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# THE SOLITARY

BY

JAMES OPPENHEIM





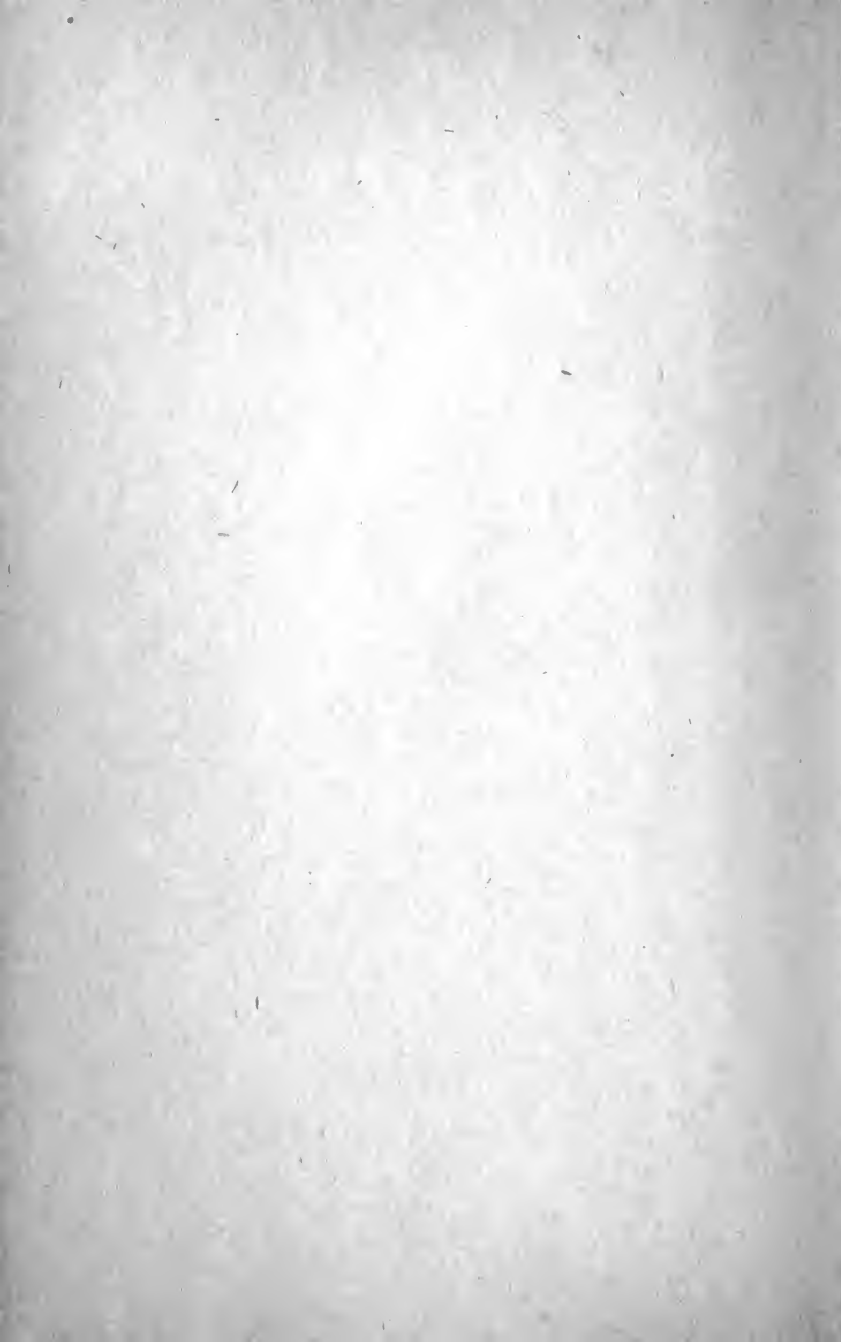
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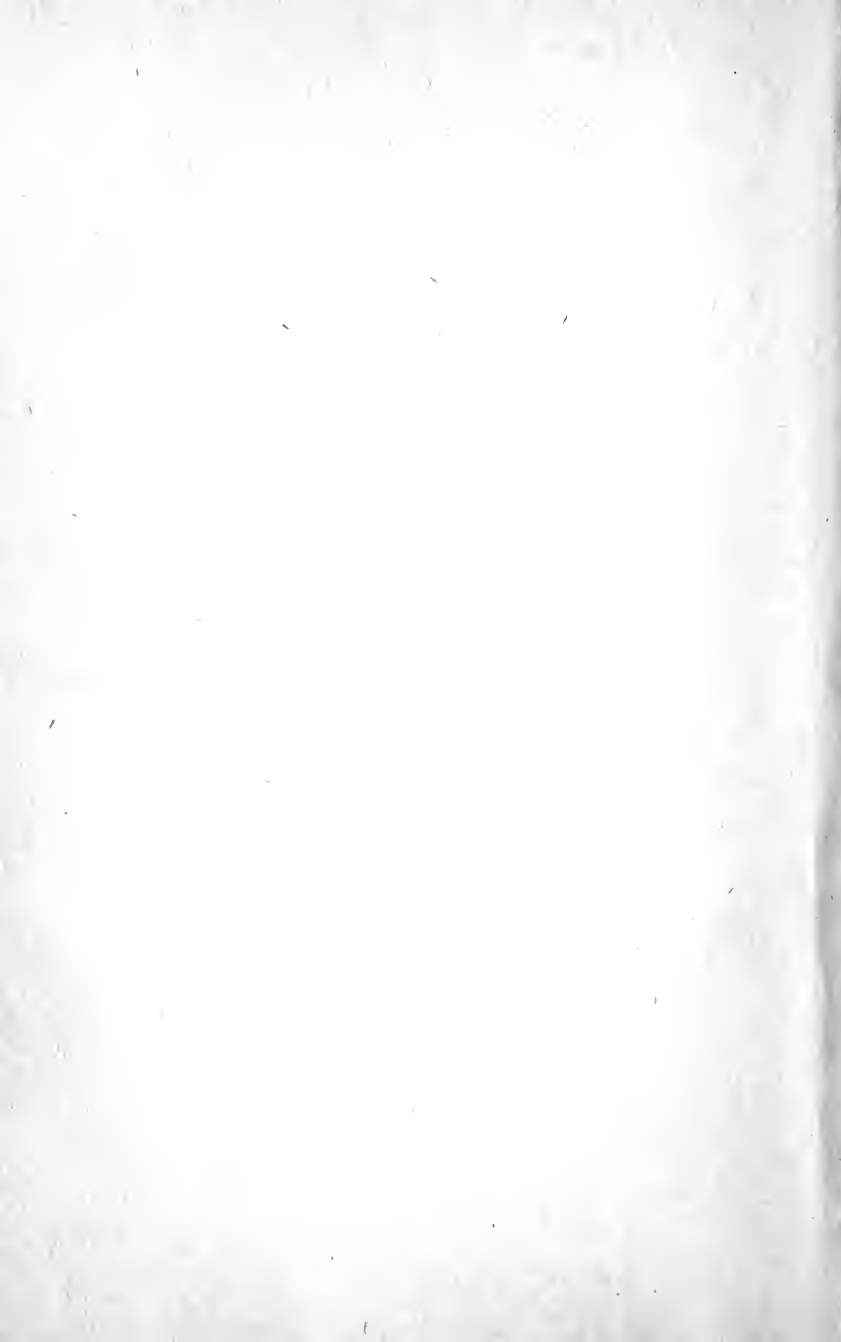
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## THE SOLITARY

*BY JAMES OPPENHEIM*

THE BELOVED (Huebsch)  
SONGS FOR THE NEW AGE (Century)  
WAR AND LAUGHTER (Century)  
THE BOOK OF SELF (Knopf)



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THE SOLITARY

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JAMES OPPENHEIM

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FOR RANDOLPH BOURNE





FOR RANDOLPH BOURNE

(Died December 22, 1918)

I

*We wind wreaths of holly  
For Randolph Bourne,  
We hang bitter-sweet for remembrance;  
We make a song of wind in pines . . .*

*Wind in pines  
Is winter's song, anthem of death,  
And winter's child  
Is gathered in the green hemlock arms  
And sung to rest . . .*

*Sung to rest . . .  
Waif of the storm  
And world-bruised wanderer . . .  
Sung to rest . . .*

*Sung to rest in our living hearts,  
We receive him,  
Winding our wreaths of holly  
For Randolph Bourne.*

*Winter lasts long*  
*And Death is our midnight sun*  
*Rayless and red . . .*  
*Peoples are dying, and the world*  
*Crumbles grayly . . .*  
*Autumn of civilization*  
*Gorgeous with fruit*  
*Dissolves in storm . . .*

*And we,*  
*Our dead about us,*  
*Know the great darkening of the sun*  
*And the frozen months,*  
*Sounding our hemlock anthem,*  
*Hanging our bitter-sweet . . .*

*We walk in ruined woods*  
*And among graves:*  
*Earth is a burying ground . . .*  
*Nations go down, and dreams*  
*And myths of peoples*  
*And the forlorn hopes*  
*Make one burial . . .*

*And we*  
*Came from the darkness, never to see*  
*A Shakespeare's England,*  
*A Sophocles' Athens,*  
*But to live in the world's latter days,*  
*In the great Age of Death,*  
*Sons of Doomsday . . .*

*He also came,  
And walked this crooked world,  
Its image.*

3

*In him the world's winter,  
Ruined boughs and disheveled cornfields,  
And the hunchback rocks  
Gray on the hills,  
Passed down our streets. . . .*

*Passed and is gone; and for him and the dying world  
Our dirge sounds . . .*

4

*Yet suddenly the wind catches up with glory  
Our anthem, and peals wild hope,  
Blowing of scattered bugles . . .*

*And the wind cries: Look,  
Pierce to the soul of the cripple  
Where, immortal,  
The spirit of youth goes on,  
Which dies never, but shall be  
The green and the garland of the Spring.*

*And the wind cries: Down  
To the dissolution of the grave  
The crippled body of the world must go  
And die utterly,  
That the seed may take April's rain  
And bring Earth's blooming back.*

*Bitter-sweet, and a northwest wind  
 To sing his requiem,  
 Who was  
 Our Age,  
 And who becomes  
 An imperishable symbol of our ongoing,  
 For in himself  
 He rose above his body and came among us  
 Prophetic of the race,  
 The great hater  
 Of the dark human deformity  
 Which is our dying world,  
 The great lover  
 Of the spirit of youth  
 Which is our future's seed . . .*

*In forced blooming we saw  
 Glimpses of awaited Spring.*

*And so, lifting our eyes, we hang  
 Bitter-sweet for remembrance  
 Of Randolph Bourne.*

*And winter's child  
 Is gathered in the green hemlock arms  
 And sung to rest . . .*

*Sung to rest in our living hearts,  
 We receive the rejected,  
 Weaving a wreath of triumph  
 For Randolph Bourne.*

THE SEA



## THE SEA

### I

My song begins with the song of the sea,  
For the song of the sea is the song eternal. . . .  
The forests shout and are still: no leaf stirs:  
The winds sleep. . . .  
The rocks are the keeps of silence . . .  
But the sea sings unendingly on the shores of the human  
world,  
And no prow puts out but is rippled with music . . .  
Restlessness and rest are in that song,  
Varying measures, and snatches of tune, and thin whispers  
and braying trumpets,  
And solo singing and chorals of multitude . . .

Restlessness and rest . . .  
The toilers on the shore know that the brine is bitter and that  
the briny song is bitter. . . .  
And the seafarer hears under the full moon the mother lull-  
aby along the ship . . .

This song is the cradle-song and the voyage-song and the  
grave-song of humanity . . .  
The land, born of the ocean, is eaten away by this hungry  
mother,

The inland pines long to go back and they remember the  
sea-songs of old time,  
And in the ears of a man this song never ceases . . .

One song, as the planet flies, rises unendingly from its lips,  
And in that song the planet-children are enfolded, and never  
go free of it,  
And never desire to go free of it,  
The unborn are astir in water,  
The elfin-faint song of the mother enfolds them  
And the born hear that song again on the shores,  
And the deep roots, yea, the sea-bottom roots of the soul  
tremble with that music,  
And drink the miracle drink . . .

For that song is the song that the sea of creation sings and  
and sings,  
Rolling with breakers and foaming billows and white-caps  
of stars,  
Restlessness and rest,  
Incessant, ceaseless on the shores of night,  
On the shores of life . . .

All-permeating sea-song,  
Music of the fluid blood and the moving spirit, life that is  
never silent,  
Energy rolling in rhythms, triumphant, despairing, soli-  
tary, multitudinous,  
Ascending descending song, the impetuous storm-brine, the  
soothing moon-sheen,  
The icy waters that burn, the balm of the equatorial baths,  
Wails of the stricken, moans of the dying, shouts of the  
strugglers,



Dirge and lullaby, bells of the bridal and the burial,—  
All within myself, all on the shores of my own body,  
The unending song of the planet of my own flesh . . .  
The Mother forever near me . . .  
The great Mother singing to her child . . .

Cities have also a deep sea music that ebbs in the darkness  
and flows in the morning,  
Unending, unsilent . . .

A solitary from the hills  
Hearing that song, is aware of a cruel sea,  
A sea whose singing is in antiphonies of yes and no,  
Choruses that battle in hoarse conflict,  
A surging of storm-music, untriumphant, discordant . . .  
A song that is noise with but overtones of concord . . .

The city dweller never is amazed at the song in which he  
himself is a bleeding chord,  
How could he be amazed, knowing the hearts of men,  
The anguish, ambition, defeat?

I have heard the songs of great cities,  
The dim bellowing of bare ebb-tides an hour or two after  
midnight,  
The washing lull of the dead hours,  
The tremulous footsteps of sleep-walkers,  
The rumble of the tide turning and the fresh cold wind  
that whips the gutters from the East,  
The clash and growl of the first foam of the flood,  
The flood itself, roaring tumultuously and with urgent  
power through the streets,

The white-caps and choppy waters of high noon,  
Bustle, gossip and chatter of the slow sun,  
The mighty out-rolling and resistless pull of the shouting  
ebb-tide,  
The last sweet babble, the whispers, kisses, delicious teasing  
of the moon-white ebb,  
The silvery low-singing tunes of first sleep . . .

Day after day, night after night this song . . .  
Great, terrible and magical in London, Manhattan, and  
Paris . . .  
Foam of brief lovers in the gardens of the Tuileries,  
Foam of the waifs of London at blue-lit crossings near Pic-  
cadilly Circus,  
Foam of the sleepers on benches and the dry hot grass of  
parks in midsummer Manhattan . . .  
Foam and sparkle, and the clean blue sweep of waters, and  
the stormy crests of crowds, bursting billows of gnash-  
ing mobs, spumy moon-bursts of revolutionists. . . .  
The election crowds on Broadway, the torchlight crowds,  
the concert crowds in the Mall . . .  
Day after day, and night after night, this song . . .

The sea, black in the winter cloud-light,  
Swinging rough squares of sheeted water, laced with white  
foam,  
And spouting spume through the wind's mouth, and slash-  
ing into blue about jutting rocks,  
Hard, broken, like jostling steel, out to the sky-rim,  
Heaves with a merciless menace, with a monstrous  
strength . . .

There is no pity in the sea,  
And nothing human. . . .

Indoors we may build a fire of faggots,  
And read of lovers and of saviors . . .  
In human warmth we may open our hearts . . .

But the wild light of November dusk glances along the win-  
dows,  
The darkening room has a smile of fire,  
Our backs shadow out through the walls to the shadow-  
shaking skies,  
Backwardly we are hurled in the fight and fury of winds  
and waters,  
The brutal ocean unleashed vents a venomous hatred,  
Now the ship is clapped together, and fisted out of the flood,  
and pulled by talons under,  
And the sea's song is a bellowing and uproar out of iced  
hell . . .

Softly the human voice goes on intoning the tale of gentle  
lovers,

The sad sweet savior story . . .

"All is love," the voice sings, "God is love . . ."

Dimly in the smile of the fire we strive to create a circle and  
spot of love . . .

But we are shadows in the light, and our life is swirling out  
over the rocking sea,

The house-walls fall apart, we stride clouds,

We ride the tempest like witches . . .

And the human being whose soft voice remembers love  
for us,

We know is a demon with a strange mask.

Was it not yesterday that the sea was as gentle as a girl  
Who after the restlessness of longing  
Is with her lover again, in a secret place,  
And he is caressing her?

Was it so long ago when the sea was as plaintive as a  
wounded child moaning for its mother,  
Forsaken on the shore, hidden from the face of the moon?

Or so long ago when the sea, striding like heroic youth in  
the morning sunshine,  
Shouted courage to the toilers on the shore,  
And his laughter echoed among the rocks?

Or when the sea like a god, some ancient and understanding  
mother,  
Laid soothing and healing hands of song on the hearts of  
men?

Sea of battles, sea of matings, sea mournful over the graves  
of the unremembered,  
Rhapsodic on summer mornings with the flush of youth,  
Sultry with passions, fogged with gropings, starry with un-  
measured majesty,  
Serene, furious, meditative, cold and hot, bitter and sweet,  
Guised in all ages, the helpless child, the youth, the mature,  
the mother and father,  
Brutal and delicate, divine, demonic,  
What are you, sea? what are you, like something in my own  
depths?  
Like something of humanity, yet not human?

I see the great race surging,  
I see the great race rolling,  
I hear the war-guns thunder and the clear-voiced choirs  
singing . . .  
I step in a house where a tired mother croons to her sleepy  
child,  
I walk along the shore, in the gleaming summer night, and  
hear the babble of lovers. . . .

The murderer walks side by side with the saint,  
The reactionist and the revolutionist hate one another,  
The judge is judged by the convict, the sick are healing the  
doctors,  
The waves break one through another, the waves appear  
only as tools and slaves of the resistless tides,  
The tides interlink, the undertow pulls against the flood,  
The sea storms, is calm, is diluted with rain and resalted  
out of its depths,  
Mercy, anguish, tribulation and sleep . . . the weather  
changes . . .  
We help the delivery of the new-born, and shovel earth on  
the dead . . .

*Mare æternis!*

Out of the bowels of chaos, you sea of life,  
Seething, divine, merciful and fiendish humanity,  
Flood of ages, flood forever old, forever new,  
Laced with the foam of thinking, with white-caps of ideal-  
ism,  
Silvered with moonlight dream, golden with the broken-up  
sun, each sun-splinter a hero and a savior,

Changeless through incessant changing,  
A sea with every wave striving to leap clear of the deeps and  
    be a soul,  
With every wave longing to walk self-contained on the hard  
    bright shore,  
Rolling yearningly toward the shore, and helplessly dragged  
    back,  
Sea in which each wave is only water swinging with the  
    ebb and flow of the flood,  
Sea that dreams of transcending itself because the sun sucks  
    it up into shining vapor-drops,  
But the rain falls, the sea drinks back the rain, and after the  
    storm the sea is the same as before . . .

*Mare æternis!*

Circle of life turning viciously in on itself,  
Serpent with its tail in its mouth, revolving like a wheel,  
Dreams of millennium when the charmed circle is broken,  
When the tail is torn from the mouth,  
Dreams of education, of justice, of democracy, of religion  
When at last there is freedom from the wash and backwash,  
    the tide and undertow,  
The mad multitude-passions, the helpless riding of storms,  
    the helter-skelter of weather, the groping in the fog,  
When at last the sea rises above itself  
Out of demonic depths to clean divine peaks . . .

The storm of revolution rides the sea,  
Crying " We bring freedom, we bring peace " . . .  
And revolution, like reaction, brings a new slavery, a new  
    war . . .  
For how shall the sea change its nature and how shall the  
    sea be anything but the sea?

Beautiful over Russia shines the star of revolution . . .  
And beautiful in the manger of the Soviets again the Christ-  
child is born on Earth,  
A divine song is in the air . . .  
And irresistibly, as of old, the Christ shall be crucified by  
his own people . . .  
For the sea has not changed because a golden light falls  
through the storm on the bitter waters . . .  
The sea of the people is the same sea that the tyrants rode,  
"Whoever is not for us, is against us," sang the tyrants,  
And the people sing: "Because our cause is holy and a lib-  
eration,  
Whoever is not for us, is against us."

It is ever in the name of holiness and through divine sanc-  
tion that man crucifies man,  
The holier the cause, the more horrible the sacrifice . . .  
For so long as man is of the sea, like the sea he must sing  
all songs,  
God-songs and devil-songs, music of mercy, music of bru-  
tality . . .  
So long as man is of the sea, all weathers shall sway him,  
And out of the divine shall leap the demonic . . .

A friend comes to the solitary and says to him:  
"But surely out of pity you are for the people,  
Surely you are with the oppressed, the despised and the  
hungry . . .  
Surely you cannot stand by and see children suffer . . ."

And the solitary answers: What shall I do?

“ You shall become one of us,” says the friend,  
“ For whoever is not for us, is against us . . . ”

And the solitary ponders and answers:

“ But if I become one of you, I become one of the oppressors . . .

For what you believe in is of God, and what your enemies believe in is of the devil . . .

Oppression begins when God hurls Satan out of heaven . . . ”

“ Yet,” says the friend, “ are we not more right than our enemies? ”

And the solitary answers: “ What is newest is most right . . .

For the new desires things of glory, even as the old, when it was new, desired things of glory . . .

But answer me: wherein do you and your fellows differ from those of old? ”

“ Our aims, our ideals, our purposes are different,” says the friend . . .

And the solitary answers:

“ The sea of man is littered all over with the spindrift of ideals . . .

Great dreams and ideas go washing over the waves . . .

Wreckages of divine civilizations mock the great flood . . .

But so long as man is of the sea, so long will the sea use him in its eternal way . . .

Man’s world is what man is, not what he dreams . . . ”

“ But this is hopelessness,” says the friend.

And the solitary answers:

“ This is but life . . .



And when men seek to transcend themselves, they shall break  
the wheel,

They shall come out of the sea . . .

Only when a man becomes human does he cease to be a herd,  
an energy, a sea, a thing of nature,

And is healed of the mighty opposites . . .

It is because of the sea in himself from which he has never  
emerged,

It is because of nature in himself, the flux, the tides, storms,  
visions and furies,

That he remains a primitive masked in a dream of di-  
vinity . . .

“ Let him start a revolution in his own soul, and free the  
slaves in his own spirit,

And conquer the tyrants in his own breast,

And harness the beast in his blood,

And put away the temptation to be a supreme god,

And the equal temptation to be a powerful demon . . .

Then perhaps he shall step up on the shore of a new world,

And find what all are seeking . . .

“ It is weakness to seek freedom for self by slaughtering  
others . . .

Equality, liberty, brotherhood are of the soul, and are of  
the self . . .

The easy way is out and over, the hard way is in and  
through . . .

It is man's soul that needs a millennium and not man's  
world . . . ”

So the solitary spoke, and of course his words were a riddle,  
they were not understood . . .

And these two could be friends no longer . . .

## II

*I sing the battle of the soul:*

At moon-wane, in furious foam-flecked seas, eddies and  
spouts and spirals,  
The dreaming soul, a wave of flesh, whipped, wandering,  
tossing on hilly waters,  
Becomes aware of itself . . .

The bellbuoys clang longings for freedom,  
And the sea like innumerable bells takes up the song, and  
goes pealing with it,  
And the waking soul rolls like a bell clanging for libera-  
tion . . .

"I am a child," sings the soul,  
"I am a child and a slave . . ."  
"I am a child of two mothers . . ."

For the soul finds now a sea within the sea,  
It finds the surface sea of the waves of flesh clashing and  
shouting around it,  
It finds the under sea profound, the depths, deep and sound-  
less . . .  
Outer sea and inner sea,  
And only a wall of flesh like a strip of sand between the  
waters . . .  
Only a wall of flesh between the two engulfing mothers . . .

And the soul, whipped, wandering, tossing on hilly waters,  
Water itself gliding through water,  
Sport of the monstrous currents, the divine-demonic tides,  
Takes soundings in the depths and learns its law. . . .

The song of the outer sea is a loud song,  
But the song of the inner sea is a still small song . . . .  
And the inner sea sings: "All seas conquer their slaves,  
But to the conqueror of seas all seas bring gifts . . . .  
Shoreward, O soul, shoreward, be free . . . ."

Now there is a wrestler in the sea:  
He wrestles with the deep sea and the sea of waves:  
He sinks: he rises: he puts out strokes toward the shore:  
he is sucked back:  
Giddily he whirls, spitting the brine from his mouth, and  
laughs wildly, and is water slapping to and fro . . . .

And there comes upon him languor, and hate of the clashing  
waves, and disgust of motion, and weariness of effort,  
He is tired of small-sized devils and gods,  
Fatigued with crowds . . . .  
And into his ears now the deep still sea intones a siren  
song . . . .

"In," it sings, "under . . . come down, my child . . . .  
Out of restlessness, rest,  
Out of pain, peace . . . .  
There are memories with gentle ghosts, beloved shapes for-  
gotten, in the depths;  
Mother is there when the child comes home,  
She shall croon to you: she shall take you to her bosom . . . .  
And deeper than memory is Eden,

And Mother Eve and your Father God walking on the grass  
when the lilacs blossom . . .

And beneath God, the float of eternal peace . . .”

The soul listens, and sinks . . .

Sinks into the arms of the Mother . . .

Sinks through a layer of terror, through the terrible creeds  
and prohibiting bans of life . . .

Breaks the law of being, which is struggle,

And finds peace and enfolding death. . . .

And the soul must now choose: life or death,

Reality or Nirvana . . .

I sing not of those who, in living death, are sealed in them-  
selves,

*But I sing the battle of the soul,*

Which dashes away from its lips the much-loved cup of  
dream,

And with birth-throes breaks open the Mother and floun-  
ders out on the swirling floods,

And, strong with the depths, strikes shoreward again . . .

Many Satans entangle this swimmer and wrestler . . .

And a sunset song and a sunrise song ring in his ears and  
allure him . . .

“Power, Power, Power,” the sunrise song repeats,

“Love, Love, Love,” comes singing from the sunset . . .

Out of the sunrise, mirage of conquerors . . .

“Be the highest wave,” is the shout . . .

“For about the highest wave the cry of fame goes circling,  
And the highest wave that rises over the shoulders of the  
lesser waves,

That goes up by trampling down,  
Shall be as a rider of the sea, stern with the joy of mastery . . .

Get above the sea, by climbing over it," is the song of the visionary conquerors . . .

Old song and terrible . . .

The soul essays the task, and his height is only a slippery pushing of the lesser waves about him,

And his is the serfdom and the slavery of height . . .

Who can stay high, who refuses to obey the low?

But out of the sunset the song of love comes alluring,  
Over the crimson and melting tide the beautiful waves come trooping,

White hands, white hands are stretched to the wanderer,  
Faces glide out of shadow and back,

Golden breasts are soft in sunset,

Youth sings to youth . . .

There is a song of little children in the song of love,  
There is a song of fireside and the nest sheltered from the blast,

A song of mother and father and home . . .

"Why do you wander," it sings, "and why do you strive for the unattainable?

What use is there in icy, lonely freedom?

What comfort on the peak?

Power is bitterness: solitude is madness:

Give yourself to the common ways, the homely ways, the folk ways:

Come into this cove of the ocean, sheltered from time and tumult . . .

Forget the depths and the heights — but while there is yet  
life, live,  
Live on from day to day, with many soft arms around  
you . . .”

This song is the most subtle temptation of the soul,  
This sunset song . . .  
*But I sing the battle of the soul*  
Which wrestles with the weakness of love, which is self-love,  
And the meshes of melting pity, which is self-pity . . .

Now the soul comes to a knowledge of itself,  
And finds, in horror, that all the evils of the world,  
Yes, all the evils of the two seas,  
Are of itself, tangled with itself,  
That the public evil of the outer sea  
And the cosmic evil of the inner sea  
Are woven like threads into itself . . .  
So it ceases now to wrestle with other souls,  
And begins to wrestle with its own soul . . .  
In itself to push out the slave and the tyrant, the beast and  
the saint, the devil and god . . .

Yea, it goes up even against its beautiful gods,  
Its adored Jesus, pure-browed Mary, and revered Jehovah,  
And trembling with superstitious fear, breaks their  
images . . .

And the soul cries: “ I have been water in water,  
What I thought was self was my mingling in others,  
Imitation of Christ, imitation of heroes, imitation of this  
teacher, that;  
But now I will put all out of me though I am stripped and  
husked like an ear of corn

And find in the end, mildew and withered kernels . . .  
I shall win myself though myself is the thinnest of shadows,  
The tiniest of seeds . . .  
I will become lonely, in order to be born . . .”

Bitter are the waters of November,  
Bleak is the cold snow-pitted air that whirls over the barren  
    sea,  
And the gray clouds that massively fold black shadows, while  
    the sea's song is a dirge, a threnody,  
And there is no life on the deep, but the mechanical sloping  
    of breakers . . .  
Barren, endless, and bitter the sea rides,  
A few gulls wheel, the air is a flight of shadows . . .

O loneliness, who has sung your song, who has known your  
    dark music?  
Only the stripped soul knows you, only the naked self has  
    tasted your salt . . .

As by a miracle the soul, wrestling only with itself, draws to  
    the shore,  
And that gray day breaks when it stands shivering and  
    naked on the sand,  
And looking about, sees that it is alone,  
And that the sea is warmer than the winter air,  
And that comfort is only in the sea . . .

Like a child, the soul weeps . . .  
“I am separated from all things,” it whimpers,  
“I am sundered from all fires, and aloof from comfort . . .  
I am naked, and have become little . . .

O the unbearableness of littleness,  
O the pain of being only human and little . . .”

And now comes the temptation of the return . . .

*But I sing the battle of the soul*

Which, lonely as in death, straightens up in all nakedness,  
Takes the North wind and the terrible view of emptiness,  
And the dying of all old ways of comfort and mightiness,  
And the being cut off from the face of Man and the face of  
God . . .

I sing of the soul that has won self out of the clutch of the  
seas,

Self, but a bitter little fruit to win,  
But conquered and kept . . .

The day dies, the night is still . . .

In a few dark hours a long season passes,  
And in the darkness before dawn on the land the song of  
meadowlarks is heard,  
And the smell of lilacs comes down to mix with the sea-  
smell . . .

A new song is on the sea,

A softer and clearer song, a music of the south and the  
homing bluebirds,  
And in the heart, a new song . . .

“ Spring has come . . .

What grass blades pierce the loam of the spirit?

What leaves open their crumpled baby hands?

And where is loneliness now with sea and earth and the  
shining cities of men



Singing about me?  
And where is bitterness now and barrenness, with the  
golden light  
Shallowing along the uneven sea and dropping from the blue  
heavens?  
And what is this in my being that bubbles upward unhin-  
dered and free,  
Is it understanding? Has love come?"

Now the soul chants the chant of freedom  
And the miracle of separation . . .  
Now it glories in being human, and is glad of littleness . . .  
Now the soul resists the depths no longer, and wrestles no  
longer with gods and demons,  
For, behold, it is at one with the depths . . .

Soul and sea sing the song of reconciliation . . .  
For he who is engulfed in the sea is a slave of the sea,  
But to the conqueror of the sea, the sea brings gifts . . .  
Yea, the monster sea now becomes the comrade of the soul,  
And sea and soul move as married . . .

The soul sings: "Because I am myself and not the sea,  
nor in it,  
Now I can work with the sea . . .  
The sea has mighty currents and tides of destiny,  
And I, born of the sea, must give myself to my doom,  
Accept the destiny the depths allot me,  
The destiny I make my own through my own need, my own  
willingness . . .  
And working with the sea, I shall work out my life . . ."

Dreams, phantasies, imaginings . . .  
Bubbling of the depths, the risen visionary billows of the  
sea of the spirit,  
In the night breaking on the shores of consciousness  
And the soul resisting like sand and rock, and so writing  
crooked lines of dream,  
Yea, the soul and the sea between them writing crooked lines  
of dream . . .

On the shore at the break of day the soul walks  
And examines the crooked lines, and deciphers this writing,  
And learns its law . . . the law of the marriage of sea  
and soul . . .  
And obeying this law, is free . . .

Not inland the soul goes, not seaward . . .  
But along its jagged shore — its own fate, given by self and  
the sea . . .

There is a mystery here, inexpressible:  
And however the books describe it,  
Only he who has won himself may understand . . .  
Only the lover knows love, only the sorrower sorrow,  
Only the free soul freedom. . . .

*I sing the battle of the soul*  
Which even when free longs back at times for bondage,  
And often is lured by the white hands under  
And swallowed again in the sea,  
And again he battles, and again he must win his free-  
dom . . .

### III

*Mare æternis!*

In the night, flashes of lightning illumining your moving  
acres,

Sky-thunder answering sea-thunder,

Sky and sea wrestling in a broken blackness . . .

The whistling of the wind in the teeth of the night . . .

Slash of the rain and the crackling of the broom and grass  
on the sand-dunes . . .

All life seeks cover: the bird to his nest, the nestling to the  
brooding wing,

And inland beasts to their lairs . . .

*Mare æternis!* Intolerable power,

Trampling destructiveness,

Shattering energy . . .

Between such forces who can stand and walk?

Who can survive between such a sea and such a sky?

Yet I see a lantern on the shore,

I see staggering yellow light on oilskin, the double motion  
of legs,

Flap of a coat about a button, a halo of slanting rain around  
the swinging lantern . . .

It is the solitary walking by the sea,

It is the solitary stooping now and then to study the  
crooked tide-lines, the débris and driftage when a billow  
pulls back,

It is the solitary battling against the risen outstretched com-  
bers and their devouring mouths,

Battling against the loosed skies and the lightning, wading  
his way through a double thunder . . .

Seaward the lightning reveals a swirling quadrangle of the  
deep,

And the solitary looking, feels his heart tighten and become  
a knot. . . .

Are those human heads and slippery naked human bodies  
struggling among the white-caps?

Is the sea-water blood, reddening round them? Is it their  
own blood reddens the sea?

Look, with sharp blades they are stabbing and hacking at  
each other . . .

The sheeted lightning fails, burying the mêlée in black-  
ness . . .

“Humanity! humanity!” cries the solitary . . .

“O you, my flesh, flesh of the adoration and the dream of  
brotherhood and of love,

Flesh of the infinite clear and quiet reason,

Flesh of the music of the isles of Greece,

Flesh of the coming of the Christ,

Flesh dedicated to divine vision,

Are you madness and murder and ravening bestiality?

What is in the heart of man, what is in his soul?

What sky-terror? what sea-horror?

What snake's venom does a man spit? and what dragon's  
fire?

You sons of God, is your mother the earthquake and the avalanche?

*"Mare æternis!* I know now what song your storm is singing;

What hymn of hate yells in the gale and the roaring swale and the thundering sky . . .

I know now your love of the suffering and anguish of others,

Your tiger-love of enemies,

You who knew how to invent racks and cannons and vapors of dense poison and spirits of body-smothering flame . . ."

And as the solitary cried out a mob in a breaker broke about him,

And with loud shouts they ringed him toward the sea . . .

He did not fight then: he fought a beast that suddenly reared out of his own depths,

And the billow fell away . . .

But one shouted from the sea-fringe . . .

"Who are you, traitor, who stand aside from the battle?"

"What have I to do with the battle?" asked the solitary . . .

"If you are not with us," cried the other, "you are with the enemy!"

"Neither with the enemy, nor with you," the solitary answered . . .

“Are you not a human being?” the other cried. “And are you not of our nation?  
And is not the voice of the people the voice of God?”

“Yes,” answered the solitary, “the voice of the people is the voice of God,  
And it is also the voice of the Devil . . .”

The night dragged away the questioner: but the solitary was troubled . . .

He stooped and read the crooked writing in the sand . . .

And he read: “Obey the law of your being . . .

Obey the law of sea and self in your own soul . . .

Accept your destiny . . .

Neither resist them nor obey them: they know not what they do . . .

Evade, and go on . . .”

Under the cover of the storm, the solitary, muffling his lantern, picked his way . . .

And he mused:

“When shall the voice of the people be *voices*, and these voices, neither God nor devil, but human?

When shall the cause cease to be a sacred cause, and one’s friends cease to be saints and one’s enemies Satans?

When shall humanity cease to be a sea, an energy of nature, a clash of opposites, and become human?

When shall a man cease to walk in the steps of his gods and half-gods

And walk in his own steps?

When shall men cease from violence against others and turn  
the battle against the evil in themselves?

Do they not know that the evil they bayonet is an evil  
within them?

And when shall they cease from demanding that the free  
return to their bondage?"

"Yea," mused the solitary,

"The deep sea and I are in league.

How then can I obey the surface sea of humanity which is  
but the froth, toy and slave of the deep sea?

Whom have I harmed? whom have I opposed?

Why are they jealous of me? why do they destroy the  
strong and those who refuse to be bound with their  
bondage?

What do they fear at the hands of free men? Are they not  
shouting for freedom all the time?

They cry: "We must be free"; but if anyone becomes free,  
they put him in chains and thrust him in jail . . .

Not freedom they seek: but power . . .

The sea wants power and sensual sultry nights,

And noise, and motion, and bondage, and abandon . . .

The sea loves the taste of many things

But loves nothing so much as the taste of human blood . . ."

The solitary went plunging through the night,

And the great storm reeled about him,

By lightning-illumination he saw terrible sights,

Visions of the deep that wrung his heart and blinded him  
with angry tears . . .

He saw a crumbling acre of skinny wretches, a toss of be-  
seething hands, and heard the animal cry of hunger,

Starving children floated dying on the sliding foam,

Wailing mothers crouched over babies and the waves washed  
them apart,  
The cruel lightning slashed down among them, the tide  
boiled with blood . . .  
And darkness carried their sorrow afar . . .

And he saw an acre of wild gayety, a dance of Dionysian  
fury in the sea,  
Eerie phosphorescence over the combers' crests, and the  
naked passion of men and women,  
And a laughter more horrible than the wail of hunger in  
that sea of blood . . .

And he saw at one place two lovers quarreling,  
And each was trying to win back the soul he had lost in the  
other,  
For their love was a living each of the other's life,  
And now each hated the other because he had lost his own  
freedom,  
And since each soul was in the other each stab they gave  
stabbed only themselves . . .  
Their hate was perfect, for their love was great . . .  
And in that scene the solitary seemed to see the whole  
struggle of humanity . . .

And he saw many other sights, and some of surpassing  
beauty,  
Sudden glimpses so tenderly beautiful that pity softened  
him . . .  
The friend who took his friend's place in guilt and died for  
him . . .  
The worn mother smiling with devout joy over the triumph  
of her son,



The unspoiled magic of first love, a boy and a girl shy and  
reverent before each other . . .

The lonely scientist giving up all things to cure a malign  
disease . . .

Joyous singers, innocent children, teachers patient with the  
young . . .

Much of wonder, pity and sweetness . . . moon-glimpses in  
a thunderstorm . . .

And the solitary thought: "Surely I cannot walk apart  
from all this . . .

Surely I am flesh of this flesh . . .

How can I go on in loneliness on the shore when the deep  
is a cry and a question and a beseeching of hands?

My folk is caught in the sea-nets, struggling, blind and in  
darkness . . .

Their terror and ecstasy are here — not on some distant  
planet —

And I am here . . . What can I do? what is my portion of  
the guilt and glory?"

He held his lantern to the crooked tide-lines,

And he read:

"The fruit ripens, and when it is ripened it falls,

And the animals eat of it . . .

Green fruit is no gift to hungry mouths — but only the  
ripened and mellow fruit . . ."

Walking on, he pondered the riddle . . .

"Can it mean," he mused, "that when I am ripe, I too shall  
be a gift?

It is true I have nothing to give to mankind but myself . . .

Myself through my works . . .

Must I let my works ripen in me, and when they are ripe,  
let them drop?

I live through the gifts of the sea — I should die this instant  
if humanity withheld its service, its dreams, its com-  
radeship . . .

Then I must give back all of myself . . . give back love and  
understanding and comradeship and the day's work,  
Yea, and the life-work . . .

“And I understand,” he cried at last . . .

“To ripen, I must grow by my own law,  
Even as an apple grows by its own law . . .

Hence, I go against others only when they demand that I  
follow *their* law;

I must resist such violence, and hold to my way . . .

Only thus may I become a gift to the folk . . .

But if I join with this group and that, if I enter their set  
wars, and their sea of passions,

Then growth is warped by that which is beyond the human,

Then again I am only water in water, a helpless wave of  
the sea . . .

The free soul must give himself

But himself can only emerge and be born when he comes  
out of other selves,

When he obeys, not others, but himself . . .”

#### IV

Wonderful as a bird in the float of the sunrise in the mountains  
Is the sharp littleness, the sun-drinking solitude of the  
redeemed soul . . .

Where there are rocks, and a shoulder of grassy Earth,  
The solitary stands in the mountain morning,  
Wind-kissed, facing the dawn . . .

Here the sea-song is a forest-song  
And here what flowed is solid . . .

The solitary sings the song of deliverance . . .

I drink the sun, who drank only bitter waters . . .  
I see hill, sky and grass, clear and chiselled out real by the  
strokes of the sun-rays . . .  
And I that tossed in floundering seas  
Have earth and rock underfoot . . .  
Everything is solid as a stone  
And my soul is solid as a stone . . .

Littleness is a strong house to live in . . .  
It is a stone . . .

A stone that no waters may wear away . . .

From the mountains the seas have departed  
For seas are at home only in abysses . . .

Out of the seas of the Earth the mountains rise up  
Shouting the song of freedom . . .

I that was a sailor and a swimmer have become a moun-  
taineer.

Gulf of heaven, blue pocket of the abyss,  
Enveloping sun-arched sky whose impalpable dome melts  
in the twilight,

By dusk melted like a dusty blue cobweb,  
And when the cobweb vanishes, a symbol of Eternity appears,  
A star, and then a bridge of stars suspended between the  
piers of the universe,

And upward into the abyss man looks,  
Standing on two legs against the turning lump of Earth  
With upraised face against the wheeling of the worlds in  
unsheltered night . . .

I, a man, stand as self-contained and solid in my littleness,  
As you in your vastness . . .

I am human,

You are Cosmos,

I would not change places with you: I would not be else-  
where: I dream of no past or future:

I accept the present moment, the present place and what  
I am . . .

Standing on a hurried lump in the abyss,

I claim myself . . .

This is the sea-fruit the ocean seeks ever to deliver from  
its womb . . .

This is the child the mother yearned to bear . . .

For wherefore the stormy passion of the whipped deep?

Wherefore the freedom-hunger in humanity?

What is the urge toward redemption? what is this terrible  
age-long cry for a savior?

Why does the sea deliver the hills out of itself?

Why do they stand up, these rocks?

What is the meaning of the dry land and the peaks?

As the hills from the sea; so man from the sea . . .

The sea rises up into rain, and the rain falls down again . . .

But if the rain fall into the sea

It is only water falling on water . . .

But the hills laugh as they take the rain in their faces,

And out of the hills come blossoms, grasses, flowers and fruit,

And nibbling wet mouths are glad of fresh Earth . . .

The mountains are great

Because the sea does not come to them like a devouring  
monster

But comes to them only in the mercy of rain;

This is a gift of the sea to all that is delivered out of the  
sea . . .

And so when the soul is delivered

The great sea sends spring rain over the soul . . .

What was sea-water to the soul when it too was a wave of  
the sea?

But now it is of the mountains and when the sea comes to it  
on the wings of the clouds and dissolves upon it in rain  
Like moist soil it drinks this mercy and feels the roots be-  
ginning to stir,  
And the grass blades piercing, and the blossoms beginning to  
open . . .  
Now it knows the joy and copious loving motherhood of the  
sea  
Which gives its free children the rain of plenty . . .

And the soul in the distance beholds the blue sea among its  
capes,  
And in the forest and in the grass and echoing far over the  
morning air  
It hears the song eternal, the song of the sea . . .

My song ends with the song of the sea . . .  
The song the sea sings untiringly on the shores of the  
world . . .

One song, as the planet flies, rises unendingly from its  
lips,  
And in that song the planet children are enfolded, and never  
go free of it,  
And never desire to go free of it . . .  
For the soul hearing this song, trembles with music to its  
roots  
And drinks the miracle drink. . . .

It is the song of the Mother forever near,  
It is the song of the great Mother singing to her child . . .

“O song,” sings the soul, “which first I heard in the neighboring heart-beats and blood pulses of my mother,  
Song that shaped in my own brain which was a bay of the silver-clashing sea of the past,  
Immemorial music that slips through the mother in the body of the child at the hour of birth,  
And he carries it into the world, and he hears it in the world,  
In the bodies of men and women, in the motions of nature,  
In nations, and sky, and Earth, and ocean . . .

Eternal song, eternal voice of the Mother . . .  
Malformed Mother, become beautiful and straight when the child finds freedom . . .  
Mother who loves the free . . .  
Mother who scourges slaves but walks like a comrade with the emancipated. . . .  
Your song, Mother, sounds in my ears forever . . .  
And by your song and the song of my soul married like treble and bass, one strain, I live and I labor,  
And out of your timeless wisdom I find my light,  
And out of your power, my flame . . .”

Cradle-song — voyage-song — grave-song of humanity . . .  
Song whose refrain is a promise, a new vision, a new symbol . . .  
Symbol of the complete human being  
Whose coming in us all is the hope of the universe . . .





SONGS OUT OF SOLITUDE



## THE SHIP OF SKIES

The ship of skies  
Foundered in the west  
And its blazing prow  
Sank off some thundering shore beyond the silence  
And dark green of the world.

Or like ten rivers  
The thin-spread clouds ran  
Converging with vermilion and purple waters  
On the western ledge  
And pouring in flame over the world's edge . . .

In those bright regions  
Sails were blown beyond our trouble  
And some great action  
Moved like song . . .

But here on tired Earth  
The heavy mist filled the green runnels of valleys;  
The weary air  
Grew dark around the thrush's aching throat;  
The house  
Gloomed itself silent and black . . .  
The day  
Drowsed off to sleep.

## MIST

I

I

In mist Monday  
Looms,  
A world groping its way on a soundless,  
Sightless sea:  
Breaking the mist like a ship  
Stopped by bells . . .

No ripples:  
No rain-patter:  
No hum of engines:  
A dead ship  
On the dead sea . . .

But on deck voices  
Clear, querulous, human.

2

In the becalmed air of these hills  
A strayed flicker pipes,  
A frog grunts,  
Footsteps sound on gravel:

[ 46 ]

But the mountain-garden  
Lies at the bottom of a motionless ocean,  
And Earth is an underworld.

The forest has given itself to the arms of whiteness,  
And the hills wander like sheep.

3

In mist Monday  
Looms,  
A giant ship stopped on a soundless,  
Sightless sea.

II

In mist the soul  
Plaintively whispers . . .

“There are tears too many,” it whispers,  
“And fears too many;  
I am weary of the ever-striving,  
I am tired of tears . . .  
I am weary of the groping and the stumbling  
On the gray graves of the years . . .

“There is memory of girls like moths in the twilight  
On the old city ways,  
Memory of the gray twilight of the old days:  
Memory of the hands of children clutching, clutching,  
Beloved faces, dead, appear . . .  
Beloved arms are round my drooping head  
And her song is in my ear.”

### III

In mist the world  
Forsakenly sings . . .

“ Oh, for the old dead days of peace,” it sings,  
“ The old sweet ways of peace . . .  
There were cities that ran with the sunrise of wild youth,  
Our children were alive,  
All over again the Golden Fleece was to win  
And honey to gain for the hive . . .

“ All over again there was love’s wild sweetness to win,  
And the tale of the home retold,  
The golden breakers lured to a launching of ships  
In the years of old . . .  
The aged of Earth could vanish away like the night  
Before the sun of the young,  
The human song that has risen with every spring  
Was now to be resung . . .

“ But the youth of the world lies dead,  
The young blood is spilled,  
We shall live for a long winter  
Among the graves of the killed . . .  
We shall live for a long winter  
Remembering ways of peace,  
Recalling the days of peace;  
We shall grow old in the knowledge  
We were better dead with these.”

## IV

In mist Monday

Looms,

A world groping its way on a soundless,

Sightless sea :

Breaking the mist like a ship

Stopped by bells . . .

## SILENCE

And now  
I know how quiet a thing  
And calm  
Is freedom . . .  
It cannot raise its voice nor break  
The rhythm of its breathing . . .

It is,—  
Needing no song,  
No trumpets . . .  
It does not cry nor laugh  
But is silent . . .

To give it voice  
Silence should have to turn to song.  
But what is song?  
. . . . Silence broken.



## RAIN-SONG

I hear the window,  
It is splashed, lashed :  
I hear the forest,  
There is rain in the gesticulating branches :  
I hear the thrush,  
There is rain in his tawny throat ;  
I hear my mother in the kitchen singing as she peels peaches :  
There is rain in her dark heart.

## SUMMER NIGHT

Down South's singing: "Darkies,  
Roll dem cotton bales . . ."  
"Tennessee's ketching de Memphis blues . . ."  
. . . And a moon on the Mississippi  
    Is as sheer love-mad  
    As a moon on Lake Michigan . . .  
Lincoln Park is silver-washed with lake ripples:  
Every dark spot is a nest for two cool aching bodies . .  
(I remember you, Chicago girl,  
And the blue electric light on your blue eyes,  
Kisses with the taste of soft coal smoke in them,  
Gossip with railroad yards in the rear.)

Telephone bells, those rasping telephone bells,  
Why are they ringing in the moonlight  
When folks should be loving and singing?

There are too many people in New York City:  
There are miles of roofs all cluttered with legs and arms  
    and faces:  
There are chimney stacks all black in the moon like silver  
    tarnished . . .  
I see a boy of five on a chimney-top  
Nude against the moon  
Urinating silver on the city . . .  
The moon smiles . . .

A ferry boat carries yellow waters about her,  
Pier bells clang . . .  
Beside a heap of pigiron on the dock the 'longshoreman's  
daughter  
Is honeying the captain's son . . .

"Yes," says the salesman, fresh from the Lackawanna Limited,  
His hands on the steel of the ferry gates,  
"Say what you want, there's nothing like her . . .  
Good old Girl . . .  
*She's* the skyline all right, all right . . .  
O that Golden Woolworth Tower!  
Out of five and ten cent pieces he pulled a skyscraper  
Biggest on Earth . . .  
*De-mocracy*, I tell yer . . ."

They eat in the Childs' Restaurants at two in the morning:  
Buckwheat cakes with corn syrup,  
Mugs of coffee on marble slabs . . .

In New Orleans, Deadwood, Key West and Council Bluffs,  
In Portland, Oregon, and Portland, Maine,  
A young woman has so multiplied her image  
That while she sits in the flesh sipping a lemonade in Los Angeles,  
The movie millions laugh and cry, watching her loveliness  
in rags in the Rockies . . .  
"Ain't Mary Pickford a darling?"

The Baltimore trolley cars go jammed with summer fluff  
and straw hats

Out to Electric City,  
Blazing, booming, shrieking . . .  
And come back crowded down silent avenues . . .  
(Trolleys along the Atlantic Coast,  
Trolleys in the Alleghanies,  
Trolleys making the loop in soot-soft Pittsburgh,  
Trolleys in the dark streaking a flare through moon-lit  
countryside.)

Coney Island skims golden platters along the edge of the  
Atlantic Ocean . . .  
Ten young dolphin women sport in the heaving breakers,  
They shriek and scatter as the lifeboat swings among  
them . . .

Down beside the cottonfields  
A line of shanties:  
Mammy sings: "Deep River,"  
With a dark child at her bosom . . .  
Pickaninny cries like white trash for the moon . . .  
The young negroes are singing  
Banjo-tunes . . .

On door-steps in Denver  
The white shimmering girls  
Laugh lightly while the spick-and-span boys  
Try to be men in love . . .

Above the Grand Canyon of the Colorado,  
A little out of St. Paul,  
Not far from Cleveland,  
In the swaying cushioned Pullmans under yellow bulbs  
The porters are making up the berths . . .

All the commercial American hotels  
Have electric lights, individual bathrooms, valet service, and  
are fireproof skyscrapers . . .  
Conventions are breaking up their meetings in the ball-  
rooms . . .  
Out in the streets the cars clash, the boys shout  
"extras" . . .

Atlanta is sweltering tonight,  
But Minneapolis is cool . . .  
New York is full of the sea, lazy warm and moon-  
drunk . . .

It's odd to think that the hospitals, the almshouses, and the  
Morgues  
Are crowded with wrecks and corpses . . .  
It's odd to think of suicides in hall bedrooms, or down by  
the dreaming sea, or along the Ohio . . .  
It's odd to think of an East-Side room in gaslight  
And a greasy father with a grand passion  
Tearing his hair like Othello because his daughter is  
ruined . . .  
Killing, thieving, quarreling, hunger —  
America is like a bloated body swelling with balked  
desire . . .  
The air grows hotter, the din louder,  
Glasses are snapped, the wine spills over, the carousel  
whirls,  
The moon pours madness,  
The moon has turned our brains, and the wild demon is  
loosed. . .

Yet where the garden  
Glories over the rocks of the mountain,  
Larkspur and rose look faded in the brilliant moon;  
They die into the dew-touched air,  
And in the quiet  
Two lovers sigh, content . . .  
Their world, a circle of hills,  
A moon, a bed, themselves . . .

All night long the Pittsburgh foundries flare:  
You can't turn off the furnaces, you can't put out the fires:  
The United States with electric lights  
Sparkles all night long . . .

## NOCTURNE

I

I

Moonlight and Autumn: floods of silver,  
A waterfall,  
Pour over cliffs of space  
On crouching hills and camel-backed forests and crowded  
gardens.

I, too, a moon reflect  
The essence of sunlight of old days  
And in the silver of memory  
Relive youth

2

The city holds up her chimneys like rain-barrels to catch  
moonlight,  
The ocean drinks silver  
To bathe in a pale tinge of green her ships and fishes,  
A woman leans from a window  
And is a silver shower  
On my heart beneath.

## 3

Wash after dying wash  
 The sea, low-singing, spans the illimitable shadow of the  
     shore  
 With silver bridges . . .  
 One pine has moon-soaked needles  
 That faintly rustle when the night breathes . . .  
 Silence  
 Throbs in the ear-drums, as if in the highest skies  
 A music of stars  
 Were played behind walls of glass, and I could not hear . . .

## 4

A child looks up through the window from his bed  
 And the face of the moon is the countenance of his first god;  
 His eyes stained silver  
 Are round with awe.

Now, years later,  
 I mercilessly stare through changed vision  
 At a dead planet.

## 5

A boy is kissing a girl  
 In the shadow of a doorway . . . the long street  
 Sounds empty beside them, vacantly gray in the moon . . .  
 Her hair is soft in his hand,  
 Her lips  
 Are trembling hotly at his . . .



A passion of old cities  
Pours a thrill through their hearts,  
An old passion of desperate love  
Binds them with warm arms . . .

The watchman is trying the doors, and stalks by,  
smiling . . .  
A ripple of sea-wind, singing a silver moon-song, trips up  
the street . . .

But this passes in fire  
From lips to lips, to the beloved woman,  
And what was, is,  
Old love, a gift to new.

## II

### I

Night grows vaster  
With simulation of intense death . . .

At one o'clock  
The mountain-farm sleeps  
In coop and stable, barn and house;  
The forest slumbers  
Like an eagle spread-wing on her brood . . .  
Nests are a rhythm of faint dream,  
Gardens are graves . . .

## 2

Like the last soul alive on a dead planet  
 I sit with my candle,  
 Unmoved by the majestic march of silence . . .

My open window  
 Is a chute for moon-beams;  
 Transfigured, the floor receives them . . .

## 3

In intense, vast death  
 My brain burns,  
 Burns like the candle:  
 We are two flames . . .  
 We two are awake and burning into the night . . .

My brain burns:  
 Vivid reaches of battleground, heaped with young bodies . . .  
 Streets of secret windows:  
 Faces remembered . . .

## 4

Silence marches with invisible ranks from sky to sky,  
 From coast to coast;  
 My blood-drops move in their courses  
 As the planets in theirs . . .

The moon like a prow  
 Plows the ocean of ether . . .  
 And my soul is a moon

Catching the light of my lost sun  
And sieving it through silver  
For a spread over seas and dunes, over cities and hills,  
To behold the perishing living through the immortal dead.

### III

#### I

Who loves the night  
When light  
Is of other worlds and of other times?

Who shrinks from seeing faces as they are,  
And dust,  
And glaring streets of noon,  
And garbage?

Whose soul sheds on the world  
Silvery beams  
Of time-transfigured memories,  
Blurring the angles with twilight,  
Burying the ugly in shadow?

#### 2

The meadow-lark drops  
His sunny dew of song  
On meadow-grass . . .

Robin is in the garden  
Wetting his wings among the roses:

A myriad of lives  
Take away the lonely nocturne of my heart.

Harvests to gather, apples to crate,  
Grapes for the crushing . . .  
Squirrels and farmer are afoot . . .  
The woods jet scarlet.

3

Such a fire in the skies is the sun  
My moon pales, and whitens, dying . . .  
The strength of fire  
Quenches my stars and shuts through my boundless soul  
A narrow sky of day . . .  
My blood sets toward the task, my spirit is whittled  
To a blade of deeds. . . .

The hidden is revealed,  
The revealed is hidde

## GRAY EVENING

In the loved melancholy of gray evening  
We smoke and are still . . .

In the loved melancholy of gray evening  
Mountains rimming the world in a misty ring  
Circle our hill of dark green timber, and wild garden, and  
rose-pillared house.

Roll, you clouds, from east to west,  
You smokes from the pipe of the coming  
Night . . .

Glistening he comes, the shaggy wanderer,  
Brooding on the dark hard Earth.

Round us the trees are singing  
A reminiscence from the dawn of time  
When their tops peeped from the floods  
And the song of the sea was heard . . .

Like surf, they sing . . .

In the loved melancholy of gray evening  
This sound has the joy of strong dark things.

Roll, you smokes, from east to west,  
The gray old Chief puffs his pipe of Peace . . .  
His cold rain-air shall be lead on our eyelids  
And deep sleep draw us down . . .

We smoke and are still:  
The heart is vague with strong dark things, with roots and  
Earth,  
With age like rocks;  
Its throb is warm with the dark human.

But we are still,  
But we are very still,  
In the loved melancholy of gray evening,  
O hushed, remote and still,  
In the loved melancholy of gray evening.

## MORNING SONG

Morning is my time.

I must have the early sun shine through this song.

I love the sky cloudless, a radiance of quivering blue,

The sun not too high up :

The month May or October :

A blithe hardiness in the wind, and the budding or harvest  
of flowers :

The earliest or latest birds :

The city streets golden with a spring morning and gay with  
toilers,

Or brilliant with autumn and the more zestful air . . .

Happy is the man who wakes up fresh from sound sleep,

A song in his heart, vigorously rising and bathing himself,

Ardent with thirst for vivid life,

Laughing that his eyes do not open on some other planet,

But they open here, and he finds himself at home in the old  
Earth,

And meets again the people he knows,

The woman he loves, his children, his enterprises,

And goes to his work throbbing with the news of the world,

And loves his work — the machinery, the puzzling prob-  
lems —

And comes home at night for his silence among books,

Or his vibrant speech among familiar friends,

Or the mystery of union with the woman . . .

Happier is this man if he is an in-goer as well as an out-goer,  
If he is a traveler and explorer in the interior life of man,  
At home with all visions, the processions of the stars and  
of the ages,  
The daring and defiant intuitions of the soul . . .

I have been doubting and drooping . . .  
I am one of those who are born with a stoop-shouldered  
spirit —  
I am a night-soul, son of the darkness . . .  
No wonder I love the morning and the unclouded dazzle  
of the sun,  
And the unselfconscious joy of birds,  
And am drawn mightily to women who sparkle, sport and  
laugh,  
And adventurous men of action . . .

But in myself, I am only too ready to lean to my own be-  
loved darkness,  
The temptation of sorrow and lament,  
The baying of the hounds of hate and suspicion,  
Jealousy, distrust and suffering:  
I am only too ready to give myself to the tide of blackness,  
Voluptuary of despair . . .

Stand up, my soul: this is a good morning for a fresh start,  
The snow lies on the sills, and is thick on the pavements,  
The air is keen, the city at work . . .

Is not this the darkest year of the Earth?  
So much more the need of courage, boldness, battle, faith!



## THE RAINBOW.

### I

The storm dies . . .

Clouds,  
Their black anger spent,  
Soften into creamy gauze, and float apart, and heaven  
Bathed, breaks blue . . .

West  
The low sun pours fire  
Through a white well,  
East  
A rainbow  
Trembles . . .

Round us the Earth  
Laughs rainily . . .  
The wet garden sparkles,  
The wet robin sings . . .

The hard rain flailed  
Fragrance from grass and dust and mint and rose  
And the air  
Is perfume . . .

We drink,  
As if the body were a mouth,  
The seen world of brilliant hills  
Sunned and rainbowed,  
The tasted world, fresh, cool, and odorous,  
The heard world of wind-dapple, bird-song, human  
    voices . . .  
And the felt world  
Of heavenly peace.

The rainbow arches  
From soul to soul,  
Our dark clouds whiten,  
Floating like reveries of song,  
Blue of heaven breaks  
Through the heart's fire . . .  
Together we laugh low,  
At peace.

## II

Here is peace . . .  
But that black storm,  
That whirlwind storm,  
Thunders through the human world,  
Stripping the forest of a generation  
Of blossoms and young leaves . . .

Millions,  
Upgazing,  
Wait for the divine arch whereunder  
Armies shall march with evening song  
Of heavenly peace,

And the perfumed winds  
Blow off the sulphurous vapors  
And the sky's blue  
Break through the battle-smoke . . .

They wait, dying;  
And it comes too late  
For the world's youth,  
And it comes never  
For doomed humanity . . .

For this is a storm  
Which has raged since the dawn of time,  
This is a storm  
Between the demons and gods in the human soul,  
This is a storm  
Under every roof of man,  
And in every body of flesh . . .

But this generation  
Has gathered each soul's tempest into one black heaven  
Of rolling lightning-riven storm,  
And the deep horror of humanity  
Is nakedly revealed  
In one great Doomsday . . .

### III

Shall peace be peace?  
It shall not be  
Save along the path of the ascension,  
The path no eyes have seen,  
No feet have felt . . .

Above man lies peace,  
Among the evening hills  
Where the late robin  
Sings in the sparkling garden,  
Where the rainbow  
Trembles in the east,  
Where the sinking sun  
Pours splendor through a well of cloud . . .

Above man  
And his unregenerate desires,  
His power-hunger, primal lust,  
Above man  
In a world which the race inhabits with hills and animals,  
With sun and storm,  
A world vaster  
Than cities and empires,  
A world where the gods  
Envelop and transcend the marketplace,  
A world whose prizes  
Are not fame or power or wealth,  
But that blest harmony  
Which pays itself . . .

Among those hills ascended  
The spirit stands alone, and says, "I am,"  
And to God, "Thou art,"  
And to Nature, "Thou, too, art,"  
And to man, "Thou art,  
But what thou seekest, I seek not,  
In this ascension."

When man overcomes man  
Then peace dawns,  
The storm dies . . .  
And in the west  
The low sun pours fire  
Through a white well,  
And in the east  
A rainbow  
Trembles . . .

## SHADOW

Sundown tonight  
Is not like something out in the world,  
But like a memory  
Seen in vague pictures of the mind . . .

Ashes of sunset,  
And mournful remembrances in gray  
In some west beyond the west,  
And the sickle moon  
Like the sun's ghost remaining behind,  
Tinted with the transient colors of the changing dusk,  
And Earth  
Mourning, not really, but in echoes  
Through the windy darkness of phantom trees  
And night  
Closing cold on the heart . . .

Closing cold  
On the chill tomb of the shrouded memories . . .  
No moon-memories  
Of beautiful dancers bathed by moonlight,  
Wild loves by wilder seas,  
And youth singing on the gleaming housetops,  
But the damp cellar-ghosts,  
The ugly insane spirits,  
Death's-head revellers . . .

Evil is evil, throbs the heart,  
Evil is evil . . .  
From their gigantic graves in man  
The titanic powers  
Break, and with steps of earthquake, stalk,  
Proclaiming war . . .

The multitudes of the Earth are gathered in a jungle,  
The torches flare under the new moon,  
In the phantom forest the naked millions  
Hold orgy,  
Calling on Mumbo-Jumbo and Satan,  
Breaking the taboo of blood,  
And in dionysian fury  
Doing massive murder . . .

Let not the murderer call  
His trade by a noble name,  
But let us look on the dead  
And see the naked evil . . .

For Doomsday is upon us, and this is the great harvesting of  
human evil,  
Now we reveal what we are  
Though we say what we are is the enemy,  
We lay bare the buried,  
Ourselves the harvesters and the harvest,  
We are cut down in our ripe evil  
And are done to death, self-slaughtered . . .

No God overlooks the battle,  
There are no Valkyries to bear the heroes to bliss,

No Jove and no Jehovah  
Blend this vengeance with pity,  
No Jesus walks through the mangled corn of No Man's  
Land . . .

We that have slain our gods  
Gaze at empty skies,  
But robed with their unslayable power  
We would-be gods are demons . . .

It is madness  
That dooms the world,  
For we have been far too sane to behold  
The irrational glory beyond our powers,  
Far too sane  
To conquer our machinery  
With senseless pity and love,  
Far too sane  
For meditation and self-conquest . . .  
But the heart has a power in it  
Which becomes a devastation  
If it is not released in splendor,  
And the universe  
Is forever unconquerable and its majesty  
Forever awful . . .

Dreaming we have slain mystery  
We are toys of a mysterious doom,  
And dreaming that we are gods of intelligence,  
Look, we are slaves of murderous passion . . .  
We aimed at a garden  
And wrought a shambles,  
We dreamed of a Golden City  
And made a Land of Graves . . .



The midnight passes  
But the madness does not pass . . .  
It burns itself out like a conflagration,  
And in the wild light  
The orgy continues,  
And shall continue  
Till the ashes of a civilization  
Become the tomb of a race.

## HYMN TO DEATH

I would raise a slow and majestic hymn to Death,  
I would sing over the dust . . .  
The ages open, and they are bins of dust,  
They are bins of the dust of the once-dreaming clay,  
They are valleys mounded over  
With dust of our unremembered, our fathers and mothers . . .  
And we shall bring  
As gifts our bodies and all of our troubled splendor  
To crumble with them, to be silent with them . . .

We have come through the dark entry to this life,  
We have lived a little while with love and longing,  
Now in the end we go  
To cool quiet,  
Now in the end  
There is a laying down of what has risen up . . .

We have had youth and desire,  
We have not been troubled by ghosts;  
Yoked with a god we fought for the glory of fame,  
And the crown of power;  
We ate the bread, we drank the wine, flesh lay with flesh;  
But the bats of the summer dusk are weaving  
Cobweb vestures for the dead,  
And in the brown air ghosts  
Crowd through the gates of the ages.

Before we were born we were indentured to the dark Master,  
And we carry a bond in our hearts that must be sealed . . .  
When the Master calls, we turn, stricken, and go  
Naked and queerly alone to the dark exit,  
And none is beside us, and the last clasp is unloosened,  
And silence and darkness take us.

We but experience  
What all have known:  
We but endure  
What every living soul has alone suffered:  
Eager or reluctant we too travel a road more worn  
With human feet than all others . . .  
We that have sung, are silent,  
And we that have fought, are princes of peace . . .  
We make our bivouac with an unending night  
And even dreams are done.

Yet are we lovers  
Of all-erasing Death:  
Life was a restless bride we ravished  
But never won,  
We lay with her in the midst of battle and our kisses were  
vain :  
Our love grew feverish, balked,  
Our tears dropped round our laughter . . .  
All that we snatched from her, was a flame that passed,  
And all that we gave, turned ashes . . .

It was then we heard  
Another love-call in our hearts,  
A longing after some healing, old and forgotten;  
It was then the calm beloved face of Death appeared

Far in the backward mist of our depths;  
It was then that silence became our treasure,  
And sleep grew sweet . . .

Then we found we were  
Shelterless and unmothered multitudes,  
Then we drew again  
Great wings of love over our skies,  
Dark wings of one who broods  
And gives solace and silence . . .

I would raise a slow and majestic hymn to Death,  
I would sing over the dust . . .  
I would set aflutter the starry veil of Night  
That *she* wears, sitting in the Deep;  
I would lift the veil, and see the shadows of her arms,  
And her beautiful dark face,  
I would see in her eternal arms the races of men  
Resting forever;  
I would see her grave and understanding eyes that look upon  
man;  
I would know the other love, which is cool and calm;  
And I would praise Death, the secret bride.

## SUNSET

I

I

Now is sunset,  
The nightfall lightens  
Over the funeral pyre of the day . . .

On a balcony we  
Sweep the round world whose rim  
Is edged with fire . . .

Unstirring cumulus cloud  
Is purple and scarlet . . . bearded cloud of the west  
Is incandescent . . .  
Beyond and below  
Our planet is a fire, and the flaming  
Makes our sky a glory over the dark green Earth . . .  
A painted glory:  
No wind breathes:  
No tree stirs:  
The world of life for a breathless moment  
Is ordered and is art:

But we live . . .

Inarticulate, stripped of desire,  
 Motionless,  
 We yet live . . .  
 Our lifted faces are lighted,  
 Our bodies are torches touched to the fixed fire of sunset  
 And kindled with the unburning flame of dream . . .

We see the little cottage  
 Painted among the painted trees:  
 We see the clover fields, lush green,  
 The western hills, dark blue,  
 The wild, windless garden,  
 Gray stones . . .

Daring to tap and crack this glass of silence  
 A robin tweets . . .

Earth never seemed capable of this:  
 Her beautiful hours  
 Sweet with orchards or rough with rain-storm  
 Or grave with stars  
 Came with the ease of familiar things  
 Woven of the weather of the human heart:  
 But this  
 Is not of the Earth we know:  
 And our eyes see  
 A life or a death beyond and behind, within and without  
 Our life . . .

We live, but neither memory  
Nor yet vision  
Warms the naked moment . . .  
We merely breathe, gaze and wonder . . .  
We only know  
That the world of human life is a capsule  
Floating in vaster existences,  
And that the melting of it  
Would be no death  
But an emergence . . .

## II

### I

Earth, over her rims,  
Is a fire . . .  
The human world, builded by hands,  
Ivied by ages,  
The human soul, born out of nature,  
And in splendor of superstition  
And tear-bought wisdom  
Grown rich and weary,  
Are at end of Day,  
In sunset . . .

The magic capsule  
Glowing inside with cathedrals and colliseums,  
Sounding with an endless song,  
Lighted with heroes and with gods,  
With dreams swaying crowds,  
Is melting . . .

The world begun by Egypt and Babylonia,  
Built temple-high by Greece,

And pinnacled by Europe,  
Dissolves . . .

2

We did not know  
That the accustomed, the fixed eternal,  
Could become a phantom  
And fade in dying light of its own sun . . .  
No dream of Doomsday  
Could forbode the doom . . .

But it is here, with the whole planet  
Raimented in flame . . .  
The whole planet  
On its funeral pyre . . .  
And the sun sets  
That rose on Pharaoh,  
And the day ends  
That dawned with Homer . . .

3

It ends, yet the spared live;  
They live,  
But neither memory nor vision  
Warms the naked moment;  
They merely breathe, gaze and wonder . . .  
And the doom falls  
On silence . . .



### III

#### I

They live and gazing  
In this visionary hour  
They see a trace of the world outside  
The dissolving world . . .

And they know  
That world has been slowly dawning  
And the light of its growing dawn  
Mingles with this sunset  
And gives it this breathless splendor . . .

That dawn rose  
In brains like Galileo's,  
Its light gathered  
In spirits like Darwin's;  
Its kindled sun  
Burnt out the old sun,  
And the dying creatures of that sun  
Sink in the beams of the new human fire-god . . .

#### 2

Those beams shall break  
On the young green of a new spring,  
With the nations gathered in a single song  
And the bright intelligence  
Of a new youth raying through the human spirit . . .  
With a new self  
For each soul that wins it, orb'd like a fresh-born planet,  
And swinging in harmony with all other planets;  
With a new sky

Storm-cleansed of old demons and gods,  
With a new earth  
For new adventures . . .

3

Those beams shall break  
On the second Day of Man:  
But in this hour  
Of awful sunset  
We do not know that Day:  
We only know  
Our dissolving world floats in a vaster existence,  
And this dissolution  
Is no death,  
But an emergence.

SONGS OUT OF MULTITUDE



## EUROPA

### EUROPA

The dark years, the dreadful years are upon me . . .

### THE VOICE OF EGYPT

Whither goest thou, Europa, whither goest thou dusty and  
grown aged and withering at the breasts?

Thou hast not crouched in the desert, mouthing the sand-  
storm,

Remembering thy Ptolemies, and she that floated golden  
down the Nile and so

Down the stream of the ages of the memories of man . . .

### EUROPA

But the dark years, and the days of bleak old age are upon  
me . . .

Once my rosy nipples were lipped by nations and a great  
people drank of them . . .

A great people with kings on horseback, and a multitude of  
banners went down the breeze, and their bards

Gathered them in nations . . .

### THE VOICE OF PERSIA

What hag is this, that against the black rifts of the storm,  
and blown by the tempest

Stalks crazily, mumbling? Is it thou, Europa?

Thou hast not seen great Babylon fallen, gone down with  
Marduk,  
Nor thine empire with such great kings as mine in Susa and  
in Ninevah  
Struck to the Earth by a sudden Alexander . . .  
Thou art not merely an Asian breath from beyond the desert  
and the ancient rivers  
Strange with Assyrian song and Arabian rumor . . .

#### EUROPA

I wither in a great noise: I shrink and grow dry and barren  
in a splendid thunder:  
I am stripped of the glory of the presence of God, and the  
grace of my children's Father:  
My song is stopped, and my vision has crumbled with the  
drooping of my breasts . . .

#### THE VOICE OF GREECE

What chariots roll by, horseless, smoking and spitting flame  
like the dragon?  
*My* smokes curled from the bivouac-fires on the shores,  
And from the kindly hearth where the housewife, spinner  
of golden yarns,  
Sat in purple shadows, weaving . . .  
But what smokes are these, stormy and black, that go up  
out of the disemboweled Earth,  
Dreadful, and as a vapor herself, this old woman wanders?  
Is it thou, Europa, conqueress of antiquity?  
Is it thou, wailing?

#### EUROPA

Greece, they have despoiled me! Mine enemy comes, the  
merciless scalpel-user, he, cunning with tools,

Glass-eyed Science, whose sapless children have songless  
names — Industrialism, pah! and Democracy!  
They that care nothing for man's glory, but stoop low  
Probing in entrails, spewing their filth out of mills,  
Slaying my Gods, and my prophets, and the grandeur of  
heroes,  
For a base business of comfort and a littleness of deeds and  
of people . . .  
I wither, my heart like a dried flower-pod: the heavens  
are empty.

#### THE VOICE OF ROME

What is this iron on the seas, and what is this beating of a  
heart of steel?  
Loud bells clamor, and there are glaring cities smothered in  
the fume of their own mouths!  
Where goest thou, Europa? And why art thou as one  
scared by lions in the arena?  
Thou hast no Rome to mourn, and the imperial eagles  
Screaming in death-throes before the tramlings of the Huns!

#### EUROPA

Rome, thine agony to mine, is as a child's to the woe of a  
woman whose love is slain in her heart,  
For thy death was my birth, but my dying is the dying of  
the race of man,  
The proud white conqueror dies in me . . .  
Man, white in his glory, in pomp against the heavens,  
Armed with his God, is gone . . .

#### THE VOICE OF SYRIA

Who art thou, great old woman, fallen down on the banks  
of darkness,

And writhing as if a serpent coiled in thy womb?  
Did I not send thee Asia for a staff and a vision against the  
North?  
Did I not send thee the love of the young man, Jesus, who  
died so early,  
And in that love wert thou not young and more beautiful  
than antiquity  
Building with thy fingers spired churches and sending men  
up spiral stairways  
Into the ante-chambers of the Lord?  
Art thou not healed in Christ?

#### EUROPA

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets,  
Jesus is slain a second time, and I am the Cross . . .  
For the people are very busy with their engines and with  
their formulas,  
Soft in their comforts, stinking in their poverty, they stir,  
Scrambling, forgetting, far from me . . .

*(Silence)*

#### THE VOICE OF ANTIQUITY

With what swellest thou, Europa, and with what quickenest  
thou  
So that thou bowest with the burden of all women?

#### EUROPA

God, what stirring is this, what ancient stirring?  
My flesh quivers, and a piercing pain is in my body.  
Can these bones shelter a child, can these sagging breasts  
ripen again with milk?



Can the blasted pine on the heath blossom and break forth  
in a new Spring?

Who mocks me with a death-bringing birth?

AMERICA

Europa, Old Wife, why do you lie there trembling and  
whispering?

EUROPA

Thou hast wrought something upon me:

Thou hast pierced me with thy terrible spear of gold . . .

O thou, the trampler on all old love, slayer of Gods, young  
Midas of the West,

Thou gross machine, thou money-changer in my temple,

Thou harsh youth using me as a brothel-woman is used on  
a summer's night . . .

Thou, reeking with thy greed, but mouthing thy rhetoric of  
Democracy,

Thou hast begotten upon me a vile thing in mine old  
age . . .

My people are bought by thee, and my children are become  
as thou art . . .

And now thou smitest me down with unwelcome progeny.

AMERICA

Old Woman, why do you begin to cry and roll around in  
agony

And cover your continent with broken cities and with blood?

EUROPA

Hear me, Heavens, I chant the chant of death, the roll of  
armies,

I burn in the fires of the Earth, the ancient fires that go  
smoking

With agony blurring the bright sun — O Man, the sorrow-  
ful!

O voices of a great lamentation!

AMERICA

What is this sorrow of great peoples, and this lamentation  
of multitudes,

Ships go down, and cities topple, and the world crumbles!

Are you not dying, Old Woman?

Are these not death-throes?

EUROPA

I am dying, America . . . I am dying! Save me and help  
me!

AMERICA

Why do you clutch me, Old Woman, why do you drag me  
into your withered arms,

Why do you wail in my ears?

EUROPA

The doom falls and now death

Drinks down greedily the glory of my two thousand  
years . . .

AMERICA

She lies still . . . she lies spent and still . . .

But what is this beside her?

THE VOICE OF ANTIQUITY

Yea, what is this beside her?

AMERICA

What opens in my heart?

What little song begins to sing so purely in my heart?

What wonder and what miracle is this?  
What child is this, so poor and helpless, lying in the arms  
of the spent mother?

EUROPA

Babe, my babe . . .  
O my breasts rise to meet thy tiny lips,  
My breasts rise, and a faint new life runs down my blood,  
And I am glorified, glorified . . .  
Drink, little stranger, drink from the mother.

## FOLK-SOUL

### I

I heard someone singing about Russia  
A freemen's song,  
And I heard the old song of the boatmen of Mother  
Volga . . .  
Dark sad songs . . .  
A folk-soul changes but slowly . . .

I thought of the wind of freedom that blows on the  
steppes . . .  
And I thought of you, Gorky,  
The dark young years,  
Your strange little Grandmother . . .

Deeper than poverty and riches,  
Deeper than oppression and tyranny,  
Deeper than ignorance,  
Deep as life is the folk-soul, and it changes but slowly . . .

I heard someone singing of America  
A Cabaret song,  
And I heard the old song of Mother dear, come bathe my  
forehead . . .

Sweet thin songs . . .  
A herd-spirit deepens but slowly . . .

I thought of the land of the free where the emigrants  
settle . . .

Are they free? I asked, are they free?  
And I thought of the public schools,  
And broadcast bathtubs,  
And movies and newspapers . . .

Czar-scourged Russia: free America . . .  
Gorky's Grandmother:  
George M. Cohen . . .

3

Who shall refuse to be of the party of bread and liberation?  
Work for all: light for all: power for all?  
Who shall set himself against the tides whose phantom moon  
is Freedom?  
And who shall forget old Tolstoi's wisdom: that freedom is  
of the spirit?

4

I heard someone singing about Russia  
A freeman's song,  
And I heard the old song of the boatmen of Mother  
Volga . . .  
Dark sad songs . . .  
A folk-soul changes but slowly.

## THE FIRES OF PITTSBURGH

FIRES —

Fires out of the dark —

(Coal-barges swing on the Ohio)

Fires, fires of Steel —

(Ore floats the ripple of the slow Monongahela)

Fires, fires of Pittsburgh —

Lo, lightnings lifting her sky of smoke, and dropping it,

Lo, the young American city,

On her heights, in the fork of her rivers,

And ringed with mills

Guarding her tracks and tonnage

Laboring day and night.

She is the womb of the Modern,

Strong young mother of cities and ships. . . .

She weaves the world with rails,

And webs the Earth with wires. . . .

Pittsburgh is *Labor*,

Pittsburgh is *Wealth*,

Pittsburgh is *Power*.

From these smokes, a nation,

From these fires, America.

O fires of Pittsburgh!

Is it only the Steel that shrieks as you twist and shape it?

Is this the howling of your hammers, the anguish of your  
cranes, the revolt of your engines?

Do I hear only this hell's music of mills?

Or is this the slaves' song of your lonely wrestlers with ele-  
mental flame and ore,—

The slaves' song,

The slaves' groaning and wailing in the dark,

The song of mastered men,

The sullen satanic music of lost and despairing human-  
ity?

I will go lightly

By the lonely shanties clinging to the barren slopes. . . .

I will go softly

Where no birds sing,

Where the gas-lamps burn grey in the flimsy sodden mill-  
town,

And from the lighted kitchens

The tired workmen throng the streets, tramping, tramping,

Tramping over the railroad bridge,

Tramping through the switch-yards,

For the Giant has blown his whistle

And the night-shift is on. . . .

Madly the night swirls

Lunging with engines —

The flames burst the roofs and shower golden snow,

The shrill-whistling yard-engines bump across the switches,

Switchmen swing lanterns, green, green, red,

The sudden headlights dazzle round the silhouettes of work-  
men,

This mill and that looms roaring, roaring,

Bells beat, whistles blow, shouts rise, and heaven

Rolls with unresting smokes,  
Glares with livid lightning. . . .

Speed!

The young god speed!

The young god speed is at the wheel,

Whipping the engines,

Pacing the workers,

The mills roar their terrible triumph over time,

The great machines snatch at the hands of men,

And drag them in, and drag in the arms,

And drag at every muscle of the body. . . .

Speed! speed!

American speed!

Set the fires roaring,

Swing the blooms in faster,

Pile up the tonnage for a record-breaker,

Pile up the tonnage. . . . Strain, strain, you toilers!

Give us every ounce of your tireless energy. . . .

Work, till you crack, work till you are slag:

Work, till you age with fever and exhaustion,

Work, till we fling you out upon the rusty scrap-heap. . . .

Open slides the floor-door: the soaking pit is dazzling. . . .

Down comes the crane-hand and dips into the fire:

It's the ten-ton ingot she is lifting up,

It's the ten-ton ingot, white-hot and sizzling. . . .

It's a lost soul shrieking snatched from out the burning. . . .

Clank, clank, clatter, the bloom runs down the rollers,

Crash! it hits the wringers!

Whong! the sparks are flying!



Klong-al, klong-al, it howls like a lioness,  
Giving up its soul as it flattens to a sheet. . . .

Noise, soot, chaos. . . .  
I wander, finding men,  
Half-naked men with wet shining bodies,  
Men with forks, and men at the levers,  
Men on cars, and men behind the engines,  
Fire-glaring men with shovels at the furnaces. . . .  
Men, men. . . .  
I watch, and I am silent. . . .

(O dance of death!  
Dance of the fires of death!  
Fires, fires of Pittsburgh!)

There are hills, beloved, with mountain-gardens,—  
There we grow roses, useless beautiful roses  
For the delight of our souls. . . .

There is a room, beloved, on the city-square,—  
There we make songs, useless beautiful songs  
As gifts to each other's hearts.

We have known how the body, like a bud,  
Opens beyond Earth, and beyond riches,  
Into vision, song, love. . . .

We have known the mystery of each other,  
Clinging in the mystery of the Night,  
With stars and long silence. . . .

There is a fire beyond fire. . . .  
There is a fire in love  
There is a fire in song. . . .

O Man, thou flame!

Thou who hast in thee this vague vision, this power of  
desire,

Hast thou traversed a planet with trade and speech,  
Steel swimmers of the sea, steel cities capped with cloud,  
Steel cannonades of destruction,  
Steel strength of Civilization,  
And yet, art thou *darkness*?

Psychic Giant!

Thou apparition appearing on a planet teeming with little  
animals,

Emerging strong from the twilight of storm-lost creatures,  
Thou envisager of distances and ages,  
Thou binder of elemental powers,  
Thou tameless fighting god of Earth!

Art thou this, builder of Pittsburgh?

Why then this sighing in the abyss?

Why from thy grimy lips this slaves' song, this slaves' song  
in the fires,

This slaves' wailing and groaning,

This sullen satanic music of despair and death?

Art thou caught in thine own creation?

Giant, art thou locked in the arms of this Giant of thine  
own making,

This brainless Giant?

Are the two of you eternally wrestling,

Thou of the shanties clinging to the barren hills,  
Thou of the tawdry mill-town  
Wrestling with Steel, struggling with Tonnage, fighting  
with Time?

There is no glory in the world that coops thee here,  
Giant of Labor,  
There is no joy. . . .  
There is no delight in the gaudy Heaven lit by the fires of  
this Hell,  
No delight among the masters ever speeding,  
No delight for the pilers-up of Power,  
There is no joy in America. . . .  
There can come no song for fine ears out of the sweating of  
the multitude,  
There can come no splendor of the soul out of the grinding  
of the slaves. . . .  
But there comes madness,  
There comes the rising whirlwind of riches.  
There comes the hurricane-fury of lust to be great,  
There comes a wind smiting nation against nation,  
There comes confusion of tongues, and storm,  
Storm whirling the towers, toppling the cities, blasting the  
countryside,  
Storm shattering Civilization — the Abyss  
Opens, a world goes down.

And thou, Labor,  
Art sucked into the cyclone —  
It is thy blood that must redden the fields of France,  
It is thy breast and thy face that must stop the shells. . . .

Fires,  
Fires out of the dark

(Coal barges swing on the Ohio)  
Fires, fires of Steel —  
(Ore floats the ripple of the slow Monongahela)  
Fires, fires of Pittsburgh —  
From these smokes, a nation,  
From these fires, America. . . .

But that morning shall break  
When the Sleeper in thy fires awakens,  
But that morning shall break  
When thy giant Slave rises and deals with thee. . . .  
With a shrug of his shoulders, those flies, his masters, shall  
drop,  
With a stroke of his terrible fist he shall clean out the mills,  
He shall seize the machines, bestriding the engines that  
rode him. . . .

When that morning breaks  
The Sun of Labor in splendor  
Shall illumine a new world,  
When that morning breaks  
This Giant shall call to the Giants  
And the Nations be one. . . .  
When that morning of glory breaks  
The Earth's hosts arisen  
Shall be streaming with light. . . .  
Song shall burst from their lips,  
And flame out of darkness. . . .  
Song shall leap from their lips,  
And the glory  
Be given to Man for his marring, his making, his death or  
his life.

## THE SONG OF THE UPRISING

### *I — Joy*

Joy wings his way,  
— (O bells of heaven!)  
Joy wings his irresistible way,  
— (O winds, O sun!)  
Joy wings his irresistible, his radiant, his ineluctable way,  
— (Morning! morning of the winds,  
Morning strong with song!)  
Joy wings, wings, *wings* his way  
And now the wild great song of dawn  
Mounts heaven on beams of light  
Scattering the dew in the path of the veering bee,  
And from the house the girl and boy bare-headed  
Come fresh from sleep  
And lift young voices toward blue skies . . .

Lift young voices toward blue skies  
Meeting the young god, Joy.

Joy is the carrier of news . . .  
He laughs over the battlefields . . .  
Joy is the sun . . .  
He shines on the democracies . . .  
Joy is exultant with tidings . . .

He flings on the Earth in the road of the hosts the luminous  
flame of the future . . .

O the Earth, it is bled,  
It is black, clawed with death,  
But victory, but victory, but irrepressible victory  
Shouts from the lips of Joy  
Who shall raise up the dead.

I will make a prophecy  
To your swelling heart,  
That the heavens open  
Presently with Peace . . .  
I will make a prophecy of glory  
To your dark-swelling heart . . .  
The peoples shall be one,  
The Earth shall be our home,  
The children shall lead us forth with a scattering of roses,  
And the heavens in all their splendor of stars shall sing:  
"One people, one planet."

O my heart!  
How wonderful is the age we dwell in . . .  
We are climbing up on the new tableland of man,  
Beyond cedars of sorrow, beyond hemlocks of lamentation,  
There where the grass blows wild,  
There where the oak and the maple sway in the wind,  
There where the festival is held, and the sun gleams on the  
steel of the workshops . . .  
Gleams on the steel and on the miraculous flesh of men's  
faces . . .

(Hear, O softly, O faintly, sweetly,  
Hear the cooing murmur of the mothers,  
The lisp of laughing babes,  
The bird-like love-notes, the lark-like mate-calls  
Of passionate girls and boys,  
And hear, hear,  
Voices of men together in workshops where work is glory.)

Truly triumphant from the massive enginery of destruction  
and battle  
Where great guns leveled Louvain and rifled Europe of  
grandeur,  
Truly triumphant the saved shall stand and march with a  
blowing of the trump  
And march with a throbbing of the drum  
Heroic and renewed to the lands of the new age . . .

They shall march! —

(O Joy, thou news-bringer!)

They shall march! —

(O Joy, thou sun in the windy heavens!)

They shall march! —

(O Joy, thou art approaching beamed with the glory of  
the free!)

They shall march, they shall sing, they shall swing with ra-  
diant ranks,

Down the fields, down the streets, down the continental  
roads,

They shall march, they shall ship, they shall fly on the  
planes of rejoicing,

They shall be one mass of triumph in the peace that crown-  
eth all.

## II — Darkness

Death darkens, darkens . . .

— (O cry of breakers!)

Death darkens, darkens on the deeps . . .

— (O rocks, O sea!)

Death darkens, darkens on the moving, the interminable  
deeps . . .

— (Midnight! midnight of no stars!

Midnight bowed with cloud!)

Death darkens, darkens, *darkens*,

And the wild blown dirges of the sea

Break into lamentation,

Break into anguish on the rocks, on the sands, on the dunes,

Wail along the dunes, weep along the dunes,

And the sea cries,

And the wind skims the sea-tides with an empty moaning,

And the clouds crowd together dropping their tears upon  
the war-bled world . . .

O the black midnight!

Winds howl and sand blows,

The broom wails and snaps and the breakers burst writh-  
ing. . .

O the blackness of this midnight . . .

Must I walk these shores lost in grief?

Must I walk these stormy shores at the salt fringes of the  
tragic sea

In a vision of the human Earth I tread,

In a vision of an Earth of men and women

Stripped and maimed,



Trapped and slain,—  
Must I walk these naked shores, dreadfully, slowly, stricken  
in my heart?

Unbearable sorrow!  
Fiendish anguish!  
Among the old that line the streets, among the faded and  
the war-worn,  
Radiant miles of youth glow by, laughing with the bugles,  
Radiant rivers of youth flow by,  
Flow into the trenches . . .  
I see the Hell they have entered with its pitiless flame-  
fledged skies,  
With its mud and stenchent carrion, with the murderer and  
the murdered . . .  
I see the Hell they have entered and the radiance gone  
out . . .

O my heart . . .  
How terrible is the age we dwell in . . .  
None . . . none . . . none  
Shall assuage great grief . . .  
None . . . none . . . none  
Shall restore the lost to us. . . .  
Roll, muffled drums, you heart-beats of despair,  
Boom, O you brass, for the burial of our boys.

I have mounted midnight  
To gaze in the abyss,  
In the midst of heaven  
Hangs a red, red heart . . .  
I have mounted mournful midnight  
To gaze in the abyss,

And I have seen that red heart  
Dripping drops of blood . . .  
That heart is the Earth,  
In the darkness it hangs red,  
In the darkness it bleeds red with human grief and an-  
guish . . .

But is not the Earth as a husk of beauties and glories and  
powers  
Which stripped, reveals the kernel, the naked body of man?  
Is not man her consummate miracle?  
Is he not strong with engines and strong with soaring song?  
Can he be this beast of the jungle?  
Can he be this darkness-maker?  
Has his great past opened only in this?

Sea of the interminable tides,  
Sea, of dirges and of moving deeps, and of darkened song,  
I will turn from you, I will call the beloved of my  
heart . . .

Turn and call her, that in her face  
I may read of youth's betrayal,  
And the treason of the strong . . .

They have betrayed us . . .

(Silence, you false seas!)

They have betrayed us . . .

(Silence, you lying dirge-singing seas!)

They have betrayed us . . .

(Silence, you seas awash with ignoble anguish!)

They have betrayed us, they have sold us, they have carried  
off our youth

To the slaughter, to the murder, to the deepest pits of Hell,

They have betrayed us, they are traitors, we shall rise  
against their power,  
We shall shake the Earth with tumult and the thunders of  
Revolt.

### *III — The Call*

Whither goest thou, beautiful and beloved, O Earth,  
Whither goest thou?

Dawn is not yet:

We sit in a cranny of the eastward rocks of the mountain-  
top;

Among shapes of the wind, shadows of the stars, and the  
Earth darker than the skies.

O my beloved,

Your hands are warm in my own, your hair blows against  
my cheek:

You are glimmering beside me, your eyes bright with the  
wild animal:

We are of the darkness of Earth dipped in the eddying  
gleam of the heavens:

We taste the freshness of wind-blown pines.

Vastness . . . ten stars are gone . . .

Grayness . . . the Earth sighs . . .

Twilight . . . the East twinkles . . .

O rise, my beloved, rise, for the runners of the sun

Appear with their bugles upon the mountains and blow long  
blasts of light

Swelling and shattering Night . . .

Rise, we must meet the miracle . . . Dawn's joy swells:  
Stirring, Earth tosses her covers of the dark aside,  
Laughing, leaps from her bed: naked, bathes in the  
dew . . .

Look, where the peeping chimney smokes, look, the gray  
lake,

Listen . . . the waking!

Birds are fluttering, brooks are babbling, leaves are danc-  
ing, woodfolk scurry . . .

The color of the dawn

Scattered, drowns in blue . . .

We are blown on the topmost rock,

We cannot be still . . .

Your hair, my beloved, is a golden gale,

Yours lips are cold . . .

Look to the East, behold . . .

Look — *gold* . . .

Pure gold, flame gold, growing, emboldening gold!

Mark!

The sons of light —

The sons of light charge heaven on golden gallopers,

And struck out of fire, with song,

The morning star is born —

The morning star is born — the sun, the sun — *Day!*

(A shadow crosses the sun . . .

The Earth grows gray below us . . .

We are hushed of a sudden, and chilled . . .

Doubt . . . dread.)

Whither goest thou, darkened and solemn, O Earth,  
Whither goest thou?

Is there then, beloved, no forgetting of sorrow?  
Must there be pausing for lamentation?  
Is there an hour for cedars?  
Shall the drums roll for the lost and the bugles blow for  
the dead?

I heard a voice say: None,  
None shall heal empty arms.  
I heard a voice say: None,  
None shall assuage great grief . . .  
For he is dead, whose young lips  
She kissed in the intervals of song . . .  
— In the intervals of song . . .

Death darkens, darkens,  
(O cry of breakers!)  
Death darkens, darkens on the deeps,  
(O rocks, O sea!)  
Death steals into the ecstasy of life,  
Steals in, snatches the loved ones, and leaves bereaved  
hearts . . .

Beloved, beloved,  
How can we abide on the mountain of our joy  
Where even touched with sunrise we quiver through ir-  
visible nerves to the ends of Earth,  
And the agony of man darkens our dawn . . .  
We must descend into the pit of a thousand million out-  
stretched, imploring hands,  
The pit of bloody faces, and wailing lips . . .  
Down to the sorrow of Earth,  
The anguish of Man.

For Earth, like a staring maniac, bearing a firebrand,  
Goes shrieking down the skies,  
Shrieking "Famine," shrieking "Pestilence," shrieking  
"War" . . .

That orb of destruction burns balefully in the august mag-  
nificence of night . . .

The mad world runs amuck . . .

Is Man ending himself?

Is the miracle of that mind and passion which dreamed and  
built Asia and Europe

Stopped in suicidal madness?

Beloved, were we born to see this, and to live this?

Are we among the doomed?

. . .

(Yet — what song is in my heart?

O has the mother heard the stir of life in her side?

Is there the faint, the tremulous stir of the unborn?)

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,

And be ye uplift, you everlasting doors . . .

The glory of the Lord is risen upon us . . .

We shall not bend before the storm: we shall not bow be-  
fore great death:

We put the darkness from us with a loud shout:

We put the temptation of despair away with resolution:

We arise: we arise clothed in courage:

We arise: we are that which has refused darkness: we are

MAN . . .

MAN, the fire-bringer,

MAN, the Creator.

We call mountain to mountain . . .  
We raise a torch of Revolution . . .  
We bring forth the peoples out of their darkness  
And the nations out of their wrath . . .  
We behold the Earth in parturition . . .  
We see the Mother in birth-throes . . .  
We greet the child with calls of welcome and the sound of  
cities of joy . . .

O, blow you bugles, with triumph,  
O, shout, you peoples, with victory . . .  
Hurl down the mighty from their seats,  
And raise yourselves to freedom . . .  
Raise up yourselves, ye slaves and chained ones,  
Raise up yourselves, ye toiling peoples . . .  
Be upraised, ye sorrowers and ye spent ones,  
Get up on the peaks of the morning and proclaim the tri-  
umph of Man,  
The victory of Man,  
Get up on the peaks of the morning and greet the child, the  
New Age,  
On tablelands of democracy,  
On heights of man, the creator,  
Get ye up, get ye up, get ye up, ye triumphing peoples . . .  
New Man is born from the Old: Joy shall leap laughing  
from Sorrow.

## THE IRONIC SPIRIT

We have drunk deep —  
This generation —  
We have drunk deep of evil . . .

The ironic spirit  
Was our wet-nurse,  
And we milked her in the soft latitudes of the equator of  
dreams . . .

In zones of comfort  
We sipped the milk of peace;  
Not without a bitter taste in the mouth,  
The taste of trade and of toil,  
But the sweet savor of sinlessness,  
Of the excellence of human nature,  
For when the gods died  
The legion of devils withered,  
And when the blaze of the seraphs was put out  
Hell's darkness also vanished . . .

So we grew up  
In the cotton of an all-human world,  
Sheltered in the sane cubicle of intelligence:  
There were no storms, but those of the winds and the clouds,  
No passions among the polite,  
No evils that were not error . . .



We were a good race, in spite of the quagmire of poverty,  
And when at last that should be abolished  
Then in goodness, the reign of kindness should triumph . . .

We pitied the past  
Lost as it was in the magic mists of superstition,  
The demon Past drinking hot blood from a skull,  
The Past of pestilence and battle,  
The tragic ignorant Past . . .

We seemed free  
Because we thought freely,  
And because we could telegraph instead of travel,  
And of all the generations of men  
We were the least tragic . . .

It was as if the ironic spirit  
Had made our content complete  
To deepen the horror of what lay in wait for us . . .  
The generation that seemed born to suffer least  
Has suffered as no generation before it,  
And we that were so good  
Are black with evil beyond our ancestors . . .  
Our kindness has shaped a fiend's devastation of hate,  
And our milk of humanity has turned to vapors of  
venom . . .  
Out of our supersanity has come a universal madness,  
And from our antiseptic safeties a devil's disregard for pain  
and death . . .  
On the corpse of our Brotherhood of Man  
We have erected a monument of slaughter,

And with the science that was to make us intelligent  
We have taught cruelty new cunning . . .

The ironic spirit smiles with a bitter satisfaction  
As it gives us to drink deep,  
Deep of all evil.

## DEBS

Four great lovers rose in America . . .

One was hung:

One was shot:

One lived in solitude:

And one was jailed . . .

. . . . .

The prairies, the valleys and the mountains of the ages are  
remembered because of great lovers who were there . . .

Drums and flags lay the cæsars to rest,

But the muffled drums roll by, dying, and we let them  
die . . .

When the great lover dies, in silence,

His grave becomes the fragrant mouth of an ever-swelling  
song:

These are the songs by which we live,

These are the suns that shine on us, stars and moons that  
sprinkle our nights,

Winds of reviving May, rains of dry summer . . .

. . . . .

Gene Debs, this fragment song for you,

Living great lover through whom America lives.

## MEMORIES OF WHITMAN AND LINCOLN

“ When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd ”

— W. W.

Lilacs shall bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.  
Spring hangs in the dew of the dooryards  
These memories — these memories —  
They hang in the dew for the bard who fetched  
A sprig of them once for his brother  
When he lay cold and dead. . . .  
And forever now when America leans in the dooryard  
And over the hills Spring dances,  
Smell of lilacs and sight of lilacs shall bring to her heart  
these brothers. . . .  
Lilacs shall bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.

Who are the shadow-forms crowding the night?  
What shadows of men?  
The stilled star-night is high with these brooding spirits —  
Their shoulders rise on the Earth-rim, and they are great  
presences in heaven —  
They move through the stars like outlined winds in young-  
leaved maples.

Lilacs bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.

Deeply the nation throbs with a world's anguish —  
But it sleeps, and I on the housetops  
Commune with souls long dead who guard our land at mid-  
night,  
A strength in each hushed heart —  
I seem to hear the Atlantic moaning on our shores with the  
plaint of the dying  
And rolling on our shores with the rumble of battle. . . .  
I seem to see my country growing golden toward California,  
And, as fields of daisies, a people, with slumbering upturned  
faces  
Leaned over by Two Brothers,  
And the greatness that is gone.

Lilacs bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.

Spring runs over the land,  
A young girl, light-footed, eager. . . .  
For I hear a song that is faint and sweet with first love,  
Out of the West, fresh with the grass and the timber,  
But dreamily soothing the sleepers. . . .  
I listen: I drink it deep

Softly the Spring sings.  
Softly and clearly:

*“ I open lilacs for the beloved,  
Lilacs for the lost, the dead.  
And, see, for the living, I bring sweet strawberry blos-  
soms,*

*And I bring buttercups, and I bring to the woods  
anemones and blue bells . . .  
I open lilacs for the beloved,  
And when my fluttering garment drifts through dusty  
cities,  
And blows on hills, and brushes the inland sea,  
Over you, sleepers, over you, tired sleepers,  
A fragrant memory falls . . .  
I open love in the shut heart,  
I open lilacs for the beloved."*

Lilacs bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.

Was that the Spring that sang, opening locked hearts,  
And is remembrance mine?  
For I know these two great shadows in the spacious night,  
Shadows folding America close between them,  
Close to the heart. . . .  
And I know how my own lost youth grew up blessedly in  
their spirit,  
And how the morning song of the mighty native bard  
Sent me out from my dreams to the living America,  
To the chanting seas, to the piney hills, down the railroad  
vistas,  
Out into the streets of Manhattan when the whistles blew  
at seven,  
Down to the mills of Pittsburgh and the rude faces of  
labor . . .  
And I know how the grave great music of that other,  
Music in which lost armies sang requiems,  
And the vision of that gaunt, that great and solemn figure,  
And the graven face, the deep eyes, the mouth,

O human-hearted brother,  
Dedicated anew my undevoted heart  
To America, my land.

Lilacs bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.

Now in this hour I was suppliant to these two brothers,  
And I said: Your land has need:  
Half-awakened and blindly we grope in the great  
world. . . .  
What strength may we take from our Past, what promise  
hold for our Future?

And the one brother leaned and whispered:  
"I put my strength in a book,  
And in that book my love. . . .  
This, with my love, I give to America . . ."  
And the other brother leaned and murmured:  
"I put my strength in a life,  
And in that life my love,  
This, with my love, I give to America."

Lilacs bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.

Then my heart sang out: This strength shall be our  
strength:  
Yea, when the great hour comes, and the sleepers wake and  
are hurled back,  
And creep down into themselves  
There they shall find Walt Whitman  
And there, Abraham Lincoln.

O Spring, go over this land with much singing  
And open the lilacs everywhere,  
Open them out with the old-time fragrance  
Making a people remember that something has been for-  
gotten,  
Something is hidden deep — strange memories — strange  
memories —  
Of him that brought a sprig of the purple cluster  
To him that was mourned of all . . .  
And so they are linked together  
While yet America lives . . .

While yet America lives, my heart,  
Lilacs shall bloom for Walt Whitman  
And lilacs for Abraham Lincoln.



## MY LAND

Not for long can I be angry with the most beautiful —  
I look out of my vengefulness, and see her so young, so vastly  
    young,  
Wandering her fields beside Huron,  
Or peering over Mt. Rainier.

Is she in daisies up to her knees?  
Do I see that fresh white smile of hers in the morning-  
    shadowed city?  
Is this she clinging to the headlight of the locomotive that  
    roars between the pine-lone mountains?  
Are her ankles in the wash of sea-weed beside the sea-bat-  
    tered rocks?

Ah! never the curve of a hill but she has just gone beyond  
    it,  
And the prairies are as sweet with her as with clover and  
    sage. . . .  
Her young breasts are soft against willow-leaves,  
Her hands are quicker than birds in the vagueness of the  
    forest.

Whether it is a dream that I have honey-gathered from the  
    years of my days,  
Whether it is so, and no dream,  
I cannot help the love that goes out of me to these plains  
    and hills,  
These coasts, these cities, and these seas.



NIGHT.

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## NIGHT

*A Priest, A Poet, A Scientist.*

*Hilltop, in October; the stars shining.*

*[The Priest kneels; the Scientist looks at the heavens through a telescope; the Poet writes in a little note-book.]*

### THE PRIEST

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the  
moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained;  
What is man, that Thou art mindful of him,  
And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

### THE SCIENTIST

Algal which is dim, becomes again a star of the second magnitude.

### THE POET

My beloved is far from this hilltop, where the firs breathe  
heavily, and the needles fall;  
But from the middle of the sea  
She, too, gazes on the lustrous stars of calm October, and in  
her heart  
She stands with me beneath these heavens — daintily blows  
Breath of the sighing pines, and from the loaded and bowed-  
down orchards and from the fields  
With smokes of the valley, peace steps up on this hill.

#### THE PRIEST

Thou art the Shepherd that strides down the Milky Way;  
Thou art the Lord, our God: glorified be Thy name and  
Thy works.

I see Thee with Thy staff driving the star-sheep to the fold  
of dawn.

#### THE SCIENTIST

The Spiral Nebula in Ursa Major, that forever turns  
Slowly like a flaming pin-wheel . . . thus are worlds born;  
Thus was the sun and all the planets a handful of million  
years ago.

#### THE POET

She is far from me . . . but in the cradle of the sea  
Sleepless she rocks, calling her beloved: he heeds her call:  
On this hilltop he picks the North Star for his beacon . . .  
For by that star the sailors steer, and beneath that star  
She and I are one in the gaze of the heavens.

#### THE PRIEST

*[Slowly rising and turning to the others.]*

Let us glorify the Creator of this magnificence of infinite  
Night,  
His footstool is the Earth, and we are but the sheep of this  
Shepherd.

#### THE SCIENTIST

Thus shall we only glorify ourselves,  
That of this energy that rolls and drives in suns and planets  
Are but the split-off forces with cunning brains,  
And questioning consciousness . . . Pray if you must —  
Only your own ears hear you, and only the heart in your  
breast

Responds to the grandiose emotion . . . See yonder star?  
That is the great Aldebaron, great in the night,  
Needing a whole sky, as a vat and a reservoir, which he fills  
with his flame . . .  
But no astronomer with his eye to his lenses  
Has seen ears on the monster.

THE PRIEST

Thou that hast never seen an atom, nor the ether thou pratest  
of,  
Thou that hast never seen the consciousness of man,  
What knowest thou of the invisible arms about this sky,  
And the Father that leans above us?

THE POET

We need know nothing of any Father  
When the grasses themselves, withering in October, stand up  
and sing their own dirges in the great west wind,  
And every pine is like a winter lodging house where the needles  
may remember the greenness of the world,  
And the great shadow is jagged at its top with stars,  
And the heart of man is as a wanderer looking for the light  
in a window,  
And the kiss and warm joy of his beloved.

THE PRIEST

Man of Song and Man of Science,  
Truly you are as people on the outside of a house,  
And one of you only sees that it is made of stone, and its  
windows of glass, and that fire burns in the hearth,  
And the other of you sees that the house is beautiful and  
very human,  
But I have gone inside the house,

And I live with the host in that house  
And have broken bread with him, and drunk his wine,  
And seen the transfiguration that love and awe make in the  
brain . . .  
For that house is the world, and the Lord is my host and my  
father:  
It is my father's house.

#### THE SCIENTIST

He that has gone mad and insane may call himself a king,  
And behold himself in a king's palace, with feasting, and  
dancing women, and with captains,  
And none can convince him that he is mad,  
Slave of hallucination . . .  
We that weigh the atom and weigh a world in the night,  
and we  
Who probe down into the brain, and see how desire discolors  
reality,  
And we that see how chemical energy changes and trans-  
forms the molecule,  
So that one thing and another changes and so man arises —  
With neither microscope, nor telescope, nor spectroscope, nor  
finest violet ray  
Have we found any Father lurking in the intricate unrea-  
sonable drive of things  
And the strange chances of nature.

#### THE POET

O Priest, is it not enough that the world and a Woman  
are very beautiful,  
And that the works and tragic lives of men are terribly  
glorious?



There is a dance of miracles, of miracles holding hands in  
a chain around the Earth and out through space to the  
moon, and to the stars, and beyond the stars,  
And to behold this dance is enough;  
So much laughter, and secret looking, and glimpses of won-  
der, and dreams of terror . . .  
It is enough! it is enough!

THE PRIEST

Enough? I see what is enough!  
Machinery is enough for a Scientist,  
And Beauty is enough for a Poet;  
But in the hearts of men and women, and in the thirsty  
hearts of little children  
There is a hunger, and there is an unappeasable longing,  
For a Father and for the love of a Father . . .  
For the root of a soul is mystery,  
And the Night is mystery,  
And in that mystery men would open inward into Eternity,  
And know love, the Lord.  
Blessed be his works, and his angels, and his sons crowned  
with his glory!

*[A pause. The Woman with a burden in her arms  
comes in slowly.]*

THE WOMAN

Who has the secret of life among you?

THE PRIEST

I, woman, have that secret:  
I have learned it from the book of the revelations of God,  
And I have learned it from life, bitterly,  
And from my heart, holily.

THE SCIENTIST

Be not deceived, woman:  
There is only one book of reality — the book of Nature.

THE WOMAN

Who has read in that book?

THE SCIENTIST

I have read a little:  
No man has read much.

THE POET

They lead you nowhere, woman;  
*You* are the secret of life, and your glory is in seeking the  
secret,  
But finding it never.

THE WOMAN

I have climbed this hill and found three watchers of the  
night —  
Three star-gazers perched above the placid October harvests  
Where they lie golden and crimson along the valley, and  
high on the slopes  
The scarlet maples flame —  
You are a priest: and you speak of God.  
I am nothing but need: for I carry a burden that is heavier  
than the Earth, and is heavier  
Than the flesh of woman can bear: I break  
Down under it: and a hard hate  
Against my birth is steel in my heart — I curse  
God, if there be a God —  
Love, if there ever was love —  
Life, that is empty ravings,  
And the hour when I was born.

THE PRIEST

Peace! Peace! Thou standest in the presence of the Night  
Shadowy with grace and benediction — the mercy  
Of the Lord falls like the dew on the soft brow of thy af-  
fliction!

THE POET

[*Softly*]

She is very beautiful and dark with her stern cursing,  
Standing there like an enemy of great Jehovah,  
A demon-woman satanic — she is very beautiful,  
With her arms full of her burden, and the stars  
Seeming to retreat before her.

THE SCIENTIST

What burden is that you carry?

THE WOMAN

That which is worth nothing,  
And worth more than these stars you gaze at.

THE PRIEST

Put thy burden upon the Lord, and thy trust in His loving  
kindness.

THE WOMAN

I will not part with my burden, though it is worth noth-  
ing . . .  
For what are a few pounds of dead flesh worth when the  
life has left it?

THE PRIEST

Then you carry the dead at your breast?

THE WOMAN

I carry the dead . . .

THE PRIEST

Flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone . . .

THE WOMAN

My breasts are still heavy with unsucked milk . . .

THE PRIEST

Your child has died . . .

THE WOMAN

My baby is dead . . .

THE PRIEST

The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away;  
Blessed be the name of the Lord.

THE WOMAN

Nine long months

I ripened with the human seed, and like a goodly tree that  
is green

Stooped with sheltering boughs above the swelling fruit . . .  
Song rang sweetly in my blood . . .

I tasted the silent life as a spring hillside where the furrows  
are run

So holds its bated breath against the pressing of the grass-  
blades

That birds coming that way catch the held-down glory under  
the furrows

And scatter ecstatic golden notes in the morning light . . .

Until the trumpets blasted, as if the opening heavens of a  
sunrise  
Were battalions of bright trumpeters blowing news of  
dawn . . .  
Sank I then into darkness,  
Sank I then into terror,  
Till I was healed of pain by the new-born, my child . . .  
And now, behold in my arms  
The life of my life:  
All that I was went out in him: my life was now outside me.

THE PRIEST

Unto thee a son was born!

THE WOMAN

I ran to tend him with glad feet, and with laughter . . .  
For my life was now outside of me,  
And I was seeking my life.

THE PRIEST

You praised the Lord?

THE WOMAN

I loved my child . . .

THE PRIEST

And God forgotten?

THE WOMAN

That child was holy . . .

THE PRIEST

He was but flesh . . .

THE WOMAN

Just so was Christ . . .

THE PRIEST

A Son of God . . .

THE WOMAN

My child was such . . .

THE PRIEST

So in the corrupt new generations of men  
They forget God, and love but the flesh,  
And the corruptible flesh decays after its kind  
And in their bereavement they have nothing . . . then in  
their sorrow  
They curse the true and the good.

THE WOMAN

The flesh, you say? Here is the flesh:  
But was it the flesh when his blue eyes opened and gazed  
with great hunger,  
Was it the flesh that wailed, the flesh that warmed against  
my naked breasts, the flesh  
That went a secret way, and I after, I after, seeking through  
embraces  
To catch my son back, hold him. . . . But, oh, he was gone,  
He was gone, leaving *this*. Priest, is this all you have for  
the bereaved?

THE PRIEST

That which is gone is now with God.

THE WOMAN

I was his God, for to me the beautiful bright life raised its  
hands,

Suppliant, full of faith . . .

He wailed for enfolding love: I gave it

For daily bread: I gave it

For healing and shelter: I gave it.

Out of me he came, but away from me he has gone,

And if he has found out some other mother, I curse her in  
my jealousy!

THE PRIEST

So you blaspheme the holiness of the Omnipotent!

THE WOMAN

So I curse the thief who stole my treasure away.

THE PRIEST

Alas! Who may speak to a sacrilegious generation?

THE WOMAN

Speak if you can, and tell me in a few words

What is the secret of life?

THE PRIEST

Life is a mysterious preparation for immortality . . .

We are sons and daughters of God, who shall later be angels,  
and in heaven

Know bliss beyond all dream.

THE WOMAN

[*Uncovering her child's face.*]

My son . . .

You and I lately pulsed with one pulse, and sang together  
one song:

For you the flaming pain, for you the terror of birth . . .

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And this priest's God let you suffer, in a glorious preparation,  
And let you die . . .

[*Kisses him.*]

Cold! Cold! My heart tightens hard, my blood is chilled . . .

[*In a loud cry.*]

Hellish heaven! Devilish God!

[*Silence. The Poet advances and covers the face.*]

#### THE POET

You are very wonderful and very noble in your satanic anger,

Your curses are cleansing, for it is a mighty thing for man to confront creation

Greater even than this vast Night, to stand in his transiency  
And his pitiful helplessness, and in the grasp of his doom,  
and against death,

Darkness, and mysterious powers, alone of all life

Godlike, downing the universe with defiance! O godlike  
Are you; and you *are* God!

#### THE WOMAN

[*Gazing at him.*]

Who are you, with these words?

#### THE POET

Seer and singer, one who glories in life, and through vision  
Creates his own worlds.

#### THE WOMAN

Has your mother ever wept for you?



THE POET

All mothers weep . . .

THE WOMAN

Have you ever had a child?

THE POET

No child of my own: but I know the love of children.

THE WOMAN

Can I trust you with a great trust?

THE POET

I think of you as a holy thing.

THE WOMAN

Then — take this a moment,  
And feel how light a heavy burden may be.

*[She carefully places the child in his arms.]*

THE POET

How strangely light!

THE WOMAN

You tremble. Why?

THE POET

There is something so real in the stiff posture of these tiny  
legs,  
These crooked arms, this little body,  
This hanging head . . .

THE WOMAN

Can you see him?

THE POET

[*Looking close.*]

O tiniest budding mouth,  
O dark deep fringes of eyelids,  
O pallid cheeks . . .

THE WOMAN

And the little tuft of hair — you see it?

THE POET

Take him! My heart is in despair!

THE WOMAN

No one will have my burden; for my burden is heavier  
Than any save a mother can bear . . . O Earth, hard  
Earth,  
I shall not go mad: I hold back: I shut the doors on the  
Furies:  
I stand straight and stiff! I hold against my heart with  
words!

[*Silence.*]

So, poet, you are hushed! Life is too much for you!  
Go — live in your dreams and let the reality of experience  
Flow over you, untasted . . . You are wise: it is better!

[*Silence.*]

What? All silent? My star-gazers brought to a pause?  
You, too?

THE SCIENTIST

[*Grimly.*]

Who would listen to me must be hard and strong.

THE WOMAN

Am I soft and weak?

THE SCIENTIST

You have the strength of revolt, but not the greater strength of acceptance.

THE WOMAN

What shall I accept?

THE SCIENTIST

The inexorable facts of life.

THE WOMAN

And what are those facts?

THE SCIENTIST

That man is no more than the grasses, and that man is no more,

Though his dreams are grandiose, than the pine on this hill, or the bright star

Burning blue out yonder — strangely the chemicals mix, and the forces interplay,

And out of it consciousness rises, an energy harnessed by energies,

And a little while it burns, then flickers, then vanishes out,

And is no more than the October wind and the smell of dried hay.

THE WOMAN

These are the facts?

THE SCIENTIST

These are the facts.

THE WOMAN

And my child was nothing but energy, gathered and scattered?

THE SCIENTIST

These are the facts . . .

THE WOMAN

He was only a cunning engine and a curious machine?

THE SCIENTIST

Thus are we all . . .

THE WOMAN

Not all . . . thus are *you* . . .

But this child was mine, he was my baby and he was my son.

And I was his life-giver, and his lover, and his mother . . .

And I knew the glory of this child, for I lived with it,

And I know the marvel and mystery of motherhood, for I lived it . . .

I lived it, who now live the death of a treasured being,

And who know now that the light of the world is out, and only death

May heal me of anguish, and only death's long sleep

Shall bury my bereavement in peace . . . O mouthers of words,

Dreamers who do not live, I go back to the valley,

And there I shall put this babe in the Earth where the seeds of Autumn are sinking,

And there I shall slay myself, knowing that no one knows,

And no one helps, and life is a madness and a horror,

And to be dead is better than to suffer.

[*They say nothing. The Priest silently prays. The*

*Woman turns, and starts slowly out. But as she goes a Man enters, searchingly.]*

THE MAN

Beloved! O where have you fled from me?

THE WOMAN

Go back — I hate you for bringing this being into life,  
Whose loss has ruined life, life itself: and I had better  
never loved you,  
For love brings children to the mother.

THE MAN

It is my child, too . . . I too have lost him.

THE WOMAN

You have lost a plaything and the promise of a man,  
And you have lost a trouble and a burden:  
But I have lost my love, and I have lost the life of my life.

THE MAN

You are cruel in your sorrow beyond all women . . .

THE WOMAN

Then leave me, and seek comfort elsewhere.  
There are many women.

THE MAN

You are desperate, and there is a hardness in you that makes  
me afraid.  
Where are you going?

THE WOMAN

I follow this child.

THE MAN

Then I lose *my* child . . . even as you lost yours.

THE WOMAN

Your child? Ha! I am gone!

[*Tries to pass him; he seizes her.*]

THE MAN

You shall not go, for you are mine. O beloved, hear me!

THE WOMAN

Take away your hands, for every moment that you make  
me stay  
Deepens my hate of you.

THE MAN

You would break my life in bits?

THE WOMAN

Your life is not so easily broken . . .  
You are a man . . . Come! I shall do some terrible thing —

THE MAN

Then I too shall follow . . .

THE WOMAN

Follow? Where?

THE MAN

Wherever you go.

THE WOMAN

Down into death?

THE MAN

Even into death.

[*A pause; she draws back a little.*]

THE WOMAN

Are you crying? Are there tears on your cheeks?  
Why do you heave so?

THE MAN

Your love has died . . .

THE WOMAN

Are you so weak?

THE MAN

But I need you so . . .

THE WOMAN

[*In a changed voice.*]

You need me!

THE MAN

Look! If I do not need you, who am alone, uncomforted,  
With no place on Earth, no life, no light, if you are  
gone . . .

THE WOMAN

You need me?

THE MAN

I need you . . .

[*Silence.*]

THE WOMAN

This man is my child . . .

[*Silence.*]

THE MAN

[*Drawing her tenderly close.*]

Our dead child between us,

O my beloved, is there not a future?

May no more children issue from us, no more children

Lovely, golden, waking with laughter, and clothed as w.  
dawn

With the memory of the dead? Come, my beloved,

Down to the Valley, down to the living, down to the toilers.

Come, my beloved! I am your child and your father,

Your husband and your lover! Come, let us go!

THE WOMAN

[*Weeping.*]

O my heart!

Something has broken in me, and the flood flows through  
my being!

I come! I come!

[*They go out together, the Man with his arm around  
the Woman.*]

THE PRIEST

Forgive these children, Lord God!

THE SCIENTIST

Ignorance is indeed bliss!



THE POET

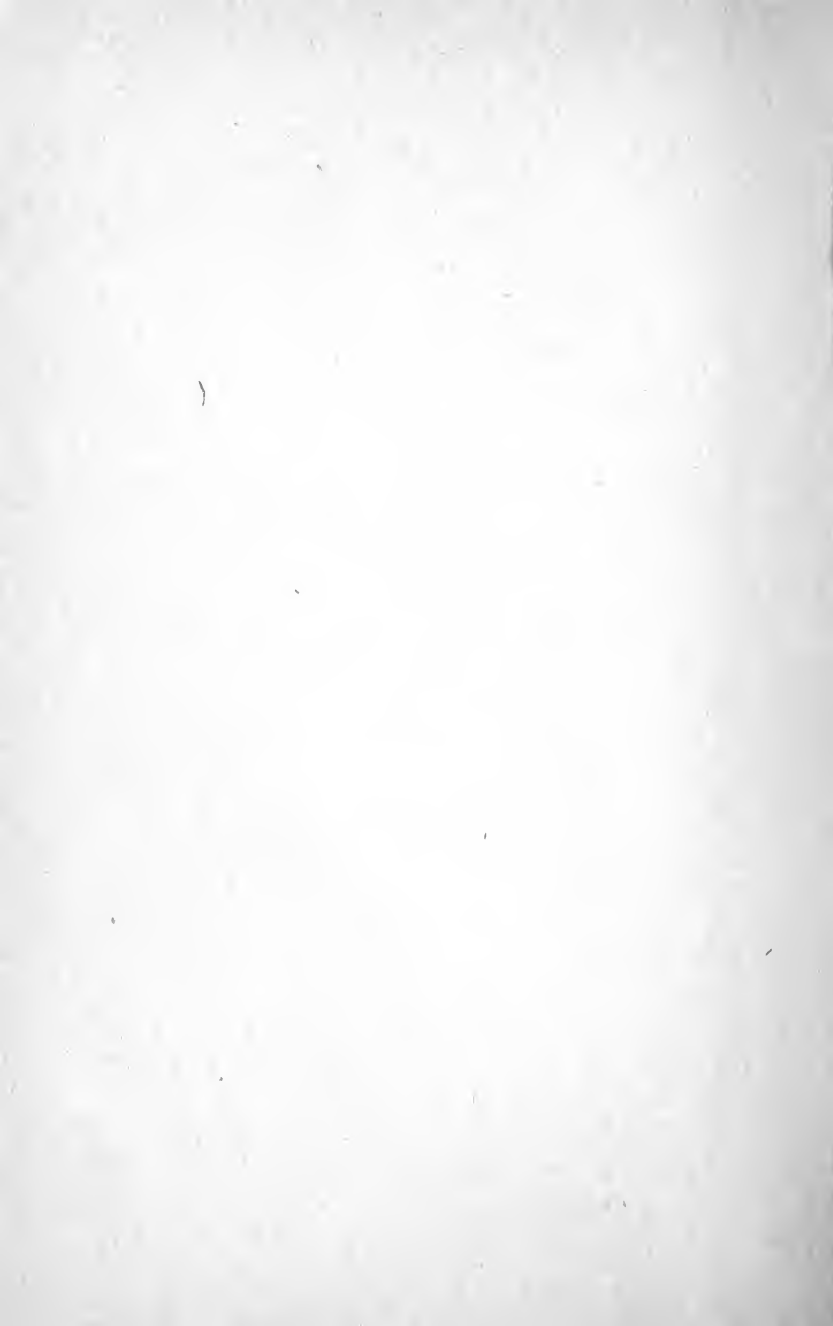
The secret of life?

He gives it to her, she gives it to him . . .

But who shall tell of it? Who shall know it?













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