

Selected Poems

Aldous Huxley

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SONG OF POPLARS.

SHEPHERD, to yon tall poplars tune your flute: Let them pierce,  
keenly, subtly shrill,

The slow blue rumour of the hill;

Let the grass cry with an anguish of evening gold, And the great sky  
be mute.

Then hearken how the poplar trees unfold Their buds, yet close and  
gummed and blind, In airy leafage of the mind,

Rustling in silvery whispers the twin-hued scales That fade not nor  
grow old.

" Poplars and fountains and you cypress spires Springing in dark and  
rusty flame, Seek you aught that hath a name?

Or say, say: Are you all an upward agony Of undefined desires ?

" Say, are you happy in the golden march Of sunlight all across the day?

Or do you watch the uncertain way

That leads the withering moon on cloudy stairs Over the heaveris wide arch ?

SONG OF POPLARS <»

" Is it towards sorrow or towards joy you lift The sharpness of your trembling spears?

Or do you seek, through the grey tears

That blur the sky, in the heart of the triumphing blue, A deeper, calmer rift ? "

So; I have tuned my music to the trees,

And there were voices dim below

'heir shrillness, voices swelling slow

In the blue murmur of hills, and a golden cry

And then vast silences.

THE REEF.

MY green aquarium of phantom fish,

Goggling in on me through the misty panes; My rotting leaves and fields spongy with rains;

My few clear quiet autumn days—I wish

I could leave all, clearness and mistiness;

Sodden or goldenly crystal, all too still.

Yes, and I too rot with the leaves that fill

The hollows in the woods; I am grown less

Than human, listless, aimless as the green

Idiot fishes of my aquarium,

Who loiter down their dim tunnels and come

And look at me and drift away, nought seen

Or understood, but only glazedly

Reflected. Upwards, upwards through the shadows, 'hrough the lush sponginess of deep-sea meadows

Where hare-lipped monsters batten, let me ply

Winged fins, bursting this matrix dark to find Jewels and movement, mintage of sunlight

Scattered largely by the profuse wind, And gulfs of blue brightness, too deep for sight.

Free, newly born, on roads of music and air Speeding and singing, I shall seek the place Where all the shining threads of water race, Drawn in green ropes and foamy meshes. There,

On the red fretted ramparts of a tower

Of coral rooted in the depths, shall break

An endless sequence of joy and speed and power: Green shall shatter to foam ; flake with white flake

Shall create an instant's shining constellation

Upon the blue; and all the air shall be

Full of a million wings that swift and free Laugh in the sun, all power and strong elation.

Yes, I shall seek that reef, which is beyond

All isles however magically sleeping

In tideless seas, uncharted and unconned

Save by blind eyes: beyond the laughter and weeping

That brood like a cloud over the lands of men. Movement, passion of colour and pure wings, Curving to cut like knives—these are the things

I search for:—passion beyond the ken

Of our foiled violences, and, more swift

Than any blow which man aims against time, Che invulnerable, motion that shall rift

All dimness with the lightning of a rhyme,

Or note, or colour. And the body shall be

Quick as the mind; and will shall find release From bondage to brute things ; and joyously

Soul, will and body, in the strength of triune peace,

Shall live the perfect grace of power unwasted.

And love consummate, marvellously blending Passion and reverence in a single spring

Of quickening force, till now never yet tasted,

But ever ceaselessly thirsted for, shall crown The new life with its ageless starry fire

I go to seek that reef, far down, far down

Below the edge of everyday's desire,

Beyond the magical islands, where of old

I was content, dreaming, to give the lie

To misery. They were all strong and bold That thither came; and shall I dare to try ?

THE FLOWERS.

DAY after day,

At spring's return,

I watch my flowers, how they burn Their lives away.

The candle crocus

And daffodil gold

Drink fire of the sunshine—

Quickly cold.

And the proud tulip— How red he glows I— Is quenched ere summer Can kindle the rose.

Purple as the innermost

Core of a sinking flame,

Deep in the leaves the violets smoulder To the dust whence they came.

Day after day

At spring's return,

I watch my flowers, how they burn Their lives away, Day after day . . .

THE ELMS.

FINE as the dust of plummy fountains blowing

Across the lanterns of a revelling night, The tiny leaves of April's earliest growing Powder the trees—so vaporously light, They seem to float, billows of emerald foam Blown by the South on its bright airy tide, Seeming less trees than things beatified, Come from the world of thought which was their home.

For a while only. Rooted strong and fast, Soon will they lift towards the summer sky Their mountaimmass of clotted greenery.

Their immaterial season quickly past, They grow opaque, and therefore needs must die, Since every earth to earth returns at last.

OUT OF THE WINDOW.

IN the middle of countries, far from hills and sea, Are the little places one passes by in trains

And never stops at; where the skies extend Uninterrupted, and the level plains

Stretch green and yellow and green without an end.

And behind the glass of their Grand Express Folk yawn away a province through, With nothing to think of, nothing to do, Nothing even to look at—never a " view " ln this damned wilderness.

But I look out of the window and find

Much to satisfy the mind.

Mark how the furrows, formed and wheeled

In a motion orderly and staid,

Sweep, as we pass, across the field

Like a drilled army on parade.

And here's a market-garden, barred

With stripe on stripe of varied greens . . .

Bright potatoes, flower starred, And the opacous colour of beans.

Each line deliberately swings nowards me, till I see a straight  
Green avenue to the heart of things,

The glimpse of a sudden opened gate Piercing the adverse walls of  
fate . . . .A moment only, and then, fast, fast, The gate swings to,  
the avenue closes; Fate laughs, and once more interposes Its  
barriers.

The train has passed.

SUMMER STILLNESS.

THE stars are golden instants in the deep

Flawless expanse of night: the moon is set: The river sleeps,  
entranced, a smooth cool sleep Seeming so motionless that I forget  
The hollow booming bridges, where it slides, Dark with the sad looks  
that it bears along, Towards a sea whose unreturning tides Ravish  
the sighted ships and the sailors' song.

INSPIRATION.

NOONDAY upon the Alpine meadows

Pours its avalanche of Light

And blazing flowers: the very shadows

Translucent are and bright.

It seems a glory that nought surpasses—

Passion of angels in form and hue—

When, lo! from the jewelled heaven of the grasses

Leaps a lightning of sudden blue.

Dimming the sumdrunk petals,

Bright even unto pain,

The grasshopper flashes, settles,

And then is quenched again.

ANNIVERSARIES.

ONCE more the windless days are here, Quiet of autumn, when the year

Halts and looks backward and draws breath Before it plunges into  
death.

Silver of mist and gossamers,

Through-shine of noonday's glassy gold, Pale blue of skies, where  
nothing stirs Save one blanched leaf, weary and old, That over and  
over slowly falls

From the mute elm-trees, hanging on air

Like tattered flags along the walls Of chapels deep in sunlit  
prayer.

Once more . . . Within its flawless glass

To-day reflects that other day,

When, under the bracken, on the grass, We who were lovers happily  
lay

And hardly spoke, or framed a thought

That was not one with the calm hills

And crystal sky. Ourselves were nought, Our gusty passions, our  
burning wills Dissolved in boundlessness, and we

Were almost bodiless, almost free.

The wind has shattered silver and gold ;

Night after night of sparkling cold, Orion lifts his tangled feet  
From where the tossing branches beat In a fine surf against the sky.

So the trance ended, and we grew Restless, we knew not how or why ;

And there were sudden gusts that blew Our dreaming banners into  
storm ;

We wore the uncertain crumbling form Of a brown swirl of windy  
leaves, A phantom shape that stirs and heaves Shuddering from earth,  
to fall again With a dry whisper of withered rain.

Last, from the dead and shrunken days We conjured spring, lighting  
the blaze Of burnished tulips in the dark;

And from black frost we struck a spark Of blue delight and fragrance  
new, A little world of flowers and dew.

Winter for us was over and done:

The drought of fluttering leaves had grown Emerald shining in the  
sun,

As light as glass, as firm as stone.

Real once more: for we had passed Through passion into thought  
again; Shaped our desires and made that fast Which was before a  
cloudy pain x Moulded the dimness, fixed, defined In a fair statue,  
strong and free, Twin bodies flaming into mind, Poised on the brink  
of ecstasy.

ITALY.

THERE is a country in my mind, Lovelier than a poet blind

Could dream of, who had never known This world of drought and dust  
and stone In all its ugliness: a place

Full of an all but human grace;

Whose dells retain the printed form Of heavenly sleep, and seem yet  
warm From some pure body newly risen ; Where matter is no more a  
prison, But freedom for the soul to know Its native beauty. For  
things glow There with an inward truth and are All fire and colour  
like a star.

And in that land are domes and towers That hang as light and bright  
as flowers Upon the sky, and seem a birth Rather of air than solid  
earth.

Sometimes I dream that walking there In the green shade, all unaware  
At a new turn of the golden glade, I shall see her, and as though  
afraid

ITALY

Shall halt a moment and almost fall For passing faintness, like a  
man Who feels the sudden spirit of Pan Brimming his narrow soul with  
all The illimitable world. And she, Turning her head, will let me  
see The first sharp dawn of her surprise Turning to welcome in her  
eyes.

And I shall come and take my lover And looking on her re-discover  
All her beauty:—her dark hair And the little ears beneath it, where  
Roses of lucid shadow sleep ;

Her brooding mouth, and in the deep Wells of her eyes reflected  
stars.

Oh, the imperishable things

That hands and lips as well as words

Shall speak I Oh movement of white wings, Oh wheeling galaxies of  
birds I

THE ALIEN.

A PETAL drifted loose

From a great magnolia bloom, Your face hung in the gloom, Floating,  
white and close.

We seemed alone: but another Bent o'er you with lips of flame,  
Unknown, without a name, Hated, and yet my brother.

Your one short moan of pain Was an exorcising spell: The devil flew  
back to hell;

We were alone again.

A LITTLE MEMORY.

WHITE in the moonlight,

Wet with dew, We have known the languor Of being two.

We have been weary As children are, When over them, radiant, A  
stooping star,

Bends their Good-Night, Kissed and smiled:— Each was mother, Each  
was child.

Child, from your forehead

I kissed the hair, Gently, ah, gently: And you were

Mistress and mother

When on your breast

I lay so safely And could rest.

WAKING.

DARKNESS had stretched its colour, Deep blue across the pane:

No cloud to make night duller, No moon with its tarnish stain;

But only here and there a star, One sharp point of frosty fire,  
Hanging infinitely far

In mockery of our life and death And all our small desire.

Now in this hour of waking From under brows of stone, A new pale day  
is breaking And the deep night is gone. Sordid now, and mean and  
small The daylight world is seen again, With only the veils of mist  
that fall Deaf and muffling over all To hide its ugliness and pain.

But today this dawn of meanness Shines in my eyes, as when

The new world's brightness and cleanness Broke on the first of men.

For the light that shows the huddled things

WAKING A

Of this close'pressmg earth, Shines also on your face and brings All  
its dear beauty back to me In a new miracle of birth.

I see you asleep and unpassioned, WhiteTaced in the dusk of your  
hair— Your beauty so fleetingly fashioned That it filled me once  
with despair To look on its exquisite transience

And think that our love and thought and laughter Puff out with the  
death of our flickering sense, While we pass ever on and away  
Towards some blank hereafter.

But now I am happy, knowing

That swift time is our friend,

And that our love's passionate glowing,

Though it turn ash in the end,

Is a rose of fire that must blossom its way Through temporal stuff,  
nor else could be More than a nothing. Into day The boundless spaces  
of night contract And in your opening eyes I see Night born in day,  
in time eternity.

BY THE FIRE.

WE who are lovers sit by the fire, Cradled warm 'twixt thought and  
will,

Sit and drowse like sleeping dogs In the equipoise of all desire,  
Sit and listen to the still

Small hiss and whisper of green logs That burn away, that burn away  
With the sound of a far-off falling stream Of threaded water blown  
to steam, Grey ghost in the mountain world of grey. Vapours blue as  
distance rise Between the hissing logs that show A glimpse of rosy  
heat below;

And candles watch with tireless eyes While we sit drowsing here. I  
know, Dimly, that there exists a world, That there is time perhaps,  
and space Other and wider than this place, Where at the fireside  
drowsily curled We hear the whisper and watch the flame Burn  
blinkless and inscrutable.

And then I know those other names That through my brain from cell to  
cell

BY THE FIRE

Echo—reverberated shout

Of waiters mournful along corridors:  
But nobody carries the orders out,  
And the names (dear friends, your name and yours)  
Evoke no sign. But here I sit  
On the wide hearth, and there are you:  
That is enough and only true.  
The world and the friends that lived in it  
Are shadows: you alone remain  
Real in this drowsing room,  
Full of the whispers of distant rain  
And candles staring into the gloom.

VALEDICTORY.

I HAD remarked—how sharply one observes When life is disappearing  
round the curves

Of yet another corner, out of sight I—

I had remarked when it was "good luck" and "good night" And " a good  
journey to you," on her face

Certain enigmas penned in the hieroglyphs

Of that half frown and queer fixed smile and trace

Of clouded thought in those brown eyes, Always so happily clear of  
hows and ifs— My poor bleared mind!—and haunting whys.

There I stood, holding her farewell hand,

(Pressing my life and soul and all

The world to one good-bye, till, small

And smaller pressed, why there I'd stand

Dead when they vanished with the sight of her).

And I saw that she had grown aware,

Queer puzzled face I of other tilings

Beyond the present and her own young speed, Of yesterday and what  
new days might breed Monstrously when the future brings

A charger with your late-lamented head :

Aware of other people's lives and will,

VALEDICTORY '<»

Aware, perhaps, aware even of me . . .

The joyous hope of it! But still I pitied her; for it was sad to see  
A goddess shorn of her divinity.

In the midst of her speed she had made pause, And doubts with all  
their threat of claws, Outstripped till now by her unconsciousness,  
Had seized on her; she was proved mortal now. " Live, only live ?  
For you were meant Never to know a thought's distress,

But a long glad astonishment

At the world's beauty and your own.

The pity of you, goddess, grown Perplexed and mortal! "

Yet . . . yet . . . can it be That she is aware, perhaps, even of  
me?

And life recedes, recedes; the curve is bare, My handkerchief  
flutters blankly in the air; And the question rumbles in the void :  
Was she aware, was she after all aware?

PRIVATE PROPERTY.

ALL fly-yet who is misanthrope?—

The actual men and things that pass Jostling, to wither as the grass  
So soon: and (be it heaven's hope, Or poetry's kaleidoscope, Or love  
or wine, at feast, at mass) Each owns a paradise of glass Where  
never a yearning heliotrope Pursues the sun's ascent or slope;

For the sun dreams there, and no time is or was.

Like fauns embossed in our domain, We look abroad, and our calm eyes  
Mark how the goatish gods of pain Revel; and if by grim surprise  
They break into our paradise, Patient we build its beauty up again.

REVELATION.

AT your mouth, white and milk'Warm sphinx, I taste a strange  
apocalypse:

Your subtle taper fingertips

Weave me new heavens, yet, methinks,  
I know the wiles and each iynx  
That brought me passionate to your lips:  
I know you bare as laughter strips  
Your charnel beauty; yet my spirit drinks  
Pure knowledge from this tainted well,  
And now hears voices yet unheard  
Within it, and without it sees  
That world of which the poets tell  
Their vision in the stammered word  
Of those that wake from piercing ecstasies.

#### 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 Syrian 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 I

#### IN UNCERTAINTY TO A LADY.

I AM not one of those who sip,

Like a quotidian bock, Cheap idylls from a languid lip Prepared to  
yawn or mock.

I wait the indubitable word, The great Unconscious Cue.

Has it been spoken and unheard ? Spoken, perhaps, by you ?

#### CRAPULOUS IMPRESSION.

" CJT1LL life, still life . . . the highlights shine

Hard and sharp on the bottles: the wine Stands firmly solid in the  
glasses, Smooth yellow ice, through which there passes The lamp's  
bright pencil of downstruck light. The fruits metallicly gleam,  
Globey in their heapedmp bowl, And there are faces against the night  
Of the outer room-faces that seem

Part of this still, still life . . . they've lost their soul.

And amongst these frozen faces you smiled, Surprised, surprisingly,  
like a child: And out of the frozen welter of sound Your voice came  
quietly, quietly.

" What about God ? you said. " I have found Much to be said tor  
Totality.

All, I take it, is God: God's all-

This bottle, for instance ..." I recall, D>mly, that you took God by  
the neck- God'imthe'bottle-and pushed Him across: But I, without a  
moment's loss

Moved Goddmthe'salt in front and shouted: "Check!"

COMPLAINT OF A POET MANQUE.

WE judge by appearance merely:

If I can't think strangely, I can at least look qucerly. So I grew  
the hair so long on my head That my mother wouldn't know me, Till a  
woman in a night-club said, As I was passing by, " Hullo, here comes  
Salome."

I looked in the dirty gilt-edged glass, And, oh Salome I there I was  
- Positively jewelled, half a vampire, With the soul in my eyes  
hanging dizzily Like the gatherer of proverbial samphire Over the  
brink of the crag of sense, Looking down from perilous eminence Into  
a gulf of windy night.

And there's straw in my tempestuous hair, And I'm not a poet: but  
never despair! I'll madly live the poems I shall never write.

SOCIAL AMENITIES.

I AM getting on well with this anecdote, When suddenly I recall

The many times I have told it of old,

And all the worked-up phrases, and the dying fall Of voice, well  
timed in the crisis, the note Of mock-heroic ingeniously struck- The  
whole thing sticks in my throat,

And my face all tingles and pricks with shame

For myself and my hearers.

These are the social pleasures, my God!

But I finish the story triumphantly all the same.

TOPIARY.

FAILING sometimes to understand

Why there are folk whose flesh should seem Like carrion puffed with  
noisome steam, Fly-blown to the eye that looks on it, Fly-blown to  
the touch of a hand;

Why there are men without any legs, Whizzing along on little  
trollies

TOPIARY

With long long arms like apes':

Failing to see why God the Topiarist

Should train and carve and twist

Men's bodies into such fantastic shapes:

vres, failing to see the point of it all, I sometimes wish That I  
were a fabulous thing in a fool's mind,

Or, at the ocean bottom, in a world that is deaf and blind, Very  
remote and happy, a great goggling fish.

ON THE 'BUS.

SITTING on the top of the 'bus,

I bite my pipe and look at the sky.

Over my shoulder the smoke streams out

And my life with it.

" Conservation of energy," you say.

But I burn, I tell you, I burn;

And the smoke of me streams out

In a vanishing skein of grey.

Crash and bump . . . my poor bruised body!

I am a harp of twittering strings,

An elegant instrument, but infinitely second-hand, And if I have not  
got phthisis it is only an accident.

Droll phenomena!

POINTS AND LINES.

INSTANTS in the quiet, small sharp stars, Pierce my spirit with a thrust whose speed

Baffles even the grasp of time.

Oh that I might reflect them

As swiftly, as keenly as they shine.

But I am a pool of waters, summer-still, And the stars are mirrored across me;

Those stabbing points of the sky Turned to a thread of shaken silver, A long fine thread.

PANIC.

THE eyes of the portraits on the wall

Look at me, follow me,

Stare incessantly:

It take it their glance means nothing at all?

-Clearly, oh clearly I Nothing at all . . .

Out in the gardens by the lake

The sleeping peacocks suddenly wake;

Out in the gardens, moonlit and forlorn, Each of them sounds his mournful horn: Shrill peals that waver and crack and break. What can have made the peacocks wake?

STANZAS.

THOUGHT is an unseen net wherein our mind

Is taken and vainly struggles to be free: Words, that should loose our spirit, do but bind New fetters on our hoped-for liberty: And action bears us onward like a stream Past fabulous shores, scarce seen in our swift course; Glorious-and yet its headlong currents seem But backwaters of some diviner force.

There are slow curves, more subtle far than thought, That stoop to carry the grace of a girl's breast;

And hanging flowers, so exquisitely wrought

In airy metal, that they seem possessed

Of souls; and there are distant hills that lift The shoulder of a  
god towards the light;

And arrowy trees, sudden and sharp and swift, Piercing the spirit  
deeply with delight.

Would I might make these miracles my own I Like a pure angel,  
thinking colour and form ; Hardening to rage in a flame of chiselled  
stone ; Spilling my love like sunlight, golden and warm On noonday  
flowers ; speaking the song of birds Among the branches ; whispering  
the fall of rain ;

Beyond all thought, past action and past words, I would live in  
beauty, free from self and pain.

POEM.

BOOKS and a coloured skein of thoughts were mine;

And magic words lay ripening in my soul Till their much-whispered  
music turned a wine Whose subtlest power was all in my control.

These things were mine, and they were real for me As lips and  
darling eyes and a warm breast:

For I could love a phrase, a melody, Like a fair woman, worshipped  
and possessed.

I scorned all fire that outward of the eyes

Could kindle passion; scorned, yet was afraid; Feared, and yet  
envied those more deeply wise Who saw the bright earth beckon and  
obeyed.

But a time came when, turning full of hate And weariness from my  
remembered themes,

I wished my poet's pipe could modulate Beauty more palpable than  
words and dreams,

All loveliness with which an act informs the dim uncertain chaos of  
desire

Is mine to day; it touches me, it warms Body and spirit with its  
outward fire.

POEM

I am mine no more: I have become a part

Of that great earth that draws a breath and stirs To meet the  
spring. But I could wish my heart Were still a winter of frosty  
gossamers.

SCENES OF THE MIND.

I HAVE run where festival was loud  
With drum and brass among the crowd  
Of panic revellers, whose cries  
Affront the quiet of the skies;  
Whose dancing lights contract the deep  
Infinity of night and sleep  
To a narrow turmoil of troubled fire.  
And I have found my heart's desire  
In beechen caverns that autumn fills  
With the blue shadowiness of distant hills;  
Whose luminous grey pillars bear the stooping sky: calm is the air,  
Nor any sound is heard to mar That crystal silence—as from far,  
Far off a man may see The busy world all utterly Hushed as an old  
memorial scene. Long evenings I have sat and been Strangely content,  
while in my hands I held a wealth of coloured strands, Shimmering  
plaits of silk and skeins Of soft bright wool. Each colour drains  
New life at the lamp's round pool of gold ; Each sinks again when I  
withhold The quickening radiance, to a wan And shadowy oblivion  
Of what it was. And in my mind Beauty or sudden love has shined And  
wakened colour in what was dead And turned to gold the sullen lead  
Of mean desires and everyday's Poor thoughts and customary ways.  
Sometimes in lands where mountains throw Their silent spell on all  
below, Drawing a magic circle wide About their feet on every side,  
Robbed of all speech and thought and act, I have seen God in the  
cataract.  
In falling water and in flame, Never at rest, yet still the same,  
God shows himself. And I have known The swift fire frozen into  
stone, And water frozen changelessly Into the death of gems. And I  
Long sitting by the thunderous mill  
Have seen the headlong wheel made still, And in the silence that  
ensued Have known the endless solitude Of being dead and utterly  
nought. Inhabitant of mine own thought,  
I look abroad, and all I see Is my creation, made for me: Along my  
thread of life are pearled The moments that make up the world.

L'APRESMIDI D'UN FAUNE.

(From the French of Stephane Mallarme.)

I WOULD immortalize these nymphs: so bright Their sunlit colouring,  
so airy light,

It floats like drowsy down. Loved I a dream? My doubts, born of  
oblivious darkness, seem A subtle tracery of branches grown

The tree's true self-proving that I have known, Thinking it love,  
the blushing of a rose.

But think. These nymphs, their loveliness ... suppose They bodied  
forth your senses' fabulous thirst?

Illusion! which the blue eyes of the first, As cold and chaste as is  
the weeping spring, Beget: the other, sighing, passioning,

Is she the wind, warm in your fleece at noon? No; through this  
quiet, when a weary swoon Crushes and chokes the latest faint essay  
Of morning, cool against the encroaching day, There is no murmuring  
water, save the gush Of my clear fluted notes; and in the hush Blows  
never a wind, save that which through my reed Puffs out before the  
rain of notes can speed Upon the air, with that calm breath of art

That mounts the unwrinkled zenith visibly, Where inspiration seeks  
its native sky.

You fringes of a calm Sicilian lake, The sun's own mirror which I  
love to take, Silent beneath your starry flowers, tell How here I  
cut the hollow rushes, well

Tamed by my skill, when on the glaucous gold Of distant lawns about  
their fountain cold A living whiteness stirs like a lazy wave;

And at the first slow notes my panpipes gave These flocking swans,  
these naiads, rather, fly Or dive. Noon burns inert and tawny dry,  
Nor marks how clean that Hymen slipped away From me who seek in song  
the real A.

Wake, then, to the first ardour and the sight, O lonely faun, of the  
old fierce white light, With, lilies, one of you for innocence.

Other than their lips' delicate pretence, The light caress that  
quiets treacherous lovers, My breast, I know not how to tell,  
discovers The bitten print of some immortal's kiss.

But hush I a mystery so great as this I dare not tell, save to my  
double reed, Which, sharer of my every joy and need,

Dreams down its cadenced monologues that we Falsely confuse the  
beauties that we see

With the bright palpable shapes our song creates: My flute, as loud  
as passion modulates, Purges the common dream of flank and breast,  
Seen through closed eyes and inwardly caressed, Of every empty and  
monotonous line.

Bloom then, O Syrinx, in thy flight malign, A reed once more beside  
our trystingdake.

Proud of my music, let me often make A song of goddesses and see  
their rape Profanely done on many a painted shape.

So when the grape's transparent juice I drain, I quell regret for  
pleasures past and feign

A new real grape. For holding towards the sky The empty skin, I blow  
it tight and lie Dream-drunk till evening, eyeing it.

Tell o'er Remembered joys and plump the grape once more. Between the  
reeds I saw their bodies gleam Who cool no mortal fewer in the  
stream Crying to the woods the rage of their desire: And their  
blight hair went down in jewelled fire

Where crystal broke and dazzled shudderingly. I check my swift  
pursuit: for see where lie, Bruised, being twins in love, by languor  
sweet, Two sleeping girls, clasped at my very feet.

/ seize and run with them, nor part the pair, Breaking this covert  
of frail petals, where Roses drink scent of the sun and our light  
play 'Mid tumbled flowers shall match the death op day. I love that  
virginal fury—ah, the wild Thrill when a maiden body shrinks,  
defiled, Shuddering like arctic light, from lips that sear Its  
nakedness . . . the flesh in secret fear I Contagiously through my  
linked pair it flies Where innocence in either, struggling, dies,  
Wet with fond tears or some less piteous dew. Gay in the conquest op  
these pears, I grew So rash that I must needs the sheap divide Op  
ruffled kisses heaven itself had tied.

For as I leaned to stifle in the hair Op one my passionate laughter  
(taking care With a stretched finger, that her innocence Might stain  
with her companion's kindling sense To touch the younger little one,  
who lay Child-like unblushing) my ungrateful prey

Slips from me, feed by passion's sudden death Nor heeds the freny  
of my sobbing breath.

Let it pass! others of their hair shall twist A rope to drag me to  
those joys I missed. See how the ripe pomegranates bursting red fo  
quench the thirst of the mumbling bees have bled; So too our blood,  
kindled by some chance fire, Flows for the swarming legions of  
desire.

At evening, when the woodland green turns gold And ashen grey, 'mid  
the quenched leaves, behold! Red Etna glows, by Venus visited,

Walking the lava with her snowy tread Whene'er the flames in  
thunderous slumber die.

I hold the goddess I

Ah, sure penalty I

But the unthinking soul and body swoon At last beneath the heavy  
hush of noon. Forgetful let me lie where summer's drouth Sifts fine  
the sand and then with gaping mouth Dream planet-struck by the  
grape's round wine-red star.

Nymphs, I shall see the shade that now you are.

MOLE.

TUNNELLED in solid blackness creeps

The old mole-soul, and wakes or sleeps, He knows not which, but  
tunnels on Through ages of oblivion ;

Until at last the long constraint

Of each hand-wall is lost, and faint Comes daylight creeping from  
afar, And mole-work grows crepuscular, bunnel meets air and bursts;  
mole sees Men as strange as walking trees ?

And far horizons smoking blue, And chasing clouds for ever new;

Green hills, like lighted lamps aglow Or quenched beneath the cloud-  
shadow; Quenching and blazing turn by turn, Spring's great green  
signals fitfully burn. Mole travels on, but finds the steering A  
harder task of pioneering

Than when he thridded through the strait Blind catacombs that  
ancient fate

Had carved for him. Stupid and dumb And bb'nd and touchless he had  
come A way without a turn ; but here,

Under the sky, the passenger

Chooses his own best way ; "and mole

Distracted wanders, yet his hole

Regrets not much wherein he crept,

But runs, a joyous nympholept,

This way and that, by all made mad-

River nymph and oread,

Ocean's daughters and Lorelei,

Combing the silken mystery,

The glaucous gold of her rivery tresses— Each haunts the traveller,  
each possesses The drunken wavering soul awhile ;

Then with a phantom's cock-crow smile Mocks craving with sheer  
vanishment.

Mole-eyes grow hawk's: knowledge is lent

In grudging driblets that pay high Unconscionable usury.

To unrelenting life. Mole learns

To travel more secure ; the turns

Of his long way less puzzling seem,

And all those magic forms that gleam

In airy invitation cheat

Less often than they did of old.

— he earth slopes upward, fold by fold

Of quiet hills that meet the gold Serenity of western shies.

Over the world's edge with clear eyes Our mole transcendent sees his  
way Tunnelled in light: he must obey Necessity again and thrid Close  
catacombs as erst he did, Fate's tunnellings, himself must bore  
Through the sunset's inmost core.

The guiding walls to each-hand shine Luminous and crystalline;

And mole shall tunnel on and on, Till night let fall oblivion.

TWO REALITIES.

A WAGGON passed with scarlet wheels

And a yellow body, shining new.

44 Splendid!" said I. 44 How fine it feels

To be alive, when beauty peels

The grimy husk from life." And you

Said, 44 Splendid !" and I thought you'd seen

That waggon blazing down the street;

But I looked and saw that your gaze had been On a child that was  
kicking an obscene

Brown ordure with his feet.

Our souls are elephants, thought I,

Remote behind a prisoning grill, With trunks thrust out to peer and  
pry And pounce upon reality ;

And each at his own sweet will

Seizes the bun that he likes best And passes over all the rest.

QUOTIDIAN VISION.

THERE is a sadness in the street,

And sullenly the folk I meet Droop their heads as they walk along,  
Without a smile, without a song. A mist of cold and muffling grey  
Falls, fold by fold, on another day That dies unwept. But suddenly,  
Under a tunnelled arch I see On flank and haunch the chestnut gleam  
Of horses in a lamplit steam;

And the dead world moves for me once more With beauty for its living  
core.

THE MIRROR.

SLOW-MOVING moonlight once did pass Across the dreaming looking-  
glass,

Where, sunk inviolably deep,

Old secrets unforgotten sleep

Of beauties unforgettable.

THE MIRROR &

But dusty cobwebs are woven now

Across that mirror, which of old

Saw fingers drawing back the gold

From an untroubled brow ;

And the depths are blinded to the moon, And their secrets forgotten,  
for ever untold.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF LAFORGUE.

YOUTH as it opens out discloses  
The sinister metempsychosis  
Of lilies dead and turned to roses  
Red as an angry dawn.  
But lilies, remember, are grave-side flowers,  
While slow bright rose-leaves sail  
Adrift on the music of happiest hours ;  
And those lilies, cold and pale,  
Hide fiery roses beneath the lawn  
Of the young bride's parting veil.

#### PHILOSOPHY.

GOD needs no christening,"  
Pantheist mutters,  
"Love opens shutters  
On heaven's glistening,  
Flesh, key-hole listening,  
Hear what God utters " . . . h es, but God stutters.

#### PHILOCLEA IN THE FOREST.

'rnpwAS I that leaned to Amoret

J- With : " What if the briars have tangled Time, Till, lost in the  
wood-ways, he quite forget How plaintive in cities at midnight  
sounds the chime Of bells slow-dying from discord to the hush whence  
they rose and met ?

" And in the forest we shall live free,  
Free from the bondage that Time has made  
To hedge our soul from its liberty;  
We shall not fear what is mighty, and unafraid  
Shall look wide-eyed at beauty, nor shrink from its majesty."

But Amoret answered me again:

" We are lost in the forest, you and I;

Lost, lost, not free, though no bonds restrain ;

For no spire rises for comfort, no landmark in the sky, And the long  
glades as they curve from sight are dark with a nameless pain.

And Time creates what he devours,—

Music that sweetly dreams itself away,

Frailswung leaves of autumn and the scent of flowers, And the beauty  
of that poised moment, when the day Hangs 'twixt the quiet of  
darkness and the mirth of the sunlit hours."

PH I LOCLE A IN THE FOREST

IL

Mottled and grey and brown they pass, The wood-moths, wheeling,  
fluttering;

And we chase and they vanish ; and in the grass

Are starry flowers, and the birds sing

Faint broken songs of the dying spring.

And on the beech-bole, smooth and grey,

Some lover of an older day

Has carved in time-blurred lettering

One world only:—"Alas."

HL

Lutes, I forbid you I You must never play,

When shimmeringly, glimpse by glimpse Seen through the leaves, the  
silken figures sway In measured dance. Never at shut of day,

When Time perversely loitering limps

Through endless twilights, should your strings

Whisper of light remembered things

That happened long ago and far away:

Lutes, I forbid you! You must never play . . .

And you, pale marble statues, far descried  
Where vistas open suddenly,  
I bid you shew yourselves no more, but hide  
Your loveliness, lest too much glorified  
By western radiance slantingly  
Shot down the glade, you turn from stone  
To living gods, immortal grown,  
And, ageless, mock my beauty's fleeting pride, 'rou pale, relentless  
statues, far descried . . .

#### BOOKS AND THOUGHTS.

OLD ghosts that death forgot to ferry Across the Lethe of the years—  
These are my friends— and at their tears I weep and with their mirth  
am merry. On a high tower, whose battlements G\*ve me all heaven at a  
glance, I lie long summer nights in trance, Drownsed by the murmurs  
and the scents That rise from earth, while the sky above me Merges  
its peace with my soul's peace, Deep meeting deep. No stir can move  
me, Nought break the quiet of my release:

In vain the windy sunlight raves At the hush and gloom of polar  
caves.

#### THE HIGHER SENSUALISM.

THERE'S a church by a lake in Italy  
Stands white on a hill against the sky;  
And a path of immemorial cobbles  
Leads up and up, where the pilgrim hobbles  
Past a score or so of neat repositories,  
Where you stop and breathe and tell your rosaries To the shrined  
terra-cotta mannikins,  
That expound with the liveliest quirks and grins Known texts of  
Scripture. But no long stay Should the pilgrim make upon his way;  
But as means to the end these shrines stand here % guide to  
something holier,  
The church on the hill top.

Your heaven's so

With a path leading up to it past a row

Of votary Priapulids;

At each you pause and tell your beads Along the quintuple strings of sense: Then on, to face Heaven's eminence, New stimulated, new inspired.

FORMAL VERSES.

I.

MOTHER of all my future memories,

Mistress of my new life, which but to-day Began, when I beheld, deep in your eyes, My own love mirrored and the warm surprise

Of the first kiss swept both our souls away,

Your love has freed me; for I was oppressed

By my own devil, whose unwholesome breath Tarnished my youth, leaving to me at best Age lacking comfort of a soul at rest

And weariness beyond the hope of death.

II.

Ah, those were days of silent happiness I

I never spoke, and had no need to speak,

While on the windy down-land, cheek by cheek, The slow-driven sun beheld us. Each caress

Had oratory for its own defence;

And when I kissed or felt her fingers press,

I envied not Demosthenes his Greek, Nor Tully for his Latin eloquence.

PERILS OF THE SMALL HOURS.

WHEN life burns low as the fire in the grate And all the evening's books are read,

I sit alone, save for the dead

And the lovers I have grown to hate.

But all at once the narrow gloom

Of hatred and despair expands

In tenderness : thought stretches hands

To welcome to the midnight room

Another presence:—a memory

Of how last year in the sunlit field, Laughing, you suddenly  
revealed Beauty in immortality.

For so it is ; a gesture strips

Life bare of all its make-believe.

All unprepared we may receive

Our casual apocalypse.

Sheer beauty, then you seemed to stir Unbodied soul; soul sleeps to  
night, And love comes, dimming spirit's sight, When body plays  
interpreter.

RETURN TO AN OLD HOME.

FN this wood—how the hazels have grown I—

I left a treasure ail my own

Of childish kisses and laughter and pain;

Left, till I might come back again

To take from the familiar earth

My hoarded secret and count its worth.

And all the spider-work of the years,

All the time-spun gossamers,

Dewed with each succeeding spring;

And the piled up leaves the Autumns fling

To the sweet corruption of death on death . . .

At the sudden stir of my spirit's breath

All scattered. New and fair and bright

As ever it was, before my sight

The treasure lay, and nothing missed.

So having handled all and kissed,

I put them back, adding one new And precious memory of you.