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THE PEOPLE'S
PALACE

BY
ACHEVERELL SITWELL



OXFORD
BLACKWELL

"ADVENTURERS ALL" SERIES

No. XXII.



THE PEOPLE'S PALACE

Adventurers All.

A SERIES OF YOUNG POETS
UNKNOWN
TO FAME.

(B)



Come my friends.... 'Tis not too late to seek a
newer world. It may be that the gulfs will wash
us down It may be we shall touch the happy isles
Yet our purpose holds... to sail beyond the sunset.

Ulysses.

The book cover is framed by a wide, intricate border of Art Nouveau style floral and foliate motifs. The central text is enclosed in a simple rectangular frame.

THE PEOPLE'S
PALACE

BY
SACHEVERELL SITWELL



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FOUNTAINS.

THIS night is pure and clear as thrice refinèd silver.

Silence, the cape of Death, lies heavy

Round the bare shoulders of the hills.

Faint throbs and murmurs

At moments growing to a mutter, then subsiding,

Fill the night with mystery and panic.

The honey-tonguèd arguings of fountains

Stir the air with flutes and gentle voices.—

The graven fountain-masks suffer and weep—

Curved with a smile, the poor mouths

Clutch at a half-remembered song

Striving to forget the agony of ever laughing,—

Laughing while they hear the secrets

Echoed from the depths of Earth beneath them.

This half-remembered song—

This flow of sad-restrainèd laughter

Jars with the jets of youthful water

Springing from the twisted masks,

For this is but the birth of water ;

FOUNTAINS 🐼

And singing joyfully
It springs upon the world
And wanders ceaselessly
Along its jewelled valleys to the sea,
Rattling like rolls of drums
The shells and pebbles down its bed.

The endless argument of water ceases,
A few drops fall heavily, splashing on the marble :
A sultan with his treasures
Seeking to gain the goodwill of his love,
Pouring before her chains of crackling pearls
And weeping heavy jealous tears
Because she will not heed him.

PINDAR.

PINDAR asleep beneath the planes.
Then every Zephyr shook his shoulder
Struck the pale disks
Sent silver showers beneath the moon
To clothe his young tired body
With those pallid leaves.

And Pan let from his shuttered hive
The snub-nosed honey-bees escape—
A whirr of sound, throb, flutter,
Feather-flight of birds,
And on the poet's lips
The swarm descends to suck his breath.

Now Pan has learnt his song
And sings it on the mountains,
The centaurs gurgling the honeyed waters
Take hands from lips, retire to caves ;
Each satyr, ev'ry grape-gatherer
Can hear their panick'd rumblings.

Now the song lulls ; centaurs breathe again—
To daylight—sniff around ; then gallop down the hills ;

Beneath the cliffs, poor fishermen
 Hear thunder-thudding of the hooves, and sail for sea.
 They think a hissing thunderbolt will fall about their
 heads.

And from the cliffs the centaurs hear
 Flutes like bird-flights through the air
 All regular, then flurry of the wings
 As breath fails in the player—
 And fevered pluckings at a harp
 Are birds beneath a canopy of leaves

Who preen their feathers, strike their beaks
 Upon each quill, re-echoing
 With air-born ecstasy.—
 Could one imprison fire within a pipe of glass
 To catch the surge and shrinkage of its flames,
 I think we'd have in one small pipe

A man could play on,
 Every plunge through chasms where the winds play,
 Through bell-clear ringing sounds of rain,
 Through painted distances aloof as dreams,
 And every beat their wings make on clouds
 Reverberant as caverns.—

And with these flute-sounds came the floundering
Of horns that play among the waves
Like porpoises who roll
Against the stiffened backs of water
That the waves flap
When they break sonorously.

They say that every sound upon the earth
Is mirrored echoed in the upper air
And never dies ; so when the sound
The centaurs heard from passing galleys
Were washing like young tides
Among the clashing cymbals we call stars—

They broke in foam against the songs
The sirens sang, and the stifled cry
Of Sappho falling to her death—
And still there rose the lyre-strung voice
Of Pindar fresh, and honey-sweet,
Rejuvenate in spite of Pan.

February 11th, 1918.

NOTE. There are two legends of Pindar. One tells how when he was asleep in a wood, whilst quite a baby, a swarm of bees settled on his lips. The other describes how Pan stole Pindar's song, and sang it on the mountains. In this poem these two incongruous elements have been combined. It is on the same principle that bad Greek wine is improved by the addition of rancid honey.

LI-TAI-PÉ.

(He strolls in the garden after dinner.)

FULL moon-fruit hanging on the orchard tree :
Wind shakes them—clash of calabashes
Full peal of bells—each fruit
A honey-hearted rain drop
Falls pattering on the straight-ribbed leaves.

I move my eyes then, look around
Can hear the frost-flowers raise their heads
In ev'ry dewdrop I have crushed—
Far back my sinuous footmarks stretch—curved snail-
walk.

Then wink my eyes
Ah! only one moon, and that
As large and round and heavy as an egg—
In branching clouds—the Phœnix-nest it is!
With half-fledged Phœnix young.

Their song now swims upon the air
Like painted ships that plough the sea.
The wind-puffs play among the weeds—
Tree-tops tremble—temple-bells clank in the wind—
All flute-sounds in the Phœnix throat.

BRIGHTON PIER.

HOW even, flat, and similar
These strips of plank beneath our feet.
Unconscious, quite, my weary eyes
Force me to tread on every joint
Of plank to plank.
I seem to lay my road
Treading flat the boarding as I go,—
And so I ponder,
Think still further, further, from me.
Then thump, thump, thump,
These leaden feet tread on my mind
And bring me back again.
Strips of white trouser
Shooting to and fro
Jumping forward, jerking back,
Gay blazers, skirts of flimsy muslin,
Squirts of sunshine, flopping hats—
The planks re-echoing and springing to the footsteps.
Here, at the water's edge, I stop
And lean upon the parapet:—

BRIGHTON PIER 🐼

There are pierrots dancing in their booth
Flooded with strong draughts of sunlight ;
They twist and turn beneath the rays
Like wisps of faint blue smoke.—
I cannot hear their song :
But distant sounds
Like bubbles breaking
Reach my ears.—
Small waves roll gently forward
Raise their tired heads
And slowly break to foam—
As sudden as you turn
A page over in a book.

FRAGMENT FROM SIRENS.

OUR sails were stooping low before the wind—
Sails, curvèd like a shell held to the ear
That sends far down the listener's soul
The faint far singing of the sea
Among its labyrinthine valleys and the hills
That shew the gilded wreckage of such argosies
As toss their heads above these sudden mountains
Raised god-like from the level water-plains,
And azure-rifted chasms ; such ships
As break their scornful heads
Against the walls of crumbling foam
And battlements of far-strung bubbles
Strewn star-thick o'er the snow-soft sea.

Our curvèd prow was steering for the sun
And lightning-swift we passed across the sea
Faster, faster, ever faster, faster,
We flew from speed to speed
Till looking from the ship

FRAGMENT FROM SIRENS 🐙

I saw the jagged foam and tear-salt spray
Left hanging in the sea
Big grapes for which the sea-god
Would thank our ship, as with his scaled feet
He crushed the wine from out the bursting fruit.
For many a mile behind our bird-swift ship
We left great footmarks in the falling snow
Of waves, and patches of dire blue
Restrained the knotted whips of spray
From striking 'gainst our ship—
A striding horse with every nerve
Strained for utmost speed.
And so beneath our prow
The dashing waves were shattered, melted,
As clouds upon a mountain side
Sink lower, break asunder,
Cling lifeless to the rocks
Then vanish to a wisp of smoke.
And all the while the red sun drew us down
A speck of dust within his giant's draught,
A speck fast falling down the slanting sea,
Which he had lifted high
Its musty dregs to drain.

OUTSKIRTS.

THE gold voice of the sunset was most clearly in the air
As I wandered through the outskirts of the town.

And here disposed upon the grass, I see
Confetti-thick the amorous couples,—
What thoughts, what scenes, evoke, evaporate
In leaden minds like theirs?
Can I create them? These things
Which mean the happiness of multitudes?
A river bank, grass for a dancing-floor,
The concertina's wail, and then the darkening day.

Raise your eyes from ground to trees
And see them stretch elastically
Tall and taller,—then look along
The banks all frayed of the canal
Where we are sitting,—the water
Lies like a sword
With marks of rust
Where the sun has caught it.

Lie back and listen,
Watch the reflections.
You see the ripples run among the leaves,
Brush them aside, like painted birds
That sing, within the lattices
The sun's hot bars make with the branches.
In China I am told, my dear,
The temples are outlined with bells
That swing in the wind, or clash
Beneath the rain-showers.
So when these ripples play among the trees
Or any insect drops upon the water
The rings and circles spread
Make the whole trees shiver,
And far down you hear
Clash upon clash, the ringing
Of the bells that jangle with the leaves.

You cannot pierce those distances ?
Look up! Look up!
Night is slowly coming to fill the valleys,
Drench the hills, and free us
From the suffocation of the sunset.
On lands all turbulent with heat

The small white houses dancing
On the rim of the horizon,—like aproned children
In a schoolyard—are stilled.
The far-off hills stand solitary
Made yellow by the sun.
Beneath them where the river winds
You hear the spirting of a gramophone—
A fountain playing with discoloured water ;
And the strumming of a piano,
Too far for voice to carry
Jerks like a mote before our eyes.
For all the instruments men make
Play on a public holiday,
That birdlike we may play upon a reed,
Or let a nightingale we've made
Sing among our trees of sentiment,

December 31st, 1917.

TAHITI.

WHEN the hood of night comes on the land
My ship is rocked by the sunset wind—
Shrill voices from the town
Cleave the air like darts ;
When they sing in chorus
It were as if steel arrows of the day,
The showers of rain, rebounded to the dome of air.
When one alone shouts loud, his jagged voice
Blares like a trumpet. Banjos and drums
Beat, twang, and throb hysterically
Outside the mud-built huts.

Far off, the sun, caught spider-like
In its cloud-web, is seething down the sea
And churns the waves, spatters them with blood.
Despairingly it waves red tentacles, clutching
Fiercely each wool-white wave crest, then splutters out—
Ashore, the tall trees flap their foliage,
Cut out like stage-trees carved in canvas ;—
The leaves whip the trees as ropes flick the masts
Of every salt-fed ship.

TAHITI

Then the hood of night comes lower, and from the shore,
The Babel grows.

—I dream that I too, sing—

Lanterns are lit,—great stairs of light
Shake in the water ;
All dank and wet I seem to climb,
Swaying on soundless gold—go silently
Above the land, unto the distant moon,
Alone, and ringing clear as a bell.

It is a gong, beaten by the drunkard clouds
Which reel on the horizon, and by the echoing laughter
of the stars.

—Even the sound dies now, and the white bubble,
Drop of milk, seems to feed
And love whole worlds, turning gold to silver,
All ugliness to beauty.

BARREL-ORGANS.

I. PRELUDE.

RIVER-LIKE, this cold quick wind
Swirls and eddies down the street.

In the wide level of the sounding sea
Sudden pitfalls gape :
Deep-laid traps for ships,
Great seething hollows, mirrors for the sky,
Blue deep chasms flecked with red and gold
Blown with foam, and live
With salt-stiff't sails and sailors' bodies,
Golden treasures and forsaken ships.—
And in these hungry seething deeps there lies
The fleeting wild reflection of the skies.

So in the steady flow of wind
That swirls and eddies down the street
All sense and sight
All sound and sorrow
Revolve around us here :—
Fly straight as arrows to this spot
And fall around us.—

BARREL-ORGANS 🎪

The jagged stones are live with sound,
And one can hear the shuffling feet on them
Tread low, monotonous, inevitable—
Vast armies marching down the corridors of Time.
Oh! how this music throbs
And lifts our bodies from the street!

Squat chimneys rattle and revolve
And you can hear
The weathercocks fly helter-skelter.—
Tall drink-shops with bedizened fronts
Decked out with golden letters;
Inside them voices raised in quarrel
Seem in an instant to jump nearer
For the swing-doors with frosted glass
And bars so thick they seem to guard a treasure
(Not screen drab ugly drink),
Fly open with a squirt of yellow light
Which only shews with emphasis
The dust and crumbling paper in the gutter.
A love-sick ballad with a chorus,
The snarl and tin-tongued tremolo of tenors
With mellow, even toned basses
Make the blind and beer-daft beggars

BARREL-ORGANS

Stamp their feet and swing their arms in unison,
So they forget the cold and hungry vigil for a ha'pence.
The doors swing to, and there is no no more light.
The darkness throbs around one like the pulse
Within a frightened animal.

On either side stretch archways
Deep like sleep and hopeless as the sea.—
A drunkard shuffling his slipshod feet
Towards his dreary starving home,
Sings in an even yellow voice:
Sings of pleasures he has never tasted,
But sings with full conviction.
The shop-signs creak and rattle in the wind
And from far-off a clock strikes (half-heartedly).
The passage of the hours is uniform ;
They glide together like the tapping of a drum.—
Our lives are but as sand within the hour-glass :
One half is up, the other down.
So,—like the ever shifting sea
Devouring misery eats up
All the inroads of prosperity—
Just as the fangs of seething foam
Which race and slide o'er the tawny sand

BARREL-ORGANS 🐼

Are quick withdrawn by the immutable tides.—
The moon, young light-haired shepherd
Has but to lead away his star-fed flocks
The wool-white foaming breakers of the sea,
Then pasture them again ;—
And when he rests behind those thyme-clad hills, the
clouds,
To see the homing stars, striped honey-bees,
And shuns the sun-god's ravenous embrace,—
Without a sight of him, the dragon-writhing foam
To the gentle piping of his wind-stopped flute
Draws back again.—

Our lives are short,
And do we differ but by our degrees of misery.
We have a solace.—Listen then :

II. THE FEATHERED HAT.

OH! how this music throbs and lifts our feet!
That day the sky was molten gold,
The wide fresh-smelling Earth was dancing
Beneath the glittering sun-shafts.—
One side, the street was dark,
As deep and cool as water-wells,

BARREL-ORGANS

The other was ablaze with light :—
Great bars, feet thick, shot down
Between the Sun's hot eyelashes ;
Motors with their rush and whirr
Shot into heated glamour, then came
Black and dull, alternately,
Between these blazing shafts of heat.
The organ plays a slow and measured waltz.
I had my best hat with the feathers in it ;
My boots were thick with dust,
I held up my skirt and swayed,
Could not dance, the heat was such.
I moved so slow, grew tired and more tired,—
Could think of nothing.

Then of a sudden came the syncopation ;
It seemed to clutch my heart,
My nerves came strung like banjo-strings—
I seemed to twang them with my hands and toes,
My heavy boots throbbed like catapults a-shooting!—

Reverberate thud of thunder-drops,
Shafts and chasms of blinding light
Cavalry gallop of falling leaves
Crackle and spark of shooting stars.

THE MOON.

THE white nightingale is hidden in the branches
And heavy leafage of the clouds.
She pours down her song—
Cascades threaded like pearls,
And the winds, her many-noted flutes
Flood forth their harmony.—
But the Earth turns away
Swinging in its air and water-rocked cradle.

“THE MAYOR OF MURCIA.”

I. SOLILOQUY.

THE shifting sand lies flat and high
As the stand from which an orator
Sees each human head, a petalled flower
Turning towards the Sun its benefactor.
All this I must destroy ;
Beating to a metal disc
Each feeling flower, to carve it
To the leer of cunning, clutch of greed,
Or smile of sacrifice.
I stand here now :
This crowd it seems my duty to command
Is still afar off. Yet the sea
Is here for me to practice on :
Each wave a hoary head
Nigh tumbling from its long bent body ;
Each head with white hair blown by my mouthpiece
The lean, hard-fingered wind—
Grown old because its thirsty hands
Can never span a shape whose bulk

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" 🐼

Will stop and give it nourishment.
So the insensate sea strives on ;
And when the far wine-stainèd breath
Of the Sun panting after his horses,
Cools the beard and stops the sea-god's conch—
Then in fury all the mermen
Thrash their tails and beat their fins together.
Always clamour, rattling of pebbles, strife,
And the greedy gaping of the quicksands.
Now as the shadow of a frown
On the face of God
Is shown by the darkening of a waving cornfield,
So, as night damps the gilt glory of the Sun
As he stoops like a husbandman to till the Earth,
Mighty sweat pouring from under his gorgeous turban
of cloud,
The whole great Earth heaves a sigh
And all the blossoms of the foam draw in their heads,
All the harvest of the untilled sea folds itself to sleep.
Then from far off the town
Raises its domes and spires—they seem
A troop of elephants with glittering eyes of glass
And swaying castles on their backs :
The whole town sways towards me

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" ●

Pouring out its people,
Who gather in the streets, march on :

Hubbub throb of drums,
Clangour and thrash of bells,
And the measured march
And stamp of feet ;—
A crash of movement
On four short notes :
Gestures of a marionette
For either arm and both his legs—
And trumpet-calls
Forked and quick as lightning,—

The crowd all gay with colour
Blown along the road
Like confetti when a wedding's over.
Bars of colour, streaks of colour
And sharp notes like a rapier's thrust.
And the fevered clanging of the bells
Rings out still more and more :
Cataracts, curved blades of steel
Falling
 down
 down
Through ice-cold caverns :

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" 🐾

The clash of shields
When ship meets ship
And the fighters leap from boat to boat,
The sea tossing her blue shoulders
And the spray running salt unaccustomed tears
Down every eager face :

The whole wide Earth trembles and totters
With the stamp of myriad feet :
The fret and fury of a mighty army
Following the foe through a level land.
Swift as Eagles the Saracen horse
Fled my army through the sun-scorched sand.
The furious tramping of horses stirred the desert
Making the sand ring like a trumpet,
Echoing the hoots, the howls, the heavy stamp of hooves
Raising hurricanes of dust to hide the stars,—
Wind-riven curtains of sand
To hide those whirling dancers from our sight.
My mind now hovers like a vulture
Seeing down-stretched before him
Dim valleys filled with memories,
High peaks enreddened by the sunset fires
And gloomy depths, clothed black
Beneath the coverlet of sleep, forgetfulness.

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" ●

And now I hover like this vulture
Swimming 'gainst the star-strewn spaces of the wind :
Or like a rock stand undismayed
The peals, the clattering throbs, and splash of foam
From all this sea of upturned heads
And bodies all poignant with colour :
Great waves of sun-touched dyes
As brilliant, swift, and shrill
As when the Sun with gorgeous fingers
Plucks the watery thrill of music
From the star-high lyre
That echoes from the clouds
To touch the Earth all resonant
With rippling carillons of rain.

And now I have to speak,—
Explain the objects we're assembled for.

II. THE SPEECH.

"Citizens of Murcia, slaves to these,—
By my command you're gathered here.
I see on every forehead lines of care ;
Each body's bowed and worn with toil.—
For many years you've laboured,

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" ●

Tilled and reaped your harvests—
Golden corn and vine-clusters
Ripened with the sun's red blood,
And when the burning hours are dead,
Refreshed with crystal emanation—
Dew from the hidden stores
Of water in the Earth's black gaping chasms.
So in the steady pageantry of years
You've garnered treasures
Wealth to deck and glorify our town.
One part
Of this, our solemn duty
You've already done.
Great girdling walls
Which circle round the town
Keep off our foes—a casque of steel
Upon a warrior's head keeps off all blows
As lustily as these star-aspiring towers.
And in the evening the droning bells
Which call to prayer, re-echo
From the walls, and peal aloft among the towers,
As in the forest on a summer's evening
The tall trees are rudely stirred
By rush of winged insects

“THE MAYOR OF MURCIA” 🐼

Intent upon their honeyed business.
Our walls, then, rise triumphant
And we can turn our energies to other fields.—
The plain here stretches many a mile
Between the town and tawny mountains ;
The far hills seem battlements
Of austere hostile towns—and nearer
The clouds hang low like beauty-drugged butterflies
Above the flowering fields.
Let us girdle the Earth with our handiwork,
Bind the blue hills with our strength ;
The firmament shall know our might and skill.
Broad roads shall cross the plains
Cleave the gold harvest at their will
And clamp the hills down with their might.
From the high towers of Murcia
The roads shall seem like fluttering pennons
Tied to lances pointing at the stars—
For so they seem, when having climbed the hills
The roads appear to launch into Eternity.—
And we will dig canals to bring
The sea’s salt breath into the land
And heap her shimmering treasures
On quays deep-laden with the glittering corn-sheaves ;

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" 🐼

So then with holds replenished
Our galleons shall sail the seas
To distant towns afloat above the tawny sands
Like fleets at anchor—

And when it's evening

No sound shall mar the cool canals
But they shall stretch like weighty drag-nets
And in each mesh you'll see the moon
All silver like a draggled scale
Amid the drying nets."

Now the thin air was torn with cheers
And the fiery fountains of the mayor's speech
Had set afire the gaping listeners ;
The swirling smoke of words
Had blinded every citizen
To sober hard reality.—
Great thoughts, those striding bridges
Athwart the crystal chasms of our dreams,
Seemed like accomplished facts
And on the prancing horses of ambition
Each conscience leaps the river
That runs between the thought and fact accomplished.

III. THE RETURN.

Look! Here come
The trumpet
-ers who stab
The air
With stinging
Blasts from
Every brazen throat.

And after them
The drummers rolling
Of their drums
Until they catch an echo
From distant dome, blue hill, or whispering tree.

Think of all the tearing grinding movements irresistible
Rattling of rain that splashes
From rock hard ground
And drips from leaves
That shake together—
One vast swing like pealing bells—
And all the rolling of the sea
Whipped by the wind's salt lashes—
And through this hubbub roar

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" 🐾

The MAYOR

In his new motor

Shoots like an arrow ;

While thick darkness lowers on the land.

And so the winds, giant gods,

Must hasten home from where

Above the foam-flecked sea

They feed their ragged cloud-flocks—

And in their haste they loosen from their shoulders

The heavy baskets filled with fruits

They have gathered in the day,

And, careless, drop them by the river

That runs through Murcia.

On either side there stand

The city's clustering domes—

Blood-pulsed fruits

From out these copious baskets

And fast these fruits now stain the sky,

With fierce ensanguined hues.

The while the spires

Re-echo with the fevered clanging of the bells—

Those steel-strong tongues the gods have given them.

And now I fear

The moon will give

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" ●

A show of sentiment,
And splash the land
With her maternal milk,
Whilst we beneath the walls
Let pass the dignitaries—
And every brick
This arch is made from
Is like a honeycomb
Replete with sound,
Till, like a sea,
We hear our voices
Break above us,
Then re-echo—
Small ripples lapping
The gold shores of all these honey-cells—
The bricks above us.

Bright torches dance like motes
In the broad moon-beams—
And in the tufted trees
Like wooden toys
The nightingales begin to creak
Their laboured song
Grinding out run by run each spray,

Till, wings relapsed,
They stare in vacancy
And listen to their neighbours.

IV. THE FESTA.

The smoke from our torches
Hung heavy in the square—
An instant's pause—a slight fatigue—
An old man with a white moustache
Stooped to his bootlace—
The first firework flew,
Rockets fell like falling fruit
Through the cloud-lattice—
Striking the bars at the second bang.
Chains of light slid on the wind
Myriad-feathered as the Phœnix
Flying to its home—
Then the searchlights sprang into the air,
And played point-blank
Upon the houses—
Like fountains lifting
Attenuated rainbows in the air,
Carving their crystal bulk to stems,
Hanging the flowers of water

“THE MAYOR OF MURCIA”

Head downwards in the fleecy clouds,
Thick leaves to guard them,
Till the fruit downfall
Like rain upon the roofs.

And while the beams
Are playing on the crowd
You see all secrets—
Every soul is bared
As by a secret window in a room,
So that the Mayor, who now is on the balcony,
Might be an insect with its hundred eyes
Probing the swaying flowers beneath it.
While below, beyond their heads,
Black puppets on the end of strings,
The people dangle on the terraces
That stretch as taut as tight-ropes
All along the cliffs—
And here and there they stumble
Try to keep their balance,
While, like a nurse's arm
 The strains of brass bands keep them up ;
 And all the night gesticulates
 With wooden movements.—

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" 🐼

In band-stands wreathed with flowers
The military blare out dance-tunes—
The brass roars out over the sea.
Sibilant strings seem syrup
Floating in clouds among the tree-tops,
Keeping the drooping acacias to their stems,
That drop their distilled dew,
Made fragrant with the honey of their breath,
Upon the sheen of darker leaves beneath them
Where magnolias flaunt their skins
Whiter than any woman's,
Or pinker, beneath the prying lights.—

 Processions now pour in
 From every side and quarter—
 Music at their head—
 People foam at the sides
 With a fringe of tin trumpets,
 Throwing flowers,
 Waving flags,—

The churches open wide their doors
So you can see inside them,
As into a cake, or the core of a honeycomb.
The organs boom out loud
Amid the sugared, marbled splendour,

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" ●

As an old priest quite solemn
Preaching to young girls who laugh at him.
Waltzes rush through the air like snakes,
Dances like flopping birds,
Bands of guitars twang,
Mandolines send
Liquid cubes, close knit with sound
Through the whirl of striving music ;
As you hear the hooves of a galloping horse,
And then, the blows of the rider.
The whole town sways
Pouring out it's people
Who gather in the streets, march on :

Hubbub throb of drums,
Clangour and thrash of bells
And the measured march
And stamp of feet :—
A crash of movement
On four short notes :
Gestures of a marionette
For either arm and both his legs—
And trumpet-calls
Forked and quick as lightning.—
The crowd all gay with colour

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" 🐼

Blown along the road
Like confetti when a wedding's over.
Bars of colour, streaks of colour
And sharp notes like a rapier's thrust,
And the fevered clanging of the bells
Rings out still more and more :
Cataracts, curved blades of steel
Falling
 down
 down
Through ice-cold caverns :
The clash of shields
When ship meets ship
And the fighters leap from boat to boat,
The sea tossing her blue shoulders
And the spray running salt unaccustomed tears
Down every eager face,
The whole wide Earth trembles and totters
With the stamp of myriad feet.
The fret and fury of a mighty army
Following the foe through a level land.
Swift as eagles the Saracen horse
Fled my army through the sun-scorched sand.
The furious trampling of horses stirred the desert

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" ●

Making the sand ring like a trumpet,
Echoing the hoots, the howls, the heavy stamp of
hooves
Raising hurricanes of dust to hide the stars—
Wind-riven curtains of sand
To hide those whirling dancers from our sight.

V. THE HOME-COMING.

The houses all are galloping toward me—
Gymnasts on the tall trapezes of the wind.
That dome there!
Like an acrobat tumbling
From the white bars that the clouds make!
That broad arch
Feet wide apart,
Like any striding giant
Comes nearer, nearer,
Leaps right over me.
The moon sends down fresh floods of milk
Tall trees seem hands
Plunged deep into the clouds
That hang, fat udders,
Whence the milk flows down.

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA."

Seen against the pattern of broad leaves,
That the tall trees make,
The moon might wander in this park
As free as any animal;
And when a sudden darkness comes
Till the beams shine out again—
Without a doubt she left her pasture,
Running in the soft grass,
Shaking with her horns
The star-fruit from the sun's gold orchards,
Where the dew of his breath
Lies like a soft bloom
On the red fruit;
And sure enough you see
A star dart through the sky
And fall into the smooth sea.

A window opens
And a voice calls out my name
I stumble on the rough stones,
Feel for my door.
A piece of paper in the gutter
Lies provocative.

"THE MAYOR OF MURCIA" ●

I blow my trumpet at it
Till it reels into the air
Floats slowly, turns red,
Starts spinning,
Darts like a flame
Above the housetops.

April 14th, 1918.

TRUMPETS.

WOVEN from the tangled hair of comets
On the never-ceasing shuttles of the wind,
Night, thick Tabernacle for the sun, is pitched ;
And from the deepening gloom
Ring out the trumpets
Red and quick as sparks
Before the vivifying camp-fire of the Gods.
The blare of a Trumpet is brazen, fierce
As the culminate charge that decides a battle.—
Great plumes like clouds wind-riven
Float behind each fighter,
And their armour glints and gleams in the Sun.—
The horses hooves beat loud, insistent,—
As ominous and dire as kettledrums ;
The whole Earth's expectant.
And the fields stretch green-metallic
As the leaden-plated sky ;—far off
Small windows, kissed by the Sun's red lips
Send back a shuddering echo
To the blare of trumpets.
The cottage smoke, so stiff and regular
Goes creaking through the painted air
And everything is waiting
Watching in uncertainty.

“PSITTACHUS EOIS IMITATRIX ALES
INDIS.”—*Ovid.*

THE parrot's voice snaps out—
 No good to contradict—
What he says he'll say again :
Dry facts, like biscuits,—

His voice and vivid colours
Of his breast and wings
Are immemoriably old ;
Old dowagers dressed in crimpèd satin
Boxed in their rooms
Like specimens beneath a glass
Inviolatè—and never changing,
Their memory of emotions dead ;
The ardour of their summers
Sprayed like camphor
On their silken parasols
Intissued in a cupboard.

"PSITTACHUS EOIS IMITATRIX ALES AB INDIS" 🐦

Reflective, but with never a new thought
The parrot sways upon his ivory perch—
Then gravely turns a somersault
Through rings nailed in the roof—
Much as the sun performs his antics
As he climbs the aerial bridge
We only see
Through crystal prisms in a falling rain.

March 1st, 1918.

TRAPEZE-SONG FROM "PERSPECTIVE"

BENEATH the roof now . . .
. . . Kick once more the gilded balustrade . . .
. . . Now's your time . . .

And then you'll be among the flowering trees
That travel with you in the train;
Among the trees, and just beneath
The creaking pulleys that manipulate them
As rain is managed by the clouds
That travel with it over sea and land.

And in your flight diagonal
Look down upon your audience—
Intent upon you, and as you move
See their direction change,
White faces sudden blotted out
Like tears are wiped from eyes—
(For an instant while you turn)—
Then full upon you once again.

TRAPEZE-SONG FROM "PERSPECTIVES" 🐣

And as your senses daze
Convert their movement into sound
A pendulum for ever beating
With a fevered interval between the beat—
(This, the movement when all heads are turned)—
Feel the hot air quiver up your legs and sides
Surround you quite, like breaking waves
On sands the sun has warmed.
Then your pace begins to slacken
Bird-like you hover
Long before you light—
While, once the danger of your turn is o'er
The band will start again,
And gently let you down,
As in a net ——

February 18th, 1918.

“WHITSUN.”

HOW hot the bank on which we lie!
The green paint is melted
On the seat near by
So that you cannot touch it!

Small yellow flowers, glazed white with heat
That snap like glass when you pick them,
Grass like a parrot's wing
Burnt yellow here and there
By the Sun's hot stare.

So high this cliff stands from the water
That the drop itself into the cooler sea
Makes a faint wind up here—
Refreshing like cold water drunk from a spring,
Or the wafting of far music
On the bird-wings of a cool wind.

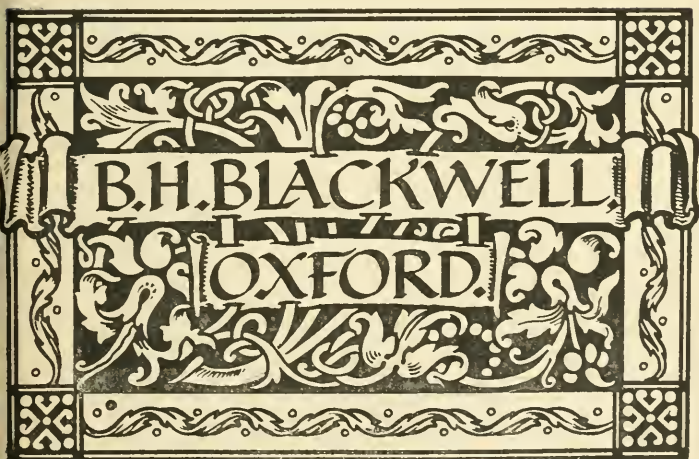
The sea sleeps ever
Under the Sun's hot trumpet,
While patches of weed float in the water
To make the surface darker—
Where the dying Sun
Has caught the windows of the town

"WHITSUN" 🐦

You see their glare reflected in the water
A whorl of quivering sparks
A crackle in the heart of waves—
While catspaws play among the weed
Till the long strands raised on a wave's back
Shine like wet hair in the Sun.

One cloud far out, comes nearer
Takes my soul back to the gray tunnel
Of every year's hard work
Till the young year's holiday, again.

February 28th, 1918.



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