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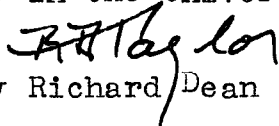
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FRANK PEARCE STURM:

HIS LIFE, LITERARY FRIENDSHIPS
AND COLLECTED WORKS

Volume II

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the University of
Durham


by Richard/Dean Taylor.

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CHARLES BAUDELAIRE: A STUDY

Charles Baudelaire: A Study¹

I.

Charles Baudelaire was one of those who take the downward path which leads to salvation. There are men born to be the martyrs of the world and of their own time; men whose imagination carries them beyond all that we know or have learned to think of as law and order; who are so intoxicated with a vision of a beauty beyond the world that the world's beauty seems to them but a little paint above the face of the dead; who love God with a so consuming fire that they must praise evil for God's glory, and blaspheme His name that all sects and creeds may be melted away; who see beneath all there is of mortal loveliness, the invisible worm, feeding upon hopes and desires no less than upon the fair and perishable flesh; who are good and evil at the same time; and because the good and evil in their souls finds a so

¹ Published in The Poems of Charles Baudelaire (London, 1906), pp. xi-liii. Reprinted in Baudelaire: His Prose and Poetry, ed. T.R. Smith (New York, 1919), pp. 11-36.

perfect instrument in the refined and tortured body of modern times, desire keener pleasure and more intolerable anguish than the world contains, and become materialists because the tortured heart cries out in denial of the soul that tortures it. Charles Baudelaire was one of these men; his art is the expression of his decadence; a study of his art is the understanding of that complex movement, that "inquietude of the Veil in the temple," as Mallarmé called it, that has changed the literature of the world; and, especially, made of poetry the subtle and delicate instrument of emotional expression it has become in our own day.

We used to hear a deal about Decadence in the arts, and now we hear as much about Symbolism, which is a flower sprung from the old corruption—but Baudelaire is decadence; his art is not a mere literary affectation, a mask of sorrow to be thrown aside when the curtain falls, but the voice of an imagination plunged into the contemplation of all the perverse and fallen loveliness of the world; that finds beauty most beautiful at the moment of its passing away, and regrets its perishing with a so poignant grief that it must needs follow it even into the narrow grave where those "dark comrades the worms, without

ears, without eyes," whisper their secrets of terror and tell of yet another pang—

"Pour ce vieux corps sans âme et mort parmi les morts."

All his life Baudelaire was a victim to an unutterable weariness, that terrible malady of the soul born out of old times to prey upon civilisations that have reached their zenith—weariness, not of life, but of living, of continuing to labour and suffer in a world that has exhausted all its emotions and has no new thing to offer. Being an artist, therefore, he took his revenge upon life by a glorification of all the sorrowful things that it is life's continual desire to forget. His poems speak sweetly of decay and death, and whisper their graveyard secrets into the ears of beauty. His men are men whom the moon has touched with her own phantasy: who love the immense ungovernable sea, the unformed and and multitudinous waters; the place where they are not; the women they will never know; and all his women are enigmatic courtesans whose beauty is transfiguration of sin; who hide the ugliness of the soul beneath the perfection of the body. He loves them and does not love; they are cruel and indolent and full of strange perversions; they are perfumed with exotic perfumes; they

sleep to the sound of viols, or fan themselves languidly in the shadow, and only he sees that it is the shadow of death.

An art like this, rooted in a so tortured perception of the beauty and ugliness of a world where the spirit is mingled indistinguishably with the flesh, almost inevitably concerns itself with material things, with all the subtle raptures the soul feels, not by abstract contemplation, for that would mean content, but through the gateway of the senses; the lust of the flesh, the delight of the eye. Sound, colour, odour, form: to him these are not the symbols that lead the soul towards the infinite: they are the soul; they are the infinite. He writes, always with a weary and laborious grace, about the abstruser and more enigmatic things of the flesh, colours and odours particularly; but unlike those later writers who have been called realists, he apprehends, to borrow a phrase from Pater, "all those finer conditions wherein material things rise to that subtlety of operation which constitutes them spiritual, where only the finer nerve and the keener touch can follow."

In one of his sonnets he says:

"Je hais la passion et l'esprit me fait mal!"

and, indeed, he is a poet in whom the spirit, as modern thought understands the word, had little or no part. We feel, reading his terrible poems, that the body is indeed acutely conscious of the soul, distressfully and even angrily conscious, but its motions are not yet subdued by the soul's prophetic voice. It was to forget this voice, with its eternal Esto Memor, that Baudelaire wrote imperishably of perishable things and their fading glory.

II.

Charles Baudelaire was born at Paris, April 21st, 1821, in an old turreted house in the Rue Hautefeuille. His father, a distinguished gentleman of the eighteenth-century school, seems to have passed his old-world manners on to his son, for we learn from Baudelaire's friend and biographer, Théophile Gautier, that the poet, "always preserved the forms of an extreme urbanity."

At school, during his childhood, he gained many distinctions, and passed for a kind of infant prodigy; but later on, when he sat for his examination as bachelier ès lettres, his extreme nervousness made him appear almost an idiot. Failing miserably, he made no second attempt.

Then his father died, and his mother married General Aupick, afterwards ambassador to Constantinople, an excellent man in every respect, but quite incapable of sympathising with or even of understanding the love for literature that now began to manifest itself in the mind of his stepson. All possible means were tried to turn him from from literature to some more lucrative and more respectable profession. Family quarrels arose over this all-important question, and young Baudelaire, who seems to have given some real cause for offence to the step-father whose aspirations and profession he despised, was at length sent away upon a long voyage, in the hopes that the sight of strange lands and new faces would perhaps cause him to forget the ambitions his relatives could ~~not~~ but consider as foolish and idealistic. He sailed the Indian Seas; visited the islands of Mauritius, Bourbon, Madagascar, and Ceylon; saw the yellow waters of the sacred Ganges; stored up the memory of tropical sounds and colours and odours for use later on; and returned to Paris shortly after his twenty-first birthday, more than ever determined to be a man of letters.

His parents were in despair; no doubt quite rightly so from their point of view. Théophile Gautier, perhaps

remembering the many disappointments and martyrdoms of his own sad life, defends the attitude of General Aupick in a passage where he poignantly describes the hopelessness of the profession of letters. The future author of The Flowers of Evil, however, was now his own master and in a position, so far as monetary matters were concerned, to follow out his own whim. He took apartments in the Hotel Pimodan, a kind of literary lodging-house where all Bohemia met; and where Gautier and Boissard were also at that period installed. Then began that life of uninterrupted labour and meditation that has given to France her most characteristic literature, for these poems of Baudelaire's are not only original in themselves but have been the cause of originality in others; they are the root of modern French literature and much of the best English literature; they were the origin of that new method in poetry that gave Mallarmé and Verlaine to France; Yeats and some others to England. It was in the Hotel Pimodan that Beaudelaire and Gautier first met and formed one of those unfading friendships not so rare among men of letters as among men of the world; there also the "Hashish-Eaters" held the séances that have since become famous in the history of literature.

Hashish and opium, indeed, contribute not a little to the odour of the strange Flowers of Evil; as also, perhaps, they contributed to Baudelaire's death from the terrible malady known as general paralysis, for he was a man who could not resist a so easy path into the world of macabre visions. I shall return to this question again; there is internal evidence in his writings that shows he made good literary use of those opiate-born dreams which in the end dragged him into their own abyss.

It was in 1849, when Baudelaire was twenty-eight years of age, that he made the acquaintance of the already famous Théophile Gautier, from whose admirable essay I shall presently translate a passage giving us an excellent pen-sketch of the famous poet and cynic—for Baudelaire was a cynic: he had not in the least degree the rapt expression and vague personality usually supposed to be characteristic of the poetic mood. "He recalls," wrote M. Dulamon, who knew him well, "one of those beautiful Abbés of the eighteenth century, so correct in their doctrine, so indulgent in their commerce with life—the Abbé de Bernis, for example. At the same time, he writes better verse, and would not have demanded at Rome the destruction of the Order of Jesuits."

That was Baudelaire exactly, suave and polished, filled with sceptical faith, cynical with the terrible cynicism of the scholar who is acutely conscious of all the morbid and gloomy secrets hidden beneath the fair exteriors of the world. Gautier, in the passage I have already mentioned, emphasises both his reserve and his cynicism: "Contrary to the somewhat loose manners of artists generally, Baudelaire prided himself upon observing the most rigid convénances; his courtesy, indeed, was excessive to the point of seeming affected. He measured his sentences, using only the most carefully chosen terms, and pronounced certain words in a particular manner, as though he wished to underline them and give them a mysterious importance. He had italics and capital letters in his voice. Exaggeration, much in honour at Pimodan's, he disdained as being theatrical and gross; though he himself affected paradox and excess. With a very simple, very natural, and perfectly detached air, as though retailing, à la Prudhomme, a newspaper paragraph about the mildness or rigour of the weather, he would advance some satanically monstrous axiom, or uphold with the coolness of ice some theory of a mathematical extravagance; for he always followed a

rigorous plan in the development of his follies. His spirit was neither in words nor traits; he saw things from a particular point of view, so that their outlines were changed, as objects when one gets a bird's-eye view of them; he perceived analogies inappreciable to others, and you were struck by their fantastic logic. His rare gestures were slow and sober; he never threw his arms about, for he held southern gesticulation in horror; British coolness seemed to him to be good taste. One might describe him as a dandy who had strayed into Bohemia; though still preserving his rank, and that cult of self which characterises a man imbued with the principles of Brummel."

At this time Baudelaire was practically unknown outside his own circle of friends, writers themselves; and it was not until eight years later, in 1857, when he published his Flowers of Evil, that he became famous. Infamous would perhaps be a better word to describe the kind of fame he at first obtained, for every Philistine in France joined in the cry against a poet who dared to remind his readers that the grave awaits even the rich; who dared to choose the materials of his art from among the objects of death and decay; who exposed the mouldering

secrecies of the grave, and painted, in the phosphorescent colours of corruption, frescoes of death and horror; who desecrated love in the sonnet entitled "Causerie":

"You are a sky of autumn, pale and rose!
But all the sea of sadness in my blood
Surges, and ebbing, leaves my lip morose
Salt with the memory of the bitter flood.
In vain your hand glides my faint bosom o'er;
That which you seek, beloved, is desecrate
By woman's tooth and talon: ah! no more
Seek in me for a heart which those dogs ate!

It is a ruin where the jackals rest,
And rend and tear and glut themselves and slay!
—A perfume swims about your naked breast,
Beauty, hard scourge of spirits, have your way!
With flame-like eyes that at bright feasts have flared
Burn up these tatters that the beats have spared!"

We can recall nothing like it in the literary history of our own country; the sensation caused by the appearance of the first series of Mr. Swinburne's Poems and Ballads was mild in comparison; just as Mr. Swinburne's poems were but wan derivatives from Baudelaire—at least as far as ideas are concerned; I say nothing about their beauty of expression or almost absolute mastery of technique—for it is quite obvious that the English poet was indebted to Baudelaire for all the bizarre and satanic elements in his work; as Baudelaire was indebted to Poe. Mr. Swinburne, however, is wild where Baudelaire is grave; and where

Baudelaire compresses some perverse and morbid image into a single unforgettable line, Mr. Swinburne beats it into a froth of many musical/^{lovely} words, until we forget the deep sea in the shining foam.

If we call to mind the reception at first given to the black-and-white work of Aubrey Beardsley, it will give some idea of the consternation caused in France by the appearance of the Flowers of Evil. Beardsley, indeed, resembles Baudelaire in many ways, for he achieved in art what the other achieved in literature: the apotheosis of the horrible and grotesque, the perfecting of symbols to shadow forth intellectual sin, the tearing away of the decent veil of forgetfulness that hides our own corruption from our eyes, and his one prose romance, Under the Hill, unhappily incomplete at his death at the age of twenty-four, beats Baudelaire on his own ground. The four or five chapters which alone remain of this incomplete romance stand alone in literature. They are the absolute attainment of what Baudelaire more or less successfully attempted—a testament of sin. Not the sin of the flesh, the gross faults of the body that are vulgarly known as sin; but sin which is a metaphysical corruption, a depravity of pure intellect, the sin of the fallen angels

in hell who cover their anguish with the sound of harps and sweet odours; who are incapable of bodily impurity, and for whom spiritual purity is the only terror. And since mortality, which is the shadow of the immortal, can comprehend spiritual and abstract things only by the analogies and correspondences which exist between them and the far reflections of them that we call reality, both Baudelaire and Beardsley, as indeed all artists who speak with tongues of spiritual truth, choose more or less actual human beings to be the shadows of the divine or satanic beings they would invoke, and make them sin delicate sins of the refined bodily sense that we may get a far-off glimpse of the Evil that is not mortal but immortal, the Spiritual Evil that has set up its black throne beside the throne of Spiritual Good, and has equal share in the shaping of the world and man.

I am not sure that Baudelaire, when he wrote this sinister poetry, had any clear idea that it was his vocation to be a prophet either of good or evil. Certainly he had no thought of founding a school of poetry, and if he made any conscious effort to bring a new method into literature, it was merely because he desired to be one of the famous writers of his country.

An inspired thinker, however, whether his inspiration be mighty or small, receives his thought from a profounder source than his own physical reason, and writes to the dictation of beings outside of and greater than himself. The famous Eliphas Lévi, like all the mystics who came before and after him, from Basilides the Gnostic to Blake the English visionary, taught that the poet and dreamer are the mediums of the Divine Word, and sole instruments through which the gods energise in the world of material things. The writing of a great book is the casting of a pebble into the pool of human thought; it gives rise to ever-widening circles that will reach we know not whither, and begins a chain of circumstances that may end in the destruction of kingdoms and religions and the awakening of new gods. The change wrought, directly or indirectly, by The Flowers of Evil alone is almost too great to be properly understood. There is perhaps not a man in Europe to-day whose outlook on life would not have been different had The Flowers of Evil never been written. The first thing that happens after the publication of such a book is the theft of its ideas and the imitation of its style by the lesser writers who labour for the multitude, and so its teaching goes from

book to book, from the greater to the lesser, as the divine hierarchies emanate from Divinity, until ideas that were once paradoxical, or even blasphemous and unholy, have become mere newspaper commonplaces adopted by the numberless thousands who do not think for themselves, and the world's thought is changed completely, though by infinite slow degrees. The immediate result of Baudelaire's work was the Decadent School in French literature. Then the influence spread across the Channel, and the English Aesthetes arose to preach the gospel of imagination to the unimaginative. Both Decadence and Aestheticism, as intellectual movements, have fallen into the nadir of oblivion, and the dust lies heavy upon them, but they left a little leaven to lighten the heavy inertness of correct and academic literature; and now Symbolism, a greater movement than either, is in the ascendant, giving another turn to the wheel, and to all who think deeply about such matters it seems as though Symbolist literature is to be the literature of the future. The Decadents and Aesthetics were weak because they had no banner to fight beneath, no authority to appeal to in defence of their views, no definite gospel to preach. They were by turns morbid,

hysterical, foolishly blasphemous, or weakly disgusting, but never anything for long, their one desire being to produce a thrill at any cost. If the hospital failed they went to the brothel, and when even obscenity failed to stimulate the jaded palates of their generation there was still the grave-yard left. A more or less successful imitation of Baudelaire's awful verses entitled "The Corpse" has been the beginning of more than one French poet's corrupt flight across the sky of literature. That Baudelaire himself was one of their company is not an accusation, for he had genius, which his imitators, English or French, have not; and his book, even apart from the fact that it made straight the way for better things, must be admitted to be a great and subtly-wrought work of art by whosoever reads it with understanding. And, moreover, his morbidness is not at all an affectation; his poems inevitably prove the writer to have been quite sincere in his perversion and in his decadence.

The Symbolist writers of to-day, though they are sprung from him, are greater than he because they are the prophets of a faith who believe in what they preach. They find their defence in the writings of the mystics,

and their doctrines are at the root of every religion. They were held by the Gnostics and are in the books of the Kabbalists and the Magi. Blake preached them and Eliphas Lévi taught them to his disciples in France, who in turn have misunderstood and perverted them, and formed strange religions and sects of Devil-worshippers. These doctrines hold that the visible world is the world of illusion, not of reality. Colour and sound and perfume and all material and sensible things are but the symbols and far-off reflections of the things that are alone real. Reality is hidden away from us by the five senses and the gates of death; and Reason, the blind and laborious servant of the physical brain, deludes us into believing that we can know anything of truth through the medium of the senses. It is through the imagination alone that man can obtain spiritual revelation, for imagination is the one window in the prison-house of the flesh through which the soul can see the proud images of eternity. And Blake, who is the authority of all English Symbolist writers, long since formulated their creed in words that have been quoted again and again, and must still be quoted by all who write in defence of modern art:—

"The world of imagination is the world of Eternity. It is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the vegetated body. This world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation, or vegetation, is finite and temporal. There exists in that eternal world the permanent realities of everything which we see reflected in this vegetable glass of nature."

In spite of the cry against "flowers of Evil", Baudelaire did not lack defenders among the literary men themselves; and many enthusiastic articles were written in praise of his book. Thierry not unjustly compared him to Dante, to which Barbey d'Aurevilly replied, "Baudelaire comes from hell, Dante only went there;" adding at the finish of his article: "After the Flowers of Evil there are only two possible ways for the poet who made them blossom: either to blow out his brains or become a Christian." Baudelaire did neither. And Victor Hugo, after reading the two poems, "The Seven Old Men" and "The Little Old Women," wrote to Baudelaire. "You have dowered the heaven of art with one knows not what deathly gleam," he said in his letter; "you have created a new shudder." The phrase became famous, and for many years after this the creation of a new shudder was the ambition of every young French writer worth his salt.

When the ^{first} great wave of public astonishment had broken and ebbed, Baudelaire's work began to be appreciated by others than merely literary men, by all in fact who cared for careful art and subtle thinking, and before long he was admitted to be the greatest after Hugo who had written French verse. He was famous and he was unhappy. Neither glory, nor love, nor friendship—and he knew them all—could minister to the disease of that fierce mind, seeking it knew not what and never finding it; seeking it, unhappily, in the strangest excesses. He took opium to quieten his nerves when they trembled, for something to do when they did not, and made immoderate use of hashish to produce visions and heighten his phantasy. His life was a haunted weariness. Thomas de Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium-Eater seem to have fascinated him to a great extent, for besides imitating the vices of the author, he wrote, in imitation of his book, The Artificial Paradises, a monograph on the effects of opium and hashish, partly original, partly a mere translation from the Confessions.

He remembered his visions and sensations as an eater of drugs and made literary use of them. At the end of this book, among the "Poems in Prose" will be found

one entitled "The Double Chamber"^u, almost certainly written under the influence of opium, and the last verse of "The Temptation"—

"O mystic metamorphosis!
My senses into one sense flow—
Her voice makes perfume when she speaks,
Her breath is music faint and low!"

as well as the last six lines of that profound sonnet "Correspondences"—

"Some perfumes are as fragrant as a child,
Sweet as the sound of hautboys, meadow-green;
Others, corrupted, rich, exultant, wild,
Have all the expansion of things infinite:
As amber, incense, musk, and benzoin,
Which sing the sense's and the soul's delight,

are certainly memories of a sensation he experienced under the influence of hashish, as recorded in The Artificial Paradises, where he has this curious passage:—"The senses become extraordinarily acute and fine. The eyes pierce Infinity. The ear seizes the most unseizable in the midst of the shrillest noises. Hallucinations commence. External objects take on monstrous appearances and show themselves under forms hitherto unknown....^uThe most singular equivocations, the most inexplicable transposition of ideas, take place. Sounds are perceived to have a colour, and colour becomes musical."

Baudelaire need not have gone to hashish to discover this. The mystics of all times have taught that sounds in gross matter produce colour in subtle matter; and all who are subject to any visionary condition know that when in a trance colours will produce words of a language whose meaning is forgotten as soon as one awakes to normal life; but I do not think Baudelaire was a visionary. His work shows too precise a method, and a too ordered appreciation of the artificial in beauty. There again he is comparable to Aubrey Beardsley, for I have read somewhere that when Beardsley was asked if ever he saw visions, he replied, "I do not permit myself to see them, except upon paper." The whole question of the colour of sound is one of supreme interest to the poet, but it is too difficult and abstract a question to be written of here. A famous sonnet by Rimbaud on the colour of the vowels has founded a school of symbolists in France. I will content myself with quoting that—in the original, since it loses too much by translation:

"A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes:
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,

Golfes d'ombre; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,
Lances des glaciers fièrs, rois blancs, frissons d'ombelles;
I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;

U, cycles, vibrations divins des mers virides,
Paix des vâtes semés d'animaux, paix des rides
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux;

O, suprême Clairon pl^uen des strideurs étranges,
Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges:
—O l'Oméga, rayon violet de Ses Yeux!"¹

It is to be hoped that opium and hashish rendered Baudelaire somewhat less unhappy during his life, for they certainly contributed to hasten his death. Always of an extremely neurotic temperament, he began to break down beneath his excesses, and shortly after the publication of The Artificial Paradises, which shows a considerable deterioration in his style, he removed from Paris to Brussels in the hope of building up his health by the change. At Brussels he grew worse. His speech began to fail; he was unable to pronounce certain words and stumbled over others. Hallucinations commenced, no longer the hallucinations of hashish; and his disease, rapidly establishing itself, was recognised as "general

¹ I have substituted the Pleiade text of 1946 for the confused and inaccurate version originally printed. (Ed.)

paralysis of the insane." Gautier tells how the news of his death came to Paris while he yet lived. It was false news, but prematurely true. Baudelaire lingered on for another three months; motionless and inert, his eyes the only part of him alive; unable to speak or even to write, and so died.

He left, besides The Flowers of Evil and Little Poems in Prose (his masterpieces), several volumes of critical essays, published under the titles of Aesthetic Curiosities and Romantic Art; The Artificial Paradises, and his translations of the work of Edgar Allan Poe—admirable pieces of work by which Poe actually gains.

III.

Baudelaire's love of the artificial has been insisted upon by all who have studied his work, but to my mind never sufficiently insisted upon, for it was the foundation of his method. He wrote many arguments in favour of the artificial, and elaborated them into a kind of paradoxical philosophy of art. His hatred of nature and purely natural things was but a perverted form of the religious ecstasy that made the old monk put his cowl about his eyes when he left his cell in

the month of May, lest he should see the blossoming trees, and his mind be turned towards the beautiful delusions of the world. The Egyptians and the earliest of the Christians looked upon nature not as the work of the good and benevolent spirit who is the father of our souls, but as the work of the rebellious "gods of generation," who fashion beautiful things to capture the heart of man and bind his soul to earth. Blake, whom I have already quoted, hated nature in the same fashion, and held death to be the only way of escape from "the delusions of goddess Nature and her laws." Baudelaire's revolt against external things was more a revolt of the intellect than of the imagination; and he expresses it, not by desiring that the things of nature should be swept away to make room for the things of the spirit, but that they should be so changed by art that they cease to be natural. As he was of all the poets the most intensely modern, holding that "modernity is one-half of art," the other half being something "eternal and immutable," he preferred, unlike Blake and his modern followers, to express himself in quite modern terms, and so wrote his famous and much misunderstood Eloge du Maquillage to defend his views.

As was usual with him, he pushed his ideas to their extreme logical sequence, and the casual reader who picks up that extraordinary essay is in consequence quite misled as to the writer's intention.

It seems scarcely necessary at this time of day to assert that the Eloge du Maquillage is something more than a mere Praise of Cosmetics, written by a man who wished to shock his readers. It is the part expression of a theory of art, and if it is paradoxical and far-fetched it is because Baudelaire wrote at a time when French literature, in the words of M. Asselineau, "was dying of correctness", and needed very vigorous treatment indeed. If the Eloge du Maquillage had been more restrained in manner, if it had not been something so entirely contrary to all accepted ideas of the well-regulated citizen who never thinks a thought that somebody else has not put into his head, it might have been passed over without notice. It was written to initiate the profane; to make them think, at least; and not to raise a smile among the initiated. And moreover it was in a manner a defence of his own work that had met with so much hatred and opposition.

He begins by attempting to prove that Nature is immately and fundamentally wrong and wicked. "The greater number of errors relative to the beautiful date from the eighteenth century's false conceptions of morality. Nature was regarded in those times as the base, source, and type of all possible good and beauty.... If, however, we consent to refer simply to the visible facts,...we see that Nature teaches nothing, or almost nothing. That is to say, she forces man to sleep, to drink, to eat, and to protect himself, well or ill, against the hostilities of the atmosphere. It is she also who moves him to kill and eat or imprison and torture his kind; for, as soon as we leave the region of necessities and needs to enter into that of luxuries and pleasures, we see that Nature is no better than a counsellor to crime.... Religion commands us to nourish our poor and infirm parents; Nature (the voice of our own interest) commands us to do away with them. Pass in review, analyse all that is natural, all the actions and desires of the natural man, and you will find nothing but what is horrible. All beautiful and noble things are the result of calculation. Crime, the taste for which the human animal absorbs before birth, is

originally natural. Virtue, on the contrary, is artificial, supernatural, since there has been a necessity in all ages and among all nations for gods and prophets to preach virtue to humanity; since man alone would have been unable to discover it. Evil is done without effort, naturally and by fatality; good is always the product of an art."

So far the argument is straightforward and expresses what many must have thought, but Baudelaire, remembering that exaggeration is the best way of impressing one's ideas upon the unimaginative, immediately carries his argument from the moral order to the order of the beautiful, and applies it there. The result is strange enough. "I am thus led to regard personal adornment as one of the signs of the primitive nobility of the human soul. The races that our confused and perverted civilization, with a fatuity and pride entirely laughable, treats as savages, understand as does the child the high spirituality of the toilet. The savage and the child, by their naïve love of all brilliant things, of glittering plumage and shining stuffs, and the superlative majesty of artificial forms, bear witness to

their distaste for reality, and so prove, unknown to themselves, the immateriality of their souls."

Thus, with some appearance of logic, he carries his argument a step further, and this immediately brings him to the bizarre conclusion that the more beautiful a woman naturally is, the more she should hide her natural beauty beneath the artificial charm of rouge and powder. "She performs a duty in attempting to appear magical and supernatural. She is an idol who must adorn herself to be adored." Powder and rouge and kohl, all the little artifices that shock respectability, have for their end "the creation of an abstract unity in the grain and colour of the skin." This unity brings the human being nearer to the condition of a statue—that is to say, "a divine and superior being." Red and black are the symbols of "an excessive and supernatural life." A touch of kohl "lends to the eye, a more decided appearance of a window opened upon infinity;" and rouge augments the brilliance of the eye "and adds to the beautiful feminine face the mysterious passion of the priestess." But artifice cannot make ugliness any the less ugly, nor help age to rival youth. "Who dare assign to art the sterile function of

imitating nature?" Deception, if it is to have any charm, must be obvious and unashamed; it must be displayed "if not with affectation, at least with a kind of candour."

Such theories as these, if they are sincerely held, necessarily lead the theorist into the strangest bypaths of literature. Baudelaire, like many another writer whose business is with verse, pondered so long upon the musical and rhythmical value of words that at times words became meaningless to him. He thought his own language too simple to express the complexities of poetic reverie, and dreamed of writing his poems in Latin. Not, however, in the Latin of classical times; that was too robust, too natural, too "brutal and purely epidermic," to use an expression of his own; but in the corrupt Latin of the Byzantine decadence, which he considered as "the supreme sigh of a strong being already transformed and prepared for the spiritual life."

One of these Latin poems has appeared in all editions of The Flowers of Evil. Though dozens as good are to be found in the Breviary of the Roman Church, "Franciscae Meae Laudes" has been included in this selection for

the benefit of those curious in such matters. It is one of Baudelaire's many successful steps in the wrong direction.

IV.

In almost every line of The Flowers of Evil one can trace the influence of Edgar Poe, and in the many places where Baudelaire has attained a pure imaginative beauty, as in "The Sadness of the Moon" or "Music" or "The Death of Lovers," it is a beauty that would have pleased the author of Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque. Another kind of beauty, the beauty of death—for in Baudelaire's crucible everything is melted into loveliness—is even more directly traceable to Poe. In spite of the sonnet "Correspondences," and in spite of his Symbolist followers of the present day, Baudelaire himself made but an imperfect use of such symbols as he had; and these he found ready to his hand in the works of the American poet. The Tomb, the symbol of death or of an intellectual darkness inhabited by the Worm, who is remorse; the Abyss, which is the despair into which the mortal part of man's mind plunges when brought into

contact with dead and perishing substances; all these are borrowed from Poe. The Worm, who "devours with a kiss," occasionally becomes Time devouring life, or the Demon, "the obscure Enemy who gnaws the heart," and when it is none of these it is the Serpent, as in that sombre poem "To a Madonna"—the Serpent beneath the feet of conquering purity. Baudelaire's imagination, however, which continually ran upon macabre images, loved remorse more than peace, and loved the Serpent more than the purity that would slay it, so he destroys purity with "Seven Knives" which are "the Seven Deadly Sins," that the Serpent may live to prey upon a heart that finds no beauty in peace. Even Love is evil, for his "ancient arrows" are "crime, horror, folly," and the god Eros becomes a demon lying in wait:

"Let us love gently. Love from his retreat
Ambushed and shadowy, bends his fatal bow,
And I too well his ancient arrows know:
Crime, Horror, Folly..."


←Gautier pretends that the poet preserved his ideal under the form of "the adorable phantom of La Béatrix, the ideal ever desired, never attained, the divine and superior beauty incarnated in an ethereal woman,

spiritual, made of light and flame and perfume, a vapour, a dream, a reflection of the seraphical world;" but when Baudelaire has a vision of this same Beatrice he sees her as one of a crowd of "cruel and curious demons" who mock^{at} his sorrow, and she, too, mocks him, and caresses the demons who are his spiritual foes.

Baudelaire was too deeply in love with the artificial to care overmuch for the symbols he could have found among natural objects. Only once in The Flowers of Evil does he look upon the Moon with the eyes of a mystic; and that is when he remembers that all people of imagination are under the Moon's influence, and makes his poet hide her iridescent tear in his heart, "far from the eyes of the Sun," for the Sun is lord of material labours and therefore hostile to the dreams and reveries that are the activity of the poet. He sought more for bizarre analogies and striking metaphors than for true symbols or correspondences. He is happiest when comparing the vault of^{the} heaven to "the lighted ceiling of a music hall," or "the black lid of a mighty pot where the human generations boil;" and when he thinks of the unfortunate and unhappy folk of the world, he does not see any hope for them in any future

state; he sees, simply, "God's awful claw" stretched out to tear them. He offers pity, but no comfort.

Sometimes he has a vision of a beauty unmingled with any malevolence; but it is always evoked by sensuous and material things; perfume or music; and always it is a sorrowful loveliness he mourns or praises. Perhaps of all his poems "The Balcony" is most full of that tender and reverential melancholy we look for in a poem of love; but even it tells of a passion that has faded out of heart and mind and become beautiful only with its passing away, and not of an existing love. The other love poems—if indeed such a name can be given to "A Madigral of Sorrow", "The Eyes of Beauty", "The Remorse of the Dead", and the like—are nothing but terrible confessions of satiety, or cruelty, or terror. I have translated "The Corpse", his most famous and most infamous poem, partly because it shows him at his worst as the others in the volume at his best, partly because it is something of the nature of a literary curiosity. A poem like "The Corpse", which is simply an example of what may happen if any writer pushes his theories to the extreme, does not at all detract, be it said, from Baudelaire's delicate genius; for though he

may not be quite worthy of a place by Dante, he has written poems that Dante might have been proud to write, and he is worthy to be set among the very greatest of the moderns, alongside Hugo and Verlaine. Read the sonnet entitled "Beauty" and you will see how he has invoked in fourteen lines the image of a goddess, mysterious and immortal; as fair as that Aphrodite who cast the shadow of her loveliness upon the Golden Age; as terrible as Pallas, "the warrior maid invincible" . And as Minerva loved mortality in the person of Ulysses, so Baudelaire's personification of Beauty loves the poets who pray before her and gaze into her eternal eyes, watching the rising and setting of their visionary Star in those placid mirrors.

The explanation of most of Baudelaire's morbid imaginings is this, that he was a man haunted by terrible dream-like memories; chief among them the memory that the loveliness he had adored in woman—the curve of a perfect cheek, the lifting of a perfect arm in some gesture of imperial indolence, the fall of a curl across a pale brow, all the minute and unforgettable things that give immortality to some movement of existence—all these, and the woman and her lover, must pass away

from Time and Space; and he, unhappily, knew nothing of the philosophy that teaches us how all objects and events, even the most trivial—a woman's gesture, a rose, a sigh, a fading flame, the sound that trembles on a lute-string—find a place in Eternity when they pass from the recognition of our senses. If he believed in the deathlessness of a man's personality he gained no comfort from his belief. He mourned the body's decay; he was not concerned with the soul; and no heaven less palpable than Mohammed's could have had any reality in his imagination.

His prose is as distinguished in its manner as his verse. I think it was Professor Saintsbury who first brought The Little Poems in Prose, a selection from which is included in this volume, before the notice of English readers in an essay written many years ago. I am writing this in France, far from the possibility of consulting any English books, but if my memory serves me rightly he considered the prose of these prose poems to be as perfect as literature can be. I think he said, "they go as far as prose can go." They need no other introduction than themselves, for they are perfect of their kind, and not different in thought

from the more elaborately wrought poems of The Flowers of Evil. Some of them, as for instance "Every Man his Chimaera", are as classical and as universally true as the myths and symbolisms of the Old Testament; and all of them, I think, are worthy of a place in that book the Archangel of the Presence will consult when all is weighed in the balance—the book written by man himself, the record of his deep and shallow imaginings. Baudelaire wrote them, he said, because he had dreamed, "in his days of ambition", "of a miracle of poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme." His attitude of mind was always so natural to him that he never thought it necessary to make any excuse for the spirit of his art or the drear philosophy he preached; unless a short notice printed in the first edition of his poems, but withdrawn from the second edition, explaining that "faithful to his dolorous programme, the author of The Flowers of Evil, as a perfect comedian, has had to mould his spirit to all sophisms as to all corruptions", can be considered as an excuse. From whatever point of view we regard him: whether we praise his art and blame his philosophy, or blame his art and praise his philosophy, he is as difficult to analyse as he is difficult to give

a place to, for we have none with whom to compare him, or very few, too few to be of service to the critic. His art is like the pearl, a beautiful product of disease, and to blame it is like blaming the pearl.

He looked upon life very much as Poe, whom he so admired, looked upon it: with the eye of a sensitive spectator in some gloomy vault of the Spanish Inquisition, where beauty was upon the rack; he was horrified, but unable to turn from a sight that fascinated him by its very terror. His moments of inspiration are haunted by the consciousness that evil beings, clothed with horror as with a shroud, are ever lingering about the temple of life and awaiting an opportunity to enter. He was like a man who awakens trembling from a nightmare, afraid of the darkness, and unable to believe the dawn may be less hopeless than the midnight. Perhaps he was haunted, as many artists and all mystics, by a fear of madness and of the unseen world of evil shapes that sanity hides from us and madness reveals. Is there a man, is there a writer, especially, who has not at times been conscious of a vague and terrible fear that the whole world of visible nature is but a comfortable illusion that may fade away in a moment and leave him face to face

with the horror that has visited him in dreams? The old occult writers held that the evil thoughts of others beget phantoms in the air that can make themselves bodies out of our fear, and haunt even our waking moments. These were the shapes of terror that haunted Baudelaire. Shelley, too, writes of them with as profound a knowledge as the magical writer of the Middle Ages. They come to haunt his Prometheus:

"Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death."

They are the elemental beings who dwell beside the soul of the dreamer and the poet, "like a vain loud multitude"; turning life into death and all beautiful thoughts into poems like The Flowers of Evil, or into tales like the satanic reveries of Edgar Poe.

"We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing faun,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will."

And every man gives them of the substance of his imagination to clothe them in prophetic shapes that are the images of his destiny:

"From our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night."

The greatest of all poets conquer their dreams; others, who are great, but not of the greatest, are conquered by them, and Baudelaire was one of these.

There is a passage in the works of Edgar Poe that Baudelaire may well have pondered as he laboured at his translation, for it reveals the secret of his life:

"There are moments when, even to the sober eye of reason, the world of our sad humanity may assume the semblance of a hell; but the imagination of man is no Carathis to explore with impunity its cavern. Alas! the grim legion of sepulchral terrors cannot be regarded as altogether fanciful; but, like the demons in whose company Afrasiab made his voyage down the Oxus, they must sleep or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber or we perish."

Pont Aven,

December 1905.

UMBRAE SILENTES

1918

To
C. S.

MY FELLOW PILGRIM
WHO BROUGHT
ROSES TO THE DESERT

On the tall cairn the light lies wist and eerily,
 In the hush of the fallen day;
The gray gull wheels, and calls to the gray sea
 warily,
 Calls and passes away.

While the tall cairn stands, or dew lies cold on
 the heather,
 Or a bird has wings,
You and I shall wander the dusk and the starlight
 together,
 To the end of things.

Umbræ Silentēs

I

One of the friends of my youth was a Benedictine monk, a learned theologian and a Greek scholar, in whom erudition was the hand-maid of simplicity. Like so many good people, he had little sense of humour, and only one joke, which was to say, whenever he lit a cigarette: "It is better to smoke here than hereafter." In the days of our friendship, which are gone, never to return, for he died a number of years ago, it was our delight to sit over the fire and discuss philosophy far into the dark hours. He had some liking for my speculations, but none for the alchemical and astrological studies to which I was then devoted. He thought that some of the alchemists might have attained Paradise, because in their sol and

luna, their mercury and salt, their alembics and anthanors and the magnum opus itself, he saw the emblems of a spiritual regeneration; but he was convinced that astrology, which he wrongly held to be a denial of free will, came out of the Shadow: even the knowledge that so many Popes had been its patrons and votaries was but a further proof of its wickedness, for an error that can deceive such as they must be powerful indeed. Though I gave him nothing but my friendship he gave me all, and it is in a manner to him that I owe whatever peace has flowered out of the broken ground of life. For many years he laboured for what he thought to be my good, writing me long letters of explanation and denial in his beautiful hand formed by the shaping of Greek characters, and now that he is dead I like to believe he still thinks of me in the shadowy mid-world where I do not doubt his spirit awaits the flowering of the plaited Thorns. He would have bound me to the altar of his Church by the golden fetters of my love for old music and dim colours and ancient traditions and an immemorial tongue; but my horoscope held a star that refused to set amid these

splendours, and in the conflict I escaped, to find, not an incense-clouded or phantom-haunted sanctuary of gold and lilies, but on a hill against a wintry dawn, a gaunt cross beneath hurrying clouds, and the cross was empty.

II

In the London square where I am writing, the bell of the old Catholic chapel, hidden away in the corner, is beating for eleven o'clock mass, and I feel now, as I always feel when moved by any such appeal to the religious imagination, that I am excluded unjustly from a share in these mysteries. It is true that I might be one with the Church if I would give up my belief in the pre-existence of the soul, but I cannot. And if I could I would not, for a belief that goes back to the first consciousness of childhood is not to be cast lightly away. I was brought up in orthodox surroundings, among dull and stupid people who accepted the first hole in the fence like sheep all of one mind, but I always knew with as great a certainty as that

fire burned or water flowed that I had lived before in some other time and should live again in a life that I hoped would be as full of splendour and adventurous learning as the lives of the Magi; nor had I ever realised till the bewildering knowledge stunned me at school that all people did not share such incontrovertible beliefs. At home I had not been permitted to ask questions or to speak in the presence of my elders, who, moreover, regarded their souls as only less indecent than their bodies, and hid them with as great a shame; but the less reticent society of a preparatory school for boys soon persuaded me that these were lonely thoughts, which must lie hidden to escape persecution.

III

One day when I was about thirteen years of age a friend of the family gave me a cheap and badly printed book which told how Roman Catholics tortured and maltreated Protestants when they had these in their power. The frontispiece of the book was a woodcut in which a missionary was being done to death by Catholic

soldiers, in the presence of a smiling priest, whose darkly humorous face was as attractive to my imagination as the clasped hands and upturned eyes of the suffering missionary were repulsive, and I was so taken with the ingenuity and delightfulness of this picture that I determined at all costs to be a Roman Catholic when I grew up. The book was given to me, no doubt, with the intention of helping me along the road to what was to me the very distasteful process I had learned to call "salvation"—a word that even yet fills me with a vague disgust—nor have I much doubt that it effected its purpose, though not in the manner nor in the circumstances foreseen by the giver. I began to take a great interest in warring creeds, and greedily read all I could find on the subject in "Chambers' Encyclopaedia," which, with the exception of a number of bound volumes of an unreadable Presbyterian Messenger, was my only library. I consulted my Encyclopaedia upon all the problems of life, and gained much curious and inassimilable information unsuited to my years, till one thought leading to another I was presently pondering, with all the energy of an immature intelligence, the

problem of religious origins. No doubt I should have been better employed fighting with other boys and playing their games, but as these healthy vulgarities were strictly forbidden by my parents I took what was nearest to hand, and set my teeth in a very bitter apple. I soon decided that Christianity had shut the door in my face, for the authorities of that religion everywhere seemed to deny the pre-existence of man's soul—a doctrine I could not accept in view of the fact that I knew I had lived before, and even seemed to remember, in dreams and lonely meditations that were waking dreams, some broken sequence of images and adventures out of a former life. I have been weighing the one problem ever since, and this book, written after many years, is in part shaped by the conviction that not only is Christianity not incompatible with the mysteries of metempsychosis, but that Christ, at one with all great teachers, made these the foundation stone of His teaching; and not only so, but that without them His world would have fallen in ruins about him, for it would have been little more than a system of ethics not greatly

superior to others that from age to age have challenged and failed to survive the curiosity of man.

IV

Metempsychosis rightly apprehended is something more than the continuous rebirth of the soul into body after material body; for, though none the less that, it means also, and indeed more particularly, the rebirth into the spiritual body, whose comprehension is the key to all those abstract speculations which seem to lead the mind nowhere. The soul shivers in the empty heavens of philosophy. The need and hunger for a habitation, a material body here or a spiritual one hereafter, is not a vice of the soul, but of the essence of it; it has, in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, a natural aptitude or exigency for existing in the body; for which very reason the imaginations of the poets are more truly spiritual than the chilly speculations of the Platonists. I have no sympathy with the transcendental philosophy that would deprive Venus of her doves or Hermes of his winged sandals; for the same reason I dislike, even while using, such

ghostly and unsatisfying terms as "abstract intellect" and "separated intelligences." If the answer to the riddle of man is anywhere in this world, it will be found among images of loveliness. Poets and artists are the powerful servants of the Most High; they are image-makers by trade; their emblems give the reality of passion to abstract truths; so that looking upon their gods and heroes the soul is not lost in the limitless empyrean it is our nature to dread, but sees divinity experiencing sorrow and happiness in the adventures of a life not unlike its own. The thirst for unimaginable happenings—the never-ending quest of the Grail—which I take to be a strong proof of his immortality, cannot be quenched in man by the cold cup of intellect. The contemplation of that "flight of the lone to the Alone" of which Plotinus tells, is poor consolation for the heart that has given battle to daemons or married a faery wife amid the glittering pageantry of dreams. Or so at least it seems to me, who, if ever I write the one book which every writer hopes to finish before he dies, will pen no learned discussion on the Absolute, but a drama in which the soul will be

the legendary Princess of Babylon who refused all lovers till one came riding upon a silver unicorn with a phoenix perched upon his wrist.

V

So many little books and treatises have made the exoteric doctrine of bodily rebirth so easy to understand that we read of it in fiction and hear it discussed over the teacups. It seems to call irresistibly to those ruined selves who know no more of life than illusions and appearance. It settles all the problems of good and evil and the seeming injustices of life that dismay their turbid minds. They do not know that good and evil, justice and injustice, together with all that seems to level them—the riddle and the answer to it—are alike illusion and shadow, deceiving those who live not in reality but in its reflected and inverted image. Rebirth is a truth; but objective truth becomes a dream within a dream when we step beyond the circle of rebirth; the soul thinks itself into the flesh as nonchanantly as the dreaming

mind becomes one with the images of sleep. Reincarnation is not the doom of all, but the punishment of the many; only in spiritual rebirth is the final death of illusion. Plotinus held that between incarnations souls not yet sufficiently pure to gain ultimate freedom taste the perfected world they knew before their fall. In what manner do they live in this Eden of sense? Do they remember death and await rebirth with as great a shrinking? Perhaps some attain there the wisdom they missed here, and so escape. "He who thus knoweth Spirit and Matter with its qualities, in whatsoever condition he may be, he shall not be born again."

VI

The belief that man can ever fall into the body of an animal, though it still has a slippery foothold in the Orient, seems to have been as repugnant to the minds of antiquity as to our own; Plato in the "Phaedrus," according to Proclus, "condemns the wicked to live as brutes and not to become them." It is, nevertheless, a thought that suggests, even at the moment of its

rejection, a new point of view, in which we regard the world of appearances from strange levels of consciousness. The cat staring with such seemingly meditative eyes into the fire may have no thoughts at all, or none but of milk and mice; she may not have, though we would like to believe she has, any memories of her Egyptian ancestry; or she may, upon the contrary, in that "unconsciousness" in which we imagine the animal creation to be plunged, live closer to the reality behind nature than we. It is possible in certain rare moments of reverie to become as it were one with the wild creatures of hearth and hill-side, and to imagine that we see ourselves as reflected in their eyes. I cannot forget a strange company of crows perched huddled upon the stones of a Druidical circle as I came upon them suddenly in the fading light of a Highland day. At the farm close by I had been told how a gang of farm-servants, set to dig up the circle and plough over the land, had after a few spadefuls of earth turned up funereal remains, and had refused there and then to dig further. Who could refuse for a time to share the common thought and the old belief that the birds who made this

desolate circle their resting place were the dead
whose ashes slept among shards and chipped arrow heads
beneath them?

VII

THE CRY OF THE RAVENS AT THE APPROACH OF NIGHT

Time rolls the world along his dusty way,
And snuffs the smoky candle of the sun,
And overthrows the battlements of day,
And heaps the earth on empires just begun;
But let him toil till all the fires are quenched,
And Sun and Moon outgrow their ancient fret,
We whom he hunts and fears have never blenched,
We whom he cannot slay escape him yet.
Under the earth they hid our heavy bones
When we were men and mortal long ago;
They raised the cromlech and the cairn of stones,
For what, being men and mortal, could they know,
Who live wingless and weak and cease to be?
O Ravens cry one cry for men who climb
The stony hills to where beside the sea
Our ancient voices croak the end of Time.

VIII

I have never yet shaken off the thought that animals
and plants and even stones may be, or could possibly
be, the vehicles of down-cast or upward-struggling

spirits, and not merely shapes taken by the stream of life as it flows from the Sun and the Stars into a chaos of matter. If animals have no pre-existence, and bear no burden of responsibility from the past, I wonder why I cannot keep a friend among them. A dog has but to become my companion to suffer before long a violent death from accident, unavoidable and unforeseen, and so inevitably has this been the case that I have taken a vow never again to offer such murderous hospitality to one of those beloved creatures.

There is a mental condition, which I am sure is a dangerous one, induced by habits of long contemplation, in which the individual seems to become one with Nature, as the saying is: when for a timeless moment the difference between a man and a tree seems not a hair's breadth, so imperceptible are the gradations by which life becomes separated into diverse identities. If I happen to be among trees when sunset has turned all to glamour, it is to believe that the strange metamorphosis by which the daughter of Peneus became a laurel is no legend, and to see with all the vividness of a dream the lifting of the enchantment that holds the forest rooted.

Even our tolerant mystics of to-day hold it a kind of heresy to play with such thoughts, but I am in the good company of the Cambridge Platonists: "This progress of the soul seemed to many to be better disposed for reward and punishment, when not restrained into any one species, but of more free dissolution and more suitable to that variety wherein nature delights, as better befitting, and more approaching to its infinity." And by this liberty they thought it often passed from a man to a beast, from a beast to a plant, and thence to a stone, if the circle were in the descendant; but if in the ascendant then its progress was from more gross subjects to more spiritual ones; for God is able of stones to raise up children unto Abraham. In Nature there is no such thing as quies, the very hardest stones in time mouldering into dust, only by a circular motion, from Rarefaction to Condensation, from Condensation to Rarefaction again.

The elemental fire which burns through all the building and breaking of created forms is described by Paracelsus, from whose candle I have taken many a light, as a self-energising essence which always lives

in the same operation and receives no life from anything else, but gives life to things which are dead in themselves, like the moon. The multiplicity of fire is the cause of the variety and diversity of creation; a variety not made of the first fire, but of the elements it energises; cast not from the Sun but from the complex courses of the planets. The world, he says, has nothing of similitude in its individuals because the transmutation of the fire is made in the elements, in whose bodies creation is imprinted. Where there is no great mixture of the elements, the Sun brings forth; where the mixture is grosser, the Moon; but where it is most gross, Venus. If creatures were born of the simple fire they would all be alike, but the manifold variety of forms intercedes and introduces variety among them.

The thought which fits in most with my own belief comes from the mystical school which holds that men's first bodies were as it were shadows cast off by gods of the moon in an ecstasy of creative thought; and that certain of the spiritual beings who inhabited the moon during her life, but became her backward and wayward

children, now climb the steep ascent to consciousness in the stones, trees and beasts of our own earth, and will be men when we have passed on.

IX

In a book of Eastern travel Lafcadio Hearn tells how he was permitted to visit the inner shrine in a Japanese temple, and how, when the veil was drawn from the sanctuary, he saw the reflection of his own face in an ancient mirror. In this adventure I find the emblem that best explains my own faith, and that, indeed, of all born beneath the shadow of the Cross, the one religious symbol that has snaped the Western mind, as it is the one about which all the speculations of occidental philosophy continually revolve—the mirror into which we must gaze to see ourselves as we substantially are. The logical and scientific imagination, drunk with the illusion which the irony of chance has named "the value of evidence," sees in the crucifixion of a man who claimed to be a god, no more than a doubtful episode in history, and rejects not only such records of the event as have escaped the destroying

enthusiasm of the Church, but also, and with weightier reason, the fantastical theory of "redemption" that has been violently squeezed out of them. Fortunately for those to whom the voice of the spirit is alone of value, the question of historical authenticity neither by its presence enhances nor by its absence depreciates the value of this tremendous myth—for it is a myth, and none the less so, but the more, if the actual event took place as described in the orthodox records; as from purely material reasons I am persuaded was the case. My purpose is not to side with either imagination or reason in the difficult problems of objective and subjective reality, nor to open the door of controversy by so much as a hair's breadth, but to write down here and there a thought or a dream of my own, or to present in my own way the thought of another, offering suggestions and possible interpretations in the light of a purely personal habit of mind. "The faith of each is shaped by his own nature," says the Indian scripture, "the man consisteth of his faith; that which it is; he is even that."

X

In the hermetic tradition the masters of the human race are highly evolved men, who, having reached the last of their incarnations on the material plane, offer themselves by an act of freewill and self-sacrifice, or are perhaps supernaturally chosen by reason of their intellectual and spiritual development to be the vehicle of the god whose recurring mission it is to show mankind the way of liberation from the darkness of matter. For the gods, though super-sensual, are yet separated intelligences who will not be absorbed into the One while Time renders all things divisible, and are thus bound by their spiritual limitations no less than we by our physical ones; wherefore they cannot manifest themselves to fallen consciousness except through the medium of the elements. The miraculous birth is in this tradition the birth not of the man but of the God, whose mother is the Virgin of Light treading the serpent beneath her feet. That prior to the entry of the god he

is a human being, the son of human parents, with mortal kin and a known family history, is evident from the very scriptures upon whose authority the belief in the miraculous nativity of one of the greatest of these Masters is founded. His descent from a king through his human father is traced with precision, and his human mother has so little claim to be a Virgin of the Mysteries, or the Mother of the God with whom she has been confounded by the later Church, that the fact of her continual virginity—now an article of faith with many—is denied by the assertion that her husband "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn": while her subsequent children, for whom no miraculous origin is ever claimed, are mentioned not only as existing, but by name. The entrance of the possessing god into the perfected human vehicle is described in words which do not essentially contradict "pagan" accounts of similar acts of union between divine and mortal beings, and is stated by St. John to have brought with it the possession of miraculous powers and the remembrance of former lives; as in Homer the entrance of Minerva "bearing a golden lamp" brought

splendour into the house of Ulysees. The appearance of a dove, descending upon and becoming one with the human body that "rose from the water" leads the imagination into curious labyrinths of inquiry. The dove is symbolical of many spiritual states and powers; it is both the emblem of divine love and the bird sacred to Venus, the goddess of physical passion, who is also, upon another plane, and viewed from another angle of consciousness, the Virgin of Light, the Mystical Rose who slays the Snake. She is the woman of the apocalypse "clothed with the Sun, and the Moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve Stars." She and not Mary is the mother of the god for whose birth the "red dragon" waits that he may devour him, or compel him to descend into the death of the body. The dragon is no other than the alchemical Serpent of the Zodiac, who lures the souls into incarnation; the same that tempted the first man and woman till they fell from their spiritual Eden and were clothed, during their descent, first in the fig-leaves of a purely vegetable existence, but at the end in human forms, the "coats of skin" made for them by the God of the Garden.

In the gnostic Acts of John we read how the god whom the suffering body could no longer hold prisoner appeared to the seer and said: "To the multitude below, in Jerusalem, I am being crucified and being pierced with spears and reeds, and vinegar and gall is being given me to drink...the things they say about me I had not, and the things they do not say those I suffered." Beneath these words, in the manuscript notes from which they are taken, I have written "God made the world in the form of a Cross": a saying I may have got from Madame Blavatsky, or Plato, or from one of Mr. Mead's learned books; but whatever its origin it explains to my unscholarly mind more than a library of argument. I see the Tree of the Garden and the dragon-guarded fruit; the trunk and the outspread limbs, reaching upwards and downwards to the Zenith and the Nadir, and East and West to the horizon of ascent into light and the horizon of going down into darkness. I see the man who is a god and the four soldiers. The soldiers take his garment, and make four parts, to every soldier a part, for the four soldiers are the four elements; but the vesture that is without seam,

woven from the top throughout, they cannot divide, because it is the mystical body which does not come from the elements nor permanently return to them. The divisible and the indivisible garments are the natural and spiritual bodies which the four soldiers fall upon at the passing of every soul, or the withering of every bough, or reaping of a field of corn or pressing of grapes in the vat. The eternal sacrifice is continually offered and the god crucified on every tree and eaten and drunk in every crust of bread and cup of wine. These are the "five pastures of the senses" of Indian philosophy, by identification with which the soul becomes the victim of illusion and appearance; or escapes by a flight from the Egypt of the body into the desert, which is both the wilderness of indecision where the soul wanders before the final choice is made, and the gulf of Lethe between the fixed and the wandering stars, between reality and illusion.

XI

Saints and philosophers and the servitors of oracles have all spoken of spiritual regeneration, and He whom

we believe to have been a supernaturally appointed teacher of the race on this planet, has said that unless a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Many have held this to mean a rebirth in a physical body in which, in a subsequent life, we may by suffering purge the soul of the sins of a former one; while others, intellectually incapable of grasping metaphysical ideas, or temperamentally opposed to such a belief, have supposed it to mean no more than to mend one's ways, or be baptised, or accept the dogmas and follow the observances of a particular cult. Both these interpretations are separated from the truth as I see it, by a darkness of incomprehension blacker than the Gap of Chaos. That Christ taught the secrets of metempsychosis to at least the inner circle of His followers is plain from the testimony of the scriptures themselves, but that He understood thereby something more than the physical rebirth which was the common knowledge of all is plain from the distinction drawn in the saying "that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit." No physical birth and rebirth can of itself by mere recurrence and

iteration bring the adventuring soul to the end of the long pilgrimage, for except a man be born not only of the flesh, but of Water and the Spirit, he knows no finality. And so the bigot of old, reading of the Water with eyes of stone, saw unbaptised infants, a span long, in the infernal fires. When I was young and asked for these difficult things to be explained I was told that they were not meant to be understood but believed. You cannot feed young spirits so. The religious observance known as an act of faith is superfluous if one believes, useless if one does not. To assert that one believes in food and drink is an act of faith, but it is the act of eating that satisfies hunger. I may kneel before the image of Christ or Buddha in my fire-warmed room, but are my aspirations worth the penny I refused the beggar in the snow outside? The body and blood of Christ are in the bread and wine we give to the hungry or they are nowhere. If I have a god he is in my heart, not before my eyes. "Thou believest that there is one God: thou dost well, the daemons also believe and tremble."

The necessity for the rebirth which is neither the

entrance of the soul into a new physical body, nor a merely ethical change, but includes and transcends both of these, must be grasped and not merely believed. If it be but comprehended, neither burdensome life nor the dark adventure of death will have further mastery over the heart. Birth is the act by which the spirit enters the body prepared for it; in this world and on the material plane by the process of generation, where human agents draw together a mortal body from the elements and the stars. The rebirth which is not of the flesh, nor altogether subject to the concordance of the constellations, necessitates a body beyond the sphere of these influences, and though to prove the existence of it I might bring together many strange and esoteric authorities, from Iamblicus to the Upanishads, I prefer the writing that is nearest to hand: "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." That we are born once into the natural body we know; that we are so born again and again some know and many believe; but that a time must ultimately come, or may be chosen now by some few, when we shall be born into the spiritual body, is a truth that is too infrequent a

visitor of our moments of contemplation. This is the spiritual birth by which we leave the ever revolving wheel of reincarnation. The labour of Christ, the perfected man who voluntarily re-entered the flesh to be the liberator of the human race, was not to build a church upon a complexity of magical ceremonial, but to reveal the secret that had been hidden from the gods themselves; the path of deliverance from the labyrinth of Karma: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross."

XII

Life after life is lived well or ill, body after body is cast aside and returns to the elements and the stars; but the spiritual body, to be in its finality unchangeable and incorruptible, is the vesture which the soul will not cast away. It is the seamless garment which the soldiers could not divide. It is that house not made by hands which is eternal in the heavens; the

spiritual habitation prepared for man, not by his Maker but by himself. As by our conduct in the flesh we shape the corruptible body for each ensuing incarnation, so by our spiritual energies we prepare the mystical body we must enter when all incarnations are done. The wheel of birth revolves until the eternal garment is taken off the loom. The soul of man is not a fine abstraction, but an entity; not an impassive wraith, but the driving intelligence of an indestructible personality. In the material world it exists in conjunction with the flesh, not wholly immersed in matter, but energising through it in the substantial unity of human nature; nor have I found anything in any philosophy to support the fantastic speculation that man returns to his everlasting home in the ignomy of a bodiless phantom. The soul like the silkworm wraps itself in shroud upon shroud of its own weaving. These are the nets of Karma that are called the sidereal body because they bear the record of the wearer's past and the impress of his horoscope; a garment sewn like the cloaks of the Magi with all that has ever been. The deeds of this life are the veils of the next. The thoughts of this world are the things of that. Every

image that passes through the mind is either rejected by the will and remains an ineffectual shadow that can neither help nor hurt; or the will consents to it and clothes it in the reality of desire, when it becomes a sin or virtue according to its nature, and is taken in the net of Karma. And except a man be born of Water and the Spirit the net will hold him. The alchemical writers who were my first masters in philosophy tell how the Eagle, when he has grown old and gray, bathes in a magical sea hidden among mountains, and rises with his youth and plumage renewed. The sea is the Water where the Spirit broods in an act of continual creation, which shall have no end nor beginning, neither in Eternity, nor in Time which is its "moving image."

XIII

THE RESTLESS HEART

The stars that bind us, heart and will,
To a stone circle in a wood,
Or a gray cairn upon a hill,
Know all the wickedness and good
That we have wrought in time gone by,
Who are older than the hills we tread,
And older than the starry sky
And all the Babylonian dead.

[no break]

They know why hearts that never rest
Must live in emblems not in things,
And why the saddest road's the best
And sorrow's tatters are a King's.

XIV

Upon what compulsion the soul entered the body at all, since by so doing it fell, is a question we cannot escape nor answer with any certainty. The soul must incarnate willingly or unwillingly. If unwillingly: as a punishment for former errors or for the performance of a present duty. If willingly: to gain something for itself or to confer benefits elsewhere. If the soul at its first incarnation was sinless, we cannot suppose the descent to have been for a punishment, but for a purpose. But man has a proud ancestry, and may have lived in many spiritual states before he became a prisoner of the flesh on this or any material planet; and not only lived, but sinned, before the clay was shaped into the first human form, in conditions of which the legend of the Pre-Adamite Kings may be a memory. Here thought wanders amid doubt and perplexity,

comforting its own uncertainty with systems and mythologies that are but conjecture and supposition. Even they who peep and mutter and speak with the dead are unable to help, for their "spirits" will tell a different tale to every listener. These doubts have led many to despair of their belief in metempsychosis, for they say that if the first descent into the flesh was not in itself a sin voluntarily committed, nor the soul at the time heavy with the burden of any previous existence, then there is no sufficient reason why Karma should ever have entered the world. I admit the weight of this, and am at times half tempted to solve the difficulty by saying that Karma is not a chain about us in this life, but a record of the past carved upon the walls of purgatory, by which the soul, looking upon it from the flames, learns the reason of its purifying torment. But it is not as reasonable, as it is surely simpler, to say that a soul previously pure may sin upon entering the body by falling^a/prey to the new delights and experiences of external consciousness?

Certain Gnostics held that human souls were formerly

divine beings who wearied of beholding God, and were cast for a punishment into human bodies; though according to Proclus they incarnated voluntarily because they wished to imitate the providential energies of the gods, and furthermore because "the descent of the soul contributes to the perfection of the universe"; but all such opinions are but the casting of a net of words over the wings of doubt. All that we know with any certainty is that the mingling of soul and body takes place in conformity with some law which, since it exists, is necessary for the evolution of both. Plotinus held that matter receives nothing from the entrance of the soul, and loses nothing by its departure; but I had rather believe that as the soul, with its natural exigency for existence in a body, does not thereby lose but gains; so also matter, by participating in consciousness, begins its difficult ascent to the condition of spirit; for I hold the soul of man to be that only-begotten who came down to save the world of matter from its own oblivion and chaos. If the universe as we see it, or imagine we see it, is necessary to the purpose of God, so also is our exile

among its illusions. The soul sees matter without form and void and unable to endure the thought that it should remain outside the divine order, enters it, and immediately there is day and night, the rising and setting of stars, and the continuous miracle of creation. With the descent of the soul matter steps into the divine order and becomes an image of life, "multitudinous in its generations"; which Image, as Plotinus held, is not less but perhaps more infinite than the Archetype; because the binding of the infinite brings it to energy and perfection.

XV

According to the Cabala souls have the sins of an immaterial existence within them even at the moment of their first incarnation, and the Zohar says they are judged before they first enter the world and when they leave it.

Disregarding the evidence of the four gospels of the orthodox faith, where pre-existence and rebirth are openly taught, there is in the Old Testament an

allegory of the fall of the soul into the world, after a life in Paradise, in a little known passage that is both a masterpiece of rhetoric, and a reply out of her own mouth to the Church's angry denial of pre-existence.

"Son of man, take up a lamentation over the Prince of Tyre, and say to him, Thus saith the Lord God: Thou hast been the seal of a similitude, and a crown of comeliness among the delights of Paradise; Thou wert adorned with every good stone or gem, and wert clothed with sardonyx, and topaz, and emerald, and carbuncle, and sapphire, and jasper, set in gold and silver, and with agate, amethyst and crysolite and beryl, and onyx: with gold also didst thou fill thy treasury and thy storehouses within thee.

"From the day when thou wert created along with the cherubim, I placed thee in the holy mount of God. Thou wert stainless in thy days, from the day when thou wert created, until iniquities were found in thee: from the greatness of thy trade thou didst fill thy storehouses with iniquity, and didst sin, and wert wounded from the mount of God. And a cherub drove thee

forth from the midst of the burning stones: and thy heart was elated because of thy comeliness, thy discipline was corrupted along with thy beauty; on account of the multitude of thy sins I cast thee forth to the earth before kings...."

In the prince of Tyre, who was created along with those cherubim whom the Cabalists held to have been the first forms to emerge from the whirlpool of creation; whose treasury and storehouses were within him; who dwelt among the delights of Paradise and the jewels of the unfallen world in the holy mount of God, I see no other than the human soul, "the seal of a similitude," who for shadowy sins is driven forth from the midst of the "burning stones," and cast into a body.

But whether we follow the philosophers who hold the soul to be sinless, or the prophets who see it step before the curtain in stained raiment, matters little, for the issue is unchanged; and man, who will at the adventure's end meet his double at the gate of Paradise, walks in flames of his own kindling, and hears or is deaf to the voice of the God crying as of old: "I am Horus, prince of eternity; a fire before your faces,

which influenceth your hearts towards me. I am master
of my thrones, and I pass onwards."

XVI

THE ONLY HAPPY TOWN

It is a town where merchants meet,
And lovers tap at secret doors,
And shaded from the desert's heat
The beggar squats and counts his sores;

And smiling women, at their ease,
Proud as the scarlet bird who preens
Her plumage in Arabian trees,
Pass in their silken palanquins;

The fighting man forgets the war,
The dark sea-rover joins the throng,
Where, in the shadow-striped bazaar,
Love dances to a beaten gong.

All these are happy as they go
Across the sleepy peacock fan,
By Allah painted long ago
To wave before the eyes of man;

With greed and tumult never done,
With songs and kisses never stale,
All these are happy; never one
Has rent illusion's heavy veil;

For when blue shadows turn to gray,
And night's gold bugles blow retreat,
These, who are dream-folk, fade away
Down the somnambulistic street.

XVII

One who has passed his life among old books and older dreams, and has hardly found his way out of the maze of the past, cannot hope to guide others through more difficult entanglements. The ordered mind of the logician has been denied me, who have no arguments scientific enough to overthrow the objections of the learned, nor any that cannot be beaten down by ignorance if it strike bravely enough; and if I never feel the lack it is because I have never yet discovered who represents learning and who ignorance in any argument.

Some time ago when crossing to Ireland I fell into talk with a Priest, who introduced himself by mistaking me for someone else, and kept me amused and on deck till the stars began to wane. He was an interesting man who had seen much of one aspect of the world, and we might have parted in friendship had not some chance mention of Cairo led me to ask him had he seen the

Pyramids. I shall never know what unhappy memory my question awoke, nor forget, so long as laughter stirs the dust, how it was received by my companion. He jumped to his feet and cried in the angry voice of one who has been done a deep wrong; "I have not seen the Pyramids! The Pyramids is natural excrescences I'm telling ye, and I shall have the greatest contempt for ye if ye presume to contradict me!"

I shall not contradict whoever dislikes these thoughts as much as the Priest disliked my question, but hope they will hurt none, and apologise for them as I apologised for the Pyramids. If I turn sacred leaves it is with no impious hand, but by the light of a lamp which was ancient when Michael the Archangel disputed with Satan over the body of Moses.

The knowledge that a Divine Child born of a Virgin Mother has been worshipped on this planet for at least ten thousand years is a bone upon which Holy Church has broken some of her best teeth; and with the disturbing whisper that the canonical gospels repeat more ancient rituals, in popular language—in most instances scriptures which antedate the canon by many

centuries—make a difficulty that Tertullian and the early Fathers answered by the common expedient of denial with reservations; which is to say, when confronted by hostile evidence, that no such evidence exists; or if it exists it is not evidence; or, lastly, if it exists and is evidence it is the work of the devil. This method was used in our own time to explain away the finds of the geologists and archaeologists, but as a rule the modern fool's advocate is more subtle in his despair. When asked to comment upon, for example, the Book of the Dead, or that carving in the ancient temple of Luxor where a picture of the annunciation, the Birth, and the Adoration of the Magi was cut into the stone nearly four thousand years ago, he will grant, unless he belong to the level of culture where "the Pyramids is natural excrescences," that the virgin-born god was doubtless worshipped for many centuries before the Christian era began, but only as a symbolical prefiguration of the truth that was to be later made plain—in other words, that coming events cast their shadow before them.

The hermetic tradition believes the divine child to be a god who incarnates again and again at intervals marked in the upper heaven by the Seven Stations of the Pole, which are forgotten and yet remembered in the Seven Stations of the Cross of the Catholic Church—and in the world by the simultaneous journey of the vernal equinox through the signs of the ecliptic¹. If this be not a mere challenge to those who cast down imaginations there should be some evidence of its credibility not too deeply hidden in secrecy to be exhibited to the multitude. The Christian will ask for evidence among the emblems of his own faith, for he will rightly hold the hermetic school to its own dogma that all religions are dramatisations of the truth. The symbolism of the Stations of the Cross, as

¹ Readers with any occult knowledge will understand how impossible it is in an essay to do much more than mention the relationship still traceable between the emblems of Christianity and those of the occult system which nourished it while it was still alive. It may be said once and for all that none of the astronomical or so-called "astrological" interpretations of the Seven Stations, scattered through modern pseudo-occult literature, is anything but spurious. The external symbolism, briefly described here, may be consulted at length in standard works on theosophy. The occult side of it has not and never can be written. It is a matter of personal experience and belongs to the Initiation. (F.P.S.)

we now see them so beautifully in Westminster Cathedral, might easily supply the text, but they would open the door upon such difficult and secret problems that I reject them and look elsewhere. I will choose the custom of eating fish on Friday as one that will appeal to those who follow it and be admitted to be a Christian custom by those who do not. The birth of Christ, admitting it to have been an historical fact, and taking into consideration/^{the}widely varying dates assigned to it by different authorities, orthodox and heretic, took place about two thousand years ago at the time when, if there is anything in the hermetic tradition, a god was due to incarnate once more. It took place, whichever of the many conflicting dates be correct, when the vernal equinox had entered Pisces, the sign of the Fishes; a fact which is commemorated by the bishop's mitre, shaped like a fish's head, with the open mouth through which the god symbolically entered the world—by the Piscina or Fish-Tank in which Christians are or were baptised—and by the sacrificial fish they eat on Friday, the day ruled by Venus, the generative goddess.

Had then the god previously to his birth as Christ

incarnated in another form whenever a hand pointed to the Moon's ladder of descent? If I were to quote dreams and meditations that have threaded the labyrinth we for want of words must call the past, I could answer that question to my own satisfaction, but the reader I like best might think it no answer at all. I will send him to the spectacled scholars who have dug up the waste places of the world, and put the records of the past in books that all may read, and in museums that all may see. He will learn from these to wonder—and the gnosis says that "he who has wondered shall reign"—why the prince of eternity had the Lion for his emblem in that immemorial past when the sign was Leo; and why he whom the Book of the Dead calls the father and creator of the gods was born as Khepera, the Beetle, and hymned as "the god^o scarabaeus" when Cancer ruled; and finally, as the Lamb born through the mouth of Pisces; and will maybe look with new eyes upon the symbols of our own age, and eat his fish on Friday with more deliberate gusto. To draw comparisons between the many manifestations of the eternal in the arena of time would be an endless labour leading the mind nowhere. Whether we look to the twelve kings who row the solar bark through the

waters of the Egyptian underworld, or the twelve knights who seek the Grail, or the twelve rulers of the aeons, or the twelve apostles of Christendom, their hands hold aloft the same symbols, their voices cry aloud the same message—the law that bound us is broken; the hawk has seen his plumage in the mirror; the labyrinth is threaded and Minotaur slain; while to those who would pull about their faces the shroud of the law and convention in which the soul lies down to die, St. Paul can say: "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements where unto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

He who pulls an oar in the long ship need look no more beyond innumerable sunsets for the last anchorage, nor the king feel the sceptre grow heavy in deathless hands, for the sepulchre is no longer the door that leads out of the world into the world. The incarnating god has uttered speech which cannot be repeated in the language of reason and logic, but may be known when the reflection of one's face is seen in a mind as still as the mirror in the Japanese temple—"I have set before you an open door and no man can shut it." The door is

not alike to all. Where I see a blank wall another may pass unhindered; and my doorway, where comic or tragic masks rattle one against another and old arms out of Troy, or Helen's garments are piled, may take you who read only from one unreality to another, as it were to step from a music hall into the street where they are crying the latest rumours of the endless war.

XVIII

An acquaintance with whom I recently discussed such thoughts as are written in these pages told me that all such theosophy is a false dream, because the dead in their communications never mention reincarnation except to deny it. I no longer believe, as once, that spiritualism is altogether a deceit, for many searchings into the records of this ambiguous cult have convinced me that messages of a kind are undoubtedly received from some plane either within or beyond the gross physical. Nor is my willingness to accept in theory the possibility of communicating with the dead any the less because their messages are not always conformable

to the dignity of separated intelligences. Oracles in all ages having been delivered in obscure and doubtful sentences, it is possible that some of them, which are sanctified for us by the glamour of antiquity and a classical tongue, may to contemporary minds have seemed as trivial and vulgar as the utterances of an illiterate "psychic" seem to us. The oracles of the Sibyl and the automatic writings of modern spiritualism have puzzled wiser heads than mine, who am no pedant to close my ears to disembodied wisdom because it speaks through common lips. It must, however, bring with it some of the recognisable airs of wisdom, and not be altogether sound and fury distressing the senses and the mind—"when the Lord acquireth a body and when He abandoneth it, He seizeth these and goeth with them, as the wind takes fragrances from their retreats."

Separated souls are beyond the influence of the Moon; so when messages arrive that can only have come from the memories of those who sleep, as in the case of the Glostonbury script,¹ I think it is not the souls of

¹ See Frederick Bligh Bond, The Glostonbury Scripts, 9 pts. (Glostonbury, 1921-25). (Ed.)

the dead who are responsible for them, but their sidereal bodies; for these are still the property of the weaving Moon and are unravelled more slowly than the gross body disintegrates in the grave. The Egyptians may have embalmed their dead to keep this memory within call, and made offerings to the dead man's mysterious Ka as the guardian of the memory that seemed then as now most vivid in the neighbourhood of the burial place. The mingling of the personal thoughts of the medium with the impersonal communicating memory may lie at the root of all that causes weariness and disgust in the revelations of the seance-room. The memory of Dante speaking through the lips of Mud the Medium rails against the Church and denies the authorship of "The Divine Comedy"; nor could Plato deliver much of note if the medium of communication were a schoolboy or a Member of Parliament.

The belief that truth is to be found somewhere, though it lie like one sound nut among a multitude of worm-eaten ones, and many dusty shells have to be cracked in the search, is almost as important as the finding of it; for it is the adventure and not its

consum^mation that hardens the thews. That we see visions or imagine them; or take a pen and write at the will of who seem as it were the dead; or in sleep pass through emblematic adventures that solve the doubts of our waking hours—or even that some of us deny all these and look for truth in wine or verse, or paint, or modelling clay, or the eyes of a lover—are but proofs that the gods have more ways of answering prayer than one. I know that my own dreams, particularly such as are looked for and as it were invited, tell me more of the path I have come by than I could hope to learn from the wisest of the dead, who must have perplexities of their own to settle. I am convinced that certain dreams, other than those physiological dreams due to bodily impressions, are sometimes communications from one's own discarded shells. So firmly has experience rooted this belief that I never go to sleep but I expect to meet one of that long line of phantoms of myself which stretches back to my first incarnation; and I know that the doorway into the world where such live their slowly dissolving lives is not too hard to find if suitable conditions be arranged.

The ghosts of the other dead may rest if I am but allowed to speak with my own. If during some period of doubt and weariness I have a dream or a thought, or find in some book a passage which seems to light a lamp in the darkness, I know it to be a message from "the mouth of utterance," for the gods speak in all voices and not only in thunders from Sinai.

XIX

An objection which has been made to my theory of dreaming is that no dream can be more than a proof that the imagination is capable of dramatising in sleep what it receives waking; but a long continuity of dreams, all coherent and directed by some energy that is certainly not the energy of the physical brain cannot be so explained. Dreams born of the senses are ^Tper_Xturbed and meaningless, lacking the control of the centres of comparison; other dreams, due to subconscious activity, can always sooner or later be traced to their source in some forgotten impress on the waking mind; but there is a third kind, always coherent, and however individually strange always as satisfying to the imagination as in a

museum the mysterious Chinese implements of jade and silver, whose purposes we cannot even guess; and these I take to be chapters in a long romance where the dreamer is the hero and his adventures a record of his past.

Many years ago, as between sleeping and waking I thought over a difficult scientific paper I was to prepare for some University Society, the picture of what seemed to be a temple cut in the side of a cliff shaped itself gradually upon the darkness in a phosphorescence of outline and detail. It was vivid and startling, but I was sufficiently awake to recognise it as a hypnopompic vision, and examined it with a dreamy interest. Presently a group of people came through the doorway and passed down the long flight of steps that led from it; while some voice that was yet not a voice told me that I was looking at "The Temple of the Hand in Ethiopia." At this I must have fallen into deep sleep, for I became one of a crowd looking at a man huddled in dejection near a vast granite Hand, of which all but the finger-tips was buried.

I knew the Hand to be the emblem of something I had long forgotten and felt a vague fear. One of the crowd, whom I asked why the man on the ground was in such misery, shouted: "His heart has turned to stone because he has never sinned."

After a desultory and unsuccessful attempt to find any record of an Ethiopian "Temple of the Hand," I forgot all about the experience until long after my marriage, when my boy, at the age of ten, complained to his mother that he was troubled in his dreams by a vast Hand, from which he seemed to be running in terror.

XX

The rites of Cybele were conducted with wild music, and clashing and ringing of brass, which threw the initiates into a trance in which their minds became full of the images of the gods; and some impressionable people can still induce trance by listening attentively to the sound of a slowly beaten gong. Certain words and rhythmical sentences have a similar power over my own imagination: there is a dream-like lyric of

Mallarmé's that has all the mystery and beauty of a magical invocation. I have only to repeat the words of Soupir:

"Mon âme vers ton front où rêve, ô calme soeur,
Un automne jonché de taches de rousseur
Et vers le ciel errant de ton oeil angélique
Monte, comme dans un jardin mélancolique,
Fidèle, un blanc jet d'eau soupire vers l'Azur!
—Vers l'Azur attendri d'Octobre pâle et pur
Qui mire aux grands bassins sa langueur infinie
Et laisse, sur l'eau morte où la fauve agonie
Des feuilles erre au vent et creuse un froid sillon,
Se traîner le soleil jaune d'un long rayon."

to call up images that have no place in the dim garden of Mallarmé's reverie, but belong to that remoter and more shadowy world which for many years has been the background of nearly all my adventures in the spirit. Avicenna and Paracelsus, to name only two masters of the contemplative life, taught that the power of the imagination, even while the soul is still in the pent-house of the body, is not yet wholly asleep, but can perform all the wonders of magic; not only as it were in the reflection of another's mind, but objectively, causing shapes to change and matter to be penetrable. And though we have for the time being lost

the secret of bending this energy to obey the will, it is still the ruler of that visionary world of waking and sleeping dreams in which I believe one may read the will of the gods and sit out the drama of his own past. Some say that such a belief is as mad as to run wild in the woods and seek to dance with the fauns. Nihil est infelicius homine cui sua figmenta dominatur, is an old saying that can be hurled at his opponents by either party in a dispute. Slowly but surely I have come to look upon the Mundus Tenebrosus of dreams as existing in the reality of its own glittering landscapes, as I have seen them, and not as physiology would have one believe, in a spurious reflex of the shabby world of external consciousness; while I think the shapes who inhabit it are, for want of a better word, Spirits who flow into the imagination as into an element of their own nature, and appear as men or gods because the human form is the one emblem by which the mind can express its knowledge of their presence.

They enter the plastic substance of the imagination as forms enter the matter, of which Plotinus wrote:

"they pervade without dividing it, like images in water." They link the soul to a diviner life and a fuller energy than its own; and bring to the physical body, in the symbol-creating dreams of a sleep not unlike death itself, memories which are more or less coherent expressions of another condition of existence.

XXI

For many years the belief that these dreams and visions might furnish in the end some sequence of evidence sufficient to convince disbelievers led me to keep a record of them. But I ~~have~~ found, as others have found, that individual conviction is the black star that shines with its own fire and turns all its rays within. The knowledge of occult truth is a personal experience and not a demonstrable fact. It cannot be handed as a gift to others; not even to those who are willing to make provisional acceptance of such evidence as we can bring in tatters across the threshold of waking consciousness. Though I see in my own vivid dreams the shadow of former existences, and trace personal activities from life to life, others

may see in them no more than the turmoil of an imagination shut up in some cavern full of old symbolisms and the phantoms of antiquity; centaurs and chimerae who peep through the trellises of a wild garden; nor have I ever known but one person who believes as firmly as I do, that whatever is written in the trance of intense and absorbed contemplation is less an agreeable form of art than a divine revelation. I cannot give to another the nameless intuition which is able to choose between images sent by the gods and those which slip into consciousness through Virgil's deceitful door of ivory—false ad coelum mittunt insomnia Manes—yet I believe that I have passed through the other gate, that of the true shadows, which, as the poet knew, is easier to find than the door of lies—qua veris facilis ~~facilis~~ datur exitus umbris—and have trod the streets of some city of the antique world, and mingled with its crowds, a shadow among faint shadows, and heard the harps of Memphis. But if I may use an expression that is often on the lips and comes often from the pen of the man of affairs, "these are not statements that carry conviction"; and he would

add "dreams are not evidence." So I leave the burden of proof on the naggard shoulders of Time, and finish this essay where it began, in a reverie that is half the property of another mind and another personality, walking in a twilight that I like to think is haunted by the gods.

In the days when I had not yet forsworn argument, nor learned the hopelessness of "trying to explain," and was getting the worst of some dispute with a logical disbeliever—oftener than not my friend, the Benedictine monk—I would bring out my dream of the two Lions of the Sun; and though perhaps none were ever converted, some had cause to rearrange their thoughts, so I bring it out again. I was convinced, before I could read or write, that the disc of the Sun was guarded by two Lions, whom I imagined chained to it as dogs might be to a kennel. They were quite plain to the mind's eye; to be seen most distinctly at the moment that lies between sleeping and waking, and I was never more certain of their existence than when threatened with punishment for insisting upon their objectivity. I never saw a lonely lion in a picture

book, or in a menagerie, but I wished he might have a companion, and the Sun shine or set between them. I refused to disbelieve in a vision which filled me with religious awe, quite different from the bored irritation with which I payed my respects to the tyrant Jehovah, whom I feared and disliked from the first; secretly sympathising with the great Adversary; even hoping he might yet conquer in some renewal of the battle. The Lions of the Sun I felt to be holy and powerful friends, worthy of both reverence and affection; I prayed to them in secret; I gave them incense, which I could always get, as relatives shipped it in cargoes from the Orient; one hot day I built an altar of stones in the garden and made a burnt-offering of a bow and arrow belonging to a friend; there was, however, no special manifestation of approbation or acceptance from the Lions, other than their continued presence in my thoughts and dreams.

Then for a few years the vision grew faint in the midst of other impressions of awakening external consciousness, until one day in a school library I came upon an illustrated volume of Egyptian antiquities, and

for the first time in this life saw among other familiar things a page of hieroglyphics. It was a crisis that shaped the whole of my subsequent conduct, and has not yet expended its force. I felt as a sick man might feel who takes up his morning paper to discover that he has forgotten how to read during the night. But in the midst of much that was incomprehensible or forgotten I found a picture of my twin Lions guarding the Sun, as I had known them for so long; there also were the stone doors, broad below and narrow above, through which I had passed in dreams; there were the long-eyed, twin-flanked girls, as I had seen them lingering on the edge of sleep; and a wooden chair with a seat of plaited grass, upon which I had certainly rested, led my eye to an interminable vista of tall pillars with capitals of half-opened lotus-buds, the shafts carved, as were the familiar walls, with rigid outlines of animals and gods and men.

At the present day it is no longer a matter of surmise, but of knowledge, from a source deeper than "the tide of dreams," that my imaginative or visionary impress of the Lions of the Sun is a memory from a former life in

which the mystery of the god of the double horizon, Horus of the twin lions and the double crown, had been a part of some religious initiation or belief; and though to some a horoscope in which the Sun is setting in Gemini may be a sufficient explanation both of the dream and the dreamer's interpretation of it, I hold it to be one of the predestined activities of my present life to tear away, or make the attempt, if only in my own mind, the painted shroud in which ecclesiastical ignorance and stupidity have wrapped the Lord of the twin Lions. Ten thousand years before the priests had killed their first heretic the world knew Horus as the Lamb; as the Word made Flesh; who came by the Water, the Blood, and the Spirit; who had said: "I am the food which does not perish." He was the double Harmahcis of the Incarnation and Resurrection; of Matter and Spirit in equipoise; the stone of his grave was the doorway of death and birth; he was the mariner who ceaseth not in the boat of the Sun; who knoweth the two Sycamores of turquoise; who cometh forth like the lily of mother-of-emerald; who is, in his numblest manifestation, the two Adams of St. Paul. The true

mystic, whoever he be, who designed the Stations of the Cross in Westminster Cathedral, has in his representation of the entombment made the Body of Christ stiffen into death in such a manner that two fingers of the rigid Hand are outstretched, as a sign that here also is the double god; the Divine in Eternity, the human in Time.

At the end of these thoughts I remember the Chinese sailor, fallen on evil days, who came to sell me his god, whom he carried about in a carpetbag. The solemn Buddha I bought from him has now for some years meditated in the room where I oftenest write, in a lattice-work shrine of pale stone, flanked by two little lions of jade, who are, as the Chinese sailor told me, the guardians and familiars of the god.

XXII

TO THE ANGEL OF THE SUN

O glittering Angel of the Sun,
Whose fiery labours never cease,
Send me the phoenix-dream of peace
When this long pilgrimage is done;
For we who turn the world to rhymes
Are lone stars mourning what is gone,

[no break]

Dreaming of merry Babylon,
Desolate in these broken times.
The ancient mark is on our brows,
Men hate our foreign thoughts, our words
Remember what thy holy birds
Sang in the burning cinnamon bough:
"Torches of dreamland flare in vain
About the passing heart of dust;
Man's labour is a heavy pain,
His sword is lifted but to rust;
The Temple crumbles as he builds,
And Time devours the Mask of Stone,
The mummy the embalmer gilds
Is but a pattern for his own."
O pacing Lion of the Sun,
Who meets his shadow in the sea,
Where in the desert, when all's done,
Shall my own Image run to me?

HERMAS AND THE DAEMON

Hermas

By the calm, mask-like, unrelenting face
That you have borrowed from some Egyptian tomb,
I know you for a Daemon; and by your eyes
Still as a lizard's; and by your rigid feet
Sandalled with gold, that do not touch this earth.

Daemon

Listen to me.

Hermas

I listen unafraid,
You are the tempter who comes once to all.

Daemon

Call me the tempter if you will; I see
Gray in your hair, and in your eyes a hint
Of courage and wisdom that might call me here,
As your imagination gives me shape;
And I am bidden invite you, chosen of many,
To join our company in a secret place,
Where all my comrades with their mortal friends
Prepare the hour that frees us from the stars
And wearisome Time; so come, elected brother,
To share my deathless body. Ten thousand years
The lawns whose pearl-gray dew no feet have trod
Await our steps where the first Ocean laves
The green-tressed agate rocks with salty life;
And sycamores older than Dodona's oaks
Among oracular foliage mutter wisdom
That has escaped you all your toilsome days.

Hermas

I hear their leafy murmur in your voice,
And through your eyes, as in those watery deeps
Fronds wave and fishes move, see human forms
Who labour in a visionary light,
Armoured with phosphorescence like the sea's;
Some pour dark wine from old urns into bowls;
Some, at the feet of a dark shape of stone,
Feed crackling tongues of flame with blossomy boughs;
Billows of heavy smoke roll lazily seaward.
Who are the shadows, Daemon? do they live?

Daemon

Players of instruments pour out sound like wine,

And poets cast the coloured boughs of spring
Into the fire of reverie; smoke of dreams
Flows to the mother of all dreams, the Sea.

Hermas

How do the shadows name the gray stone shape?

Daemon

They name her Silence.

Hermas

Do the shades exist
Because your eyes have frightened thought to sleep,
Daemon whose eyes are crystals in the Sun?

Daemon

You see them in the emblematic shapes
Their hearts prepare, as the ripe acorn pours
An oak in some invisible mould of form.
These are the labourers who receive for hire
The Moon's unquarried silver; thirsty dreamers
Who found, being still entravelled by the stars,
Intolerable venom to the flesh
In the olympian hydromel, yet drank deep;
Their lips have shrivelled on the edge of the cup.

Hermas

Have I not drank as deep as any there?
But not, O Daemon, your deluding wine,
Nor in their company whom my heart cries
Are your co-evals; daemons of earth, air, water;
Not my lost brothers of the holy fire,
Whose brightness is the shadow of their lord.

These are but phantoms whom your subtle will
Has clad in some illusion of romance
To lure, as charms the glittering snake a bird,
My wonder-loving spirit to its fall.

Daemon

Would you tread fear, the midnight toad, to death?
And wander living through the under-world,
And be no more the sport, as now you are,
Of diverse essences? O unhappy, wavering
Mortal, vain as a wave!
Chained to corruption by the gyves of terror!
A hissing torch borne through a storm of rain!
I offer you the cup the magian Kings,
And all the dusty alchemists you dream of,
Sought sleeping and awake when the white Moon
That now rides dead was once a living world;
Do you refuse, as though decay's dull candle
Would outshine heaven's tall beacon in the end?

Hermas

Spirit, you rave in your daemonic mind!
Not the seven planets with their captive stars
Goaded along the turquoise floors of space,
Could fill the cup that Eden's revel drained.
I look beyond the accidental beauty
Of all bewildering emblems of the gods,
To that great stormy threshold of the Sibyl
Whose lips betray the invisible source of life.
All must drink there, save only the deathless ones;
Perhaps they also; once when I was young
I thought I saw the changeable forms of gods
Moving at high noon in an ilex grove,
Calm, awful, cold, too beautiful for life;
Their hard eyes shone like suns mirrored in ice!
And once at dawn, upon the windy beach,
Beating my brains over a difficult thought,
The keen salt air grew on a sudden soft
With languid breaths of summer roses blowing
And the monotonous voices of the gulls

Became the amorous moan of restless doves,
Whose coral feet and hyacinth-coloured breasts
Were lovely to the eye, O envious Daemon;
But when she passed who treads all hearts alike;
Venus, who else? I saw Myrrha's deep eyes.
So are all shapes men burn their hearts before;
Phantoms of thought in flight, arrested suddenly
Before us on a mirror of still air.
We give the immortals bodies like our own;
For how can man, who dares the grave, adore
A phantom god who neither suffers nor dies?

Daemon

There is a restless Image in your heart
Who will not stay a moment in one dream,
Nor leave one thought unravelled and at peace,
But wanders like the sea's edge after the Moon's
Sleep-wandering feet.

Hermas

An Image that remembers
Its transcendental fall; wherefore I move
Beneath the drifting change of time and sky,
Among sublunary images, whether of daemons
That vanish cloud-like, or of Pyramids,
Temples or Cities, built with hands like these,
As among emblems in a happy dream;
There are no more.

Daemon

They are indeed no more,
But I would lift you out of time and sky,
Free from the burden of these many dreams,
To share with you a throne that is not least
Among daemonic thrones, for we are one.

Hermas

Maybe you are my shadow, and we are one
As voice and echo, or as placid cloud
And its reflection in the broken shallows;
But not as flame and light are, nor the holy
Inseparable mystery of Being
With Beauty one when child or woman smiles.
Daemon, you are a servant of despair,
Your heart a hollow shell echoing the sad
Plaint of a sea where never mariner sings
Contempt of death in high adventures won,
But careful cowards hug the stormless beach
With ragged sails, gathered in some disastrous
And never-sated comradeship of wrong.
You offer me the withered leaves of magic,
The tattered lure of "ye shall never die";
But these tired bones that cry against the choice,
Have lifted too hard burdens through the world,
And would not now be cheated of the grave.
Or even did the flesh, as it does not,
Desire to lie forever in the Sun,
A stagnant pool, and not become a cloud;
Soul and not Body is master in this House.
The Soul has chosen; through the grave's gray door
With all my Kin I'll fare the adventurous way,
And free the god who sleeps, if dreams be true,
Not only in passionate hearts of men and women,
But in each tree, dumb beast, and shapeless stone,
The portion of captive light that awaits deliverance.

Daemon

I fade away; your thrice-bewildering god
Has made of this most passionate adventure
An accidental energy of the mind;
I fade, I fade...into my own despair....

Hermas

Now he has gone I will cry a human cry;
I will sing the song I made when Myrrna went,
Whose pretty fingers closed the ugly oaks
That now are all I have. Dreams and a song!
A cry going after her to the Abyss!
"She will not come, she will not smile any more;
I shall not see her again, she who was mine;
I have laid offerings under the Sycamore;
A ruby, a robe of silk, a jar of wine,
Her favourite fan, her lute ready to hand;
But one hot noon has drained the wine-jar dry,
My gifts are hidden in the wind-blown sand,
The lute-strings broke at sunset with a cry."

SALUTATION TO THE MANES

NOURMAHAL

An Arabian Night
in four acts

arranged for the stage

by

J. Sackville Martin

Nourmahal
An Arabian Night

CHARACTERS

<u>Nourmahal.</u>	A courtezan of Samarkand.
<u>Badoura.</u>	Another.
<u>Ishmael.</u>	An Arab slave of Badoura.
<u>Gulnare.</u>	Female slave of Badoura.
<u>Zeyn Alasman.</u>	A poet.
<u>Akbar.</u>	Prince of Samarkand.
<u>Grand Vizier.</u>	
<u>Vickram.</u>	Captain of Akbar's Body Guard.
<u>An Officer.</u>	
<u>Fareesh.</u>	Keeper of a Hascheech Den.
<u>Vishnumara.</u>	His dwarf slave.
<u>A Soldier.</u>	
<u>A Fakir.</u>	
<u>A Sophist.</u>	
<u>Djaleeb.</u>	A slave merchant.
<u>Selim.</u>	
<u>Fatima.</u>	
<u>Zouredinah.</u>	
<u>A Merchant of Desires.</u>	
<u>The King of the Dream City of Ur-Quadesh.</u>	

The action takes place partly in the City of Samarkand,
and partly in the Dream City of Ur-Quadesh.

Time—the time of all Arabian Nights.

Nourmahal

Acting Version

Act I

Scene. A room in the house of Badoura, a Courtezan of Samarkand. It is a low room, hung with bright coloured tapestries. On the floor are piles of cushions, and many low tables which bear salvers, laden with boxes of sweetmeats, fruits and flagons of wine. A narguilé stands on one of the tables. In a corner, a green parrot swings on his perch. There are curtained windows, C, and the entrance is R. The windows are curtained with stringed beads.

Badoura before a mirror, is arranging her hair and her draperies. Zeyn Alasman, a handsome young Arab, stands C, watching her with an irony half directed against her, half against himself. Badoura, turning, and finding him still standing, half laughs and nods dismissal.

Badoura. Good night, sweetheart.

Zeyn. (Angrily) Pah!

Badoura. (In a languishing drawl) Sleep well.

Zeyn. (Tersely) Sleep well, Badoura.

Badoura. You will come again soon?

Zeyn. No, I will never come again. As it is, how dare I look into the eyes of her I love? Oh me, unhappy! Oh Zeyn Alasman, miserable wretch who would fain be a poet,—how am I better than a dog, a swine, a self-indulgent fool,—and worse than a fool. Ah, I hate myself. And you, Badoura, curse you.

Badoura. (Still arranging her hair; laughing prettily)
That is about the seventh time you have made me that little speech. You will come again.

Zeyn. By Allah, I will not.

Badoura. When you come again, I will tell you if I like your poem. You have left it, have you not? Ah yes, I see it there. Read it to me, whilst I finish my hair. Read it now.

Zeyn. I will not. I am not in the mood for reading.

Badoura. Read it, I say,—to please me. Have I not done much to please you?

Zeyn. Have you not been paid for your pleasing?

Badoura. Read it nevertheless. Or is your poetry like my arts,—at the call of money only?

Zeyn. (Picking up the manuscript and looking at her ironically) Shall I read it then?

Badoura. Have I not said so?

Zeyn. So be it. (He reads) To Badoura.

Badoura. Oh not to Amine, then?—not to your moon of love, your rose of desire?

Zeyn. (With emphasis) To Badoura.

Badoura. Go on then.

Zeyn. (Reading)

What heart desires thee, Rose of the Bazaar?
Thou sad, dishevelled flower!
For thee, no sun, nor moon, nor any star
Brings the propitious hour,
When hot love waxeth sleepy with delight,
Lulled by the sound of kisses in the night,
Sad girl, that faded face has lost its power.

Badoura. Dishevelled flower! Faded face! Oh you
unspeakable villain!

Zeyn. You would hear it.

Badoura. Lost my power, have I? Then why are you
here? What brings you? What brought you two days
ago? What brings you four days out of every seven?
Slobbering idiot!

Zeyn. You would hear it, I say.

Badoura. Did I ask to listen to lies? My face is not
faded. (She scrutinizes herself anxiously in the
mirror.) You lie, I say. Conceited driveller. Perhaps
a little heaviness under the eyes,—a line or two
about the mouth. That is the work of the hascheecn
cup. But lost its power! You lie, Zeyn Alasman. Own
that you lie,—as poets lie,—and perhaps I will
admit that you are a poet.

Zeyn. I lie,—as poets lie,—whose lies hold the
essence of truth.

Badoura. So, you admit you lie, I care not.

Zeyn. Admit then, I am a poet.

Badoura. If to be a liar is to be a poet, then you are a poet,—a great poet. The very greatest of poets. Omar and Hafiz should go to school to thee.

Zeyn. Enough. I will write verses to thee, Badoura,—but I return here no more.

Badoura. You will come again. (Laughing) Write the verses and bring them with you.

Zeyn. I will never come again. Thank you that I cannot resist you?

Badoura. You cannot resist writing verses,—and reading them to me. You will come again.

Zeyn. (Hopelessly) Never!

(He exits R, through the curtained doorway.)

Badoura. (Solus; calling after him) When you come next

week, bring a better poem with you. (She yawns)
Heicho! I rather like that foolish youth. He's in
love. He is like the others. They come to me when
they are first in love. The virtuous women don't
half realise what they owe us. We teach their lovers,
and they benefit,—and yet if they knew, they
wouldn't thank us. I wonder now if Zeyn Alasman's
beloved,—his Amine,—only knew who first criticised
the poems he writes about her, whether she would
thank me. I wonder! Well, well, I shouldn't have been
born a woman. The gift of thought is fatal to women,—
especially if they apply it to their own trade. (She
yawns luxuriously, stretches herself, and picks up
the moutnpiece of the narguilé. After a few puffs
she draws a parchment from her breast, reads it
carefully, with a half scornful smile, and tosses it
aside. Then she claps her hands, calling) Ishmael!
Ishmael! Come here. You lazy, wicked, son of the
desert, come here.

(A tall, beautifully poised, full-blooded Arab boy
answers the call, entering R. His small, closely set

features nave in them something of the eagerness of the wild animal. His finely hooked nose with its sensitive nostrils, his girlish mouth, the manly grimness of his adolescent chin, bespeak a desert ancestry. He carries a massive copper tray, laden with innumerable requisites of an Arabian lady's toilet. He sets the tray down upon a little table, and taking a live coal from a brazier, presses it into the bowl of the courtezan's narquile. Badoura smokes.)

(Thrusting out one foot) My slipper has fallen off Ishmael. Put it on. (Ishmael seeks amongst the cushions for the slipper, and finding it, attempts to put it on the wrong way about. Heel to toe.)

Badoura. (Regarding him curiously, with a laugh which she tries to make irritable) You're a fool, boy. Do you expect me to walk backwards?

Ishmael. (Still fumbling; his eyes on her face) All should the world/walk backwards in your presence, lady.

Badoura. You are certainly a fool,—and you are clumsy. I don't know why I keep you. (She snatches the slipper from him and puts it on herself) Oh dear! Look at that now!

Ishmael. (In hushed interrogation) Lady?

Badoura. One of my bracelets has slipped off. Put it on, Ishmael. (Ishmael seeks amongst the cushions for the bracelet, but as it has not fallen off, he cannot find it. He regards his mistress in hopeless agony).

Badoura. (Pulling one of the bracelets from her arms and handing it to him) Oh, put it on again, Ishmael. (She holds out her arm, Ishmael, kneeling before her, clasps the bracelet round the thick of her arm above the elbow. She lets her arm fall across his knees. He springs back, oversetting the table which bears the laden salver. He stands trembling.)

What is the matter?

Ishmael. (With a profound salaam) Gracious mistress!

Badoura. (Languidly) You are a handsome lad, Ishmael. Sing to me.

Ishmael. At your bidding, Lady Badoura.

Badoura. Or stay,—speak the words, I do not love your voice. Speak the song.

Ishmael. (Speaks; to an accompaniment of plucked strings)

The white cranes wandering by,
Breaking the twilight's rest
With their sorrowful cry
Disappear in the west,
Spots on the desert sky.

Badoura. Most musical. Who is the author of that poem?

Ishmael. It is just a song, Lady Badoura. This is the second verse.

Stars flowering, one by one
Out of Heaven's blue deep
Bring no oblivion;
Bring no quiet sleep
To me whom they shine upon.

Badoura. (Sighing profoundly) Ah! I am ready to weep! Who has taught you to speak verse, Ishmael. Six months ago, you had an ear set to false measures, and thought of nothing but chance sweetmeats; and now you recite like a poet. You have brought a real sigh from my heart and real tears to my eyes. I who know so many poets and am so weary of them. Who taught you to sing? Tell me?

Ishmael. The third verse, Lady, explains the meaning of the preceding stanzas and finishes the song.

Deign to listen.

There is no peace, ah no!
Those cold cold stars above
And the desert sands below
Are perishing of the slow
Sweet melody of love!

Badoura. You have a sweet voice, Ishmael. I did wrong to say that I loved it not,—and you have a pretty fancy. Don't look like a fool. I know you made that poem yourself. You are a clever lad,—for a negro.

Ishmael. If it pleases the Lady Badoura that I be a negro, then I am a negro. But I was not born a negro.

Badoura. No? Well, go now, Ishmael. To your duties. Wash the dishes, see that my horses are groomed, and when you have done that.....

(Gulnare, a young slave girl, red-haired and green-eyed, rushes in R, at door, and bumps against his receding figure. Ishmael exits R.)

Gulnare. Oh, oh, Lady Badoura! Oh Mistress! Oh forgive me for coming in like this. Oh, I knew it would happen some day, and now it has happened! Oh, I'm

out of breath. Oh, Lady Badoura, tidy the room.
Burn a pastille. Powder your face. Oh my! Oh my! Oh
how my heart beats!

Badoura. Chatter, chatter, chatter! Screech, screech,
screech! You scarlet-crowned parakeet! Have done,
or you shall be whipped. My nerves cannot endure it.
Now don't blubber, you little fool! Will you drive
me mad? How many times have I told you not to rush
in upon me like a sandstorm? Stand still, will you.
Go away at once. No. Come back. Oh my poor head.
Find the rose water and the smelling bottle. No, put
them down,—I don't want them. Fan me,—No, not that
way, you careless girl. Do you think that fan is a
fly-flipper? Put it down at once. Is my nose red?
What brought you here?

Gulnare. Oh mistress, what an honour! What rejoicings!
Showers of golden honour and the eyes of all other
women red with envy. Now let Zouredinah go out into
the desert and dig herself a grave! Cheap thing! And
Nourmahal, the conceited thing whose pride all the
rich young men feed with their nonsense, won't she

bite her long polished nails sharp now. They say she scratches Prince Akbar's face!

Badoura. (Rising angrily) It is not for nothing that my slaves are the fattest and the most contented in Samarkand. I am an indulgent fool with you. But if you do not immediately and without one further unnecessary word, give me your message, I will have you whipped so that you will not lie easy for a month to come.

Gulnare. Oh Lady Badoura, what honour,—what joy. The Vizier! The Grand Vizier,—is here.

Badoura. The Vizier?

Gulnare. Even so!

(She gives a sudden screech, and flops downwards upon the floor. Badoura turns round in surprise. The Grand Vizier, a tall, soldierly man, well on in middle age, has entered R. He stands with one hand holding back the curtain, and looks round him disdainfully. Badoura looks him up and down, shrugs her shoulders, tosses her head, yawns affectedly, and turns one shoulder to him. She begins to turn the rings upon her fingers. Gulnare grovels out of the room with bowed head, not daring to raise her eyes. The Vizier, a tremendous figure, with slant eyes, curling nostrils, and a square-cut Rajput beard steps into the middle of the room. He is followed by five armed men, who gather in a little motionless group about the doorway.)

Vizier. Are you Badoura,—you girl?

Badoura. I am the Lady Badoura,—er,—Sir.

Vizier. Well, Lady Badoura (Emphasising the title contemptuously). I have work for you. Listen to what I have to say and stand still while I speak to you. You have heard of Prince Akbar?

Badoura. (Simpering) Heard of him, Excellency?

Vizier. If he be one of your customers, so much the better, I wish you joy of the drunken eater of swine's flesh. That I should call such a man, my prince! Well listen. He comes here to-night. (Badoura starts) He has of late filled the court with his weeping, because his latest fancy, Nourmahal, in the street of the drug-sellers, will have none of him. By Allah, she has some discrimination. He will come here to-night to you, doubtless to make her jealous,—if by chance one of her sort can experience so human a sentiment. You will ply him with drink. That is easy. You will bring out the tricks you reserve for your best customers,—reluctant modesty, and so

forth,—you know! You will so arrange your affair that he shall be in your arms at the striking of the tenth hour. You will have extinguished the lamp. The aforesaid reluctant modesty will be your excuse. My soldiers will be here, hiding in the corridor without. When they rush in, be sure to hold Akbar tightly in your arms so that they may deal with him the more easily.

Badoura. (Rushing to the door with a scream) Murder!

(The men bar her way. She turns to the Vizier.)

Murder, I say. There shall be no murder here!

Vizier. I am giving orders.

Badoura. I won't help you. I won't! I won't!

Vizier. You will do what I tell you. You will not say any more. Not another word. You have your instructions.

Carry them out. (To the men) Hide yourselves outside.

(He goes to the door and confers with them in whispers.)

Badoura. (Gaining control of herself in a desperate undertone) Oh Allah! Nay, not Allah, but thou, Oh

Satan, Master of Lies, Patron of the deceitful tongues of women, I Badoura, have truly sinned in thy service. Aid me now, Oh Master of Lies. Akbar! Akbar! They shall not slay thee. (She rapidly powders her face, turning her back to the doorway.)

Vizier. (Striding into the room) Now Badoura!

Badoura. Oh yes. I know what you require of me. As the tenth hour strikes, you, Excellency, suppose that Akbar, Prince of Samarkand, will be helpless in my arms, a defenceless prey to the daggers of your assassins. Do you suppose well, Oh loyal Vizier of Akbar?

Vizier. I am not supposing. I am giving you orders.

Badoura. For what do you take me, Excellency?

Vizier. (Grimly) For a harlot.

Badoura. I am a harlot. I robe my beauty in shame and sell it. I was born so. My mother was a harlot. My father was a regiment. It is in my blood. Love is good, but it is not good until gold has been paid for it. Food and drink are good, but if I had my way, I

would drink dissolved gold and pepper my meats with the dust of gold. I would paint my life with gold. I would have a gilded heart. If you want the corpse of Akbar, you must gild it.

Vizier. Is Zeyn Alasman, one of your customers, by any chance?

Badoura. Why Excellency?

Vizier. Nothing, nothing. But your talk is the stale phantom of his thrice effeminate poetry.

Badoura. (Yawning) Oh,—good night, Excellency.

Vizier. Insolent woman! Do you dare to pretend even to forget the task I have laid upon you.

Badoura. (Eyeing him languishingly) Not if your Excellency remembers the price you intend to pay for the service.

Vizier. Price, you fool! I have but to clasp my hands and my men will drain your life-blood out here upon your scented carpet, and then who will come to kiss your cut throat?

Badoura. (Snapping her fingers in his face) Certainly not Akbar. Akbar kisses no cut throats. No, no, Highness. It will not do. Your threats are hollow. You may wish to kill me,—but you dare not do it. You will not do it,—if your treacherous plot is as near your heart as your pale face says it is. (The Vizier snarls and half pulls a dagger.) Don't threaten me. You are only a man under your titles and your curled beard, and your pretence of grandeur;—you are only a man whom my eyes strip naked, and I defy you. I Badoura, the harlot, defy you, you lick-spittle of Kings!

Vizier. (Somewhat nonplussed) Woman.....

Badoura. You have said it. I am a woman. I am as many times a woman as you have called me one,—nay, as men have called me one. I have listened so long to the lies of men that I know there is only one thing that they can give. I used to ask for love; they taught me what that meant. They gave me gold instead of it and that taught me what that meant. It means all that I can ask,—it purchases for me all that there is for me

in the world. Gold! Gold, hard pieces of gold!

Vizier. (Shrugging his shoulders) How much, oh She
dog!

Badoura. How much do you offer?

Vizier. One hundred pieces.

Badoura. Five thousand pieces.

Vizier. You are mad.

Badoura. No. I am sleepy. Good night, Vizier.

Vizier. I will not haggle with you. Five thousand
pieces.

Badoura. Well, I will consider that, if there go with
it an introduction to your friends, Vizier.

Vizier. My friends! Well, I promise you that. (He
pauses) It is in my mind Badoura, to confess that I
have misunderstood you. You have courage. You should
have been the mother of soldiers.

Badoura. (Sighing) You should have been their father.

I will help you. But courage, did you say? Oh no, I am a coward. I hate blood. I faint at the thought of pain or death. Oh Excellency, will it hurt him much?

Vizier. (Laughing) Don't worry girl. A thrust,—a gasp,—and it will be over,—and you will have earned your money.

Badoura. Oh, the red gush of blood,—if it should touch my hands. You do not seem to think of that. It is nothing to you. You are a man! —what a man! There are none such in Samarkand!

Vizier. Ha! Ha! Hum! Ha! Not now perhaps,—but when I was a young man, by Allah, there were many like me. (Badoura sinks down and bursts into hysterical weeping.) Now by the Sandals of God, girl, what is the matter? Nay, nay, by the Prophet, weep not so.

Badoura. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh! What chance has a poor girl! How can she lead a decent life? Did not Allah make me as I am? Did not Allah foresee that I should be willing to commit murder at the bidding of this

most wonderful, handsome, blood-thirsty, kingly, bearded, God-like warrior? --Oh no,--not warrior,--more than warrior,--Prince, King, God,--that ever the eyes of a poor girl looked upon. (Sobs.)

Vizier. (Importantly) Hrrhm! Hrrhm! Now, now. There, there! Do not weep. I will protect you.

Badoura. (Sobbing still more hysterically) Oh, oh! Oh, Excellency, if all men were like you, I should be in love with my profession. (She catches hold of his hand and frantically fondles it.) You do not know how I despise the men who come here,--a pack of silly, scented poets with pieces of paper in their pockets, boring me to death with trash about nightingales and new moons. (Sobs) I am sure they are all cowards. But you,--you don't write poetry! You don't write about anything. You do anything you want to do. You want to get rid of Akbar, and you make me get rid of him for you,--as I will do. How can I help but do it when you ask me? --for you are a man,--and I have dealt so long with the husks of men.

Vizier. (Patting her hand consolingly) Ah, sensible wench! You will play your part,—and after that.....

Badoura. After that, oh Highborn, whose heel is upon my neck?

Vizier. After that, Badoura,—you shall come to me.

Badoura. (Clasping her hands) Oh most generous! Oh most brave! Oh most noble Vizier. (The Vizier pushes his scimitar out of the way and puts his arm round Badoura.)

Vizier. Ah!

Badoura. Oh!

Vizier. Little star of the world.

Badoura. (Softly) Stay with me a little while now, Highness.

Vizier. Stay with you now?

Badoura. (Fawning upon him) It is but early, Highness. See, it wants yet half an hour from the ninth hour.

There is time. Stay a little while with Badoura.

Oh lucky Badoura, who has found a man at last.

Vizier. By Allah, I will stay. I must stay! I cannot help myself, adorable witch. But first I must see that my men are placed. I go, but for a moment. I will return at once. I will come back to you, little gazelle!

Badoura. (Holding out both arms) You will not fail me?

Vizier. Be not afraid. I will return.

(He exits R. Badoura waits listening until the sound of his footsteps has died away, and then strikes a gong, calling "Ishmael! Ishmael!" The young Arab enters and falls upon both knees with bowed head and hands outstretched.)

Badoura. Ishmael, you were a child when I bought you.

Ishmael. If the Lady Badoura pleases.

Badoura. You are almost a man now, Ishmael.

Ishmael. If the Lady Badoura pleases.

Badoura. Do you know whom you serve, Ishmael?

Ishmael. I serve you,—to death.

Badoura. Words, Ishmael.

Ishmael. With words and with deeds, Lady,—prove me.

Badoura. Those who serve me with deeds,—I reward.

Ishmael. Please you to prove me.

Badoura. You said,—to death, Ishmael.

Ishmael. Even so. Do you ask proof of that? Then—

(He snatches a dagger from his girdle and is about to plunge it into his breast when Badoura stops him.)

Badoura. Don't do that, fool! What use is a dead man to any woman. Any man will do heroic things for his mistress. The true lover!—the true lover, Ishmael, is he who will play the fool for her.

Ishmael. Mistress! Lady! Dress me in the cast-off clothes of your serving negro woman, seat me backwards upon a she-ass, sell me in the market place for a bunch of grapes, and if you but laugh at it for a memory, the gates of Paradise will have opened for Ishmael.

Badoura. (Laughing) Would you do all that, Ishmael?

Ishmael. Prove me, mistress.

Badoura. If you will do that, you will do a lesser thing.

Ishmael. I will do greater things,—or lesser,—as you wish them.

Badoura. (Coolly) You will do what I tell you. Take this gong. (She holds out a gong and a hammer.) Hide yourself in the little alcove beneath the stairway near the window, and when you see the Muezzin mount the minaret to call the hour of nine, strike ten strokes upon the gong.

Ishmael. You mean strike nine upon the gong at the ninth hour?

Badoura. I mean, strike ten upon the gong at the ninth hour.

Ishmael. But why?

Badoura. Those who serve me with deeds,—I reward.

But they must serve me without questioning.

Ishmael. Give me the gong.

(He takes it and disappears through doorway R.)

Badoura. (Looking after him with a scornful laugh)

So. If Love can make a fool of a wise man, to what monster will it transform a foolish boy.

(She arranges the cushions, making two piles near together, takes a flagon from one of the tables, and fills two cups.)

(The Vizier enters R.)

(Handing him a cup) A toast, Excellency. May that which Badoura has undertaken, be successfully accomplished. (The Vizier nods and drinks.) See, Excellency, I have made a seat for you. Sit down and I will sing you a song about Love.

(They sit. The Vizier puts his arm about Badoura, but she slips away from him.)

Not yet. Let me sing my song, Excellency. Afterwards, —

(She recites in a low monotone, accompanying herself on a stringed instrument)

Oh, my swift-setting star, teach me to fashion
Some place of dreams, where my beloved may rest,
With thy dark petals, foolish rose of passion,
Strewn for one hour upon his lips and breast.

For though like leaves we are blown apart hereafter,
Stricken with ruin, and sorrowing as we go,
There shall be one bright hour of mingled laughter
Ere Death's wind wakens or her waters flow.

Here, though the dream fades, the palace moulders,
Here where the Gods do nought their Saints have vowed,
Brief Love is still a golden spark that smoulders
Along the bleak edge of the embattled cloud.

Love like a flame lights up our perishing faces,
One moment in our eyes her planets gleam,
Sighing, we kiss in sorrow-haunted places,
And part, the vain, sad people of a dream.

Vizier. What a strange song,—and a sad one,—you
strange girl.

Badoura. But what a lovely song. What a true song. Are
we not the vain, sad people of a dream?

Vizier. (Laughing) By Eblis, I am no dream. One of
your puling poets made that song, Badoura. Some
mawkish boy with scented hair and a stricken mind.
Curse the song. It hath made me sad. Kiss me. (Badoura
avoids his kiss, and slips away laughing.)

Badoura. Not yet, thou over-bold soldier. Thou art not

at the sack of a town.

Vizier. (Rising excitedly) By God, thou hast it! I would I were. Wouldst thou kiss me, Badoura, if I rushed in, sword in hand, spattered with blood and foul with smoke? Aye, wouldst thou! I know thy kind.

Badoura. (Filling his cup) The more willingly for the blood. Thou art a wicked man.

Vizier. (Draining the cup, and dashing the drops from his beard) I have been, Badoura. I have been. I have trodden on the neck of Death for the sake of a kiss.

Badoura. And will again.

Vizier. Thou sayest the truth. Old sticks burn the brightest.

Badoura. And are the swiftest ash.

Vizier. (Laughing) Very clever. Very clever. Fill my cup.

Badoura. (Filling his cup) Is the wine to your taste?

Vizier. (Drinking) An excellent wine.

Badoura. (Demurely) It must be. It hath made thee forget.

Vizier. Forget! Forget what?

Badoura. (Sighing profoundly) Nothing! Nothing! Only poor Badoura.

Vizier. Aha,—witch! (He makes a clutch at her which she eludes.) Come hither! Come hither, I say, that I may kiss thee. (He picks up his cup but puts it down again.) By Allah, I will drink no more till I have kissed thee. The wine is as heady as thine eyes. Come here.

Badoura. Do you really want me?

Vizier. (In a voice which wine has thickened) Come here and see.

Badoura. Art thou ill for longing?

Vizier. Little devil! Come hither. I am ill for longing.

Badoura. Then thou art not ill enough. Thou must be made before Badoura says yes. Fill thy cup and empty

it.

Vizier. By Allah, I will not.

Badoura. Then thou dost not love me.

Vizier. By Allah, I will fill my cup to the very brim.

(He fills it.) I will drain it to the very dregs. (He drains it.) Now come hither.

Badoura. Not yet. I must dance to thee. When thou hast seen me dance, thou wilt be truly mad,—and then,—

(She shakes her finger at him.)

Vizier. More wine!

(He takes the cup in one hand and the flagon in the other. He fills the cup clumsily, spilling wine. He drains it at a gulp and fills again. He looks up. Badoura has gone to the window and is looking out, holding the curtains apart.)

(Holding the cup so that the wine runs onto the floor) What art thou doing there?

Badoura. Oh the lovely stars!

Vizier. Curse the stars! Dance! Dance! I will pay thee well.

Badoura. (Hysterically) I will dance into thy arms.

Vizier. (Drunkenly) Good! Excellent! Dance!

(Badoura begins to dance. The Vizier beats time with an uncertain hand. Badoura, dancing, drops her shawls and veils, one by one, and making a circle of the apartment, blows out each lamp as she comes to it. The Vizier claps his hands. Badoura ends the dance with a sudden dramatic gesture, and kneeling beside the Vizier, drags him down on to the cushions, embracing him.)

Badoura. Now my soldier!

Vizier. (Thickly) I love thee, by Allah, I love thee.

Wait but a minute and I will kiss thee.

(Badoura twines herself about him, imprisoning his arms in her embrace. He kisses her drunkenly. A gong strikes somewhere without. It continues to strike.)

(Struggling) What is that?

Badoura. Naught! Naught! Love me!

Vizier. Let me go, Badoura. (The gong is striking.)

Badoura. Never again, thou fool!

Vizier. (Struggling) Let me go, I say. What is the hour?

Badoura. My hour!

(At the tenth stroke of the gong, the assassins rush into the darkened apartment and stab the Vizier, in Badoura's arms. Badoura leaps up and stands regarding them. They smile at Badoura, showing their teeth.)

Laugh you fools. Grin you murderers, who are already dead. Look at this, you bungling apes! Look! Laugh now,—if ye still must laugh.

(She turns the body over, showing the face. The assassins rush to the door with cries. Their way is stopped by Akbar, who stands in the doorway, holding the curtains apart with outstretched hands. They fall back in a shaking group.)

Akbar. What now? A brawl? have I not said there shall be no brawling in women's houses? Why do ye not answer me? (He looks slowly round and sees the body.) Is that man drunk? Why do ye not answer me? (They fall on the ground, grovelling. Akbar whistles. Armed men answer his summons.) Keep the door. (He strides across the room and looks at the body.) By Allah, they have slain the Vizier. You shall die for this, Badoura. (Furiously.)

Badoura. Nay, noble Akbar, for this is no work of mine. There lie the murderers. (She points to the prostrate men.)

Akbar. (Picking up one of their fallen daggers and examining it) Now by the beard of the Prophet, here is a piece of most damnable treachery. My father's noble and trusted Vizier, my own honourable friend, slain by the guards who should have given their lives for his. Were this to go unpunished, no man's life would be safe. (To his men) Take away these reptiles and slay them forthwith in the open bazaar. It is my order that no man remove their bodies from the gutter where ye shall leave them.

(The Vizier's men are taken away, offering no resistance. Akbar goes to the casement and opens it. After a moment he turns to Badoura.)

Listen, Badoura! (There is the sound of a scuffle in the street, then screams, then silence.) Your friends bid you farewell, Badoura.

(Badoura stops her ears with her fingers. Akbar kneels by the body of the Grand Vizier and straightens the twisted limbs. His guard re-enters.)

Vickram, Captain of the Guard. The order is accomplished, Prince.

Akbar. (Standing up) There is another order. Bear forth this noble Lord to his stricken home. (The soldiers

take up the body and carry it out.) This is a
woeful sight. What part had you in this, Badoura?

Badoura. None, noble Prince.

Akbar. Well for you if it should prove so. Other-
wise, I swear by all that is holy, and may Allah
record my vow, you shall join your friends in the
gutter below. (He shudders) Pah! The air of your
scented room is thick with the reek of blood. If I
stay here, I shall turn sick like a girl.

Badoura. Listen to me, Prince Akbar.....

Akbar. Not one word!

Badoura. Let me explain,—

Akbar. Thou shalt explain anon,—and in another place.

(He makes for the door.)

Badoura. (Running after him and catching his sleeve,

R) What brought you to Badoura's house to-night?

Akbar. (Flinging her off) That which I am ashamed to

think of.

(Akbar exits R. Badoura sinks amongst the cushions and weeps abandonedly. After a moment, Ishmael enters and tip-toeing over to the cushions to Badoura, touches her on the shoulder. She starts and looks up.)

Badoura. (Irritably) Well boy, what now? (Ishmael does not speak but stands before her with bowed head) Oh, cannot you speak? Are you stricken dumb?

Ishmael. Lady, I struck the song ten times.

Badoura. Well, such was my order. what then?

Ishmael. The reward?

Badoura. Reward? Since when have my slaves begun to speak of rewards? By Allah, you fool, if you stand looking at me like that, I will strike you.

Ishmael. Almost you promised me—

Badoura. In Heaven's name, what did I promise you?

Ishmael. This!(He takes her about the waist and kisses her on the throat.)

Badoura. (Jumping up, horror-stricken) This is the end!—the fitting end to a mad day! My slave, my chattel, the paramour of my serving maid, the negro boy who eats the broken meats that my friends leave upon their plates, has touched my flesh with his lips. Thou wouldst kiss, thou dog! I will have thy hide kissed off with rods of split bamboo. (She claps her hands.)

(Gulnare enters at the sound.)

(To Gulnare) bid Masoura, the keeper of my slaves, take Ishmael here, and beat him till he dies.

(Gulnare makes an appealing gesture.) Go!

(Gulnare falls downwards at her mistress' feet. Ishmael begins to laugh. Gulnare starts and Badoura turns upon him in furious astonishment.)

Ishmael. It has been revealed to me that I shall not be beaten. I am a man. Feel my strength. (He grips her by the wrist.) Do not scream, Badoura, my pearl, lest I strangle you. (He bends her across his knee.) and now, what hinders that I do not kiss you. Nothing, save that I desire you no longer. You are

beneath me. And I fling you away,—thus! (He releases her and throws her from him.)

Badoura. (Shaking with passion and facing him) Now thou shalt die slowly.

Ishmael. I die swiftly. (He stabs himself, and falls. Gulnare flings herself upon the body.)

Gulnare. Oh my beloved! Oh Ishmael! (She lifts his head.) Compassionate Allah, he is dead! (She jumps up and confronts Badoura.) I will serve you no longer, destroyer of men's lives. There is more blood than love in this house. I have done with it.

Badoura. Oh, but this is too much. I can endure no longer. (She claps her hands. An old negress enters, followed by two men.) Remove this. (Pointing to the body. The two men take out Ishmael's body.) Now remove that! (Pointing to Gulnare. The negress claps her hands and the men re-enter. They seize Gulnare by the wrists.)

Negress. What is to be done with her, lady?

Badoura. Whip her. No!—Stay! She is worth more undamaged. Sell her. Sell her at once. Take her to Djaleeb, the slave merchant, and if he will not pay, give her to him.

(The men lead Gulnare away.)

Negress. Now you will go to bed, my lamb.

Badoura. Not in this house, —tonight.

Negress. (Coaxingly) Come to bed, darling.

Badoura. (Stamping her foot) Shall I have you whipped?

Negress. Not you! Old mammy has whipped you often enough when you were a little girl. Come to bed or I shall get angry. Come now, lovey.

Badoura. You will drive me mad. (She rummages in a corner, finds a dark cloak, puts it on, and draws a veil half over her face.) Listen to me, Zobeida, but do not dare to reply. Not even from you will I endure one further word. This night I have saved a Prince, slain two men, and broken a girl's heart.

Now I go to the Café of Fareesh to drug myself into forgetfulness.

(She passes out R.)

Negress. (Looking after her) To the Café of Fareesh! Fareesh, the drug-seller! She goes too often to the Café of Fareesh. She will go once too often yet!

(As she stares after her, the curtain falls.)

END OF ACT I

Nourmahal

Act II

Scene. The Café of Fareesh.

To the left of the stage is the large open outer room of the Café of Fareesh, the seller of drugs, perfumes, parrots, coffee, ivory, jewels and apes. Obliquely facing this and to the right of the stage is the house of Nourmahal, the Courtezan. There is a narrow, Moorish door in the wall, and above this is a pillared balcony. High above the balcony is a window closed by a curtain, composed of strings of beads. Between the tall white wall of the house of Nourmahal and the Café of Fareesh, the street of the drug-sellers is seen in perspective.

It is a narrow, silent street, rising in steps, with curtained shops at either side, and beyond, silhouetted against the moonlit sky, the gilded turrets and minarets of Samarkand. A Soldier and a Fakir are seated amongst cushions on the open floor of the Café. Their faces are the dazed faces of hascheech eaters. They stare at each other drunkenly.

Soldier. (After a pause) Fareesh!

Fakir. Fareesh! Brother Fareesh!

Soldier. Fareesh, thou dog! Come forth!

(The curtains at the back of the Café open and a little old man, very neat, very bent, a turbanned and bowing Arabian Pantaloon, surveys the guests. He comes forward, followed by a bow-legged, humped-backed, inscrutable negro dwarf, carrying a copper tray, laden with sweetmeats, little boxes, cups and flagons.)

Art thou there, dog? Another cup!

Fakir. Yes, another cup, Brother Fareesh.

Fareesh. (To the dwarf) Fill to them, Vishnumara.

(As the dwarf fills, Fareesh comes down to the centre of the stage, speaking in a secretive monotone, whilst a soft Eastern melody is played in the orchestra.)

I am Fareesh!
Fareesh of Samarkand!
Seller of coffee, perfumes and hascheech.
All night in the bazaar my blue lamp gleams.
I, old Fareesh, of Samarkand,
Merchant of Dreams.

(He turns slowly away towards his Café.)

Are their cups filled, Vishnumara?

Vishnumara. Yes, master.

Fareesh. (With a secretive smile) It is well. Let us
leave them.

(Fareesh exits through the curtains at the back of the Café, followed by the dwarf.)

Soldier. Drink, Fakir.

Fakir. (Drunkenly) I drink, brother, I drink. Do thou drink also.

Soldier. (Drinking) I drink. Thou seest. Ah! Who comes here?

(A Dervish dances in from the right of the stage, whirling round and round. He comes swiftly up to the centre of the stage, ceases whirling, and with both arms outspread, chants loudly.)

I, stricken of God,
Ever in praise of Him,
Whirl like a giddy star,
Whirl like a Potter's wheel,
Whirl in His praise.
Round stalks the lordly sun,
Following the Lady Moon;
Clad all in garments white,
Clasping each other's hands,
Dance the bright day-time hours,
Seeking the hours of night.
Clad all in black,
They too spin giddily,
Whirling His praise.
Faster than hour and hour,
Swifter than life and death,
Faster than Love's dances done,
I whirl God's praise.
Time laughs and whips me round,
Time is the child of God.

[/no break/

I am the top he spins,
Whipping me round.
Lo, I am stricken of God.
All I can do is spin,
Humming the Praise of God.
ALLAH RASOUL!

(With a loud, chanting cry, he resumes his spinning,
and whirls off stage, left, before the Café.)

Soldier. (Nudging the Fakir) Look at that now;
slothful servant of God! There's a holy man for you!
Such a one cannot fail to attain blessedness,
whirling thus continuously without reason or
cessation. He will make Allah giddy regarding him.
Ha, ha! Rise sluggard! Whirl thou in such a manner
while I laugh at thee. Thou wilt not whirl? Why
wilt thou not whirl?

Fakir. Listen and I will tell thee, Soldier. Listen,—
and if thou canst understand plain Arabic,—
comprehend. That marabout whirls that he may attain.
I, having attained,—whirl not.

Soldier. (Contemptuously) He whirls and you talk.

Fakir. Nay, listen. He, ~~is~~ whirling thus continuously

with his body, becomes a whirlpool, into the vortex of which are sucked down all evil passions; illusory desires that bestrew the road to perfection.

Soldier. (kissing drunkenly) Dost thou say that? Then I will whirl too. For by Allah, the world whirls round me even now. I will whirl in the opposite direction. Out of the way, thou holy man. (Stretching out his arms in imitation of the marabout) Out of the way, I say.

(He whirls out of the Café, across the stage, and bumps into a young man in the dress of a travelling sophist who has just entered R. The young man catches hold of the soldier who is now extremely giddy, and supports him back to the Café. The soldier, staggering, regards him furiously.)

Soldier. Dost thou whirl at me, thou dog?

Sophist. (Laughing) Nay, I whirl not. Allah forbid!

Soldier. The better for thee. I spare thy life.

(Nudging the Fakir with his foot) Explain to him, holy man.

Sophist. (Seating himself, watching the Soldier seat

himself, and regarding his companions curiously)

Yes, explain to me,—for I am by profession, a seeker of various explanations. Explain, venerable and holy person, whom by thy obvious uncleanness, I know to be a man of God. Explain.

Fakir. Thou art a sophist, by thy dress?

Sophist. Alas, holy one, I was, but the schools will have none of me.

Fakir. And wherefore not?

Sophist. For this reason,—that I have listened to too many explanations and believed all of them.

Fakir. Thou art one of us brother,—thou art one of us! There is naught to explain to thee. I was but demonstrating the elements of philosophy to this illiterate wallower in blood, when the drugs that he hath absorbed, overcame him, and he whirled as thou sawest.

Sophist. Drugs! Allah be praised! As it is written, "He fell among thieves and found friends." Brother

ne'er-do-wells, I swear to you that I have not tasted the bitter gum of dreams, since Ramazan,— a full half moon. Is there opium, brothers?

Fakir. Hast thou money, brother?

Sophist. Not a piastre.

Fakir. Then there is no opium.

Sophist. Those injected eyes and purple lips and the beads of sweat upon thy brow say otherwise. They say that there is opium. Ah bliss! Opium from Syria. Black and bitter! Sleepy gum! Nauseous ecstasy!

Fakir. A most expensive ecstasy, Sophist. (He looks lovingly into a pot, filled with a dark and sticky material,)

Sophist. (Gasping. His eyes fixed on the pot) What didst thou pay for that pot?

Fakir. One tenth of a ghazi of gold.

Sophist. I will buy it.

Fakir. Thou hast not a piastre.

Sophist. Nevertheless I will buy it. Listen to me
thou grimy saint. I who know the way of holy men,
know in what manner thou didst obtain the money that
paid for that jar of bliss.

Fakir. The alms of the faithful paid for it. I
preach. They pay.

Sophist. Give me the pot, holy man, and I will give
thee a new sermon.

Fakir. Is it orthodox?

Sophist. So orthodox that all who hear it, no matter
of what faith they be, are uplifted thereby. They
take heart for they are soothed and comforted. Their
minds expand, their purses gape, and the profit is to
the holy one who expoundeth it.

Fakir. (Shaking his hand) I am too old to learn a new
sermon.

Sophist. Nay, but this is in verse. A child might learn
it.

Fakir. In true Arabian stanzas?

Sophist. Of the purest. They ring like new-minted
gold.

Fakir. Here is the pot. Give me the poem.

Sophist. (Snatching the pot and putting it in his
bag) Here is the poem. I will read it thee.

Fakir. Listen Soldier,—he is about to read a poem.

Soldier. (Unhappily) Curse your poems. I am sick, and
still whirling.

Fakir. (To the Sophist) Proceed.

Sophist. (Standing up, and reading from a parchment)

This is the Wisdom given to me,
By voices of the muttering sea,
At twilight, when the Autumn moon
Watched the slow death of afternoon;
By silence, when the night was still,
And all the flowers had drunk their fill
Of the intoxicating dew.
And faint stars pierced the darkness through
With their soft flush; by mine own heart
When the soul's deeps were cloven apart
By the dark spirit whose sword gleams
Before the Mecca of our dreams;
For joy and sorrow, rapture, pain
And love and hate, the same refrain
With iterate voices over and over
Murmur unto every lover.

[no break]

All ye whose spirits have been hurled
Into the darkness of this world;
All ye who seek in life's brief measure
To wring the last sweet drops from pleasure;
Who pray the empty skies above
To add one pang to sated love;
Know this; between hope and despair
There is not space for one gold hair
From beauty's head; no interlude
Breathes music between mood and mood,
For sad moods come and gay moods go,
And all are ripples on the flow
That some call life and some call death;
Allah, who knows the rose's breath
Only as starry music, knows
No difference between the rose
That withers in a night between
The breasts of harlot or of queen,
And queen or harlot, cold and dead,—
The flower-crowned or the sin-crowned head.
There is no choice. Our love and hate
And life and death belong to fate.
The joy that wakes, the pain that stirs,
Are her indifferent ministers.
We are the sacrifice; and she
The one to whom, with trembling knee
Allah bows low, and offers up
The star-encrusted, dim gold cup
Of day and night, brimmed with your tears,
Blind agonies, and helpless fears.
And ye, O shining spectres, hurled,
Into the dark night of the world,
Tremble and sing and laugh and sigh,
And watch the phantom hours go by
With silent lips and mocking eyes,
Intolerable mysteries.
Yet know that in your hands ye hold
The silver moon, the sun of gold,
And all the multitude of heaven,
The virtues and the vices seven,—
Allah and Kishmet, Time and Chance
Are painted shadows in a dance,
Are phantoms delicately made,

[no break]

Your own dreams in a masquerade
That shall die out and cease to be
When ye attain the ecstasy
Of dreamless sleep, where no warm breath
Stirs the indifference of death.

Fakir. (In ecstasy, snatching the parchment) Oh
eminent Sophist! O sweet throated singer of God!

Sophist. Doth the poem suit thy needs, holy one?

Fakir. The purest honey of philosophy! Now shall I
gather congregations! Come little bees, come ye
buzzing swarms of seekers after truth! Come and buy
truth for gold! Gold! I will be drunk from Ramazan
to Ramazan! Soldier, the art of war is a despicable
and subsidiary art.

Soldier. Leave me in peace, you dotard. I am extremely
indisposed.

(Badoura enters L, rapidly, stands before the Café
a moment, regarding the occupants indifferently, and
claps her hands.)

Sophist. (Settling his garments and picking up his
staff) Farewell, holy philosopher,—and you, warlike
king of laughter,—farewell.

Fakir. Farewell, brother in God.

Soldier. Hell drag thee down, thou insolent whirler,—
farewell. (He drinks.)

Sophist. Farewell, Lady.

Badoura. (Indifferently) Allah be with you stranger.
(The Sophist exits L.)

Badoura. Fareesh! Fareesh!

Fakir. Brother Fareesh!

Soldier. Fareesh, Thou dog,—come forth!

(Fareesh enters from the curtains at the back of the
Café, followed by Visnaumara.)

Fareesh. Who calls Fareesh?
Fareesh of Samarkand,
Seller of coffee, perfumes and hascheech.
All night in the bazaar, my blue lamp gleams.
I, old Fareesh, of Samarkand,
Merchant of dreams.

Badoura. Bring forth the cup.

Soldier. Bring forth the cup of sleep.

Badoura.

I who have drunk the cup of living up
Now would drink deep
Of dreamless, sightless, thoughtless, senseless sleep.

(Vishnumara, obedient to a sign from his master,
hands a cup to each and fills from his flagon. They
lift their cups.)

Soldier. I drink to my one love, the bride of war. My
curved, blue-bladed, bleak, steel scimitar.

Fakir. (Kissing his beads, in a voice thick with
ecstasy) I drink to our Lord Buddha's golden face.

Badoura. (Letting fall her carefully arranged hair)

I to the end of passion's weary race,
To the last slumber, to the final breath,
To my one friend, to my last lover,—Death!

(She drains the cup.)

Fakir. (Laughing) Ha, ha, ha!

Soldier. (Nodding drunkenly at him) You mustn't laugh
at her, blind old son of a Hindu cow. Let us resume
the discussion. It was very interesting. I say so. I
know all about it. But you're both wrong. I don't
agree with,—with anything you say. What did you say?

What are we,—I mean, what were we talking about?

Fakir. (With the benignly uplifted hand of the professional ecclesiastic) You are proving my argument, Soldier. What are we talking about? Nothing! What is there to talk about? Nothing! Do we exist? No. There is nothing. Nothing exists, but it exists everywhere,—and being nowhere, is not. It is all illusion. You cannot understand this, Soldier, nor you, Blossom of Love, but it is quite true,—though Truth also does not exist. Nothing exists, and I am not,—though I learnt these non-existent truths by sitting for fifteen years on the banks of the holy Ganges, which is a river flowing out of nowhere into nothing. I too am beginning to feel sick. Moreover, Soldier, you are drunk and you are falling asleep. In the words of our Lord Buddha, "Wisdom falleth upon the head of the foolish, as the rain drops upon the male frog in the season of love."

Soldier. I am not drunk. The fakir lies. I am not asleep. And you, dancing girl? How is it with you? But you are a woman. Listen to me. Contemplate me.

Brawn, muscle, stature, valour! (He strikes his chest.) Manhood! That is my humble self. What follows me? Blood, carnage, the slaughter of heroes. War, the burning of cities and the cries of virgins. When I was a young man, I was a captain in the Army of Iskander Beg. I sacked cities. I pillaged. I slew! Aha! (To Badoura) What are you laughing at, my Pearl of Islam?

Badoura. (Contemptuously) At you, sapless root of war.

Fakir. Cease my children, cease. We are none of us either soldiers or pearls,—we are all of us everything and nothing; for we none of us exist.

Badoura. (Yawning) You have said that before, holy man.

Soldier. (Extremely influenced by the hascheech he has swallowed) I am not nothing. I will slay you. Slay! Burn! Kiss me, sunbeam of Allah! You will not? Where is my sword? I will slay you, I say! There is but one God and Mohamet is the Prophet of God!

(The hascheech grips him and he seems to go mad before their eyes. He springs to his feet with a yell,

whirling his long curved sword about his head in a flashing circle. Badoura screams and clutches the fakir.)

Fakir. Have no fear, daughter.

Badoura. (Feverishly) Will he kill me? Is he mad?

Fakir. Not mad,—happy! This is what he nas paid
Fareesh for.

Soldier. (With foam on his lips, staggering) Allah,
Allan, Allah!

Fakir. Listen.

Soldier. (Gazing into vacancy)

The camp awakens, Hark! The deep boom of gongs!
The dragon-throated war-horns bellow and snarl!
The leathern drums purr, holy tongues of war,
Greadily raving for death.
The captains wake, they call the drowsy ranks.
The soldiers waken, eagerly they leap,
They shake their limbs free from the weeds of dream
They rise like divers from the gulfs of sleep,
They stretch their arms and drink the morning air.
They munch their bread and dates, and wait the word.
Lo! See the shaken banners rise and fall.
Hark to the twanging of the stretched bow-strings.
Cry, musical harps of death!
Scream, hawks of battle, scream!
A rain of arrows! A storm of spears!
They blot out the sun. This is to live, indeed!
I have but dreamed of shame and misery,—
I am a man again!

[no break]

I am a captain of Iskander Beg!
Sons of the Crescent! Follow me to death!
Charge on them! Islam! Paradise awaits
Beneath the shadow of Iskander's sword.

(He drops his sword, staggers, and collapses upon the floor. He lies where he has fallen, snoring.)

Badoura. Oh compassionate heart of Allah, why was I
born a woman!

(The Fakir who was nodding, wakes up and looks around around him, but sees only his own dreams.)

Fakir. (Counting his fingers) Three dancing girls! —
Three soldiers! —Three fakirs! I lie,—I am no
fakir,—nor a soldier,—nor a dancing girl. Yet I am
all these three,—and I am nothing. I am everything,—
and I am nothing,—and I am,—I am,—sleepy. (He falls
over with his face in the cushions.)

Badoura. (Regarding him, and then the Soldier,
contemptuously. Speaking at last, bitterly) Now I can
weep in peace.

(She sinks down upon the cushions, mixes a cup and
drinks deeply, and with a sigh of satisfaction.)

Ah! That puts new life into me!

(Fareesh enters from the back of the Café, moving softly
and stealthily, bowing with an enigmatical smile.)

Fareesh. A new life truly, Lady Badoura.

Badoura. A deeper indifference to life, old man. And that is all I have to hope for.

Fareesh. The life in the cup is a Heavenly life, Lady Badoura.

Badoura. I have looked in strange places for Heaven, old man.

Fareesh. And found it?

Badoura. Not I. It is not to be found where I looked for it. (Losing herself and staring straight before her; speaking to herself) In the eyes of a drunken Princeling. Heaven! Ha! Desire even was not in his eyes, or if it was, I could not recognise it.

Fareesh. (Discretely) It is a man that you would have, Lady?

Badoura. (Carelessly) No woman can have a man. There is nothing under their empty husk of passion. No man can have a woman; for all that is beneath the arts

wherewith she smears her soul to please him is invisible to him. And if he saw it, he would not want it.

Fareesh. There is a way.

Badoura. Thou sayest?

Fareesh. (Pointing) Within the cup.

Badoura. Ah yes! Within the cup.

Fareesh. There is a way, Lady. (He smiles secretively and is about to retire when she stops him with a gesture.)

Badoura. Fareesh!

Fareesh. Lady!

Badoura. Thou hast drunk of this cup, thyself, perchance?

Fareesh. Long ago, Lady,—when I was young. But a little, Lady,—but a very little. I am old. And they who drink much of this cup, do not grow old.

Badoura. Dost thou remember, then?

Fareesh. (Smiling secretively) Yes.

Badoura. When thou hadst drunken, thou didst find
desires gratified that were denied thee in life?

Fareesh. Truly.

Badoura. Thou didst find thyself in places that were
not of this life?—in cities that were not of this
earth?

Fareesh. (Slowly) In cities,—in a city that was
not,—it is not good to speak of it.

Badoura. That city I too know. Why do you fear to
speak of it?

Fareesh. I drank,—once,—twice. I would not drink
again.

Badoura. Wherefore, I say?

Fareesh. (Still more slowly) Lest finding myself in
that city, I might not return.

Badoura. (With growing excitement) And the name of that city?

Fareesh. (Visibly uneasy) It is not to be named.

Badoura. It is the City of Ur-Quadesh! It is the City that is twice as old as time. It is the City of the thirteenth hour. (Fareesh makes a gesture of horrified recollection.) Bah! Begone, old man. I would re-enter the gates of that city.

(Fareesh exits at the back of the Café, looking back at her uneasily over his shoulder.)

Badoura. (Leaning her chin upon her elbow, and looking ^{straight} before her gloomily) Yes,—once again, I would re-visit it. I will re-visit it. Akbar, thou Prince of wine cups, thou mannikin upon whom I have hung my dreams of a man, if I cannot drink the sweet poison of deceitful love from thy lips, I can at least compel thee, thanks to the bitter poison of Fareesh's cup, to be in dreams that which thou couldst not be in reality. (She lifts the cup.) Do thou, dark sister, mistress of untrue visions, sleepy queen of the poppy, send him to me in dreams. Ah me! What a

fool I am. Akbar will never again hold up his head in Samarkand. He owes his life to one such as I!

(She picks up a stringed instrument from one of the low tables and examines it curiously.)

Cracked! And two of the strings gone. A poor useless instrument, but how sweet the wood of it smells. It may serve my purpose. (She plucks the strings softly, reciting)

Strange little lute of scented wood,
Now touched by my unskilful hand,
Will you not answer to my mood,
Poor courtesan of Samarkand?

Tell me, O sweetly smelling lute,
Upon what star-lit deed intent,
Did your last lover's lips fall mute?
You sad, Arabian instrument!

Whisper your secret, though it stings,
None list save I, and the crescent moon.
Be not ashamed of your jangled strings,
For my heart too is out of tune.

What a merry song! O dear! What a festive evening!

(She looks around her.) The appreciative audience snores. Where is the cup? Empty? (She examines the flagons.) All empty! (She claps her hands. Vishnumara enters.) Come hither, thou! What is thy name?

Vishnumara. Vishnumara, beautiful apparition.

Badoura. A lordly name.

Vishnumara. Yes, Lady Badoura. It means the sorrow of Vishnu. My parents gave it to me. I was born after they had prayed Vishnu for a child.

Badoura. Poor lad! Does it hurt to be so hideous!

Vishnumara. No, Lady, but it hurts to be pitied.

Badoura. (Wincing) I do not pity thee, thou fool.

Dwarf. Thanks, gracious Lady.

Badoura. Fill these bottles. Bring hemp and opium.
Have you Indian hemp?

Dwarf. (Producing a flagon from a dark corner of the Café) Here is Indian hemp, Lady. It is more potent than all other kinds. I come from India.

Badoura. Mingle me a cup then, after the Indian fashion. Make it strong. (The dwarf mixes wine and hemp in a cup and hands it to Badoura, who smells it.)

I do not think much of thy brewing, Vishnumara.
This cup hath an evil smell.

Dwarf. So hath heaven to mortal nostrils, lady.

Badoura. Ho! Thou art a philosopher too, little
twisted one. Tell me, is this cup a deadly cup?

Dwarf. In what way deadly?

Badoura. Will it kill?

Dwarf. It will bring peace, but no man hath died of
it. No sane man,—or none that I have heard of,—
hath ever drunk a second cup, having drunk one such
cup as thou hast, lady Badoura.

Badoura. (Looking at him steadily) No? (She drains the
cup to the last drop.) Mix me another.

Dwarf. (Starting back) By Sheva, the destroyer, I will
not.

Badoura. Thou wilt not? Fareesh! Fareesh! Thou lazy
landlord, where art thou?

(Fareesh enters, rubbing his eyes.)

Fareesh. Ever at thy service. Lady Badoura.

Badoura. So! Bid this cripple mingle me a cup of Indian hemp,—the strongest cup, according to the fashion of his country.

Fareesh. (To the dwarf) So do.

Dwarf. (Mingling the cup, and handing it to Badoura, who places it beside her) I had a nightmare about this.

Badoura. Another cup.

Dwarf. (Handing the second cup to Badoura, who places it by the first) It was thus in my dream.

Badoura. Enough. Leave me.

(Fareesh bows and leaves the Café. The dwarf lingers, gesticulating desperately and imploringly. Fareesh returns, takes him by the scruff of the neck and kicks him through the door at the back. The curtains fall behind both.)

Badoura. Two cups! (She places one to the right, the other to the left.) Two pillars of the doorway out of this world. I have never been so happy since I left my father's farm. I wonder if the snow be as white as it used to be upon the hill-peaks of

Kashmir? The hemp is at work. I seem to hear music.

(There is a sound of distant music. Akbar is seen coming down the street of the drug-sellers. He is accompanied by musicians. He comes forward beneath the window of Nourmahal. Akbar, staggering ever so slightly, regards the musicians who group themselves and begin to tune their instruments. Some put flutes to their lips, others lay lutes across their knees, or kneel before brightly painted tympan and drums. Three austere and dark Egyptian musicians crouch on one knee before their curved harps. They all regard Akbar.)

Badoura. (Moodily) It was not the hascheech then.

There was music. There is Akbar! Akbar,—and before the house of Nourmahal. A fool accompanied by his folly.

Akbar.

Now ye musicians with your dreamy faces,
Lords of the tympan, dulcimer and snawn,
Ye who dance taboring, ye who blow long flutes,
And ye, Egyptian harpers, crouching low,
Ye whose blood moves to undulating music,
Ye whom I love because ye hate harsh sounds,
Wake now your willing slaves of string and wind,
Bid them vibrate beneath your learned hands,
To weave a web of music round her heart,
A shadowy fane where lute and viol complain
Against the world; there be her dwelling place,
Surrounded, Music, by thy ministers.
Blow, blow, soft flutes, and ye wild harps, cry on,
Build battlements of music to the stars,
Love dwells in Palaces not reared by hands.

(The musicians play. Pause. There is no answer
from the casement of Nourmahal.)

Alas musicians, she hath overthrown
Your battlements of sound with silent scorn,
And Akbar, he who sent a thousand ships
Across ten thousand leagues of alien sea,
To bring strange foreign poets to his court,
Akbar, whose caravans have trailed the world,
Laden with jewels to bring all singers hither;
Akbar's a beggar when he doth beseech
One smile from one frail girl in Samarkand.
The footsore beggar, all befouled with mire,
Who leads his hungry wife from town to town,
And loves her under hedges in the rain,
He is my lord! He has what he desires;
While I, whose spoken titles make him blench
Would give him all he envies, could he give
His woes to me, and with them, Nourmahal.
Now leave me sorrowing, music-making friends,
Scorn is a hurt that's best endured alone,
When Love's proud pinions that should fan the stars
Trail crippled thus, disserviceably lame.
Go and make merry.

A Musician.

Nay, if thou be sad,
The silvern unison and grave sweet pause,
The tunable and dulcet ebb and flow
Of all Arabia's wandering seas of song,
Would grate and creak in stridulous discord
On the jarred ears of us who are thy friends.
If thou art sad, we will go pray. Come brethren!

(The musicians exeunt, covering up their instruments
and drawing their hoods about their faces. Akbar
watches them till they disappear amongst the shadows
of the star-lit street. Then after a pause in which
he gazes up at the balcony, he seems to rouse himself

and knocks vehemently at the door of Nourmanal's house with the ivory staff he carries.)

Akbar. Nourmahal! Nourmanal! It is I, Akbar, son of the Kaleeph, son of Jelial-ud-Din, the illustrious, the Light of Islam, Protector of the Faith. It is I, Akbar. I want you, Nourmahal.

Badoura. We meet again, Prince Akbar. (Akbar looks round but does not reply.)

Akbar. (Knocking again) Nourmahal! Nourmanal!

Badoura. (Mockingly) Nourmahal! Nourmahal!

Akbar. (Knocking) Nourmahal! Nourmahal!

Badoura. Do you love Nourmahal?

Akbar. (Without turning his head) I love Nourmanal. Nourmahal is mine.

Badoura. Why do you love her?

Akbar. She is Nourmahal. She is the Rose of the World.

Badoura. Look at me.

Akbar. She is Nourmahal. She is whiter than the Moon
of Ramazan.

Badoura. (Brushing her hair back from her flushed
face with a gesture of contempt) She is Nourmahal.
I am Badoura. Is there any difference between us?

Akbar. She is Nourmahal. Her wanton thoughts are
whiter than the pearls that divers bring. She is
colder than the snow that is upon the summit of
Ararat and she is more consuming than fire. She is
a red stain upon the white tapestry of the world.
She has flushed the marble steps of the Palaces of
Samarkand with the red blood of love. She is
Nourmahal, —Nourmahal whom Akbar loves. (Knocking)
Nourmahal! Open the door!

(Badoura, with a gesture of contemptuous acquiescence,
begins to play upon the lute. The tune is indefinite
at first, the mere murmur of strings plucked at
intervals, but it gradually shapes itself into a
melody, and as the melody defines itself, Akbar turns
to Badoura.)

Badoura. Sing to her, thou lover! Sing to your
Nourmahal. She will not know that it is I who set
the measure.

(The music has now become a very definite melody.)

Akbar. (Singing)

Nourmahal, light as a leaf, dancer out of a dream,
Nourmahal, lo, it is I! here in the still bazaar,
Here in a world that has withered, awaiting the gleam,
Of your jewelled hand at the lattice, Nourmahal,
woman or star.

Nourmahal, waken and wonder, great are the gifts
that I bring,
Richer than merchants bear in caravans from the south.
Kings may hang you with jewels, but I am more than a
king.
I will give you the world and the stars for the noney
and musk of your mouth.

(As he sings, the beaded curtain of the window is moved, and as the last words die away upon the air to the last notes of Badoura's music, the curtains open, and a veiled figure, gracious even beneath the obscuring yashmak, leans out with a laugh. All that is revealed of it is the small jewelled hand that holds aside the curtain.)

Nourmahal. Honey and musk, indeed! And at an hour when
all good bees are in their hives! Honey and musk
indeed!—you fool! What do you want?

Akbar. (In a choked voice) It is I, Nourmahal. I, Akbar!

Nourmahal. I? Who is I? I don't know you. I am sick of
you all,—Akbars, Vickrams, Seleems,—Sons of Kaleeps,
soldiers, poets, priests,—oh yes, the priests know
Nourmahal,—all of you! I wish I wasn't a woman. Go
home,—or go elsewhere.

Honey and musk, indeed? Do you know how many of you fools have been here to-day?

Akbar. I do not know. I do not wish to know. Do not tell me. I will not believe you. Oh Nourmahal, golden sand blown over the desert of my life, golden sand blown by the wind of love; it is I, it is Akbar, Nourmahal. Do not say these things to torture me. I love you, Nourmahal!

Nourmahal. (Laughing) Aha! It is you. Yes, now I know you. You are Akbar. Oh virtuous Akbar, son of the Kaleeph, all the bazaar is talking about you. Who drinks wine in Ramazan? Who sent Nourmahal a rope of pearls hidden in a basket of red pomegranate flowers,—with a letter,—such a foolish letter,—and a poem!—such a silly poem! All my friends have laughed over them. All my friends, Akbar; Vickram, the tall captain of your father's body guard, has just carried off your poem hidden in his turban. Poor Vickram. He is going to Bagdad,—with your poem, Akbar. There is a pale girl in a hareem there who will not look at Vickram. He is foolish enough to wish to try the virtue of your poem upon her.

Akbar. There is but one pale girl in all the world,
Nourmahal.

Nourmahal. Now you are quoting your own foolish
verses. What did you say in that poem? How did it
go? Something about pomegranate flowers. I am very
stupid. I cannot remember. I get so many poems. Oh
yes,—now I remember. You said you had sent the
pomegranate flowers so that they might look at my
lips and know what red blossoms really are. Catch!
(She kisses a red pomegranate flower and throws it
to Akbar, who takes no notice of it.) Why don't you
take it, Akbar? Take it and kiss it as you ought to
do if you really care for me. Isn't it red enough for
you?

Akbar. It is not so red as your lips, Nourmahal.

Nourmahal. Certainly it is not. My lips are scarlet.
They are redder than any flower. Even Vickram, the
soldier,—ah, what a man!—even he has not been
able to kiss them pale. Your poem diverted him,
Akbar. (She yawns.) Good night, Akbar.

(She lets the curtain fall. There is the sound of a laugh. Akbar rattles furiously at the door. Badoura plucks a mocking tune from the strings of her instrument.)

Akbar. Nourmahal! For the last time, I Akbar, son of the Kaleeph of Samarkand, I call to you. For the last time, I appeal to you. (There is a pause during which the tune that Badoura is playing becomes almost comic.) You will not come? You will not hear? You are asleep? Well then, there is only one thing more. (He draws his dagger.) Sleep in peace, Nourmahal. Sleep in peace, even though there is blood on your threshold.

(He sinks down upon his knees, his eyes fixed on the lattice, and is about to plunge the dagger into his heart, when Badoura with a dreadful cry, springs forward and holds his wrist.)

Badoura. Not that, son of the Kaleeph!

Akbar. (Rising on one knee, angrily) Why not, Bride of the cutter?

Badoura. (Solemnly) There are other ways of peace.

Akbar. But none to Nourmahal.

Badoura. (With sudden fury) Nourmahal! Nourmahal! And who

is Nourmahal, that you should grope for her among the gutters of Samarkand. A thing of naught! A thing bought and sold, even as I!—(Shrieking) even as I, Akbar, the excellent! And to the same end shall we come, and she to worse than mine, (She bursts into tears) —for I have loved!

Akbar. (Busy with his dreams) She is the flower of the world!

Badoura. Yes, we are all flowers!—sisters of the same garden.

Akbar. She is a flower. Her roots are about my heart. (He tries to free his hands from Badoura's grasp)
Let go, you cheap fool! She is a flower.

Badoura. You are the fool, Kaleeph's son, or you would know that the roots of such flowers as we are, are deep in hell.

Akbar. (Struggling weakly) Let go! Let go, you,—you paid kisser!

Badoura. (Whedding) I will not. Listen, illustrious one,

listen, Protector of the poor. Listen, oh Heaven-born, guardian of even such as I. (Dreadfully)

There is a better way. You shall have your Nourmahal.

I swear it. Give me the knife. (She tears the knife from him and conceals it in the folds of her robe.)

Yes, Nourmahal shall be yours to-night, lips, body, veil, perfume and all the lying paint, all the husk of love that others have sucked dry before you. You shall bite into it and when it crashes like a cinder beneath your teeth, say to your heart that this was worth the sacrifice of your manhood. No, no. I am a liar! I am a liar! There is peace on the breast of Nourmahal. I hold the key. I will do one good deed before I rot. Listen Akbar, —there is a cup that is brimmed over with all that men desire and women understand. Riches, women, war, pomp, power, cruelty and the ability to use it, religion and all the follies of the world,—the cup that Fareesh sells. By the shadow of that Allah who has shut his heaven to women, I swear that I know. God gave us knowledge when he denied us immortality. I am of the company of the lovers of the cup of dreams. Drink this.

(She hands one of the cups to Akbar, and drains the other.)

Akbar. (Drinks) Faugh! (Shuddering with disgust) Ugh!
What filth is that? Is it poison? I would have preferred my dagger.

Badoura. It is the cup of solace. It is hascheech of the Indian sort.

Akbar. (After a long pause) It is very strong. It is surely strong enough. Bitter and foul and —and beautiful! What am I saying. It is stronger than wine. I know the strength of wine,—none better! Wine forbidden of the Prophet. It has hold of me already. (He staggers to the steps of the Café and sits down.)
I am drowsy,—sleepy! I am not drunk. I want to dream,—to dream without forgetting anything, good or evil. Good bye, Nourmahal. —Badoura,—Akbar,—Soldier,—Kaleeph,—all of you. Perhaps for one night out of many nights, I shall sleep. Thank you, girl of the streets. I shall sleep. My head is ringed with iron. Did you say it was night? You lie, Badoura. There are two suns and two moons,—green and red,—and violet,—and blue. And I can hear a

shepherd on the hills blowing on his flute the tune that is making me sleepy.

(He sinks his head in his hands.)

Badoura. (Rising up and listening) I can hear something too. I can hear music gathering. It is coming from everywhere. It is as though the earth and the stars and the trees had become audible. It is no shepherd's pipe on any hill that makes that music. Or if it be (Covering both eyes with her hands), —Merciful Allah, grant that I never see that Shepherd's face. Oh! I am beginning to be afraid. I am terrified of everything! Hush. I dare not ask Akbar to protect me, for fear of what I might see when he lifts his face. Is it Akbar? Oh, what a fool I am! My hands and feet are becoming numb. I mustn't scream. (Whispering) I no longer dare to listen to the sound of my own voice! Be brave, Badoura! Are you there, Badoura? Do not be afraid! The door of the hascheech-eater's Paradise is always thrown open by images of terror. Now they are gone! Allah be praised! I feel happiness to my finger nails. Oh! (She shrieks) Akbar, wake up! What are these?

(The stage becomes filled with a crowd of shadowy and vaguely defined semi-human figures. They drop from balconies, they rise up from the cushions in the Café, they step from behind pillars, every dark corner gives birth to troops of them. They are in constant motion and the sound of them is as of a multitudinous whispering. They are accompanied by music.)

Badoura. If I do not speak to them, I shall become one of them. Who are ye? (They gather closer.)

Who are ye that wander by,
Grey in the greyest hour of night?
Do ye sing on muted strings
Of the end of all delight?

A Shadow. (To Akbar who sleeps)

Wrapt in folds of slumber we
Lay dreaming by the Arabian sea,
But sighs awoke us, and we came,
Swifter than wind, brighter than flame,
We rode the storm, we swam the flood,
With laughter alight in our sleepy blood,
With beaks and claws and wings and fins,
Bright feathered bodies and women's eyes,
Akbar, we are thy merry sins,
Whirled in the wind of Akbar's sighs.

(Badoura draws closer to Akbar, as though to protect him. He raises his head drowsily and looks about him, oblivious of the shadows.)

A Second Shadow. (Fawning upon him)

Master of hearts, do you dream no more
Of the Tamarisk grove by the Lake of Wine,
And the red flamingoes that paced the shore,
And the lutes that sang when your heart was mine?
Master, I give you the knotted string
That stilled the voice you had taught to sing.

(She offers Akbar a knotted cord. Badoura waves her off. She wails and becomes one of the crowd.)

Another Shadow.

I was the wife of a Prince of Ind.
You ate his salt and you broke his bread.
And called him brother, and struck him dead,
And who dare say that Akbar sinned?
Akbar, son of the Kaleeph, see
The serpent's tongue that you gave to me.
Whose but Akbar's secret kiss
Turned my voice to a lying hiss?
Akbar's love, and Allah's scorn
Covered me with scales of horn.
Heaven's justice and Akbar's lust
Turned my heart to this ball of dust.

(She scatters a handful of grey ashes and disappears.)

Badoura. (Shaking Akbar) Wake! Wake! This is no place
to dream. Your dreams are about us. They are wicked
dreams. They are powerful dreams. Wake, wake, Akbar,
—or they will overcome me.

Akbar. (Starting up) I was asleep. Who are you. Oh,
Badoura! What is the matter?

Badoura. (Weeping) Look at them.

Akbar. (Stupidly) I can hardly look at anything. The
hemp is overpowering me. In any case, I see nothing.
We are alone, are we not? (The shadows disappear.)

Badoura. They are gone!

Akbar. (Pushing her away irritably) Who are gone?

What is gone?

Badoura. Your sins have gone, Akbar.

Akbar. Not they, by Allah! But my senses are going.

Yours have gone, Badoura. (He rises to his feet) I can scarcely stand, but I am beginning to feel very happy. Will that stuff make us sleep?

Badoura. No.

Akbar. Of what use is it then?

Badoura. Our bodies will sleep, but we ourselves, we shall not sleep. We shall attain all our desires while our bodies sleep.

Akbar. While our bodies sleep? And where shall we be then?—we ourselves?

Badoura. In the City to which we are going.

Akbar. The City? Aha! It seems to me that somewhere,

—somehow,—I have heard of a City. But what City?

Badoura. It is the City of Ur-Quadesh! The City that is twice as old as time. The City of the thirteenth hour.

Akbar. Of the thirteenth hour. I am not so sober as I thought I was. There are twelve hours,—or there were twelve hours. How then, of the thirteenth?

Badoura. All the inhabitants of that City wait the striking of the thirteenth hour.

Akbar. And wherefore?

Badoura. That we shall know, when we hear it strike. It may be that at that hour only, we shall attain our desires.

Akbar. Have you any desires, Sister Badoura?

Badoura. Yesterday,—or this morning, was it?—or tomorrow,—or perhaps in a former life,—I desired you.

Akbar. Me? Who am I?

Badoura. You are Akbar.

Akbar. No I am not. That shows how heavily you have drunk. Did you know Akbar?

Badoura. Yes. At least I think I did. A girl in Samarkand that I heard of,—or perhaps knew,—or maybe whom I have just imagined,—knew and loved him. I have forgotten her name, but I remember her all the same,—a little hill-girl from Kashmir,—and yes,—I remember,—she was called Badoura. She loved Akbar.

Akbar. This is a dull tale, whoever you are. Let me tell you a tale. I no longer know who I am, but if this is my voice, listen. There was a man who loved a woman. I have forgotten her name. If I could remember her name, I could tell you the rest of the tale.

(The window of Nourmahal is momentarily illuminated as though someone within had carried a lamp past it. There is the sound of a sudden laugh.)

Akbar. Listen! That was her name, that laugh! That quick light that lasted but a moment,—that was herself. She is called Nourmahal.

Badoura. What a pretty name!

Akbar. Yes. She was born in Ramazan. The moon was her

mother. I don't think she had a father,—or at least, I don't know him. But I remember that the devil was her uncle. She hath been the cause of much anguish and not a few poems. There! Look over there! (Pointing to a corner of the Café) Do you see him?

Badoura. See whom?

Akbar. That man over there. He is the Uncle of Nourmahal. Can you not see him?

Badoura. I see many appalling things, but there is no man amongst them.

Akbar. He is perfectly plain however, to me. Now he is gone, but he is with us all the same. He is about us. By Allah, he pours sleep upon us. Sleep is coming upon me.

Badoura. (Sinking down on the cushions) And upon me.

Akbar. (Sinking down also) I can hold out against it no longer. Shall we awake from this sleep, Badoura?

Badoura. (Sleepily) We shall awaken in Ur-quadesh.
(She sleeps.)

Akbar. (Sleepily) In Ur-Quadash. In the City of the thirteenth hour,—where we shall attain our desires. By Allah, I would give my soul to see that City. Well, since I cannot, I bid myself good night. I will sleep. I must sleep.

(He is about to settle down when a tall veiled figure appears and comes down to him, touching him on the shoulder. A faint beam of light strikes upon the heavily veiled face. The Voice speaks.)

Voice. You called me.

Akbar. Who are you?

Voice. You called me.

Akbar. Then I didn't want you. Go away. Who are you?

Voice. She whom you called Nourmahal is my daughter and my niece.

Akbar. Your daughter and your niece! I am a little weary of riddles, good fellow. I know the devil was her uncle.

Voice. She is my niece. I am the King of Ur-Quadash.

Akbar. What is Ur-Quadash?

Voice. The City of the thirteenth hour.

Akbar. I think I remember hearing,—something. What is the thirteenth hour?

Voice. The hour when the soul awakens to knowledge, —to the truth hidden from it.

Akbar. I don't want knowledge,—and my soul,—if I have a soul,—doesn't want it either. It wants to sleep. What have you come for?

Voice. The soul that you promised me.

Akbar. What do you want to do with it?

Voice. To take it,—to Ur-quadesh.

Akbar. (Sleepily) Very well, then. Take it.

Voice. I have it.

Akbar. Keep it then,—but go.

Voice. Do you ask a price?

Akbar. No. It can't be worth much,—such a soul as mine. My price is,—let me sleep.

Voice. You shall have more than your price. You shall have all your desire. If you desire your soul too, you shall have it. I am a just merchant.

Akbar. I have no desire,—except to sleep.

Voice. It may be that you will find your desire,—in the City to which you go.

Akbar. (Sleepily) Is it far?

Voice. It is at hand. It is about you.

Akbar. How do I reach it?

Voice. Through the gates of sleep.

Akbar. Then I will go. I will certainly go. Do not hinder me. And if I find my desire there, I will tell you. As for my soul, you may keep it. Put it in your purse. Now I will sleep. By Allah, I will sleep.

(Reciting the evening prayer) There is but one God
—and Mohamet is —is —

(The dark figure disappears. Badoura jumps up with a scream.)

Badoura. Akbar! Akbar! My beloved! Akbar!

Akbar. (Rising up angrily on his elbow) Cannot a Prince sleep? Where is the steward of my bedchamber?

Badoura. The dark figure! It has gone!

Akbar. Please go with it.

Badoura. My soul! It too has gone! The dark figure has taken it!

Akbar. A priceless treasure, doubtless. Why did he take it?

Badoura. It went with yours.

Akbar. And where?

Badoura. To the City of the thirteenth hour, —to Ur-Quadesh.

Akbar. Ah, I have heard of it. Somewhere, I have heard of it. Then you too may gain the knowledge of your desire.

Badoura. It has been given to me. The out-cast who saved your life, got your heart as her reward.

Akbar. (Confusedly) I do not seem to be sleeping well to-night. Tell them to be silent. Am I not a Prince? I am a Prince. Is there no place in this land of nightmares where I may rest my head?

Badoura. (Putting her arms round him with the gesture of a mother) Yes. Here! Here on this fallen breast, poor lover of Nourmahal!

(Their heads droop together sleepily. The dark figure re-appears and stands over them. A long note on a trumpet is heard. The figure waves with a commanding gesture and the Voice speaks.)

Voice. Open the gates and let them enter.

(The stage darkens. The background dissolves, revealing heavy bronze doors. The note of the trumpet is heard again. The doors slowly swing open. As they do so, the curtain falls.)

END OF ACT II

Nourmahal

Act III: The Dream

Scene i

Scene. High Noon in Ur-Quadash.

The market place. At the back of the stage is the base of a basalt cliff. The smooth surface of the cliff is pierced by vast sliding doors of stone. The doors are shut. On either side are various booths and shops. As the curtain rises, a small boy is beating furiously upon a large and deep-toned gong which hangs at the side of the doors of the cliff. He looks at the rising curtain and flies in terror. The booth keepers, each seated in front of his booth, laugh. An old woman who is cooking a meal in an open shop, R, looks after the boy, glances at the audience, and goes back to her cooking. The gong begins to sound itself. The audience can see it shaking beneath the force of invisible strokes. A crowd walks upon the stage. Some gather in groups and quarrel, some make love, others inspect the booths in turn, but no one buys.

A Butcher. (Standing in front of his booth, L, the contents of which, however, are hidden by the front of the old woman's shop before him)

I deal in flesh.
I sell the hearts of men in Ur-Quadesh.
My takings hardly pay my shop's upkeep.
Hearts are so cheap!

Buy, buy, buy, buy. Hearts for sale. Hearts for sale
here! Buy, buy, buy, buy!

An Apothecary.

I deal in drugs!
Crystals of Dead Sea salt and bitter bark.
Moon stricken flowers, gathered in the dark.
Dried caul and graveyard slugs
In wine concocted are a cure for pain.
Do dreams oppress ye? Take of dragon's brain
One scruple, and a drachm of mummy dust;
Or of this wondrous gum,
Gathered at midnight by a maid born dumb:
One grain in milk will stir old age to lust.
Come buy, buy, buy! But no one ever buys,
And no drug here will dry my weeping eyes.
Oh sad physician, weary and alone,
With drugs to heal all sorrows but his own.

(He shakes his head sadly, trying the contents of some
of his flagons.)

A Merchant.

I deal in silk!
Here in my shop are purple shawls from Tyre;
Fine wool as white as milk;
Rare Persian cloth of gold
Centuries old,
That shines like water woven into fire.
Here are pale silks as lucent as the dawn;
Garments for brides with falling sleeves of lawn;
Here are thin tunics, fit for amorous girls,
Finer than web, all sewn with little pearls;
Bright green and scarlet turbans for the Brave,
And soft Egyptian linen for the grave.

/no break/

Come buy, buy, buy. None buys, alas!
Will proud youth ever pass,
Pass on the other side?
Alas for the eyes of pride!

(He sinks down cross-legged on his cushions. Badoura enters. The Apothecary bows invitingly. She ignores him. The merchant of woven stuffs spreads a gaudily patterned cloth before her feet. She ignores it. She comes to the Butcher and enters into low speech with him. The crowd gradually melt away, leaving her alone with the Butcher.)

Badoura. You are he, whom I have been seeking?

Butcher. Gracious Lady!

Badoura. Are you he?

Butcher. I do not know. I sell hearts.

Badoura. Then you are he. Have you any hearts to sell?

Butcher. Many, Lady. You have but to walk inside to see
them.

Badoura. Will you answer for your wares? Have you any
hearts worth buying?

Butcher. Gracious Lady, are any hearts that are for sale
worth buying?

Badoura. I do not know. Do your customers think so?

Butcher. Alas, Lady,—none buy.

Badoura. Nevertheless I will buy,—if you have the heart I want.

Butcher. Please you to step inside.

Badoura. Wait. Have you any Princes' hearts?

Butcher. Princes' hearts? Wherefore, Lady?

Badoura. The heart I want is a Prince's heart. Have you any such?

Butcher. Not at present, Lady. The Princes who have recently come hither, have left their hearts behind them.

Badoura. Then I shall buy nothing to-day. Allah be with you, Butcher.

(The Butcher, shrugging his shoulders, is about to enter his shop, when she stops him.)

Badoura. Stay.

Butcher. Lady.

Badoura. If you come across such a heart, keep it for me.

Butcher. As you will, Lady. How shall I know it?

Badoura. It is a Prince's heart.

Butcher. The hearts of Princes are as the hearts of
other men, Lady.

Badoura. Not this heart.

Butcher. Is it greater than the hearts of other men?

Badoura. No.

Butcher. Does it beat faster than the hearts of other
men?

Badoura. No.

Butcher. Is it more faithful than the hearts of other
men, Lady?

Badoura. No.

Butcher. How then shall I know it?

Badoura. Keep it. I shall know it.

(Akbar enters, looking about him.)

Akbar. A friendly face at last. By Allah, how many years is it since I have been wandering in this strange place? I have seen strange things,—more things than I dare speak of. But you, I know you. What is your name?

Badoura. I am Badoura, recently of Samarkand.

Akbar. Then who am I?

Badoura. You are Akbar, Prince of Samarkand.

Akbar. Am I indeed? I was! Yes,—now I remember,—I was. But that is all far off,—far off and half forgotten. When did I meet you before?

Badoura. To-night.

Akbar. To-night? It is high noon.

Badoura. It is here, but not there.

Akbar. Here,—but not there. I am weary of riddles. I will not try to answer you. Do you answer me. Where was there,—and where is here?

Badoura. There was Samarkand. There was the Café of Fareesh in the street of the drug-sellers. There, I

gave you the cup that you drank,—the cup that brought you here.

Akbar. I am dreaming, I suppose. But in my dream I seem to understand you. So much for there. Where am I now?

Badoura. Now I cannot understand you. There is no now.

Akbar. Oh I see. You have explained There. Explain Here.

Badoura. Here is Ur-Quadesh.

Akbar. This town?

Badoura. This town. Here you are in Ur-Quadesh,—Ur-Quadesh, the City that is twice as old as time, the City of the Shut Gates, the City of the thirteenth hour. It is the City whose outer gates have been seen from afar by poets, drunkards, saints, condemned murderers and the dead. It is the city of Fulfilled Desire.

Akbar. Ah yes, I remember,—or I seem to remember,—I came here to find a desire.

Badoura. What desire?

Akbar. By Allah, I cannot remember. Only I remember it was a desire that I desired very greatly. Can you remember my desire, Badoura?

Badoura. It may be that you will find it.

Akbar. Where?

Badoura. Here.

Akbar. How shall I know it when I do find it?

Badoura. If it be the real desire of your heart, you will know it.

Akbar. Where am I to look for it?

Badoura. Go seek about. There is a merchant here who sells such things.

Akbar. Desires?

Badoura. And their fulfilment.

Akbar. By Allah, a strange merchant, Badoura. Can you direct me to him?

Badoura. No,—but he is to be found.

Akbar. I will seek him. By the beard of the Prophet,
I will seek him. A rare merchant. But first, tell me
more about this City, Badoura.

Badoura. It is the City of Ur-Quadash. It is ruled by
a King whose face no inhabitant hath ever seen and by
an innumerable multitude of virgins, who were fallen
women there. I might be one of them, but I have
sacrificed my right for a desire that is not yet
fulfilled.

Akbar. What desire?

Badoura. Ask the Butcher.

Akbar. I will listen to your riddles no longer. I am
either drunk, sleeping or dead.

Badoura. Yet had you asked him, my riddle would have
been answered; for I have just been looking over his
stock to see if your heart was there.

Akbar. (Laughing) Did you buy it?

Badoura. No. I couldn't. He hadn't got it. But I think
I shall get it yet. It may come to me by right of

inheritance. When the thirteenth hour strikes, you may even be glad to give it to me.

Akbar. Which hour is the thirteenth hour?

Badoura. It is an hour that is struck on no time-piece made by human hands. It is an hour that many await but few can explain. I cannot explain it. I doubt if any man can explain it.

(The Fakir enters with his begging bowl.)

Fakir. I can explain it. It is the hour which does not exist. It is the hour which never strikes. The sun, flaunting to the zenith, fears the thirteenth hour as mortals fear the spirits of the dead. It hath never struck, and thereat the sun rejoiceth, for he is the slave of day and night. The twenty-four hours of day and night are the articles of his creed. The heresy of the thirteenth hour is the overthrow of his creed. Such is my teaching. If ye have listened, ye have profited. If ye have profited, rejoice thereat. Be grateful thereat. (He holds out his begging bowl.) A trifle dropped therein will insure ye success in this world. Add thereto a trifle and I will recite to ye a poem in

which the ultimate truths of all religions say their last word, and expire. (He holds out his begging bowl to Badoura.) Wouldst thou rob God? (To Akbar) The jewel in thy turban, Illustrious, will ensure thee Paradise. (Akbar turns his back.) Or, as thou art a Prince, a copper piastre shall buy it.

(Three little scaly devils with parrot's heads and the hoofs and horns of goats, rush in and bite the Fakir's heels. Shrieking, he drops his begging bowl and rushes off the stage, possessed.)

Akbar. This holy man, possessed of more reverence than lucidity, seems to have fled. Why hath he fled?

Badoura. Because in Ur-Quadash, mere holiness hath no dwelling place. This is the City of Truth.

Akbar. Who were those apish, scaled, half-human dog-birds that bit at his heels?

Badoura. Illustrious child, dead men, who hath not realised death, they are the devils of his own disbelief.

Akbar. So be it, if thou sayest so. I have lost all count of things. Whatever thou sayest, I will believe.

Tell me but one thing, thou who seemest to know more than I know,—this desire which I seek,—shall I find it?—and finding it, shall I know it for the desire that I desired in that other place,—which I desired there?

Badoura. If it be the true desire of thy heart, thou shalt find it. Not otherwise.

Akbar. Not otherwise. Then if it be not the true desire?

Badoura. You cannot find it here. This is the City of Truth. It has been left behind you.

Akbar. And if it be the true one?—when shall I find it?

Badoura. It maybe, at the thirteenth hour.

Akbar. And thou sayest, none can explain the thirteenth hour?

Badoura. None can explain it.

(The Soldier enters.)

Soldier. I can explain it. Such is my mission. The thirteenth hour is the hour of desolation. It hath

never struck. Allah grant that it may never strike.
When it strikes, War shall be no more. When it
strikes, the cold steel of the swords of Islam
shall turn to water and drip in drops of wetness
through our scabbards.

(A gaudily dressed woman simpers across the stage at
the back. He turns and sees her.)

Stay! Stay, Zouredinah, it is I. I must begone.
Here is something that will not brook delay. Farewell.
Farewell. Allah be with you.

(He exits hastily after the woman.)

Akbar. I give it up. For the second time, I give it up.
If I am dead, I am content. If this be death, it is
more amusing than the Paradise I have been taught to
believe in. Ghostly Badoura, is there anything in
this phantom City to distract the Shade of Akbar?

Badoura. Seek your desire.

Akbar. Where?

Badoura. About the City. (Going) Farewell.

Akbar. Stay! Stay! Will you not help me to find it?

Badoura. Not yet. Farewell. We shall meet again.

Akbar. When?

Badoura. If not before, then at the thirteenth hour.

(She disappears. A woman, carrying a child, wrapped in a shawl, hurries across the stage. Akbar catches hold of her shawl.)

Akbar. Is it nearly thirteen o'clock?

Woman. Nearly. Hold this till then. (She hands the child to Akbar and is hurrying off.)

Akbar. (Turning it about awkwardly and scanning its face) It is dead.

Woman. (Returning and shrieking) Oh you villain! How dare you. Dead, did you say? Give me back my child. There is no death.

(She snatches the body of the child from him and rushes off the stage.)

Akbar. If there is no death, then I am alive. If there is no madness, then I am sane. If hemp, nor poppy hath not grown in any field, then I am sober. But there is death in this City, and here madness stalks shameless

at noonday. Death and Madness are City councillors here, and one boasteth against the other, saying that his hemp-field is richer than his neighbour's poppy garden. If it is the will of Allah, so be it. I, being mad, dead and drunk in a City of ghosts, will enjoy this ultimate adventure to its dregs. I will engage a guide though it be the Evil One himself.

(He looks about him, to find himself alone. He goes up to a booth, and knocks. There is no reply. He knocks at another booth, with the same result. After a pause in which he stares about him, he goes up to the vast doors in the cliff and knocks. As he does so, the stage rapidly darkens. The veiled figure of the second act crosses from right to left, pausing a moment in the centre to wave his arm with a commanding gesture. Then complete darkness falls and when it lightens, the booths, and all save the vast doors are gone, and we are in the courtyard of Djaleeb, the slave-seller, illuminated by the full moon.)

Scene ii

(Djaleeb is in the act of selling his last slave to a young man, who pays the price and leads his purchase away. Djaleeb packs handfuls of money into bags. He ties up his last bag with a sigh of satisfaction. The stage gradually fills with the crowd who occupied the preceding scene. Badoura enters breathlessly, dragging in Gulnare by the wrist. Gulnare hangs back.)

Badoura. (To Djaleeb) Stay merchant. Do not close the shop. Here is a slave whom you must sell on my behalf.

Djaleeb. (Bowing) I am tired Lady; but never too tired to make a good bargain. My commission is twenty-five per cent.

Badoura. Oh you can take the lot. I am not selling this girl for profit.

Djaleeb. Is it a whim?

Badoura. It is a whim.

Djaleeb. Good. (To Gulnare) Sit down girl! (As she sulks at him, threateningly.) Sit down, I say. (Gulnare sits.) This one will need firmness. You sold her to me before, Lady Badoura.

Badoura. When?

Djaleeb. In the dream that we have both left.

Badoura. That is true, merchant. I sold her then to fulfil my desire.

Djaleeb. And now?

Badoura. Now I must sell her that she may find her's.

Djaleeb. What is her desire?

Badoura. (Indifferently) I do not know. I only know that if I sell her, she will find it. I was talking to Prince Akbar when I heard this girl's heart beating. It was crying to be sold and I hurried after it. I found it. I ran through many little crooked streets that tried to trip me up. I passed innumerable doorways that tried to drag me in. I ran breathlessly, disregarding the voices that whistled my name. Without making a sound, I broke through the nets woven by the hands that belonged to those voices. I could not hear my own footsteps. I heard no sound save the beating of the heart that was crying for help. At last I found it. I rescued her. Here she is. Sell her.

Djaleeb. (Threateningly) Stand up, girl! (Gulnare stands up sullenly.)

(Akbar, still knocking mechanically at the door in the cliff at the back, turns his head and seeing Gulnare and Badoura, comes to himself. He beckons a small boy from the crowd and gives him money.)

Akbar. Knock at this door, and if it opens, call me.

(The boy knocks at the door, and Akbar crosses the stage to the slave-merchant. As soon as Akbar's back is turned, the boy runs away, biting the piece of money.)

Ha! I know you. It is Gulnare! Shall I buy you, Gulnare?

Gulnare. No, Illustrious!

Akbar. (Taken aback) Well, well, I won't then. But why should I not buy you?

Gulnare. Because I hate you, you tufted, bejewelled fool!

Akbar. (Slapping Djaleeb on the back) By Allah, merchant, I will buy this slave. How much?

Badoura. (Pushing between Akbar and Djaleeb) She is not for sale. I take her back.

Akbar. What do you mean?

Badoura. I mean that you shan't have her.

Akbar. Why should I not? I can pay for her.

Badoura. She is not for sale. She is not for sale.

Akbar. Aha, Badoura,—a thought has descended upon me. What if this be the desire that I am here to seek.

Badoura. She is not. She is not!

Akbar. By Allah, I know not. I have not found it yet.

Badoura. You will not find it here.

Akbar. (Sardonically) Do you assure me of that? Very well then. I will take your word. It is rather that I am indifferent in the matter. I will seek elsewhere. Allah be with you, Badoura,—and with you, Gulnare. I shall not buy you after all.

(Akbar exits, L, up.)

Badoura. (Looking after him) Akbar! Akbar!

(Badoura hurries out after him.)

Djaleeb. By the beard of Allah, she seeks her desire. And I am to sell you, girl, it seems, that you may

find yours. Well (eyeing her), it should not be difficult. Hold yourself straight and sing a song to call up the loiterers. Do as I bid you, girl. (Gulnare looks at him contemptuously.) You won't? You dare to disobey me? (Gulnare shrugs.) You won't sing?—or is it that you can't? Oh well, if you can't,—of course that alters the matter. I must sell you myself without help from you.

(He begins to clap his hands together, at first slowly, afterwards more energetically, calling to the crowd which begins to gather about him)

Hi, hi, hi, hi! Noble Sheiks, brave Imaums, hon^orable Ulemahs, merchants, scholars, soldiers, ye proud spirited students of the four orthodox sects, and ye also, fakirs and philosophers, servants of Allah who desire a little refreshment by the wayside in your search for truth, gather about Djaleeb, —Djaleeb, the lover of his fellow men,—who has a slave to sell. Now is your time. I am selling at a loss. Four hundred ghazis of gold I paid for her. (aside to Gulnare) May Allah forgive me for the lie. (Aloud) Four hundred ghazis, I ask for her; and for that price go also her armlets of gold, her necklet

of coral, her twisted bracelets, the rings upon her ankles, and the untamed spirit of a virgin daughter of hell. Ho, ho, ho, ho! (Clapping his hands) Ha, ha, ha, ha! (Clapping his hands) Tall she is, white she is, the sun is jealous of her hair, the sea cries continuously to be as green as her eyes. Buy, buy, buy, buy. Is there no one? Will ye not bid, ye sons of ghosts. If there is a man here with aught but smoke in his veins, let him come forth and bid for what I sell.

(The Grand Vizier, a blood-stained kerchief pressed hard against his breast, enters. He is accompanied by two of his guard who bear bags of gold. His face is very pale.)

Djaleeb. Ha! By the beard of Allah, this crowd of ghosts have given birth to a man, though he is not a young one, and being recently dead, still bleeds.

Vizier. Thou liest. I bleed not.

Djaleeb. (Beating his drum) Be silent, dead man that knows not death. Listen to me, and I will so sing that thou shalt be enraptured thereat. Listen,—and thou shalt forget the daggers that so lately

encountered thee. Look hither at what I have to sell. Look hither and pay me my price,—that she may find her desire.

Vizier. That she may find her desire. And what is her desire, merchant?

Djaleeb. What else but a man,—a man like thee, noble Vizier. Is it not so Gulnare?

Gulnare. (Sullenly) No.

Djaleeb. It is the way of maids to deny what they would have. Listen noble Vizier. Listen to my song. (He nods to the orchestra which begins to play.)

(Chanting)

To all who pay, I sell; what does thou give?

Vizier. (With difficulty; pressing the handkerchief hard against his breast)

Gold that is squandered ere the day is done.

Djaleeb. (Pushing forward the unwilling Gulnare)

Then take her to thee, for Djaleeb must live. Take what thy price has bought, and get thee gone.

(The Vizier beckons to his body guard who bring forward the bags of gold. As they do so, he reels and dies, overcome by his wounds. They drop their money bags and bear the body off the stage. Djaleeb adds the bags to his heap.)

(Zeyn Alasman rushes forward from the crowd casting himself and a rose at Gulnare's feet. She draws her feet away from him.)

Djaleeb. (Looking at him)

To all who pay, I sell; what dost thou give.

Zeyn.

A toll of Love that will outlast the years.

Djaleeb. (Thrusting Gulnare forward)

Give her that toy, for even she must play.
Give me the price, and quench her sullen tears.

(Zeyn Alasman attempts to take Gulnare in his arms. She thrusts him away, laughing mockingly at him. He stands a moment regarding her, then covering his face with his hands, rushes out.)

Djaleeb. I cannot sell thee, Gulnare, and if I cannot, it is the will of Allah. It is the first time I have had to sell on such terms,—that thou shouldst find thy desire. By Allah, I have nitherto sold that those who buy should find theirs. If I knew what thy desire was, perchance I should succeed. Not gold, it seems, nor love: what then? Thou art silent? So be

it. I will wait five minutes, and at the end of that time, if thou art not sold, I take thee home.

(Akbar enters with Badoura at the back, and stands watching. The moon which has illuminated the courtyard turns green. A greenish light suffuses the stage. The crowd suddenly falls to its knees; Djaleeb also. The King of Ur-Quadesh has entered. He is hooded and robed in black and green. He is recognisable as the hooded figure of the preceding act. The people grovel abjectly.)

Djaleeb. (His voice shaken)

To all who pay, I sell; what dost thou hold?

Voice.

Sleep and the end, and no more wish to live.

Gulnare.

(Falling on her knees and stretching her arms out to him)

Then in thine arms, my weary heart enfold,
Thy price outbids all that I have to give.

(The King takes Gulnare by the wrists and leads her away. As he goes, he turns and looks slowly upon the audience and upon the prostrate crowd. His face is a skull. When they have left the stage, Gulnare is heard to scream. One of the crowd rises up and looks about him. It is Ishmael.)

Ishmael. (Frantically)

Which way did she go? Is there not a voice among you,
dead sea of pallid ghosts?

(The lights go out, leaving the stage in utter darkness. In the darkness the voice of Ishmael is heard calling.)

Gulnare! Where are you, Gulnare?

Scene iii

(When it lightens again, we are back in the market place. The crowd have gone. The booth keepers have retired within their shops. The old woman in the front booth is still cooking. Akbar and Badoura stand exactly where they stood in the preceding scene, looking at each other. The only other occupant of the stage is an old man who sits drowsing before an empty booth. There is a plain wooden box before him. He snores audibly.)

Akbar. (Rubbing his eyes) Gone! Where is she?

Badoura. Of whom do you speak?

Akbar. Of her who was here, but now!—of Gulnare.

Badoura. I know not. I only know that her heart is at rest. I can hear it no longer.

Akbar. She has found her desire, then?

Badoura. Truly.

Akbar. In strange ways, Badoura.

Badoura. The ways of Allah are strange, Prince Akbar.

Akbar. By Allah himself, that is so. And Ishmael who was thy slave. Has he also found his desire?

Badoura. His heart too is at rest. I cannot hear it beat.

Akbar. Mine beats fast. Faster methinks than it beat in the life I have left. It is time I found my desire.

Badoura. Thou hast not^{yet}/found it then?

Akbar. (Uncertainly; making a step towards her) I,—I think I have found it, Badoura.

Badoura. (Drawing back) Not yet.

Akbar. (Pausing) How then?

Badoura. When you truly find it, you will not think that you have found it. You will know.

Akbar I shall know! Then I will know,—and the sooner the better. Where is this merchant of whom thou hast spoken, who will sell me my desire? Guide me to him, Badoura. Guide me to him, I say. I will pay his

price. I will pay any price. For it seems to me that I know,—that I think I know,—what he will sell me.

Badoura. I cannot guide you to him. You must seek him for yourself.

Akbar. There is madness in the air. There are riddles on the tongues of all who speak here. I am surrounded by creatures of dreams, shapes of folly. You alone Badoura, seem apart from all this compact of unreality. You alone seem wise in this maze of madness. If you cannot guide me, how shall I find this merchant myself.

Badoura. Seek diligently, Prince,—and with a single heart. Farewell.

Akbar. Stay, Badoura,—stay. Do not leave me.

Badoura. I must. You will find naught, unless you seek it alone. Farewell. We shall meet again.

Akbar. When?

Badoura. At the thirteenth hour.

(Badoura exits, R.)

Akbar. (To the audience) Never before have I had so vivid a dream. Never before hath the cup so wrought in me. Wine could not have done it. These merry phantoms, these fantastic images, these grotesque similitudes with which I am surrounded, do indeed seem more real to me than the originals whom they represent. (He is interrupted by shrill laughter.) Listen to that. Were it not that I can still taste the bitter dregs of that cup upon my tongue, I could find it in my heart to be afraid. Here I am,—the prodigal son of Jellal-ud-Din, the public scandal of the realm, as well known and despised in Samarkand as my father is honoured,—here I am, Prince Akbar, blind drunk with hemp in the Café of Fareesh, no doubt snoring disgustingly and most certainly doomed to violent sickness when I awake. And yet it seems to me (peering at the audience) that I address a multitude of grotesquely bedizened beings, all set out in rows, who regard me curiously. I pace the streets of a City that is charted on no map. I am fretted by ghosts. The apparent dead are my familiar friends. And all this high adventure, this magical

interlude in my useless life, this City and its inhabitants, will drop in dust about me. The ultimate result of so much wonder will be a violent headache and a long, dull, only too familiar sermon from my august progenitor. Well, for the ~~first~~ time at any rate, I am here,—and in search of a desire. I will live out the dream. I will stir up some more of these dreams and see what happens.

(He looks round and sees the merchant dozing with the wooden box before him.)

(Poking him with his scabbard) What do you sell, father?

(The merchant sleeps on. Akbar opens the box and peers into it curiously. He takes it in his hand, turns it upside down and shakes it. The box is empty. He replaces it and laughs. He shakes the merchant vigorously by the shoulder.)

Merchant. (Waking, and rubbing his eyes; in a sleepy voice) Buy, buy, buy. Come good people, what do you lack. Buy my goods.

Akbar. (Laughing) Goods indeed! Are you trying to sell that box?

Merchant. Which box?

Akbar. (Kicking it contemptuously) Why, this old empty clothes box.

Merchant. Allah forbid.

Akbar. Allah forbid indeed. No man would buy it.

Merchant. No man could buy it, Akbar, Prince of Samarkand.

Akbar. More wonders! You know me then?

Merchant. I was present at thy birth. I prophesied thy coming hither.

Akbar. Indeed,—and to whom?

Merchant. To myself.

Akbar. (Laughing) Truly did all prophets confine their prophecies to such an audience, they would gain more credit than they now possess. Mad old seller of nothing, your box is empty.

Merchant. Yet know its value, Prince Akbar. If the great Haroun-al-Raschid, upon whose departed spirit be peace, were to gather all his wealth into a

heap,—a heap so high that Mount Ararat were hidden beneath it,—and if the seven genii were to pile the wealth of their master, Solomon, upon that heap until its summit were overthrown by the sun in its course,—and were all that wealth multiplied as many times as there are grains of sand upon all the shores of this world,—yet know that it would not buy the dust from the sandals of him who made that box.

Akbar. Allah protect thy wits. Here is a piece of gold.

Merchant. (Carefully testing the piece of gold with his teeth and placing it in his pouch) May the father of all, whose name be holy for ever; may he pour his blessings abundantly upon you, munificent Protector of the Poor!

Akbar. (Laughing with genuine amusement) I cannot pile gold pieces up to the sun, venerable merchant, but I will give you ten similar pieces for the emptiness that is in your box. Is it a bargain?

Merchant. (Stroking his beard and looking into vacancy)

The emptiness that is in my box, Illustrious, is a portion of that emptiness that rolls between star and star. Regarding the bargain, it is already completed. You have bought all that I have to sell, but my stock is not diminished.

Akbar. Dost thou sell words, eloquent and convincing father of rhetoric?

Merchant. No.

Akbar. What then?

Merchant. Wishes.

Akbar. Truly?

Merchant. Desires.

Akbar. (Arrested) Ha! And what moreover?

Merchant. Their fulfilment.

Akbar. I have been seeking thee. This is the maddest turn in the dream yet. Wilt thou sell me my desire?

Merchant. I have already told thee,—I have sold it

thee.

Akbar. If it be true, old man, that you have sold me the fulfilment of my desire at the price of a gold piece, then by Allah, I have made the first admirable bargain of my life. Add to your favours, worthy and venerable merchant, by informing me what my desire is.

Merchant. In good time you will know it.

Akbar. In what time.

Merchant. When the thirteenth hour strikes.

Akbar. The thirteenth hour!—again the thirteenth hour!

(Zeyn Alasman enters.)

Merchant. (Interrupting Akbar) Pardon me, Illustrious, but here is a customer; and it is my doom that I may never refuse to trade.

(Zeyn Alasman kicks the box, stamps on the floor and shakes his fist in the merchant's face.)

Merchant. (Imperturbably) Ungovernable captain.

Zeyn. I am not a captain. I am Alasman, the poet,—Zeyn Alasman, which means the beauty of statues.

Merchant. (Imperturbably) Illustrious Zeyn Alasman,
the poet,—

Zeyn. (Still more furiously) Fool!

Merchant. My son!

Zeyn. Bearded he-devil!

Merchant. Brother.

Zeyn. Cheat.

Merchant. Dupe.

Akbar. This promises well. There is a heavy sale toward.

(Zeyn Alasman turns angrily upon him but is mollified
by the aloofness of the richly dressed and soldierly
accoutred figure of Akbar.)

Zeyn. Illustrious stranger, if you have come hither to
bargain, be warned by me and go.

Akbar. I have already bought.

Zeyn. Then you will get nothing for your money. This
merchant is a cheat.

Akbar. (Indifferently) Well, well, I am used to being

cheated.

Zeyn. And so am I,—but this merchant is the father of cheats. If I buy wine from a wine merchant and the wine is sour, it is the will of Allah.

Merchant and Akbar. (Together) Blessed be His name.

Zeyn. And I go elsewhere for my wine. But if it be not wine, but poison, and I drink it and perish miserably thereof, is not my blood upon the head of him that sold it to me? Will not Allah demand it of him who is not a merchant of wine but a poisoner? So also is this merchant. Ask him.

Akbar. (Looking at the merchant who is again slumbering peacefully) I perceive he is again asleep.

Zeyn. I will waken him. But wait! Wait! Listen to me, —to me, Zeyn Alasman, the poet,—whom you, as all the admiring world, must know as that dreamer from whose brain sprang alive the quatrains which men call the entrance to the Four Paths of Love.

Akbar. A most excellent poem.

Zeyn. You have read it?

Akbar. Not yet.

Zeyn. Nevertheless, listen. I bought from this seller of vapid charms, this threadbare wizard from the ultimate desert, a charm. I gave him gold, food, opium, and the wine forbidden of the Prophet. For all this, I demanded the littlest of favours. I asked that it should be given to me,—to me,—Zeyn Alasman,—merely this,—the power to produce one thing of beauty whose fame should outlast even the Quatrains that have made me what I am.

Akbar. (Yawning) Well,—what happened?

Zeyn. This happened. At the very hour, moment, second, that this devil-bartering dotard of the bazaar promised me the birth of my inspiration, my ears were split by the shrieks of a wizened hag, with a foul babe in her arms, who swore that her daughter had given birth to it, subsequent upon an act of periodic absentmindedness to which all we men of letters are subject.

Akbar. They say these things about me. Let us take

comfort from the words of the Prophet who saith,
—"The complaints of the ignoble are lies in the
ears of the Illustrious."

Zeyn. Nevertheless I will wake this rascal. (He
shakes the merchant.) Rouse thyself, cheat,—and
justify thy rascality if thou canst.

Merchant. The babe which thou denyest,—

Zeyn. Ah then, thou didst hear—

Merchant. The babe which thou denyest shall be the
thing of Beauty which shall outlast even the memory
of thee and of thy Quatrains. She shall be the first
of the thirteen beautiful works of Allah; but in
that day, no man shall know that the author of thy
tnrice-forgotten poems was her father.

Akbar. (Staring curiously at Zeyn) Thou hast then, thy
desire.

Zeyn. (Furiously) I am cheated with words. (He rushes
from the stage.)

(The old woman in the shop, sets down her pan and
comes out upon the stage.)

Woman. What's to do? Whatever is to do? More trouble?

Who's quarrelling now?

(As she shuffles about the stage, one of her slippers comes off. She bends down to pick it up, and straightens herself with a cry of pain.)

Ah. Oh! Ee! Oh my poor back! Oh-h! Curse the rheumatism!

(She shuffles across the stage to Akbar, and peers at him short-sightedly.)

What's the matter, young man? Huh! My back!

(Akbar goes down upon one knee and fixes her sandal for her.)

(Rising)

Akbar. /Nothing is the matter, reverend lady.

Woman. (Thrusting her face into his in her eagerness to see who is speaking) Oh you villain! Reverend indeed!

Why don't you say, old lady and have done with it.

You scented popinjay!

Akbar. (Leading her towards her house) Well, well,—I meant no offence. Forgive me, mother.

Woman. (Pushing him) Mother, you Arabian fool! It is easy to see that you are a stranger here. Mother, indeed! I have only been married seven months.

Akbar. (Settling her head-dress which has fallen off)

Well, well, I did not mean that, or not as you supposed I meant it. I am, as you say, but a stranger, beautiful lady, mother of heroes to be.

Woman. (Giggling) My sister had twins,—both boys!

—They are soldiers now. Fine, handsome lads!

Akbar. I am sure they are.

Woman. So like me!—both of them!

Akbar. Yes, yes. (Aside) This is the most natural dream of all.

Woman. You are laughing at me. This bazaar is becoming uninhabitable. I never liked it. I don't like the neighbours,—and I particularly dislike that obscure old man who sits before an empty box all day and never seems to sell anything. I shouldn't wonder if he was accountable for my rheumatism.

Akbar. By the beard of Allah, there is something in the wisdom of age,—that is to say, worthy matron, your attractive maturity has solved the problem. I

don't like him.

Woman. I hate him. Nobody seems to know who he is or where he comes from or what he has to sell. Do you know what he is?

Akbar. I only know what he says he is.

Woman. What is that?

Akbar. He says he sells wishes.

Woman. Wishes?

Akbar. He says so.

Woman. Ah well,—poor folk like myself have quite enough wishes without needing to buy them.

Akbar. True, good mother,—pardon, I forgot. But this merchant declares that by wishes he means desires; and that he sells the fulfilment of them. I have even traded with him myself.

Woman. (In an entirely new voice) Have you got the fulfilment of your desires?

Akbar. Well,—(Hesitantly)—not yet. But I am like the

hungry dog under the table at the feast, I live in hopes.

Woman. (Turning round and looking at the merchant) He is certainly a strange old man.

Akbar. That is so.

Woman. Does it not seem to you that there is something about him which is not entirely repellent?

Akbar. (Eyeing the merchant doubtfully) Yes,—I suppose so,—if he wouldn't sleep so much.

Woman. Young man, you are not yet old enough to be anything but a scoffer. The very fact that this poor merchant has apparently nothing to sell, convinces me that he is not one of your common bazaar cheats. I have always pitied him. I have even believed in him. I said to my husband only yesterday—

Merchant. (Half waking up) Buy, buy, buy, buy! Soldiers and priests, citizens and wives, here I have all that you desire. Buy, buy, buy! Women and girls, widows and brides—

Woman. (To Akbar) Now then, what did I say? Did you hear that?

Akbar. (Trying to disengage his garment from her clutching hand) Hear what?

Woman. (In a doddering ecstasy) He said Brides! Brides! And me only married seven months! Oh moon of Love! Oh Pools of affection! Oh unfathomable wells of Passion,—Oh,—ah,—eh,—oh, my rheumatism! Oh merchant! Hi! Hi! Ho! Ho! He, he! Merchant! Fall not asleep, son of a dog, for here is custom! (To Akbar, who half laughingly, half seriously, tries to detain her) Let me go, you silken fool! What do you know of our customs? You are a stranger. Hi, merchant!

(She fumbles in her breast and pulls out a little greasy bag of money, which she throws with a clash at the feet of the merchant.)

All my savings, reverend and mysterious one whom I have always loved! Sell me a wish.

(The merchant puts the bag into his belt and dozes.)

(Shaking him, whilst Akbar laughs) Sell me a wish.

Merchant. (Opening one eye) It is sold, unattractive old woman. You have your wish.

Woman. (Dancing with rage) Why you drowsy fraud, you don't even know what it is.

Merchant. I know.

Woman. (Drawing back from him in fear and curiosity)
You know?

Merchant. Wrinkled daughter of the grave, I know. Be you the judge. You wished for once, if only for once, to do something, or to be, think, or act something that might divert your husband from those other loves with whom he now spends so great a portion of his time.

Woman. (To Akbar) What does he mean?

Akbar. He means, poor old mother,—now don't devour me,—that you wish to please a young husband.

Woman. (Falling on her knees before the merchant and stretching out her arms) Yes, though my soul burn forever in Gehenna, though I be childless till I die, though all women laugh at me, though every bitterness that may be the lot of women mingle with every bite of my daily bread, still, O merchant,

Servant of Allah if you be, or friend of Satan, if so you be, or good or evil, whatever you be, grant me this—

Merchant. I have said that it is granted.

Woman. Nay, do not laugh at me. Listen! Grant me this,—so order your magic, whether it be of Heaven or of Hell,—and whatever be the price,—that I may, if only for once, perform one act,—bring to its consummation one undertaking,—perform one good or evil deed,—that shall be wholly pleasing to my husband.

Akbar. (With a light laugh) Now go home, there's a good woman.

Merchant. (To the old woman) The bargain is made.

Woman. Thanks be to Allah! Oh dear! Oh me! Oh my! What a smell of burning! Alas for the dinner.

(She rushes into her house and blows upon the froth of a saucepan that is boiling over. She spreads the cloth upon the floor,—sets various dishes upon it, fills them with steaming messes from her numerous pans, and is gathering cushions from the corners of the room, when her husband enters from a door in the

rear of the house. He sinks cross-legged upon the cushions, stroking his short black beard with the solemn precision of a man who is not quite sober. His wife puts one of the dishes before him. He sniffs at it doubtfully, with one eye upon the door by which he has entered and towards which he beckons apologetically. The slim, veiled figure of a woman, with regard to whose status no doubt can be reasonably entertained, enters the apartment in response to his beckoning, and sinking beside him with a foolish giggle, thrusts two henna-stained fingers into the steaming platter. The old woman, who has also seated herself, picks up a goblet, as though to throw it at the younger one, but instead, she moves closer to her husband, and sitting on the opposite side to that of the girl, drops her head on his shoulder.)

Husband. (Shrugging her head off his shoulder) Don't go to sleep there, you drowsy old she-ass.

Woman. (Fatuously) My beautiful Selim! My handsome young husband!

Husband. Fatima, you are a fool! (The younger woman giggles, her mouth full of sweetmeats)

Woman. Ah Selim, my loved one, you can't deceive me. I can see it in your face. There is the same look in your eyes as there used to be when you stood outside the shop of my father, the money-lender, and recited that beautiful poem you had made about me. Come now, —confess it,—you do love your little Fatima, don't you?

Husband. (Bored) Oh Allah!

(The Courtesan, Zouredinah, nudges him. He turns towards her.)

(To Zouredinah) Little veiled moon of love!

Woman. (Ecstatically) I knew you did. Oh, say it again.

Husband. (Irritably) Has Allah visited you with madness, Fatima, you mumbling, toothless, withered, sorrow of my youth? Is it not enough to be thankful for and to praise Heaven for, that you have got a husband in your old age? Be more respectful, particularly in company.

Woman. (Beginning to blubber) Oh Selim, you are only jesting. I know you are only jesting, even though perhaps you don't know it yourself.

Husband. By the beard of the devil, Fatima, I believe you have gone mad. Cannot a man eat his evening meal in peace? Cannot a man commune with a friend? Must he after all the labours of a weary day, have his brief moments of leisure rendered bitter by your drivelling?

Woman. (Kissing him full upon the lips) My Selim! My

very ownest young and eloquent husband!

Husband. (Pushing the dishes away and oversetting them) Now you've spoilt my appetite. How can I eat anything now? Cannot you be content with trying to poison me with bad cookery, you tattered remnant of a woman. Be more respectful, or by Allah, you will drive me to forget myself. In another moment, I shall say something that might offend the ears of our guest, the Lady Zouredinah.

(He leers idiotically at Zouredinah, who yawns genteelly behind her veil. The old woman very deliberately takes the spread cloth by the corners and draws it away, oversetting all the dishes. As deliberately, she rises, and drags away the cushion on which the Courtezan is sitting, causing Zouredinah to fall back in an undignified heap. Zouredinah screeches in the indignant falsetto of the gutter. Selim regards these proceedings with staring eyes, open mouth, and raised hands; the complete picture of a dignified fool taken by surprise.)

Zouredinah. (Arranging her veil, in a voice incoherent with spite) Thing! Thing! Thing! Married woman! Old married woman! Childless creature of misery.

Woman. Spit away, shrill little pest! Screech, you poor thing! Or if you will leave my house quietly, I will give you an old snawl and the heel of a loaf.

Go back to the company of others like yourself. You are no fit company for aught else. I forget myself in speaking to you. I am a woman. Do not say old woman, for I know it,—but I am at least a woman. You might have been,—you poor, silly, cheap, vain, veiled, scented thing of nothing. I don't despise you. I don't hate you. I deny myself even the legitimate pleasure of pitying you. Take the broken meats and the soiled cloth. (Threateningly) Take them,—and go quickly. Go,—and leave me with this self-indulgent disgrace of manhood.

(Before the threatening attitude of the old woman, the Courtezan retreats in terror until she is stopped by the wall at the back of the house, where she flops to the ground in violent hysterics.)

Husband. (With an abject, and wholly unsuccessful attempt at virtuous indignation) Fatima, I shall divorce you.

Woman. Selim, divorce me now.

Husband. (Stuttering) Yes, yes, you she-devil! I do divorce you. You are divorced! You are no longer wife of mine. Leave my house, undutiful wife.

(The old woman begins to close the house and tidy up the room.)

Woman. I cannot leave your house.

Husband. How? You cannot? When I have divorced you?

Woman. You left your house when you came here,—to my house.

Husband. To yours?

Woman. My house,—bought with the gold of my father, the money-lender. The Prophet Mahomet, who closed the doors of Paradise to women, no doubt because he was a saint, was yet sufficiently a man to do us justice in this world. This house is mine.

Husband. Yours?

Woman. Mine. Its furnishings, ornaments, plates and linen are mine. The very cobwebs in its undusted corners are mine. The spiders who have woven them are my tenants,—even as you are, Selim, my beloved husband, my young, noble, righteous and dutiful husband, who has seen fit to divorce me. Your garments are mine,—and if I went before the Cadi

and claimed the very food that you have eaten, I should win my suit. But I give you that. I am sleepy, and I am going to close my house. Take away this shrill thing that you have brought here and go. Go! Allah go with you, Selim.

Husband. (Thoroughly frightened) Fatima!

Woman. Well?—Go!

Husband. And is this the way you repay me?

Woman. Yes.

Husband. Is this the reward of the love I have given you? The recompense of my faithfulness,—my devotion? —of my self-sacrifice and self-immolation upon the altar of Love? Fatima, my autumn rose, now little you understand me?

Woman. I understand well enough.

Husband. You do not. By Allah, you do not. You are angry because I brought low dancing girls into our house. But why have I done so?—to try you,—to prove you,—so that now that all seems ended, as you

thought it was,—I may open my arms to you and say with all my heart that it is you, only,—Fatima,—my Fatima,—that I love,—that I desire.

Woman. Selim,—you married me.

Husband. I married you, Fatima.

Woman. Do you love me, Selim?

Husband. Can you doubt it? (With one eye on the still wriggling figure of the younger woman) I do love you, Fatima. Surely you can not find it in your heart to turn me out?

Woman. (Approaching him slowly) If you love me then, look at me.

(He turns to her from the younger woman, gazing at her as though fascinated by her manner. She comes slowly towards him, and before he has time to see what she is doing, she has plucked a dagger from his belt. He stares at her and fumbles with the empty sheath.)

Who bought you this knife, Selim? (He does not answer.) It was I! Ten ghazis of gold I paid for it. I have a receipt from the armourer. I am a careful woman,—a true daughter of my father. Yes, I bought it,—and for you. You saw it in the armourer's booth, and priced it. Your leather-brained mind never rested

until it was yours. Ten ghazis of gold I paid for it,—for a jewel-hilted knife that you would not have courage to stick a pig with. Its haft wears as many precious stones as such things as she (pointing to the Courtezan, who tired of being in a faint, looks up slowly), but its blade is virgin. It is the last purchase I made. (She looks from him to the Courtezan, pauses a moment and goes on) Yet no. It is not the last purchase I made. That was made to-day. I bought a charm from the seller of wishes.

Husband. (Alarmed) To wish me dead, you hag!

Woman. Not so. I gave him a bag of gold and for that gold the thrice-accursed cheat promised me the fulfilment of my desire. Do you know what that desire was, my husband?

Husband. Allah forbid!

Woman. It was not much. It was only that I should be able to perform one act,—one only,—that would please the empty fool that it is my curse to love. The seller of wishes is a liar. I can do nothing to please my

husband, but I can do,—and here I do,—the one act of my life wholly pleasing to myself.

(With both hands she drives the dagger up to the hilt in her left breast. Selim recedes from her, horror-stricken. She staggers towards him, sways and falls. The Courtezan jumps up and screams.)

Zouredinah. Murder! You have murdered her! You wicked villain! Let me go. I had nothing to do with it. I saw you do it. Let me go. Call the watch. Help! Murder!

Husband. (Kneeling hurriedly and examining his wife, and then turning warningly upon the Courtezan)
Silence! Silence, I say. Don't be a fool. She is dead!

Zouredinah. She is dead,—and you have killed her!

Husband. Not I, by Allah. With her own hand she slew herself. She lies there with her fingers stiffening about the dagger. Come away. Come away, I say! This ends all our troubles. She will come between us no more. See, I will close the curtains. (Getting ready to let them fall across the shop) See,—they will find her and we know naught of her. And when I have

come into her inheritance, thou, Oh my Pearl shalt
be nung with jewels as rare as thou art.

Zouredinah. (Leaping up) Quickly then.

Husband. Come. Oh go you before. I follow.

(He watches her go out by the door at the back of the shop, and follows, after letting the curtains fall across it. Akbar, who has been watching with interest, strides furiously over to the sleeping merchant of wishes and tugs him angrily by the beard. The merchant starts up furiously and puts his hand upon his dagger.)

Akbar. You cheat! You thief! You prophet of serving
maids! Give me back my money!

Merchant. You have touched my beard!

Akbar. (With a hand upon his yataghan) I will touch
your throat, dishonest merchant.

Merchant. How then? Dishonest! Thou liest. The goods I
cry are the goods I sell. No man hath received from
me other than that he hath paid for.

Akbar. If my dagger were not a new one, I would cut
your throat. As it is, I will have you whipped. You
would trade with me, old cheat! Give me back the
gold you had from me.

Merchant. (Handing him money) Here is your gold.

Akbar. (Flinging the gold away) The better for you.
The bargain is ended.

Merchant. Not yet.

Akbar. What do you mean?

Merchant. I gave you a gold piece. I sold you a desire.
Your desire is still to be fulfilled. Your desire will
be fulfilled. Over and above that, you are the richer
by a piece of gold which I, a reputable merchant of
this City, gave to you. Go in peace.

Akbar. (Stamping his foot) Fool! Blinded fool! Aged
charlatan drunk upon the wine of incomprehension,
have you not slept? Yes, you have slept,—and so
sleeping, you have not known what you have done,—you
have not comprehended that utter wickedness which is
the ultimate outcome of your fraudulent pretence.

Merchant. How then, my son?

Akbar. I am not your son. I have naught to do with you,
I praise Allah. Would you know your wickedness, go

draw back yonder curtains and behold what is behind them.

Merchant. It needs not. I know what is behind them.

Akbar. Then you know how you have cheated that old woman whose desire you promised to fulfil.

Merchant. Be you a witness, Illustrious Akbar. How have I cheated her? Do you say now what her desire was.

Akbar. It was little to ask. It was that she might do one thing,—one thing only,—that might be wholly pleasing to her husband. (The merchant nods slowly, and as slowly points to the drawn curtains. Akbar, comprehending, draws back in horror) Then,—then it was that!

Merchant. It was that, Prince of Samarkand. She has her desire.

Akbar. (Terror-stricken. Shouting) Badoura! Badoura! Hither! Hither to me!

Badoura. (Entering) You called me, Prince?

Akbar. Oh you are come! And in good time. Called you?
I have been calling you for years.

Badoura. I heard you call. I came instantly. What is
the matter?

Akbar. (Pointing at the merchant with shaking hand)
That—that old man there,—if he be indeed man,
—look at him.

Badoura. That grey-beard! What of him?

Akbar. Allah preserve us from such age. Come away,
Badoura. Come away from him. He frightens me.

Badoura. Frightens you!

Akbar. With that he sells. With that that is in that
box. (The merchant sleepily pushes the box towards
him. He starts away like a frightened horse.) Avoid!
Avoid, I say!

Badoura. (Inspecting the box curiously) There is nothing
in the box.

Akbar. There is that in it I dare not think of.

Merchant. (Sleepily) Buy, buy, buy, buy!

Badoura. What do you sell, old man?

Merchant. Desires.

Badoura. Cheap ware indeed,—since all possess what
you would sell.

Merchant. And their fulfilment.

Badoura. (Slowly) Ah! (Turning to Akbar) This is he of
whom I told you.

Akbar. Come away from him, I say.

Badoura. Will you sell me the fulfilment of my desire,
old man?

Akbar. Buy not of him. Buy not, I say. Come away.

Badoura. Will you sell it me, old man?

Merchant. (Glancing from her to Akbar) It needs not.
You have it.

Badoura. (Glancing at Akbar) Ah,—and he?

Merchant. He also has bought of me,—and his desires shall be fulfilled.

Akbar. It is that which terrifies me. Two have I seen who bought from him and disaster trod upon their heels. I bought from him before I knew. Allah preserve me from the like fulfilment.

Badoura. What was your desire, Prince of Samarkand?

Akbar. I do not yet know it,—ask him.

Badoura. What was his desire, old man?

Merchant. He shall know it,—in good time,—at the thirteenth hour,—he shall know it.

Akbar. (Wildly) The thirteenth hour! Always the thirteenth hour. Let it come then. Let it strike. It shall strike.

(He rushes towards the gong and is about to strike it, when it begins to sound itself. At its sound a vast crowd of figures come upon the stage, and begin to count the strokes. The stage darkens.)

Crowd. (Counting) Nine,—Ten,—Eleven,—Twelve!

Akbar. (Rushing to the hammer and giving the gong a

resounding blow) Thirteen!

(The crowd fall back with a long sigh of terror. The doors in the cliff slowly slide apart. In the green glare with which the stage is suffused, the dwarf, Vishnumara, clad in fantastic armour and bearing a horn, comes through the aperture. The doors shut noiselessly behind him. He blows a long note upon his horn. The crowd wavers, terror-stricken.)

Vishnumara.

Silence! List and understand,
Citizens of Ur-Quadash,
In the spirit or the flesh,
Bow and hearken, I command.

Mercnant, Prince and Courtezan,
Wife and widow, bride to be,
Rush ye all and list to me,
Every woman, every man.

Listen to my lofty rhyme,
List or perish without pity
To the Herald of the City
That is twice as old as Time.

(He blows a long note upon his horn.)

Bow ye low and bate your breath,
Dead or living, man or wife,—
If ye listen, I am Life;
If ye list not, I am Death.

When my horn cries, from the gutters
All the trampled beggars rise,
Sleepy Allah, rubs his eyes,
Frightened Satan stirs and mutters.

Now the sea no longer moans,
Now the stars desert their ways,
Now the last redeemer lays
Down his disregarded bones.

Heaven and Hell and Earth are hurled
In the melting pot of Time—
List ye tremblers, while my rhyme
Strikes the last hour of the world!

In the spirit or the flesh,
Souls, your final song is sung,
Souls, your final hour has rung
On the gongs of Ur-Quadash!

(He again blows a note on his trumpet. When he has finished, a powerful voice off the stage cries, "Throw back the gates of desire!" The gates open, revealing the absolute blackness beyond. All the people save Akbar and Badoura rush through them and disappear. There is the sound of a laugh. A figure gradually shapes itself in the darkness beyond the gates. It is Nourmahal.)

Nourmahal. (Stretching out her arms) Akbar! (Akbar does not move.) Akbar,—it is I,—Nourmahal, whom you love! Come to me, Akbar. (Akbar remains motionless.)

Badoura. Lo, Akbar, it is Nourmahal who calls. Nourmahal before whose barred doorway you would have shed your blood. Nourmahal whom you have desired so long—

Akbar. Do you bid me go to her?

Badoura. If at this hour she be truly your desire—?

Akbar. I have found my desire. (He stretches out his arms to Badoura.) Let us close the gates.

Badoura. Yes. Let us close the gates.

(They go towards the gates which close slowly before them, blotting out the vision. The curtain comes down as they turn to each other and embrace upon the darkening stage.)

End of Act III

Nourmehal

Act IV: The Awakening

Scene. Dawn in Samarkand. The Café of Fareesh. The pale light of early morning discovers Akbar, Badoura, the Fakir and the Soldier within the Café. The Fakir and the Soldier lie among the cushions where they have fallen. From time to time they move uneasily in their sleep, muttering. Badoura, with her back against a pillar, and her face in shadow, supports Akbar's head on her knees. There is heard the vague murmur of an awakening city. Dogs bark in the distance and a cock crows shrilly. Fareesh enters the Café, evidently but half awake. He looks about him and shivers in the chill air. The negro dwarf enters, carrying a broom and a wooden bucket.

Fareesh. Get to work, thou sluggard!

(The dwarf sets the bucket down and leaning on his broom, yawns vigorously. Fareesh cuffs him over the head. The dwarf, with a start, begins to sweep. He sweeps the same place over and over again, yawning. Fareesh snatches the broom from him and shakes him angrily by the scruff of the neck.)

Dwarf. (Writhing) Yow! Don't!

Fareesh. (Again cuffing him) Wake you sluggard! Wake!

Dwarf. (Blowing through his half closed fist) Tantara!
Tantara! (Fareesh fells him to the ground and kicks
him.)

Fareesh. You have been stealing the wine, you devil's
whelp.

Dwarf. (Sitting up and gazing into vacancy) Listen to
me! I am the Herald,—the Herald of the thirteenth
hour. Stand back good people, while I recite these
imposing words which have been put upon me. (To
Fareesh, with a lordly wave of his hand) Stand aside,
worthy fellow!

Fareesh. (Aghast) This thing hath slept in the moon-
light and hath lost its wits! (He empties the bucket
of water on the dwarf.)

Dwarf. (With a yell) Hi! Hi! I am drowned. Hi, master,
come hither! The roof of my chamber leaks, and the
summer rains do quench thy poor dwarf entirely.

Fareesh. (Hitting him with the bucket) I'll quench
thee, thou villain!

(The dwarf clambers to his feet and confronts Fareesh. His wet clothes cling about him, his teeth chatter.)

Dwarf. (In a slave's voice) Did you call me, master?

Fareesh. (Laughing) It doth seem so. Hast thou dreamt?

Dwarf. (Blubbering) How do I know, good master? I thought I was a herald, with beautiful long words to say, and a lovely curled trumpet, all my own. Oh Heaven!—when I blew, it thundered!

Fareesh. (Pinching his ear) Well, well, thou art awake now. Thou hast dreamt, and thy dreams are as twisted as thy body. Set the shop in order.

Dwarf. (Rubbing his knuckles into his eyes) Art thou angry, master?

Fareesh. I am no longer angry.

Dwarf. (Taking up the broom, and beginning to sweep)
When I am a man and have saved gold, will I purchase a café such as this? (He sweeps.) Not I! Will I purchase a wife?

Fareesh. (Laughing) Wilt thou not?

Dwarf. (Sweeping till he gasps) Not I! Let all women avoid me!

Fareesh. Thou wilt have thy wish, thou piteous mite.

Dwarf. If I have my wish, then I shall have just such a trumpet as the one I blew. Boom! Brr! Tan-tara!
(He sweeps himself out of the Café.)

Fareesh. (With a sigh) Alas I have no trumpet to hope for. (He crosses over to the Fakir and shakes him.) Rouse Thyself! Come, come! Wake up, holy man! Open thy wise eyes, servant of Allah, or Buddha, or whatever God thou dost affect in the morning.

(The Fakir wakens with difficulty and struggles to his feet, yawning and stretching.)

Fakir. (Miserably) Thou hast my blessing, Fareesh.

Fareesh. Thy blessing! (He laughs) Thou hast more need of mine,—and even more need of this! (He hands him a cup of wine which the Fakir drains at a gulp, and with a gasp) Art thou awake now?

Fakir. Awake?

Fareesh. Aye,—awake, holy man?

Fakir. Nay, I dream now. I look upon Illusion. Whilst I slept,—while my body grovelled among the lees of wine,—then,—then I was awake.

Fareesh. Thou art still drunk.

Fakir. I know not. But this I do know,—that though I go there,—yea, and as often as I go there,—I can never remain there long. Always I am driven forth through this door or that. (He looks round him vacantly.) Next time I swear that naught shall tempt me from Ur-Quadesh.

Fareesh. Allah be with thee,—thou art a fool.

Fakir. I am thrice a fool! Would I be here if I were not. Truly no! I was in the City of Desire. Had I not been trebly a fool, I would have stayed there. But certain devils pursued me, and I fled through the door into thy Café,—(He looks about him, and adds after a pause)—as it seems.

Fareesh. Thou must go now. Here is thy begging bowl.

Fakir. (Taking it) I thought I had left it behind. (He

holds it out to Fareesh.) Alms for the love of Allah!

Fareesh. Not a piastre.

Fakir. As thou wilt. Allah be with thee.

(He lurches off the stage.)

Fareesh. (Kicking the Soldier) Get up!

(The Soldier staggers to his feet and comos his beard and moustaches with shaking fingers.)

Soldier. What do I owe thee, fellow?

Fareesh. Fellow indeed! Thou owest me naught. The woman paid the score last night. (He nods towards Badoura.)

Soldier. (In a parched voice) The better for thee,—for I have naught.

Fareesh. Thou hast a vile look,—and I dare swear, a ringing head. (He fills a cup.) Take this and begone! This will put life into thee.

Soldier. (Taking the cup and looking at Fareesh)

Fareesh, I have dreamed a dream. In that dream, I was a man again. Now I have wakened to my misery. But I am still a man, though a broken one. I will not drink

thy cup, though I die for this wine. I will drink no more. Never again will I drink. May Allan blast me if I ever drink again.

Fareesh. That is well said, Soldier.

Soldier. Never again! I have sworn it. No more,—after this one cup!

(He drains the wine to the dregs and stretches out his hand to the flagon. Fareesh snatches it out of his reach. He follows the Fakir, muttering to himself. EXIT.)

Fareesh. (Looking after him) So! He has followed the Fakir. War and Religion, hating each other, yet never far apart. (He turns towards Akbar and Badoura.) Now to eject Love!

(He walks over to the two sleeping figures and drags a curtain aside so that the light falls full upon them. When he catches sight of Akbar's face, he throws his arms abroad with a gesture of consternation.)

By the wrath of God, it is the Prince. Here hath he lain the night through with his head in the lap of a girl! Fareesh! There is trouble at thy door, Fareesh! This is like to be a bad business. Let me see! Yes, let me see! If I let him sleep on, the customers coming for their morning coffee will see him.

That will not do. If I waken him before he hath slept off the fumes of drug and wine, he will most certainly call the watch and hail me to the beheading place. That will not do either. Alack, what it is to have to do with Princes, and headstrong ones, also. (He stands a moment in deep thought; then calls) Boy! Come hither!

(Vishnumara enters.)

Stand here! When I am gone, but not before, waken these sleepers, one of whom, as thou seest, is the Prince. Not before I am gone, look you. If he offers to pay, take nothing. If he ask for me in a hot, unreasonable voice, say I am still abed. Above all, hand him a heavy draught of wine before he is quite awake. Not before I am gone, look you.

Dwarf. Master, I dare not wake him!

Fareesh. Thou darrest not, little coward!

Dwarf. If I am a coward, I am a coward,—but I dare not wake him.

Fareesh. Thou shalt wake him, or thou shalt be beaten until thy screams awake him.

Dwarf. (Beginning to slubber) How dare I awaken Prince Akbar? I'd sooner be beaten. I'd sooner be beaten twice! (He boo-hoos at the top of his voice.)

Fareesh. (Alarmed) Hist, thou fool!

Dwarf. Boo,—hoo,—hoo,—hoo!

Fareesh. (Terrified) Hist! Hush! Be quiet, thou fool!

Dwarf. (Roaring) Boo,—hoo! Beat me after, but waken him first yourself.

Fareesh. (In a furious whisper) Curse the whelp!
(Coaxing) Waken him, Vishnumara,—waken him, and I will buy thee that trumpet, even this day.

Dwarf. (Arrested) The trumpet.

Fareesh. Yes,—the trumpet.

Dwarf. I —I would do anything for that.

Fareesh. Do this, then.

Dwarf. Wilt thou buy me the trumpet if he slays me?

Fareesh. Yes, yes. Indeed I will.

Dwarf. If he slays me, wilt thou bury the trumpet
with me?

Fareesh. Yes, yes. Two trumpets.

Dwarf. Then I will do it. I will waken him. Get thee
gone, good master.

Fareesh. Not before I am gone, look you.

(Fareesh exits.)

Dwarf. If I only had the trumpet now, I would blow it
and waken him.

(He tiptoes about until he finds a broom. With infinite precaution he builds a barricade of cushions. He crouches behind them, rolls up his sleeves, spits on his hands, and taking the broom, gingerly prods Akbar in the ribs. There is no response. He prods again and again, each time more vigorously. He becomes so engrossed in his task that he leans too far over his barricade of cushions which collapses, sending him sprawling. The broom-stick takes Badoura full in the chest and knocks her over. The dwarf gets to his feet.)

Dwarf. That has done it! No, it has not! Still they
sleep.

(He tiptoes cautiously to the recumbent figures and looks down upon them. He suddenly falls on his knees beside Badoura and lifts her head. He lets it fall again, turning to Akbar, and touches his cheek with his finger. Then he jumps up shrieking.)

Master! Master! Master! (He opens the curtains.)

Master! Come hither! Be swift! Lose not a moment!

Fareesh. (Off the stage, sleepily) Dost thou call me, my slave? I am yet abed.

Dwarf. Master! Prince Akbar lies dead in thy Café!

(Fareesh hurries on to the stage, and knocking the dwarf aside, rapidly examines the bodies of Akbar and Badoura. He drags the body of Akbar into a corner of the Café, and in dumb show, bids the dwarf do likewise for Badoura. He throws carpets over the bodies and upon the carpets he piles cushions.)

Fareesh. This is thy work, thou slave. They will punish thee for this. They will put a bowstring round thy temples for this. They will shred out thy nerves with combs of iron for this. Now will I call the watch and denounce thee, thou little murderer!

Dwarf. Please, master, I didn't do it!

Fareesh. Who mingled the cup?

Dwarf. Who bade me?

Fareesh. Who will believe thee?

Dwarf. Do not let them hurt me, master. I am twisted

enough already.

Fareesh. I am a good master. No one shall hurt thee.
No one shall know that thou art a murderer, if thou wilt but obey me, thy kind and loving master.

Dwarf. O, I will, I will! What must I do?

Fareesh. Thou must do nothing.

Dwarf. What must I say?

Fareesh. Thou must say **nothing**. Thou must know nothing.
Listen to me. Answer me. Where is Prince Akbar?

Dwarf. (Pointing with a trembling finger) Under those cushions.

Fareesh. Is that indeed so? Then they will slay thee.
Now, once again,—where is Prince Akbar?

Dwarf. Thou knowest, master.

Fareesh. Thou dost not know. Where is Prince Akbar?

Dwarf. I do not know, master.

Fareesh. That is better. Hast thou ever seen Prince

Akbar?

Dwarf. Indeed yes, master,—even now.

Fareesh. Call the watch. Ho there!

Dwarf. No, no, no, master. I saw Prince Akbar once,
long since,—afar off. I have forgotten where.

Fareesh. Remember that.

Dwarf. I will remember it, master.

Fareesh. Go and boil the coffee.

Dwarf. It is boiled.

Fareesh. (Irritably) Go then and boil more coffee!

(The dwarf exits. Fareesh fills and lights a narguilé, and sitting cross-legged at the door of the Café, stares intently into vacancy, inhaling great volumes of smoke.)

(Addressing the mouthpiece of his narguilé) Whether it is better, Fareesh, to hang thyself in thy cellar without more ado, or so to work, so contrive and so imagine, that thy old brains will save the grey head that holds them? The question is worthy of consideration. Thou art old, Fareesh, and being old, it may

be said of thee that thou art incapable of the full enjoyment of life. Granted! But being old, thou art wise, and being wise, thou canst suck more pleasure out of what remains to thee than effulgent youth can extract from the whole world prostrate at its feet. As thou art wise, Fareesh, be also cautious. As thou art cautious, be apt, and being apt, compose thy lineaments. Let no man read thee. Hast thou a dead Prince hidden in thy Café? If thou hast, thou hast more than any inn-keeper in Samarkand. Let such philosophical reflections save thy head.

(He smokes meditatively. The door of Nourmahal's house opens and a serving maid trips across to Fareesh.)

Girl. Allah be with thee, venerable inn-keeper.

Fareesh. I hope he is with me. Keep thou his precepts, serving wench.

Girl. I have come for a pot of coffee.

Fareesh. (Shouting into the shop) Slave,—bring coffee!

(The dwarf brings coffee.)

Girl. What a little pot!

Fareesh. Take it and begone.

Girl. (Giggling affectedly) I think I had better take two pots. My mistress hath a friend.

Fareesh. (To the dwarf) Two pots. (To the girl) Is he noble?

Girl. By Allah, most noble and most beautiful.

(There is the sound of a galloping horse. An armed man rushes on the stage. He is an officer of the Sultan's body guard.)

Officer. Art thou Fareesh?

Fareesh. Such is the will of Allah.

Officer. Hast thou seen our Prince, the noble Akbar?

Fareesh. Allah be praised. I have often seen him.

Officer. Do not trifle with me, thou fool. Hast thou seen him to-night?

Fareesh. Do you mean, have I seen him this morning?
It is now morning.

Officer. Curse thee for a slaving fool. Hast thou seen Akbar last night or this morning?

Fareesh. No.

Officer. Fool! I must be gone.

Fareesh. Do you want to know where he is?

Officer. Allah preserve me from slaying thee, thou dotard! Dost thou know where he is?

Fareesh. (Indifferently) Ye men of battle are so precipitate. Had I not know where he was,—though Allah forbid I should pry upon the goings and comings of one so far above me,—would I have demanded of thee if thou didst desire to know?

Officer. (Beside himself) Where is he?

Fareesh. (To the girl) Where is he?

Girl. Who?

Officer. Trifle with me no more, thou fool! If I find not Akbar ere noon, my head pays for it. Mine, look you! In the name of Allah, where is he, if ye know.

Fareesh. Noble Captain, indispose not thyself. Allah forbid that thy head should fall. This serving girl

hath told me even now that Akbar is over there,—
with Nourmahal.

Girl. I said no such thing.

Officer. Ye are both liars. God help ye both when I am
finished with this business.

Pareesh. (In a reasonable voice) Allah forgive me if I
am wrong, Noble Captain,—but this girl hath even now
demanded the morning coffee for two persons, one of
whom is her mistress, the Lady Nourmahal, and the
other, the Lady Nourmahal's most noble,—er,—friend.
Most noble, mark you. I quote her own words.

Officer. Hell seize ye both. I will see for myself.

(With the hilt of his scimitar, he beats furiously
and continuously upon Nourmahal's door.)

Open the door, thou woman! (There is no reply.)

Open the door! Thou wilt not! Then I will!

(He puts his shoulder to the door and presses it until
it cracks. There is a feminine shriek within; At the
sound of the shriek, the serving maid lets the tray
fall with a crash and bolts off the stage. The door
gives way and falls inward. A man rushes out. He has a
drawn sword. It is Vickram, the Captain of Akbar's
body guard.)

Vickram. (Foaming with rage) Who, by the wrath of God,
seeks death?

Officer. Vickram, by Hell!

Vickram. What have I done to thee? Is it a quarrel?

Officer. Brother, put up thy sword. It is not a quarrel.

Vickram. Dost thou seek my woman?

Officer. Neither thee nor thy woman, Vickram. Where is
Akbar?

Vickram. Seek him in Hell if thou desireth. Am I Akbar's
keeper?

Officer. Thou art the Captain of his guard,—and he is
lost.

Vickram. Lost!

Officer. Lost,—and I am charged to find him.

Vickram. It is naught to me, brother. Fareesh!

Fareesh. Excellency.

Vickram. Coffee! Hot and strong and plenty of it.

Fareesh. (Shouting) Coffee! (The dwarf brings coffee to the soldiers who sit facing each other.)

Officer. To thee, brother (drinking).

Vickram. By Allah,—to thee!

Officer. I marvel to hear thee say that Akbar's disappearance is naught to thee. It is a serious matter.

Vickram. Then do not speak of it.

Officer. I do not jest. I tell you Prince Akbar has gone,—he has disappeared!

Vickram. He will reappear. Or if he does not, it is naught to me. Naught matters aught to me this morning.

Officer. Housethyself, Vickram. If it is naught to thee, it is much to me. Dost see my head?

Vickram. Who could help see it? I do not blame thee for it, brother.

Officer. God knows, I boast not of it, but it is mine. Custom hath so inured me to its presence that I have

become fond of it. If it is good for naught else, it hath at least an opening through which drink may be poured. I do not exaggerate, Vickram, when I assure thee that I should be loath to have this uncomely head roll across the gravel of the beheading ground.

Vickram. Allah forbid!

Officer. Allah forbid indeed. Yet there is a danger of it.

Vickram. Wherefore?

Officer. The problem is this. Akbar hath disappeared.

Vickram. That is small loss.

Officer. Truly. Were his disappearance permanent, thou knowest, and I know, and all the world knows, it would be the salvation of the unhappy dynasty whereunder we live.

Vickram. Granted. I agree with thee.

Officer. Thou hast reason. We know what we know. But his besotted progenitor, the Kaleeph Jellal-ud-Din, hath

chosen to pretend otherwise. He called me to audience with him an hour ago. And what task think you, the palsied dotard laid upon me?

Vickram. I know not. I care not. What task?

Officer. This,—to bring him news of Akbar before noon, —or at noon, to forfeit this thing that I call my head and which now speaketh to thee.

Vickram. Tut! Let not that alarm thee. Do thou invent some moving and pathetic history of Akbar's disappearance. The Kaleeph loves such tales. Can the Prince not rescue maidens from a magician, and be wrapped away in a cloud, thou weeping?

Officer. It might be so, Vickram, wert thou me. But alas, I have not thy facility in falsehood. My lies grate. They fall not smoothly upon the ears.

(The Sophist enters, blowing his horn.)

Officer. (To the Sophist) Be silent!

Vickram. (Seizing the Officer's arm) Now if ever, control thy slippery tongue. This is the man for thee.

Officer. This mountebank! How so?

Vickram. Thou desirest a ready lie. Here is a liar
beyond all price.

Officer. Sayest thou?

(The Sophist blows his trumpet in the Officer's face
and laughs.)

Dost thou blow at me, fellow?

Sophist. (Laughing) Nay, I blow for thee. Art thou not
musical?

Vickram. Thou art a man of law, art thou not?

Sophist. No.

Vickram. What art thou, then?

Sophist. I am a man without law. I am a law unto myself.

Officer. Be more respectful, fellow.

Vickram. Let be. Let be, I say. I will speak to him.

(To the Sophist) Canst thou lie?

Sophist. I can lie better than a priest. I can tell
thee all the thoughts of Allah, and when I have told
thee, Allah himself dare not deny them lest the

faithful smell heresy. In a word, I am a sophist.

Officer. What is a sophist?

Sophist. One who hath knowledge. My profession is to know.

Officer. Dost thou know where Prince Akbar is?

Sophist. Noble Captain, dost thou desire the truth, or a plausible lie? The truth I know, but cannot prove to thee. The apparent truth or the lie, I can forthwith demonstrate to thee.

Officer. I do not understand thee.

Vickram. Sophist, I will give thee a gold piece for a plain answer.

Sophist. The gold first.

Vickram. Here it is.

Officer. Here is more.

Sophist. This is a good day. Now I will tell thee all. Akbar hath disappeared.

Officer. Dost thou know where Akbar is?

Sophist. Yes.

Officer. Then forthwith commit thyself,—or I will slay thee.

Sophist. In the first place, he is here. In the second place, he is not here.

Vickram. (To the Officer) Be quiet and let him finish. It is his nature. Such as he cannot help it. It is the doom of the lawyer to say yes in three chapters.

Sophist. I have never said yes. How dare I say yes, when Allah himself, to whom be glory and praise forever, hath never yet mingled one affirmative with his many thunders.

Officer. May He curse thee at thy last hour. With regard to the present, pestilent entangler of words, I will make thee a plain offer. Here are forty ghazis of gold, and here an ivory-hilted, heavily bejewelled inlaid blade of white Damascus steel, worth eighty more. If thou hast news of Akbar,—plain news, mind ye,—no tortured lie lost in a foggy

labyrinth of words, but clean, every-day Arabic, such as we woo women with, clean-edged rhetoric that will deny God to his face if we do not believe in him, in brief, a plain tale,—these riches are thine.

Sophist. There are no plain tales, but this is the truth. Three moons ago, Allah having inspired me with a mood expressive of my philosophy, I made a poem. Last night I parted with this poem to one of God's most unclean, but most venerable servants, of whom it may be said that his spirit shall flourish for ever, for he was a man of judgement and subtle discrimination in the art of verse. As a recompense for this poem, —for we poets do not sell our wares,—he bestowed upon me a pot of spiced confection of opium, of which I, ravening at the end of a full month's abstinence, most liberally partook. Thereafter I journeyed through darkling streets, or what seemed to be streets, seeing beauty in every hag, a jewel in every dust heap. My little friends the stars came down and played with me, until the sulphur-coloured moon with a smile of horror on her cadaverous face, prophesied evil.

Thereat the stars fled,—and I also, but in another direction. Here, it must be confessed, valiant soldier, that my memory leaves a considerable gap in my tale. Permit me therefore to pass over any adventures which I may have forgotten. Ultimately, —or so to speak with absolute precision as a sophist should, penultimately, I arrived at, or to be absolutely exact, became conscious of a place. What place? Allah knows! Was it a desert place? If it was, this world does not know the meaning of desolation. Was it a place of lakes and gently wooded hills sloping down to them? Then no man who hath not ruined his constitution with opium, hath ever apprehended natural loveliness. Or if it was a city,—Allah knows, I know not,—then Babylon is a village of mud huts. Still fleeing from the moon, whom I, drunk or sober, drugged or miserable, most profoundly distrust, I came without warning on Akbar and Badoura. Love sat in their eyes and Joy held them by the hand. Oblivious of the inimical moon, they were kissing. They were happy,—and I so miserable that I laughed in an unseemly manner. My laugh was so re-echoed by so many hills,—or it may

have been the walls of houses,—so multiplied and magnified into a terrifying thunder of mirth,—that the moon ceased to smile and expired. At that moment Akbar became aware of me, and shading his eyes from the blinding sunlight, said, "Art thou also another inhabitant of the City of Desire?" I answered in a dignified, but I hope, respectful manner, "I am only here for a little while." "Not so we," said Akbar, "We have found our abiding city." "We return to Samarkand no more," said Badoura. They kissed one another. I blessed them mentally and fled. It was necessary for me to flee. The opium pot was empty and the moon showed signs of coming to life again. I fled vehemently. Here I am.

Vickram. Thou didst understate thy quality. The Father of Lies should go to school to thee.

Officer. (Embracing the Sophist) By Allah, thou art a noble liar.

Sophist. So be it! Allah preserve me from spiritual pride.

Officer. Thou hast told the tale. Take the gold. (He gives it.) Take the dagger. (He hands it across.)

By Allah, I am loath to part with that dagger. But take it. Thou hast won it. The girl who gave me that dagger was a fool to thee, though she lied to me till the blade curled. Now will I hail thee before Akbar's illustrious father, and thou, taking thy oath, will lie to him as thou hast lied to me, telling him how thou hast heard from Akbar's self that he returns to Samarkand no more. Thereat will the eyes of the Sultan ooze brine as false as thy story, and his heart greatly rejoice,—and if he reward thee, thou wilt give half to me.

Sophist. As thou wilt. There is opium in this. With opium I fear naught. I blow defiance at thee, moon. (He lifts his trumpet.)

Vickram. (Preventing him) Spare these nerves, that do shrink from noise. Cast down thy hollow toy.

Sophist. It is hollow but not empty. Music dreams therein. The blare of war awaits an awakening breath.

Vickram. Is that poetry?

Sophist. I know not. It is a useful horn, but fear not,—I refrain. It is my most valued possession, for I have none other. Music and war apart, I might blow upon it to call for wine, but since thou art overwrought, I will hail Fareesh less brutally.

(He claps his hands. Fareesh and the dwarf enter. The dwarf, staring at the Sophist, runs to him and endeavours to wrest the horn from him.)

Dwarf. That is my trumpet! My trumpet!

Sophist. Sayest thou? Then wherefore is it mine?

Dwarf. (Dancing with excitement) Should I know? Didst thou not instruct me how to blow thereon? Didst thou not pour into my mouth the words of power that I recited when I had blown? Whereat all wondered, and Ur-Quadesh fell into dust and shadow, and the gates in the cliff rolled apart with a noise of grating stone? Didst thou not flee through the opening thereof, calling out that the moon pursued thee? And I after thee, weeping and afraid, and wet to the skin and shivering by reason of the bucket of water that my master poured over me?

Sophist. (Shaking a finger at him) Little brother!

Little brother! My heart is heavy for thee. Thou also, sad little waif of the world, art one of us. Hast thou not dipped thy fingers into the opium pot, that is the bane of Dwarf and Sophist alike?

Dwarf. (With a terrified look at Fareesh) I hardly

looked! A mere taste! One thick drop on the tip of a finger as I cleaned the pots. Did I know that a small, bitter taste on the tongue would tell me why Fareesh's beard is grey, and why thy speech is smooth and friendly and false, and why men do not look one another in the eyes when they smile? Did I steal? Did I do wrong? Neither theft nor wrong have I committed. I took but the merest drain,—a taste from the empty pot when Badoura's last cup was mingled. A mere trickle from the Prince's cup before I rinsed it.

Vickram and Officer. (Together) The Prince! Aha!

Sophist. Aha! Allah stirreth in his sleep.

Fareesh. (Seizing the dwarf) Thou little thief! Thou purblind, sneaking worm! Thou dost steal, dost thou?

My hascheech! My opium!

(He seizes the dwarf, and putting a hand over his mouth, begins to hurry him towards the door leading to the inner apartments. Vickram intercepts him.)

Vickram. Nay, nay, master Fareesh,—do not hurt the child.

(The dwarf struggles and kicks.)

Officer. Let him be, Fareesh, thou art choking him.

(With a glance at one another, Vickram and the Officer pluck the dwarf from Fareesh's grasp and hold him between them.)

Vickram. (To the dwarf) Kneel thou there. (He points to the floor. The dwarf kneels.) Clasp thy hands behind thy back. (The dwarf does so.) Now! (Vickram draws his faulchion.)

Dwarf. (Piteously) O, my lord, my lord! Hurt me not!

Vickram. I will hurt thee not at all. It will be over before thou canst blink. Stretch thy neck.

Dwarf. (Stretching his neck) Strike swiftly.

Vickram. (Pausing) It will hurt a little.

Dwarf. I fear pain,—but do thou strike.

Vickram. What wilt thou do for me if I strike not?

Dwarf. I will tumble for thee, and screech like an ape and walk on my hands. I will teach thee now to creak on a reed at night until all the frogs leave their pools and gather about thee and flop!

Vickram. Get up! (The dwarf gets up.) Wilt thou tell all?

Dwarf. (Stammering, and glancing at Fareesh) All?

Vickram. All! (The dwarf is silent.)

Officer. (Putting a hand on Fareesh's shoulder) Thy servant is silent for fear of thee, Fareesh.

Fareesh. (Indifferently) Nay, he loves me, soldier.

Vickram. Dost thou love thy master? (The dwarf begins to blubber, rubbing his knuckles in his eyes.)

Fareesh. Thou dost love me, Vishnumara?

Dwarf. (Catching Fareesh's eye and falling on his knees)
Yes, yes, I do. I do love thee, master. Thy poor dwarf loves thee. He loves thee and will tell naught.

Sophist. (To the soldiers) He will tell me. Now, little brother, thou art free. Thou art free to come and go,—and above all, free to speak. Fareesh is no more thy lord. He is now the prisoner of the Noble Vickram and his friend. He can hurt thee no more. If thou wilt tell what thou knowest, the Kaleeph will make thee his jester and give thee a bag of gold and a white donkey to ride upon with slaves to run behind thee and before, and no toil.

Dwarf. I will tell naught.

Fareesh. Thou hast naught to tell.

Officer. (Striking him over the mouth) Be still!

Sophist. See how helpless is the master thou fearest, Vishnumara.

Dwarf. Thou canst not deceive me. I shall be the more beaten for that blow. I will tell naught.

Vickram. (To the Officer) Tie a bowstring about his forehead. (The dwarf howls lamentably.)

Sophist. That is a fool's trick. He will speak if thou torture him, but not the truth. Vishnumara, if thou wilt tell all, I will give thee this trumpet.

Dwarf. (Still sobbing) Thou canst not deceive me,—for I too am a wondrous liar. Were I lord of that trumpet, I would not part with it to save Allah from death. Slay me quick, for I am tired of talking to thee. I will die even as the Prince is dead.

Vickram and Officer. (Together) The Prince! He is dead,
then?

Dwarf. I know naught. I have seen naught. I have heard naught. I will tell naught.

Sophist. (Shaking a finger at him) Little brother!
Little brother—!

Officer. (Furiously) Little brother of Hell! May the devils of murder fill the cut throat of every lawyer with blood! Curse the blubbering fool!

(He snatches the trumpet from the Sophist and thrusts it into the hands of the dwarf.)

There! Take that, thou slave of a slave! There is
thy accursed toy! Now tell the truth!

(The dwarf seizes the trumpet and nurses it to his
breast, dancing ungovernably about the stage.)

Dwarf. (Chanting)

The trumpet, the trumpet is mine!
The Horn of God is my own!
And Ur-Quadesh, the divine
Will rebuild when the trumpet is blown.

Ur-Quadesh that has flown
Shall arise at the note of the horn,
From its echoes her walls be rebuilt,
In its cries shall her joys be reborn.

In chambers of silver and gilt
Her lovers shall wake in the morn!
I, Vishnumara, the dwarf,
The folder of Allah's scarf,

The Chamberlain of His bed,
By me, it is said,
By me, the possessed, the divine,
For the trumpet is mine!

Vickram. He is possessed!

Officer. The dwarf is stricken of Allah! Molest him not!

Vickram. This day would I molest God! (He snatches the
trumpet from the dwarf.)

Dwarf. Give it me! Give it me!

Vickram. (Holding the trumpet high above his head) Tell

what thou knowest then.

Dwarf. I know all. I have seen all. I will tell all.

Give me the trumpet.

Vickram. Tell first what thou knowest.

Dwarf. I will tell all. Prince Akbar and his paramour are dead. They are poisoned. I poisoned them. I or my master, Fareesh, I know not. When the dawn broke, they sat among the cushions, propped grotesquely one against the other like empty flagons forgotten overnight. I thrust at them with a broomstick,—whereat, they, without sound, speaking no word, thinking no thought, complaining not, fell apart stiffly, and where they fell remained, dreadful to behold. Thereafter, Fareesh and I, full of awe for them and of compassion for ourselves, hid their bodies, and assumed silence.

Vickram and Officer. (Together) Where hidest thou them?

Dwarf. Give me my trumpet,—mine and God's.

Vickram. (Giving him the trumpet) In God's name, where?

Dwarf. (Pointing to the cushions) They lie there.

Vickram. (To Fareesh) Drag aside those cushions.

Fareesh. (With a philosophic smile and a shrug of his shoulders) As thou wilt.

(He goes to the pile of cushions, lifts them and draws away the rug. He starts slightly. Beneath the rug are revealed two sets of empty garments, —Akbar's and Badoura's. The bodies are gone. Fareesh comes to the front of the stage and stands with outstretched arms, Akbar's clothing in one hand, Badoura's in the other.)

Vickram. (To the Officer, wildly) All these are mad!

As for me, I will take horse and spur away and sell my sword to Mansoor-el-Zinbeed, our Kaleeph's ancient enemy. He is at least a man, and sane!

Officer. By Allah, brother,—thou shalt not go alone!

(Vickram and the Officer hurry off the stage. There is the sound of galloping horses.)

Sophist. My tongue is dry. My head splits. My belly craves. I have not a piastre. To live, I must have opium. To have opium, I must work. I will begone and preach abstinence in the market place. God curse the world!

(The Sophist exits.)

Dwarf. (Sidling up to Fareesh who still stands with outstretched hands, holding up the empty garments)
Art thou angry with me, O, my beloved master?

Fareesh. I am not angry with thee, Vishnumara. (There is a pause, during which Vishnumara silently regards Fareesh.)

Dwarf. Thy shadows waver, Ur-Quadash! Thy dust stirs in the shadow! The memory of thee quickens. The winds of thy resurrection awaken amongst waste places!

Fareesh. (Letting fall the garments) The ways of Allah are wonderful and past comprehension. Blessed be the name of Allah!

(The curtain falls. When it has fallen, the dwarf is heard, blowing on his trumpet.)

THE END

NOTES FROM A DIARY

1934 - 1940

Notes from a Diary

1934 - 1940

22nd August '34

Man knows that whatever is formed from the elements grows and decays; and this applies not only to his bodily form but also to his temporal self.¹

In order that the fruits of their past lives be re-awakened in them, they [archetypal figures such as Chiron, Romulus and Remus, and Oedipus] are brought as it were face to face with themselves through the treachery of their homes.²

5th November '34

I have been reading Steiner's Atlantis and Lemuria and note how cautious he is in every statement. For example, he does not say that the first Atlantean sub-race were Rhmoahals, but that 'Theosophical literature has given the name of Rhmoahals to the first Atlantean sub-race.'³

¹ Rudolf Steiner, The Gospel of St. John (London, 1933), p. 12.

² Steiner, p. 36.

³ Trans. Agnes Blake (London, 1923), p. 22. Italics are Sturm's.

15th November '34

Soft winding sneets, my luke-warm disorder
Couch where I spread myself, question myself, and yield
myself,

Where I went to drown the beatings of my heart,
Almost a living tomb in my apartments,
Which breathes, and upon which eternity listens to itself,
Place full of me, which has taken me all,
O form of my form and the hollow warmth
That my returns upon myself recognise as their own,
Now so much pride that plunges itself in your folds
In the end mingles with the turpitudes of dream!
In your sneets where sleek she imitated her death
The idol in spite of herself prepares herself and sleeps,
Tired woman absolute, and the eyes in her tears
When the cares and the charms of her naked secrets
And the remainder of love which the body keeps
Corrupted her loss and her mortal harmonies
All secret ask and nevertheless so dear,
My transports, this night, hoped to break thy chain;
I have but lulled with lamentations
My flanks (only) laden with daylight and creations!
What! my eyes that so much grey (azur) mistreats
Coldly watch the fine rare star perish there,
And this young sun of my astonishments
Seems to me to shine upon the torments of an ancestor,
Its flame of remorse so ravishes their existence,
And makes of the dawn a dear substance
Which already makes itself the substance of a tomb!...
O, on all the sea, on my feet, how beautiful it is!
Thou comest!... I am always that which thou breathest,
My evaporated veil flees me towards thine empires.

So, I have formed, vain farewells if I live,
But dreams?... If I come, in ravished vestments,
Upon this shore, without horror, to breathe in the high foam,
To drink with the eyes the immense and laughing bitterness,
The being against the wind, in the most keen of the air,
Receiving in the face a call of the sea;

[no break]

If the intense soul pants, and swells out raging
The sudden wave on the beaten wave, and if the wave
Thunder on the headland, immolating a monster of candour,
and comes from the high seas to vomit the deepness
Upon this rock, from when spouts out towards my thoughts
A flashing of frozen sparks,
And in my skin that a bitter alarm bites,
Then, in spite of myself, it is necessary, O Sun
That I adore my heart where thou comest to know thyself,
Soft and powerful return to the delight of being born,
Fire towards which a virgin of blood raises herself
Under the golden species of a grateful breast!

The above is a rapidly made but quite literal line for
line translation of the last section of Paul Valéry's
famous "La Jeune Parque."¹ Stripped of its native music,
rhyme and rhythm, is there a thought in it worth
considering?

Here is a fair specimen of gongoristic rhyme by
Tristan Derème:

Tes bras ont une courbe adorable et malgré que
Ton coeur n'ait que dédain pour la grammaire grecque.

16th December '34

La poésie est semblable à l'amandier: ses fleurs
sont parfumées et ses fruits sont amers.
Gaspard de la Nuit

¹ See Poésies (Paris, 1942), pp. 81-2.

The mirror reflects everything but itself. But if its surface is tarnished, it reflects the stain.
F.P.S.

10th February '35

Miss Sands told me that Queen Victoria, who was latterly éprise with Disraeli, one day asked him what was his real religion. 'Madam,' he replied, 'I am the blank page between the Old Testament and the New.'¹

I was occupied yesterday with my budget speech in the House of Lords, with which I was fairly well satisfied, but it is an impossible audience: as Lowe said fifty years ago, it is like 'speaking by torchlight to corpses in a charnel-house.'²

Faith, which Frederick Meyers defines as the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis....³

The Church, says Loisy, need no more reproduce the forms of the Galilean Gospel than a man of fifty need resemble a new-born child. 'When we want to assure ourselves of the identity of an individual, we do not try to squeeze him into his cradle.'⁴

¹ H.H. Asquith, Letters of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith to a Friend, 2nd ser. (London, 1934), p. 94.

² Asquith, pp. 138-9.

³ William Ralph Inge, vale (London, 1934), p. 41.

⁴ Inge, p. 57.

4th September '35

Christ and the Church. If he were to apply for a divorce on the grounds of cruelty, adultery and desertion, he would probably get one.¹

People in general are equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted, and at seeing it practised.²

I should like to write a book which should be like a picture with a deep venetian blue-green sky and an impossibly rich golden tone all over it.³

The lions would not eat Daniel. They could eat most things, but they drew the line at prophets.⁴

Judas died desperate, his crime confessed;
Had Judas flourished in our age and city,
He'd be alive and figure with the rest
Upon the Christ Memorial Committee.⁵

A propos of Mr. Gladstone joining the Committee of the Gordon Memorial.

Canon Ainger. Jones said that Ainger was capable of bringing out an expurgated edition of Wordsworth.⁶

¹ Samuel Butler, Further Extracts from the Note-Books of Samuel Butler, ed. A.T. Bartholomew (London, 1934), p. 26.

² Butler, p. 120.

³ Butler, p. 123.

⁴ Butler, p. 134.

⁵ As quoted by Butler, p. 180.

⁶ Butler, p. 304.

There is such a thing as doing good that evil may come.¹

Only the most ancient Christian church, the Greek Orthodox Church, has guarded the original tradition of spiritual understanding: indeed, it teaches still to-day that personal experience is the only canonical means of learning the truth of dogmas.²

It is distressing to think of the many lives ruined by that prejudice about the moral order being a function of the spiritual. Moral questions have, in themselves, no spiritual significance; they are pure questions of physiological equilibrium.... What is really true is that sexual questions have no spiritual importance whatsoever. How many young souls have been ruined by the prejudice that masturbation is a crime punished by physical decay!³

5th September '35

My gods are the inanimate
Beautiful grave images
Contemplative and inarticulate
Of that great sage
The utterly passed-away Gotama Buddha.

F.P.S.

¹ Butler, p. 307.

² Count Hermann Keyserling, Problems of Personal Life (London, 1934), p. 224.

³ Keyserling, p. 34.

I know cyclopean gates of stone
On one is a great Mastodon
On one is a stamping Unicorn,
The gates are Ivory and Thorn
Out of them true and untrue dreams
Run cheek by jowl, companion streams.

F.P.S.

Dead so many times
In so many climes
Child and man and woman
Animal and human.

F.P.S.

Who has living friends
So wise as those who come
Is it for their own ends
Out of their garden tomb?

I love the dead who creep
Between awake and asleep
Whispering round my bed
For I belong to the dead.

F.P.S.

The Eastern theology had its roots in Greek Philosophy,
while a great deal of Western theology was based in
Roman Law.¹

¹ See Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Lectures on the History
of the Eastern Church (London, 1864), p. 23.

The Eastern Church has no creeds in the modern Western use of the word, no normative summaries of what must be believed.¹

My birth was the first of my misfortunes....

Jean-Jacques Rousseau²

When I asked a monk who rejected the doctrine of everlasting punishment how he reconciled his scepticism with his profession, he replied: 'I have no scepticism; I accept every dogma in the sense in which it is true.'

My faith is a pendulum which swings from East to West, from Krishna to Christ. I used to despair of this vacillation but now I know that the swing is not from truth to falsity, but from truth to truth, from

¹ 'Orthodox Eastern Church,' Encyclopoedia Britannica, XVI, 939.

² See Les Confessions, T.I. (Paris, 1952), p. 11.

norm to norm, for Christ and Krishna are one and the same. St. Thomas Aquinas [sic] teaches that any truth, by whomsoever spoken, is from the lips of the Holy Spirit.¹

10th September '35

Much interested to find in the 'Office for the Dead' a prayer that departed souls shall not go to the animals.

Ne tradas bestiis animas confitentes tibi. Et animas pauperum tuorum ne obliviscaris in finem.²

16th September '35

The poems that have most moved me, in more or less chronological order:

class

- I 'The Lotos-eaters,' Tennyson.
- I 'Hérodiade,' Mallarmé.
- I L'Après-midi d'un Faune, Mallarmé.
- I 'Soupir,' Mallarmé.
- I 'Las de l'Amer Repos,' Mallarmé.
- I 'Brise Marine,' Mallarmé.
- I The Shadowy Waters, Yeats.
- I All the rest of Yeats' poems.
- I Fêtes Galantes, Verlaine.
- I Les Fleurs du mal, Baudelaire.

¹ St. Ambrose; see gloss on I Cor. 12:3.

² Versicle and Response of 'Third Nocturn,' Breviarium Romanum. The usual interpretation is, of course, 'evil spirits' and not 'animals'.

class

- I Aeneid, Lib VI, Virgil.
- I Sturge Moore's poetry, almost all; but especially The Centaur's Booty, The Rout of the Amazons, A Sicilian Idyll & especially, The Sea is Kind.
- II Swinburne's Poems & Ballads, in my youth.
- II 'Venise,' 'Ballade à la Lune,' 'Madame la Marquise' and 'L'Andalouse' of de Musset.
- I Poems, E.A. Poe.
- II Au Jardin de l'Infante, Albert Samain.
Théophile Gautier's 'Carmen' which still thrills me to the bone (Or is it the memory that thrills the ageing man?).

Milton, Browning and Spencer bore me.

Wordsworth, Coleridge and Walt Whitman are almost unreadable. Also Alice Megrell and Robert Bridges.

Oscar Wilde, Alfred Douglas, Humbert Wolfe and Arthur Symons wrote verse, not poetry. But I expect Symons' translations from Mallarmé and Verlaine, which are his best stuff, have the guts of poetry.

22nd September '35

The Scala Sancta are before the Sancta Sanctorum,¹ where are preserved many holy things among them the

¹ The old private chapel in the Vatican, dedicated to St. Lawrence, and the only remaining part of the former Lateran Palace. See 'Scala Sancta,' The Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, 505.

celebrated image of Christ 'not made by human hands.'
This has not been seen since Leo X (1513-21).

Serpens nisi serpentem comederit, non fit draco.¹

1. Ego 2. Non-Ego 3. The affinity between the two.



There is nothing else: that is the cross.

3rd November '35

This seems to be my religion:

1. I believe in metempsychosis and karma.
2. I believe all that Buddha taught.
3. He was the precursor of Christ.
4. Christ came to free man from reincarnation.
5. To share this benefit he brought, only faith is required.

¹ Referring to the Uroboros (tail-eater) as symbol of aeon or the prima materia of the alchemical process. See Carl Gustave Jung, 'Psychology and Alchemy,' The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Vol. 12 (New York, 1953), pp. 45, 53 & 99.

6. Faith is not of the brain or the intellect, but shines only in the stilled heart. It is not in 'A' consciousness.
7. Yoga's citta-vriti-nirodhan.¹
8. The rule for me is to pray always. To say for ever, without cease, Domine Jesu Christe, fili Dei, esto propitius mihi peccatori. That is the Om mani padme hum² of the westerner.

9th November '35

9. East and west meet in the Prex Jesu.³ It is both in Eastern mantram⁴ and in western prayer.

Wilhelm von Humbolt was trying to dissuade Goethe from his attitude of aloofness on the subject of Indian philosophy. Goethe answered: 'I have nothing whatever against Indian thought, but I am afraid of it (aber ich fürchte mich davor). It would involve my imagination in the pursuit of the formless and the misshapen (denn es zieht meine Einbildungskraft ins Formlose und Difforme).'⁵

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- 1 The first sentence of the Yogasūtra of Patanjali; 'Yoga is the stopping of the activity of the mind.'
 - 2 'Hail to the jewel in the Lotus.' For details as to the use of this mantra see Anāgārika Brohmācari Govinda, Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism (London, 1959).
 - 3 Prayer of submission to God's will in the Garden of Gethsemane. See Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42 and John 18:11.
 - 4 A sacred text used as a prayer or incantation; from the Sanskrit meaning, an instrument of thought.
 - 5 Romain Rolland, Goethe and Beethoven, trans. G.A. Pfister and E.S. Kemp (New York and London, 1931), p. 68.

The beauty of perfected human speech (Rede)...is far greater than that of song. There is nothing we can compare to it: its inflections and modulations (Abwechslungen und Mannigfaltigkeiten) in the expression of our feelings (Gemüt) are infinite in number. Song must return to simple speech, when the greatest dramatic and emotional heights are to be attained.¹

18th January '36

If I could sun the roots of my faith in the East I would go to China where Buddhism is most² corrupt. In Japan it has been so rebuilt that perhaps none of the original remains.

25th January '36

I have heard a selection of Burns' poems over the wireless this evening, including 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.' I used to hate Burns but after reading Auden, Spender and some other of our young men, I realise that Burns was what they are not, a poet.

26th January '36

On the wireless: Newman's sermon of farewell to his parishioners at Littlemore (1843). An emotional,

¹ Goethe, as quoted by Rolland, pp. 156-7.

² The sense requires 'least.'

oratorical address, characterised by a complete lack of intelligence.

15th April '36

Man comes into the world in order to leave it. Dying is the most important act of life. He is born out of oblivion. He dies with a lifetime of consciousness behind him.

A man who is not Death Conscious at the age of fifty years has not fulfilled one of the important purposes for which he was born.

What we call consciousness in this life is no more than sensory perception illuminated, if at all, by some dim light from the psyche. Real consciousness belongs neither to the senses nor the psyche. It is a function of the spirit alone, and it is impossible during incarnate life.

When a man dies he loses thought, speech, sight, touch and hearing, but attains what the flesh has never even known or suspected. He gains consciousness which is entirely different from all these, and greater. It is not different in degree, but in kind. He does not think, see, hear, touch or speak. Without limiting sensory organs he

is thought, sight, hearing, touch and speech. Man in the flesh is never conscious. His eyes dimly see three inches of the endless spectrum of light, his ears vibrate like muffled drums, and for tactile impressions of the so-called/^{solid}external world he has to rely on his numb finger-tips.

3rd June '36

Fifteen years ago Eternal Helen was published. Since then I have written nothing, nor had any desire to write. Meditation is the death of art. It is rightly called by the Chinese the philosophy of the Empty Gate. Meditation drains the illusory objective world of all colour and enchantment, and without these what is the poet?

I was proud of Eternal Helen, but now I think my chief pleasure in it was the fact that Yeats admired it and wrote enthusiastically about it. He was always my favourite poet and now is the only one who interests me at all. We have written to one another for thirty-five years. All that he writes I admire. But his famous power of talking bores me so much that one night in

Oxford I suddenly yawned so prodigiously that I had to make the excuse of an imaginary cold and ask to go to bed, though it was only ten. I am still ashamed of that involuntary yawn.

I was walking with Yeats through cloisters in Oxford when some street-boy whistled shrilly. The poet said: that was your Daemon warning me not to say what I was about to say. I was about to give you a magical formula which would make you see visions, but now I must not.

One night when I had been talking with Yeats about Madame Blavatsky there was a noise on the stairs outside his study door. Listen, said the poet, to the daemons who haunt this house. I opened the door and said good-night to Yeats' two maid-servants on their way to bed. He was unconvinced. He said: Daemons can take any shape to deceive you.

Yeats is one of the greatest poets who wrote English. In my opinion perhaps the greatest of all.

4th June '36

Yeats must be mediumistic for he has told me of blossoms which materialise when he is abstracted by

writing. Sometime he finds the pockets of his jackets full of flowers, in the depth of winter, and sometimes his room is suddenly flooded with the scent of jasmin or heliotrope. During my stay with him in Oxford he found a spray of flowering hawthorne in his pocket, though it was February [1921]. He laid it on his writing table so that I might see it and be convinced, and went on correcting his proofs, but when I returned from my walk the blossom has disappeared as mysteriously as it had come. I do not doubt the reality of these apports, for I believe him to live in another state of consciousness, in which they are actually objective, and I know, though I have never had similar experiences, of states of consciousness in which more extraordinary happenings are not only possible but commonplace.

Thirty-five years ago, when still an undergraduate, my life was one of almost complete solitude and continuous meditation. Apart from a girl, with whom my occasional intercourse was not intellectual, I had but one friend, a journalist whom I will call Strachan, interested like myself in French poetry. I had begun my translations of Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal, but was so

fascinated by the poems of Mallarmé that I could think of little else. His verse sank into my very soul. What I saw in it then I do not now know, though I still admire it, but at that time it exerted the power of something magical, some actual enchantment which certainly caused me to live in another world. I brooded for long days over Hérodiade, as remote from the world as though I had taken some powerful opium. And here let me say in parenthesis that Symons' translation is a miraculous reproduction in English of the French original.

For several years I lived in a dream. I passed examinations, for I have my degrees, but I hardly remember them.

There was an old house in Albyn Place.¹ It was called Albyn Cottage. Once when I was home during the long vacation my mother told me that my grandfather's brother had built that house and had died there in the

¹ Actually in Albyn Lane, just off Albyn Place, Aberdeen.

'60's of last century. He was an unconventional man who shortly before his death had driven about the town in a phaeton with a bucket full of whisky, offering to all who would partake a drink from a tin dipper.

5th June '36

Behind this house a stone bridge spans a shallow stream whose waters make a loud gurgling as they rush over their bed, and upon the other side of the bridge I used to see a lake full of water-lilies and patches of very tall and very luxuriant bullrushes. I have spent long days on the banks of this lake, looking across it into a garden where an old man worked with hoe and shears and a girl in a mutch and a plaid skirt seemed to be feeding geese or sometimes hanging out linen to dry. After thirty-five years I can remember the expressions on their faces.

Neither the lake, nor the garden, nor the old gardener and the girl, have any objective existence. The brook is there, and the stone bridge, but there is nothing beyond but a dull country road leading to the Cairn Crie

Woods.¹ All was imagining or a waking dream. But how can one explain the fact that a dull-witted middle-aged woman, at the time in great trouble, had the same hallucination upon the same spot? She saw the lake and the garden, the gardener and the girl, and like myself returned several times to find the vision gone.

6th June '36

All this happened so long ago that I have not cared to write all that I remember, but have made only as it were a bold outline sketch. What I have written is true; what I have kept back is just as true, but it belongs to memory and myself.

8th June '36

In medicine I am a heretic terrified by authority. I am not interested in the average doctor, who is as illiterate as a plumber. There are so few learned physicians left that I look with respect upon everyone

¹ According to maps of the period, the Denburn did run near Albyn Cottage, but the Cairn Crie Woods were on the other side of Aberdeen and the bridge mentioned in a highly built-up area near the middle of town.

who has his M.D. They are becoming fewer and fewer. Medicine since the "Great war" has become more than ever a trade. This country is infested by hoards from Ireland whose whole claim to distinction is the legal ability to sign a death certificate. Whiskified hooligans who haven't enough culture to think boticelli [sic] is a cheese. They are picked up drunk from the gutters of English industrial towns and put in irons by the police for their own safety.

9th June '36

I read in the daily press that Gabriele D'Annunzio, the popular Italian poet, is threatened by blindness. He is 73 years of age and still writes for many hours each day. Not knowing Italian I have read only such of his works as have been translated into French and English. I cannot remember one by name, but have retained the general impression that they are repellent. The sexual feelings and orgasms of a wop rhymester, described in detail, do not interest me.¹ All the Latin

¹ See 'Appendix A' below, item 10 (Digressions: I. Rue with a difference).

writers who have misunderstood Baudelaire seem to think that putrescence and poetry are one. His mantle has fallen upon none. There has never been a second Baudelaire. His influence has been a poison. The only French poets are Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé. Writers of the past cannot appeal to the modern imagination. Ronsard and his compeers wrote so long ago that they are modern, for they are on the spiral of necessity and have come round again, but how I hate and cannot understand Racine! I have met only one writer of English who seemed to understand Racine, and that was Synge.

An old physician need not worry about literature, what is Baudelaire to me or me to Baudelaire? My one literary anxiety now is that I should write a good report, and my amazement is that I find the best English in the decisions of judges. There is nothing in Shakespeare to equal the clean clear decision of a County Court Judge.

11th June '36

When I look at the bewildering array of books of

Indian philosophy which fills so many shelves of my library I wonder how much I have gained from a life-long perusal of them. Everything and nothing. Nothing, because the truth can be found in no book, but only within; everything, because they taught me that.

I have a teacher whom I contact imperfectly and occasionally, but he is there. Sometimes he seems to be Christ, sometimes Buddha, often Krishna, but these are various names of the same being. I find Christ in the Gospel of St. John, Krishna in The Geetā, and Buddha in Paul Dahlke and Suzuki and in my own meditations. The so-called Buddhist Scriptures, as they exist in translation, are unreadable, except for the Sermon of Benares.¹

The Bhagavad Gita is my sacred book. It has given me the most knowledge and the deepest peace of any Scripture. Then the Gospel of St. John, which I read by the light of Rudolf Steiner, fascinated but still inimical.

Forty years is a long time, in one life, to have

¹ See 'Samyutta Nikaya,' v. 421-3 of the Pali Canon.

given to one labour. For forty years I have struggled with the Vedanta, and now, nearly an old man, wonder why I looked without for what was all the time within. The written Scriptures have been to me, as the Japanese Buddhist say, a finger pointing to the Moon.

13th June '36

Nearly twenty years ago a friend introduced me to the work of Rudolf Steiner, describing him as 'a German mystic obsessed with Christian thought forms.' That friend¹ has since become one of Steiner's devoted disciples and has translated many of his works. Steiner taught me the meaning and the technique of meditation. Who or what he was, or where he came from no man knows, but he brought the only complete and satisfying philosophy the West has known. St. Thomas Aquinas withers to a logic-chopper in his light. Twenty centuries have produced but one person who has explained Christianity in universal terms. In some future life I

¹ Miss Dorothy Osmond who helped Sturm arrange the publication of Umbrae Silentes through the Theosophical Society to whom she was then Secretary.

may know enough of his teaching to expound it to others. In this life I can do no better than to give all my leisure to its study. Twenty years ago I thought him a cleverer charlatan than Blavatsky, but now I know him for the forerunner of the Second Coming. Steiner has drained out of me all the arrogance of scholarship. I am content to say: Tu es magister, and to lay my pitiful learning at his feet, as I have seen flowers cast before the image of Buddha.

16th June '36

I am 57 today. Last night my wife dreamed of a white bird that swooped round and round a tall square brick tower. As she watched it the bird changed into the statue of a woman who was joined by a man. Both were statues, of gray stone, and both circled the tower like birds. That is a strange dream. I remember nothing of that night, though often I share her dreams or seem to do so.

17th June '36

Many years ago I began to write a novel, but gave it up when I discovered that its hero was myself. The

writer of a novel must have observed at least some part of the world, however small, but I have observed nothing.

18th June '36

I have just read Vienna by one Stephen Spender, a new poet. It is poor journalese, carefully tortured into meaninglessness. It has the rhythm of a second-hand motor-cycle about to break down for the last time. If an illiterate shop-boy were to read one of Ezra Pound's bad efforts and there are many, and say I can do this myself, he would produce something like Vienna, and might, who knows, persuade a publisher to print it. If Stephen Spender would soak himself for ten years in the verse of Wilhelmina Stitch¹ he might learn to write something; but never poetry. Many young men have so admired Ezra Pound that they have tried to do likewise, and some have nearly succeeded. But not this one. Vienna is as dull as the account of a local wedding in a provincial weekly. As for Ezra Pound he tried to

¹ Author of Brownies and Guides: A Book of Rhymes,
The Wilhelmina Stitch Birthday Book and others.

shock the public which has neglected him, but he has genius, and if he were not Yankee he might once have written. No one is shocked by the dirty words Ezra Pound likes to write. We all know them and have pencilled them on closet walls when we were at school. "To smear the walls of a jakes."

T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound have much to answer for. They have tried to introduce American boost into English literature, and the worst that can be said is that they have succeeded. The mental background of such aliens has once and for all been sketched in by the author of Babbitt. They have stirred up the mud. The stink-flies follow them. The gutter has become vocal.

These American boosters, "Zooming for Zenith," do not understand European culture. They accept our scornful hand-claps for genuine applause.

If someone were to go through my library, and copy out every passage I have underlined there would be a complete answer to every doubt that has assailed minds like my own. There would be a complete philosophy. I

take no vow to do this myself, because now that I am old, I understand myself, and know that when I had copied out the first underlined passage I would have read on and copy out no more. For three years I have been reading a little pamphlet by Steiner. It is all underlined, and I have read it twenty times, but am yet only dimly conscious of its meaning.

19th June '36

Often when I read a novel I wish I were not a physician. Write as impersonally as he will the novelist unconsciously reveals his innermost soul in his work. Secret perversions and endocrine deficiencies stand confessed. Impotence writes of all it has failed to do. The woman-hater confesses the secret vice that made him so.

Forty years ago, or a little more, I read a book called Esoteric Buddhism. The author of it was a person for whom I had no admiration when I met him long after,¹ but that book changed my life, for it

¹ Alfred Percy Sinnett.

started me on the study of Eastern philosophy. All my leisure has been devoted to that, and now, growing old, I am keener than ever, and care less than ever for other reading.

When I was young I hated the Anglican Christianity of my up-bringing. No emotion of my life has equalled the force of that hatred. When my mother, a fabulous Victorian mamma in bustle and dolman, smelling of lavender, kid gloves and respectability, took me to church every Sunday morning, I felt dead with the hate I was too young to express in words. Above all other figures I hated the pious and bearded Jesus. He had bare feet, loathsomely barbered long hair and whiskers, and worst of all he loved me so much that he would send me to hell unless I returned that loathsome affection.

30th June '36

I have read Aldous Huxley's novel entitled Eyeless in Gaza. It is poor stuff for the grandson of the great biologist to have written. It contains so much water-

closet philosophy that a better title would have been Faustus [?] Niger. The hero of it is so obviously the author that one sees him before the mirror in his bedroom carefully putting his own beauty into words. Could I have written so clever a book myself. No. I wouldn't if I could. I got nothing out of Eyeless in Gaza but a new name for my cat.

2nd July '36

As we sat in our garden tonight the housekeeper, Lizzi, brought the news that Dr. [Richard Burrows] Sephton was dead. Then she gave a piece of raw liver to our kitten, who sat on the garden path and ate it with a soft gluttonous chewing noise. Then we had each a very large whiskey and soda and Lottie took hers to the bathroom and a hot bath.

With the death of Sephton there goes another of the old gang. When we were young there were none of the bright young men who now make of medicine a trade or an adventure a snade better, they hope, than the paternal shop. We are wondering which of the newcomers will be the first to set up a branch surgery in Sephton's village. To sit in one's own garden, and know

that one is old, and to hear of the death of a contemporary, and to be fascinated by the sound of a small black kitten eating raw liver, are experiences not to be missed. Whether Death, or the noise of the kitten eating, or the glow of one's cigarette, or the filigree of ash-leaves against the sky, are at all important, or mean anything, we do not yet know, but the time is coming. For many years I have liked Dick Septon for himself and despised him for his horses and dogs. But he knows more than I know tonight. He has faced the great perhaps.

4th July '36

Tonight in our garden, under the blue starless sky, we discussed the books that had interested us in the past, and this is my list:

In youth; the works of Rider Haggard.
In adolescence; Esoteric Buddhism by A.P. Sinnett.
In maturity, say to the age of 38;

1. The Symbolist Movement in Literature, Symons.
2. The Renaissance, Walter Pater.
3. Greek Studies, Walter Pater.
4. Imaginary Portraits, Walter Pater.
5. Mallarmé.
6. Verlaine.
7. Yeats.
8. The Human Soul, Abbot Vonier.
9. Ghost Stories of an Antiquary, Montague James.

10. Bhagavad Gita.
11. Gospel of St. John.
12. The Way of all Flesh, Samuel Butler.
13. De Maupassant.
14. Baudelaire.
15. Kim, Kipling.
16. The Narrow Corner, Somerset Maugham.
17. The Lacquer Lady, F. Tennyson Jesse.

There are more but I have for the present forgotten.

5th July '36

Again in the garden, where we sat in our concealed corner for three hours. The full moon rose, the evening star glittered, the black kitten played with anything that moved and often when he jumped made a chortling noise in his throat, probably a cat's laugh. I held Suzuki's Mahâyâna Buddhism in my hand, but read nothing of it, or hardly anything. Next week he is to lecture in London. Would it help me to hear him. It is very doubtful. I get all the philosophy I need from a long thin rowan branch against the evening sky. When it grew chill we came into the house, the black kitten mewing about one's feet in the hope of raw liver, but there was none.

There are big furry moths flying about the house, bumping themselves against the circle of light cast upon

the ceiling by the electric light. There is something inimical about these creatures. They have the same aura as rats, but the purple glare in the eye of a moth is beautiful to see.

I should add Suzuki to the writers who have influenced me. If I no longer read his books it is perhaps because I know them by heart.

Long ago I used to write and even publish what I wrote. Now I can write nothing, for nothing seems worth while. I do not even think. It is enough for me to look at a growing plant. I just look. I no longer even ask myself: what is a plant.

A moth has flown into the hanging electric globe and is whirling round and round, in ecstasy or agony, beating himself to death.

6th July '36

I must add to the books that have influenced my life some of the novels of Huysmans: La Cathédrale, En Route and L'Objet. In my youth I read them in French, but the last two I now have in translation, and I like the translations better than the original.

That some souls, for the misdeeds of one earthly life, can be condemned to endless torture in hell, is a dogma so futile, so childish, that it is hard to understand it has ever been seriously held.

7th July '36

Mrs. Sherratt died at 4.0 am or thereabouts. She was 72 years old. She was quite unconscious when she died. May I die so when my time, now so near, comes. Ora pro nobis, Sancta Dei Genitrix, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.¹

This afternoon I went to Manchester, and wandered from bookshop to bookshop and then to the church they call 'the Hidden Jewel' (why?)² but there was a drizzle of fine rain, and I came home, wet through and miserable to read Huysmans' En Route and wonder why I had thought it fine the day before.

¹ Response to 'Ave Maria.'

² St. Mary's, Mulberry Street, more commonly known as 'the Hidden Gem,' was then virtually hidden in the dingy alleys of central Manchester. Other than the ugliness of its neo-Byzantine interior, its only distinction is that Blessed Dominic Barberi (1792-1849) who received John Henry Newman into the Church, preached from its pulpit.

Tedium vitae is the horror of horrors. No wonder that so many doctors take to drink or drugs, or both, or worse.

9th July '36

Karl Metzger's last day as my assistant. This morning he said: Tomorrow I am to get married. Well, poor bugger or lucky fellow, who knows.

Today has been a rotten day. The air unbreathable, the sky like wet cotton wool soaked in dirty water.

Tonight, when the wet garden fell dark, we lost Tompy.

We found him half-way up a tree. On the garden wall was another tom, so much older that he should have known better, encouraging the small black kitten to climb. He was showing Tompy the town, or at least we hope so. As my wife pulled Tompy off the tree, all claws and protest, the big cat on the wall disappeared, as cats do. We hope that Tompy will not prove to be Tompina. There have been suspicious trysts beneath a currant bush, but we hope for the best.

Sad boozen eyes.

10th July '36

A horrible day, cold and sweaty, with rain. This is the worst summer that we can remember.

16th July '36

The street lamp, seen over the creeper-furred wall, was lit tonight for the first time this year.

The lighting of the lamp is the beginning of long nights under the stars. It is for us the symbol of the beginning of autumn.

There has been no rain today.

17th July '36

A day of suffocating heat. A black sky. Continuous rain. Tompie is very ill. He has vomited passim and lies on the mat in the kitchen, looking like a kitten who has rambled this world and intends to identify himself with its cause. I love Tompie, but his small green pools of vomit leave me unattracted.

From 10-10.30 pm a wild thunderstorm. The wireless will not work.

26th July '36

Another day of rain, but with short intervals of sun. Tonight we saw a bright sulphur-coloured sunset, a wonderful rainbow, and sat at the kitchen door, as the servants were away. When the rain no longer pattered the garden leaves we sat in our corner and watched the stars for the first time this year, Charles' Wain,¹ and the Pole Star and Orion, and all the rest whose names we do not know. We drank whiskey and beer and discussed the terrible effects of alcohol on Buddhists. The stars shone, the kitten Tompy fought with a friend, and we both recited the new poem about Moley the Mole:

1st Mole (singing)

They cut a slice of pie
And handed it to Moley,
But he began to cry,
He wanted that pie wholly.

2nd Mole (speaking)

Moley is a greedy beast
Although in size the least.

Today we drove out to see Mrs. Burrow, who lives in a cottage on Ratcliffe Meadow, where there is neither

¹ Arcturus.

water nor any light but an oil lamp. An old and mysterious woman, a female Melchisedek,¹ without friends or ancestry, and certainly without ascertainable means of subsistence. For two years she has been kept alive by large doses of opium.

27th July '36

This house was called Brunswick House long before I was born. Where it got its name God knows. We always refer to it as Brunswick House, but we think of it as the Monastery, for it is the only sanctuary we have ever known. Since we pulled down the old stables, and the room above them that was the home of some prehistoric coachman, and built a garden on the site of that dismal brickwork, the place has been really a monastery for us. House or monastery it is our own and the ugly outside world is excluded. The monastery cat, lately kitten, and still kittenish, by name Tompy, black from nose to tail-tip, and utterly sinful by nature, cavorts the garden paths, and every evening attacks a much larger tom who every night keeps tryst with a female of his

¹ See Hebrews 7:3.

kind among our garden bushes. Tonight the big tom bowled him over twice, but Tompy returned to the attack undismayed. When it began to rain, at ten o'clock, I put Suzuki's Mahâyâna Buddhism under my coat, and my wife gathered up the protesting Tompy, and we came in, content that our quiet had been disturbed by nothing nearer mankind than spitting tom-cats, and falling rain-drops.

If my grandson ever reads this diary he will wonder why it contains so much about a kitten and so little about Buddha. He will say to himself that a man who has devoted a long life to one thing must surely have something to say about it, but he will be wrong, because Buddhism is a mode of life, not a religion or a philosophy, and though it may be experienced, it can never be written. When I sit half-dressed in the morning, unable to put on a sock, which dangles from one hand, or when I call Mrs. Brown by a wrong name, or lose my pen or my spectacles, or pour the ink-pot into my whiskey and soda, or put the wrong end of a lighted cigarette into my mouth, or try to eat my napkin instead of my dry toast at breakfast, all that, so far as I'm

concerned, is Buddhism. I have lived so long with abstract thoughts that all concrete things are shadows beyond my control. If my grandson, myself still alive, ever says to me: But what have you got out of all this? I can say to him: You are afraid of death, and I am not. My wife has just said: But would that be true. Yes, it would.

28th July '36

Night of stars, no, nor there were none visible; out night of cats, yes, certainly, for Tompy and his friend fought and cavorted for hours. There was no malice in the battle, and neither won. At fall of dark the Widow from Hazel's slunk along the wall and made female noises, so we took Tompy in to enjoy raw liver, and left Friend and Widow to pursue less innocent acrobatics than a mere fight, is so they desire, but so far no wailings from the garden bushes have announced the ecstasies of feline love. Even cats may tire of copulation, and the hideous noises they make at midnight are perhaps sometimes no more than plain-

song chanted in honour of Pasht¹ or the Moon. At the present rate I shall soon be more learned in cat-calls than in Latin. So far I know chortle or cat-laugh, purr of content, sub-yell of friendly defiance, and Widow's invitation voice. As Tompy grows older I hope to distinguish other and more esoteric vocalities, such as adult tom battlecry, virgin female yell of pleased agony as Tompy gets home, though I am afraid his first experience in this matter is more likely to be widow than maid. In any case, there is a cat language which I am learning, and find easier than Sanskrit. It is unlikely that Tompy will need my professional advice for any form of impotence. He seems to be a good beast of his kind, which is more than I can say of most men I know, including the present writer.

When our housekeeper came home at ten o'clock and began to caress the cat, calling him her little boy and herself his mother I had a sudden feeling of pity for the frustrated spinster, but it was wasted, for I

¹ Also, Bast; the benevolent and elegant cat-headed goddess of Pleasure in ancient Egypt.

think she is a happy woman. I think we have solved the servant problem. Our servants are free to come and go in and out of the house as they please. They get higher wages than others, and when their work is done they can do as they please always. Today, as I passed the house of Dr. T,¹ who was bred in a shop and is a real gentleman with a lady wife, also half-shop, I saw a sulky maid cleaning the windows. She wore a cap and gown and was plainly and evidently a servant, and knew it. From the expression on her face, as I saw it for a second as my car passed the house I knew that she was contemplating giving notice. Next month there will be another, and then another and another disgruntled and liveried slave. That is what is known as the servant problem. It does not touch this house. Our servants wear no badge of servitude. We know class from class without the help of cap and gown.

29th July '36

The sky tonight was beautiful, as though some worry

¹ Henry Tickle.

had been lifted off the world. The clouds that changed shapes in the sunset were a kind of inexpressible golden rose, and the blue above, before it became the dark blue of night, was a blue I have never seen before, a light Dresden china blue I called it, but my wife said it was a water-colour blue. At about ten o'clock the sunset show was over. I do not know whether the three-quarter moon was waxing or waning. Virtually over it one star glittered. We have never before seen that star, which haunts the moon, in that position. Perhaps it means something, perhaps not. Just before the sunset ended we heard one bird chattering in an unknown voice, and then silence fell. Then some bell rang a three-quarter chime, and we sat there in quietness among the trees and watched Tompy and his friends, but even they were quiet. When the housekeeper came home Tompy followed her meowing for food and his two acquaintances retreated beneath a bush and went to sleep.

30th July '36

Suzuki's Mahâyâna Buddhism must be read for years before it is understood. The chapter on Karma is in

some way a snock to the Western mind, for in it there is a streak of what appears at first to be 'atheism,' in the bad sense of the word, a materialism, an utter denial, not only of survival, but of any continuity of consciousness; really, in the last analysis, a denial of anything at all after death.

Buddhism, in common with the Eastern Church, teaches that personal experience is the one means of learning the truth of dogma. Nothing is true until the individual has experienced it as true.

Buddhism can not be learned from books, nor by intellectual processes. Only those whose karma has prepared them for it can grasp it.

1st August '36

Tonight we sat in the garden and drank whisky. We finished 3/4 of a bottle under a big round moon, which we thought was at the full until the calendar told us it would not be full until the day after tomorrow. I thought the whisky had no effect, but now that I try to write I find that it has had a very considerable one. Though I am sober my handwriting is obviously drunk. From 8.30 to 11.30, three hours, we sat and

drank and philosophised. The moon shone, the stars tried to pierce the clouds, and the kitten Tompy played. I turned the garden hose on two feline aspirants. It is a good and powerful nose. The jet of water hit the howling toms amidstrips. They separated and fled, one to safety, and the other into disaster, for as he ran along the top of the wall my powerful hose soaked him thoroughly. It was the third great moment of my life. The first was when I discovered that Buddhism was Christianity, the second when I got my M.D., and the third when I soaked that fleeing tom-cat.

3rd August '36

My Buddhas have great lobes to their ears, as a sign of wisdom and longevity. All but one, a very refined looking image that came, not from the East, but from the Theosophical Society bookshop near the British Museum. He, or she, for the fact is sexually indeterminate, sits among the pukka rupas¹ with an expression of primness. She is a follower of Annie Besant, and is quite sure that her constipation is the karmaic result

¹ Meaning literally, genuine statues of the Buddha.

of thrilling sexual adventures in a past life; not in this life, for in this life she has had none, nor is likely to have. Probably she refused to take her Devacham,¹ and came back as a Voluntary, to redeem her ancient lover, but when she met him in Lyons Corner House and had almost plucked up courage to say 'Lo, thou!' her excitement precipitated the action of the Cascara tablets she had taken in the morning, and she hurried back from the Ladies Lavatory to find that he had paid for his tea and scones and departed. I picked up a little wooden peg in the street and placed it in her hand. Dr. [James Sacaville] Martin says it has something to do with golf, but I prefer to regard it as a phallic symbol, and every time I see it in those girlish fingers I hear the other Buddhas saying: Frottez plus fort.

A miserable young working woman came to see me tonight. She was pregnant and had hyperemesis gravidarum.² She was

¹ Spiritual bliss or reward in a heaven-world.

² Persistent vomiting in early pregnancy.

what my wife calls a Dweep, a hopeless wining [sic] hypochondriac who thinks no woman was ever pregnant before. She looked round the room and said: Where are the three wise monkeys, Doctor. I have never forgotten that you told me they were See no evil, Speak no evil and Hear no evil. They never tell us things like that at Chapel.

That calls to mind a dream I have not recorded. I saw a great toadstool with Buddha sitting beneath it. When I said to Him: What must I do to be saved he pointed to the Three Wise Monkeys.

4th August '36

Such a cold damp cloudy rainy unnapy day that everything seems to have stopped. Even the water is so cold that my wife can't have a bath. Only the cat Tompy is unaffected and she is cavorting as usual in the damp garden, attended by Friend, whose intentions may or may not be as innocent as they appear. Clouds rise from the West, from the sunset, and in a few minutes cover the sky. Then rain drops fall, then a shower of rain, and we are driven in. There has been no summer at all. The sun every day, laden with the

dead of the late war, lets their etheric bodies fall in the form of sullen angry clouds in the West, and these clouds shower down the astral bodies as constant chilling rain. That cannot be true but to-night I believe it, and am quite ready to lecture or write about it. Even the clocks in the house are all wrong, one chimes this and the other that, but they are all correct when they say, that whatever the exact time is, it is past closing time. Don't be more melancholy than you need, says my wife, for we have lots of drink in the house.

I have met very few Orientals in my life; one or two Hindus, one or two Bengalese, never a Chinese, except a low class one with syphilis, a Japanese naval officer who spoke English that I could not understand at all, and all of them have been as repellent as rats. I should have said two Chinamen, for once I bought a Buddha carved of soapstone from a Chinese sailor in France, but he was as repellent as the others. And during the war, now I remember, there was a Chinese

labour corps behind the line as Estree West. They were in the charge of an English ranker ? officer whom they killed. They killed also a big dog and ate him. I was shown parts of the animal with burnt mangy hair sticking to half-raw chops. All these men were alike except for their clothes. One had a woman's corsets over all his other clothes, and another wore a big picture hat secured by a motor veil of dingy green.

And yet it is from the orient that I get my religion, my philosophy, and all my mental peace. I have never met a cultured Oriental, if I did he would perhaps also repel me. If I could realise my ambition to sit as a Buddhist monk in a cell in some lone monastery unknown even to the most hardened tourist I should probably in a week be very sorry for myself.¹

5th August '36

Bought a new typewriter today. Remington Model 10. With old machine given in exchange it cost £24.

¹ I am sure I should (F.P.S.—23/II/41).

6th August '36

I have been trying, but have failed, to find that passage in Vonier in which he says that sacramental objects, such as holy images, live a life of their own, in a world which is neither material nor spiritual, but lies between the two, like Buddha's middle path, neither yes nor no.

It has been a wild night, blowing a gale, and we have sat in the garden, well wrapped up, as though it were December and not August. When we came in we found the statue of Christ, a beautiful wooden image, had been blown from his pedestal and was lying on the floor, the index finger of the left hand broken almost off, and the thumb damaged, but neither beyond the help of Secotine and surgery.

I have just found in Vonier a sentence that is not the sentence I was looking for, but it is almost as near to my purpose. He writes:

The sacramental world is a new world created by God, entirely different from the world of nature and even from the world of spirits.¹

¹ Dom Anscar Vonier, A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist (London, 1925), p. 35.

And further on:

Sacraments have a mode of existence of their own, a psychology of their own, a grace of their own. If they are not beings in the sense in which man is a being or an angel is a being, they are beings nevertheless, resembling God's nature very closely.¹

And Aquinas says:

The linking up (continuatio) which is through faith takes place through the act of the soul: but the linking up which is through the sacraments takes place through the use of external things.²

External things! Our garden, her image of Christ, my Buddha rupas. And also Tompy, being a cat, cavorting alone or luring expectant and patient friend, and Lizzie, with a scrap of raw liver for him, sure in her frustrated mind that the little beast's excitement when she comes home is affection and not merely appetite.

As for images generally the Egyptians believed that the god they portrayed dwelt mystically within them, and the ancient Christian Church said they should be used because the honour shown to them is referred to the prototype which they represent.

¹ Vonier, p. 36.

² As quoted by Vonier, pp. 42-3, from Summa Theologica, III, Quest. lxii, Art. 6.

7th August '36

I spent the best years of my life studying the Kabala Denudata¹ and the Upanishads, and had turned fifty before I discovered that it was all inside one. As a Doctor of Medicine I have given most of my leisure hours to reading medicine, because that is partly an objective science; no meditation will teach a man to pass Eustachian Catheter or accurately read a Blood Pressure, and when I was doing surgery I operated best when I meditated least, not because meditation hinders the skilled fingers or dulls the quick perception of what is needed at the moment, but because it says to the mind: all this is useless. Death unstitches the cleanest wound in time and drags the surgeon down to the grave to join his failures and successes, which seem, looking back upon them, to be of equal value.

10th August '36

It is wrong to eat the corpses of animals, one's whole nature revolts from it, but vegetarianism, with its inevitable sequel of flatulence and abdominal misery, is more revolting still, so I shall continue to eat meat

¹ See S.L. MacGregor Mathers, The Kaobala Unveiled (London, 1887).

and approve of a vegetarian diet. It is also wrong to drink alcohol, but to be a total abstainer is worse. To sit in the garden at night, with nice cups of tea, is a horror not to be repeated, once tried. Wine and beer and whisky, either each alone, or one after the other, or all mixed up anyhow, shorten one's life, obfuscate one's intellect, and are utterly bad. But so long as they can be obtained I shall take far too much of all three. I am the wandering Buddhist who dropped in at the wedding feast at Cana and got drunk on the water changed to wine.

He sat on the steps, holding his begging bowl humbly before him, and some of the well-dressed girls, accompanied by officers from the garrison, threw him a copper. But the small brown pot-bellied mendicant was un-noticed by the majority. At last a servant poured water into his bowl, as a sign that there was nothing else for him, but at that moment the miracle took place, and the water was such good wine, and so strong, that Ananda drank it all, and sang on the steps all night, and since then Buddhists have drunk secretly in honour of his great adventure.

11th August '36

I am so interested in the Buddhist monk who got drunk at the wedding at Cana that I have worried about him all day. His former history, his provenances, his fate thereafter. Who was he? Perhaps the fourth Magus of legend, who arrived too late to see the star above the stable, but wandered Palestine for thirty years, preaching abstinence and the Buddha-word, to find peace at last in a draught of the wine that ended forever the ascetism of the East.

13th August '36

Outlines of Mahâyâna Buddhism by Prof. Suzuki is deservedly a famous book. No student of Buddhism can afford to neglect it. It is a difficult book, but in the last analysis it is utterly materialistic. It is no more than an elaborate denial of survival. The chapter on karma (VIII) deserves very close study.

In his introduction the author divides Buddhism into geographical sections: Southern, Northern, and Eastern, but forgets that there is now a Western Buddhism arising, which is a mingling of mystical Christianity

and Buddhist philosophy, the religion of the immediate future. The negative faith of official Mahâyâna Buddhism is a menace to the world.

14th August '36

We sat so long tonight in the garden, under a slate-gray dome of clouds, waiting for a star, that when at length one came out our patience was exhausted, and we came in disgruntled, to drink our final drink, or drinks, under the protection of house-buddhas. As for the garden-wall Buddha, Lottie never looks at him for fear of arousing the jealousy of the wooden image in her bedroom, and I have lost faith in him completely. Unless he can produce better weather than this let him supervise the wars and loves of the garden toms, for that is all he is fit for. I have a bronze image of some loathsome Hindoo deity, leaning forward with a ball in his right hand and sticking out a fat-cheeked bottom behind. He might bring fine weather if I burned a joss-stick or a patelle to him. Even if nothing happened his failure would be no greater than that of my many Buddhas or of Lottie's Jesus, whose finger and thumb I mended with Seccotine. As a matter of fact

these deities don't pull their weight. They will take all the incense, joss-sticks, prayers, and so on, that you have to give, but the weather remains the same. The only one who sticks to his word is Dionysus, but his sacrament is now 12/6 a bottle. It is a dreadful thing for earthlings when Olympus adopts the methods of New York. But how fortunate we are that our gods are images of stone or wood or plaster or porcelaine. How dreadful it would be if Buddha himself were to join us in the garden. Could we stand a long sermon after a heavy surgery. I couldn't. A gentle and rhythmical plashing down the corridor tells me that Lottie is trying to sober up in a hot bath. Hot baths do no harm. I took one myself last May.

15th August '36

Nulla dies sine linea used to be my motto in the days when I never wrote a line from year to year. At that time I would not write unless I could accomplish something that mattered, or that I thought mattered, but now that I know that nothing matters I write this diary.

Today began well, a long slow heavy August day with a kind of fog of laziness and sunshine about the flowers

in the gardens on Newbrook Road, and tonight for perhaps an hour we sat under stars, but then, almost suddenly, all was again leaden and cloudy, so we came in, and here I am writing this and finishing the bottle of whisky that was bought only yesterday, and Lottie is having her inevitable hot bath. She must have been reading about B.O. in the advertisement columns. She has retired among the steam with a cake of Palm Olive Soap, so by the time I have finished writing she will be school-girl complexion all over. The thought of that, when I was a young man, would have made me clamour at the bath-room door, but not now, for we look aghast at one another and say: God, what a belly. The mystery of time has made us grand-parents, has made us abdominal and philosophical. It is good to be old and fat and indifferent, and to have for sexual problems only the uncertainty as to the sex of Tompy, cavorting among a coven of plant-destroying tom-cats in our garden.

There is something in our garden that no writer has yet described. A tendril of the rambler rose reflects the light from a street-lamp and glitters like a cluster

of fabulous jewels. It is too softly beautiful to be described. It is a result of the mystery we call light, whose nature and provenance are for ever hidden. It means something, but what does it mean? I think of the little dog in the library who lifts a leg at the rows of books on the very lowest shelf.

16th August '36

When I was a little boy I thought my mother unutterably beautiful. She was a trim little woman, incredibly neat, with smooth brushed hair, tight to her small head, pretty thin-lipped mouth, and grey intolerant eyes. A velveteen jacket, neatly buttoned to her throat, a silver chain, and a cockleshell silver brooch complete the picture. My father was a tall man with a black beard. He was then intolerably good-looking and always had a flower in his button-hole and smelt of cigars. He was as empty handsome as the curly-haired models that in those days were in every barber's window. I hated him so that I used to pray at night to be worthy of my dear Papa and then lay awake in terror lest he should come in to kiss me good-night, as he did from time to time, when drink had made him sentimental. He planted a fear

in me that I still feel, and though he has been dead for years and I shall soon be an old man, I still hate his memory. When I try to be natural with my own son, I cannot, because I always think: Do I seem to him as my father seemed to me, a menace to be placated by silence and hypocrisy?

When I came of age a legacy left by my grandmother should have given me £200 a year, but my handsome father was executor and had spent the capital. I was an undergraduate at the time. Agonized letters came from my mother. I remember one sentence only: Do you want your father to go to prison? I didn't much care, but being a chip of the old block I was pursuing a love-affair with a married woman, and rather than be interrupted I signed a lot of papers and all was for a time peace.

17th August '36

It still rains. Somebody in heaven turned off the tap for half an hour, during which we sat in the dripping garden, and if anything less happy can be imagined than two tired doctors sitting on wet chairs under a black sky I have not experienced it. even

Buddha, on his creeperless bare wall had a dingy and discouraged look, and such flowers as have survived this amazing summer had the appearance of dirty linen in a wet but soapless laundry whose workers are on strike.

18th August '36

The Key, the Comet, the Cat. Today we lost the key of the safe, an old miraculous key belonging to our 18th century safe, a key like prison warders jangle in an old romance. Horriole consternation seized this family, for the key had never been lost before. Don't mistake the word family. There are only two of us. Aloysius the grandchild is in Catterick with his mother and conjunctivitis, and Punch is in Haifa with the hump. When we deep-ended and quarrelled, and even summoned the police, the key was found by the house-keeper Lizzie. Joy and relaxation.

Then the comet flamed across the sky. For one second I thought the moon had fallen in flames. The garden was lit as though by a magnesium flash. Every leaf was visible. So much for that.

As for the cat Tompy, we established by inspection

and palpation the fact that Tompy is a tom. He has undoubted balls.

21st August '36

Acute substernal pain with painful hiccup for the past three days. Tonight 9.0 pm. $7\frac{1}{2}$ grain tablet of Medinal.¹ 10.0 pm. Very sleepy, and so to bed.

22nd August '36

The Medinal last night not very successful as a hypnotic, but I have taken another $7\frac{1}{2}$ grain tablet at 9.50 tonight, hoping for the best.

23rd August '36

The $7\frac{1}{2}$ grains of Medinal had no more effect than so much sugar. At midnight I took 3 grains of Paraldehyde,² and then I slept till 9.0 in the morning. Tonight, after finishing $\frac{1}{2}$ bottle of whisky with Lottie, I hoped to sleep, but it was no good. We came upstairs with a pint of beer, which we poured on top of the whisky. We hadn't even the excuse of bad weather. It

¹ A rather large dose.

² A sedative.

is a brilliant night of stars, without a cloud. My only hope is that tomorrow I am as sick as a dog, with acute gastritis and painful hiccup and a feeling inside as though I had swallowed a quart of melted india rubber. That won't cure me, either. When a drunkard begins to mix beer and whisky nothing can cure him. The mixture is known in the sad annals of drink as the last lap. You go on lapping it till you lap no more.

When I was a young man I judged everything by some standard that I have now forgotten. I remember this much, that I would not have received a message from God himself if there had been a split infinitive in it. I write this only to show how foolish I was then.

Someone, I think it was Mr. J.M. Watkins,¹ told me to read Light on the Path by Mabel Collins. That book hung about me for twenty years. I nated it. There are

¹ The London bookseller and publisher whose shop in Cecil Court was a meeting place for those interested in the occult, and where Sturm often came with Yeats at the time of the First World War.

no split infinitives in it, so far as I know, but I thought it commonplace, propagandist, in a word theosophical, not in the ordinary sense of the word, but Theosophical with a capital 'T', Besantish and Blavatskish, full of charlatan uplift, redolent of Koot Hoomis and Christophers¹ and other dolls of the fraudulent H.P.B. Now I am more humble. It is a great book, second only, if second at all, to the Bhagavat Gita and the Gospel of St. John. I believe that Mabel Collins claimed it had been dictated to her by St. Paul. If not, it might have been.

24th August '36

You can't get out of life more than it contains. Rosita Forbes² found that the romantic Bedouin sheiks of her imagination were dirty hooligans who stank. The guitar-playing Spaniards are now cutting throats, the peaceful German philosophers are goose-stepping to the sound of machine-guns and gutturals, and the dreamy

¹ Spiritual teachers or 'Masters' who inspired Madame Blavatsky, and are considered prophets of Theosophy.

² Journalist, adventurer and author of many books on travel.

Southerners have just air-bombed a nation of unarmed blacks into submission. The chests of the noble ice-creamers are plastered with medals given for plain murder. The organ-grinder who has the courage to hit his monkey gets the Italian equivalent of the V.C. If among that nation of lick-spittle hooligans there were one with enough courage to choke Mussolini with an ice-cream wafer he would deserve the O.B.E. In this country we gave that decoration to anyone who had the cunning to keep out of the late war, so long as he approved of it. Shakespeare, who seems to have known everything, knew Mussolini also, but he called him Pistol. Mussolini can't survive in history. How can anyone survive when the very look of him makes one want to give him a kick in the pants? The gesticulating Benito would not have been a success in this country. He would have been laughed into the casual ward. In America they would have knocked him for a row of ash-cans. When I read in the morning paper that some other wop has spat him out on the sidewalks I shall put crepe on the handle of the outside water-closet.

25th August '36

AE said to W.B.Y., or W.B.Y. said to AE, I have forgotten which, you have only to look at H.G. Wells to know why God is invisible. This is a literary joke without point or meaning. When H.G. Wells wrote God the Invisible King he was doing his best. Wells is not a poet, and I don't suppose he is much of a philosopher; I am no judge, I am just a medical practitioner, but he appeals to the people. He can drive home hard facts and he thought of tanks and poison gas long before the War Office. He has properly rumbled dictators and he has debunked the romance of war. I have seen a man tangled in the wire with his jaw blown off and his rops covered with flies hanging heavily out of his torn belly. Wells has never seen it, but he can imagine it and make the man in the street think it might be himself. If I try to tell what I have seen the listener quite properly tells me to shut up. When the German planes bombed the horse lines outside Amiens and set free 200 screaming mules I was on a stretcher vomiting and thought the end had come, but I did not feel so frightened as I felt this afternoon

when I saw London bombed in Wells's film of Things to Come.

Wells certainly couldn't have written Calvary, but neither could Yeats have written The First Men on the Moon.

Yeats appeals to those few of us who are so cultured that we dare not write the word shit. I belong to the Yeats faction, but if I had to choose for the world I would plot him out and keep Wells. If I were a literary dictator, and there will be one some day, I would destroy all that the poets of this century have written so that Kim might survive. Kipling is a bad popular poet with a trumpet and a Union Jack, but he wrote a better tale than any of them. Kipling glorified the Army because in his time there had been no war. There is no mud on the boots of his officers, and if you had told him to write now Basset-Smythe of the Gunners shot himself during a bombardment he couldn't have done it. He would have made Basset-Smythe win his V.C. in clean pants, and there would have been so loathsome a scene of reunion with his mother in the ancestral home, slow music and his father, the old general, saying:

My boy, my boy, that I should have been afraid of my own clean pants when I read it.

26th August '36

This afternoon I motored into town to see the Marx Brothers in a film called A Night at the Opera. They seem to be three very nasty Jew boys. Their performance is entirely without humour of any kind. It is without a funny second. Probably they have made a large fortune in America. The house was packed, but the morse play of these three clowns evoked only one laugh, and that was from a drunken man who slept most of the time and awoke at intervals to laugh and retch. For the first time in my life I sympathised wholly with Hitler. If these foul nooligans are Jews no atrocity is too atrocious to blot them out. One Jew said rude things to every Gentile, another Jew hit Gentiles on the head with a wooden hammer, and the third pretended to be mad, and as he never spoke at all, was the pick of that filthy Hebrew gang. They were but shadows on a screen, but the whole house stank of Jew. Heil Hitler, and more power to your arm. I would wear a swastika if I knew where to buy one. I am a merciful and kindly man

and have seen death at its most horrid and have sickened at it, but I could bear to hear that Fascist toughs, whom I hate, had beaten the Marx Brothers to pulp. Why don't they, anyhow?

27th August '36

When I think of the thousands of books that have accumulated about me during my lifetime, and particularly when I look at them, row upon row, behind the glass of the bookshelves, I get a kind of mental vertigo. I have read all these books but am none the better for it. If I could retire into an even greater obscurity with a selection of twenty volumes I would have more than I could ever master. What twenty would I choose? I have done this before, but it is a favourite pastime, so here goes again.

Dahlke's works. ¹	3 vols.
Vonier's <u>Human Soul</u> .	1 vol.
<u>The Bible</u> .	1 vol.
<u>The Upanishads</u> .	1 vol.
<u>Bhagavad Gita</u> .	1 vol.
Lewis and Short's <u>Latin Dictionary</u> .	1 vol.
Liddell and Scott's <u>Greek Lexicon</u> .	1 vol.
<u>Petit Larousse</u> .	1 vol.

¹ Buddhist Essays (London, 1901), Buddhism and Science (London, 1913) and Buddhism (London, 1927).

<u>Concise Oxford Dictionary.</u>	1 vol.
<u>Crueden's Concordance.</u>	1 vol.
<u>Waite's Secret Doctrine in Israel.</u>	1 vol.
<u>Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine.</u>	3 vols.
<u>Dasgupta's Yoga as Philosophy and Religion.</u>	1 vol.
<u>Meister Eckhart.</u>	1 vol.
<u>Price's Practice of Medicine.</u>	1 vol.
<u>The Extra Pharmacopea;</u>	1 vol.
	20 vols.

There are my twenty volumes, but I don't think they would do. Add the Encyclopædia Britannica and the Catholic Encyclopedia. No poetry at all, I could write my own if I needed any. No Shakespeare. He bores me to the verge of a nervous breakdown. George Bernard Shaw and Edgar Wallace I suppose I could get from the circulating library if I ever wanted to read popular literature. Why do I want to set fire to George Bernard Shaw's whiskers? I don't know, but I have never yet attempted that arson. In the same way I want a long cigarette holder like Edgar Wallace's, but I can't find one in any shop on this planet. Fluttering round each one of my twenty chosen volumes are twenty other volumes, like moons round Jupiter, if there are any, certainly like moths round an electric globe. When I go

¹ Ed. Martindale, 14th ed. (London, 1914). All subsequent editions are in two volumes each.

into retirement I shall have to take the lot, for when all comes to all I shan't have the heart to leave one behind,¹ not even the Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception.²

30th August '36

In medicine there is nothing better than to have a law to work by. That is where the homoeopaths score with their similis similibus curentur, though they don't follow it, except in theory. Nothing could better exemplify the hopelessness of that position than a study of their bible, Kent's Repertory.³ It is a dreadful compilation. I have studied it for years but have never got anything out of it which could help me in my daily work. Never in this world has a case of auricular fibrillation or bad bronchitis been helped by one of the high potencies of the homoeopaths. A society woman,

¹ My library was sold to Sutton of Manchester, an old established firm, some weeks ago. His premises were bombed and all his stock, including my library, was destroyed. (F.P.S.—23/II/41).

² Max Heindel, The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception, or Mystic Christianity, rev. ed. (Oceanside, California, 1911); a potted version of Steiner's theosophy.

³ See James Tyler Kent, Lectures on Homoeopathic Materia Medica (Philadelphia, 1905).

suffering from sherry shivers or cocktail spasms, will naturally swear by the homoeopath who puts her into a Nursing Home for a month and gives her Lachesis C.M. One dose per week, but it is the rest and abstinence that cure her and not the powder or drops.

Sometime about the middle of the last century a Dr. W.H. Schuessler of Oldenburg introduced Biochemical Therapy. All diseases are due to lack of some one of the twelve inorganic salts he enumerates.¹ Doubtless his biochemistry was weak, it must have been at that date, but his practice was excellent, and still is. He dynamized his drugs and gave everything in the sixth decimal potency, though he was not a homoeopath. He does not seem to have heard of iodine or iodides. He treated 'goitre' with Magnesium Phosphate. He gave Phosphate of Iron for tonsillitis. It is still the best remedy. Syrup of Iron-Phosphate compound has saved many children from operation. I have done many thousands of tonsillectomies on children and can speak from experience.

The 6^X trituratum contains 16 billion molecules of the

¹ See William Boericke and A.D. Willis, The Twelve Tissue Remedies of Schuessler (Philadelphia, 1890).

drug per milligramme, and this quantity is more than sufficient to restore disturbed molecular action to the normal.

I have learned much from Schuessler and the homoeopaths. They are unscientific and their results, when they have any, are the purest empiricism. So there is no law to work by, and what I have said about that is washed out. Nevertheless I am the better physician for having studied their works and adopted some of their methods.

31st August '36

The full moon threw great slants of silver across the Buddha wall. The alabaster image of the wholly-enlightened-one glowed like a jewel. The rowan trees made silhouettes of black filigree against the wall and the sky, and behind them Charles's Wain shone dim in the moonlight.

1st September '36

Tonight there is no moon, stars or sky. A grey blanket of cold rain clouds.

Just before we closed the surgery there came in a pair of young lovers, whose banners are up and who are to

be married in three weeks. The girl is a virgin, but they are afraid she may be pregnant as she has been in the habit of masturbating her swain and is afraid that some of his semen may have been transferred from her hand to her vagina. 'He caught it in a handkerchief, Doctor, but some went on my hand, and I have missed a period.' She had no signs of pregnancy and was a virgin with a retroverted uterus. Romance is not yet dead. If I were to record, truly, my experiences, all readers would say I was a liar. 'Who but another doctor, even if he, would believe in the young man who took his bride to London on a honeymoon and then in his own words: 'I tossed myself off to let her see what it was like' and that, according to the lady, was all he did for the fortnight of their wedding trip. She was intacta when she came to me, after six weeks of marriage.

3rd September '36

On June 16th 1939 I shall be 60 years of age. It is impossible but it is true. Then I shall retire from active practice. I shall sell this practice, and

forget it, and take my drunken carcass and my drunken wife to fresh fields and pastures new. Fields anyhow, not pastures. Pastures mean work. We mean to do no more after that so-nearly-approaching date. No more work. Rest on our laurels. The smoke-soiled laurels of a practice in Lancashire. There will be more than thirty years of Lancashire filth upon our laurels then. Where shall we go? We can't stay here. We can't live among the shrieking sirens and continuous motor horns of London or Paris. We are more than doubtful of Manchester, which after all is but a larger and dirtier Leigh, with a more dangerous traffic. Southport, with its quite good Boots' library and cafe, is not unattractive, and its many cinemas, some open on Sunday, are surely an added attraction, but I think we shall end up in Peterhead. I might have time and leisure to read a few of the 5,000 volumes in my library. I am tired of axillary cellulitis caused by Veet.¹ I am not thrilled by the symptoms of the menopause; blood pressures bore me to tears, and I am now so old that

¹ An old-fashioned medical euphemism for syphilis.

I can't even pretend a thrill of interest when mutual masturbators come for advice. But I would like to know what Buddha really said about immediate karma, and hope, if God and Bailie Schultze¹ will but speak up for me, to be appointed Curator to the Arbuthnot Museum, whose rotting and fly-blown contents are a memory of youth. None better could catalogue the two-headed kitten, if it is still there, and who, if not a doctor from Lancashire is better qualified to dabble among the mould and rot and dismal antiquity?

Shakespeare's tragedies are dreadful, but no tragedy can equal the tragedy of seeing one of them performed.²

4th September '36

I used to read Shakespeare every day when I was a young man. I can't read him at all now, and if I see one of his plays, any one, no matter which, performed, I am

¹ Max Schultze (Saunders); brother to Charlotte Sturm; b. Nov. 1882, d. 30 May 1955. Herring merchant and shipbroker of Peterhead, Aberdeenshire. Active in local politics from 1926, he was chairman of the constituency branch of the Labour Party and served Peterhead as Town Councillor, Bailie and finally Provost (1936-40).

² Logan Pearsall Smith, On Reading Shakespeare (London, 1933), p. 151.

filled with a horrible boredom that is beyond expression. A few months ago my wife and I saw one Gielgud in Romeo and Juliet. We were too well-bred to laugh or to leave our seats vomiting, but we felt like it. Romeo and Juliet is poor stuff at the best, except for a line here and there, and if the work of a modern author, would be refused both by the Nineteenth Century and Peg's Paper. To read it is possible, if you have no Edgar Wallace; to sit out its performance is a martyrdom. Bernard Shaw says that he himself is a greater writer than Shakespeare. I well believe him. Both of them are second-rate. When the late Dr. James of Eton could be bothered to reach for his pen he wrote stuff that must have made both of them think they were working on a dredge. (Apologies to Mr. Dooley and his prophet Dr. Sackville Martin.¹) The one author who ever said anything that mattered was 'poor old Gautama.' When he said 'everything has a cause' he threw a spanner into the works. Whatever else anyone else has said does

¹ James Sackville Martin, M.D., Leigh practitioner and author (see biblio.) who arranged Sturm's completed plays for the stage. Mr. Dooley may be one of Martin's creations but is more probably that of Finley Peter Dunne.

not matter after that. The many volumes of Thomas Aquinas are no more important than the statement that every square of this paper is medicated with Izal, which I use daily.

I would take the works of James rather than those of Shakespeare with me into exile if I had to choose.

If I were not so interested in queer words and turns of expression I would sooner read any standard English author than the Golden Ass of Apuleius. If the ancients were really thrilled by the stuff that has survived they must have been crashing bores. I am what is known to the illiterate as a scholar, but O boy would I not rather see a thrilling gangster film than read Virgil. Like all high-brows I love all that is low. When I saw Charles Laughton in Wallace's play On the Spot I got more genuine pleasure out of it than all Shakespeare could have given me.

Now the reason of this is religion. The young people who talk about the structure of plays, and their psychological significance, and the complex of motive when John feels Mary but impregnates Jane, have not got any religion. They take it out in physical reactions.

The minute you hear Buddha say everything has a cause, or Jesus say my kingdom is not of this world, you forget then orgasms and anxieties and fold your hands in death, and reply, Buddhist or Christian, fiat voluntas tua, or, if you can, 'everything has a cause.' Then you know that death is not an end, but another beginning.

5th September '36

The more I write the less I believe in myself. I spill the slop-pail of a mediocre mind over these pages; night after night, but there is never a thought floating in the tild. It is a comfort to suppose I might do better if I wrote in the morning, because at night, when I write the diary, I am never quite sober. I still believe my Home Office medical reports to be good of their kind, because I know medicine, and I get £2.2.0. a time, and who ever gets that for a poem? Certainly not me. I suppose I am au fond a Philistine. As I said yesterday, I don't really like Shakespeare, and I do like the Medical Annual. I draw more sustenance from it. I feel at home. This is something that I really do understand, that I can really approve of or criticise, and I have

the probably quite erroneously feeling that another Medical Referee who read one of my reports might contemplate resignation. I take more pleasure in being definitive than I ever took in being decorative. Here is something that I can really do, and do well, so let's stick to it as long as we can. Some Coroner has started a newspaper controversy by saying that 57 is a bad age for men, they begin to doubt themselves, he says, and commit suicide. Well, I am 57 and am only just beginning to find myself. It is true that I said above that the more I write the less I believe in myself, but what of it, that is only contradiction, and but a proof that the divine insouciance of youth begins at 57. My brother-in-law Max says he can do his work better when he has had a drink, and I am not sure that he is not right. A drink keeps me as quiet as I can ever hope to be in this incarnation, and when I go teetotal my wife says god help us all and leaves me till the spell is over. She is having another bath. It is still raining. The sound of rain upon a garden is quite sui generis. There is no other sound quite like it. But I am going to leave it at that. I am a doctor, not a poet.

If I had a friend, which God forbid, and if he read this journal, which he never can, he might ask why I have found no room for my philosophy among so many trivial words. I simply don't know. My philosophy is Buddhism, my religion is Christianity and neither can be written down. One accepts it, and lives it perfectly or imperfectly, nodding a drunken or a sober head. Buddha himself is said never to have drunk. But he was never a doctor in industrial Lancashire.

11.10 pm. And then she came out of her bath and began an endless quarrel. Some sentence in this dreary diary 'had been written for effect.' On and on and on and on and on, a broken windmill going round and round and round and round. Written for effect, certainly written for effect, how could it be so or not and don't let yourself grow into an arrogant old man, because I like bits about Tompy the cat or the garden but when you say your mind has swung like a pendulum between Christ and Krishna I know it has been written for effect because there is no such thing as time and you have often said they were the same and whether or not you meant what you say I don't know but I know that I slave

behind the dispensary counter till you read this to me and I enjoy every word of it but when you say that the pendulum swings.... and so on and so on, till I went to my own room and to bed, wondering what I had done, but knowing only too well what the trouble was.

She is right and I am wrong. To put down in writing what you have done or thought during the day is a harmless enough pastime so long as you keep it to yourself. It becomes a disaster if you read it to anyone whatever. Your most innocent sentence may contain a sting you never knew was there, and certainly never meant.

10th September '36

Once upon a time which means, at a moderate estimate, 30 years ago, nothing would suffice but some unattainable best. When we were young Lottie was all for a great stone-built house with a many-fountained garden full of tropical plants, white peacocks, tame panthers and a moorish balcony overlooking it, and I thought that nothing would serve my purpose but the moon-lit cell of a lonely

monastery high up on Adam's Peak,¹ so far from the world that I saw myself as a Buddhist solitary sitting cross-legged for ever, lost in contemplation till I became as lifeless as a stone image. As a matter of fact I could not at that time sit still for 5 minutes and had a permanent erection which, alas, has quite gone, and cannot be resuscitated.

The fountained garden has become the small garden of an old house in a lost town in industrial Lancashire, and as for my ideal of eternal meditation I think I do well if I find time to say a 'Pater Noster' and an 'Ave Maria' every morning between a cup of tea and a shave. We praise abstinence if at all over a glass of very dry Manzanilla and applaud the vegetarians as we eat another slice or two from the roast. Vegetables and fruit make us ill and any day without wine is like a Sunday in Selwyn Street. And that reminds me of an elderly man who came to consult me one Saturday. He lived in Pennington, a ghastly suburb known as the Shopkeeper's Paradise. He had contracted somewhere a sprightly

¹ A holy mountain in Ceylon whose top has an imprint in stone resembling a human foot which is ascribed by Buddhists to Gautama and by Christians to Adam.

gonorrhoea. Next day which was Sunday, driving down Selwyn St. in a high gig, it was before motors, I came upon an open air meeting, complete with banner and harmonium, and found my patient preaching the gospel to a gathering of the local inhabitants. He shouted the word 'Jesus' at the top of his voice, but as I drove past I thought of his elderly penis wrapped in cotton wool and tied up with a finger-bandage. He was a teetotaller and a non-smoker who preached the gospel and had gonorrhoea. Piety and promiscuity were interchangeable terms among the Christers of my youth, but education and the cinema have improved all that. The word prostitute is an anachronism. They all do it now, and gonorrhoea is like the black plague, a romantic word of the past.

Tonight my housekeeper said to my wife: 'The doctor must have spent a lot of money on all them books! I would never buy a book. I once read one. But fancy spending money on books.'

17th September '36

A cold starry night. We put on overcoats to sit in the garden. I like the house and the garden and our excellent household staff so much that whenever I think of retirement a voice says 'Count your blessings.' Even if we had wealth we could not be as comfortable as we are here. Even great wealth could not buy solitude, or not the kind of solitude we like. Lottie could not adorn the walls of a suite in a luxury hotel, and where I could make tinctures and contemplate articles on Cralegus ?,¹ if not here, I don't know. I would like to retire, on general principles, but I am so interested in tinctures and polygraphs that if I had no pulse to feel and no heart to auscultate I might take to drink seriously. When I interview patients I am a physician, and they know it, and get better. When I have leisure I am a neurotic hypochondriac, a seven months' abortion, a premature senility, anything you like. Ask my poor wife, who has put up with it for more than 30 years. Were I to retire she would take to drink, if I didn't.

¹ I have been unable to trace Cralegus but suppose him to be connected with medical history in which Sturm was then greatly interested.

If I can't put up with myself, how can I hope that she could put up with me. When I was last in Aberdeen I heard of a doctor who died while writing a perscription. That's what I would like.

18th September '36

Schuyler invited Barred upstairs tonight. He shouldn't have done that, he hasn't the right to be upstairs himself, but there they were when we came in from the garden. Barred slunk down the stairs apologetically, expecting the kick he didn't get. Tompy went into my consulting room and made cavorting noises, heaven knows why. Barred got a slice of beef, and fled with it, counting his blessings. Tompy mewed as though he were in extremis from starvation, but refused beef. Nothing less carnivorous than raw liver is any use to Tompy. Sometimes we call him Schuyler and sometimes Tompy, the reason being that his real name in full is Schuyler van Tompy. He awaits the return of Lizzie, who never having produced in man the devastating orgasm which makes men work like slaves in the hope of another, gives pieces of raw liver and lung to a tomcat.

Schuyler and Barred are having the time of their lives.

But it won't last. In another month or so their funny friendship will end in disaster. Some frousy female cat with the perennial kitten urge will break it up.

Vulgarity, said Oscar Wilde, is the behaviour of other people; and a superstition is a belief you do not happen to share.¹

19th September '36

I write under four candles. Two brass candle-sticks and two of faience. A soft eerie light which illuminates the immediate surroundings but leaves the rest of the room in a mysterious twilight. A good light by which to write poetry, but I am no longer a poet. If I need a book I must take a candle and peer along the shelves. A romantic but inconvenient procedure. If I get a night-call I must strike a match, light a candle, and grope my way to the loud telephone or the banging door-knocker. I might, in some remote house hidden in the country, when retired, fold myself in faith and candle-light, but it would not do here. One could believe anything by candle-

¹ Ernest Edward Kellett, As I Remember (London, 1936), pp. 64-5.

light. The presences who lurk in the shadows become half visible and wholly believable. One's own face in the Chinese mirror becomes more dreadful than ever, and all the Buddhas have different and sinister countenances. Nothing is changed but the beer,¹ which tastes as flat as ever. Where did I put my lighted cigarette? God knows. It may be burning a hole somewhere, but I have not the energy to take one of these accursed candles and make a voyage autour de ma chambre. If Milton's Platonist in his lonely tower had but a candle to read by, he must have had better sight than mine. Were I so placed, with one candle, I would blow it out and go to sleep, and dream of Plato but not read him. But who does? Plato is another superstition that should be debunked. The man who has not yawned over Plato has never read him.

20th September '36

Sunday today and lovely autumn weather. Went over to Culcheth Hall to see Miss Sephton who is deaf, blind, arteriosclerotic and just about to exchange Culcheth,

¹ The sense requires 'Everything is changed...'.
1

where she has lived for 76 years for Mentone, which she has never seen. Her brother-in-law, a nice fellow, reassuringly elderly, with the phantasmal name of Courtney de Cassin, has lived in Mentone for 12 years after 28 years as some kind of official in Ceylon. His father was the Rector of Warwick in some past that is dim to me, because it was before I was born. I have a snap-shot of Lottie in Warwick church, taken as she sat beneath a memorial remembrance of past grandeur. She hates to be called Lottie, but I can't refer to her in this diary as Hi! We have a maid called Lottie but known to ourselves as Gargantua, so tall she is. 'Weep, her lily hands for work too tender' could not be said of Gargantua, who is a wondrous scrubber. No fault except that she drips with kitsch.

Tonight we sat beneath the stars and consumed a prodigious quantity of ardent spirits, but what of that. Cats came, real cats, not alcoholic ones, and were fed on boiled lights, milk and slices of cold mutton. Tompy's barred friend was gorged to the gullet, but he is a pusillanimous pussy, and we fear he has been in his kittenhood deprived of essentials. Tompy runs him

off and devours the milk which he doesn't like, doesn't need, and at other times despises. Tompy would eat Quaker Oats rather than let barred friend have them. Tompy is a bad cat as well as a black one.

Nearly thirty years ago, when I was assistant to a doctor whom it would be flattery to call a scoundrel, at least half of the patients I visited lived in places like Culcheth Hall. One day I went to see a Lord Milton and was shewn a collection of pictures by his sister who said 'There is tea in the housekeeper's room'. I called to Shepherd, the coachman who drove me about, 'Lady whatever-her-name-was, has ordered tea for you in the housekeeper's room.' Thank-you Sir said Shepherd, but I don't feel like tea, so I climbed in the gig and we drove off. Another time a parson's housekeeper told me to go round to the tradesmen's entrance. I drove away and never saw that sick clergyman. I remember being conducted by a servingman through miles of stone corridors to see a Lady Barbara, sister of the Bishop of Hereford. She was not a bitch. The word bitch

is a euphemism. I never saw his lordship but I was told that the income of this follower of Jesus was £12,000 a year.

My principal at that time was a man whose colleagues despised him, but the wealthy and the well-born liked him more than any other doctor. He had a mistress who was the wealthy patroness of a village whose inhabitants stoned him.

She was a terrible creature. A female gangster. One of the few pleasant spots in my life is the memory that I defied her and put her wickedness to flight. I was a very young man then, but I remember how shocked I was at the fact that the mistress of my employer was almost crippled with rheumatoid arthritis. I liked my women to be young, slim, light and slippery, and still do, or would, but I am allowed nothing now.

In the pantry there is a little window, about a foot square. Lizzie leaves a quart of beer on the sill, with the window half open, so that every night, if I want it, there is a long cold drink for me. It might be lemonade

or malted milk, but thank god there are no teetotalers in this house. The mild benevolent muzziness that prevails may, and most certainly will, end in cerebral haemorrhage, but who cares.

21st September '36

The more I drink the less I think. My hero is Uncle Chang, who, whenever he got fed up with things as they are, and they can be pretty bloody, got drunk and dived into the lake and stayed there, at the bottom, for months together.¹

A propos of nothing at all I have just remembered a saying of Mr. Harry Gee.² The discussion had blown round to religion and we were talking about the possibility of an after-life, all ignorant, I dare say, and none more ignorant than myself. I was telling a man named

¹ A rather free reference to phenomena resulting from the controlled-breathing exercises of the Taoist yogin, Chuang Tsu and Pao P'u Tzu, as discussed by Arthur Waley in The Way and Its Power (London, 1934), pp. 116-9.

² A Leigh insurance agent and frequenter of Court's Hotel.

Garret¹ what was meant by the word karma, when Mr. Gee said: Excuse me interrupting, out to revert to serious subjects for a moment what about Everton Wanderers today. This is vero and not trovato.

22nd September '36

One of the greatest snags in the technique of the supernatural life used to be what pious Catholics call devotion to our Blessed Lady. I was irritated and hostile. Not only did I hate the term out I hated all that it implied. I have got over all that. 'Hail Mary' is better than Om Mani, and to kneel down is a better posture for prayer than the Lotus Seat. The invocation to the Eternal Mother is older than any gospel. In the Lolita-Sahasranama:² Her form is the universe itself. In her forehead is the moon. The moon shows fifteen phases in its waxing and waning. The sixteenth part, when Time stands still, is when and where Divinity

¹ Bernard John Garret (1878-1945), surveyor and one of Court's Hotel group.

² 'The Thousand Names of the Goddess.'

incarnates.¹

In old woodcuts and in illuminated vignettes in Breviaria before printing you may see the Virgin at prayer with a thin ray of light entering her head from somewhere beyond.

24th September '36

Today I have been haunted by the conviction that life and death are but mystical experiences of the soul. Where this thought came from, or what it means, if anything, I do not know, but I write it down for future reference.

The walls of the room that my wife has decorated are the eighth wonder of the world. The Divine Life, in small coloured vignettes, each with its appropriate text from the Vulgate beneath it, the paintings of Botticelli and Italian primitives in profusion; Chinese and Buddhist prints next to miniatures from old missals, and here and there something by Watteau or Corot or some other almost modern painter whose landscapes are

¹ See Elizabeth Sharpe, The Tantrik Doctrine of Immaculate Conception (London, 1933), pp. 11 & 18, especially.

an escape from everything modern; Persian and Indian and Asiatic fantasies in colour; in fact, the philosophy and religion of all times and all races upon the four walls of a room.

25th September '36

When I came home tonight I found my wife doing her hair by the light of two bougies stuck in chandeliers de faience that I brought from France or Brittany at least a quarter of a century ago. Her electric reading lamp had burnt out, so I replaced it and gave her another glass of vintage port, which on top of the Paraldehyde I shouldn't have done, but what the hell, Archibald, what the hell.

27th September '36

The doctrine of transmigration of souls ($\kappa\omega\lambda\upsilon\psi\epsilon\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$) vulgarly known as reincarnation has been held at all times and by all races. Most people today believe in it in some form, many Catholics believe that this is purgatory, the world a penal settlement to which souls are sent for some evil done in a former existence. I myself firmly believe in the possibility of polygenesis,

but I no longer fear it. Christ is my surety against return.

"Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2) 'Neither he nor his parents,' all the dreary business of reincarnation is done away with for now for those who believe. 'This man is a special incarnation, so born that my power may be shown.' He is the sign that reincarnation and karma are conquered. The last enemy that shall be overcome is death. There can be no death without birth and birth shall cease also. Hippolytus taught that Christ came to abolish metempsychosis and St. Paul says 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,... nailing it to his cross.' (Colossians 2:14)

The beatified Soul has its citizenship in heaven; but it must continue always to produce its like on the stage of time. In what sense these successive products of its activity are continuous or identical with each other is a question which we must leave to those whom it interests. To us their only unity is in the source from which they flow, and in the end to which they aspire.¹

¹ William Ralph Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus, Vol. II (London, 1918), p. 36.

The mendicant who had been born blind (John 9:1-7) for no sin of his own in any past life is one of the mysterious figures of the Gospel of John. Neither he nor his parents had sinned. His blindness therefore was a proof that God is not just, or he was a special incarnation. He had been born blind, not as a punishment for any former fault, 'but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.' The blind beggar had been sent into the world for a special purpose, or had come willingly for a purpose.

Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The word 'Sent' (Missus in the Vulgate translation) in the original Greek has the special meaning of being specially sent as a divine messenger.

I cannot help the conviction that the words 'which is by interpretation, Sent', refer to the blind beggar and not the pool of Siloam.

1st October '36

There was rather a febrile sederunt last night. Max [Schultze], Lottie, myself and all kinds of bottles,

glasses and jugs. I can't speak for the two, but I myself must have been even drunker than usual. I remember examining my shins for signs of cardiac dropsy and then all was silence till Lottie brought a longed-for cup of tea at 7.0 am. Today I have been teetotal, six glasses of sherry, two pints of beer and a large whisky are absolutely all I have had today.

To be an educated and intellectual man, or at any rate interested in things of the intellect, lost for a life-time in an industrial slum, where even the local aristocracy has one foot in the ancestral gutter, is one of the minor tragedies of karma. Such a one will take to drink or religion, or, as in my case to both.

The words in John 'which is by interpretation, Sent', must be read thus: This being explained means that the blind beggar was sent. I believe these words to be a marginal comment incorporated in the text. I see in this incident but a further proof that Christ came to abolish reincarnation. The blind beggar had been sent to earth for a special purpose, to prove that karma was now at an

end, that a man could be born blind through no fault of his own. For once only, in the whole history of man, a karma-less spirit was incarnated for a special purpose. Quod interpretatur Missus, and the same was said of John the Baptist who was missus a Deo, though he, as Christ himself said, was an incarnation of Elias.

This is plain, the disciples of Christ knew the doctrine of reincarnation, and Christ himself not only knew of it but announced the truth of it and yet said 'this blindness is not karmaic.' This man is blind, yet not for any sin, 'but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.' He was sent here for a special purpose. Quod interpretatur Missus. Had these words referred to the pool Siloam, would not the word have been the neuter Missum, or the feminine Missa. Et dixit ei: Vade, lava in natatoria Siloae. Natatoria is feminine, and requires Missa.

Respondit Jesus: Neque hic peccavit, neque parentes ejus; sed ut manifestentur opera Dei in illo.

What were the opera Dei if not freedom from the Wheel.

Ne oportet operari opera ejus qui misit me, donec dies est: quando nemo potest operari. Quamdiu in mundo sum, lux sum mundi.

Venit nox. It has come, and no one can work.

5. The wholly resigned soul enjoys the imperturbable peace of the mystic death.

To these I would add my own discoveries;

1. Silence.
2. Seclusion.
3. Resignation to externals (often horrible).
4. Contemplation of sacraments, not local participation.
5. Count your blessings.

And from Rosmini:² (Maximus of Perfection)

1. Indifference to environment.
2. Indifference to occupation.
3. Indifference to state of health.

10th October '36

It has been a heavy day. Fortunately there was no clinic. I am too tired to write. I am afraid of bed. The ringing telephone or the knock at the door will drag me out.

11th October '36

L'Impératrice Joséphine, me dit le poète Robert de Montesquiou, possédait une opale fluide et fulgurante

¹ A page has been removed from the diary resulting in this unintelligible, partial entry.

² Antonio Rosmini Serbatì, liberal theologian and founder of the Institute of Charity.

qu'elle nommait 'L'Incendie de Troie'.¹

From now on I abandon my will entirely. All that I do, good or evil, I will regard as the voluntas Dei working in me. My own Will is so weak, so useless, that it can only lead me astray. I will be a marionette whose strings are pulled by a man. If I sin by the weakness of my own will, I am to blame. If I follow only the voluntas Dei, and sin, the blame is not mine, but sin of any kind will be impossible if my thoughts, words and deeds are no longer my own but His.

I abandon speculation and will await and rely upon 'His secret instructions by means of pure Faith'.²

The way of inner peace consists in conforming ourselves in all things to the Divine Will.³

The way of peace consists in 'a total conformity to the Will of God'.⁴

¹ Maurice Barrès, Amor et Dolori Sacrum (Paris, [1903]), p. vi.

² Michael de Molinos, The Spiritual Guide, ed. Kathleen Lyttleton (London, 1907), p. 56.

³ Molinos, p. 66.

⁴ Molinos, p. 66. Italics are Sturm's.

This powerful and practical conformity with the Divine Will in all things, leads the Soul to Annihilation and to complete oneness with God.¹

If thou dost but enclose thyself in Nothingness (where the blows of adversity can never come) nothing will vex thee or break thy peace.²

The Soul being once annihilated and renewed, finds in her higher part a profound peace....Nothing exists that does not comfort her; nor does the want of anything affect her. To die, is joy; and to live, is happiness. She is as contented here upon Earth, as she could be in Paradise; she is as glad under privation, as she can be in possession, in sickness as she can be in health, because she knows that this is the will of her Lord.³

The way to attain to that high state of a Mind reformed, whereby we may attain to the Highest Good, to the First Cause, and to perfect Peace, is Nothingness.⁴



A man going upon his travels to search the world for wisdom saw a beggar sitting upon his doorstep, whom he ignored. After a life-time of wandering he returned, an old and disappointed man. The beggar was still there. 'Who are you?' asked the astonished traveller. 'I am Wisdom' answered the beggar. I am that traveller.

¹ Molinos, p. 193.

² Molinos, p. 197.

³ Molinos, p. 198-9.

⁴ Molinos, p. 195.

Berkeley denied the existence of material substance, which he reduced to a series of impressions on the mind. Mind is the only substance. What seem to be causal changes in the phenomenal world are illusory. There are no secondary causes. God and the human mind alone are real. Berkeley included the human body in his denial of the reality of matter, and maintained that there are no substances except the soul and God.

I have gathered this from various volumes of the Catholic Encyclopedia; and though, as I wrote above, I abandon speculation, I cannot but say that Berkeley's philosophy is my own, so far as I have one.

When one is young and death seems at an impossible distance, the thought of it is horrible. When one is old, all changes. The nearer it gets the nicer it seems. Once my son said, when it came up in conversation: 'Let's change the subject, I can't bear it.' Not death but dying is the terror. Not dying even but the pain of it.

The last messenger from heaven is the indifferent young doctor with his well-loaded hypodermic syringe. I don't think he even suspects that his turn will come.

Personally I hope for the courage to face the end without aid from the syringe. I don't know, but I hope so. In my own practice I have never withheld opium from the dying. To do so, in my opinion, is a mortal sin. We cannot cure, or only for a time but we can cure the exitus letalis.

12th October '36

Dies nulla.

Nulla linea.

13th October '36

Today at the Gaumont I saw John Gielgud as Ashenden in The Secret Agent. He had a man's part which he played like a man. So different from the ass he made of himself as Romeo. Peter Lorre was excellent too, but he over-acted a little. Still. The Secret Agent was preceded by Colleen an intolerable, interminable American song and dance film. Gielgud is a good actor. Lorre is a genius. The film as a story would not bear a moment's analytical

inspection, out what of that? It was entertaining.

14th October '36

Private room at Court's Hotel. Five present. Loud mouths and silent minds. 'An idea would give that guy brain-fever.' Dead from the neck up.

If I were not so tired after the long day of consultations I would write a novel. The hero would be some Gospel character, probably the man born blind who went to the pool of Siloam. Or Lazarus. My friend Sackville Martin has written a play around the servant of the Centurion who said Non sum dignus, Domine, ut intres sub tectum meum. It interested my wife greatly when she read it, but I am too ego~~g~~centric to take much interest in the work of others, and have forgotten it. But I remember that it was very good.

My play "Helen in Egypt," suggested to me many years ago by Sturge Moore has got as far as the end of the first act, which has taken ten years or more to write. Some ideal of impossible perfection makes me cross out and cross out until nothing remains of my work but scratches. There is a tale in Balzac of an artist who painted a picture in the same way. I have forgotten the

title, but I seem to remember that as an old man he laboured at a canvas that to every one but himself was an unintelligible blur of paint.

I shall never again write anything but a prescription or an article for some medical journal. Medicine is my office. Molinos says:

The wise and truly mystical Man never speaks but when he cannot help it; nor doth he concern himself in anything but what belongs to his Office.¹

Count your blessings. There is no sound but the faint murmur of a gas fire and the fainter sound when my wife, in the next room, turns over a page of the novel she is reading in bed. In this lost Lancashire town there is the silence and peace that could be found nowhere else but in Tibet, and perhaps not there.

15th October '36

Garret~~z~~ made me hungry tonight by talking about sucking pig and eels in aspic, so when I came home I couldn't write my ideas on the doctrine of grace, as I had intended, but went into the pantry. All I could find was a tin of sardines, so I woke up my wife and we

¹ The Spiritual Guide, p. 191.

finished the bottle of sards together. We ate with our hands and wiped our greasy fingers on the bed-sheet.

16th October '36

APHORISMS

Bacon

Wives are young Men's Mistresses; Companions for Middle Age; and old Men's Nurses.

Revenge is a kind of Wild Justice.

Geo. Savile, Marquess of Halifax

He who changes his Place below him, will certainly be below his Place.

If knaves had not foolish memories, they would never trust one another so often as they do.

Chesterfield

Never talk your best in the company of fools.

I always treat fools and coxcombs with great ceremony; true good breeding not being a sufficient barrier against them.

Women's beauty, like men's wit, is generally fatal to the owner.

In matters of religion and matrimony I never give any advice, because I will not have anybody's torments in this world or the next laid to my charge.

Dr. Johnson

The world will never be long without some good reason to hate the unhappy.

The man who threatens the world is always ridiculous.

Kindness is in our power, but fondness is not.

To-morrow is an old deceiver, and his cheat never goes stale.

Hazlitt

Those who are at war with others are not at peace with themselves.

To give a reason for anything is to breed a doubt of it.

If a person has no delicacy he has you in his power.

Clever men are the tools with which bad men work.

17th October '36

Resurrection of the Body

Objection. If a man be eaten by cannibals or wild beasts and his body become thus distributed among their bodies, and part of their bodies, it cannot be resurrected for it no longer exists as a unity.

Answer. The cannibals or wild beasts do not eat the Body. They only eat the visible, tangible, mineral 'stuffing.' That which is visible is not the Body. The Body, like the Soul, belongs altogether to the supernatural order. The Physical Body is invisible, indestructible, intangible and impartible. It is the

coat without seam, for which the four elements cast lots. All that we see is the mineral substance which our 'grasping' has built into it. The word grasping must be understood in the technical sense it holds in Eastern philosophy.

Burn all that can be seen of it with fire, dissolve the ashes and pour them into a pond and let them nourish a million weeds, and let the weeds be devoured by a thousand living creatures. You have not touched the Physical Body, which is an invisible, intangible, impartible, immortal phantom. Man leaves it at death and comes back to it at birth. It wanes and waxes like the moon as he goes and returns and were it not that after some long ago fall he started to eat garbage and flesh it would still be the copy of its archetype. Before the fall the Physical Body had Impassibility, which rendered it incapable of suffering; Brightness, which rendered it glorious; Agility, which enabled it to pass with the aid and speed of thought from one part of creation to another; and Subtility, by which it shared the spiritual existence of the Soul, and was capable, like the Body of Christ after His Resurrection, of passing through all material substances; and when

the wheel of the fall has ceased to turn it will have all these qualities again. Such is my belief, and I write it down now, having failed before to say what I meant, for when I wrote in my youth I always sacrificed the substance for the style, and truth for decoration. In this sense I can say 'I believe in the resurrection of the body,' as the Anglican 'Creed' has it, but I cannot say with the Roman Church, Credo in carnis resurrectionem, for the flesh profiteth nothing, and is at the best a jazz-dance of electrons.

The Phantom which cannot be seen with the physical eyes, was what was first there of the physical body of man. It is a body of force which is quite transparent. What the physical eye sees are the physical substances which the person eats, and which he takes into himself, and which fill out that which is invisible. If the physical eye looks upon a physical body, what it sees is really the mineral part that fills out the physical body, not the physical body itself.¹

It is a Christian belief that without the help of God's grace we cannot do anything to merit salvation. What is Salvation. For me it means one thing only: liberation from the wheel of rebirth. Round and round we go, life after life, aeon after aeon, and whatever our

¹ Rudolf Steiner, From Jesus to Christ (London, 1930), p. 97.

origin was it is plain that now we are so sunk in the slough of matter that we cannot hope ever to escape. Christ had a look at the mess and saw that without external help the wheel would rave on for eternity. 'For without me ye can do nothing' (John 15:5). The help he brought belongs entirely to the supernatural order, that is, it is beyond human reason, and must be accepted by the will alone, with no co-operation of the reason, for it is entirely inscrutable and incomprehensible. And even so, the possibility of availing oneself of such aid is given only to one here and there. 'No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father'. (John 6:65.)

God gives grace to whom He will, but when the church wants me to believe that it is freely bestowed upon us without any deserts on our part, I want to say that the deserts of past lives are taken into account no less than present merit. The man who is given Grace today may seem utterly unworthy, but has earned the gift, if not in this life, in another.

In the 'Pater Noster' the words ne nos inducas in tentationem do not mean lead us not into temptation. The thought of God leading one into temptation would have been an impossibility to the author of the Gospel. The words, both in the Greek and Latin versions mean: lead us not to judgement; that is to say, do not judge us for all we have done, for we could not survive a legal judgement, but free us from the evil karma we have built about us: sed libera nos a malo. Liberate us from the bonds, not because we deserve liberation, but because we could never, in all eternity, escape from the wheel by our own efforts.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. (James 1:13.)

Jerome On Matt. vi. 11 (The Lord's prayer), says:¹

In the Gospel called according to the Hebrews for 'supersubstantial' bread I found mahar, which means 'of the morrow', so that the sense is: Our bread of the morrow, that is, of the future, give us this day.

Montague James notes:

The word supersubstantial is meant to render literally the difficult word epiousios which we translate 'daily'.

¹ The following notes were added sometime between October 1940 and March 1941, and were meant to complete the preceding commentary.

Jerome writes On Ps. cxxxv:

In the Hebrew Gospel according to Matthew it is thus: Our bread of the morrow give us this day; that is 'the bread which thou wilt give us in thy kingdom, give us this day'.¹

Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon have :

ἐπιούσιος , for the coming day, sufficient for the day.
From ἡ ἐπιούσα ἡμέρα , the coming day.

Lewis and Short's Latin Dictionary have :

Supersubstantivus, a, um, adj., supermaterial
/eccl. lat./ : Christus nec substantiva nec insubstantiva,
sed superstantiva res est, Rustic. c. Acep. p. 1184.

ἄρτοι τῆς προέσεως : Loaves of the Presence.²

The casual way in which Christ and his disciples refer to pre-existence and rebirth are a sufficient proof to me of its truth. Christ quite definitely told his questioners that John the Baptist was a reincarnation of Elias. The man who denies the possibility of repeated lives denies Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity

¹ The Apocryphal New Testament, trans. Montague Rhodes James (Oxford, 1924), p. 4.

² Also translated 'Shewbread' (Authorised Version) and 'Loaves of Proposition' (Douay). See Matthew 12:4, Mark 2:26 and Luke 6:4.

alike, and I doubt if he could find a foothold even in Islam, of which, however, I know nothing.

McTAGGART¹

The greatest exponent and critic of Hegel.

With The Nature of Existence McTaggart has fully earned his place among the immortals. McTaggart seems to place Berkeley high among British philosophers. He held Mr. F.H. Bradley, author of Appearance and Reality, to be the greatest of living philosophers.

C.E. Rolt in his introductory study to Dionysius the Areopagite says:

According to Dr. McTaggart each human soul possesses, behind its temporal nature, a timeless self and each one of these timeless selves is an eternal differentiation of the Absolute.²

The human soul, even while in the body, or being the form of the body, belongs simultaneously to two worlds,

¹ The following notes and comments were added in March 1941.

² (London, 1920), pp. 30-1. Cp. McTaggart, Studies in Hegelian Cosmology (Cambridge, 1918), Chapters 2 & 3, especially (F.P.S.).

the temporal world of Manifestation and the eternal world of Reality. There is a timeless self as well as a temporal self. The timeless self is by its very definition eternal, the temporal self is but its hand stretched down into the manifested body. When the body dies the temporal self is no longer temporal, but retreats into timelessness. The two are again one, not a dew drop slipped into the raining sea but a crystallization within the Absolute; one with God and yet an individual personality. It is this belief in the retention of personality even after absorption in the Godhead which separates Western religion and philosophy from the metaphysics of the East: Nirvana from the Beatific Vision. During the span of bodily life the temporal self is not aware of its timeless counterpart, though it longs for it without knowing for what it longs, or but vaguely and intermittently, yet strives to climb to the Absolute by the path of prayer or deeds or meditation. The great Hegelian expositor McTaggart knew this and notes how the temporal self may for a moment glimpse and experience the timeless self.

For however long it may take us to reach the Absolute, it is sometimes curiously near us in isolated episodes of life, and our attitude toward certain phases of consciousness, if not our positive actions, may be materially affected by the consideration of the greater or less adequacy with which these phases embody reality.¹

Hegel asserts the truth of immortality in several places.

We have his [Hegel] explicit statements that immortality is to be ascribed to the self.²

Experience teaches us that there exists in the Universe finite personal spirits....these spirits are called selves. And the problem which we have now to consider is whether there is a point in time for each self after which it would be correct to say that the self had ceased to exist. If not, it must be considered as immortal, whether as existing throughout endless time, or as having a timeless and therefore endless existence.³

Am I eternal, or am I a mere temporary manifestation of something eternal which is not myself?⁴

The view that selves are manifestations of the Absolute, in such a way that they change and perish while the Absolute remains unchanged, is one which has always had an attraction for mystics. It is especially prominent among Oriental thinkers. The most frequent

1 John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, Philosophical Studies (London, 1934), p. 213.

2 Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 5.

3 Studies, p. 4.

4 Studies, p. 6.

metaphors by which this thought is expressed are those of a drop of water returning to the ocean, and of a ray of light returning to the sun. They show that the relation which was conceived to exist between the Absolute and the self was substantially that of Matter and Form. The Absolute was formless —or relatively formless—itsself, but a part of it assumed form and limitation and became a self. At death, or in the mystic vision of true wisdom, the form disappeared, and the matter dropped back into the undifferentiated mass of the Absolute. Such a view involves the indifference of the Absolute to the form it assumes. For all the changes in the forms do not affect the changelessness of the Absolute.¹

The Catholic Church teaches that the lot of the reprobate is 'everlasting and eternal punishment'.² But eternal punishment or eternal happiness, whatever else they may be, certainly cannot be everlasting. Eternity has nothing in common with time; eternity has neither beginning nor end; eternity has no duration.

'As no one holds that the reward of the just will come to an end', writes the good father, 'is it not

¹ Studies, p. 33.

² As quoted by Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, The Question Box (New York, 1929), p. 382 from Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and Council of Trent (Sess. vi, ch. 14; Sess. xiv, Can. 5).

unreasonable to suppose that Christ meant the punishment of the wicked to cease after a time.' But many do hold that the reward of the just will come to an end. When the just have received their reward for merit accumulated during life they will be reborn into the world. When the evil have suffered the punishment due they also will be reborn. Some hold that both reward and punishment are administered partly during incarnation and partly in the interval between death and rebirth. These are minutiae that do not for the moment matter. All I desire to emphasise is the personal conviction that 'everlasting' and 'eternal' are contradictory and mutually exclusive terms.

Non-Ego

The anatta (non-ego) doctrine¹ which is such a stumbling-block to western students of Buddhism was nevertheless one of the fundamental teachings of Christ.

¹ The doctrine of the non-separateness of all forms of life and the opposite of that of an immortal soul. As applied to man, it states that there is no permanent ego or self.

Neither our Lord Himself, nor the Christians of the Apostolic age, nor the Greek and Roman fathers and bishops who drew up the Creeds, had any word for personality, or felt the want of any word.¹

Asiatic Mysticism is the natural refuge of men who have lost faith in civilization, but will not give up faith in God.²

Scholasticism was philosophy in chains.³

Another time he [Suso] saw a vision of angels, and besought one of them to show him the manner of God's secret dwelling in the soul. An angel answered, 'Cast then a joyous glance into thyself, and see how God plays His play of love with thy loving soul.' He looked immediately, and saw that his body over his heart was as clear as crystal, and that in the centre was sitting tranquilly, in lovely form, the eternal Wisdom.⁴

The road is by faith, which is like night to the intellect.⁵

- 1 William Ralph Inge, Personal Idealism and Mysticism, 2nd ed. (London, 1913), p. 77.
- 2 Christian Mysticism (London, 1899), p. 115.
- 3 Christian Mysticism, p. 148.
- 4 Christian Mysticism, p. 175. Cp. the Heart Meditation in Vivikananda's Râja Yoga (F.P.S.).
- 5 As quoted by Inge in Christian Mysticism, p. 224 from St. John of the Cross in The Ascent of Mount Carmel.

The Beautiful is essentially the Spiritual making itself known sensuously.¹

The chief motive force which led to the increased importance of Mystery-religion in the first centuries of our era, was the desire for 'salvation' (σωτηρία) Salvation was regarded as in the Oriental religions, as emancipation from the fetters of human existence.... They also believed in transmigration of souls, and in a κύκλος τῆς γενέσεως (rota fati et generationis).²

When I awake in the morning I drink a cup of tea, light my gas-fire and say my prayers. I am in another world than this, in another state of consciousness. It lasts maybe for an hour. Then the morning letters and the daily paper are brought up and this world enters. I am Dr. Sturm again. 'The grave M.D.' Quelle farce!

18th October '36

Ex nihilo nihil fit.

¹ As quoted in Christian Mysticism, p. 323 from Georg Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, trans. E.B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson, Vol. II (London, 1895), p. 8.

² Christian Mysticism, pp. 351-2.

19th October '36

Ex nihilo nihil fit.

20th October '36

To town. Saw the film Tale of Two Cities. Mid-day feed, as usual, with my chauffeur Franklin. Evening surgery. Wireless. Court's Hotel and Garret. Home at 10.40. Lottie terribly tired and gone to bed. Whisky and a pipe. Despair. Ne tradas bestiis animas confitentis tibi.¹ Half a pipe and then to bed. Will my grandson, who exists, but whom I have never seen, believe that I paid 1/6 for one ounce of tobacco, or will he pay more for it?

25th October '36

Only during the past ten years have I realised the vast, the infinite, the inexhaustible content of Christian theology. I mean the intellectual content. It is the infinite. A thousand lives would not exhaust the implications of the 'Pater Noster'.

Every day, or almost every day, I read the office,

¹ Versicle of 'The Office for the Dead, Third Nocturn,' Breviarium Romanum.

the Horae Diurnae, and never fail to get from it some comfort. It is often a magical comfort, some wonder that has its roots in the mud of the past. I am thrilled to the bone by the rhythm of some of the prayers, particularly by the marvellous finial: Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum.¹

29th December '36

KARMA

Karma means consequence, the result of something preceding. If you put your finger in a flame it will be burnt; that is karma. If you do wrong in this life you may be born again as a consumptive; that is karma. If you are happy and well it is because you have earned it by good deeds in a past life or in this life; that is karma. Everything has a cause.

¹ The normal formula for prayers which do not mention the Christ specifically. See Breviarium Romanum.

OLD TESTAMENT¹

He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity.

(Proverbs 22:8)

They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.

(Hosea 8:7)

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

(Psalms 126:5-6)

Owen Rutter in The Scales of Karma interprets 'sheaves' as 'experience'.²

Who so stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

(Proverbs 21:13)

Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

(Proverbs 22:22-3)

¹ The following passages were gathered after October 1940 and were meant to support the preceding argument.

² (London, [1940]), p. 70.

When he prepared the heavens, I was there...When he established the clouds above...When he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight...rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

(Proverbs 8:27-31)

Whereas I was more good, I came to a body undefiled.

(Wisdom 8:20)

He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

(Ecclesiastes 10:8)

For God shall bring every work unto judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

(Ecclesiastes 12:14)

They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

(Job 4:8)

Job was 'perfect and upright'. His punishment was for evil done in a past life.

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

(Exodus 20:5)

i.e., whoso has sinned in a past life shall reincarnate in the third or fourth generation to reap his karma.

NEW TESTAMENT

If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

(Matthew 11:14)

Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.

(Matthew 17:12)

(cp. Mark 9:13)

Whom do men say that I am?

(Mark 8:27)

Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go.

(John 8:14)

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad....Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.

(John 8:56-8)

Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

(Matthew 5:18)

He that is greatest among you shall be your servant, And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

(Matthew 23:11-2)

Not possible in the space of only one life.

When the disciples asked if the man was blind from birth because of some sin he had committed, such sin could not have been committed in the present life, since he was born blind (see John 9:1-7).

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

(John 3:3)

Paul makes a direct reference to reincarnation:

When Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither done any good or evil...) It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God. God forbid.

(Romans 9:10-4)

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.

(Revelation 3:12)

He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.

(Revelation 13:10)

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

(Galations 6:7)

PATER HĒMWN HO EN TOIS OURANCOIS
HAGIASTHĒTW TO ONOMA SOU,
ELTHĒTW HE BASILEIA SOU,
GENĒTHĒTW TO THELĒMA SOU
HWS EN OURANW KAI EPITĒS GĒS
TON ARTON HĒMWN TON EPIOUSION
DOS HĒMIN SĒMERON,
KAI APHES HĒMINTA OPHEILĒMATA
HĒMWN, HWS KAI HĒMEIS
APHIEMEN TOIS OPHEILETAIS HĒMWN,
KAI MĒ EISENEGKĒS HĒMAS EIS
PEIRASMON, ALLA RHUSAI
HĒMAS APO TOU PONĒROU¹

2nd January '37

The two most musical lines Racine ever wrote always seem to me two lines out of Phèdre:

Ariane ma soeur, de quel amour blessée
Vous mourûtes au bords où vous fûtes laissée.

It is said that when Rachel spoke these two lines on the stage for the first time the effect was so tremendous that Alfred de Musset fainted in his box.²

I can only suppose that Alf was, as usual, very drunk, and had succumbed to Pernod rather than Poetry. To me those two lines are hideously unmusical, and I quite

¹ Of the Gospel versions, the text follows that of Matthew (6:9-13) most closely, but would seem to be an original translation from the English of The Book of Common Prayer. Note especially the use of the present, APHIEMEN.

² Maurice Baring, Have You Anything to Declare? (London, 1936), p. 115.

agree with the critic, quoted by Maurice Baring, who thought the two circumflexed u's were hideous.

MORE APHORISMS

Chateaubriand

La mort est belle, elle est notre amie: néanmoins nous ne la reconnaissons pas, parce qu'elle se présente à nous masquée et que son masque nous épouvante.

Les années qui avaient passé sur la tête ne lui avaient laissé que leur printemps.

La mort semble née à Rome.

Dr. Johnson

No man is obliged to do as much as he can. A man is to have a part of his life to himself.

_____ : a pudding-faced peasant leading a defeated mob.

_____ : a moron, with a jut-jowl and a stupid glare in shallow eyes, trying to look frightful, as of course he is, but not in the way he hopes.

6th January '37

Un vieux Duc (le meilleur des époux)
Demandait, en lui tâtant le pouls,
A sa vieille Duchesse,
Qu'un vieux catarrhe oppresse,
'Et ton thé, t'a-t-il ôté la toux?'

Il était un Gendarme, à Nanteuil,
Qui n'avait qu'une dent et qu'un oeil;
Mais cet oeil solitaire
Était plein de mystère,
Cette dent, d'impotence et d'orgueil.

George du Maurier

9th May '37

I meditate on the Glory of the Dharmakaya¹ under the
appearance of Jesus Christ. May he illuminate the mind.

I like to think about Dr. Bodkin's story of the
Chinese mandarin who sat for his portrait looking at a
landscape through a window with his back to the artist.
His choice of landscape was a better clue than his face
to his true self.²

The goblin Aiken Drum promises to 'Ba the bairns wi'
an unkennd tune.' Now, that's what poetry is, 'an
unkennd tune,' not a repeated air.³

¹ 'The Body of the Law,' the Buddha as the personi-
fication of Truth.

² Oliver St. J. Gogarty, As I was going down Sack-
ville street (London, 1937), p. 255.

³ Gogarty, p. 225.

Ces nymphes, je les veux perpétuer.

Si clair,
Leur incarnat léger, qu'il voltige dans l'air
Assoupi de sommeils touffus.

Aimai-je un rêve?

Mon doute, amas de nuit ancienne, s'achève
En maint rameau subtil, qui, demeuré les vrais
Bois mêmes, prouve, hélas! que bien seul je m'offrais
Pour triomphe la faute idéale des roses—

Réfléchissons...

ou si les femmes dont tu gloses
Figurent un souhait de tes sens fabuleux!
Faune, l'illusion s'échappe des yeux bleus
Et froids, comme une source en pleurs, de la plus
chaste:

Mais, l'autre tout soupirs, dis-tu qu'elle contraste
Comme brise du jour chaude dans ta toison?
Que non! par l'immobile et lasse pâmoison
Suffoquant de chaleurs le matin frais s'il lutte,
Ne murmure point d'eau que ne verse ma flûte
Au bosquet arrosé d'accords; et le seul vent
Hors des deux tuyaux prompt à s'exhaler avant
Qu'il disperse le son dans une pluie aride,
C'est, à l'horizon pas remué d'une ride,
Le visible et serein souffle artificiel
De l'inspiration, qui regagne le ciel.

Stéphane Mallarmé

Here follows a translation of the above extract by
Wilfred Thorley.

I would perpetuate these nymphs, the swift
Translucent flesh set drowsily adrift
Like down in air. Loved I love's counterfeit?
My doubts, begotten of the long night's heat,
Dislimn the woodland till my triumph shows
As the flawed shadows of a frustrate rose.
Yet pause and think...Were there fair women but
A flood of sensual fancy thou wouldst glut!
Their blue eyes spill illusion like the flow
Of weeping runnels that forsake their snow.
That other, now, all sighs...does she release
A summer wind to fondle thy warm fleece?
Nay! through the nushed imponderable hours
That stifle the young day, no sound of showers
Is heard save only the bright drops I blow
To drench the branches that I pipe below;
No wind is there save what my flute gives out
In arid rain swift-ebbing on the drought.
Only along the horizon's flawless hue
Floats the frail breath that once the piper blew,
Serene and visible, his kindled flame
Drawn up to the far heaven whence it came.¹

Thorley's note says:

This is a fragment from the celebrated après-midi, of which a miraculous rendering has been completed by Mr. Aldous Huxley. Mallarmé's lines are so variously construed in the effort to achieve their sense that I can only hope that I have discovered a melodic coherence in them, that being, I believe, all that Mallarmé sought.

Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98) born in Paris and engaged for the greater part of his life as a teacher of English in State schools, became a living oracle to the younger

¹ Wilfred Thorley, A Bouquet from France (London, 1926), pp. 172-3.

literary men at the close of the last century. An apostle of the perfect form, sequence of sense he regarded as unnecessary so long as his words sounded beautiful and were sufficient to suggest a mood or a dream. His vogue developed, as such fashions will, into a form of snobbery in which obscurity became a virtue, and to be understood a sign of vulgarity. The early Après-midi d'un Faune is of limpid clearness when compared with his later work, in which not merely sense but syntax is entirely to seek, though the sound and suggestion of his lines are of disturbing magnificence.¹

Translation of L'Azur:

The eternal Blue, remote, serene, unkind,
O'erwhelms with beauty as of idle flowers
The poet groping with his weight of mind
Through arid wastes of unassuaged hours.

Alas, with shut eyes I feel the piercing look
Of its keen eye strike down my soul's void space.
Where shall I fly? How foil the sharp rebuke
In darkness unbeholden of its face?

Rise, mists! Pour out your slow, sad, ashen breath!
With rags of haze festoon the skiey roof
To o'erbrim the marsh where Autumn loitereth;
And rear a throne of silence far aloof.

And thou, dear Grief, from pools of Lethe's tide
Steal out and pluck the ooze-filled rush's blade,
With hand unwearied weave a veil to hide
The huge blue rents the heartless birds have made.²

¹ Thorley, pp. 265-6.

² Thorley, p. 171.

26th May '38

On a haematite seal of the third century A.D. there is engraved a crucified Orpheus, with the Moon and seven Stars above the Cross, and the inscription Orpheos Bakkikos. The discovery of this identification of Christ with the Bacchic mysteries moved me so profoundly when I made it, now many years ago, that all my outlook upon religion underwent a spiritual change. I became a partaker of the mystery of Christ. I saw the descent of the cosmic sun-spirit into the earth and into the soul of man, and realised the reality of the Apollonian and Dionysian Christ. To experience Christ both within the soul and as a concrete figure in the objective world is to undergo the Rosicrucian initiation.

The main Orphic doctrine, as far back as the time of Herodotus was metempsychosis. The Time-God of these mysteries was Chronos agêratos ('undecaying Time').¹

¹ See Robert Eisler, Orpheus—the Fisher (London, 1921), p. 6.

The sixteenth sonnet in Humbert Wolfe's The Fourth of August is the best sonnet I have read for many years. It gives the authentic thrill that comes only from true poetry. Here it is—

There was a legend of the house. 'Twas said
that on a high gold night of summer a bird
like some great bat, that floats among the dead
screamed with an eldritch cry, and he who heard
forgot all else, the summer and the trees,
life, and perhaps a woman's weaving hands,
in the slow rustle of unholy seas
creeping with witches' feet across bleached sands.
And such a one, as if far-called, must go
into the night, into the ambiguous shade
of branches painted with the moon, as though
Columbine in some silver masquerade
danced, but with none that men would call a man,
and Harlequin had the split feet of Pan.¹

27th May '38

The gardener is burning something against the far wall beyond the lawn, behind a low hedge of shrubbery. The pale blue smoke drifts across the background of green trees, beautiful, and for some reason, very sad. The azaleas have less colour than before the rain of the past few days; but three beds of pinks are brilliant, their colour somehow bringing their perfume to memory.

¹ (London, 1935), p. 16.

The geranium, the pink and the hawthorn have a perfume that is exquisite but wholly animal; an odour is exquisite decay, beauty in ashes.

6th December '38

The leaded mullions were filled with pebbles of such opaque and imperfect glass, full of wnoirls and bubbles, that nothing was visiole tarough them. They admitted only a green dim twilight, but when the window was unlatched I saw a pool with willows trailing the water on the further side, and on the bank nearest to me a nuge gander stretching his neck over a small goose dozing indifferently beside him.

10th October '40

It is 8.0 pm and a coal black night. The wind is howling among the almost leafless trees. Lottie is still in bed, suffering a constant pain that never lets up unless she is drugged. Dr. Sinton saw her today and has told her to take tincture of opium, 1 drachm at bed-time and a second drachm during the night if the pain returns. I would not have dared to prescribe these heroic doses of opium, but am glad they have been ordered if they keep

her from suffering. My own heart disease is bad enough without the additional mental agony of Lottie's pain, and on the top of that there is the constant anxiety of the war and the uncertainty of the future. But I can endure that if only she can be free of pain. Until this came upon her I did not know what she meant to me. 'A pity beyond all telling is hid in the heart of love' is the truest thing my friend W.B.Y. ever wrote. When the planes zoom overhead and we hear the crash of bombs and the thud of A.A. fire I almost pray for a direct hit, so that we may escape from this hideous world together. If there is anything after this life we shall share it, if there is nothing we shall not know.

The End

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APPENDIX A

Petronius of the BON-ACCORD

I was told by Miss Dorothy Sturm that her brother had helped to support himself at university by writing for the local papers and had begun on his arrival in Aberdeen by contributing occasional pieces to the Bon-Accord under the name of Petronius. Each of the following efforts is so signed and all give evidence of Sturm's authorship.

For the sake of comparison I add nere a fragment from a notebook found among his surviving papers.

.

. . .

Scene. Kitchen of a country cottage. Propped up on pillows in a wooden armchair before the fire, a very old man looks evilly at the District Nurse who tries to make him as comfortable as possible. He is obviously very ill. His lips are blue from heart failure.

Nurse. (Arranging the pillow) Are you comfortable now
Daddy.

Old Man. No, I'm not. I feel bloody awful.

Nurse. No need to swear. Try to relax and get a dose.
I'll be back in a couple of hours to give you your draught. Good night for the present.

Old Man. Go to Hell.

Nurse. That's where you'll go if you don't mend. (She picks up her bag and goes out.)

Old Man. Good riddance. Them wenches is a sad come down from when I were a young man. Carryin' on wi't doctor, I'll bet. His mucky medicine hasn't done me a spit out of good. But he's none so bad as't parson who fair shames me when he gets down on his hunkers and prays. Who wants to be saved? Nobbut a grand funeral with three coaches and a plush-lined coffin with handles and a brass plate. I don't want a grand funeral. I want to get well again and sup a pint or two at the Colleen Arms. I'm not an old man yet. What the hell is 79 when owd John Fitzakerley geet wed when he were nearly 90, and got a kit, or anywhey, someone did, and his wife are't mother on it. I'm as good as ever I was but for this bloody cough and my swollen feet.

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1

Move on!

This is the law, the law of Bon-Accord,
Expounded by its omnipotent lord,
Our great Chief C.

Says he:

"Let there be moral light in Aberdeen,
Let there be naught unseemly or obscene;
And if our youths and maidens chance to meet
At dusk of day when strolling on the street,
Move thou them on!

Bid them be straightway gone!

Let no soft looks be bandied to and fro,

For all is vanity—ah, me, I know.

They may not stop to talk,

They must for ever walk—

Move thou them on!

Heed not their weariness nor their complaints,
Whether they will or no they shall be saints.

"Lo, I have spoken, let my word endure,
Let all, like me, be sanctified and pure;
Holy and upright, full of Godly worth,
A model to all peoples of the earth.
So shall my fame and salary increase,
And our fair city be the dome of Peace—
MOVE THOU THEM ON."

The Woeful Cabby

A cabby clad in silken robes
Was sitting all alone,
And woefully he beat his breast,
And woefully did groan,
And much I marvelled when I saw
Him bite upon a stone.

His glance was wild, his cheek was pale,
Sunken and white and wan,
Never before had I seen such
A hungry-looking man—
No, never since the nappy reign
Of our great Chief began.

"What ails thee, Woeful Cabby,
I cannot understand;
For thou art clad in costly garb,
In silks from Samarcand,
With summer roses in thy hair
And jewels on thy hand!"

He raised a cold and glassy eye—
"There was a Man," quoth he,
"Who gave it everybody hot,
Particularly me:
His name is Wyness; his remarks
Acidulous and free.

"He says that I must cast aside
The clothes I used to wear,
And always dress myself like him
With decency and care;
Which, when you come to think of it,
Is not exactly fair.

"My wage is eighteen bob per week,
My appetite is keen;
My family is as big a one
As ever you have seen;
And eighteen bob ain't very much
Even in Aberdeen.

"And so I'm clad in regal robes,
In silks from Samarcand;
And costly baubles gleam upon
My famine-stricken hand—
But not a single taste of food
Or drink can I command!"

Petronius His Complete Catechism

3

I

Q. What is your name, and where do you live?

A. My name is N. or M., and I live in Aberdeen.

Q. Why do you live in Aberdeen?

A. Because of its Beauty, its Salubrious Atmosphere, its Bathing Station, and, above all, its High Moral Tone.

Q. Quite so; but some say that the Bathing Station is a blot upon the city, a disgrace to architecture, a hideous conglomeration of red and yellow. Is that true?

A. Those who say so are stiff-necked heretics, and there is no health in them. The Bathing Station is one of the Triumphs of the Nineteenth Century. Ask the Town Council. And you can buy three different kinds of ginger beer in the restaurant, not to mention coffee essence.

Q. Is it true that the water in the Pond has been known to be clean?

A. I refuse to answer.

Q. I will not press the point. Perhaps it is a Solar Myth. You spoke of High Moral Tone. Tell me exactly what you mean.

A. I cannot tell you what I mean. I am not a Town Councillor; I am only N. or M. But I know what a Policeman is.

Q. What is a Policeman?

A. A Policeman is a man—

Q. Be careful what you say!

A. Well, a Policeman is a Being—

Q. That is better. What does he do?

A. He tells you to move on, and breathes in your face. He smokes very strong tobacco.

Q. Perhaps he drinks buttermilk?

A. Perhaps.

Q. Why does he move you on?

A. He is under the command of a Higher Power.

Q. What is a Higher Power.

A. A Higher Power is a Policeman with Frills and a Pink

Bow on. Some call him a Chief Constable. He is said to wear baggy trousers and love Cabmen. It is he who keeps the High Moral Tone of Aberdeen. He keeps it very close.

Q. How do you know that he keeps it very close?

A. Nobody has ever seen it.

Q. You are a very intelligent child. But is it not true that the Police were made for the Public?

A. Certainly not. The Public and all that in them is were made for the Police.

Q. How do you know this?

A. We ought not to question such matters. The ways of the Chief Constable are inscrutable and his end is—

Q. What?

A. I forget what I was going to say.

Q. That will do for to-day; you may go home.

Petronius His Complete Catechism

4

II

Q. Have you prepared your lesson with diligence?

A. Sir, I have; but I am afraid that my mind now retains but little of it.

Q. Indeed, how so?

A. I have been perturbed, and (to speak truth) seriously incommoded.

Q. Pray calm yourself. Explain the circumstances of your perturbation.

A. On my way here I was about to turn aside for a moment and enter the Douglas Hotel to get a—

Q. Eh?

A. —to get change for a sixpence, when I was made aware of two terrible soldiers who guarded the doors of the edifice.

Q. Dear me; I hope they offered no violence to your person?

A. None at all, sir. In spite of their warlike demeanour they seemed to be most worthy individuals, and plainly regretted their inability to admit me.

Q. I cannot see in what manner—

A. Allow me, sir, to proceed. A large crowd was dividing its attention between watching the two soldiers and keeping its toes out of the way of a ponderous Policeman who was moving it on with the most commendable diligence. I took the liberty of opposing this gentleman, and having raised my hat and bowed with suitable humility, I begged him to tell me why such a considerable crowd had collected, and I particularly enquired the office of the soldiers who stood at the portals like two motionless marble—er—like bronze—like Highlanders, in fact.

Q. And what reply did he give?

A. He said an Important Person was within the building—a person who had to be cherished.

Q. Who was this Person?

A. Please, sir, he said it was the Lord—

Q. Of the Puissant Police?

A. Oh, no, sir, it was not the Chief Constable; merely

a legal lord.

Q. Why then this guard? Was he not under the shadow of the wings of Wyness?

A. So I should have supposed. It was the thought that he was not safe without the additional protection of these soldiers that so perturbed me.

Q. I can quite understand that. However, I will not be hard upon you. Do you think you are sufficiently recovered to answer a simple question?

A. I will do my best, sir.

Q. Quite so. Do you know anything about politics?

A. I have a cousin who once saw Mr John Morley.

Q. Very good; then perhaps you can tell me what is meant by the Liberal split?

A. Oh, yes, sir. If you were to order two nips and a split soda, that would be a liberal split. It would be a very liberal split if I ordered it.

Q. Suppose—

A. I am more than agreeable. Just around the corner.

Q. Do you not find politics a delightfully refreshing subject?

A. Oh, sir, delightful!

5

Petronius to his Beloved

The song or songs; sung by Petronius the Bard, the singer before the seats of the mighty, the upright walker, the beloved of editors. Hear ye!

Behold, thou art fair, my love, like unto a pennyworth of mint and sweet herbs, and thine eyes are more beautiful than mine. Thou art fair, and in thee there is neither spot nor blemish.

Thy garment is of fine linen and muslin, cunningly embroidered and thy hat is of straw.

Let all the captains bow down and the strong men tear their beards, for thou art mine.

Lo, thou sittest on the beach from the rising up of the sun even unto the going down of the same, and thy breath hath the savour of peppermint.

Yea, thou art the only pebble on the beach, and thou art altogether lovely.

The giddy undergraduate passeth thee by, he pouteth his lip and calleth thee his beloved, but thou art like

unto a tower of ivory set round with a ditch. Thou
readest thy book, and thine eyes are turned down when
he calleth thee his beloved and his little dear.

Thou art not little dear, O, my beloved; thou art
very dear.

The handmaiden who dispenseth ices knoweth of it, and the
merchant of strawberries and cream hath admired thine
appetite.

Thou goest mincingly; thou art as joyful as the young
kid that skippeth upon the everlasting hills, and thy
shoes are white and full of sand.

In the morning thou gigest, in the afternoon also,
and again at night.

On the days when the young men and the heroes gather
together by the edge of the sea thou dost disport thyself
therein, and the opera-glasses are levelled at thee.

The little waves run in upon thee and thou screamest,
for thy bathing costume is worth many shekels, and may
not safely be wetted.

O, my love, my heart palpeth for delight of thee, my
knees are loosened with fear at thy beauty.

Thou tormentest me more than many printer's devils,
and thy frown is more than the wrath of editors.

Farewell, delight of mine eyes! I will sing to thee
another song when I have been paid for this one.

If thou comest to the beach this night, please leave
thy little brother at home, or thou wilt not see thy
devoted Petronius.

My Vendetta

I am a quite harmless kind of individual, and although I was born in Glasgow I have been known to make a joke. Fact is, I'm rather fond of a joke. But there is a man in this office who ought to be slain; I should like to give him a death with plenty of blood in it, something lingering; I should like to hear the sobs of agony burst from his lips chill with the hue of death—I don't know what that means, but I heard it at the play last night.

Perhaps you would like to know why I cherish such an undying hatred of a fellow-creature. The explanation is very simple: We were talking about our favourite authors when this friend said, "Why does Anthony Hope?"

I gasped out that I didn't know.

"Why," he replied, "to Marietta Holley, of course."

The tears flowed down my cheeks as I fell on my knees and begged mercy...

"What happens when John Kendrick Bangs," asked my torturer.

Oh! ah! was all I could say.

"Samuel Smiles," came the answer.

"I shall kill you," I said, but he took no notice, and continued: "When did Thomas Buchanan Read? Just after Winthrop Mackworth Praed..."

I screamed and shuddered.

"Why was Rider Haggard? Because he let Rose Terry Cooke..."

I felt something snap inside, and a gurgling sound broke from my purple lips.

"Why is Sarah Grand? To make Andrew Marvell. Why did Lewis Carroll? To put a stop to Francis Quarles."

At this point I fainted, and have been unable to work ever since. Can you wonder that I thirst for his blood?

Pigs

One fine afternoon last week I went over the hills in the south with an artist. We are such good friends that we can spend hours together without uttering a word. The only little deception we practice upon each ~~an~~ other is a pretence of philosophy. What is more, we each tolerate the other's branch of art. He reads my prose and verse with at least the outward appearance of enjoyment, while my admiration for his pictures is often mixed with a little envy because I am unable to make pictures myself.

I often wonder if he ever wishes to be a writer. No doubt he has far too much sense, but then one never can tell, and the man who wears the shoe knows best where it pinches, as the proverb says. Not that my shoe pinches; it does not. Only painters can afford to wear shoes; the writer has to go barefooted, and is saved from discomfort by the very poverty of his attire. George has read what I have written; he says I lie with elegance and precision.

But to resume. We went in search of a fine landscape, and found pigs. Doubtless the landscape could also have been found, but so fascinating were the pigs that we sat on the ground and painted them. George painted them, that is; I thought about them, and wondered why I had never realised the true inwardness of pigs before.

This particular family of pigs inhabited a field of short stubble, and consisted, if I remember rightly, of one black father, one white mother, and six pink piglings, if that is the right word; all very philosophical after the Epicurean manner. Your pig is your true philosopher, I have found; and your true teacher of philosophy. Did not the Prodigal Son persevere in his evil ways until he came into daily contact with pigs? Did he not then see the foolishness of his conduct and turn over a new leaf? The fatted calf would in all probability never have been subject to the ignominy of stuffing and basting out for those pigs in the far country of husks. It was a pet calf, and I daresay it felt its position keenly. People of an uncomfortably practical turn of mind may be tempted to say that the Prodigal's return was due to hunger or to the nausea consequent on a constant pig diet. Certainly, bacon

for every meal would pall upon the keenest lover of pig, but I refuse to admit that even the Prodigal Son was base enough to batten upon the comrades of his exile. Besides, we are distinctly told that he fed upon husks; and husks, I believe, are first cousins to oatmeal porridge. If you consider, therefore, how well he must have lived, you will own that his return could not have been due to merely selfish considerations of appetite. To what then was it due? why, to no less than a better frame of mind induced by the contemplation of pigs.

For my own part I assert that since I spent an afternoon in their company, my soul has aspired to diviner air, my sympathies have expanded, my life has been fuller, the universe has seemed palpitant with a higher meaning. Think of the serenity with which a pig accepts his position in life, think of the calm aristocratic indifference with which he bears the scoffs and japes poured upon him by his human inferiors. Where shall we find another creature so truly pastoral in the highest meaning of the term, so content to spend life amidst those simple surroundings which alone have true elegance? The horse is a creature dependent upon artifice for his very life; he demands his servants,

his trappings, his hot drink at night. Otherwise he dies.

The pig wishes for none of these things; nay, he scorns them. A russet apple fallen upon the orchard grass brings more delight to his simple soul than a landscape by Corot. True, he eats the apple, but what of that! The sound of the fragrant hog-wash falling into his trough is to him sweeter music than the ripple of many fountains in a stately garden of parterres and terraces.

I, alas, am not the first to realise the glory of the pig; at least one great artist has painted him in all the stages of his life, from pink and squealing babyhood to creased and grunting senility. When the companions of Ulysses were enchanted by Circe, the forms they took were those of swine. Even mighty Homer could think of no greater transformation for his heroes. Some day a poet shall arise to sing the pig in fitting terms. Would that I might be he! But the prospect is too great, the field too wide; I await a bard of bolder quill, my own incapacity is too glaring. I look forward to the days when ladies will affect a lap-pig in place of the offensive lap-dog of modern times. A pig with a blue ribbon round its neck. Such a millennium may not be far away—who knows?

8

An Open Letter to Andrew

DEAR MR CARNEGIE,

I hope you are very well, as this does not leave me at present. I have ominous forebodings and a sense of coming disaster. To think that a nice man like you should spend your hard-earned pennies in trying to ruin the poor Universities. You will first pauperise them, and then I suppose you will buy them up and turn them into model lodging-houses or Temperance hotels. Carnegie Trust, indeed! If I was a poet I should like to immortalise you in an ode. I should begin something like this—

Hail, Andrew! blessed are thou among millionaires!
Thou hast all thy wisdom teeth, forsooth;
And knowest all the uses of adversity,
Also of advertising;
Thy conscience is as white as thy whisker;
Thy Purse is as bottomless as the Stygian Pit
And does twice as much harm,
Therefore, hail!
You will observe—thou wilt observe, that is—
That I am writing blank verse,
Very blank verse in fact;

[no break]

But it isn't half so blank
As thy benighted, heaven-forsaken
Plan, scheme, or whatever thou callest it,
For turning the 'Varsity Man, who at present is
Rather a nice creature,
Into a foolish, sullen, penniless,
Invertebrate, sapless,
Herring-fed Highland ploughboy.
Let the shoemaker stick to his last;
And the ploughboy to the ploughtail.

Please don't throw the animal amongst a crowd of well-bred men who will be as disgusted as he is uneasy. He will never be tolerated. He will be smeared with the gold of Carnegie from head to foot. He will wish himself back in his bothie. He will, really.

Keep your pennies in your pocket. You don't look well as a philanthropist. Why don't you try to win the yacht race, like Sir Tea Lipton? Do, there's a dear good old man. If you send me an invitation to your palatial residence, I don't mind paying you a visit. That is, of course, providing you don't want to pay my train fare.
—Yours in a moderate degree,

Petronius.

9

The Poet and the Lady

Carmen in Virginem Inexorabilem

The lady student and the youth
Went down to hear the band,
When they got tired of walking
They sat upon the sand;
The gentle youth was musing on
The lady's lily hand.

The sky above was calm and blue,
So were the lady's eyes,
The youth (a poet) thought them like
Twin stars of Paradise.
The lady read a "Pocket Gray,"
A much-abhorred device.

The sea was shimmering in the sun,
Behind them was a hill
Green clad in summer verdure, and
The youth drank in his fill
Of beauty, but the lady said,
"'Tis merely chlorophyll."

The youth was nothing daunted,
But caught her modest eye,
And told her how some daring deed
He longed to do or die
For her sweet sake—she felt his pulse,
"Tis nerves," was her reply.

Thereat the youth, enflamed, declared
How he had nursed his hope
Through three long weary sessions,
He begged her to elope—
The lady answered nothing but
Produced a stethoscope.

She fixed the mystic morbid tube
Against his manly chest,
"What you require," she calmly said,
Is arrowroot and rest,
With digitalis t.p.d.:
Your bronchi are oppressed."

The youth with fixed and glassy eye
Saw that all hope was fled,
Sic factus est examinis,
And at her feet dropped dead.
"The trouble that he suffered from
Was valvular," she said.

Digressions

10

I. Rue with a difference

Paul stood before the book-case, reading the titles of the volumes with an air which I divined to be of disapprobation. I was in no mood to break in upon his thoughts; to precipitate the sermon he was evidently preparing; I was at peace. The subdued glow of the lamp gave an air of almost cloistral seclusion to my room, the fire was at that perfect stage when the coals have attained a uniform red, with no leaping flames to distract one's attention from one's dreams; my cigarette was an undoubted Nadji Hassan. I was at peace.

"These books of yours—" began Paul. I looked over my shoulder. He was tapping the back of a willow-green volume with his finger-nail.

"Well," I said, "my books—? They are very ripping, aren't they?"

"They confirm an opinion I have held for some time;

these books of yours," mused Paul.

I blinked at him through a veil of smoke; the effect was very fine. "Your opinions are always valuable, dear Paul."

"My opinion is, my dear, that your intellect is undergoing a slow process of decay. It is perishing. In a few short years it will be in the same condition as your morals."

"I flatter myself my morals are rather graceful, don't you know."

"A remark of that nature," said Paul, "is particularly disgusting from a man of your notoriously evil reputation."

I waved my cigarette at the spotless one. "I cannot help my reputation, I assure you. It's like the snape of my nose; it's hereditary. It was born with me. It goes along in front, banging a drum, to let people know who's coming. I am modest by nature, and try to hide in dark corners if people would only let me. But they won't: they drag me out and hold me up as an awful example. It's all because of the reputation, Paul. I never did much to deserve it. I should have liked to, but I never got the

chance. No such luck. I dismiss the subject of my reputation."

"Your flippancy is inexcusable," said my ghostly adviser, "but in view of the fact that I have a more serious indictment, I will let that pass."

"'Ear, 'ear!" I applauded.

"These books of yours. You can't expect to have sound ideas if you read morbid stuff of this kind. There isn't a healthy-minded volume on the shelf."

"You will oblige me by respecting that bookcase," I replied comfortably. "It is a casket of strange jewels. It is a temple of subtle emotions."

"It may be," said Paul. "It reminds me of a cemetery." He took down a volume at random and began to read. It was one of D'Annunzio's "Romances of the Lily"; I recognised the crimson binding and the unusual design at once. He read for some time, silently, a look of wan despair creeping over his face.

"This book," he told me, at length, "is a disgrace to so-called literature."

"On the contrary, dear Paul," I corrected, "it is a triumph of art. I have read it."

"A triumph of art? Sheer invertebrate drivel, I call it. I could make a better book out of curl-papers."

"Paul, be calm," I said, soothingly. "Don't let your evil passions get the better of you. It's a very good book."

Paul turned over a few pages. "Listen to this," he said. "There's a young woman in this book who doesn't appear to be very well. This is the way she talks to folk: 'When a perfume envelopes me and vanishes, when a sound reaches me and dies out, sometimes I feel myself grow pale and almost faint away, for it seems to me that the aroma and harmony of my life are tending to the same evanescence...' People who want to fade away in that indecent manner ought to be ashamed of themselves. It's not natural."

"Undiluted nature is a poor thing," I said. "It's crude."

"It's healthy, anyhow."

"You miss the point, Paul. The artistic life, if you follow me, may be compared to an exquisite harmony composed of many notes, many emotions, unimportant perhaps in themselves, but making when combined a perfect

and many-coloured whole. The artistic life is a fugue, an aria, a sonata if you like. To the coarser-fibred among us it may be unattractive, even injurious. I sympathise with you, Paul."

Paul sat down and drew his chair up to the fire. "When I was a very small child," he said, "they used to tell me a tale about an old cow."

"Tell me about her, please."

"She died. It was very sad." He shook his head mournfully.

"You shouldn't let that worry you," I said. All flesh is grass."

"I can't help it. The circumstances were pathetic. She died of a tune; she was that coarse-fibred, poor thing. It may have been a fugue, an aria, a sonata if you like," he added meditatively.

"I don't think so. I expect your cow met a man with bag-pipes. It's not inconceivable."

"No; it must have been a sonata. You never heard of anyone who did anything more serious than take a drink from hearing a bag-pipe tune; though I have heard of a man being murdered all along o' the bag-pipes. He used

to play them."

"I don't wonder that people made it unpleasant. But we are deserting our muttons. We were discussing my books. I beg to submit that each one of my books is an excellent example of some outstanding class of literature. You can't deny that?"

Paul glared at me with an air of dull satisfaction. "I see," he said, "that you have got some bound volumes of the journal that a trusting public imagines I edit. How does that bear out your statement?"

"Perfectly. It is an excellent example of the class of literature that ought to remain unwritten."

"You are right," agreed Paul. "One cannot expect work like that to be appreciated by the mob."

I lit a cigarette and pushed the box across. The unfortunate creature never smokes, but I feel that it is only friendly to make a pretence of not noticing his infirmity.

"A propos of books," I remarked, "the literary life is the only one possible to a man of feeling."

"I differ from you," Paul said; "here in the North we think that the strenuous life has its points. I am all

for austerity, personally."

I helped myself to a Benedictine. "There is something to be said for a life of aesthetic austerity," I agreed.

'And self-denial," said Paul, carefully slicing a lemon.

"If it comes to that, of course, self-denial is the only road to contentment. Some philosopher—Socrates, wasn't it?—said that the wealthiest man is he who has the fewest needs."

I sipped my Benedictine. "By-the-way," I said, suddenly remembering, "I must really see if I cannot get some orange-flower water. Benedictine is unendurable without orange-flower water. I learned that in Paris."

"When one is on the stroke of thirty," said Paul, deliberately crushing the sugar in his glass, "there are many things unendurable without orange-flower water. But it has to be made from the genuine orange-blossom. The genuine orange-blossom only grows—where does it grow, my brother?"

"In the gardens of Castles in Spain," I answered, despondingly, but with conviction.

Digressions

11 II. Literature and My Landlady

When Mrs. MacNash had cleared my breakfast things away the other morning, she did not immediately leave the room, but stood at the door, half in half out, and favoured me with a genteel premonitory cough. At first I thought she was about to entertain me with one of the innumerable anecdotes that have gathered round the memory of her deceased husband, a virtuous, semi-legendary stone-cutter, with whom died the Golden Age.

I looked up from my after-breakfast cigarette with that air of seraphic endurance upon which my friends have so often complimented me. But I trembled when I perceived the eye of the long-suffering widow fixed sternly upon me. It was to be something more serious than an anecdote. When Mrs. MacNash fixes her eye upon me I know that I am despicaole.

"Well, Mrs. MacNash?" There was no sparkle in my

assumption of airy unconcern.

"Two of my best tumblers were broken, sir, last night."

"I am truly grieved," I murmured.

"I dinna ken what way it could have happened, sir."

"Very good of you to say so, Mrs. MacNash. These things do happen, you know. Not often, of course, but they do happen. I had a friend with me," I added.

"I heard him," said Mrs. MacNash, severely.

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, between you and me, so did I."

"And the neighbours heard him too, sir."

"I can well believe it."

"They hae been saying nae verra pleasant things."

"About my friend?" I queried without much interest.

"Na, na, sir. About yoursel'."

"Nothing very shocking, I trust." This with a slight increase of interest.

"Nae that bad, but still, nae pleasant. I hardly like to tell you."

"You'd better make a clean breast of it, Mrs. MacNash. I have been called most things, I assure you. I am quite hardened."

"Well, sir, Mrs. Campbell that's downstairs says her niece that's a school-teacher tellt her—it's too ridiculous, sir, really!" I am prepared to state upon oath that Mrs. MacNash tittered.

"So much the better," I replied. "I flatter myself that I can enjoy the ridiculous."

"—her niece tellt her that you—that you wrote poetry! I said none of my gentlemen did such like things. I told her you were a literary gentleman."

"I have been called that too," I admitted.

"It was about the Moon—"

"What was about the Moon?"

"The poetry, sir. Mrs. Campbell's niece cut it out of a paper. I'll read it to you, if you like, sir. It's in my work-box."

"Mrs. MacNash, I implore you! The fact is, I don't care much about poetry. I can't understand it."

"Neither can I, sir. Mrs. Campbell's niece cut it out of a paper called—"

"Yes, yes!" I hastily interposed, "I don't deny it for a moment. Mrs. Campbell's niece is doubtless a most estimable young person. Clever, too, you say? The weather,

Mrs. MacNash—"

"The poetry, sir," continued my remorseless landlady, "had your initials at the bottom."

"Mrs. MacNash," I said, with some severity, "my dear, good Mrs. MacNash, I ask you a simple question. Do I look as though I wrote poetry about the Moon? Do I?"

"No, sir," replied my landlady without a moment's hesitation, "you don't."

"Very well, then, we will say no more about it." I thought it best not to press the point. I have not, I grant you, a very romantic personality, but one has one's feelings.

My landlady turned to go. She was smiling, evidently in the best of tempers once again. I hastened to seize the golden opportunity.

"By the way, Mrs. MacNash—"

"Yes, sir?"

"I am having a few friends to supper to-night."

"Literary gentlemen, sir?"

"Literary gentlemen, Mrs. Macnash."

My invaluable landlady grasped the situation at once. "You will be wanting tumblers, sir, plenty of tumblers, and sugar and het water?"

"And lemons, Mrs. MacNash."

"Yes, sir." And then, pathetically, "They are my best tumblers, sir."

"I will remember the fact," I said, with proper feeling. "One of the gentlemen who are coming to-night," I added, "really does write poetry. About the Moon, I believe."

Mrs. MacNash looked me full in the face. "Yon mannie wi' the black een?" she queried.

"The gentleman," I corrected sternly, "with the dark complexion. Yes."

"Will he sing?"

"Sing, Mrs. MacNash? I trust not."

"He sang last time. I dinna mind mysel', because I lock the kitchen door, but the neighbours speak, sir. He may recite poetry if he daesna dae't ower lood."

"Rely upon me, Mrs. MacNash. If my friend becomes too—er—dithyrambic, I will take means, I promise you, I will take means."

The supper party, I rejoice to say, came off to the entire satisfaction of Mrs. MacNash. Literary gentlemen, she assures me, are the quietest creatures on earth, and even my friend the Poet is allowed to have his good points.

Digressions

12

III. A Vinous Reverie

We had ordered black coffee. They give you very fair black coffee at the Trocadero. "Suppose," said Paul, "we have a little of something with it? A suspicion of the national amber essence lends an atmosphere to coffee."

"I prefer something green," I said. The atmosphere is more suggestive if you take something green with your coffee. Chartreuse, for instance."

"It costs three times as much," said Paul.

"It is three times as good," I argued. "Besides, consider the atmosphere. The atmosphere is essential, I imagine."

"Oh, very well," said Paul, and Chartreuse it was.

I held up the delicate thin-stemmed glass to the light. The subtle cordial glimmered like a green flame in my hand: its pungent, balsamic odour suggested a thousand exotic things; a thousand bye-gone hours. The music from the orchestra behind the faded screen seemed out of place; banal, suburban. To properly appreciate Chartreuse you require some decaying city of Europe, Toledo for preference; a violet dusk full of stars; the distant music of mandolines; and, if possible, a hopeless love affair. I communicated this information to Paul.

"Oh, my poetic soul, mine uncle!" was all the comfort

I got.

"Has it never struck you," I said, "that there is something spiritual about Chartreuse; something infinite and mystical; something Catholic?"

"I am not going to argue religion with you," said Paul, who inherits a few black drops of Calvinism.

"Do, please. There's a dear. I'm in a theological mood," I pleaded. I wasn't really, but I saw a way of making Paul angry.

"Proceed, if you insist," said the philosophical youth.

"We will suppose," I said, "that for the sake of argument, this empty coffee-cup is a glass of English ale. Do you follow?"

"I'm doing my best," said Paul, apathetically.

"And this silver match-box—a present from a lady, by the way—is a glass of whisky."

"Scotch or Irish?" queried the scoffer.

"The description is immaterial at this point," I said.

"I see. Go on. It's very interesting." He yawned politely.

"And finally, this glass of green Chartreuse is simply green Chartreuse."

"How profound of you," said Paul in admiration.

"I am profound," I admitted, with some pride. "But to our muttons. We have here three typical beverages—"

"Beverages is good," murmured Paul.

"—English ale, Scotch whisky, and a Continental liqueur. Can you follow that?"

"I'll try, if you'll give me time. It requires some

thinking about."

"Now, I want you to tell me which you prefer."

"Is that the jape? You subtle humorist!"

"Which do you prefer? Think well. It's important."

"The ale is abominable swill: neither one thing nor the other; the whisky is excellent—perhaps a little coarse-fibred, but excellent; the Chartreuse, though it needs a deal of living up to, is the best of all."

"You will stick to ~~that~~ opinion?" I queried.

"Like a clinging mist to a phantasmal tree-top," asserted Paul, who is rash enough to fancy he can parody my style.

"Well then, here's my point. The English ale represents the English Church; cold; stolid; neither one thing nor the other, as you succinctly put it. The Scotch whisky represents Scotch Calvinism—a little coarse-fibred, eh? I remind you of your own words, my friend. And the Chartreuse—look at it! look at the enigmatic, beautiful soul of it, the green, mysterious soul; like a secret fire!—does it not symbolise all that is best and most satisfying in the old faith? The best of all, you said. You were right, Paul, for once."

"Look here," said Paul, coldly; "you mustn't suppose you can floor a man of my years with an illogical old argument like that. It's absurd."

"Why is it absurd?"

"Why isn't it?"

"For every reason. The best reason is that you cannot refute my illogical old argument, as you call it."

"If I had the time and the patience, I could knock your illogical old argument into a cocked hat," said Paul, vulgarly.

"Let me see you do it, my seraph," I derided.

"What is the basis of every argument, may I ask?"

"The premises, of course," I replied, puzzled.

"I can destroy your premises. Oh, very easily."

"You cannot! I'll bet you my halidom, Paul."

"Cannot I? Regardez donc!" said Paul, and he drained my Chartreuse.

"Paul," I said, reproachfully, "that was unworthy of you. You have betrayed me."

"We will have another," said Paul.

Digressions

13 IV. A Little Bit of Sentiment: Only
 Remotely Connected with Paul¹

It had been such a delightful spring morning, so pleasant a change from the snow and the cold and the grey melancholy of the preceding week, that I came back from my walk in the merriest of moods, and with an appetite. Not the poor wisp of an appetite one cherishes all winter; but an appetite of a breadth, of a depth, an appetite worthy of twenty-one or some such ridiculously far-away period; an appetite to demand culinary impossibilities.

I entered my room, whistling, smiling. I entered; I shut the door. The air died from my lips; the smile faded. It was not a man with a bill, it was not even an unexpected relative, that caused the smile and the tune to fade from my lips. It was a ghost. How? Thus. The room was empty, the sun was shining on the floor, a

¹ See 'Diversions,' Appendix B.

little fire in the grate was dimly holding out against the sunshine. That was absolutely all. But in the air was a lingering reminiscence of perfume; a vague fugitive nuance of fragrance, as though someone had carried a branch of blossom through the room.

I stood in the middle of the floor, inhaling it. "I could almost swear it is Peau d'Espagne," I murmured. I sniffed again; a thousand uncapturable memories tilting through my mind. It was Peau d'Espagne.

How came my room to be odorous with such a subtle and suggestive perfume as this? "Peau d'Espagne," a clever friend once assured me, "suggests the enigma of the eternal femininity of all things beautiful. It is the most beautiful of all perfumes; it is the most feminine." On occasion, I reflected, the house was made awful by an atmosphere of peppermint. That, however, happened on Sunday, when my landlady had been to her religious duties. This day was not Sunday; this odour was far from being peppermint.

I rang the bell. Mrs. MacNash appeared, calm, austere, very Aberdonian. Mrs. MacNash, certainly, would never be guilty of Peau d'Espagne.

"There is a horrible odour of some cheap scent here," I said.

"It is disgusting, sir," admitted Mrs. MacNash.

"Who has been in this room?" I enquired, with severity.

"A young person, sir, who said she was a countess."

Mrs. MacNash was unmoved, but I confess that I gasped.

The number of countesses who are honoured by my friendship is somewhat limited.

"Good heavens, Mrs. MacNash! A countess? You surprise me."

"I am surprised, sir, myself," said my landlady. "The young person came in a handsome-cab and asked for you. She insisted upon seeing your room and tittered and clapped her hands for all the world like a bairn. She must have been English, sir."

"Indeed. Why?"

"I could scarce make out a word she said," replied Mrs. MacNash. "She kissed me on both cheeks when she went, and laughed and said something in her queer snippit English way that I couldn't catch."

I looked with commiseration upon my landlady.

"You could have knocked me down with a feather," said that lady, hopelessly.

"What was she like?" I asked. Mrs. MacNash gave a long and very technical description of her dress. She was

visibly impressed by the dress.

"Never mind the dress. What was she like herself?"

"She had red hair, sir."

"Red, indeed! You mean gold."

"It was red, sir. Do you know the young person, sir?"

"Not I, alas. I did know a 'young person' once—a very pleasant young person, Mrs. MacNash—who had red-gold hair of the divinest, of the silkiest, of a perfume the most intoxicating. But she is far away from Aberdeen. And she is not a countess, Mrs. MacNash. Nor English."

"Per'aps this one isn't, sir."

"We will give her the benefit of the doubt, Mrs. MacNash. It is the least we can do. Yes, you may serve dinner."

Le parfum souvent me prends comme une mer, vers ma pale étoile! I quoted, as the subtle fragrance of Peau d'Espagne again crept delicately into my brain.

"I will arise and go to my Paul," I said, when I had dined. "I will drink coffee and green Chartreuse until I forget this thing. Paul shall have the honour of paying

for it," and I set out. But I did not reach Paul.

I met her in Union Street. I could have met Jupiter Ammon in Whitechapel with equanimity. But Elodie in Union Street! There she was, standing before me—moi qui vous parle—holding out a little gloved hand as though we had seen each other only yesterday. The sun was on her red-gold hair; on her pale cheek. I was conscious of Peau d'Espagne.

"Good heavens!" I cried, apostrophising the blue.

"Oh, là, là! Listen to him. Aren't you glad to see me?"

"It isn't you, I refuse to believe it. You'll fade away in a minute. Don't mock a man, dear ghost."

"C'est moi, absolument. There, you've broken my fingers. You are glad to see me, then?"

"A bit, I grant you. Suppose we walk."

"How horribly changed you are. I believe you are shrivelling, you poor thing!"

"It's very good of you to notice it, Elodie. You are not much altered."

"Oh, my friend, I know! You can't deceive me. Je suis bien fanée, moi. So are you. You look grey; and your eyes are all scribbled round. J'ai raison, quoi?"

"Be merciful. What are you doing in this paradise of oatmeal and haddock?"

"The land of cakes, they call it, hein? I know. We are going to—where's it? Where the queens are. I am desolating myself to see a queen."

I laughed. "Ballater, perhaps."

"Perhaps; I forget names. But I adore Aberdeen. I shall probably live here for ever. I have been here three days."

"I have been here three years," I said.

"You poor thing. I retract what I said about your looks. You are permitted to look gray—and scribbled."

"Grand merci, Madame. but it isn't such a bad place, Aberdeen. There are amusements, you know. This is one of them."

"Which is one of them?"

"This is—this street—Union Street. If it is a fine day, and you feel very wicked and Continental, you walk down Union Street. Everybody walks down Union Street. Everybody who is anybody, that is."

"Oh, là, là! Je te prends. Alors?"

"Then you walk back again. You needn't laugh, Elodie. It's an institution: and you shouldn't laugh at

institutions. One has to enter into the spirit of the thing, of course, or one doesn't appreciate it. Besides, there are other amusements. Amateur Operatics and Dramatic Societies. Immense, I assure you. On Sunday you go to the kirk."

"The kirk. Qu'est ce que c'est, le kirk?"

"What a monstrous little heathen you are. The kirk is also an institution. It is the Church—l'Eglise. Comprends?"

"Oh, l'Eglise?" said Eloïdie, solemnly. "Yes, I know. On va assister à la messe, n'est ce pas?"

"One does not, my child. There is no mass. One goes to kirk because one is a lost soul. because one is damned. Comprends, p'tite?"

"But I am not damned!" shrilled Eloïdie, with indignation.

"Then you are not respectable."

"Mais—mais je suis bonne Catholique, moi!"

"I can't help it. That only makes it worse. Everybody who is anybody is damned."

Eloïdie laughed; the most winsome, catching, feminine tirra-lirra of a laugh. I felt called upon to suppress her.

"You must not laugh like that," I said, severely.

"Someone might hear you."

"Nom d'un parapluie! Pourquoi pas? Why not?"

"Because it isn't respectable."

"Is anything respectable in this Aberdeen town?"

"I am happy to say that nothing is. At least, very little." Elodie made an inimitable gesture of despair and puzzlement.

"Are you respectable?" she asked.

"God forbid," I ejaculated, piously.

"Then why stay here?"

"You are arguing in a vicious circle, ma p'tite."

"And you, you are talking paradoxes."

"We will change the subject. Greater intellects than ours have gone to pieces upon the granite of this distressing village. Who came to my rooms this morning? Who kissed my aged landlady upon both cheeks?"

"I did," said Elodie, "moi qui vous parle, elle est bien drôle, ta landlady."

"She is, a bit. You shouldn't have kissed her, though."

"Why not?"

"well, you might have kept it for me, after coming all this way to see me."

"You take a deal for granted, dear man." She put a little scented hand on my sleeve. Something inside me began to remember, and I shook. "Je ne te baisera jamais plus, bien-aimé," she whispered.

I did not speak.

"I am married," she said.

"Oh, a trifle!"

"But I am serious, mon ami."

I looked at her, and quickly looked again, for the best of reasons.

"Not really, Elodie?"

"Yes, really."

Something was hurting me—a little. Only a little, I assure you. "Who is he?" I asked.

"An Italian, bien-aimé."

"Crasse!" I said. It was wrong; it was ungentlemanly; but I couldn't help it.

"Oh, no, no, my friend, I assure you. He is very well born; the best of families; he is noble. See, here is my card."

I took the card, and read: CONTESSA ELOIDIE DI SANTAGIAMO. PALAZZO MADELLINI. ROMA.

"Then you really are a countess, Elodie?"

"But yes—Oh, you don't think—but he is good—"

I said nothing. There was nothing to be said.

"Do you remember the Caffè Greco? And the suppers?"
asked Eloidie, after a silence.

"They were passable suppers," I admitted.

"Do you remember," continued Eloidie, "the Sunday
we made the excursion to Aqua Acetosa, and missed the
last train home?"

"I remember, perfectly. We walked home, didn't we?"

"Yes," said Eloidie, almost inaudibly, looking straight
in front of her.

"I believe so, Contessa."

"Here is my hotel. You will come and see my husband?"

"I have not the time. I leave Aberdeen to-night."

"Good-bye, my friend."

"Good-bye, Contessa."

"Good-bye, Will."

"Good-bye, Contessa."

Digressions

14 V. Mrs. MacNash on Salvation

On Sunday morning I was feeling particularly unregenerate, so that when Mrs. MacNash came to enquire about my dinner, she found me in dressing gown and slippers, smoking a cigarette, and sipping, I regret to say, a glass of absinthe. Very good absinthe, too. On the label is the name Pernod Fils, Couvet, Suisse. I defy you to go one better than Pernod Fils.

If my sense of time left me, I should always know when Sunday came round by the look of austere Sabbatic virtue on my landlady's face.

"I perceive you have been to the kirk, Mrs. MacNash," I ventured.

"But you have not, sir; if I may be so bold."

"Obviously not," I retorted, thrusting out a slippered foot and flapping my dressing gown.

"I think you should, sir," she said, rather vaguely, I thought.

"Should what?"

"Go to the kirk."

"Why?" I queried.

Mrs. MacNash was unprepared to answer so fatuous a remark.

"Well, because you should, of course, sir. Everybody goes to kirk in Aberdeen. Except Catholics, I mean."

"H'm, yes. But what do they go to the kirk ior, you dear Auld Licht Idyll you?"

"So as they'll get saved."

"That's very sweet of them. Are you saved, Mrs. MacNash, if I may take the liberty?"

"Oh, no, sir," replied Mrs. MacNash, cheerfully.

"You surprise me. I hope you are mistaken."

"We are none of us saved," chaunted this holy widow, with unction, I thought; certainly with gloomy conviction. "We are sinners, born in sin. Horrible sinners, sir! I am a horrible sinner. We all are. We are all damned, all of us!" Her eyes took in the cigarette, the absinthe, the ancient dressing gown, the whole shameless picture. "You are lost, sir"—I had hoped she would say ~~damned~~—"lost for all eternity! It gives me quite a turn to think of it."

"Charming of you to say so, Mrs. MacNash. Have you any reasonable explanation to offer?"

"It's called predestination, sir."

"Lucid, Mrs. MacNash, extremely lucid! I congratulate you upon your grasp of a very difficult subject. But your—er—predestination does not seem to be of much use, does it?"

Mrs. MacNash was pained. "In what way, may I ask, sir?"

"If it doesn't save you, you know?"

"We are saved," said my landlady, by faith and works."

I abandoned the point. Mrs. MacNash is too hopelessly well-informed for me.

At this moment the household cat, a distressing creature with a meagre air of having seen better days, entered the room, and arched himself up against my leg by way of insult. He knows how I hate cats. Then he wandered round the room, seeking something high enough to jump upon; something with breakables on it for preference.

"Mrs. MacNash," I said, regarding the animal over the edge of my glass, "you have my permission to remove John Knox."

"Remove what, sir?"

"John Knox," I repeated, indicating him.

"We call him Rob Roy, sir."

"That is an apology for a name. I said John Knox."

"Why John Knox?"

"Why not?"

"It's such a queer-like name for a cat." She sidled John Knox from the room with her elastic-sided boot. It may be an indiscretion to admit that I caught a glimpse of a white cotton stocking, but such is in fact the case.

I lit a fresh cigarette and explained. "I saw him doing his little best, the other morning, to convince a mouse of the truth of the doctrine of predestination, Mrs. MacNash. I christened him John Knox at once, like the poor cat in the adage."

"What is that?"

"I don't know. 'Tis quite correct however. It is in Shakespeare!"

Mrs. MacNash looked doubtful. "That is a joke, sir?"

"I admit it," I said.

"The minister preached a very moving sermon to-day, sir," she said, after a pause.

"I regret I did not hear it. The subject was—?"

"He preached, sir, against drink and Popery."

"Ah, Popery. There is a great deal of Popery, you know, Mrs. MacNash."

"So the minister said, sir. It is through Popery that we have such a lot of crime. Popery fills the prisons, sir, and leads to crime."

"How very distressing. You should be very grateful you were born a Presbyterian instead of a Papist, Mrs. MacNash."

"Me a Papist, sir! Sakes! what like an idea is that. Fancy me bowing down to a brazen image with feet of clay. A pretty sight I should look, I'm sure."

"Surely it cannot be so bad as that," I protested.

"Every bit, sir, believe me. Those was the minister's very words, 'a brazen image with feet of clay'."

"Your minister seems to be a very discriminating gentleman."

"Yes, sir. A clever young man, too. He has been through the College."

"That settles it then," I had to admit.

Mrs. MacNash warmed to a genial subject. "We are all either sheep or goats, sir, the minister says."

"Yes? Which are which, may I ask?"

"The Protestants, sir, are the sheep."

"Well, there is something in that, Mrs. MacNash."

"Papists are a bad lot, believe me, sir."

"So it has been said."

"Don't you think so yourself, sir?"

"They are no better than your even Christian, I grant."

"Don't you think they are poor deluded wretches?"

"I hardly can, you know, Mrs. MacNash. I am unfortunately a Papist myself."

"Sir! you are joking," said my poor landlady, very red on the cheek-bones.

"'Pon honour, Mrs. MacNash."

"I hardly know which way to look, sir, after all I've said!"

"Pray don't mention it; I was very interested." She stood at the door, twisting the handle, flurried, nervous, flushed. She is a good soul. "By the way, Mrs. MacNash," I added, as she turned to go, "I see that John Knox has invaded my room again. He is under the sofa. Yes, remove him." She went, carrying John Knox, who gave me a most unbigoted wink over her shoulder.

For the rest of the day there was silence, blessed and most perfect.

Digressions

15

VI. The Gentle Flame

I always tell Paul that he and I are really admirable bachelors. Not that we go to the length of sewing our own buttons on, or any ultra-Presbyterian fads of that sort; but we never permit our imperturbable calm to be ruffled by any of the amazing variations of the eternal feminine. Our discussions are as a rule confined to the latest dramatic criticism or the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. We never talk frou-frou: Paul is past that kind of thing, and I am virtuous naturally. We have, however, hidden riches of wisdom upon the delicate subject of the tender passion, for we are both great readers, and I possess an excellent French dictionary.

All this, you will ask, is a propos of what? It is a propos of Reggie, a young English friend of mine, who broke into my room the other evening, and told Paul and me all about his Beloved. Reggie is just twenty-one, and

it appears that his Beloved is very lovely indeed. Her name, if my memory serves, is Maud, and Reggie is going to marry her whether his mother will let him or no. He analysed his feelings in a way that would have done credit to Monsieur Bourget. It wasn't very interesting, but we bore the affliction not without heroism, and tried to look as though we had never heard the same thing before. When Reggie had talked himself out we offered him a drink, which he refused, because he said, very properly, that a fellow who is engaged has no right to drink. He has stopped smoking, too, because it's simply disgusting to go into a lady's company with the air of a taproom hanging about a fellow. Paul was delighted with the phrase. "You ought to write, dear boy," he told him. "You have a very correct idea of the value of words. Atmosphere of the taproom is the best thing I have heard for some time. But tell us more about the lady; we are all on fire."

Reggie cleared his throat to begin all over again, so I thought it was time to give him a little sound advice.

"Look here," I said, "this girl of yours seems to be a very ordinary type."

"I beg your pardon?" said the lover, stiffly.

"Well, her name, you know," I urged. "You can't have girls calling themselves Maud. It reminds you of Tennyson."

"It doesn't remind me of Tennyson," said Reggie, loyally. "It reminds me of Her."

"Yes, of course; but she is an ordinary type, you know. You can't pretend to deny you said she is the most perfect woman you ever set eyes on can you?"

"No, I can't," came the rapt answer; "and I don't want to."

"And the sweetest?"

"Yes."

"And the purest?"

"Certainly she is."

"Well, there you are! Quite the usual set of virtues. I appeal to Paul."

I might as well have appealed to the archangel Gabriel. Paul, the hypocrite, actually sighed.

"Don't listen to him, Reggie," he advised. "He cannot understand these things as we do. His withered bosom has never glowed beneath the tender flame, as ours have. Regard him as the serpent who would disturb the unsullied

bliss of your young Eden. Don't let his honeyed whisperings impose upon you; turn a deaf ear to all his—"

Paul might have gone on for some time like this, had not Reggie embraced him, much to his disgust, for he hates to have a well turned period broken in upon. It must be confessed that Reggie is somewhat violently English.

"When you two have done billing and cooing," I said in disgust, "perhaps I can go on with the sound advice I was giving."

"We don't want to hear any more," said the graceless Paul. "You don't appreciate our feelings; does he, Reggie?"

"He can't, you know," agreed the pitiful wretch. "I am glad you understand me, though, old chap."

"He understand you!" I derided. "He's making fun of you. I was giving you sound advice, Paul, I'm ashamed of you. Don't heed him, Reggie. Look at the expression of low cunning on his face."

Reggie ignored me altogether, as beneath notice. "I read a ripping thing last night," he said, addressing himself to Paul, "It's about a woman. Would you like to

hear it?"

"Yes, go ahead."

"It's poetry, you know," he said, diffidently. I heard Paul grit his teeth, and felt a certain amount of base satisfaction. Reggie cleared his throat, and blushed a little: "It's by a chap called Shelley," he told us. "It goes like this. Don't forget it's about a woman.

Seraph of heaven, too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman
All that is insupportable in thee
Of light and love and immortality.
Sweet benediction of the eternal curse!
Veiled glory of this lampless universe."

"Is there any more?" interrupted Paul, in a hollow voice.

"Yes, lots; but you've made me lose the thread with interrupting like that. I can't remember the rest. I'm awfully sorry."

"So am I," said Paul. He stretched a limp hand towards the horn of plenty. "I'm going to have a drink," he announced. "I should advise you to have a drink too, Reggie. You'll need it."

We drank. After the second glass our wan lover remembered he was teetotal, and said he would only have

one more. But his frigid virginity was thawed, and when he had been persuaded to light a cigarette, he began to chaff me about good advice.

"It is no laughing matter," I assured him. "A man shouldn't let himself be imposed upon. For instance, it was unwise of you to believe the rubbish she told you about never having been kissed before. Springs to catch woodcocks, my sweet boy!"

Reggie was visibly impressed; he blushed like a red, red rose. "How the dickens did you know—" he stuttered.

"How did I know?" I said, waving my hand with the air of superiority which has so endeared me to my friends of the press. "How did I know? Well, as I have heard the same tale myself from more women than this grey head cares to remember, and as every woman tells every man that he is the very first who ever did anything like that to her, my knowledge is not hard to explain. Wake up, Paul," I said, touching him with my slipper.

Paul opened one eye, and regarded us. "Are you still talking about women?" he asked, tentatively.

"Yes; I was telling Reggie that women almost without exception——"

"I don't suppose," said the vestal Paul, "it will be

fit for us to hear. You go home Reggie; he'll corrupt you. Pass the wine."

APPENDIX B

Parodies of Sturm

Published in BON-ACCORD

1 Frank and his Faery Grandmother¹

With the usual apologies to the Author of
'Fin and His Faery Wife'
as per last year's Christmas Number

I was a poet making rhymes,
I did a lot of things like that—
I wrote of wraiths and faery queens,
And phantom maidens—far from fat.

For everyone I sang about
Was dead, or just about to die;
And not a soul who read my rhyme
Could understand it—nor could I.

But one day, as the murmuring breath
Of many maidens sang to me,
There came a gray and withered crone;
I offered her a cup of tea.

She had a joyous gin-bright eye,
And whisps of straw were in her hair;
She tripped upon her tangled skirt
And tumbled in my easy chair.

¹ LXXIII, 25 (18 December 1902), p. 13.

And when the vapour of the tea
Had her phantasmal fancy fired,
She wiped her mouth and, murmuring, said:
"My boy, you make me very tired—

"You might not guess it from my looks,
But I'm the Faery Wife of Fin,
An' him an' me was never tight
On anything more "strange" than gin.

"You're out of it with your ideas
About the heroes as we slew:
We never fought with no one yet
Except the faery Men in Blue."

I glared upon the dismal hag,
She cowered before my maniac grin,
But presently she slept, and then
I slew the Faery Wife of Fin.

Since that time I have left alone
Each pale queen of the pallid brow:
And even Moira has got wed
And lives respectably now.

Diversions¹

A Little Bit of Sugar for the Bird:
Very Remotely Connected with Anything

(With the customary apologies to Petronius)

It had rained cheerfully all the week. It was a pleasant change from the snow of the preceding month, for it was now August. The weather report read "set fair," so I was in the best of spirits, and, whistling "Molly Riley," I playfully tapped my landlady, Mrs. Harris, under the chin as I entered.

"Omnis amans ament," I remarked, sweetly.

"The same to you, sir, I'm sure," she answered with characteristic spirit.

I had returned from my game at golf with a chaste thirst—one of those select thirsts that you caress lovingly like the red lips of a woman—voluptuous and Rossetti-like. I would have had a green Chartreuse, but

¹ AAAV, 4 (23 July 1903), pp. 8-9.

I could not afford it. Whisky, on the other hand, suggests Calvinism and an Agricultural Labourer. Now, I am not Calvinistic—neither am I an Agricultural Labourer. Instead, I had a small soda. It fitted my mood.

I had only composed five poems that day, a monody to the Free Press and a monograph on "The Limitations of Subjective Intelligence," to Light, and as it was still an hour till the aurate Sun might be expected to fade like a dying flame in the interminable West and (if the rain held off) a violet dusk full of stars ensue, I decided to write a "Town's Drummer." As I left my little room, round whose walls hung the shelves buoyantly bearing my favourite authors—myself, Burns, and Harry Hat—a faint, languorous, subtle perfume, lingering like a woman's first kiss, caught me laughingly on the olfactory nerve. I halted—in helpless stupefaction. I felt in all my pockets as if I had lost something. No—it could not. Yet—yes, it was. Where had I last experienced that elusive phantasmal effluvia? No, the street had not been up for a week—it could not be the gas meter. Tremblingly I rang for Mrs. Harris. She came, swathed in homespun, a smile

dimpling her left cheek.

"Have the sheets been well aired?" I said, simulating anger.

Mrs. Harris looked at me anxiously, for she has not got accustomed to my Scotch accent.

"I mean has this room been aired," I continued, approaching the subject delicately.

"Ay, that it has, laddie," she answered affectionately, for we had played dominoes together, when, as I once felicitously observed to her, mens agitat molem.

"I thought," I continued, with just the suspicion of a falter, "that—that I felt—"

"Smelt," she corrected hurriedly.

"Quite true," I answered. "Was it—?"

"Le vrai n'est pas toujours vraisemblable," replied Mrs. Harris. "Ay^{da} she continued, lapsing into the vernacular I love so well. "Puir thing, she wandert in here by mistake wi' her wee bit bundle of onions ower her shouther. I think she cam' frae furrin parts or frae Dundee. Puir yallow-faced quinie—"

A deathly pallor overspread my landlady's face.

"My silver tea-pot," she shrieked; "my silver tea-pot that was my mither's and her mither's afore her! Far is't?"

"My dear long-lost Countess!" I answered, and swooned away.

That night I was in the Shiprow. I love these Bonemian haunts where the smell of the oil of the Fish-shop curls in the languorous air. Then I saw her. I could have met Burnett of Kemnay in Huntley Street with calmness. But Slider in the Shiprow! There she stood—giovane santa—My Slider!

"Corpo di Bacco!" I exclaimed.

"Not so," she replied, with charming naïveté. Merely me. Buon giorno, Signore!"

"Servitore umilissimo!"

"So nice of you to say so. But you are changed—horribly changed. You have got your hair cut, and you wear a tartan tie."

"Omnia mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis. This is Aberdeen."

"Oh, là, là! But Aberdeen—c'est magnifique! I love the great chimney électrique—the dear sweet Via Porto, the Chief Parish Ruler—what you call him with the


flail—Milor Murray? and the great little man, Sir Croll. I love them all."

"Always the same, ma p'tite. Always liberal with your loves and counsels! Eh, quoi?"

"Illi umru tawil bishuf ketir, as the Arabs say," She answered sweetly.

"Don't, carissima—don't say that."

"Pourquoi?"

"Because," I said, "I cannot make use of it in my 'Dig—, I mean my 'Diversions.' The hero of the first story in last month's Strand uses the phrase three times, and there is such a thing as infringement of copyright."

"Gott in Him—"

"Hush, darling," I whispered, "this will be read by the Young Person."

"Donner und blitzen!" she murmured softly, then laughed, a most hilarious, hold-me-ere-I-die laugh.

"Le renard prêché aux poulets," she added, when the paroxysm had subsided.

"You read the newspapers, then?" I said. "You may even read Bo—"

"Oui. All of 'em. The dear old fail-me-never Journal,

and the Free Press with the great Critique Dramatique.

How else could I know when to go to the play?"

"There is—" I suggested.

"I know. But it is not approved in a High Quarter."

"Well then, the People's Journal."

"Bravissima! the flippant, flighty P.J. Do you know," she continued confidentially, "I do believe you are Dainty Davie, who writes all those pretty stories for the children, you know. Are you really Dainty Davie? I could kiss the dear old man."

"Il n'est point de roses sans épines! Pardon, Slider," I hastened to add, for I saw her eyelash quiver as a sunbeam stole caressingly past. "I did not mean it in that way. But may I be Dainty Davie then?"

"You remember, Pietro, that night we stood upon the Janiculum?" she remarked, rather inconsequently, I thought.

"It was a damp night," I replied.

"And do you remember when we strolled along the Borgo Santo Spirito, and while we lingered on the Bridge of Sant' Angelo—"

"His Serene Excellency, your husband, the Lion Tamer, was rather annoyed," I interrupted.

"You held my hand a little longer than I—than I thought quite proper."

"Too true. Polla metaxa eikon kulikos—"

"Don't," she pleaded. "I hate Attic Greek. It is so very suburban. Yet you meant it?"

"L'amour et la fumée ne peuvent se cacher."

"Peter," said my slider—she often called me Peter in the old days, because she said it reminded her of Paul—"I am a Widow."

"Caramba!"

It was what the hero always says in a penny "blood", and so I said it too.

"Yes, free—a vinculo matrimonii," she continued.

"Really, slider?"

"Shure's deth."

I had new potatoes for luncheon, and they hurt me. New potatoes always do—a little.

"And now?"

"See," she said, handing me a treasured, well-thumbed cutting from the advertisement pages of the Weekly News.

I took it, and read:

MADAME BROWN

(Contessa Slider di Santiago, late Contortionist,
Barnun & Baley's),

IMPORTER OF ONIONS AND DEALER IN BRIC-a-BRAC.

FAMILIES WAITED ON AT THEIR OWN HOMES.

NO REASONABLE OFFER REFUSED.

Call or wire: 49 Shiprow, Aberdeen.

That elusive aroma! But she was a widow.

"Here is my Emporium," she continued, gaily. "Come in and see this quaint old silver tea-pot."

"I have not time. I am moving into the Ferryhill neighbourhood next week."

"Au revoir, mon ami."

"Good-bye, Madame Brown."

"Ting-ting, Peter."

"Good-bye, Madame Brown."