIOSDA. [“In agony.”] No! no! not that!

MAURYA. [“Smiling.”] The priest has secrets from the goddess?

CRIOSDA.

[“With a cry as of physical pain, deadly sharp.”]

Stop!

No jesting there.

MAURYA. I did not mean to jest.

As brother to sister?

CRIOSDA. Ah! that hurts, that hurts.

MAURYA. I am heavy?

CRIOSDA. Heavy as my own heart's fear.

MAURYA. You fear? Am I in fault? Is Maurya maid

The foe to Maurya goddess?

CRIOSDA. Ah, indeed!

MAURYA. Is not the work nigh ready?

[CRIOSDA “grips his caduceus, which he has dropped, and presses it savagely to his breast. Then, with a mingled burst of ferocity and joy, dashes” MAURYA “aside to the ground, reaches his hand towards the empty throne, apostrophising it, and cries with a strident laugh;” {131B}

CRIOSDA. Ay, to-night!

[“A spasm overcomes him and he falls prone.”

MAURYA. Criosda! You are ill, ill! Help!

[“He is silent; she unclasps the leopard's skin, and busies herself in trying to restore him.”

Janet! Angus! Angus!

[“Under her breath.”

Angus is the man — he saved poor Kenneth!

[“Aloud.”

Angus! Oh, miserable! No help comes here.

Criosda! wake! wake! —

Oh, I must take him out — no man may enter here! — It is ill luck. Old Andrew found the passage! and the next day he was dead — murdered, murdered! Oh, how horrible! — what a horrible place this is with all its beauty and love! and my worship — oh, how strange it all is. Criosda! come!

[“She begins to carry him to the great door, then notices his white robe.”

This must come off: they must not see the holy robes.

Criosda! my darling dear brother, do look at me!

[“She has removed his robes.” CRIOSDA “is now seen to be dressed in a dark-green tartan kilt and quasi-military tunic with silver buttons. A dirk hangs at his side. Its hilt is of unusual shape, being surmounted by the circle and cross familiar to visitors to Iona.”

Criosda! Ah yes, look up, look up!

How pale you are! There is no blood in your lips.

CRIOSDA.

[“Starting violently from her arms.”

Blood! Blood!

MAURYA. Lie still, dear, you are ill. Now! That is better. Come —
can you walk a little? — we will get Angus to help.

CRIOSDA. No! No! I am well! I am well! Go, go!

If you love me, go. I cannot bear it longer. {132A}

Your presence is my pain. There is nothing here.

Nothing — leave me!

MAURYA. Criosda, my own brother!

CRIOSDA. Go! O devil! Devil! Maurya!

[“He reaches out a threatening arm against the empty throne.

Suddenly, with an inarticulate noise in his throat, he again
collapses.”

MAURYA. Oh! Oh! he must come out and be tended. Where is the lever?

Here —

[“Still supporting him on one arm, she raises a ponderous knocker and
lets it fall. A clang, sombre, and of surprising volume,
resounds. The door slowly opens of itself.”

CRIOSDA. [“Recovering.”] Who is at the door? Back, back. It is ill
luck, ill luck, I say. Where is old Andrew? The faithful fool — Oh, the
last dreadful look of his glazed eyes! What am I saying? Maurya, girl,
go! I must tend the temple. I must be alone. It is not fitting —

MAURYA. You are ill; come and be tended yourself, first.

CRIOSDA. No! I am well. You are a girl, not a God.

MAURYA. Oh! Oh! Have I done amiss? Am I not —

CRIOSDA. Stop, don't!

["Aside."] I must be man — tut! tut!

["Aloud."] Why, little sister, know

Those whom we worship as our gods are gods.

The power is mine: that art no skill resists.

No God dethrones himself; none can.

Will he, nill he, God must be God: it is a luckless fate for a girl's
dower, a thankless way for a maiden's feet.

MAURYA. Why, then, am I not the Goddess Maurya?

CRIOSDA. Yes! yes! of course, but only by my making.

MAURYA. Was not my birth miraculous? and strange

The death of the old people of this house

That left you guardian?

CRIOSDA. Yes, girl, that was strange. {132B}

MAURYA. Then, is the power that makes me in the end

True Goddess Maurya, yours, yours only?

CRIOSDA. ["Solemnly."] No!

Stop! ask no more! There lies the awful crux.

Blind are fate's eyes, and pinioned are will's wings.

In you the whole chance lies.

MAURYA. In me?

CRIOSDA. In you.

MAURYA. I will do all to win!

CRIOSDA. Do all?

MAURYA. Do all.

CRIOSDA. Ah then! No, no, it is not yet enough.

Not definite yet. Stop! fool, shall I hint and ruin all with a word?

Backwards or forwards, the blow goes home either way. ["Looks at her with keen fierce eyes."] Ah!

MAURYA. ["A little frightened."] Come, O my brother!

It is time to go.

CRIOSDA. No! leave me. It is but an hour.

[MAURYA "smiles; leaves her hand a little in his, and so passes out slowly through the open door with her eyes fixed in love and trust on him." CRIOSDA "starts up and pulls fiercely at a second lever, and the door clangs to with the same nerve shattering shock."

CRIOSDA "staggers to altar; and, with his hand on it, turns

towards door.”

Mouths of God’s mercy! I would her eyes were bleeding wounds in my heart! Ah though! If she were a dog I could not do it. She is my sister

—

[“Turns with a cry to throne and flings up his hands.”

and I will!

Death! Death!

It is a year to-night. I arrayed her first

In yon gold ornaments — My brain is sick!

I want coffee — or hashish — No! That is for her!

I must be very clear and calm, very clear, very calm, {133A}

How I must be ill —

[“Correcting himself with effort.”] Ill I must be. Ha!

[“Goes to altar, opens it, takes out a flask filled with a clear pale

blue liquor with rosy stars of light in it, pours it into a long

vial, and holds it to the light. The room is lighted by

electricity, the globes being the eyes of strange sculptured stone

beasts on the walls.”

So far the story is true.

[“Drink a little”

Why, that is better already. I am again the priest of Maurya — who is the brother of Maurya? A trivial ape o' the time! — cold, logical to a fault! — Ay! and a crime, a crime at which the stars shake in the heaven, men might think. Yet the stars, I will wager, are indifferent. True, the news has not reached them: true, that star I see is not a star; it was so six, ten, twenty thousand years ago — logical, I say! — and I will drink, for parenthetical is a poor substitute —

[“Drinks.”]

Why, how thou fir'st me! with that icy fire
Of adamant thought. It well befits this hour
If I recoil the chain whose last smooth link
Slides o'er Time's cogwheel. In the beginning then
The vastness of heavens and the earth
Created the idea of God. So Levi once
Sarcastic in apostasy; “a rebours.”
So Muller, mythopoeic in his mood
Of the unmasking mythopoeia. Now
Profounder science, Spencer's amplitude,
Allen's too shallow erudition, Frazer's
Research, find men have made — since men made aught —

Their Gods, and slain, and eaten. Surface! I,
Criosda of the Mist, see truth in all
Rather than truth in one. Below the rite,
The sight! Beyond the priest, the power! Above
The sense, the soul! So men who made their gods {133B}
Did make in very deed: so I will make
In uttermost truth a new god, since the old
Are dead, or drunk with wine, and soma-juce
And hemp and opium! Maurya, thou shalt be!
So for long years I have dared. First the twin death
Of the dotards, slow constraint of Maurya's mind
To the one end. Next, study: next, research
In places long-forgotten of the West,
Deep hidden of the East; the perfect rite
Dragged by laborious hand and brain to shape
And this ["Raises glass"] the first fruits! Hail, thou fount of wit,
Light liquor, child of cares how heavy! Drink!
The peace of the Priest!
["He drinks up the liquor."
Be thou my light!

Uncloud the misty channels of the mind!

Off, horror! Off, compassion! Be the brain

The almighty engine of the Will — and those

Subtler and deeper forces grimly guessed,

Terribly proven — be they strong thereby!

Awake, O sleeping serpent of the soul,

Unhinted skills, and unimagined powers,

And purposes undreamed of!

[“He goes now calmly about the temple, arranging all he ornaments.

He empties the censer.”

Shadowy influence

Of smoke! Where lies its physiologic act?

What drug conceals the portent? Mystery!

Mystery ninefold closed upon itself

That matter should move mind — Ay! darker yet

That mind should work on matter? And the proof

Extant, implicit in the thought thereof!

Else all our work were vain. These twain be one;

And in their essence? Deeper, deeper yet

I dive.

[“He draws the dirk and tests the point.”

And will to-morrow show me aught?

[“He extinguishes the lamps, goes to the door and opens it. The clang startles him.” {134A}

I hate that door! Strange that the outer air

Should bring back manhood! Man, thou pitiest her!

Man, thou art whelmed in that red tide of lust

That rolls over strong loathing by vast will,

Hideous rapture of death. That’s for thee, man!

Thine are the scalding tears of sympathy,

The tender love for the young flower. And these

Are none of the priest’s. Enough!

[“Exit. The door clangs again. The curtain falls; a scene drops”

RUPHA, “an aged and wizened hag, of gigantic stature, is discovered

seated, C. The scene represents a lonely hill-top covered with

stones. A little coarse grass grows in places. Three great

menhirs stand up, C. Moonlight.”

RUPHA. The rune of the breath.

The saga of death.

The secret of earth.

The beginning of birth.

The speech of woe.

Ho! Ho!

I scent the prey.

I sniff the air.

The dawn of day

Makes Maurya May

The Goddess rare.

The light of the stars

Be hers; go, go,

Ye silent folk,

Harness your cars!

Brace the yoke!

It is time to Know.

Ho! Ho!

Desolate deeds!

She bleeds, she bleeds.

The golden head

Is drooped for aye.

She is dead, she is dead.

She is God, and I? {134B}

I am might.

I am power.

I am light

For an hour.

I am strong, I grow.

Ho! Ho!

I taught Criosda

The evil runes.

Mine were the tunes

His passion sang.

Mine is the clang

Of the olden door.

Half the secret

I gave: no more!

Half the secret

Hidden I keep.

Hide it deep!

That is mine!

I will work.

He is nought.

The runes divine

Awry be wrought.

Hail to the murk!

["A distant whine is heard."

Cover me! Lurk,

Rupha, lurk!

'Tis a foe.

Ho! Ho!

["Clouds have been obscuring the moon; it is now dark. A fox passes
over the stage."

Crafty! Crafty!

That is the omen.

Fear not the foemen!

["She rises up."

Mine is the spoil

Of the grimly toil.

Gloomy, gloomy!

Ah! but I laugh.

He is but a fool.

He has lost!

He is lost!

Take the staff!

Trace the rule

Of the circle crossed!

[“she makes a circle and a cross therein.” {135A}

No light therein!

Mother of sin,

Thou hast won!

Death to the sun!

Hail to the glow

Of the corpse decayed!

Hail to the maid!

Ho! Ho!

[“She rambles about the stage, muttering savage runes with dismal laughter. Her words are inarticulate, when with a last” Ho! Ho!

“the curtain falls.”

[“The scene rises, and we again see the stage as in” Scene I. MAURYA
“and” CRIOSDA “as in the opening.” CRIOSDA “is, however, absolutely
calm.”

MAURYA. Criosda, answer!

CRIOSDA. I obey, having heard.

MAURYA. This dawn shall see me take the final flight?

CRIOSDA. It shall.

MAURYA. I shall be taken utterly from earth?

CRIOSDA. So.

MAURYA. Ye abide with thee, my priest.

CRIOSDA. Ay! Ay!

MAURYA. I feel no early prompting thither.

CRIOSDA. No. It is sudden.

MAURYA. What then lacks?

CRIOSDA. A draught: a word.

MAURYA. Where is the draught?

CRIOSDA. This incense in my hand.

MAURYA. What is the word?

[CRIOSDA “is silent.”

Criosda, answer me.

CRIOSDA. To invoke death it were to answer this.

MAURYA. Ah, then, forbear!

[CRIOSDA “is silent.”

How shall I know the word?

CRIOSDA. Good luck may bring it to the light.

MAURYA. Ill luck?

CRIOSDA. A year’s delay.

MAURYA. Ah, let me gain one gift {135B}

Whose sweet reversion hangs above me now:

To order luck!

CRIOSDA. Skill orders luck!

MAURYA. The draught!

CRIOSDA. Hither, O Maurya!

MAURYA. I will come to thee.

[CRIOSDA, “taking hashish, throws it upon the glowing censer.”

MAURYA

“comes down stage and bends over it.” CRIOSDA “lifts it up and offers it reverently.”

MAURYA. Methinks anticipation o’ the event

Shoots in my veins, darting delight.

Why, this is strange!

I am losing myself. Criosda!

The walls of the world fall back with a crash.

Where is all this? I am out of myself: I expand

O Maurya, where art thou, little phantom of myriads of ages ago? What a memory! Ah! Ah! She is falling.

[MAURYA “staggers.” CRIOSDA, “who has been watching her narrowly,

catches her and lays her tenderly on the altar.”

Oh, what happiness, what happiness! Criosda, dear brother, how I love you!

I wish to sleep for ever — I wish to die!

[CRIOSDA, “who has been bending over her, leaps up, shrieks.”

CRIOSDA. The luck of Maurya!

[“He draws quickly his dirk; it flashes on high, he leaps on to the body of” MAURYA, “and plunges it into her heart.”

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

FORTY YEARS AFTERWARDS.

“The scene is an open and stormy sea.” RUPHA, “with her staff, wave-riding

in a cockle shell.”

RUPHA. Ha! Ha!

In the storm

I ride. {136A}

The winds bear me.

The waves fear me.

I appal; I inform

Their pride.

Let him hither,

Drifting ever

Wrecked and lost!

His life shall wither.

The dirk shall sever

His rune ill-crossed.

I hear him come

Across the foam

With a bang and a boom.

The winds, hum, hum.

The billows comb.

Ho! Ho! the doom!

Ho! Ho! I have won.

I shall win.

Death to the sun!

Life to sin!

They reap who sow.

Ho! Ho!

[“A boat drifts in, L. In it the aged” CRIOSDA, “his white hair afloat
in the storm is standing with folded arms. His eyes are dull, as
seeing inward.”

RUPHA. Ha! Ha!

‘Tis the priest.

Dost think

O' the feast?

Criosda, shrink!

The rune is woe.

Ho! Ho!

CRIOSDA. Mother of Sin!

RUPHA. Ho! Ho!

CRIOSDA. Thus then at last the Luck of Maurya throws

A double-six to lost Criosda.

RUPHA. Ho!

The Luck of Maurya!

The power of the deed.

CRIOSDA. I find thee, mother, at last. Life's final flash

Gleams through the storm.

RUPHA. I am found!

Ho! Ho! {136B}

CRIOSDA. What of the power? I bid these waves be calm

In Maurya's name.

[“The storm increases momentarily in violence.” RUPHA “mutters on.”

CRIOSDA “shows with a gesture that he knows his words avail
nothing.”

RUPHA. Ho! Ho!

CRIOSDA. I wittingly and well resumed the rite

Learnt at thy breast, old wolf!

RUPHA. Ho! Ho!

The might is mine

O' the rune divine.

Silence, winds!

Peace, ye waves!

The spell binds

Their wrath

In the graves

Below ocean.

Clear the path!

Cease your motion?

Swift, be slow!

Ho! Ho!

[“The storm ceases.”

CRIOSDA. “Thy” words avail then?

RUPHA. Ha! Ha!

They avail.

I avail.

Did Rupha fail,

All would be done.

Death to the sun!

I know.

Ho! Ho!

CRIOSDA. All this I did for thee?

RUPHA. Ha! Ha!

What didst thou do?

Ha! Ha!

Ha! Ha!

CRIOSDA. What did I not do? All!

RUPHA. Tell! Tell!

‘Tis a spell.

CRIOSDA. I will tell all. O sea, swallow me up

With the last word!

RUPHA. It obeys?

No! No!

Ho! Ho! {137A}

CRIOSDA. Thou sinister one! Thy rite I duly did;

That drugged (and dancing with delight thereof
The maiden's mind) the maiden's body prone
Lay on her altar. Then she gave consent,
And I smote once.

RUPHA. Ha! Ha!

What came them?

CRIOSDA. I tore out her heart,
And held its flame aloft. The blackening blood
Gushed on my arms — and then —

RUPHA. Ho! HO!

CRIOSDA. With red lips reeking from the sweet foul feast,
I sang in tuneless agony the spell;
Rolled athwart space the black words: then some force
Tore me: I heard the tears drop in my heart.

I heard the laughter of some utmost God
Hid in the middle of matter. That was I,
The hideous laughter of the maniac laugh
When loathing makes the bed to lust, and twine
The limbs of agony about the trunk
Of torture — rapture stabbing through — Maurya!

Ay, that was I; ,and I the weeping wolf

That howls about this hell that is my heart;

And I the icy and intangible

That beholds all, and is not.

RUPHA. Three in one!

One in three!

Death to the sun!

Glory to thee!

Thou wast there!

Enough!

It will grow.

Ho! Ho!

CRIOSDA. In English, I was mad. But no new portents

Confound the course of the sun. I left my home

To seek thee out. When skill availed me not,

I put to sea to try the Luck of Maurya. {137B}

RUPHA. Thou shouldst have tried that first of all.

CRIOSDA. Why then

The Luck may avail if that wried tongue can speak

Straight! Hast thou aught to bid me do?

To me naught matters more. My life I cast

On the one throw; and, having lost, I have lost.

I am indifferent to my fate as the stars

Are to my curses, were I fool enough

To curse.

RUPHA. Destiny has strange ways.

CRIOSDA. I care not.

RUPHA. How long hast thou left home?

CRIOSDA. Seven years.

RUPHA. Return!

CRIOSDA. How can I?

RUPHA. Stamp the boat beneath thy feet

Down wallowing in the trough!

CRIOSDA. It is done!

[“The boat sinks from under” CRIOSDA. “He would sink did he not grasp

the staff extended to him.”

RUPHA. Now, stand alone!

CRIOSDA. I stand.

RUPHA. Then break, O vision

Of sea; awake, O vision of the shrine!

CRIOSDA. All is illusion?

RUPHA. All. Murder a mode

And love a mode of the unknown that is,

That nor thyself nor I can ever see.

Yet, so far as may be, awake, O shrine!

[“She strikes the sea with her staff; the storm rises; it grows bitter dark; only their shapes are dimly seen against the dark background of cloud. The scene rises.”

RUPHA. Break, break, O mist of morning!

[“The stage, which is full of mist, gradually clears. It shows the Temple as in” Scene I. “On the throne the embalmed body of” MAURYA “is seated. The altar flames with glowing charcoal, and a thin steam of incense arises.” RUPHA “and” CRIOSDA “are in front, R. Two priests minister; a goodly” {138A} “crew of choristers intone low litanies. A few young folk are at a barrier by the footlights (centre) in prayer. An old woman enters and brings an offering of flowers, which the priests receive and cast before the throne.”

RUPHA “motions” CRIOSDA “to be silent.”

1ST PRIEST. Glory unto thee, Maurya, secret Lady of the Stars!

CHORISTERS. Who was born on earth!

2ND PRIEST. Glory unto thee, Maurya, Lady of Life!

CHORISTERS. Who didst die for us!

ALL. Glory for ever unto Maurya!

THE WORSHIPPING FOLK. Maurya, hear us!

[“All bend deeper and deeper in adoration. Silence awhile. They rise, and the priests see” RUPHA “and” CRIOSDA.

1ST PRIEST. [“Whispers.”] It is the Mother of our Lady.

2ND PRIEST. [“Whispers.”] Who is with her?

1ST PRIEST. [“Whispers.”] The first disciple.

2ND PRIEST. [“Whispers.”] Blessed is this day, O brother!

1ST PRIEST. [“Whispers.”] Let us go and do them reverence.

[“They approach” RUPHA “and” CRIOSDA, “and bend low before them.”

RUPHA. Criosda! Of one act the ultimation

Rings through eternity past the poles of space.

Choose then what spangle on the robe of time

Shall glitter in thine eyes: for the hour strikes.

CRIOSDA. Mother! I would see the Luck of Maurya stand

Two thousand years from now.

RUPHA. Good priest, bring forth

The globe of crystal.

1ST PRIEST. Hearing is enough.

[“The priest takes a crystal from out the altar, and places it thereupon.” RUPHA “and” CRIOSDA “advance.”

RUPHA. Look! I uplift the veil.

[“She unveils the crystal.” {138B}

CRIOSDA. I see a lofty pyramid sun-white

Blaze in immaculate glory to the stars;

Its splendour of itself, since all is dark

About, above. Thereon a countless folk,

Multitudes many-coloured, grave and tall,

Beautiful, make a beautiful murmur, move,

In infinite musical labyrinths about.

Them doth the soul of love inhabit, them

The light of wisdom doth inform, them peace

Hath marked and sealed her own. But on their lips

Is one imagined silence like a sigh.

Unanimous the hushed harmony

Flows forth from heart to mouth; and mouths bloom red

With ripe and royal repetition; kisses

Flow like thick honey-drops in honeysuckle.

That is their worship.

RUPHA. Whom then worship they? {139A}

CRIOSDA. Maurya!

[“Recalled to himself, he perceives the meaning of this; with a great cry breaks forward and stands before the throne, raises himself up and says in triumph and knowledge of peace:”

Then — I have lived!

[“Reaches out his hand towards the enthroned mummy.”

Maurya!

[“With the last terrible cry he collapses, and falls dead with his head on” MAURYA’S knees.

RUPHA. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end.

[“She deliberately breaks her staff in her hands. The report is sharp and very loud, like a pistol shot.” {139B}

{Full page below}

CURTAIN.

{139}

THE SWORD OF SONG

CALLED BY CHRISTIANS

THE BOOK OF THE BEAST

1904

TO MY OLD FRIEND AND COMRADE IN THE ART

BHIKKHU ANANDA METTEYA

AND TO THOSE

FOOLS

WHO BY THEIR SHORT-SIGHTED STUPIDITY IN

ATTEMPTING TO BOYCOTT THIS BOOK

HAVE WITLESSLY AIDED THE

CAUSE OF TRUTH

I DEDICATE THESE MY BEST WORDS

[This book is so full of recondite knowledge of various kinds that it seems quite ineffective to annotate every obscure passage. Where references and explanations can be concisely given, this has been done.]

{columns commence}

“YOU are said!” the Knight said, in an anxious tone; “let me sing you a song to comfort you.”<<This passage is a parody on one in “Alice through the Looking-Glass.”>>

“Is it very long” Alice asked.

“It’s long,” said the Knight, “but it’s ‘very very’ beautiful. The name of the song is called ‘The Book of the Beast.’”

“Oh! how ugly!” cried Alice.

“Never mind,” said the mild creature. “‘Some’ people call it ‘Reason in Rhyme.’”

“But which ‘is’ the name of the song?” Alice said, trying not to seem too interested.

“Ah, you don’t understand,” the Knight said, looking a little vexed. “That’s what the name is ‘called.’ The name really ‘is’ ‘Ascension Day and Pentecost; with some Prose Essays and an Epilogue,’ just as the title is ‘The Sword of Song’ you know, just in the same way, just in the same way, just in the same way ...”

Alice put her fingers in her ears and gave a little scream. “Oh, dear me! That’s {140A} harder than ever!” she said to herself, and then, looking determinedly intelligent: “So ‘that’s’ what the song is called. I see. But what ‘is’ the song?”

“You must be a perfect fool,” said the Knight, irritably. “The song is called ‘Shout Doubt; or the Agnostic’s Anthology,’ by the author of ‘Gas Manipulation,’ ‘Solutions,’ ‘The Management of Retorts,’ and other physical works of the first order — but that’s only what it’s ‘called,’ you know.”

“Well, what ‘is’ the song then?” said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.

“If I wished to be obscure, child,” said the Knight, rather contemptuously, “I should tell you that the Name of the Title was ‘What a man of 95 ought to know,’ as endorsed by eminent divines, and that...” Seeing that she only began to cry, he broke off and continued in a gentler tone: “it ‘means,’ my dear...” He stopped short, for she was taking no notice; but as her figure was bent by sobs into something very like a note of interrogation: “You want to know that it ‘is,’ {140B} I suppose!” continued the knight, in a superior, but rather offended voice.

“If you would, please, sir!”

“Well, ‘that,’” pronounced the knight, with the air of having thoroughly studied the question and reached a conclusion absolutely final and irreversible, “‘that,’ Goodness only knows. But I will sing it to you.”

PRELIMINARY INVOCATION.

NOTHUNG.<<1>>

<<1. The name of Siegfried's sword.>>

THE crowns of Gods and mortals wither;

Moons fade where constellations shone;

Numberless aeons brought us hither;

Numberless aeons beckon us on.

The world is old, and I am strong —

Awake, awake, O Sword of Song!

Here, in the Dusk of Gods, I linger;

The world awaits a World of Truth.

Kindle, O lyre, beneath my finger!

Evoke the age's awful youth!

To arms against the inveterate wrong!

Awake, awake, O Sword of Song!

Sand-founded reels the House of Faith;

Up screams the howl of ruining sect;

Out from the shrine flits the lost Wraith;

“God hath forsaken His elect!”

Confusion sweeps upon the throng —

Awake, awake, O Sword of Song!

Awake to wound, awake to heal

By wounding, thou resistless sword!

Raise the prone priestcrafts that appeal

In agony to their prostrate Lord!

Raise the duped herd — they have suffered long!

Awake, awake, O Sword of Song!

My strength this agony of the age

Win through; my music charm the old

Sorrow of years: my warfare wage

By iron to an age of gold: —

The world is old, and I am strong —

Awake, awake, O Sword of Song! {141A}

INTRODUCTION TO “ASCENSION DAY AND PENTECOST.”

NOT a word to introduce my introduction! Let me instantly launch the Boat of Discourse on the Sea of Religious Speculation, in danger of the Rocks of Authority and the Quicksands of Private Interpretation, Scylla and Charybdis. Here is the strait; what God shall save us from shipwreck? If we choose to understand the Christian (or any other) religion literally, we are at once overwhelmed by its inherent impossibility. Our credulity is outraged, our moral sense shocked, the holiest foundations of our inmost selves assailed by no ardent warrior in triple steel, but by a loathly and disgusting worm. That this is so, the apologists for the religion in question, whichever it may be, sufficiently indicate (as a rule) by the very method of their apology. The alternative is to take the religion symbolically, esoterically; but to move one step in this direction is to start on a journey whose end cannot be determined. The religion, ceasing to be a tangible thing, an object uniform for all sane eyes, becomes rather that mist whereon the sun of the soul casts up, like Brocken spectre, certain vast and vague images of the beholder himself, with or without a glory encompassing them. The function of the facts is then quite passive: it matters little or nothing whether the cloud be the red mist of Christianity, or the glimmering silver-white of Celtic Paganism; the hard grey dim-gilded of Buddhism, the fleecy opacity of Islam, or the mysterious medium of those ancient faiths which come up in as many colours as their investigator has moods.<<“In order to get over the ethical difficulties presented by the naive naturalism of many parts of those Scriptures, in the divine authority of which he firmly believed, Philo borrowed from the Stoics (who had been in like straits in respect of Greek mythology) that great Excalibur which they had forged with infinite pains and skill — the method of allegorical interpretation. This mighty ‘two-handed engine at the door’ of the theologian is warranted to make a speedy end of any and every moral or intellectual difficulty, by showing that, taken allegorically, or, as it is otherwise said, ‘poetically’ or ‘in a spiritual sense,’ the plainest words mean whatever a pious interpreter desires they should mean” (Huxley, “Evolution of Theology”). — A. C.>> {141B} If the student has advanced spiritually so that he can internally, infallibly perceive

what is Truth, he will find it equally well symbolised in most external faiths.

It is curious that Browning never turns his wonderful faculty of analysis upon the fundamental problems of religion, as it were an axe laid to the root of the Tree of Life. It seems quite clear that he knew what would result if he did so. We cannot help fancying that he was unwilling to do this. The proof of his knowledge I find in the following lines: —

“I have read much, thought much, experienced much,

Yet would die rather than avow my fear

The Naples’ liquefaction may be false ...

I hear you recommend, I might at least

Eliminate, decrassify my faith

Since I adopt it: keeping what I must

And leaving what I can; such points as this ...

Still, when you bid me purify the same,

To such a process I discern no end ...

First cut the liquefaction, what comes last

But Fichte’s clever cut at God himself? ...

I trust nor hand, nor eye, nor heart, nor brain

To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.

The first step, I am master not to take.”

This is surely the apotheosis of wilful ignorance! We may think, perhaps, that Browning is “hedging” when, in the last paragraph, he says: “For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke,”<<Probably a record for a bishop. — A. C.>> and hints at some deeper ground. It is useless to say, “This is Blougram and not Browning.” Browning could hardly have described the dilemma without seeing it. What he really believes is, perhaps, a mystery.

That Browning, however, believes in universal salvation, though he nowhere (so far as I know) gives his reasons, save as they are summarised in the last lines of the below-quoted stanza of “Apparent Failure,” and from his final pronouncement of the Pope on Guido, represented in Browning’s masterpiece as a Judas without the decency to hang himself.

“So (“ie.” by suddenness of fate) may the truth be flashed out by one
blow,

And Guido see one instant and be saved.

Else I avert my face nor follow him

Into that sad obscure sequestered state

Where God unmakes but to remake the soul

He else made first in vain: which must not be.” {142A}

This may be purgatory, but it sounds not unlike reincarnation.

It is at least a denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment.

As for myself, I took the first step years ago, quite in ignorance of what the last would lead to. God is indeed cut away — a cancer from the breast of truth.

Of those philosophers, who from unassailable premisses draw by righteous deduction a conclusion against God, and then for His sake overturn their whole structure by an act of will, like a child breaking an ingenious toy, I take Mansel as my type.<<As represented by his Encyclopaedia article; not in such works as “Limits of Religious Thought.” — A.C.>>

Now, however, let us consider the esoteric idea-mongers of Christianity, Swedenborg, Anna Kingsford, Deussen and the like, of whom I have taken Caird as my example. I wish to unmask these people: I perfectly agree with nearly everything they say, but their claim to be Christians is utterly confusing, and lends a lustre to Christianity which is quite foreign. Deussen, for example, coolly discards nearly all the Old Testament, and, picking a few New Testament passages, often out of their context, claims his system as Christianity. Luther discards James. Kingsford calls Paul the Arch Heretic. My friend the “Christian Clergyman” accepted Mark and Acts — until pushed. Yet Deussen is honest enough to admit that Vedanta teaching is identical, but clearer! and he quite clearly and sensibly defines Faith — surely the most essential quality for the adherent to Christian dogma — as “being convinced on insufficient evidence.” Similarly the dying-to-live idea of Hegel (and Schopenhauer) claimed by Caird as the central spirit of Christianity is far older, in the Osiris Myth of the Egyptians. These ideas are all right, but they have no more to do with Christianity than the Metric System with the Great Pyramid. But see Piazzzi Smyth!<<An astronomer whose brain gave way. He prophesied the end of the world in 1881, from measurements made in the Great Pyramid.>> Henry Morley has even the audacity to claim Shelley — Shelley! — as a Christian “in spirit.”

Talking of Shelley: — With regard to my open denial of the personal Christian God, may it not be laid to my charge that I have dared to voice in

bald language what Shelley {142B} sang in words of surpassing beauty: for of course the thought in one or two passages of this poem is practically identical with that in certain parts of “Queen Mab” and “Prometheus Unbound.” But the very beauty of these poems (especially the latter) is its weakness: it is possible that the mind of the reader, lost in the sensuous, nay! even in the moral beauty of the words, may fail to be impressed by their most important meaning. Shelley himself recognised this later: hence the direct and simple vigour of the “Masque of Anarchy.”

It has often puzzled athiests how a man of Milton’s genius could have written as he did of Christianity. But we must not forget that Milton lived immediately after the most important Revolution in Religion and Politics of modern times: Shelley on the brink of such another Political upheaval. Shakespeare alone sat enthroned above it all like a god, and is not lost in the mire of controversy.<<So it is usually supposed. Maybe I shall one day find words to combat, perhaps to overthrow, this position. “P.S.” As, for example, page 185. As a promise-keeper I am the original eleven stone three Peacherine. — A.C.>> This also, though “I’m no Shakespeare, as too probable,” I have endeavoured to avoid: yet I cannot but express the hope that my own enquiries into religion may be the reflection of the spirit of the age; and that plunged as we are in the midst of jingoism and religious revival, we may be standing on the edge of some gigantic precipice, over which we may cast all our impedimenta of lies and trickeries, political, social, moral, and religious, and (ourselves) take wings and fly. The comparison between myself and the masters of English thought I have named is unintentional, though perhaps unavoidable; and though the presumption is, of course, absurd, yet a straw will show which way the wind blows as well as the most beautiful and elaborate vane: and in this sense it is my most eager hope that I may not unjustly draw a comparison between myself and the great reformers of eighty years ago. {143A}

I must apologise (perhaps) for the new note of frivolity in my work: due doubtless to the frivolity of my subject: these poems being written when I was an Advaitist and could not see why — everything being an illusion — there should be any particular object in doing or thinking anything. How I have found the answer will be evident from my essay on this subject.

<<“Vide infra,” “Berashith.”>> I must indeed apologise to the illustrious Shade of Robert Browning for my audacious parody in title, style, and matter of his “Christmas Eve and Easter Day.” The more I read it the eventual anticlimax of that wonderful poem irritated me only the more. But there is hardly any poet living or dead who so commands alike my personal affection and moral admiration. My desire to find the Truth will be my pardon with him, whose whole life was spent in admiration of Truth, though he never turned its formidable engines against the Citadel of the Almighty.

If I be appealed of blasphemy or irreverence in my treatment of these subjects, I will take refuge in Browning’s own apology, from the very poem I am attacking: “I have done: and if any blames me,

Thinking that merely to touch in brevity

The topics I dwell on were unlawful —

Or worse, that I trench with undue levity

On the bounds of the holy and the awful —

I praise the heart and pity the head of him

And refer myself to Thee, instead of him,

Who head and heart alike discernest,

Looking below light speech we utter

Where frothy spume and frequent splutter

Prove that the soul’s depths boil in earnest!”

But I have after all little fear that I am seriously wrong. That I show to my critics the open door of the above city of refuge may be taken as merely

another gesture of contemptuous pity, the last insult which may lead my antagonists to that surrender which is the truest victory.

{full page follows}

PEACE TO ALL BEINGS.

{143B}

{Column format is abandoned for the next full page sections; resumed after as noted. Marginal notes and line numbers alternate for even and odd pages, left to right/right to left, but these have been kept in even page format in this transcription.}

ASCENSION DAY.

Curious posi-I FLUNG out of chapel {End note#1} <<1>> and church,
tion of poet. Temple and hall and meeting-room,

Venus' Bower and Osiris' Tomb, {#2}

And left the devil in the lurch,

While God {#3} got lost in the crowd of gods, {#4} 5

And soul wend down{#5} in the turbid tide

Of the metaphysical lotus-eyed,{#6}

And I was — anyhow, what's the odds?

<<1. The numbered notes {end notes only} are given at p. 190.>>

What is Truth? The life to live? The thought to think? Shall I take refuge

said jesting In a tower like once childe Roland<<1>>{#7} found, blind,

Pilate: but deaf, huge, 10

Crowley waits Or in that forest of two hundred thousand

for an answer. Trees,{#8} fit alike to shelter man and mouse, and —

<<Bacon, Shall I say God? Be patient, your Reverence,{#9}

“Essay on I warrant you’ll journey a wiser man ever hence!

Truth,” Let’s tap (like the negro who gets a good juice of it, 15

line 1.>> Cares nought if that be, or be not, God’s right use of

it).{#10}

In all that forest of verses one tree{#11}

Yclept “Red Cotton Nightcap Country”:

How a goldsmith, between the Ravishing Virgin

And a leman too rotten to put a purge in, 20

Day by day and hour by hour,

In a Browningsque forest of thoughts having lost himself,

Expecting a miracle, solemnly tossed himself

Off from the top of a tower.

Moral: don't spoil such an excellent sport as an 25

Ample estate with a church and a courtesan!

<<1. "Childe Roland to the dark Tower came." — BROWNING.>>

Alternative "Truth, that's the gold!" {#12} But don't worry about it!

theories of I, you, or Simpkin({#13} can get on without it!

Greek authors. If life's task be work and love's (the soft lipped) ease,

Browning's Death's be God's glory? discuss with Euripides! {144} 30

summary. Or, cradle be hardship, and finally coffin, ease,

Love being filth? let us ask Aristophanes!

Or, heaven's sun bake us, while Earth's bugs and fleas kill

us,

Love the God's scourge? I refer you to Aeschylus!

(Nay! that's a slip! Say we "Earth's grim device, cool loss!

—" 35

Better the old Greek orthography! — Aischulos! {#14}

Or, love be God's champagne's foam; death in man's trough,
hock lees,

Pathos our port's beeswing? what answers Sophocles?

Brief, with love's medicine let's draught, bolus, gloubule
us!

Wise and succinct bids, I think, Aristobulus. {#15} 40

Whether my Muse be Euterpe or Clio,

Life, Death, and Love are all Batrachomyo {#16} —

Machia, what? ho! old extinct Alcibiades?

For me, do ut—God true, be mannikin liar! —des!

Apology of It's rather hard, isn't it, sir, to make sense of it? 45

poet. Mine of so many pounds — pouch even pence of it? {#17}

Skeleton of Try something easier, {#18} where the bard seems to me

poem. Valu-Seeking that light, which I find come in dreams to me.

able fact for Even as he takes two feasts to enlarge upon,

use of lovers. So will I do too to launch my old barge upon. 50

Invocation. Analyse, get hints from Newton {#19} or Faraday, {#20}

Use every weapon — love, scorn, reason, parody!

Just where he worships? Ah me! shall his soul,

Far in some glory, take hurt from a mole
Grubbing i' th' ground? Shall his spirit not see, 55
Lightning to lightning, the spirit in me?
Parody? Shall not his spirit forgive
Me, who shall love him as long as I live?
Love's at its height in pure love? Nay, but after
When the song's light dissolves gently in laughter! 60
Then and then only the lovers may know
Nothing can part them for ever. And so,
Muse, hover o'er me! Apollo, above her!

Imperfect I, of the Moderns, have let alone Greek. {#21}
scholastic at-Out of the way Intuition shall shove her. 65
tainments of Spirit and Truth in my darkness I seek.
author reme-Little by little they bubble and leak;
died by his Such as I have to the world I discover.
great spiritual Words — are they weak ones at best? They shall speak!
insight.
His intention. {PAGE 145}

His achieve-Shields? Be they paper, paint, lath? They shall cover 70
ment. Well as them may, the big heart of a lover!

Plan of poem Swords? Let the lightning of Truth strike the fortress
“Conspuez Frowning of God! I will sever one more tress

Dieu!” Off the White Beard{#22} with his son’s blood besprinkled,

Carve one more gash in the forehead{#23} hate-wrinkled: — 75

So, using little arms, earn one day better ones;

Cutting the small chains,{#24} learn soon to unfetter one’s

Limbs from the large ones, walk forth and be free! —

So much for Browning! and so much for me!

Apology for Pray do not ask me where I stand! 80

manner of “Who asks, doth err.”{#25} At least demand
poem. No folly such as answer means!

A chance for “But if” (you{#26} say) “your spirit weans

Tibet. Itself of milk-and-water pap,

And one religion as another 85

O’erleaps itself and falls on the other;{#27}

You’ll tell me why at least, mayhap,

Our Christianity excites

Especially such petty spites

As these you strew throughout your verse.” 90

The chance of birth! I choose to curse

(Writing in English{#28}) just the yoke

Of faith that tortures English folk.

I cannot write{#29} a poem yet

To please the people in Tibet; 95

But when I can, Christ shall not lack

Peace, while their Buddha I attack.{#30}

Hopes. Iden-Yet by-and-by I hope to weave

itivity of poet. A song of Anti-Christmas Eve

Attention And First-and Second-Beast-er Day. 100

drawn to my There’s one<<1>> {#31} who loves me dearly (vrai!)

highly decora-Who yet believes me sprung from Tophet,

tive cover. Either the Beast or the False Prophet;

And by all sorts of monkey tricks

Adds up my name to Six Six Six. 105

Retire, good Gallup! {#32} In such strife her

Superior skill makes “you” a cipher! {PAGE 146}

Ho! I adopt the number. Look

At the quaint wrapper of this book!<<2>>

I will deserve it if I can: 110

It is the number of a Man. {#33}

<<1. Crowley's mother.>>

<<2. It had a design of 666 and Crowley's name in Hebrew (which, like most names, adds up to that figure) on the reverse.>>

Necessity of So since in England Christ still stands

poem. With iron nails in bloody hands

Not pierced, but grasping! to hoist high

Children on cross of agony, 115

I find him real for English lives.

Up with my pretty pair of fives! {#34}

I fight no ghosts.

Mysticism "v." "But why revile"

literal (You urge me) "in that vicious style 120

interpretation. The very faith whose truths you seem

Former excused. (Elsewhere)(#35) to hold, to hymn supreme

In your own soul?" Perhaps you know

How mystic doctrines melt the snow

Of any faith: redeem it to 125

A fountain of reviving dew.

So I with Christ: but few receive.

The Qabalistic Balm,{#36} believe

Nothing — and choose to know instead.

But, to that terror vague and dread, 130

External worship; all my life —

War to the knife! War to the knife!

Buddha re-No! on the other hand the Buddha

bukes poet. Says: "I'm surprised at you! How could a

Detailed Person accept my law and still 135

scheme of Use hatred, the sole means of ill,

modified poem. In Truth's defence? In praise of light?"

Well! Well! I guess Brer Buddha's right!

I am no brutal Cain{#37} to smash an Abel;

I hear that blasphemy's unfashionable: 140

So in quietest way we'll chat about it;
No need to show teeth, claws of cat about it!
With gentle words — fiat exordium;
Exeat dolor, inret gaudium! {PAGE 147}
We'll have the ham to logic's sandwich 145
Of indignation: last bread bland, which
After our scorn of God's lust, terror, hate,
Prometheus-fired, we'll butter, perorate
With oiled indifference, laughter's silver:
“Omne hoc verbum valet nil, vir”! 150

Aim of poet. Let me help Babu Chander Grish up!
Indignation of As a posset of Hunyadi {#38}
poet. Poet Clear mind! Was Soudan of the Mahdi
defies his Not cleared by Kitchener? Ah, Tchhup!
uncle. Such nonsense for sound truth you dish up, 155
Were I magician, no mere cadi,
Not Samuel's ghost you'd make me wish up,
Not Saul's (the mighty son of Kish) up,
But Ingersoll's or Bradlaugh's pardie!

By spells and caldron stews that squish up, 160

Or purifying of the Nadi, {#39}

Till Stradivarius or Amati

Shriek in my stomach! Sarasate,

Such strains! Such music as once Sadi

Made Persia ring with! I who fish up 165

No such from soul may yet cry: Vade

Retro, Satanas! Tom Bond Bishop! {#40}

Whip and You old screw, Pegasus! Gee (Swish!) up!

spur. Sport- (To any who correctly rhymes {#41}

ing offer. The With Bishop more than seven times 170

“Times” Com-I hereby offer as emolum—

petition out-Ent, a bound copy of this volume.)

done.

Sub-species of These strictures must include the liar

genus Chris-Copleston, {#42} Reverend F. B. Meyer

tian included (The cock of the Dissenter’s midden, he!) 175

in poet’s And others of the self-same kidney: —

strictures. How different from Sir Philip Sidney!

But “cave os, et claude id, ne

Vituperasse inventus sim.”

In English let me render him! 180

‘Ware mug, and snap potato-trap!

Or elsely it may haply hap {PAGE 148}

Panel<<1>> in libel I bewail me!

(Funny how English seems to fail me!)

So, as a surgeon to a man, sir, 185

Let me excise your Christian cancer

Impersonally, without vanity,

Just in pure love of poor humanity!

<<1. Scots legal term for defendant.>>

Ascension Day. Here’s just the chance you’d have! Behold

Moral aspect The warm sun tint with early gold 190

of Christianity Yon spire: to-day’s event provide

to be discussed My text of wrath — Ascension-tide!

to prejudice of Oh! ‘tis a worthy day to wrest

the metaphysi-Hate's diadem from Jesus' Crest!

cal. Ascends he? 'Tis the very test 195

By which we men may fairly judge,

From the rough roads we mortals trudge

Or God's paths paved with heliotrope,

The morals of the crucified.

(Both standpoints join in one, I hope, 200

In metaphysic's stereoscope!)

But for the moment be denied

A metaphysical inspection —

Bring out the antiseptic soap! —

We'll judge the Christ by simple section, 205

And strictly on the moral side.

Orthodoxy to But first; I must insist on taking

be our doxy.<<1>>The ordinary substantial creed

Gipsies barred. Your clergy preach from desk and pulpit

Henrik Ibsen Each Sunday; all the bible, shaking 210

and H. G. Its boards with laughter, as you read

Wells Each Sunday. Ibsen{#43} to a full pit

May play in the moon. If (lunars they)

They thought themselves to be the play,

It's little the applause he'd get. 215

<<1. A Romany word for woman. {WEH NOTE: No, it isn't. "Doxy" is from Dutch, for "Doll", hence a darling. "Orthodoxy is my Doxy" is such a cliché that it's used as an example in a dictionary of word origins!}>>

Parson and I met a Christian Clergyman,<<1>>

poet. Fugitive The nicest man I ever met.

nature of We argued of the Cosmic plan.

dogma in these I was Lord Roberts, he de Wet. {#44} {PAGE 149}

latter days. He tells me when I cite the "Fall" 220

The Higher "But those are legends, after all."

Criticism. {149m} He has a hundred hills {#45} to lie in,

But finds no final ditch {#46} to die in.

"Samuel was man; the Holy Spook

Did not dictate the Pentateuch." 225

With cunning feint he lures me on

To loose my pompoms on Saint John;

And, that hill being shelled, doth swear

His forces never had been there.

I got disgusted, called a parley, 230

(Here comes a white-flag treachery!)

Asked: “Is there anything you value,

Will hold to?” He laughed, “Chase me, Charlie!”

But seeing in his mind that I

Would not be so converted, “Shall you,” 235

He added, “grope in utter dark?

The Book of Acts and that of Mark

Are now considered genuine.”

I snatch a Testament, begin

Reading at random the first page; — 240

He stops me with a gesture sage:

“You must not think, because I say

St Mark is genuine, I would lay

Such stress unjust upon its text,

As base thereon opinion. Next?” 245

I gave it up. He escaped. Ah me!

But so did Christianity.

<<1. The Rev. J. Bowley. The conversation described actually occurred in Mr. Gerald Kelly's studio in Paris.>>

Lord George As for a quiet talk on physics sane ac

Sanger<<1>> on Lente, I hear the British Don

the Unknowable. Spout sentiments more bovine than a sane yak 250

How the crea-Ever would ruminate upon,

tures talk. Half Sabbatarian and half Khakimaniac,

Built up from Paul and John,

With not a little tincture of Leviticus

Gabbled pro forma, jaldi,<<2>> a la Psittacus 255

To aid the appalling hotch-potch; lyre and lute

Replace by liar and loot, the harp and flute {PAGE 150}

Are dumb, the drum doth come and make us mute:

The Englishman, half huckster and half brute,

Raves through his silk hat of the Absolute. 260

The British Don, half pedant and half hermit,

Begins: "The Ding an sich <<3>> — as Germans term it —"

We stop him short; he readjusts his glasses,

Turns to his folio — 'twill eclipse all precedent,

Reveal God's nature, every dent a blessed dent! 265

The Donkey: written by an ass, for asses.

<<1. Proprietor of a circus and menagerie.>>

<<2. Hindustani: quickly.>>

<<3. "Vide infra," Science and Buddhism, and the writings of Immanuel Kant and his successors.>>

Basis of Poem So, with permission, let us be

to be that of Orthodox to our finger-ends;

the Compro-What the bulk hold, High Church or Friends,

mise of 1870. Or hard-shell Baptists — and we'll see. 270

Non-medical I will not now invite attack

nature of poem. By proving white a shade of black,

Crowley J. Or Christ (as some {#47} have lately tried)

An epileptic maniac,

Citing some cases, "where a dose 275

Of Bromide duly given in time

Drags a distemper so morose

At last to visions less sublime;
Soft breezes stir the lyre Aeolian,
No more the equinoctial gales; 280
The patient reefs his mental sails;
His Panic din that shocked the Timolian{#48}
Admits a softer run of scales —
Seems no more God, but mere Napoleon
Or possibly the Prince of Wales”: — 285
Concluding such a half-cured case
With the remark “where Bromide fails! —
But Bromide people did not know
Those 1900 years ago.”
I think we may concede to Crowley an 290
Impartial attitude.

No mention And so
will be made I scorn the thousand subtle points
of the Figs and Wherein a man might find a fulcrum
the Pigs. {151m} (Ex utero Matris ad sepulcrum, 295 {PAGE 151}
Et praeter — such as Huxley tells

I'll pierce your rotten harness-joints,
Dissolve your diabolic spells,
With the quick truth and nothing else.

Christian pre-So not one word derogatory 300
misses ac-To your own version of the story!
cepted. Severe I take your Christ, your God's creation,
mental strain Just at their own sweet valuation.
involved in For by this culminating scene,
reading poem. Close of that wondrous life of woe 305
Before and after death, we know
How to esteem the Nazarene.
Where's the wet towel?

The Ascension Let us first
at last! This From Paul right downward to the Schools, 310
is a common That the Ascension's self rehearsed
feat. Prana-Christ's Godhead by its miracle.
yama. Grand! — but the power is mine as well!
In India levitation counts 315

No tithe of the immense amounts
Of powers demanded by the wise
From Chela ere the Chela rise
To Knowledge. Fairy-tales? Well, first,
Sit down a week and hold your breath 320
As masters teach{#49} — until you burst,
Or nearly — in a week, one saith,
A month, perchance a year for you,
Hard practice, and yourself may fly —
Yes! I have done it! you may too! 325

Difference be-Thus, in Ascension, you and I
tween David Stand as Christ's peers and therefore fit
Douglas To judge him — "Stay, friend, wait a bit!"
Home, Sri (You cry) "Your Indian Yogis fall
Swami Back to the planet after all, 330
Sabapati Never attain to heaven and stand
Vamadeva (Stephen) or sit (Paul){#50} at the hand
Bhaskara-Of the most High! — And that alone,
nanda Saras-That question of the Great White Throne,

wati and the Is the sole point that we debate.” 335

Christ. I answer, Here in India wait {PAGE 152}

Latter com-Samadhi-Dak, {#51} convenient

pared to To travel to Maha Meru, {#52}

Madame Hum-Or Gaurisankar’s {#53} keen white wedge

bert. {152m} Spearing the splendid dome of blue, 340

Former com-Or Chogo’s {#54} mighty flying edge

pared to Keru-Shearing across the firmament, —

bim; as it is But, first, to that exact event

written, Run-You Christians celebrate to-day.

ning and Re-We stand where the disciples stood 345

turning. And see the Master float away

Into that cloudlet heavenly-hued

Receiving him from mortal sight.

Which of his sayings prove the true,

Lightning-bescrawled athwart the blue? 350

I say not, Which in hearts aright

Are treasured? but, What after ages

Engrave on history’s iron pages?

This is the one word of “Our lord”;

“I bring not peace; I bring a sword.” 355

In this the history of the West{#55}

Bears him out well. How stands the test?

One-third a century’s life of pain —

He lives, he dies, he lives again,

And rises to eternal rest 360

Of bliss with Saints — an endless reign!

Leaving the world to centuries torn

By every agony and scorn,

And every wickedness and shame

Taking their refuge in his Name. 365

Shri Para- “No Yogi shot his Chandra”{#56} “so.”

nanda ap-Will Christ return? What ho? What ho!

plauds Yogi. What? What? “He mediates above

Gerald jeers at Still with His sire for mercy, love, —”

Jesus. And other trifles! Far enough 370

That Father’s purpose from such stuff!

John iii. 16.<<1>>You see, when I was young, they said:

Its importance. “Whate’er you ponder in your head,

Its implied Or make the rest of Scripture mean,
meaning. You can't evade John iii. 16." 375 {PAGE 153}

Exactly! Grown my mental stature,
I ponder much: but never yet
Can I get over or forget
That bitter text's accused nature,
The subtle devilish omission,{#57} 380
The cruel antithesis implied,
The irony, the curse-fruition,
The calm assumption of Hell's fevers
As fit, as just, for unbelievers —
These are the things that stick beside 385
And hamper my quite serious wish
To harbor kind thoughts of the "Fish." {#58}

<<1. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that
whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.">>

My own vague Here goes my arrow to the gold!
optimism. Im-I'll make no magpies! Though I hold

possibility of Your Christianity a lie, 390

tracing cause Abortion and iniquity,

back or effect The most immoral and absurd

forward to the — (A priest's invention, in a word) —

ultimate. Of all religions, I have hope

Ethics In the good Dhamma's {#59} wider scope, 395

individual. Nay, certainty! that all at last,

However came they in the past,

Move up or down — who knows, my friend? —

But yet with no uncertain trend

Unto Nibbana in the end. 400

I do not even dare despise

Your doctrines, prayers, and ceremonies!

Far from the word “you'll go to hell!”

I dare not say “you do not well!”

I must obey my own mind's laws, 405

Accept its limits, seek its cause:

My meat may be your poison! I

Hope to convert you by-and-by?

Never! I cannot trace the chain {#60}

That brought us here, shall part again 410

Our lives — perchance for aye! I bring

My hand down on this table-thing, {#61}

And that commotion widens thus

And shakes the nerves of Sirius!

To calculate one hour's result 415

I find surpassing difficult; {PAGE 154}

One year's effect, one moment's cause;

What mind would estimate such laws?

Who then (much more!) may act aright,

Judged by and in ten centuries' sight? 420

(Yet I believe, whate'er we do

Is best for me and best for you

And best for all: I line no brow

With wrinkles, meditating how.)

Caird's inter-Well, but another way remains. 425

pretation of Shall we expound the cosmic plan

Hegel. His By symbolising God and man

identification And nature thus? As man contains

of it with Cells, nerves, grey matter in his brains,
Christianity Each cell a life, self-centre, free 430
proved to be Yet self-subordinate to the whole
mystical. His For its own sake — expand! — so we
interpretation Molecules of a central soul,
false. Time's sons, judged by Eternity.

Nature is gone — our joys, our pains, 435

Our little lives — and God remains

Were this the truth — why! worship then

Were not so imbecile for men!

But that's no Christian faith! For where

Enters the dogma of despair? 440

Despite his logic's sliver flow

I must count Caird{#62} a mystic! No!

You Christians shall not mask me so

The plain words of your sacred books

Behind friend Swedenbrog his spooks! 445

Says Huxley{#63} in his works (q.v.)

“The microcosmic lives change daily

In state or body” — yet you gaily

Arm a false Hegel cap-a-pie—

Your self, his weapons — make him wear 450

False favours of a ladye fayre,

(The scarlet woman!) bray and blare

A false note on the trumpet, shout:

“A champion? Faith’s defender! Out!

Sceptic and sinner! See me! Quail I?” 455

I cite the Little-go. You stare,

And have no further use for Paley! {PAGE 155}

Mysticism does But if you drink your mystic fill

not need Christ. Under the good tree Igdrasil{#64}

Krishna will Where is at all your use for Christ? 460

serve, or the Hath Krishna not at all sufficed?

Carpenter. I hereby guarantee to pull

The Sacred A faith as quaint and beautiful

Walrus. As much attractive to an ass,

God, some And setting reason at defiance, 465

Vestments, and As Zionism, Christian Science,

Lady Wimborne. Or Ladies’ League,{#65} “Keep of the Grass!”

From “Alice through the Looking-Glass.”

Fearful aspect Hence I account no promise worse,
of John iii. 16. Fail to conceive a fiercer curse 470

Than John’s third chapter (sixteenth verse).

Universalism. But now (you say) broad-minded folk
Will God get Think that those words the Master spoke
the bara<<1>> Should save all men at last. But mind!
slam? The text says nothing of the kind! 475

Read the next verses!<<2>>

<<1. Great slam — at term of Bridge-Whist. Bara is Hindustani for
great.>>

<<2. John iii. 18, “He that believeth not is condemned already.”>>

Eternal life. Then — one-third

Divergent Of all humanity are steady

views of its In a belief in Buddha’s word,

desirability. Possess eternal life already, 480

Buddhist idea. And shun delights, laborious days

Of labour living (Milton's phrase)

In strenuous purpose to — ? to cease!

“A fig for God's eternal peace!

True peace is to annihilate 485

The chain of causes men call Fate,

So that no Sattva{#66} may renew

Once death has run life's shuttle through.”

(Their sages put it somewhat thus)

What's fun to them is death to us! 490

That's clear at least.

Dogma of But never mind!

Belief. Call them idolaters and blind!

We'll talk of Christ. As Shelley sang,

“Shall an eternal issue hang 495 {PAGE 156}

On just belief or unbelief;

And an involuntary act

Make difference infinite in fact

Between the right and left-hand thief?

Belief is not an act of will!” 500

Free will. I think, Sir, that I have you still,

Herbert Even allowing (much indeed!)

Spencer. That any will at all is freed,

And is not merely the result

Of sex, environment, and cult, 505

Habit and climate, health and mind,

And twenty thousand other things!

So many a metaphysic sings.

(I wish they did indeed: I find

Their prose the hardest of hard reading!) 510

If there is free “But if,” you cry, “the world’s designed

will how can As a mere mirage in the mind,

there be pain Up jumps free will.” But all I’m pleading

or damnation? Is against pain and hell. Freewill 515

not-Self being Then can damn man? No fearful mill,

an illusion. Grinding catastrophe, is speeding

Self or not-Self Outside — some whence, some wither? And{#67}

real? Chute I think we easier understand
d'Icare. Where Schelling (to the Buddha leading)
Calls real not-self. In any case 520
There is not, there can never be
A soul, or sword or armour needing,
Incapable in time or space
Or to inflict or suffer. We
I think are gradually weeding 525
The soil of dualism. Pheugh!
Drop to the common Christian's view!

I have pity: This is my point; the world lies bleeding: —
had Christ (Result of sin?) — I do not care; 530
any? The I will admit you anywhere!
Sheep and the I take your premisses themselves
Goats. And, like the droll spiteful elves
They are, they yet outwit your plan.
I will prove Christ a wicked man {PAGE 157}
(Granting him Godhead) merciless 535
To all the anguish and distress

About him — save to him it clung
And prayed. Give me omnipotence?
I am no fool that I should fence
That power, demanding every tongue 540
To call me god — I would exert
That power to heal creation's hurt;
Not to divide my devotees
From those who scorned me to the close:
A worm, a fire, a thirst for these; 545
A harp-resounding heaven for those!

Will Satan be And though you claim Salvation sure
saved? Who For all the heathen{#68} — there again
pardons Judas? New Christians give the lie to plain
Scripture, those words which must endure! 550
(The Vedas say the same!) and though
His mercy widens ever so,
I never met a man (this shocks,
What I now press) so heterodox,
Anglican, Roman, Methodist, 555

Peculiar Person — all the list! —

I never met a man who called

Himself a Christian, but appalled

Shrank when I dared suggest the hope

God's mercy could expand its scope, 560

Extend, or bend, or spread, or straighten

So far as to encompass Satan

Or even poor Iscariot.

God's fore-Yet God created (did he not?)

knowledge of Both these. Omnisciently, we know! 565

Satan's fall and Benevolently? Even so!

eternal misery Created from Himself distinct

makes him re- (Note that! — it is not meet for you

sponsible for To plead me Schelling and his crew)

it. If he and These souls, foreknowing how were linked 570

Judas are The chains in either's Destiny.

finally re- "You pose me the eternal Why?"

deemed, we Not I? Again, "Who asks doth err."

might perhaps But this one thing I say. Perchance

look over the There lies a purpose in advance 575 {PAGE 158}

matter this Tending to final bliss — to stir

once. Poet Some life to better life, this pain

books his seat. Is needful: that I grant again.

Creator in{158m} Did they at last in glory live,

heaven suffers Satan and Judas {#69} might forgive 580

Hell's pangs, The middle time of misery,

owing to re-Forgive the wrong creation first

proaches of Or evolution's iron key

bard. Did them — provided they are passed

Beyond all change and pain at last 585

Out of this universe accurst.

But otherwise! I lift my voice,

Deliberately take my choice

Promethean, eager to rejoice,

In the grim protest's joy to revel 590

Betwixt Iscariot and the Devil,

Throned in their midst! No pain to feel,

Tossed on some burning bed of steel,

But theirs: My soul of love should swell

And, on those piteous floors they trod, 595

Feel, and make God feel, out of Hell,

Across the gulf impassable,

That He was damned and I was God!

Ethical and Ay! Let him rise and answer me

eloquent de-That false creative Deity, 600

nunciation of Whence came his right to rack the Earth

Christian Cos-With pangs of death, {#70} disease, and birth:

mogony. No joy unmarred by pain and grief:

Insult on injury heaped high

In that quack-doctor infamy 605

The Panacea of — Belief!

Only the selfish soul of man

Could ever have conceived a plan

Man only of all life to embrace,

One planet of all stars to place 610

Alone before the Father's face;

Forgetful of creation's stain,

Forgetful of creation's pain,

Not dumb! — forgetful of the pangs
Whereby each life laments and hangs, 615
(Now as I speak a lizard{#71} lies
In wait for light-bewildered flies) {PAGE 159}
Each life bound ever to the wheel{#72}
Ay, and each being — we may guess
Now that the very crystals feel! — 620
For them no harp-resounding court,
No palm, no crown, but none the less
A cross, be sure! The worst man's thought
In hell itself, bereft of bliss,
Were less unmerciful than this! 625
No! for material things, I hear,
Will burn away, and cease to be —
(Nibbana! Ah! Thou shoreless Sea!)
Man, man alone, is doomed to fear,
To suffer the eternal woe, 630
Or else, to meet man's subtle foe,
God — and oh! infamy of terror!
Be like him — like him! And for ever!

At least I make not such an error:

My soul must utterly dissever 635

Its very silliest thought, belief,

From such a God as possible,

Its vilest from his worship. Never!

Avaunt, abominable chief

Of Hate's grim legions; let me well 640

Gird up my loins and make endeavour,

And seek a refuge from my grief,

O never in Heaven — but in Hell!

Death-bed of “Oh, very well!” I think you say,
poet. Effect “Wait only till your dying day! 645
of body on See whether then you kiss the rod,
mind. And bow that proud soul down to God!”

I perfectly admit the fact;

Quite likely that I so shall act!

Here's why Creation jumps at prayer. 650

You Christians quote me in a breath

This, that, the other atheist's death; {#73}

How they sought God! Of course! Impair
By just a touch of fever, chill,
My health — where flies my vivid will? 655
My carcase with quinine is crammed;
I wish South India were damned;
I wish I had my mother's nursing,
Find precious little use in cursing, {PAGE 160}
And slide to leaning on another, 660
God, or the doctor, or my mother.
But dare you quote my fevered word
For better than my health averred?
The brainish fancies of a man
Hovering on delirium's brink:
"Shall these be classed his utmost span?" 666<<1>>
All that he can or ought to think?
No! the strong man and self-reliant
Is the true spiritual giant.
I blame no weaklings, but decline 670
To take their maunderings for mine.

<<1. WEH NOTE: This line deliberately numbered thus in the original.>>

Poem does not You see I do not base my thesis
treat of Palae-On your Book's being torn to pieces
ontology: nor By knowledge; nor invoke the shade
of poet's youth: Of my own boyhood's agony. 675
nor of Christian Soul, shudder not! Advance the blade
infamies. Poet Of fearless fact and probe the scar!
forced to mystic You know my first-class memory?
position. Well, in my life two years there are

Twelve years back — not so very far! 680

Two years whereof no memory stays.

One ageless anguish filled my days

So that no item, like a star

Sole in the supreme night, above

Stands up for hope, or joy, or love. 685

Nay, not one ignis fatuus glides

Sole in that marsh, one agony

To make the rest look light. Abides

The thick sepulchral changeless shape

Shapeless, continuous misery 690
Whereof no smoke-wreaths might escape
To show me whither lay the end,
Whence the beginning. All is black,
Void of all cause, all aim; unkenned,
As if I had been dead indeed — 695
All in Christ's name! And I look back,
And then and long time after lack
Courage or strength to hurl the creed
Down to the heaven it sprang from! No!
Not this inspires the indignant blow 700 {PAGE 161}
At the whole fabric — nor the seas
Filled with those innocent agonies
Of Pagan Martyrs that once bled,
Of Christian Martyrs damned and dead
In inter-Christian bickerings, 705
Where hate exults and torture springs,
A lion on anguished flesh and blood,
A vulture on ill-omen wings,
A cannibal {#74} on human food.

Nor do I cry the scoffer's cry, 710
That Christians live and look the lie
Their faith has taught them: none of these
Inspire my life, disturb my peace.
I go beneath the outward faith
Find it a devil or a wrath, 715
Just as my mood or temper tends!

Mystical mean-And thus to-day that "Christ ascends,"
ing of "Ascen-I take the symbol, leave the fact,
sion Day." Decline to make the smallest pact
Futility of With your creative Deity, 720
whole discuss-And say: The Christhood-soul in me,
sion, in view of Risen of late, is now quite clear
facts. Even of the smallest taint of Earth.

Supplanting God, the Man has birth
("New Birth" you'll call the same, I fear,) 725
Transcends the ordinary sphere
And flies in the direction. "x."
(There lies the fourth dimension.) Vex

My soul no more with mistranslations
From Genesis to Revelations, 730
But leave me with the Flaming Star, {#75}
Jeheshua (See thou Zohar!)(#76)
And thus our formidable Pigeon- {#77}
Lamb-and-Old-Gentleman religion
Fizzles in smoke, and I am found 735
Attacking nothing. Here's the ground,
Pistols, and coffee — three in one,
(Alas, O Rabbi Schimeon!)
But never a duellist — no Son,
No Father, and (to please us most) 740
Decency pleads — no Holy Ghost!
All vanish at the touch of truth,
A cobweb trio — like, in sooth, {PAGE 162}
That worthy Yankee millionaire,
And Wealthy nephews, young and fair, 745
The pleasing Crawfords! Lost! Lost! Lost! {#78}
“The Holy Spirit, friend! beware!”

The reader Ah! ten days yet to Pentecost!
may hope. Come that, I promise you — but stay!
At present ‘tis Ascension Day! 750

Summary. At least your faith should be content.

Reader dis-I quarrel not with this event.

missed to The supernatural element?

chapel I deny nothing — at the term

It is just Nothing I affirm. 755

The fool (with whom is wisdom, deem

The Scriptures — rightly!) in his heart

Saith (silent, to himself, apart)

This secret: “HB:Aleph-Yod-Nun-final

Aleph-Lamed-Heh-Yod-Memfinal”{#79}

See the good Psalm! And thus, my friend! 760

My diatribes approach the end

And find us hardly quarrelling.

And yet — you seem not satisfied?

The literal mistranslated thing

Must not by sinners be denied. 765

Go to you Chapel then to pray!

(I promise Mr. Chesterton {#80}

Before the Muse and I have done

A grand ap-pre-ci-a-ti-on

Of Brixton on Ascension Day.) 770

Future plans of He's gone — his belly filled enough!

poet. Jesus This Robert-Browning-manque stuff!

dismissed with 'Twill serve — Mercutio's scratch! — to show

a jest. Where God and I are disagreed.

There! I have let my feelings go 775

This once. Again? I deem not so.

Once for my fellow-creature's need!

The rest of life, for self-control, {#81}

For liberation of the soul! {#82}

This once, the truth! In future, best 780

Dismissing Jesus with a jest.

The Jest. Ah! Christ ascends? {#83} Ascension day?

Old wonders bear the bell {#84} away?

Santos-Dumont, though! Who can say? {PAGE 163}

PENTECOST

Poem dissimi-TO-DAY thrice halves the lunar week
lar to its pre-Since you, indignant, heard me speak
decessor. Will Indignant. Then I seemed to be
it lead some-So far from Christianity!
where this Now, other celebrations fit
time? The time, another song shall flit 5
Reflections on Reponsive to another tune.
the weather, September's shadow falls on June,
proper to be-But dull November's darkest day
ginning a con-Is lighted by the sun of May. 10
versation in
English.

Autobiography Here's how I got a better learning.
of bard. It's a long lane that has no turning!
Lehrjahre. Mad as a woman-hunted Urning,
Wanderjahre. The lie-chased alethephilist:<<1>>
“The magician Sorcery's maw gulps the beginner: 15

of Paris.” In Pains’s mill neophytes are grist:

Disciples ache upon the rack.

Five Years I sought: I miss and lack;

Agony hounds lagoon twist;

I peak and struggle and grow thinner. 20

And get to hate the sight of dinner.

With sacred thirst, I, soul-hydroptic, {#1}

Read Levi {#2} and the cryptic Coptic; {#3}

With ANET’ HER-K UAA EN RA, {#4}

“How clever I And HB:Samekh-Peh-Resh-Aleph

am!” Dalet-Tzaddi-Nun-Yod-Ayin-Vau-Taw-Aleph 25

While good MacGregor {#5} (who taught freely us)

Bade us investigate Cornelius

Agrippa and the sorceries black

Of grim Honorius and Abramelin; {#6}

While, fertile as the teeming spawn 30

Of pickled lax or stickleback,

Came ancient rituals, {#7} whack! whack!

Of Rosy Cross and Golden Dawn. {#8} {PAGE 164}

I lived, Elijah-like, Mt. Carmel in:

All gave me nothing. I slid back 35
To common sense, as reason bids,
And “hence,” my friend, “the Pyramids.”

<<1. Truth-lover.>>

My Mahatma. At last I met a maniac
What price With mild eyes full of love, and tresses
Kut Humi? Blanched in those lonely wildernesses 40

Where he found wisdom, and long hands

Gentle, pale olive ‘gainst the sand’s

Amber and gold. At sight, I knew him;

Swifter than light I flashed, ran to him,

And at his holy feet prostrated 45

My head; then, all my being sated

With love, cried “Master! I must know.

Already I can love.” E’en so.

“?????? Oh, The sage saluted me {...} {#9}

how wise {...} {WEH NOTE: several lines of Devanagari type} {...} 50

Grampa must {...}

have been, {...}

Bobbie!” {...}

{...}

{...} said I: 55

“I’m game to work through all eternity,

Your holiness the Guru Swami!”<<1>> Thus

I studied with him till he told me {...{Devanagari}}{#10}

He taught the A B C of Yoga:

I asked {...{Devanagari}}{#11}{...}{#12} 60

In strange and painful attitude,{#13}

I sat, while he was very rude.{#14}

With eyes well fixed on my proboscis,{#15}

I soon absorbed the Yogi Gnosis.

He taught me to steer clear of vices, 65

The giddy waltz, the tuneful aria,

Those fatal foes of Brahma-charya;{#16}

And said, “How very mild and nice is

One’s luck to lop out truth in slices,

And chance to chop up cosmic crises!” 70 {PAGE 165}

He taught me A, he taught me B,

He stopped my baccy {#17} and my tea.
He taught me Y, he taught me Z,
He made strange noises in my head.
He taught me that, he taught me this, 75
He spoke of knowledge, life, and bliss.
He taught me this, he taught me that,
He grew me mangoes in his hat. {#18}
I brought him corn: he made good grist of it: —
And here, my Christian friend, 's the gist of it! 80

<<1. The correct form of address from a pupil to his teacher. See Sabhapaty Swami's pamphlet on Yoga.>>

The philo-First, here's philosophy's despair,
sophical im-The cynic scorn of self. I think
passe. Practi-At times the search is worth no worry,
cal advice. And hasten earthward in a hurry,
Advice to poet's Close spirit's eyes, or bid them blink, 85
fat friend. Go back to Swinburne's {#19} counsel rare,
Kissing the universe its rod,

As thus he sings “For this is God;
Be man with might, at any rate,
In strength of spirit growing straight 90
And life as light aliving out!”
So Swinburne doth sublimely state,
And he is right beyond a doubt.
So, I’m a poet or a rhymer;
A mountaineer or mountain climber. 95
So much for Crowley’s vital primer.
The inward life of soul and heart,
That is a thing occult, apart:
But yet his metier or his kismet
As much as these you have of his met. 100
So — you be butcher; you be baker;
You, Plymouth Brother, and you, Quaker;
You, Mountebank, you, corset-maker: —
While for you, my big beauty, {#20} (Chicago packs pork)
I’ll teach you the trick to be hen-of-the-walk. 105
Shriek a music-hall song with a double ong-tong!
Dance a sprightly can-can at Paree or Bolong!

Or the dance of Aleiers — try your stomach at that!

It's quite in your line, and would bring down your fat.

You've a very fine voice — could you only control it! 110

And an emerald ring — and I know where you stole it!

But for goodness sake give up attempting Brunnhilde;

Try a boarding-house cook, or a coster's Matilda! {PAGE 166}

Still you're young yet, scarce forty — we'll hope at three

score

You'll be more of a singer, and less of a whore. 115

Live out thy Each to his trade! live our our life!

life! Charac-Fondle your child, and buss your wife!

ter of Balti. Trust not, fear not, steer straight and strong!

His religious Don't worry, but just get along.

sincerity. Re-I used to envy all my Balti coolies{#21} 120

lations of poet In an inverse kind of religious hysteria,

and the Egyp-Though every one a perfect fool is,

tian God of To judge by philosophic criteria,

Wisdom. My Lord Archbishop. The name of Winchester,

Crowley dis-Harrow, or Eton{#22} makes them not two inches stir. 125

missed with a They know not Trinity, Merton, or Christchurch;
jest. They worship, but not at your back-pews-high-priced Church.

I've seen them at twenty thousand feet

On the ice, in a snowstorm, at night fall, repeat

Their prayers{#23} — will you Grace do as much for your

Three 130

As they do for their One? I have seen — may you see!

They sleep and know not what a mat is;

Seem to enjoy their cold chapaties;<<1>>

Are healthy, strong — and some are old.

They do not care a damn{#24} for cold, 135

Behave-like children, trust in Allah;

(Flies in Mohammed's spider-parlour!)

They may not think: at least they dare

Live out their lives, and little care

Worries their souls — worse fools they seem 140

Than even Christians. Do I dream?

Probing philosophy to marrow,

What thought darts in its poisoned arrow

But this? (my wisdom, even to me,

Seems folly) may their folly be 145

True Wisdom? O esteemed Tahuti! {#25}

You are, you are, you are a beauty!

If after all these years of worship

You hail Ra {#26} his bark or Nuit {#27} her ship {PAGE 167}

And sail — “the waters wild a-wenting 150

Over your child! The left lamenting”

(Campbell). {#28} The Ibis head, {#29} unsuited

To grin, perhaps, yet does its best

To show its strong appreciation

Of the humour of the situation — 155

In short, dismiss me, jeered and hooted,

Who thought I sported Roland’s crest, {#30}

With wisdom saddled, spurred, and booted,

(As I my Jesus) with a jest. {#31}

<<1. A flat cake of unleavened bread. As a matter of fact they do not enjoy and indeed will not eat them, preferring “dok,” a paste of coarse flour and water, wrapped round a hot stone. It cooks gradually, and remains warm all day.>>

Slowness of So here is my tribute — a jolly good strong ‘un — 160
Divine Justice. To the eunuch, the faddist, the fool, and the wrong ‘un!
Poet pockets it’s fun when you say “A mysterious way{#32}
Piety Stakes. God moves in to fix up his Maskelyne tricks.
National An-He trots on the tides, on the tempest he rides
them of Natal. (Like Cosmo); and as for his pace, we bethought us 165
Achilles could never catch up with that tortoise!”
No flyer, but very “Who’s Griffiths?”<<1>> No jackpot!
I straddle the blind, age! At hymns I’m a moral;
In Sankey, your kettle may call me a black pot.
Here’s diamond for coke, and pink pearl for pale coral. 170
Though his mills may grind slowly — what says the old
hymn?{#33}
Tune, Limerick! Author? My memory’s dim.
The corn said “You sluggard!”
The mill “You may tug hard,” (or lug hard, or plug hard;
I forget the exact Rhyme; that’s a fact) 175
“If I want to grind slowly I shall,”
A quainter old fable one rarely is able
To drag from its haunt in the — smoke room or stable!

You see (vide supra) I've brought to the test a ton

Of tolerance, broadness. Approve me, friend Chesterton! 180

<<1. "Who's Griffiths? The safe man." A well-known advertisement, hence
"Who's Griffiths" = safe.>>

But this talk is So much when philosophy's lacteal river
all indigestion. Turns sour through a trifle of bile on the liver.
Now for But now for the sane and the succulent milk
heath. Of truth — may it slip down as smoothly as silk!

Reasons for "How very hard it is to be" {#34} 185
undertaking A Yogi! Let our spirits see
the task. At least what primal need of thought

This end to its career has brought: {PAGE 168}

Why, in a word, I seek to gain

A different knowledge. Why retain 190

The husk of flesh, yet seek to merit

The influx of the Holy Spirit?

And, swift as caddies pat and cap a tee,

Gain the great prize all mortals snap at, heroic guerdon of Srotapatti?
{#35} 195

Our logical With calm and philosophic mind,
method. Clas-No fears, no hopes, devotions blind
sical allusion. To hamper, soberly we'll state
demonstrating The problem, and investigate
erudition of In purely scientific mood 200
poet. The sheer Ananke of the mind,

A temper for our steel to find
Whereby those brazen nails subdued
Against our door-posts may in vain
Ring. We'll examine, to be plain, 205
By logic's intellectual prism
The spiritual Syllogism.

Whether or We know what fools (only) call
not spirit and Divine and Supernatural
matter are dis-And what they name material 210
tinct, let us Are really one, not two, the line

investigate the By which divide they and define
fundamental Being a shadowy sort of test;
necessities of A verbal lusus at the best,
thought. At worst a wicked lie devised 215

To bind men's thoughts; but we must work
With our own instruments, nor shirk
Discarding what we erstwhile prized;
Should we perceive it disagree
With the first-born necessity. 220

Impermanence I come to tell you why I shun
of the soul. The sight of men, the life and fun

You know I can enjoy so well,
The Nature that I love as none
(I think) before me ever loved. 225

You know I scorn the fear of Hell,
By worship and all else unmoved. {PAGE 169}

You know for me the soul is nought{#36}
Save a mere phantom in the thought,
That thought itself impermanent, 230

Save as a casual element
With such another may combine
To form now water and now wine;
The element itself may be
Changeless to all eternity, 235
But compounds ever fluctuate
With time or space or various state.
(Ask chemists else!) So I must claim
Spirit and matter are the same {#37}
Or else the prey of putrefaction. 240
This matters to the present action
Little or nothing. Here's your theories!
Think if you like: I find it wearies!

Recapitulation It matters little whether we
of principal With Fichte and the Brahmins preach 245
cosmic theories. That Ego-Atman sole must be;
With Schelling and the Buddha own
Non-Ego-Skandhas are alone;
With Hegel and — the Christian? teach

That which completes, includes, absorbs 250

Both mighty unrevolving orbs

In one informing masterless

Master-idea of consciousness —

All differences as these indeed

Are chess play, conjuring. “Proceed!” 255

Nay! I’ll go back. The exposition

Above, has points. But simple fission

Has reproduced a different bliss,

At last a heterogenesis!

Bard check-The metaphysics of these verses 260

mates himself. Is perfectly absurd. My curse is

Consciousness No sooner in an iron word

and Christi-I formulate my thought than I

anity. Perceive the same to be absurd

Dhyanna and (Tannhauser). So for this, Sir, why! 265

Hinduism. Your metaphysics in your teeth!

Sammāsamadhi and Confer A. Crowley, “Berashith.”

Buddhism. But hear! The Christian is a Dualist; {PAGE 170}

Such view our normal consciousness

Tells us. I'll quote you now if you list 270

From Tennyson. It isn't much;

(Skip this and 'twill be even less)

He says: "I am not what I see, {#38}

And other than the things I touch." <<1>>

How lucid is our Alfred T.! 275

The Hindu, an Advaitist,

Crosses off Maya from the list;

Believes in one — exactly so,

Dhyana-consciousness, you know!

May it not be that one step further 280

“‘Tis lotused Buddha roaring murther!”? {#39}

Nibbana is the state above you

Christians and them Hindus — Lord love you! —

Where Nothing is perceived as such.

<<1. “In Memoriam.”>>

Bard is pleased This clever though doth please me much. 285

with himself.

Poetee mani-But if das Essen is das Nichts —

festes a natural Ha! Hegel's window! Ancient Lights!

irritation. And two is one and one is two —

“Bother this nonsense! Go on, do!”

My wandering thoughts you well recall! 290

I focus logic's perfect prism:

Lo! the informing syllogism!

Sabbe pi Duk-The premiss major. life at best

kham! Is but a sorry sort of jest;

<<All is At worst, a play of fiends uncouth, 295

Sorrow.>> Mocking the soul foredoomed to pain.

In any case, its run must range

Through countless miseries of change.

So far, no farther, gentle youth!

The mind can see. So much, no more. 300

So runs the premiss major plain;

Identical, the Noble truth

First of the Buddha's Noble Four!

Beyond The premiss minor. I deplore
thought, is These limitations of the mind. 305
there hope? I strain my eyes until they're blind,
Maya again. And cannot pierce the awful veil {PAGE 171}
Vision of the That masks the primal cause of being.
Visible image With all respect to Buddha, fleeing
of the Soul of The dreadful problem with the word 310
Nature, whose "Who answers, as who asks, hath erred,"
name is Fat-I must decidedly insist
ality. On asking why these things exist.
My mind refuses to admit
All-Power can be all-Wickedness. 315
— Nay! but it may! What shadows flit
Across the awful veil of mist?
What thoughts invade, insult, impress?
There comes a lightning of my wit
And sees — nor good nor ill address 320
Itself to task, creation's ill,

But mere law without a will, {#40}
Nothing resolved in something, fit
Phantom of dull stupidity,
And evolution's endless stress 325
All the inanity to knit
Thence: such a dark device I see!
Nor lull my soul in the caress
Of Buddha's "Maya fashioned it." {#41}
My mind seems ready to agree; 330
But still my senses worry me.

Futility of all Nor can I see what sort of gain
investigations God finds in this creating pain;
of the Mind Nor do the Vedas help me here.
into the First Why should the Paramatma cease {#42} 335
Cause. From its eternity of peace,
Develop this disgusting drear
System of stars, to gather again
Involving, all the realm of pain,
Time, space, to that eternal calm? 340

Blavatsky's Himalayan Balm {#43}

Aids us no whit — if to improve

Thus the All-light, All-life, All-love,

By evolution's myrrh and gall,

It would not then have been the All. 345

Faith our only Thus all conceptions fail and fall.

alternative to But see the Cyclopaedia-article

Despair? So On "Metaphysics"; miss no particle {PAGE 172}

says Mansel. Of thought! How ends the brave B.D.,

Summarising Ontology? 350

"This talk of 'Real' is a wraith.

Our minds are lost in war of word;

The whole affair is quite absurd —

Behold! the righteous claims of Faith!"

(He does not rhyme you quite so neatly; 355

But that's the sense of it completely.)

The Advaitist I do not feel myself inclined,

position. In spite of my irreverent mind,

So lightly to pass by the schemes
Of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel (one, 360
Small though the apparent unison),
As if they were mere drunken dreams;
For the first word in India here
From Koromandl to Kashmir
Says the same thing these Germans said: 365
“Ekam Advaita!”{#44} one, not two!
Thus East and West from A to Z
Agree — Alas! so do not you?
(It matters nothing — you, I find,
are but a mode of my own mind.) 370

Mind’s superior As far as normal reasoning goes,
functions. I must admit my concepts close
Exactly where my worthy friend,
Great Mansel, says they ought to end.
But here’s the whole thing in a word: 375
Olympus in a nutshell! I
Have a superior faculty

To reasoning, which makes absurd,
Unthinkable and wicked too,
A great deal that I know is true! 380
In short, the mind is capable,
Besides mere ratiocination,
Of twenty other things as well,
The first of which is concentration!

Does truth Here most philosophers agree; 385
make itself in-Claim that the truth must so intend,
stantly appa-Explain at once all agony
rent? Not Of doubt, make people comprehend {PAGE 173}
reason. As by lightning flash, solve doubt
But the results And turn all Nature inside out: 390
of concentra-And, if such potency of might
tion do so. Hath Truth, once state the truth aright,
Whence came the use of all those pages
Millions together — mighty sages
Whom the least obstacle enrages? 395
Condemn the mystic if he prove

Thinking less valuable than love?

Well, let them try their various plans!

Do they resolve that doubt of man's?

How many are Hegelians? 400

Thus, though I hold him mostly true.

But, to teach others that same view?

Surely long years develop reason. {#45}

After long years, too, in thy season

Bloom, Concentration's midnight flower! 405

After much practice to this end

I gain at last the long sought power

(Which you believe you have this hour,

But certainly have not, my friend!)

Of keeping close the mind to one 410

Thing at a time — suppose, the Sun.

I gain this (Reverence to Ganesh'!) {#46}

And at that instant comprehend

(The past and future tenses vanish)

What Fichte comprehends. Division, 415

Thought, wisdom, drop away. I see

The absolute identity

Of the beholder and the vision.

Some poetry. There is a lake<<1>> amid the snows

Wherein five glaciers merge and break. 420

Oh! the deep brilliance of the lake!

The roar of ice that cracks and goes

Crashing within the water! Glows

The pale pure water, shakes and slides

The glittering sun through emerald tides, 425

So that faint ripples of young light

Laugh on the green. Is there a night {PAGE 174}

So still and cold, a frost so chill,

That all the glaciers be still?

Yet in its peace no frost. 430

<<1. This simile for the mind and its impressions, which must be stilled before the sun of the soul can be reflected, is common in Hindu literature. The five glaciers are, of course, the senses.>>

Arise!

Over the mountains steady stand,

O sun of glory, in the skies

Alone, above, unmoving! Brand

Thy sigil, thy resistless might, 435

The abundant imminence of light!

Ah!

O in the silence, in the dark,

In the intangible, unperfumed,

In gust abyss, abide and mark 440

The mind's magnificence assumed

In the soul's splendour! Here is peace;

Here earnest of assured release.

Here is the formless all-pervading

Spirit of the World, rising, fading 445

Into a glory subtler still.

Here the intense abode of Will

Closes its gates, and in the hall

Is solemn sleep of festival.

Peace! Peace! Silence of peace! 450

O visionless abode! Cease! Cease!

Through the dark veil press on! The veil

Is rent asunder, the stars pale,

The suns vanish, the moon drops,
The chorus of the spirit stops, 455
But one note swells. Mightiest souls
Of Bard and music maker, rolls
Over your loftiest crowns the wheel
Of that abiding bliss. Life flees
Down corridors of centuries 460
Pillar by pillar, and is lost.
Life after life in wild appeal
Cries to the master; he remains
And thinks not.
The polluting tides 465
Of sense roll shoreward. Arid plains
Of wave-swept sea confront me. Nay!
Looms yet the glory through the grey,
And in the darkest hours of youth
I yet perceive the essential truth, 470 {PAGE 175}
Know as I know my consciousness,
That all division's hosts confess
A master, for I know and see

The absolute identity

Of the beholder and the vision. 475

Fact replacing How easy to excite derision

folklore, the In the man's mind! Why, fool, I think

Christian snig-I am as clever as yourself,

gers. Let him At least as skilled to wake the elf

beware. Of jest and mockery in a wink. 480

I can dismiss with sneers as cheap

As yours this fabric of my own,

One banner of my mind o'erthrown

Just at my will. How true and deep

Is Carroll{#47} when his Alice cries: 485

"It's nothing but a pack of cards!"

There's the true refuge of the wise;

To overthrow the temple guards,

Deny reality.

For I speak And now 490

subtly. (I'll quote you Scripture anyhow)

What did the Sage mean when he wrote

(I am the Devil when I quote)

“The mere terrestrial-minded man

Knows not the Things of God, nor can 495

Their subtle meaning understand?”

A sage, I say, although he mentions

Perhaps the best of his inventions,

God.

Results of prac-For, at first, this practice leads 500

tice. The poet To holy thoughts (the holy deeds

abandons all to Precede success) and reverent gaze

find Truth. Upon the Ancient One of Days,

Beyond which fancy lies the Truth.

To find which I have left my youth, 505

All I held dear, and sit alone

Still meditating, on my throne

Of Kusha-grass, {#48} and count my beads,

Murmur my mantra, {#49} till recedes

The world of sense and thought — I sink 510 {PAGE 176}

To — what abyss's dizzy brink?
And fall! And I have ceased to think!
That is, have conquered and made still
Mind's lower powers by utter Will.

Nothing. The It may be that pure Nought will fail 515
Apotheosis of Quite to assuage the needs of thought;
Realism and But — who can tell me whether Nought
Idealism alike. Untried, will or will not avail?

Gayatri. Aum! Let us meditate aright {#50}
On that adorable One Light, 520
Divine Savitri! So may She
Illume our minds! So mote it be!

Is "The Soul I find some folks think me (for one)
of Osiris" a So great a fool that I disclaim
Hymn Book? Indeed Jehovah's hate for shame 525
How verse is That man to-day should not be weaned
written. Of worshipping so foul a fiend

Prayer. In presence of the living Sun,
And yet replace him oiled and cleaned
By the Egyptian Pantheon, 530
The same thing by another name.
Thus when of late Egyptian Gods
Evoked ecstatic periods
In verse of mine, you thought I praised
Or worshipped them — I stand amazed. 535
I merely wished to chant in verse
Some aspects of the Universe,
Summed up these subtle forces finely,
And sang of them (I think divinely)
In name and form: a fault perhaps — 540
Reviewers are such funny chaps!
I think that ordinary folk,
Though, understood the things I spoke.
For Gods, and devils too, I find
Are merely modes of my own mind! 545
The poet needs enthusiasm!
Verse-making is a sort of spasm,

Degeneration of the mind,
And things of that unpleasant kind. {PAGE 177}
So to the laws all bards obey 550
I bend, and seek in my own way
By false things to expound the real.
But never think I shall appeal
To Gods. What folly can compare
With such stupidity as prayer? 555

Marvellous an-some years ago I thought to try
swer to prayer. Prayer{#51} — test its efficacy.
Prayer and I fished by a Norwegian lake.
averages. “O God,” I prayed, “for Jesus’ sake
Grant thy poor servant all his wish! 560
For every prayer produce a fish!”
Nine times the prayer went up the spout,
And eight times — what a thumping trout!
(This is the only true fish-story
I ever heard — give God the glory!) 565
The thing seems cruel now, of course.

Still, it's a grand case of God's force!

But, modern Christians, do you dare

With common prudence to compare

The efficacy of prayer? 570

Who will affirm of Christian sages

That prayer can alter averages?

The individual case allows

Some chance to operate, and thus

Destroys its value quite for us. 575

So that is why I knit my brows

And think — and find no thing to say

Or do, so foolish as to pray.

“So much for this absurd affair {#52}

About” validity of prayer. 580

But back! Let once again address

Our minds to super-consciousness!

Are the results You weary me with proof enough

of meditation That all this meditation stuff

due to auto-Is self-hypnosis. Be it so! 585

hypnosis? Do you suppose I did not know?

Still, to be accurate, I fear

The symptoms are entirely strange.

If I were hard, I'd make it clear

That criticism must arrange 590 {PAGE 178}

An explanation different

For this particular event.

Though surely I may find it queer

That you should talk of self-hypnosis,

When your own faith so very close is 595

To similar experience;

Lies, in a word, beneath suspicion

To ordinary common sense

And logic's emery attrition.

I take, however, as before 600

Your own opinions, and demand

Some test by which to understand

Huxley's piano-talk,<<1>> and find

If my hypnosis may not score

A point against the normal mind. 605

(As you are pleased to term it, though!

I gather that you do not know;

Merely infer it.)

<<1. See his remarks upon the Rational piano, and the conclusions to which the evidence of its senses would lead it.>>

A test. The Here's a test!

artist's concen-What in your whole life is the best 610

tration on his Of all your memories? They say

work. You paint — I think you should one day

Take me to see your Studio —

Tell me, when all your work goes right,

Painted to match some inner light, 615

What of the outer world you know!

Surely, your best work always finds

Itself sole object of the mind's.

In vain you ply the brush, distracted

By something your have heard or acted. 620

Expect some tedious visitor —

Your eye runs furtive to the door;
Your hand refuses to obey;
You throw the useless brush away.
I think I hear the Word you say! 625

Yogi but a I practice then, with conscious power
more vigorous Watching my mind, each thought controlling,
artist. Indig-Hurling to nothingness, while rolling
nation of poet The thunders after lightning's flower, {PAGE 179}
suppressed by Destroying passion, feeling, thought, 630
Yogi and philo-The very practice you have sought
sopher alike. Unconscious, when you work the best.

I carry on one step firm-pressed
Further than you the path, and you
For all my trouble, comment: "True! 635
"Auto-hypnosis. Very quaint!" {#53}
No one supposes me a Saint — {#54}
Some Saints to wrath would be inclined
With such a provocation pecked!
But I remember and reflect 640

That anger makes a person blind,
And my own “Chittam” I’d neglect.
Besides, it’s you, and you, I find,
Are but a mode of my own mind.

Objectivity of But then you argue, and with sense; 645

universe not “I have this worthy evidence
discussed. That things are real, since I cease

The painter’s ecstasy of peace,
And find them all unchanged.” To-day
I cannot brush that doubt away; 650

It leads to tedious argument

Uncertain, in the best event:

Unless, indeed, I should invoke

The fourth dimension, clear the smoke

Psychology still leaves. This question 655

Needs a more adequate digestion.

Yet I may answer that the universe

Of meditation suffers less

From time’s insufferable stress

Than that of matter. On, thou puny verse! 660
Weak tide of rhyme! Another argument
Will block the railway train of blague you meant
To run me over with. This world
Or that? We'll keep the question furled.

Preferability of But, surely, (let me corner you!)
concentration- "You wish the painter-mood were true!" 666
state to the To leave the hateful world, and see
normal. Perish the whole Academy;
So you remain for ever sated.
On your own picture concentrated! 670 {PAGE 180}

Fifty years of But as for me I have a test
Europe worth Of better than the very best.
a cycle of "Respite finem!" Judge the end;
Cathay. The man, and not the child, my friend!
Method of First ecstasy of Pentecost, 675
Christ. The (You now perceive my sermon's text.)
poet a Chris-First leap to Sunward flings you vexed

tian. By glory of its own riposte

Back to your mind. But gathering strength

And nerve, you come (ah light!) at length 680

To dwell awhile in the caress

Of that strange super-consciousness.

After one memory — O abide!

Vivid Savitri lightning-eyed! —

Nothing is worth a thought beside. 685

One hint of Amrita{#55} to taste

And all earth's wine may run to waste!

For by this very means Christ gained{#56}

His glimpse into that world above

Which he denominated "Love." 690

Indeed I think the man attained

By some such means — I have not strained

Out mind by chance of sense or sex

To find a way less iron-brained

Determining direction "x;"{#57} 695

I know not if these Hindu methods

Be best ('tis no such life and death odds,

Since suffering souls to save or damn

Never existed). So I fall

Confessing: Well, perchance I am 700

Myself a Christian after all!

With reserva-So far at least. I must concede

tions. Deus in Christ did attain in every deed;

machina. Pon-Yet, being an illiterate man,

tius Pilate as a Not his to balance or to scan, 705

Surrey Magis-To call God stupid or unjust!

trate. He took the universe on trust;

He reconciled the world below

With that above; rolled eloquence

Steel-tired o'er reason's "why?" and "whence?" 710

Discarded all proportion just,

And thundered in our ears "I know,"

And bellowed in our brains "ye must." {PAGE 181}

Mystic mean-Such reservations — and I class

ing of Pente-Myself a Christian: let us pass 715

cost. Back to the text whose thread we lost,

And see what means this “Pentecost.”

Super-con- This, then, is what I deem occurred
sciousness is (According to our Saviour’s word)
the gift of the That all the Saints at Pentecost 720
Holy Ghost. Received the gift — the Holy Ghost;

Such gift implying, as I guess,

This very super-consciousness. {#59}

Miracles follow as a dower;

But ah! they used that fatal power 725

And lost the Spirit in the act.

This may be fancy or a fact;

At least it squares with super-sense

Or “spiritual experience.”

Poet not a You do not well to swell the list 730

materialist. Of horrid things to me imputed

Mohammed’s By calling me “materialist.”

ideas. At least this thought is better suited

To Western minds than is embalmed

Among the doctrines of Mohammed, 735

The dogma parthenogenetic<<1>>

As told me by a fat ascetic.

He said: “Your worthy friends may lack you late,

But learn how Mary was immaculate!”

I sat in vague expectant bliss. 740

<<1. Concerning conception of a virgin.>>

Verbatim re-The story as it runs is this:

port of Moslem (I quote my Eastern friend{#60} verbatim!)

account of the “The Virgin, going to the bath,

Annunciation Found a young fellow in her path,

And turned, prepared to scold and rate him! 745

‘How dare you be on me encroaching?’

The beautiful young gentleman,

With perfect courtesy approaching,

Bowed deeply, and at once began:

‘Fear nothing, Mary! All is well!’ 750

I am the angel Gabriel.’

She bared her right breast;” (query why?)

“The angel Gabriel let fly {PAGE 182}

Out of a silver Tube a Dart

Shooting God’s Spirit to her heart” — {#61} 755

This beats the orthodox Dove-Suitor!

What explanation could be cuter

Than — Gabriel with a pea-shooter?

Degradation of In such a conflict I stand neuter.

symbols. Es-But oh! mistake not gold for pewter! 760

sential identity The plain fact is: materialise

of all forms of What spiritual fact you choose,

existence. And all such turn to folly — lose

The subtle splendour, and the wise

Love and dear bliss of truth. Beware 765

Lest your lewd laughter set a snare

For any! Thus and only thus

Will I admit a difference

‘Twixt spirit and the things of sense.

What is the quarrel between us? 770

Why do our thoughts so idly clatter?

I do not care one jot for matter,

One jot for spirit, while you say

One is pure ether, one pure clay.

Practical ad-I've talked too long: you're very good — 775

vice. I only hope you've understood!

Remember that “conversion” lurks

Nowhere behind my words and works.

Go home and think! my talk refined

To the sheer needs of your own mind. 780

You cannot bring God in the compass

Of human thought? Up stick and thump ass!

Let human thought itself expand —

Bright Sun of Knowledge, in me rise!

Lead me to those exalted skies 785

To live and love and understand!

Paying no price, accepting nought —

The Giver and the Gift are one

With the Receiver — O thou Sun

Of thought, of bliss transcending thought, 790

Rise where division dies! Absorb

In glory of the glowing orb

Self and its shadow! {PAGE 183}

Christian Now who dares

mystics not Call me no Christian? And, who cares? 795

true Christians. Read; you will find the Master of Balliol,

What think ye Discarding Berkeley, Locke, and Paley, ‘ll

of Crowley? Resume such thoughts and label clear

His interlo- “My Christianity lies here!”

cutor dis-With such religion who finds fault? 800

missed, not Stay, it seems foolish to exalt

with a jest, but Religion to such heights as these,

with a warning. Refine the actual agonies

To nothings, lest the mystic jeer

“So logic bends its line severe 805

Back to my involuted curve!”

These are my thoughts. I shall not swerve.

Take them, and see what dooms deserve
Their rugged grandeur — heaven or hell?
Mind the dark doorway there! {#62} Farewell! 810

Poet yawns. How tedious I always find
That special manner of my mind!

Aum! Aum! let us meditate aright
On that adorable One Light,
Divine Savitri! So may She 815
Illume our minds! so mote it be!

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NOTES TO ASCENSION DAY AND PENTECOST

“Blind Chesterton is sure to err,
And scan my work in vain;
I am my own interpreter,
And I will make it plain.”

NOTE TO INTRODUCTION

{columns commence}

1 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

AN APPRECIATION

BY ALEISTER CROWLEY.<<1>>

<<1. The lamented decease of the above gentleman forbids all hope (save through the courtesy of Sir Oliver Lodge) of the appearance of the companion article. — A.C.>>

IT is a lamentable circumstance that so many colossal brains (W. H. Mallock, &c.) have been hitherto thrown away in attacking what is after all a problem of mere academic interest, the authorship of the plays our fathers accepted as those of Shakespeare. To me it seems of immediate and vital importance to do for Shakespeare what Verrall has done so ably for Euripides. The third tabernacle must be filled; Shaw and “the Human” must have their Superhuman companion. (This is not a scale: pithecanthropoid innuendo is to deprecated.) Till now — as I write the sun bursts forth suddenly from a cloud, as if heralding the literary somersault of the twentieth century — we have been content to accept Shakespeare as orthodox, with common sense; moral to a fault, with certain Rabelaisian leanings: a healthy tone (we say) pervades his work. Never believe it! The sex problem is his Speciality; a morbid decadence (so-called) is hidden i’ th’ heart o’ th’ rose. In other words, the divine William is the morning star to Ibsen’s dawn, and Bernard Shaw’s effulgence.

The superficial, the cynical, the misanthropic will demand proof of such a statement. Let it be our contemptuous indulgence to afford them what they ask.

May I premise that, mentally obsessed, monomaniac indeed, as we must now consider Shakespeare to have been on these points, he was yet artful enough to have concealed his {185A} advanced views — an imperative

necessity, if we consider the political situation, and the virginal mask under which Queen Bess hid the grotesque and hideous features of a Messaline. Clearly so, since but for this concealment even our Shakespearian scholars would have discovered so patent a fact. In some plays, too, of course, the poet deals with less dangerous topics. These are truly conventional, no doubt; we may pass them by; they are foreign to our purpose; but we will take that stupendous example of literary subterfuge — “King Lear.”<<WEH NOTE: All this is very well, and fun; but Crowley overlooks the obvious fact that Shakespeare wrote this play as propaganda. So effective was this “take” on the War of the Roses that it played in very earnest later under the Stuarts with Cromwell!>>

Let me digress to the history of my own conversion.

Syllogistically, — All great men (“e.g.” Shaw) are agnostics and subverters of morals. Shakespeare was a great man. Therefore Shakespeare was an agnostic and a subverter of morals.

“A priori” this is then certain. But —

Who killed Rousseau?

I, said Huxley

(Like Robinson Crusoe),

With arguments true, — so

I killed Rousseau!

Beware of “a priori!” Let us find our facts, guided in the search by “a priori” methods, no doubt; but the result will this time justify us.

Where would a man naturally hide his greatest treasure? In his most perfect treasure-house.

Where shall we look for the truest thought of a great poet? In his greatest poem.

What is Shakespeare's greatest play? "King Lear."

In "King Lear," then, we may expect the final statement of the poet's mind. The passage that first put me on the track of the amazing discovery for which the world has to thank me is to be found in Act I. Sc. iii. ll. 132-149: —

"This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, — often the surfeit of our own behaviour, — we make guilty {185B} of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under "ursa major;" so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. 'Sfoot! I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing."

If there is one sound philosophical dictum in the play, it is this. (I am not going to argue with astrologers in the twentieth century.) It is one we can test. On questions of morality and religion opinions veer; but if Shakespeare was a leader of thought, he saw through the humbug of the star-gazers; if not, he was a credulous fool; not the one man of his time, not a "debauched genius" (for Sir R. Burton in this phrase has in a sense anticipated me discovery) but a mere Elizabethan.

This the greatest poet of all time? Then we must believe that Gloucester was right, and that eclipses caused the fall of Lear! Observe that before this Shakespeare has had a sly dig or two at magic. In "King John," "My lord,

they say five moons were seen to-night” — but there is no eyewitness. So in “Macbeth.” In a host of spiritual suggestion there is always the rational sober explanation alongside to discredit the folly of the supernatural.

Shakespeare is like his own touchstone; he uses his folly as a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit.

Here, however, the mask is thrown off for any but the utterly besotted; Edmund’s speech stands up in the face of all time as truth; it challenges the acclamation of the centuries.

Edmund is then the hero; more, he is Shakespeare’s own portrait of himself; his ways are dark — (and, alas! his tricks are vain!) — for why? For the fear of the conventional world about him.

He is illegitimate: Shakespeare is no true child of that age, but born in defiance of it and its prejudices.

Having taken this important step, let us slew round the rest of the play to fit it. If it fits, the law of probability comes to our aid; every coincidence multiplies the chance of our correctness in ever increasing proportion. We shall see — and you may look up your Proctor — that if the stars are placed just so by chance not law, then also it may be possible that Shakespeare was the wool-combing, knock-kneed, camel-backed, church-going, plaster-of-Paris, {186A} stick-in-the-mud our scholars have always made him.

Edmund being the hero, Regan and Goneril must be the heroines. So nearly equal are their virtues and beauties that our poet cannot make up his mind which shall possess him — besides which, he wishes to drive home his arguments in favour of polygamy.

But the great theme of the play is of course filial duty; on this everything will turn. Here is a test:

“Whenever this question is discussed, let us see who speaks the language of sense, and who that of draggle-tailed emotionalism and tepid melodrama.”

In the first scene the heroines, who do not care for the old fool their father — as how could any sane women? Remember Shakespeare is here about to show the folly of filial love as such — feel compelled, by an act of gracious generosity to a man they despise, yet pity, to say what they think will please the dotard's vanity. Also no doubt the sound commercial instinct was touched by Lear's promise to make acres vary as words, and they determined to make a final effort to get some parsnips buttered after all.

Shakespeare (it is our English boast) was no long-haired squiggle self-ycept bard; but a business man — see Bishop Blougram's appreciation of him as such.

Shall we suppose him to have deliberately blackguarded in another his own best qualities?

Note, too, the simple honesty of the divine sisters! Others, more subtle, would have suspected a trap, arguing that such idiocy as Lear's could not be genuine — Cordelia, the Madame Humbert of the play, does so; her over-cleverness leaves her stranded: yet by a certain sliminess of dissimulation, the oiliness of frankness, the pride that apes humility, she “does” catch the best king going. Yet it avails her little. She is hanged like the foul Vivien she is.<<I use the word Vivien provisionally, pending the appearance of an essay to prove that Lord Tennyson was in secret an ardent reformer of our lax modern morals. No doubt, there is room for this. Vivien was perfectly right about the “cycle of strumpets and scoundrels whom Mr. Tennyson has set revolving round the figure of his central wittol,” and she was the only one with the courage to say so, and the brains to strip off the barbarous glitter from an idiotic and phantom chivalry.>>

Cordelia's farewell to her sisters shows up the characters of the three in strong relief. Cordelia — without a scrap of evidence to go on — accuses her sisters of hypocrisy and cruelty. (This could not have previously existed, or Lear would not have been deceived.) Regan gravely rebukes her; recommends, as it were, a course of Six Easy Lessons in Minding {186B} Her Own Business; and surely it was unparalleled insolence of the part of a dismissed girl to lecture her more favoured sister on the very point for

which she herself was at that moment being punished. It is the spite of baffled dissimulation against triumphant honesty. Goneril adds a word of positive advice. "You," she says in effect, "who prate of duty thus, see you show it to him unto whom you owe it."

That this advice is wasted is clear from Act V. Sc. iii., where the King of France takes the first trivial opportunity<<He leaves her in charge of Marshal Le Fer, whom alone he could trust to be impervious to her wiles, he being devoted to another; for, as an invaluable contemporary MS. has it, "Seccotine colle meme Le Fer.">> to be free of the vile creature he had so foolishly married.

Cordelia goes, and the sisters talk together. Theirs is the language of quiet sorrow for an old man's failing mind; yet a most righteous determination not to allow the happiness of the English people to depend upon his whims. Bad women would have rejoiced in the banishment of Kent, whom they already knew to be their enemy; these truly good women regret it. "Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment" (Act I. Sc. i, ll 304-5).

In Scene ii. Edmund is shown; he feels himself a man, more than Edgar: a clear-headed, brave, honourable man; but with no maggots. The injustice of his situation strikes him; he determines not to submit.<<This may be, but I think should not be, used as an argument to prove the poet an illegitimate son of Queen Elizabeth.>>

This is the attitude of a strong man, and a righteous one. Primogeniture is wrong enough; the other shame, no fault of his, would make the blood of any free man boil.

Gloucester enters, and exhibits himself as a prize fool by shouting in disjointed phrases what everybody knew. Great news it is, of course, and on discovering Edmund, he can think of nothing more sensible than to ask for more! "Kent banished thus! And France in choler parted! And the king gone to-night! subscrib'd his power! Confin'd to exhibition! All this done upon the gad! Edmund, how now! what news?" (Act I. Sc. ii. ll. 23-26).

Edmund “forces a card” by the simple device of a prodigious hurry to hide it. Gloucester gives vent to his astrological futilities, and falls to anxiomania in its crudest form, — “We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us disquietly to our graves” (Sc. ii. ll. 125-127).

Edmund, once rid of him, gives us the {187A} plainest sense we are likely to hear for the rest of our lives; then, with the prettiest humour in the world takes the cue of his father’s absurdity, and actually plays it on his enemy. Edgar’s leg is not so easily pulled — (“How long have you been a sectary astronomical?” ll. 169, 170) — and the bastard hero, taking alarm gets right down to business.

In Scene iii. we find Lear’s senile dementia taking the peculiarly loathsome forms familiar to alienists — this part of my subject is so unpleasant that I must skim over it; I only mention it to show how anxious Shakespeare is to show his hidden meaning, otherwise his naturally delicate mind would have avoided the depiction of such phenomena.

All this prepares us for Scene iv., in which we get a glimpse of the way Lear’s attendants habitually behave. Oswald, who treats Lear throughout with perfect respect, and only shows honest independence in refusing to obey a man who is not his master, is insulted in language worthier of a bargee than a king; and when he remonstrates in dignified and temperate language is set upon by the ruffanly Kent.

Are decent English people to complain when Goneril insists that this of thing shall not occur in a royal house? She does so, in language nobly indignant, yet restrained: Lear, in the hideous, impotent rage of senility, calls her — his own daughter — a bastard (no insult to her, but to himself or his wife, mark ye well!). Albany enters — a simple, orderly-minded man; he must not be confused with Cornwall, he is at the last Lear’s dog; yet even he in decent measured speech sides with his wife. Is Lear quieted? No! He utters the most horrible curse, not excepting that of Count Cenci, that a father ever pronounced. Incoherent threats succeed to the boilings-over of the hideous malice of a beastly mind; but a hundred knights are a hundred

knights, and a threat is a threat. Goneril had not fulfilled her duty to herself, to her people, had she allowed this monster of mania to go on.

I appeal to the medical profession; of one doctor will answer me that a man using Lear's language should be allowed control of a hundred armed ruffians [in the face of Kent's behaviour we know what weight to attach to Lear's defence: "Detested kite! thou liest" (I. iv. l. 286)], should ever be allowed outside a regularly appointed madhouse, I will cede the point, and retire myself into an asylum.

In fact, Lear is going mad; the tottering intellect, at no time strong ("tis the infirmity of age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself," I. i. ll. 296-7), is utterly cast down by drink and debauchery: he even sees it himself, and with a pointless bestiality from the Fool, fit companion for the — king — and in that word {187B} we see all the concentrated loathing of the true Shakespeare for a despotism, massed in one lurid flame, phantasmagoric horror, the grim First Act rolls down.

II.

Act II. Sc. i. adds little new to our thesis, save that in line 80 we see Gloucester (ignorant of his own son's handwriting!) accept the forged letter as genuine, as final proof, with not even the intervention of a Bertillon to excuse so palpable a folly, so egregious a crime. What father of to-day would disinherit, would hunt down to death, a beloved son, on such evidence? Or are we to take it that the eclipse gave proof unshakable of a phenomenon so portentous?

In Scene ii. we have another taste of Kent's gentlemanly demeanour; let our conventionalist interpreters defend this unwarrantable bullying if they dare! Another might be so gross, so cowardly; but not our greatest poet! A good portion of this play, as will be shown later, is devoted to a bitter assault upon the essentially English notion that the pugilist is the supreme

device of the Creator for furthering human happiness. (See “Cashel Byron’s Profession” for a similar, though more logical and better-worded, attack.) Coarse and violent language continues to disgrace Lear’s follower; only Gloucester, the unconscionable ass and villain of Scene i., has a word to say in his defence.

In Scene iii. we have a taste of Edgar’s quality. Had this despicable youth the consciousness of innocence, or even common courage, he had surely stood to his trial. Not he! He plays the coward’s part — and his disguise is not even decent.

In Scene iv. we are shown the heroic sisters in their painful task of restraining, always with the utmost gentleness of word and demeanour, the headstrong passions of the miserable king. Lear, at first quiet in stating his fancied wrongs “Reg.” ‘I am glad to see your highness.’ “Lear.” ‘Regan, I think you are; I know what reason I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad, I would divorce me from thy mother’s tomb, Sepulchring an adult’ress. (“to Kent”). O! are you free? Some other time for that. Beloved Regan, Thy sister’s naught: O Regan! she hath tied Sharp-tooth’d unkindness, like a vulture, here: (“Points to his heart”). I can scarce speak to thee; thou’lt not believe with how deprav’d a quality — O Regan!’ “Reg.” ‘I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope!’”) (ll. 130-139), an excusable speech, at the first hint that he is not to have it all his own way, falls a-cursing again like the veriest drab or scullion Hamlet ever heard.

Here is a man, deprived on just cause of {188A} half a useless company of retainers. Is this wrong (even were it wrong) such as to justify the horrible curses of ll. 164-168. “All the stor’d vengeance of heaven fall On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones, You taking airs, with lameness! You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames Into her scornful eyes!” With this he makes his age contemptible by the drivell-pathos of ll. 156-158, “Dear daughter, I confess that I am old; Age is unnecessary: on my knees I beg (‘Keeling’) That you’ll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food,” begging what none ever thought to deny him.

Yet such is the patience of Goneril that even when goaded by all this infamous Billingsgate into speech, her rebuke is the temperate and modest ll. 198-200. “Why not by the hand, sir? How have I offended? All’s not offence that indiscretion finds And dotage terms so.” If we ask a parallel for such meekness under insult, calumny, and foul abuse, we must seek it not in a human story, but a divine.

The heroines see that no half measures will do, and Lear is stripped of all the murderous retinue — what scum they are is shown by the fact that not one of them draws sword for him, or even follows him into the storm — for him in spite of all his loathsomeness, his hatred, his revengefulness — is Regan’s gentle and loving, “For his particular, I’ll receive him gladly.”

III.

In Act III. we have another illustration of the morality that passed current with the Tudors, and which only a Shakespeare had the courage to attack. Kent does not stick at treachery — he makes one gulp of treason — straining at the gnat of discipline, he swallows the camel of civil war.

It was then, and is even now, the practice of some — for example, the emigres of the French Revolution — to invite foreign invasion as a means of securing domestic reaction. The blackguardism implied is beyond language: Shakespeare was perhaps thinking of the proposal, in Mary’s reign, to react to Romanism by the aid of Spanish troops. But he will go further than this, will our greatest poet; it were ill that the life of even one child should atone for mere indignity or discomfort to another, were he the greatest in the realm. To-day, we all agree; we smile or sneer if any one should differ.

“King Lear got caught in the rain — let us go and kill a million men!” is an argument not much understood of Radical Clubs, and even Jingos would

pause, did they but take the precaution of indulging in a mild aperient before recording their opinions. {188B}

In Scenes iii., vi., and vii., Edmund, disguised beyond all measure with Gloucester's infamies, honourably and patriotically denounces him.

The other scenes depict the miseries which follow the foolish and the unjust; and Nemesis falls upon the ill-minded Gloucester. Yet Shakespeare is so appreciative of the virtue of compassion (for Shakespeare was, as I shall hope to prove one day, a Buddhist) that Cornwall, the somewhat cruel instrument of eternal Justice, is killed by his servant. Regan avenges her husband promptly, and I have little doubt that this act of excessive courtesy towards a man she did not love is the moral cause of her unhappy end.

I would note that we should not attempt to draw any opinions as to the author's design from the conversation of the vulgar; even had we not Carionus to show us what he thought.

IV.

Act IV. develops the plot and is little germane to our matter, save that we catch a glimpse of the unspeakably vile Cordelia, with no pity for her father's serious condition (though no doubt he deserved all he got, he was now harmless, and should have inspired compassion), hanging to him in the hope that he would now reverse his banishment and make her (after a bloody victory) sole heiress of great England.

And were any doubt left in our minds as to who really was the hero of the play, the partisanship of France should settle it. Shakespeare has never any word but ridicule for the French; never aught but praise of England and love for her: are we to suppose that in his best play he is to stultify all his other work and insult the English for the benefit of the ridiculed and hated Frenchman?

Moreover, Cordelia reckons without her host. The British bulldogs make short work of the invaders and rebels, doubtless with the connivance of the King of France, who, with great and praiseworthy acuteness, foresees that Cordelia will be hanged, thus liberating him from his “most filthy bargain”: there is but one alarum, and the whole set of scoundrels surrender. Note this well; it is not by brute force that the battle is won; for even if we exonerate the King of France, we may easily believe that the moral strength of the sisters cowed the French.

This is the more evident, since in Act V. Shakespeare strikes his final blow at the absurdity of the duel, when Edmund is dishonestly slain by the beast Edgar. Yet the poet’s faith is still strong: wound up as his muse is to tragedy, he retains in Edmund the sublime heroism, the simple honesty, of the {189A} true Christian; at the death of his beloved mistress he cries, “I was contracted to them both: all three

Now marry in an instant — “

At the moment of death his great nature (self-accusatory, as the finest so often are) asserts itself, and he forgives even the vilest of the human race, — “I pant for life: some good I mean to do Despite of mine own nature. <<This may merely mean “despite the fact that I am dying — though I am almost too weak to speak.” If so, the one phrase in the play which seems to refute our theory is disposed of. Execution of such criminals would be a matter of routine at the period of the play.>> Quickly send, Be brief in it, to the castle; for my writ Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia. Nay, send in time” (ll. 245-249).

And in that last supreme hour of agony he claims Regan as his wife, as if by accident; it is not the passionate assertion of a thing doubtful, but the natural reference to a thing well known and indisputable.

And in the moment of his despair; confronted with the dead bodies of the splendid sisters, the catafalque of all his hopes, he can exclaim in spiritual triumph over material disaster — the victory of a true man’s spirit over Fate

“Yet Edmund was beloved.”

Edgar is left alive with Albany, alone of all that crew; and if remorse could touch their brutal and callous souls (for the degeneration of the weakling, well-meaning Albany, is a minor tragedy), what hell could be more horrible than the dragging out of a cancerous existence in the bestial world of hate their hideous hearts had made, now, even for better men, for ever dark and gloomy, robbed of the glory of the glowing Goneril, the royal Regan, and only partially redeemed by the absence of the harlot Cordelia and the monster Lear.

V.

It may possibly be objected by the censorious, by the effete parasites of a grim conventionalism, that I have proved too much. Even by conventional standards Edmund, Goneril, and Regan appear angels. Even on the moral point, the sisters, instead of settling down to an enlightened and by no means overcrowded polygamy, prefer to employ poison. This is perhaps true, of Goneril at least; Regan is, if one may distinguish between star and star, somewhat the finer character.

This criticism is perhaps true in part; but I will not insult the intelligence of my readers. I will leave it to them to take the obvious step and work backwards to the re-exaltation of Lear, Cordelia, Edgar and company, to the heroic fields of their putty Elysium (putty, not {189B} Putney) in their newly-demonstrated capacity as “unnatural” sons, daughters, fathers, and so on.

But I leave it. I am content — my work will have been well done — if this trifling essay be accepted as a just installment towards a saner criticism of our holiest writers, a juster appreciation of the glories of our greatest poet, a {190A upper column breaks} possibility jejune yet assuredly historic attempt to place for the first time William Shakespeare on his

proper pedestal as an early disciple of Mr. George Bernard Shaw; and by consequence to carve myself a little niche in the same temple: the smallest contributions will be thankfully received. {190B upper column breaks out to full page for one line.}

NOTES TO ASCENSION DAY

{Columns resume}

1. “I flung out of chapel. {#1}” — Browning, “Xmas Eve,” III. last line.
3. “Venus’ Bower and Osiris’ Tomb.” {#2} — Crowley “Tannhauser.”
5. “God.” {#3} — Hebrew HB:Aleph-Lamed-Heh-Yod-Memfinal, Gen. iii. 5.
5. “gods.” {#4} — Hebrew HB:Aleph-Lamed-Heh-Yod-Memfinal, Gen. iii. 5.

The Revisers, seeing this most awkward juxtaposition, have gone yet one step lower and translated both words by “God.” In other passages, however, they have been compelled to disclose their own dishonesty and translate HB:Aleph-Lamed-Heh-Yod-Memfinal by “gods.”

For evidence of this the reader may look up such passages as Ex. xviii. 11; Deut. xxxii. 17; Ps. lxxxii. [in particular, where the word occurs twice, as also the word HB:Aleph-Lamed. But the revisers twice employ the word “God” and once the word “gods.” The A. V. has “mighty” in one case]; Gen. xx. 13, where again the verb is plural; Sam. xxviii. 13, and so on.

See the Hebrew Dictionary of Gesenius (trans. Tregelles), Bagster, 1859, “s.v.,” for proof that the Author is on the way to the true interpretation of these conflicting facts, as now established — see Huxley, H. Spencer, Kuenen, Reuss, Lippert, and others — and his orthodox translator’s infuriated snarls (in brackets) when he suspects this tendency to accept facts as facts.

6. “Soul went down.”{#5} — “The Questions of King Milinda,” 40-45, 48, 67, 86-89, 111, 132.

7. “The metaphysical lotus-eyed.”{#6} — Gautama Buddha.

10. “Childe Roland.”{#7} — Browning, “Dramatic Romances.”

11. “Two hundred thousand Trees.”{#8} — Browning wrote about 200,000 lines.

13. “Your Reverence.”{#9} — The imaginary Aunt Sally for the poetic cocoanut.<<Crowley confuses two common pastoral amusements — throwing wooden balls at cocoanuts and sticks at Aunt Sally.>>

16. ““God’s right use of it.””{#10} — “And many an eel, though no adept in god’s right reason for it, kept Gnawing his kidneys half a year.” — Shelley, “Peter Bell the Third.”

17. “One tree.”{#11} — Note the altered value of {190A} the metaphor, such elasticity having led Prof. Blumengarten to surmise them to be india-rubber trees.

27. ““Truth, that’s the gold.””(#12} — “Two Poets of Croisic,” clii. 1, and elsewhere.

28. ““I, you, or Simpkin.””{#13} — “Inn Album,” l. 143. “Simpkin” has nothing to do with the foaming grape of Eastern France.

36. “Aischulos.”{#14} — See Agamemnon (Browning’s translation), Preface.

40. “Aristobulus.”{#15} — May be scanned elsehow by pedants. Cf. Swinburne’s curious scansion: Aristophanes. But the scansion adopted here gives a more creditable rhyme.

42. GR:Beta-alpha-tau-rho-alpha-chi-omicron-mu-epsilon-omicron-mu-alpha-chi-iota-alpha.{#16} — Aristophanes Batrachoï.

46. “Mine of so many pounds — pouch even pence of it?”{#17} — This line was suggested to me by a large holder of Westralians.

47. “Something easier.”{#18} — “Christmas Eve and Easter Day.”

51. “Newton.”{#19} — Mathematician and physicist of repute.

51. “Faraday.”{#20} — See Dictionary of National Biography.

64. “I, of the Moderns, have alone Greek.”{#21} — As far as they would let me. I know some.

74. “Beard.”{#22} — ” 150. A Barba Senioris Sanctissimi pendet omnis ornatus omnium: & influentia; nam omnia appellantur ab illa barba, Influentia.

“151. His est ornatus omnium orantium: Influentie superiores & inferiores omnes respiciunt istam Influentiam.

“152. Ab ista influentia dependet vita omnium.

“153. Ab hac influentia dependent coeli & terra; pluviae beneplaciti; & alimenta omnium.

“154. Ab hac influentia venit providentia omnium. Ab hac influentia dependent omnes exercitus superiores & inferiores.

“155. Tredecim fontes olei magnificentiae boni, dependent a barba hujus influentiae gloriosae; & omnes emanant in Microprosopum.

“156. Ne dicas omnes; sed novem ex iis inveniuntur ad inflectenda judicia.

“157. Et quando haec influentia aequaliter pendet usque ad praecordia omnes Sancitates Sancitatum Sancitatis ab illa dependent. {190B}

“158. In istam influentiam extenditur expansio aporrhoeae supernae, quae est caput omnium capitum: quod non cognoscitur nec perficitur, quodque

non norunt nec superi, nec inferi: propterea omnia ab ista influentia dependent.

“159. In hanc barbam tria capita de quibus diximus, expandantur, & omnia consociantur in hac influentia, & inveniuntur in ea.

“160. Et propterea omnis ornatus ornatuum ab ista influentia dependent.

“161. Istaе literae, quae dependent ab hoc Seniore, omnes pendent in ista barba, & consociantur in ista influentia.

“162. Et pendent in ea ad stabiliendas literas alteras.

“163. Nisi enim illae literae ascenderent in Seniorem, reliquae istae literae non stabilirentur.

“164. Et propterea dicit Moses cum opus esset: Tetragrammaton, Tetragrammaton bis: & ita ut accentus distinguat utrumque.

“165. Certe enim ab influentia omnia dependent.

“166. Ab ista influentia ad reverentiam adiguntur superna & inferna, & flectuntur coram ea.

“167. Beatus ille, qui ad hac usque per tingit.

“Idra Suta, seu Synodus minor.” Sectio VI.

“496. “Forehead.”{#23} — Fons Cranii est frons ad visitandum: (Al. ad eradicandum) peccatoras.

“497. Et cum ista frons detegitur tunc excitantur Domini Judiciorum, contra illos qui non erubescunt in operibus suis.

“498. Haec frons ruborem habet roseum. Sed illo tempore, cum frons Senioris erga hanc frontem detegitur, haec apparent alba ut nix.

“499. Et illa hora vocatur Tempus beneplaciti pro omnibus.

“500. In libro Dissertationis Scholae Raf Jebha Senis dicitur: Frons est receptaculum frontis Senioris. Sin minus, litera Cheth inter duas reliquas interponitur, justa illud: (Num. xxiv. 17) HB:Vau-Mem-Heh-Tzaddifinal et confinget angulos Moab.

“501. Et alibi diximus, quod etiam vocetur HB:Nun-Tzaddi-Heh, literis vicinis permutatis: id est, superatio.

“502. Multae autem sunt Superationes: ita ut Superatio alia elevata sit in locum alium: & aliae dentur Superationes quae extenduntur in totum corpus.

“503. Die Sabbathi autem tempore precum pomeridianarum, ne excitentur judicia, detegitur frons Senioris Sanctissimi.

“504. Et omnia judicia subiguntur; & quamvis extent, tamen non exercentur. (Al. et sedantur.)

“505. Ab hac fronte dependent viginti quatuor tribunalia, pro omnibus illis, qui protervi sunt in operibus.

“506. Sicut scriptum est: (Ps. lxxii. 11.) Et dixerunt: quomodo sit Deus? Et estne scientia in excelso? {191A}

“507. At vero viginti saltem sunt. cur adduntur quatuor? nimirum respectu suppliciorum, tribunalium inferiorum, quae a supernis dependent.

“508. Remenent ergo viginti. Et propterea neminem supplicio capitali afficiunt, donec compleverit & ascenderit ad viginti annos; respectu viginti horum tribunalium.

“509. Sed in thesi nostra arcana docuimus, per ista respici viginti quatuor libros qui continentur in Lege.

“Idra Suta, seu Synodus minor.” Sectio XIIIv

77. “Chains.”{#24} — Sakka”h”a-di”tt”hi. Vi”k”iki”kkh”a, silabbata-paramasa, kama, patigha, rupaṛaga, arupaṛaga, mano, uddha”kk”a, avi”gg”a.

81. ““Who asks doth err.””{#25} — Arnold, “light of Asia.”

83. “You.”{#26} — You!

86. ““O’erleaps itself and falls on the other.””{#27} — “Macbeth,” I. vii. 27.

92. “English.”{#28} — This poem is written in English.

94. “I cannot write.”{#29} — This is not quite true. For instance: {8 lines in what looks like Tibetan lettering}

This, the opening stanza of my masterly poem on Ladak, reads: — “The way was long, and the wind was cold: the Lama was infirm and advanced in years; his prayer-wheel, to revolve which was his only pleasure, was carried by a disciple, an orphan.”

There is a reminiscence of some previous incarnation about this: European critics may possibly even identify the passage. But at least the Tibetans should be pleased.<<They were; thence the pacific character of the British expedition of 1904. — A. C.>> {191B}

97. “while their Buddha I attack.” — Many Buddhists think I fill the bill with the following remarks on —

PANSIL.{30}<<1>>

<<1. WEH NOTE: This essay may have been inspired by Blake’s argument between Satan and the Archangel — whereby Satan demonstrates that

Christ broke every one of the Ten Commandments.>>

Unwilling as I am to sap the foundations of the Buddhist religion by the introduction of Propyry's terrible catapult, Allegory. I am yet compelled by the more fearful ballista of Aristotle, Dilemma. This is the two-handed engine spoken of by the prophet Milton!<<"Lycidas," line 130.>>

This is the horn of the prophet Zeruiah, and with this am I, though no Syrian, utterly pushed, till I find myself back against the dead wall of Dogma. Only now realising how dead a wall that is, do I turn and try the effect of a hair of the dog that bit me, till the orthodox "literary"<<The school whose Buddhism is derived from the Canon, and who ignore the degradation of the professors of the religion, as seen in practice.>> school of Buddhists, as grown at Rangoon, exclaim with Lear: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is To have an intellect!" How is this? Listen, and hear!

I find myself confronted with the crux: that, a Buddhist, convinced intellectually and philosophically of the truth of the teaching of Gotama; a man to whom Buddhism is the equivalent of scientific methods of Thought; an expert in dialectic, whose logical faculty is bewildered, whose critical admiration is extorted by the subtle vigour of Buddhist reasoning; I am yet forced to admit that, this being so, the Five Precepts<<The obvious caveat which logicians will enter against these remarks is that Pansil is the Five Virtues rather than Precepts. Etymologically this is so. However, we may regard this as a clause on my side of the argument, not against it; for in my view these are virtues, and the impossibility of attaining them is the cancer of existence. Indeed, I support the etymology as against the futile bigotry of certain senile Buddhists of to-day. And, since it is the current interpretation of Buddhistic thought that I attack, I but show myself the better Buddhist in the act. — A. C.>> are mere nonsense. If the Buddha spoke scientifically, not popularly, not rhetorically, then his precepts are not his. We must reject them or we must interpret them. We must inquire: Are they meant to be obeyed? Or — and this is my theory — are they sarcastic and biting criticisms on existence, illustrations of the First Noble Truth; "reasons," as

it were, for the apotheosis of annihilation? I shall show that this is so. Let me consider them “precept upon precept,” if the introduction of the Hebrew visionary is not too strong meat for the Little Mary<<A catch word for the stomach, from J. M. Barrie’s play “Little Mary.”>> of a Buddhist audience. {192B}

THE FIRST PRECEPT.

This forbids the taking of life in any form.<<Fielding, in “The soul of a People,” has reluctantly to confess that he can find no trace of this idea in Buddha’s own work, and calls the superstition the “echo of an older Faith.” — A. C.>> What we have to note is the impossibility of performing this; if we can prove it to be so, either Buddha was a fool, or his command was rhetorical, like those of Yahweh to Job, or of Tannhauser to himself —

“Go! seek the stars and count them and explore!

Go! sift the sands beyond a starless sea!”

Let us consider what the words can mean. The “Taking of Life” can only mean the reduction of living protoplasm to dead matter: or, in a truer and more psychological sense, the destruction of personality.

Now, in the chemical changes involved in Buddha’s speaking this command, living protoplasm was changed into dead matter. Or, on the other horn, the fact (insisted upon most strongly by the Buddha himself, the central and cardinal point of his doctrine, the shrine of that Metaphysic which isolates it absolutely from all other religious metaphysic, which allies it with Agnostic Metaphysic) that the Buddha who had spoken this

command was not the same as the Buddha before he had spoken it, lies the proof that the Buddha, by speaking this command, violated it. More, not only did he slay himself; he breathed in millions of living organisms and slew them. He could not eat nor drink nor breathe without murder implicit in each act. Huxley cites the “pitiless microscopist” who showed a drop of water to the Brahmin who boasted himself “Ahimsa” — harmless. So among the “rights” of a Bhikkhu is medicine. He who takes quinine does so with the deliberate intention of destroying innumerable living beings; whether this is done by stimulating the phagocytes, or directly, is morally indifferent.

How such a fiend incarnate, my dear brother Ananda Maitriya, can call him “cruel and cowardly” who only kills a tiger, is a study in the philosophy of the mote and the beam!<<The argument that the “animals are our brothers” is merely intended to mislead one who has never been in a Buddhist country. The average Buddhist would, of course, kill his brother for five rupees, or less. — A. C. {WEH NOTE: This footnote is left floating at the bottom of the page without a text referent. Probably it goes here, with a typo in the form of an exclamation mark replacing the dagger that would have drawn it to this point.}>>

Far be it from me to suggest that this is a defence of breathing, eating, and drinking. By no means; in all these ways we bring suffering and death to others, as to ourselves. But since these are inevitable acts, since suicide would be a still more cruel alternative (especially in case something should subsist below mere Rupa), the command is not to achieve {192B} the impossible, the already violated in the act of commanding, but a bitter commentary on the foul evil of this aimless, hopeless universe, this compact of misery, meanness, and cruelty. Let us pass on.

THE SECOND PRECEPT.

The Second Precept is directed against theft. Theft is the appropriation to one's own use of that to which another has a right. Let us see therefore whether or no the Buddha was a thief. The answer of course is in the affirmative. For to issue a command is to attempt to deprive another of his most precious possession — the right to do as he will; that is, unless, with the predestinarians, we hold that action is determined absolutely, in which case, of course, a command is as absurd as it is unavoidable. Excluding this folly, therefore, we may conclude that if the command be obeyed — and those of Buddha have gained a far larger share of obedience than those of any other teacher — the Enlightened One was not only a potential but an actual thief. Further, all voluntary action limits in some degree, however minute, the volition of others. If I breathe, I diminish the stock of oxygen available on the planet. In those far distant ages when Earth shall be as dead as the moon is to-day, my breathing now will have robbed some being then living of the dearest necessity of life.

That the theft is minute, incalculably trifling, is no answer to the moralist, to whom degree is not known; nor to the scientist, who sees the chain of nature miss no link.

If, on the other hand, the store of energy in the universe be indeed constant (whether infinite or no), if personality be indeed delusion, then theft becomes impossible, and to forbid it is absurd. We may argue that even so temporary theft may exist; and that this is so is to my mind no doubt the case. All theft is temporary, since even a millionaire must die; also it is universal, since even a Buddha must breathe.

THE THIRD PRECEPT.

This precept, against adultery, I shall touch but lightly. Not that I consider the subject unpleasant — far from it! — but since the English section of my readers, having unclean minds, will otherwise find a fulcrum therein for their favourite game of slander. Let it suffice if I say that the Buddha — in

spite of the ridiculous membrane legend,<<Membrum virile illius in membrana inclusum esse aiunt, ne copulare posset.>> one of those foul follies which idiot devotees invent only too freely — was a confirmed and habitual adulterer. It {193A} would be easy to argue with Hegel-Huxley that he who thinks of an act commits it (“cf.” Jesus also in this connection, though he only knows the creative value of desire), and that since A and not-A are mutually limiting, therefore interdependent, therefore identical, he who forbids an act commits it; but I feel that this is no place for metaphysical hair-splitting; let us prove what we have to prove in the plainest way.

I would premise in the first place that to commit adultery in the divorce Court sense is not here in question.

It assumes too much proprietary right of a man over a woman, that root of all abomination! — the whole machinery of inheritance, property, and all the labyrinth of law.

We may more readily suppose that the Buddha was (apparently at least) condemning incontinence.

We know that Buddha had abandoned his home; true, but Nature has to be reckoned with. Volition is no necessary condition of offence. “I didn’t mean to” is a poor excuse for an officer failing to obey an order.

Enough of this — in any case a minor question; since even on the lowest moral grounds — and we, I trust, soar higher! — the error in question may be resolved into a mixture of murder, theft, and intoxication. (We consider the last under the Fifth Precept.) THE FOURTH PRECEPT.

Here we come to what in a way is the fundamental joke of these precepts. A command is not a lie, of course; possibly cannot be; yet surely an allegorical order is one in essence, and I have no longer a shadow of a doubt that these so-called “precepts” are a species of savage practical joke.

Apart from this there can hardly be much doubt, when critical exegesis has done its damndest on the Logia of our Lord, that Buddha did at some time commit himself to some statement. “(Something called) Consciousness exists” is, said Huxley, the irreducible minimum of the pseudo-syllogism, false even for an enthymeme, “Cogito, ergo sum!” This proposition he bolsters up by stating that whoso should pretend to doubt it, would thereby but confirm it. Yet might it not be said “(something called) Consciousness appears to itself to exist,” since Consciousness is itself the only witness to that confirmation? Not that even now we can deny some kind of existence to consciousness, but that it should be a more real existence than that of a reflection is doubtful, incredible, even inconceivable. If by consciousness we mean the normal consciousness, it is definitely untrue, since the {193B} Dhyanic consciousness includes it and denies it. No doubt “something called” acts as a kind of caveat to the would-be sceptic, though the phrase is bad, implying a “calling.” But we can guess what Huxley means.

No doubt Buddha’s scepticism does not openly go quite as far as mine — it must be remembered that “scepticism” is merely the indication of a possible attitude, not a belief, as so many good fool folk think; but Buddha not only denies “Cogito, ergo sum”; but “Cogito, ergo non sum.” See “Sabbasava Sutta.” par. 10.<<Quoted below, “Science and Buddhism,” note.>>

At any rate Sakkyaditthi, the delusion of personality, is in the very forefront of his doctrines; and it is this delusion that is constantly and inevitably affirmed in all normal consciousness. That Dhyanic thought avoids it is doubtful; even so, Buddha is here represented as giving precepts to ordinary people. And if personality be delusion, a lie is involved in the command of one to another. In short, we all lie all the time; we are compelled to it by the nature of things themselves — paradoxical as that seems — and the Buddha knew it!

THE FIFTH PRECEPT.

At last we arrive at the end of our weary journey — surely in this weather we may have a drink! East of Suez,<<“Ship me somewhere East of Suez, where a man can raise a thirst.” — R. KIPLING.>> Trombone-Macaulay (as I may surely say, when Browning writes Banjo-Byron<<“While as for Quip Hop o’ my Thumb there, Banjo-Byron that twangs the strum-strum there.” — BROWNING, “Pachiarotto” (said of A. Austin).>>) tells us, a man may raise a Thirst. No, shrieks the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the Enlightened One, do not drink! It is like the streets of Paris when they were placarded with rival posters —

Ne buvez pas de l’Alcool!

L’Alcool est un poison!

and

Buvez de l’Alcool!

L’Alcool est un aliment!

We know now that alcohol is a food up to a certain amount; the precept, good enough for a rough rule as it stands, will not bear close inspection. What Buddha really commands, with that grim humour of his, is: Avoid Intoxication.

But what is intoxication? unless it be the loss of power to use perfectly a truth-telling set of faculties. If I walk unsteadily it is owing to nervous lies — and so for all the phenomena of drunkenness. But a lie involves the assumption {194A} of some true standard, and this can nowhere be found.

A doctor would tell you, moreover, that all food intoxicates: all, here as in all the universe, of every subject and in every predicate, is a matter of degree.

Our faculties never tell us true; our eyes say flat when our fingers say round; our tongue sends a set of impression to our brain which our hearing declares non-existent — and so on.

What is this delusion of personality but a profound and centrally-seated intoxication of the consciousness? I am intoxicated as I address these words; you are drunk — beastly drunk! — as you read them; Buddha was as drunk as a British officer when he uttered his besotted command. There, my dear children, is the conclusion to which we are brought if you insist that he was serious!

I answer No! Alone among men then living, the Buddha was sober, and saw Truth. He, who was freed from the coils of the great serpent Theli coiled round the universe, he knew how deep the slaver of that snake had entered into us, infecting us, rotting our very bones with poisonous drunkenness. And so his cutting irony — drink no intoxicating drinks!

—

When I go to take Pansil,<<To “take Pansil” is to vow obedience to these Percepts.>> it is in no spirit of servile morality; it is with keen sorrow gnawing at my heart. These five causes of sorrow are indeed the heads of the serpent of Desire. Four at least of them snap their fangs on me in and by virtue of my very act of receiving the commands, and of promising to obey them; if there is a little difficulty about the fifth, it is an omission easily rectified — and I think we should all make a point about that; there is great virtue in completeness.

Yes! Do not believe that the Buddha was a fool; that he asked men to perform the impossible or the unwise.<<I do not propose to dilate on the moral truth which Ibsen has so long laboured to make clear: that no hard and fast rule of life can be universally applicable. Also, as in the famous case of the lady who saved (successively) the lives of her husband, her

father, and her brother, the precepts clash. To allow to die is to kill — all this is obvious to the most ordinary thinkers. These precepts are of course excellent general guides for the vulgar and ignorant, but you and I, dear reader, are wise and clever, and know better. Nichtwar?

Excuse my being so buried in “dear Immanuel Kant” (as my friend Miss Br. c. {A.C.SUB NOTE: A fast woman who posed as a bluestocking.} would say) that this biting and pregnant phrase slipped out unaware. As a rule, of course, I hate the introduction of foreign tongues into an English essay. — A. C.>> Do not believe that the sorrow of existence is so trivial that easy rules {194B} easily interpreted (as all Buddhists do interpret the Precepts) can avail against them; do not mop up the Ganges with a duster; nor stop the revolution of the stars with a lever of lath.

Awake, awake only! let there be ever remembrance that Existence is sorrow, sorrow by the inherent necessity of the way it is made; sorrow not by volition, not by malice, not by carelessness, but by nature, by ineradicable tendency, by the incurable disease of Desire, its Creator, is it so, and the way to destroy it is by uprooting of Desire; nor is a task so formidable accomplished by any threepenny-bit-in-the-plate-on-Sunday morality, the “deceive others and self-deception will take care of itself” uprightness, but by the severe roads of austere self-mastery, of arduous scientific research, which constitute the Noble Eightfold Path.

101-105. “There’s one ... Six Six Six.” {#31} — This opinion has been recently (and most opportunely) confirmed by the Rev. Father Simons, Roman Catholic Missionary (and head of the Corner in Kashmir Stamps), Baramulla, Kashmir.

106. “Gallup.” {#32} — for information apply to Mr. Sidney Lee.

111. ““It is the number of a Man.”” {#33} — Rev. xlii. 18.

117. “Fives.” {#34} — Dukes.

122. (“Elsewhere.”) {#35} — See “Songs of the Spirit” and other works.

128. “the Qabalistic Balm.”{#36} — May be studied in “The Kabbalah (“sic”) Unveiled” (Redway). It is much to be wished that some one would undertake the preparation of an English translation of Rabbi Jischak Ben Loria’s “De Revolutionibus Animarum,” and of the book “Beth Elohim.”

139. “Cain.”{#37} — Gen. iv. 8.

152. “Hunyadi.”{#38} — Hunyadi Janos, a Hungarian table water.

161. “Nadi.”{#39} — For this difficult subject refer to the late Swami Vivekananda’s “Raja Yoga.”

167. “Tom Bond Bishop.”{#40} — Founder of the “Children’s Scripture Union” (an Association for the Dissemination of Lies among Young People) and otherwise known as a philanthropist. His relationship to the author (that of uncle) has procured him this rather disagreeable immortality.

He was, let us hope, no relation to George Archibald Bishop, the remarkable preface to whose dreadfully conventionally psychopathic works is this.

PREFACE<<1>>

<<1. To a collection of MSS. illustrating the “Psychopathia Sexualis” of von Kraft-Ebling. The names of the parties have been changed.>>

In the fevered days and nights under the Empire that perished in the struggle of 1870, {195A} that whirling tumult of pleasure, scheming, success, and despair, the minds of men had a trying ordeal to pass through. In Zola’s “La Curee” we see how such ordinary and natural characters as those of Saccard, Maxime, and the incestuous heroine, were twisted and

distorted from their normal sanity, and sent whirling into the jaws of a hell far more affrayant than the mere cheap and nasty brimstone Sheol which is the Shibboleth for the dissenter, and with which all classes of religious humbug, from the Pope to the Salvation ranter, from the Mormon and the Jesuit to that mongrel mixture of the worst features of both, the Plymouth Brother, have scared their illiterate, since hypocrisy was born, with Abel, and spiritual tyranny, with Jehovah! Society, in the long run, is eminently sane and practical; under the Second Empire it ran mad. If these things are done in the green tree of Society, what shall be done in the dry tree of Bohemianism? Art always has a suspicion to fight against; always some poor mad Max Nordau is handy to call everything outside the kitchen the asylum. Here, however, there is a substratum of truth. Consider the intolerable long roll of names, all tainted with glorious madness. Baudelaire the diabolist, debauchee of sadism, whose dreams are nightmares, and whose waking hours delirium; Rollinat the necrophile, the poet of phthisis, the anxiomaniac; Peladan, the high priest — of nonsense; Medes, frivolous and scoffing sensualist; besides a host of others, most alike in this, that, below the cloak of madness and depravity, the true heart of genius burns. No more terrible period than this is to be found in literature; so many great minds, of which hardly one comes to fruition; such seeds of genius, such a harvest of — whirlwind! Even a barren waste of sea is less saddening than one strewn with wreckage.

In England such wild song found few followers of any worth or melody. Swinburne stands on his solitary pedestal above the vulgar crowds of priapistic plagiarists; he alone caught the fierce frenzy of Baudelaire's brandied shrieks, and his First Series of Poems and Ballads was the legitimate echo of that not fierier note. But English Art as a whole was unmoved, at any rate not stirred to any depth, by this wave of debauchery. The great thinkers maintained the even keel, and the windy waters lay not for their frailer barks to cross. There is one exception of note, till this day unsuspected, in the person of George Archibald Bishop. In a corner of Paris this young poet (for in his nature the flower of poesy did spring, did even take root and give some promise of a brighter bloom, till stricken and blasted in later years by the lightning of his own sins) was steadily writing day after day, night after {195B} night, often working forty hours at a time,

work which he destined to entrance the world. All England should ring with his praises; by-and-by the whole world should know his name. Of these works none of the longer and more ambitious remains. How they were lost, and how those fragments we possess were saved, is best told by relating the romantic and almost incredible story of his life.

The known facts of this life are few, vague, and unsatisfactory; the more definite statements lack corroboration, and almost the only source at the disposal of the biographer is the letters of Mathilde Doriac to *Mdme. J. S.*, who has kindly placed her portfolio at my service. A letter dated October 15, 1866, indicates that our author was born on the 23rd of that month. The father and mother of George were, at least on the surface, of an extraordinary religious turn of mind. Mathilde's version of the story, which has its source in our friend himself, agrees almost word for word with a letter of the Rev. Edw. Turle to Mrs. Cope, recommending the child to her care. The substance of the story is as follows.

The parents of George carried their religious ideas to the point of never consummating their marriage!<<Will it be believed that a clergyman (turned Plymouth Brother and schoolmaster) actually made an identical confession to a boy of ten years old?>> This arrangement does not seem to have been greatly appreciated by the wife; at least one fine morning she was found to be enceinte. The foolish father never thought of the hypothesis which commends itself most readily to a man of the world, not to say a man of science, and adopted that of a second Messiah! He took the utmost pains to conceal the birth of the child, treated everybody who came to the house as an emissary of Herod, and finally made up his mind to flee into Egypt! Like most religious maniacs, he never had an idea of his own, but distorted the beautiful and edifying events of the Bible into insane and ridiculous ones, which he proceeded to plagiarise.

On the voyage out the virgin mother became enamoured, as was her wont, of the nearest male, in this case a fellow-traveller. He, being well able to support her in the luxury which she desired, easily persuaded her to leave the boat with him by stealth. A small sailing vessel conveyed them to Malta, where they disappeared. The only trace left in the books of earth records

that this fascinating character was accused, four years later, in Vienna, of poisoning her paramour, but thanks to the wealth and influence of her newer lover, she escaped.

The legal father, left by himself with a squalling child to amuse, to appease in his tantrums, {196A} and to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, was not a little perplexed by the sudden disappearance of his wife. At first he supposed that she had been translated, but, finding that she had not left the traditional mantle behind her, he abandoned this supposition in favour of quite a different, and indeed a more plausible one. He now believed her to be the scarlet woman in the Apocalypse, with variations. On arrival in Egypt he hired an old native nurse, and sailed for Odessa. Once in Russia he could find Gog and Magog, and present to them the child as Antichrist. For he was now persuaded that he himself was the First Beast, and would ask the sceptic to count his seven heads and ten horns. The heads, however, rarely totted up accurately!

At this point the accounts of Mr. Turle and Mathilde diverge slightly. The cleric affirms that he was induced by a Tartar lady, of an honourable and ancient profession, to accompany her to Tibet “to be initiated into the mysteries.” He was, of course, robbed and murdered with due punctuality, in the town of Kiev. Mathilde’s story is that he travelled to Kiev on the original quest, and died of typhoid or cholera. In any case, he died at Kiev in 1839. This fixes the date of the child’s birth at 1837. His faithful nurse conveyed him safely to England, where his relatives provided for his maintenance and education.

With the close of this romantic chapter in his early history we lose all reliable traces for some years. One flash alone illumines the darkness of his boyhood; in 1853, after being prepared for confirmation, he cried out in full assembly, instead of kneeling to receive the blessing of the officiating bishop, “I renounce for ever this idolatrous church;” and was quietly removed.

He told Mathilde Doriac that he had been to Eton and Cambridge — neither institution, however, preserves any record of such admission. The

imagination of George, indeed, is tremendously fertile with regard to events in his own life. His own story is that he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1856, and was sent down two years later for an article which he had contributed to some University or College Magazine. No confirmation of any sort is to be found anywhere with regard to these or any other statements of our author. There is however, no doubt that in 1861 he quarrelled with his family; went over to Paris, where he settled down, at first, like every tufthead, somewhere in the Quarter Latin; later, with Mathilde Doriac, the noble woman who became his mistress and held to him through all the terrible tragedy of his moral, mental, and physical life, in the Rue du Faubourg-Poissonniere. At his house there the rightful scene {196B} of '68 took place, and it was there too that he was apprehended after the murders which he describes so faithfully in "Abysmos." He had just finished this poem with a shriek of triumph, and had read it through to the appalled Mathilde "avec des yeux de flamme et de gestes incoherentes," when foaming at the mouth, and "hurlant de blasphemes indicibles," he fell upon her with extraordinary violence of passion; the door opened, officers appeared, the arrest was effected. He was committed to an asylum, for there could be no longer any doubt of his complete insanity; for three weeks he had been raving with absinthe and satyriasis. He survived his confinement no long time; the burning of the asylum with its inmates was one of the most terrible events of the war of 1870. So died one of the most talented Englishmen of his century, a man who for wide knowledge of men and things was truly to be envied, yet one who sold his birthright for a mess of bestlier pottage than ever Esau guzzled, who sold soul and body to Satan for sheer love of sin, whose mere lust of perversion is so intense that it seems to absorb every other emotion and interest. Never since God woke light from chaos has such a tragedy been unrolled before men, step after step toward the lake of Fire!

At his house all his writings were seized, and, it is believed, destroyed. The single most fortunate exception is that of a superbly jewelled writing-case, now in the possession of the present editor, in which were found the MSS. which are here published. Mathilde, who knew how he treasured its contents, preserved it by saying to the officer, "But, sir, that is mine." On opening this it was found to contain, besides these MSS., his literary will.

All MSS. were to be published thirty years after his death, not before. He would gain no spurious popularity as a reflection of the age he lived in. "Tennyson," he says, "will die before sixty years are gone by: if I am to be beloved of men, it shall be because my work is for all times and all men, because it is greater than all the gods of chance and change, because it has the heart of the human race beating in every line." This is a patch of magenta to mauve, undoubtedly; but — ! The present collection of verses will hardly be popular; if the lost works turn up, of course it may be that there may be found "shelter for songs that recede." Still, even here, one is, on the whole, more attracted than repelled; the author has enormous power, and he never scruples to use it, to drive us half mad with horror, or, as in his earlier most exquisite works, to move us to the noblest thoughts and deeds. True, his debt to contemporary writers is a little obvious here and there; but these {197A} are small blemishes on a series of poems whose originality is always striking, and often dreadful, in its broader features.

We cannot leave George Bishop without a word of inquiry as to what became of the heroic figure of Mathilde Doriac. It is a bitter task to have to write in cold blood the dreadful truth about her death. She had the misfortune to contract, in the last few days of her life with him, the same terrible disease which he describes in the last poem of his collection. This shock, coming so soon after, and, as it were, as an unholy perpetual reminder of the madness and sequestration of her lover, no less than of his infidelity, unhinged her mind, and she shot herself on July 5, 1869. Her last letter to Madame J— S— is one of the tenderest and most pathetic ever written. She seems to have been really loved by George, in his wild, infidel fashion: "All Night" and "Victory," among others, are obviously inspired by her beauty; and her devotion to him, the abasement of soul, the prostitution of body, she underwent for and with him, is one of the noblest stories life has known. She seems to have dived with him, yet ever trying to raise his soul from the quagmire; if God is just at all, she shall stand more near to His right hand than the vaunted virgins who would soil no hem of vesture to save their brother from the worm that dieth not!

The Works of George Archibald Bishop will speak for themselves; it would be both impertinent and superfluous in me to point out in detail their

many and varied excellences, or their obvious faults. The “raison d’etre,” though, of their publication, is worthy of especial notice. I refer to their psychological sequence, which agrees with their chronological order. His life-history, as well as his literary remains, gives us an idea of the progression of diabolism as it really is; not as it is painted. Note also, (1) the increase of selfishness in pleasure, (2) the diminution of his sensibility to physical charms. Pure and sane is his early work; then he is carried into the outer current of the great vortex of Sin, and whirls lazily through the sleepy waters of mere sensualism; the pace quickens, he grows fierce in the mysteries of Sapphism and the cult of Venus Aversa with women; later of the same forms of vice with men, all mingled with wild talk of religious dogma and a general exaltation of Priapism at the expense, in particular, of Christianity, in which religion, however, he is undoubtedly a believer till the last (the pious will quote James ii. 19, and the infidel will observe that he died in an asylum); then the full swing of the tide catches him, the mysteries of death become more and more an obsession, and he is flung headlong into Sadism, Necrophilia, {197B} all the maddest, fiercest vices that the mind of fiends ever brought up from the pit. But always to the very end his power is unexhausted, immense, terrible. His delirium does not amuse; it appals! A man who could conceive as he did must himself have had some glorious chord in his heart vibrating to the eternal principle of Boundless Love. That this love was wrecked is for me, in some sort a relative of his, a real and bitter sorrow. He might have been so great! He missed Heaven! Think kindly of him!

169. “Correctly rhymes.”{#41} — Such lines, however noble in sentiment, as: “A bas les Anglais! The Irish up!” will not be admitted to the competition. Irish is accented on the penultimate — bad cess to the bloody Saxons that made it so!

The same with Tarshish (see Browning, “Pippa Passes,” II., in the long speech of Blouphocks) and many others.

173. “The liar Copleston.”{#42}<<Copies were sent to any living persons mentioned in the “Sword of Song,” accompanied by the following letter:
Letters and Telegrams: BOLESKINE FOYERS is sufficient address.

Bills, Writs, Summonses, etc.: CAMP XI., THE BALTORO GLACIER,
BALTISTAN.

O Millionaire! My lord Marquis,

Mr. Editor! My lord Viscount,

Dear Mrs. Eddy, My lord Earl,

Your Holiness the Pope! My lord,

Your Imperial Majesty! My lord Bishop,

Your Majesty! Reverend sir,

Your Royal Highness! Sir,

Dear Miss Corelli, Fellow,

Your Serene Highness! Dog!

My lord Cardinal, Mr. Congressman,

My lord Archbishop, Mr. Senator,

My lord Duke, Mr. President,

(or the feminine of any of these), as shown

by underlining it,

Courtesy demands, in view of the

(“a”) tribute to your genius

(“b”) attack on your (1) political

(2) moral

(3) social

(4) mental

(5) physical character

(“c”) homage to your grandeur

(“d”) reference to your conduct

(“e”) appeal to your better feelings

on page — of my masterpiece, “The Sword of Song,” that I should send you a copy, as I do herewith, to give you an opportunity of defending yourself against my monstrous assertions, thanking me for the advertisement, or — in short, replying as may best seem to you to suit the case.

Your humble, obedient servant,

ALEISTER CROWLEY.>> — Bishop of Calcutta. {198A} While holding the see of Ceylon he wrote a book in which “Buddhism” is described as consisting of “devil-dances.” Now, when a man, in a position to know the facts, writes a book of the subscription-cadging type, whose value for this purpose depends on the suppression of these facts, I think I am to be commended for my moderation in using the term “liar.”

212. — “Ibsen.”{#43} — Norwegian dramatist. This and the next sentence have nineteen distinct meanings. As, however, all (with one doubtful exception) are true, and taken together synthetically connote my concept, I have let the passage stand.

219. “I was Lord Roberts, he De Wet.”{#44} — “Vide” Sir A. Conan doyle’s masterly fiction, “The Great Boer War.”

222. “Hill”.{#45} — An archaic phrase signifying the kopje.

223. “Ditch.”{#46} — Probably an obsolete slang term for spruit.

273. “Some.”{#47} — The reader may search modern periodicals for this theory.

282. “The Timolian.”{#48} — Timolus, who decided the musical contest between Pan and Apollo in favour of the latter.

321. “As masters teach.”{#49} — Consult Vivekananda, “op. cit.,” or the “Hathayoga Pradipika.” Unfortunately, I am unable to say where (or even whether) a copy of this latter work exists.

331, 332. “Stand.” — “(Stephen) or sit (Paul).”{#50} — Acts vii. 36; Heb. xii. 2.

337. “Samadhi-Dak.”{#51} — “Ecstasy-of-meditation mail.”

338. “Maha-Meru.”{#52} — The “mystic mountain” of the Hindus. See Southery’s “Curse of Kehama.”

339. “Gaurisankar.”{#53} — Called also Chomokankar, Devadhunga, and Everest.

341. Chogo.{#54} — The Giant. This is the native name of “K2”; or Mount Godwin-Austen, as Col. Godwin-Austen would call it. It is the second highest known mountain in the world, as Devadhunga is the first.

356. “the history of the West.”{#55} —

De Acosta (Jose) Natural and Moral History of the Indies.

Alison, Sir A... History of Scotland.

Benzoni... . History of the New World.

Buckle... . History of Civilisation.

Burton, J. H... History of Scotland.

Carlyle... . History of Frederick the Great.

Carlyle... . Oliver Cromwell.

Carlyle... . Past and Present.

Cheruel, A... . Dictionnaire historique de la France.

Christian, P... Historie de la Magie {198B}

Clarendon, Ld... History of the Great Rebellion.

De Comines, P... Chronicle.

Edwards, Bryan. . History of the British Colonies in the W. Indies.

Elton, C... . Origins of English History.

Erdmann... . History of Philosophy. Vol. II.

Froude... . History of England.

Fyffe, C. A... History of Modern Europe.

Gardiner, S. R. . History of the Civil War in England.

Gibbon... . Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

Green, J. R... A History of the English People.

Guizot... . Historie de la Civilisation.

Hallam, H... . State of Europe in the Middle Ages.

Hugo, V... . Napoleon le Petit.

Innes, Prof. C. . Scotland in the Middle Ages.

Kingscote... . History of the War in the Crimea.

Levi, E... . History de la Magie.

Macaulay, Ld... History of England.

McCarthy, J... A History of our Own Times.

Maistre, Jos... Oeuvres.

Michelet... . Historie des Templiers.

Migne, Abbe... Oeuvres.

Montalembert... The Monks of the West.

Morley, J... . Life of Mr. Gladstone.

Motley... . History of the Dutch Republic.

Napier... . History of the Peninsular War.

Prescott... . History of the Conquest of Mexico.

Prescott... . History of the Conquest of Peru.

Renan... . Vie de Jesus.

Robertson, E. W. . Historical Essays.

Roseberry, Ld... Napoleon.

Shakespeare... Histories.

Society for the

Propagation

of Religious

Truth... . Transactions, Vols. I. - DCLXVI.

Stevenson, R. L. . A Footnote to History.

Thornton, Ethel—

red, Rev... . History of the Jesuits.

Waite, A. E... The Real History of the Rosicrucians.

Wolseley, Ld... Marlborough.

The above works and many others of less importance were carefully consulted by the Author before passing these lines for the press. Their substantial accuracy is further guaranteed by the Professors of History at Cambridge, Oxford, Berlin, Harvard, Paris, Moscow, and London. {199A}

336. “Shot his Chandra.”{#56} — Anglice, shot the moon.

380. “The subtle devilish omission.”{#57} — But what are we to say of Christian dialecticians who quote “All things work together for good” out of its context, and call this verse “Christian optimism?” See Caird’s “Hegel.”

Hegel knew how to defend himself, though. As Goethe wrote of him:

“They thought the master too

Inclined to fuss and finick.

The students’ anger grew

To frenzy Paganinic.<<Paganini, a famous violinist.>>

They vowed to make him rue

His work in Jena's clinic.

They came, the unholy crew,

The mystic and the cynic:

He had scoffed at God's battue,

The flood for mortal's sin — Ichthyosaurian Waterloo!

They eyed the sage askew;

They searched him through and through

With violet rays actinic.

They asked him 'Wer bist du?'

He answered slowly 'Bin ich?'"

387. "The Fish." {#58} — Because of GR:iota-chi-theta-epsilon-sigma, which means Fish, And very aptly symbolises Christ. — "Ring and Book" (The Pope), ll. 89, 90.

395. "Dharma." {#59} — Consult the Tripitaka.

409. "I cannot trace the chain." {#60} — "How vain, indeed, are human calculations!" — "the Autobiography of a Flea," p. 136.

412. "Table-thing." {#61} — "Ere the stuff grow a ring-thing right to wear." — "The Ring and the Book," i. 17.

"This pebble-thing, o' the boy-thing."

— CALVERLEY, “The Cock and the Bull.”

442. “Caird.”{#62} — See his “Hegel.”

446. “Says Huxley.”{#63} — See “Ethics and Evolution.”

459. “Igdrasil.”{#64} — The Otz Chimm of the Scandinavians.

467. “Ladies’ League.”{#65} — Mrs. J. S. Crowley says: “The Ladies’ League Was Formed For The Promotion And Defence Of The Reformed Faith Of The Church Of England.” (The capitals are hers.) I think we may accept this statement. She probably knows, and has no obvious reasons for misleading.

487. “Sattva.”{#66} — The Buddhists, denying an Atman or Soul (an idea of changless, eternal, knowledge, being, and bliss) represent the fictitious Ego of a man (or a dog) as a temporary agglomeration of particles. Reincarnation only knocks off, as it were, some of the corners of the mass, so that for several births the Ego is constant within limits; hence the possibility of the “magical memory.” The “Sattva” is this agglomeration. See my {199B} “Science and Buddhism,” “infra,” for a full discussion of this point.

518. “And.”{#67} — Note the correct stress upon this word. Previously, Mr. W. S. Gilbert has done this in his superb lines:

“Except the plot of freehold land

That held the cot, and Mary, and —”

But his demonstration is vitiated by the bad iambic “and Ma-”; unless indeed the juxtaposition is intentional, as exposing the sophistries of our official prosodists.

548. “The heathen.”{#68} — “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

586. “Satan and Judas.” {#69} — At the moment of passing the final proofs I am informed that the character of Judas has been rehabilitated by Mr. Stead (and rightly: is Mr. Abington<<Famous Adelphi villain.>> paid with a rope?) and the defence of Satan undertaken by a young society lady authoress — a Miss Corelli — who represents him as an Angel of Light, “i.e.,” one who has been introduced to the Prince of Wales.

But surely there is some one who is the object of universal reprobation amongst Christians! Permit me to offer myself as a candidate. Sink, I beseech you, these sectarian differences, and combine to declare me at least Anathema Maranatha.

602. “Pangs of Death.” {#70} — Dr. Maudsley demands a panegyric upon death. It is true that evolution may bring us a moral sense of astonishing delicacy and beauty. But we are not there yet. A talented but debauched Irishman has composed the following, which I can deplore, but not refute, for this type of man is probably more prone to reproduce his species than any other. He called it “Summa Spes.”

I.

Existence being sorrow,

The cause of it desire,

A merry tune I borrow

To light upon the lyre:

If death destroy me quite.

Then, I cannot lament it;

I’ve lived, kept life alight,

And — damned if I repent it!

Let me die in a ditch,

Damnably drunk

Or lipping a punk,

Or in bed with a bitch!

I was ever a hog;

Muck? I am one with it!

Let me die like a dog;

Die, and be done with it! {200A}

II.

As far as reason goes,

There's hope for mortals yet:

When nothing is that knows,

What is there to regret?

Our consciousness depends

On matter in the brain;

When that rots out, and ends,

There ends the hour of pain.

III.

If we can trust to this,
why, dance and drink and revel!
Great scarlet mouths to kiss,
And sorrow to the devil!
If pangs ataxic creep,
Or gout, or stone, annoy us,
Queen Morphia, grant thy sleep!
Let worms, the dears, enjoy us!

IV.

But since a chance remains
That "I" survives the body
(So talk the men whose brains
Are made of smut and shoddy),
I'll stop it if I can.

(Ah Jesus, if Thou couldst!)

I'll go to Martaban

To make myself a Buddhist.

V.

And yet: the bigger chance

Lies with annihilation.

Follow the lead of France,

Freedom's enlightened nation!

Off! sacerdotal stealth

Of faith and fraud and gnosis!

Come, drink me: Here's thy health,

Arterio-sclerosis!<<1>>

<<1. The hardening of the arteries, which is the predisposing cause of senile decay; thus taken as the one positive assurance of death.>>

Let me die in a ditch,

Damnably drunk,

Or lipping a punk,
Or in bed with a bitch!
I was ever a hog;
Muck? I am one with it!
Let me die like a dog;
Die, and be done with it!

616. “A lizard.”{#71} — A short account of the genesis of these poems seems not out of place here. The design of an elaborate parody on {200B} Browning to be called “Ascension Day and Pentecost” was conceived (and resolved upon) on Friday, November 15, 1901. On that day I left Ceylon, where I had been for several months, practising Hindu meditations, and exposing the dishonesty of the Missionaries, in the intervals of big game shooting. The following day I wrote “Ascension Day,” and “Pentecost” on the Sunday, sitting outside the dak-bangla at Madura. These original drafts were small as compared to the present poems.

Ascension Day consisted of: —

p. 144, I flung ...

p. 146, Pray do ...

p. 147, “But who ...

p. 149, Here’s just ...

p. 151, I will ...

to p. 160, ... but in Hell! ...

p. 161, You see ...

to end.

Pentecost consisted of: —

p. 164, To-day ...

p. 168, How very hard ...

to p. 170, “Proceed!” ...

p. 171, My wandering thoughts ...

to p. 172, All-wickedness ...

p. 172, Nor lull my soul ...

to p. 174, ... and the vision.

p. 176, How easy ...

to end.

“Berashith” was written at Delhi, March 20 and 21, 1902. Its original title was “Crowleymas Day.” It was issued privately in Paris in January 1903. It and “Science and Buddhism” are added to complete the logical sequence from 1898 till now. All, however, has been repeatedly revised. Wherever there seemed a lacuna in the argument an insertion was made, till all appeared a perfect chrysolite. Most of this was done, while the weary hours

of the summer (save the mark!) of 1902 rolled over Camp Misery and Camp Despair on the Chogo Ri Glacier, in those rare intervals when one's preoccupation with lice, tinned food, malaria, insoaking water, general soreness, mental misery, and the everlasting snowstorm gave place to a momentary glimmer of any higher form of intelligence than that ever necessarily concentrated on the actual business of camp life. The rest, and the final revision, occupied a good deal of my time during the winter of 1902-1903. The MS. was accepted by the S. P. R. T. in May of this year, and after a post-final revision, rendered necessary by my Irish descent, went to press.