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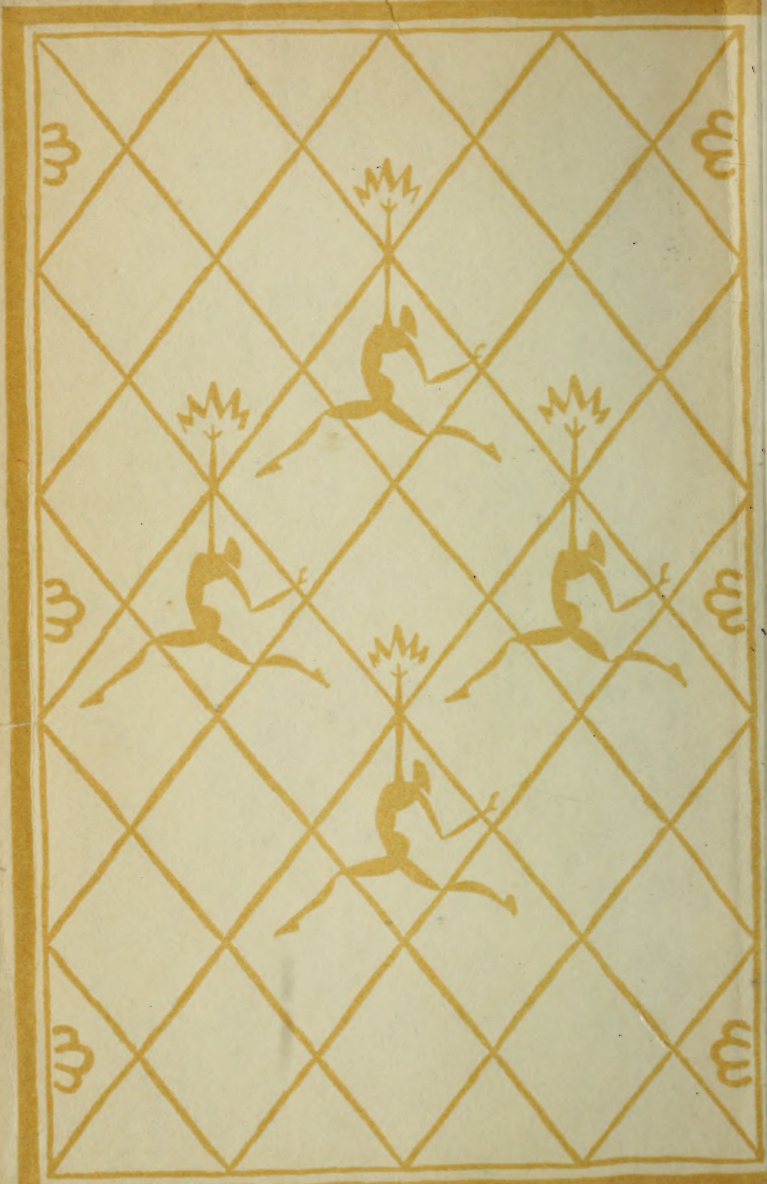

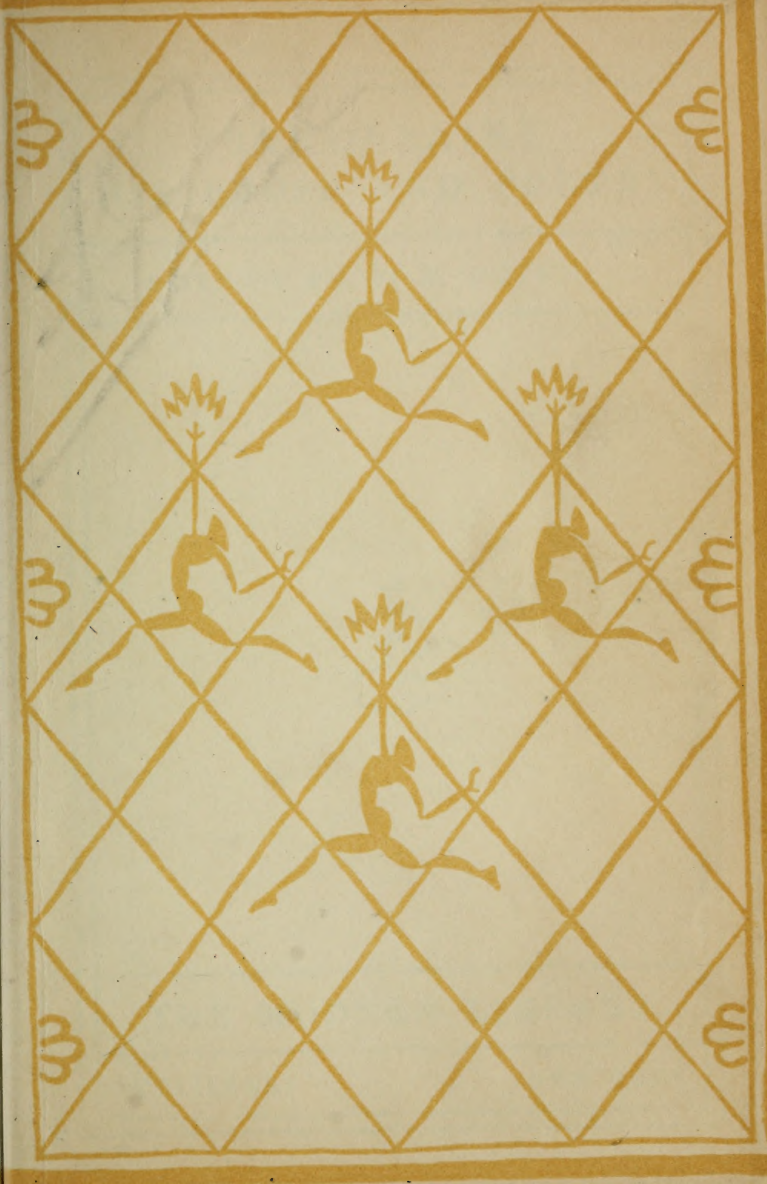

BAUDELAIRE
HIS PROSE AND POETRY

EDITED BY T. R. SMITH

THE MODERN LIBRARY

PUBLISHERS :: :: NEW YORK

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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FLOWERS OF EVIL

AVE ATQUE VALE

In Memory of Charles Baudelaire

By Algernon Charles Swinburne

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique a l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.
Les Fleurs du Mal.

I

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

II

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs

Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do not wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
It is not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips.

V

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who are past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labor and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

VII

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,

What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits gray like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

VIII

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

XII

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest and on this dust no tears could quicken

There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poet's pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
  And stains with tears her changing bosom chill;
  That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
  With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
  Long since, and face no more called Erycine
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
  Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
  Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
  And shadows hot from hell.

XVI

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
  No choral salutation lure to light
  A spirit with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
  There is no help for these things; none to mend,
  And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
  Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
  And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
  And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
  If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live
  And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden

Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

XVIII

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done:
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

PREFACE

In presenting to the American public this collection in English of perhaps the most influential French poet of the last seventy years, I consider it essential to explain the conditions under which the work has been done.

Baudelaire has written poems that will, in all likelihood, live while poetry is used as a medium of expression, and the great influence that he has exercised on English and continental literature is mainly due to the particular quality of his style, his way of feeling or his method of thought. He is a master of analytical power, and in his highest ecstasy of emotional expression, this power can readily be recognized. In his own quotation he gave forth his philosophy on this point:

"The more art would aim at being philosophically clear, the more will it degrade itself and return to the childish hieroglyphic: on the other hand, the more art detaches itself from teaching, the more will it attain to pure disinterested beauty. . . . Poetry, under pain of death or decay, cannot assimilate Herself to science or ethics. She has not Truth for object, she has only Herself."

What appears at first glance in the preceding phrases to be a contradiction is really a confirmation of Baudelaire's conception of the highest understanding of æsthetic principle. Baudelaire's ideal beauty is tempered with mystery and sadness, the real too, but never the commonplace.

No poet has brought so many new ideas in sensation into a literary style. Intellectually he is all sensation, though he seldom degenerates into abstract sentimentality. This sum totality of the power of absorbing external sensation is Baudelaire. From the effect of his

objectivity his art expresses itself as if solely subjective. This condition of mind and art makes him most difficult to translate into another language, in particular, English.

This collection of his verse and prose is gathered from those experiments in translation which I think will most effectively convey to the English reader those qualities that made Baudelaire what he is. There are numerous translations from Baudelaire in English but most of them may be dismissed as being seldom successful. Mr. Arthur Symon's translation of some of the prose poems is a most beautiful adventure in psychological sensations, effective though not always accurate in interpretation. Mr. F. P. Sturm's effort with the Flowers of Evil and the Prose Poems is always accurate, sometimes inspired, and often a *tour de force* of translation. Mr. W. J. Robertson's translations from the Flowers of Evil is the most successful of all. He maintains with amazing facility all the subtlety, beauty and one might also say the perfume of Baudelaire's verse. Mr. Shipley does a most meritorious work in his translations from the prose poems, and the reader will be everlastingly grateful to him for his fine painstaking translation of the *Intimate Papers* from Baudelaire's unpublished novels.

There are few interesting or valuable essays on the mind and art of Baudelaire in English, but the reader will find the following critical appreciations to be of inestimable use in the study of the poet:

"The Influence of Baudelaire": G. Turquet-Milnes (Constable: 1913); "The Baudelaire Legend": James Huneker (Egoists: Scribner's: 1909); and Théophile Gautier's essay on Baudelaire, of which an excellent English translation has been made by Prof. Sumichrast.

I think that this anthology will give the reader an intelligent understanding of the mind and art of a very great French poet.

T. R. Smith.

June, 1919.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE:

A Study by F. P. Sturm

I

Charles Baudelaire was one of those who take the downward path which leads to salvation. There are men born to be the martyrs of the world and of their own time; men whose imagination carries them beyond all that we know or have learned to think of as law and order; who are so intoxicated with a vision of a beauty beyond the world that the world's beauty seems to them but a little paint above the face of the dead; who love God with a so consuming fire that they must praise evil for God's glory, and blaspheme His name that all sects and creeds may be melted away; who see beneath all there is of mortal loveliness, the invisible worm, feeding upon hopes and desires no less than upon the fair and perishable flesh; who are good and evil at the same time; and because the good and evil in their souls finds a so perfect instrument in the refined and tortured body of modern times, desire keener pleasure and more intolerable anguish than the world contains, and become materialists because the tortured heart cries out in denial of the soul that tortures it. Charles Baudelaire was one of these men; his art is the expression of his decadence; a study of his art is the understanding of that complex movement, that "inquietude of the Veil in the temple," as Mallarmé called it, that has changed the literature of the world; and, especially, made of poetry the subtle

and delicate instrument of emotional expression it has become in our own day.

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

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

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

body. He loves them and does not love; they are cruel and indolent and full of strange perversions; they are perfumed with exotic perfumes; they sleep to the sound of viols, or fan themselves languidly in the shadow, and only he sees that it is the shadow of death.

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

In one of his sonnets he says:

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

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

II

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

At school, during his childhood, he gained many distinctions, and passed for a kind of infant prodigy; but later on, when he sat for his examination as *bachelier ès lettres,* his extreme nervousness made him appear almost an idiot. Failing miserably, he made no second attempt. Then his father died, and his mother married General Aupick, afterwards ambassador to Constantinople, an excellent man in every respect, but quite incapable of sympathising with or even of understanding the love for literature that now began to manifest itself in the mind of his stepson. All possible means were tried to turn him from literature to some more lucrative and more respectable profession. Family quarrels arose over this all-important question, and young Baudelaire, who seems to have given some real cause for offence to the stepfather whose aspirations and profession he despised, was at length sent away upon a long voyage, in the hopes that the sight of strange lands and new faces would perhaps cause him to forget the ambitions his relatives could but consider as foolish and idealistic. He sailed the Indian Seas; visited the islands of Mauritius, Bourbon, Madagascar, and Ceylon; saw the yellow waters of the sacred Ganges; stored up the memory of tropical sounds and colours and odours for use later on; and returned to

Paris shortly after his twenty-first birthday, more than ever determined to be a man of letters.

His parents were in despair; no doubt quite rightly so from their point of view. Théophile Gautier, perhaps remembering the many disappointments and martyrdoms of his own sad life, defends the attitude of General Aupick in a passage where he poignantly describes the hopelessness of the profession of letters. The future author of *The Flowers of Evil,* however, was now his own master and in a position, so far as monetary matters were concerned, to follow out his own whim. He took apartments in the Hôtel Pimodan, a kind of literary lodging-house where all Bohemia met; and where Gautier and Boissard were also at that period installed. Then began that life of uninterrupted labour and meditation that has given to France her most characteristic literature, for these poems of Baudelaire's are not only original in themselves but have been the cause of originality in others; they are the root of modern French literature and much of the best English literature; they were the origin of that new method in poetry that gave Mallarmé and Verlaine to France; Yeats and some others to England. It was in the Hôtel Pimodan that Baudelaire and Gautier first met and formed one of those unfading friendships not so rare among men of letters as among men of the world; there also the "Hashish-Eaters" held the *séances* that have since become famous in the history of literature. Hashish and opium, indeed, contribute not a little to the odour of the strange *Flowers of Evil;* as also, perhaps, they contributed to Baudelaire's death from the terrible malady known as general paralysis, for he was a man who could not resist a so easy path into the world of *macabre* visions. I shall return to this question again; there is internal evidence in his writings that shows he made good literary use of these opiate-born

dreams which in the end dragged him into their own abyss.

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

That was Baudelaire exactly, suave and polished, filled with sceptical faith, cynical with the terrible cynicism of the scholar who is acutely conscious of all the morbid and gloomy secrets hidden beneath the fair exteriors of the world. Gautier, in the passage I have already mentioned, emphasises both his reserve and his cynicism: "Contrary to the somewhat loose manners of artists generally, Baudelaire prided himself upon observing the most rigid *convenances;* his courtesy, indeed, was excessive to the point of seeming affected. He measured his sentences, using only the most carefully chosen terms, and pronounced certain words in a particular manner, as though he wished to underline them and give them a mysterious importance. He had italics and capital letters in his voice. Exaggeration, much in honour at Pimodan's, he disdained as being theatrical and gross; though he himself affected paradox and excess. With a very simple, very natural, and perfectly detached air, as

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

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

"You are a sky of autumn, pale and rose!
But all the sea of sadness in my blood
Surges, and ebbing, leaves my lip morose
Salt with the memory of the bitter flood.

In vain your hand glides my faint bosom o'er;
That which you seek, beloved, is desecrate
By woman's tooth and talon: ah! no more
Seek in me for a heart which those dogs ate!

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

We can recall nothing like it in the literary history of our own country; the sensation caused by the appearance of the first series of Mr. Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* was mild in comparison; just as Mr. Swinburne's poems were but wan derivatives from Baudelaire—at least as far as ideas are concerned; I say nothing about their beauty of expression or almost absolute mastery of technique—for it is quite obvious that the English poet was indebted to Baudelaire for all the bizarre and satanic elements in his work; as Baudelaire was indebted to Poe. Mr. Swinburne, however, is wild where Baudelaire is grave; and where Baudelaire compresses some perverse and morbid image into a single unforgettable line, Mr. Swinburne beats it into a froth of many musical lovely words, until we forget the deep sea in the shining foam.

If we call to mind the reception at first given to the black-and-white work of Aubrey Beardsley, it will give some idea of the consternation caused in France by the appearance of the *Flowers of Evil.* Beardsley, indeed, resembles Baudelaire in many ways, for he achieved in art what the other achieved in literature: the apotheosis of the horrible and grotesque, the perfecting of symbols to shadow forth intellectual sin, the tearing away of the decent veil of forgetfulness that hides our own corruption from our eyes, and his one prose romance, *Under the Hill,* unhappily incomplete at his death at the age of

twenty-four, beats Baudelaire on his own ground. The four or five chapters which alone remain of this incomplete romance stand alone in literature. They are the absolute attainment of what Baudelaire more or less successfully attempted—a testament of sin. Not the sin of the flesh, the gross faults of the body that are vulgarly known as sin; but sin which is a metaphysical corruption, a depravity of pure intellect, the sin of the fallen angels in hell who cover their anguish with the sound of harps and sweet odours; who are incapable of bodily impurity, and for whom spiritual purity is the only terror. And since mortality, which is the shadow of the immortal, can comprehend spiritual and abstract things only by the analogies and correspondences which exist between them and the far reflections of them that we call reality, both Baudelaire and Beardsley, as indeed all artists who speak with tongues of spiritual truth, choose more or less actual human beings to be the shadows of the divine or satanic beings they would invoke, and make them sin delicate sins of the refined bodily sense that we may get a far-off glimpse of the Evil that is not mortal but immortal, the Spiritual Evil that has set up its black throne beside the throne of Spiritual Good, and has equal share in the shaping of the world and man.

I am not sure that Baudelaire, when he wrote this sinister poetry, had any clear idea that it was his vocation to be a prophet either of good or evil. Certainly he had no thought of founding a school of poetry, and if he made any conscious effort to bring a new method into literature, it was merely because he desired to be one of the famous writers of his country. An inspired thinker, however, whether his inspiration be mighty or small, receives his thought from a profounder source than his own physical reason, and writes to the dictation of beings outside of and greater than himself. The famous Eliphas

Levi, like all the mystics who came before and after him, from Basilides the Gnostic to Blake the English visionary, taught that the poet and dreamer are the mediums of the Divine Word, and sole instruments through which the gods energise in the world of material things. The writing of a great book is the casting of a pebble into the pool of human thought; it gives rise to ever-widening circles that will reach we know not whither, and begins a chain of circumstances that may end in the destruction of kingdoms and religions and the awakening of new gods. The change wrought, directly or indirectly, by *The Flowers of Evil* alone is almost too great to be properly understood. There is perhaps not a man in Europe to-day whose outlook on life would not have been different had *The Flowers of Evil* never been written. The first thing that happens after the publication of such a book is the theft of its ideas and the imitation of its style by the lesser writers who labour for the multitude, and so its teaching goes from book to book, from the greater to the lesser, as the divine hierarchies emanate from Divinity, until ideas that were once paradoxical, or even blasphemous and unholy, have become mere newspaper commonplaces adopted by the numberless thousands who do not think for themselves, and the world's thought is changed completely, though by infinite slow degrees. The immediate result of Baudelaire's work was the Decadent School in French literature. Then the influence spread across the Channel, and the English Æsthetes arose to preach the gospel of imagination to the unimaginative. Both Decadence and Æstheticism, as intellectual movements, have fallen into the nadir of oblivion, and the dust lies heavy upon them, but they left a little leaven to lighten the heavy inertness of correct and academic literature; and now Symbolism, a greater movement than either, is in the ascendant, giv-

ing another turn to the wheel, and to all who think deeply about such matters it seems as though Symbolist literature is to be the literature of the future. The Decadents and Æsthetes were weak because they had no banner to fight beneath, no authority to appeal to in defence of their views, no definite gospel to preach. They were by turns morbid, hysterical, foolishly blasphemous, or weakly disgusting, but never anything for long, their one desire being to produce a thrill at any cost. If the hospital failed they went to the brothel, and when even obscenity failed to stimulate the jaded palates of their generation there was still the graveyard left. A more or less successful imitation of Baudelaire's awful verses entitled "The Corpse" has been the beginning of more than one French poet's corrupt flight across the sky of literature. That Baudelaire himself was one of their company is not an accusation, for he had genius, which his imitators, English or French, have not; and his book, even apart from the fact that it made straight the way for better things, must be admitted to be a great and subtly-wrought work of art by whosoever reads it with understanding. And, moreover, his morbidness is not at all an affectation; his poems inevitably prove the writer to have been quite sincere in his perversion and in his decadence.

The Symbolist writers of to-day, though they are sprung from him, are greater than he because they are the prophets of a faith who believe in what they preach. They find their defence in the writings of the mystics, and their doctrines are at the root of every religion. They were held by the Gnostics and are in the books of the Kabbalists and the Magi. Blake preached them and Eliphas Levi taught them to his disciples in France, who in turn have misunderstood and perverted them, and formed strange religions and sects of Devil-worshippers.

These doctrines hold that the visible world is the world of illusion, not of reality. Colour and sound and perfume and all material and sensible things are but the symbols and far-off reflections of the things that are alone real. Reality is hidden away from us by the five senses and the gates of death; and Reason, the blind and laborious servant of the physical brain, deludes us into believing that we can know anything of truth through the medium of the senses. It is through the imagination alone that man can obtain spiritual revelation, for imagination is the one window in the prison-house of the flesh through which the soul can see the proud images of eternity. And Blake, who is the authority of all English Symbolist writers, long since formulated their creed in words that have been quoted again and again, and must still be quoted by all who write in defence of modern art:—"*The world of imagination is the world of Eternity. It is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the vegetated body. This world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation, or vegetation, is finite and temporal. There exist in that eternal world the permanent realities of everything which we see reflected in this vegetable glass of nature.*"

In spite of the cry against *Flowers of Evil,* Baudelaire did not lack defenders among literary men themselves; and many enthusiastic articles were written in praise of his book. Thierry not unjustly compared him to Dante, to which Barbey d'Aurevilly replied, "Baudelaire comes from hell, Dante only went there"; adding at the finish of his article: "After the *Flowers of Evil* there are only two possible ways for the poet who made them blossom: either to blow out his brains or become a Christian." Baudelaire did neither. And Victor Hugo, after reading the two poems, "The Seven Old Men" and "The Little

Old Women," wrote to Baudelaire. "You have dowered the heaven of art with one knows not what deathly gleam," he said in his letter; "you have created a new shudder." The phrase became famous, and for many years after this the creation of a new shudder was the ambition of every young French writer worth his salt.

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

He remembered his visions and sensations as an eater of drugs and made literary use of them. At the end of this book, among the "Poems in Prose," will be found one entitled "The Double Chamber," almost certainly written under the influence of opium, and the last verse of "The Temptation"—

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

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

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

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

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

of the vowels has founded a school of symbolists in France. I will content myself with quoting that—in the original, since it loses too much by translation:

"A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu, voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes,
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bourdonnent autour des puanteurs cruelles,
Golfes d'ombres; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,
Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombrelles;
I, poupre, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;
U, cycles, vibrements divins des mers virides,
Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux.
O, suprême clairon, plein de strideurs étranges,
Silences traversés des mondes et des anges.
—O l'Omega, rayon violet de ses yeux."

It is to be hoped that opium and hashish rendered Baudelaire somewhat less unhappy during his life, for they certainly contributed to hasten his death. Always of an extremely neurotic temperament, he began to break down beneath his excesses, and shortly after the publication of *The Artificial Paradises,* which shows a considerable deterioration in his style, he removed from Paris to Brussels in the hope of building up his health by the change. At Brussels he grew worse. His speech began to fail; he was unable to pronounce certain words and stumbled over others. Hallucinations commenced, no longer the hallucinations of hashish; and his disease, rapidly establishing itself, was recognised as "general paralysis of the insane." Gautier tells how the news of his death came to Paris while he yet lived. It was false news, but prematurely true. Baudelaire lingered on for another three months; motionless and inert, his eyes the only part of him alive; unable to speak or even to write, and so died.

He left, besides *The Flowers of Evil* and *Little Poems*

in Prose (his masterpieces), several volumes of critical essays, published under the titles of *Æsthetic Curiosities* and *Romantic Art; The Artificial Paradises,* and his translations of the works of Edgar Allan Poe—admirable pieces of work by which Poe actually gains.

III

Baudelaire's love of the artificial has been insisted upon by all who have studied his work, but to my mind never sufficiently insisted upon, for it was the foundation of his method. He wrote many arguments in favour of the artificial, and elaborated them into a kind of paradoxical philosophy of art. His hatred of nature and purely natural things was but a perverted form of the religious ecstasy that made the old monk pull his cowl about his eyes when he left his cell in the month of May, lest he should see the blossoming trees, and his mind be turned towards the beautiful delusions of the world. The Egyptians and the earliest of the Christians looked upon nature not as the work of the good and benevolent spirit who is the father of our souls, but as the work of the rebellious "gods of generation," who fashion beautiful things to capture the heart of man and bind his soul to earth. Blake, whom I have already quoted, hated nature in the same fashion, and held death to be the one way of escape from "the delusions of goddess Nature and her laws." Baudelaire's revolt against external things was more a revolt of the intellect than of the imagination; and he expresses it, not by desiring that the things of nature should be swept away to make room for the things of the spirit, but that they should be so changed by art that they cease to be natural. As he was of all poets the most intensely modern, holding that "modernity is one-half of art," the other half being something "eternal and immutable," he preferred, unlike Blake and

his modern followers, to express himself in quite modern terms, and so wrote his famous and much misunderstood *Eloge du Maquillage* to defend his views. As was usual with him, he pushed his ideas to their extreme logical sequence, and the casual reader who picks up that extraordinary essay is in consequence quite misled as to the writer's intention.

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

He begins by attempting to prove that Nature is innately and fundamentally wrong and wicked. "The greater number of errors relative to the beautiful date from the eighteenth century's false conceptions of morality. Nature was regarded in those times as the base, source, and type of all possible good and beauty. . . . If, however, we consent to refer simply to the visible facts, . . . we see that Nature teaches nothing, or almost nothing. That is to say, she *forces* man to sleep, to drink, to eat, and to protect himself, well or ill, against

the hostilities of the atmosphere. It is she also who moves him to kill and eat or imprison and torture his kind; for, as soon as we leave the region of necessities and needs to enter into that of luxuries and pleasures, we see that Nature is no better than a counsellor to crime. . . . Religion commands us to nourish our poor and infirm parents; Nature (the voice of our own interest) commands us to do away with them. Pass in review, analyse all that is natural, all the actions and desires of the natural man, and you will find nothing but what is horrible. All beautiful and noble things are the result of calculation. Crime, the taste for which the human animal absorbs before birth, is originally natural. Virtue, on the contrary, is *artificial,* supernatural, since there has been a necessity in all ages and among all nations for gods and prophets to preach virtue to humanity; since man alone would have been unable to discover it. Evil is done without effort, *naturally* and by fatality; good is always the product of an art."

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

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

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

Such theories as these, if they are sincerely held, necessarily lead the theorist into the strangest bypaths of literature. Baudelaire, like many another writer whose business is with verse, pondered so long upon the musical and rhythmical value of words that at times words became meaningless to him. He thought his own language too simple to express the complexities of poetic reverie, and dreamed of writing his poems in Latin. Not, however, in the Latin of classical times; that was too robust,

too natural, too "brutal and purely epidermic," to use an expression of his own; but in the corrupt Latin of the Byzantine decadence, which he considered as "the supreme sigh of a strong being already transformed and prepared for the spiritual life."

One of these Latin poems has appeared in all editions of *The Flowers of Evil*. Though dozens as good are to be found in the Breviary of the Roman Church, "Franciscæ Meæ Laudes" has been included in this selection for the benefit of those curious in such matters. It is one of Baudelaire's many successful steps in the wrong direction.

IV

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

when it is none of these it is the Serpent, as in that sombre poem "To a Madonna"—the Serpent beneath the feet of conquering purity. Baudelaire's imagination, however, which continually ran upon *macabre* images, loved remorse more than peace, and loved the Serpent more than the purity that would slay it, so he destroys purity with "Seven Knives" which are "the Seven Deadly Sins," that the Serpent may live to prey upon a heart that finds no beauty in peace. Even Love is evil, for his "ancient arrows" are "crime, horror, folly," and the god Eros becomes a demon lying in wait:

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

Gautier pretends that the poet preserved his ideal under the form of "the adorable phantom of La Beatrix, the ideal ever desired, never attained, the divine and superior beauty incarnated in an ethereal woman, spiritualised, made of light and flame and perfume, a vapour, a dream, a reflection of the seraphical world"; but when Baudelaire has a vision of this same Beatrice he sees her as one of a crowd of "cruel and curious demons" who mock at his sorrow, and she, too, mocks him, and caresses the demons who are his spiritual foes.

Baudelaire was too deeply in love with the artificial to care overmuch for the symbols he could have found among natural objects. Only once in *The Flowers of Evil* does he look upon the Moon with the eyes of a mystic; and that is when he remembers that all people of imagination are under the Moon's influence, and makes his poet hide her iridescent tear in his heart, "far from the eyes of the Sun," for the Sun is lord of material labours and therefore hostile to the dreams and reveries

that are the activity of the poet. He sought more for bizarre analogies and striking metaphors than for true symbols or correspondences. He is happiest when comparing the vault of the heaven to "the lighted ceiling of a music hall," or "the black lid of the mighty pot where the human generations boil"; and when he thinks of the unfortunate and unhappy folk of the world, he does not see any hope for them in any future state; he sees, simply, "God's awful claw" stretched out to tear them. He offers pity, but no comfort.

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

"Beauty" and you will see how he has invoked in fourteen lines the image of a goddess, mysterious and immortal; as fair as that Aphrodite who cast the shadow of her loveliness upon the Golden Age; as terrible as Pallas, "the warrior maid invincible." And as Minerva loved mortality in the person of Ulysses, so Baudelaire's personification of Beauty loves the poets who pray before her and gaze into her eternal eyes, watching the rising and setting of their visionary Star in those placid mirrors.

The explanation of most of Baudelaire's morbid imaginings is this, that he was a man haunted by terrible dream-like memories; chief among them the memory that the loveliness he had adored in woman—the curve of a perfect cheek, the lifting of a perfect arm in some gesture of imperial indolence, the fall of a curl across a pale brow, all the minute and unforgettable things that give immortality to some movement of existence—all these, and the woman and her lover, must pass away from Time and Space; and he, unhappily, knew nothing of the philosophy that teaches us how all objects and events, even the most trivial—a woman's gesture, a rose, a sigh, a fading flame, the sound that trembles on a lute-string—find a place in Eternity when they pass from the recognition of our senses. If he believed in the deathlessness of man's personality he gained no comfort from his belief. He mourned the body's decay; he was not concerned with the soul; and no heaven less palpable than Mohammed's could have had any reality in his imagination.

His prose is as distinguished in its manner as his verse. I think it was Professor Saintsbury who first brought *The Little Poems in Prose,* a selection from which is included in this volume, before the notice of English readers in an essay written many years ago. I am writing this in France, far from the possibility of

consulting any English books, but if my memory serves me rightly he considered the prose of these prose poems to be as perfect as literature can be. I think he said, "they go as far as prose can go." They need no other introduction than themselves, for they are perfect of their kind, and not different in thought from the more elaborately wrought poems of *The Flowers of Evil*. Some of them, as for instance "Every Man His Chimæra," are as classical and as universally true as the myths and symbolisms of the Old Testament; and all of them, I think, are worthy of a place in that book the Archangel of the Presence will consult when all is weighed in the balance —the book written by man himself, the record of his deep and shallow imaginings. Baudelaire wrote them, he said, because he had dreamed, "in his days of ambition," "of a miracle of poetical prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme." His attitude of mind was always so natural to him that he never thought it necessary to make any excuse for the spirit of his art or the drear philosophy he preached; unless a short notice printed in the first edition of his poems, but withdrawn from the second edition, explaining that "faithful to his dolorous programme, the author of *The Flowers of Evil*, as a perfect comedian, has had to mould his spirit to all sophisms as to all corruptions," can be considered as an excuse. From whatever point of view we regard him: whether we praise his art and blame his philosophy, or blame his art and praise his philosophy, he is as difficult to analyse as he is difficult to give a place to, for we have none with whom to compare him, or very few, too few to be of service to the critic. His art is like the pearl, a beautiful product of disease, and to blame it is like blaming the pearl.

He looked upon life very much as Poe, whom he so admired, looked upon it: with the eye of a sensitive

spectator in some gloomy vault of the Spanish Inquisition, where beauty was upon the rack; he was horrified, but unable to turn from a sight that fascinated him by its very terror. His moments of inspiration are haunted by the consciousness that evil beings, clothed with horror as with a shroud, are ever lingering about the temple of life and awaiting an opportunity to enter. He was like a man who awakens trembling from a nightmare, afraid of the darkness, and unable to believe the dawn may be less hopeless than the midnight. Perhaps he was haunted, as many artists and all mystics, by a fear of madness and of the unseen world of evil shapes that sanity hides from us and madness reveals. Is there a man, is there a writer, especially, who has not at times been conscious of a vague and terrible fear that the whole world of visible nature is but a comfortable illusion that may fade away in a moment and leave him face to face with the horror that has visited him in dreams? The old occult writers held that the evil thoughts of others beget phantoms in the air that can make themselves bodies out of our fear, and haunt even our waking moments. These were the shapes of terror that haunted Baudelaire. Shelley, too, writes of them with as profound a knowledge as the magical writer of the Middle Ages. They come to haunt his Prometheus.

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

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

> "We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
> And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
> And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue

Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will."

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

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

The greatest of all poets conquer their dreams; others, who are great, but not of the greatest, are conquered by them, and Baudelaire was one of these. There is a passage in the works of Edgar Poe that Baudelaire may well have pondered as he laboured at his translation, for it reveals the secret of his life: "There are moments when, even to the sober eye of reason, the world of our sad humanity may assume the semblance of a hell; but the imagination of man is no Carathis to explore with impunity its every cavern. Alas! the grim legion of sepulchral terrors cannot be regarded as altogether fanciful; but, like the demons in whose company Afrasiab made his voyage down the Oxus, they must sleep or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber or we perish."

POEMS IN PROSE

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR SYMONS

NOTE

THE "Petits Poëmes en Prose" are experiments, and they are also confessions. "Who of us," says Baudelaire in his dedicatory preface, "has not dreamed, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme, subtle and staccato enough to follow the lyric motions of the soul, the wavering outlines of meditation, the sudden starts of the conscience?" This miracle he has achieved in these *bagatelles laborieuses,* to use his own words, these astonishing trifles, in which the art is not more novel, precise and perfect than the quality of thought and of emotion. In translating into English a few of these little masterpieces, which have given me so much delight for so many years, I have tried to be absolutely faithful to the sense, the words, and the rhythm of the original. A. S.

I

THE FAVOURS OF THE MOON

THE Moon, who is caprice itself, looked in through the window when you lay asleep in your cradle, and said inwardly: "This is a child after my own soul."

And she came softly down the staircase of the clouds, and passed noiselessly through the window-pane. Then she laid herself upon you with the supple tenderness of a mother, and she left her colours upon your face. That is why your eyes are green and your cheeks extraordinarily pale. It was when you looked at her, that your pupils widened so strangely; and she clasped her arms so tenderly about your throat that ever since you have had the longing for tears.

Nevertheless, in the flood of her joy, the Moon filled the room like a phosphoric atmosphere, like a luminous poison; and all this living light thought and said: "My kiss shall be upon you for ever. You shall be beautiful as I am beautiful. You shall love that which I love and that by which I am loved: water and clouds, night and silence; the vast green sea; the formless and multiform water; the place where you shall never be; the lover whom you shall never know; unnatural flowers; odours which make men drunk; the cats that languish upon pianos and sob like women, with hoarse sweet voices!

"And you shall be loved by my lovers, courted by my courtiers. You shall be the queen of men who have green eyes, and whose throats I have clasped by night in my caresses; of those that love the sea, the vast tumultuous green sea, formless and multiform water, the place where they are not, the woman whom they know not, the omi-

nous flowers that are like the censers of an unknown rite, the odours that trouble the will, and the savage and voluptuous beasts that are the emblems of their folly."

And that is why, accursed dear spoilt child, I lie now at your feet, seeking to find in you the image of the fearful goddess, the fateful god-mother, the poisonous nurse of all the moonstruck of the world.

II

WHICH IS TRUE?

I KNEW one Benedicta who filled earth and air with the ideal; and from whose eyes men learnt the desire of greatness, of beauty, of glory, and of all whereby we believe in immortality.

But this miraculous child was too beautiful to live long; and she died only a few days after I had come to know her, and I buried her with my own hands, one day when Spring shook out her censer in the graveyards. I buried her with my own hands, shut down into a coffin of wood, perfumed and incorruptible like Indian caskets.

And as I still gazed at the place where I had laid away my treasure, I saw all at once a little person singularly like the deceased, who trampled on the fresh soil with a strange and hysterical violence, and said, shrieking with laughter: "Look at me! I am the real Benedicta! a pretty sort of baggage I am! And to punish you for your blindness and folly you shall love me just as I am!"

But I was furious, and I answered: "No! no! no!" And to add more emphasis to my refusal I stamped on the ground so violently with my foot that my leg sank up to the knee in the earth of the new grave; and now, like a wolf caught in a trap, I remain fastened, perhaps for ever, to the grave of the ideal.

III

"L'INVITATION AU VOYAGE"

THERE is a wonderful country, a country of Cockaigne, they say, which I dreamed of visiting with an old friend. It is a strange country, lost in the mists of our North, and one might call it the East of the West, the China of Europe, so freely does a warm and capricious fancy flourish there, and so patiently and persistently has that fancy illustrated it with a learned and delicate vegetation.

A real country of Cockaigne, where everything is beautiful, rich, quiet, honest; where order is the likeness and the mirror of luxury; where life is fat, and sweet to breathe; where disorder, tumult, and the unexpected are shut out; where happiness is wedded to silence; where even cooking is poetic, rich and highly flavoured at once; where all, dear love, is made in your image.

You know that feverish sickness which comes over us in our cold miseries, that nostalgia of unknown lands, that anguish of curiosity? There is a country made in your image, where all is beautiful, rich, quiet and honest; where fancy has built and decorated a western China, where life is sweet to breathe, where happiness is wedded to silence. It is there that we should live, it is there that we should die!

Yes, it is there that we should breathe, dream, and lengthen out the hours by the infinity of sensations. A musician has written an "Invitation à la Valse": who will compose the "Invitation au Voyage" that we can offer to the beloved, to the chosen sister?

Yes, it is in this atmosphere that it would be good to live; far off, where slower hours contain more thoughts,

where clocks strike happiness with a deeper and more significant solemnity.

On shining panels, or on gilded leather of a dark richness, slumbers the discreet life of pictures, deep, calm, and devout as the souls of the painters who created it. The sunsets which colour so richly the walls of dining-room and drawing-room, are sifted through beautiful hangings or through tall wrought windows leaded into many panes. The pieces of furniture are large, curious, and fantastic, armed with locks and secrets like refined souls. Mirrors, metals, hangings, goldsmith's work and pottery, play for the eyes a mute and mysterious symphony; and from all things, from every corner, from the cracks of drawers and from the folds of hangings, exhales a singular odour, a "forget-me-not" of Sumatra, which is, as it were, the soul of the abode.

A real country of Cockaigne, I assure you, where all is beautiful, clean, and shining, like a clear conscience, like a bright array of kitchen crockery, like splendid jewellery of gold, like many-coloured jewellery of silver! All the treasures of the world have found their way there, as to the house of a hard-working man who has put the whole world in his debt. Singular country, excelling others as Art excels Nature, where Nature is refashioned by dreams, where Nature is corrected, embellished, remoulded.

Let the alchemists of horticulture seek and seek again, let them set ever further and further back the limits to their happiness! Let them offer prizes of sixty and of a hundred thousand florins to whoever will solve their ambitious problems! For me, I have found my "black tulip" and my "blue dahlia!"

Incomparable flower, recaptured tulip, allegoric dahlia, it is there, is it not, in that beautiful country, so calm and so full of dreams, that you live and flourish? There,

would you not be framed within your own analogy, and would you not see yourself again, reflected, as the mystics say, in your own "correspondence"?

Dreams, dreams ever! and the more delicate and ambitious the soul, the further do dreams estrange it from possible things. Every man carries within himself his natural dose of opium, ceaselessly secreted and renewed, and, from birth to death, how many hours can we reckon of positive pleasure, of successful and decided action? Shall we ever live in, shall we ever pass into, that picture which my mind has painted, that picture made in your image?

These treasures, this furniture, this luxury, this order, these odours, these miraculous flowers, are you. You too are the great rivers and the quiet canals. The vast ships that drift down them, laden with riches, from whose decks comes the sound of the monotonous songs of labouring sailors, are my thoughts which slumber or rise and fall on your breast. You lead them softly towards the sea, which is the infinite, mirroring the depths of the sky in the crystal clearness of your soul; and when, weary of the surge and heavy with the spoils of the East, they return to the port of their birth, it is still my thoughts that come back enriched out of the infinite to you.

IV

THE EYES OF THE POOR

Ah! you want to know why I hate you to-day. It will probably be less easy for you to understand than for me to explain it to you; for you are, I think, the most perfect example of feminine impenetrability that could possibly be found.

We had spent a long day together, and it had seemed to me short. We had promised one another that we would think the same thoughts and that our two souls should become one soul; a dream which is not original, after all, except that, dreamed by all men, it has been realised by none.

In the evening you were a little tired, and you sat down outside a new café at the corner of a new boulevard, still littered with plaster and already displaying proudly its unfinished splendours. The café glittered. The very gas put on all the fervency of a fresh start, and lighted up with its full force the blinding whiteness of the walls, the dazzling sheets of glass in the mirrors, the gilt of cornices and mouldings, the chubby-cheeked pages straining back from hounds in leash, the ladies laughing at the falcons on their wrists, the nymphs and goddesses carrying fruits and pies and game on their heads, the Hebes and Ganymedes holding out at arm's-length little jars of syrups or parti-coloured obelisks of ices; the whole of history and of mythology brought together to make a paradise for gluttons. Exactly opposite to us, in the roadway, stood a man of about forty years of age, with a weary face and a greyish beard, holding a little boy by one hand and carrying on the other arm a little fellow too weak to walk. He was taking the nurse-maid's place, and had brought his children out for a walk in the evening. All were in rags. The three faces were extraordinarily serious, and the six eyes stared fixedly at the new café with an equal admiration, differentiated in each according to age.

The father's eyes said: "How beautiful it is! how beautiful it is! One would think that all the gold of the poor world had found its way to these walls." The boy's eyes said: "How beautiful it is! how beautiful it is! But that is a house which only people who are not like

us can enter." As for the little one's eyes, they were too fascinated to express anything but stupid and utter joy.

Song-writers say that pleasure ennobles the soul and softens the heart. The song was right that evening, so far as I was concerned. Not only was I touched by this family of eyes, but I felt rather ashamed of our glasses and decanters, so much too much for our thirst. I turned to look at you, dear love, that I might read my own thought in you; I gazed deep into your eyes, so beautiful and so strangely sweet, your green eyes that are the home of caprice and under the sovereignty of the Moon; and you said to me: "Those people are insupportable to me with their staring saucer-eyes! Couldn't you tell the head waiter to send them away?"

So hard is it to understand one another, dearest, and so incommunicable is thought, even between people who are in love!

V

WINDOWS

He who looks in through an open window never sees so many things as he who looks at a shut window. There is nothing more profound, more mysterious, more fertile, more gloomy, or more dazzling, than a window lighted by a candle. What we can see in the sunlight is always less interesting than what goes on behind the panes of a window. In that dark or luminous hollow, life lives, life dreams, life suffers.

Across the waves of roofs, I can see a woman of middle age, wrinkled, poor, who is always leaning over something, and who never goes out. Out of her face, out of her dress, out of her attitude, out of nothing almost, I

have made up the woman's story, and sometimes I say it over to myself with tears.

If it had been a poor old man, I could have made up his just as easily.

And I go to bed, proud of having lived and suffered in others.

Perhaps you will say to me: "Are you sure that it is the real story?" What does it matter, what does any reality outside of myself matter, if it has helped me to live, to feel that I am, and what I am?

VI

CROWDS

It is not given to every man to take a bath of multitude: to play upon crowds is an art; and he alone can plunge, at the expense of humankind, into a debauch of vitality, to whom a fairy has bequeathed in his cradle the love of masks and disguises, the hate of home and the passion of travel.

Multitude, solitude: equal terms mutually convertible by the active and begetting poet. He who does not know how to people his solitude, does not know either how to be alone in a busy crowd.

The poet enjoys this incomparable privilege, to be at once himself and others. Like those wandering souls that go about seeking bodies, he enters at will the personality of every man. For him alone, every place is vacant; and if certain places seem to be closed against him, that is because in his eyes they are not worth the trouble of visiting.

The solitary and thoughtful walker derives a singular intoxication from this universal communion. He who

mates easily with the crowd knows feverish joys that must be for ever unknown to the egoist, shut up like a coffer, and to the sluggard, imprisoned like a shell-fish. He adopts for his own all the occupations, all the joys and all the sorrows that circumstance sets before him.

What men call love is small indeed, narrow and weak indeed, compared with this ineffable orgie, this sacred prostitution of the soul which gives itself up wholly (poetry and charity!) to the unexpected which happens, to the stranger as he passes.

It is good sometimes that the happy of this world should learn, were it only to humble their foolish pride for an instant, that there are higher, wider, and rarer joys than theirs. The founders of colonies, the shepherds of nations, the missionary priests, exiled to the ends of the earth, doubtless know something of these mysterious intoxications; and, in the midst of the vast family that their genius has raised about them, they must sometimes laugh at the thought of those who pity them for their chaste lives and troubled fortunes.

VII

THE CAKE

I was travelling. The landscape in the midst of which I was seated was of an irresistible grandeur and sublimity. Something no doubt at that moment passed from it into my soul. My thoughts fluttered with a lightness like that of the atmosphere; vulgar passions, such as hate and profane love, seemed to me now as far away as the clouds that floated in the gulfs beneath my feet; my soul seemed to me as vast and pure as the dome of the sky that enveloped me; the remembrance of earthly things came as faintly to my heart as the thin tinkle of the

bells of unseen herds, browsing far, far away, on the slope of another mountain. Across the little motionless lake, black with the darkness of its immense depth, there passed from time to time the shadow of a cloud, like the shadow of an airy giant's cloak, flying through heaven. And I remember that this rare and solemn sensation, caused by a vast and perfectly silent movement, filled me with mingled joy and fear. In a word, thanks to the enrapturing beauty about me, I felt that I was at perfect peace with myself and with the universe; I even believe that, in my complete forgetfulness of all earthly evil, I had come to think the newspapers are right after all, and man was born good; when, incorrigible matter renewing its exigencies, I sought to refresh the fatigue and satisfy the appetite caused by so lengthy a climb. I took from my pocket a large piece of bread, a leathern cup, and a small bottle of a certain elixir which the chemists at that time sold to tourists, to be mixed, on occasion, with liquid snow.

I was quietly cutting my bread when a slight noise made me look up. I saw in front of me a little ragged urchin, dark and dishevelled, whose hollow eyes, wild and supplicating, devoured the piece of bread. And I heard him gasp, in a low, hoarse voice, the word: "Cake!" I could not help laughing at the appellation with which he thought fit to honour my nearly white bread, and I cut off a big slice and offered it to him. Slowly he came up to me, not taking his eyes from the coveted object; then, snatching it out of my hand, he stepped quickly back, as if he feared that my offer was not sincere, or that I had already repented of it.

But at the same instant he was knocked over by another little savage, who had sprung from I know not where, and who was so precisely like the first that one might have taken them for twin brothers. They rolled

over on the ground together, struggling for the possession of the precious booty, neither willing to share it with his brother. The first, exasperated, clutched the second by the hair; and the second seized one of the ears of the first between his teeth, and spat out a little bleeding morsel with a fine oath in dialect. The legitimate proprietor of the cake tried to hook his little claws into the usurper's eyes; the latter did his best to throttle his adversary with one hand, while with the other he endeavoured to slip the prize of war into his pocket. But, heartened by despair, the loser pulled himself together, and sent the victor sprawling with a blow of the head in his stomach. Why describe a hideous fight which indeed lasted longer than their childish strength seemed to promise? The cake travelled from hand to hand, and changed from pocket to pocket, at every moment; but, alas, it changed also in size; and when at length, exhausted, panting and bleeding, they stopped from the sheer impossibility of going on, there was no longer any cause of feud; the slice of bread had disappeared, and lay scattered in crumbs like the grains of sand with which it was mingled.

The sight had darkened the landscape for me, and dispelled the joyous calm in which my soul had lain basking; I remained saddened for quite a long time, saying over and over to myself: "There is then a wonderful country in which bread is called cake, and is so rare a delicacy that it is enough in itself to give rise to a war literally fratricidal!"

VIII

EVENING TWILIGHT

The day is over. A great restfulness descends into poor minds that the day's work has wearied; and

thoughts take on the tender and dim colours of twilight.

Nevertheless from the mountain peak there comes to my balcony, through the transparent clouds of evening, a great clamour, made up of a crowd of discordant cries, dulled by distance into a mournful harmony, like that of the rising tide or of a storm brewing.

Who are the hapless ones to whom evening brings no calm; to whom, as to the owls, the coming of night is the signal for a witches' sabbat? The sinister ululation comes to me from the hospital on the mountain; and, in the evening, as I smoke, and look down on the quiet of the immense valley, bristling with houses, each of whose windows seems to say, "Here is peace, here is domestic happiness!" I can, when the wind blows from the heights, lull my astonished thought with this imitation of the harmonies of hell.

Twilight excites madmen. I remember I had two friends whom twilight made quite ill. One of them lost all sense of social and friendly amenities, and flew at the first-comer like a savage. I have seen him throw at the waiter's head an excellent chicken, in which he imagined he had discovered some insulting hieroglyph. Evening, harbinger of profound delights, spoilt for him the most succulent things.

The other, a prey to disappointed ambition, turned gradually, as the daylight dwindled, sourer, more gloomy, more nettlesome. Indulgent and sociable during the day, he was pitiless in the evening; and it was not only on others, but on himself, that he vented the rage of his twilight mania.

The former died mad, unable to recognise his wife and child; the latter still keeps the restlessness of a perpetual disquietude; and, if all the honours that republics and princes can confer were heaped upon him, I believe that the twilight would still quicken in him the burning envy

of imaginary distinctions. Night, which put its own darkness into their minds, brings light to mine; and, though it is by no means rare for the same cause to bring about opposite results, I am always as it were perplexed and alarmed by it.

O night! O refreshing dark! for me you are the summons to an inner feast, you are the deliverer from anguish! In the solitude of the plains, in the stony labyrinths of a city, scintillation of stars, outburst of gas-lamps, you are the fireworks of the goddess Liberty!

Twilight, how gentle you are and how tender! The rosy lights that still linger on the horizon, like the last agony of day under the conquering might of its night; the flaring candle-flames that stain with dull red the last glories of the sunset; the heavy draperies that an invisible hand draws out of the depths of the East, mimic all those complex feelings that war on one another in the heart of man at the solemn moments of life.

Would you not say that it was one of those strange costumes worn by dancers, in which the tempered splendours of a shining skirt show through a dark and transparent gauze, as, through the darkness of the present, pierces the delicious past? And the wavering stars of gold and silver with which it is shot, are they not those fires of fancy which take light never so well as under the deep mourning of the night?

IX

"ANYWHERE OUT OF THE WORLD"

Life is a hospital, in which every patient is possessed by the desire of changing his bed. One would prefer to suffer near the fire, and another is certain that he would get well if he were by the window.

It seems to me that I should always be happy if I were somewhere else, and this question of moving house is one that I am continually talking over with my soul.

"Tell me, my soul, poor chilly soul, what do you say to living in Lisbon? It must be very warm there, and you would bask merrily, like a lizard. It is by the sea; they say that it is built of marble, and that the people have such a horror of vegetation that they tear up all the trees. There is a country after your own soul; a country made up of light and mineral, and with liquid to reflect them."

My soul makes no answer.

"Since you love rest, and to see moving things, will you come and live in that heavenly land, Holland? Perhaps you would be happy in a country which you have so often admired in pictures. What do you say to Rotterdam, you who love forests of masts, and ships anchored at the doors of houses?"

My soul remains silent.

"Or perhaps Java seems to you more attractive? Well, there we shall find the mind of Europe married to tropical beauty."

Not a word. Can my soul be dead?

"Have you sunk then into so deep a stupor that only your own pain gives you pleasure? If that be so, let us go to the lands that are made in the likeness of Death. I know exactly the place for us, poor soul! We will book our passage to Torneo. We will go still further, to the last limits of the Baltic; and, if it be possible, further still from life; we will make our abode at the Pole. There the sun only grazes the earth, and the slow alternations of light and night put out variety and bring in the half of nothingness, monotony. There we can take great baths of darkness, while, from time to time,

for our pleasure, the Aurora Borealis shall scatter its rosy sheaves before us, like reflections of fireworks in hell!"

At last my soul bursts into speech, and wisely she cries to me: "Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world!"

X

A HEROIC DEATH

Fancioulle was an admirable buffoon, and almost one of the friends of the Prince. But for persons professionally devoted to the comic, serious things have a fatal attraction, and, strange as it may seem that ideas of patriotism and liberty should seize despotically upon the brain of a player, one day Fancioulle joined in a conspiracy formed by some discontented nobles.

There exist everywhere sensible men to denounce those individuals of atrabiliar disposition who seek to depose princes, and, without consulting it, to reconstitute society. The lords in question were arrested, together with Fancioulle, and condemned to death.

I would readily believe that the Prince was almost sorry to find his favourite actor among the rebels. The Prince was neither better nor worse than any other Prince; but an excessive sensibility rendered him, in many cases, more cruel and more despotic than all his fellows. Passionately enamoured of the fine arts, an excellent connoisseur as well, he was truly insatiable of pleasures. Indifferent enough in regard to men and morals, himself a real artist, he feared no enemy but Ennui, and the extravagant efforts that he made to fly or to vanquish this tyrant of the world would certainly have brought upon him, on the part of a severe historian, the epithet of "monster," had it been permitted, in his dominions, to write anything what-

ever which did not tend exclusively to pleasure, or to astonishment, which is one of the most delicate forms of pleasure. The great misfortune of the Prince was that he had no theatre vast enough for his genius. There are young Neros who are stifled within too narrow limits, and whose names and whose intentions will never be known to future ages. An unforeseeing Providence had given to this man faculties greater than his dominions.

Suddenly the rumour spread that the sovereign had decided to pardon all the conspirators; and the origin of this rumour was the announcement of a special performance in which Fancioulle would play one of his best *rôles,* and at which even the condemned nobles, it was said, were to be present, an evident sign, added superficial minds, of the generous tendencies of the Prince.

On the part of a man so naturally and deliberately eccentric, anything was possible, even virtue, even mercy, especially if he could hope to find in it unexpected pleasures. But to those who, like myself, had succeeded in penetrating further into the depths of this sick and curious soul, it was infinitely more probable that the Prince was wishful to estimate the quality of the scenic talents of a man condemned to death. He would profit by the occasion to obtain a physiological experience of a *capital* interest, and to verify to what extent the habitual faculties of an artist would be altered or modified by the extraordinary situation in which he found himself. Beyond this, did there exist in his mind an intention, more or less defined, of mercy? It is a point that has never been solved.

At last, the great day having come, the little court displayed all its pomps, and it would be difficult to realise, without having seen it, what splendour the privileged classes of a little state with limited resources can show forth, on a really solemn occasion. This was a

doubly solemn one, both from the wonder of its display and from the mysterious moral interest attaching to it.

The Sieur Fancioulle excelled especially in parts either silent or little burdened with words, such as are often the principal ones in those fairy plays whose object is to represent symbolically the mystery of life. He came upon the stage lightly and with a perfect ease, which in itself lent some support, in the minds of the noble public, to the idea of kindness and forgiveness.

When we say of an actor, "This is a good actor," we make use of a formula which implies that under the personage we can still distinguish the actor, that is to say, art, effort, will. Now, if an actor should succeed in being, in relation to the personage whom he is appointed to express, precisely what the finest statues of antiquity, miraculously animated, living, walking, seeing, would be in relation to the confused general idea of beauty, this would be, undoubtedly, a singular and unheard of case. Fancioulle was, that evening, a perfect idealisation, which it was impossible not to suppose living, possible, real. The buffoon came and went, he laughed, wept, was convulsed with an indestructible aureole about his head, an aureole invisible to all, but visible to me, and in which were blended, in a strange amalgam, the rays of Art and the martyr's glory. Fancioulle brought, by I know not what special grace, something divine and supernatural into even the most extravagant buffooneries. My pen trembles, and the tears of an emotion which I cannot forget rise to my eyes, as I try to describe to you this never-to-be-forgotten evening. Fancioulle proved to me, in a peremptory, an irrefutable way, that the intoxication of Art is surer than all others to veil the terrors of the gulf; that genius can act a comedy on the threshold of the grave with a joy that hinders it from seeing the

grave, lost, as it is, in a Paradise shutting out all thought of the grave and of destruction.

The whole audience, *blasé* and frivolous as it was, soon fell under the all-powerful sway of the artist. Not a thought was left of death, of mourning, or of punishment. All gave themselves up, without disquietude, to the manifold delights caused by the sight of a masterpiece of living art. Explosions of joy and admiration again and again shook the dome of the edifice with the energy of a continuous thunder. The Prince himself, in an ecstasy, joined in the applause of his court.

Nevertheless, to a discerning eye, his emotion was not unmixed. Did he feel himself conquered in his power as despot? humiliated in his art as the striker of terror into hearts, of chill into souls? Such suppositions, not exactly justified, but not absolutely unjustifiable, passed through my mind as I contemplated the face of the Prince, on which a new pallor gradually overspread its habitual paleness, as snow overspreads snow. His lips compressed themselves tighter and tighter, and his eyes lighted up with an inner fire like that of jealousy or of spite, even while he applauded the talents of his old friend, the strange buffoon, who played the buffoon so well in the face of death. At a certain moment, I saw his Highness lean towards a little page, stationed behind him, and whisper in his ear. The roguish face of the pretty child lit up with a smile, and he briskly quitted the Prince's box as if to execute some urgent commission.

A few minutes later a shrill and prolonged hiss interrupted Fancioulle in one of his finest moments, and rent alike every ear and heart. And from the part of the house from whence this unexpected note of disapproval had sounded, a child darted into a corridor with stifled laughter.

Fancioulle, shaken, roused out of his dream, closed his eyes, then re-opened them, almost at once, extraordinarily wide, opened his mouth as if to breathe convulsively, staggered a little forward, a little backward, and then fell stark dead on the boards.

Had the hiss, swift as a sword, really frustrated the hangman? Had the Prince himself divined all the homicidal efficacy of his ruse? It is permitted to doubt it. Did he regret his dear and inimitable Fancioulle? It is sweet and legitimate to believe it.

The guilty nobles had enjoyed the performance of comedy for the last time. They were effaced from life.

Since then, many mimes, justly appreciated in different countries, have played before the court of ——; but none of them have ever been able to recall the marvellous talents of Fancioulle, or to rise to the same *favour*.

XI

BE DRUNKEN

Be always drunken. Nothing else matters: that is the only question. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time weighing on your shoulders and crushing you to the earth, be drunken continually.

Drunken with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you will. But be drunken.

And if sometimes, on the stairs of a palace, or on the green side of a ditch, or in the dreary solitude of your own room, you should awaken and the drunkenness be half or wholly slipped away from you, ask of the wind, or of the wave, or of the star, or of the bird, or of the clock, of whatever flies, or sighs, or rocks, or sings, or speaks, ask what hour it is; and the wind, wave, star, bird, clock, will answer you: "It is the hour to be

drunken! Be drunken, if you would not be martyred slaves of Time; be drunken continually! With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you will."

XII

EPILOGUE

With heart at rest I climbed the citadel's
Steep height, and saw the city as from a tower,
Hospital, brothel, prison, and such hells,

Where evil comes up softly like a flower.
Thou knowest, O Satan, patron of my pain,
Not for vain tears I went up at that hour;

But, like an old sad faithful lecher, fain
To drink delight of that enormous trull
Whose hellish beauty makes me young again.

Whether thou sleep, with heavy vapours full,
Sodden with day, or, new apparelled, stand
In gold-laced veils of evening beautiful,

I love thee, infamous city! Harlots and
Hunted have pleasures of their own to give,
The vulgar herd can never understand.

POEMS IN PROSE

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH T. SHIPLEY

DEDICATION
To
ARSÈNE HOUSSAYE

My dear Friend:

I send you a little work of which it cannot be said, without injustice, that it has neither head nor tail; since all of it, on the contrary, is at once head and tail, alternately and reciprocally. Consider, I pray you, what convenience this arrangement offers to all of us, to you, to me and to the reader. We can stop where we wish, I my musing, you your consideration, and the reader his perusal—for I do not hold the latter's restive will by the interminable thread of a fine-spun intrigue. Remove a vertebra, and the two parts of this tortuous fantasy rejoin painlessly. Chop it into particles, and you will see that each part can exist by itself. In the hope that some of these segments will be lively enough to please and to amuse you, I venture to dedicate to you the entire serpent.

I have a little confession to make. It was while glancing, for at least the twentieth time, through the famous *Gaspard de la Nuit,* by Aloysius Bertrand (a book known to you, to me, and to a few of our friends, has it not the highest right to be called famous?), that the idea came to me to attempt an analogous plan, and to apply to the description of modern life, or rather of *a* life modern and more abstract, the process which he applied in the depicting of ancient life, so strangely picturesque.

Which of us has not, in his moments of ambition,

dreamed the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm or rime, sufficiently supple, sufficiently abrupt, to adapt itself to the lyrical movements of the soul, to the windings and turnings of the fancy, to the sudden starts of the conscience?

It is particularly in frequenting great cities, it is from the flux of their innumerable streams of intercourse, that this importunate ideal is born. Have not you yourself, my dear friend, tried to convey in a chanson the strident cry of the glazier, and to express in a lyric prose all the grievous suggestions that cry bears even to the house-tops, through the heaviest mists of the street?

But, to speak truth, I fear that my jealousy has not brought me good fortune. As soon as I had begun the work, I saw that not only was I laboring far, far, from my mysterious and brilliant model, but that I was reaching an accomplishment (if it can be called *an accomplishment*) peculiarly different—accident of which all others would doubtless be proud, but which can but profoundly humiliate a mind which considers it the highest honor of the poet to achieve exactly what he has planned.

Devotedly yours,

C. B.

A JESTER

It was the outburst of the New Year: chaos of mud and snow, crossed by a thousand coaches, sparkling with baubles and gewgaws, swarming with desires and with despairs, official folly of a great city made to weaken the fortitude of the firmest eremite.

In the midst of this hubbub and tumult, a donkey was trotting along, tormented by a lout with a horsewhip.

As the donkey was about to turn a corner, a fine fellow, gloved, polished, with a merciless cravat, and imprisoned in impeccable garments, bowed ceremoniously before the beast; said to it, removing his hat: "I greet thee, good and happy one"; and turned towards some companions with a fatuous air, as though requesting them to add their approbation to his content.

The donkey did not see the clever jester, and continued steadily where its duty called.

As for me, I was overcome by an inordinate rage against the sublime idiot, who seemed to me to concentrate in himself the wit of France.

THE DOG AND THE VIAL

"My pretty dog, my good dog, my doggy dear, come and smell this excellent perfume bought at the best scent-shop in the city."

And the dog, wagging its tail, which is, I think, the poor creature's substitute for a laugh or a smile, ap-

proached and curiously placed its damp nose to the opened vial; then, recoiling with sudden fright, it growled at me in reproach.

"Ah! wretched dog, if I had offered you a mass of excrement, you would have smelled it with delight, and probably have devoured it. So even you, unworthy companion of my unhappy life, resemble the public, to whom one must never offer delicate perfumes, which exasperate, but carefully raked-up mire."

THE WILD WOMAN AND THE COQUETTE

"Really, my dear, you tire me immeasurably and unpityingly; one would say, to hear you sigh, that you suffered more than the sexagenarian gleaners or the old beggar hags who pick up crusts at the doors of restaurants.

"If at least your sighs expressed remorse, they would do you some honor; but they convey merely the surfeit of well-being and the languor of repose. And, too, you will not stop your constant flow of needless words: 'Love me well! I have so much need! Comfort me thus, caress me so!'

"Come! I shall try to cure you; perhaps we shall find a means, for two cents, in the midst of a fair, not far away.

"Take a good look, I pray you, at this strong iron cage, within which moves, howling like a damned soul, shaking the bars like an ourang-outang enraged by exile, imitating to perfection, now the circular bounds of the tiger, now the clumsy waddling of the polar bear, that hairy monster whose form vaguely resembles your own.

"That monster is one of those beasts one usually calls 'my angel'—that is, a woman. The other monster, he who bawls at the top of his voice, club in his hand, is a husband. He has chained his lawful wife like a beast,

and he exhibits her in the suburbs on fair days—with the magistrates' permission, of course.

"Pay close attention. See with what voracity (perhaps not feigned) she tears apart the living rabbits and the cackling fowl her keeper throws her. 'Come,' he says, 'one must not eat one's whole store in a day'; and, with that wise word, he cruelly snatches the prey, the winding entrails of which remain a moment caught on the teeth of the ferocious beast—I mean, the woman.

"Come! A good blow to calm her! for she darts terrible glances of lust at the stolen food. Good God! The club is not a jester's slap stick! Did you hear the flesh resound, right through the artificial hair? Her eyes leap from her head now; she howls *more naturally*. In her rage she sparkles all over, like smitten iron.

"Such are the conjugal customs of these two children of Adam and Eve, these works of Thy hands, O my God! This woman is doubtless miserable, though after all, perhaps, the titillating joys of glory are not unknown to her. There are misfortunes less remediable, and with no compensation. But in the world to which she has been thrown, she has never been able to think that woman might deserve a different destiny.

"Now, as for us two, my fine lady! Seeing the hells of which the world is made, what would you have me think of your pretty hell, you who rest only on stuffs as soft as your own skin, who eat only cooked viands, for whom a skilled domestic takes care to cut the bites?

"And what can mean to me all these soft signs which heave your perfumed breast, my lusty coquette? And all those affectations learned from books, and that everlasting melancholy, intended to arouse an emotion far other than pity? Indeed, I sometimes feel like teaching you what true misfortune means.

"Seeing you so, my beautiful dainty one, your feet in

the mire and your moist eyes turned to the sky, as though to demand a king, one would say indeed: a young frog invoking the ideal. If you scorn the log (which I am now, you know), beware the stork which will *kill, swallow, devour you* at its caprice.

"Poet as I am, I am not such a fool as you may think, and if you tire me too often with your whining affectations, I shall treat you as a wild woman, or throw you through the window as an empty flask."

THE OLD MOUNTEBANK

EVERYWHERE the holiday crowd was parading, spread out, merry making. It was one of those festivals on which mountebanks, tricksters, animal trainers and itinerant merchants had long been relying, to compensate for the dull seasons of the year.

On such days it seems to me the people forget all, sadness and work; they become children. For the little ones, it is a day of leave, the horror of the school put off twenty-four hours. For the grown-ups, it is an armistice, concluded with the malevolent forces of life, a respite in the universal contention and struggle.

The man of the world himself, and even he who is occupied with spiritual tasks, with difficulty escape the influence of this popular jubilee. They absorb, without volition, their part of the atmosphere of devil-may-care. As for me, I never fail, like a true Parisian, to inspect all the booths that flaunt themselves in these solemn epochæ.

They made, in truth, a formidable gathering: they bawled, bellowed, howled. It was a mingling of cries, of blaring of brass and bursting of rockets. The clowns and the simpletons convulsed the features of their swarthy faces, hardened by wind, rain, and sun; they

hurled forth, with the assurance of comedians certain of their wares, witticisms and pleasantries of a humor solid and heavy as that of Molière. The Hercules, proud of the enormousness of their limbs, without forehead, without cranium, stalked majestically about under fleshings fresh washed for the occasion. The dancers, pretty as fairies or as princesses, leapt and cavorted under the flare of lanterns which filled their skirts with sparkles.

All was light, dust, shouting, joy, tumult; some spent, others gained, the one and the other equally joyful. Children clung to their mothers' skirts to obtain a sugar-stick, or climbed upon their fathers' shoulders the better to see a conjurer dazzling as a god. And spread over all, dominating every odor, was a smell of frying, which was the incense of the festival.

At the end, at the extreme end of the row of booths, as if, ashamed, he had exiled himself from all these splendors, I saw an old mountebank, stooped, decrepit, emaciated, a ruin of a man, leaning against one of the pillars of his hut, more wretched than that of the most besotted barbarian, the distress of which two candle ends, guttering and smoking, lighted up only too well.

Everywhere was joy, gain, revelry; everywhere certainty of the morrow's bread; everywhere the frenetic outbursts of vitality. Here, absolute misery, misery bedecked, to crown the horror, in comic tatters, where necessity, rather than art, produced the contrast. He was not laughing, the wretched one! He was not weeping, he was not dancing, he was not gesticulating, he was not crying. He was singing no song, gay or grievous, he was imploring no one. He was mute and immobile. He had renounced, he had withdrawn. His destiny was accomplished.

But what a deep, unforgettable look he cast over the crowd and the lights, the moving stream of which was

stemmed a few yards from his repulsive wretchedness! I felt my throat clutched by the terrible hand of hysteria, and it seemed as though glances were clouded by rebellious tears that would not fall.

What was to be done? What good was there in asking the unfortunate what curiosity, what marvel had he to show within those barefaced shades, behind that threadbare curtain? In truth, I dared not; and, although the reason for my timidity will make you laugh, I confess that I was afraid of humiliating him. At length, I had resolved to drop a coin while passing his boards, in the hope that he would divine my purpose, when a great backwash of people, produced by I know not what disturbance, carried me far away.

And leaving, obsessed by the sight, I sought to analyze my sudden sadness, and I said: "I have just seen the image of the aged man of letters, who has survived the generation of which he was the brilliant entertainer; of the old poet, friendless, without family, without child, degraded by his misery and by public ingratitude, into whose booth a forgetful world no longer wants to go!"

THE CLOCK

THE Chinese tell the time in the eyes of cats. One day a missionary, walking in the suburbs of Nanking, noticed that he had forgotten his watch, and asked a little boy what time it was.

The youngster of the heavenly Empire hesitated at first; then, carried away by his thought he answered: "I'll tell you." A few moments later he reappeared, bearing in his arms an immense cat, and looking, as they say, into the whites of its eyes, he announced without hesitation: "It's not quite noon." Which was the fact.

As for me, if I turn toward the fair feline, to her so

aptly named, who is at once the honor of her sex, the pride of my heart and the fragrance of my mind, be it by night or by day, in the full light or in the opaque shadows, in the depths of her adorable eyes I always tell the time distinctly, always the same, a vast, a solemn hour, large as space, without division of minutes or of seconds,—an immovable hour which is not marked on the clocks, yet is slight as a sigh, is rapid as the lifting of a lash.

And if some intruder comes to disturb me while my glance rests upon that charming dial, if some rude and intolerant genie, some demon of the evil hour, comes to ask: "What are you looking at so carefully? What are you hunting for in the eyes of that being? Do you see the time there, mortal squanderer and do-nothing?" I shall answer, unhesitant: "Yes, I see the time, it is Eternity!"

Is not this, madame, a really worth-while madrigal, just as affected as yourself? Indeed, I have had so much pleasure in embroidering this pretentious gallantry, that I shall ask you for nothing in exchange.

A HEMISPHERE IN A TRESS

Let me breathe, long, long, of the odor of your hair, let me plunge my whole face in its depth, as a thirsty man in the waters of a spring, let me flutter it with my hand as a perfumed kerchief, to shake off memories into the air.

If you could know all that I see! all that I feel! all that I understand in your hair! My soul journeys on perfumes as the souls of other men on music.

Your hair meshes a full dream, crowded with sails and masts; it holds great seas on which monsoons bear me toward charming climes, where the skies are bluer and

deeper, where the atmosphere is perfumed with fruits, with leaves, and with the human skin.

In the ocean of your hair I behold a port humming with melancholy chants, with strong men of all nations and with ships of every form carving their delicate, intricate architecture on an enormous sky where lolls eternal heat.

In the caresses of your hair, I find again the languor of long hours on a divan, in the cabin of a goodly ship, cradled by the unnoticed undulation of the port, between pots of flowers and refreshing water-jugs.

At the glowing hearth-stone of your hair, I breathe the odor of tobacco mixed with opium and sugar; in the night of your hair, I see shine forth the infinite of the tropic sky; on the downy bank-sides of your hair, I grow drunk with the mingled odors of tar and musk, and oil of cocoanut.

Let me bite, long, your thick black hair. When I nibble your springy, rebellious hair, it seems that I am eating memories.

THE PLAYTHING OF THE POOR

I SHOULD like to give you an idea for an innocent diversion. There are so few amusements that are not guilty ones!

When you go out in the morning for a stroll along the highways, fill your pockets with little penny contrivances—such as the straight merryandrew moved by a single thread, the blacksmiths who strike the anvil, the rider and his horse, with a whistle for a tail—and, along the taverns, at the foot of the trees, make presents of them to the unknown poor children whom you meet. You will see their eyes grow beyond all measure. At first, they will not dare to take; they will doubt their

good fortune. Then their hands will eagerly seize the gift, and they will flee as do the cats who go far off to eat the bit you have given them, having learned to distrust man.

On a road, behind the rail of a great garden at the foot of which appeared the glitter of a beautiful mansion struck by the sun, stood a pretty, fresh child, clad in those country garments so full of affectation.

Luxury, freedom from care, and the habitual spectacle of wealth, make these children so pretty that one would think them formed of other paste than the sons of mediocrity or of poverty.

Beside him on the grass lay a splendid toy, fresh as its master, varnished, gilt, clad in a purple robe, covered with plumes and beads of glass. But the child was not occupied with his favored plaything, and this is what he was watching:

On the other side of the rail, on the road, among the thistles and the thorns, was another child, puny, dirty, fuliginous, one of those pariah-brats the beauty of which an impartial eye might discover if, as the eye of the connoisseur divines an ideal painting beneath the varnish of the coach-maker, it cleansed him of the repugnant patina of misery.

Across the symbolic bars which separate two worlds, the highway and the mansion, the poor child was showing the rich child his own toy, which the latter examined eagerly, as a rare and unknown object. Now, this toy, which the ragamuffin was provoking, tormenting, tossing in a grilled box, was a live rat! His parents, doubtless for economy, had taken the toy from life itself.

And the two children were laughing together fraternally, with teeth of equal *whiteness!*

THE GIFTS OF THE FAIRIES

It was that great assembly of the fairies, to proceed with the repartition of gifts among the new-born who had arrived at life within the last twenty-four hours.

All these antique and capricious sisters of destiny, all these bizarre mothers of sadness and of joy, were most diversified: some had a somber, crabbed air; others were wanton, mischievous; some, young, who had always been young; others old, who had always been old.

All the fathers who believed in fairies had come, each bearing his new-born in his arms.

Gifts, Faculties, Good Fortunes, Invincible Circumstances, were gathered at the side of the tribunal, as prizes on the platform for distribution. What was peculiar here was that the gifts were not the reward of an effort, but, quite the contrary, a grace accorded him who had not yet lived, a grace with power to determine his destiny and become as well the source of his misfortune as of his good.

The poor fairies were kept very busy; for the crowd of solicitors was great, and the intermediate world, placed between man and God, is subject, like man, to the terrible law of Time and his endless offspring, Days, Hours, Minutes, Seconds.

In truth, they were as bewildered as ministers on an audience day, or as guards at the Mont-de-Piété when a national holiday authorizes gratuitous liberations. I really think that from time to time they looked at the hands of the clock with as much impatience as human judges, who, sitting since morn, cannot help dreaming of dinner, of the family, and of their cherished slippers. If, in supernatural justice, there is a little of haste and

of luck, we should not be surprised sometimes to find the same in human justice. We ourselves, in that case, would be unjust judges.

So some shams were enacted that day which might be thought bizarre, if prudence, rather than caprice, were the distinctive, eternal characteristic of the fairies.

For instance, the power of magnetically attracting fortune was awarded the sole heir of a very wealthy family, who, endowed with no feeling of charity, no more than with lust for the most visible goods of life, must later on find himself prodigiously embarrassed by his millions.

Thus, love of the beautiful and poetic power were given to the son of a gloomy knave, a quarry-man by trade, who could in no way develop the faculties or satisfy the needs of his deplorable offspring.

All the fairies rose, thinking their task was through; for there remained no gift, no bounty, to hurl at all that human fry, when one fine fellow, a poor little tradesman, I think, rose, and grasping by her robe of multicolored vapors the Fairy nearest at hand, cried:

"Oh, Madam! You are forgetting us! There is still my little one! I don't want to have come for nothing!"

The fairy could have been embarrassed, for there no longer was a thing. However, she recalled in time a law, well known, though rarely applied, in the supernatural world, inhabited by those impalpable deities, friends of man and often constrained to mold themselves to his passions, such as Fairies, Gnomes, Salamanders, Sylphides, Sylphs, Nixies, Watersprites and Undines—I mean the law which grants a Fairy, in a case similar to this, namely, in case of the exhausting of the prizes, power to give one more, supplementary and exceptional, provided always that she has sufficient imagination to create it at once.

Accordingly the good Fairy responded, with self-possession worthy of her rank: "I give to your son . . . I give him . . . *the gift of pleasing!*"

"Pleasing? How? Pleasing? Why?" obstinately asked the little shopkeeper, who was doubtless one of those logicians so commonly met, incapable of rising to the logic of the Absurd.

"Because! Because!" replied the incensed Fairy, turning her back on him; and, rejoining the train of her companions, she said to them: "What do you think of this little vainglorious Frenchman, who wants to know everything, and who, having secured for his son the best of gifts, dares still to question and to dispute the indisputable?"

SOLITUDE

A PHILANTHROPIC journalist once said to me that solitude is harmful to man, and, to support his thesis, he cited—as do all unbelievers—words of the Christian Fathers.

I know that the Demon gladly frequents parched places, and that the spirit of murder and lechery is marvellously inflamed in solitude. But it is possible that solitude is dangerous only to the idle, rambling soul, who peoples it with his passions and his chimeras.

It is certain that a babbler, whose supreme pleasure consists in speaking from a pulpit or a rostrum, would be taking great chances of going stark mad on the island of Crusoe. I do not demand of my journalist the courageous virtues of Robinson, but I ask that he do not summon in accusation lovers of solitude and mystery.

There are in our chattering races individuals who would accept the supreme agony with less reluctance, if they were permitted to deliver a copious harangue from

the height of the scaffold, without fear that the drums of Santerre* would unseasonably cut short their oration.

I do not pity them, for I guess that their oratorical effusions bring them delights equal to those which others draw from silence and seclusion; but I despise them.

I desire above all that my accursed journalist leave me to amuse myself as I will. "Then you never feel," he says in a very apostolic nasal tone, "the need of sharing your joys?" Do you see the subtle jealous one! He knows that I scorn his, and he comes to insinuate himself into mine, the horrible killjoy!

"The great misfortune of not being able to be alone," La Bruyère says somewhere, as though to shame those who rush to forget themselves in the crowd, fearing, doubtless, that they will be unable to endure themselves.

"Almost all our ills come to us from inability to remain in our room," said another sage, Pascal, I believe, recalling thus in the cell of meditation the frantic ones who seek happiness in animation, and in a prostitution which I could call fraternary, if I wished to use the fine language of my century.

PROJECTS

He said to himself, while strolling in the great lonely park: "How beautiful she would be in an intricate, gorgeous court costume, descending, through the air of a beauteous evening, the marble stairs of a palace, opposite shallow pools and great greenswards. For she has naturally the air of a princess."

Passing along a street somewhat later, he stopped before a print-shop, and finding in a portfolio an engraving of a tropical scene, he said: "No, it is not in a palace

* Santerre is the general of the French Revolution who ordered his drummers to play, drowning the words of Louis XVI from the scaffold.

that I should like to be master of her beloved life. We would not feel at home. Besides, walls riddled with gold would afford no niche to hold her likeness; in those solemn galleries there is no intimate corner. Decidedly it is *there* I must live to develop the dream of my life."

And, analyzing the details of the engraving, he continued mentally: "At the edge of the sea, a little log cabin, surrounded by those shiny, bizarre trees, the names of which I have forgotten . . . in the air, an indefinable, intoxicating perfume . . . in the cabin, a potent fragrance of rose and of musk . . . farther off, behind our little domain, mast-tops swaying with the swell . . . around us, beyond the room lighted by a roseate glow sifted through the blinds, adorned with fresh matting and intoxicating flowers, with rare benches of Portuguese rococo, of a heavy and shadowy wood (where she will rest, so calm, so gently fanned, smoking tobacco tinged with opium), beyond the timbers of the ships, the racket of the birds drunk with the light, and the chattering of little negresses . . . and, at night, to serve as accompaniment to my musings, the plaintive song of musical trees, of melancholy beef-woods! Yes, in truth, there indeed is the setting that I seek. What have I to do with palaces?

And still farther, as he followed a great avenue, he noticed a well-kept tavern, from a window of which, enlivened by curtains of checkered prints, two laughing heads leaned forth. And at once: "My fancy," he said, "must be a great vagabond to seek so far what is so near to me. Pleasure and good fortune are in the nearest tavern, in the chance tavern, so rich in happiness. A great fire, gaudy earthenware, a tolerable meal, rough wine, and an enormous bed with cloths somewhat coarse, but fresh; what more could be desired?"

And returning home, alone, at the hour when the coun-

sels of Wisdom are not drowned by the hum of external life, he said: "I have had to-day, in my revery, three dwellings in which I have found equal pleasure. Why constrain my body to move about, when my soul voyages so freely? And to what end carry out projects, when the project itself is a sufficing joy?"

THE LOVELY DOROTHEA

THE sun pours down upon the city with its direct and terrible light; the sand is dazzling, and the sea glistens. The stupefied world sinks cowardly down and holds siesta, a siesta which is a sort of delightful death, in which the sleeper, half-awake, enjoys the voluptuousness of his annihilation.

None the less, Dorothea, strong and proud as the sun, advances along the deserted street, alone animated at that hour, under the immense blue sky, forming a startling black spot against the light.

She advances, lightly, balancing her slender trunk upon her so large hips. Her close-fitting silk dress, of a clear, roseate fashion, stands out vividly against the darkness of her skin and is exactly molded to her long figure, her rounded back and her pointed throat.

Her red parasol, sifting the light, throws over her dark face the bloody disguise of its reflection.

The weight of her enormous, blue-black hair draws back her delicate head and gives her a triumphant, indolent bearing. Heavy pendants tinkle quietly at her delicate ears.

From time to time the sea-breeze lifts the hem of her flowing skirt and reveals her shining, superb limbs; and her foot, a match for the feet of the marble goddesses whom Europe locks in its museums, faithfully imprints its form in the fine sand. For Dorothea is such a won-

drous coquette, that the pleasure of being admired overcomes the pride of the enfranchised, and, although she is free, she walks without shoes.

She advances thus, harmoniously, glad to be alive, smiling an open smile; as if she saw, far off in space, a mirror reflecting her walk and her beauty.

At the hour when dogs moan with pain under the tormenting sun, what powerful motive can thus draw forth the indolent Dorothea, lovely, and cold as bronze?

Why had she left her little cabin, so coquettishly adorned, the flowers and mats of which make at so little cost a perfect boudoir; where she takes such delight in combing herself, in smoking, in being fanned, or in regarding herself in the mirror with its great fans of plumes; while the sea, which strikes the shore a hundred steps away, shapes to her formless reveries a mighty and monotonous accompaniment, and while the iron pot, in which a ragout of crabs with saffron and rice is cooking, sends after her, from the courtyard, its stimulating perfumes?

Perhaps she has a rendezvous with some young officer, who, on far distant shores, heard his comrades talk of the renowned Dorothea. Infallibly she will beg him, simple creature, to describe to her the Bal de l'Opera, and will ask him if one can go there barefoot, as to the Sunday dances, where the old Kaffir women themselves get drunk and mad with joy; and then, too, whether the lovely ladies of Paris are all lovelier than she.

Dorothea is admired and pampered by all, and she would be perfectly happy if she were not obliged to amass piastre on piastre to buy back her little sister, who is now fully eleven, and who is already mature, and so lovely! She will doubtless succeed, the good Dorothea; the child's master is so miserly, too miserly to understand another beauty than that of gold.

THE COUNTERFEIT MONEY

As we were moving away from the tobacconist's, my companion carefully sorted his money: in the left pocket of his waistcoat he slipped little gold pieces; in the right, little silver pieces; in the left pocket of his trousers, a mass of coppers, and finally, in the right, a silver two-franc pieces that he had particularly examined.

"Singular and minute distribution!" I said to myself.

We came across a pauper who, trembling, held forth his cap.—I know nothing more disquieting than the dumb elcquence of those suppliant eyes which hold, for the sensitive man who can read within, both so great humility and so deep reproach. Something lies there which approaches that depth of complex feeling in the tearful eyes of dogs that are being flogged.

The offering of my friend was much more considerable than mine, and I said to him: "You are right; after the pleasure of being astonished, none is greater than that of creating a surprise."—"It was the counterfeit," he answered tranquilly, as though to justify his prodigality.

But in my miserable brain, always busied seeking noon at two p.m. (of such a wearying faculty has nature made me a gift!), the idea suddenly came that such conduct, on the part of my friend, was excusable only by the desire to produce an occasion in the life of the poor devil, perhaps even to know the diverse consequences, disastrous or otherwise, that a counterfeit in the hands of a mendicant can engender. Could it not multiply itself in valid pieces? Could it not also lead him to jail? A tavern-keeper, a baker, for example, might perhaps have him arrested as a forger or a spreader of counterfeits. Quite as well the counterfeit coin might

be, for a poor little speculator, the germ of a several days' wealth. And so my fancy ran its course, lending wings to the spirit of my friend and drawing all possible deductions from all imaginable hypotheses.

But he abruptly burst my revery asunder by taking up my own words: "Yes, you are right: there is no sweeter pleasure than to surprise a man by giving him more than he expected."

I looked into the whites of his eyes, and I was frightened to see that his eyes shone with an undeniable candor. I then saw clearly that he wished to combine charity and a good stroke of business; to gain forty sous and the heart of God; to sweep into Paradise economically; in short, to entrap gratis the brevet of charitable man.

I would almost have pardoned in him the desire of the criminal joy of which I had just now thought him capable! I would have thought it curious, singular, that he found it amusing to compromise the poor; but I shall never pardon the ineptitude of his calculation. One is never to be forgiven for being wicked, but there is some merit in being conscious that one is;—the most irreparable of all evils is to do wrong through stupidity.

THE GENEROUS PLAYER

Yesterday, in the crowd of the boulevard, I felt myself grazed by a mysterious Being whom I have always wished to know, and whom I recognized at once, though I had never seen him. He doubtless had a similar wish to make my acquaintance, for he gave me a significant wink in passing which I hastened to obey. I followed him attentively, and soon I descended behind him into a resplendent subterranean abode, where sparkled a luxury that none of the better homes in Paris can nearly

approach. It seemed odd to me that I could have passed by this enchanting den so often without divining the entrance. There reigned an exquisite, though heady atmosphere, which made one forget almost at once all the fastidious horrors of life; there one breathed a somber blessedness, similar to that which the lotus-eaters experienced when, disembarking on an enchanted isle, bright with the glimmerings of eternal afternoon, they felt growing within them, to the drowsy sound of melodious cascades, the desire never to see again their hearthstones, their wives, their children, and never to remount the high surges of the sea.

Strange visages of men and women were there, marked with a fatal beauty, which it seemed to me I had already seen in epochs and in lands I could not precisely recall, and which inspired me rather with a fraternal sympathy than with that fear which is usually born at sight of the unknown. If I wished to try to define in any way the singular expression of these visages, I should say that I had never seen eyes burning more feverishly with dread of ennui and with the immortal desire of feeling themselves alive.

My host and I were already, when we sat down, old and perfect friends. We ate, we drank beyond measure of all sorts of extraordinary wines, and—what was no less extraordinary—it seemed to me, after several hours, that I was no more drunken than he. Play, that superhuman pleasure, had meanwhile irregularly interrupted our frequent libations, and I must say that I staked and lost my soul, at the rubber, with heroic heedlessness and lightness. The soul is so impalpable a thing, so often useless and sometimes so annoying, that I experienced, at its loss, a little less emotion than if, on a walk, I had misplaced my visiting card. For a long time we smoked some cigars the incomparable savor and perfume of

which gave the soul nostalgia for unknown lands and joys, and, intoxicated with all these delights, I dared, in an access of familiarity which seemed not to displease him, to cry, while mastering a cup full to the brim: "To your immortal health, old Buck!"

We talked, also, of the universe, of its creation and of its future destruction; of the great idea of the century, namely, progress and perfectibility; and, in general, of all forms of human infatuation. On this subject, His Highness never exhausted his fund of light and irrefutable pleasantries, and he expressed himself with an easy flow of speech and a quietness in his drollery that I have found in none of the most celebrated causeurs of humanity. He explained to me the absurdity of the different philosophies which have hitherto taken possession of the human brain, and deigned even to confide to me certain fundamental principles, the property and the benefits of which it does not suit me to share with the casual comer. He did not in any way bemoan the bad reputation which he enjoys in all parts of the world, assured me that he himself was the person most interested in the destruction of *superstition,* and confessed that he had never feared for his own power save once, on the day when he had heard a preacher, more subtle than his colleagues, cry from the pulpit: "My dear brethren, never forget, when you hear the progress of wisdom vaunted, that the cleverest ruse of the Devil is to persuade you he does not exist!"

The memory of this celebrated orator led us naturally to the subject of the academies, and my strange companion stated that he did not disdain, in many cases, to inspire the pen, the word, and the conscience of pedagogs, and that he was almost always present, though invisible, at the academic sessions.

Encouraged by so many kindnesses, I asked him for

news of God, and whether he had recently seen Him. He answered, with a carelessness shaded with a certain sadness: "We greet one another when we meet, but as two old gentlemen, in whom an innate politeness cannot extinguish the memory of ancient bitterness."

It is doubtful that His Highness had ever granted so long an audience to a plain mortal, and I was afraid of abusing it. Finally, as the shivering dawn whitened the panes, this famous personage, sung by so many poets and served by so many philosophers who have worked unknowingly for his glory, said to me: "I want to leave you with a pleasant memory of me, and to prove that I, of whom so much ill is said, I can sometimes be a *good devil,* to make use of one of your common phrases. In order to compensate for the irremediable loss of your soul, I shall give you the stakes you would have won had fate been with you, namely, the possibility of relieving and of conquering, all through your life, that odd affection of ennui which is the source of all your maladies and of all your wretched progress. Never shall a desire be framed by you which I will not aid you to realize; you shall reign over your vulgar fellow-men; you shall be stocked with flattery, even with adoration; silver, gold, diamonds, fairylike palaces, shall come seeking you and shall pray you to accept them, without your having made an effort to attain them; you shall change fatherland and country as often as your fancy may dictate; you shall riot in pleasures, unwearying, in charming countries where it is always warm and where the women are fragrant as the flowers—et cetera, et cetera . . ." he added, rising and taking leave of me with a pleasant smile.

If I had not been afraid of humiliating myself before so vast an assemblage, I should gladly have fallen at the feet of this generous player to thank him for his

unheard of munificence. But little by little, after I had left him, incurable distrust reëntered my breast; I dared no longer believe in such prodigious good fortune, and, on going to bed, still saying my prayers through silly force of habit, I repeated in semi-slumber: "My God! Lord, my God! Let it be that the Devil keep his word!"

THE ROPE

To Edward Manet

Illusions, my friend told me, are perhaps as numberless as the relations of men with one another, or of men to things. And when the illusion disappears, that is, when we see the being or the fact as it exists outside of us, we undergo a strange feeling, a complex half of regret for the vanished phantom, half of agreeable surprise before the novelty, before the real fact. If one phenomenon exists that is trite, evident, always the same, concerning the nature of which it is impossible to be deceived, it is maternal love. It is as difficult to imagine a mother without maternal love as a light without heat; is it not then perfectly legitimate to attribute to maternal love all the words and actions of a mother, relating to her child? None the less hear this little story, in which I was singularly mystified by the most natural illusion.

"My profession of painter drives me to regard attentively the visages, the physiognomies, which present themselves on my way, and you know what joy we derive from this faculty which renders life more vivid and significant in our eyes than for other men. In the secluded section where I live, and where great grassy spaces still separate the buildings, I often observed a child whose

ardent and roguish countenance, more than all the rest, won me straightway. He posed for me more than once, and I transformed him, now into a little gypsy, now into an angel, now into mythological Love. I made him bear the violin of the vagabond, the Crown of Thorns and the Nails of the Passion, and the Torch of Eros. At length, I took so lively a pleasure in all the drollery of the youngster, that one day I begged his parents, poor folk, to be kind enough to yield him to me, promising to clothe him well, to give him money and not to impose on him any task beyond cleaning my brushes and running my errands. The child, with his face washed, became charming, and the life he led with me seemed a paradise, compared to that he had undergone in the parental hovel. Only I must say that the little fellow astonished me at times by singular spells of precocious sadness, and that he soon manifested an immoderate taste for sugar and for liqueurs; so much so that one day when I found that, despite my numerous warnings, he had again been doing some pilfering of that sort, I threatened to send him back to his parents. Then I went out, and my business kept me away for quite some time.

"What was my surprise and horror when, reëntering the house, the first object that met my eyes was my little fellow, the frolicsome companion of my life, hanging from the panel of the closet! His feet almost touched the floor; a chair, which he had doubtless thrust back with his foot, was overturned beside him; his head was bent convulsively over one shoulder; his bloated face, and his eyes, quite wide open with a fearful fixity, gave at first the illusion of life. To take him down was not so easy a business as you might think. He was already quite stiff, and I had an inexplicable repugnance to letting him fall heavily to the floor. It was necessary to bear his whole weight on one arm, and, with the free hand, to

cut the rope. But that accomplished, all was not yet done; the little monster had made use of a very slender twine which had entered deep into his flesh, and I must now, with delicate scissors, seek the cord between the two cushions of the swelling, to disengage the neck.

"I have neglected to tell you that I called vigorously for help; but all my neighbors refused to come to my assistance, faithful in that to the habits of civilized man, who never wishes, I know not why, to mix in the affairs of one that has been hanged. Finally a physician came, who said that the child had been dead several hours. When, later, we had to disrobe him for burial, the cadaverous rigidity was such that, despairing of bending his limbs, we had to tear and cut the garments to remove them.

"The commissioner, to whom, naturally, I had to announce the casualty, looked at me askew and said to me: 'Here's something suspicious,' moved doubtless by an inveterate desire and a professional habit of frightening, at all events, the innocent as well as the guilty.

"There remained a supreme task to perform, the thought of which alone gave me a terrible anguish: I had to notify the parents. My feet refused to guide me to them. Finally, I had the courage. But, to my great astonishment, the mother was unmoved, not a tear oozed from the corner of her eye. I attributed that strangeness to the very horror she must feel, and I recalled the well-known maxim: 'The most terrible sorrows are silent ones.' As to the father, he contented himself with saying with an air half brutalized, half pensive: 'After all, it is perhaps for the best; he would always have come to a bad end!'

"However, the body was stretched out on my couch, and, assisted by a servant, I was busying myself with the final preparations, when the mother entered my

studio. She wished, she said, to see the body of her son. I could not, in truth, deny her the intoxication of her grief and refuse her that supreme and somber consolation. Then she begged me to show her the place where her little one had hanged himself. 'Oh no, madam,' I answered, 'that would be bad for you.' And as my eyes turned involuntarily toward the fatal cupboard, I perceived, with disgust mingled with horror and wrath, that the nail had remained driven in the casing, with a long rope-end still hanging. I leapt rapidly to snatch away the last traces of the misfortune, and as I was going to hurl them out through the open window, the poor woman seized my arm and said in an irresistible tone: 'Oh! sir! leave that for me! I beg you! I beseech you.' Her despair had doubtless become, it seemed to me, so frantic that she was now overcome with tenderness toward that which had served her son as the instrument of death, and she wished to preserve it as a dear and horrible relic.—And she took possession of the nail and of the twine.

"At last! At last! all was accomplished. There remained only to set myself back at work, even more strenuously than usual, to drive out gradually the little corpse that haunted the recesses of my brain, the phantom of which wore me out with its great fixed eyes. But the next day I received a bundle of letters: some from lodgers in the house, several others from neighboring houses; one from the first floor, another from the second, another from the third, and so throughout! some in semi-humorous style, as though seeking to disguise beneath an apparent jocularity the sincerity of the request; others, grossly shameless and without spelling; but all tending to the same goal, namely, to securing from me a bit of the fatal and beatific rope. Among the signers were, I must say, more women than men; but not all, I assure

you, belonged to the lowest class. I have kept the letters.

"And then, suddenly, a light glowed in my brain, and I understood why the mother was so very anxious to wrest the twine from me, and by what traffic she meant to be consoled."

CALLINGS

In a beautiful garden where the rays of the autumnal sun seemed to linger with delight, under a sky already greenish, in which golden clouds floated like voyaging continents, four fine children, four boys, doubtless tired of playing, were chatting away.

One said: "Yesterday I was taken to the theatre. In great, sad palaces, where in the background spread the sea and the sky, men and women, also serious and sad, but much more beautiful and much better dressed than any we see about, were talking with musical voices. They threatened one another, they entreated, they were disconsolate, and often they rested a hand on a dagger sunk within the sash. Ah! that is beautiful indeed! The women are much more beautiful and much greater than those that come to the house to visit us, and although with their great hollow eyes and their fiery cheeks they have a terrible look, you can not help loving them. You are afraid, you want to cry, and still you are content. . . . And then, what is stranger still, it all makes you want to be dressed the same, to say and to do the same things, to speak with the same voice. . . ."

One of the four children, who for several moments had no longer been listening to his comrade's talk, and had been watching with surprising fixity some point or other in the sky, said all at once: "Look, look down there!

Do you see *Him?* He is sitting on that little isolated cloud, that little fiery cloud, which is moving slowly. *He* too, they say, *He* watches us."

"Who? Who?" asked the others.

"God!" he answered, with the accent of perfect conviction.—"Ah! He is already quite far away; by and by you will not be able to see Him. Doubtless He is traveling to visit every land. Look, He is going to pass in back of that line of trees near the horizon . . ., and now He is going down behind the steeple. . . . Ah! you can't see Him any longer!" And the child remained for some time turned in the same direction, fixing on the line which separates earth from the sky eyes in which burned an inexpressible glow of ecstasy and regret.

"He is a fool, that one, with his good God, whom he alone can see!" then said the third, whose whole person was marked with a singular vivacity and life. "*I* am going to tell you how something happened to me which has never happened to you, and which is a little more interesting than your theatre and your clouds . . . Several days ago my parents took me on a trip with them, and as the inn where we stopped didn't have enough beds for all of us, it was decided that I should sleep in the same bed as my nursery maid." He drew his comrades quite close and spoke in a lower tone. "That was a strange performance, now! not to sleep alone, and to be in bed with your maid, in the dark. As I couldn't sleep, I amused myself, while she was sleeping, by passing my hand over her arms, her neck, and her shoulders. She has a much thicker neck and arm than all other women, and her skin is so soft, so soft, that you might call it note-paper or silver paper. I liked it so much that I should have kept on for a long time, if I hadn't been afraid, afraid at first of waking her, and then still afraid of I don't know what. Then I buried

my head in the hair which lay down her back, thick as a mane, and it smelled just as good, I assure you, as the flowers in the garden, right now. Try, when you can, to do as much, and you will see!"

The young author of this prodigious revelation, in telling his story, had his eyes wide open in a sort of stupefaction at what he still felt, and the rays of the setting sun, slipping across the sandy locks of his ruffled hair, illumined it like a sulphurous aureole of passion. It was easy to guess that this youngster would not lose his life seeking Divinity in the clouds, and that he would frequently discover it elsewhere.

At last the fourth spoke: "You know that I seldom find amusment at home. I am never taken to a play; my tutor is too stingy; God doesn't bother about me and my ennui, and I haven't a pretty nurse to fondle me. It has often seemed to me that I should just like to go forever straight ahead, without knowing where, without any one's being worried, always to see new lands. I am never well off anywhere, and I always think I shall be better somewhere else. Oh well! I saw, at the last fair at the nearby village, three men who lived as I should like to. You paid no attention to them, you others. They were large, almost black, and very proud, although in rags, looking as though they had need of no one. Their great gloomy eyes became quite brilliant while they played their music; a music so astonishing that it made you want now to dance, now to cry, or to do both together, and it would almost make you go mad if you listened too long. One, drawing his bow across his violin, seemed to be whispering sorrow; another, making his hammer skip over the keys of a little piano hung by a strap about his neck, appeared to be mocking the plaint of his neighbor; while from time to time the third clashed his cymbals with extraordinary violence.

They were so pleased with themselves that they went on playing their wild music even after the crowd had gone away. Finally they gathered together their sous, piled their luggage on their back, and left. I wanted to know where they lived, and I followed them from afar, right to the edge of the forest, and only then, I understood that they lived nowhere.

"Then one said: 'Must we pitch the tent?'

" 'Goodness! No!' answered the other. 'It's such a pleasant night!'

"The third spoke, while figuring up the collection: 'These folks do not appreciate music, and their wives dance like bears. Fortunately, within a month we shall be in Austria, where we shall find more amiable folk.'

" 'Perhaps we'd do better to go toward Spain, for the season is forward; let us flee before the rains, and moisten nothing but our gullets,' said one of the others.

"I remember everything, as you see. Then each one drank a cup of brandy and went to sleep, with his forehead toward the stars. At first I wanted to beg them to take me along with them and to teach me to play their instruments; but I didn't dare, doubtless because it is always very difficult to come to a decision about anything, and also because I was afraid of being recaptured before we were out of France."

The slightly interested air of the three other comrades made me realize that this fellow was already *misunderstood*. I looked at him closely; there was in in his eye and on his brow that indescribable fatal precocity which generally repells sympathy, and which, I know not why, aroused my own to the point that for a moment I had the queer notion that I might have a brother unknown to me.

The sun had set. The solemn night was come. The

children separated, each going in ignorance, according to circumstance and chance, to reap his destiny, scandalize his relatives, and gravitate toward glory or toward dishonor.

A THOROUGHBRED

She is quite ill-favored. None the less she is delightful! Time and Love have scarred her with their claws, and have cruelly taught her that every moment and every kiss bears away youth and freshness.

She is indeed ugly; she is an ant, a spider, if you insist, a very carcass; but she is, as well, a potion, a magistral, an enchantment! in short, she is exquisite!

Time could not break the sparkling harmony of her walk, nor the indestructible elegance of her stays. Love has not changed the sweetness of her childlike breath; Time has plucked nothing of her abundant mane, from which is breathed in tawny perfumes all the devilish vitality of Southern France: Nîmes, Aix, Arles, Avignon, Narbonne, Toulouse, towns blessed by the sun, amorous and charming!

Time and Love have vainly nibbled with sharp teeth; they have in no way lessened the vague but eternal charm of her hoyden breast.

Worn perhaps, but not wearied, and always heroic, she brings thoughts of those full-blooded horses which the eye of the true amateur will recognize, even hitched to a hackney or to a heavy truck.

And then she is so sweet and so fervent! She loves as one loves in the autumn; you would say that the approach of winter lights a new fire in her heart, and the servility of her tenderness is never wearying.

THE MIRROR

A FRIGHTFUL man enters, and looks at himself in a glass.

"Why do you look at yourself in the mirror, since you can view yourself only with displeasure?"

The frightful man answers me: "Sir, in accordance with the immortal principles of '89, all men have equal rights; therefore I have the right to behold myself; with pleasure or displeasure, that concerns only my conscience."

In the name of common sense, I was surely right; but, from a legal standpoint, he was not wrong.

THE HARBOR

A HARBOR is a charming abode for a soul weary of the struggles of life. The amplitude of the sky, the mobile architecture of the clouds, the changing colorations of the sea, the scintillating of the beacon-lights, form a prism marvellously adapted to entertain the eyes without tiring them. The slender forms of the ships, with their complicated rigging, to which the billows give harmonious oscillations, serve to maintain the taste for rhythm and for beauty. And, above all, there is a sort of mysterious and aristocratic pleasure for him who no longer has curiosity or ambition, in contemplating, couched in the turret or leaning on the pier, all the movements of those who depart and those who return, of those who still have the strength to will, the desire to travel or to acquire wealth.

MISTRESSES' PORTRAITS

In a men's boudoir, that is, in a smoking room adjoining a fashionable brothel, four men were smoking and drinking. They were not exactly either young or old, either handsome or ugly; but, old or young, they bore that unmistakable distinction of veterans of joy, that indescribable something-or-other, that cold and scoffing sadness that so clearly says: "We have lived forcefully, and we seek what we can love and prize."

One of them drew the talk to the subject of women. It would have been more philosophical not to have spoken of them at all; but there are men of parts who, after drinking, do not disdain commonplace conversations. One listens, then, to the one that speaks as to the music of a dance.

"All men," said this one, "have passed through the age of the Cherub: that is the period when, in default of dryads, one embraces, without disgust, the trunks of oaks. It is the first degree of love. At the second degree, one begins to choose. To be able to deliberate is already decadence. Then it is that one makes a decided search for beauty. As for me, gentlemen, I take pride in having long ago reached the climactic period of the third degree, when beauty itself no longer suffices, unless it be seasoned with perfume, with finery, et cetera. I will even confess that I sometimes aspire, as to an unknown happiness, to a certain fourth degree which is marked by absolute calm. But, all through my life, except at the Cherub age, I have been more sensible than all others of the enervating folly, of the irritating mediocrity, of women. What I like above all in animals is

their candor. Judge then how much I suffered at the hands of my last mistress.

"She was a prince's bastard. Beautiful, that goes without saying; otherwise, why should I have taken her? But she spoiled that great quality by an unseemly, deformed ambition. She was a woman who wanted always to play the man. 'You're not a man!' 'Of the two, it is I who am the man!' Such were the unbearable refrains that came from her mouth when I wished to see nothing but songs take wing.

"In regard to a book, a poem, an opera, for which I let my admiration escape: 'So you think this is rather powerful?' she would say at once; 'since when are you a judge of power?' and she would argue on.

"One fine day she took to chemistry; so that between her mouth and mine I found thenceforth a mask of glass. With all that, quite squeamish. If now and then I jostled her with too amorous a gesture, she raved like a ravished virgin."

"How did it end?" asked one of the three others. "I never knew you so patient."

"God," he replied, "found the remedy in the ill. One day I found this Minerva, craving for ideal force, alone with my servant, and in a situation which forced me to retire discreetly, so as not to make them blush. That evening, I dismissed them both, giving them the arrears of their wages."

"As for me," continued the interrupter, "I have only myself to complain of. Happiness came to dwell with me, and I did not know her. Fate once granted me the enjoyment of a woman who was indeed the sweetest, the most submissive, the most devoted of creatures, and always ready, and without enthusiasm. 'I am quite willing, since it's agreeable to you.' That was her usual response. You might give a bastinado to this wall or

this couch and draw from it as many sighs as the most infuriate transports of love would draw from the breast of my mistress. After a year of life together, she confessed to me that she had never known pleasure. I lost taste in the unequal duel, and that incomparable girl got married. Later I had a fancy to see her, and she said, showing me six fine children: 'Well, my dear friend, the wife is still as much a *virgin* as was your mistress.' Nothing had changed. Sometimes I regret her; I should have married her."

The others burst into laughter, and a third spoke in turn:

"Gentlemen, I have known joys which you have perhaps neglected. I mean the comical in love, and a comical which does not bar admiration. I admired my last mistress, I think, more than you could have loved or hated yours. And every one admired her as much as I. When we entered a restaurant, after a few minutes every one forgot to eat in watching her. The barmaid and the waiters themselves felt the contagious ecstasy so far as to neglect their duties. In short, I lived for some time face to face with a living *phenomenon*. She ate, chewed, ground, devoured, swallowed up, but with the lightest and most careless air imaginable. In this way she kept me for a long time in ecstasy. She had a soft, dreamy, English and romantic way of saying: 'I am hungry.' And she repeated these words day and night, revealing the prettiest teeth in the world, which would soften and enliven you together.—I could have made my fortune exhibiting her at fairs, as a *polyphagous monster*. I nourished her well, but none the less she left me. . . ."

"For a purveyor of provisions, undoubtedly?"

"Something of the sort, a kind of employee in the commissariat who, by some by-profit unknown to her, per-

haps furnished the poor child with the rations of several soldiers. At least, so I imagine."

"As for me," said the fourth, "I have endured grievous sufferings through the opposite of that with which we usually reproach the female egoist. You are quite unjustified, too happy mortals, in complaining of the imperfections of your mistresses!"

This was said in a very serious tone, by a man of pleasant and sedate appearance, of an almost clerical countenance, unhappily lighted by clear grey eyes, those eyes whose glances spoke: "I wish it!" or "It is necessary!" or indeed "I never forgive!"

"If, nervous as I know you to be, you, G——, slothful and trifling as you are, you two, K—— and J——, if you had been matched with a certain woman I know, either you would have fled, or you would have died. I survived, as you see. Imagine a person incapable of making an error, from feeling or from design; imagine a provoking serenity of mind, a devotion without sham and without parade, a softness without weakness, an energy without violence. The story of my love is like an endless voyage on a surface as pure and polished as a mirror, dizzily monotonous, reflecting all my feelings and my movements with the ironic exactness of my own conscience, so that I could not allow myself an unreasonable move or emotion without immediately beholding the dumb reproach of my inseparable spectre. Love seemed to me like a protectorate. How much nonsense she stopped me from committing, which I regret not having done! How many debts I paid despite myself! She deprived me of all the benefits I could have reaped from my personal folly. With a cold and impassable rule, she barred all my caprices. To crown the horror, she demanded no gratitude when the danger was passed. How many times have I not held myself from leaping at

her throat, crying: 'Be imperfect, wretch! so that I can love you without uneasiness and wrath!' For several years I wondered at her, my heart full of hate. Finally, it was not I that died of it!"

"Ah!" said the others, "then she is dead?"

"Yes. Things could not go on like that. Love had become an overwhelming nightmare to me. Victory or death, as the Politics says, such was the alternative which destiny imposed. One evening, in a wood . . ., at the edge of a pond . . ., after a melancholy walk in which her eyes reflected the gentleness of heaven, and my heart was thrilling with hell . . ."

"What!"

"What's that?"

"What do you mean?"

"It was inevitable. I had too great a sense of justice to beat, to insult, or to dismiss an irreproachable servant. But I had to reconcile that feeling to the horror which that being inspired in me; rid myself of that being without losing her respect. What would you want me to do with her, *since she was perfect?*"

The three others looked at him with an uncertain and somewhat stupefied gaze, as though feigning not to understand and as though tacitly avowing that they did not feel themselves capable of so rigorous an act, however sufficiently accounted for in another.

Then they ordered fresh bottles, to kill time whose life is so sturdy, and to speed life, whose movement is so slow.

SOUP AND THE CLOUDS

My well-beloved little madcap was dining with me, and through the open window of the dining-room I was

contemplating the moving architecture which God formed from the vapors, the marvellous constructions of the impalpable. And I was saying to myself, in my reflection: "All these phantasmagoria are almost as beautiful as the eyes of my beautiful well-beloved, the little prodigious madcap with green eyes."

And all at once I received a violent punch in the back, and I heard a hoarse and charming voice, a voice hysterical and husky as with brandy, which said to me: "Are you going to eat your soup, s . . ., b . . . of a dealer in clouds?"

THE LOSS OF A HALO

"Eh! What! You here, my dear? You, in a place of ill! You, the drinker of quintessences! you, the eater of ambrosia! Indeed, this is something surprising!"

"My dear, you know my dread of horses and carriages. Just now, as I was crossing the boulevard, in great haste, and as I was hopping about in the mud, in the midst of that moving chaos where death arrives at a gallop from all sides at once, my halo, in a sudden start, slipped from my head into the mire of the macadam. I did not have the courage to pick it up. I thought it less disagreeable to lose my insignia than to have my bones broken. And then, I reflected, it's an ill wind that blows no good. I can now go about incognito, perform base actions, and give myself over to debauchery, like ordinary mortals. And here I am, quite like you, as you see!"

"You ought at least have the halo advertised, or asked for at the police."

"Heavens, no! I am quite well off here. You alone have recognized me. Besides, dignity was boring. Then,

too, I think with joy that some poor poet will pick it up, and will impudently deck himself out. To make some one happy, what joy! and especially a happy one that makes me laugh! Think of X——, or of Z——! Oh! that would be comical!"

MLLE. BISTOURY

When I had reached the heart of the slums, under the gaslights, I felt an arm which slid softly under mine, and I heard a voice which whispered: "You are a doctor, sir?"

I looked: it was a big girl, robust, slightly rouged, her eyes wide open, her hair floating in the wind with her bonnet strings.

"No, I am not a doctor. Let me pass."

"Oh yes! you are a doctor. I can see it well. Come to my house. You will be quite satisfied, I assure you. I shall doubtless go to see you, but later, *after the doctor, goodness me!* . . . Ha! Ha!" she exclaimed, still clinging to my arm and bursting into laughter. "You are a physician jokster. I have known several of that sort. Come."

I am passionately in love with mystery, because I always hope to unravel it. So I let myself be led by my companion, or rather, by the unlooked-for enigma.

I omit description of the hovel; it can be found in several well known old French poets. Only, detail unnoticed by Regnier, two or three portraits of renowned physicians were hung upon the wall.

How I was pampered! A great fire, warm wine, cigars; and while offering me these fine things and lighting a cigar for herself the comical creature said to me: "Make yourself at home; be quite at ease. This will

bring back the hospital and the happy days of your youth . . . Oh look! where did you win those white hairs? You were not like that, not so long ago, when you were interne at L——. I remember it was you that helped at the major operations. *There* was a man that loved to cut, hew, lop off! It was you that handed him the instruments, the threads and the sponges. . . . And how proudly, the operation performed, he used to say, looking at his watch, 'Five minutes, gentlemen!' Oh! I, I go everywhere! I know these people well!"

A few moments later, in more familiar tone, harping on the same theme, she said: "You are a doctor, aren't you, darling?"

That unintelligible refrain brought me to my feet. "No!" I cried, furious.

"Surgeon, then?"

"No! No! unless it be to cut off your head!"

"Wait," she continued, "you shall see."

And she drew from a closet a file of papers which was nothing else than the collection of illustrious doctors of the day, lithographed by Maurin, that was displayed for several years on the Quay Voltaire.

"Look, do you recognize this one?"

"Yes, it's X——. The name is at the bottom, besides; but I know him personally."

"I should say so! Look! Here is Z——, the one who said in his course, speaking of X——, 'this monster, bearing on his face the blackness of his soul!' all because the other did not agree with him in a certain case! How they laughed at that in the school, at the time! Do you remember? . . . Look! here is K——, who denounced to the authorities the rebels he was caring for at his hospital. That was at the time of the riots. How is it possible so handsome a man can have so little heart?

. . . This one is W——, a famous Englishman; I captured him on his visit to Paris. He looks like a girl, doesn't he?"

And as I touched a little tied-up parcel, also on the table: "Wait a while," she said, "In this one are the internes; and that package has the dressers."

And she spread out, fanlike, a mass of photographs, picturing much younger faces.

"When we see each other again, you will give me your portrait, won't you, deary?"

"But," I said to her, I also following my fixed idea, "what makes you think I am a doctor?"

"It's because you are so amiable and good to women!"

"Peculiar logic," I said to myself.

"Oh! I am hardly ever mistaken; I have known quite a number. I love them so much that, even though I am not sick, I sometimes go to see them, only to see them. There are some who say coldly: 'You are not sick at all!' But there are others who understand me, because I ogle them."

"And when they do not understand?"

"Well, since I have disturbed them *fruitlessly,* I leave ten francs on the mantel. . . . They are so good and so kind, these folk! I discovered a little interne at the Pieté, pretty as an angel, and so refined! and a worker, the poor boy! His comrades told me he didn't have a sou, because his parents were poor folks who couldn't send him anything. That gave me confidence. After all, I am a fairly good looking woman, although not too young. I said to him: 'Come to see me, come to see me often. With me you needn't bother: I have no need of money.' But you know that I made him understand that in a host of ways, I didn't tell it to him bluntly; I was so afraid of humiliating him, the dear child! . . . Oh well! would you believe that I had a queer fancy I didn't dare to tell

him? . . . I should have liked him to come to see me with his instrument case and his apron, even with a little blood on it."

She said this in the most candid manner, as a feeling man would say to an actress that he loved: "I want to see you dressed in the costume you wore in this famous rôle that you created. . . ."

I, persisting, continued: "Can you remember the time and the occasion when this so special passion was born in you?"

I made her understand with difficulty; finally I succeeded. But then she answered in a very sad tone, and even, as well as I can recall, lowering her eyes: "I don't know . . ., I can't remember."

What oddities can be found in a great city, if one knows how to walk about and watch. Life swarms with innocent monsters.—

Lord, my God! You, the Creator, You the Master, You who have created Law and Liberty; You, the Sovereign that doth not interfere; You, the Judge that pardoneth; You who are full of motives and causes, and who perhaps have planted a taste for horror in my mind in order to convert my soul, as the recovery after a sword; Lord, have pity, have pity on madmen and mad women! O Creator, can monsters exist in the eyes of Him who alone knows why they exist, how they *are made,* and how they need not have been made?

LET US FLAY THE POOR

For a fortnight I was confined to my room, and I surrounded myself with the books of the day (sixteen or seventeen years ago): I mean those volumes which treat of the art of making people happy, wise and rich, in

twenty-four hours. I had thus digested—swallowed, I should say—all the lucubrations of all those master-builders of the public weal, of those who advise all the poor to enslave themselves, and of those who persuade them they are all dethroned kings. There is, then, naught surprising in the fact that I was in a state of mind bordering on intoxication or stupidity.

It seemed to me merely that I felt, imprisoned in the depths of my intelligence, the obscure germ of an idea superior to all the old wives' formulæ the cyclopedia of which I had just run through. But it was only the thought of a thought, a something infinitely vague.

And I went forth with a great thirst, for the impassioned taste of poor reading engenders a proportionate need of open air and of refreshment.

As I was about to enter a tavern, a beggar held out his hat to me, with one of those unforgettable glances that would tumble down thrones, if the mental moved the material, and if a mesmerist's glance could ripen grapes.

At the same time, I heard a voice which whispered at my ear, a voice that I knew well: it was that of a good angel, or a good Demon, who is with me everywhere. Since Socrates had his good Demon, why may not I have my good Angel, and why may not I have the honor, like Socrates, of securing my brevet in folly, signed by the subtle Lélut and the well-advised Baillarget?*

There is this difference between the Demon of Socrates and my own, that his manifested itself only to warn, to forbid, to prevent, and that mine deigns to counsel, suggest, persuade. Poor Socrates had only a Demon prohibitor; mine is a great affirmator, mine is a Demon of action, or a Demon of combat.

* Famous Parisian alienists of the time.

Now, his voice whispered to me thus: "He alone is the equal of another, that proves it; and he alone is worthy of liberty, that can secure it."

Immediately I leapt upon the beggar. With one punch, I stopped an eye, which became in a moment large as a ball. I broke one of my nails shattering two of his teeth, and as I did not feel strong enough, having been born delicate and having had but little practice in boxing, to beat the old fellow to death right away, I grasped him by one hand by the collar of his coat, and with the other I throttled him, and I set to work dashing his head against a wall. I must avow that I had first inspected the surroundings in a glance, and had made sure that in that deserted suburb I should be long enough out of the reach of a policeman.

Having then, with a kick in the back, hard enough to break his shoulderblade, felled the enfeebled sexagenarian, I seized a great branch of a tree which lay along the ground, and I beat him with the determined energy of cooks trying to make a beefsteak tender.

All at once,—O miracle! O joy of the philosopher who proves the excellence of his theory!—I saw that antique carcass turn about, straighten up with an energy I should never have suspected in so strangely disordered a machine—and, with a glance of hate that seemed to me *good omen,* the decrepit ruffian hurled himself upon me, blackened both my eyes, broke four teeth, and with the same branch beat me stiff as a jelly. By my energetic medication, I had restored to him pride and life.

Then I made any number of signs to him to make him understand that I considered the matter closed, and, rising with the satisfaction of a philosopher of the Porch, I said to him: "Sir, *you are my equal!* Kindly do me the honor of sharing my purse; and remember, if you are truly philanthropic, that you must apply to all your

colleagues, when they ask for alms, the theory that I have had the *sorrow* of trying on your back."

He swore to me that he understood my theory, and that he would obey my counsels.

GOOD DOGS

To Mr. Joseph Stevens

I HAVE never, even before the young writers of my century, been ashamed of my admiration for Buffon; but to-day it is not the spirit of that painter of lofty nature that I would call to my assistance. No.

Much more willingly I call to Sterne, and I say to him: "Descend from heaven, or climb to me from the Elysian Fields, to inspire me in behalf of good dogs, of poor dogs, with a song worthy of thee, sentimental farceur, farceur incomparable. Come back astraddle that famous ass which will always accompany you in the memory of the future; and especially do not let that ass forget to carry, delicately hung between his lips, his immortal macaroons."

Away with the academic muse! I have no business with that old prude. I invoke the familiar muse, the citizen, the boon companion, to aid me to sing the good dogs, the poor dogs, the dirty dogs, those whom every one drives away, pestiferous and lousy, except the poor, whose associates they are, and the poet, who sees them with fraternal eye.

Fie upon the foppish dog, upon the coxcomb quadruped, Dane, King Charles, pugdog or lapdog, so enamoured of himself that he darts inconsiderately between the legs or on the knees of the visitor, as if he were certain of pleasing, wild as a youngster, foolish as

a flirt, often surly and insolent as a servant! Fie especially upon those four-pawed serpents, idle and shivering, that are called greyhounds, and that do not harbor in their pointed muzzle enough scent to follow the track of a friend, nor in their flattened head enough intelligence to play at dominoes!

To the kennel with all these plaguy parasites!

Let them slink to the kennel stuffed and sulky! I sing the dirty dog, the poor dog, the homeless dog, the stroller dog, the dog buffoon, the dog whose instinct, like that of the poor, the gypsy and the mountebank, is marvellously sharpened by necessity, that excellent mother, that true patron of intelligence!

I sing the distressful dogs, be they those that wander, alone, in the winding gullies of the great cities or those who have said to the forsaken man, with blinking spiritual eyes: "Take me with you, and of two miseries we shall make a sort of joy!"

"Whither go the dogs?" Nestor Roquepelan once said in an immortal leaflet which he has doubtless forgotten, and which I alone, and perhaps Saint-Beuve, recall today.

Where do the dogs go, you ask, heedless men? They go about their business.

Business engagements, affairs of love. Through the fog, through the snow, through the mire, under the biting dogstar, under the streaming rain, they come, they go, they hurry, they move along under carriages, excited by fleas, by passion, by duty or by need. Like us, they have risen bright and early, and they seek their livelihood or run to their pleasure.

There are some who sleep in a ruin in the suburbs and who come every day at a stated hour, to beg alms at the door of a Palais-Royal cook; others who run in troops, for more than five leagues, to partake of the

repast which has been prepared for them through the charity of certain sexagenarian maids, whose unoccupied hearts are given over to beasts, since imbecile man wants them no more; others who, like runaway negroes, frantic with love, leave their province on certain days, to come to the city and romp for an hour with a handsome bitch, a little careless in her toilet, but proud and thankful.

And they are all very precise, without notebooks, without memoranda, without portfolios.

Do you know slothful Belgium, and have you, like me, admired all those vigorous dogs hitched to the cart of the butcher, of the milkmaid, of the baker, who give evidence in their triumphant barks, of the proud pleasure they feel in rivalling the horse?

And here are two that belong to a still more civilized order! Permit me to introduce you into the room of an absent mountebank. A bed, of painted wood, without curtains, with dragging covers stained with bugs; two cane chairs, a cast-iron stove, one or two disordered musical instruments. Oh, what sad furniture! But look, I pray you, at these two intelligent personages, clad in garments at once sumptuous and frayed, hooded like troubadours or soldiers, who are guarding, with the close watch of a sorcerer, *the nameless something* which simmers on the lighted stove, and from the center of which a long spoon stands forth, planted as one of those aerial masts which announce that the masonry is complete.

Is it not just that such zealous comedians should not set out without having well lined their stomachs with a strong, sound soup? And will you not forgive a little sensuality in these poor devils who all day have to face the indifference of the public and the injustice of a director who deems himself the whole show and who alone eats more soup than four actors?

How often have I contemplated, touched and smiling, all these four-footed philosophers, compliant, submissive or devoted slaves, whom the republican dictionary might well call "fellows," * if the republic, too busied with the *happiness* of men, had time to respect the *honor* of dogs!

And how many times have I thought that perhaps there is somewhere (who knows, after all?), to reward so much courage, so much of patience and of labor, a special paradise for good dogs, for poor dogs, for dirty and afflicted dogs. Swedenborg affirms that there is one for the Turks and one for the Dutchmen!

The shepherds of Virgil and of Theocritus expected, as prize for their alternate songs, a good cheese, a flute from the best maker, or a she-goat with swelling udders. The poet who has sung the good dogs has received for reward a fine vest, of a color both faded and rich, which brings thoughts of the autumn suns, of the beauty of matured women and of the summers of Saint-Martin.

None of those who were present in the tavern of Rue Villa-Hermosa will forget with what petulance the painter was despoiled of his vest for the poet, so well had he understood that it is good and seemly to sing of poor dogs.

Thus a magnificent Italian tyrant, in the good old days, offered the divine Aretine a dagger rich with jewels, or a courtly gown, in exchange for a precious sonnet or a rare satiric poem.

And whenever the poet dons the painter's vest, he is forced to think of the good dogs, of the dog philosophers, of the summers of Saint-Martin and of the beauty of full-blown women.

* "Officieux" was the term adopted by the Republic, to replace "domestique" and "valet," and to indicate the equality of all—even master and man.

LITTLE POEMS IN PROSE

TRANSLATED BY F. P. STURM

EVERY MAN HIS CHIMÆRA

BENEATH a broad grey sky, upon a vast and dusty plain devoid of grass, and where not even a nettle or a thistle was to be seen, I met several men who walked bowed down to the ground.

Each one carried upon his back an enormous Chimæra as heavy as a sack of flour or coal, or as the equipment of a Roman foot-soldier.

But the monstrous beast was not a dead weight, rather she enveloped and oppressed the men with her powerful and elastic muscles, and clawed with her two vast talons at the breast of her mount. Her fabulous head reposed upon the brow of the man like one of those horrible casques by which ancient warriors hoped to add to the terrors of the enemy.

I questioned one of the men, asking him why they went so. He replied that he knew nothing, neither he nor the others, but that evidently they went somewhere, since they were urged on by an unconquerable desire to walk.

Very curiously, none of the wayfarers seemed to be irritated by the ferocious beast hanging at his neck and cleaving to his back: one had said that he considered it as a part of himself. These grave and weary faces bore witness to no despair. Beneath the splenetic cupola of the heavens, their feet trudging through the dust of an earth as desolate as the sky, they journeyed onwards with the resigned faces of men condemned to hope for ever. So the train passed me and faded into the atmosphere of the horizon at the place where the planet unveils herself to the curiosity of the human eye.

During several moments I obstinately endeavoured to comprehend this mystery; but irresistible Indifference

soon threw herself upon me, nor was I more heavily dejected thereby than they by their crushing Chimæras.

VENUS AND THE FOOL

How admirable the day! The vast park swoons beneath the burning eye of the sun, as youth beneath the lordship of love.

There is no rumour of the universal ecstasy of all things. The waters themselves are as though drifting into sleep. Very different from the festivals of humanity, here is a silent revel.

It seems as though an ever-waning light makes all objects glimmer more and more, as though the excited flowers burn with a desire to rival the blue of the sky by the vividness of their colours; as though the heat, making perfumes visible, drives them in vapour towards their star.

Yet, in the midst of this universal joy, I have perceived one afflicted thing.

At the feet of a colossal Venus, one of those motley fools, those willing clowns whose business it is to bring laughter upon kings when weariness or remorse possesses them, lies wrapped in his gaudy and ridiculous garments, coiffed with his cap and bells, huddled against the pedestal, and raises towards the goddess his eyes filled with tears.

And his eyes say: "I am the last and most alone of all mortals, inferior to the meanest of animals in that I am denied either love or friendship. Yet I am made, even I, for the understanding and enjoyment of immortal Beauty. O Goddess, have pity upon my sadness and my frenzy."

The implacable Venus gazed into I know not what distances with her marble eyes.

ALREADY!

A HUNDRED times already the sun had leaped, radiant or saddened, from the immense cup of the sea whose rim could scarcely be seen; a hundred times it had again sunk, glittering or morose, into its mighty bath of twilight. For many days we had contemplated the other side of the firmament, and deciphered the celestial alphabet of the antipodes. And each of the passengers sighed and complained. One had said that the approach of land only exasperated their sufferings. "When, then," they said, "shall we cease to sleep a sleep broken by the surge, troubled by a wind that snores louder than we? When shall we be able to eat at an unmoving table?"

There were those who thought of their own firesides, who regretted their sullen, faithless wives, and their noisy progeny. All so doted upon the image of the absent land, that I believe they would have eaten grass with as much enthusiasm as the beasts.

At length a coast was signalled, and on approaching we saw a magnificent and dazzling land. It seemed as though the music of life flowed therefrom in a vague murmur; and the banks, rich with all kinds of growths, breathed, for leagues around, a delicious odour of flowers and fruits.

Each one therefore was joyful; his evil humour left him. Quarrels were forgotten, reciprocal wrongs forgiven, the thought of duels was blotted out of the memory, and rancour fled away like smoke.

I alone was sad, inconceivably sad. Like a priest from whom one has torn his divinity, I could not, without heartbreaking bitterness, leave this so monstrously seductive ocean, this sea so infinitely various in its terrifying simplicity, which seemed to contain in itself and

represent by its joys, and attractions, and angers, and smiles, the moods and agonies and ecstasies of all souls that have lived, that live, and that shall yet live.

In saying good-bye to this incomparable beauty I felt as though I had been smitten to death; and that is why when each of my companions said: "At last!" I could only cry "*Already!*"

Here meanwhile was the land, the land with its noises, its passions, its commodities, its festivals: a land rich and magnificent, full of promises, that sent to us a mysterious perfume of rose and musk, and from whence the music of life flowed in an amorous murmuring.

THE DOUBLE CHAMBER

A CHAMBER that is like a reverie; a chamber truly *spiritual,* where the stagnant atmosphere is lightly touched with rose and blue.

There the soul bathes itself in indolence made odorous with regret and desire. There is some sense of the twilight, of things tinged with blue and rose: a dream of delight during an eclipse. The shape of the furniture is elongated, low, languishing; one would think it endowed with the somnambulistic vitality of plants and minerals.

The tapestries speak an inarticulate language, like the flowers, the skies, the dropping suns.

There are no artistic abominations upon the walls. Compared with the pure dream, with an impression unanalyzed, definite art, positive art, is a blasphemy. Here all has the sufficing lucidity and the delicious obscurity of music.

An infinitesimal odour of the most exquisite choice, mingled with a floating humidity, swims in this atmosphere where the drowsing spirit is lulled by the sensations one feels in a hothouse.

The abundant muslin flows before the windows and the couch, and spreads out in snowy cascades. Upon the couch lies the Idol, ruler of my dreams. But why is she here?—who has brought her?—what magical power has installed her upon this throne of delight and reverie? What matter—she is there; and I recognize her.

These indeed are the eyes whose flame pierces the twilight; the subtle and terrible mirrors that I recognize by their horrifying malice. They attract, they dominate, they devour the sight of whomsoever is imprudent enough to look at them. I have often studied them; these Black Stars that compel curiosity and admiration.

To what benevolent demon, then, do I owe being thus surrounded with mystery, with silence, with peace, and sweet odours? O beatitude! the thing we name life, even in its most fortunate amplitude, has nothing in common with this supreme life with which I am now acquainted, which I taste minute by minute, second by second.

Not so! Minutes are no more; seconds are no more. Time has vanished, and Eternity reigns—an Eternity of delight.

A heavy and terrible knocking reverberates upon the door, and, as in a hellish dream, it seems to me as though I had received a blow from a mattock.

Then a Spectre enters: it is an usher who comes to torture me in the name of the Law; an infamous concubine who comes to cry misery and to add the trivialities of her life to the sorrow of mine; or it may be the errand-boy of an editor who comes to implore the remainder of a manuscript.

The Chamber of paradise, the Idol, the ruler of dreams, the Sylphide, as the great René said; all this magic has vanished at the brutal knocking of the Spectre.

Horror; I remember, I remember! Yes, this kennel,

this habitation of eternal weariness, is indeed my own. There is my senseless furniture, dusty and tattered; the dirty fireplace without a flame or an ember; the sad windows where the raindrops have traced runnels in the dust; the manuscripts, erased or unfinished; the almanac with the sinister days marked off with a pencil!

And this perfume of another world, whereof I intoxicated myself with a so perfected sensitiveness; alas, Its place is taken by an odour of stale tobacco smoke, mingled with I know not what nauseating mustiness. Now one breathes here the rankness of desolation.

In this narrow world, narrow and yet full of disgust, a single familiar object smiles at me: the phial of laudanum: old and terrible love; like all loves, alas! fruitful in caresses and treacheries.

Yes, Time has reappeared; Time reigns a monarch now; and with the hideous Ancient has returned all his demoniacal following of Memories, Regrets, Tremors, Fears, Dolours, Nightmares, and twittering nerves.

I assure you that the seconds are strongly and solemnly accentuated now; and each, as it drips from the pendulum, says: "I am Life: intolerable, implacable Life!"

There is not a second in mortal life whose mission it is to bear good news: the good news that brings the inexplicable tear to the eye.

Yes, Time reigns; Time has regained his brutal mastery. And he goads me, as though I were a steer, with his double goad: "Whoa, thou fool! Sweat, then, thou slave! Live on, thou damnèd!"

AT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

Alone at last! Nothing is to be heard but the rattle of a few tardy and tired-out cabs. There will be silence

now, if not repose, for several hours at least. At last the tyranny of the human face has disappeared—I shall not suffer except alone. At last it is permitted me to refresh myself in a bath of shadows. But first a double turn of the key in the lock. It seems to me that this turn of the key will deepen my solitude and strengthen the barriers which actually separate me from the world.

A horrible life and a horrible city! Let us run over the events of the day. I have seen several literary men; one of them wished to know if he could get to Russia by land (he seemed to have an idea that Russia was an island); I have disputed generously enough with the editor of a review, who to each objection replied: "We take the part of respectable people," which implies that every other paper but his own is edited by a knave; I have saluted some twenty people, fifteen of them unknown to me; and shaken hands with a like number, without having taken the precaution of first buying gloves; I have been driven to kill time, during a shower, with a mountebank, who wanted me to design for her a costume as Venusta; I have made my bow to a theatre manager, who said: "You will do well, perhaps, to interview Z; he is the heaviest, foolishest, and most celebrated of all my authors; with him perhaps you will be able to come to something. See him, and then we'll see." I have boasted (why?) of several villainous deeds I never committed, and indignantly denied certain shameful things I accomplished with joy, certain misdeeds of fanfaronade, crimes of human respect; I have refused an easy favour to a friend and given a written recommendation to a perfect fool. Heavens! it's well ended.

Discontented with myself and with everything and everybody else, I should be glad enough to redeem myself and regain my self-respect in the silence and solitude.

Souls of those whom I have loved, whom I have sung,

fortify me; sustain me; drive away the lies and the corrupting vapours of this world; and Thou, Lord my God, accord me so much grace as shall produce some beautiful verse to prove to myself that I am not the last of men, that I am not inferior to those I despise.

THE CONFITEOR OF THE ARTIST

How penetrating is the end of an autumn day! Ah, yes, penetrating enough to be painful even; for there are certain delicious sensations whose vagueness does not prevent them from being intense; and none more keen than the perception of the Infinite. He has a great delight who drowns his gaze in the immensity of sky and sea. Solitude, silence, the incomparable chastity of the azure—a little sail trembling upon the horizon, by its very littleness and isolation imitating my irremediable existence—the melodious monotone of the surge—all these things thinking through me and I through them (for in the grandeur of the reverie the Ego is swiftly lost); they think, I say, but musically and picturesquely, without quibbles, without syllogisms, without deductions.

These thoughts, as they arise in me or spring forth from external objects, soon become always too intense. The energy working within pleasure creates an uneasiness, a positive suffering. My nerves are too tense to give other than clamouring and dolorous vibrations.

And now the profundity of the sky dismays me; its limpidity exasperates me. The insensibility of the sea, the immutability of the spectacle, revolt me. Ah, must one eternally suffer, for ever be a fugitive from Beauty?

Nature, pitiless enchantress, ever-victorious rival, leave me! Tempt my desires and my pride no more. The contemplation of Beauty is a duel where the artist screams with terror before being vanquished.

THE THYRSUS

To Franz Liszt

What is a thyrsus? According to the moral and poetical sense, it is a sacerdotal emblem in the hand of the priests or priestesses celebrating the divinity of whom they are the interpreters and servants. But physically it is no more than a baton, a pure staff, a hop-pole, a vine-prop; dry, straight, and hard. Around this baton, in capricious meanderings, stems and flowers twine and wanton; these, sinuous and fugitive; those, hanging like bells or inverted cups. And an astonishing complexity disengages itself from this complexity of tender or brilliant lines and colours. Would not one suppose that the curved line and the spiral pay their court to the straight line, and twine about in a mute adoration? Would not one say that all these delicate corollæ, all these calices, explosions of odours and colours, execute a mystical dance around the hieratic staff? And what imprudent mortal will dare to decide whether the flowers and the vine branches have been made for the baton, or whether the baton is not but a pretext to set forth the beauty of the vine branches and the flowers?

The thyrsus is the symbol of your astonishing duality, O powerful and venerated master, dear bacchanal of a mysterious and impassioned Beauty. Never a nymph excited by the mysterious Dionysius shook her thyrsus over the heads of her companions with as much energy as your genius trembles in the hearts of your brothers. The baton is your will: erect, firm, unshakeable; the flowers are the wanderings of your fancy around it: the feminine element encircling the masculine with her illusive dance. Straight line and arabesque—intention and

expression—the rigidity of the will and the suppleness of the word—a variety of means united for a single purpose—the all-powerful and indivisible amalgam that is genius—what analyst will have the detestable courage to divide or to separate you?

Dear Liszt, across the fogs, beyond the flowers, in towns where the pianos chant your glory, where the printing-house translates your wisdom; in whatever place you be, in the splendour of the Eternal City or among the fogs of the dreamy towns that Cambrinus consoles; improvising rituals of delight or ineffable pain, or giving to paper your abstruse meditations; singer of eternal pleasure and pain, philosopher, poet, and artist, I offer you the salutation of immortality!

THE MARKSMAN

As the carriage traversed the wood he bade the driver draw up in the neighbourhood of a shooting gallery, saying that he would like to have a few shots to kill time. Is not the slaying of the monster Time the most ordinary and legitimate occupation of man?—So he gallantly offered his hand to his dear, adorable, and execrable wife; the mysterious woman to whom he owed so many pleasures, so many pains, and perhaps also a great part of his genius.

Several bullets went wide of the proposed mark, one of them flew far into the heavens, and as the charming creature laughed deliriously, mocking the clumsiness of her husband, he turned to her brusquely and said: "Observe that doll yonder, to the right, with its nose in the air, and with so haughty an appearance. Very well, dear angel, *I will imagine to myself that it is you!*"

He closed both eyes and pulled the trigger. The doll was neatly decapitated.

Then, bending towards his dear, adorable, and execrable wife, his inevitable and pitiless muse, he kissed her respectfully upon the hand, and added, "Ah, dear angel, how I thank you for my skill!"

THE SHOOTING-RANGE AND THE CEMETERY

"Cemetery View Inn"—"A queer sign," said our traveller to himself; "but it raises a thirst! Certainly the keeper of this inn appreciates Horace and the poet pupils of Epicurus. Perhaps he even apprehends the profound philosophy of those old Egyptians who had no feast without its skeleton, or some emblem of life's brevity."

He entered: drank a glass of beer in presence of the tombs; and slowly smoked a cigar. Then, his phantasy driving him, he went down into the cemetery, where the grass was so tall and inviting; so brilliant in the sunshine.

The light and heat, indeed, were so furiously intense that one had said the drunken sun wallowed upon a carpet of flowers that had fattened upon the corruption beneath.

The air was heavy with vivid rumours of life—the life of things infinitely small—and broken at intervals by the crackling of shots from a neighbouring shooting-range, that exploded with a sound as of champagne corks to the burden of a hollow symphony.

And then, beneath a sun which scorched the brain, and in that atmosphere charged with the ardent perfume of death, he heard a voice whispering out of the tomb where he sat. And this voice said: "Accursed be your rifles and targets, you turbulent living ones, who care so little for the dead in their divine repose! Accursed be your ambitions and calculations, importunate mortals

who study the arts of slaughter near the sanctuary of Death himself! Did you but know how easy the prize to win, how facile the end to reach, and how all save Death is naught, not so greatly would you fatigue yourselves, O ye laborious alive; nor would you so often vex the slumber of them that long ago reached the End—the only true end of life detestable!"

THE DESIRE TO PAINT

Unhappy perhaps is the man, but happy the artist, who is torn with this desire.

I burn to paint a certain woman who has appeared to me so rarely, and so swiftly fled away, like some beautiful, regrettable thing the traveller must leave behind him in the night. It is already long since I saw her.

She is beautiful, and more than beautiful: she is overpowering. The colour black preponderates in her; all that she inspires is nocturnal and profound. Her eyes are two caverns where mystery vaguely stirs and gleams; her glance illuminates like a ray of light; it is an explosion in the darkness.

I would compare her to a black sun if one could conceive of a dark star overthrowing light and happiness. But it is the moon that she makes one dream of most readily; the moon, who has without doubt touched her with her own influence; not the white moon of the idylls, who resembles a cold bride, but the sinister and intoxicating moon suspended in the depths of a stormy night, among the driven clouds; not the discreet peaceful moon who visits the dreams of pure men, but the moon torn from the sky, conquered and revolted, that the witches of Thessaly hardly constrain to dance upon the terrified grass.

Her small brow is the habitation of a tenacious will

and the love of prey. And below this inquiet face, whose mobile nostrils breathe in the unknown and the impossible, glitters, with an unspeakable grace, the smile of a large mouth; white, red, and delicious; a mouth that makes one dream of the miracle of some superb flower unclosing in a volcanic land.

There are women who inspire one with the desire to woo them and win them; but she makes one wish to die slowly beneath her steady gaze.

THE GLASS-VENDOR

THERE are some natures purely contemplative and antipathetic to action, who nevertheless, under a mysterious and inexplicable impulse, sometimes act with a rapidity of which they would have believed themselves incapable. Such a one is he who, fearing to find some new vexation awaiting him at his lodgings, prowls about in a cowardly fashion before the door without daring to enter; such a one is he who keeps a letter fifteen days without opening it, or only makes up his mind at the end of six months to undertake a journey that has been a necessity for a year past. Such beings sometimes feel themselves precipitately thrust towards action, like an arrow from a bow.

The novelist and the physician, who profess to know all things, yet cannot explain whence comes this sudden and delirious energy to indolent and voluptuous souls; nor how, incapable of accomplishing the simplest and most necessary things, they are at some certain moment of time possessed by a superabundant hardihood which enables them to execute the most absurd and even the most dangerous acts.

One of my friends, the most harmless dreamer that ever lived, at one time set fire to a forest, in order to

ascertain, as he said, whether the flames take hold with the easiness that is commonly affirmed. His experiment failed ten times running, on the eleventh it succeeded only too well.

Another lit a cigar by the side of a powder barrel, *in order to see, to know, to tempt Destiny*, for a jest, to have the pleasure of suspense, for no reason at all, out of caprice, out of idleness. This is a kind of energy that springs from weariness and reverie; and those in whom it manifests so stubbornly are in general, as I have said, the most indolent and dreamy beings.

Another so timid that he must cast down his eyes before the gaze of any man, and summon all his poor will before he dare enter a café or pass the pay-box of a theatre, where the ticket-seller seems, in his eyes, invested with all the majesty of Minos, Æcus, and Rhadamanthus, will at times throw himself upon the neck of some old man whom he sees in the street, and embrace him with enthusiasm in sight of an astonished crowd. Why? Because—because this countenance is irresistibly attractive to him? Perhaps; but it is more legitimate to suppose that he himself does not know why.

I have been more than once a victim to these crises and outbreaks which give us cause to believe that evil-meaning demons slip into us, to make us the ignorant accomplices of their most absurd desires. One morning I arose in a sullen mood, very sad, and tired of idleness, and thrust as it seemed to me to the doing of some great thing, some brilliant act—and then, alas, I opened the window.

(I beg you to observe that in some people the spirit of mystification is not the result of labour or combination, but rather of a fortuitous inspiration which would partake, were it not for the strength of the feeling, of the mood called hysterical by the physician and satanic by

those who think a little more profoundly than the physician; the mood which thrusts us unresisting to a multitude of dangerous and inconvenient acts.)

The first person I noticed in the street was a glass-vendor whose shrill and discordant cry mounted up to me through the heavy, dull atmosphere of Paris. It would have been else impossible to account for the sudden and despotic hatred of this poor man that came upon me.

"Hello, there!" I cried, and bade him ascend. Meanwhile I reflected, not without gaiety, that as my room was on the sixth landing, and the stairway very narrow, the man would have some difficulty in ascending, and in many a place would break off the corners of his fragile merchandise.

At length he appeared. I examined all his glasses with curiosity, and then said to him: "What, have you no coloured glasses? Glasses of rose and crimson and blue, magical glasses, glasses of Paradise? You are insolent. You dare to walk in mean streets when you have no glasses that would make one see beauty in life?" And I hurried him briskly to the staircase, which he staggered down, grumbling.

I went on to the balcony and caught up a little flower-pot, and when the man appeared in the doorway beneath I let fall my engine of war perpendicularly upon the edge of his pack, so that it was upset by the shock and all his poor walking fortune broken to bits. It made a noise like a palace of crystal shattered by lightning. Mad with my folly, I cried furiously after him: "The life beautiful! the life beautiful!"

Such nervous pleasantries are not without peril; often enough one pays dearly for them. But what matters an eternity of damnation to him who has found in one second an eternity of enjoyment?

THE WIDOWS

VAUVENARGUES says that in public gardens there are alleys haunted principally by thwarted ambition, by unfortunate inventors, by aborted glories and broken hearts, and by all those tumultuous and contracted souls in whom the last sighs of the storm mutter yet again, and who thus betake themselves far from the insolent and joyous eyes of the well-to-do. These shadowy retreats are the rendezvous of life's cripples.

To such places above all others do the poet and philosopher direct their avid conjectures. They find there an unfailing pasturage, for if there is one place they disdain to visit it is, as I have already hinted, the place of the joy of the rich. A turmoil in the void has no attractions for them. On the contrary, they feel themselves irresistibly drawn towards all that is feeble, ruined, sorrowing, and bereft.

An experienced eye is never deceived. In these rigid and dejected lineaments; in these eyes, wan and hollow, or bright with the last fading gleams of the combat against fate; in these numerous profound wrinkles and in the slow and troubled gait, the eye of experience deciphers unnumbered legends of mistaken devotion, of unrewarded effort, of hunger and cold humbly and silently supported.

Have you not at times seen widows sitting on the deserted benches? Poor widows, I mean. Whether in mourning or not they are easily recognised. Moreover, there is always something wanting in the mourning of the poor; a lack of harmony which but renders it the more heart-breaking. It is forced to be niggardly in its show of grief. They are the rich who exhibit a full complement of sorrow.

Who is the saddest and most saddening of widows: she who leads by the hand a child who cannot share her reveries, or she who is quite alone? I do not know. . . . It happened that I once followed for several long hours an aged and afflicted woman of this kind: rigid and erect, wrapped in a little worn shawl, she carried in all her being the pride of stoicism.

She was evidently condemned by her absolute loneliness to the habits of an ancient celibacy; and the masculine characters of her habits added to their austerity a piquant mysteriousness. In what miserable café she dines I know not, nor in what manner. I followed her to a reading-room, and for a long time watched her reading the papers, her active eyes, that once burned with tears, seeking for news of a powerful and personal interest.

At length, in the afternoon, under a charming autumnal sky, one of those skies that let fall hosts of memories and regrets, she seated herself remotely in a garden, to listen, far from the crowd, to one of the regimental bands whose music gratifies the people of Paris. This was without doubt the small debauch of the innocent old woman (or the purified old woman), the well-earned consolation for another of the burdensome days without a friend, without conversation, without joy, without a confidant, that God had allowed to fall upon her perhaps for many years past—three hundred and sixty-five times a year!

Yet one more:

I can never prevent myself from throwing a glance, if not sympathetic at least full of curiosity, over the crowd of outcasts who press around the enclosure of a public concert. From the orchestra, across the night, float songs of fête, of triumph, or of pleasure. The dresses of the women sweep and shimmer; glances pass;

the well-to-do, tired with doing nothing, saunter about and make indolent pretence of listening to the music. Here are only the rich, the happy; here is nothing that does not inspire or exhale the pleasure of being alive, except the aspect of the mob that presses against the outer barrier yonder, catching gratis, at the will of the wind, a tatter of music, and watching the glittering furnace within.

There is a reflection of the joy of the rich deep in the eyes of the poor that is always interesting. But to-day, beyond this people dressed in blouses and calico, I saw one whose nobility was in striking contrast with all the surrounding triviality. She was a tall, majestic woman, and so imperious in all her air that I cannot remember having seen the like in the collections of the aristocratic beauties of the past. A perfume of exalted virtue emanated from all her being. Her face, sad and worn, was in perfect keeping with the deep mourning in which she was dressed. She also, like the plebeians she mingled with and did not see, looked upon the luminous world with a profound eye, and listened with a toss of her head.

It was a strange vision. "Most certainly," I said to myself, "this poverty, if poverty it be, ought not to admit of any sordid economy; so noble a face answers for that. Why then does she remain in surroundings with which she is so strikingly in contrast?"

But in curiously passing near her I was able to divine the reason. The tall widow held by the hand a child dressed like herself in black. Modest as was the price of entry, this price perhaps sufficed to pay for some of the needs of the little being, or even more, for a superfluity, a toy.

She will return on foot, dreaming and meditating—and alone, always alone, for the child is turbulent and selfish,

without gentleness or patience, and cannot become, any more than another animal, a dog or a cat, the confidant of solitary griefs.

THE TEMPTATIONS; OR, EROS, PLUTUS, AND GLORY

Last night two superb Satans and a She-devil not less extraordinary ascended the mysterious stairway by which Hell gains access to the frailty of sleeping man, and communes with him in secret. These three postured gloriously before me, as though they had been upon a stage—and a sulphurous splendour emanated from these beings who so disengaged themselves from the opaque heart of the night. They bore with them so proud a presence, and so full of mastery, that at first I took them for three of the true Gods.

The first Satan, by his face, was a creature of doubtful sex. The softness of an ancient Bacchus shone in the lines of his body. His beautiful languorous eyes, of a tenebrous and indefinite colour, were like violets still laden with the heavy tears of the storm; his slightly-parted lips were like heated censers, from whence exhaled the sweet savour of many perfumes; and each time he breathed, exotic insects drew, as they fluttered, strength from the ardours of his breath.

Twined about his tunic of purple stuff, in the manner of a cincture, was an iridescent Serpent with lifted head and eyes like embers turned sleepily towards him. Phials full of sinister fluids, alternating with shining knives and instruments of surgery, hung from this living girdle. He held in his right hand a flagon containing a luminous red fluid, and inscribed with a legend in these singular words:

"DRINK OF THIS MY BLOOD: A PERFECT RESTORATIVE";

and in his left hand held a violin that without doubt served to sing his pleasures and pains, and to spread abroad the contagion of his folly upon the nights of the Sabbath.

From rings upon his delicate ankles trailed a broken chain of gold, and when the burden of this caused him to bend his eyes towards the earth, he would contemplate with vanity the nails of his feet, as brilliant and polished as well-wrought jewels.

He looked at me with eyes inconsolably heart-broken and giving forth an insidious intoxication, and cried in a chanting voice: "If thou wilt, if thou wilt, I will make thee an overlord of souls; thou shalt be master of living matter more perfectly than the sculptor is master of his clay; thou shalt taste the pleasure, reborn without end, of obliterating thyself in the self of another, and of luring other souls to lose themselves in thine."

But I replied to him: "I thank thee. I only gain from this venture, then, beings of no more worth than my poor self? Though remembrance brings me shame indeed, I would forget nothing; and even before I recognised thee, thou ancient monster, thy mysterious cutlery, thy equivocal phials, and the chain that imprisons thy feet, were symbols showing clearly enough the inconvenience of thy friendship. Keep thy gifts."

The second Satan had neither the air at once tragical and smiling, the lovely insinuating ways, nor the delicate and scented beauty of the first. A gigantic man, with a coarse, eyeless face, his heavy paunch overhung his hips and was gilded and pictured, like a tattooing, with a crowd of little moving figures which represented the unnumbered forms of universal misery. There were little sinew-shrunken men who hung themselves willingly from

nails; there were meagre gnomes, deformed and undersized, whose beseeching eyes begged an alms even more eloquently than their trembling hands; there were old mothers who nursed clinging abortions at their pendent breasts. And many others, even more surprising.

This heavy Satan beat with his fist upon his immense belly, from whence came a loud and resounding metallic clangour, which died away in a sighing made by many human voices. And he smiled unrestrainedly, showing his broken teeth—the imbecile smile of a man who has dined too freely. Then the creature said to me:

"I can give thee that which gets all, which is worth all, which takes the place of all." And he tapped his monstrous paunch, whence came a sonorous echo as the commentary to his obscene speech. I turned away with disgust and replied: "I need no man's misery to bring me happiness; nor will I have the sad wealth of all the misfortunes pictured upon thy skin as upon a tapestry."

As for the She-devil, I should lie if I denied that at first I found in her a certain strange charm, which to define I can but compare to the charm of certain beautiful women past their first youth, who yet seem to age no more, whose beauty keeps something of the penetrating magic of ruins. She had an air at once imperious and sordid, and her eyes, though heavy, held a certain power of fascination. I was struck most by her voice, wherein I found the remembrance of the most delicious *contralti*, as well as a little of the hoarseness of a throat continually laved with brandy.

"Wouldst thou know my power?" said the charming and paradoxical voice of the false goddess. "Then listen." And she put to her mouth a gigantic trumpet, enribboned, like a *mirliton*, with the titles of all the newspapers in the world; and through this trumpet she cried my name so that it rolled through space with the

sound of a hundred thousand thunders, and came re-echoing back to me from the farthest planet.

"Devil!" cried I, half tempted, "that at least is worth something." But it vaguely struck me, upon examining the seductive virago more attentively, that I had seen her clinking glasses with certain drolls of my acquaintance, and her blare of brass carried to my ears I know not what memory of a fanfare prostituted.

So I replied, with all disdain: "Get thee hence! I know better than wed the light o' love of them that I will not name."

Truly, I had the right to be proud of a so courageous renunciation. But unfortunately I awoke, and all my courage left me. "In truth," I said, "I must have been very deeply asleep indeed to have had such scruples. Ah, if they would but return while I am awake, I would not be so delicate."

So I invoked the three in a loud voice, offering to dishonour myself as often as necessary to obtain their favours; but I had without doubt too deeply offended them, for they have never returned.

THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

Translated by F. P. Sturm

THE DANCE OF DEATH

Carrying bouquet, and handkerchief, and gloves,
Proud of her height as when she lived, she moves
With all the careless and high-stepping grace,
And the extravagant courtesan's thin face.

Was slimmer waist e'er in a ball-room wooed?
Her floating robe, in royal amplitude,
Falls in deep folds around a dry foot, shod
With a bright flower-like shoe that gems the sod.

The swarms that hum about her collar-bones
As the lascivious streams caress the stones,
Conceal from every scornful jest that flies,
Her gloomy beauty; and her fathomless eyes

Are made of shade and void; with flowery sprays
Her skull is wreathed artistically, and sways,
Feeble and weak, on her frail vertebræ.
O charm of nothing decked in folly! they

Who laugh and name you a Caricature,
They see not, they whom flesh and blood allure,
The nameless grace of every bleached, bare bone,
That is most dear to me, tall skeleton!

Come you to trouble with your potent sneer
The feast of Life! or are you driven here,
To Pleasure's Sabbath, by dead lusts that stir
And goad your moving corpse on with a spur?

Or do you hope, when sing the violins,
And the pale candle-flame lights up our sins,
To drive some mocking nightmare far apart,
And cool the flame hell lighted in your heart?

Fathomless well of fault and foolishness!
Eternal alembic of antique distress!
Still o'er the curved, white trellis of your sides
The sateless, wandering serpent curls and glides.

And truth to tell, I fear lest you should find,
Among us here, no lover to your mind;
Which of these hearts beat for the smile you gave?
The charms of horror please none but the brave.

Your eyes' black gulf, where awful broodings stir,
Brings giddiness; the prudent reveller
Sees, while a horror grips him from beneath,
The eternal smile of thirty-two white teeth.

For he who has not folded in his arms
A skeleton, nor fed on graveyard charms,
Recks not of furbelow, or paint, or scent,
When Horror comes the way that Beauty went.

O irresistible, with fleshless face,
Say to these dancers in their dazzled race:
"Proud lovers with the paint above your bones,
Ye shall taste death, musk-scented skeletons!

Withered Antinoüs, dandies with plump faces,
Ye varnished cadavers, and grey Lovelaces,
Ye go to lands unknown and void of breath,
Drawn by the rumour of the Dance of Death.

From Seine's cold quays to Ganges' burning stream,
The mortal troupes dance onward in a dream;
They do not see, within the opened sky,
The Angel's sinister trumpet raised on high.

In every clime and under every sun,
Death laughs at ye, mad mortals, as ye run;
And oft perfumes herself with myrrh, like ye;
And mingles with your madness, irony!"

THE BEACONS

Rubens, oblivious garden of indolence,
Pillow of cool flesh where no man dreams of love,
Where life flows forth in troubled opulence,
As airs in heaven and seas in ocean move.

Leonard da Vinci, sombre and fathomless glass,
Where lovely angels with calm lips that smile,
Heavy with mystery, in the shadow pass,
Among the ice and pines that guard some isle.

Rembrandt, sad hospital that a murmuring fills,
Where one tall crucifix hangs on the walls,
Where every tear-drowned prayer some woe distils,
And one cold, wintry ray obliquely falls.

Strong Michelangelo, a vague far place
Where mingle Christs with pagan Hercules;
Thin phantoms of the great through twilight pace,
And tear their shroud with clenched hands void of ease.

The fighter's anger, the faun's impudence,
Thou makest of all these a lovely thing;
Proud heart, sick body, mind's magnificence:
PUGET, the convict's melancholy king.

WATTEAU, the carnival of illustrious hearts,
Fluttering like moths upon the wings of chance;
Bright lustres light the silk that flames and darts,
And pour down folly on the whirling dance.

GOYA, a nightmare full of things unknown;
The fœtus witches broil on Sabbath night;
Old women at the mirror; children lone
Who tempt old demons with their limbs delight.

DELACROIX, lake of blood ill angels haunt,
Where ever-green, o'ershadowing woods arise;
Under the surly heaven strange fanfares chaunt
And pass, like one of Weber's strangled sighs.

And malediction, blasphemy and groan,
Ecstasies, cries, Te Deums, and tears of brine,
Are echoes through a thousand labyrinths flown;
For mortal hearts an opiate divine;

A shout cried by a thousand sentinels,
An order from a thousand bugles tossed,
A beacon o'er a thousand citadels,
A call to huntsmen in deep woodlands lost.

It is the mightiest witness that could rise
To prove our dignity, O Lord, to Thee;
This sob that rolls from age to age, and dies
Upon the verge of Thy Eternity!

THE SADNESS OF THE MOON

THE Moon more indolently dreams to-night
Than a fair woman on her couch at rest,
Caressing, with a hand distraught and light,
Before she sleeps, the contour of her breast.

Upon her silken avalanche of down,
Dying she breathes a long and swooning sigh;
And watches the white visions past her flown,
Which rise like blossoms to the azure sky.

And when, at times, wrapped in her languor deep,
Earthward she lets a furtive tear-drop flow,
Some pious poet, enemy of sleep,

Takes in his hollow hand the tear of snow
Whence gleams of iris and of opal start,
And hides it from the Sun, deep in his heart.

THE BALCONY

MOTHER of memories, mistress of mistresses,
O thou, my pleasure, thou, all my desire,
Thou shalt recall the beauty of caresses,
The charm of evenings by the gentle fire,
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses!

The eves illumined by the burning coal,
The balcony where veiled rose-vapour clings—
How soft your breast was then, how sweet your soul!
Ah, and we said imperishable things,
Those eves illumined by the burning coal.

Lovely the suns were in those twilights warm,
And space profound, and strong life's pulsing flood,
In bending o'er you, queen of every charm,
I thought I breathed the perfume in your blood.
The suns were beauteous in those twilights warm.

The film of night flowed round and over us,
And my eyes in the dark did your eyes meet;
I drank your breath, ah! sweet and poisonous,
And in my hands fraternal slept your feet—
Night, like a film, flowed round and over us.

I can recall those happy days forgot,
And see, with head bowed on your knees, my past.
Your languid beauties now would move me not
Did not your gentle heart and body cast
The old spell of those happy days forgot.

Can vows and perfumes, kisses infinite,
Be reborn from the gulf we cannot sound;
As rise to heaven suns once again made bright
After being plunged in deep seas and profound?
Ah, vows and perfumes, kisses infinite!

THE SICK MUSE

Poor Muse, alas, what ails thee, then, to-day?
Thy hollow eyes with midnight visions burn,
Upon thy brow in alternation play,
Folly and Horror, cold and taciturn.

Have the green lemure and the goblin red,
Poured on thee love and terror from their urn?
Or with despotic hand the nightmare dread
Deep plunged thee in some fabulous Minturne?

Would that thy breast where so deep thoughts arise,
Breathed forth a healthful perfume with thy sighs;
Would that thy Christian blood ran wave by wave

In rhythmic sounds the antique numbers gave,
When Phœbus shared his alternating reign
With mighty Pan, lord of the ripening grain.

THE VENAL MUSE

Muse of my heart, lover of palaces,
When January comes with wind and sleet,
During the snowy eve's long wearinesses,
Will there be fire to warm thy violet feet?

Wilt thou reanimate thy marble shoulders
In the moon-beams that through the window fly?
Or when thy purse dries up, thy palace moulders,
Reap the far star-gold of the vaulted sky?

For thou, to keep thy body to thy soul,
Must swing a censer, wear a holy stole,
And chaunt Te Deums with unbelief between.

Or, like a starving mountebank, expose
Thy beauty and thy tear-drowned smile to those
Who wait thy jests to drive away thy spleen.

THE EVIL MONK

The ancient cloisters on their lofty walls
Had holy Truth in painted frescoes shown,
And, seeing these, the pious in those halls
Felt their cold, lone austereness less alone.

At that time when Christ's seed flowered all around,
More than one monk, forgotten in his hour,
Taking for studio the burial-ground,
Glorified Death with simple faith and power.

And my soul is a sepulchre where I,
Ill cenobite, have spent eternity:
On the vile cloister walls no pictures rise.

O when may I cast off this weariness,
And make the pageant of my old distress
For these hands labour, pleasure for these eyes?

THE TEMPTATION

The Demon, in my chamber high,
This morning came to visit me,
And, thinking he would find some fault,
He whispered: "I would know of thee

Among the many lovely things
That make the magic of her face,
Among the beauties, black and rose,
That make her body's charm and grace,

Which is most fair?" Thou didst reply
To the Abhorred, O soul of mine:
"No single beauty is the best
When she is all one flower divine.

When all things charm me I ignore
Which one alone brings most delight;
She shines before me like the dawn,
And she consoles me like the night.

The harmony is far too great,
  That governs all her body fair.
For impotence to analyse
  And say which note is sweetest there.

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

THE IRREPARABLE

Can we suppress the old Remorse
  Who bends our heart beneath his stroke,
Who feeds, as worms feed on the corse,
  Or as the acorn on the oak?
Can we suppress the old Remorse?

Ah, in what philtre, wine, or spell,
  May we drown this our ancient foe,
Destructive glutton, gorging well,
  Patient as the ants, and slow?
What wine, what philtre, or what spell?

Tell it, enchantress, if you can,
  Tell me, with anguish overcast,
Wounded, as a dying man,
  Beneath the swift hoofs hurrying past.
Tell it, enchantress, if you can,

To him the wolf already tears
  Who sees the carrion pinions wave
This broken warrior who despairs
  To have a cross above his grave—
This wretch the wolf already tears.

Can one illume a leaden sky,
  Or tear apart the shadowy veil
Thicker than pitch, no star on high,
  Not one funereal glimmer pale?
Can one illume a leaden sky?

Hope lit the windows of the Inn,
  But now that shining flame is dead;
And how shall martyred pilgrims win
  Along the moonless road they tread?
Satan has darkened all the Inn!

Witch, do you love accursèd hearts?
  Say, do you know the reprobate?
Know you Remorse, whose venomed darts
  Make souls the targets for their hate?
Witch, do you know accursèd hearts?

The Might-have-been with tooth accursed
  Gnaws at the piteous souls of men,
The deep foundations suffer first,
  And all the structure crumbles then
Beneath the bitter tooth accursed.

II

Often, when seated at the play,
  And sonorous music lights the stage,
I see the frail hand of a Fay
  With magic dawn illume the rage
Of the dark sky. Oft at the play

A being made of gauze and fire
  Casts to the earth a Demon great.
And my heart, whence all hopes expire,
  Is like a stage where I await,
In vain, the Fay with wings of fire!

A FORMER LIFE

Long since, I lived beneath vast porticoes,
By many ocean-sunsets tinged and fired,
Where mighty pillars, in majestic rows,
Seemed like basaltic caves when day expired.

The rolling surge that mirrored all the skies
Mingled its music, turbulent and rich,
Solemn and mystic, with the colours which
The setting sun reflected in my eyes.

And there I lived amid voluptuous calms,
In splendours of blue sky and wandering wave,
Tended by many a naked, perfumed slave,

Who fanned my languid brow with waving palms.
They were my slaves—the only care they had
To know what secret grief had made me sad.

DON JUAN IN HADES

When Juan sought the subterranean flood,
And paid his obolus on the Stygian shore,
Charon, the proud and sombre beggar, stood
With one strong, vengeful hand on either oar.

With open robes and bodies agonised,
Lost women writhed beneath that darkling sky;
There were sounds as of victims sacrificed:
Behind him all the dark was one long cry.

And Sganarelle, with laughter, claimed his pledge;
Don Luis, with trembling finger in the air,
Showed to the souls who wandered in the sedge
The evil son who scorned his hoary hair.

Shivering with woe, chaste Elvira the while,
Near him untrue to all but her till now,
Seemed to beseech him for one farewell smile
Lit with the sweetness of the first soft vow.

And clad in armour, a tall man of stone
Held firm the helm, and clove the gloomy flood;
But, staring at the vessel's track alone,
Bent on his sword the unmoved hero stood.

THE LIVING FLAME

They pass before me, these Eyes full of light,
Eyes made magnetic by some angel wise;
The holy brothers pass before my sight,
And cast their diamond fires in my dim eyes.

They keep me from all sin and error grave,
They set me in the path whence Beauty came;
They are my servants, and I am their slave,
And all my soul obeys the living flame.

Beautiful Eyes that gleam with mystic light
As candles lighted at full noon; the sun
Dims not your flame phantastical and bright.

You sing the dawn; they celebrate life done;
Marching you chaunt my soul's awakening hymn,
Stars that no sun has ever made grow dim!

CORRESPONDENCES

In Nature's temple living pillars rise,
And words are murmured none have understood,
And man must wander through a tangled wood
Of symbols watching him with friendly eyes.

As long-drawn echoes heard far-off and dim
Mingle to one deep sound and fade away;
Vast as the night and brilliant as the day,
Colour and sound and perfume speak to him.

Some perfumes are as fragrant as a child,
Sweet as the sound of hautboys, meadow-green;
Others, corrupted, rich, exultant, wild,

Have all the expansion of things infinite:
As amber, incense, musk, and benzoin,
Which sing the sense's and the soul's delight.

THE FLASK

There are some powerful odours that can pass
Out of the stoppered flagon; even glass
To them is porous. Oft when some old box
Brought from the East is opened and the locks
And hinges creak and cry; or in a press
In some deserted house, where the sharp stress
Of odours old and dusty fills the brain;
An ancient flask is brought to light again,
And forth the ghosts of long-dead odours creep.
There, softly trembling in the shadows, sleep
A thousand thoughts, funereal chrysalides,

Phantoms of old the folding darkness hides,
Who make faint flutterings as their wings unfold,
Rose-washed and azure-tinted, shot with gold.

A memory that brings languor flutters here:
The fainting eyelids droop, and giddy Fear
Thrusts with both hands the soul towards the pit
Where, like a Lazarus from his winding-sheet,
Arises from the gulf of sleep a ghost
Of an old passion, long since loved and lost.
So I, when vanished from man's memory
Deep in some dark and sombre chest I lie,
An empty flagon they have cast aside,
Broken and soiled, the dust upon my pride,
Will be your shroud, beloved pestilence!
The witness of your might and virulence,
Sweet poison mixed by angels; bitter cup
Of life and death my heart has drunken up!

REVERSIBILITY

Angel of gaiety, have you tasted grief?
Shame and remorse and sobs and weary spite,
And the vague terrors of the fearful night
That crush the heart up like a crumpled leaf?
Angel of gaiety, have you tasted grief?

Angel of kindness, have you tasted hate?
With hands clenched in the shade and tears of gall,
When Vengeance beats her hellish battle-call,
And makes herself the captain of our fate,
Angel of kindness, have you tasted hate?

Angel of health, did ever you know pain,
Which like an exile trails his tired footfalls
The cold length of the white infirmary walls,
With lips compressed, seeking the sun in vain?
Angel of health, did ever you know pain?

Angel of beauty, do you wrinkles know?
Know you the fear of age, the torment vile
Of reading secret horror in the smile
Of eyes your eyes have loved since long ago?
Angel of beauty, do you wrinkles know?

Angel of happiness, and joy, and light,
Old David would have asked for youth afresh
From the pure touch of your enchanted flesh;
I but implore your prayers to aid my plight,
Angel of happiness, and joy, and light.

THE EYES OF BEAUTY

You are a sky of autumn, pale and rose;
But all the sea of sadness in my blood
Surges, and ebbing, leaves my lips morose,
Salt with the memory of the bitter flood.

In vain your hand glides my faint bosom o'er,
That which you seek, beloved, is desecrate
By woman's tooth and talon; ah, no more
Seek in me for a heart which those dogs ate.

It is a ruin where the jackals rest,
And rend and tear and glut themselves and slay—
A perfume swims about your naked breast!

Beauty, hard scourge of spirits, have your way!
With flame-like eyes that at bright feasts have flared
Burn up these tatters that the beasts have spared!

SONNET OF AUTUMN

THEY say to me, thy clear and crystal eyes:
"Why dost thou love me so, strange lover mine?"
Be sweet, be still! My heart and soul despise
All save that antique brute-like faith of thine;

And will not bare the secret of their shame
To thee whose hand soothes me to slumbers long,
Nor their black legend write for thee in flame!
Passion I hate, a spirit does me wrong.

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

Crime, horror, folly. O pale Marguerite,
Thou art as I, a bright sun fallen low,
O my so white, my so cold Marguerite.

THE REMORSE OF THE DEAD

O SHADOWY Beauty mine, when thou shalt sleep
In the deep heart of a black marble tomb;
When thou for mansion and for bower shalt keep
Only one rainy cave of hollow gloom;

And when the stone upon thy trembling breast,
  And on thy straight sweet body's supple grace,
Crushes thy will and keeps thy heart at rest,
  And holds those feet from their adventurous race;

Then the deep grave, who shares my reverie,
(For the deep grave is aye the poet's friend)
During long nights when sleep is far from thee,

Shall whisper: "Ah, thou didst not comprehend
The dead wept thus, thou woman frail and weak"—
And like remorse the worm shall gnaw thy cheek.

THE GHOST

Softly as brown-eyed Angels rove
I will return to thy alcove,
And glide upon the night to thee,
Treading the shadows silently.

And I will give to thee, my own,
Kisses as icy as the moon,
And the caresses of a snake
Cold gliding in the thorny brake.

And when returns the livid morn
Thou shalt find all my place forlorn
And chilly, till the falling night.

Others would rule by tenderness
Over thy life and youthfulness,
But I would conquer thee by fright!

TO A MADONNA

(An Ex-Voto in the Spanish taste.)

MADONNA, mistress, I would build for thee
An altar deep in the sad soul of me;
And in the darkest corner of my heart,
From mortal hopes and mocking eyes apart,
Carve of enamelled blue and gold a shrine
For thee to stand erect in, Image divine!
And with a mighty Crown thou shalt be crowned
Wrought of the gold of my smooth Verse, set round
With starry crystal rhymes; and I will make,
O mortal maid, a Mantle for thy sake,
And weave it of my jealousy, a gown
Heavy, barbaric, stiff, and weighted down
With my distrust, and broider round the hem
Not pearls, but all my tears in place of them.
And then thy wavering, trembling robe shall be
All the desires that rise and fall in me
From mountain-peaks to valleys of repose,
Kissing thy lovely body's white and rose.
For thy humiliated feet divine,
Of my Respect I'll make thee Slippers fine
Which, prisoning them within a gentle fold,
Shall keep their imprint like a faithful mould.
And if my art, unwearying and discreet,
Can make no Moon of Silver for thy feet
To have for Footstool, then thy heel shall rest
Upon the snake that gnaws within my breast,
Victorious Queen of whom our hope is born!
And thou shalt trample down and make a scorn
Of the vile reptile swollen up with hate.

And thou shalt see my thoughts, all consecrate,
Like candles set before thy flower-strewn shrine,
O Queen of Virgins, and the taper-shine
Shall glimmer star-like in the vault of blue,
With eyes of flame for ever watching you.
While all the love and worship in my sense
Will be sweet smoke of myrrh and frankincense.
Ceaselessly up to thee, white peak of snow,
My stormy spirit will in vapours go!

And last, to make thy drama all complete,
That love and cruelty may mix and meet,
I, thy remorseful torturer, will take
All the Seven Deadly Sins, and from them make
In darkest joy, Seven Knives, cruel-edged and keen,
And like a juggler choosing, O my Queen,
That spot profound whence love and mercy start,
I'll plunge them all within thy panting heart!

THE SKY

WHERE'ER he be, on water or on land,
Under pale suns or climes that flames enfold;
One of Christ's own, or of Cythera's band,
Shadowy beggar or Crœsus rich with gold;

Citizen, peasant, student, tramp; whate'er
His little brain may be, alive or dead;
Man knows the fear of mystery everywhere,
And peeps, with trembling glances, overhead.

The heaven above? A strangling cavern wall;
The lighted ceiling of a music-hall
Where every actor treads a bloody soil—

The hermit's hope; the terror of the sot;
The sky: the black lid of the mighty pot
Where the vast human generations boil!

SPLEEN

I'm like some king in whose corrupted veins
Flows agèd blood; who rules a land of rains;
Who, young in years, is old in all distress;
Who flees good counsel to find weariness
Among his dogs and playthings, who is stirred
Neither by hunting-hound nor hunting-bird;
Whose weary face emotion moves no more
E'en when his people die before his door.
His favourite Jester's most fantastic wile
Upon that sick, cruel face can raise no smile;
The courtly dames, to whom all kings are good,
Can lighten this young skeleton's dull mood
No more with shameless toilets. In his gloom
Even his lilied bed becomes a tomb.
The sage who takes his gold essays in vain
To purge away the old corrupted strain,
His baths of blood, that in the days of old
The Romans used when their hot blood grew cold,
Will never warm this dead man's bloodless pains,
For green Lethean water fills his veins.

THE OWLS

Under the overhanging yews,
The dark owls sit in solemn state,
Like stranger gods; by twos and twos
Their red eyes gleam. They meditate.

Motionless thus they sit and dream
Until that melancholy hour
When, with the sun's last fading gleam,
The nightly shades assume their power.

From their still attitude the wise
Will learn with terror to despise
All tumult, movement, and unrest;

For he who follows every shade,
Carries the memory in his breast,
Of each unhappy journey made.

BIEN LOIN D'ICI

HERE is the chamber consecrate,
Wherein this maiden delicate,
And enigmatically sedate,

Fans herself while the moments creep,
Upon her cushions half-asleep,
And hears the fountains plash and weep.

Dorothy's chamber undefiled.
The winds and waters sing afar
Their song of sighing strange and wild
To lull to sleep the petted child.

From head to foot with subtle care,
Slaves have perfumed her delicate skin
With odorous oils and benzoin.
And flowers faint in a corner there.

CONTEMPLATION

Thou, O my Grief, be wise and tranquil still,
The eve is thine which even now drops down,
To carry peace or care to human will,
And in a misty veil enfolds the town.

While the vile mortals of the multitude,
By pleasure, cruel tormentor, goaded on,
Gather remorseful blossoms in light mood—
Grief, place thy hand in mine, let us be gone

Far from them. Lo, see how the vanished years,
In robes outworn lean over heaven's rim;
And from the water, smiling through her tears,

Remorse arises, and the sun grows dim;
And in the east, her long shroud trailing light,
List, O my grief, the gentle steps of Night.

TO A BROWN BEGGAR-MAID

White maiden with the russet hair,
Whose garments, through their holes, declare
That poverty is part of you,
And beauty too.

To me, a sorry bard and mean,
Your youthful beauty, frail and lean,
With summer freckles here and there,
Is sweet and fair.

Your sabots tread the roads of chance,
And not one queen of old romance
Carried her velvet shoes and lace
With half your grace.

In place of tatters far too short
Let the proud garments worn at Court
Fall down with rustling fold and pleat
About your feet;

In place of stockings, worn and old,
Let a keen dagger all of gold
Gleam in your garter for the eyes
Of roués wise;

Let ribbons carelessly untied
Reveal to us the radiant pride
Of your white bosom purer far
Than any star;

Let your white arms uncovered shine,
Polished and smooth and half divine;
And let your elfish fingers chase
With riotous grace

The purest pearls that softly glow,
The sweetest sonnets of Belleau,
Offered by gallants ere they fight
For your delight;

And many fawning rhymers who
Inscribe their first thin book to you
Will contemplate upon the stair
Your slipper fair;

And many a page who plays at cards,
And many lords and many bards,
Will watch your going forth, and burn
For your return;

And you will count before your glass
More kisses than the lily has;
And more than one Valois will sigh
When you pass by.

But meanwhile you are on the tramp,
Begging your living in the damp,
Wandering mean streets and alleys o'er,
From door to door;

And shilling bangles in a shop
Cause you with eager eyes to stop,
And I, alas, have not a sou
To give to you.

Then go, with no more ornament,
Pearl, diamond, or subtle scent,
Than your own fragile naked grace
And lovely face.

THE SWAN

I

ANDROMACHE, I think of you! The stream,
The poor, sad mirror where in bygone days
Shone all the majesty of your widowed grief,
The lying Simoïs flooded by your tears,
Made all my fertile memory blossom forth
As I passed by the new-built Carrousel.
Old Paris is no more (a town, alas,

Changes more quickly than man's heart may change);
Yet in my mind I still can see the booths;
The heaps of brick and rough-hewn capitals;
The grass; the stones all over-green with moss;
The *débris,* and the square-set heaps of tiles.

There a menagerie was once outspread;
And there I saw, one morning at the hour
When toil awakes beneath the cold, clear sky,
And the road roars upon the silent air,
A swan who had escaped his cage, and walked
On the dry pavement with his webby feet,
And trailed his spotless plumage on the ground.
And near a waterless stream the piteous swan
Opened his beak, and bathing in the dust
His nervous wings, he cried (his heart the while
Filled with a vision of his own fair lake):
"O water, when then wilt thou come in rain?
Lightning, when wilt thou glitter?"
Sometimes yet
I see the hapless bird—strange, fatal myth—
Like him that Ovid writes of, lifting up
Unto the cruelly blue, ironic heavens,
With stretched, convulsive neck a thirsty face,
As though he sent reproaches up to God!

II

Paris may change; my melancholy is fixed.
New palaces, and scaffoldings, and blocks,
And suburbs old, are symbols all to me
Whose memories are as heavy as a stone.
And so, before the Louvre, to vex my soul,
The image came of my majestic swan
With his mad gestures, foolish and sublime,

As of an exile whom one great desire
Gnaws with no truce. And then I thought of you,
Andromache! torn from your hero's arms;
Beneath the hand of Pyrrhus in his pride;
Bent o'er an empty tomb in ecstasy;
Widow of Hector—wife of Helenus!
And of the negress, wan and phthisical,
Tramping the mud, and with her haggard eyes
Seeking beyond the mighty walls of fog
The absent palm-trees of proud Africa;
Of all who lose that which they never find;
Of all who drink of tears; all whom grey grief
Gives suck to as the kindly wolf gave suck;
Of meagre orphans who like blossoms fade.
And one old Memory like a crying horn
Sounds through the forest where my soul is lost . . .
I think of sailors on some isle forgotten;
Of captives; vanquished . . . and of many more.

THE SEVEN OLD MEN

O SWARMING city, city full of dreams,
Where in full day the spectre walks and speaks;
Mighty colossus, in your narrow veins
My story flows as flows the rising sap.

One morn, disputing with my tired soul,
And like a hero stiffening all my nerves,
I trod a suburb shaken by the jar
Of rolling wheels, where the fog magnified
The houses either side of that sad street,
So they seemed like two wharves the ebbing flood
Leaves desolate by the river-side. A mist,
Unclean and yellow, inundated space—
A scene that would have pleased an actor's soul.

Then suddenly an aged man, whose rags
Were yellow as the rainy sky, whose looks
Should have brought alms in floods upon his head,
Without the misery gleaming in his eye,
Appeared before me; and his pupils seemed
To have been washed with gall; the bitter frost
Sharpened his glance; and from his chin a beard
Sword-stiff and ragged, Judas-like stuck forth.
He was not bent but broken: his backbone
Made a so true right angle with his legs,
That, as he walked, the tapping stick which gave
The finish to the picture, made him seem
Like some infirm and stumbling quadruped
Or a three-legged Jew. Through snow and mud
He walked with troubled and uncertain gait,
As though his sabots trod upon the dead,
Indifferent and hostile to the world.

His double followed him: tatters and stick
And back and eye and beard, all were the same;
Out of the same Hell, indistinguishable,
These centenarian twins, these spectres odd,
Trod the same pace toward some end unknown.
To what fell complot was I then exposed?
Humiliated by what evil chance?
For as the minutes one by one went by
Seven times I saw this sinister old man
Repeat his image there before my eyes!

Let him who smiles at my inquietude,
Who never trembled at a fear like mine,
Know that in their decrepitude's despite
These seven old hideous monsters had the mien
Of beings immortal.

Then, I thought, must I,
Undying, contemplate the awful eighth;
Inexorable, fatal, and ironic double;
Disgusting Phœnix, father of himself
And his own son? In terror then I turned
My back upon the infernal band, and fled
To my own place, and closed my door; distraught
And like a drunkard who sees all things twice,
With feverish troubled spirit, chilly and sick,
Wounded by mystery and absurdity!

In vain my reason tried to cross the bar,
The whirling storm but drove her back again;
And my soul tossed, and tossed, an outworn wreck,
Mastless, upon a monstrous, shoreless sea.

THE LITTLE OLD WOMEN

I

Deep in the tortuous folds of ancient towns,
Where all, even horror, to enchantment turns,
I watch, obedient to my fatal mood,
For the decrepit, strange and charming beings,
The dislocated monsters that of old
Were lovely women—Lais or Eponine!
Hunchbacked and broken, crooked though they be,
Let us still love them, for they still have souls.
They creep along wrapped in their chilly rags,
Beneath the whipping of the wicked wind,
They tremble when an omnibus rolls by,
And at their sides, a relic of the past,
A little flower-embroidered satchel hangs.
They trot about, most like to marionettes;
They drag themselves, as does a wounded beast;
Or dance unwillingly as a clapping bell
Where hangs and swings a demon without pity.

Though they be broken they have piercing eyes,
That shine like pools where water sleeps at night;
The astonished and divine eyes of a child
Who laughs at all that glitters in the world.
Have you not seen that most old women's shrouds
Are little like the shroud of a dead child?
Wise Death, in token of his happy whim,
Wraps old and young in one enfolding sheet.
And when I see a phantom, frail and wan,
Traverse the swarming picture that is Paris,
It ever seems as though the delicate thing
Trod with soft steps towards a cradle new.
And then I wonder, seeing the twisted form,
How many times must workmen change the shape
Of boxes where at length such limbs are laid?
These eyes are wells brimmed with a million tears;
Crucibles where the cooling metal pales—
Mysterious eyes that are strong charms to him
Whose life-long nurse has been austere Disaster.

II

The love-sick vestal of the old "Frasciti";
Priestess of Thalia, alas! whose name
Only the prompter knows and he is dead;
Bygone celebrities that in bygone days
The Tivoli o'ershadowed in their bloom;
All charm me; yet among these beings frail
Three, turning pain to honey-sweetness, said
To the Devotion that had lent them wings:
"Lift me, O powerful Hippogriffe, to the skies"—
One by her country to despair was driven;
One by her husband overwhelmed with grief;
One wounded by her child, Madonna-like;
Each could have made a river with her tears.

III

Oft have I followed one of these old women,
One among others, when the falling sun
Reddened the heavens with a crimson wound—
Pensive, apart, she rested on a bench
To hear the brazen music of the band,
Played by the soldiers in the public park
To pour some courage into citizens' hearts,
On golden eves when all the world revives.
Proud and erect she drank the music in,
The lively and the warlike call to arms;
Her eyes blinked like an ancient eagle's eyes;
Her forehead seemed to await the laurel crown!

IV

Thus you do wander, uncomplaining Stoics,
Through all the chaos of the living town:
Mothers with bleeding hearts, saints, courtesans,
Whose names of yore were on the lips of all;
Who were all glory and all grace, and now
None know you; and the brutish drunkard stops,
Insulting you with his derisive love;
And cowardly urchins call behind your back.
Ashamed of living, withered shadows all,
With fear-bowed backs you creep beside the walls,
And none salute you, destined to loneliness!
Refuse of Time ripe for Eternity!
But I, who watch you tenderly afar,
With unquiet eyes on your uncertain steps,
As though I were your father, I—O wonder!—
Unknown to you taste secret, hidden joy.
I see your maiden passions bud and bloom,

Sombre or luminous, and your lost days
Unroll before me while my heart enjoys
All your old vices, and my soul expands
To all the virtues that have once been yours.
Ruined! and my sisters! O congenerate hearts,
Octogenarian Eves o'er whom is stretched
God's awful claw, where will you be to-morrow?

A MADRIGAL OF SORROW

WHAT do I care though you be wise?
Be sad, be beautiful; your tears
But add one more charm to your eyes,
As streams to valleys where they rise;
And fairer every flower appears

After the storm. I love you most
When joy has fled your brow downcast;
When your heart is in horror lost,
And o'er your present like a ghost
Floats the dark shadow of the past.

I love you when the teardrop flows,
Hotter than blood, from your large eye;
When I would hush you to repose
Your heavy pain breaks forth and grows
Into a loud and tortured cry.

And then, voluptuousness divine!
Delicious ritual and profound!
I drink in every sob like wine,
And dream that in your deep heart shine
The pearls wherein your eyes were drowned.

I know your heart, which overflows
With outworn loves long cast aside,
Still like a furnace flames and glows,
And you within your breast enclose
A damnèd soul's unbending pride;

But till your dreams without release
Reflect the leaping flames of hell;
Till in a nightmare without cease
You dream of poison to bring peace,
And love cold steel and powder well;

And tremble at each opened door,
And feel for every man distrust,
And shudder at the striking hour—
Till then you have not felt the power
Of Irresistible Disgust.

My queen, my slave, whose love is fear,
When you awaken shuddering,
Until that awful hour be here,
You cannot say at midnight drear:
"I am your equal, O my King!"

MIST AND RAIN

Autumns and winters, springs of mire and rain,
Seasons of sleep, I sing your praises loud,
For thus I love to wrap my heart and brain
In some dim tomb beneath a vapoury shroud

In the wide plain where revels the cold wind,
Through long nights when the weathercock whirls round,
More free than in warm summer day my mind
Lifts wide her raven pinions from the ground.

Unto a heart filled with funereal things
That since old days hoar frosts have gathered on,
Naught is more sweet, O pallid, queenly springs,

Than the long pageant of your shadows wan,
Unless it be on moonless eves to weep
On some chance bed and rock our griefs to sleep.

SUNSET

Fair is the sun when first he flames above,
  Flinging his joy down in a happy beam;
And happy he who can salute with love
  The sunset far more glorious than a dream.

Flower, stream, and furrow!—I have seen them all
  In the sun's eye swoon like one trembling heart—
Though it be late let us with speed depart
  To catch at least one last ray ere it fall!

But I pursue the fading god in vain,
For conquering Night makes firm her dark domain,
  Mist and gloom fall, and terrors glide between,

And graveyard odours in the shadow swim,
And my faint footsteps on the marsh's rim,
  Bruise the cold snail and crawling toad unseen.

THE CORPSE

Remember, my Beloved, what thing we met
  By the roadside on that sweet summer day;
There on a grassy couch with pebbles set,
    A loathsome body lay.

The wanton limbs stiff-stretched into the air,
Steaming with exhalations vile and dank,
In ruthless cynic fashion had laid bare
The swollen side and flank.

On this decay the sun shone hot from heaven
As though with chemic heat to broil and burn,
And unto Nature all that she had given
A hundredfold return.

The sky smiled down upon the horror there
As on a flower that opens to the day;
So awful an infection smote the air,
Almost you swooned away.

The swarming flies hummed on the putrid side,
Whence poured the maggots in a darkling stream,
That ran along these tatters of life's pride
With a liquescent gleam.

And like a wave the maggots rose and fell,
The murmuring flies swirled round in busy strife:
It seemed as though a vague breath came to swell
And multiply with life

The hideous corpse. From all this living world
A music as of wind and water ran,
Or as of grain in rhythmic motion swirled
By the swift winnower's fan.

And then the vague forms like a dream died out,
Or like some distant scene that slowly falls
Upon the artist's canvas, that with doubt
He only half recalls.

A homeless dog behind the boulders lay
And watched us both with angry eyes forlorn,
Waiting a chance to come and take away
The morsel she had torn.

. . . . . .

And you, even you, will be like this drear thing,
A vile infection man may not endure;
Star that I yearn to! Sun that lights my spring!
O passionate and pure!

Yes, such will you be, Queen of every grace!
When the last sacramental words are said;
And beneath grass and flowers that lovely face
Moulders among the dead.

Then, O Belovèd, whisper to the worm
That crawls up to devour you with a kiss,
That I still guard in memory the dear form
Of love that comes to this!

AN ALLEGORY

Here is a woman, richly clad and fair,
Who in her wine dips her long, heavy hair;
Love's claws, and that sharp poison which is sin,
Are dulled against the granite of her skin.
Death she defies, Debauch she smiles upon,
For their sharp scythe-like talons every one
Pass by her in their all-destructive play;
Leaving her beauty till a later day.
Goddess she walks; sultana in her leisure;
She has Mohammed's faith that heaven is pleasure,
And bids all men forget the world's alarms
Upon her breast, between her open arms.

She knows, and she believes, this sterile maid,
Without whom the world's onward dream would fade,
That bodily beauty is the supreme gift
Which may from every sin the terror lift.
Hell she ignores, and Purgatory defies;
And when black Night shall roll before her eyes,
She will look straight in Death's grim face forlorn,
Without remorse or hate—as one new-born.

THE ACCURSED

Like pensive herds at rest upon the sands,
These to the sea-horizons turn their eyes;
Out of their folded feet and clinging hands
Bitter sharp tremblings and soft languors rise.

Some tread the thicket by the babbling stream,
Their hearts with untold secrets ill at ease;
Calling the lover of their childhood's dream,
They wound the green bark of the shooting trees.

Others like sisters wander, grave and slow,
Among the rocks haunted by spectres thin,
Where Antony saw as larvæ surge and flow
The veined bare breasts that tempted him to sin.

Some, when the resinous torch of burning wood
Flares in lost pagan caverns dark and deep,
Call thee to quench the fever in their blood,
Bacchus, who singest old remorse to sleep!

Then there are those the scapular bedights,
Whose long white vestments hide the whip's red stain,
Who mix, in sombre woods on lonely nights,
The foam of pleasure with the tears of pain.

O virgins, demons, monsters, martyrs! ye
Who scorn whatever actual appears;
Saints, satyrs, seekers of Infinity,
So full of cries, so full of bitter tears;

Ye whom my soul has followed into hell,
I love and pity, O sad sisters mine,
Your thirsts unquenched, your pains no tongue can tell,
And your great hearts, those urns of love divine!

LA BEATRICE

In a burnt, ashen land, where no herb grew,
I to the winds my cries of anguish threw;
And in my thoughts, in that sad place apart,
Pricked gently with the poignard o'er my heart.
Then in full noon above my head a cloud
Descended tempest-swollen, and a crowd
Of wild, lascivious spirits huddled there,
The cruel and curious demons of the air,
Who coldly to consider me began;
Then, as a crowd jeers some unhappy man,
Exchanging gestures, winking with their eyes—
I heard a laughing and a whispering rise:

"Let us at leisure contemplate this clown,
This shadow of Hamlet aping Hamlet's frown,
With wandering eyes and hair upon the wind.
Is't not a pity that this empty mind,
This tramp, this actor out of work, this droll,
Because he knows how to assume a rôle
Should dream that eagles and insects, streams and woods,
Stand still to hear him chaunt his dolorous moods?
Even unto us, who made these ancient things,
The fool his public lamentation sings."

With pride as lofty as the towering cloud,
I would have stilled these clamouring demons loud,
And turned in scorn my sovereign head away
Had I not seen—O sight to dim the day!—
There in the middle of the troupe obscene
The proud and peerless beauty of my Queen!
She laughed with them at all my dark distress,
And gave to each in turn a vile caress.

THE SOUL OF WINE

ONE eve in the bottle sang the soul of wine:
"Man, unto thee, dear disinherited,
I sing a song of love and light divine—
Prisoned in glass beneath my seals of red.

"I know thou labourest on the hill of fire,
In sweat and pain beneath a flaming sun,
To give the life and soul my vines desire,
And I am grateful for thy labours done.

"For I find joys unnumbered when I lave
The throat of man by travail long outworn,
And his hot bosom is a sweeter grave
Of sounder sleep than my cold caves forlorn.

"Hearest thou not the echoing Sabbath sound?
The hope that whispers in my trembling breast?
Thy elbows on the table! gaze around;
Glorify me with joy and be at rest.

"To thy wife's eyes I'll bring their long-lost gleam,
I'll bring back to thy child his strength and light,
To him, life's fragile athlete I will seem
Rare oil that firms his muscles for the fight.

"I flow in man's heart as ambrosia flows;
The grain the eternal Sower casts in the sod—
From our first loves the first fair verse arose,
Flower-like aspiring to the heavens and God!"

THE WINE OF LOVERS

SPACE rolls to-day her splendour round!
Unbridled, spurless, without bound,
Mount we upon the wings of wine
For skies fantastic and divine!

Let us, like angels tortured by
Some wild delirious phantasy,
Follow the far-off mirage born
In the blue crystal of the morn.

And gently balanced on the wing
Of the wild whirlwind we will ride,
Rejoicing with the joyous thing.

My sister, floating side by side,
Fly we unceasing whither gleams
The distant heaven of my dreams.

THE DEATH OF LOVERS

THERE shall be couches whence faint odours rise,
Divans like sepulchres, deep and profound;
Strange flowers that bloomed beneath diviner skies
The death-bed of our love shall breathe around.

And guarding their last embers till the end,
Our hearts shall be the torches of the shrine,
And their two leaping flames shall fade and blend
In the twin mirrors of your soul and mine.

And through the eve of rose and mystic blue
A beam of love shall pass from me to you,
Like a long sigh charged with a last farewell;

And later still an angel, flinging wide
The gates, shall bring to life with joyful spell
The tarnished mirrors and the flames that died.

THE DEATH OF THE POOR

Death is consoler and Death brings to life;
The end of all, the solitary hope;
We, drunk with Death's elixir, face the strife,
Take heart, and mount till eve the weary slope.

Across the storm, the hoar-frost, and the snow,
Death on our dark horizon pulses clear;
Death is the famous hostel we all know,
Where we may rest and sleep and have good cheer.

Death is an angel whose magnetic palms
Bring dreams of ecstasy and slumberous calms
To smooth the beds of naked men and poor.

Death is the mystic granary of God;
The poor man's purse; his fatherland of yore;
The Gate that opens into heavens untrod!

GYPSIES TRAVELLING

The tribe prophetic with the eyes of fire
Went forth last night; their little ones at rest
Each on his mother's back, with his desire
Set on the ready treasure of her breast.

Laden with shining arms the men-folk tread
By the long wagons where their goods lie hidden;
They watch the heaven with eyes grown weariëd
Of hopeless dreams that come to them unbidden.

The grasshopper, from out his sandy screen,
Watching them pass redoubles his shrill song;
Dian, who loves them, makes the grass more green,

And makes the rock run water for this throng
Of ever-wandering ones whose calm eyes see
Familiar realms of darkness yet to be.

FRANCISCÆ MEÆ LAUDES

Novis te cantabo chordis,
O novelletum quod ludis
In solitudine cordis.

Esto sertis implicata,
O fœmina delicata
Per quam solvuntur peccata

Sicut beneficum Lethe,
Hauriam oscula de te,
Quæ imbuta es magnete.

Quum vitiorum tempestas
Turbabat omnes semitas,
Apparuisti, Deitas,

Velut stella salutaris
In naufragiis amaris . . .
Suspendam cor tuis aris!

Piscina plena virtutis,
Fons æternæ juventutis,
Labris vocem redde mutis!

Quod erat spurcum, cremasti;
Quod rudius, exæquasti;
Quod debile, confirmasti!

In fame mea taberna,
In nocte mea lucerna,
Recte me semper guberna.

Adde nunc vires viribus,
Dulce balneum suavibus,
Unguentatum odoribus!

Meos circa lumbos mica,
O castitatis lorica,
Aqua tincta seraphica;

Patera gemmis corusca,
Panis salsus, mollis esca,
Divinum vinum, Francisca!

A LANDSCAPE

I WOULD, when I compose my solemn verse,
Sleep near the heaven as do astrologers,
Near the high bells, and with a dreaming mind
Hear their calm hymns blown to me on the wind.

Out of my tower, with chin upon my hands,
I'll watch the singing, babbling human bands;
And see clock-towers like spars against the sky,
And heavens that bring thoughts of eternity;

And softly, through the mist, will watch the birth
Of stars in heaven and lamplight on the earth;
The threads of smoke that rise above the town;
The moon that pours her pale enchantment down.

Seasons will pass till Autumn fades the rose;
And when comes Winter with his weary snows,
I'll shut the doors and window-casements tight,
And build my faery palace in the night.

Then I will dream of blue horizons deep;
Of gardens where the marble fountains weep;
Of kisses, and of ever-singing birds—
A sinless Idyll built of innocent words.

And Trouble, knocking at my window-pane
And at my closet door, shall knock in vain;
I will not heed him with his stealthy tread,
Nor from my reverie uplift my head;

For I will plunge deep in the pleasure still
Of summoning the spring-time with my will,
Drawing the sun out of my heart, and there
With burning thoughts making a summer air.

THE VOYAGE

I

THE world is equal to the child's desire
Who plays with pictures by his nursery fire—
How vast the world by lamplight seems! How small
When memory's eyes look back, remembering all!—

One morning we set forth with thoughts aflame,
Or heart o'erladen with desire or shame;
And cradle, to the song of surge and breeze,
Our own infinity on the finite seas.

Some flee the memory of their childhood's home;
And others flee their fatherland; and some,
Star-gazers drowned within a woman's eyes,
Flee from the tyrant Circe's witcheries;

And, lest they still be changed to beasts, take flight
For the embrasured heavens, and space, and light,
Till one by one the stains her kisses made
In biting cold and burning sunlight fade.

But the true voyagers are they who part
From all they love because a wandering heart
Drives them to fly the Fate they cannot fly;
Whose call is ever "On!"—they know not why.

Their thoughts are like the clouds that veil a star;
They dream of change as warriors dream of war;
And strange wild wishes never twice the same:
Desires no mortal man can give a name.

II

We are like whirling tops and rolling balls—
For even when the sleepy night-time falls,
Old Curiosity still thrusts us on,
Like the cruel Angel who goads forth the sun.

The end of fate fades ever through the air,
And, being nowhere, may be anywhere
Where a man runs, hope waking in his breast,
For ever like a madman, seeking rest.

Our souls are wandering ships outweariëd;
And one upon the bridge asks: "What's ahead?"
The topman's voice with an exultant sound
Cries: "Love and Glory!"—then we run aground.

Each isle the pilot signals when 'tis late,
Is El Dorado, promised us by fate—
Imagination, spite of her belief,
Finds, in the light of dawn, a barren reef.

Oh the poor seeker after lands that flee!
Shall we not bind and cast into the sea
This drunken sailor whose ecstatic mood
Makes bitterer still the water's weary flood?

Such is an old tramp wandering in the mire,
Dreaming the paradise of his own desire,
Discovering cities of enchanted sleep
Where'er the light shines on a rubbish heap.

III

Strange voyagers, what tales of noble deeds
Deep in your dim sea-weary eyes one reads!
Open the casket where your memories are,
And show each jewel, fashioned from a star;

For I would travel without sail or wind,
And so, to lift the sorrow from my mind,
Let your long memories of sea-days far fled
Pass o'er my spirit like a sail outspread.

What have you seen?

"We have seen waves and stars,
And lost sea-beaches, and known many wars,
And notwithstanding war and hope and fear,
We were as weary there as we are here.

"The lights that on the violet sea poured down,
The suns that set behind some far-off town,
Lit in our hearts the unquiet wish to fly
Deep in the glimmering distance of the sky;

"The loveliest countries that rich cities bless,
Never contained the strange wild loveliness
By fate and chance shaped from the floating cloud—
And we were always sorrowful and proud!

"Desire from joy gains strength in weightier measure.
Desire, old tree who draw'st thy sap from pleasure,
Though thy bark thickens as the years pass by,
Thine arduous branches rise towards the sky;

"And wilt thou still grow taller, tree more fair
Than the tall cypress?
—Thus have we, with care,
"Gathered some flowers to please your eager mood,
Brothers who dream that distant things are good!

"We have seen many a jewel-glimmering throne;
And bowed to Idols when wild horns were blown
In palaces whose faery pomp and gleam
To your rich men would be a ruinous dream;

"And robes that were a madness to the eyes;
Women whose teeth and nails were stained with dyes;
Wise jugglers round whose neck the serpent winds——'

V

And then, and then what more?

VI

"O childish minds!

"Forget not that which we found everywhere,
From top to bottom of the fatal stair,
Above, beneath, around us and within,
The weary pageant of immortal sin.

"We have seen woman, stupid slave and proud,
Before her own frail, foolish beauty bowed;
And man, a greedy, cruel, lascivious fool,
Slave of the slave, a ripple in a pool;

"The martyrs groan, the headsman's merry mood;
And banquets seasoned and perfumed with blood;
Poison, that gives the tyrant's power the slip;
And nations amorous of the brutal whip;

"Many religions not unlike our own,
All in full flight for heaven's resplendent throne;
And Sanctity, seeking delight in pain,
Like a sick man of his own sickness vain;

"And mad mortality, drunk with its own power,
As foolish now as in a bygone hour,
Shouting, in presence of the tortured Christ:
'I curse thee, mine own Image sacrificed.'

"And silly monks in love with Lunacy,
Fleeing the troops herded by destiny,
Who seek for peace in opiate slumber furled—
Such is the pageant of the rolling world!"

VII

O bitter knowledge that the wanderers gain!
The world says our own age is little and vain;
For ever, yesterday, to-day, to-morrow,
'Tis horror's oasis in the sands of sorrow.

Must we depart? If you can rest, remain;
Part, if you must. Some fly, some cower in vain,
Hoping that Time, the grim and eager foe,
Will pass them by; and some run to and fro

Like the Apostles or the Wandering Jew;
Go where they will, the Slayer goes there too!
And there are some, and these are of the wise,
Who die as soon as birth has lit their eyes.

But when at length the Slayer treads us low,
We will have hope and cry, "'Tis time to go!"
As when of old we parted for Cathay
With wind-blown hair and eyes upon the bay.

We will embark upon the Shadowy Sea,
Like youthful wanderers for the first time free—
Hear you the lovely and funereal voice
That sings: *O come all ye whose wandering joys*
Are set upon the scented Lotus flower,
For here we sell the fruit's miraculous boon;
Come ye and drink the sweet and sleepy power
Of the enchanted, endless afternoon.

VIII

O Death, old Captain, it is time, put forth!
We have grown weary of the gloomy north;

Though sea and sky are black as ink, lift sail!
Our hearts are full of light and will not fail.

O pour thy sleepy poison in the cup!
The fire within the heart so burns us up
That we would wander Hell and Heaven through,
Deep in the Unknown seeking something *new!*

FROM THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

Translated by W. J. Robertson

BENEDICTION

When, by the sovran will of Powers Eternal,
The poet passed into this weary world,
His mother, filled with fears and doubts infernal,
Clenching her hands towards Heaven these curses hurled.

—"Why rather did I not within me treasure
"A knot of serpents than this thing of scorn?
"Accursed be the night of fleeting pleasure
"Whence in my womb this chastisement was borne!

"Since thou hast chosen me to be the woman
"Whose loathsome fruitfulness her husband shames,
"Who may not cast aside this birth inhuman,
"As one that flings love-tokens to the flames,

"The hatred that on me thy vengeance launches
"On this thwart creature I will pour in flood:
"So twist the sapling that its withered branches
"Shall never once put forth a cankered bud!"

Regorging thus the venom of her malice,
And misconceiving thy decrees sublime,
In deep Gehenna's gulf she fills the chalice
Of torments destined to maternal crime.

Yet, safely sheltered by his viewless angel,
The Childe forsaken revels in the Sun;

And all his food and drink is an evangel
Of nectared sweets, sent by the Heavenly One.

He communes with the clouds, knows the wind's voices,
And on his pilgrimage enchanted sings;
Seeing how like the wild bird he rejoices
The hovering Spirit weeps and folds his wings.

All those he fain would love shrink back in terror,
Or, boldened by his fearlessness elate,
Seek to seduce him into sin and error,
And flesh on him the fierceness of their hate.

In bread and wine, wherewith his soul is nourished,
They mix their ashes and foul spume impure;
Lying they cast aside the things he cherished,
And curse the chance that made his steps their lure.

His spouse goes crying in the public places:
"Since he doth choose my beauty to adore,
"Aping those ancient idols Time defaces
"I would regild my glory as of yore.

"Nard, balm and myrrh shall tempt till he desires me
"With blandishments, with dainties and with wine,
"Laughing if in a heart that so admires me
"I may usurp the sovranty divine!

"Until aweary of love's impious orgies,
"Fastening on him my fingers firm and frail,
"These claws, keen as the harpy's when she gorges,
"Shall in the secret of his heart prevail.

"Then, thrilled and trembling like a young bird captured,
"The bleeding heart shall from his breast be torn;

"To glut his maw my wanton hound, enraptured,
"Shall see me fling it to the earth in scorn."

Heavenward, where he beholds a throne resplendent,
The poet lifts his hands, devout and proud,
And the vast lightnings of a soul transcendent
Veil from his gaze awhile the furious crowd:—

"Blessëd be thou, my God, that givest sorrow,
"Sole remedy divine for things unclean,
"Whence souls robust a healing virtue borrow,
"That tempers them for sacred joys serene!

"I know thou hast ordained in blissful regions
"A place, a welcome in the festal bowers,
"To call the poet with thy holy Legions,
"Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers.

"I know that Sorrow is the strength of Heaven,
" 'Gainst which in vain strive ravenous Earth and Hell,
"And that his crown must be of mysteries woven
"Whereof all worlds and ages hold the spell.

"But not antique Palmyra's buried treasure,
"Pearls of the sea, rare metal, precious gem,
"Though set by thine own hand could fill the measure
"Of beauty for his radiant diadem;

"For this thy light alone, intense and tender,
"Flows from the primal source of effluence pure,
"Whereof all mortal eyes, though bright their splendour,
"Are but the broken glass and glimpse obscure."

ILL LUCK

To bear so vast a load of grief
Thy courage, Sisyphus, I crave!
My heart against the task is brave,
But Art is long and Time is brief.

Far from Fame's proud sepulchral arches,
Towards a graveyard lone and dumb,
My sad heart, like a muffled drum,
Goes beating slow funereal marches.

—Full many a shrouded jewel sleeps
In dark oblivion, lost in deeps
Unknown to pick or plummet's sound:

Full many a weeping blossom flings
Her perfume, sweet as secret things,
In silent solitudes profound.

LE GUIGNON.

BEAUTY

MY face is a marmoreal dream, O mortals!
And on my breast all men are bruised in turn,
So moulded that the poet's love may burn
Mute and eternal as the earth's cold portals.

Throned like a Sphinx unveiled in the blue deep,
A heart of snow my swan-white beauty muffles;
I hate the line that undulates and ruffles:
And never do I laugh and never weep.

The poets, prone beneath my presence towering
With stately port of proudest obelisks,
Worship with rites austere, their days devouring;

For I have charms to keep their love, pure disks
That make all things more beautiful and tender:
My large eyes, radiant with eternal splendour!

LA BEAUTÉ.

IDEAL LOVE

No, never can these frail ephemeral creatures,
The withered offspring of a worthless age,
These buskined limbs, these false and painted features,
The hunger of a heart like mine assuage.

Leave to the laureate of sickly posies
Gavarni's hospital sylphs, a simpering choir!
Vainly I seek among those pallid roses
One blossom that allures my red desire.

Thou with my soul's abysmal dreams be blended,
Lady Macbeth, in crime superb and splendid,
A dream of Æschylus flowered in cold eclipse

Of Northern suns! Thou, Night, inspire my passion,
Calm child of Angelo, coiling in strange fashion
Thy large limbs moulded for a Titan's lips!

L'IDÉAL.

HYMN TO BEAUTY

BE thou from Hell upsprung or Heaven descended,
Beauty! thy look demoniac and divine
Pours good and evil things confusedly blended,
And therefore art thou likened unto wine.

Thine eye with dawn is filled, with twilight dwindles,
Like winds of night thou sprinklest perfumes mild;
Thy kiss, that is a spell, the child's heart kindles,
Thy mouth, a chalice, makes the man a child.

Fallen from the stars or risen from gulfs of error,
Fate dogs thy glamoured garments like a slave;
With wanton hands thou scatterest joy and terror,
And rulest over all, cold as the grave.

Thou tramplest on the dead, scornful and cruel,
Horror coils like an amulet round thine arms,
Crime on thy superb bosom is a jewel
That dances amorously among its charms.

The dazzled moth that flies to thee, the candle,
Shrivels and burns, blessing thy fatal flame;
The lover that dies fawning o'er thy sandal
Fondles his tomb and breathes the adorëd name.

What if from Heaven or Hell thou com'st, immortal
Beauty? O sphinx-like monster, since alone
Thine eye, thy smile, thy hand opens the portal
Of the Infinite I love and have not known.

What if from God or Satan be the evangel?
Thou my sole Queen! Witch of the velvet eyes!
Since with thy fragrance, rhythm and light, O Angel!
In a less hideous world time swiftlier flies.

HYMNE À LA BEAUTÉ.

EXOTIC FRAGRANCE

WHEN, with closed eyes in the warm autumn night,
I breathe the fragrance of thy bosom bare,

My dream unfurls a clime of loveliest air,
Drenched in the fiery sun's unclouded light.

An indolent island dowered with heaven's delight,
Trees singular and fruits of savour rare,
Men having sinewy frames robust and spare,
And women whose clear eyes are wondrous bright.

Led by thy fragrance to those shores I hail
A charmëd harbour thronged with mast and sail,
Still wearied with the quivering sea's unrest;

What time the scent of the green tamarinds
That thrills the air and fills my swelling breast
Blends with the mariners' song and the sea-winds.

PARFUM EXOTIQUE.

XXVIII SONNET

IN undulant robes with nacreous sheen impearled
She walks as in some stately saraband;
Or like lithe snakes by sacred charmers curled
In cadence wreathing on the slender wand.

Calm as blue wastes of sky and desert sand
That watch unmoved the sorrows of this world;
With slow regardless sweep as on the strand
The long swell of the woven sea-waves swirled.

Her polished orbs are like a mystic gem,
And, while this strange and symbolled being links
The inviolate angel and the antique sphinx,

Insphered in gold, steel, light and diadem
The splendour of a lifeless star endows
With clear cold majesty the barren spouse.

MUSIC

Launch me, O music, whither on the soundless
Sea my star gleams pale!
I beneath cloudy cope or rapt in boundless
Æther set my sail;

With breast outblown, swollen by the wind that urges
Swelling sheets, I scale
The summit of the wave whose vexed surges
Night from me doth veil;

A labouring vessel's passions in my pulses
Thrill the shuddering sense;
The wind that wafts, the tempest that convulses,
O'er the gulf immense
Swing me.—Anon flat calm and clearer air
Glass my soul's despair!

La Musique.

THE SPIRITUAL DAWN

When on some wallowing soul the roseate East
Dawns with the Ideal that awakes and gnaws,
By vengeful working of mysterious laws
An angel rises in the drowsed beast.

The inaccessible blue of the soul-sphere
To him whose grovelling dream remorse doth gall
Yawns wide as when the gulfs of space enthral.
So, heavenly Goddess, Spirit pure and clear,

Even on the reeking ruins of vile shame
Thy rosy vision, beautiful and bright,
For ever floats on my enlargëd sight.

Thus sunlight blackens the pale taper-flame;
And thus is thy victorious phantom one,
O soul of splendour, with the immortal Sun!

L'Aube Spirituelle.

THE FLAWED BELL

Bitter and sweet it is, in winter night,
Hard by the flickering fire that smokes, to list
While far-off memories rise in sad slow flight,
With chimes that echo singing through the mist.

O blessëd be the bell whose vigorous throat,
In spite of age alert, with strength unspent,
Utters religiously his faithful note,
Like an old warrior watching near the tent!

My soul, alas! is flawed, and when despair
Would people with her songs the chill night-air
Too oft they faint in hoarse enfeebled tones,

As when a wounded man forgotten moans
By the red pool, beneath a heap of dead,
And dying writhes in frenzy on his bed.

La Cloche Félée.

THREE POEMS FROM BAUDELAIRE

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD HERNE SHEPHERD

I

A CARCASS

RECALL to mind the sight we saw, my soul,
That soft, sweet summer day:
Upon a bed of flints a carrion foul,
Just as we turn'd the way

Its legs erected, wanton-like, in air,
Burning and sweating past,
In unconcern'd and cynic sort laid bare
To view its noisome breast.

The sun lit up the rottenness with gold,
To bake it well inclined,
And give great Nature back a hundredfold
All she together join'd.

The sky regarded as the carcass proud
Oped flower-like to the day;
So strong the odour, on the grass you vow'd
You thought to faint away.

The flies the putrid belly buzz'd about,
Whence black battalions throng
Of maggots, like thick liquid flowing out
The living rags along.

And as a wave they mounted and went down,
Or darted sparkling wide:
As if the body, by a wild breath blown,
Lived as it multiplied.

From all this life a music strange there ran,
Like wind and running burns:
Or like the wheat a winnower in his fan
With rhythmic movement turns.

The forms wore off, and as a dream grew faint,
An outline dimly shown,
And which the artist finishes to paint
From memory alone.

Behind the rocks watch'd us with angry eye
A bitch disturb'd in theft,
Waiting to take, till we had pass'd her by
The morsel she had left.

Yet you will be like that corruption too,
Like that infection prove—
Star of my eyes, sun of my nature, you,
My angel and my love!

Queen of the graces, you will even be so,
When, the last ritual said,
Beneath the grass and the fat flowers you go,
To mould among the dead.

Then, O my beauty, tell the insatiate worm,
Who wastes you with his kiss,
I have kept the godlike essence and the form
Of perishable bliss!

II

WEEPING AND WANDERING

Say, Agatha, if at times your spirit turns
Far from the black sea of the city's mud,
To another ocean, where the splendour burns
All blue, and clear, and deep as maidenhood?
Say, Agatha, if your spirit thither turns?

The boundless sea consoles the weary mind!
What demon gave the sea—that chantress hoarse
To the huge organ of the chiding wind—
The function grand to rock us like a nurse?
The boundless ocean soothes the jaded mind!

O car and frigate, bear me far away,
For here our tears moisten the very clay.
Is't true that Agatha's sad heart at times
Says, far from sorrows, from remorse, from crimes,
Remove me, car, and, frigate, bear away?

O perfumed paradise, how far removed,
Where 'neath a clear sky all is love and joy,
Where all we love is worthy to be loved,
And pleasure drowns the heart, but does not cloy.
O perfumed paradise, so far removed!

But the green paradise of childlike loves,
The walks, the songs, the kisses, and the flowers,
The violins dying behind the hills, the hours
Of evening and the wine-flasks in the groves.
But the green paradise of early loves,

The innocent paradise, full of stolen joys,
Is't farther off than ev'n the Indian main?
Can we recall it with our plaintive cries,
Or give it life, with silvery voice, again,
The innocent paradise, full of furtive joys?

III

LESBOS

MOTHER of Latin sports and Greek delights,
Where kisses languishing or pleasureful,
Warm as the suns, as the water-melons cool,
Adorn the glorious days and sleepless nights,
Mother of Latin sports and Greek delights.

Lesbos, where kisses are as waterfalls
That fearless into gulfs unfathom'd leap,
Now run with sobs, now slip with gentle brawls,
Stormy and secret, manifold and deep;
Lesbos, where kisses are as waterfalls!

Lesbos, where Phryne Phryne to her draws,
Where ne'er a sigh did echoless expire,
As Paphos' equal thee the stars admire,
Nor Venus envies Sappho without cause!
Lesbos, where Phryne Phryne to her draws,

Lesbos, the land of warm and languorous nights,
Where by their mirrors seeking sterile good,
The girls with hollow eyes, in soft delights,
Caress the ripe fruits of their womanhood,
Lesbos, the land of warm and languorous nights.

Leave, leave old Plato's austere eye to frown;
  Pardon is thine for kisses' sweet excess,
Queen of the land of amiable renown,
  And for exhaustless subtleties of bliss,
Leave, leave old Plato's austere eye to frown.

Pardon is thine for the eternal pain
  That on the ambitious hearts for ever lies,
Whom far from us the radiant smile could gain,
  Seen dimly on the verge of other skies;
Pardon is thine for the eternal pain!

Which of the gods will dare thy judge to be,
  And to condemn thy brow with labour pale,
  Not having balanced in his golden scale
The flood of tears thy brooks pour'd in the sea?
Which of the gods will dare thy judge to be?

What boot the laws of just and of unjust?
  Great-hearted virgins, honour of the isles,
Lo, your religion also is august,
  And love at hell and heaven together smiles!
What boot the laws of just and of unjust?

For Lesbos chose me out from all my peers,
  To sing the secret of her maids in flower,
  Opening the mystery dark from childhood's hour
Of frantic laughters, mix'd with sombre tears;
For Lesbos chose me out from all my peers.

And since I from Leucate's top survey,
  Like a sentinel with piercing eye and true,
Watching for brig and frigate night and day,
  Whose distant outlines quiver in the blue,
And since I from Leucate's top survey,

To learn if kind and merciful the sea,
  And midst the sobs that make the rock resound,
Brings back some eve to pardoning Lesbos, free
  The worshipp'd corpse of Sappho, who made her bound
To learn if kind and merciful the sea!

Of her the man-like lover-poetess,
  In her sad pallor more than Venus fair!
  The azure eye yields to that black eye, where
The cloudy circle tells of the distress
Of her the man-like lover-poetess!

Fairer than Venus risen on the world,
  Pouring the treasures of her aspect mild,
The radiance of her fair white youth unfurl'd
  On Ocean old enchanted with his child;
Fairer than Venus risen on the world.

Of Sappho, who, blaspheming, died that day
  When trampling on the rite and sacred creed,
She made her body fair the supreme prey
  Of one whose pride punish'd the impious deed
Of Sappho who, blaspheming, died that day.

And since that time it is that Lesbos moans,
  And, spite the homage which the whole world pays,
Is drunk each night with cries of pain and groans,
  Her desert shores unto the heavens do raise,
And since that time it is that Lesbos moans!

INTIMATE PAPERS FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS OF BAUDELAIRE

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH T. SHIPLEY

ROCKETS
MY HEART LAID BARE

THE following pages (not included in the "complete" French edition) contain notes found after the death of Baudelaire; disconnected fragments; echoes; pistils of ideas, promising wondrous blossom, to which no pollen came. They epitomize the moral and intellectual life of the artist. In his own art, Baudelaire is the creator of a new mood, in which Maeterlinck and Verlaine are among his disciples, where Swinburne and Wilde have followed him; in painting and in music, his criticism was seeking in 1850 all that the later development of these arts has brought forth. The reflection of that brilliant mind glows in these intimate pages.

In the almost absolute isolation in which he confined himself more and more, Baudelaire, who had so loved to expand in conversation, felt the need of a confidant that would not importune him with useless counsels, nor with expressions of sympathy he would have repulsed, if only through dandyism. Paper alone could be that confidant.

The poet is wholly within these journals, with his religious, political, moral and literary theories, above all, with the explicit evidence of his weaknesses and his griefs. What skilled theologian has made a more haughty confession than this: "There are none great among men save the poet, the priest and the soldier; the man who sings, the man who blesses, the man who sacrifices others and himself. The rest is made for the whip"? What

political economist has made a more absolute declaration of principles than this: "There is no reasonable, stable government save the aristocratic. Monarchy and republic, based on democracy, are equally weak and absurd"?

His ideal of the greatness of the individual is derived logically from his conception of an aristocratic society under the triumvirate of the poet, the priest and the soldier. "Before all, to be a great man and a saint for one's self;" that, for Baudelaire, is the one ambition worthy of a superior nature. He has indicated the principal traits of the ideal "dandy" that he has sought unceasingly. The dandy is not only the most elegant of men, of the most original and discriminating tastes, which he exercises in his habits, in the choice of his books or his mistress; he is armed with a will superior to all obstacles, opposing caprice with invincible energy, and correcting in himself the inevitable faults of nature with all the resources of art.

The two manuscripts in which these ideals are scattered differ so slightly that it might seem impossible to decide which should be read first. A closer examination, however, indicates that *Rockets* is of the period about ten years before the author's death, while *My Heart Laid Bare* belongs entirely to the days when he felt the first attacks of the illness that was to bear him off. No effort has been made to group the paragraphs according to topic; they are printed as they appear in the manuscript (the page divisions of which are indicated by the successive numbers). The documents furnish an interesting supplement to the more formal works of the poet, and a valuable contribution to literature.

ROCKETS

I

Even if God did not exist, religion would still be holy and divine.

God is the only being who, to govern, need not even exist.

That which is created by the mind lives more truly than matter.

Love is the desire of prostitution. There is not even one noble pleasure which cannot be reduced to prostitution.

At a play, at a ball, each one finds pleasure in all. What is art? Prostitution.

The pleasure of being in a crowd is a mysterious expression of joy in the multiplication of number.

All is number. Number is in *all*. Number is in the individual. Intoxication is a number.

The desire of productive concentration ought to replace, in a mature being, the desire of deperdition.

Love may spring from a generous emotion: desire of prostitution; but it is soon corrupted by the desire of possession.

Love would like to come out of itself, to merge itself in its victim, as the victor in the vanquished, while still preserving the privileges of the conqueror.

The delights of whoso keeps a mistress partake at once of the angel and of the proprietor. Charity and ferocity. They are even independent of sex, of beauty, of the animal kind.

Immense depth of thought in popular phrases, hollowed out by generations of ants.

II

Of the femininity of the Church, as the reason for its omnipotence.

Of the color violet (restrained, mysterious, veiled love, color of canoness).

The priest is immense, because he makes one believe in a host of astounding matters. That the Church wants to do all and to be all, is a law of the human mind. Mankind worships authority. Priests are the servants and sectaries of the imagination. The throne and the altar, revolutionary maxim. Religious intoxication of great cities. Pantheism. I, that is all; all, that is I. Vortex.

III

I think I have already written in my notes that love is very like torture or a surgical operation. But that idea can be developed in the bitterest way. Even though two lovers are deeply smitten and filled with reciprocal desire, one of the two will always be more calm, or less enraptured than the other. He or she is the surgeon, or the hangman; the other is the patient, the victim. Do you hear those sighs, preludes of a tragedy of shame, those groanings, those cries, those throat-rattlings? Who has not breathed them, who has not irresistibly summoned them forth? And what worse do you find in the torments applied by painstaking torturers? Those far-away eyes of the somnambulist, those limbs the muscles of which twitch and grow taut as under the action of a galvanic battery; drunkenness, delirium, opium, in their most infuriate consequences, surely yield no such frightful, no such curious examples. And the human countenance, which Ovid thought fashioned to reflect the stars, behold! it speaks only of insane ferocity, or is spread in

a species of death. For, certainly, I believe it would be sacrilege to apply the word "ecstasy" to that sort of decomposition.

Frightful play, in which one of the players must lose control of himself!

Once, in my presence, it was asked in what lay the greatest pleasure of love. Some one answered naturally: in receiving, and another: in giving one's self. The former said: pleasure of pride; and the latter: delight of humility! All these blackguards spoke like the Imitation of Christ.—Finally, an impudent Utopian came forward to affirm that the greatest pleasure of love is to create citizens for the fatherland.

As for me, I said: The one and the supreme bliss of love rests in the certainty of doing *evil*. Both man and woman know, from birth, that in evil lies all bliss.

V

When a man takes to his bed, almost all his friends have a secret desire to see him die; some, to establish the fact that his health is inferior to theirs; others, in the disinterested hope of studying an agony.

The arabesque is the most spiritual of designs.

VI

The man of letters rouses the capitals and conveys a taste for intellectual gymnastics.

We love women in proportion as they are strangers to us. To love intelligent women is a pleasure of the pederast. Thus bestiality excludes pederasty.

The spirit of buffoonery need not exclude charity; but that's rare.

Enthusiasm applied to other things than abstractions is a sign of weakness and disease.

The thin is more naked, more indecent, than the fat.

VII

Tragic sky. Term of an abstract order applied to a material thing.

Man drinks light with the atmosphere. Thus they are right who say that the night air is not healthful for labor.

Man is born a fireworshipper.

Fireworks, conflagrations, incendiaries.

If one imagine a born fireworshipper born a Parsee, one could create a story.

VIII

Misunderstanding of a countenance is the result of the eclipse of the real image by the hallucination born of it.

Know then the joys of a bitter life, and pray, pray ceaselessly. Prayer is a store-house of energy. (Altar of the will. Moral dynamics. The sorcery of the sacraments. Hygiene of the soul.)

Music deepens the sky.

Jean Jacques said that he could not enter a restaurant without a certain emotion. For a timid nature, a ticket office somewhat resembles the tribunal of hell.

Life has but one true attraction: the attraction of play. But if we care not whether we win or lose?

IX

Nations have great men only in spite of themselves—like families. They make every effort not to have them. Therefore, the great man must, in order to exist, possess an offensive force greater than the power of resistance developed by millions of individuals.

Apropos of sleep, that sinister adventure of all our nights, we might say that men go to bed daily with an audacity that would be incomprehensible if we did not know that it is the result of ignorance of the danger.

There are tortoise-shell hides against which scorn is no longer a vengeance.

Many friends, many gloves.* Those who have admired me were despised, I might even say were despicable, if I sought to flatter honest men.

Girardin talk Latin! *Pecudesque locutae.*

He belongs to an infidel Society to send Robert Houdin to the Arabs to convert them from the miracles.

XI

These great, beautiful vessels, imperceptibly swaying (rocking) on the tranquil waters, these sturdy ships, with their idle, homesick air, do they not ask us, in a silent tongue: When do we sail for happiness?

Not to forget the marvellous in drama, sorcery, romance.

The background, the atmosphere in which a whole tale should be steeped. (See the Fall of the House of Usher, and refer this to the profound sensations of hashish and of opium.)

XII

Are there mathematical insanities, and idiots who think that two and two make three? In other words, can hallucination, if the words do not cry out (at being coupled), invade the affairs of pure reason? If, when a man is sunk in habits of sloth, of revery, of idleness, to the point of constantly deferring the important thing to the morrow, another man were to wake him in the morning with biting lash, and were to whip him pitilessly until, unable to work for pleasure, he worked for fear,

* 'for fear of the itch' is added elsewhere.

that man, that flogger, would he not be truly the friend, the benefactor? Besides, one might declare that pleasure would follow, much more justly than is said "Love comes after marriage."

Similarly, in politics, the true saint is he who lashes and destroys the people, for the people's good.

That which is not slightly deformed seems to lack feeling; whence it follows that irregularity, that is, the unforeseen, surprise, astonishment, are an essential part and characteristic of beauty.

XIII

Theodore de Banville is not exactly materialistic; he is luminous. His poetry represents happy hours.

For each letter from a creditor, write fifty lines on an abstract subject, and you are saved.

XV

Translation and paraphrase of the *Passion*. To refer everything to that.

Spiritual and physical joys born of the storm, thunder and lightning, tocsin of loving, shadowy memories, of years gone by.

XVI

I have found the definition of Beauty, of my Beauty. It is something ardent and sad, something slightly vague, giving conjecture wing. I will, if you please, apply my idea to a palpable object, for instance, to the most interesting object in society, to a woman's countenance. A seductive and beautiful head, a woman's head, I mean, is a head that brings dreams at once—confusedly—of voluptuousness and of sadness; which bears a suggestion of melancholy, of weariness, even of satiety,—or per-

haps an opposite emotion, an ardor, a wish to live, mingled with pent up bitterness, as springs from privation or from despair. Mystery, regret, are also characteristics of beauty.

A handsome male head need not convey, save perhaps in the eyes of a woman, that suggestion of voluptuousness, which, in a female countenance, is generally tantalizing in proportion as the face is melancholy. But that head also will bear something ardent and sad, spiritual needs, ambitions vaguely receding, the thought of a rumbling, unused power, sometimes the thought of a vengeful lack of feeling (for the ideal type of the dandy must not be neglected here), sometimes also—and that is one of the most interesting characteristics of beauty—mystery, and finally (let me have the courage to confess to what degree I feel myself modern in esthetics) *misfortune*. I do not claim that Joy cannot be associated with Beauty, but I do say that Joy is one of its most vulgar ornaments, while Melancholy is, as it were, its illustrious companion, to such a degree that I can scarcely conceive (is my brain an enchanted mirror?) a type of beauty in which is no *Misfortune*. Following—others might say: obsessed by—these ideas, you can see that it would be difficult for me not to conclude that the most perfect type of manly Beauty is Satan,—as pictured by Milton.

XVII

Auto-idolatry. Poetic harmony of character. Eurhythmy of character and faculties. Of conserving all the faculties. Of augmenting all the faculties. A cult (Magianism, evocatory sorcery).

The sacrifice and the vow are the highest formulæ and symbols of exchange.

Two fundamental literary qualities: the supernatural, and irony. Individual glance, aspect in which things maintain themselves before the writer, then a Satanic turn of mind. The supernatural includes the general color and the accent, *i. e.,* intensity, sonority, limpidity, vibration, depth and resonance in space and in time.

There are moments in life when time and space are deeper, and the intensity of life immeasurably increased.

Of magic applied to the rousing of the great dead, to the reëstablishment and the perfecting of health.

Inspiration always comes, when a man *wishes,* but it does not always go, when he wishes.

Of writing and of speech, considered as magic operations, evocatory sorcery.

Of Airs in Woman

The charming airs, which constitute Beauty, are: The blasé air, the bored air, the giddy air, the impudent air, the cold air, the disdainful air, the commanding air, the willing air, the mischievous air, the sickly air, the feline air, a mingling of childishness, nonchalance and malice.

XVIII

In certain almost supernatural moods of the soul the depth of life reveals itself to the full, in the scene, ordinary as it may be, beneath one's eyes. It becomes the symbol.

As I was crossing the boulevard, and as I hurried to escape the wagons, my aureole slipped off and fell into the mire of the macadam. Fortunately, I had time to pick it up; but a moment after the unlucky idea entered my mind that it was an ill omen; after that the idea clung to me, and gave me no rest the entire day.

Of the worship of one's self in love, from the point of

view of health, of hygiene, of the toilet, of eloquence and of spiritual nobility.

XIX

There is a magic operation in prayer. Prayer is one of the great forces of intellectual dynamics. It is like an electric current.

The rosary is a medium, a vehicle; it is prayer brought within reach of all.

Labor, progressive and accumulative force, bearing interest like capital, in faculties as in results.

Play, intermittent energy, even though guided by science, will be conquered, fruitful as it may be, by labor, slight as it may be, but sustained.

If a poet asked the state for the right to have a few bourgeois in his stable, there would be considerable surprise; while, if a bourgeois asked for roast poet, it would seem quite natural.

"Kitten, puss, pussy, my cat, my wolf, my little monkey, big monkey, big serpent, my little melancholy monkey." Such freaks of too often repeated terms, too frequent bestial appellations, reveal a satanic side in love. Have not the devils the forms of beasts? The Camel of Cazotte, camel, devil, and woman.

XX

A man went to a shooting gallery, accompanied by his wife. He selected a puppet, and said to his wife: "I imagine that's you." He closed his eyes and beheaded the puppet. Then he said, kissing his companion's hand: "Dear angel, how I thank you for my skill."

When I have inspired universal disgust and horror, I shall have won solitude.

This book is not made for my wives, my daughters or my sisters. I have few of such things.

God is a scandal, a scandal that rebounds.

XXI

Do not scorn any one's sensibility. One's sensibility, that is one's genius.

By an ardent concubinage, one can imagine the joys of a young household.

The precocious taste for women. I used to confuse the odor of fur with the odor of woman. I remember. . . . Finally, I loved my mother for her elegance. Thus I was a precocious dandy.

The Protestant countries lack two elements essential to the happiness of a well-bred man: gallantry and devotion.

The mingling of the grotesque and the tragic is pleasing to the mind, as discords to blasé ears.

What is intoxicating in bad taste, is the aristocratic pleasure of displeasing.

Germany expresses meditation by line, as England by perspective.

There is, in the birth of every sublime thought, a nervous shock that is felt in the cerebellum.

Spain puts into its religion the ferocity natural to love.

STYLE.—The eternal note, the eternal and cosmopolitan style. Chateaubriand, Alph. Rabbe, Edgar Poe.

Why democrats do not love cats is easy to determine. The cat is beautiful; it awakens ideas of luxury, of cleanliness, of voluptuousness, etc.

XXII

A little labor, repeated three hundred and sixty-five times, yields three hundred and sixty-five times a little money, that is, an enormous sum. *At the same time fame is won.*

To create a pounced drawing is genius. I ought to create a pounced drawing.

My mother is fantastic; one must fear her and please her.

XXIII

To give one's self over to Satan, what does that mean?

What more absurd than progress since man, as is proven by everyday fact, is always like and equal to man, that is to say, always in the savage state! What are the perils of the forest and the prairie beside the daily shocks and conflicts of civilization? Whether man ensnare his dupe on the boulevard, or pierce his prey in unknown forests, is he not eternal man, *i. e.,* the most perfect beast of pray?

They say I am thirty years of age; but if I have lived three minutes in one . . ., am I not ninety?

. . . Work, is it not the salt that preserves embalmed souls?

XXIV

I think that the infinite and mysterious charm that rests in the contemplation of a ship, especially of a vessel in motion, springs, in the first place, from regularity and symmetry (which are of the primordial needs of the human mind, as much as complexity and harmony)—and, secondly, from the successive multiplication and generation of all the curves and imaginary figures cut in space by the real elements of the object.

The poetic idea which this movement in lines produces is the hypothesis of a vast, immense, complex but eurythmic being, of a creature full of genius, suffering and sighing all human sighs and all human ambitions.

Civilized races, that always speak so stupidly of savages and barbarians, soon, as d'Aurevilly says, you will *no longer be good enough to be idolaters.*

Stoicism, religion that has but one sacrament: suicide!

Conceive a canvas for a lyric or fairy buffoonery, for a pantomime, and transplant it into a serious novel. Bathe the whole in an abnormal, dreamy atmosphere,—in the atmosphere of the *great days*. Let there be something soothing,—something even serene, in passion. Regions of pure poetry.

XXV

What is not a priesthood nowadays? Youth itself is a priesthood—so youth tells us.

Man, *i. e.*, every one, is so naturally depraved that he suffers less from the universal abasement than from the establishment of a sensible hierarchy.

XXVI

The world is coming to an end. The only reason for which it can continue is that it exists. How weak that reason is, compared to all that announce the opposite, particularly to this: What has the world henceforth to do beneath the sky? For, supposing that it continue to exist materially, would it be an existence worthy of the name and of the Historical Dictionary? I do not say that the world will be reduced to the expedients and the comic disorder of the South American Republics, that perhaps we shall return to the savage state, and that we shall go, across the grassy ruins of our civilization, seeking our pasture, gun in hand. No; for these adventures presuppose a remnant of vital energy, echo of the earliest ages. New example and new victims of the inexorable moral laws, we shall perish by that through which we thought to live. The mechanical will so have Americanized us, progress will so have atrophied all our spiritual side, that naught, in the sanguine, sacrilegious

or unnatural dreams of the Utopians can be compared to the actual outcome. I ask every thinking man to show me what of life remains. Of religion, I believe it useless to speak and to seek the remnants, since to take the trouble to deny God is the only scandal in that field. Property virtually disappeared with the suppression of the right of the first-born; but the time will come when humanity, like an avenging ogre, will snatch their last morsel from those who think they are the legitimate heirs of the revolutions. Still, that will not be the supreme ill.

The human imagination can conceive, without too much trouble, republics or other community states, worthy of some glory, if directed by consecrated men, by definite aristocrats. But it is not particularly in political institutions that there will be manifest the universal ruin, or the universal progress; for the name matters little. It will be in the debasement of the heart. Need I say that the little of the political remaining will writhe painfully in the embrace of the general bestiality. and that governments will be forced, in order to maintain themselves and to create a phantom of order, to revert to means which will make our actual humanity shudder, although so hardened? Then, the son will flee from his family not at eighteen years, but at twelve, emancipated by his gluttonous precocity; he will flee, not in search of heroic adventures, not to deliver a beautiful prisoner in a tower, not to immortalize a garret by sublime thoughts, but to establish a trade, to amass wealth, and to compete with his infamous papa, founder and stockholder of a journal which will spread the light and which will cause *the century* to be looked upon as an abettor of superstition. Then, the wanderers, the outcasts, those who have had several lovers, and who were once called angels, in recognition of the heedlessness which shines, light of luck,

in their existence logical as evil—then these, I say, will be no more than a pitiless wisdom, a wisdom that will condemn all, lacking money, all, *even the faults of the senses!* Then, that which will resemble virtue, what do I say?—all that is not ardor toward Plutus will be considered enormously ridiculous. Justice, if in that fortunate period justice can still exist, will interdict all citizens who cannot make a fortune. Your wife, O Bourgeois! your chaste partner, whose legitimacy is the poetry of your existence, thenceforth, introducing into legality an irreproachable infamy, zealous and loving guardian of your strongbox, will be no more than the ideal of the kept woman. Your daughter, with infantile hopes of marriage, will dream in her cradle of selling herself for a million, and you yourself, O Bourgeois, still less poet than you are to-day, you will see nothing amiss; you will regret naught. For there are things in men that strengthen and prosper as others weaken and decline; and, thanks to the progress of the times, you will have left of your entrails only the viscera! These times are perhaps quite near; who knows even that they have not come, and that the thickness of our skins is not the only obstacle that prevents us from appreciating the environment in which we breathe?

As for me, who sometimes feel in me the ridicule of a prophet, I know that I shall never find in myself the charity of a doctor. Lost in this vile world, jostled by the crowds, I am as a tired man who sees behind him, in the depths of the years, only disillusion and bitterness, and ahead, only a storm that carries nothing new, neither knowledge nor grief. The evening that man stole from fate a few hours of pleasure, cradled in his digestion, forgetful—as far as possible—of the past, content with the present and resigned to the future, intoxicated with his sangfroid and his dandyism, proud of being less base

than those who passed, he said, watching the smoke of his cigar: "What does it matter to me where these consciences are going?"

I think I have achieved what mechanics call an extra. However, I shall retain these pages,—because I want to date my sadness.

MY HEART LAID BARE

I

Of the vaporization and the centralization of the ego. All lies in that.

Of a certain sensual joy in the society of extravagants.

(I plan to begin *My Heart Laid Bare* at any point, in any way, and to continue it from day to day, following the inspiration of the occasion and the moment, provided that the inspiration be vivid.)

II

The first comer, if he can entertain, has the right to speak of himself.

III

I understand that some people desert a cause to discover what they can experience in serving another.

It might be pleasant to be alternately victim and executioner.

IV

Woman is the opposite of the dandy. Thus she must inspire horror. Woman is hungry, and she wants to eat, thirsty, and she wants to drink. She is proud, and she wants to be . . .

True merit!

Woman is *natural,* that is to say, abominable.

Also, she is always vulgar, that is, the opposite of the dandy.

In regard to the Legion of Honor. He who seeks the cross seems to say: "If I am not decorated for having done my duty, I shall not go ahead."

If a man has merit, what is the good in decorating him? If he has not, then he can be decorated, since that will give him a lustre.

To consent to be decorated, is to recognize that the state has the right to judge you, to adorn you, et cetera.

Furthermore, if not pride, Christian humility should defend the cross.

Calculation in favor of God. Nothing exists without an end. Hence my existence has an end. What end? I do not know. Hence it is not I that have marked it. Hence it is some one wiser than I. Hence I must pray to some one to enlighten me. That is the wisest part.

The dandy ought to aspire uninterruptedly to be sublime. He should live and sleep before a mirror.

V

Analysis of counter-religions; example: sacred prostitution.

What is sacred prostitution? Nervous excitation. Pagan mysticism. Mysticism, link between paganism and Christianity. Paganism and Christianity are reciprocal proofs.

Revolution and the worship of Reason prove the concept of Sacrifice.

Superstition is the reservoir of all truths.

VI

There is in all change something at once agreeable and infamous, something that smacks of infidelity and of

moving day. That is enough to explain the French Revolution.

VII

My intoxication in 1848. Of what sort was that intoxication? Desire of vengeance. Natural pleasure in demolishing. Literary drunkenness; memories of reading.

The 15th of May. Ever the desire of destruction. Legitimate desire, if all that is natural is legitimate.

The horrors of June. Madness of the people and madness of the bourgeoisie. Natural love of crime.

My fury at the coup d'état. How many gunshots sustained! Another Buonaparte! What a disgrace!

Still, all is quieted. Has not the President the right to invoke?

What Emperor Napoleon III is? What he is worth?

To find the explanation of his nature, and of his providentiality.

VIII

To be a useful man has always seemed to me a hideous thing.

1848 was amusing only because every one was building Utopias like castles in Spain.

1848 was charming only by the very excess of the ridiculous.

Robespierre is estimable only because he has made some fine phrases.

IX

The Revolution, by sacrifice, confirmed superstition.

X

Politique. I have no convictions, as the men of my age understand the term, because I have no ambition.

There is no basis in me for conviction.

There is a certain cowardice, or rather a certain softness, in honest men.

The brigands alone are convinced—of what? That they must succeed. Therefore, they succeed.

Why should I succeed, when I haven't even the desire to try?

Glorious empires can be founded on crime, and noble religions on imposture.

However, I have some convictions, in a higher sense, that cannot be understood by the men of my day.

Feeling of *solitude,* from my childhood. Despite my family, and in the midst of my comrades above all,—feeling of an eternally solitary destiny.

Withal, an intense desire for life and for pleasure.

Almost all our life is spent in idle curiosity. In revenge, there are things which ought to rouse human curiosity to the highest degree, and which, to judge by their commonplace activity, inspire it in no one!

Where are our dead friends? Why are we here? Do we come from somewhere? What is liberty? Can it harmonize with providential law? Is the number of souls finite or infinite? And the number of habitable worlds? etc., etc.

XI

Nations have great men only in spite of themselves. Hence the great man is the conqueror of all his nation.

The modern ridiculous religions: Molière, Beranger, Garibaldi.

XII

Belief in progress is a doctrine of the slothful, a doctrine of the Belgians. It is the individual who relies on his neighbors to tend to his affairs. There can be no progress (true, that is, moral) save in the individual

and by the individual himself. But the world is composed of folks who can think only in common, in bands. Thus the Belgian societies. There are also folks who can amuse themselves only in droves. The true hero finds his pleasure alone.

Eternal superiority of the dandy. What is the dandy?

XIII

My opinions on the theatre. What I have always found most beautiful in the theatre, in my childhood, and still to-day, is *lustre*,—a beautiful object, luminous, crystalline, complex, circular, symmetrical.

However, I do not absolutely deny the value of dramatic literature. Only, I should like the actors to be mounted on high pattens, to wear masks more expressive than the human face, and to speak through megaphones; finally, I should like the female parts to be played by men.

After all, lustre has always seemed to me the principal actor, seen through the large or the small end of the glass.

XIV

One must work, if not through desire, at least in despair, since, as is well established, to work is less boring than to seek amusement.

XV

There are in every man, at every moment, two simultaneous postulations, one toward God, the other toward Satan.

The invocation of God, or spirituality, is a desire to rise; that of Satan, or bestiality, is a joy in descent. To the latter should be attributed love for women.

The joys which spring from these two loves conform to their two natures.

XVI

Intoxication of humanity; great picture to be made, in the sense of charity, in the sense of libertinage, in the literary or dramaturgic sense.

XVII

Torture, as the art of discovering the truth, is barbaric nonsense; it is the application of a material means to a spiritual end.

Capital punishment is the result of a mystic idea, totally misunderstood to-day. The death penalty has not as its object to *preserve* society, *materially* at least. Its object is the *preservation* (spiritually) of society and the guilty one. In order that the sacrifice be perfect, there must be assent and joy on the part of the victim. To give chloroform to one condemned to death would be an impiety, for it would be to wipe out the consciousness of his grandeur as victim and to destroy his chance of gaining paradise.

As to torture, it is born of the infamous side of the heart of man, athirst for voluptuousness. Cruelty and voluptuousness, identical sensations, like extreme heat and extreme cold.

XVIII

A dandy does nothing. Can you imagine a dandy talking to the people, save to scoff at them?

There is no reasonable, stable government save the aristocratic.

Monarchy and republic, based on democracy, are equally weak and absurd.

Immense nausea of placards.

There exist but three respectable beings: the priest, the warrior, the poet. To know, to kill, and to create.

Other men are serfs or slaves, created for the stable, that is, to exercise what are called professions.

XIX

Observe that those who advocate the abolition of capital punishment are more or less interested in its abolishment. Often, they are executioners. The matter may be summarized thus: "I wish to be able to cut off your head, but you shall not touch mine."

Those who abolish souls (materialists) necessarily abolish hell; they are, beyond all doubt, interested.

At the least, they are men that are afraid to live again, slothful ones.

XX

Mme. de Metternich, although a princess, has forgotten to answer me, in regard to what I said of her and of Wagner. Manners of the Nineteenth Century.

XXII

The woman Sand is the Prudhomme of immorality. She has always been a moralist. Only formerly she practiced amorality. Also she has never been an artist. She has the famous *fluent style,* dear to the bourgeois.

She is stupid, she is heavy, she is a chatterbox. She has, in moral matters, the same depth of judgment and the same delicacy of feeling as innkeepers and kept wom-

en. What she has said of her mother; what she has said of poetry. Her love for the workingman.

George Sand is one of those old ingenues who do not wish to quit the boards.

See the preface to *Mlle. La Quintinie,* where she claims that true Christians do not believe in hell. Sand is for the *God of good folks,* the god of innkeepers and of domestic sharpers.

She has good reason to wish to wipe out hell.

XXIII

It must not be thought that the devil tempts only men of genius. He doubtless scorns imbeciles, but he does not disdain their assistance. Quite the contrary, he founds great hopes on them.

Take George Sand. She is especially, and above all things, a great *blockhead;* but she is *possessed.* It is the devil who has persuaded her to trust in her *good heart* and her *good sense,* so that she might persuade all other great blockheads to trust in their good heart and their good sense.

I cannot think of that stupid creature without a shudder of horror. If I were to meet her, I could not keep myself from hurling a basin of holy water at her.

XXIV

I am bored in France, especially as every one resembles Voltaire.

Emerson forgot Voltaire in his "Representative Men." He could have made a fine chapter entitled Voltaire or The Antipoet, the king of boobies, the prince of the shallow, the anti-artist, the preacher of innkeepers, the father who "lived in a shoe" of the editors of the century.

XXV

In the "Ears of the Earl of Chesterfield," Voltaire jokes at the expense of that immortal soul which resided, for nine months, in the midst of excrement and urine. Voltaire, like all the slothful, hates mystery.

(At least, he might have divined in that environment the malice or satire of Providence against love, and, in the process of generation, a sign of original sin. In fact, we can make love only with excretory organs.)

Unable to suppress love, the Church wished at least to disinfect it, and created marriage.

XXVI

Portrait of the literary riff-raff. Doctor Tavernus Crapulosus Pedantissimus. His portrait in the manner of Praxiteles. His pipe, his opinions, his Hegelianism, his filth, his ideas of art, his spleen, his jealousy. A fine picture of modern youth.

XXVII

Theology. What is the fall? If it is unity become duality, it is God who has fallen. In other words, is not creation the fall of God?

Dandyism. What is the superior man? It is not the specialist. It is the man of leisure and broad education. To be rich and to love labor.

XXVIII

Why does the man of parts prefer maidens to women of the world, though they are equally stupid? Find this out.

XXIX

There are women who are like the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. They are wanted no more, because they have been sullied by certain men. Just as I would not put on the breeches of a mangy fellow.

What is annoying in love, is that it is a crime in which one cannot do without an accomplice.

XXX

Study of the great disease of horror of the home. Reasons for the disease.

Indignation at the universal fatuity of all classes, of all beings, of both sexes, of every age.

Man loves man so much that when he flees the city, it is still to seek the crowd, that is, to rebuild the city in the country.

XXXI

Of love, of the predilection of the French for military metaphors. Here every metaphor wears a moustache.

Militant literature.—To man the breach.—To bear the standard aloft.—To maintain the standard high and firm.—To hurl oneself into the thick of the fight.—One of the veterans. All these fine phrases apply generally to the college scouts and to the do-nothings of the coffee-house.

XXXII

To add to the military metaphors: Soldier of the judicial press (Bertin). The poets of strife. The litterateurs of the advance guard. This habitude of military metaphors denotes minds not military, but made for discipline, that is, for conformity, minds born domesticated, Belgian minds, which can think only in society.

XXXIII

Desire of pleasure binds us to the present. Care for our health suspends us on the future.

He who attaches himself to pleasure, that is, to the present, is to me as one who, rolling down an incline, and trying to cling to the shrubs, uproots them and bears them away in his fall.

Before all to be a *great man* and a saint for one's self.

XXXV

In the end, before all history and before the French people, the great glory of Napoleon III will have been to prove that the first comer, by seizing the telegraph and the national press, can govern a great nation.

Imbeciles are those who think that such things can be accomplished without the permission of the people,—and those who believe that glory can be founded only on virtue!

XXXVI

What is love? The need of coming out of one's self.

Man is an animal of worship. To worship is to sacrifice one's self and to prostitute one's self.

Thus all love is prostitution.

The most prostituted being is the being beyond compare, is God, since he is the soul supreme for every individual, since he is the common, inexhaustible reservoir of love.

PRAYER

Do not chastise me in my mother, nor chastise my mother because of me.—I commend to you the souls of my father and Mariette.—Give me each day strength to

perform the present duty and thus to become a hero and a saint.

XXXVII

A chapter on the indestructible, eternal, universal and ingenious human ferocity. Of the love of blood, of the intoxication of blood, of the intoxication of crowds. Of the intoxication of the executed criminal (Damiens).

XXXIX

I have always been astonished that women are allowed to enter church. What conversation can they have with God?

The eternal Venus (caprice, hysteria, whim) is one of the seductive forms of the devil.

XL

Woman cannot separate the soul from the body. She is simple, like the animals.—A satirist would say it is because she has only a body.

XLII

Veuillot is so coarse and such an enemy of the arts that one would think all the democracy of the world was harbored in his breast.

Development of the portrait. Supremacy of the pure idea in the Christian as in the Babouvian communist.

Fanaticism of humility. Not even to aspire to understand religion.

XLIV

In love, as in almost all human affairs, the *entente cordial* is the result of misunderstanding. The misunderstanding is pleasure. The man cries: "Oh my angel!"

The woman coos: "Mamma! Mamma!" And the two imbeciles are persuaded that they are thinking in concert.—The insuperable gulf, which bars communication, remains unabridged.

XLV

Why is the spread of the sea so infinitely and so eternally agreeable?

Because the sea conveys the thought both of immensity and of movement. Six or seven leagues are for man the radius of the infinite. 'Tis a diminutive infinite. What matter, if it suffice to suggest the whole? Twelve or fourteen leagues of liquid in movement are enough to convey the highest ideal of beauty which is offered to man in his transitory habitation.

XLVI

There is naught interesting on earth save its religions.

There is a universal religion made for the alchemists of thought, a religion which is disengaged from man, considered as a heavenly reminder.

XLVII

Saint-Marc Girardin has spoken one word that will endure: "Let us be mediocre!" Set that beside this of Robespierre: "Those that do not believe in the immortality of their being, do themselves justice." The word of Saint-Marc Girardin implies a bitter hatred of the sublime.

XLVIII

Theory of true civilization. It lies not in gas, nor in steam, nor in tilting tables. It lies in the diminution of the traces of original sin.

Nomad peoples, shepherds, hunters, farmers, even can-

nibals, *all* can rise superior in energy, in personal dignity, to our races of the West. We perhaps shall be destroyed.

XLIX

It is through leisure, in part, that I have grown,—to my great detriment; for leisure, without wealth, increases debts; but to my great gain, in regard to sensibility, meditation, and the faculty of dandyism and of dilettantism.

L

The young girl of editors. The young girl of editors in chief. The young girl, scarecrow, monstrous, assassin of art.

The young girl, what she really is. A little stupid and a little slovenly; the greatest imbecility combined with the greatest depravity.

There is in the young girl all the abjection of the cad and of the school-boy.

LI

Advice to non-communists: all is common, even God.

LII

The Frenchman is a backyard animal so domestic that he dare not leap any fences. See his tastes in art and literature.

He is an animal of the Latin race; filth does not displease him; in his home, and in literature, he is scatophagous. He dotes on excrement. The litterateurs of the coffee-house call that the *gallic salt*.

LIII

Princes and generations. There is equal injustice in attributing to reigning princes the virtues and the vices of the people they actually govern.

Those virtues and those vices should almost always, as statistics and logic will show, be attributed to the atmosphere of the preceding government.

Louis XIV inherits the men of Louis XIII, glory. Napoleon I inherits the men of the Republic, glory. Louis-Philippe inherits the men of Charles X, glory. Napoleon III inherits the men of Louis-Philippe, dishonor.

It is always the preceding government that is responsible for the customs of the following, in so far as a government can be responsible for anything.

The sudden suppressions that circumstances bring to a reign do not allow of absolute exactitude in this law, in regard to time. One cannot say precisely where an influence ends, but an influence will endure in all the generation that was subjected to it in youth.

LIV

Of the hatred of youth toward those who quote. The quoter is their enemy.

"I would place spelling itself in the hands of the hangman." (Th. Gautier.)

Immovable desire of prostitution in the heart of man, whence springs his horror of solitude.—He wishes to be *two*. The genius wishes to be *one*, hence alone. Glory is in remaining *one*, and in prostituting one's self in a particular way.

It is that horror of solitude, the need of forgetting his *ego* in the outer flesh, that man nobly calls the *need of love.*

Two fine religions, immortally planted on the mature, eternal obsessions of the people: the ancient phallus, and "Vive Barbés!" or "A bas Philippe!" or "Vive la Republique!"

LV

To study, in all its moods, in the works of nature and in the works of man, the eternal and universal law of gradation, by degrees, little by little, with forces progressively increasing, like compound interest in finance.

It is the same with artistic and literary ease; it is the same with the variable treasure of the will.

LVI

The rout of little litterateurs to be seen at funerals, distributing handshakes and commending themselves to the memory of the letter writer. Of the funerals of famous men.

Molière.—My opinion of Tartuffe is that it is not a comedy, but a pamphlet. An atheist, if only he is well-bred, would think, in connection with the play, that serious questions should never be betrayed to the riff-raff.

LVII

To glorify the worship of images (my great, my one, my primitive passion). To glorify vagabondage and what may be called bohemianism. Worship of sensation, multiplied and expressing itself in music. Refer this to Liszt.

Of the need of beating women.

One can chastise what one loves. Thus with children.

But that implies the misery of scorning what one loves.

Of cuckoldom and of cuckolds. The misery of the cuckold. It springs from his pride, from a false conception of honor and of happiness, and from a love foolishly turned from God to be attributed to creatures. It is ever the worshipping animal deluded with its idol.

LVIII

Music conveys the idea of space. All the arts, more or less; since they are *number* and number is a translation of space.

Daily to wish to be the greatest of men!

LXI

Nations have great men only in spite of themselves.

Apropos of the actor and of my childish dreams, a chapter on what constitutes, in the human soul, the calling of the actor, the glory of the actor, the art of the actor and his situation in the world.

The theory of Legouvé. Is Legouvé a cold farceur, a Swift, who tried whether France would swallow a new absurdity? His choice. Good, in the sense that Samson is not an actor.

Of the true greatness of pariahs. Perhaps even, virtue harms the talents of pariahs.

LXII

Commerce is, in its essence, *satanic*. Commerce, is the loan returned, it is the loan with an understanding: Return more than I gave you.

—The spirit of everything commercial is completely depraved.

—Commerce is *natural*, hence it is *infamous*.

—The least infamous of tradesmen is he who says: "Let us be virtuous that we may gain much more money than the fools who are vicious." For the tradesman, honesty itself is a speculation. Commerce is satanic, because it is one of the forms of egoism, the lowest, and the most vile.

LXIII

When Jesus Christ said: "Blessed are they that hunger, for they shall be filled!" Jesus Christ was gambling on probabilities.

LXIV

The world progresses only through misunderstanding. It is by universal misunderstanding that all the world agrees. For if, unfortunately, they understood one another, people could never agree.

The man of wit, he who will never agree with any one, ought to strike up a liking for the conversation of idiots and the reading of bad books. He will draw from this bitter joys that will largely compensate for his fatigue.

LXV

Any officeholder whatsoever, a minister, a manager of a theater or magazine, can sometimes be an estimable being; but he can never be admirable. He is a person lacking personality, a being without originality, born for the office, that is to say, for public domesticity.

LXVI

God and his profundity. One can be not lacking in wit and find in God the accomplice and friend who is always wanting. God is the eternal confidant in that tragedy where every one is the hero. There are per-

haps usurers and assassins who say to God: "Lord, let my next operation succeed!" But the prayer of these rascally folk does not disturb the honor and the pleasure of mine.

LXVII

All idea is, in itself, endowed with immortal life, like a person. All form, even created by man, is immortal. For form is independent of matter, and it is not molecules that constitute form.

LXVIII

It is impossible to glance through any newspaper at all, no matter of what day, what month, what year, without finding in every line the most frightful signs of human perversity, together with the most astonishing boasts of probity, of goodness, of charity, and the most shameless affirmations in regard to the progress of civilization.

Every paper, from the first line to the last, is but a tissue of horrors. War, crime, theft, lewdness, crimes of princes, crimes of nations, crimes of individuals, a universal intoxication of atrocity.

And it is with this disgusting appetizer that civilized man accompanies his every morning meal. Everything in this world sweats crime: the magazine, the wall, the face of man. I cannot see how a pure hand can touch a paper without a convulsion of disgust.

LXIX

The strength of the amulet demonstrated by philosophy. Bored coins, talismans, every one's keepsakes. Treatise on moral dynamics. Of the power of the sacra-

ments. Of my childhood, tendency to mysticism. My conversations with God.

LXX

Of obsession. Of Possession, of Prayer and of Faith. Moral dynamics of Jesus. (Renan thinks it ridiculous to suppose that Jesus believed in the omnipotence, even materially, of Prayer and of Faith.) The sacraments are the means of this dynamics.

Of the infamy of the printing-shop, great obstacle to the development of beauty.

LXXI

In order for the law of progress to exist, every one must wish to create it; that is, when every individual applies himself to progress, then, and only then, humanity will be in progress.

This hypothesis serves to explain the identity of two contradictory ideas, free will and predestination.—Not only is there, in the case of progress, identity of free will and predestination, but that identity has always existed. That identity is history, the history of nations and of men.

LXXII

Hygiene. Projects.—The more one wills, the better one wills.

The more one works, the better one works, and the more one wants to work. The more one produces, the more fertile one grows.

Morally as physically, I have always had the sensation of the gulf, not only of the gulf of sleep, but the gulf of action, of revery, of memory, of desire, of regret, of remorse, of beauty, of number, etc.

I have cultivated my hysteria with joy and terror. Now, I always have vertigo, and to-day, January 23, 1862, I felt a strange warning. I felt pass over me a gust from the wing of imbecility.

LXXIII

How many presentiments and signs already sent by God, that it is *high time* to act, to regard the present moment as the most important moment, and to make my *perpetual joy* of my usual torment, that is, of work!

LXXIV

Hygiene, Conduct, Morals.—Every moment, we are crushed by the idea and sensation of time. And there are only two means of escaping that nightmare, of forgetting it: pleasure and work. Pleasure consumes us. Work fortifies us. Let us choose.

The more we make use of one of these means, the more the other fills us with repugnance.

One can forget time only by using it.

Everything is accomplished bit by bit.

De Maistre and Edgar Poe taught me to reason.

There is no long work but that which one dares not begin. It becomes a nightmare.

LXXV

Hygiene.—By putting off what one has to do, one runs the risk of never being able to do it. By postponing conversion, one risks being damned.

To heal everything, misery, disease and melancholy, absolutely nothing is needed but the love of work.

LXXVI

Precious Notes.—Do every day what prudence and duty dictate. If you work every day, life will be more endurable. Work *six* days without a let-up. To find fields, *Know thyself.* Always to be a poet, even in prose. Grand style (nothing is more beautiful than the commonplace). First begin, then make use of logic and analysis. Any hypothesis whatsoever tends to its conclusion. Find the daily frenzy.

LXXVII

Hygiene, Conduct, Morals.—Debts. Friends (my mother, friends, myself). Thus, 1000 francs should be divided into two parts of 500 francs each, and the second divided into three.

LXXVIII

—To do one's duty every day and trust in God for the morrow.

The one way to make money is to work in a disinterested fashion.

—Concentrated wisdom. Toilet, prayer, labor.

Prayer: charity, wisdom and strength.

Without charity, I am but a clashing cymbal.

—My humiliations have been mercies of God.

Is my egoistical phase at an end?

The gift of responding to the moment's need, exactitude, in a word, should infallibly bring its recompense.

LXXIX

Hygiene, Conduct, Morals.—Jean 300, my mother 200, myself 300,—800 francs a month. To work from

six in the morning, on an empty stomach, till noon. To work blindly, aimlessly, like a madman. We shall see the result.

I suppose I base my destiny on a few hours' uninterrupted toil.

All is reparable. There is still time. Who knows even if new pleasure . . . ?

I have not yet known the pleasure of a project carried out.

Power of the fixed idea, power of hope.

The habit of doing one's duty drives out fear.

One must wish to dream and know how to dream. The summoning of inspiration. The Art of Magic. To set myself immediately to writing. I reason too much.

Immediate work, even poor, is worth more than dreams.

A procession of little wishes makes a mighty end.

Every recoil of the will is a particle of lost substance. How prodigal, then, is hesitation! And judge of the greatness of the final effort needed to repair so many losses!

The man who prays in the evening, is a captain who posts his sentinels. He can sleep.

Dreams of death and warnings.

Up to now I have enjoyed my memories alone; they must be shared with another. Make a passion of the joys of the heart.

Because I comprehend a glorious existence, I believe myself capable of realizing it. O Jean-Jacques!

Work forcibly engenders good habits, sobriety and chastity, consequently health, wealth, successive and progressive genius, and charity. Age quod agis.

Fish, cold baths, showers, lichen, lozenges, occasionally; in addition, suppression of everything exciting.

Island Lichen.....125 grams
White sugar.....250 "

Steep the lichen, for twelve or fifteen hours, in a sufficient quantity of cold water, then drain the water. Boil the lichen in two liters of water, on a slow and continuous flame, until the two liters have dwindled to one, remove the scum once; then add the 250 grams of sugar and allow it to thicken to the consistency of syrup. Allow it to cool again. Take a large tablespoonful *three* times daily, morning, noon, and night. Do not be afraid to increase the dose, if the crises become too frequent.

LXXX

Hygiene, Conduct, Method.—I swear to myself henceforth to take the following rules as eternal rules of my life:

Every morning to pray to God, *reservoir of all strength and all justice, to my father, to Mariette, and to Poe,* as intercessors; to pray to them to grant me the necessary strength always to do my duty, and to grant to my mother *a life long enough* to enjoy my transformation; to work all day, or at least *while my strength remains;* to trust in God, that is, in Justice itself, for the success of my projects; to make, every evening, a new prayer to God, asking life and strength for my mother and for myself; to divide all I earn into four parts,—one for current expenses, one for my creditors, one for my friends and one for my mother;—to obey the precepts of strictest sobriety, of which the first is the suppression of everything exciting, whatever it may be.