

PREFACE

AK. #26
pg 1

In response to a widely-spread lack of interest in my writings, I have consented to publish a small and unrepresentative selection from the same. With characteristic ^{Qv}cunning I have not included any poems published later than the Third Volume of my Collected Works.

The selection has been made by a committee of seven competent persons, sitting separately.

Only those poems have been included which obtained a majority vote.

This volume, thus almost ostentatiously democratic, is therefore now submitted to the British Public with the fullest confidence that it will be received with exactly the same amount of acclamation as that to which I have become accustomed.

ALEISTER CROWLEY.

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FROM 'THE TALE OF ARCHAIS'

Song

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pg 2

Ere the grape of joy is golden
 With the summer and the sun,
Ere the maidens un beholden
 Gather one by one,
To the vineyard comes the shower,
No sweet rain to fresh the flower,
 But the thunder rain that cleaves,
 Rends and ruins tender leaves.

Ere the wine of perfect pleasure
 From a perfect chalice poured,
Swells the veins with such a measure
 As the garden's lord
Makes his votaries dance to, death
Draws with soft delicious breath
 To the maiden and the man.
 Love and life are both a span.

2

Ere the crimson lips have planted
 Paler roses, warmer grapes,
Ere the maiden breasts have panted,
 And the sunny shapes
Flit around to bless the hour,
Comes men know not what false
flower:
 Ere the cup is drained, the wine
 Grows unsweet, that was divine.

All the subtle airs are proven
 False at dewfall; at the dawn
Sin and sorrow, interwoven,
 Like a veil are drawn
Over love and all delight.
Grey desires invade the white.
 Love and life are but a span;

Ere the crimson lips have planted
 Paler roses, warmer grapes,
 Ere the maiden breasts have panted,
 And the sunny shapes
 Flit around to bless the hour,
 Comes men know not what false flower:
 Ere the cup is drained, the wine
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All the subtle airs are proven
 False at dewfall; at the dawn
 Sin and sorrow, interwoven,
 Like a veil are drawn
 Over love and all delight.
 Grey desires invade the white.
 Love and life are but a span;
 Woe is me! and woe is man!

3

IN HOLLOW STONES, SCAWFELL

Blind the iron pinnacles edge the twilight;
 Blind and black the ghylls of the mountain clefted,
 Crag and snow-clad slope in a distant vision
 Rise as before me.

Here (it seems) my feet by a tiny torrent
 Press the moss with a glad delight of being:
 Here my eyes look up to the riven mountain
 Split by the thunder,

Rent and rifted, shattered of wind and lightning,
 Smitten, scarred, and stricken of sun and tempest,
 Seamed with wounds, like adamant, shod with iron,
 Torn by the earthquake.

Still through all the stresses of doubtful weather
 Hold the firm old pinnacles, sky-defying;
 Still the icy feet of the wind relentless

Fields that flower not, blossom in no new spring-
tide;

Fields where grass nor herb nor abounding darnel
Flourish; fields more barren, devoid, than ocean's
Pasture ungarnered.

Deserts, stone as arid as sand, savannahs
Black with wrecks, a wilderness evil, fruitless;
Still, to me, a land of the bluest heaven
Studded with silver.

Castles bleak and bare as the wrath of ocean,
Wasted wall and tower, as the blast had risen,
Taken keep and donjon, and hurled them earth-
ward,
Rend and uprooted.

Such rock-ruins people me tribes and nations,
Kings and queens and princes as pure as dawning,
Brave as day and true; and a happy people
Lulled into freedom;

Nations past the stormier times of tyrants,
Past the sudden spark of a great rebellion,
Past the iron gates that are thrust asunder
Not without bloodshed:

Past the rule of might and the rule of lying,
Free from gold's illusion, and free to cherish
Joys of life diviner than war and passion--
Falsest of phantoms.

Only now true love, like a sun of molten
Glory, surging up from a sea of liquid
Silver, golden, exquisite, overflowing,
Soars into starland.

Sphere on sphere unite in the chant of wonder;
Star to star must add to the glowing chorus;
Sun and moon must mingle and speed the echo
Flaming through heaven.

Night and day divide, and the music strengthens,
Gathers roar of seas and the dirge of moorlands;
Tempest, thunder, birds, and the breeze of summer
Join to augment it.

So the sound-world, filled of the fire of all things,
Rolls majestic torrents of mighty music
Through the stars where dwell the avenging spirits
Bound in the whirlwind . . .

So the cliffs their Song . . . For the mist re-
gathers,
Girds them bride-like, fit for the sun to kiss them;
Darkness falls like dewfall about the hill-sides;
Night is upon me.

Now to me remain in the doubtful twilight
Stretches bare of flower, but touched with whispers,
Grey with huddled rocks, and a space of wood-
land,
Pine-tree and poplar.

Now a stream to ford and a stile to clamber;
Last the inn, a book, and a quiet corner . . .
Fresh as Spring, there kisses me on the forehead
Sleep, like a sister.

7

FROM 'SONGS OF THE SPIRIT'

The Goad

Amsterdam, December 23rd, 1897.

Let me pass out beyond the city gate.
All day I loitered in the little streets
Of black worn houses tottering, like the fate
That hangs above my head even now, and meets
Prayer and defiance as not hearing it.
They lean, these old black streets! a little sky
Peeps through the gap, the rough stone path is lit
Just for a little by the sun, and I
Watch his red face pass over, fade away
To other streets, and other passengers,
See him take pleasure where the heathen pray,
See him relieve the hunter of his furs,

All the wide world awaiting him, all folk

Glad at his coming, only I must weep:

Rise he or sink, my weary eyes invoke

Only the respite of a little sleep;

Sleep, just a little space of sleep, to rest

The fevered head and cool the aching eyes;

Sleep for a space, to fall upon the breast

Of the dear God, that He may sympathise.

Long has the day drawn out; a bitter frost

Sparkles along the streets; the shipping heaves

With the slow murmur of the sea, half lost

In the last rustle of forgotten leaves.

Over the bridges pass the throngs; the sound,

Deep and insistent, penetrates the mist--

I hear it not; I contemplate the wound

Stabbed in the flanks of my dear silver Christ.

He hangs in anguish there; the crown of thorns

Pierces that palest brow; the nails drip blood;

There is the wound; no Mary by Him mourns,

There is no John beside the cruel wood.

I am alone to kiss the silver lips;

I rend my clothing for the temple veil;

My heart's black night must act the sun's eclipse;

My groans must play the earthquake, till I

quail

??

The wind is bitterer; the air breeds snow;
I put my Christ away; I turn my bow
Towards the south stedfastly; my feet must go
Some journey of despair. I dare not turn
To meet the sun; I will not follow him:
Better to pass where sand and sulphur burn
And days are hazed with heat, and nights are
dim
With some malarial poison. Better lie
Far and forgotten on some desert isle,
Where I may watch the silent ships go by,
And let them share my burden for awhile.
Let me pass out beyond the city gate
Where I may wander by the water still,
And see the faint few stars immaculate
Watch their own beauty in its depth, and chill
Their own desire within its icy stream.
Let me move on with vacant eyes, as one
Lost in the labyrinth of some ill dream,
Move and move on, and never see the sun
Lap all the mist with orange and red gold,
Throw some lank windmill into iron shade,
And stir the chill canal with manifold
Rays of clear morning; never grow afraid

When he dips down beyond the far flat land,
 Know never more the day and night apart,
 Know not hwere frost has laid his iron hand
 Save only that it fastens on my heart;
 Save only that it grips with icy fire
 These veins no fire of hell could satiate;
 Save only that it quenches this desire.
 Let me pass out beyond the city gate.

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ASTROLOGY

A lonely spirit seeks the midnight hour,
 When souls have power
 To cast away one moment bonds of clay,
 And touch the day
 With pallid, wistful lips beyond the earth,
 And bring to birth
 New thoughts with which life long has travailed;
 As if one dead
 Should rise and utter secrets of the tomb,
 And from hell's womb
 Or heaven's breast bring all the load of fears,
 Toils of long years,
 Sorrows of life and agonies of death,
 Hard caught-up breath,
 The labouring hands of love, the cheeks of shame,
 The gloomy flame
 Of lust, the cruel torment of desire
 More than hell fire,
 And bid them fade, as if the bryony
 Let her flower die,

And banished them through space, as if a star
 Dropped through the far
 Vault of the sky, and, as a lamp extinct
 With blood-red tinct,
 Went out. So lonely in mysterious night
 A wild, strange light
 Flickers around the sacred head of man,
 And bids him scan
 The scroll of heaven, and see if there be not,
 Black with no blot
 Of cloud, but golden lettered on the blue
 That mothers dew,
 This message of good hope, good trust, good fate,
 And good estate:
 Work on, hope ever, let your faith be built
 Of gold ungilt;
 Your love exceed the starry vault for height,
 The heaven for might;
 Your faith wax firmer than a ship at sleep
 On the grey deep,
 Anchored in some most certain anchorage
 From ocean's rage;
 Your patience stand when mountains shake and
 quail
 Before the gale

Of God's great tribulation. Make thee sure
 'Thou canst endure!
 And work, work ever, sleep not, gird they head
 With garlands red
 Of blood from swollen veins forced in bitter toil
 To win some spoil
 Of knowledge from the caverns of the deep!
 So shall the steep
 Pathways of heaven gleam with loftier fires
 Than earth's desires.
 So shalt thou conquer Space, and lastly climb
 The walls of Time,
 And by the golden path the great have trod

FROM 'JEPHTHAH

Chorus of Maidens

O the time of dule and teen!
O the dove the hawk has snared!
Would to God we had not been,
We, who see our maiden queen,
Love has slain whom hate had spared.
Sorrow for our sister sways
All our maiden bosoms bared
To the dying vesper rays,
Where the sun below the bays
Of the West is stooping;
All our hearts together drooping,
Flowers the ocean bears.
All the garb that gladness wears
To a rent uncouth attire
Changed with cares;
Happy songs our love had made
Ere the sun had sunk his fire,
In the moonrise fall and fade,

And the dregs of our desire
Fall away to death.
Tears divide our labouring breath
That our sister--O our sister!
Moon and sun and stars have kissed her!--
She must touch the lips of death,
Touch the lips whose coldness saith:
Thou art clay.
Let us fare away, away
To the ice whose ocean gray
Tumbles on the beach of rock,
Where the wheeling vultures mock
Our distress with horrid cries;
Where the flower relenting dies,
And the sun is sharp to slay;
Where the ivory dome above
Glimmers like the dawn of love
On the weary way;
Where the ibex chant and call
Over tempest's funeral;
Where the horned beast is shrill,
And the eagle hath its will,
And the shadows fall
Sharp and black, till day is passed
??

Where the barren rocks resound
Only to the rending roar
Of the shattering streams that pour
Rocks by ice eternal bound,
Myriad cascades that crowned
Once the far resounding throne
Of the mountain spirits strong,
All the treacherous souls that throng
Desolate abodes of stone,
Barren of all comely things,
Given to the splendid kings,
Gloomy state, and glamour dark,
Swooping jewel-feathered wings,
Eyes translucent with a spark
Of the world of fire, that swings

Gates of adamant below
Lofty minarets of snow.
Thence the towering flames arise,
Where the flashes white and wise
Find their mortal foe.
Let us thither, caring not
Anything, or any more,
Since the sorrow of our lot
Craves to pass the abysmal door.
Never more for us shall twine

Rosy fingers on the vine.
Never maiden lips shall cull
Myriad blossoms beautiful.
Never cheeks shall dimple over
At the perfume of the clover.
Never bosoms bright and round
Shall be garlanded and bound
With the chain of myrtle, wreathed
By the fingers of the maid
Each has chosen for a mate,
When the west wind lately breathed
Murmurs in the wanton glade
Of the day that dawneth late
In a maiden's horoscope,
Dawning faith and fire and hope
On the spring that only knew
Flowers and butterflies and dew,
Skies and seas and mountains blue,
On the spring that wot not of
Fruit and falling leaves and love.
Never dew-dashed foreheads fair
Shall salute the idle air.
Never shall we wander deep
Where the fronds of fern, asleep,
Kiss her rosy feet that pass

On the spangled summer grass,
 Half awake, and drowse again.
 Never more our feet shall stain
 Purple with the joyous grape,
 Whence there rose a fairy shape
 In the fume and must and juice,
 Singing lest our eyes escape
 All his tunic wried and loose
 With the feet that softly trod
 In the vat the fairy god.
 Never more our eyes shall swim
 Looking for the love of him
 In the magic moon that bent
 Over maidens moon-content,
 When the summer woods were wet
 With our dewy songs, that set
 Quivering all seas and snows,
 Stars and tender winds that fret
 Lily, lily, laughing rose,
 Sighing, sighing violet,
 Dusky pansy, swaying rush,
 And the stream that flows
 Singing, ringing softly: Hush!
 Listen to the bird that goes
 Wooing to the brown mate's bough;

Listen to the breeze that blows
 Over cape and valley now
 At the silence of the noon,
 Or the slumber hour
 Of the white delicious moon
 Like a lotus-flower!
 Let us sadly, slowly, go
 To the silence of the snow!

FROM 'MYSTERIES'

De Profundis

Blood, mist, and foam, then darkness. On my eyes
Sits heaviness, the oppor worn body lies

Devoid of nerve and muscle; it were death
Save for the heart that throbs, the breast that sighs.

The brain reels drowsily, the mind is dulled,
Deadened and drowned by noises that are lulled

By the harsh poison of the hateful breath.
All sense and sound and seeing is annulled.

Within a body dead a deadened brain
Beats with the burden of a shameful pain,

The sullen agony that dares to think,
And think through sleep, and wake to think again.

Fools! bitter fools! Our breaths and kisses seem
Constrained in devilry, debauch, and dream:

Lives logged in the morass of meat and drink,
Loves dipped in Phlegethon, the perjured stream.

Behold we would that hours and minutes pass,
Watch the sands falling in the eager glass;
 To wile their weariness is pleasure's bliss;
But ah! the years! like smoke They fade, alas!

We weep them as they slip away; we gaze
Back on the likeness of the former days--
 The hair we fondle and the lips we kiss--
Roses grow yellow, and no purple stays.

Ah! the old years! Come back, ye vanished hours
We wasted; come, grow red, ye faded flowers!
 What boots the weariness of olden time
Now, when old age, a tempest-fury, lowers?

Up to high God beyond the weary land
The days drift mournfully; His hoary hand
 Gathers them. Is it so? My foolish rime
Dreams they are links upon an endless band.

The planets draw in endless orbits round
The sun; itself revolves in the profound
 Black wells of space; the comet's mystic track
By the strong rule of a closed curve is bound.

Why not with time? To-morrow we may see
The circle ended--if to-morrow be--

And gaze on chaos, and a week bring back
Adam and Eve beneath the apple tree.

Or, like the comet, the wild race may end
Out into darkness, and our circle bend

Round to all glory, in a sudden sweep,
And speed triumphant with the sun to friend.

Love will not leave my home. She knows my
tears,

My angers and caprices; still my ears

Listen to singing voices, till I weep
Once more, less sadly, and set hounds on fears.

She will not leave me comfortless. And why?
Through the dimmed glory of my clouded eye

She catches one sharp glint of love for her;
She will not leave me ever till I die;--

Nay, though I die! Beyond the distant gloom
Heaven springs, a fountain, out of Change's womb!

Time would all men within the grave inter:--
For Time himself shall no god find a tomb?

Glory and love and work precipitate
The end of man's desire--so sayeth Fate.

Man answers: Love is stronger, work more sure,
Glory more fadeless than her shafts abate.

Though all worlds fail, the pulse of Life be still,
God fall, all darken, she hath not her will

Of deeds beyond recall, that shall endure:
For us, these three divinest glasses fill,

Fill to the brim with lustrous dew, nor fail
To leave the blossom and the nightingale,
Love's earlier kiss, and manhood's glowing
prime!

Let these suffice. Shall man or Fate prevail?

Lo, we are blind, and dubious fingers grope
In Despair's dungeon for the key of Hope;

Lo, we are chained, and with a broken rhyme
Would file our fetters and enlarge our scope.

Yet ants may move the mountain; none is small
But he who stretches out no arm at all:

Thousands have wrecked fair cities in a night;
??

Christ touched the leper and the widow's son;
And thou wouldst serve the work the Perfect One
 Began, by folding arms and gazing up
To heaven, as if thy work were rightly done.

I tell thee, He should say, if ye were met:
'Thou hadst a talent--ah, thou hast it yet
 Wrapped in a napkin! thou shalt drain the cup
Of that damnation that may not forget

'The wasted hours!' Ah, bitter interest
Of our youth's capital--forgotten zest
 In all the pleasures of o'erflowing life,
Wine tasteless, tired the brain, and cold the breast!

Ah! but if with it is one good deed wrought,
One kind word spoken, one immortal thought
 Born in thee, all is paid: the weary strife
Grows victory. 'Love is all and Death is nought!'

Such an one wrote that word as I would meet,
Lay my life's burden at his silver feet,
 Have him give ear if I say 'Master.' Yea!
??

He passed before me on the wheel of Time,
He who knows no Time--the intense sublime
 Master of all philosophy and play,
Lord of all love and music and sweet rime.

Follow thou him! Work ever, if thy heart
Be fervent with one hope, thy brain with art,
 Thy lips with sone, thine arm with strength to
 smite:
Achieve some act; its name shall not depart.

Christ laid Love's corner-stone, and Ceasar built
The tower of glory; Sappho's life was spilt
 From fervent lips the torch of sone to ignite:
Thou mayst add yet a stone--if but thou wilt.

And yet the days stream by; night shakes the day
From his pale throne of purple, to allay
 The tremors of the earth; day smiteth dark
With the swift poignard dipped in Helios' ray.

The days stream by; with lips and cheeks grown
 pale
On their indomitable breast we sail.
 There is a fovouring wind; our idle bark
Lingers, we raise no silk to meet the gale.

The bank slips by; we gather not its fruit,
We plant no seed, we irrigate no root
True men have planted; and the tare and thorn
Spring to rank weedy vigour; poisons shoot

Into the overspreading foliage;
So as days darken into weary age
The flowers are fewer; the weeds are stronger
born,
And hands are grown too feeble to assuage

Their venom; then, the unutterable sea!
Is she green-cinctured with the earlier tree
Of Life? Do blossoms blow, or weeds create
A foul rank undergrowth of misery?

From the deep water of the bitterest brine
Drowned children raise their arms; their lips
combine
To force a shriek; bid them go contemplate
The cold philosophy of Zeno's shrine?

Nay, stretch a hand! Although their eagle clutch
Overturn thy skiff, yet it is overmuch
To grieve for that: life is not so divine--
??

We are wild serpents in a ring of fire;
Our necks stretch out, our haggard eyes aspire
 In desperation; from the fearful line
Our coils revulse in impotence and ire.

An idle song it was the poet sang,
A quavering note--no brazen kettle's clang,
 But gentle, drooping, tearful. Nay, achieve!
I can remember how the finish rang

Clear, sharp, and lous; the harp is glad to die
And give the clarion one note silver-high.
 It was too sweet for music, and I weave
In vain the tattered woof of memory.

Ashes and dust!
 Cold cinders dead!
Our swords are rust;
 Our lives are fled
Like dew on glass.
 In vain we lust;
Our hopes are sped,
 Alas! alas!
From heaven we are thrust, we have no more trust.
 Alas!

When I am dead, remember me for this
That I bade workers work, and lovers kiss;
 Laughed with the Stoic at the dream of pain,
And preached with Jesus the evangel--bliss.

When I am dead, think kindly. rail my song?
'Twas the poor utterance of an eager tongue;
 I stutter in my rime? my heart was full
Of greater longings, more divinely wrung

By love and pity and regret and trust,
High hope from heaven that God will be just,
 Spurn not the child because his mind was dull,
Still less condemn him for his father's lust.

Yet I think priests shall answer Him in vain:
Their gospel of disgrace, disease, and pain,
 Shall move His heart of Love to such a wrath--
O Heart! Turn back and look on Love again!

Behold, I have seen visions, and dreamed dreams!
My verses eddy in slow wandering streams,
 Veer like the wind, and know no certain path--
Yet their worst shades are tinged with dawning
 beams!

Gold hairs and gray!

Red lips and white!

Warm hearts, cold clay!

Bright day, dim night!

Our spirits pass

Like the hours away.

We have no light,

Alas! alas!

We have no more day, we are fain to say

Alas!

In Love's a cure

For Fortune's hate;

In Love's a lure

Shall laugh at Fate;

We have tolled Death's knell;

All streams are pure;

We are new-create;

All's well, all's well!

We have God to endure, we are very sure

All's well!

In such wise rang the challenge unto Death

With clear high eloquence and happy breath;

So did a brave sad heart grow glad again

And mock the riddle that the dead Sphinx saith.