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Attitudes



PAUL TANAQUIL *pseud.*

J. G. C. de Clercq



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THE BURDEN OF BEAUTY

THE BURDEN OF BEAUTY.

DEDICATION.

To One whose name I may not tell. . . .

HERE are my songs,
Such as I make them;
Each one belongs
Unto you: take them.

I shall never utter
One name: your name,
But let my rhymes flutter
On wings of flame,

Till they come to rest
In a calm, strange place,
White as your breast,
Fair as your face.

PASSÉE.

A MILLION lovers plight their troth,
Calling on her to bless their oath.

She does not shine more bright because
They will be faithful to her laws ;

She does not hang her head and weep
For brave-made vows they will not keep ;

She looks, as ever, austere and cold—
I think the moon is growing old.

A VERY YOUNG MAN SPEAKS . . .

THE stars are old and wise. Tonight they look
With such cold pity at us that I know
They see a million lovers that forsook
Vows by their light, made centuries ago ;
Yet by the still and skeptic stars above
I swear I will be faithful in my love.

MOMENT.

You smiled a little, shyly,
Then suddenly bowed your head;
And all the air was heavy
With things unsaid.

The moment held such magic
That, had I said one word,
Gently, you would have answered
The plea you heard.

But I was silent, thinking
How frail our moods can be;
And you, yourself once more, were putting
Sugar in my tea!

A VERY YOUNG GIRL'S SONG.

LITTLE she cares for rare gems,
For gold or silver, little's her care;
Sunlight and moonlight gild her hair
With changing glitter of diadems.

Little she cares for fine homes,
For stone mansion, little's her care;
God's sky is everywhere
And over the moor her lover roams.

Little she cares who mans ships,
For brave soldier, little's her care;
Last night her lover kissed her hair,
Tonight her lover will kiss her lips.

RIDDLE.

SINCE nothing matters very much,
Why need we dissemble?
Since nothing matters very much,
Tell me why I tremble
At the mere chance touch
Of your white, cool hand?

Since nothing matters very much,
I do not understand. . . .

TEASE.

AND if I were to tell you,
Pray, what would be your gain?
Conceit with being victor
And consequent disdain?

Suppose I do not tell you,
Then sorrow is your share:
Rue, for being vanquished;
Anger and despair.

Maybe I love you a little,
Or, possibly, too well;
Maybe I do not love you at all—
Who can tell?

HISTORY.

BECAUSE a woman's lips were red,
Because a woman's breast was white,

One man went forth into the fight
Following where the battle led,
And, girded with resistless might,
He won a kingdom for his right.

Because a woman's lips were red,
Because a woman's breast was white,

One man went forth, his soul alight
With the radiance her beauty shed,
And wandering silent through the night
Dreamed of a song for her delight.

The kingdom now is dust, thereof
Nothing remains but desert sand;
The song through many a foreign land
In many a tongue proclaims its love—

How once a woman's lips were red,
How once a woman's breast was white.

WISDOM.

SHE came with laughter in her eyes
And called to me to follow her;
But Time had made my ardor wise,
I did not stir.

She came again with wistfulness
Deep in the shadows of her eyes,
And wisdom was but wantonness
And tricks . . . and lies!

A GIRL SINGS.

GRIEF is gentle as warm rain
Falling on the April fields;
I will bear my meed of pain
For the wonder loving yields.

I will bear my meed of pain ;
Love has made my spirit proud ;
Whilst I sew, shall I complain
If my veil become a shroud ?

DOLORIDES LUNA.

I WONDER what she knows to keep
Her laughing through the years ;
Her understanding must be deep
To guard her soul from fears ;
And yet, I think, by day her sleep
Is miserable with tears.

POUR ELLE.

THERE are things of Beauty of which I never shall tire:
Moving seas and sea foam; and the blue
Sky above the tall church spire;
And the blue smoke
That rises from a hidden fire
Deep down in the valley; flowers; dew
Over the green grasses; moonlight dripping through
Sieves of silver foliage, delicately intricate as lace;
Mighty hills arising ever higher;
Long, sloping roofs and clean white houses under;
April rain; flash of lightning; crash of thunder;
Children laughing; the trill of meadowlarks; and the lithe
 grace
Of horses at a canter; more—and more—all true,
Noble and good and beautiful to view.

But best of all, the wonder,
The poignancy of you
As changing shadows creep across your face. . . .

AGAINST HER WRATH.

I DO not fear your righteous wrath
One half so much as I would care
If you walked down the garden path
With sunlight gleaming on your hair.

WRANGLERS.

WHEN you are here we quarrel,
Once you are gone I weep,
In sheer despair I tear my hair
And cry myself to sleep.

There's too much ardor in me
And nonchalance in you ;
Why cannot we act sensibly
As other people do ?

BITTERSWEET.

SLOWLY to seaward the stately ships,
White sails agleam against the spars,
The poignant wonder of your lips,
And—the stars !

Far away to the fragrant south
Somewhere a beacon flashes ;
Bitter my eyes with tears, my mouth
Filled with ashes.

WORSHIP.

YOU cannot know what wonder I will pour on your name,
I will raise it as a flame with the wind blowing under,
I will cast myself asunder, to my blame, to my shame,
I will shout it loud as thunder with all heaven for a frame,
I will make a living wonder of your fame.

TWO MEN.

WHEN the red wine flows freely and the glasses clink,
When Happiness winks up at you from their broad
brim,

Amid the riot of music and the sheen of light,
Your arm in his you link—
And your desire and your delight
Are all for him.

But when grey dawn steals in to find you weary . . . weary . . .
And there is only tinsel where brave gold should be,
When in its harsh sterility the fog-bound city
Looms, desolate and dreary,
Your tender loneliness, your wistful, childlike pity
Are all for me.

VOICES.

VOICES . . . voices . . . following endlessly,
So many beautiful voices that will not let me be :
A lark's sudden trill of joy and the deep cry of a crane
With its harsh, hoarse burden, poignant as pain ;
Children's light voices, echoed in frolicsome laughter ;
Bold, rough voices of men that ring to the highest rafter ;
Voices, beautiful voices. . . .

. . . And after
A tremulous shy whisper, beyond sorrow or mirth,
A still voice of calm peace like the gentle April earth,
And bright as the June sky with its blue arch above you,
The voice I love of all voices, whispering. . . .

REAWAKENING.

IN the lost moment of a foolish hour
I said: 'My love is fairer than a flower!'

A flower lifts a shining face to God,
Your eyes are set on the small path you've trod;
A flower brings wonder to a world of pain,
You drag me from my dreams to dross again—

Pity the fool in an unguarded hour
Who sees a woman fairer than a flower!

AFTER.

I REMEMBER words you said
Half in tears and half in laughter,
How you vowed on your own head
You would love me ever after.

I remember dreams that slept
Till I wakened them for me;
I remember how you wept
Glad, for Love's idolatry.

Strange it is and full of pain
To consider how our tears
Vanished with the April rain
In the limbo of the years. . . .

WELL, THEN. . . .

LET Columbine be beautiful
As she alone can be,
She will not bring him joy so full
As that she brought to me;
My laughter was her music and
Her kisses were my wine,
No other man can understand
The soul of Columbine.

So let him taste her hungry mouth
Lifted in fierce appeal,
Her lips as flame against his drouth
How shall he ever feel
Such wonder as was mine to know
When Love strode free of Pain—
Her breasts twin pillows of white snow,
Her kisses April rain?

RELEASE.

I SHALL forget the sorrow
You brought for love's return;
Today or else tomorrow
I shall no longer yearn.

The troubling wonder of you
I never shall regret;
Life, teaching me to love you,
May teach me to forget.

And should your name be spoken
By such as knows us not,
My laughter shall be token
How well I have forgot.

EPISODE.

SHE never deemed her love a sin,
She seemed only to know
That all the world spelled Harlequin
And she must die—or go!

But when young Pierrot hanged himself,
(Men said he wearied of the earth)
His picture on her mantel-shelf
Assumed an actual worth.

And ever she played the tragic queen
No matter where she went;
Ignoring that his death had been
A drunkard's accident.

ULTIMA VERBA PLENA SAPIENTIAE.

WHAT words need be said?
As though words mattered, as though anything mattered
Now you are dead.

Shall I grieve then? shall I chide?
As though chiding mattered, as though anything mattered
Even before you died.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

You were the singer, I,
I, the refrain;
You were the shadowy sky,
I was the April rain;
You were the moon above,
I the sea where it shone—
You who taught me to love
Teach me to stand alone!

PARTING.

His shadowy days are over,
He will come . . . no . . . more,
The bee has left the clover,
His shadowy days are over;
For the last time your rover
Has touched a foreign shore;
His shadowy days are over,
He will come . . . no . . . more!

THE POET.

I AM not rueful
For these vain hopes of mine
And all their loss—
How proudly beautiful
All white they shine,
Nailed to the cross.

INTERLUDE.

You need not bare your shoulder,
Nor loose your golden hair—
My heart grows colder . . . colder . . .
I cannot care.

It's bright your proud eye flashes,
And, spurned, you know not shame!
(You cannot kindle ashes
To a white flame!)

What profit to grow bolder?
Leave me and never care:
I shall not kiss your shoulder
Nor loose your hair. . . .

FOR REMEMBRANCE.

WHEN you are old and venerable and grey,
And your fair cheek's sere as an autumn leaf,
When far beyond the toils of joy and grief
The playground of your heart is yesterday—
When Time has made the memory dim
In some mazed twilight interim:

Oh, will you think how many wove their woof
Of word and deed about your life-thread, made
Their bitter grievances to mar, to soil
Its perfect beauty;—how the obscure shade
Of silence shrouded one who stood aloof
Lest with his blundering finger he might spoil?

SERENE.

THERE was a woman once whose voice was music
Coursing through my young veins like poisoned wine,
But I have forgotten her, I have forgotten her,
Wisdom is mine.

There was a woman once had hands like lilies,
Yet if she stretched them beckoning me to her,
(I have found wisdom, I have found wisdom!)
I would not stir.

There was a woman once with eyes like starlight,
They told me she was dead of her despair—
But I have found happiness, I have found happiness!
I do not care.

SEMPER EADEM.

CHEEKS that are sunk and ashen,
Eyes that weep in vain,
Always the same passion
In the same senseless fashion
And the same pain,
Forever beginning again. . . .

PASSIVE.

LAUGH softly, lest you stir
Old dreams of mine—
(The memory of her
Is poisoned wine!)

Nor let me lay my throbbing head
At rest upon your curious knees,
Lest I forget that she is dead
And resurrect old ecstasies.

Dance gently—do not lure me on,
Such triumph ends in tears—
I would remember she is gone,
These many years. . . .

PRIÈRE DU SOIR.

You who are strong in reason
And fearless for very pride,
Teach me to bare for a season
The sorrowful dream I hide.

Teach me that Life has a guerdon
Meet for the brave to seize,
Help me unshoulder the burden
Of ancient memories.

Gold stars make riot above me
But my heart refuses to hear—
You who pretend you love me,
Teach me to laugh at fear!

CONFESSIONAL.

THIS is not Love. Nay, though my fingers press
Your fingers apart to grasp your white hand's flower,
For all I have sworn I love you and you only,
It is because our lives are empty . . . lonely . . .
Our solitudes are met in one small hour:
What we call Love is born of idleness.

PASSAGE.

SHE brought a glimmer of light
To break our gloom,
But so cold, impassive—

She was a candle
In a dead room!

FINALE.

VERY soon
The thread
Will be broken—
No word more
Will be spoken
Very soon—
What we said
Will not matter
Very soon . . .

Very soon
I shall be dead!

MIRAGE.

AND all of it is laughter
That moves us an hour
And vanishes after,
Or tears . . . tears . . .
Deep—without power
Over the years.

THE CAPTIVE YEARS.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.

WHAT are you doing in Berkeley?' I laughed and shook my head:

'I am doing the same as ever I did anywhere,' I said.

'There were Sussex downs and rain-drenched gorse and sunlight on the heather,
There was Devonshire and a galloping horse, a frenzied pack on a break-neck course
In crisp hunting weather.

'There were Paris days with ingenious ways of youthful decadence,
And a Pennsylvania campus and studious pretence,
There were brown files in Flanders mud and good friends slain,
Friends in pain and pleasure as never friends again!

'And now—I am in Berkeley! Rueful I shake my head:
It's exactly the same as ever it was for all words said,
The same as ever anywhere in spite of Flanders dead.

'There's something I go seeking, I throw my life away
In striving to be at one with them, to be both grave and gay,
To share their pain and pleasure, to know what doubts they weigh.

'Ere ever I break away from me my old faults win,
Something I cannot fathom, secret as a sin,
Keeps me apart from all their heart till Hope grows spectre-thin,

'And ends as baffled hope must, in reasonless disgust;
Vain as kisses from one blind, bitter to taste as dust,
And I eat my heart out as acid eats rust.'

'What are you doing in Berkeley?'—Laughing, I shook my head—

'I am doing the same as ever I did anywhere,' I said,
'The old dreams . . . the old loss . . . stones for bread!'

(For Leonard Bacon.)

MOONLIGHT VISTAS.

ACROSS the wall
Of my bare room
The moving jets
Of moonlight fall,
Etching strange figures
That recall
The madcap march
Of marionettes
From carnival
To tomb.

FRIENDS.

THIS blundering, kindly gesture
That moves you to sudden mirth
Is tragic and final as only
Things dying at birth.

I would make of my heart a measure
To span the gulf of your heart,
But ere my hands reach you, coldly
You are drawing apart.

I have tried to find you, but always
I have been shy and slow—
What manner of man you really are
I never shall know.

NOUS N'IRONS PLUS AU BOIS.

THE woods tonight are magical with silence
After the music that the wild winds made ;
As a shy votary before an altar
The moon holds up a candle to the glade.

Great clouds like incense smoke arise before it,
And, of a sudden, all is dark once more ;
Earth broods regretfully to have forgotten
The smiling face, a moment gone, she wore.

A hundred things that I would not remember
Rise up to haunt me in this solitude,
My heart is bitter-sweet as woody nightshade ;
I shall not go again into the wood.

(For Harold Vinal.)

PRIMAVERA.

FAINTE echoes of autumnal tears
Linger in the April rain,
As though Earth, sober for her years,
Could not be wholly glad again,

And, with leaves dripping, yonder oak
Bows down against the shadowy sky,
Like some sad Argus whose heart broke,
Weeping, nor ever knowing why.

THE LYRIC.

You take a little round stone, you smooth it,
You polish its surface and carve your name
With the deft firm hand of a craftsman who loves
To bring sheer beauty to merely a game.

It glints like moonlight on throbbing waters,
It fits in its frame like a gem in a ring,
You finish it, lay it beside its fellows
Deep in the folds of your cunning sling.

Some day you use it: your shot goes flying
In charming curve with the heavens for mark—
The silence is broken by poignant music,
A sudden radiance breaks through the dark!

(For Charles Mills Gayley.)

DIFFERENCE.

FOR you the lure of April is the glory
Of conquering love that daunts the brightest stars;
April for me is but a tragic story
Of ancient enmities and battle scars.

Autumn brings you the pleasant melancholy
Of lovely things remembered gratefully,
But I find in it memories of folly,
And haunting grief that will not let me be.

So, whilst you pass your days in light and music,
Considering Pain but an old Turk to beard,
My heart stores the sad harvest of its rue, sick
For things desired too much and too much feared.

DÉNOUEMENT.

A FADING dart of crimson and the sun has set;
On the listless face of the waters, a solitary ship's light
gleams,
The waves' monotonous break is low as a dirge and dreary.
I have not shed a glimmer of light in my life—and yet
My hope is dead, my desire spent, and ended my dreams,
Even my heartache is healed: I am hopelessly weary.

ARABESQUE.

GENTLY Night folds her bluish veil
Over the weary limbs of Earth,
The lambent waters plash unheard,
Mirroring the moon's lank face;
Far to the westward a crooked sail
Bellies as one with senile mirth,
And the lone cry of a stray bird
Is as a damned man's prayer for grace.

(For A. G. H. Spiers.)

CAPTIVE.

HE that hath lost his soul though he conquer a world
Shall not be made whole when the last flag is furled.
The silver goblet in his hand shall be as ashes; rust
Shall eat his bravely gleaming brand to a little, reddish dust,
And in the moonlight's streams of gold it shall be his to see
The shining pence for which he sold his mortal mastery.

MOONDOWN.

MOONLIGHT . . . and foam of the sea . . .
When I shall tire of singing
Your solemn witchery—
When Beauty shall fail in bringing
Its poignancy—
Dead may I be!

WHEN TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED
TOGETHER. . . .

THERE were five men in that place;
One, with a sneer,
Spat in the corpse's face,
Saying: 'God is here!'

One made a proud jest,
'Come unto me all ye
Who weary, I will give ye rest . . .
Indeed?—' quoth he.

One laughed: 'A pretty King
Worthy of the Jews!'
One: 'Among three rogues who swing
There's little to choose!'

One, fearing lest he blunder,
Silent, stood by;
Lost in a piteous wonder . . .
(Was it I?)

AT THE DEATH OF THE PLAYBOY.

O BUT it's lonely the Playboy is now, lonely as the moon
o' dawn,
Cold he is and silent like the deadness o' the night;
How dark it is about him with the curtain drawn,
Little's the cheer there is for him in the candlelight.

He was shy as a poor dumb beast of the fields, and many's
the time, many's the time
He looked deep from his deep eyes nor was after speaking a
word,
But sometimes he wove a pattern like lace, twisting the threads
of music and rhyme
To a song like the Lady Mary was singing when Holy Michael
heard.

O but it's lonely the Playboy is, lonely in death and cold
If Father Reilly's words be messengers of Truth,
But it's my mind he's sitting in Heaven strumming a harp of
gold,
With Christ after hearing the music and Mary a-dreaming on
her youth. . . .

HISTORY.

WE make deep footprints
In the snow,
That all may see
The way we go.
Nor have we felt
Our gesture vain,
Though the snows melt
Beneath the rain.

(For F. F. Peabody.)

CHOSE VUE.

SUDDENLY
The leering moon pressed
Yellow, lecherous fingers
On the fear-laden
Breast
Of the white, throbbing sea—

As in the forest lingers
A shepherd boy to see
The satyr and the cringing maiden,
Possessed. . . .

So watched I silently.

STRANGER.

WHAT simple joys were you denied?
What hope in you was crucified?
That there should shine about your soul
Wistfulness, like an aureole?

WORDS.

ALL your words are slaves that stand
Schooled and governed to obey
Whatsoever you command,
Words are deeds beneath your sway.

Words of mine are foolish things,
Ineffectual though fair,
Like a callow girl that sings
Beautifully of despair!

VALUES.

MY words are wings
On which I fly,
My words are winds
That bear me high.

Your words are gold
In weight and worth—
Ah! how they hold
You fast to Earth!

TREES.

THE trees tonight are heavy with distress,
Bowed down in contemplation on Earth's grief,
And never a wind blowing with wantonness
Will clasp in his rough grasp a truant leaf
To brush against their bony nakedness.

Nothing can be more baleful than gaunt trees,
Sketched in harsh outline on the drape of Night,
Like gnarled, scarred hands that have done miseries,
But now, being powerless and without might,
Implore the aid of one who never sees.

Nothing can be more baleful than these are,
Most tragic penitents whose company
Renders them only lonelier by far,
Nothing is sadder than a naked tree
Against a sky too bleak to hold a star.

SHEEP.

You did not know him while he walked among you,
Bent on your ways you were too full of pride;
You never listened to the songs he sung you,
He called you once—then never after tried.

Now he is dead, I wonder which is fitter:
That you ignored him then or praise him now?
I wonder which of them he finds more bitter:
The quick hand spurned or the dead laurelled brow?

À MI-VOIX.

(After the French of A. Hudy.)

IF a dream you seek
Should once gleam bright,
To no man speak
Of your delight.

If the swaying bough
Bring shade to you,
Let its green brow
Be all your view.

Take you Love's rose
Homeward, but mind you
Be sure to close
Your door behind you. . . .

(For Régis Michaud.)

IN BONOS MAGISTROS SCRIBIT POETA.

I AM a vagabond,
I owe
Blood and bond
To Clément Marot
And to Sir Guy of Trébizonde.

Villon nursed me,
Rhymes my milk;
Geoffroi Rudel rehearsed me
In wearing lyric silk;
Ah! how schoolmasters cursed me!

Marlowe spun me lies
In verse,
And for a woman's eyes
I might do worse
Than poetise.

We need no roof
For shelter,
Who give proof
Helter-skelter
Of a cloven-hoof—

(For Dan Murphy.)

THE PEDANT.

P ELICAN-LIKE he wags his greyish head
And his raised arms are like the wings of birds;
He may have dreamed once, but his dream is dead,
Choked as he grubbed in tomes for roots of words;
So whilst through lexicons his fingers roam
In philologic hunt, he has forgot
How crimson roses flamed through ancient Rome
And slender lilies shone in Camelot!

MASEFIELD.

His song is a magic
Stream
Down from a white peak ;
And as I hear him speak
He seems like one bewitched in dream
By his own music.

WARNING.

LAST night I dreamed
Death passed by me ;
Her wild eyes gleamed
Alluringly,
I think she seemed
To beckon me.

I did not dare
To rise and go,
I could but stare
Frightened ; and so
She left me there—
And yet I know

She will return
Here to my bed,
And though I yearn
To stay, instead
My feet will turn
The way she led.

VERBA . . . VERBERA.

THE words you spoke
Were delicate . . . elusive,
So many butterflies
Flashing in the sunlight—

The words you would not speak
Were heavy . . . ultimate:
Stones dropped
Into still pools.

FULFILLMENT.

BECAUSE I have always striven
To keep my senses pure,
My sins shall be forgiven
By the Lord God, I am sure—
And because I have freely given
Some of my dreams shall endure.

(For Frédéric Le Clercq.)

A SHEAF OF SONNETS.

SONNETTEERS.

THESE men being proud of their deep gift of thought
Were ever unwilling that their mood find speech
In facile utterance, within the reach
Of shallow minds; with loving care they wrought
A golden background for their pictures, brought
A deft hand disciplined by toil to each
Dream they expressed. And as the masters teach
They were content to learn. Sometimes one caught
A note of music or a gleam of light
Unknown before of man; sometimes they seemed
Gladly to follow the appointed way;
Beauty they held so rare as to delight
In polishing her jewels till they gleamed
Like sudden sunshine on a winter's day.

TO BEAUTY.

BEAUTY, be close to me, go by my side
Constant through life; I need you most of all.
I will be true to you, and where you call
I will obey you, Beauty. Oh, abide
Deep in me; keep me young; let my dreams ride
Like clouds over the earth—I fear the thrall
Of knowledge and satiety, the gall
Of senses jaded or of joy denied.

Always remain beside me; be my friend;
Let me discover you with wondering eyes
In the most simple things: a swaying tree,
A flower that the gentle breezes bend,
A lark trilling his joy in the June skies,
The steadfast hills and the eternal sea. . . .

(For H. L. Mencken.)

RÊVERIE D' AUTOMNE.

THE woods are lyrical with echoings
Of Summer's music. Soft and far away
A nightingale, bidding farewell to Day,
Sings ancient roses and forgotten things.
The woods are lyrical. About them clings
Remembered words they heard young lovers say
In whisperings, while hearts made holiday
Deeming them all-unheard. The evening flings
A mauve, gossamer veil over the trees,
The pale moon crooks her slender, argent finger
Against the bluish sky; down in the dell,
Darkness is crouched, as one whose memories
Bid him lie close to earth awhile and linger
In thought on secrets that he will not tell.

LES CYGNES.

I HAVE watched swans . . . drifting . . . languorously
Down placid pools and stirring scarce a ripple
On the smooth surface that shone glassily,
The tips of their red mouths round as a nipple
Or, opened wide, as sharp as points that stipple
Sinuous, rare designs; all-dreamily
Craning their slim necks forward in a triple
Beauty of movement, line and symmetry.

I have watched swans with such a curious care
That all their movements are become for me
Token of the eternal beautiful:
A flash of light across a silent pool,
A thing created but that it might be
For them that watch a wonder and despair.

SEA-DEATH.

WAVES and white foam-froth shall wash over me
And barren sea-flower float above my head,
I perish as proud kings have perished,
Helpless before the power of the sea.
The wet wind wails my requiem; I shall see
Fair women with long tresses, meet to bed
In Caesar's company; and with these dead
Soon shall I be as one—eternally.

Rich gems of Tyre, treasures from Ind have lain
Long in the hold of countless sunken ships,
The crowns of queens are tarnished with sea-rust;
Amid their pageantry I shall foil pain,
Kiss life into the ashes of dead lips,
Mingling with some drowned Cleopatra's dust.

(For Ralph Roeder.)

THE ACTOR.

THIRTY long years he had been on the stage,
Thirty short lines had been his longest part,
You would have thought that long ago his heart
Would have grown bitter after such an age
Of futile toil; yet in the narrow cage
He called his room, I heard him walk apart,
Deep in the richest lore of classic art,
Evoking Hamlet's doubt, Othello's rage,
Faustus' magic. . . .

. . . Late into the night
He lived another life and gladly died
Three deaths forever consecrate to sorrow;
The wonder spent, an hour before the light
Of Dawn would break, he sat on his hard bed,
Speaking ere sleep his farce-lines for the morrow.

THE VIOLINIST.

THERE is a silence where Life dare not speak
Lest the heart break. An inarticulate
Sigh falls from lips weary and satiate
For things too much desired.

And yet you seek
With guileless confidence in mere technique
Mechanically to disintegrate
Secrets too dim for light to penetrate;
You crucify Love on the lofty peak
Of the mad bow you handle.

Ah, let be!
For far beyond Thought's realm, an unknown love
Sways us too beautifully to understand—
Ah, stay your skilful fratricidal hand,
Lest we should laugh before the failure of
Your trifling show of virtuosity.

REVANCHE.

DREAMER and fool, they call him. Yet, in bygone days,
Huge hosts were marshalled did his hand but sweep the
lyre,

Great empires crumbled when kings heard his lays,
He loved a woman's face—and Troy was set afire.
They deem him niggard, fouling him with their derision
Vain oaf who must needs hitch his waggon to a star,
Columbus, fool of fools with a distorted vision,
Or an ambitious cheat.

The great dreams are
Purchased by heart's blood spilled through nights of bitter
weeping

In anguish of the body, in the soul's vexation,
Till the years pass. Over his bones the worm is creeping
But that man's folly is the spirit of a nation:
Live, spirit of the paltry clown the crowds deride,
Smile as they pray to you, pale Christ they crucified!

ACTORS.

SOME few, perhaps, knew what it meant to hear
Loud thunders of appreciative applause;
These men I cannot pity much, because
When they are old, in memory they appear
Once more on stages where they were held dear,
Living old triumphs over: this one thaws
Stern men to warmth of mirth, another draws
From the most dull a tribute in a tear.

But oh! the countless hosts of men who knew
Only the drudgery of night on night
Playing their little moment generously
Saw others pass them by while wearily
Dream after dream slipped from their wistful sight—
The many ladders for the fame of few!

DOUBLE.

WITHIN my being are two men : one, old,
My spirit, and the other young, my flesh—
The ancient has absorbed what truths books hold,
Stored in his mind their lore is ever fresh ;
The youngster cries for moons of his desire
Nor brooks denial ; with mad energy
He leaps at stars and falls into the mire
And, in his fall, is lost. Audaciously
He drinks too deep the wine of carnival
And as he does so, guilefully his mate
Poisons the potion : bitter as only gall
The liquor burns the heart of him, too late
To change his ways or ever seek to quell
The sorry conflict that is each man's hell.

(For Philip Leidy.)

FELO DE SE.

WHEN I consider how my life is bound
Forever by Fatality's harsh chain,
What petty joy and nugatory pain
Confine me in the squalor of their round ;
How utterly complacency has wound
Its tendrils round my unresisting brain ;
In what morass of sloth my soul has lain ;
How my will's granite into dust is ground ;

I wonder how they fare : Egypt's proud queen
Who fed the asps upon her delicate flesh,
The pale-faced boy who in a garret mean
Drank poison with the lips old song made fresh ;
The captain, losing all on a far strand,
Who vanquished Life with one blow of his hand.

LA DONNA. . . .

YES, you are modern enough. You have the strong
Self-conquered independence of our day,
Few are the things you dare not do or say
And nothing you may care to do is wrong—
But sometimes, like a half-forgotten song
Whose notes on the dazed senses vaguely play,
The wraith of some dead sprite of yesterday
Takes hold on you and bears your heart along,
Mingles and mixes with you, is yourself,
Gives you the carefree air, the artless grace,
The half-shy and half-wanton abandon
Of a nymph dancing. . . .

In my serious face

You laugh . . . mock . . . beckon . . . O elusive elf,
And madly I give chase. . . . And you are gone!

INCHOATE.

SPEECH is so old,
Love is so rare—
Must I compare
Your hair to gold?
What verse could hold
Lights, like your hair?
Oh, I despair
Ever to mould
Something that stands
Like marble hewed
And carved by hands
Deft, for Love's duty;
Song is too crude
To speak your beauty.

À VOIX-BASSE.

LIKE as the awaited storm-beleaguered ships,
Reaching the end of their most perilous quest,
Into the haven sail with many a chest
Teeming with gold doubloons; as the moon dips
Her crescent whilst coquettishly she slips
Into the clouds' embrace to sleep at rest—
So have I found my peace upon your breast,
My dear oblivion on your popped lips.

Lest Earth be plunged in darkness too profound
Since your bright eyes were dimmed by shadowed sleep
Ten thousand stars shine in the heaven above—
A brooding pain about my heart is wound—
Ah, lover—let me weep the tears of love
For I am young—and it is good to weep!

ANALYSIS.

BEING timid of Life, we must needs hide
Behind the ambushed equivoke of speech,
And the vague words we utter cannot reach
That storm of wonder where our dreams would ride
Had we but courage. Things we never tried
Haunt us a moment, then are lost; we teach
Our reason strength in disappointment, each
Holding he does not wish what is denied.

If only we made circumstance, we two!
If only I would dare all without fear
Of your misunderstanding, you would hear
And hearing, know, and knowing, seize the gift
That with shy, blundering hands daily I lift—
Poor fools undone by what we will not do!

THE GIRL.

THERE was in you a childlike wistfulness
Lying heavy on the merest thing you did,
And deep in your deep eyes seemed to be hid
Vague longings that you never dared express.
How frail you were, how clearly powerless!
And life?—A chest of gems whose heavy lid
You could not lift alone; therefore you bid
Others to succor you in your distress.

So others did those things that were your fear,
Others accomplished deeds you held in scorn,
Gladly they held your meed of pain in trust;
Life is a singing voice you never hear,
A diadem you never will have worn,
A glory you have forfeited—for dust!

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

I TRIED to conjure up apt words to say,
You must forget I was but late returned,
I would act as I used to yesterday—
Try as I would I could not . . .

And I learned

How many sad things Time can thrust between
Two people in a year, and how words said
Cannot be changed, whatever they might mean,
How there's no morrow for the Love that's dead.

We scarcely spoke save to pass platitudes,
You said: 'What weather! Look, how the rain drips!'
I struck conventional, dull attitudes—
(Before my misty eyes swam your red lips!)
And coldly shook your hand like a chance friend,
This was the irremediable end.

SEEKING AND FINDING NOT.

MOST beautiful and best I said were you,
Strange how I brought myself to think such lies ;
There are on earth a thousand things I prize
More dearly, being more noble and more true ;
Dawn's paean ; Sunset's dirge ; meadows that dew
Stirs to shy whispers ; lavish hills that rise
Stark-bosomed to the vault of pearl-grey skies ;
Warm rain of April ; moonlight bursting through
Branches the breeze shakes.

There is far more grace

In the brave beauty of tall-masted ships
Riding to sea than queenliest women find
In stately movement. Nay—I have been blind !
And yet, the poignancy of your red lips !
The wonder of your pale remembered face !

AT HER GRAVE.

WEEP not ! Your tears
Can bring no balm
To one who hears
Naught in the calm
Of the deep grave
Wherein she lies . . .
Go hence ! Be brave !
Everything dies.

The fairest flower
Lives but a day,
Love knows one hour
Then ebbs away—
What man has power
Death's hand to stay ?

APOLOGIA PRO MORIBUS SUIS.

YES, bitterly I criticise
But am no cynic. For I heap
Insult on all, that I may keep
Sacred what I idealise.
Too well I hold before my eyes
The sad fruit sympathy would reap;
Therefore, my soul in scorn I steep,
It is my way of being wise.

Once, in my unregenerate days
I might have walked those simple ways
Which, selfishly, you would not share;
Now I have found in my own heart
Treasures in which you have no part,
So why need either of us care?

LINCOLN.

(*For a Head of Lincoln by Borglum.*)

I.

THERE is no radiance gathered round his head,
He is not clothed in flame nor shod with light,
No great world cowers fearful in his sight,
No giant empire trembles at the tread
Of his triumphant feet; ungarlanded,
Free from all sign of pomp however slight
He looks on us from out the curious night
That makes him one with the eternal dead,
As who should look who lived his little span
Of governed days; who knew deep joy; who gave
The full possession of his work and dreams—
(Sometimes he looked almost grotesque, it seems,)
So when he died they laid him in his grave
A humble, somewhat melancholy man.

II.

The man was humble but of boundless pride,
He never stooped to flattery, no art
Of trickery was in his ways: his part
Was to speak out his mind and ever abide
By what he said; he had no need to hide
Behind the equivoke of speech, to dart
Swift to advantage of deceit. His heart
Was loyal to his people. He defied
The people's foes, moved valiantly among
Such men as strongly waged the people's fight
Regardless of the bitter price to pay—
Our greatest homage to his name today
Lies in the words: He read his people aright,
He listened to their heart, he spoke their tongue!

III.

Let but this land be suddenly plunged in gloom,
After all things attempted are found vain,
Out of the welter of folly, crime and pain,
The last hope dead, the last word said, no room
For aught but dark despair and bitter gloom,
Then cry one name to rouse souls that have lain
Dull from disuse, to arm weak hands, to train
The rusted rifle on its mark, to boom
Out of the cannon's mouth; on bayonets
To flash proud in the sunlit summer weather
Across the tattered field like a white flame—
There is one name no countryman forgets.
To rally all America together
For the good fight, you need but cry one name.

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