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SALVO THREE
THIS MORNING
POEMS by HILDEGARDE FLANNER



New York : FRANK SHAY : 1921



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THIS MORNING:

Hildegarde Flanner

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By Hildegarde Flanner

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THIS MORNING

After the emotion of rain
The mist parts across the morning,
Like the smile of one
Who has laughed in sleep
And cannot remember why.

The damp road companions my feet,
And is a friend to every step.
Above me winter goldfinches
Cling like fruit
To the delighted birch trees;
And the studious earth,
Thinking what flowers to speak in next,
Moves restlessly with small, wise birds
Who read tucks in the moss,
Symbols on beetle-wings,
And comedies on pink and yellow pebbles,
Which I am too tall to see.

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ANNEX 1A

I AM YOUNG

Happiness grows like grass beneath my feet,
Happiness flows like a girdle from my waist,
Happiness runs like a black dog at my side
To remember the lyric path that we have traced.

When I die, leash a swift dog to guard the grass,
Lest it follow me into the earth.
Then put a girdle across my lips
To catch my mirth.

DISCOVERY

Until my lamp and I
Stood close together by the glass,
I had not ever noticed
I was a comely lass.

My aunts have always nodded,
"Sweet child,
She has a gentle soul
And mild."

And so, one night,
I took the lamp and said,
"I'll look upon my gentle soul
Before I go to bed."

I could not find it—no—
But gazing hard I spied
Something much more near to me,
White-armed and amber-eyed.

And as I looked I seemed to feel
Warm hands upon my breast,
Where never any hands but mine
Were known to rest.

And as I looked, my startled thoughts
Winged up in happy flight,
And circled like mad butter-flies
About the light.

I went to bed without my soul
And I had no mind to care,
For a joyful little sin
Slept pillowed on my hair.

I went to bed without my soul
—What difference to me?
I had a joyful little sin
For company.

And that is what came of listening
To aunts who always lied.
They never told me that I was
White-armed and amber-eyed.

SOLITUDE

I have pitched my soul
Among a solitude
Of other tents . . .
O will none of you,
Will none of you
Draw back the flap
Of painted canvas?

CIRCLE

Of all the motions I have made,
One forms in endless grace—
My hands uplifted whitely
To your face.

Of all the sounds that I have heard,
One cannot sink to rest—
Your footsteps going east,
Mine going west.

GARDEN

I. PORTULACA

Some day I might die
For fear they cannot hear me laugh
When I am being buried,
Come and be merry on my grave,
O cerise and yellow darlings,
So that my friends may say,
"It seems to me I hear her voice."

II. COLUMBINE

There is an eager hillside
Thirsting to a lake,
And on the sands a hundred toads
Trilling to awake
A band of ghosts with yellow brows,
Who stretch green hands and rise
To look along their happy limbs
With cherry-coloured eyes.

III. NASTURTIUM

I shall hide my discretion
In your willing brightness,
And give you to a snail to hold,
And say,
"Catch me if you can,
I am going to China."

IV. TIGRIDIA

Let three naked men
Carry me across the jungle.
There is a broken temple
Where I must meet the new moon
At sunrise.

V. PURPLE IRIS

I could drown
In one deep petal.

VI. DIANTHUS

They say my grandmother often picked you
And placed your quaint perfume
At her tight girdle.

My grandmother
Did Vergil into French
And then had seven children.

. . . . I shall not pick you,
Dianthus.

VII. SUNFLOWER

You must have more wisdom than any,
For the sun tells you
What God says,
And wild canaries tell you
What it is,
To be a yellow motion
In the air.

BIRDS

Beloved, the black swans of my eyes
Are loosed to your behest,
And must I still keep caged from you
The white swans of my breast?

My hands, like slender pigeons,
Flutter the whole day through.
Did you not know the little things
Home unto you?

My lips, like slim canaries,
Sing when I hear you speak.
Beloved, bend and stroke once more
The finches of my cheek.

“BIRCH GROVE”—By Boris Anisfeld

“Je peins ce que je sens, pas ce que je vois.”

I cannot find a path there
For mortal feet at all,
Where the shepherd boy is golden air
And the leaves are a water-fall.

I cannot wantonly intrude
Into that pagan solitude,
Where little dream goats in a row
Trot quaintly, primly to and fro.

One hand upraised would be to crush
The wonder-strung fragility
Of trees that with a slow, still rush
Flow down from high infinity.

There is a chain I cannot sever . . .
There is a wall that never . . . never . . .

I watch the little dream goats pace
Within that dim and dryad place.

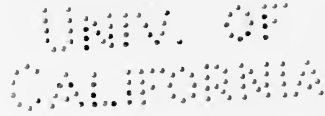
COMPANION

When the sun is shining,
I go within the privacy of mist
Along a road
Where time is clasped in laurel boughs
And leaf-life minutes
Drop unhindered to the ground.

When the moon slinks above me
Like a white cat,
And the cricket stars chirp angrily
Far behind her,
I am as much alone
As though I were God.

There may be others besides myself
Who live upon the earth,
But I have not found them.
My only companion
Is a little, wren-like pain
That gossips of death.

MOOD



My shadow going on before
Flutters like a leaf,
But it can never reach the door
Before my grief.
My grief goes first and takes the key
To open the door and welcome me.
He offers me a lonely cup
Full of lily wine
And says, "Come sister, share this drink,
Yours and mine."
He weds a pale blue candle
To a loving flame
And, holding it before his lips,
Breathes over it my name.
He lays his forehead to my knee
And I smooth his sorrowing hair.
The look of it beneath my hands
Is soft and fair.
He opens his mouth and sings one note
That strikes like rain against my throat;
Then he leads me jealousy to bed,
Lest I meet my dreams unaccompanied.

What a desolate thing my house would be
If grief were not there to welcome me.

COMMUNION

I have spoken with the dead.
From the silence of my bed
I have heard them in the night.
Their voices are as white
As altar candles. Their voices are as gold as wheat,
And clustered in the dark their words are sweet
As ripened fruit. Their voices are the colour of dim rain
Over grass where spring has lain.
Their speaking is an orchard of delight.
I have heard them in the night.
Their lips bloomed into heavy song
That hung like bells above me. You are wrong
Who say the dead lie still.
I heard them sing until
The cup of silence fell in two and lay
Broken by beauty of what dead men say.

There is no loveliness I cannot see.
There is no wall too stern for me.
There is no door that can withstand
The lifted symbol of my hand.

I know an ancient shibboleth:
I pass, for I have talked with death!

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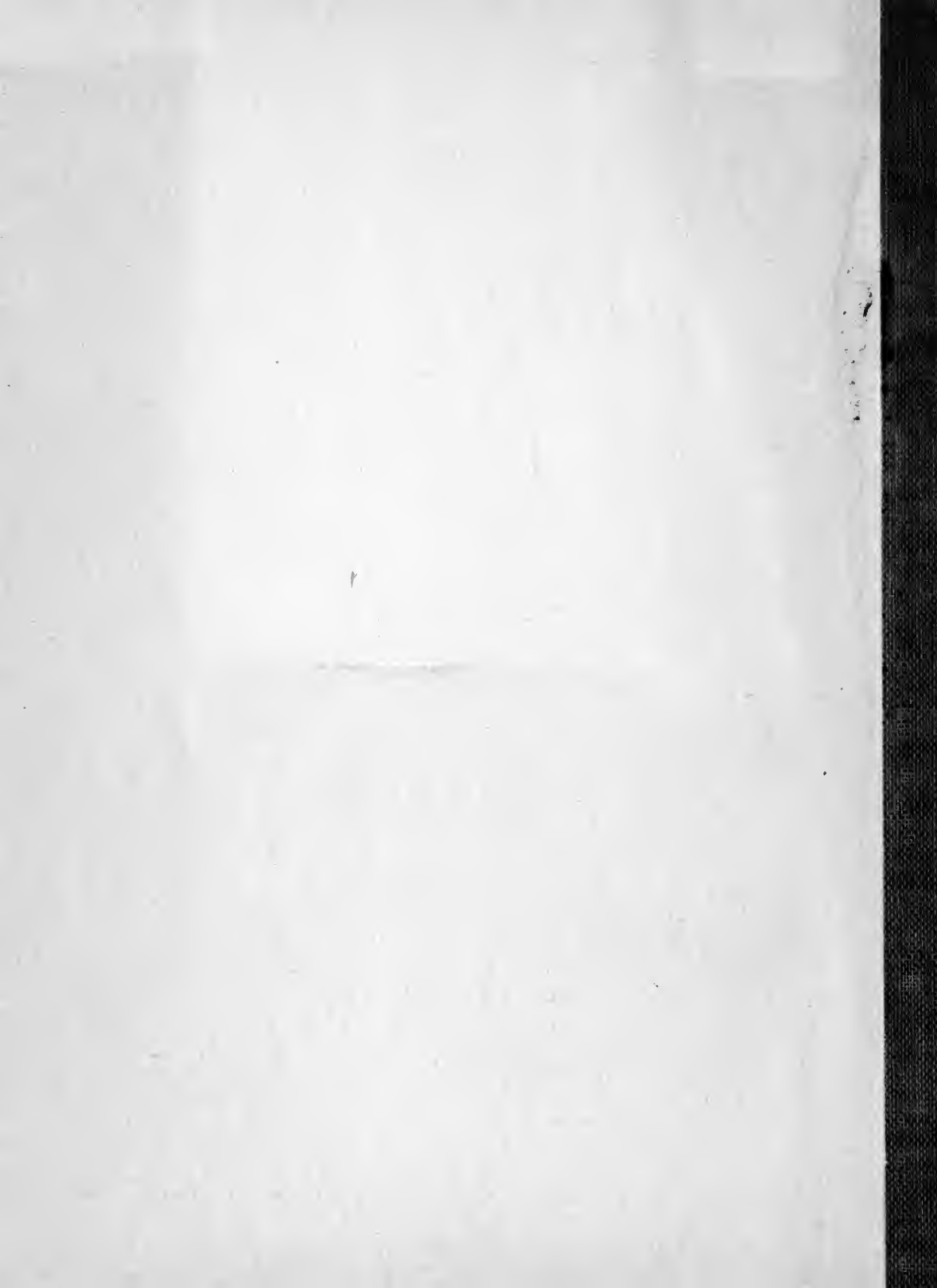
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