

JONAH

CHRISTMAS

1917

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JONAH.

A cream of phosphorescent light
Floats on the wash that to and fro
Slides round his feet—enough to show
Many a pendulous stalactite
Of naked mucus, whorls and wreaths
And huge festoons of mottled tripes,
With smaller palpitating pipes
Through which some yeasty liquor seethes.

Seated upon the convex mound
Of one vast kidney, Jonah prays
And sings his canticles and hymns,
Making the hollow vault resound

God's goodness and mysterious ways,
Till the great fish spouts music as he swims.

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BEHEMOTH.

His eyes are little rutilant stones
Sunk in black basalt; scale by scale
Men count the wealth of silver mail
That laps his flesh and iron bones.
And from his navel, deep and wide
As an old Cyclops' drinking-bowl,
Spring those stout nerves of twisted hide
That are his life and strength and soul.

Basking his belly, fast asleep
He sprawls on the warm shingle bank;
And the bold Ethiops come and creep
Along his polished heaving flank,
And in his navel brew their wine
And drink vast strength and grow divine.

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MINOAN PORCELAIN.

Her eyes of bright unwinking glaze
All imperturbable do not
Even make pretences to regard
The jutting absence of her stays
Where many a Tyrian gallipot
Excites desire with spilth of nard.
The bistred rims above the fard
Of cheeks as red as bergamot
Attest that no shamefaced delays
Will clog fulfilment nor retard
Full payment of the Cyprian's praise
Down to the last remorseful jot.
Hail! priestess of we know not what
Strange cult of Mycenean days.

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ZOO CELESTE.

Au coin le plus obscur du jardin des déesses
Dort le Singe Idéal, dont les immenses fesses
Etalent de l'Azur les éblouissements.

Une Négrresse allaite un troupeau d'éléphants,
Mignons d'Olympe, dont la trompe au pâles lèvres
S'enivre d'un lait noir et qui donne les fièvres
Puis, abreuvés ils vont, balançant sur le dos
Le haut machicoulis fantasque des châteaux
D'ivoire et de jadis, broûter dans la prairie.
Des baleines de cuir, rêvant sur l'eau fleurie,
Font jaillir le cristal tournoyant de leur trombe,
Qui monte vers le ciel, se lasse, puis retombe
Avec un clapotis sonore de tambour
Sur les lotus gonflés de parfums et d'amour
Comme les chairs en feu de l'Anadyomène.
Voici, sur l'or de la plage qui se promène
Béhémoth: et dans l'air voici le Roc géant,
Qui pond de temps à autre au giron du néant
De nouveaux univers complets, chacun garni
D'un petit Tout-Puissant qui se croit infini.

* * *

SONNET A L'INGENUE.

Tout en martyrisant les divines mandores
Du mensonge sacré des mots, je songe, ôsi
Nonchalamment belle! à ta voix de colibri:
Avec ta triste voix de colibri tu dores

Toute imbécillité qu'exhale les landores
Dans leurs meurtres de sens à jamais aboli;
Inconsciente, tu perces le coeur ravi,
Où je ne puis qu'à peine ouvrir un peu les stores.

Péniblement de mes bouquins moisis j'évoque
L'esprit mystique et frais de la Sainte Alacocque;
Mais sans verve pour moi saigne le Sacré Coeur.
Tu parles, et ta voix de petite ingénue
Imite un Séraphin, cul nu sur une nue,
Louant Dieu de son psaume infiniment moqueur.

* * *

DIX-HUITIEME SIECLE.

Temple d'Amours passés, ton style rococo
Rappelle tristement le rire d'un gai âge.
Sur ton autel discret les belles de Watteau
Vouaient leur vierge offrande, onzième pucelage.

Derrière tes volets, les beaux après-midis,
Elles out dénoué leur friponne ceinture,
Avec ménagement goûtant le paradis
Pour peur de violer leur chaste chevelure.

Mais, Temple, maintenant te voilà négligé;
Car aucun pied furtif ne sonne sur tes dalles,
Et dans l'Alcôve froid, restes de volupté,
Poussent lubriquement de gros amorphophalles.

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HOMMAGE A JULES LAFORGUE.

Que je t'aime, mon cher Laforgue,
Frère qui connais les nostalgies
Qu'engendrent les sanglots des violons;
Et puis, dans la rue, les pâmoisons
Crépusculaires des orgues—des orgues
D'une par trop lointaine Barbarie.—
O ciel, tu les as senties
Percer ton coeur de Bon Breton!

Tu avais la solitude dans l'âme:
Orphelin par ton génie,
Tu n'as jamais trouvé la femme
Qui pourrait être l'Unique Amie.

Parmi les parfums et les frou-frous,
Malgré toi ta chair est restée pure,

Et tu en as devenu presque fou;
Tu pensais, tu étais un Hors-Nature.

Hélas, il faut que l'on vivote
Selon la Nature et le père Aristote;
Mais c'était une bien autre loi
Que nous suivions, toi et moi.
Vois-tu, mon pauvre Jules,
Nous nous sommes faits assez ridicules.

* * *

SENTENTIOUS SONG.

God's in his Heaven:—He never issues
(Wise man!) to visit this world of ours.
Unchecked the cancer gnaws our tissues,
Stops to lick chops and then again devours.

They find who most delight to roam
'Mid castles of remotest Spain
There's luckily no place like home,
And so they start upon their travels again.

Beauty for some provides escape,

Who gain a happiness in eyeing
The gorgeous buttocks of the ape
Or autumn sunsets exquisitely dying.

Some swoon before the uplifted Host,
Or gazing on their navels find
Both Father, Son and Holy Ghost
In that small Ark of Ecstasy confined.

And some to better worlds than this
Mount up on wings as frail and misty
As passion's all-too-transient kiss,
(Though afterwards—oh, omne animal triste!)

But I, too rational by half
To live but where I bodily am,
Can only do my best to laugh,
Can only sip my misery dram by dram.

While happier mortals take to drink,
A dolorous dipsomaniac,
Fuddled with grief I sit and think,
Looking upon the bile when it is black.

Chorus, in unison.

Then brim the bowl with atrabilious liquor!
We'll pledge our Empire vast across the flood;

For Blood, as all men know, than Water's thicker,
But water's wider, thank the Lord, than Blood.

* * *

THE OXFORD VOLUNTEERS.

The volunteers in vomit-colour
Go forth to shoot the Lamb of God.
Their leaden faces redden to a blazing comet-colour
And they sweat as they plod.

Parson and Poet Laureate,
Professor, Grocer, Don—
This one as fat as Ehud, that (poor dear!) would grow the more he
ate,
Yet more a skeleton.

Some have piles and some have goitres,
Most of them have Bright's disease,
Uric acid has made them flaccid and one gouty hero loiters,
Anchylosed in toes and knees.

'Tis Duty drags their aching carrion
Through the rain and through the mud.
England calls! From Windsor walls sounds the once Coburgian clarion,

Screaming: Empire, Home and Blood!

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THE CONTEMPLATIVE SOUL.

Fathoms from sight and hearing,
Where seas are blind and deaf.
My soul like a fish goes steering
Her fabulous gargoyle nef:

Her nef of silver and mouldering
Mother-of-pearl with eyes
Of bulging coral smouldering
Down dim green galleries.

To climb the brightening ladder
Of layer on layer of the sea
She dare not; her swimming-bladder
Would burst in the ecstasy

Of sunlight and windy motion,
White moons and the sky's red gates.
Still in the depth of ocean
She sits and contemplates.

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THE BETROTHAL OF PRIAPUS.

Dark water: the moonless side of the trees:
The Dog-Star sweating in the roses: Mind
Heat-curdled to sheer flesh. For ease
And the sake of coolness, having dined,

I loose a button, wrench a stud.
We belch to the tune of drunk Moselle.
What a noise in the temples-hammering blood.
Shall we sit down? Are we altogether well?

'How weedily the river exhales!'
'Like the smell of caterpillar's dung.'
'You too collected?' 'When I was young,
But used no camphor; Moth prevails

Over moths, you take me.' Sounding close,
But God knows where, two landrails scrape
Nails on combs. Her hair is loose,
One tendril astray upon the nape

Of a neck which star-revealed is white

Like an open-eyed tobacco-flower—
Frail thurible that fills the night
With the subtle intoxicating power

Of summer perfume. And you too—
Your scent intoxicates; the smell
Of clothes, of hair, the essence of you.
But for the ferments of Moselle.

I'd swoon in the languor of your perfume,
In the drowsed delicious contemplation
Of a neck seen palely through the gloom.
Another hideous eructation.—

And I wake, distressingly aware
That there are uglier things in life
Than perfumed stars and women's hair.—
Action, then, action! will you be my wife?

* * *

FAREWELL TO THE MUSES.

My typewriter has been writing crookedly
For a very considerable time;
It is so hard to write in metre and rhyme

With a typewriter that writes crookedly.

Lines should look clean and decent to the eye,

And mine have ceased to do so; and so that is why

I am ceasing to be a poet....

Because my typewriter writes so exacerbatingly,

So distressingly crookedly.