

The Vigil of Venus and Other Poems by "Q" eBook

The Vigil of Venus and Other Poems by "Q" by Arthur Quiller-Couch

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Page 1

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

The *Pervigilium Veneris*—of unknown authorship, but clearly belonging to the late literature of the Roman Empire—has survived in two MSS., both preserved at Paris in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.

Of these two MSS. the better written may be assigned (at earliest) to the close of the seventh century; the other (again at earliest) to the close of the ninth. Both are corrupt; the work of two illiterate copyists who—strange to say—were both smatterers enough to betray their little knowledge by converting *Pervigilium* into *Per Virgilium* (*scilicet*, “by Virgil”): thus helping us to follow the process of thought by which the Middle Ages turned Virgil into a wizard. Here and there the texts become quite silly, separately or in consent; and just where they agree in the most surprising way—*i.e.* in the arrangement of the lines—the conjectural emendator is invited to do his worst by a note at the head of the older Codex, “Sunt vero versus xxii”—“There are rightly twenty-two lines.”

This has started much ingenious guess-work. But no really convincing rearrangement has been achieved as yet; and I have been content to take the text pretty well as it stands, with a few corrections upon which most scholars agree. With a poem of “paratactic structure” the best of us may easily go astray by transposing lines, or blocks of lines, to correspond with *our* sequence of thought; and I shall be content if, following the only texts to which appeal can be made,[1] my translation be generally intelligible.

It runs pretty closely, line for line, with the original; because one may love and emulate classical terseness even while despairing to rival it. But it does not attempt to be literal; for even were it worth doing, I doubt if it be possible for anyone in our day to hit precisely the note intended by an author or heard by a reader in the eighth century. Men change subtly as nations succeed to nations, religions to religions, philosophies to philosophies; and it is a property of immortal poetry to shift its appeal. It does not live by continuing to mean the same thing. It grows as we grow. We smile, for instance, when some interlocutor in a dialogue of Plato takes a line from the *Iliad* and applies it seriously *au pied de la lettre*. We can hardly conceive what the great line conveyed to him; but it may mean something equally serious to us, though in a different way.

[1] Facsimiles of the two Codices can be studied in a careful edition of the *Pervigilum* by Mr Cecil Clementi, published by Mr B.H. Blackwell of Oxford, 1911.

PERVIGILIUM VENERIS

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet. Ver novum, ver jam canorurn, vere natus orbis est; Vere concordant amores, vere nubunt alites, Et nemus comam resolvit de maritis imbris. Cras amorum copulatrix inter umbras arborum 5

Implicat casas virentes de flagello myrteo: Cras Dione jura dicit fulta sublimi throno.
Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet.



Page 2

To-morrow—What news of to-morrow?

Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have loved, love anew!

It is Spring, it is chorussing Spring; 'tis the birthday of Earth, and
for you!

It is Spring; and the Loves and the birds wing together and woo to accord
Where the bough to the rain has unbraided her locks as a bride to
her lord.

For she walks—she our Lady, our Mistress of Wedlock—the woodlands
atween, 5

And the bride-bed she weaves them, with myrtle enlacing, with curtains
of green.

Look aloft! list the law of Dione, sublime and enthroned in the blue:

Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have loved, love anew!

Tunc liquore de superno spumeo et ponti globo,
Caerulas inter catervas, inter et bipedes equos, 10

Fecit undantem Dionen de maritis imbribus.

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet.

Ipsa gemmis purpurantem pingit annum floribus,

Ipsa surgentes papillas de Favoni spiritu

Urget in toros tepentes; ipsa roris lucidi 15

Noctis aura quem relinquit, spargit umentes aquas.

Et micant lacrimae trementes de caduco pondere:

Time was that a rain-cloud begat her, impregnating the heave of the deep,
'Twixt hooves of sea-horses a-scatter, stampeding the dolphins as
sheep. 10

Lo! arose of that bridal Dione, rainbow'd and besprent of its dew!

Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have loved, love anew!

She, she, with her gem-dripping finger enamels the wreath of the year;

She, she, when the maid-bud is nubile and swelling winds—whispers anear,

Disguising her voice in the Zephyr's—"So secret the bed! And thou
shy?" 15

She, she, thro' the hush'd humid Midsummer night draws the dew from on
high;

Dew bright with the tears of its origin, dew with its weight on the bough,

Gutta praeceps orbe parvo sustinet casus suos.

En, pudorem florulentae prodiderunt purpurae:

Umor ille quern serenae astra rorant noctibus 20

Mane virgineas papillas solvit umentis peplo.

Ipsa jussit mane ut udas virgines nubant rosae;



Fusa Paphies de cruore deque Amoris osculis
Deque gemmis deque flammis deque solis purpuris,
Cras ruborem qui latebat veste tectus ignea 25
Unico marita nodo non pudebit solvere.
Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet.

Misdoubting and clinging and trembling—"Now, now must I fall? Is it now?" Star-fleck'd
on the stem of the brier as it gathers and falters and flows, Lo! its trail runs a ripple of
fire on the nipple it bids be a
 rose, 20

Yet englobes it diaphanous, veil upon veil in a tiffany drawn To bedrape the small
virginal breasts yet unripe for the spousal of dawn; Till the vein'd very vermeil of Venus,
till Cupid's incarnadine kiss, Till the ray of the ruby, the sunrise, ensanguine the bath of
her bliss; Till the wimple her bosom uncover, a tissue of fire to the view, 25 And the zone
o'er the wrists of the lover slip down as they reach to undo. *Now learn ye to love who
loved never—now ye who have loved, love anew!*



Page 3

Ipsa nymphas diva luco jussit ire myrteo:
It puer comes puellis. Nee tamen credi potest
Esse Amorem feriatum, si sagittas vexerit. 30
Ite, nymphae, posuit arma, feriatu est Amor;
Jussus est inermis ire, nudus ire jussus est,
Neu quid arcu, neu sagitta, neu quid igne laederet;
Sed tamen nymphae cavete, quod Cupido pulcher est;
Est in armis totus idem quando nudus est Amor! 35

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit eras amet.

Conpari Venus pudore mittit ad te virgines:

“Go, maidens,” Our Lady commands, “while the myrtle is green in the
groves,
Take the Boy to your escort.” “But ah!” cry the maidens, “what trust
is in Love’s
Keeping holiday too, while he weareth his archery, tools of his
trade?” 30
“Go! he lays them aside, an apprentice released; ye may wend unafraid.
See, I bid him disarm, he disarms; mother-naked I bid him to go,
And he goes mother-naked. What flame can he shoot without arrow or bow?”
Yet beware ye of Cupid, ye maidens! Beware most of all when he charms
As a child: for the more he runs naked, the more he’s a strong
man-at-arms. 35

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have loved, love anew! “Lady
Dian”—Behold how demurely the damsels approach her and sue—*

Una res est quam rogamus: cede, virgo Delia,
Ut nemus sit incruentum de ferinis stragibus.
Ipsa vellet ut venires, si deceret virginem: 40
Jam tribus choros videres feriatos noctibus
Congreges inter catervas ire per saltus tuos,
Floreas inter coronas, myrteas inter casas:
Nee Ceres nee Bacchus absunt, nee poetarum Deus;
De tenente tota nox est pervigilia canticis: 45
Regnet in silvis Dione; tu recede, Delia.
Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet.

Hear Venus her only petition! Dear maiden of
Delos, depart!
Let the forest be bloodless to-day, unmolested the
roe and the hart!



Holy huntress, thyself she would bid be her guest, 40
could thy chastity stoop
To approve of our revels, our dances—three
nights that we weave in a troop
Arm-in-arm thro' thy sanctu'ries whirling, till faint
and dispersed in the grove
We lie with thy lilies for chaplets, thy myrtles for
arbours of love:
And Apollo, with Ceres and Bacchus to chorus—
song, harvest, and wine—
Hymns thee dispossess'd, "'Tis Dione who reigns! 45
Let Diana resign!"
O, the wonderful nights of Dione! dark bough,
with her star shining thro'!
*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew!*

Jussit Hyblaeis tribunal stare diva floribus;
Praeses ipsa jura dicit, adsederunt Gratiae.
Hybla, totos funde floras quidquid annus adtulit; 50
Hybla, florum rumpe vestem quantus Aetnae campus est.



Page 4

Ruris hic erunt puellae, vel puellae montium,
Quaeque silvas, quaeque lucos, quaeque fontes incolunt:

Jussit omnes adsidere mater alitis dei,
Jussit et nudo puellas nil Amori credere. 55

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet.

She has set up her court, has Our Lady, in Hybla,
and deckt it with blooms:—

With the Graces at hand for assessors Dione dispenses
her dooms.

Now burgeon, O Hybla! put forth and abound, till 50
Proserpina's field,

To the foison thy lap overflowing its laurel of Sicily
yield.

Call, assemble the nymphs—hamadryad and dryad—
the echoes who court

From the rock, who the rushes inhabit, in ripples
who swim and disport.

“I admonish you maids—I, his mother, who suckled
the scamp ere he flew—

An ye trust to the Boy flying naked, some pestilent 55
prank ye shall rue.”

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew!*

Et rigentibus virentes ducit umbras floribus:

Cras erit quum primus AEther copulavit nuptias,

Et pater totum creavit vernis annum nubibus,

In sinum maritus imber fluxit almae conjugis, 60

Unde fetus mixtus omnes aleret magno corpore.

Ipsa venas atque mentem permeanti spiritu

Intus occultis gubernat procreatrix viribus,

Perque coelum, perque terras, perque pontum
subditum

Pervium sui tenorem seminali tramite 65

She has coax'd her the shade of the hazel to cover
the wind-flower's birth.

Since the day the Great Father begat it, descending
in streams upon Earth;

When the Seasons were hid in his loins, and the
Earth lay recumbent, a wife,

To receive in the searching and genital shower the 60



soft secret of life.
As the terrible thighs drew it down, and conceived,
as the embryo ran
Thoro' blood, thoro' brain, and the Mother gave all
to the making of man,
She, she, our Dione, directed the seminal current to
creep,
Penetrating, possessing, by devious paths all the
height, all the deep.
She, of all procreation procuress, the share to the 65
furrow laid true;

Inbuit, jussitque mundum nosse nascendi vias. *Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet.*

Ipsa Trojanos nepotes in Latinos transtulit,
Ipsa Laurentem puellam conjugem nato dedit;
Moxque Marti de sacello dat pudicam virginem; 70
Romuleas ipsa fecit cum Sabinis nuptias,
Unde Ramnes et Quirites proque prole posterum
Romuli matrem crearet et nepotem Caesarem.
Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras amet.

She, she, to the womb drave the knowledge, and open'd the ecstasy through. *Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have loved, love anew!*



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Her favour it was fill'd the sail of the Trojan for Latium bound; Her favour that won her
Aeneas a bride on Laurentian ground, And anon from the cloister inveigled the Virgin,
the Vestal,

to Mars; 70

As her wit by the wild Sabine rape recreated her Rome for its wars, With the Ramnes,
Quirites, together ancestrally proud as they drew From Romulus down to our Caesar—
last, best of that bone, of that thew. *Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who
have loved, love anew!*

Rura fecundat voluptas: rura Venerem sentiunt: 75

Ipse Amor puer Dionse rure natus dicitur.

Hunc ager, cum parturiret ipsa, suscepit sinu:

Ipsa florum delicatis educavit osculis.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras,
amet.*

Ecce jam super genestas explicant tauri latus, 80

Quisque tutus quo tenetur conjugali foedere:

Subter umbras cum maritis ecce balantum greges;

Et canoras non tacere diva jussit alites.

Pleasure planteth a field; it conceives to the passion, 75

the pang, of his joy.

In a field was Dione in labour delivered of Cupid the

Boy;

And the field in its fostering lap from her travail

received him: he drew

Mother's milk from the delicate kisses of flowers;

and he prosper'd and grew—

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew!*

Lo! behold ye the bulls, with how lordly a flank 80

they besprawl on the broom!—

Yet obey the uxorious yoke, and are tamed to

Dione her doom.

Or behear ye the sheep, to the husbanding rams

how they bleat to the shade!

Or behear ye the birds, at the Goddess' command

how they sing unafraid!

Jam loquaces ore rauco stagna cycni perstrepunt; Adsonat Terei puella subter umbram

populi, 85 Ut putes motus amoris ore dici musico, Et neges queri sororem de marito

barbaro. Ilia cantat, nos tacemus. Quando ver venit meum? Quando fiam uti chelidon,



ut tacere desinam? Perdidi Musam tacendo, nec me Apollo respicit; 90 Sic Amyclas,
cum tacerent, perdidit silentium. *Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras
amet.*

Be it harsh as the swannery's clamour that shatters the hush of the lake, Be it dulcet as
where Philomela holds darkling the poplar awake, 85 So melting her soul into music,
you'd vow 'twas her passion, her own, She plaineth—her sister forgot, with the Daulian
crime long-agone. Hark! Hush! Draw around to the circle ... Ah, loitering Summer!
Say when For me shall be broken the charm, that I chirp with the swallow again? I am
old; I am dumb; I have waited to sing till Apollo withdrew— 90 So Amyclae a moment
was mute, and for ever a wilderness grew. *Now learn ye to love who loved never—now
ye who have loved, love anew,
To-morrow!—to-morrow!*

TO CHARLES THURSBY



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THE "ONLIE BEGETTER"

THE REGENT

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CARL'ANTONIO, *Duke of Adria*

TONINO, *his young son*

LUCIO; *Count of Vallescura, brother to the Duchess*

CESARIO, *Captain of the Guard*

GAMBA, *a Fool*

OTTILIA, *Duchess and Regent of Adria*

LUCETTA, *a Lady-in-Waiting*

FULVIA, *a Lady of the Court*

Courtiers, Priests, Choristers, Soldiers, Mariners, Townsfolk, etc.

The Scene is the Ducal Palace of Adria, in the N. Adriatic

The Date, 1571

THE REGENT

SCENE.—A terraced courtyard before the Ducal Palace. Porch and entrance of Chapel, R. A semicircular balcony, L., with balustrade and marble seats, and an opening whence a flight of steps leads down to the city. The city lies out of sight below the terrace; from which, between its cypresses and statuary, is seen a straight stretch of a canal; beyond the canal are sand-hills and the line of the open sea. Mountains, L., dip down to the sea and form a curve of the coast.

As the curtain rises, a crowd of town and country folk is being herded to the back of the terrace by the Ducal Guard, under Cesario. Within the Chapel, to the sound of an organ, boys' voices are chanting the service of the Mass.



Cesario, Gamba the Fool, Guards, Populace.

Cesario. Way there! Give room! The Regent comes from Mass. Guards, butt them on the toes—way there! give room! Prick me that laggard's leg-importunate fools!

Guards. Room for the Regent! Room!

[The sacring bell rings within the Chapel.]

Cesario. Hark there, the bell!

[A pause. Men of the crowd take off their caps.]

Could ye not leave, this day of all the year,
Your silly suits, petitions, quarrels, pleas?
Could ye not leave, this once in seven years,
Our Lady to come holy-quiet from Mass.
Lean on the wall, and loose her cage-bird heart,
To lift and breast and dance upon the breeze.
Draws home her lord the Duke?

Crowd. Long live the Duke!

Cesario. The devil, then! Why darken his approach?

Gamba (from the bench where he has been mending his viol). Because, Captain, 'tis a property knaves and fools have in common—to stand in their own light, as 'tis of soldiers to talk bad logic. That knave, now—he with the red nose and the black eye—the Duke's colours, loyal man!—you clap an iron on his leg, and ask him why he is not down in the city, hanging them out of window! Go to: you are a soldier!

Cesario. And you a Fool, and on your own showing stand in your own light.



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Gamba. Nay, neither in my own light, nor as a Fool. So should myself stand between the sun and my shadow; whereas I am not myself—these seven years have I been but the shadow of a Fool. Yet one must tune up for the Duke.

(Strikes his viol and sings.)

“Bird of the South, my Rondinello——”

Flat-Flat!

Cesario (calling up to watchman on the Chapel roof). Ho there! What news?

A Voice. Captain, no sail!

Cesario. Where sits The wind?

Voice. Nor’ west, and north a point!

Cesario. Perchance They have down’d sail and creep around the flats.

Gamba (tuning his viol). Flats, flats! the straight horizon, and the life
These seven years laid by rule! The curst canal
Drawn level through the drawn-out level sand
And thistle-tufts that stink as soon as pluck’d!
Give me the hot crag and the dancing heat,
Give me the Abruzzi, and the cushioned thyme—
Brooks at my feet, high glittering snows above.
What were thy music, viol, without a ridge?

[Noise of commotion in the city below.]

Cesario. Watchman, what news?

A Voice. Sir, on the sea no sail!

One of the Crowd. But through the town below a horseman spurs— I think, Count Lucio! Yes—Count Lucio! He nears, draws rein, dismounts!

Cesario. Sure, he brings news.

Gamba. I think he brings word the Duke is sick; his loyal folk have drunk so much of his health.

[A murmur has been growing in the town below. It breaks into cheers as Count Lucio comes springing up to the terrace.]



Enter Lucio.

Lucio. News! Where's the Regent? Eh? is Mass not said?
Cesario, news! I rode across the dunes;
A pilot—Nestore—you know the man—
Came panting. Sixteen sail beyond the point!
That's not a galley lost!

Crowd. Long live the Duke!

Lucio. Hark to the tocsin! I have carried fire— Wildfire! Why, where's my sister? I've a mind—

[He strides towards the door of the Chapel; but pauses at the sound of chanting within, and comes back to Cesario.]

Man, are you mute? I say the town's aflame
Below! But here, up here, you stand and stare
Like prisoners loosed to daylight. Rub your eyes,
Believe!

Cesario (musing). It has been long.

Lucio. As tapestry
Pricked out by women's needles; point-device
As saints in fitted haloes. Yet they stab,
Those needles. Oh, the devil take their tongues!

Cesario. Why, what's the matter?

Lucio. P'st! another lie
Against the Countess Fulvia; and the train
Laid to my sister's ear. Cesario,
My sister is a saint—and yet she married:
Therefore should understand ... Would saints, like cobblers,
Stick but to business in this naughty world!
Ah, well! the Duke comes home.





Year after year, and still the State not starved;
Was't not well done? And if, responsible
To God, and lonely, she has leaned on God
Too heavily for our patience, was't not wise?—
And well, though weary?

Lucio. I tell you, she's my sister!

Cesario. Well, an you will, bridle on that. Lord Lucio,
You named the Countess Fulvia. To my sorrow,
Two hours ago I called on her and laid her
Under arrest.

Lucio. The devil! For what?

Cesario. For that
A lady, whose lord keeps summer in the hills
To nurse a gouty foot, should penalize
His dutiful return by shutting doors
And hanging out a ladder made of rope,
Or prove its safety by rehearsing it
Upon a heavier man.

Lucio. I'll go to her. Oh, this is infamous!

Cesario. Nay, be advised:
No hardship irks the lady, save to sit
At home and feed her sparrows; nor no worse
Annoy than from her balcony to spy
(Should the eye rove) a Switzer of the Guard
At post between her raspberry-canes, to watch
And fright the thrushes from forbidden fruit.

Lucio. Infamous! infamous!

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Cesario. Enough, my lord: The Regent!

[Doors of the Chapel open. The organ sounds, with voices of choir chanting the recessional. The Court enters from Mass, attending the Regent Ottilia and her son Tonino. She wears a crown and heavy dalmatic. Her brother Lucio, controlling himself with an effort, kisses her hand and conducts her to the marble bench, which serves for her Chair of State. She bows, receiving the homage of the crowd; but, after seating herself, appears for a few moments unconscious of her surroundings. Then, as her rosary slips from her fingers and falls heavily at her feet, she speaks.]

Regent. So slips the chain linking this world with Heaven,
And drops me back to earth: so slips the chain
That hangs my spirit to the Redeemer's cross
Above pollution in the pure swept air
Whereunder frets this hive: so slips the chain—
(She starts up)—God! the dear sound! Was that his anchor dropped?
Speak to the watchman, one! Call to the watch!
What news?

Cesario. Aloft! What news?

Voice above. No sail as yet!

Regent. Ah, pardon, sirs! My ears are strung to-day, And play false airs invented by the wind. Methought a hawse-pipe rattled ...

Gamba (chants to his viol). *Shepherds, see— Lo! What a mariner love hath made me!*

Regent. What chants the Fool?

Gamba. Madonna, 'tis a trifle Made by a silly poet on wives that stand All night at windows listening the surf— *Now he comes! Will he come? Alas! no, no!*

Lucio. Peace, lively! Madam, there is news—brave news!
I'm from the watch-house. There the pilots tell
Of sixteen sail to the southward! Sixteen sail,
And nearing fast!

Regent. Praise God! dear Lucio!

[She has seated herself again. She takes Lucio's hand and speaks, petting it.]

What? Glowing with my happiness? That's like you.
But for yourself the hour, too, holds release.



Lucio (between sullenness and shame, with a glance at Cesario). "Release?"

Regent. You will forgive? I have great need
To be forgiven: sadly I have been slack
In guardianship, and by so much betrayed
My promise to our mother's passing soul.
Myself in cares immersed, I left the child
Among his toys—and turn to find him man—
But yet so much a boy that boyhood can
(*Wistfully*) Laugh in his honest eyes? Forgive me, Lucio!
Tell me, whate'er have slackened, there has slipped
No knot of love. To-morrow we'll make sport,
Be playmates and invent new games, and old—
Wreath flowers for crowns—

[He drags his hand away. She gazes at him wistfully, and turns to the Captain of the Guard.]

Cesario,
What are the suits?

Cesario. They are but three to-day, Madonna. First, a scoundrel here in irons For
having struck the Guard.



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Regent (eying the culprit). His name, I think,
Is Donatello Crocco. Hey? You improve,
Good man. The last time 'twas your wife you basted.
At this rate, in another year or two
You'll bang the Turk. Do you confess the assault?

Prisoner. I do.

Regent. Upon a promise we dismiss you.
Your tavern, as it comes into our mind,
Is the 'Three Cups.' So many, and no more,
You'll drink to-day—have we your word? Three cups,
And each a *Viva* for the Duke's return.

Prisoner. Your Highness, I'll not take it at the price
Of my good manners. I'm a gallant man:
And who in Adria calls. 'Three cheers for the Duke!'
But adds a fourth for the Duchess? Lady, nay;
Grant me that fourth, or back I go to the cells!

[*The Regent laughs and nods to the Guard to release him.*]

Regent. What next?

An Old Woman (very rapidly). Your Highness will not know me—Zia
Agnese, Giovannucci's wife that was;
And feed a two-three cows, as a widow may,
On the marshes where the grass is salt and sweet
As your Highness knows—and always true to pail
Until this Nicolo—

Nicolo. Lies! lies, your Highness!

Old Woman. Having a quarrel, puts the evil eye On Serafina. She's my best of cows, In
stall with calf but ten days weaned.

Nicolo. Lies! lies!

Old Woman. I would your Highness saw her! When that thief
Hangs upon Lazarus' bosom, he'll be bidding
A ducat for each drop of milk he's cost me,
To cool his tongue.

Regent. Ay—ay, the cow is sick,
I think; and mind me, being country-bred,



Of a cure for such: which is, to buy a comb
And comb the sufferer's tail at feeding-time.
If Zia Agnese do but this, she'll counter
The Evil Eye, and maybe with her own
Detect who thieves her Serafina's hay.

Old Woman. God bless your Highness!

Nicolo. God bless your Highness!

Regent (taking up a fresh suit). Why, what's here? "*Costanza, Wife of Giuseppe Boni, citeth him And sueth to live separate, for neglect And divers beatings, as to wit——*" H'm, h'm—
Likewise to keep the child Geronimo, Begotten of his body. You defend The suit, Giuseppe?

A Young Peasant (shrugs his shoulders). As the woman will! I'll not deny I beat her.

Regent. But neglect!
How came you to neglect her? Look on her—
The handsome, frowsy slut, that, by appearance,
Hath never washed her body since she wed.
A beating we might pass. But how neglect
To take her by the neck unto the pump
And hold her till her wet and furious face
Were once again worth kissing? Well—well—well!
Neglect is proven. She shall have deserts:
(*To a Clerk*) But—write, "Defendant keeps his lawful child."



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Young Peasant. My lady—

Wife. Nay, my lady—

Regent. Eh? What's this?

Wife. The poor *bambino*! Nay, 'twas not the suit! How should Giuseppe, being a fool, a man—

Young Peasant. Aye, aye: that's sense. I love him: still, you see—

Regent. An if my judgment suit you not, go home,
The pair. (*As they are going she calls the woman back.*)
Costanza! hath your husband erred
With other woman?

Young Peasant. Never!

Wife. I'll not charge him With that.

Regent. But, yes, you may. This man hath held Another woman to his breast.

Wife. Her name? That I may tear her eyes!

Regent. Her name's Costanza.
The same Costanza that, with body washed,
With ribbon in her hair, light in her eyes,
Arrayed a cottage to allure his heart.
Go home, poor fools, and find her!...
Heigh! No others? [*Heaves a sigh.*]
Captain, dismiss the Guard. The watch, aloft—
Set him elsewhere. We would not be o'erlooked.
You only, Lucio—you, Lucetta—stay;
You for a while, Cesario.

[*Exeunt Courtiers, Guard, Crowd, etc.*]

Heigh! that's over—
The last Court of the Regent; and the books
Accounts of stewardship, my seven years all,
Closed here for audit.

Nay, there's one thing more—
Brother, erewhile I spoke you sisterly,
You turned away, and still you bite your lip:



Signs that may short my preface. It concerns
The Countess Fulvia.

Lucio. Ha!

Regent. Go, bring her, Captain.

[Exit Cesario.

List to me, Lucio: listen, brother dear,
First playmate-child, tending whose innocence
Myself learned motherhood. Shall I deny
Youth to be loved and follow after love?
There is a love breaks like a morning beam
On the husht novice kneeling by his arms;
And worse there is, whose kisses strangle love,
Whose feet take hold of hell. My Lucio,
Follow not that!

Lucio. Why, who—who hath maligned
The Countess?

Regent Not maligned. Lucetta, here—

Lucio. Lucetta! Curse Lucetta and her tongue!
Am I a child, to be nagged by waiting-maids?

Regent. No, but a man, and shall weigh evidence.

Lucio. But I'll not hear it! If her viper tongue
Can kill, why kill it must. But send me a man,
And I will smite his mouth—ay, slit his tongue—
That dares defame the Countess!

Regent. Stay: she comes.

[Enter the Countess Fulvia, Cesario attending.

Madam, the reason wherefore you are summoned
No doubt you guess, from a rude earlier call
Our Captain paid you. Certain practices,
Which you may force me name, are charged upon
you
On testimony you may force me call
And may with freedom question.

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Fulvia. I'll not question:
No, nor I will not answer.

Lucio. Then I'll answer!
For me, for all, she is innocent!

Regent. For you?
We'll hope it: but 'for all' 's more wide an oath
Than you can swear, sir. I'll not bandy you
Words nor debate. Myself the ladder saw;
Lucetta, here, the ladder and the man.
What man she will not say. Cesario
Has tracked his footprint on her garden plots.
Must we say more?

Fulvia. No need. Her fingering mind
Is a close cupboard turning all things rancid.

Lucio. Yea, for such wry-necks all the world's a lawn
To peek and peer and pounce a sinful worm;
The fatter, the more luscious.

Regent. Lucio,
This woman nought gainsays.

Fulvia (fiercely). As why should I?
I'll question not, nor answer. 'Neath your brow
My sentence hunches, crawls, like cat to spring.
Pah! there's no prude will match your virtuous wife
You'd banish me?

Regent. I do. Cesario,
See to it the City gate shuts not to-night.
And she this side.

Fulvia (laughs recklessly). To-night? To-night's your own.
Most modest woman! Duchess, there's a well
By the road, some seven miles beyond the town.
There, 'neath the stars, I'll dip a hand and drink
To the good Duke's disport. But have a care!
That cup's not yet to lip.

Regent. Captain, remove her.
Lucio, remain.



[Exeunt the Countess Fulvia, Cesario following]

Lucio. I'll not remain—When ice
Sits judge of fire, what justice shall be done?
Sister, there be your books—peruse them. There
The sea-line—bide you so with back to it.
While the cold inward heat of cruelty
Warms what was once your heart, now crusted o'er
With duty and slimed with poisonous drip of tongues.
God help the Duke, if what he left he'd find!

[Exit Lucio]

Regent. Is't so, I wonder? Go, Lucetta, fetch
My glass, if haply I may tell.

[Exit Lucetta.]

Is't so?
And have these years enforced, encrusted me
To something monstrous, neither woman nor man?
My lord, my lord! too heavy was the load
You laid! Yet I'll not blame you: for myself
Ruled the straight path the long account correct
As in these books, my ledgers....

*[While she turns the pages, Gamba the Fool creeps
in and hoists himself on the balustrade. He
tries his viol, and sings.]*

SONG: *Gamba.*

Bird of the South, my Rondinello—

Regent. Hey? That Song!



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Gamba. Hie to me, fly to me, steel-blue mate!
Under my breast-knot flutters thy fellow;
Here can I rest not, and thou so late.
Home, to me, home!
'Love, love, I come!'
—Dear one, I wait!

*Quanno nacesti tu, nacqui pur io:
La lundanza tua, 'l desiderio mio!*
You know the song, madonna?

Regent. Ay, fool. Sit
Here at my feet, sing on.

Gamba (sings).

Bird of the South, my Rondinello
Under thy wing my heart hath lain
Till the rain falling on last leaves yellow
Drumm'd to thee, calling southward again.
Home, to me, home!
'Love, love, I come!'
Ah, love, the pain!
Addio, addio! ed un' altra volt' addio!
La lundanza tua, 'l desiderio mio!
(Pause).

A foolish rustic thing the shepherd wives
In our Abruzzi croon by winter fires,
Of their husbands in the plains.

Regent. Gamba!

Gamba. Madonna?

Regent. I'd make thee my confessor. Mindest thou,
By Villalago, where from Sanno's lake
The stream, our Tasso, hurls it down the glen?
One noon, with Lucio—ever in those days
With Lucio—on a rock within the spray,
I wove a ferny garland, while the boy
Roamed, but returned in triumph, having trapped
A bee in a bell-flower—held it to my ear,
Laughing, dissembling that he feared to loose
The hairy thief. So laughed we—and were still,
As deep in Vallescura wound a horn,



And up the pathway 'neath the dappling bough
Came riding—flecked with sunshine, man and horse,—
My lord, my lover; and that song, that song
Upon his lips....

Voice of Watchman. Sail ho! a sail! a sail!

[Murmur of populace below. It grows and swells to a roar as enter hurriedly courtiers, guards, and others: Cesario; Lucetta with mirror.]

Lucetta. My lady! O my lady!—

Cesario. See, they near!
Galley on galley—look, there, by the point!

Regent. O, could my heart keep tally with the surge
That here comes crowding!

Lucetta. Joy, my lady! Joy!

All. Joy! Joy, my lady!

[They press flowers on her. A pause, while they watch. On the canal the galleys come into sight. They near: and as the oars rise and fall, the rowers' chorus is borne from the distance. It is the Rondinello song]

Chorus in Distance. *La lundananza tua, 'l desiderio mio!*

Regent. Thanks, my good, good friends!
And deem it not discourteous if alone
I'd tune my heart to bliss.
My glass, Lucetta!

[Takes mirror.]

Some thoughts there are—some thoughts——



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Courtiers. God save you, madam!

[They go out, leaving the Regent alone.]

Regent (she loosens the clasp of her robe). Some thoughts—some thoughts—

Fall from me, envious robe!

Rest there, my crown—thou more than leaden ache!

Ah!—

God! What a mountain drops! I float—I am lifted

Like thistledown on nothing. Back, my crown—

Weight me to earth! Nay, nay, thy rim shall bite

No more upon this forehead ... Where's my glass?

O mirror, mirror, hath it bit so deep?

My love is coming, hark! O, say not grey,

Sweet mirror! Tell, what time to cure it now?

And he so near, so near!

How shall I meet him?

Why how but as the river leaps to sea,

Steel to its magnet, child to mother's arms?

[She catches up flowers from the baskets left by the courtiers, and decks herself mildly.]

Flowers for my hair, flowers at the breast! Sweet flowers,

He'll crush you 'gainst his corslet. He has arms

Like bands of iron for clasping, has my love.

He'll hurt, he'll hurt ... But oh, sweet flowers, to lie

And feel you helpless while he grips and bruises

Your weak protesting breasts! You'll die in bliss,

Panting your fragrance out.—

Wh'st! Hush, poor fool!

I have unlearned love's very alphabet.

Men like us coy, demure ... Then I'll coquet

And play Madam Disdain—but not to-day.

To-morrow I'll be shrewish, shy, perverse,

Exacting, cold—all April in my moods:

We'll walk the forest, and I'll slip from him,

Hide me like Dryad 'mid the oaks, and mark

His hot dark face pursuing; or I'll couch

In covert green, and hold my breath to hear

His blundering foot go by; then up I'll leap,

And run—and he'll run after. O this lightness!

I'll draw him like a fairy, dance and double—



Yet not so fast but he shall overtake
At length, and catch me panting. O, I charge you,
I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
Wake not my love beneath the forest bough
Where we lie dreaming!

[Fanfare of trumpets in the distance.]

Trumpets, hark! and drums!
They have landed! From the quay they march!
Flowers! flowers!
They are near ... I see him!... Carlo! lord and love!
He looks—waves—O 'tis he! O foolish heart!—
I had feared he'd ta'en a wound.
What is't they shout?
Eh? 'Victory!'—yes, yes. He's browner, thinner;
And the dear eyes, how gaunt!... Yes
'Victory!'
'Victory!' ... lord, and love!...

[The shouts of acclamation are heard now close under the terrace. Spears and banners are seen trooping past. Beside herself, she throws flowers to them, laughing, weeping the while. Then, running to the Chapel door, she prostrates herself before the image of the Virgin that crowns its archway.]



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O Mary, Mother!
Thou, in whose breast all women's thoughts have moved,
All woman's passions heaved. Lo! I adore!
Sweet Mother, hold my hands, rejoice with me:
My bridegroom cometh!

[During this invocation the Countess Fulvia has crept in, a stiletto in her hand. She leans over the Regent and stabs her twice in the breast.]

Fulvia. Then with that!—and that!
Go meet him!

Regent (turns, looks up, and falls on her face).
Oh! I am slain!

Fulvia. And I am worse!
But there's my flower, my red flower, on your breast.—
Go, meet your lord and show it!

[She passes down the steps as Lucetta runs in.]

Lucetta. Madam! Madam!
The Duke is at the gate—Madam!—
Christ! she is murdered! Murder! Murder!

Regent. Fie, Lucetta! peace! What word to greet the Duke For his home-coming! Lift me ... Quick, my robe— My Crown! Call no one. O, but hasten!

Lucetta (helpless, wringing her hands). Madam!

Regent. I need your strength, and must I steady you?
Lucetta, years ago you disarrayed me
Upon my bridal night. I would you'd whisper
The rogueries your tongue invented then.
I have few moments, girl ... I'd have them wanton.
Make jest this mantle hides the maid I was.
I'll have no priest, no doctor—Fetch Tonino!
I must present his son—

[Lucetta runs out.]

All's acted quick:
Bride-bed, conception, birth—and death! But he
Shall sum it in one moment death not takes ...
What noise of trumpets!... Is the wound not covered?



[She wraps herself carefully in her mantle as the courtiers pour in. The child Tonino runs to her and stands by her side. Lucio, Cesario, all the Court, group themselves round her as the Duke enters. He rushes in eagerly; but she sets her teeth on her anguish, and receives him with a low reverence.

Welcome my lord!

Duke. Ottilia!

Regent. Good my lord, Welcome! This day is bright restores you to Your loyal Duchy.

Duke (impatient). Wife! Ottilia!

Regent (she lifts a hand to keep him at distance).
There must be forms, my lord—some forms! Cesario,
Render the Duke his sceptre. As bar to socket,
When the gate closes on a town secure,
So locks this rod back to his manly clutch—
Cry all, 'Long live the Duke!'

All. Long live the Duke!

Duke. Wife, make an end with forms!

Lucio (to Cesario). And so say I! A man would think my sister had no blood In her body.

Cesario (watching the Regent). Peace, man: something there's amiss.

Regent. Yet here is he that sceptre shall inherit.
Lucetta, lead his first-born to the Duke.
His first-born!—Nay but look on him how straight
Of limb, how set and shoulder-square, tho' slender!
He'll sit a horse, in time, and toss a lance
Even with his father.



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Duke. There's my blessing, boy!
But stand aside. Look in my face, Ottilia—
Hearken me, all! One thing these seven years
My life hath lacked, which wanting, all your cannon,
Your banners, *vivas*, bells that rock the roofs,
Throng'd windows, craning faces—all—all—all
Were phantasms, were noise.—

Lucio (exclaims). Why look, here's blood! Here, on the boy's hand!

Regent. Ay! a scratch, no worse, Here, when I pinned my robe.

Duke (continuing). Nay, friends, this moment
My Duchy her dear hand restores to me
To me's a dream. More buoyant would I tread
Dumb street, deserted square, climb ruin'd wall,
Where in a heap beneath a broken flag
Lay Adria.—
So that amid the ruins stood my love
And stretched her hands so faintly—stretched her hands
So faintly. See! She's mine! She lifts them—

Regent (totters and falls into his arms with a tired, happy laugh, which ends in a cry as his arms enfold her). Ah!

[*She faints.*

Duke. (after a moment, releasing her a little). What's here? Ottilia!

Lucetta. My mistress swoons!

A Courtier. 'Tis happiness—

Duke. Fetch water!

Lucio. Nay this blood—
Came of no scratch!

Lucetta. Loosen her bodice—

Duke. Blood?
Why blood? Where's blood?

(Stares as the mantle is imclasped and falls open).
Ah, my God!



Lucetta. Murder! murder! The Countess Fulvia—

Cesario. Speak!

Lucetta. There—while she knelt— Stabbed her, and fled.

Cesario. Which way?

[Lucetta points to the stairs. He dashes off in pursuit.]

Duke. All-seeing God! Where were thine eyes, or else thy justice? Dead? O, never dead!

Lucio. Ay, Duke, push God aside,
As I push thee. I have the better right:
I killed her—I. O never pass, sweet soul,
Till thou hast drunk a shudder of this wretch,
Thy brother, playmate, murderer!

Duke. Wine! bring wine—

Regent (as the wine is brought and revives her). Flower, he will crush thee—but the bliss, the bliss! I swim in bliss. What ... Lucio? Where's my lord? Dear, bring him: he was here awhile and held me. Say he must hold, or the light air will lift And bear me quite away.

[Re-enter Cesario. In one hand he carries his sword, in the other a dagger.]

Lucio. Cesario! What! Is that devil escaped? To think—to think I drank her kisses!—What? Where is she?

Cesario. Dead. I raised the cry: the people pointed after; Ran with me, ravening. Just this side the bridge She heard our howl and turned—drew back the dagger Red with our lady's blood, then drove it home Clean to her own black heart.



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Regent. God pardon her! I would what blood of mine clung to the blade Might mix with hers and sweeten it for mercy.

Lucio. Will you forgive her? Then forgive not me!

Regent. Dear Lucio!—You'll not pluck away your hand This time? Hush! Where's Cesario?... Friend, farewell. Where lies the body?

Cesario. Sooth, madonna, I flung it To the river's will, to roll it down to sea Or cast on muddy bar, for dogs to gnaw.

Regent. The river? Ah! How strong the river rolls! Hold me, my lord—

Duke. Love, love, I hold you

Regent.—Ay!

The child, too—You will hold the child?...

This roar

Deafens but will not drown us.

[Within the Chapel the choir is chanting a dirge. Gamba goes and closes the door on the sound: then creeps to the foot of the couch. The dying woman gently motions aside the cross a priest is holding to her, and looks up at her husband.]

[Below the terrace a voice is heard singing the Rondinello song.]

Look! beyond

Be waters where no galley moves with oar,

So wide, so waveless,—and, between the woods,

Meadows—O land me there!... Hark, my lord's voice

Singing in Vallescura! Soft my, love,

I am so tired—so tired! Love, let me play!

[Dies.]

[The Courtiers lift the body in silence and bear it to the Chapel, the Duke and his train following. The doors close on them. On the stage are left only Cesario, standing by the balustrade; and Gamba, who has seated himself with his viol and touches it, as still the voice sings below—]

Addio, Addio! ed un'altra volt'addio!

La lundananza tua, 'l desiderio mio!

[On the last note a string of the viol cracks, and with a cry the Fool flings himself, heart-broken, on the empty couch. Cesario steps forward and stands over him, touching his shoulder gently.]



CURTAIN.

POEMS

EXMOOR VERSES

I. VASHTI'S SONG

Over the rim of the Moor,
And under the starry sky,
Two men came to my door
And rested them thereby.

Beneath the bough and the star,
In a whispering foreign tongue,
They talked of a land afar
And the merry days so young!

Beneath the dawn and the bough
I heard them arise and go:
And my heart it is aching now
For the more it will never know.

Why did they two depart
Before I could understand?
Where lies that land, O my heart?
—O my heart, where lies that land?

II. SATURN

From my farm, from her farm
Furtively we came.
In either home a hearth was warm:
We nursed a hungrier flame.

Our feet were foul with mire,
Our faces blind with mist;
But all the night was naked fire
About us where we kiss'd.



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To her farm, to my farm,
Loathing we returned;
Pale beneath a gallow's arm
The planet Saturn burned.

III. DERELICTION

O'er the tears that we shed, dear
The bitter vines twist,
And the hawk and the red deer
They keep where we kiss'd:
All broken lies the shieling
That sheltered from rain,
With a star to pierce the ceiling,
And the dawn an empty pane.

Thro' the mist, up the moorway,
Fade hunters and pack;
From the ridge to thy doorway
Happy voices float back ...
O, between the threads o' mist, love,
Reach your hands from the house.
Only mind that we kiss'd, love,
And forget the broken vows!

TWO FOLK SONGS

I. THE SOLDIER

(Roumanian)

*When winter trees bestrew the path,
Still to the twig a leaf or twain
Will cling and weep, not Winter's wrath,
But that foreknown forlorn pain—
To fall when green leaves come again.*

I watch'd him sleep by the furrow—
The first that fell in the fight.
His grave they would dig to-morrow:
The battle called them to-night.



They bore him aside to the trees, there,
By his undigg'd grave content
To lie on his back at ease there,
And hark how the battle went.

The battle went by the village,
And back through the night were borne
Far cries of murder and pillage,
With smoke from the standing corn.

But when they came on the morrow,
They talk'd not over their task,
As he listen'd there by the furrow;
For the dead mouth could not ask—

How went the battle, my brothers?
But that he will never know:
For his mouth the red earth smothers
As they shoulder their spades and go.

Yet he cannot sleep thereunder,
But ever must toss and turn.
How went the battle, I wonder?
—And that he will never learn!

*When winter trees bestrew the path,
Still to the twig a leaf or twain
Will cling and weep, not Winter's wrath,
But that foreknown, forlorn pain—
To fall when green leaves come again!*

II. THE MARINE

(Poitevin)

The bold Marine comes back from war,
So kind:
The bold Marine comes back from war,
So kind:
With a raggedy coat and a worn-out shoe.
“Now, poor Marine, say, whence come you,
All so kind?”

I travel back from the war, madame,
So kind:
I travel back from the war, madame,
So kind:

For a glass of wine and a bowl of whey,
'Tis I will sing you a ballad gay,
All so kind.



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The bold Marine he sips his whey,
So kind:
He sips and he sings his ballad gay,
So kind:
But the dame she turns toward the wall,
To wipe her tears that fall and fall,
All so kind.

What aileth you at my song, madame,
So kind?
I hope that I sing no wrong, madame,
So kind?

Or grieves it you a beggar should dine
On a bowl of whey and the good white wine,
All so kind?

It ails me not at your ballad gay,
So kind:
It ails me not for the wine and whey,
So kind:

But it ails me sore for the voice and eyes
Of a good man long in Paradise.—
Ah, so kind!

You have fair children five, madame,
So kind:
You have fair children five, madame,
So kind:

Your good man left you children three;
Whence came these twain for company,
All so kind?

“A letter came from the war, Marine,
So kind:
A letter came from the war, Marine,
So kind:
A while I wept for the good man dead,
But another good man in a while I wed,
All so kind.”



The bold Marine he drained his glass,
 So kind:
The bold Marine he drained his glass,
 So kind.
He said not a word, though the tears they flowed,
But back to his regiment took the road,
 All so kind.

MARY LESLIE

Before Vittoria, June 20, 1813

O Mary Leslie, blithe and shrill
 The bugles blew for Spain:
And you below the Castle Hill
 Stood in the crowd your lane.
Then hearts were wild to watch us pass,
 Yet laith to let us go!
While mine said, "Fare-ye-well, my lass!"
 And yours, "God keep my Jo!"

Here by the bivouac fire, above
 These fields of savage play,
I'll lift my love to meet thy love
 Twa thousand miles away,

Where yonder, yonder by the stars,
 Nightlong there rins a burn,
And maids with lovers at the wars
 May list their wraiths' return.

More careless yet my spirit grows
 Of fame, more sick of blood:
But I can think of Badajoz,
 And yet that God is good.
Beyond the siege, beyond the stour,
 Beyond the sack of towns,
I reach to pluck ae lily-floo'r
 Where leaders press for crowns.

O Mary! lily! bow'd and wet
 With mair than mornin's rain!
The bugles up the Lawnmarket
 Shall sound us home again.

Then fare-ye-well, these foreign lands,
 And be damn'd their bitter drouth.



With your dear face between my hands
And the cup held to my mouth,
 My love,
It's clean cup to my mouth!

JENIFER'S LOVE

Small is my secret—let it pass—
Small in your life the share I had,
Who sat beside you in the class,
Awed by the bright superior lad:
Whom yet with hot and eager face
I prompted when he missed his place.



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For you the call came swift and soon:
But sometimes in your holidays
You meet me trudging home at noon
To dinner through the dusty ways,
And recognized, and with a nod
Passed on, but never guessed—thank God!

Truly our ways were separate.
I bent myself to hoe and drill,

Yea, with an honest man to mate,
Fulfilling God Almighty's will;
And bore him children. But my prayers
Were yours—and, only after, theirs.

While you—still loftier, more remote,
You sprang from stair to stair of fame,
And you've a riband on your coat,
And you've a title to your name;
But have you yet a star to shine
Above your bed, as I o'er mine?

TWO DUETS

From "Arion," an unpublished Masque

I

He. Aglai-a! Aglai-a!

Sweet, awaken and be glad.

She. Who is this that calls Aglaia?

Is it thou, my dearest lad?

He. 'Tis Arion, 'tis Arion,

Who calls thee from sleep—

From slumber who bids thee

To follow and number

His kids and his sheep.

She. Nay, leave to entreat me!

If mother should spy on

Us twain, she would beat me.

He. Then come, my love, come!



And hide with Arion
Where green woods are dumb!

She. Ar-i-on! Ar-i-on!
Closer, list! I am afraid!

He. Whisper, then, thy love Arion,
From thy window, lily maid.

She. Yet Aglaia, yet Aglaia
Hath heard them debate
Of wooing repenting—
“Who trust to undoing,
Lament them too late.”

He. Nay, nay, when I woo thee,
Thy mother might spy on
All harm I shall do thee.

She. I come, then—I come!
To follow Arion
Where green woods be dumb.

SONG

Sparrow of Love, so sharp to peck,
Arrow of Love—I bare my neck
Down to the bosom. See, no fleck

Of blood! I have never a wound; I go
Forth to the greenwood. Yet, heigh-ho!
What 'neath my girdle flutters so?

'Tis not a bird, and yet hath wings,
'Tis not an arrow, yet it stings;
While in the wound it nests and sings—

Heigh-ho!

He. Of Arion, of Arion
That wound thou shalt learn;
What nothings 'tis made of,
And soft pretty soothings
In shade of the fern.



She. When maids have a mind to,
Man's word they rely on,
Old warning are blind to—
I come, then—I come
To walk with Arion
Where green woods are dumb!



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II

He. Dear my love, and O my love,
And O my love so lately!
Did we wander yonder grove
And sit awhile sedately?
For either you did there conclude
To do at length as I did,
Or passion's fashion's turn'd a prude,
And troth's an oath derided.

She. Yea, my love—and nay, my love—
And ask me not to tell, love,
While I delay'd an idle day
What 'twixt us there befell, love.
Yet either I did sit beside
And do at length as you did,
Or my delight is lightly by
An idle lie deluded!

THE STATUES AND THE TEAR

All night a fountain pleads,
Telling her beads,
Her tinkling beads monotonous 'neath the moon;
And where she springs atween,
Two statues lean—
Two Kings, their marble beards with moonlight
strewn.

Till hate had frozen speech,
Each hated each,
Hated and died, and went unto his place:
And still inveterate
They lean and hate
With glare of stone implacable, face to face.

One, who bade set them here
In stone austere,
To both was dear, and did not guess at all:
Yet with her new-wed lord
Walking the sward
Paused, and for two dead friends a tear let fall.



She turn'd and went her way.
Yet in the spray
The shining tear attempts, but cannot lie.
Night-long the fountain drips,
But even slips
Untold that one bead of her rosary:
While they, who know it would
Lie if it could,
Lean on and hate, watching it, eye to eye.

NUPTIAL NIGHT

Hush! and again the chatter of the starling
Athwart the lawn!
Lean your head close and closer. O my darling!—
It is the dawn.
Dawn in the dusk of her dream,
Dream in the hush of her bosom, uncloset
Bathed in the eye-bright beam,
Blush to her cheek, be a blossom, a rose!

Go, nuptial night! the floor of Ocean tressing
With moon and star;
With benediction go and breathe thy blessing
On coasts afar.

Hark! the theorbos thrum
O'er the arch'd wave that in white smother booms
"Mother of Mystery, come!
Fain for thee wait other brides, other grooms!"

Go, nuptial night, my breast of hers bereaving!
Yet, O, tread soft!
Grow day, blithe day, the mountain shoulder heaving
More gold aloft!
Gold, rose, bird of the dawn,
All to her balcony gather unseen—
Thrill through the curtain drawn,
Bless her, bedeck her, and bathe her, my Queen!

HESPERUS

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Down in the street the last late hansoms go
Still westward, but with backward eyes of red
The harlot shuffles to her lonely bed;
The tall policeman pauses but to throw
A flash into the empty portico;
Then he too passes, and his lonely tread
Links all the long-drawn gas-lights on a thread
And ties them to one planet swinging low.

O Hesperus! O happy star! to bend
O'er Helen's bosom in the tranced west—
To watch the hours heave by upon her breast
And at her parted lip for dreams attend:
If dawn defraud thee, how shall I be deem'd.
Who house within that bosom, and am dreamed?

CHANT ROYAL OF HIGH VIRTUE

Who lives in suit of armour pent
And hides himself behind a wall,
For him is not the great event,
The garland nor the Capitol.
And is God's guerdon less than they?
Nay, moral man, I tell thee Nay:
Nor shall the flaming forts be won
By sneaking negatives alone,
By Lenten fast or Ramazan;
But by the challenge proudly thrown—
Virtue is that becrowns a Man!

God, in His Palace resident
Of Bliss, beheld our sinful ball,
And charged His own Son innocent
Us to redeem from Adam's fall.

"Yet must it be that men Thee slay."
"Yea, tho' it must, must I obey,"
Said Christ; and came, His royal Son,
To die, and dying to atone
For harlot, thief, and publican.
Read on that rood He died upon—
Virtue is that becrowns a Man!



Beneath that rood where He was bent
I saw the world's great captains all
Pass riding home from tournament
Adown the road from Roncesvalles—
Lord Charlemagne, in one array
Lords Caesar, Cyrus, Attila,
Lord Alisaundre of Macedon ...
With flame on lance and habergeon
They passed, and to the rataplan
Of drums gave salutation—
"Virtue is that becrowns a Man!"
Had tall Achilles lounged in tent
For aye, and Xanthus neigh'd in stall,
The towers of Troy had ne'er been shent,
Nor stay'd the dance in Priam's hall.
Bend o'er thy book till thou be grey,
Read, mark, perpend, digest, survey,
Instruct thee deep as Solomon,
One only chapter thou canst con,
One lesson learn, one sentence scan,
One title and one colophon—
Virtue is that becrowns a Man!

High Virtue's best is eloquent
With spur and not with martingall:
Swear not to her thou'rt continent:
BE COURTEOUS, BRAVE, AND LIBERAL.
God fashion'd thee of chosen clay
For service, nor did ever say,
"Deny thee this," "Abstain from yon,"
But to inure thee, thew and bone.
To be confirmed of the clan
That made immortal Marathon—
Virtue is that becrowns a Man!

ENVOY

Young Knight, the lists are set to-day!
Hereafter shall be time to pray
In sepulture, with hands of stone.
Ride, then! outride the bugle blown!
And gaily dinging down the van,
Charge with a cheer—"Set on! Set on!"
Virtue is that becrowns a Man!"

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CORONATION HYMN

Tune—Luther's Chorale
"Ein' feste burg ist unser Gott"

I

Of old our City hath renown.
Of God are her foundations,
Wherein this day a King we crown
Elate among the nations.
Acknowledge, then, thou King—
And you, ye people, sing—
What deeds His arm hath wrought:
Yea, let their tale be taught
To endless generations.

II

So long, so far, Jehovah guides
His people's path attending,
By pastures green and water-sides
Toward His hill ascending;
Whence they beneath the stars
Shall view their ancient wars,
Their perils, far removed.
O might of mercy proved!
O love past comprehending!

III

He was that God, for man which spake
From Sinai forth in thunder;
He was that Love, for man which brake
The dreadful grave asunder.
Lord over every lord,
His consecrating word
An earthly prince awaits;
Lift then your heads, ye gates!
Your King comes riding under.



IV

Be ye lift up, ye deathless doors;
Let wave your banners o'er Him!
Exult, ye streets; be strewn, ye floors,
With palm, with bay, before Him!
With transport fetch Him in,
Ye ransom'd folk from sin—
Your Lord, return'd to bless!
O kneeling king, confess—
O subject men, adore Him!

THREE MEN OF TRURO

I

E. W. B.

Archbishop of Canterbury: sometime the First Bishop of Truro. October 1896

The Church's outpost on a neck of land—
By ebb of faith the foremost left the last—
Dull, starved of hope, we watched the driven sand
Blown through the hour-glass, covering our past,
Counting no hours to our relief—no hail
Across the hills, and on the sea no sail!

Sick of monotonous days we lost account,
In fitful dreams remembering days of old
And nights—th' erect Archangel on the Mount
With sword that drank the dawn; the Vase of Gold
The moving Grail athwart the starry fields
Where all the heavenly spearmen clashed their
shields.

In dereliction by the deafening shore
We sought no more aloft, but sunk our eyes,
Probing the sea for food, the earth for ore.
Ah, yet had one good soldier of the skies
Burst through the wrack reporting news of them,
How had we run and kissed his garment's hem!

Nay, but he came! Nay, but he stood and cried,
Panting with joy and the fierce fervent race,
"Arm, arm! for Christ returns!"—and all our pride,

Our ancient pride, answered that eager face:
“Repair His battlements!—Your Christ is near!”
And, half in dream, we raised the soldiers’ cheer.



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Far, as we flung that challenge, fled the ghosts—
Back, as we built, the obscene foe withdrew—
High to the song of hammers sang the hosts
Of Heaven—and lo! the daystar, and a new
Dawn with its chalice and its wind as wine;
And youth was hope, and life once more divine!

* * * * *

Day, and hot noon, and now the evening glow,
And 'neath our scaffolding the city spread
Twilit, with rain-wash'd roofs, and—hark!—below,
One late bell tolling. "Dead? Our Captain dead?"
Nay, here with us he fronts the westering sun
With shaded eyes and counts the wide fields won.

Aloft with us! And while another stone
Swings to its socket, haste with trowel and hod!
Win the old smile a moment ere, alone,
Soars the great soul to bear report to God.
Night falls; but thou, dear Captain, from thy star
Look down, behold how bravely goes the war!

II

A. B. D.

Canon Residentiary and Precentor of Truro December 1903

Many had builded, and, the building done,
Through our adorned gates with din
Came Prince and Priest, with pipe and clarion
Leading the right God in.

Yet, had the perfect temple quickened then
And whispered us between our song,
*"Give God the praise. To whom of living men
Shall next our thanks belong?"*

Then had the few, the very few, that wist
His Atlantean labour, swerved
Their eyes to seek, and in the triumph missed,
The man that most deserved.



He only of us was incorporate
In all that fabric; stone by stone
Had built his life in her, had made his fate
And her perfection one;

Given all he had; and now—when all was given—
Far spent, within a private shade,
Heard the loud organ pealing praise to Heaven,
And learned why man is made.—

To break his strength, yet always to be brave;
To preach, and act, the Crucified ...
Sweep by, O Prince and Prelate, up the nave,
And fill it with your pride!

Better than ye what made th' old temples great,
Because he loved, he understood;
Indignant that his darling, less in state,
Should lack a martyr's blood.

She hath it now. O mason, strip away
Her scaffolding, the flower disclose!
Lay by the tools with his o'er-wearied clay—
But She shall bloom unto its Judgment Day,
His ever-living Rose!

III

C. W. S.

The Fourth Bishop of Truro May 1912

Prince of courtesy defeated,
Heir of hope untimely cheated,
Throned awhile he sat, and, seated,

Saw his Cornish round him gather;
"Teach us how to live, good Father!"
How to die he taught us rather:



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Heard the startling trumpet sound him,
Smiled upon the feast around him,
Rose, and wrapp'd his coat, and bound him

When beyond the awful surges,
Bathed in dawn on Syrian verges,
God! thy star, thy Cross emerges.

And so sing we all to it—

Crux, in coelo lux superna,
Sis in carnis hac taberna
Mihi pedibus lucerna:

Quo vexillum dux cohortis
Sistet, super flumen Mortis,
Te, flammantibus in portis!

ALMA MATER

Know you her secret none can utter?
Hers of the Book, the tripled Crown?
Still on the spire the pigeons flutter,
Still by the gateway flits the gown;
Still on the street, from corbel and gutter,
Faces of stone look down.

Faces of stone, and stonier faces—
Some from library windows wan
Forth on her gardens, her green spaces,
Peer and turn to their books anon.
Hence, my Muse, from the green oases
Gather the tent, begone!

Nay, should she by the pavement linger
Under the rooms where once she played,
Who from the feast would rise to fling her
One poor *sou* for her serenade?
One short laugh for the antic finger
Thrumming a lute-string frayed?

Once, my dear—but the world was young then—
Magdalen elms and Trinity limes—
Lissom the blades and the backs that swung then,



Eight good men in the good old times—
Careless we, and the chorus flung then
Under St Mary's chimes!

Reins lay loose and the ways led random—
Christ Church meadow and Iffley track,
"Idleness horrid and dog-cart" (tandem),
Aylesbury grind and Bicester pack—
Pleasant our lines, and faith! we scanned 'em:
Having that artless knack.

Come, old limmer, the times grow colder;
Leaves of the creeper redden and fall.
Was it a hand then clapped my shoulder?—
Only the wind by the chapel wall!
Dead leaves drift on the lute ... So, fold her
Under the faded shawl.

Never we wince, though none deplore us,
We who go reaping that we sowed;
Cities at cock-crow wake before us—
Hey, for the lilt of the London road!
One look back, and a rousing chorus!
Never a palinode!

Still on her spire the pigeons hover;
Still by her gateway haunts the gown.
Ah! but her secret? You, young lover,
Drumming her old ones forth from town,
Know you the secret none discover?
Tell it—when *you* go down.

Yet if at length you seek her, prove her,
Lean to her whispers never so nigh;
Yet if at last not less her lover
You in your hansom leave the High;
Down from her towers a ray shall hover—
Touch you, a passer-by!

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CHRISTMAS EVE

Friend, old friend in the Manse by the fireside sitting,
Hour by hour while the grey ash drips from the log;
You with a book on your knee, your wife with her knitting,
Silent both, and between you, silent, the dog.

Silent here in the south sit I; and, leaning,
One sits watching the fire, with chin upon hand;
Gazes deep in its heart—but ah! its meaning
Rather I read in the shadows and understand.

Dear, kind she is; and daily dearer, kinder,
Love shuts the door on the lamp and our two selves:

Not my stirring awakened the flame that behind her
Lit up a face in the leathern dusk of the shelves.

Veterans are my books, with tarnished gilding:
Yet there is one gives back to the winter grate
Gold of a sunset flooding a college building,
Gold of an hour I waited—as now I wait—

For a light step on the stair, a girl's low laughter,
Rustle of silk, shy knuckles tapping the oak,
Dinner and mirth upsetting my rooms and, after,
Music, waltz upon waltz, till the June day broke.

Where is her laughter now? Old tarnished covers—
You that reflect her with fresh young face unchanged—
Tell that we met, that we parted, not as lovers;
Time, chance, brought us together, and these estranged.

Loyal were we to the mood of the moment granted,
Bruised not its bloom, but danced on the wave of its joy;
Passion—wisdom—fell back like a fence enchanted,
Ringing a floor for us both—whole Heaven for the boy!

Where is she now? Regretted not, though departed,
Blessings attend and follow her all her days!
—Look to your hound: he dreams of the hares he started,
Whines, and awakes, and stretches his limbs to the blaze.



Far old friend in the Manse, by the green ash peeling
Flake by flake from the heat in the Yule log's core,
Look past the woman you love. On wall and ceiling
Climbs not a trellis of roses—and ghosts—of yore?

Thoughts, thoughts! Whistle them back like hounds returning—
Mark how her needles pause at a sound upstairs.
Time for bed, and to leave the log's heart burning!
Give ye good-night, but first thank God in your prayers!

THE ROOT

Deep, Love, yea, very deep.
And in the dark exiled,
I have no sense of light but still to creep
And know the breast, but not the eyes. Thy child
Saw ne'er his mother near, nor if she smiled;
But only feels her weep.

Yet clouds and branches green
There be aloft, somewhere,
And winds, and angel birds that build between,
As I believe—and I will not despair;
For faith is evidence of things not seen.
Love! if I could be there!



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I will be patient, dear.

Perchance some part of me
Puts forth aloft and feels the rushing year
And shades the bird, and is that happy tree
Then were it strength to serve and not appear,
And bliss, though blind, to be.

TO A FRIEND WHO SENT ME A BOX OF VIOLETS

Nay, more than violets
These thoughts of thine, friend!
Rather thy reedy brook—
Taw's tributary—
At midnight murmuring,
Descried them, the delicate
Dark-eyed goddesses,
There by his cressy bed
Dissolved and dreaming
Dreams that distilled into dew
All the purple of night,
All the shine of a planet.

Whereat he whispered;
And they arising—

Of day's forget-me-nots
The duskier sisters—
Descended, relinquished
The orchard, the trout-pool,
Torridge and Tamar,
The Druid circles,
Sheepfolds of Dartmoor,
Granite and sandstone;
By Roughtor, Dozmare,
Down the vale of the Fowey
Moving in silence,
Brushing the nightshade
By bridges cyclopean,
By Trevenna, Treverbyn,
Lawharne and Largin,
By Glynn, Lanhydrock,
Restormel, Lostwithiel,
Dark wood, dim water, dreaming town;



Down the vale of the Fowey
To the tidal water
Washing the feet
Of fair St Winnow—
Each, in her exile
Musing the message,
Passed, as the starlit
Shadow of Ruth from the land of the Moabite.

So they came,
Valley-born, valley-nurtured—
Came to the tideway
The jetties, the anchorage,
The salt wind piping,
Snoring in Equinox,
By ships at anchor,
By quays tormented,
Storm-bitten streets;
Came to the Haven
Crying, "Ah, shelter us,
The strayed ambassadors,
Love's lost legation
On a comfortless coast!"

Nay, but a little sleep,
A little folding
Of petals to the lull
Of quiet rainfalls—
Here in my garden,
In angle sheltered
From north and east wind—
Softly shall recreate
The courage of charity,
Henceforth not to me only
Breathing the message.

Clean-breath'd Sirens!
Hencefore the mariner.

TO A FRIEND

Here in the fairway
Fetching—foul of keel,
Long-stray but fortunate—
Out of the fogs, the vast
Atlantic solitudes.



Shall, by the hawser-pin
Waiting the signal
Leave—go—anchor!
Scent the familiar,
The unforgettable
Fragrance of home;
So in a long breath
Bless us unknowing:
Bless them, the violets,
Bless me, the gardener,
Bless thee, the giver.

OF THREE CHILDREN

OF THREE CHILDREN CHOOSING
A CHAPLET OF VERSE

You and I and Burd so blithe—
Burd so blithe, and you, and I—
The Mower he would whet his scythe
Before the dew was dry.



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And he woke soon, but we woke soon
And drew the nursery blind,
All wondering at the waning moon
With the small June roses twined:
Low in her cradle swung the moon
With an elfin dawn behind.

In whispers, while our elders slept,
We knelt and said our prayers,
And dress'd us and on tiptoe crept
Adown the creaking stairs.

The world's possessors lay abed,
And all the world was ours—
“Nay, nay, but hark! the Mower's tread!
And we must save the flowers!”

The Mower knew not rest nor haste—
That old unweary man:
But we were young. We paused and raced
And gather'd while we ran.

O youth is careless, youth is fleet,
With heart and wing of bird!
The lark flew up beneath our feet,
To his copse the pheasant whirr'd;

The cattle from their darkling lairs
Heaved up and stretch'd themselves;
Almost they trod at unawares
Upon the busy elves

That dropp'd their spools of gossamer,
To dangle and to dry,
And scurried home to the hollow fir
Where the white owl winks an eye.

Nor you, nor I, nor Burd so blithe
Had driven them in this haste;
But the old, old man, so lean and lithe,
That afar behind us paced;
So lean and lithe, with shoulder'd scythe,
And a whetstone at his waist.



Within the gate, in a grassy round
Whence they had earliest flown,
He upside-down'd his scythe, and ground
Its edge with careful hone.
But we heeded not, if we heard, the sound,
For the world was ours alone;
The world was ours!—and with a bound
The conquering Sun upshone!

And while as from his level ray
We stood our eyes to screen.
The world was not as yesterday
Our homelier world had been—
So grey and golden-green it lay
All in his quiet sheen,
That wove the gold into the grey,
The grey into the green.
Sure never hand of Puck, nor wand
Of Mab the fairies' queen,
Nor prince nor peer of fairyland
Had power to weave that wide riband
Of the grey, the gold, the green.

But the Gods of Greece had been before
And walked our meads along,
The great authentic Gods of yore
That haunt the earth from shore to shore
Trailing their robes of song.

And where a sandall'd foot had brush'd,
And where a scarfed hem,
The flowers awoke from sleep and rush'd
Like children after them.

Pell-mell they poured by vale and stream,
By lawn and steepy brae—
"O children, children! while you dream,
Your flowers run all away!"

But afar and abed and sleepily
The children heard us call;
And Burd so blithe and you and I
Must be gatherers for all.

The meadow-sweet beside the hedge,
The dog-rose and the vetch,

The sworded iris 'mid the sedge,
The mallow by the ditch—



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With these, and by the wimpling burn,
Where the midges danced in reels,
With the watermint and the lady fern
We brimm'd out wicker creels:

Till, all so heavily they weigh'd,
On a bank we flung us down,
Shook out our treasures 'neath the shade
And wove this Triple Crown.

Flower after flower—for some there were
The noonday heats had dried,
And some were dear yet could not bear
A lovelier cheek beside,
And some were perfect past compare—
Ah, darlings! what a world of care
It cost us to decide!

Natheless we sang in sweet accord,
Each bending o'er her brede—
"O there be flowers in Oxenford,
And flowers be north of Tweed,
And flowers there be on earthly sward
That owe no mortal seed!"

And these, the brightest that we wove,
Were Innocence and Truth,
And holy Peace and angel Love,
Glad Hope and gentle Ruth.
Ah, bind them fast with triple twine
Of Memory, the wild woodbine
That still, being human, stays divine,
And alone is age's youth!...

But hark! but look! the warning rook
Wings home in level flight;
The children tired with play and book
Have kiss'd and call'd Good-night!

Ah, sisters, look! What fields be these
That lie so sad and shorn?
What hand has cut our coppices,
And thro' the trimm'd, the ruin'd, trees
Let's wail a wind forlorn?



'Tis Time, 'tis Time has done this crime
And laid our meadows waste—
The bent unwearied tyrant Time,
That knows nor rest nor haste.

Yet courage, children; homeward bring
Your hearts, your garlands high;
For we have dared to do a thing
That shall his worst defy.

We cannot nail the dial's hand;
We cannot bind the sun
By Gibeon to stay and stand,
Or the moon o'er Ajalon;

We cannot blunt th' abhorred shears,
Nor shift the skeins of Fate,
Nor say unto the posting years
"Ye shall not desolate."

We cannot cage the lion's rage,
Nor teach the turtle-dove
Beside what well his moan to tell
Or to haunt one only grove;
But the lion's brood will range for food
As the fledged bird will rove.

And east and west we three may wend—
Yet we a wreath have wound
For us shall wind withouten end
The wide, wide world around:

Be it east or west, and ne'er so far,
In east or west shall peep no star,
No blossom break from ground,
But minds us of the wreath we wove
Of innocence and holy love
That in the meads we found,
And handsell'd from the Mower's scythe,
And bound with memory's living withe—
You and I and Burd so blithe—
Three maidens on a mound:
And all of happiness was ours
Shall find remembrance 'mid the flowers,
Shall take revival from the flowers
And by the flowers be crown'd.

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EPILOGUE

TO A MOTHER, ON SEEING HER SMILE REPEATED
IN HER DAUGHTER'S EYES

A thousand songs I might have made
Of You, and only You;
A thousand thousand tongues of fire
That trembled down a golden wire
To lamp the night with stars, to braid
The morning bough with dew.

Within the greenwood girl and boy
Had loiter'd to their lure,
And men in cities closed their books
To dream of Spring and running brooks
And all that ever was of joy
For manhood to abjure.

And I'd have made them strong, so strong
Outlasting towers and towns—
Millennial shepherds 'neath the thorn
Had piped them to a world reborn,
And danced Delight the dale along
And up the daisied downs.

A thousand songs I might have made...
But you required them not;
Content to reign your little while
Ere, abdicating with a smile,
You pass'd into a shade, a shade
Immortal—and forgot!