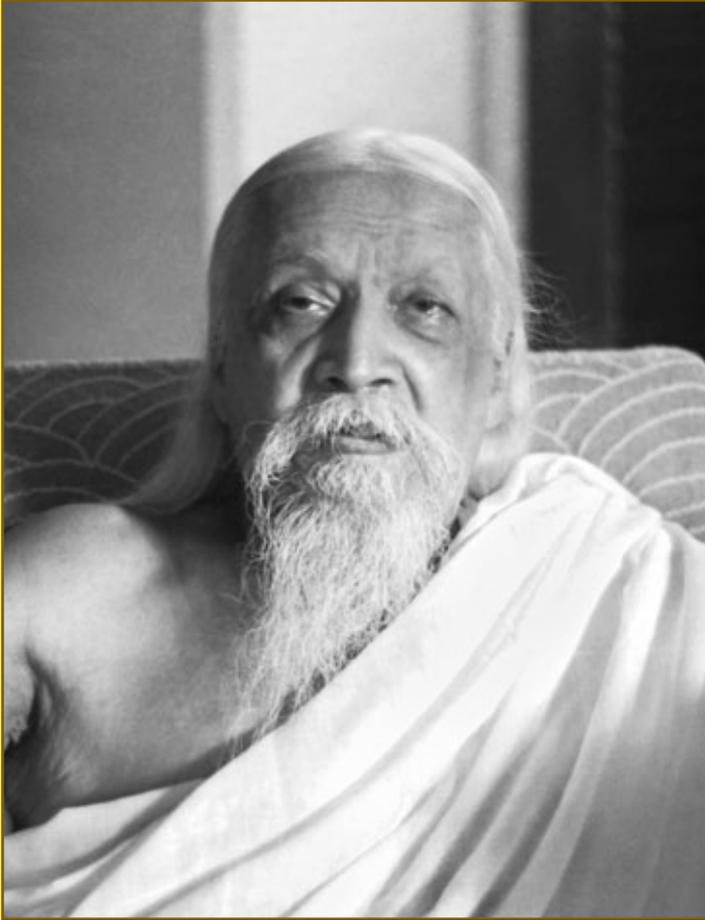


Collected Poems



Sri Aurobindo

VOLUME 2
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO
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Collected Poems

Publisher's Note

Collected Poems comprises all of Sri Aurobindo's poetical works with the exception of (1) the epic *Savitri*, (2) poetic dramas, (3) most translations into verse of poetry in Sanskrit, Bengali and other languages, and (4) original poetry in Bengali and Sanskrit. *Savitri* is published as volumes 33 and 34 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO; the poetic dramas are included in volumes 3 and 4, *Collected Plays and Stories*; the poetic translations are included in volume 5, *Translations*; and the original poetry in Sanskrit and Bengali is published in volume 9, *Writings in Bengali and Sanskrit*.

The present volume includes all short and narrative poems in English that Sri Aurobindo published during his lifetime. It also includes all complete poems found among his manuscripts after his passing, as well as incomplete poetry that the editors thought worthy of inclusion.

The poems have been arranged in seven overlapping chronological parts, which are subdivided into sections representing different genres and states of completeness. Poems published in small books during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime have, for the most part, been kept together as published.

Sri Aurobindo worked on the poems in this volume over the course of seven decades. The first one was published in 1883, when he was ten. A number were composed or revised more than sixty years later, during the late 1940s.

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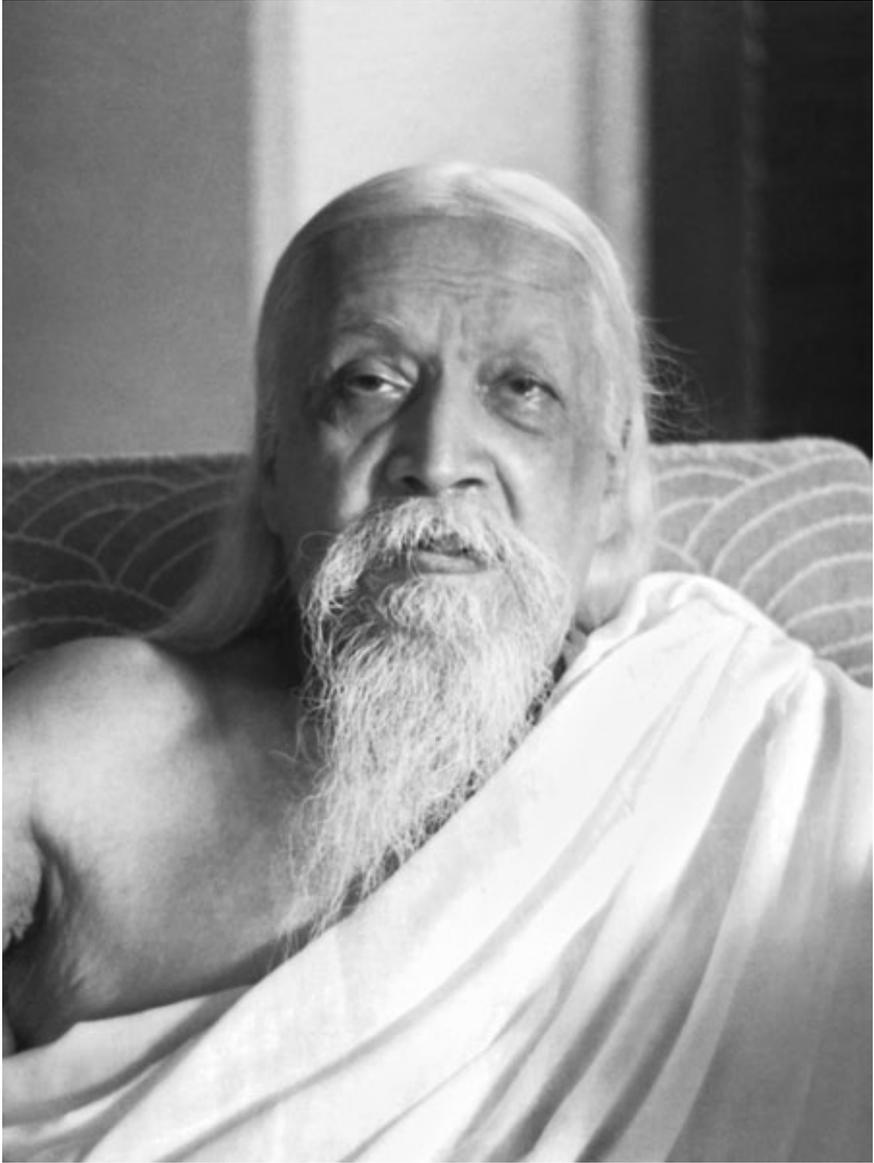
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Sri Aurobindo in 1950

Part One

England and Baroda

1883–1898

Poem Published in 1883

Light

From the quickened womb of the primal gloom,
 The sun rolled, black and bare,
Till I wove him a vest for his Ethiop breast,
 Of the threads of my golden hair;
And when the broad tent of the firmament
 Arose on its airy spars,
I pencilled the hue of its matchless blue,
 And spangled it around with stars.

I painted the flowers of the Eden bowers,
 And their leaves of living green,
And mine were the dyes in the sinless eyes
 Of Eden's Virgin queen;
And when the fiend's art in the truthful heart
 Had fastened its mortal spell,
In the silvery sphere of the first-born tear
 To the trembling earth I fell.

When the waves that burst o'er a world accurst
 Their work of wrath had sped,
And the Ark's lone few, tried and true,
 Came forth among the dead,
With the wondrous gleams of the bridal beams,
 I bade their terrors cease,
As I wrote on the roll of the storm's dark scroll
 God's covenant of peace.

Like a pall at rest on the senseless breast,
 Night's funeral shadow slept —
Where shepherd swains on Bethlehem's plains,
 Their lonely vigils kept,
When I flashed on their sight, the heralds bright,
 Of Heaven's redeeming plan,
As they chanted the morn, the Saviour born —
 Joy, joy, to the outcast man!

Equal favour I show to the lofty and low,
 On the just and the unjust I descend:
 E'en the blind, whose vain spheres, roll in darkness and
tears,

Feel my smile — the blest smile of a friend.
 Nay, the flower of the waste by my love is embraced,
 As the rose in the garden of kings:
 At the chrysalis bier of the morn I appear,
 And lo! the gay butterfly wings.

The desolate morn, like the mourner forlorn,
 Conceals all the pride of her charms,
 Till I bid the bright hours, chase the night from her flowers,
 And lead the young day to her arms.
 And when the gay rover seeks Eve for her lover,
 And sinks to her balmy repose,
 I wrap the soft rest by the zephyr-fanned west,
 In curtains of amber and rose.

From my sentinel steep by the night-brooded deep
 I gaze with unslumbering eye,
 When the cynosure star of the mariner
 Is blotted out from the sky:
 And guided by me through the merciless sea,
 Though sped by the hurricane's wings,
 His companionless, dark, lone, weltering bark,
 To the haven home safely he brings.

I waken the flowers in the dew-spangled bowers,
 The birds in their chambers of green,
 And mountain and plain glow with beauty again,
 As they bask in their matinal sheen.
 O, if such the glad worth of my presence on earth,
 Though fitful and fleeting the while,
 What glories must rest on the home of the blessed,
 Ever bright with the Deity's smile.

Songs to Myrtilla

Songs to Myrtilla

GLAUCUS

Sweet is the night, sweet and cool
As to parched lips a running pool;
Sweet when the flowers have fallen asleep
And only moonlit rivulets creep
Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood,
To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.
When earth is full of whispers, when
No daily voice is heard of men,
But higher audience brings
The footsteps of invisible things,
When o'er the glimmering tree-tops bowed
The night is leaning on a luminous cloud,
And always a melodious breeze
Sings secret in the weird and charmèd trees,
Pleasant 'tis then heart-overawed to lie
Alone with that clear moonlight and that listening sky.

AETHON

But day is sweeter; morning bright
Has put the stars out ere the light,
And from their dewy cushions rise
Sweet flowers half-opening their eyes.
O pleasant then to feel as if new-born
The sweet, unripe and virgin air, the air of morn.
And pleasant are her melodies,
Rustle of winds, rustle of trees,
Birds' voices in the eaves,
Birds' voices in the green melodious leaves;
The herdsman's flute among his flocks,
Sweet water hurrying from reluctant rocks,
And all sweet hours and all sweet showers
And all sweet sounds that please the noonday flowers.

Morning has pleasure, noon has golden peace
 And afternoon repose and eve the heart's increase.

All things are subject to sweet pleasure,
 But three things keep her richest measure,
 The breeze that visits heaven
 And knows the planets seven,
 The green spring with its flowery truth
 Creative and the luminous heart of youth.
 To all fair flowers and vernal
 The wind makes melody diurnal.
 On Ocean all night long
 He rests, a voice of song.
 The blue sea dances like a girl
 With sapphire and with pearl
 Crowning her locks. Sunshine and dew
 Each morn delicious life renew.
 The year is but a masque of flowers,
 Of light and song and honied showers.
 In the soft springtide comes the bird
 Of heaven whose speech is one sweet word,
 One word of sweet and magic power to bring
 Green branches back and ruddy lights of spring.
 Summer has pleasant comrades, happy meetings
 Of lily and rose and from the trees divinest greetings.

GLAUCUS

For who in April shall remember
 The certain end of drear November?
 No flowers then live, no flowers
 Make sweet those wretched hours;
 From dead or grieving branches spun
 Unwilling leaves lapse wearily one by one;
 The heart is then in pain
 With the unhappy sound of rain.
 No secret boughs prolong

A green retreat of song;
Summer is dead and rich repose
And springtide and the rose,
And woods and all sweet things make moan;
The weeping earth is turned to stone.
The lovers of her former face,
Shapes of beauty, melody, grace,
Where are they? Butterfly and bird
No more are seen, no songs are heard.
They see her beauty spent, her splendours done;
They seek a younger earth, a surer sun.
When youth has quenched its soft and magic light,
Delightful things remain but dead is their delight.

AETHON

Ah! for a little hour put by
Dim Hades and his pageantry.
Forget the future, leave the past,
The little hour thy life shall last.
Learn rather from the violet's days
Soft-blooming in retired ways
Or dewy bell, the maid undrest
With creamy childhood in her breast,
Fierce foxglove and the briony
And sapphire thyme, the work-room of the bee.
Behold in emerald fire
The spotted lizard crawl
Upon the sun-kissed wall
And coil in tangled brake
The green and sliding snake
Under the red-rose-briar.
Nay, hither see
Lured by thy rose of lips the bee
To woo thy petals open, O sweet,
His flowery murmur here repeat,
Forsaking all the joys of thyme.

Stain not thy perfumed prime
 With care for autumn's pale decay,
 But live like these thy sunny day.
 So when thy tender bloom must fall,
 Then shalt thou be as one who tasted all
 Life's honey and must now depart
 A broken prodigal from pleasure's mart,
 A leaf with whom each golden sunbeam sinned,
 A dewy leaf and kissed by every wandering wind.

GLAUCUS

How various are thy children, Earth!
 Behold the rose her lovely birth,
 What fires from the bud proceed,
 As if the vernal air did bleed.
 Breezes and sunbeams, bees and dews
 Her lords and lovers she indues,
 And these her crimson pleasures prove;
 Her life is but a bath of love;
 The wide world perfumes when she sighs
 And, burning all the winds, of love she dies.
 The lily liveth pure,
 Yet has she lovers, friends,
 And each her bliss intends;
 The bees besides her treasure
 Besiege of pollened pleasure,
 Nor long her gates endure.
 The snowdrop cold
 Has vowed the saintly state to hold
 And far from green spring's amorous guilds
 Her snowy hermitage she builds.
 Cowslip attends her vernal duty
 And stops the heart with beauty.
 The crocus asks no vernal thing,
 But all the lovely lights of spring
 Are with rich honeysuckle boon

And praise her through one summer moon.
Thus the sweet children of the earth
Fulfil their natural selves and various birth.
For one is proud and one sweet months approve
Diana's saint, but most are bondmaidens of Love.

Love's feet were on the sea
When he dawned on me.
His wings were purple-grained and slow;
His voice was very sweet and very low;
His rose-lit cheeks, his eyes' pale bloom
Were sorrow's anteroom;
His wings did cause melodious moan;
His mouth was like a rose o'erblown;
The cypress-garland of renown
Did make his shadowy crown.
Fair as the spring he gave
And sadder than a winter's wave
And sweet as sunless asphodel,
My shining lily, Florimel,
My heart's enhaloed moon,
My winter's warmth, my summer's shady boon.

AETHON

Not from the mighty sea
Love visited me.
I found as in a jewelled box
Love, rose-red, sleeping with imprisoned locks;
And I have ever known him wild
And merry as a child,
As roses red, as roses sweet,
The west wind in his feet,
Tulip-girdled, kind and bold,
With heartsease in his curls of gold,
Since in the silver mist
Bright Cymothea's lips I kissed,

Whose laughter dances like a gleam
 Of sunlight on a hidden stream
 That through a wooded way
 Runs suddenly into the perfect day.
 But what were Cymothea, placed
 Where like a silver star Myrtilla blooms?
 Such light as cressets cast
 In long and sun-lit rooms.
 Thy presence is to her
 As oak to juniper,
 Thy beauty as the gorgeous rose
 To privet by the lane that blows,
 Gold-crownèd blooms to mere fresh grass,
 Eternal ivy to brief blooms that pass.

GLAUCUS

But Florimel beside thee, sweet,
 Pales like a candle in the brilliant noon.
 Snowdrops are thy feet,
 Thy waist a crescent moon,
 And like a silver wand
 Thy body slight doth stand
 Or like a silver beech aspire.
 Thine arms are walls for white caresses,
 Thy mouth a tale of crimson kisses,
 Thine eyes two amorous treasuries of fire.
 To what shall poet liken thee?
 Art thou a goddess of the sea
 Purple-tressed and laughter-lipped
 From thy choric sisters slipped
 To wander on the flowery land?
 Or art thou siren on the treacherous sand
 Summer-voiced to charm the ear
 Of the wind-vext mariner?
 Ah! but what are these to thee,
 Brighter gem than knows the sea,

Lovelier girl than sees the stream
Naked, Naiad of a dream,
Whiter Dryad than men see
Dancing round the lone oak-tree,
Flower and most enchanting birth
Of ten ages of the earth!
The Graces in thy body move
And in thy lips the ruby hue of Love.

O Coil, Coil

O coil, honied envoy of the spring,
Cease thy too happy voice, grief's record, cease:
For I recall that day of vernal trees,
The soft asoca's bloom, the laden winds
And green felicity of leaves, the hush,
The sense of Nature living in the woods.
Only the river rippled, only hummed
The languid murmuring bee, far-borne and slow,
Emparadised in odours, only used
The ringdove his divine heart-moving speech;
But sweetest to my pleased and singing heart
Thy voice, O coil, in the peepel tree.

O me! for pleasure turned to bitterest tears!
O me! for the swift joy, too great to live,
That only bloomed one hour! O wondrous day,
That crowned the bliss of those delicious years.
The vernal radiance of my lover's lips
Was shut like a red rose upon my mouth,
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves,
His love around me than the summer air.
Five hours entangled in the coil's cry
Lay my beloved twixt my happy breasts.
O voice of tears! O sweetness uttering death!
O lost ere yet that happy cry was still!

O tireless voice of spring! Again I lie
 In odorous gloom of trees; unseen and near
 The windlark gurgles in the golden leaves,
 The woodworm spins in shrillness on the bough:
 Thou by the waters wailing to thy love,
 O chocrobacque! have comfort, since to thee
 The dawn brings sweetest recompense of tears
 And she thou lovest hears thy pain. But I
 Am desolate in the heart of fruitful months,
 Am widowed in the sight of happy things,
 Uttering my moan to the unhoused winds,
 O coil, coil, to the winds and thee.

Goethe

A perfect face amid barbarian faces,
 A perfect voice of sweet and serious rhyme,
 Traveller with calm, inimitable paces,
 Critic with judgment absolute to all time,
 A complete strength when men were maimed and weak,
 German obscured the spirit of a Greek.

The Lost Deliverer

Pythian he came; repressed beneath his heel
 The hydra of the world with bruised head.
 Vainly, since Fate's immeasurable wheel
 Could parley with a straw. A weakling sped
 The bullet when to custom's usual night
 We fell because a woman's faith was light.

Charles Stewart Parnell

1891

O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,
Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,
Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth.

Hic Jacet

Glasnevin Cemetery

Patriots, behold your guerdon. This man found
Erin, his mother, bleeding, chastised, bound,
Naked to imputation, poor, denied,
While alien masters held her house of pride.
And now behold her! Terrible and fair
With the eternal ivy in her hair,
Armed with the clamorous thunder, how she stands
Like Pallas' self, the Gorgon in her hands.
True that her puissance will be easily past,
The vision ended; she herself has cast
Her fate behind her: yet the work not vain
Since that which once has been may be again,
And she this image yet recover, fired
With godlike workings, brain and hands inspired,
So stand, the blush of battle on her cheek,
Voice made armipotent, deeds that loudly speak,
Like some dread Sphinx, half patent to the eye,
Half veiled in formidable secrecy.
And he who raised her from her forlorn life
Loosening the fountains of that mighty strife,

Where sits he? On what high foreshadowing throne
 Guarded by grateful hearts? Beneath this stone
 He lies: this guerdon only Ireland gave,
 A broken heart and an unhonoured grave.

Lines on Ireland

1896

After six hundred years did Fate intend
 Her perfect perseverance thus should end?
 So many years she strove, so many years,
 Enduring toil, enduring bitter tears,
 She waged religious war, with sword and song
 Insurgent against Fate and numbers, strong
 To inflict as to sustain; her weak estate
 Could not conceal the goddess in her gait;
 Goddess her mood. Therefore that light was she
 In whom races of weaker destiny
 Their beauteous image of rebellion saw;
 Treason could not unnerve, violence o'erawe —
 A mirror to enslavèd nations, never
 O'ercome, though in the field defeated ever.
 O mutability of human merit!
 How changed, how fallen from her ancient spirit!
 She that was Ireland, Ireland now no more,
 In beggar's weeds behold at England's door
 Neglected sued or at the best returned
 With hollow promise, happy if not spurned
 Perforce, she that had yesterday disdained
 Less than her mighty purpose to have gained.
 Had few short change of seasons puissance then,
 O nurse and mother of heroic men,
 Thy genius to outwear, thy strength well-placed
 And old traditionary courage, waste

Thy vehement nature? Nay, not time, but thou
These ancient praises strov'st to disavow.
For 'tis not foreign force, nor weight of wars,
Nor treason, nor surprise, nor opposite stars,
Not all these have enslaved nor can, whate'er
Vulgar opinion bruit, nor years impair,
Ruin discourage, nor disease abate
A nation. Men are fathers of their fate;
They dig the prison, they the crown command.
Yet thine own self a little understand,
Unhappy country, and be wise at length.
An outward weakness doing deeds of strength
Amazed the nations, but a power within
Directed, like effective spirit unseen
Behind the mask of trivial forms, a source
And fund of tranquil and collected force.
This was the sense that made thee royal, blessed
With sanction from on high and that impressed
Which could thyself transfigure and infuse
Thine action with such pride as kings do use.
But thou to thine own self disloyal, hast
Renounced the help divine turning thy past
To idle legends and fierce tales of blood,
Mere violent wrath with no proposèd good.
Therefore effective wisdom, skill to bend
All human things to one predestined end
Renounce thee. Honest purpose, labour true,
These dwell not with the self-appointed crew
Who, having conquered by death's aid, abuse
The public ear, — for seldom men refuse
Credence, when mediocrity multiplied
Equals itself with genius — fools! whose pride
Absurd the gods permit a little space
To please their souls with laughter, then replace
In the loud limbo of futilities.
How fallen art thou being ruled by these!
Ignoble hearts, courageous to effect

Their country's ruin; such the heavens reject
For their high agencies and leave exempt
Of force, mere mouths and vessels of contempt.
They of thy famous past and nature real
Uncareful, have denied thy rich ideal
For private gains, the burden would not brook
Of that sustaining genius, when it took
A form of visible power, since it demanded
All meaner passions for its sake disbanded.
As once against the loud Euphratic host
The lax Ionians of the Asian coast
Drew out their numbers, but not long enduring
Rigorous hard-hearted toil to the alluring
Cool shadow of the olives green withdrew;
Freedom's preparators though well they knew
Labour exact, discipline, pains well nerved
In the severe unpitying sun, yet swerved
From their ordeal; Ireland so deceiving
The world's great hope, her temples large relieving
Of the too heavy laurel, rather chose
Misery, civil battle, triumphant foes
Than rational order and divine control.
Therefore her brighter fate and nobler soul
Glasnevin with that hardly-honoured bier
Received. But the immortal mind austere,
By man rejected, of eternal praise
Has won its meed and sits with heavenly bays,
Not variable breath of favour, crowned
On high. And grieves it not, spirit renowned,
Mortal ingratitude though now forgiven,
Grieves it not, even on the hills of heaven,
After so many mighty toils, defeats
So many, cold repulse and vernal heats
Of hope, iron endurance throned apart
In lonely strength within thy godlike heart,
Obloquy faced, health lost, the goal nigh won,
To see at last thy strenuous work undone?

So falls it ever when a race condemned
To strict and lasting bondage, have contemned
Their great deliverer, self and ease preferring
To labour's crown, by their own vileness erring.
Thus the uncounselled Israelites of old,
Binding their mightiest, for their own ease sold,
Who else had won them glorious liberty
To his Philistian foes, as thine did thee.
Thou likewise, had thy puissant soul endured
Within its ruined house to stay immured,
With parallel disaster and o'erthrow
Hadst daunted and their conjured strength laid low.
But time was adverse. Thus too Heracles
In exile closed by the Olynthian seas,
Not seeing Thebes nor Dirce any more,
His friendless eyelids on an alien shore.
Yet not unbidden of heaven the men renowned
Have laboured, though no fruit apparent crowned
Nor praise contemporary touched with leaf
Of civic favour, who for joy or grief
To throned injustice never bowed the head.
They triumph from the houses of the dead.
Thou too, high spirit, mighty genius, glass
Of patriots, into others' deeds shalt pass
With force and tranquil fortitude thy dower,
An inspiration and a fount of power.
Nor to thy country only nor thy day
Art thou a name and a possession, stay
Of loftiest natures, but where'er and when
In time's full ripeness and the date of men
Alien oppression maddened has the wise, —
For ever thus preparing Nemesis
In ruling nations unjust power has borne
Insolence, injustice, madness, outrage, scorn,
Its natural children, then, by high disdain
And brave example pushed to meet their pain,
The pupils of thy greatness shall appear,

Souls regal to the mould divine most near,
 And reign, or rise on throne-intending wings,
 Making thee father to a line of kings.

On a Satyr and Sleeping Love

Me whom the purple mead that Bromius owns
 And girdles rent of amorous girls did please,
 Now the inspired and curious hand decrees
 That waked quick life in these quiescent stones,
 To yield thee water pure. Thou lest the sleep
 Yon perilous boy unchain, more softly creep.

PLATO

A Rose of Women

Now lilies blow upon the windy height,
 Now flowers the pansy kissed by tender rain,
 Narcissus builds his house of self-delight
 And Love's own fairest flower blooms again;
 Vainly your gems, O meadows, you recall;
 One simple girl breathes sweeter than you all.

MELEAGER

Saraswati with the Lotus

(Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Obit 1894)

Thy tears fall fast, O mother, on its bloom,
 O white-armed mother, like honey fall thy tears;
 Yet even their sweetness can no more relume
 The golden light, the fragrance heaven rears,
 The fragrance and the light for ever shed
 Upon his lips immortal who is dead.

Night by the Sea

Love, a moment drop thy hands;
Night within my soul expands.
Veil thy beauties milk-rose-fair
In that dark and showering hair.
Coral kisses ravish not
When the soul is tinged with thought;
Burning looks are then forbid.
Let each shyly-parted lid
Hover like a settling dove
O'er those deep-blue wells of Love.
Darkness brightens; silvering flee
Pomps of foam the driven sea.

In this garden's dim repose
Lighted with the burning rose,
Soft narcissi's golden camp
Glimmering or with rosier lamp
Censured honeysuckle guessed
By the fragrance of her breast, —
Here where summer's hands have crowned
Silence in the fields of sound,
Here felicity should be.
Hearken, Edith, to the sea.

What a voice of grief intrudes
On these happy solitudes!
To the wind that with him dwells
Ocean, old historian, tells
All the dreadful heart of tears
Hidden in the pleasant years.
Summer's children, what do ye
By the stern and cheerless sea?

Not we first nor we alone
Heard the mighty Ocean moan

By this treasure-house of flowers
 In the sweet ambiguous hours.
 Many a girl's lips ruby-red
 With their vernal honey fed
 Happy mouths, and soft cheeks flushed
 With Love's rosy sunlight blushed.
 Ruddy lips of many a boy
 Blithe discovered hills of joy
 Ruby-guided through a kiss
 To the sweet highways of bliss.
 Here they saw the evening still
 Coming slowly from the hill
 And the patient stars arise
 To their outposts in the skies;
 Heard the ocean shoreward urge
 The speed and thunder of his surge,
 Singing heard as though a bee
 Noontide waters on the sea.

These no longer. For our rose
 In her place they wreathed once, blows,
 And thy glorious garland, sweet,
 Kissed not once those wandering feet.
 All the lights of spring are ended,
 To the wintry haven wended.
 Beauty's boons and nectarous leisure,
 Lips, the honeycombs of pleasure,
 Cheeks enrosed, Love's natal soil,
 Breasts, the ardent conqueror's spoil,
 Spring rejects; a lovelier child
 His brittle fancies has beguiled.
 O her name that to repeat
 Than the Dorian muse more sweet
 Could the white hand more relume
 Writing and refresh the bloom
 Of lips that used such syllables then,
 Dies unloved by later men.

Are we more than summer flowers?
Shall a longer date be ours,
Rose and springtime, youth and we
By the everlasting sea?

Are they blown as legends tell
In the smoke and gurge of hell?
Writhe they in reluctant gyres
O'er a circle sad of fires?
In what lightless groves must they
Or unmurmuring alleys stray?
Fields no sunlight visits, streams
Where no happy lotus gleams?
Yet, where'er their steps below,
Memories sweet for comrades go.
Lethe's waters had their will,
But the soul remembers still.
Beauty pays her boon of breath
To thy narrow credit, Death,
Leaving a brief perfume; we
Perish also by the sea.

We shall lose, ah me! too soon
Lose the clear and silent moon,
The serenities of night
And the deeper evening light.
We shall know not when the morn
In the widening East is born,
Never feel the west-wind stir,
Spring's delightful messenger,
Never under branches lain
Dally with the sweet-lipped rain,
Watch the moments of the tree,
Nor know the sounds that tread the sea.

With thy kisses chase this gloom: —
Thoughts, the children of the tomb.

Kiss me, Edith. Soon the night
 Comes and hides the happy light.
 Nature's vernal darlings dead
 From new founts of life are fed.
 Dawn relumes the immortal skies.
 Ah! what boon for earth-closed eyes?
 Love's sweet debts are standing, sweet;
 Honied payment to complete
 Haste — a million is to pay —
 Lest too soon the allotted day
 End and we oblivious keep
 Darkness and eternal sleep.
 See! the moon from heaven falls.
 In thy bosom's snow-white walls
 Softly and supremely housed
 Shut my heart up; keep it closed
 Like a rose of Indian grain,
 Like that rose against the rain,
 Closed to all that life applauds,
 Nature's perishable gauds,
 And the airs that burdened be
 With such thoughts as shake the sea.

The Lover's Complaint

O plaintive, murmuring reed, begin thy strain;
 Unloose that heavenly tongue,
 Interpreter divine of pain;
 Utter thy voice, the sister of my song.
 Thee in the silver waters growing,
 Arcadian Pan, strange whispers blowing
 Into thy delicate stops, did teach
 A language lovelier than speech.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, begin thy strain;
 O plaintive, murmuring reed.
 Nisa to Mopsus is decreed,
The moonwhite Nisa to a swarthy swain.
What love-gift now shall Hope not bring?
Election dwells no more with beauty's king.
The wild weed now has wed the rose,
Now ivy on the bramble grows;
Too happy lover, fill the lamp of bliss!
Too happy lover, drunk with Nisa's kiss!
For thee pale Cynthia leaves her golden car,
For thee from Tempe stoops the white and evening star.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain;
 O solace anguish yet again.
 I thought Love soft as velvet sleep,
Sweeter than dews nocturnal breezes weep,
Cool as water in a murmuring pass
And shy as violets in the vernal grass,
But hard as Nisa's heart is he
And salt as the unharvestable sea.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain.
 One morn she came; her mouth
 Breathing the odours of the south,
With happy eyes and heaving bosom fain.
She asked for fruit long-stored in autumn's hold.
These gave I; from the branch dislodged I threw
Sweet-hearted apples in their age of gold
And pears divine for taste and hue.
And one I saw, should all the rest excel;
But error led my plucking hand astray
And with a sudden sweet dismay
My heart into her apron fell.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain.
 My bleeding heart awhile

She kept and bloomed upon its pain,
 Then slighted as a broken thing and vile.
 Now Mopsus in his unblest arms,
 Mopsus enfolds her heavenlier charms,
 Mopsus to whom the Muse averse
 Refused her gracious secrets to rehearse.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, breathe yet thy strain.
 Ye glades, your bliss I grudge you not,
 Nor would I that my grief profane
 Your sacred summer with intruding thought.
 Yet since I will no more behold
 Your glorious beauty stained with gold
 From shadows of her hair, nor by some well
 Made naked of their sylvan dress
 The breasts, the limbs I never shall possess,
 Therefore, O mother Arethuse, farewell.

For me no place abides
 By the green verge of thy beloved tides.
 To Lethe let my footsteps go
 And wailing waters in the realms below,
 Where happier song is none than moaning pain
 Nor any lovelier Syrinx than the weed.
 Child of the lispings waters, hush thy strain,
 O murmuring, plaintive reed.

Love in Sorrow

Do you remember, Love, that sunset pale
 When from near meadows sad with mist the breeze
 Sighed like a feverous soul and with soft wail
 The ghostly river sobbed among the trees?
 I think that Nature heard our misery
 Weep to itself and wept for sympathy.

For we were strangers then; we knew not Fate
 In ambush by the solitary stream
Nor did our sorrows hope to find a mate,
 Much less of love or friendship dared we dream.
Rather we thought that loneliness and we
Were wed in marble perpetuity.

For there was none who loved me, no, not one.
 Alas, what was there that a man should love?
For I was misery's last and frailest son
 And even my mother bade me homeless rove.
And I had wronged my youth and nobler powers
By weak attempts, small failures, wasted hours.

Therefore I laid my cheek on the chill grass
 And murmured, "I am overborne with grief
And joy to richer natures hopes to pass.
 Oh me! my life is like an aspen leaf
That shakes but will not fall. My thoughts are blind
And life so bitter that death seems almost kind.

"How am I weary of the days' increase,
 Of the moon's brightness and the splendid stars,
The sun that dies not. I would be at peace,
 Nor blind my soul with images, nor force
My lips to mirth whose later taste is death,
Nor with vain utterance load my weary breath."

Thus murmured I aloud nor deemed I spoke
 To human ears, but you were hidden, sweet,
Behind the willows when my plaining broke
 Upon your lonely muse. Ah kindly feet
That brushed the grass in tender haste to bind
Another's wounds, you were less wise than kind.

You said, "My brother, lift your forlorn eyes;
 I am your sister more than you unblest."

I looked upon your face, the book of sighs
 And index to incurable unrest.
 I rose and kissed you, sweet. Your lips were warm
 And drew my heart out like a witch's charm.

We parted where the sacred spires arose
 In silent power above the silent street.
 I saw you mid the rose-trees, O white rose,
 Linger a moment, then the dusk defeat
 My eyes, and, listening, heard your footsteps fade
 On the sad leaves of the autumnal glade.

And were you happy, sweet? In me I know —
 For either in my blood the autumn sang
 His own pale requiem or that new sweet glow
 Failed in the light of bitter knowledge — rang
 A voice that said, "Behold the loves too pure
 To live, the joy that never shall endure."

This too I know, nor is my hope so bright
 But that it sees its autumn cold and sere
 Attending with a pale and solemn light
 Beyond the gardens of the vernal year.
 Yet will I not my weary heart constrain
 But take you, sweet, and sweet surcease from pain.

The Island Grave

Ocean is there and evening; the slow moan
 Of the blue waves that like a shaken robe
 Two heard together once, one hears alone.

Now gliding white and hushed towards our globe
 Keen January with cold eyes and clear
 And snowdrops pendent in each frosty lobe

Ushers the firstborn of the radiant year.
Haply his feet that grind the breaking mould,
May brush the dead grass on thy secret bier,

Haply his joyless fingers wan and cold
Caress the ruined masses of thy hair,
Pale child of winter, dead ere youth was old.

Art thou so desolate in that bitter air
That even his breath feels warm upon thy face?
Ah till the daffodil is born, forbear,

And I will meet thee in that lonely place.
Then the grey dawn shall end my hateful days
And death admit me to the silent ways.

Estelle

Why do thy lucid eyes survey,
Estelle, their sisters in the milky way?
The blue heavens cannot see
Thy beauty nor the planets praise.
Blindly they walk their old accustomed ways.
Turn hither for felicity.
My body's earth thy vernal power declares,
My spirit is a heaven of thousand stars,
And all these lights are thine and open doors on thee.

Radha's Complaint in Absence

(Imitated from the Bengali of Chundidas)

O heart, my heart, a heavy pain is thine!
 What land is that where none doth know
 Love's cruel name nor any word of sin?
 My heart, there let us go.

Friend of my soul, who then has called love sweet?
 Laughing I called from heavenly spheres
 The sweet love close; he came with flying feet
 And turned my life to tears.

What highborn girl, exiling virgin pride,
 Has wooed love to her with a laugh?
 His fires shall burn her as in harvest-tide
 The mowers burn the chaff.

O heart, my heart, merry thy sweet youth ran
 In fields where no love was; thy breath
 Is anguish, since his cruel reign began.
 What other cure but death?

Radha's Appeal

(Imitated from the Bengali of Chundidas)

O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,
 Since mortal words are weak?
 In life, in death,
 In being and in breath
 No other lord but thee can Radha seek.

About thy feet the mighty net is wound
Wherein my soul they bound;
Myself resigned
To servitude my mind;
My heart than thine no sweeter slavery found.

I, Radha, thought; through the three worlds my gaze
I sent in wild amaze;
I was alone.
None called me “Radha!”, none;
I saw no hand to clasp, no friendly face.

I sought my father’s house; my father’s sight
Was empty of delight;
No tender friend
Her loving voice would lend;
My cry came back unanswered from the night.

Therefore to this sweet sanctuary I brought
My chilled and shuddering thought.
Ah, suffer, sweet,
To thy most faultless feet
That I should cling unchid; ah, spurn me not!

Spurn me not, dear, from thy beloved breast,
A woman weak, unblest.
Thus let me cling,
Thus, thus about my king
And thus remain caressing and caressed.

I, Radha, thought; without my life’s sweet lord,
— Strike now thy mightiest chord —
I had no power
To live one simple hour;
His absence slew my soul as with a sword.

If one brief moment steal thee from mine eyes,
 My heart within me dies.
 As girls who keep
 The treasures of the deep,
 I string thee round my neck and on my bosom prize.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji

How hast thou lost, O month of honey and flowers,
 The voice that was thy soul! Creative showers,
 The cuckoo's daylong cry and moan of bees,
 Zephyrs and streams and softly-blossoming trees
 And murmuring laughter and heart-easing tears
 And tender thoughts and great and the compeers
 Of lily and jasmine and melodious birds,
 All these thy children into lovely words
 He changed at will and made soul-moving books
 From hearts of men and women's honied looks.
 O master of delicious words! the bloom
 Of chompuk and the breath of king-perfume
 Have made each musical sentence with the noise
 Of women's ornaments and sweet household joys
 And laughter tender as the voice of leaves
 Playing with vernal winds. The eye receives
 That reads these lines an image of delight,
 A world with shapes of spring and summer, noon and night;
 All nature in a page, no pleasing show
 But men more real than the friends we know.
 O plains, O hills, O rivers of sweet Bengal,
 O land of love and flowers, the spring-bird's call
 And southern wind are sweet among your trees:
 Your poet's words are sweeter far than these.
 Your heart was this man's heart. Subtly he knew
 The beauty and divinity in you.
 His nature kingly was and as a god

In large serenity and light he trod
His daily way, yet beauty, like soft flowers
Wreathing a hero's sword, ruled all his hours.
Thus moving in these iron times and drear,
Barren of bliss and robbed of golden cheer,
He sowed the desert with ruddy-hearted rose,
The sweetest voice that ever spoke in prose.

Madhusudan Dutt

Poet, who first with skill inspired did teach
Greatness to our divine Bengali speech, —
Divine, but rather with delightful moan
Spring's golden mother makes when twin-alone
She lies with golden Love and heaven's birds
Call hymeneal with enchanting words
Over their passionate faces, rather these
Than with the calm and grandiose melodies
(Such calm as consciousness of godhead owns)
The high gods speak upon their ivory thrones
Sitting in council high, — till taught by thee
Fragrance and noise of the world-shaking sea.
Thus do they praise thee who amazed espy
Thy winged epic and hear the arrows cry
And journeyings of alarmèd gods; and due
The praise, since with great verse and numbers new
Thou mad'st her godlike who was only fair.
And yet my heart more perfectly ensnare
Thy soft impassioned flutes and more thy Muse
To wander in the honied months doth choose
Than courts of kings, with Sita in the grove
Of happy blossoms, (O musical voice of love
Murmuring sweet words with sweeter sobs between!)
With Shoorpa in the Vindhyan forests green
Laying her wonderful heart upon the sod

Made holy by the well-loved feet that trod
 Its vocal shades; and more unearthly bright
 Thy jewelled songs made of relucènt light
 Wherein the birds of spring and summer and all flowers
 And murmuring waters flow, her widowed hours
 Making melodious who divinely loved.
 No human hands such notes ambrosial moved;
 These accents are not of the imperfect earth;
 Rather the god was voiceful in their birth,
 The god himself of the enchanting flute,
 The god himself took up thy pen and wrote.

To the Cuckoo

Sounds of the wakening world, the year's increase,
 Passage of wind and all his dewy powers
 With breath and laughter of new-bathèd flowers
 And that deep light of heaven above the trees
 Awake mid leaves that muse in golden peace
 Sweet noise of birds, but most in heavenly showers
 The cuckoo's voice pervades the lucid hours,
 Is priest and summoner of these melodies.
 The spent and weary streams refresh their youth
 At that creative rain and barren groves
 Regain their face of flowers; in thee the ruth
 Of Nature wakening her dead children moves.
 But chiefly to renew thou hast the art
 Fresh childhood in the obscurèd human heart.

Envoi

*Ite hinc, Camenae, vos quoque ite jam, sane
Dulces Camenae, nam fatebimur verum
Dulces fuistis, et tamen meas chartas
Revisitote sed pudenter et raro.*

Pale poems, weak and few, who vainly use
Your wings towards the unattainable spheres,
Offspring of the divine Hellenic Muse,
Poor maimèd children born of six disastrous years!

Not as your mother's is your wounded grace,
Since not to me with equal love returned
The hope which drew me to that serene face
Wherein no unrepentful light of effort burned.

Depart and live for seasons many or few
If live you may, but stay not here to pain
My heart with hopeless passion and renew
Visions of beauty that my lips shall ne'er attain.

For in Sicilian olive-groves no more
Or seldom must my footprints now be seen,
Nor tread Athenian lanes, nor yet explore
Parnassus or thy voiceful shores, O Hippocrene.

Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati
Has called to regions of eternal snow
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow.

Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1891–1898

To a Hero-Worshipper

I

My life is then a wasted ereme,
My song but idle wind
Because you merely find
In all this woven wealth of rhyme
Harsh figures with harsh music wound,
The uncouth voice of gorgeous birds,
A ruby carcanet of sound,
A cloud of lovely words?

I am, you say, no magic rod,
No cry oracular,
No swart and ominous star,
No Sinai thunder voicing God.
I have no burden to my song,
No smouldering word instinct with fire,
No spell to chase triumphant wrong,
No spirit-sweet desire.

Mine is not Byron's lightning spear,
Nor Wordsworth's lucid strain
Nor Shelley's lyric pain,
Nor Keats', the poet without peer.
I by the Indian waters vast
Did glimpse the magic of the past,
And on the oaten pipe I play
Warped echoes of an earlier day.

II

My friend, when first my spirit woke,
I trod the scented maze
Of Fancy's myriad ways,

I studied Nature like a book
 Men rack for meanings: yet I find
 No rubric in the scarlet rose,
 No moral in the murmuring wind,
 No message in the snows.

For me the daisy shines a star,
 The crocus flames a spire,
 A horn of golden fire,
 Narcissus glows a silver bar:
 Cowslips, the golden breath of God,
 I deem the poet's heritage,
 And lilies silvering the sod
 Breathe fragrance from his page.

No herald of the sun am I
 But in a moonlit vale
 A russet nightingale
 Who pours sweet song, he knows not why,
 Who pours like wine a gurgling note
 Paining with sound his swarthy throat,
 Who pours sweet song he reck's not why
 Nor hushes ever lest he die.

Phaethon

Ye weeping poplars by the shelvy slope
 From murmurous lawns downdropping to the stream
 On whom the dusk air like a sombre dream
 Broods and a twilight ignorant of hope,
 Say what compulsion drear has bid you seam
 Your mossy sides with drop on eloquent drop
 That in warm rilletts from your eyes elope?

Is it for the too patient, sure decay
Pale-gilded Autumn, aesthete of the years,
A gorgeous death, a fading glory wears
That thus along its tufted, downy way
Creeps slothfully this ooze of amber tears,
And thus with tearful gusts your branches sway
Sighing a requiem to your emerald day?

The Just Man

Where is the man whom hope nor fear can move?
Him the wise Gods approve.
The man divine of motive pure and steadfast will
Unbent to ill,

Whose way is plain nor swerves for power or gold
The high, straight path to hold: —
Him only wise the wise Gods deem, him pure of lust;
Him only just.

Tho' men give rubies, tho' they bring a prize
Sweeter than Helen's eyes —
Yea, costlier things than these things were, they shall not win
That man to sin.

Tho' the strong lords of earth his doom desire,
He shall not heed their ire,
Nor shall the numerous commons' stormy voice compel
His heart nor quell.

Tho' Ocean all her purple pride unroll,
It stirs, not shakes his soul.
He sees the billows lift their cowed heads on high
With undimmed eye.

Pure fields he sees and groves of calm delight;
He turns into the night.
Hell is before; the swords await him; friends betray;
He holds his way.

He shall not fear tho' heaven in lightnings fall
Nor thunder's furious call,
Nor earthquake nor the sea: tho' fire, tho' flood assail,
He shall not quail.

Tho' God tear out the heavens like a page
And break the hills for rage,
Blot out the sun from being and all the great stars quench,
He will not blench.

Incomplete Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1891–1892

Thou bright choregus

Thou bright choregus of the heavenly dance
Who with thy lively beauty wouldst endear
The alien stars and turnst thy paler glance
To us thy dominating sphere

Why didst thou with Erinna impart thy mind,
The faithful copyist of this cruelty,
Who to usurpers pays allegiance kind
Passing the true pretender by?

Like a white statue

Like a white statue made of lilies
Her eyes were hidden jewels beneath scabbards of black silk: her
shoulders moonlit mountain-slopes when they are coated with
new-fallen snow: her breasts two white apples odorous with the
sweet fragrance of girlhood, her body a heap of silk in a queen's
closet, her legs were marble pillars very clear-cut, her face ivory
flushed by the dawn.

He frowned on her like a dark cloud instinct with rain over
a tall white ship at sea.

The full orb of her loveliness revealed as when the fleecy gown
is stripped from the shoulders of the moon and she stands naked
in heaven.

The moon of the three worlds.

Her gait was the swan's in stateliness, the other's wild and jocund
as the sea-fowl, her hair windtost, her eyes sparkling like bubbles
in a wine-cup, her face slim and very girlish.

The Vigil of Thaliard

Where Time a sleeping dervish is
 Or printed legend of Romance
 Mid lilies and mid gold roses
 Of mediaeval France,
 Where Life, a faithful servitor
 Mid alien faces cast,
 Still wears in memory of her
 The trappings of the Past,
 Sweet Lily's child, that golden grape
 Girl prince of Avelion,
 Thaliard by early-plucking hap
 Star-reaching Mador's son,
 Kept vigil by the impious pool
 Beyond the misty moaning sea
 To win from warlock's weird misrule
 His soul's sweet liberty.

For if throughout the monstrous night
 Unblest by ave or by creed
 By witchèd water Christian wight
 Do finger bead by bead
 His scarlet rosary of sins
 And leave his soul ajar,
 What hour the sleepy Evening pins
 Her bodice with a star,
 Until, the pitchy veil withdrawn
 That swathes the looming dune,
 The crowing trumpeter of dawn
 Blows addio to the moon,
 The awful record of his soul
 Shall by God's finger blotted be,
 And o'er his drownèd past shall roll
 Forgiveness like a sea.

The warden of the starry waste
Who walks with orange-coloured lamp
And weird eyes nursing fire, paced
 Night's silver-tented camp.
The rose-lipped golden-footed day,
 A flower by maiden culled,
Beneath star-blossomed arras lay
 In Evening's bosom lulled.
The water seemed a damson crust
 With golden sugar poured,
Or mirror caked with purple dust
 In lady's closet stored.
The hour like a weary snake
Coiled slowly gliding serpentine
Or drowsy nun perforce awake
 To pace a pillared shrine.

The roses shuddered in their sleep,
The lilies drooped their silver fires,
The reeds upon the humming steep
 Bowed low their tapering spires;
For tho' no sob pulsed in the air,
 No agony of wind,
Down Heaven's moonlight-painted stair
 Trode angels who had sinned.
Fireflies drizzled in the dark
 Like drops of burning rain,
The glow-worm was a crawling spark,
 The pool a purple stain,
The stars were grains of blazing sand,
A haunted soul the shadowy lea,
In forest-featured Broceliande
 Beyond the echoing sea.

Sir Thaliard by the phantom edge
Heard rustling feet behind the trees
And the weird water lapped the sedge
 With wistful symphonies:

Sometimes a thrill of voices broke
 In runic tongues of old,
 Sometimes pale fingers seemed to stroke
 His curls of cringing gold:
 Thin laughter sobbed he knew not where
 Till God's own candles paled,
 Or else out in the moonless air
 A goblin infant wailed.
 Now in the moon's enchanted wake
 Wild shadows ran a giant race,
 And now the golden glassing lake
 Was blotted with a face.

But when the naked moon rose clear
 Above the ruins of the day,
 Childe Thaliard saw a glinting spear
 Across the milky way.
 And when the white moon's sliding feet
 One rank of stars had passed,
 Upon him smote the windy beat
 And terror of a blast.
 The tempest rippled thro' the leaves,
 New wine of evening sucked,
 And at the water-lily sheaves
 With nervous fingers plucked.
 And in its wind-white arms it bore
 A diademed and sceptred thing,
 The semblance of a man, that wore
 The glory of a king.

An argent cincture studded thick
 With opal and the blushing stone
 Fine wrought of texture Arabic
 About his middle shone:
 And in its buckled girth did sit,
 A fierce and cloudy star,
 Of temper fine as poet's wit
 The Orient scimitar.

Morocco gave his wrathful dart,
 The spring of widowed tears,
Tempered in Afric's sultry heart
 Or famous far Algiers.
His barb was hued like cedar's core
In Aramean mountains born,
Wild as the sea on storm-vexed shore
 And fronted as the morn.

Upon his kingly head the crown
Was eloquent of Iran's gold
Dropping fine threads of glory down
 Upon the turban's fold.
His eyes were drops of smelted ore
 That in a foundry chase:
His lips a cruel promise wore,
 A marble pride his face.
As shows thro' gold caparison
 Laburnum dusky-stemmed,
Thro' silks in Persian harem spun
 His gorgeous body gleamed.
Or as a lithe and tropic snake
That from some fine mosaic glares,
Or spotted panther by a lake
 Beneath the Indian stars.

This Orient vision burning-bright
Snapped close his bridle silver-lined
Between the moonlight and the night,
 The water and the wind.
His cry sang like a stormy shower
 Upon a thundering sea:
"O Thaliard, Thaliard, Britain's flower,
 Wilt break a lance with me?
The golden scythe of Mahomet
 Gleams crescent on my shield:
My harvest upon thine is set,
 A cross in argent field.

Prince-errant, prop of battle styled
 And flawless glass of chivalry,
 O Thaliard, Thaliard, golden childe,
 Wilt break a lance with me?"

As trailing thunder dies in heaven
 Thro' silence trailed his latest word,
 And fire like the bearded levin
 Beneath his eyelids stirred.
 Childe Thaliard saw the burning stars
 Vermilion grown like blood,
 Thrice drew the serpent cross of Mars,
 Thrice clamoured where he stood.
 But Thaliard saw a milkwhite star
 Grow large against the moon,
 Quelled by whose candid flames, afar
 Mars' ruby paled in a swoon.
 "Not here" he faltered like the wind,
 "Not here, where murmurs poison sleep,
 When haunted memories grown half blind
 Their ghastly vigils keep.

"Not here, when drifts past happy shores
 From mortal vision far withdrawn
 With lustrous sails and dipping oars
 The hull that brings the dawn,
 Seek me, but in the cloudy time
 When ruin blazons forth
 In sanguine hues the vaporous clime
 And champagnes of the north."
 As wine that from the bubbling lips
 Of some fine beaker falls,
 This honeyed utterance largely slips
 Like murmurs in vast halls.
 The wimpled moon bent down her ear,
 And in the granaries of light
 The seedling splendours thrilled to hear,
 And all the east grew bright.

The phantom like a burning page
Was furrowed with the ploughs of wrath,
And thro' his wintry orbs white rage
 Rolled like the dead sea-froth.
His lance poised slanting like a ray
 Of ominous sunlight fell.
Astarte in the milky way
 Saw death half-risen from hell:
And soon the cold hooves of his horse
 On shivering lilies trod,
Till, yellow anguish borrowing force,
 Childe Thaliard cried on God.
The phantom, withering thro' the bars
Of Being like transitory sound,
Left but the murmur of the stars,
 Left but the hush profound.

And now the naked wanton moon
Shed languorous glances on the lake
Whose ripples sobbing from their swoon
 Grew golden for her sake:
The amorous stars were faint with love;
 Earth's awning seemed so light
That Hesper like a flying dove
 Would tremble into sight.
When Thaliard saw in drooping skies
 Large drops of beauty burn,
A white-winged chorus did arise,
 The prayers that purely yearn.
But Thaliard saw the curling deep
With foamy moon-tints blaze and break,
Till the slack spirit longed to steep
 Rich fancies in the lake.

The penitent chorus of his prayers
Were mingled with voluptuous speech
Of daedal images and airs
 Luxurious wrapping each:

A blue papyrus-leaf designed
 With fretted curls of fire,
 A purple page with coronet lined
 Or labyrinthine spire:
 The fiery-coloured bee of night
 With folded purple wing,
 Or solitary chrysolite
 Shut in an emerald ring:
 The vellum binding of a book,
 A scented volume spiced with Ind,
 A magic purse by Genie shook
 To loose a murmuring wind.

And in the bridal pomp of hell
 Walked Beauty hand-in-hand with sin,
 And Thought, the glorious infidel,
 A helmèd Paladin;
 When shutting under cloudy bars
 Astarte's radiant eye,
 God sowed with multitudinous stars
 His peacock in the sky.
 The diamonds perished from the deep,
 The moon-tints from the edge,
 The wrinkled water smoothed in sleep
 His locks of ruffled sedge.
 Imagination, like a sponge
 Wrung very pure of beauty, wept,
 As from his pores with a tired plunge
 His flakes of fancy leaped.

But hark! a wailing anguish woke
 The silence with a fiery sting:
 The foaming gulfs of clamour broke
 Around a fallen king:
 A distant moan of battle high
 Above a phantom land,
 And heron-weird a woman's cry
 Went shrilling down the strand.

While terror with a vulture's force
 Was plucking at his throat,
He heard the shrill hooves of a horse
 Prick echoes less remote.
And like old accents Night may lend
On lips long hushed in endless sleep,
The voice of a familiar friend
 Came shuddering from the deep.

“Thaliard, awake; the smiling morn
Forgets the cloud of yesterday:
The sceptre from thy house is torn,
 Thy glory washed away.
Amid the reeling battle trod,
 As a poppy in the mill,
With white face lifted up to God,
 Thy sire lies very still.
Pendragon's spear has stung him dead,
 He sleeps among the slain;
The glorious princes heap his bed,
 Like lilies in a plain.
Thy brothers Galert and Gyneth
Like toppling mountains whelmed I saw
Beneath the shadowy winds of death
 In the rushing tide of war.

“Thy sister, fawn-eyed Guendolen,
Haled captive from thy tottering hall,
Lies helpless in the dragon's den
 Luxurious Gawain's thrall.
His kisses tremble on her mouth
 Like moonbeams on a rose,
For she is water to his drouth,
 He sunlight to her snows:
Her flowering body to his love
 A pleasaunce-garden sweet;
Her spirit, meeker than a dove,
 Fawns blindly at his feet.

And with the pelting words of shame,
 Like delicate pigments bleared by storm,
 The gorgeous colouring of thy name
 Is losing gloss and form.

“The night-wind in thy yawning dome
 Has made her nest alive with song,
 The humming wasps of Aeolus roam
 Low-flying in a throng:
 The thunder like a flying stork
 Clangs hoarsely but aloof,
 And lightning with his vermilion fork
 Has written on thy roof.
 The lion lodges in thy gate,
 The were-wolf is thy guest,
 The night-owl, like a sombre fate,
 Wails weirdly without rest.
 Thy deeds are grown a haunting rhyme,
 A fragment breaking from the past,
 An atom, which the meteor, Time,
 In his fiery flight has cast.”

With sobs of shuddering agony bled
 The silence as with stinging whips,
 But Thaliard felt slim fingers laid
 Upon his writhen lips.
 The soul's redoubts flung each to each
 A ringing challenge round,
 To clench the ruby gates of speech
 On the corridors of sound.
 In dancing dithyrambs thro' each vein
 A dizzy echo sang,
 While on the anvil of his brain
 The steely syllables rang:
 And from the avenues of the heart
 Thro' which the river of being pours,
 The torpid life with a sudden start
 Recoiled upon its doors.

The voice was now a violin
Shrill-winding, now a startled bat,
And now as linnet's warble thin,
 Now wailful as a gnat,
But gathered volume as of yore
 Until with refluent tide,
Like Ocean ebbing from her shore
 The murmur ebbed and died.
Like beauty losing maidenhood
 Astarte debonnair
Undid the crocus-coloured snood
 That bound her glimmering hair.
And up the ladder of the moon,
As white smoke curls upon a glass,
He saw with flakes of glory strewn
 A radiant figure pass.

Astarte from her cloudy chair
Paced with her troop of star-sweet girls;
Unfilleted, her glorious hair
 Hung loose in cowslip curls.
And like the flower-song of a bee
 On April's daffodil skirt,
A whisper from the smiling sea
 In her crocus gown did flirt.
The waters quivering to her wiles
 Among the rushes whipped,
As thro' the net-work of her smiles
 Her visible murmur slipped.
But when they wooed her to repeat
Her primrose painted pilgrimage,
She dipped the white palms of her feet
 In beds of bubbling sedge.

Again the stealthy minutes crept
On tiptoe to the breathless hour
And loud suspense her riot kept
 Till budding doom should flower.

The yellow moon, whom Heaven once more
 From silver cowl did shake,
 With golden letters scribbled o'er
 The purple-written lake.
 But when to Heaven's polished breast
 Her rounded amulet clung
 Below in the blue palimpsest
 A slit, a chasm sprung.
 A meteor from the purple brink,
 A vivid star no eye may lose,
 A pictured bowl of nectarous drink,
 An apparition rose.

Her body lapped in cloth of gold
 A wave disguised in moonlight seemed,
 Whose every curve and curious fold
 With opal facets gleamed.
 Her nestling mass of rounded curls
 Were soft as velvet cloths,
 Once fingered by Arabian girls
 Or piled in Syrian booths.
 She was an ebon-framed lyre
 Where wind-waked murmurs dance,
 A tinted statue of Desire
 In studios of Romance.
 Her glowing cheeks just ripe with youth,
 The purple passion of her eyes,
 Half seemed a splendid mock at truth,
 A brilliant mesh of lies.

Below with balmy sobs that drank
 The must of life thro' thirsty lips,
 Her painèd bosom heaved and sank
 Like Ocean-cradled ships.
 And as bee-blossoms sapphire-looped,
 The humming waves that kiss,
 Her creamy forehead almost drooped
 Burthened with too much bliss.

The artist Grace who limned her fair
 With moist and liberal brush,
Painted a glory in her hair
 And mixed a gorgeous blush
To tint her cheeks with flowery bloom,
To touch her lips with scarlet fire, —
An empire's beauty in small room,
 A vision of desire.

A fairy witch by painful charms
Had burgeoned this refulgent flower,
Embraced by wild and wanton arms
 In weird and midnight hour.
She on the amber milk of bees
 By magic mother nursed,
In laurel-sheltered libraries
 Cons rudiments accurst,
The most familiar things of hell,
 The mightiest names inherits,
And learns what iron syllable
 Compels reluctant spirits.
A perilous thorn on fire with bloom,
A poppied spell, an empress snake,
She rose, the alchemist of doom,
 The Lady of the Lake.

Part Two

Baroda

Circa 1898–1902

Complete Narrative Poems

Urvasio

CANTO I

Pururavus from Titan conflict ceased
Turned worldwards, through illimitable space
Had travelled like a star 'twixt earth and heaven
Slowly and brightly. Late our mortal air
He breathed; for downward now the hooves divine
Trampling out fire with sound before them went,
And the great earth rushed up towards him, green.
With the first line of dawn he touched the peaks,
Nor paused upon those savage heights, but reached
Inferior summits subject to the rain,
And rested. Looking northwards thence he saw
The giant snows upclimbing to the sky,
And felt the mighty silence. In his ear
The noise of a retreating battle was,
Wide crash of wheels and hard impetuous blare
Of trumpets and the sullen march of hosts.
Therefore with joy he drank into his soul
The virgin silence inaccessible
Of mountains and divined his mother's breasts.
But as he listened to the hush, a thought
Came to him from the spring and he turned round
And gazed into the quiet maiden East,
Watching that birth of day, as if a line
Of some great poem out of dimness grew,
Slowly unfolding into perfect speech.
The grey lucidity and pearliness
Bloomed more and more, and over earth chaste again
The freshness of the primal dawn returned,
Life coming with a virginal sharp strength,
Renewed as from the streams of Paradise.
Nearer it drew now to him and he saw
Out of the widening glory move a face
Of dawn, a body fresh from mystery,
Enveloped with a prophecy of light
More rich than perfect splendours. It was she,

The golden virgin, Usha, mother of life,
 Yet virgin. In a silence sweet she came,
 Unveiled, soft-smiling, like a bride, rose-cheeked,
 Her bosom full of flowers, the morning wind
 Stirring her hair and all about her gold.
 Nor sole she came. Behind her faces laughed
 Delicious, girls of heaven whose beauties ease
 The labour of the battle-weary Gods;
 They in the golden dawn of things sprang gold,
 From youth of the immortal Ocean born,
 They youthful and immortal, and the waves
 Were in their feet and in their voices fresh
 As foam, and Ocean in their souls was love.
 Laughing they ran among the clouds, their hair
 And raiment all a tempest in the breeze.
 The sky grew glorious with them and their feet
 A restless loveliness and glad eyes full
 Of morning and divine faces bent back
 For the imperious kisses of the wind.
 So danced they numberless as dew-drops gleam,
 Ménaca, Misracayshie, Mullica,
 Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie,
 Lolita, Lavonya and Tilôttama, —
 Many delightful names; among them she.
 And seeing her Pururavus the king
 Shuddered as of felicity afraid,
 And all the wide heart of Pururavus
 Moved like the sea — when with a coming wind
 Great Ocean lifts in far expectancy
 Waiting to feel the shock, so was he moved
 By expectation of her face. For this
 Was secret in its own divinity
 Like a high sun of splendour, or half seen
 All troubled with her hair. Yet Paradise
 Breathed from her limbs and tresses wonderful,
 With odours and with dreams. Then for a space
 Voiceless the great king stood and, troubled, watched

That lovely advent, laughter and delight
Gaining upon the world. At last he sighed
And the vague passion broke from him in speech
Heard by the solitude. "O thou strong god,
Who art thou graspest me with hands of fire,
Making my soul all colour? Surely I thought
The hills would move and the eternal stars
Deviate from their rounds immutable,
Never Pururavus; yet lo! I fall.
My soul whirls alien and I hear amazed
The galloping of uncontrollable steeds.
Men said of me: 'The King Pururavus
Grows more than man; he lifts to azure heaven
In vast equality his spirit sublime.'
Why sink I now towards attractive earth?
And thou, who art thou, mystery! golden wonder!
Moving enchantress! Wast thou not a part
Of soft auspicious evenings I have loved?
Have I not seen thy beauty on the clouds?
In moonlight and in starlight and in fire?
Some flower whose brightness was a trouble? a face
Whose memory like a picture lived with me?
A thought I had, but lost? O was thy voice
A vernal repetition in some grove,
Telling of lilies clustered o'er with bees
And quiet waters open to the moon?
Surely in some past life I loved thy name,
And syllable by syllable now strive
Its sweetness to recall. It seems the grace
Of visible things, of hushed and lonely snows
And burning great inexorable noons,
And towns and valleys and the mountain winds.
All beauty of earthliness is in thee, all
Luxurious experience of the soul.
O comest thou because I left thy charm
Aiming at purity, O comest thou,
Goddess, to avenge thyself with beauty? Come!

Unveil thyself from light! limit thyself,
 O infinite grace, that I may find, may clasp.
 For surely in my heart I know thou bearest
 A name that naturally weds with mine,
 And I perceive our union magically
 Inevitable as a perfect verse
 Of Veda. Set thy feet upon my heart,
 O Goddess! woman, to my bosom move!
 I am Pururavus, O Urvasie.”
 As when a man to the grey face of dawn
 Awaking from an unremembered dream,
 Repines at life awhile and buffets back
 The wave of old familiar thoughts, and hating
 His usual happiness and usual cares
 Strives to recall a dream’s felicity; —
 Long strives in vain and rolls his painful thought
 Through many alien ways, when sudden comes
 A flash, another, and the vision burns
 Like lightning in the brain, so leaped that name
 Into the musing of the troubled king.
 Joyous he cried aloud and lashed his steeds:
 They, rearing, leaped from Himalaya high
 And trampled with their hooves the southern wind.

But now a cry broke from the lovely crowd
 Of fear and tremulous astonishment;
 And they huddled together like doves dismayed
 Who see the inevitable talons near
 And rush of cruel wings. ’Twas not from him,
 For him they saw not yet, but from the north
 A fear was on them, and Pururavus
 Heard a low roar as of a distant cloud.
 He turned half-wrathful. In the far northwest
 Heaven stood thick, concentrated in gloom,
 Darkness in darkness hidden; for the cloud
 Rose firmament on sullen firmament,
 As if all brightness to entomb. Across

Great thundrous whispers rolled, and lightning quivered
From edge to edge, a savage pallor. Down
The south wind dropped appalled. Then for a while
Stood pregnant with the thunderbolt and wearing
Rain like a colour, the monumental cloud
Sublime and voiceless. Long the heart was stilled
And the ear waited listening. Suddenly
From motionless battalions as outride
A speed disperse of horsemen, from that mass
Of livid menace went a frail light cloud
Rushing through heaven, and behind it streamed
The downpour all in wet and greenish lines.
Swift rushed the splendid anarchy admired,
And reached, and broke, and with a roar of rain
And tumult on the wings of wind and clasp
Of the o'erwhelmed horizons and with bursts
Of thunder breaking all the body with sound
And lightning 'twixt the eyes intolerable,
Like heaven's vast eagle all that blackness swept
Down over the inferior snowless heights
And swallowed up the dawn. Pururavus,
Lost in the streaming tumult, stood amazed:
But as he watched, he was aware of locks
Flying and a wild face and terrible
And fierce familiar eyes. Again he looked
And knew him in a hundred battles crossed,
The giant Cayshie. It seemed but yesterday
That over the waves of fight their angry eyes
Had met. He in the dim disguise of rain,
All swift with storm, came passionate and huge,
Filling the regions with himself. Immense
He stooped upon the brides of heaven. They
Like flowers in a gust scattered and blown
Fled every way; but he upon that beauty
Magical sprang and seized and lifted up,
As the storm lifts a lily, and arrow-like
Up towards the snow-bound heights in rising cloud

Rushed with the goddess to the trembling East.
But with more formidable speed and fast
Storming through heaven King Pururavus
Hurled after him. The giant turned and knew
The sound of those victorious wheels and light
In a man's face more dangerous to evil
Than all the shining Gods. He stood, he raised
One dreadful arm that stretched across the heavens,
And shook his baffling lance on high. But vast,
But magnified by speed came threatening on
With echoing hooves and battle in its wheels
The chariot of the King Pururavus
Bearing a formidable charioteer,
Pururavus. The fiend paused, he rolled his eyes
Full of defiance, passion and despair
Upon the swooning goddess in his arms
And that avenger. Violence and fear
Poised him a moment on a wave of fate
This way to death cadent, that way to shame.
Then groaning in his great tumultuous breast
He dropped upon the snow heaven's ravished flower
And fled, a blackness in the East. New sky
Replenished from the sullen cloud dawned out;
The great pure azure rose in sunlight wide.
Nor King Pururavus pursued but checked
His rushing chariot on the quiet snow
And sprang towards her and knelt down and trembled.
Perfect she lay amid her tresses wide,
Like a mishandled lily luminous,
As she had fallen. From the lucid robe
One shoulder gleamed and golden breast left bare,
Divinely lifting, one gold arm was flung,
A warm rich splendour exquisitely outlined
Against the dazzling whiteness, and her face
Was as a fallen moon among the snows.
And King Pururavus, beholding, glowed
Through all his limbs and maddened with a love

He feared and cherished. Overawed and hushed,
Hardly even breathing, long he knelt, a greatness
Made stone with sudden dread and passion. Love
With fiery attempt plucked him all down to her,
But fear forbade his lips the perfect curls.
At length he raised her still unkissed and laid
In his bright chariot, next himself ascended
And resting on one arm with fearful joy
Her drooping head, with the other ruled the car; —
With one arm ruled, but his eyes were for her
Studying her fallen lids and to heart-beats
Guessing the sweetness of the soul concealed.
And soon she moved. Those wonderful wide orbs
Dawned into his, quietly, as if in muse.
A lovely slow surprise crept into them
Afterwards; last, something far lovelier,
Which was herself, and was delight, and love.
As when a child falls asleep unawares
At a closed window on a stormy day,
Looking into the weary rain, and long
Sleeps, and wakes quietly into a life
Of ancient moonlight, first the thoughtfulness
Of that felicitous world to which the soul
Is visitor in sleep, keeps her sublime
Discurtained eyes; human dismay comes next,
Slowly; last, sudden, they brighten and grow wide
With recognition of an altered world,
Delighted: so woke Urvasie to love.

But, hardly now that luminous inner dawn
Bridged joy between their eyes, laughter broke in
And the returning world; for Ménaca,
Standing a lily in the snows, laughed back
Those irresistible wheels and spoke like song; —
She tremulous and glad from bygone fear;
But all those flowerlike came, increasing light,
Their bosoms quick and panting, bright, like waves

That under sunshine lift remembering storm.
 And before all Ménaca tremulously
 Smiling: “Whither, O King Pururavus,
 Bear’st thou thy victory? Wilt thou set her
 A golden triumph in thy halls? But she
 Is other than thy marble caryatids
 And austere doors, purity colourless.
 Read not too much thy glory in her eyes.
 Will not that hueless inner stream yet serve
 Where thou wast wont to know thy perfect deeds?
 But give her back, give us our sister back,
 And in return take all thyself with thee.”
 So with flushed cheeks and smiling Ménaca.
 And great Pururavus set down the nymph
 In her bright sister’s arms and stood awhile
 Stormily calm in vast incertitude,
 Quivering. Then divine Tilôttama:
 “O King, O mortal mightier than the Gods!
 For Gods change not their strength, but are of old
 And as of old, and man, though less than these,
 May yet proceed to greater, self-evolved.
 Man, by experience of passion purged,
 His myriad faculty perfecting, widens
 His nature as it rises till it grows
 With God conterminous. For one who tames
 His hot tremulousness of soul unblest
 And feels around him like an atmosphere
 A quiet perfectness of joy and peace,
 He, like the sunflower sole of all the year,
 Images the divine to which he tends:
 So thou, sole among men. And thou today
 Hast a high deed perfected, saved from death
 The great Gods of the solar world the first,
 And saved with them the stars; but her today
 Without whom all that world would grow to shade
 Or grow to fire, but each way cease to live.
 And thou shalt gather strange rewards, O King,

Hurting thyself with good, and lose thy life
To have the life of all the solar world,
Draw infinite gain out of more infinite loss,
And, for the lowest, endless fame. Today
Retire nor pluck the slowly-ripening fates;
Since who anticipates the patient Gods,
Finds his crown ashes and his empire grief.
So choose blind Titans in their violent souls
Unseeing, forfeiting the beautiful world
For momentary splendours." She was silent,
And he replied no word, but gathering
His reins swept from the golden group. His car
Through those mute Himalayan doors of earth
And all that silent life before our life
Solitary and great and merciless,
Went groaning down the wind. He, the sole living,
Over the dead deep-plunging precipices
Passed bright and small in a wide dazzling world
Illimitable, where eye flags and ear
Listening feels inhuman loneliness.
He tended towards Gungotri's solemn peaks
And savage glaciers and the caverns pure
Whence Ganges leaps, our mother, virgin-cold.
But ere he plunged into the human vales
And kindlier grandeurs, King Pururavus
Looked back upon a gust of his great heart,
And saw her. On a separate peak, divine,
In blowing raiment and a glory of hair
She stood and watched him go with serious eyes
And a soft wonder in them and a light.
One hand was in her streaming folds, one shaded
Her eyes as if the vision that she saw
Were brighter even than deathless eyes endure.
Over her shoulder pressed a laughing crowd
Of luminous faces. And Pururavus
Staggered as smitten, and shaking wide his reins
Rushed like a star into the infinite air;

So curving downwards on precipitate wheels,
His spirit all a storm, came with the wind
Far-sounding into Ila's peaceful town.

CANTO II

But from the dawn and mountains Urvasie
Went marvelling and glad, not as of old
A careless beam; for an august constraint,
Unfelt before, ruled her extravagant grace
And wayward beauty; and familiar things
Grew strange to her, and to her eyes came mists
Of mortal vision. Love was with her there,
But not of Paradise nor that great guest
Perpetual who makes his golden couch
Between the Opsara's ever-heaving breasts.
For this was rapturous, troubled, self-absorbed,
A gracious human presence which she loved,
And wondered at, and hid deep in her heart.
And whether in the immortal's dance she moved,
A billow, or her fingers like sunbeams
Brightened the harps of heaven, or going out
With the white dawn to bathe in Swerga's streams,
Or in the woods of Eden wandering,
Or happy sitting under peaceful boughs
In a great golden evening, all she did,
Celestial occupations, all she thought
And all she was, though still the same, had changed.
There was a happy trouble in her ways
And movements; her felicitous lashes drooped
As with a burden; all her daily acts
Were like a statue's imitating life,
Not single-hearted like the sovran Gods.
Now as the days of heaven went by in quiet
And there was peaceful summer 'mid the Gods,
In Swerga song increased and dances swayed
In multitudinous beauty, jasmine-crowned;
And often in high Indra's hall the spirits
Immortal met to watch the shows divine
Of action and celestial theatre.

For not of earth alone are delicate arts
 And noble imitations, but in heaven
 Have their rich prototypes. So on that day
 Before a divine audience there was staged
 The Choice of Luxmie. Urvasie enacted
 The goddess, Ocean's child, and Ménaca
 Was Varunie, and other girls of heaven
 Assembled the august desiring Gods.
 Full strangely sweet those delicate mimics were;
 Moonbeam faces imitated the strength
 And silence of great spirits battle-worn,
 And little hands the awful muniments
 Of empire grasped and powers that shake the world.
 Then with a golden wave of arm sublime
 Ménaca towards the warlike consistory,
 Under half-drooping lashes indicating
 Where calm eternal Vishnu like a cloud
 Sat discus-armed, said to her sister bright:
 "Daughter of Ocean, sister, for whom heaven
 Is passionate, thou hast reviewed the powers
 Eternal and their dreadful beauty scanned,
 And heard their blissful names. Say, unafraid
 Before these listening faces, whom thou lovest
 Above all Gods and more than earth and more
 Than joy of Swerga's streams?" And Urvasie,
 Musing with wide unseeing eyes, replied
 In a far voice: "The King Pururavus."
 Then, as a wind among the leaves, there swept
 A gust of laughter through the assembled Gods,
 A happy summer sound. But not in mirth
 Bharuth, the mighty dramatist of heaven,
 Passionate to see his smooth work marred and spell
 Broken of scenic fancies finely-touched:
 "Since thou hast brought the breath of mortal air
 Into the pure solemnities of heaven,
 And since thou givest up to other ends
 Than the one need for which God made thee form,

Thy being and hast here transferred from earth
Human failure from the divided soul,
Marring my great creation, Urvasie,
I curse thee to possess thy heart's desire.
Exiled from Swerga's streams and golden groves
Thou, by terrestrial Ganges or on sad
Majestic mountains or in troubled towns,
Enjoy thy love, but hope not here to breathe
Felicity in regions built for peace
Of who, erect in their own nature, keep
Living by fated toils the glorious world."
He ceased and there was silence of the Gods.
Then Indra answered, smiling, though ill-pleased:
"Bharuth, not well nor by the fates allowed
To exile without limit from the skies
Who of the skies is part. Her wilt thou banish
From the felicity of grove and stream,
Making our Eden empty of her smiles?
But what felicity in stream or grove
And she not secret there? And hast thou taxed
Her passion, yet in passion wouldst deface
The beautiful world because thy work is vain?"
Bharuth replied, the high poet severe:
"Irrevocable is the doom pronounced
Once by my lips. Fates too are born of song.
But if of limit thou speakest and the term
By nature fixed to the divorce of her
From the felicity in which she moves,
Nature that fixed the limit, still effects
Inevitably its fated ends. For Fate,
The dim great presence, is but nature made
Irrevocable in its fruits. Let her
To the pure banks of sacred Ganges wend.
There she may keep her exile, from of old
Intended for perfection of the earth
Through her sweet change. Heaven too shall flash and grow
Fairer with her returning feet though changed, —

Though changed, yet lovelier from beneficence.
For she will come soft with maternal cheeks
And flushed from nuptial arms and human-blest
With touches of the warm delightful earth.”
He said and Urvasie from the dumb place
And thoughtful presence of the Gods departed
Into the breezy noon of Swerga. Under
Green well-known boughs laden with nameless fruit
And over blissful swards and perfect flowers
And through the wandering alleys she arrived
To heavenly Ganges where it streams o’er stones;
There from the banks of summer downward stepped,
One little golden hand gathering her dress
Above her naked knees, and, lovely, passed
Through the divine pellucid river on
To Swerga’s portals, pausing on the slope
Which goes toward the world. There she looked down
With yearning eyes far into endless space.
Behind her stood the green felicitous peaks
And trembling tops of woods and pulse of blue
With those calm cloudless summits quivering.
All heaven was behind her, but she sent
No look to those eternal seats of joy.
She down the sunbeams gazed where mountains rose
In snow, the bleak and mighty hills of earth,
And virgin forests vast, great infant streams
And cities young in the heroic dawn
Of history and insurgent human art
Titanic on the old stupendous hills.
Towards these she gazed down under eyelids glad.
And to her gazing came Tilôttama,
Bright out of heaven, and clasped her quiet hand
And murmured softly, “Sister, let us go.”
Then they went down into the waiting world,
The golden women, and through gorges mute
Past Budricayshwur in the silent snow
Came silent to Pururavus Urvasie.

For not in Ilian streets Pururavus
Sojourned, nor in the happy throng of men,
But with the infinite and the lonely hills.
For he grew weary of walls and luminous carved
Imperial pillars bearing up huge weight
Of architectural stone, and the long street,
And thoughtful temple wide, and sharp cymbals
Protecting the august pure place with sound;
The battled tramp of men, sessions of kings,
The lightning from sharp weapons, jubilant crash
Of chariots, and the Veda's mighty chant;
The bright booths of the merchants, the loud looms
And the smith's hammer clanging music out,
And stalwart men driving the patient plow
Indomitable in fierce breath of noon.
Of these he now grew weary and the blaze
Of kingship, its immense and iron toils,
With one hand shielding in the people's ease,
With one hand smiting back the tireless foe,
And difficulty of equal justice cold,
And kind beneficent works harmonious kept
With terrible control; the father's face,
The man's heart, the steeled intellect of power
Insolubly one; and after sleepless nights
Labouring greatly for a great reward,
Frequent failure and vigorous success,
And sweet reward of voices filial grown.
These that were once his life, he loved no more.
They held not his desire nor were alive,
But pale magnificent ghosts out of the past
With sad obsession closing him from warm
Life and the future in far sunlight gold.
For in his heart and in his musing eyes
There was a light on the cold snows, a blush
Upon the virgin quiet of the East
And storm and slowly-lifting lids. Therefore
He left the city Ilian and plains

Whence with a mighty motion eastward flows
 Ganges, heroical and young, a swift
 Mother of strenuous nations, nor yet reaches
 Her musing age in ardent deep Bengal.
 He journeyed to the cold north and the hills
 Austere, past Budricayshwur ever north,
 Till, in the sixth month of his pilgrimage
 Uneasy, to a silent place he came
 Within a heaped enormous region piled
 With prone far-drifting hills, huge peaks o'erwhelmed
 Under the vast illimitable snows, —
 Snow on ravine, and snow on cliff, and snow
 Sweeping in strenuous outlines to heaven,
 With distant gleaming vales and turbulent rocks,
 Giant precipices black-hewn and bold
 Daring the universal whiteness; last,
 A mystic gorge into some secret world.

He in that region waste and wonderful
 Sojourned, and morning-star and evening-star
 Shone over him and faded, and immense
 Darkness wrapped the hushed mountain solitudes
 And moonlight's brilliant muse and the cold stars
 And day upon the summits brightening.
 But ere day grew the hero nympholept
 Climbed the immortal summits towards the dawn
 And came with falling evening down and lay
 Watching the marvellous sky, but called not sleep
 That beat her gentle wings over his eyes,
 Nor food he needed who was grown a god.
 And in the seventh month of his waiting long
 Summit or cliff he climbed no more, but added
 To the surrounding hush sat motionless,
 Gazing towards the dim unfathomed gorge.
 Six days he sat and on the seventh they came
 Through the dumb gorge, a breath of heaven, a stir,
 Then Eden's girls stepping with moonbeam feet

Over the barren rocks and dazzling snows,
That grew less dazzling, their tresses half unbound
And delicate raiment girdled enchantingly.
Silent the perfect presences of heaven
Came towards him and stood a little away,
Like flowers waiting for a sunbeam. He
Stirred not, but without voice, in vision merged,
Sat, as one sleeping momentarily expects
The end of a dear dream he sees, and knows
It is a dream, and quietly resigned
Waits for the fragile bliss to break or fade.
Then nearer drew divine Tilôttama
And stood before his silence statuesque,
Holding her sister's hand; for she hung back,
Not as an earthly maiden, cheeks suffused,
Lids drooping, but as men from patience called
Before supreme felicity hang back,
A little awed, a little doubtful, fearing
To enter radiant Paradise, so bright
It seems; thus she and quailed before her bliss.
But her sister, extending one bright arm:
"Pururavus, thou hast conquered and I bring
No dream into thy life, but Urvasie."
And at that name the strong Pururavus
Rose swaying to his feet like one struck blind;
Or when a great thought flashes through his brain,
A poet starts up and almost cries aloud
As at a voice, — so he arose and heard.
And slowly said divine Tilôttama:
"Yet, son of Ila, one is man and other
The Opsaras of heaven, daughters of the sea,
Unlimited in being, Ocean-like.
They not to one lord yield nor in one face
Limit the universe, but like sweet air,
Water unowned and beautiful common light
In unrestrained surrender remain pure.
In patient paths of Nature upon earth

And over all the toiling stars we fill
 With sacred passion large high-venturing spirits
 And visit them with bliss; so are they moved
 To immense creative anguish, glad if through
 Heart-breaking toil once in bare seasons dawn
 Our golden breasts between their hands or rush
 Our passionate presence on them like a wave.
 In heaven bright-limbed with bodily embrace
 We clasp the Gods, and clasp the souls of men,
 And know with winds and flowers liberty.
 But what hast thou with us or winds or flowers?
 O thou who wast so white, wilt thou not keep
 Thy pure and lonely eminence and move
 For ever towards morning like a star?
 Or as thy earthly Ganges rolling down
 Between the homes and passionate deeds of men,
 And bearing many boats and white with oars,
 From all that life quite separate, only lives
 Towards Ocean, so thou doest human work,
 Making a mighty nation, doing high
 And necessary deeds, but, all untouched
 By action, livest in thy soul apart
 And to the immortal zenith climbest pure.”
 But he, blind as from dazzling dreams, said low:
 “One I thought spoke far-off of purity
 And whiteness and the human soul in God.
 These things were with me once, but now I see
 The Spring a golden child and shaken fields.
 All beautiful things draw near and come to me.
 I dream upon a woman’s glorious breasts,
 And watch the dew-drop and am glad with birds,
 And love the perfect coilings of the snake,
 And cry with fire in the burning trees,
 And am a wave towards desired shores.
 I move to these and move towards her bosom
 And mystic eyes where all these are one dream.
 And what shall God profit me or his glory,

Who love one small face more than all his worlds?"
He woke with his own voice. His words that first
Dreamed like a languid wave, sudden were foam;
And he beheld her standing and his look
Grew strong; he yearned towards her like a wave,
And she received him in her eyes as earth
Receives the rain. Then bright Tilôttama
Cried in a shining glory over them:
"O happy lover and O fortunate loved,
Who make love heavenlier by loss! Ah yet,
The Gods give no irrecoverable gifts,
Nor unconditioned, O Pururavus,
Is highest bliss even to most favoured men.
And thy deep joy must tremble o'er her with soul
On guard, all overshadowed by a fear.
For one year thou shalt know her on the peaks,
In solitary vastnesses of hills
And regions snow-besieged; and for one year
In the green forests populous and free
Life in sunlight and by delightful streams
Thou shalt enjoy her; and for one year where
The busy tramp of men goes ceaseless by,
Subduing her to lovely human cares:
And so long after as one law observed
Save her to thee, O King; for never man
With Opsara may dwell and both be known:
Either a rapture she invisible
Or he a mystic body and mystic soul.
Reveal not then thy being naked to hers,
O virgin Ila's son, nor suffer ever
Light round thy body naked to her eyes,
Lest day dawn not on thy felicity,
Sole among men." She left them, shining up
Into the sunlight, and was lost in noon.
And King Pururavus stood for a space,
Like the entrancèd calm before great winds
And thunder. Then through all his limbs there flashed

Youth and the beauty and the warmth of earth
And joy of her left lonely to his will.
He moved, he came towards her. She, a leaf
Before a gust among the nearing trees,
Covered. But, all a sea of mighty joy
Rushing and swallowing up the golden sand,
With a great cry and glad Pururavus
Seized her and caught her to his bosom thrilled,
Clinging and shuddering. All her wonderful hair
Loosened and the wind seized and bore it streaming
Over the shoulder of Pururavus
And on his cheek a softness. She, o'erborne,
Panting, with inarticulate murmurs lay,
Like a slim tree half seen through driving hail,
Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek
And golden throat averted, and wide trouble
In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss.
Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met.
With her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts
Tumultuous up against his beating heart,
He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven's desire.
So clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge.
Then strong Pururavus, with godlike eyes
Mastering hers, cried tremulous: "O beloved,
O miser of thy rich and happy voice,
One word, one word to tell me that thou lovest."
And Urvashie, all broken on his bosom,
Her godhead in his passion lost, moaned out
From her imprisoned breasts, "My lord, my love!"

CANTO III

So was a goddess won to mortal arms;
And for twelve months he held her on the peaks,
In solitary vastnesses of hills
And regions snow-besieged. There in dim gorge
And tenebrous ravine and on wide snows
Clothed with deserted space, o'er precipices
With the far eagles wheeling under them,
Or where large glaciers watch, or under cliffs
O'er-murmured by the streaming waterfalls,
And later in the pleasant lower hills,
He of her beauty world-desired took joy:
And all earth's silent sublime spaces passed
Into his blood and grew a part of thought.
Twelve months in the green forests populous,
Life in sunlight and by delightful streams
He increased rapture. The green tremulous groves,
And solitary rivers white with birds,
And watered hollow's gleam, and sunny boughs
Gorgeous with peacocks or illumining
Bright bosom of doves, in forests' musing day
Or the great night with roar of many beasts, —
All these were Eden round the glorious pair.
And in their third flower-haunted spring of love
A child was born from golden Urvase.
But when the goddess from maternal pangs
Woke to the child's sweet face and strange tumult
Of new delight and felt the little hands
Erring about her breasts, passionate she cried:
"How long shall we in woods, Pururavus,
Waste the glad days of cheerful human life?
What pleasure is in soulless woods and waves?
But I would go into the homes of men,
Hear the great sound of cities, watch the eager
Faces tending to hall and mart, and talk

With the bright girls of earth, and kiss the eyes
Of little children, feel smooth floors of stone
Under my feet and the restraint of walls,
And eat earth's food from vessels made and drink
Earth's water cool from jars, and know all joy
And labour of that blithe and busy world.”
She said, and he with a slight happy smile
Consented. So to sacred Ganges they
Came and the virgin's city llian.
But when they neared the mighty destined walls,
His virgin-mother from her temple pure
Saw him, and a wild blare of conchs arose.
Rejoicing to the lion-gates they streamed,
The people of Pururavus, a glad
Throng indistinguishable, traders and priests,
Merchants of many gains and craftsmen fine
Oblivious of their daily toils; the carver
Flinging his tool away and hammerless
The giant smith laughing through his vast beard.
And little children ran, all over flowers,
And girls like dawn with a delightful noise
Of anklets, matrons and old men divine,
And half a godhead with great glances came
The large-eyed poets of the Vedic chant;
Before them, all that multitude divided
Honouring them. In gleaming armour came,
And bearing dreadful bows, with sound of swords,
High lords of sacrifice and aged chiefs
War-weary and great heroes with mighty tread.
All these to a high noise of trumpets came.
They with a wide sound going up to heaven
Welcomed their king, and a soft shower of blooms
Fell on him as from warlike fields returned.
Much all they marvelled at his heavenly bride
And worshipped her, half-awed. And young girls came,
Daughters of warriors, to great houses wed,
Sweet faces of delightful laughter, came

And took into their glad embrace and kissed,
Enamoured of her smiling mouth, and praised
Aloud her beauty. With flowers then they bound
Her soft immortal wrists, and through the gates,
Labouring in vain to bend great bows, waving
Far-glancing steel, and up the bridal streets
Captive the girlish phalanx, bright with swords,
After the old heroic fashion led.
They amid trumpets and the vast acclaim
Of a glad people brought the child of Gods
To her terrestrial home; through the strong doors
They lifted, and upon an earthly floor,
Loosening, let from the gleaming limbs slide down
Her heavenly vesture; next they brought and flung
About her sweet insufferable grace
Mortal habiliments, a clinging robe.
Over her hair the wifely veil was drawn.
Thus was the love of all the world confined
To one man's home. And O too fortunate
Mortal, who could with those august joys
Mingle our little happy human pains,
Subduing a fair goddess from her skies
To gentle ordinary things, sweet service
And household tasks making her beautiful,
And trivial daily words, and kisses kind,
And all the meaning dear of wife and home!
Human with earth dwelt golden Urvasie,
And bore to King Pururavus a race
Of glorious children, each a shining god.
She loved that great and simple life of old,
Its marble outlines, strong joys and clear air
Around the soul, loved and made roseate.
The sacred city felt a finer life
Within it; burning inspirations breathed
From hallowed poets; and architects to grace
And fancy their immense conceptions toned;
Numberless heroes emulously drove forth

And in strong joyous battle rolling back
 The dark barbarian borders, flashed through fields,
 Brilliant, and sages in their souls saw God.
 And from the city of Pururavus
 High influences went; Indus and Ganges
 And all the golden intermediate lands
 Grew with them and a perfect impulse felt.
 Seven years the earth rejoiced in Urvasie.

But in their fortunate heavens the high Gods
 Dwelt infelicitous, losing the old
 Rapture inexplicable and thrill beneath
 Their ancient calm. Therefore not long enduring,
 They in colossal council marble, said
 To that bright sister whom she had loved best,
 “Ménaca!” crying “how long shall one man
 Divide from heaven its most perfect bliss?
 Go down and bring her back, our bright one back,
 And we shall love again our luminous halls.”
 She heard and went, with her ethereal robe
 Murmuring about her, to the gates divine,
 And looked into the world, and saw the far
 Titanic Ilian city like a stone
 Sunlit upon the small and distant earth.
 Down from heaven’s peaks the daughter of the sea
 Went flashing and upon a breathless eve
 Came to the city of Pururavus,
 Air blazing far behind her till she paused.
 She over the palace of Pururavus
 Stood in shadow. Within the lights yet were;
 Still sat the princes and young poets sang
 On harps heroical of Urvasie
 And strong Pururavus, of Urvasie
 The light and lovely spirit golden-limbed,
 Son of a virgin strong Pururavus.
 “O earth made heaven to Pururavus!
 O heaven left earth without sweet Urvasie!

“Rejoice possessing, O Pururavus!
Be glad who art possessed, O Urvasie!
“Behold the parents of the sacrifice!
When they have met, then they together rush
And in their arms the beautiful fire is born.
“Behold the children of the earth and sky!
When they met, then they loved, O then they clasped,
And from their clasp a lovely presence grew.
“A holy virgin’s son we hear of thee
Without a father born, Pururavus,
Without a mother lovely Urvasie.
“Hast thou not brought the sacrifice from heaven,
The unquenched, unkindled fire, Pururavus?
Hast thou not brought delightful Urvasie?
“The fires of sacrifice mount ever up:
To their lost heavens they naturally aspire.
Their tops are weighted with a human prayer.
“The soul of love mounts also towards the sky;
Thence came the spark but hardly shall return;
Its wings are weighted with too fierce a fire.
“Rejoice in the warm earth, O lovely pair,
The green strong earth that gave Pururavus.
“Rejoice in the blithe earth, O lovely pair,
The happy earth all flushed with Urvasie.
“As lightning takes the heart with pleasant dread,
So love is of the strong Pururavus.
“As breathes sweet fragrance from the flower oppressed,
So love from thy bruised bosom, Urvasie.”

So sang they and the heart rejoiced. Then rose
The princes and went down the long white street,
Each to his home. Soon every sound had faded;
Heaven and a few bright stars possessed the world.
But in a silent place dim with the west
On that last night of the sweet passionate earth,
The goddess with the mortal hero lay.
For over them victorious Love still showered
His arrows marble-dinting, not flower-tipped

As our brief fading fires, — naked and large
As heaven the monumental loves of old.
On their rich bed they lay, and the two rams
That once the subtle bright Gundhuras gave
To Urvasie, were near; they were ever
With her and cherished; hardly even she loved
The tender faces of her children more
Than these choice from flocks heavenly: only these
Remained to her of unforgotten skies.
So lay they under those fierce shafts of Love,
And in the arms of strong Pururavus
Once more were those beloved limbs embraced,
Once more, if never once again on earth.
Before he slept, the lord of Urvasie
Clasped her to him and wooed from her tired lips
One kiss, nor in its passion felt farewell.
But the night darkened over the vague town,
And clouds came gradual up, and through the clouds
In thunderless great flashes stealing came
The subtle-souled Gundhuras from the peaks
Of distant Paradise. Thunder rolled out,
And through the walls, in a fierce rush of light,
Entered the thieves of heaven and stole the rams,
And fled with the same lightning. Shuddering
The exile of the skies awoke and knew
Her loss, and with a lamentable cry
Turned to her lord. “Arise, Pururavus!”
She wept, “they take from me my snow-white joys.”
And starting from his sleep Pururavus,
In that waking when memory is far
And nature of a man unquestioned rules,
Heard of oppression and a space forgot
Fate and his weak tenure of mighty bliss,
Restored to the great nature of a king.
Wrathful he leaped up and on one swift stride
Reached to his bow. Before ’twas grasped he shuddered,
His soul all smitten with a rushing fear.

Alarmed he turned towards her. Suddenly wide
The whole room stood in splendour manifest,
All lightning, and heroically vast,
In gesture kingly like a statue stayed,
Rose glorious, all a grace of naked limbs,
The hero beautiful, Pururavus,
In that fierce light. Intenser than by day
He for one brilliant moment clear beheld
All the familiar place, the fretted huge
Images on the columns, the high-reared
Walls massively erect and silent floor,
And on the floor the gracious fallen dress
That never should embrace her perfect form,
Lying a glimmer, and each noble curve
Of the strong couch, and delicately distinct
The golden body and the flower-like face:
Beside her with a lovely smile that other,
One small hand pressing back the shining curls
Blown with her speed over her. Then all faded.
Thunder crashed through the heavens jubilant.
For a long while he stood with beating heart
Half-conscious of its loss, and as if waiting
Another flash, into the dimness gazed
For those loved outlines that were far away.
Then with a quiet smile he went and placed
Where she had lain such a short while ago
Both hands, expecting her sweet breasts, but found
Her place all empty to him. Silently
He lay down whispering to his own heart:
“She has arisen and her shining dress
Put round her and gone into the cool alcove
To fetch sweet water for the heavenly rams,
And she will stay awhile perhaps to look
And muse upon the night, and then come back,
And give them drink, and silently lie down
Beside me. I shall see her when it dawns.”
And so he slept. But the grey dawn came in

And raised his lashes. He stretched out his arms
To find her. Then he knew he was alone.

Even so he would not dwell with his despair.
“She is but gone,” he said, “for a little gone
Into the infinite silences afar
To see her golden sisters and revisit
The streams she knew and those unearthly skies.
But she will soon come back, — even if her heart
Would let her linger, mine would draw her back; —
Come soon and talk to me of all she left,
And clasp her children, and resume sweet goings
And happy daily tasks and rooms she loved.”
So, steadfast, he continued kingly toils
Among a people greatly-destined, giving
In sacred sessions and assemblies calm
Counsels far-seeing, magnanimous decrees
Bronze against Time, and from the judgment seat
Unblamed sentence or reconciliation large.
And perfect trinity of holy fires
He kindled for desirable rain, and went
To concourse of strong men or pleasant crowds,
Or triumphed in great games omnipotent.
Yet behind all his moments there was void.
And as when one puts from him desperately
The thought of an inevitable fate,
Blinding himself with present pleasures, often
At a slight sound, a knocking at the door,
A chance word terrible, or even uncalled
His heart grows sick with sudden fear, and ghastly
The face of that dread future through the window
Looks at him; mute he sits then shuddering:
So to Pururavus in session holy,
Or warlike concourse, or alone, speaking,
Or sitting, often a swift dreadful fear
Made his life naked like a lightning flash;
Then his whole being shook and his strong frame,

As with a fever, and his eyes gazed blind;
Soon with great breaths he repossessed his soul.
Long he endured thus, but when shocks of fear
And brilliant passage of remorseless suns
And wakeful nights wrestling with memory
Invisibly had worn his heart, he then
Going as one desperate, void of thought or aim,
Into that silent place dim with the west,
Saw there her dress empty of her, and bed
Forlorn, and the cold floor where she had lain
At noon and made life sweet to him with her voice.
Sometimes as in an upland reservoir
Built by the hands of early Aryan kings,
Its banks in secret fretted long go down,
Suddenly down with resonant collapse,
Then with a formidable sound the flood
Descends, heard over all the echoing hills,
And marble cities are o'erwhelmed; so sank
The courage of the strong Pururavus,
By memory and anguish overcome
And thoughts of bliss intolerable. Tears
Came from him; the unvanquished hero lay
With outstretched arms and wept. Henceforth his life
Was with that room. If he appeared in high
Session, warlike concourse or pleasant crowd,
Men looked on him as on the silent dead.
Nor did he linger, but from little stay
Would silently return and in hushed rooms
Watch with the little relics left of her,
Things he had hardly borne to see before,
Now clasped them often, often kissed, sometimes
Spoke to them as to sweet and living friends,
And often over his sleeping children hung.
Nor did he count the days, nor weep again,
But looked into the dawn with tearless eyes.
And all the people mourned for their great king,
Silently watching him, and many murmured:

“This is not he, the King Pururavus,
 Hero august, who his impetuous soul
 Ruled like a calm and skilful charioteer,
 And was the virgin Ila’s son, our king.
 Would that the enemy’s war-cry now might rush
 Against our gates and all the air be sound.
 Surely he would arise and lift his bow,
 And his swift chariot hurling through the gates
 Advance upon them like a sea, and triumph,
 And be himself among the rushing wheels.”
 So they would murmur grieving. But the king
 When the bright months brought round a lustier earth,
 Felt over his numbed soul some touch of flowers,
 And rose a little from his grief, and lifted
 His eyes against the stars. Then he said low:
 “I was not wont so quickly to despair.
 O hast thou left me and art lost in light,
 Cruel, between the shining hemispheres?
 Yet even there I will pursue my joy.
 Though all the great immortals jealously
 Encompass round with shields thy golden limbs,
 I may clash through them yet, or my strong patience
 Will pluck my love down from her distant stars.
 Still am I Ila’s son, Pururavus,
 That passionless pure strength though lost, though fallen
 From the armed splendid soul which once I was.”
 So saying he to the hall of session strode,
 Mightily like a king, a marble place
 With wide Titanic arches imminent,
 And from the brooding pillars seized a shell
 And blew upon it. Like a storm the sound
 Through Pratisthana’s streets was blown. Forth came
 From lintel proud and happy threshold low
 The people pouring out. Majestic chiefs
 And strong war-leaders and old famous men
 And mighty poets first; behind them streamed
 The Ilian people like driving rain, and filled

With faces the immeasurable hall.
And over them the beautiful great king
Rose bright; anticipations wonderful
Of immortality flashed through his eyes
And round his brow's august circumference.
"My people whom I made, I go from you;
And what shall I say to you, Ilian people,
Who know my glory and know my grief? Now I
Endure no more the desolate wide rooms
And gardens empty of her. I will depart
And find her under imperishable trees
Or secret beside streams. But since I go
And leave my work behind and a young nation
With destiny like an uncertain dawn
Over it — Ayus her son, I give you. He
By beauty and strength incomparable shall rule.
Lo, I have planted earth with deeds and made
The widest heavens my monument, have brought
From Paradise the sempiternal fire
And warred in heaven among the warring Gods.
O people, you have shared my famous actions
Done in a few great years of earthly life,
The battles I fought, edifications vast,
And perfect institutes that I have framed.
High things we have done together, O my people.
But now I go to claim back from the Gods
Her they have taken from me, my dear reward."
He spoke and all the nation listened, dumb.
Then was brought forth the bud of Urvasie,
With Vedic verse intoned and Ganges pure
Was crowned a king, and empire on his curls
Established. But Pururavus went forth,
Through ranks of silent people and gleaming arms,
With the last cloud of sunset up the fields
And darkening meadows. And from Ila's rock,
And from the temple of Ila virginal,
A rushing splendour wonderfully arose

And shone all round the great departing king.
He in that light turned and saw under him
The mighty city, luminous and vast,
Colossally up-piled towards the heavens,
Temple and street and palace, and the sea
Of sorrowing faces and sad grieving eyes;
A moment saw, and disappeared from light
Into forest. Then a loud wail arose
From Pratisthana, as if barbarous hordes
Were in the streets and all its temples huge
Rising towards heaven in disastrous fire,
But he unlistening into darkness went.

CANTO IV

Through darkness and immense dim night he went
Mid phantom outlines of approaching trees,
And all the day in green leaves, till he came
To peopled forests and sweet clamorous streams
And marvellous shining meadows where he lived
With Urvasie his love in seasons old.
These like domestic faces waiting were.
He knew each wind-blown tree, each different field;
And could distinguish all the sounding rivers
Each by its own voice and peculiar flow.
Here were the happy shades where they had lain
Inarmed and murmuring, here half-lustrous groves
Still voiceful with a sacred sound at noon,
And these the rivers from her beauty bright.
There straying in field and forest he to each
Familiar spot so full of her would speak,
Pausing by banks and memorable trees.
“O sacred fig-tree, under thee she paused
Musing amid her tresses, and her eyes
Were sweet and grave. And, O delicious shade,
Thou hast experienced brightness from her feet,
O cool and dark green shelterer, perfect place!
And lo! the boughs all ruinous towards earth
With blossoms. Here she lay, her arms thrown back,
Smiling up to me, and the flowers rained
Upon her lips and eyes and bosom bare.
And here a secret opening where she stood
Waiting in narrow twilight; round her all
Was green and secret with a mystic, dewy
Half invitation into emerald worlds.
O river, from thee she moved towards the glade
Breathing and wet and fresh as if a flower
All bare from rain. And thou, great holy glade,
Sawest her face maternal o’er her child.”
Then ceasing he would wait and listen, half

Expecting her. But all was silent; only
 Perhaps a bird darted bright-winged away,
 Or a grey snake slipped through the brilliant leaves.
 Thus wandering, thus in every mindful place
 Renewing old forgotten scenes that rose,
 Gleam after gleam, upon his mind, as stars
 Return at night; thus drawing from his heart
 Where they lay covered, old sweet incidents
 To live before his eyes; thus calling back
 Uncertain moods, brief moments of her face,
 And transient postures strangely beautiful,
 Pleasures, and little happy mists of tears
 Heart-freeing, he, materializing dreams,
 Upon her very body almost seized.
 Always a sense of imperfection slipped
 Between him and that passionate success.
 Therefore he murmured at last unsatisfied:
 “She is not here; though every mystic glade
 And sunbright pasture breathe alone of her
 And quiver as with her presence, I find not
 Her very limbs, her very face; yet dreamed
 That here infallibly I should restrain
 Her fugitive feet or hold her by the robe.
 O once she was the luminous soul of these,
 And in her body lived the summer and spring
 And seed and blossoming, ripening and fall,
 Hiding of Beauty in the wood and glen,
 And flashing out into the sunlit fields
 All flowers and laughter. All the happy moods
 And all the beautiful amorous ways of earth
 She was; but they now seem only her dress
 Left by her. Therefore, O ye seaward rivers,
 O forests, since ye have deceived my hope,
 I go from you to dazzling cruel ravines
 And find her on inclement mountains pure.”

Then northward blown upon a storm of hope

The hero self-discrowned, Pururavus,
Went swiftly up the burning plains and through
The portals of the old Saivaalic hills
To the inferior heights, nor lingered long,
Though pulsing with fierce memories, though thrilled
With shocks of a great passion touching earth;
But plunged o'er difficult gorge and prone ravine
And rivers thundering between dim walls,
Driven by immense desire, until he came
To dreadful silence of the peaks and trod
Regions as vast and lonely as his love.
Then with a confident sublime appeal
He to the listening summits stretched his hands:
"O desolate strong Himalaya, great
Thy peaks alone with heaven and dreadful hush
In which the Soul of all the world is felt
Meditating creation! Thou, O mountain,
My bridal chamber wast. On thee we lay
With summits towards the moon or with near stars
Watching us in some wild inhuman vale,
Thy silence over us like a coverlid
Or a far avalanche for bridal song.
Lo, she is fled into your silences!
I come to you, O mountains, with a heart
Desolate like you, like you snow-swept, and stretch
Towards your solemn summits kindred hands.
Give back to me, O mountains, give her back."
He ceased and Himalaya bent towards him, white.
The mountains seemed to recognize a soul
Immense as they, reaching as they to heaven
And capable of infinite solitude.
Long he, in meditation deep immersed,
Strove to dissolve his soul among the hills
Into the thought of Urvasie. The snow
Stole down from heaven and touched his cheek and hair,
The storm-blast from the peaks leaped down and smote
But woke him not, and the white drops in vain

Froze in his locks or crusted all his garb.
For he lived only with his passionate heart.
But as the months with slow unnoticed tread
Passed o'er the hills nor brought sweet change of spring
Nor autumn wet with dew, a voice at last
Moved from far heavens, other than our sky.
And he arose as one impelled and came
Past the supreme great ridges northward, came
Into the wonderful land far up the world
Dim-looming, where the Northern Kurus dwell,
The ancients of the world, invisible,
Among forgotten mists. Through mists he moved
Feeling a sense of unseen cities, hearing
No sound, nor seeing face, but conscious ever
Of an immense traditionary life
Throbbing round him and dreams historical.
For as he went, old kingly memories surged,
And with vast forward faces driving came
Origins and stabilities and empires,
Huge passionate creations, impulses
National realizing themselves in stone.
Lastly with rolling of the mists afar
He saw beneath him the primeval rocks
Plunge down into the valley, and upsoar
To light wide thoughtful domes and measureless
Ramparts, and mid them in a glory walk
The ancients of the world with eyes august.
Next towards the sun he looked and saw enthroned
Upon the summit one whose regal hair
Crowned her, and purple in waves down to her feet
Flowed, Indira, the goddess, Ocean's child,
Giver of empire who all beauty keeps
Between her hands, all glory, all wealth, all power.
Severe and beautiful she leaned her face.
"What passion, Ilian Pururavus,
Has led thee here to my great capital
And ancient men in the forgotten mists,

The fathers of the Aryan race? Of glory
Enamoured hast thou come, or for thy people
Empire soliciting? But other beauty
Is on thy brow and light no longer mine.
Yet not for self wast thou of virgin born,
Perfect, and the aerial paths of gods
Permitted to thy steps; nor for themselves,
But to the voice of Vedic litanies,
Sacredly placed are the dread crowns of Kings
For bright felicities and cruel toils.
And thou, O Ilian Pururavus,
For passion dost thou leave thy strenuous grandeurs,
A nation's destinies, and hast not feared
The sad inferior Ganges lapsing down
With mournful rumour through the shades of Hell?"
Then with calm eyes the hero Ilian:
"O Goddess, patroness of Aryasthan,
Lover of banyan and of lotus, I
Not from the fear of Hell or hope of Heaven
Do good or ill. Reigning I reigned o'er self,
And with a kingly soul did kingly deeds.
Now driven by a termless wide desire
I wander over snow and countries vague."
And like a viol Luxmie answered him:
"Sprung of the moon, thy grandsire's fault in thee
Yet lives; but since thy love is singly great,
Doubtless thou shalt possess thy whole desire.
Yet hast thou maimed the future and discrowned
The Aryan people; for though Ila's sons,
In Hustina, the city of elephants,
And Indraprutha, future towns, shall rule
Drawing my peoples to one sceptre, at last
Their power by excess of beauty falls, —
Thy sin, Pururavus — of beauty and love:
And this the land divine to impure grasp
Yields of barbarians from the outer shores."
She ceased and the oblivious mists rolled down.

But the strong hero uncrowned, Pururavus,
Eastward, all dreaming with his great desire,
Wandered as when a man in sleep arises,
And goes into the night, and under stars
Through the black spaces moves, nor knows his feet
Nor where they guide him, but dread unseen power
Walks by him and leads his unerring steps
To some weird forest or gaunt mountain-side;
There he awakes, a horror in his soul,
And shudders alien amid places strange.
So wandered, driven by an unknown power,
Pururavus. Over hushed dreadful hills
And snows more breathless to the quiet banks
Of a wide lake mid rocks and bending woods
He came, and saw calm mountains over it,
And knew in his awed heart the hill of God,
Coilas, and Mainaac with its summits gold.
Awed he in heart, yet with a quicker stride
He moved and eyes of silent joy, like one
Who coming from long travel, sees the old
Village and children's faces at the doors.
In a wild faery place where mountain streams
Glimmer from the dim rocks and meet the lake
Amid a wrestle of tangled trees and heaped
Moss-grown disordered stones, and all the water
Is hidden with its lotuses and sways
Shimmering between leaves or strains through bloom,
She sat, the mother of the Aryans, white
With a sublime pallor beneath her hair.
Musing, with wide creative brows, she sat
In a slight lovely dress fastened with flowers,
All heaped with her large tresses. Golden swans
Preened in the waters by her dipping feet.
One hand propped her fair marble cheek, the other
The mystic lotus hardly held. Seeing her
Pururavus bent to her and adored.
And she looked up and musing towards him

Said low: "O son, I knew thy steps afar.
Of me thou wast; for as I suffered rapture,
Invaded by the sea of images
Breaking upon me from all winds, and saw
Indus and Ganges with prophetic mind,
A virginal impulse gleamed from my bosom
And on the earth took beauty and form. I saw
Thee from that glory issue and rejoiced.
But now thou comest quite discrowned. From me,
O son, thou hadst the impulse beautiful
That made thy soul all colour. For I strive
Towards the insufferable heights and flash
With haloes of that sacred light intense.
But lo! the spring and all its flowers, and lo!
How bright the Soma juice. What golden joys,
What living passions, what immortal tears!
I lift the veil that hides the Immortal — Ah!
My lids faint. Ah! the veil was lovelier.
My flowers wither in that height, my swan
Spreads not his wings felicitous so far.
O one day I shall turn from the great verse
And marble aspiration to sing sweetly
Of lovers and the pomps of wealth and wine
And warm delights and warm desires and earth.
O mine own son, Pururavus, I fall
By thy vast failure from my dazzling skies."
And Ila's son made answer, "O white-armed,
O mother of the Aryans, of my life
Creatress! fates colossal overrule.
But lo! I wander like a wave, nor find
Limit to the desire that wastes my soul."
Then with a sweet immortal smile the mother
Gave to him in the hollow of her hand
Wonderful water of the lake. He drank,
And understood infinity, and saw
Time like a snake coiling among the stars;
And earth he saw, and mortal nights and days

Grew to him moments, and his limbs became
 Undying and his thoughts as marble endured.
 Then to the hero deified the goddess,
 “O strong immortal, now pursue thy joy:
 Yet first rise up the peaks of Coilas; there
 The Mighty Mother sits, whose sovran voice
 Shall ratify to thee thy future fair,”
 Said and caressed his brow with lips divine.
 And bright Pururavus rose up the hill
 Towards the breathless summit. Thence, enshrined
 In deep concealing glories, came a voice,
 And clearer he discerned as one whose eyes,
 Long cognizant of darkness, coming forth,
 Grow gradually habituated to light,
 The calm compassionate face, the heaven-wide brow,
 And the robust great limbs that bear the world.
 Prophetic and deep her voice came down:
 “Thou then hast failed, bright soul; but God blames not
 Nor punishes. Impartially he deals
 To every strenuous spirit its chosen reward.
 And since no work, however maimed, no smallest
 Energy added to the mighty sum
 Of action fails of its exact result,
 Empire shall in thy line and forceful brain
 Persist, the boundless impulse towards rule
 Of grandiose souls perpetually recur,
 And minds immense and personalities
 With battle and with passion and with storm
 Shall burn through Aryan history, the speech
 Of ages. In thy line the Spirit Supreme
 Shall bound existence with one human form;
 In Mathura and ocean Dwarca Man
 Earthly perfectibility of soul
 Example: son of thy line and eulogist,
 The vast clear poet of the golden verse,
 Whose song shall be as wide as is the world.
 But all by huge self-will or violence marred

Of passionate uncontrol; if pure, their work
By touch of later turbulent hands unsphered
Or fames by legend stained. Upon my heights
Breathing God's air, strong as the sky and pure,
Dwell only Ixvaacou's children; destined theirs
Heaven's perfect praise, earth's sole unequalled song.
But thou, O Ila's son, take up thy joy.
For thee in sweet Gundhurva world eternal
Rapture and clasp unloosed of Urvasie,
Till the long night when God asleep shall fall."

Ceased the great voice and strong Pururavus
Glad of his high reward, however dearly
Purchased, purchased with infinite downfall,
With footing now divine went up the world.
Mid regions sweet and peaks of milk-white snow
And lovely corners and delicious lakes,
He saw a road all sunlight and the gates
Of the Gundhurvas' home. O never ship
From Ocean into Ocean erring knew
Such joy through all its patient sails at sight
Of final haven near as the tried heart
Of earth's successful son at that fair goal.
Towards the gates he hastened, and one bright
With angel face who at those portals stood
Cried down, "We wait for thee, Pururavus."
Then to his hearing musical, the hinges
Called; he beheld the subtle faces look
Down on him and the crowd of luminous forms,
And entered to immortal sound of lyres.
Up through the streets a silver cry went on
Before him of high instruments. From all
The winds the marvellous musicians pressed
To welcome that immortal lover. One
Whose pure-limned brows aerial wore by right
Faery authority, stood from the crowd.
"O Ila's son, far-famed Pururavus,

Destined to joys by mortals all unhopéd!
Move to thy sacred glories as a star
Into its destined place, shine over us
Here greatest as upon thy greener earth.”
They through the thrilling regions musical
Led him and marvelled at him and praised with song
His fair sublimity of form and brow
And warlike limbs and grace heroical.
He heeded not, for all his soul was straining
With expectation of a near delight.
His eyes that sought her ever, beheld a wall
Of mighty trees and, where they arched to part,
Those two of all their sisters brightest rise,
One blithe as is a happy brook, the other
With her grave smile; and each took a strong hand
In her soft clasp, and led him to a place
Distinct mid faery-leaved ethereal trees
And magic banks and sweet low curves of hills,
And over all the sunlight like a charm.
There by a sounding river downward thrown
From under low green-curtaining boughs was she.
Mute she arose and with wide quiet eyes
Came towards him. In their immortal looks
Was a deep feeling too august for joy,
The sense that all eternity must follow
One perfect moment. Then that comrade bright
With slow grave smile, “O after absence wide
Who meet and shall not sunder any more
Till slumber of the Supreme, strong be your souls
To bear unchanging rapture; strong you were
By patience to compel unwilling Gods.”
And they were left alone in that clear world.
Then all his soul towards her leaning, took
Pururavus into his clasp and felt,
Seriously glad, the golden bosom on his
Of Urvasie, his love; so pressing back
The longed-for sacred face, lingering he kissed.

Then Love in his sweet heavens was satisfied.
But far below through silent mighty space
The green and strenuous earth abandoned rolled.

Love and Death

Love and Death

In woodlands of the bright and early world,
When love was to himself yet new and warm
And stainless, played like morning with a flower
Ruru with his young bride Priyumvada.
Fresh-cheeked and dew-eyed white Priyumvada
Opened her budded heart of crimson bloom
To love, to Ruru; Ruru, a happy flood
Of passion round a lotus dancing thrilled,
Blinded with his soul's waves Priyumvada.
To him the earth was a bed for this sole flower,
To her all the world was filled with his embrace.
Wet with new rains the morning earth, released
From her fierce centuries and burning suns,
Lavished her breath in greenness; poignant flowers
Thronged all her eager breast, and her young arms
Cradled a childlike bounding life that played
And would not cease, nor ever weary grew
Of her bright promise; for all was joy and breeze
And perfume, colour and bloom and ardent rays
Of living, and delight desired the world.
Then Earth was quick and pregnant tamelessly;
A free and unwall'd race possessed her plains
Whose hearts uncramped by bonds, whose unspoiled thoughts
At once replied to light. Foisoned the fields;
Lonely and rich the forests and the swaying
Of those unnumbered tops affected men
With thoughts to their vast music kin. Undammed
The virgin rivers moved towards the sea,
And mountains yet unseen and peoples vague
Winged young imagination like an eagle
To strange beauty remote. And Ruru felt
The sweetness of the early earth as sap
All through him, and short life an aeon made
By boundless possibility, and love,

Sweetest of all unfathomable love,
A glory untired. As a bright bird comes flying
From airy extravagance to his own home,
And breasts his mate, and feels her all his goal,
So from boon sunlight and the fresh chill wave
Which swirled and lapped between the slumbering fields,
From forest pools and wanderings mid leaves
Through emerald ever-new discoveries,
Mysterious hillsides ranged and buoyant-swift
Races with our wild brothers in the meads,
Came Ruru back to the white-bosomed girl,
Strong-winged to pleasure. She all fresh and new
Rose to him, and he plunged into her charm.
For neither to her honey and poignancy
Artlessly interchanged, nor any limit
To the sweet physical delight of her
He found. Her eyes like deep and infinite wells
Lured his attracted soul, and her touch thrilled
Not lightly, though so light; the joy prolonged
And sweetness of the lingering of her lips
Was every time a nectar of surprise
To her lover; her smooth-gleaming shoulder bared
In darkness of her hair showed jasmine-bright,
While her kissed bosom by rich tumults stirred
Was a moved sea that rocked beneath his heart.
Then when her lips had made him blind, soft siege
Of all her unseen body to his rule
Betrayed the ravishing realm of her white limbs,
An empire for the glory of a God.
He knew not whether he loved most her smile,
Her causeless tears or little angers swift,
Whether held wet against him from the bath
Among her kindred lotuses, her cheeks
Soft to his lips and dangerous happy breasts
That vanquished all his strength with their desire,
Meeting his absence with her sudden face,
Or when the leaf-hid bird at night complained

Near their wreathed arbour on the moonlit lake,
Sobbing delight out from her heart of bliss,
Or in his clasp of rapture laughing low
Of his close bosom bridal-glad and pleased
With passion and this fiery play of love,
Or breaking off like one who thinks of grief,
Wonderful melancholy in her eyes
Grown liquid and with wayward sorrow large.
Thus he in her found a warm world of sweets,
And lived of ecstasy secure, nor deemed
Any new hour could match that early bliss.
But Love has joys for spirits born divine
More bleeding-lovely than his thornless rose.
That day he had left, while yet the east was dark,
Rising, her bosom and into the river
Swam out, exulting in the sting and swift
Sharp-edged desire around his limbs, and sprang
Wet to the bank, and streamed into the wood.
As a young horse upon the pastures glad
Feels greensward and the wind along his mane
And arches as he goes his neck, so went
In an immense delight of youth the boy
And shook his locks, joy-crested. Boundlessly
He revelled in swift air of life, a creature
Of wide and vigorous morning. Far he strayed
Tempting for flower and fruit branches in heaven,
And plucked, and flung away, and brighter chose,
Seeking comparisons for her bloom; and followed
New streams, and touched new trees, and felt slow beauty
And leafy secret change; for the damp leaves,
Grey-green at first, grew pallid with the light
And warmed with consciousness of sunshine near;
Then the whole daylight wandered in, and made
Hard tracts of splendour, and enriched all hues.
But when a happy sheltered heat he felt
And heard contented voice of living things
Harmonious with the noon, he turned and swiftly

Went homeward yearning to Priyumvada,
And near his home emerging from green leaves
He laughed towards the sun: "O father Sun,"
He cried, "how good it is to live, to love!
Surely our joy shall never end, nor we
Grow old, but like bright rivers or pure winds
Sweetly continue, or revive with flowers,
Or live at least as long as senseless trees."
He dreamed, and said with a soft smile: "Lo, she!
And she will turn from me with angry tears
Her delicate face more beautiful than storm
Or rainy moonlight. I will follow her,
And soothe her heart with sovereign flatteries;
Or rather all tyranny exhaust and taste
The beauty of her anger like a fruit,
Vexing her soul with helplessness; then soften
Easily with quiet undenied demand
Of heart insisting upon heart; or else
Will reinvest her beauty bright with flowers,
Or with my hands her little feet persuade.
Then will her face be like a sudden dawn,
And flower compelled into reluctant smiles."
He had not ceased when he beheld her. She,
Tearing a jasmine bloom with waiting hands,
Stood drooping, petulant, but heard at once
His footsteps and before she was aware,
A sudden smile of exquisite delight
Leaped to her mouth, and a great blush of joy
Surprised her cheeks. She for a moment stood
Beautiful with her love before she died;
And he laughed towards her. With a pitiful cry
She paled; moaning, her stricken limbs collapsed.
But petrified, in awful dumb surprise,
He gazed; then waking with a bound was by her,
All panic expectation. As he came,
He saw a brilliant flash of coils evade
The sunlight, and with hateful gorgeous hood

Darted into green safety, hissing, death.
Voiceless he sank beside her and stretched out
His arms and desperately touched her face,
As if to attract her soul to live, and sought
Beseeching with his hands her bosom. O, she
Was warm, and cruel hope pierced him; but pale
As jasmies fading on a girl's sweet breast
Her cheek was, and forgot its perfect rose.
Her eyes that clung to sunlight yet, with pain
Were large and feebly round his neck her arms
She lifted and, desiring his pale cheek
Against her bosom, sobbed out piteously,
"Ah, love!" and stopped heart-broken; then, "O Love!
Alas the green dear home that I must leave
So early! I was so glad of love and kisses,
And thought that centuries would not exhaust
The deep embrace. And I have had so little
Of joy and the wild day and throbbing night,
Laughter, and tenderness, and strife and tears.
I have not numbered half the brilliant birds
In one green forest, nor am familiar grown
With sunrise and the progress of the eves,
Nor have with plaintive cries of birds made friends,
Cuckoo and rainlark and love-speak-to-me.
I have not learned the names of half the flowers
Around me; so few trees know me by my name;
Nor have I seen the stars so very often
That I should die. I feel a dreadful hand
Drawing me from the touch of thy warm limbs
Into some cold vague mist, and all black night
Descends towards me. I no more am thine,
But go I know not where, and see pale shapes
And gloomy countries and that terrible stream.
O Love, O Love, they take me from thee far,
And whether we shall find each other ever
In the wide dreadful territory of death,
I know not. Or thou wilt forget me quite,

And life compel thee into other arms.
Ah, come with me! I cannot bear to wander
In that cold cruel country all alone,
Helpless and terrified, or sob by streams
Denied sweet sunlight and by thee unloved.”
Slower her voice came now, and over her cheek
Death paused; then, sobbing like a little child
Too early from her bounding pleasures called,
The lovely discontented spirit stole
From her warm body white. Over her leaned
Ruru, and waited for dead lips to move.
Still in the greenwood lay Priyumvada,
And Ruru rose not from her, but with eyes
Emptied of glory hung above his dead,
Only, without a word, without a tear.
Then the crowned wives of the great forest came,
They who had fed her from maternal breasts,
And grieved over the lovely body cold,
And bore it from him; nor did he entreat
One last look nor one kiss, nor yet denied
What he had loved so well. They the dead girl
Into some distant greenness bore away.

But Ruru, while the stillness of the place
Remembered her, sat without voice. He heard
Through the great silence that was now his soul,
The forest sounds, a squirrel’s leap through leaves,
The cheeping of a bird just overhead,
A peacock with his melancholy cry
Complaining far away, and tossings dim
And slight unnoticeable stir of trees.
But all these were to him like distant things
And he alone in his heart’s void. And yet
No thought he had of her so lately lost.
Rather far pictures, trivial incidents
Of that old life before her delicate face
Had lived for him, dumbly distinct like thoughts

Of men that die, kept with long pomps his mind
Excluding the dead girl. So still he was,
The birds flashed by him with their swift small wings,
Fanning him. Then he moved, then rigorous
Memory through all his body shuddering
Awoke, and he looked up and knew the place,
And recognised greenness immutable,
And saw old trees and the same flowers still bloom.
He felt the bright indifference of earth
And all the lonely uselessness of pain.
Then lifting up the beauty of his brow
He spoke, with sorrow pale: "O grim cold Death!
But I will not like ordinary men
Sate thee with cries, and falsely woo thee,
And make my grief thy theatre, who lie
Prostrate beneath thy thunderbolts and make
Night witness of their moans, shuddering and crying
When sudden memories pierce them like swords,
And often starting up as at a thought
Intolerable, pace a little, then
Sink down exhausted by brief agony.
O secrecy terrific, darkness vast,
At which we shudder! Somewhere, I know not where,
Somehow, I know not how, I shall confront
Thy gloom, tremendous spirit, and seize with hands
And prove what thou art and what man." He said,
And slowly to the forest wandered. There
Long months he travelled between grief and grief,
Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,
Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.
And his heart cried in him as when a fire
Roars through wide forests and the branches cry
Burning towards heaven in torture glorious.
So burned, immense, his grief within him; he raised
His young pure face all solemnised with pain,
Voiceless. Then Fate was shaken, and the Gods
Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid.

Therefore from peaks divine came flashing down
Immortal Agni and to the uswutth-tree
Cried in the Voice that slays the world: “O tree
That liftest thy enormous branches able
To shelter armies, more than armies now
Shelter, be famous, house a brilliant God.
For the grief grows in Ruru’s breast up-piled,
As wrestles with its anguished barricades
In silence an impending flood, and Gods
Immortal grow afraid. For earth alarmed
Shudders to bear the curse lest her young life
Pale with eclipse and all-creating love
Be to mere pain condemned. Divert the wrath
Into thy boughs, Uswuttha — thou shalt be
My throne — glorious, though in eternal pangs,
Yet worth much pain to harbour divine fire.”
So ended the young pure destroyer’s voice,
And the dumb god consented silently.
In the same noon came Ruru; his mind had paused,
Lured for a moment by soft wandering gleams
Into forgetfulness of grief; for thoughts
Gentle and near-eyed whispering memories
So sweetly came, his blind heart dreamed she lived.
Slow the uswuttha-tree bent down its leaves,
And smote his cheek, and touched his heavy hair.
And Ruru turned illumined. For a moment,
One blissful moment he had felt ’twas she.
So had she often stolen up and touched
His curls with her enamoured fingers small,
Lingering, while the wind smote him with her hair
And her quick breath came to him like spring. Then he,
Turning, as one surprised with heaven, saw
Ready to his swift passionate grasp her bosom
And body sweet expecting his embrace.
Oh, now saw her not, but the guilty tree
Shrinking; then grief back with a double crown
Arose and stained his face with agony.

Nor silence he endured, but the dumb force
Ascetic and inherited, by sires
Fierce-musing earned, from the boy's bosom blazed.
"O uswuth-tree, wantonly who hast mocked
My anguish with the wind, but thou no more
Have joy of the cool wind nor green delight,
But live thy guilty leaves in fire, so long
As Aryan wheels by thy doomed shadow vast
Thunder to war, nor bless with cool wide waves
Lyric Saruswathi nations impure."
He spoke, and the vast tree groaned through its leaves,
Recognising its fate; then smouldered; lines
Of living fire rushed up the girth and hissed
Serpentine in the unconsuming leaves;
Last, all Hutashan in his chariot armed
Sprang on the boughs and blazed into the sky,
And wailing all the great tormented creature
Stood wide in agony; one half was green
And earthly, the other a weird brilliance
Filled with the speed and cry of endless flame.
But he, with the fierce rushing-out of power
Shaken and that strong grasp of anguish, flung
His hands out to the sun; "Priyumvada!"
He cried, and at that well-loved sound there dawned
With overwhelming sweetness miserable
Upon his mind the old delightful times
When he had called her by her liquid name,
Where the voice loved to linger. He remembered
The chompuc bushes where she turned away
Half-angered, and his speaking of her name
Masterfully as to a lovely slave
Rebellious who has erred; at that the slow
Yielding of her small head, and after a little
Her sliding towards him and beautiful
Propitiating body as she sank down
With timid graspings deprecatingly
In prostrate warm surrender, her flushed cheeks

Upon his feet and little touches soft;
 Or her long name uttered beseechingly,
 And the swift leap of all her body to him,
 And eyes of large repentance, and the weight
 Of her wild bosom and lips unsatisfied;
 Or hourly call for little trivial needs,
 Or sweet unneeded wanton summoning,
 Daily appeal that never staled nor lost
 Its sudden music, and her lovely speed,
 Sedulous occupation left, quick-breathing,
 With great glad eyes and eager parted lips;
 Or in deep quiet moments murmuring
 That name like a religion in her ear,
 And her calm look compelled to ecstasy;
 Or to the river luring her, or breathed
 Over her dainty slumber, or secret sweet
 Bridal outpantings of her broken name.
 All these as rush unintermitting waves
 Upon a swimmer overborne, broke on him
 Relentless, things too happy to be endured,
 Till faint with the recalled felicity
 Low he moaned out: “O pale Priyumvada!
 O dead fair flower! yet living to my grief!
 But I could only slay the innocent tree,
 Powerless when power should have been. Not such
 Was Bhrigu from whose sacred strength I spring,
 Nor Bhrigu’s son, my father, when he blazed
 Out from Puloma’s side, and burning, blind,
 Fell like a tree the ravisher unjust.
 But I degenerate from such sires. O Death
 That showest not thy face beneath the stars,
 But comest masked, and on our dear ones seizing
 Fearest to wrestle equally with love!
 Nor from thy gloomy house any come back
 To tell thy way. But O, if any strength
 In lover’s constancy to torture dwell
 Earthward to force a helping god and such

Ascetic force be born of lover's pain,
Let my dumb pangs be heard. Whoe'er thou art,
O thou bright enemy of Death, descend
And lead me to that portal dim. For I
Have burned in fires cruel as the fire
And lain upon a sharper couch than swords."
He ceased, and heaven thrilled, and the far blue
Quivered as with invisible downward wings.

But Ruru passioned on, and came with eve
To secret grass and a green opening moist
In a cool lustre. Leaned upon a tree
That bathed in faery air and saw the sky
Through branches, and a single parrot loud
Screamed from its top, there stood a golden boy,
Half-naked, with bright limbs all beautiful —
Delicate they were, in sweetness absolute:
For every gleam and every soft strong curve
Magically compelled the eye, and smote
The heart to weakness. In his hands he swung
A bow — not such as human archers use:
For the string moved and murmured like many bees,
And nameless fragrance made the casual air
A peril. He on Ruru that fair face
Turned, and his steps with lovely gesture chained.
"Who art thou here, in forests wandering,
And thy young exquisite face is solemnised
With pain? Luxuriously the Gods have tortured
Thy heart to see such dreadful glorious beauty
Agonise in thy lips and brilliant eyes:
As tyrants in the fierceness of others' pangs
Joy and feel strong, clothing with brilliant fire,
Tyrants in Titan lands. Needs must her mouth
Have been pure honey and her bosom a charm,
Whom thou desirest seeing not the green
And common lovely sounds hast quite forgot."
And Ruru, mastered by the God, replied:

“I know thee by thy cruel beauty bright,
 Kama, who makest many worlds one fire.
 Ah, wherefore wilt thou ask of her to increase
 The passion and regret? Thou knowest, great love!
 Thy nymph her mother, if thou truly art he
 And not a dream of my disastrous soul.”
 But with the thrilled eternal smile that makes
 The spring, the lover of Rathi golden-limbed
 Replied to Ruru, “Mortal, I am he;
 I am that Madan who inform the stars
 With lustre and on life’s wide canvas fill
 Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,
 Make ordinary moments wonderful
 And common speech a charm: knit life to life
 With interfusions of opposing souls
 And sudden meetings and slow sorceries:
 Wing the boy bridegroom to that panting breast,
 Smite Gods with mortal faces, dreadfully
 Among great beautiful kings and watched by eyes
 That burn, force on the virgin’s fainting limbs
 And drive her to the one face never seen,
 The one breast meant eternally for her.
 By me come wedded sweets, by me the wife’s
 Busy delight and passionate obedience,
 And loving eager service never sated,
 And happy lips, and worshipping soft eyes:
 And mine the husband’s hungry arms and use
 Unwearying of old tender words and ways,
 Joy of her hair, and silent pleasure felt
 Of nearness to one dear familiar shape.
 Nor only these, but many affections bright
 And soft glad things cluster around my name.
 I plant fraternal tender yearnings, make
 The sister’s sweet attractiveness and leap
 Of heart towards imperious kindred blood,
 And the young mother’s passionate deep look,
 Earth’s high similitude of One not earth,

Teach filial heart-beats strong. These are my gifts
For which men praise me, these my glories calm:
But fiercer shafts I can, wild storms blown down
Shaking fixed minds and melting marble natures,
Tears and dumb bitterness and pain unpitied,
Racked thirsting jealousy and kind hearts made stone:
And in undisciplined huge souls I sow
Dire vengeance and impossible cruelties,
Cold lusts that linger and fierce fickleness,
The loves close kin to hate, brute violence
And mad insatiable longings pale,
And passion blind as death and deaf as swords.
O mortal, all deep-souled desires and all
Yearnings immense are mine, so much I can.”
So as he spoke, his face grew wonderful
With vast suggestion, his human-seeming limbs
Brightened with a soft splendour: luminous hints
Of the concealed divinity transpired.
But soon with a slight discontented frown:
“So much I can, as even the great Gods learn.
Only with death I wrestle in vain, until
My passionate godhead all becomes a doubt.
Mortal, I am the light in stars, of flowers
The bloom, the nameless fragrance that pervades
Creation: but behind me, older than me,
He comes with night and cold tremendous shade.
Hard is the way to him, most hard to find,
Harder to tread, for perishable feet
Almost impossible. Yet, O fair youth,
If thou must needs go down, and thou art strong
In passion and in constancy, nor easy
The soul to slay that has survived such grief —
Steel then thyself to venture, armed by Love.
Yet listen first what heavy trade they drive
Who would win back their dead to human arms.”
So much the God; but swift, with eager eyes
And panting bosom and glorious flushed face,

The lover: “O great Love! O beautiful Love!
But if by strength is possible, of body
Or mind, battle of spirit or moving speech,
Sweet speech that makes even cruelty grow kind,
Or yearning melody — for I have heard
That when Saruswathi in heaven her harp
Has smitten, the cruel sweetness terrible
Coils taking no denial through the soul,
And tears burst from the hearts of Gods — then I,
Making great music, or with perfect words,
Will strive, or staying him with desperate hands
Match human strength ’gainst formidable Death.
But if with price, ah God! what easier! Tears
Dreadful, innumerable I will absolve,
Or pay with anguish through the centuries,
Soul’s agony and torture physical,
So her small hands about my face at last
I feel, close real hair sting me with life,
And palpable breathing bosom on me press.”
Then with a lenient smile the mighty God:
“O ignorant fond lover, not with tears
Shalt thou persuade immitigable Death.
He will not pity all thy pangs: nor know
His stony eyes with music to grow kind,
Nor lovely words accepts. And how wilt thou
Wrestle with that grim shadow, who canst not save
One bloom from fading? A sole thing the Gods
Demand from all men living, sacrifice:
Nor without this shall any crown be grasped.
Yet many sacrifices are there, oxen,
And prayers, and Soma wine, and pious flowers,
Blood and the fierce expense of mind, and pure
Incense of perfect actions, perfect thoughts,
Or liberality wide as the sun’s,
Or ruthless labour or disastrous tears,
Exile or death or pain more hard than death,
Absence, a desert, from the faces loved;

Even sin may be a sumptuous sacrifice
Acceptable for unholy fruits. But none
Of these the inexorable shadow asks:
Alone of gods Death loves not gifts: he visits
The pure heart as the stained. Lo, the just man
Bowed helpless over his dead, nor all his virtues
Shall quicken that cold bosom: near him the wild
Marred face and passionate and will not leave
Kissing dead lips that shall not chide him more.
Life the pale ghost requires: with half thy life
Thou mayst protract the thread too early cut
Of that delightful spirit — half sweet life.
O Ruru, lo, thy frail precarious days,
And yet how sweet they are! simply to breathe
How warm and sweet! And ordinary things
How exquisite, thou then shalt learn when lost,
How luminous the daylight was, mere sleep
How soft and friendly clasping tired limbs,
And the deliciousness of common food.
And things indifferent thou then shalt want,
Regret rejected beauty, brightnesses
Bestowed in vain. Wilt thou yield up, O lover,
Half thy sweet portion of this light and gladness,
Thy little insufficient share, and vainly
Give to another? She is not thyself:
Thou dost not feel the gladness in her bosom,
Nor with the torture of thy body will she
Throb and cry out: at most with tender looks
And pitiful attempt to feel move near thee,
And weep how far she is from what she loves.
Men live like stars that see each other in heaven,
But one knows not the pleasure and the grief
The others feel: he lonely rapture has,
Or bears his incommunicable pain.
O Ruru, there are many beautiful faces,
But one thyself. Think then how thou shalt mourn
When thou hast shortened joy and feelst at last

The shadow that thou hadst for such sweet store.”
He ceased with a strange doubtful look. But swift
Came back the lover’s voice, like passionate rain.
“O idle words! For what is mere sunlight?
Who would live on into extreme old age,
Burden the impatient world, a weary old man,
And look back on a selfish time ill-spent
Exactng out of prodigal great life
Small separate pleasures like an usurer,
And no rich sacrifice and no large act
Finding oneself in others, nor the sweet
Expense of Nature in her passionate gusts
Of love and giving, first of the soul’s needs?
Who is so coldly wise, and does not feel
How wasted were our grandiose human days
In prudent personal unshared delights?
Why dost thou mock me, friend of all the stars?
How canst thou be love’s god and know not this,
That love burns down the body’s barriers cold
And laughs at difference — playing with it merely
To make joy sweeter? O too deeply I know,
The lover is not different from the loved,
Nor is their silence dumb to each other. He
Contains her heart and feels her body in his,
He flushes with her heat, chills with her cold.
And when she dies, oh! when she dies, oh me,
The emptiness, the maim! the life no life,
The sweet and passionate oneness lost! And if
By shortening of great grief won back, O price
Easy! O glad briefness, aeons may envy!
For we shall live not fearing death, nor feel
As others yearning over the loved at night
When the lamp flickers, sudden chills of dread
Terrible; nor at short absence agonise,
Wrestling with mad imagination. Us
Serenely when the darkening shadow comes,
One common sob shall end and soul clasp soul,

Leaving the body in a long dim kiss.
Then in the joys of heaven we shall consort,
Amid the gladness often touching hands
To make bliss sure; or in the ghastly stream
If we must anguish, yet it shall not part
Our passionate limbs inextricably locked
By one strong agony, but we shall feel
Hell's pain half joy through sweet companionship.
God Love, I weary of words. O wing me rather
To her, my eloquent princess of the spring,
In whatsoever wintry shores she roam.”
He ceased with eager forward eyes; once more
A light of beauty immortal through the limbs
Gleaming of the boy-god and soft sweet face,
Glorifying him, flushed, and he replied:
“Go then, O thou dear youth, and bear this flower
In thy hand warily. For thou shalt come
To that high meeting of the Ganges pure
With vague and violent Ocean. There arise
And loudly appeal my brother, the wild sea.”
He spoke and stretched out his immortal hand,
And Ruru's met it. All his young limbs yearned
With dreadful rapture shuddering through them. He
Felt in his fingers subtle uncertain bloom,
A quivering magnificence, half fire,
Whose petals changed like flame, and from them breathed
Dangerous attraction and alarmed delight,
As at a peril near. He raised his eyes,
But the green place was empty of the God.
Only the faery tree looked up at heaven
Through branches, and with recent pleasure shook.
Then over fading earth the night was lord.

But from Shatudru and Bipasha, streams
Once holy, and loved Iravathi and swift
Clear Chandrabhaga and Bitosta's toil
For man, went Ruru to bright sumptuous lands

By Aryan fathers not yet paced, but wild,
But virgin to our fruitful human toil,
Where Nature lay reclined in dumb delight
Alone with woodlands and the voiceless hills.
He with the widening yellow Ganges came,
Amazed, to trackless countries where few tribes,
Kirath and Poundrian, warred, worshipping trees
And the great serpent. But robust wild earth,
But forests with their splendid life of beasts
Savage mastered those strong inhabitants.
Thither came Ruru. In a thin soft eve
Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,
A glimmering restlessness with voices large,
And from the forests of that half-seen bank
A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,
With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale.
Then Ruru by his side stepped in; they went
Down the mysterious river and beheld
The great banks widen out of sight. The world
Was water and the skies to water plunged.
All night with a dim motion gliding down
He felt the dark against his eyelids; felt,
As in a dream more real than daylight,
The helmsman with his dumb and marble face
Near him and moving wideness all around,
And that continual gliding dimly on,
As one who on a shoreless water sails
For ever to a port he shall not win.
But when the darkness paled, he heard a moan
Of mightier waves and had the wide great sense
Of ocean and the depths below our feet.
But the boat stopped; the pilot lifted on him
His marble gaze coeval with the stars.
Then in the white-winged boat the boy arose
And saw around him the vast sea all grey
And heaving in the pallid dawning light.
Loud Ruru cried across the murmur: "Hear me,

O inarticulate grey Ocean, hear.
If any cadence in thy infinite
Rumour was caught from lover's moan, O Sea,
Open thy abysses to my mortal tread.
For I would travel to the despairing shades,
The spheres of suffering where entangled dwell
Souls unreleased and the untimely dead
Who weep remembering. Thither, O, guide me,
No despicable wayfarer, but Ruru,
But son of a great Rishi, from all men
On earth selected for peculiar pangs,
Special disaster. Lo, this petalled fire,
How freshly it blooms and lasts with my great pain!"
He held the flower out subtly glimmering.
And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,
Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with waves,
Converging all its giant crests; towards him
Innumerable waters loomed and heaven
Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved
Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound
All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,
Curving with monstrous menace over him.
He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed
Descending, saw with floating hair arise
The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,
And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld
A mute stupendous march of waters race
To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.
Ganges he saw, as men predestined rush
Upon a fearful doom foreseen, so run,
Alarmed, with anguished speed, the river vast.
Veiled to his eyes the triple goddess rose.
She with a sound of waters cried to him,
A thousand voices moaning with one pain:
"Lover, who fearedst not sunlight to leave,
With me thou mayst behold that helpless spirit

Lost in the gloom, if still thy burning bosom
Have courage to endure great Nature's night
In the dire lands where I, a goddess, mourn
Hurting my heart with my own cruelty.”
She darkened to the ominous descent,
Unwilling, and her once so human waves
Sent forth a cry not meant for living ears.
And Ruru chilled; but terrible strong love
Was like a fiery finger in his breast
Pointing him on; so he through horror went
Conducted by inexorable sound.
For monstrous voices to his ear were close,
And bodiless terrors with their dimness seized him
In an obscurity phantasmal. Thus
With agony of soul to the grey waste
He came, glad of the pain of passage over,
As men who through the storms of anguish strive
Into abiding tranquil dreariness
And draw sad breath assured; to the grey waste,
Hopeless Patala, the immutable
Country, where neither sun nor rain arrives,
Nor happy labour of the human plough
Fruitfully turns the soil, but in vague sands
And indeterminable strange rocks and caverns
That into silent blackness huge recede,
Dwell the great serpent and his hosts, writhed forms,
Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues
Coiling in a half darkness. Shapes he saw,
And heard the hiss and knew the lambent light
Loathsome, but passed compelling his strong soul.
At last through those six tired hopeless worlds,
Too hopeless far for grief, pale he arrived
Into a nether air by anguish moved,
And heard before him cries that pierced the heart,
Human, not to be borne, and issued shaken
By the great river accursed. Maddened it ran,
Anguished, importunate, and in its waves

The drifting ghosts their agony endured.
There Ruru saw pale faces float of kings
And grandiose victors and revered high priests
And famous women. Now rose from the wave
A golden shuddering arm and now a face.
Torn piteous sides were seen and breasts that quailed.
Over them moaned the penal waters on,
And had no joy of their fierce cruelty.
Then Ruru, his young cheeks with pity wan,
Half moaned: "O miserable race of men,
With violent and passionate souls you come
Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days
In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams
Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers;
Then from your spacious earth in a great horror
Descend into this night, and here too soon
Must expiate your few inadequate joys.
O bargain hard! Death helps us not. He leads
Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,
The naked spirit here. O my sweet flower,
Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?
Ah me! But I will haste and deeply plunge
Into its hopeless pools and either bring
Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars,
Or find thee out and clasp thy tortured bosom
And kiss thy sweet wrung lips and hush thy cries.
Love shall draw half thy pain into my limbs;
Then we shall triumph glad of agony."
He ceased and one replied close by his ear:
"O thou who troublest with thy living eyes
Established death, pass on. She whom thou seekest
Rolls not in the accursèd tide. For late
I saw her mid those pale inhabitants
Whom bodily anguish visits not, but thoughts
Sorrowful and dumb memories absolve,
And martyrdom of scourged hearts quivering."
He turned and saw astride the dolorous flood

A mighty bridge paved with mosaic fire,
All restless, and a woman clothed in flame,
With hands calamitous that held a sword,
Stood of the quaking passage sentinel.
Magnificent and dire her burning face.
“Pass on,” she said once more, “O Bhrigu’s son;
The flower protects thee from my hands.” She stretched
One arm towards him and with violence
Majestic over the horrid arch compelled.
Unhurt, though shaking from her touch, alone
He stood upon an inner bank with strange
Black dreary mosses covered and perceived
A dim and level plain without one flower.
Over it paced a multitude immense
With gentle faces occupied by pain;
Strong men were there and grieving mothers, girls
With early beauty in their limbs and young
Sad children of their childlike faces robbed.
Naked they paced with falling hair and gaze
Drooping upon their bosoms, weak as flowers
That die for want of rain un murmuring.
Always a silence was upon the place.
But Ruru came among them. Suddenly
One felt him there and looked, and as a wind
Moves over a still field of patient corn,
And the ears stir and shudder and look up
And bend innumerable flowing, so
All those dumb spirits stirred and through them passed
One shuddering motion of raised faces; then
They streamed towards him without sound and caught
With desperate hands his robe or touched his hair
Or strove to feel upon them living breath.
Pale girls and quiet children came and knelt
And with large sorrowful eyes into his looked.
Yet with their silent passion the cold hush
Moved not; but Ruru’s human heart half burst
With burden of so many sorrows; tears

Welled from him; he with anguish understood
That terrible and wordless sympathy
Of dead souls for the living. Then he turned
His eyes and scanned their lovely faces strange
For that one face and found it not. He paled,
And spoke vain words into the listless air:
“O spirits once joyous, miserable race,
Happier if the old gladness were forgot!
My soul yearns with your sorrow. Yet ah! reveal
If dwell my love in your sad nation lost.
Well may you know her, O wan beautiful spirits!
But she most beautiful of all that died,
By sweetness recognisable. Her name
The sunshine knew.” Speaking his tears made way:
But they with dumb lips only looked at him,
A vague and empty mourning in their eyes.
He murmured low: “Ah, folly! were she here,
Would she not first have felt me, first have raised
Her lids and run to me, leaned back her face
Of silent sorrow on my breast and looked
With the old altered eyes into my own
And striven to make my anguish understand?
Oh joy, had she been here! for though her lips
Of their old excellent music quite were robbed,
Yet her dumb passion would have spoken to me;
We should have understood each other and walked
Silently hand in hand, almost content.”
He said and passed through those untimely dead.
Speechless they followed him with clinging eyes.
Then to a solemn building weird he came
With grave colossal pillars round. One dome
Roofed the whole brooding edifice, like cloud,
And at the door strange shapes were pacing, armed.
Then from their fear the sweet and mournful dead
Drew back, returning to their wordless grief.
But Ruru to the perilous doorway strode,
And those disastrous shapes upon him raised

Their bows and aimed; but he held out Love's flower,
 And with stern faces checked they let him pass.
 He entered and beheld a silent hall
 Dim and unbounded; moving then like one
 Who up a dismal stair seeks ever light,
 Attained a dais brilliant doubtfully
 With flaming pediment and round it coiled
 Python and Naga monstrous, Joruthcaru,
 Tuxuc and Vasuki himself, immense,
 Magic Carcotaca all flecked with fire;
 And many other prone destroying shapes
 Coiled. On the wondrous dais rose a throne,
 And he its pedestal whose lotus hood
 With ominous beauty crowns his horrible
 Sleek folds, great Mahapudma; high displayed
 He bears the throne of Death. There sat supreme
 With those compassionate and lethal eyes,
 Who many names, who many natures holds;
 Yama, the strong pure Hades sad and subtle,
 Dharma, who keeps the laws of old untouched,
 Critanta, who ends all things and at last
 Himself shall end. On either side of him
 The four-eyed dogs mysterious rested prone,
 Watchful, with huge heads on their paws advanced;
 And emanations of the godhead dim
 Moved near him, shadowy or serpentine,
 Vast Time and cold irreparable Death.
 Then Ruru came and bowed before the throne;
 And swaying all those figures stirred as shapes
 Upon a tapestry moved by the wind,
 And the sad voice was heard: "What breathing man
 Bows at the throne of Hades? By what force,
 Spiritual or communicated, troubles
 His living beauty the dead grace of Hell?"
 And one replied who seemed a neighbouring voice:
 "He has the blood of Gods and Titans old.
 An Apsara his mother liquid-orbed

Bore to the youthful Chyavan's strong embrace
This passionate face of earth with Eden touched.
Chyavan was Bhrigu's child, Puloma bore,
The Titaness, — Bhrigu, great Brahma's son.
Love gave the flower that helps by anguish; therefore
He chilled not with the breath of Hades, nor
The cry of the infernal stream made stone."
But at the name of Love all hell was moved.
Death's throne half faded into twilight; hissed
The phantoms serpentine as if in pain,
And the dogs raised their dreadful heads. Then spoke
Yama: "And what needs Love in this pale realm,
The warm great Love? All worlds his breath confounds,
Mars solemn order and old steadfastness.
But not in Hell his legates come and go;
His vernal jurisdiction to bare Hell
Extends not. This last world resists his power
Youthful, anarchic. Here will he enlarge
Tumult and wanton joys?" The voice replied:
"Menaca momentary on the earth,
Heaven's Apsara by the fleeting hours beguiled
Played in the happy hidden glens; there bowed
To yoke of swift terrestrial joys she bore,
Immortal, to that fair Gundhurva king
A mortal blossom of delight. That bloom
Young Ruru found and plucked, but her too soon
Thy fatal hooded snake on earth surprised,
And he through gloom now travels armed by Love."
But then all Hades swaying towards him cried:
"O mortal, O misled! But sacrifice
Is stronger, nor may law of Hell or Heaven
Its fierce effectual action supersede.
Thy dead I yield. Yet thou bethink thee, mortal,
Not as a tedious evil nor to be
Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,
But tranquil, but august, but making easy
The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time

Still batter down the glory and form of youth
 And animal magnificent strong ease,
 To warn the earthward man that he is spirit
 Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends,
 Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,
 But called unborn into the unborn skies.
 For body fades with the increasing soul
 And wideness of its limit grown intolerant
 Replaces life's impetuous joys by peace.
 Youth, manhood, ripeness, age, four seasons
 Twixt its return and pale departing life
 Describes, O mortal, — youth that forward bends
 Midst hopes, delights and dreamings; manhood deepens
 To passions, toils and thoughts profound; but ripeness
 For large reflective gathering-up of these,
 As on a lonely slope whence men look back
 Down towards the cities and the human fields
 Where they too worked and laughed and loved; next age,
 Wonderful age with those approaching skies.
 That boon wilt thou renounce? Wherefore? To bring
 For a few years — how miserably few! —
 Her sunward who must after all return.
 Ah, son of Rishis, cease. Lo, I remit
 Hell's grasp, not oft relinquished, and send back
 Thy beautiful life unborrowed to the stars.
 Or thou must render to the immutable
 Total all thy fruit-bearing years; then she
 Reblossoms." But the Shadow antagonist:
 "Let him be shown the glory he would renounce."
 And over the flaming pediment there moved,
 As on a frieze a march of sculptures, carved
 By Phidias for the Virgin strong and pure,
 Most perfect once of all things seen in earth
 Or Heaven, in Athens on the Acropolis,
 But now dismembered, now disrupt! or as
 In Buddhist cavern or Orissan temple,
 Large aspirations architectural,

Warrior and dancing-girl, adept and king,
And conquering poms and daily peaceful groups
Dream delicately on, softening with beauty
Great Bhuvanayshwar, the Almighty's house,
With sculptural suggestion so were limned
Scenes future on a pediment of fire.
There Ruru saw himself divine with age,
A Rishi to whom infinity is close,
Rejoicing in some green song-haunted glade
Or boundless mountain-top where most we feel
Wideness, not by small happy things disturbed.
Around him, as around an ancient tree
Its seedlings, forms august or flame-like rose;
They grew beneath his hands and were his work;
Great kings were there whom time remembers, fertile
Deep minds and poets with their chanting lips
Whose words were seed of vast philosophies —
These worshipped; above this earth's half-day he saw
Amazed the dawn of that mysterious Face
And all the universe in beauty merge.
Mad the boy thrilled upwards, then spent ebbed back.
Over his mind, as birds across the sky
Sweep and are gone, the vision of those fields
And drooping faces came; almost he heard
The burdened river with human anguish wail.
Then with a sudden fury gathering
His soul he hurled out of it half its life,
And fell, like lightning, prone. Triumphant rose
The Shadow chill and deepened giant night.
Only the dais flickered in the gloom,
And those snake-eyes of cruel fire subdued.
But suddenly a bloom, a fragrance. Hell
Shuddered with bliss: resentful, overborne,
The world-besetting Terror faded back
Like one grown weak by desperate victory,
And a voice cried in Ruru's tired soul:
"Arise! the strife is over, easy now

The horror that thou hast to face, the burden
Now shared.” And with a sudden burst like spring
Life woke in the strong lover over-tried.
He rose and left dim Death. Twelve times he crossed
Boithorini, the river dolorous,
Twelve times resisted Hell and, hurried down
Into the ominous pit where plunges black
The vast stream thundering, saw, led puissantly
From night to unimaginable night, —
As men oppressed in dreams, who cannot wake,
But measure penal visions, — punishments
Whose sight pollutes, unheard-of tortures, pangs
Monstrous, intolerable mute agonies,
Twisted unmoving attitudes of pain,
Like thoughts inhuman in statuary. A fierce
And iron voicelessness had grasped those worlds.
No horror of cries expressed their endless woe,
No saving struggle, no breathings of the soul.
And in the last hell irremediable
Where Ganges clots into that fatal pool,
Appalled he saw her; pallid, listless, bare —
O other than that earthly warmth and grace
In which the happy roses deepened and dimmed
With come-and-go of swift enamoured blood!
Dumb drooped she; round her shapes of anger armed
Stood dark like thunder-clouds. But Ruru sprang
Upon them, burning with the admitted God.
They from his touch like ineffectual fears
Vanished; then sole with her, trembling he cried
The old glad name and crying bent to her
And touched, and at the touch the silent knots
Of Hell were broken and its sombre dream
Of dreadful stately pains at once dispersed.
Then as from one whom a surpassing joy
Has conquered, all the bright surrounding world
Streams swiftly into distance, and he feels
His daily senses slipping from his grasp,

So that unbearable enormous world
Went rolling mighty shades, like the wet mist
From men on mountain-tops; and sleep outstretched
Rising its soft arms towards him and his thoughts,
As on a bed, sank to ascending void.

But when he woke, he heard the koil insist
On sweetness and the voice of happy things
Content with sunlight. The warm sense was round him
Of old essential earth, known hues and custom
Familiar tranquillising body and mind,
As in its natural wave a lotus feels.
He looked and saw all grass and dense green trees,
And sunshine and a single grasshopper
Near him repeated fierily its note.
Thrilling he felt beneath his bosom her;
Oh, warm and breathing were those rescued limbs
Against the greenness, vivid, palpable, white,
With great black hair and real and her cheek's
Old softness and her mouth a dewy rose.
For many moments comforting his soul
With all her jasmine body sun-ensnared
He fed his longing eyes and, half in doubt,
With touches satisfied himself of her.
Hesitating he kissed her eyelids. Sighing
With a slight sob she woke and earthly large
Her eyes looked upward into his. She stretched
Her arms up, yearning, and their souls embraced;
Then twixt brief sobbing laughter and blissful tears,
Clinging with all her limbs to him, "O love,
The green green world! the warm sunlight!" and ceased,
Finding no words; but the earth breathed round them,
Glad of her children, and the koil's voice
Persisted in the morning of the world.

A NOTE ON *LOVE AND DEATH*

The story of Ruru and Pramadvura — I have substituted a name more manageable to the English tongue — her death in the forest by the snake and restoration at the price of half her husband's life is told in the Mahabharata. It is a companion legend to the story of Savitri but not being told with any poetic skill or beauty has remained generally unknown. I have attempted in this poem to bring it out of its obscurity. For full success, however, it should have had a more faithfully Hindu colouring, but it was written a score of years ago when I had not penetrated to the heart of the Indian idea and its traditions, and the shadow of the Greek underworld and Tartarus with the sentiment of life and love and death which hangs about them has got into the legendary framework of the Indian Patala and hells. The central idea of the narrative alone is in the Mahabharata; the meeting with Kama and the descent into Hell were additions necessitated by the poverty of incident in the original story.

Incomplete Narrative Poems
Circa 1899–1902

Khaled of the Sea

an Arabian romance

Prologue	Alnuman and the Peri
Canto I	The Story of Alnuman and the Emir's Daughter
Canto II	The Companions of Alnuman 1
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Canto V	The First Quest of the Sapphire Crown
Canto VI	The Quest of the Golden Snake
Canto VII	The Quest of the Marble Queen
Canto VIII	The Quest of the Snowbird
Canto IX	The Second Quest of the Sapphire Crown
Canto X	The Journey of the Green Oasis
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Canto XII	The Journey of the Land without Pity
Epilogue	The Arabian and the Caliph

PROLOGUE

Alnuman and the Peri

In Bagdad by Euphrates, Asia's river,
Euphrates that through deserts must deliver
The voices which of human daybreaks are
Into the dim mysterious surge afar,
The Arabian dwelt; after long travel he.
Regions deserted, wastes of silent sea,
Wide Ocean ignorant of ships and lands
Never made glad by toil of mortal hands
For he had seen, the Indian mountains bare
Save of hard snow and the unbreathed huge air
And swum through giant waters and had heard
In those unhuman forests beast and bird,
The peacock's cry and tiger's hoarse appeal
Calling to God for prey, marked the vast wheel
Of monstrous birds shadowing whole countries; he
From Singhal through the long infinity
Of southern floods had steered his shuddering ship
Where unknown winds their lonely tumult keep.
And he had lived with strong and pitiless men,
Nations unhumanized by joy and pain,
And he had tasted grain not sown by man
And drunk strange milk in weird Mazinderan.
Silent he was, as one whom thoughts attend,
Distant, whom stiller hearts than ours befriend.
He lived with memories only; no sweet voice
Made the mute echoes of his life rejoice;
No lovely face of children brought the dawn
Into his home; but silent, calm, withdrawn,
He watched the ways of men with godlike eyes
Released from trammelling affinities.
Yet was he young and many women strove
Vainly to win his marble mind to love.
One day when wind had fled to the cool north
And the strong earth was blind with summer, forth

The Arabian rode from great Bagdad and turned
Into the desert. All around him burned
The imprisoned spirit of fire; above his head
The sky was like a tyranny outspread,
The sun a fire in those heavens, and fire
The sands beneath; the air burning desire
And breathless, a plumb weight of flame; yet rode
The Arabian unfeeling like a god.
Three hours he rode and now no more was seen
Bagdad, the imperial city, nor aught green,
But the illimitable sands around
Extend, a silent world waiting for sound,
When in the distance he descried a grace
Of motion beautiful in that dead place.
Wondering he turned, but suddenly the horse
Pricked up his slender ears, swerved from the course
And pawing stood the unwilling air, nor heard
The guiding voice nor the familiar word.
Whinnying with wrath he smote the desert sand
And mocked the rein and raged at the command.
Then raised the man his face and saw above
No cloud with the stark face of heaven strove,
A single blaze of light from pole to pole.
Smiling the Arabian spoke unto his soul.
“Here too then are you strong, O influences
That trouble the earth and air and the strong seas!
Therefore I will not stay your gathering wings
Who watch me from the air, you living things,
But go to find whatever peril or wonder
Wait me of life above the earth or under.
Strange will it be if quiet Bagdad yield
More terror or more sweetness than in field
Has stayed me yet or in untravelled flood
Or mountain or the tiger-throated wood.”
So saying he grasped the strong and shaken mane
And set swift footing on the fiery plain.
At once the beast as if by sorcery

Strangely compelled, calmed his impetuous eye;
His angry tremor ceased and bounding wrath
Following unbidden in the Arabian's path.
But he with silent toil the sands untried
Vanquishing through that luminous world and wide
Went a slow shadow, till his feet untired
The fruit of all his labour long acquired.
Before a mile complete he was aware
Of a strange shape of beauty sitting there
On a sole boulder in the level wild,
Maiden, a marvellous bloom, a naked child;
All like a lily from her leaves escaped
The golden summer kissed her close and wrapped
In soft revealing sunshine, — a sweet bareness,
A creature made of flowers and choicest fairness;
And all her limbs were like a luminous dream,
So wonderfully white they burn and gleam,
Her shoulder ivory richly bathed in gold,
Her sides a snowy wonder to behold,
Marble made amorous; her body fair
Seemed one with the divine, translucent air,
A light within the light, a glorious treasure,
A thing to hold, to kiss, to slay with pleasure.
This girl was not alone, but with her watched
Two shapes of beauty and of terror hatched,
A strong, fierce snake, round her sweet middle twined,
A tigress at her lovely feet reclined.
Dreaming on those tremendous sands she waited
And often with that splendour miscreated
Played thoughtfully, about her wondrous knees
Binding the brilliant death or would increase
The whiteness of her limbs with its fierce hues
Or twine it in her tresses flowing loose.
Below that other restless evil played,
The fierce, sleek terror on the sands outspread.
First of the wonderful three rose with a bound
Waking the desert from its sleep with sound

The tigress, but the Arabian strode more near
As one who had forgotten how to fear
And frowning like a god with kingly look
He threatened the preparing death and shook
His javelin in the sun. Back crouched the fiend
Amazed nor could the steely light attend
Nor that unconquerable glance; yet lowered
To find her dreadful violence overpowered
By any smaller thing than death; and he
Heeded no more crouched limb nor stealthy eye.
He on that flowerlike shape a moment gazed
As one by strange felicity amazed,
Who long grown sorrow's friend his whole life grieves,
Blest beyond expectation, scarce believes
That joy is in his heart — so gazed, so laid
At last upon the white and gleaming maid
The question of his hands. O soft and real
The nakedness he grasped, no marble ideal
Born of the blazing light and infinite air,
A breathing woman with lovely limbs and bare.
Then with a strong melodious voice he cried
And all his cheek was flushed with royal pride.
“Thou then art mine, after long labour mine,
O earthly body and O soul divine,
After long labour and thy sounding home
Hast left and caverns where thy sisters roam,
O dweller where the austral tempest raves!
O daughter of the wild and beautiful waves!
Ah breasts of beauty! Ah delicious shoulder!
Leading from bliss to bliss the hands that hold her,
At length I grasp you then and snared at length
The ivory swiftness of thy feet and strength
Of this immortal body shaped for kings,
O memory of sweet and dreadful things!
Ah welcome to the streets that human tread
Makes musical and joy of human bread
Broken between dry hands and to the sight

Of the untroubled narrow rivers, light
Of lamps and warmth of kindled fires and man.
Fairer shall be thy feet on greensward than
On ocean rocks and O! more bright thy beauty
For human passion and for womanly duty
And softer in my bosom shalt thou sleep
Than lulled by the sublime and monstrous deep.
Much have I laboured; the resplendent face
Of summer I have hated, as the days
Went by and no delightful brook was found
Sprinkling with earth's cool love the ruthless ground,
And in my throat there was a desert's thirst
And on my tongue a fire: I have cursed
The spring and all its flowers: the wrathful cry
Of the wild waters and their cruelty
I have endured, labouring with sail and oar
Through the mad tempest for some human shore
And fought with winds, and seen vast Hell aflame
Down in the nether flood till I became
Blind with the sight of those abysmal graves
And deaf with the eternal sound of waves
And all my heart was broken alone to be
Day after day with the unending sea.
And much on land I have laboured without moan
Or weakening tears making my heart a stone.
But thou art come and I shall hear no more
By inexorable rocks the Ocean roar,
Nor pine in dungeons far from pity or aid.
But in far other prison, seaborne maid,
Thy limbs shall minister to my delight
Even as an ordinary woman's might.
And I shall hear thy voice around my heart
Like a cool rivulet and shall not start
To see thee ivory gleaming and all night
Shall feel thee in my arms, O darling white —
With afterjoys that spring from these; the face
Of childish loveliness shall light my days,

About my doors the feet of children tread
And little heads with jonquils garlanded,
That often to sweetness win war-hardened eyes
And hearts grown iron their soft masteries
Compel and the light touch of little hands
Bend sworded fingers to their sweet commands.
O bright felicity, labour's dear end,
Into my arms, into my heart descend.”
So as he spoke, the silent desert air
Lived with his gladness, and the maiden there
Listened with downcast lids and a soft flush
Upon her like the coming of a blush.
But when he finished and the air was mute,
She laughed with happy lips most like a flute
Or voice of cuckoo in an Indian grove
Waking the heart to vague delightful love.
And with divine eyes gleaming where strange mirth
A smiling mischief was, the living girth
Of her delicious waist she suddenly
Unbound and by the middle lifting high
Betwixt them shook. Hissed the fierce snake and raised
Its jewelled hood for spotted radiance praised,
Its jewelled hood to the dread leap distended:
Sad limit of noble life, had that descended
Since short his breath and evil, who that pang
Experienced; but before the serpent sprang,
Wrathful, the Arabian seized the glittering neck
And twines of bronze burning with many a fleck
Of coloured fire. His angry grasp to quell
Vainly the formidable folds rebel:
Not all that gordian force and slippery strength
Of coils availed. Inanimate at length,
The immense destroyer on the Arabian's wrist
Hung in a ruin loose; and to resist
His wrath of love none now might intervene,
Nor she deny him. Yet with tranquil mien
Smiling she sat and swept with noble gesture

Her hair back that had fallen a purple investure
Over her glowing grace. Strong arms he cast
Around her naked loveliness and fast
Showered kisses on her limbs whose marble white
Grew woman with a soft and rosy light
In each kissed place. "Deemedst thou then," he cried,
"Bright fugitive, lovely wanderer with the tide,
By shaking death before death-practised eyes
My crown to wrest of strenuous enterprise,
Thyself, thyself and beauty? O too sweet
To touch our hard earth with thy faultless feet!
Yet on hard earth must dwell. For with the ground
Thy dreadful guardians who have fenced thee round
Are equalled, and thyself, sweet, though thou shame
The winds with swiftness or like mounting flame
Strive all thy days in my imprisoning arms,
Couldst burn thyself no exit. With alarms
Menace and shapes of death; call on the flood
For thy deliverance on these sands to intrude
And lead thee to its jealous waters rude;
But hands that have flung back the swallowing sea
Shall stay and chastise and habituate thee
To service due." He said and with the words
The power in his soul increased, as birds
With sounds encourage love and like great waves
Exulting, rose against the breasts he craves,
So he engrossed the lovely limbs. Then grasping
Her fair soft arm in one hand, the other clasping
Her smooth desired thighs, from that rude seat,
The grey sun-blistered boulder most unmeet
To bear her snowwhite radiance, lifted. She
As to his horse he bore her mightily,
A little strove in his strong arms, but round
Her lithe, reluctant limbs closer he bound
His despot hands and on the saddle set
Never with such sweet rider burdened yet.
Then to his seat he sprang and musical

His cry in that vast silence, wherewithal
He urged his horse, which delicately went
Arching its neck with joy and proud content.
Great were the Arabian's labours; many seas
He had passed and borne impossible miseries
And battled with impracticable ills
O'er uncrossed rivers and forbidden hills,
Till nature fainted. Yet too little was this
To merit all the heaven now made his.
For she, earth's wonder hard to grasp as fire,
She whom all ocean's secret depths admire,
Laid her delicious cheek to his and flung
Sweet, bare arms on his neck and round him clung:
Her snowy side was of his being a part;
Her naked breast burdened his throbbing heart,
And all her hair streamed over him and the whiteness
Of her was in his eyes and her soft brightness
A joy beneath his hands, to his embrace
And he was clothed with her as in a dress.
Round them the strong recovered coils were rolled
Of the great snake and with imperious fold
Compelled their limbs together, and by their side
Pacing the tigress checked her dangerous stride.
So rode they like a vision. All the time
She murmured accents as of linkèd rhyme
Musical, in a language like the sea,
Accents of undulating melody.
For sometimes it was like a happy noon
Murmuring with waves and sometimes like the swoon
Of calm, a silence heard, or rich by noise
Of rivers pouring with their seaward voice
And leaping laughters and sometimes was wild
And passionate as the sobbing of a child.
But often it was like the cold salt spray
On a health-reddened cheek and glad with day
And life and sad with the far-moaning call
Of wind upon the waters funeral.

Not on the lips of man might fashioned be
A language of such wild variety.
Now of that magic tongue no separate word
Was of Alnuman understood nor heard,
And yet he knew that of the caves she spoke
Where never earthly light of sunshine woke,
And of unfathomed things beneath the floods
And peopled depths and Ocean solitudes
And mighty creatures of the main and light
Of jewels making a subluminescent night
Lower than even the dead may sink; and walls
Of coral and in what majestic halls
The naked seaborne sisters link their dance;
How sometimes on the shores their white limbs glance
In the mysterious moonlight; how they come
To river-banks far from their secret home;
And last she spoke of mighty Love that reaches
Resistless arms beyond the long sea-beaches
And mocks the barriers of the storm, and how
Pearls unattainable a human brow
Have decked and man, the child of misery,
Been mated with the sisters of the sea.
So on she murmured like a ceaseless song
Making the weary sands a rapture; long
The patient desert round them waits; nor soon
The sun toiled through the endless afternoon:
But they paced always like a marvellous dream,
And dreamlike in the eyes of man might seem
Such magic vision (had human eyes been found
In the sole desert void of sign or bound), —
The horse that feared its dread companion not;
The kingly man with brow of reaching thought
And danger-hardened strength; fair as the morn,
The radiant girl upon his saddle borne,
Naked, a vision not of earth; the fell
Serpent that twined about them, terrible
With burning hues; and the fierce tigress there

Following with noiseless step the godlike pair.
Nor when to Bagdad and its streets they came,
Did any eye behold. Only a name
Was in the ears of the grim warders. Straight
Like engines blind of some o'ermastering fate
They rose, the mighty bolts they drew: loud jarred
The doors unhearing with deaf iron barred
And groaned upon their road; then backward swung
Whirling and kissed again with clamorous tongue.
Nor in the streets was any step of man,
Before loud wheels no swift torchbearers ran
Setting the night on fire; bright and rare
The garlanded highshuttered windows, where
Men revelled and sound into the shadows cast:
All else was night and silence where they passed.
So is the beautiful sea stranger gone
To her new home, who now no more must run
Upon the bounding waves nor feel the sun
On wind-blown limbs, destined a mortal's bride.
So is the strong Arabian deified
In bliss. Moreover from the wondrous night
When with those small beloved feet grew bright
His lonely house, wealth like a sea swept through
Its doors and as a dwelling of gods it grew
In beauty and in brightness. All that thrives
Costly or fragrant upon earth or lives
Of riches in the hoarding ocean lost
And all bright things with gold or gems embossed
By Indian or by Syrian art refined
And all rich cloths and silks with jewels lined
Regal Bokhara weaves or Samarcand,
Increased and gathered to Alnuman's hand
And girls of glorious limb and feature he
Bought for his slaves, of rose and ivory,
Sweet Persians with the honey-hiding mouth
And passionate Arab girls and strong-limbed youth
Of Tartar maidens for his harem doors.

For now not vainly the fair child implores
Of Shaikh or of Emir his love for boon,
But with high marriage-rites some prosperous moon
At last has brought into the marble pride
Of that great house for envy edified.
So in Bagdad the Arabian dwelt nor seemed
Other his life than theirs who never dreamed
Beyond earth's ken, nor made in sun and breeze
Their spirits great with shock of the strong seas,
Nor fortified their hearts with pains sublime
Nor wrestled with the bounds of space and time.
Like common men he lived to whom the ray
Of a new sun but brings another day
Unmeaning, who in their own selves confined
Know not the grandeur which the mightier mind
Inherits when it makes the destinies rude
The chisel by which its marble mass and crude
With God's or hero's likeness is indued.
Yet this was also rumoured that within
The sheath of that calm life he sojourned in
An edge of flaming rapture was, that things
Beyond all transitory imaginings
Came to him secret and vast pleasures more
Than frail humanity had dared to feel before.
Since too much joy man's heart can hardly bear
And all too weak man's narrow senses were
For raptures that eternal spirits attain
In sensuous heavens ignorant of pain.
Yet even such raptures mortal man's could be
Wed with the child of the unbounded sea.

CANTO I

The Story of Almaimun and the Emir's Daughter¹

Now in great Bagdad of the Abbasside
The wanderer rests, to peace at last allied,
Whom storm so long had tossed to storm; and grace
Of love dwelt with him and the nobleness
Of hearts made golden by felicity,
Which is earth's preferable alchemy.
For other is from pain the metal wrought,
Anguish and wrestling in the coils of thought.
These strengthen, these the mind as marble hard
Make and as marble pure, which has not feared
To scourge itself with insight; but the stress
Of joy heightened to self-forgetfulness
Is sweeter and to sweeter uses tends.
With such felicity were crowned the friends
And lovers of Almaimun and increase
In the glad strength that grows from boundless peace.
And each as to her orb the sunflower burns
His spirit to his spirit's image turns.
Such puissance great well-poised natures prove
To mould to their own likeness all they love.
But where is she who lit his doubtful morn,
Whose sweet imagined shape each hour new-born
Brightened but to illumine, kindled each
Stray look with godhead and her daily speech
A far ethereal music made, for whom
He sought the wild waves and the peopled gloom
Of the unseen? Must only she make moan?
She in the crowded chambers is alone
And closes eyes kept dry by anguished pride
To wake in tears that hardly will be dried.
Happy the heart and more than earthly blest
That for those hands was meant where 'tis possessed,

¹ Here Sri Aurobindo altered the name "Alnuman" to "Almaimun". — Ed.

That to no alien house at the end has come
But winging goes as to its natural home.
The evening bird with no more simple flight
Reaches its one unfailing nest at night.
The heart which Fate not always here perverse
With the one possible home out of an universe,
Makes simply happy there secure shall dwell,
Feeling that to be there is only well.
And equal happy whether queenly chair
Her portion or she kneel loose-girdled there
And serve him as a slave. Alike 'tis heaven,
Rule or obedience to the one heart given.
So did not bright Zuleikha deem when she
The temple was of his idolatry.
Impatient of divine subjection, all
Love's wealth was to her grace imperial
Purple and diadems and earth's noblest gift
But vantage her disdainful pride to lift.
She was an Emir's daughter and her sire
Clothed her in jewels and sublime attire,
From silver dishes fed and emerald
And in a world of delicate air installed
So that her nature with these costly things
Being burdened raised in vain its heavenward wings.
From Koraish and the Abbasside he drew
His stern extraction. Yet what brighter grew
About his formidable name accursed
Was a white fire of riches and the thirst
Of poor men gazing with a bitter stealth
On that impossibility of wealth.
"Abdullah the Emir," so men would say
Drawing their rags about them, "has display
Of gold and silver and the sunlight fades
At noon in his wide treasury and the shades
Of midnight are more luminous there than birth
Of day upon the ordinary earth.
He has rich garments, would the naked clothe

From Bagdad to the sea, were he not loth:
The leavings of his menials far exceed
In Khorassan the labourer's sharpened need.
And since by thee this fair display was planned,
O God, yet from the beggar's outstretched hand
He guards his boundless trust ignobly well,
Just Lord, display to him the fires of Hell."
And here another pressing from his eye
His children's pining looks, made sad reply.
"Richer his wealth than widest chambers hold,
Not in the weary heaps of ingots told
Entirely, nor the cloths Damascus yields,
Nor what the seas give up, nor what the fields.
He gathers ever with exhaustless hands:
His camels heave across the endless sands.
Through Balkh when to Caboul or Candahar
The wains go groaning or the evening star
Watches the pomp of the wide caravan
Intend to provinces Arabian,
Half is Abdullah the Emir's: and he
Gets spices of the south and porphyry:
His are the Chinese silks, the Indian work
Saved hardly from the horsehooves of the Turk:
From Balsora the ships that o'er the bar
Reel into Ocean's grasp, Abdullah's are;
Yemen's far ports are with his ventures full;
Muscat transmits him horses, arms and wool.
The desert rider hopes no richer prize
To handle than Abdullah's merchandize;
With joy the Malayan sea-robber hails
His argosy and for his western sails
The Moorish pirates all the horizon scan
Upon the far Mediterranean.
Yet though his losses make the desert great
And Ocean a new treasury create
From his sole rapine, yet untouched endure
His riches by that vast expenditure.

He takes but to increase his piles of gold,
He gives but to recover hundredfold.
Thereby the poor increase. Wherefore I trust,
When Azrael shall smite his limbs to dust
And he upon that dolorous bridge is led
Which, lord and peasant, all must one day tread,
The bitter sword that spans the nether hell,
He may be evened with the infidel.”
And one might answer mid these wretched men
Who quiet was from constancy to pain;
“Curse him not either lest the Kazi find
And God loose not the chains that he shall bind.”
For he indeed was mighty in the town,
A man acceptable in his renown;
The mullahs to his will interpreted
Their books and the law’s lightning from his head
Glanced on the rash accuser; for his word
Was Hédoya before the Kazi heard.
But whence the fountain of his wealth might flow,
Well did the sad and toiling peasant know.
For he as governor in Khorassan
Had held the balance betwixt man and man
And justified his rule benevolent
By rape and torture for their own good meant,
The fallen rooftree and the broken door
And rents wrung from the miserable poor.
And now hemmed in with lustrous things and proud,
Each day a pomp, each night with music loud,
He blazed, however his eye a darkness cast
And pleasure by his sense external passed.
Yet joy he had over his gathered gold
And in that one sweet maiden joy untold.
Daughter of Nouredin the Barmecide
Was she who bore this brightness, but when died
Jaafar and all his house fell like a tower
Loosened in the mutation of an hour,
Abdullah found his foe an outlawed man,

Proscribed, a heretic and Persian
And slew him with the sword juridical
Between his golden house and Allah's wall.

Uloupie

CANTO I

Under the high and gloomy eastern hills
The portals of Pataala are and there
The Bhogavathie with her sinuous waves
Rises, a river alien to the sun,
And often to its strange and gleaming sands
Uloupie came, weary of those dim shades
And great disastrous caverns neighbouring Hell,
Avid of sunlight. Through the grasses long
She glided and her fierce and gorgeous hood
Gleamed with a perilous beauty and a light
Above the green spikes of the grass; often
In the slow sinuous waters she was spied
Swimming, with mystic dusky hair and cheeks
That had no rose, — one shoulder's dipping glow
Through water and one white breast hardly seen.
But as she swam she looked towards the west
Dreaming of daily sunlight and of flowers
That need soft rain and of the night with stars,
A friendly darkness and the season's change
In beautiful Aryavertha far away,
The country of the Gods, and yet sometimes
Vaguely expectant to the southward gazed.

Then into heaven dim-featured twilight came
And in her city mid the eastern hills
Chitrangada awoke and saw the dawn
Presaged in bleakness. From Urjoona's arms
Unclasping her rose-white smooth limbs, she looked
Into the opening world; but all was grey
And formless. Then into her mood there passed
The spirit of the gloomy northern hills
Burdening her breasts with terror and her heart
Was bared to insight, and new-heard a moan
Of waters and remembered pain. The sad
Prophecies of the pale astrologers

Haunted her with affliction, and she found
Pale hints of absence from the twilight drawn.
But now the hero felt his clasp a void
And on one arm half-rising searched the grey
Unlidded darkness for the face; then spoke
Slowly her name, “How has the unborn day
Called thee, beloved, that thou standest dumb
In the grey light like one whose joy is far?
Come hither.” Silently she came and knelt
And laid her quiet cheek upon his breast.
He felt her tears, wondering; and she replied,
“Ah, dost thou love me and a moment brief
Of absence troubles even in sleep thy heart
Waking to emptiness? And yet, ah God,
How easily that void will soon be filled!
For thou wilt like a glorious burning move
Through cities and through regions like a star,
Careless in thy heroic strength o’er all
The beautiful country Aryavertha. Women
Will see thy face and strangely, swiftly drawn
Thy masculine attraction feel and bow
Over thy feet. For thou wilt come to them
A careless glory taking women’s hearts
As one breaks from a tree the wayside flowers,
And smile, securely kind, even as a god
Might draw a mortal maiden to his arms
And marry his immortal mouth to hers.
Then will thy destiny seize thee; thou wilt pass
Like some great light in heaven, leaving behind
A splendid memory of force and fire.
And thou wilt fill thy soul with battle, august
Misfortunes and tremendous harms embrace,
Experience mighty raptures and at last
Upon some world-renowned far-rumoured field
Empire for ever win or lose, nor all
The while think once of my forgotten face.”
She ceased and wept; he said, touching her hair,

“What wast thou musing, O Chitrangada,
Lonely beside the window and thine eyes
Looked out on the half-formed aspect of things
Twixt light and darkness? Do not so again.
For bleak and dreadful is the hour ere dawn
And one who gazes out then from his sweet,
Warm, happy, bounded human room, is touched
With awful memories that he cannot grasp
And mighty sorrows without form, the sense
Of an original vastness desolate,
Bleak labour and a sad unfinished world.
Dwell not with these again, but when thou wakest
And seest the unholy hour pallid gaze
Into thy room, draw closer to my bosom
Waking with kisses and with joy surround
Thy soul until God rises with the sun.
Friendly to mortals is the living sun’s
Great brilliant light; but this pale hour was made
For slowly-dying men whose lone chilled souls
Grow near to that greyness and dumb mourners
Unfriended.” But Chitrangada replied,
“I looked into the dawn and had a dream.
Thou wast gone far from me; too well I knew
That sound of trampling horsehooves in the north
And victor rumours of thy chariot shook
The hearts of distant kings. I sat alone
At this pale window and about me saw
My city and our low familiar hills.
Yet these were but as objects painted in
Upon the eye, and round me I beheld
The gloomy northern mountains with their mists
And sorrowful embracing rains and heard
With melancholy voices rolling down
The waters of a dull, ill-omened stream
Sinuous and eddies alien to the sun.
That thou wilt pass from me I know, nor would
I stay thee, had I power: for if today

I held thy feet, yet as the seasons passed,
The impulse of thy mighty life would come
Upon thee like a wind and drive thee forth
To love and battle and disastrous deeds
And all the giant anguish that preserves
This world. Thou as resistlessly wast born
To these things as the leopard sleek to strength
And beauty and fierceness, as resistlessly
As women are to love; though well they know
Pain for the end, yet knowing still must love.
Ah swiftly pass. Why shouldst thou linger here
Vainly? How will it serve God's purpose in thee
To tarry soothing for such brief while longer
Merely a woman's heart; meanwhile perhaps
Lose some great moment of thy life which once
Neglected never can return." She ceased
And strove to conquer overmastering tears.
He was silent a little, then his eyes
Strained towards the dim-seen fairness of her face,
Saying, "O little loving child, who once
Wast simply glad to love and feel my kiss!
But now thou mournest, art in one night changed.
Thou wast not wont to leave my arms ere dawn
And dream of sorrow. Rather wast thou fain
Of all my bosom and the gazing light
Hardly could force away thy obstinate clasp.
Yet now thou speakst of absence easily.
Is my love faded? Dost thou feel my arms
Looser about thee, my beloved? Nay,
Thou knowest that not less but more I love thee
Than when to eastern Monipura far
I came, a wandering prince companioned only
By courage and my sword and found thee here,
O sweet young sovereign, ruling with pure eyes
And little maiden hand, fragile and mild,
A strong and savage nation. At my call
Unquestioning thou camest, oh, meekly down

Leaving tremendous seat and austere powers,
Contented at my feet to dwell and feel
My kisses on thy hair, and couldst renounce
Thy glorious girdle for my simple arms.
O fair young soul, candid and meek and frank
Thy love was, opening to me fragrantly
Like flowers to the sun, wide-orbed, and yielded
Thy whole self up. Yet now thou speakest sadly
Too like a mind matured by thought and pain.”

He ceased, covering her bosom with his hands,
And she trembled, and broke out faltering.
“O endlessness of moments and the long
Rain-haunted nights when thou art far! O me
And the pale dreadful dawn when I shall wake
In the grey hour and feel myself alone
For ever! Yet O my rapture and pride! O prince,
O hero, O strong protagonist of earth!
World-conqueror! and in heaven immortal lips
Burning have kissed thy feet, but I possessed.
God knows that I have loved thee, not with grudging
Piecemeal reluctant cessions of the soul
As ordinary women love, but greatly
With one glad falling at my conqueror’s feet
All suddenly and warmly like the Spring.
Ah God, thy beauty when it dawned on me
And I obeyed thy bright attraction! felt
Thy face like the great moon that draws the tides!
Facing our armèd senate, bow in hand
Leaned on a pillar with a banner’s pomp
Seeming to mingle in thy hair thou stoodst
Expectant, careless, and thy strong gracious face
Was brilliant like a sudden god’s. And half
I rose up as one called. But even then
Through all the hushed assembly ran a murmur,
An impulse and a movement and with cries
Round thee my strong barbarian nobles pressed

Offering fierce homage. But I sat alone,
Abandoned, with a wounded sad delight,
Loving thy glory, like a young warrior conquered
In battle by the hero he admires.
Thou tookst me by the hand and ledst me down
From the high daïs and the ancient throne:
Faltering I went with meek submissive eyes.”
Then strong Urjoon: “Beloved, and was this not
Dearer, a woman’s bliss in her one lord
Than ruling all those kings? Dost thou not choose
Rather thy body by my kisses wakened
Than those free virgin and unconscious limbs?
Ah wherefore shouldst thou dream of love cut short
And joy without its sequel? Rather think
That thy young passion shall to matron bloom
Live warmly enriched and beautifully changed
When thou with the hushed wonder of motherhood
Touching thy sweet young eyes holdst up to me
Returning from high battle to thine arms
A creature of our own.” And she answered
With a low sob, “Would God that it might be!
But though I loved thee I have known I was
No real part of thy great days; only
A bosom on which thou hast lain ere riding
To battle, a face which thou hast loved and passed.
Hero, take up thy bow! Warrior, arise!
Proceed with thy majestic mission. Thou
From many mighty spirits wast selected
And mayst not for a transient joy renounce
The anguish and the crown. But I shall witness
Thy far-off pomps, not utterly alone;
As herdsmen pausing under quiet leaves
Watch the stupendous passage of a host,
Shrill neigh of horses, chariots swift and men
Marching, and hear great conchshells blown, and look
Into the burning eyes of kings. Some wave
Of thy vast fate perhaps shall roll thee here

Ere all is over; for the long round of things
Brings a changed soul in man to old unaltered
Places, and objects cared for once; then, then
We touching hands in the old way, yet changed,
Shall wonder in each other's eyes to find
Strange kindlings and the buried deeps of love."

She ended and Urjoona for a moment
Beheld vast Aryavertha as if mapped
Before him, rivers, heaven-invading hills
And cities ancient as their skies; then turned
And drawing to his bosom Chitrangada
With his calm strength surrounding her replied:
"This may be; yet, O woman, O delight,
Remember to rejoice! Flowers die, beloved,
To live again; therefore hold fast to love,
Hold fast the blooming of thy life in love.
The soul's majestic progress moulding doom
Is with the frailest flower helped that blows
In frankness. Therefore is the woman's part
Nearest divine, who to one motion keeps
And like the fixed immortal planets' round
Is constant to herself in him she loves.
Nor though fate call me hence, have I in vain
Loved thee, young virgin of the hills, and snared
Thy feet with kisses; though my soul from thee
Adventure journeying like a star the void, —
As 'tis our spirit's fate ever to roam
Seeking bright portions of ourself, which found
The strong heart cherishes until his close.
Relinquish nothing grasped; who yieldeth aught
To fate or weakness, misses the great goal; —
So have I planted thee within my heart,
O tender beauty, and shall not lightly lose.
Though years divide us and the slow upgrowth
Of overlaying thoughts submerge the peace,
The sweet and mutual self — yet the old joy
Lives like Valmekie in his mound, — the sage,

Buried, forgot, but murmuring the name.
 Let us not lose then, O Chitrangada,
 One moment's possibility of love
 Which being squandered, we shall then regret.
 Fate that united once, may when she will
 Divorce, but cannot the sweet meaning spoil
 Of these warm kisses." He embraced her wholly
 Confounding her with bliss; so for that time
 The Shadow fled and joy forgot his close.

But one pale morn Chitrangada rose wan
 And to the stable through the grey hushed place
 Descending, with her little deft hands yoked
 Urjoona's coursers to the car, — persuading
 Thrust in their whinnying mouths the bit, fastened
 The traces, harmonised the reins, then led
 Into the sad dim court trampling his steeds;
 And with a strange deep look of love and hate
 Caressing said, faint with her unshed tears:
 "You brought him here who now shall bear away,
 O horses yoked to fate. How often yet
 Will you deceive us shaking wide your manes
 And trampling over women's hearts with hooves
 Thunderous towards battle? Yet your breed perhaps
 Shall bring him to my wrinkled age." And now
 Urjoona came: his mailed and resonant tread
 Rang in her very heart, his corslet blazed
 Towards the chill skies and his heroic form
 Seemed to consent with the surrounding hills.
 But in the marble face and eyes august
 The light of his tremendous fate had dawned
 Like a great sunrise. Calm her shuddering body
 He took into his bosom and with no word
 Under the witnessing, unmoved heavens
 Kissed her pale lips. Then to his car he rose.

And now she did not weep, but silently
 Took and returned his kiss. So he went forth.
 Thundering the great wheels jarred upon the stones

Of the wide court and echoes filled the air
With a triumph of warlike sound. Outside,
The city's nobles, waiting, saw the car
Emerge, and bowed down to their king. They spoke
No word, but stood austerely watching still,
A mist over their stern and savage eyes,
His going, as men in darkness watch a light
Carried away that cheered them for an hour,
Then turned back homeward. But Chitrangada
Waited till the last thunders died away
And far off on a hill the warlike flag
Waved in the breeze and dipped below the edge;
Then to her chamber slowly went alone.

Sonnets from Manuscripts
Circa 1900–1901

O face that I have loved

O face that I have loved until no face
Beneath the quiet heavens such glory wear,
They say you are not beautiful, — no snare
Of twilight in the changing mysticness
Or deep enhaloed secrecy of hair,
Soft largeness in the eyes I dare not kiss!
Unreal all your bosom's dreadful bliss.
Too narrow are your brows they say to bear
The temple of vast beauty in its span
Or chaste cold bosom to house fierily
Beauty that maddens all the heart of man.
I know not; this I know that utterly
My soul is by some magic curls surprised,
Some glances have my heart immortalized.

I cannot equal

I cannot equal those most absolute eyes,
Although they rule my being, with the stars,
Nor floral rich comparisons devise
To detail sweetness that your body wears.
Nor in the heavens hints of you I find,
Nor dim suggestions in this thoughtful eve;
The moonlight of your darker grace is blind.
Who can with such pale delicacies deceive
A naked burning heart? Only one place
Satisfies me of you, where the feet
That I shall never clasp, with beauty press
The barren earth in one place only sweet,
One face in the wide world alone divine,
The only one that never can be mine.

O letter dull and cold

O letter dull and cold, how can she read
 Gladly these lifeless lines, no fire that prove,
 When others even their passionate hearts exceed
 Caressing her sweet name with words of love?
 O me that I could force this barrier, turn
 My heart to syllables, make all desire
 One burning word, then would my letters yearn
 With some reflection of that hidden fire.
 Ah if I could, what then? This fiery pit
 Within for human eyes was never meant.
 All hearts would view with horror or with hate
 A picture not of earthly lineament.
 Yourself even, sweet, would start with terror back
 As at the hissing of a sudden snake.

My life is wasted

My life is wasted like a lamp ablaze
 Within a solitary house unused,
 My life is wasted and by Love men praise
 For sweet and kind. How often have I mused
 What lovely thing were love and much repined
 At my cold bosom moved not by that flame.
 'Tis kindled; lo, my dreadful being twined
 Round one whom to myself I dare not name.
 I cannot quench the fire I did not light
 And he that lit it will not; I cannot even
 Drive out the guest I never did invite;
 Although the soul he dwells with loses heaven.
 I burn and know not why; I sink to hell
 Fruitlessly and am forbidden to rebel.

Because thy flame is spent

Because thy flame is spent, shall mine grow less,
O bud, O wonder of the opening rose?
Why both my soul and Love it would disgrace
If I could trade in love, begin and close
My long account of passion, like a book
Of merchant's credit given to be repaid,
Or not returned, struck off with lowering look
Like a bad debt uncritically made.
What thou couldst give, thou gav'st me, one sweet smile
Worth all the sunlight that the years contain,
One month of months when thy sweet spirit awhile
Fluttered o'er mine half-thinking to remain.
What I could give, I gave thee, to my last breath
Immortal love, immovable by death.

Thou didst mistake

Thou didst mistake, thy spirit's infant flight
Opening its lovely wings upon the sun
Paused o'er the first strong bloom that met thy sight
Thinking perhaps it was the only one.
But all this fragrant garden was beyond.
Winds came to thee with hints of honey; day
Disclosed a brighter hope than this unsunned
Thought-sheltered heart and called thee far away.
Thou didst mistake. Must I then rage, grow ill,
With tortured vanity and think it love,
Miscall with brutal names my lady's will
Fouling thy snowwhite image, O my dove?
Is not thy kiss enough, though only one,
For all eternity to live upon?

Rose, I have loved

Rose, I have loved thy beauty, as I love
 The dress that thou hast worn, the transient grass,
 O'er which thy happy careless footsteps move,
 The yet-thrilled waysides that have watched thee pass.
 Soul, I have loved thy sweetness as men love
 The necessary air they crave to breathe,
 The sunlight lavished from the skies above,
 And firmness of the earth their steps beneath.
 But were that beauty all, my love might cease
 Like love of weaker spirits; were't thy charm
 And grace of soul, mine might with age decrease
 Or find in Death a silence and a term,
 But rooted in the unnameable in thee
 Shall triumph and transcend eternity.

I have a hundred lives

I have a hundred lives before me yet
 To grasp thee in, O spirit ethereal,
 Be sure I will with heart insatiate
 Pursue thee like a hunter through them all.
 Thou yet shalt turn back on the eternal way
 And with awakened vision watch me come
 Smiling a little at errors past, and lay
 Thy eager hand in mine, its proper home.
 Meanwhile made happy by thy happiness
 I shall approach thee in things and people dear
 And in thy spirit's motions half-possess
 Loving what thou hast loved, shall feel thee near,
 Until I lay my hands on thee indeed
 Somewhere among the stars, as 'twas decreed.

Still there is something

Still there is something that I lack in thee
And yet must find. There is a broad abyss
Between possession and true sovereignty
Which thou must bridge with a diviner kiss.
I questioned all the beauty of other girls
Thinking thou hadst it not to give indeed.
But not Giannina's breasts nor Pippa's curls
Contained it; thou alone canst meet my need.
Deniest thou some secret of thy soul
To me who claim thee all? Nay, can it be
Thy bosom's joys escape from my control?
Forbid it Heaven Hell should yawn for thee.
Deny it now! Let not sweet love begun
End in red blood and awful justice done.

I have a doubt

I have a doubt, I have a doubt which kills.
Tell me, O torturing beauty, O divine
Witchcraft, O soul escaped from heaven's hills
Yet fed upon strange food of utter sin.
Why dost thou torture me? Hast thou no fear?
My love was ever like my hate a sword
To search the heart and kill however dear
The joy that would not own me for its lord.
Yet must I still believe that thou art true
If thou wilt say it and smile. Knowst thou not then
I have purchased with my passion all of you
And wilt thou keep one nook for other men?
Deny it now! Let not sweet love begun
End in red blood and awful justice done.

To weep because a glorious sun

To weep because a glorious sun has set
 Which the next morn shall gild the east again,
 To mourn that mighty strengths must yield to fate
 Which by that fall a double force attain,
 To shrink from pain without whose friendly strife
 Joy could not be, to make a terror of death
 Who smiling beckons us to farther life
 And is a bridge for the persistent breath;
 Despair and anguish and the tragic grief
 Of dry set eyes or such disastrous tears
 As rend the heart though meant for its relief
 And all man's ghastly company of fears
 Are born of folly that believes this span
 Of brittle life can limit immortal man.

What is this talk

What is this talk of slayer and of slain?
 Swords are not sharp to slay nor floods assuage
 This flaming soul. Mortality and pain
 Are mere conventions of a mightier stage.
 As when a hero by his doom pursued
 Falls like a pillar of the huge world upturn
 Shaking the hearts of men and awe-imbued,
 Silent the audience sits or weeps forlorn,
 Meanwhile behind the stage the actor sighs
 Deep-lunged relief, puts off what he has been
 And talks with friends that waited or from the flies
 Watches the quiet of the closing scene,
 Even so the unwounded spirits of the slain
 Beyond our vision passing live again.

Short Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1900–1901

The Spring Child

(On Basanti's birthday — Jyestha 1900)

Of Spring is her name for whose bud and blooming
 We praise today the Giver, —
Of Spring and its sweetness clings about her
For her face is Spring and Spring's without her,
 As loth to leave her.

See, it is summer; the brilliant sunlight
 Lies hard on stream and plain,
And all things wither with heats diurnal;
But she! how vanished things and vernal
 In her remain.

And almost indeed we repine and marvel
 To watch her bloom and grow;
For half we had thought our sweet bud could never
Bloom out, but must surely remain for ever
 The child we know.

But now though summer must come and autumn
 In God's high governing
Yet I deem that her soul with soft insistence
Shall guard through all change the sweet existence
 And charm of Spring.

O dear child soul, our loved and cherished,
 For this thy days had birth,
Like some tender flower on a grey stone portal
To sweeten and flush with childhood immortal
 The ageing earth.

There are flowers in God's garden of prouder blooming
 Brilliant and bold and bright,
 The tulip and rose are fierier and brighter,
 But this has a softer hue, a whiter
 And milder light.

Long be thy days in rain and sunshine,
 Often thy spring relume,
 Gladdening thy mother's heart with thy beauty,
 Flowerlike doing thy gentle duty
 To be loved and bloom.

A Doubt

Many boons the new years make us
 But the old world's gifts were three,
 Dove of Cypris, wine of Bacchus,
 Pan's sweet pipe in Sicily.

Love, wine, song, the core of living
 Sweetest, oldest, musicalest.
 If at end of forward striving
 These, Life's first, proved also best?

The Nightingale

An Impression

Hark in the trees the low-voiced nightingale
 Has slain the silence with a jubilant cry;
 How clear in the hushed night, yet voluble
 And various as sweet water wavering by,
 That murmurs in a channel small
 Beneath a low grey wall,
 Then sings amid the fitful rye.

O sweet grave Siren of the night,
Astarte's eremite,
Thou feedest every leaf with solemn glee.
Lo, the night-winds sigh happier, being chid by thee.

Euphrosyne

Child of the infant years, Euphrosyne,
Bird of my boyhood, youth's blithe deity!
If I have hymned thee not with lyric phrase,
Preferring Eros or Aglaia's praise,
Frown not, thou lovely spirit, leave me not.
Man worships the ungrasped. His vagrant thought
Still busy with the illimitable void
Lives all the time by little things upbuoyed
Which he contemns; the wife unsung remains
Sharing his pleasures, taking half his pains
While to dream faces mounts the poet's song.
Yet she makes not their lyric right her wrong,
Knowing her homely eyes his sorrow's star
Smiles at the eclipsing brow untouched by care.
Content with human love lightly she yields
The immortal fancy its Elysian fields.

A Thing Seen

She in her garden, near the high grey wall,
Sleeping; a silver-bodied birch-tree tall
That held its garments o'er her wide and green,
Building a parapet of shade between,
Forbade the amorous sun to look on her.
No fold of gracious raiment was astir.
The wind walked softly; silent moved a cloud
Listening; of all the tree no leaf was loud
But guarded a divine expectant hush
Thrilled by the silence of a hidden thrush.

Epitaph

Moulded of twilight and the vesper star
 Midnight in her with noon made quiet war;—
 Moulded twixt life and death, Love came between;
 Then the night fell; twilight faded, the star had been.

To the Modern Priam

Of Ilion's ashes was thy sceptre made;
 'Tis meet thou lose it now in Ilion's fall.

Song

O lady Venus, shine on me,
 O rose-crowned goddess from thy seas
 Radiant among the Cyclades!
 Rose-crowned, puissant like the sea.

And bring thy Graces three,
 The swift companions of thy mirthful mind.
 Bring thy sweet rogue with thee,
 Thy careless archer, beautiful and blind.

A woman's royal heart
 Bid him to wound and bind her who is free;
 Bind her for me!
 Nor for the sweet bright crimson blood may start
 In little rillets from the little heart
 Spare her thy sport to be,
 Goddess, she spared not me.

Epigram

If thou wouldst traverse Time with vagrant feet
Nor make the poles thy limit fill not then
Thy wallet with the fancy's cloying sweet
Which is no stay to heaven-aspiring men,
But follow wisdom since alone the wise
Can walk through fire with unblinking eyes.

The Three Cries of Deiphobus

Awake, awake, O sleeping men of Troy,
That sleep and know not in the grasp of Hell
I perish in the treacherous lonely night
To foes betrayed, environed and undone.
O Trojans, will ye sleep until the doom
Have slipped its leash and bark upon your doors?
Not long will ye, unless in Pluto's realm,
Have slumber, since forsaken among foes
I drink the bitter cup of lonely death
Unheeded and from helping faces far.
O Trojans, Trojans, yet again I call!
Swift help we need or Ilion's days are done.

Perigone Prologuises

Cool may you find the youngling grass, my herd,
Cool with delicious dew, while I here dream
And listen to the sweet and garrulous bird
That matches its cool note with Thea's stream.
Boon Zephyr now with waist ungirdled runs
And you, O luminous nurslings, wider blow,
O nurslings of light rain and vernal suns,

When bounteous winds about the garden go.
 Apt to my soul art thou, blithe honeyed moon,
 O lovely mother of the rose-red June.
 Zephyr that all things soothes, enhances all,
 Dwells with thee softly, the near cuckoo drawn
 To farther groves with sweet inviting call
 And dewy buds upon the blossoming lawn.
 But ah, today some happy soft unrest
 Aspires and pants in my unquiet breast,
 As if some light were from the day withdrawn,
 As if the flitting Zephyr knew a lovelier word
 Than it had spoken yet, and flower and bird
 Kept still some grace that yet is left to bloom,
 Had still a note I never yet have heard,
 That, blossoming, would the wide air more illumine,
 That, spoken, would advance the sweet Spring's bounds
 With large serener lights and joy of exquisite sounds.

Nor have I any in whose ears to tell
 This gracious grief and so by words have peace,
 Save the cold hyacinth in the breezy dell
 And the sweet cuckoo in the sunlit trees
 Since the sharp autumn days when with increase
 Of rosy-lighted cheeks attained the ground
 Weary of waiting and by wasps hung round
 The bough's fair hangings and Thea fell with these,
 My mother, with twelve matron summers crowned.
 Four times since then the visits of green spring
 Have blessed the hillsides with fresh blossoming
 And four times has the winter chilled the brooks,
 Since sole I dwell with my rude father cheered
 By no low-worded speech or sunny looks.
 Yet are we rich enough, fruitful our herd
 And yields us brimming pails, and store we still
 Numberless baskets with white cheese and fill
 Our cave with fruits for winter, and since wide-feared
 My father Sinnis, none have care our wealth to spoil.

Therefore I pass sweet days with easy toil,
Nor other care have much but milk the kine
And call them out to graze in soft sunshine
And stall them when the evening-star grows large.
All else is pleasure, budded wreaths to twine
And please my soul beside my hornèd charge
And bathe in the delicious brook that speeds,
Iris and water-lily capped and green with reeds.

Nor need we flocks for clothing nor the shears;
For when the echoes in the mountain rocks
Mimic the groaning wain that moving peers
Between thick trees or under granite blocks,
Our needs my father takes, nor any yet
Scaped him who breaks the wrestler as these twines
Of bloom I break, so he with little sweat,
And tears the women with dividing pines.
Therefore thin gleaming robes and ruddy wines
We garner, flickering swords in jewelled case
And burning jewels and the beautiful gold
Whereof bright plenty now our caverns hold
And ornaments of utter exquisiteness.
But if these brilliants of their pleasure fail,
The lily blooms from vale to scented vale
And crocus lifts in Spring its golden fire.
Our midnight hears the warbling nightingale,
The cuckoo calls as he would never tire;
Along our hills we pluck the purple grapes,
And in the night a million stars arise
To watch us with their ancient friendly eyes.
Such flowering ease I have and earth's sweet shapes,
And riches, and the green and hivèd springs.
Ah then what longing wakes for new and lovelier things.

Since I have seen your face

Since I have seen your face at the window, sweet
Love, you have thrown a spell on my heart, on my feet.
My heart to your face, my feet to your window still
Bear me by force as if by an alien will.

O witch of beauty, O Circe with innocent eyes,
You have suddenly caught me fast in a net of sighs.
When I look at the sunlight, I see your laughing face;
When I purchase a flower, it is you in your radiant grace.

I have tried to save my soul alive from your snare,
I will strive no more; let it flutter and perish there.
I too will seize your body alive, O my dove,
And teach you all the torture and sweetness of love.

When you looked from the window out on the trampling city,
Did you think to take my heart and pay me with pity?
But you looked on one who has ever mocked at sin
And gambled with life to lose her all or win.

I will pluck you forth like a fluttering bird from her nest.
You shall lie on Love's strong knees, in his white warm breast,
Afraid, with delighted lids that will not close.
You shall grow white one moment, the next a rose.

So that was why

So that was why I could not grasp your heart
Between my hands and feel it nestle in,
Contented. O you kept it in your breast
Most secretly, were skilful in your sin,
Farthest away, most intimately caressed.
But if I sought for it with this sharp knife
Here, here, thou harlot? What, you tremble, you shriek,
Would you be skilful still? You love your life
For his sake then? For his sake! No. I'll wait
Till you have fathomed all my depths of hate.
Weep not, nor pray; you have tasted to the brim
The glory of my love, and laughed, oh laughed!
Now drink my hatred to the dregs, this time
You shall not easily reject the draught.
God! now I hate you whom I once so loved.
God! the abhorred whiteness of these limbs
Where I have wasted all my glorious heart
In kisses. Dreams, ah Heaven, sweet hateful dreams!
Nay, I shall live, 'tis thou that must depart.
Why, he has kissed them too. Will not this edge
Dig out his kisses from the bleeding flesh?
Call not on God, thou soul self-doomed to Hell,
Against whose blessings thou hast dared rebel.
Thou liv'st but while I hold myself in leash.
His name! Thou lovely devil, from thy breast
I'll tear his name out. He! then now, then now
And thus and thus...
O heaven! how beautiful her murdered brow!
Will not thine eyes open and look at me with love,
Surely they hold not his vile image yet,
For Death should leave thee pure. But I forget.
He lives and God signs to me from above
Beckoning to me to strike. When it is done,
I will come back and kiss you only once.

World's delight

World's delight, spring's sweetness, music's charm
Lie within my arm.
Earth that is and heaven to come are here with me
Mastered on my knee.
Open thy red petals, shrinking rose,
And thy heart disclose.
Pant thy fragrance up to me, O my delight,
All the perfumed night.
Thou possessed and I possessing, earth
Opened for our mirth.
Flowers dropping on us from delighted trees,
Revels of the breeze,
All for me because I hold their Circe white,
Queen of their delight.
Wanton, thou shalt know at last a chain
Golden to restrain.
Not a minute of thee shall escape my kiss,
Captive made to bliss,
Not a wandering breath but love shall seize
With his ecstasies,
All thy body be a glorious happy lyre
Played on by desire
And thy soul shall be my absolute kingdom still
To misrule at will.
Wast thou hoping to escape at last?
Nay, I held thee fast.
Thou shalt know what love is, all his bliss and pain,
Fondling and disdain.
Jealousy and joy shall seize on thee by turns
Till thy whole heart burns.
I will learn now all that is to know
In this golden show.
I will gather all there are of sweets to take
In this scented brake.
All thy soul's reserves of honied shame

Seized as by a flame
Shall be mine and falter naked to the light
And discovered quite.
I will burn thee up as with a fire
Of unquenched desire.
I will ravage like a conqueror all thy soul
And annex the whole.
To escape from joys too fierce that burn
Thou in vain shalt turn.
Puissant Fate shall rescue not thy soul from mine
Nor decree divine
Nor shall Death release thy hunted heart from fear;
I shall still be near.

Part Three

Baroda and Bengal
Circa 1900–1909

Poems from
Ahana and Other Poems

Invitation

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?

Not in the petty circle of cities
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;
Over me God is blue in the welkin,
Against me the wind and the storm rebel.

I sport with solitude here in my regions,
Of misadventure have made me a friend.
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.

I am the lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

Who

In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?

He is lost in the heart, in the cavern of Nature,
He is found in the brain where He builds up the thought:
In the pattern and bloom of the flowers He is woven,
In the luminous net of the stars He is caught.

In the strength of a man, in the beauty of woman,
 In the laugh of a boy, in the blush of a girl;
 The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven,
 Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

These are His works and His veils and His shadows;
 But where is He then? by what name is He known?
 Is He Brahma or Vishnu? a man or a woman?
 Bodied or bodiless? twin or alone?

We have love for a boy who is dark and resplendent,
 A woman is lord of us, naked and fierce.
 We have seen Him a-muse on the snow of the mountains,
 We have watched Him at work in the heart of the spheres.

We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:
 He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
 He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
 Then lures with His joy and His beauty again.

All music is only the sound of His laughter,
 All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;
 Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
 Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,
 And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
 He slays without stint and is full of compassion;
 He wars for the world and its ultimate years.

In the sweep of the worlds, in the surge of the ages,
 Ineffable, mighty, majestic and pure,
 Beyond the last pinnacle seized by the thinker
 He is throned in His seats that for ever endure.

The Master of man and his infinite Lover,
He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;
We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passions,
We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone.

Miracles

Snow in June may break from Nature,
Ice through August last,
The random rose may increase stature
In December's blast;

But this at least can never be,
O thou mortal ecstasy,
That one should live, even in pain,
Visited by thy disdain.

Reminiscence

My soul arose at dawn and, listening, heard
One voice abroad, a solitary bird,
A song not master of its note, a cry
That persevered into eternity.
My soul leaned out into the dawn to hear
In the world's solitude its winged compeer
And, hearkening what the Angel had to say,
Saw lustre in midnight and a secret day
Was opened to it. It beheld the stars
Born from a thought and knew how being prepares.
Then I remembered how I woke from sleep
And made the skies, built earth, formed Ocean deep.

A Vision of Science

I dreamed that in myself the world I saw,
Wherein three Angels strove for mastery. Law
Was one, clear vision and denial cold,
Yet in her limits strong, presumptuous, bold;
The second with enthusiasm bright,
Flame in her heart but round her brows the night,
Faded as this advanced. She could not bear
That searching gaze, nor the strong chilling air
These thoughts created, nourishing our parts
Of mind, but petrifying human hearts.
Science was one, the other gave her name,
Religion. But a third behind them came,
Veiled, vague, remote, and had as yet no right
Upon the world, but lived in her own light.
Wide were the victories of the Angel proud
Who conquered now and in her praise were loud
The nations. Few even yet to the other clove, —
And some were souls of night and some were souls of love.
But this was confident and throned. Her heralds ranged
Claiming that night was dead and all things changed;
For all things opened, all seemed clear, seemed bright —
Save the vast ranges that they left in night.
However, the light they shed upon the earth
Was great indeed, a firm and mighty birth.
A century's progress lived before my eyes.
Delivered from amazement and surprise,
Man's spirit measuring his worlds around
The laws of sight divined and laws of sound.
Light was not hidden from her searching gaze,
Nor matter could deny its myriad maze
To the cold enquiry; for the far came near,
The small loomed large, the intricate grew clear.
Measuring and probing the strong Angel strode,
Dissolving and combining, till she trod

Firmly among the stars, could weigh their forms,
Foretold the earthquakes, analysed the storms.
Doubt seemed to end and wonder's reign was closed.
The stony pages of the earth disclosed
Their unremembered secrets. Horses of steam
Were bitted and the lightnings made a team
To draw our chariots. Heaven was scaled at last
And the loud seas subdued. Distance resigned
Its strong obstructions to the mastering mind.
So moved that spirit trampling; then it laid
Its hand at last upon itself, how this was made
Wondering, and sought to class and sought to trace
Mind by its forms, the wearer by the dress.
Then the other arose and met that spirit robust,
Who laboured; she now grew a shade who must
Fade wholly away, yet to her fellow cried,
"I pass, for thou hast laboured well and wide.
Thou thinkest term and end for thee are not;
But though thy pride is great, thou hast forgot
The Sphinx that waits for man beside the way.
All questions thou mayst answer, but one day
Her question shall await thee. That reply,
As all we must; for they who cannot, die.
She slays them and their mangled bodies lie
Upon the highways of eternity.
Therefore, if thou wouldst live, know first this thing,
Who thou art in this dungeon labouring."
And Science confidently, "Nothing am I but earth,
Tissue and nerve and from the seed a birth,
A mould, a plasm, a gas, a little that is much.
In these grey cells that quiver to each touch
The secret lies of man; they are the thing called I.
Matter insists and matter makes reply.
Shakespeare was this; this force in Jesus yearned
And conquered by the cross; this only learned
The secret of the suns that blaze afar;
This was Napoleon's giant mind of war."

I heard and marvelled in myself to see
 The infinite deny infinity.
 Yet the weird paradox seemed justified;
 Even mysticism shrank out-mystified.
 But the third Angel came and touched my eyes;
 I saw the mornings of the future rise,
 I heard the voices of an age unborn
 That comes behind us and our pallid morn,
 And from the heart of an approaching light
 One said to man, "Know thyself infinite,
 Who shalt do mightier miracles than these,
 Infinite, moving mid infinities."
 Then from our hills the ancient answer pealed,
 "For Thou, O Splendour, art myself concealed,
 And the grey cell contains me not, the star
 I outmeasure and am older than the elements are.
 Whether on earth or far beyond the sun,
 I, stumbling, clouded, am the Eternal One."

Immortal Love

If I had wooed thee for thy colour rare,
 Cherished the rose in thee
 Or wealth of Nature's brilliants in thy hair,
 O woman fair,
 My love might cease to be.

Or, had I sought thee for thy virtuous youth
 And tender yearning speech,
 Thy swift compassion and deliberate truth,
 O heart of ruth,
 Time might pursue, might reach.

But I have loved thee for thyself indeed
And with myself have snared;
Immortal to immortal I made speed.
Change I exceed
And am for Time prepared.

A Tree

A tree beside the sandy river-beach
Holds up its topmost boughs
Like fingers towards the skies they cannot reach,
Earth-bound, heaven-amorous.

This is the soul of man. Body and brain
Hungry for earth our heavenly flight detain.

To the Sea

O grey wild sea,
Thou hast a message, thunderer, for me.
Their huge wide backs
Thy monstrous billows raise, abysmal cracks
Dug deep between.
One pale boat flutters over them, hardly seen.
I hear thy roar
Call me, "Why dost thou linger on the shore
With fearful eyes
Watching my tops visit their foam-washed skies?
This trivial boat
Dares my vast battering billows and can float.
Death if it find,
Are there not many thousands left behind?
Dare my wide roar,
Nor cling like cowards to the easy shore.

Revelation

Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks
Like a startled bright surmise
Visible to mortal eyes, —
Just a cheek of frightened rose
That with sudden beauty glows,
Just a footstep like the wind
And a hurried glance behind,
And then nothing, — as a thought
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
Someone of the heavenly rout
From behind the veil ran out.

Karma

(Radha's Complaint)

Love, but my words are vain as air!
In my sweet joyous youth, a heart untried,
Thou tookst me in Love's sudden snare,
Thou wouldst not let me in my home abide.

And now I have nought else to try,
But I will make my soul one strong desire
And into Ocean leaping die:
So shall my heart be cooled of all its fire.

Die and be born to life again
As Nanda's son, the joy of Braja's girls,
And I will make thee Radha then,
A laughing child's face set with lovely curls.

Then I will love thee and then leave;
 Under the codome's boughs when thou goest by
 Bound to the water morn or eve,
 Lean on that tree fluting melodiously.

Thou shalt hear me and fall at sight
 Under my charm; my voice shall wholly move
 Thy simple girl's heart to delight;
 Then shalt thou know the bitterness of love.

(From an old Bengali poem)

Appeal

Thy youth is but a noon, of night take heed, —
 A noon that is a fragment of a day,
 And the swift eve all sweet things bears away,
 All sweet things and all bitter, rose and weed.
 For others' bliss who lives, he lives indeed.

But thou art pitiful and ruth shouldst know.
 I bid thee trifle not with fatal love,
 But save our pride and dear one, O my dove,
 And heaven and earth and the nether world below
 Shall only with thy praises peopled grow.

Life is a bliss that cannot long abide,
 But while thou livest, love. For love the sky
 Was founded, earth upheaved from the deep cry
 Of waters, and by love is sweetly tied
 The golden cordage of our youth and pride.

(Suggested by an old Bengali poem)

A Child's Imagination

O thou golden image,
Miniature of bliss,
Speaking sweetly, speaking meetly!
Every word deserves a kiss.

Strange, remote and splendid
Childhood's fancy pure
Thrills to thoughts we cannot fathom,
Quick felicities obscure.

When the eyes grow solemn
Laughter fades away,
Nature of her mighty childhood
Recollects the Titan play;

Woodlands touched by sunlight
Where the elves abode,
Giant meetings, Titan greetings,
Fancies of a youthful God.

These are coming on thee
In thy secret thought;
God remembers in thy bosom
All the wonders that He wrought.

The Sea at Night

The grey sea creeps half-visible, half-hushed,
And grasps with its innumerable hands
These silent walls. I see beyond a rough
Glimmering infinity, I feel the wash
And hear the sibilation of the waves

That whisper to each other as they push
 To shoreward side by side, — long lines and dim
 Of movement flecked with quivering spots of foam,
 The quiet welter of a shifting world.

The Vedantin's Prayer

Spirit Supreme

Who musest in the silence of the heart,
 Eternal gleam,

Thou only Art!

Ah, wherefore with this darkness am I veiled,
 My sunlit part

By clouds assailed?

Why am I thus disfigured by desire,
 Distracted, haled,

Scorched by the fire

Of fitful passions, from thy peace out-thrust
 Into the gyre

Of every gust?

Betrayed to grief, o'ertaken with dismay,
 Surprised by lust?

Let not my grey

Blood-clotted past repel thy sovereign ruth,
 Nor even delay,

O lonely Truth!

Nor let the specious gods who ape Thee still
 Deceive my youth.

These clamours still;
 For I would hear the eternal voice and know
The eternal Will.

This brilliant show
 Cumbering the threshold of eternity
Dispel, — bestow

The undimmed eye,
 The heart grown young and clear. Rebuke in me
These hopes that cry

So deafeningly,
 Remove my sullied centuries, restore
My purity.

O hidden door
 Of Knowledge, open! Strength, fulfil thyself!
Love, outpour!

Rebirth

Not soon is God's delight in us completed,
 Nor with one life we end;
Termlessly in us are our spirits seated,
 A termless joy intend.

Our souls and heaven are of an equal stature
 And have a dateless birth;
The unending seed, the infinite mould of Nature,
 They were not made on earth,

Nor to the earth do they bequeath their ashes,
 But in themselves they last.
An endless future brims beneath thy lashes,
 Child of an endless past.

Old memories come to us, old dreams invade us,
Lost people we have known,
Fictions and pictures; but their frames evade us, —
They stand out bare, alone.

Yet all we dream and hope are memories treasured,
Are forecasts we misspell,
But of what life or scene he who has measured
The boundless heavens can tell.

Time is a strong convention; future and present
Were living in the past;
They are one image that our wills complaisant
Into three schemes have cast.

Our past that we forget, is with us deathless,
Our births and later end
Already accomplished. To a summit breathless
Sometimes our souls ascend,

Whence the mind comes back helped; for there emerges
The ocean vast of Time
Spread out before us with its infinite surges,
Its symphonies sublime;

And even from this veil of mind the spirit
Looks out sometimes and sees
The bygone aeons that our lives inherit,
The unborn centuries:

It sees wave-trampled realms expel the Ocean, —
From the vague depths uphurled
Where now Himâloy stands, the flood's huge motion
Sees measuring half the world;

Or else the web behind us is unravelled
And on its threads we gaze, —
Past motions of the stars, scenes long since travelled
In Time's far-backward days.

The Triumph-Song of Trishuncou

I shall not die.
Although this body, when the spirit tires
Of its cramped residence, shall feed the fires,
My house consumes, not I.

Leaving that case
I find out ample and ethereal room.
My spirit shall avoid the hungry tomb,
Deceiving death's embrace.

Night shall contain
The sun in its cold depths; Time too must cease;
The stars that labour shall have their release.
I cease not, I remain.

Ere the first seeds
Were sown on earth, I was already old,
And when now unborn planets shall grow cold
My history proceeds.

I am the light
In stars, the strength of lions and the joy
Of mornings; I am man and maid and boy,
Protean, infinite.

I am a tree
That stands out singly from the infinite blue;
I am the quiet falling of the dew
And am the unmeasured sea.

I hold the sky
 Together and upbear the teeming earth.
 I was the eternal thinker at my birth
 And shall be, though I die.

Life and Death

Life, death, — death, life; the words have led for ages
 Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
 Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
 Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.
 Life only is, or death is life disguised, —
 Life a short death until by life we are surprised.

Evening

A golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
 Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
 That bend down to their green companion
 And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering, — these
 And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God, —
 Rich like old age when the long ways have all been trod.

Parabrahman

These wanderings of the suns, these stars at play
 In the due measure that they chose of old,
 Nor only these, but all the immense array
 Of objects that long Time, far Space can hold,

Are divine moments. They are thoughts that form,
They are vision in the Self of things august
And therefore grandly real. Rule and norm
Are processes that they themselves adjust.

The Self of things is not their outward view,
A Force within decides. That Force is He;
His movement is the shape of things we knew,
Movement of Thought is Space and Time. A free

And sovereign master of His world within,
He is not bound by what He does or makes,
He is not bound by virtue or by sin,
Awake who sleeps and when He sleeps awakes.

He is not bound by waking or by sleep;
He is not bound by anything at all.
Laws are that He may conquer them. To creep
Or soar is at His will, to rise or fall.

One from of old possessed Himself above
Who was not anyone nor had a form,
Nor yet was formless. Neither hate nor love
Could limit His perfection, peace nor storm.

He is, we cannot say; for Nothing too
Is His conception of Himself unguessed.
He dawns upon us and we would pursue,
But who has found Him or what arms possessed?

He is not anything, yet all is He;
He is not all but far exceeds that scope.
Both Time and Timelessness sink in that sea:
Time is a wave and Space a wandering drop.

Within Himself He shadowed Being forth,
 Which is a younger birth, a veil He chose
 To half-conceal Him, Knowledge, nothing worth
 Save to have glimpses of its mighty cause,

And high Delight, a spirit infinite,
 That is the fountain of this glorious world,
 Delight that labours in its opposite,
 Faints in the rose and on the rack is curled.

This was the triune playground that He made
 And One there sports awhile. He plucks His flowers
 And by His bees is stung; He is dismayed,
 Flees from Himself or has His sullen hours.

The Almighty One knew labour, failure, strife;
 Knowledge forgot divined itself again:
 He made an eager death and called it life,
 He stung Himself with bliss and called it pain.

God

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
 Yet sitst above,
 Master of all who work and rule and know,
 Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
 Nor even the clod,
 Therefore we know by that humility
 That thou art God.

The Fear of Death

Death wanders through our lives at will, sweet Death
Is busy with each intake of our breath.
Why do you fear her? Lo, her laughing face
All rosy with the light of jocund grace!
A kind and lovely maiden culling flowers
In a sweet garden fresh with vernal showers,
This is the thing you fear, young portress bright
Who opens to our souls the worlds of light.
Is it because the twisted stem must feel
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?
Is it because the flowerless stalk droops dull
And ghastly now that was so beautiful?
Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar
That shakes you, feeble souls of courage bare?
Death is but changing of our robes to wait
In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.

Seasons

Day and night begin, you tell me,
When the sun may choose to set or rise.
Well, it may be; but for me their changing
Is determined only by her eyes.

Summer, spring, the fruitless winter
Hinge, you say, upon the heavenly sun?
Oh, but I have known a yearlong winter!
Spring was by her careless smiles begun.

The Rishi

King Manu in the former ages of the world, when the Arctic continent still subsisted, seeks knowledge from the Rishi of the Pole, who after long baffling him with conflicting side-lights of the knowledge, reveals to him what it chiefly concerns man to know.

MANU

Rishi who trance-held on the mountains old
 Art slumbering, void
 Of sense or motion, for in the spirit's hold
 Of unalloyed
 Immortal bliss thou dreamst protected! Deep
 Let my voice glide
 Into thy dumb retreat and break thy sleep
 Abysmal. Hear!
 The frozen snows that heap thy giant bed
 Ice-cold and clear,
 The chill and desert heavens above thee spread
 Vast, austere,
 Are not so sharp but that thy warm limbs brook
 Their bitter breath,
 Are not so wide as thy immense outlook
 On life and death:
 Their vacancy thy silent mind and bright
 Outmeasureth.
 But ours are blindly active and thy light
 We have forgone.

RISHI

Who art thou, warrior armèd gloriously
 Like the sun?
 Thy gait is as an empire and thine eye
 Dominion.

MANU

King Manu, of the Aryan peoples lord,
Greets thee, Sage.

RISHI

I know thee, King, earth to whose sleepless sword
Was heritage.
The high Sun's distant glories gave thee forth
On being's edge:
Where the slow skies of the auroral North
Lead in the morn
And flaming dawns for ever on heaven's verge
Wheel and turn,
Thundering remote the clamorous Arctic surge
Saw thee born.
There 'twas thy lot these later Fates to build,
This race of man
New-fashion. O watcher with the mountains wild,
The icy plain,
Thee I too, asleep, have watched, both when the Pole
Was brightening wan
And when like a wild beast the darkness stole
Prowling and slow
Alarming with its silent march the soul.
O King, I know
Thy purpose; for the vacant ages roll
Since man below
Conversed with God in friendship. Thou, reborn
For men perplexed,
Seekest in this dim aeon and forlorn
With evils vexed
The vanished light. For like this Arctic land
Death has annexed
To sleep, our being's summits cold and grand
Where God abides,
Repel the tread of thought. I too, O King,

In winds and tides
 Have sought Him, and in armies thundering,
 And where Death strides
 Over whole nations. Action, thought and peace
 Were questioned, sleep,
 And waking, but I had no joy of these,
 Nor ponderings deep,
 And pity was not sweet enough, nor good
 My will could keep.
 Often I found Him for a moment, stood
 Astonished, then
 It fell from me. I could not hold the bliss,
 The force for men,
 My brothers. Beauty ceased my heart to please,
 Brightness in vain
 Recalled the vision of the light that glows
 Suns behind:
 I hated the rich fragrance of the rose;
 Weary and blind,
 I tired of the suns and stars; then came
 With broken mind
 To heal me of the rash devouring flame,
 The dull disease,
 And sojourned with this mountain's summits bleak,
 These frozen seas.
 King, the blind dazzling snows have made me meek,
 Cooled my unease.
 Pride could not follow, nor the restless will
 Come and go;
 My mind within grew holy, calm and still
 Like the snow.

MANU

O thou who wast with chariots formidable
 And with the bow!
 Voiceless and white the cold unchanging hill,

Has it then
A mightier presence, deeper mysteries
 Than human men?
The warm low hum of crowds, towns, villages,
 The sun and rain,
The village maidens to the water bound,
 The happy herds,
The fluting of the shepherd lads, the sound
 Myriad of birds,
Speak these not clearer to the heart, convey
 More subtle words?
Here is but great dumb night, an awful day
 Inert and dead.

RISHI

The many's voices fill the listening ear,
 Distract the head:
The One is silence; on the snows we hear
 Silence tread.

MANU

What hast thou garnered from the crags that lour,
 The icy field?

RISHI

O King, I spurned this body's death; a Power
 There was, concealed,
That raised me. Rescued from the pleasant bars
 Our longings build,
My wingèd soul went up above the stars
 Questing for God.

MANU

Oh, didst thou meet Him then? in what bright field
Upon thy road?

RISHI

I asked the heavenly wanderers as they wheeled
For His abode.

MANU

Could glorious Saturn and his rings of hue
Direct thy flight?

RISHI

Sun could not tell, nor any planet knew
Its source of light,
Nor could I glean that knowledge though I paced
The world's beyond
And into outer nothingness have gazed.
Time's narrow sound
I crossed, the termless flood where on the Snake
One slumbers throned,
Attempted. But the ages from Him break
Blindly and Space
Forgets its origin. Then I returned
Where luminous blaze
Deathless and ageless in their ease unearned
The ethereal race.

MANU

Did the gods tell thee? Has Varuna seen
The high God's face?

RISHI

How shall they tell of Him who marvel at sin
And smile at grief?

MANU

Did He not send His blissful Angels down
For thy relief?

RISHI

The Angels know Him not, who fear His frown,
Have fixed belief.

MANU

Is there no heaven of eternal light
Where He is found?

RISHI

The heavens of the Three have beings bright
Their portals round,
And I have journeyed to those regions blest,
Those hills renowned.
In Vishnu's house where wide Love builds his nest,
My feet have stood.

MANU

Is he not That, the blue-winged Dove of peace,
Father of Good?

RISHI

Nor Brahma, though the suns and hills and seas
Are called his brood.

MANU

Is God a dream then? are the heavenly coasts
Visions vain?

RISHI

I came to Shiva's roof; the flitting ghosts
Compelled me in.

MANU

Is He then God whom the forsaken seek,
Things of sin?

RISHI

He sat on being's summit grand, a peak
Immense of fire.

MANU

Knows He the secret of release from tears
And from desire?

RISHI

His voice is the last murmur silence hears,
Tranquil and dire.

MANU

The silence calls us then and shall enclose?

RISHI

Our true abode
Is here and in the pleasant house He chose
To harbour God.

MANU

In vain thou hast travelled the unwonted stars
And the void hast trod!

RISHI

King, not in vain. I knew the tedious bars
That I had fled,
To be His arms whom I have sought; I saw
How earth was made
Out of His being; I perceived the Law,
The Truth, the Vast,
From which we came and which we are; I heard
The ages past
Whisper their history, and I knew the Word
That forth was cast
Into the unformed potency of things
To build the suns.
Through endless Space and on Time's iron wings
A rhythm runs
Our lives pursue, and till the strain's complete
That now so moans
And falters, we upon this greenness meet,
That measure tread.

MANU

Is earth His seat? this body His poor hold
Infirmly made?

RISHI

I flung off matter like a robe grown old;
Matter was dead.

MANU

Sages have told of vital force behind:
It is God then?

RISHI

The vital spirits move but as a wind
Within men.

MANU

Mind then is lord that like a sovereign sways
Delight and pain?

RISHI

Mind is His wax to write and, written, rase
Form and name.

MANU

Is Thought not He who has immortal eyes
Time cannot dim?

RISHI

Higher, O King, the still voice bade me rise
Than thought's clear dream.
Deep in the luminous secrecy, the mute
Profound of things,
Where murmurs never sound of harp or lute
And no voice sings,
Light is not, nor our darkness, nor these bright
Thunderings,
In the deep steady voiceless core of white
And burning bliss,
The sweet vast centre and the cave divine
Called Paradise,

He dwells within us all who dwells not in
Aught that is.

MANU

Rishi, thy thoughts are like the blazing sun
Eye cannot face.
How shall our souls on that bright awful One
Hope even to gaze
Who lights the world from His eternity
With a few rays?

RISHI

Dare on thyself to look, thyself art He,
O Aryan, then.
There is no thou nor I, beasts of the field,
Nor birds, nor men,
But flickerings on a many-sided shield
Pass, or remain,
And this is winged and that with poisonous tongue
Hissing coils.
We love ourselves and hate ourselves, are wrung
With woes and toils
To slay ourselves or from ourselves to win
Shadowy spoils.
And through it all, the rumour and the din,
Voices roam,
Voices of harps, voices of rolling seas,
That rarely come
And to our inborn old affinities
Call us home.
Shadows upon the many-sided Mind
Arrive and go,
Shadows that shadows see; the vain pomps wind
Above, below,
While in their hearts the single mighty God
Whom none can know,

Guiding the mimic squadrons with His nod
 Watches it all —
 Like transient shapes that sweep with half-guessed truth
 A luminous wall.

MANU

Alas! is life then vain? Our gorgeous youth
 Lithe and tall,
 Our sweet fair women with their tender eyes
 Outshining stars,
 The mighty meditations of the wise,
 The grandiose wars,
 The blood, the fiery strife, the clenched dead hands,
 The circle sparse,
 The various labour in a hundred lands,
 Are all these shows
 To please some audience cold? as in a vase
 Lily and rose,
 Mixed snow and crimson, for a moment blaze
 Till someone throws
 The withered petals in some outer dust,
 Heeding not, —
 The virtuous man made one with the unjust,
 Is this our lot?

RISHI

O King, sight is not vain, nor any sound.
 Weeds that float
 Upon a puddle and the majestic round
 Of the suns
 Are thoughts eternal, — what man loves to laud
 And what he shuns;
 Through glorious things and base the wheel of God
 For ever runs.
 O King, no thought is vain; our very dreams
 Substantial are;

The light we see in fancy, yonder gleams
In the star.

MANU

Rishi, are we both dreams and real? the near
Even as the far?

RISHI

Dreams are we not, O King, but see dreams, fear
Therefore and strive.
Like poets in a wondrous world of thought
Always we live,
Whose shapes from out ourselves to being brought
Abide and thrive.
The poet from his vast and labouring mind
Brings brilliant out
A living world; forth into space they wind,
The shining rout,
And hate and love, and laugh and weep, enjoy,
Fight and shout,
King, lord and beggar, tender girl and boy,
Foemen, friends;
So to His creatures God's poetic mind
A substance lends.
The Poet with dazzling inspiration blind,
Until it ends,
Forgets Himself and lives in what He forms;
For ever His soul
Through chaos like a wind creating storms,
Till the stars roll
Through ordered space and the green lands arise,
The snowy Pole,
Ocean and this great heaven full of eyes,
And sweet sounds heard,
Man with his wondrous soul of hate and love,
And beast and bird, —

Yes, He creates the worlds and heaven above
 With a single word;
 And these things being Himself are real, yet
 Are they like dreams,
 For He awakes to self He could forget
 In what He seems.
 Yet, King, deem nothing vain: through many veils
 This Spirit gleams.
 The dreams of God are truths and He prevails.
 Then all His time
 Cherish thyself, O King, and cherish men,
 Anchored in Him.

MANU

Upon the silence of the sapphire main
 Waves that sublime
 Rise at His word and when that fiat's stilled
 Are hushed again,
 So is it, Rishi, with the Spirit concealed,
 Things and men?

RISHI

Hear then the truth. Behind this visible world
 The eyes see plain,
 Another stands, and in its folds are curled
 Our waking dreams.
 Dream is more real, which, while here we wake,
 Unreal seems.
 From that our mortal life and thoughts we take.
 Its fugitive gleams
 Are here made firm and solid; there they float
 In a magic haze,
 Melody swelling note on absolute note,
 A lyric maze,
 Beauty on beauty heaped pell-mell to chain
 The enchanted gaze,

Thought upon mighty thought with grandiose strain
 Weaving the stars.
This is that world of dream from which our race
 Came; by these bars
Of body now enchained, with laggard pace,
 Borne down with cares,
A little of that rapture to express
 We labour hard,
A little of that beauty, music, thought
 With toil prepared;
And if a single strain is clearly caught,
 Then our reward
Is great on earth, and in the world that floats
 Lingering awhile
We hear the fullness and the jarring notes
 Reconcile, —
Then travel forwards. So we slowly rise,
 And every mile
Of our long journey mark with eager eyes;
 So we progress
With gurge of revolution and recoil,
 Slaughter and stress
Of anguish because without fruit we toil,
 Without success;
Even as a ship upon the stormy flood
 With fluttering sails
Labours towards the shore; the angry mood
 Of Ocean swells,
Calms come and favouring winds, but yet afar
 The harbour pales
In evening mists and Ocean threatens war:
 Such is our life.
Of this be sure, the mighty game goes on,
 The glorious strife,
Until the goal predestined has been won.
 Not on the cliff
To be shattered has our ship set forth of old,

Nor in the surge
 To founder. Therefore, King, be royal, bold,
 And through the urge
 Of winds, the reboant thunders and the close
 Tempestuous gurge
 Press on for ever laughing at the blows
 Of wind and wave.
 The haven must be reached; we rise from pyre,
 We rise from grave,
 We mould our future by our past desire,
 We break, we save,
 We find the music that we could not find,
 The thought think out
 We could not then perfect, and from the mind
 That brilliant rout
 Of wonders marshal into living forms.
 End then thy doubt;
 Grieve not for wounds, nor fear the violent storms,
 For grief and pain
 Are errors of the clouded soul; behind
 They do not stain
 The living spirit who to these is blind.
 Torture, disdain,
 Defeat and sorrow give him strength and joy:
 'Twas for delight
 He sought existence, and if pains alloy,
 'Tis here in night
 Which we call day. The Yogin knows, O King,
 Who in his might
 Travels beyond the mind's imagining,
 The worlds of dream.
 For even they are shadows, even they
 Are not, — they seem.
 Behind them is a mighty blissful day
 From which they stream.
 The heavens of a million creeds are these:
 Peopled they teem

By creatures full of joy and radiant ease.
 There is the mint
From which we are the final issue, types
 Which here we print
In dual letters. There no torture grips,
 Joy cannot stint
Her streams, — beneath a more than mortal sun
 Through golden air
The spirits of the deathless regions run.
 But we must dare
To still the mind into a perfect sleep
 And leave this lair
Of gross material flesh which we would keep
 Always, before
The guardians of felicity will ope
 The golden door.
That is our home and that the secret hope
 Our hearts explore.
To bring those heavens down upon the earth
 We all descend,
And fragments of it in the human birth
 We can command.
Perfect millenniums are sometimes, until
 In the sweet end
All secret heaven upon earth we spill,
 Then rise above
Taking mankind with us to the abode
 Of rapturous Love,
The bright epiphany whom we name God,
 Towards whom we drove
In spite of weakness, evil, grief and pain.
 He stands behind
The worlds of Sleep; He is and shall remain
 When they grow blind
To individual joys; for even these
 Are shadows, King,
And gloriously into that lustre cease

From which they spring.
 We are but sparks of that most perfect fire,
 Waves of that sea:
 From Him we come, to Him we go, desire
 Eternally,
 And so long as He wills, our separate birth
 Is and shall be.
 Shrink not from life, O Aryan, but with mirth
 And joy receive
 His good and evil, sin and virtue, till
 He bids thee leave.
 But while thou livest, perfectly fulfil
 Thy part, conceive
 Earth as thy stage, thyself the actor strong,
 The drama His.
 Work, but the fruits to God alone belong,
 Who only is.
 Work, love and know, — so shall thy spirit win
 Immortal bliss.
 Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O King,
 Fear not to enjoy;
 For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing
 Fools to annoy.
 From self escape and find in love alone
 A higher joy.

MANU

O Rishi, I have wide dominion,
 The earth obeys
 And heaven opens far beyond the sun
 Her golden gaze.
 But Him I seek, the still and perfect One, —
 The Sun, not rays.

RISHI

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set
 In the huge press
Of many worlds to build a mighty state
 For man's success,
Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,
 Perfect the race.
For thou art He, O King. Only the night
 Is on thy soul
By thy own will. Remove it and recover
 The serene whole
Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover
 To God the goal.

In the Moonlight

If now must pause the bullocks' jingling tune,
 Here let it be beneath the dreaming trees
 Supine and huge that hang upon the breeze,
Here in the wide eye of the silent moon.

How living a stillness reigns! The night's hushed rules
 All things obey but three, the slow wind's sigh
 Among the leaves, the cricket's ceaseless cry,
The frog's harsh discord in the ringing pools.

Yet they but seem the silence to increase
 And dreadful wideness of the inhuman night.
 The whole hushed world immeasurable might
Be watching round this single spot of peace.

So boundless is the darkness and so rife
 With thoughts of infinite reach that it creates
 A dangerous sense of space and abrogates
The wholesome littleness of human life.

The common round that each of us must tread
 Now seems a thing unreal; we forget
 The heavy yoke the world on us has set,
 The slave's vain labour earning tasteless bread.

Space hedges us and Time our hearts o'ertakes;
 Our bounded senses and our boundless thought
 Strive through the centuries and are slowly brought
 Back to the source whence their divergence wakes.

The source that none have traced, since none can know
 Whether from Heaven the eternal waters well
 Through Nature's matted locks, as Ganges fell,
 Or from some dismal nether darkness flow.

Two genii in the dubious heart of man,
 Two great unhappy foes together bound
 Wrestle and strive to win unhampered ground;
 They strive for ever since the race began.

One from his body like a bridge of fire
 Mounts upward azure-winged with eager eyes;
 One in his brain deep-mansioned labouring lies
 And clamps to earth the spirit's high desire.

Here in this moonlight with strange visions rife
 I seem to see their vast peripheries
 Without me in the sombre mighty trees,
 And, hark! their silence turns the wheels of life.

These are the middle and the first. Are they
 The last too? Has the duel then no close?
 Shall neither vanquish of the eternal foes,
 Nor even at length this moonlight turn to day?

Our age has made an idol of the brain,
 The last adored a purer presence; yet

In Asia like a dove immaculate
He lurks deep-brooding in the hearts of men.

But Europe comes to us bright-eyed and shrill.
“A far delusion was that mounting fire,
An impulse balked and an unjust desire;
It fades as we ascend the human hill.”

She cries to us to labour in the light
Of common things, grow beautiful and wise
On strong material food, nor vex our eyes
With straining after visionary delight.

Ah, beautiful and wise, but to what end?
Europe knows not, nor any of her schools
Who scorn the higher thought for dreams of fools;
Riches and joy and power meanwhile are gained.

Gained and then lost! For Death the heavy grip
Shall loosen, Death shall cloud the laughing eye,
And he who broke the nations soon shall lie
More helpless than a little child asleep.

And after? Nay, for death is end and term.
A fiery dragon through the centuries curled,
He feeds upon the glories of the world
And the vast mammoth dies before the worm.

Stars run their cycle and are quenched; the suns
Born from the night are to the night returned,
When the cold tenebrous spaces have inurned
The listless phantoms of the Shining Ones.

From two dead worlds a burning world arose
Of which the late putrescent fruit is man;
From chill dark space his roll of life began
And shall again in icy quiet close.

Our lives are but a transitory breath:
 Mean pismires in the sad and dying age
 Of a once glorious planet, on the edge
Of bitter pain we wait eternal death.

Watering the ages with our sweat and blood
 We pant towards some vague ideal state
 And by the effort fiercer ills create,
Working by lasting evil transient good.

Insults and servitude we bear perforce;
 With profitable crimes our souls we rack,
 Vexing ourselves lest earth our seed should lack
Who needs us not in her perpetual course;

Then down into the earth descend and sleep
 For ever, and the lives for which we toiled
 Forget us, who when they their turn have moiled,
Themselves forgotten into silence creep.

Why is it all, the labour and the din,
 And wherefore do we plague our souls and vex
 Our bodies or with doubts our days perplex?
Death levels soon the virtue with the sin.

If Death be end and close the useless strife,
 Strive not at all, but take what ease you may
 And make a golden glory of the day,
Exhaust the little honey of your life.

Fear not to take her beauty to your heart
 Whom you so utterly desire; you do
 No hurt to any, for the inner you
So cherished is a dream that shall depart.

The wine of life is sweet; let no man stint
 His longing or refuse one passionate hope.

Why should we cabin in such infinite scope,
Restrict the issue of such golden mint?

Society forbids? It for our sakes
Was fashioned; if it seek to fence around
Our joys and pleasures in such narrow bound,
It gives us little for the much it takes.

Nor need we hearken to the gospel vain
That bids men curb themselves to help mankind.
We lose our little chance of bliss, then blind
And silent lie for ever. Whose the gain?

What helps it us if so mankind be served?
Ourselves are blotted out from joy and light,
Having no profit of the sunshine bright,
While others reap the fruit our toils deserved.

O this new god who has replaced the old!
He dies today, he dies tomorrow, dies
At last for ever, and the last sunrise
Shall have forgotten him extinct and cold.

But virtue to itself is joy enough?
Yet if to us sin taste diviner? why
Should we not herd in Epicurus' sty
Whom Nature made not of a Stoic stuff?

For Nature being all, desire must reign.
It is too sweet and strong for us to slay
Upon a nameless altar, saying nay
To honied urgings for no purpose plain.

A strange unreal gospel Science brings, —
Being animals to act as angels might;
Mortals we must put forth immortal might
And flutter in the void celestial wings.

“Ephemeral creatures, for the future live,”
 She bids us, “gather in for unborn men
 Knowledge and joy, and forfeit, nor complain,
 The present which alone is yours to give.”

Man’s immortality she first denies
 And then assumes what she rejects, made blind
 By sudden knowledge, the majestic Mind
 Within her smiling at her sophistries.

Not so shall Truth extend her flight sublime,
 Pass from the poor beginnings she has made
 And with the splendour of her wings displayed
 Range through the boundaries of Space and Time.

Clamp her not down to her material finds!
 She shall go further. She shall not reject
 The light within, nor shall the dialect
 Of unprogressive pedants bar men’s minds.

We seek the Truth and will not pause nor fear.
 Truth we will have and not the sophist’s pleas;
 Animals, we will take our grosser ease,
 Or, spirits, heaven’s celestial music hear.

The intellect is not all; a guide within
 Awaits our question. He it was informed
 The reason, He surpasses; and unformed
 Presages of His mightiness begin.

Nor mind submerged, nor self subliminal,
 But the great Force that makes the planets wheel
 Through ether and the sun in flames reveal
 His godhead, is in us perpetual.

That Force in us is body, that is mind,
 And what is higher than the mind is He.

This was the secret Science could not see;
Aware of death, to life her eyes were blind.

Through chemistry she seeks the source of life,
Nor knows the mighty laws that she has found,
Are Nature's bye-laws merely, meant to ground
A grandiose freedom building peace by strife.

The organ for the thing itself she takes,
The brain for mind, the body for the soul,
Nor has she patience to explore the whole,
But like a child a hasty period makes.

"It is enough," she says, "I have explored
The whole of being; nothing now remains
But to put details in and count my gains."
So she deceives herself, denies her Lord.

Therefore He manifests Himself; once more
The wonders of the secret world within
Wrapped yet with an uncertain mist begin
To look from that thick curtain out; the door

Opens. Her days are numbered, and not long
Shall she be suffered to belittle thus
Man and restrain from his tempestuous
Uprising that immortal spirit strong.

He rises now; for God has taken birth.
The revolutions that pervade the world
Are faint beginnings and the discus hurled
Of Vishnu speeds down to enring the earth.

The old shall perish; it shall pass away,
Expunged, annihilated, blotted out;
And all the iron bands that ring about
Man's wide expansion shall at last give way.

Freedom, God, Immortality; the three
Are one and shall be realised at length,
Love, Wisdom, Justice, Joy and utter Strength
Gather into a pure felicity.

It comes at last, the day foreseen of old,
What John in Patmos saw, what Shelley dreamed,
Vision and vain imagination deemed,
The City of Delight, the Age of Gold.

The Iron Age is ended. Only now
The last fierce spasm of the dying past
Shall shake the nations, and when that has passed,
Earth washed of ills shall raise a fairer brow.

This is man's progress; for the Iron Age
Prepares the Age of Gold. What we call sin,
Is but man's leavings as from deep within
The Pilot guides him in his pilgrimage.

He leaves behind the ill with strife and pain,
Because it clings and constantly returns,
And in the fire of suffering fiercely burns
More sweetness to deserve, more strength to gain.

He rises to the good with Titan wings:
And this the reason of his high unease,
Because he came from the infinities
To build immortally with mortal things;

The body with increasing soul to fill,
Extend Heaven's claim upon the toiling earth
And climb from death to a diviner birth
Grasped and supported by immortal Will.

Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1900–1906

To the Boers

(Written during the progress of the Boer War.)

O Boers, you have dared much and much endured
For freedom, your strong simple hearts inured
To danger and privation nor so made
As by death's daily grasp to be dismayed,
Nor numbers nor disasters in the field,
Nor to o'erwhelming multitudes to yield.
It was no secondary power you faced,
But she who has the whole wide world embraced,
England whose name is as the thunder, she
Whose navies are the despots of the sea,
Napoleon's conqueror whose fair dreadful face
Great nations loathe and fear and choose disgrace
Rather than meet in wild and dangerous war
Victors of Waterloo and Trafalgar.
But you, a band of armèd herdsmen small,
Feared not her strength, her pride imperial,
Nor all the union of her empire huge,
Nor all her barking cannon, her deluge
Of bullets, nor her horsehooves, nor her lance,
Her boundless wealth, her bayonets aglance.
You met her on her hills and overthrew,
You crossed her by her streams and smote and slew.
But soon in anger like the Ocean foiled
For fiercer swift invasion she recoiled
And multiplied her force until her troops
Tenfold outnumbering your warlike groups
Resurging rolled you back and seized your towns
And spread like locusts over fields and downs.
Not even then were you dismayed, not then
Would tamely yield, but with a proud disdain
Rejected proffered servitude and base.
Therefore are you participants in praise

With Armin and Viriathus; you stand
The last of Freedom's children and your land
Her latest foothold upon earth; nor can
Your rugged pastoral mood disguise the man
Identical at Salamis who waged
Unequal battle and in salt floods assuaged
The Persian's lust of rule. Miltiades
Is grown your brother; the strong Tyrolese
Hold out their hands to you across the grave.
From Rouen's burning pile one watches; brave
Hofer from sad Verona; in eastern skies
Mewar's unconquerable Rajpoots rise.
They too preferred strong liberty and rude
To a splendid ignominy of servitude.
For liberty they gave to alien hands
Their faery city and their fertile lands,
Themselves to death, their women to the flame,
And in wild woods and mountains harbouring came
Often like sudden fire upon the foe:
So for long decades fought, exile and woe
Accepting, till the equal hand of God
Restored to their hereditary abode.
You too have greatly dared, and but that Fate
For her remoter objects obdurate
Averted her unmoved and marble gaze,
No human force had power to erase
From Earth's free peoples. Not the armèd pride
Of England but decrees supreme o'erride
This stubborn nation. Farm and smiling field
Plundered and burned no more your sustenance yield,
Your chiefs are taken one by one, your bands
Wasted with battle, your great war-weary hands
Avail no longer and your women die
In England's camps by famine miserably,
Disease and famine, hunger's squalid brood.
The smiling babes who should prolong your blood,
Pale victims flit, to death's unbottomed maw

Devoted by the conqueror's cynic law.
And must you perish from earth's record then,
O nation of indomitable men?
Look not towards Europe! Europe's heart is dead.
Hard atheisms, selfish lusts instead
Usurp her bosom; not honest blood but gold
Runs liquid in her veins: for she has sold
Her soul to commerce, Mammon is her creed,
The ledger lined her Bible, and Christ must bleed
In plundered nations that the modern Jew
May prosper. This is not Europe that you knew
When from the clash of mighty States you went
Into harsh sultry deserts well-content.
For all her swift and sovran moods of old
Are changed into a reckoning spirit cold
And a hysteric wrath that dare not strike
The strong man armed to meet the blow. She, like
A trembling woman who puts o'er her shift
Hard armour, wears the sword she dare not lift,
Covering her coward heart with splendid arms:
Clothed as in adamant shakes with pale alarms,
Armed as with hell-fire fronts not answering shells,
Blusters and trembles, menaces and pales.
Therefore her navies case in triple steel,
Therefore her legions grow apace; her heel
Of iron breaks the weak ones of the world,
But not against the strong her flags unfurled
Shall flaunt the tempest, nor her hissing flail
Of bullets thresh familiar hills and hail
Of shells in Ocean sibilant be drowned
While navies rend and sink her coasts around.
Easier the naked African to quell
Or on the ill-armed Mongolian shot and shell
To lavish and with coward murder chase
Or with strong lust invade a virtuous race.
Meanwhile her prating conferences increase
And gild her terrors with the name of peace.

All these high nations who with paeans loud
Acclaimed your victories, the bitter crowd
And the loose tongues who spat their venom base
In England's evil hour on England's face
Avenging thus decades of craven fear,
Not one shall dare to speak high words with her
For your sake, none shall raise his armed hand
Against the inheritors of sea and land.
Nor shall the American's pale feverish face
Be lifted from his heaps of gold and trays
Of silver. Deal not with such things as these,
You who are men, not gibbering shades. Increase
Strength rather, of yourselves and Heaven be sure;
Firm make your hearts, magnanimous to endure
More than loud ruin. Though at last you yield,
Yet nowise vain your firmness in the field,
Daring and all the bitter sweat of blood.
Boers, you have sown the veldt with greatness, stood
Irrigating from your own veins farmstead
And kopje and with the bodies of your dead
Manured them: women and young children gave
Their lives to help the seedtime of the brave.
Shall harvest fail you? No, the Power is just
That veils Himself behind the world, not thrust
From puissance by the maxim's brutal roar
Nor to the shrapnel gives His sceptre o'er.
The harvest that you sowed, your sons shall reap,
Stern liberty; nor the example sleep
Imprisoned in the Afric seas, but hurled
Reverberate through the upstarting world.
And the dead nations in the East shall rise
And they that slumber in the West; with eyes
Dismayed the elder Empires overgrown
Shall feel a sudden spirit breathe, a tone
Of challenge hearkening know, at last awake,
Earth was not wide for one sole nation's sake.
For this He fashioned you Who built the stars,

For this He sifted you with searching wars.
Upon the Frisian waters bleak and isles
Where the cold northern Ocean steel-like smiles,
Savage and wide and bare, a nation sparse
Bleak-fishing under the chill midnight stars,
From the wild piercing blast your fathers drew
The breath that loves the desert. To them grew
The Saxon dour and the hard German rude,
And of that stubborn ore unbrittle, crude,
God hammered Him a sword with giant strokes
Upon the anvil of the Ocean rocks;
His fiercest furnace piled the ore to try;
Often He tempered it, often laid by
Unknown of all to harden and anneal.
He made it not of the fine Damasc steel
Comely to see or polished dazzling bright,
A dancing splendour and a pitiless light,
Nor as in Jaipur worked with genial art,
But sheer and stark to rive the adamant heart.
With this He smote the Iberian and the Gaul;
This from his scabbard leaps whene'er o'er all
His earth of various use in various lands
One domination spreads out selfish hands.
Not for its own sake is the falchion keen,
Not for self-greatness was it forged, through skin,
Flesh, heart and bone of giant power to cleave.
Its flash is as the lightning on the eve
Of the stupendous storm that shall uproot
Some oak of empire. When Heaven grows a clot
Of darkness, then God's dagger rips the sky.
Small is the blade and narrow to the eye
The rift; but through it seas of light shall pour
And through it the world-shaking thunders roar
And from the storm the sweet fresh day have birth.
When Spain was mighty and cruel and all earth
Darkened by her huge shadow, your fathers first
Defied her puissance; — they the chains accursed

Asunder rent and braved the bigot's flame
And braved the unvanquished terrors of her name.
Then England grew, then France arose. The one
Repulsed her from the sea's dominion
Making the narrow floods an empire's tomb
When the shot-ridden galleons through the gloom
Of heaven and the wrath of spuming seas
Fled through grey Ocean and the Hebrides,
God's anger swift behind. Then was her hand
Loosened from France's throat; the smiling land
Healed her deep wounds and from her masculine strife
Of mighty spirits forged united life
Now first; so, her high natural vigour found,
Hurled the wide-sprawling Titan to the ground.
But 'twas stern Holland shore his feet of clay
Opening to these the splendours of their day.
Next when great Louis' grandiose mind and high
O'ervaulted all the West like God's own sky,
Your fathers first opposed their petty strength
To his huge destinies; nor defeat, nor length
Of weary struggle could out-tire nor break
Their spirit obstinate for freedom's sake,
When Nassau led them. He was such a man
As you love best to set in your stern van,
Wordless and lonely, stubborn as the hills,
With nature strong to brook tremendous ills
In silence, dowered with vigilant brain and nerve
That never from the goal consent to swerve
But tame down fiercest Fate as men may school
Some dangerous lion to constraining rule.
He sowed the seed; strong England reaped the fruit,
Bringing down showers with the loud cannon's bruit.
Then did she grow indeed. Iberia proud
Being humbled she upon the Ocean loud
Her dwarfish stature launched, but now she trod
Both hemispheres, now giantlike bestrode
The Atlantic and her crest was in the skies,

Earth but a market for her merchandise.
The double Indies all their wealth disgorged
To swell her and her thunders iron-forged
Possessed the hither and the farther seas:
She strewed their waters with her enemies.
Ever she grew and as when Rome was great,
No limit seemed of her supreme estate.
Frore Canada to the Austral heats she joins
And peoples Earth from her exhaustless loins.
Asia and the equator were her spoil,
Her footstool, or a workshop for her toil.
Nor sole she walked, but Europe emulous
Where she had trampled followed orgulous
Like dwarfs behind a giant, gleaning wide
Footholds too small for her gigantic stride.
They too grow great, they too are sons of God
Who meant, they say, all earth for their abode
And increase; others the Almighty made
Their menial peoples, stamped with yellow shade
Or dark, savage of heart, of reason weak.
Nay, but their lords shall make them wise and meek!
Inferior races, let them serve and crouch
Obedient, with the kennel for their couch,
Too happy if but spared the knout and rod.
Yet shall the proud blasphemers know that God
For nobler uses to immortal man
This body's garb designed when He began
To build the planets. His foreseeing eyes
Of ease and its corroding puissance wise,
Reserving to more memorable blows,
From you His chosen stock your sternest chose
And hardest in the grain and drove them forth
From their too populous and prosperous North
Over to torrid regions burning far
Under a fierier sun and brighter star.
There had He worked His Amazulu hordes
To His great purpose 'neath their savage lords,

Chaka the brain of war and Dingaan; — there
Your steel was once again in the red flare
Of that strong furnace tested and annealed,
And that its hard rough temper glints might yield
Of fire, into its molten ore He sank
The Celt's swift force and genius of the Frank:
Nor in the wave-washed regions of the south
Allowed your home, but to the higher drouth
Scourged northward half the iron-minded brood
In the high hills and the veldt's solitude
'Twi'x Vaal and the Limpopo. There you stand
Fighting for liberty and fatherland,
O little people of a mighty birth,
The huge colossus who bestrides the earth.
Therefore let not defeat your hearts dismay,
For He that made you, knows His hour, — today
Or after Time grows old, the Spirit high
Prepares His mighty ends unwaveringly.
Not by the fluent tongue is Freedom earned,
Nor lightly, but when her spirit long has burned
In the strong bosom fronting giant fears
And wrestling with defeat and hostile years,
Antagonist of its opposing fate, —
Such hearts earn mighty Freedom for their mate.
Such hearts are yours and will not falter. Firm
Your destiny stands assured its strenuous term
In God's great keeping who His deathless trust
Keeps for the race when your strong hearts are dust, —
Freedom that blooms not but upon the grave
Where they who loved her sleep, her slaughtered brave.

Vision

Who art thou that roamest
Over mountains dim
In the haunts of evening,
Sister of the gleam!

Whiter than the jasmines,
Roses dream of thee;
Softly with the violets
How thine eyes agree!

As thy raven tresses
Night is not so black,
From thy moonbright shoulders
Floating dimly back.

Feet upon the hilltops,
Lilies of delight,
With their far-off radiance
Tinge the evening bright.

In the vesper calmness
Lightly like a dove,
With thy careless eyelids
Confident of love,

As of old thou comest
Down the mountains far,
Smiling from what gardens,
Glowing from what star?

Racing from the hilltops
Like a brilliant stream,
Burning in the valleys
Marble-bright of limb,

Singing in the orchards
 When the shadows fall,
 With thy crooning anklets
 To my heart that call,

By the darkening window
 Like a slender fire,
 With the night behind thee,
 Daughter of desire!

Open wide the doorway,
 Bid my love come in
 With the night behind her
 And the dawn within.

Take, O radiant fingers,
 Heart and hands of me,
 Hide them in thy bosom,
 O felicity!

To the Ganges

Hearken, Ganges, hearken, thou that sweepst golden to the sea,
 Hearken, Mother, to my voice.
 From the feet of Hari with thy waters pure thou leapest free,
 Waters colder-pure than ice.

On Himaloy's grandiose summits upright in his cirque of stones
 Shiva sits in breathless air,
 Where the outcast seeks his refuge, where the demon army moans,
 Ganges erring through his hair.

Down the snowwhite mountains speeding, the immortal peaks and cold,
 Crowd thy waves untouched by man.
 From Gungotry through the valleys next their icy tops were rolled,
 Bursting through Shivadry ran.

In Benares' stainless city by defilement undefiled
 Ghauts and temples lightly touched
With thy fingers as thou ranst, laughed low in pureness like a child
 To his mother's bosom clutched.

Where the steps of Rama wandered, where the feet of Krishna came,
 There thou flowest, there thy hand
Clasps us, Bhagirathie, Jahnavie or Gunga, and thy name
 Holier makes the Aryans' land.

But thou leavest Aryavurtha, but thou leapest to the seas
 In thy hundred mighty streams;
Nor in the unquiet Ocean vast thy grandiose journeyings cease,
 Mother, say thy children's dreams.

Down thou plungest through the Ocean, far beneath its oozy bed
 In Patala's leaden gloom
Moaning o'er her children's pain our mother, Ganges of the dead,
 Leads our wandering spirits home.

Mighty with the mighty still thou dwelledst, goddess high and pure;
 Iron Bhîshma was thy son,
Who against ten thousand rushing chariots could in war endure;
 Many heroes fled from one.

Devavrath the mighty, Bhîshma with his oath of iron power,
 Smilingly who gave up full
Joy of human life and empire, that his father's wish might flower
 And his father's son might rule.

Who were these that thronged thereafter? wherefore came these puny hearts
 Apter for the cringing slave,
Wrangling, selfish, weak and treacherous, vendors of their nobler parts,
 Sorry food for pyre and grave?

O but these are men of mind not yet with Europe's brutal mood alloyed,
 Poets singing in their chains,
 Preachers teaching manly slavery, speakers thundering in the void.
 Motley wear these men of brains!

Well it is for hound and watchdog fawning at a master's feet,
 Cringing, of the whip afraid!
 Well it is for linnet caged to make with song his slavery sweet.
 Man for other ends was made.

Man the arrogant, the splendid, man the mighty wise and strong,
 Born to rule the peopled earth,
 Shall he bear the alien's insult, shall he brook the tyrant's wrong
 Like a thing of meaner birth?

Sreepoor in the east of Chand and Kédar, bright with Mogul blood,
 And the Kings of Aracan
 And the Atlantic pirates helped that hue, — its ruined glory flood
 Kirtinasha's waters wan.

Buried are our cities; fallen the apexed dome, the Indian arch;
 In Chitore the jackals crowd:
 Krishna's Dwarca sleeps for ever, o'er its ruined bastions march
 All the Oceans thundering loud.

Still, yet still the fire of Kali on her ancient altar burns
 Smouldering under smoky pall,
 And the deep heart of her peoples to their Mighty Mother turns,
 Listening for her Titan call.

Yet Pratapaditya's great fierce spirit shall in might awake
 In Jessore he loved and made,
 Sitaram the good and mighty for his well-loved people's sake
 Leave the stillness and the shade.

And Bengal the wide and ancient where the Senas swayed of old
Up to far Benares pure,
She shall lead the Aryan peoples to the mighty doom foretold
And her glory shall endure.

By her heart of quick emotion, by her brain of living fire,
By her vibrant speech and great,
She shall lead them, they shall see their destiny in her warm desire
Opening all the doors of Fate.

By the shores of Brahmaputra or where Ganges nears the sea,
Even now a flame is born
Which shall kindle all the South to brilliance and the North shall be
Lighted up as with the morn.

And once more this Aryavurtha fit for heavenly feet to tread,
Free and holy, bold and wise,
Shall lift up her face before the world and she whom men thought dead,
Into strength immortal rise.

Not in icy lone Gungotry nor by Kashi's holy fanes,
Mother, hast thou power to save
Only, nor dost thou grow old near Sagar, nor our vileness stains,
Ganges, thy celestial wave.

Dukkhineswar, Dukkhineswar, wonderful predestined pile,
Tell it to our sons unborn,
Where the night was brooding darkest and the curse was on the soil
Heaviest, God revealed the morn.

Suddenly out from the wonderful East

Suddenly out from the wonderful East like a woman exulting
 Dawn stepped forth with a smile on her lips, and the glory of morning
 Hovered over the hills; then sweet grew air with the breezes,
 Sweet and keen as a wild swift virgin; the wind walked blithely,
 Low was the voice of the leaves as they rustled and talked with the river,
 Ganges, the sacred river. Down from the northlands crowding,
 Touching the steps of the ghauts with the silver tips of their fingers
 Lightly the waters ran and talked to each other of sunshine,
 Lightly they laughed. But high on his stake impaled by the roadway
 Hung Mandavya the mighty in marble deep meditation,
 Sepulchred, dumb; on his either side were the thieves, immobile.
 They were dead, made free from cruelty, ceasing from anguish,
 And forgetting the thirst. But past them Ganges the mighty,
 First of the streams of the earth, our Mother, remembering the ages,
 Poured to the sea.

Early at dawn by her ghauts the women of Mithila gathered.
 There they filled their gurgling jars, or gilding the Ganges
 Bathed in her waters and laughed as they bathed there clamouring, dashing
 Dew of her coolness in eyes of each other: the banks called sweetly
 Mad with the musical laughter of girls and joy of their crying,
 Low melodious cries. As when in a wood on the hillsides
 Thousands of bulbuls flitting and calling, eating the wild plums,
 Filling the ear with sweetness carry from treetop to treetop
 Vermeil of crest and scarlet of tail and small brown bodies
 Flitting and calling, calling and flitting, full of sweet clamour,
 Full of the wine of life, even such was the sweetness and clamour,
 Women bathing close by the ghauts of the radiant Ganges,
 Golden-limbed or white or darker than olives when ripest,
 Lovely of face or of mood, but all sweethearted and happy
 Aryan women. One there seemed of another moulding
 Who was aloof from the crowd and the chaos of cheerful faces.
 She at one side of the stairway slowly like one half-musing
 Bathed there, hiding her face in the deep cool bosom of waters,
 Losing herself in Ganges, or let its pearl drops dribble

Quietly down through the mystical night of her tresses on gleaming
Shoulders, betwixt her great breasts noble as hills at noontide
Back to their hurrying home: nor heeded the laughter near her.
Only at times when the clamour grew high, she would look up smiling
Such a slow sweet serious smile as a tender mother
Watching her children at play might smile forgetting the sorrow
Down in her own still patient heart where the deep tears gathered
Swell unwept, till they turn to a sea of sorrowful pity.

On the Mountains

Immense retreats of silence and of gloom,
Hills of a sterile grandeur, rocks that sublime
In bareness seek the blue sky's infinite room
With their coeval snows untouched by Time!

I seek your solemn spaces! Let me at last
Forgotten of thought through days immemorable
Voiceless and needless keep your refuge vast,
Growing into the peace in which I dwell.

For like that Soul unmade you seem to brood
Who sees all things emerge but none creates,
Watching the ages from His solitude,
Lone, unconcerned, remote. You to all Fates

Offer an unchanged heart, unmoved abide,
Wordless, acceptant, sovereignly still.
There is a soul in us as silent, wide,
Mere, uncreative, imperturbable.

Part Four

Calcutta and Chandernagore
1907–1910

Satirical Poem Published in 1907

Reflections of Srinath Paul, Rai Bahadoor,
on the Present Discontents

*(The Address of a Perspiring Chairman Rendered
Faithfully into the Ordinary English Vernacular.)*

Councillors, friends, Rai Bahadoors and others,
Gentlemen all, my bold and moderate brothers!
This Conference's revolutionary course
(By revolution, sirs, I mean of course
The year's, — not anything wicked and Extremist;)
Has brought us here, and like a skilful chemist
Mixed well together our victorious batches
Bearing triumphant scars and famous scratches
Of a year's desperate fight. Behold, the glooms
Are over! See, our conquering Suren comes!
Dream not that when I talk of scars and fighting,
I really mean King Edward to go smiting
And bundle dear Sir Andrew out of Ind.
Nothing, nothing like that is in the wind.
Ah no! what has not Britain done for us?
Were we not savage, naked, barbarous?
Has she not snatched and raised us from the mire?
Taught us to dress, eat, talk, write, sneeze, perspire,
Like Europeans, giving civilisation
To this poor ignorant degraded nation?
Was not our India full of cuts and knocks?
'Twas Britain saved us from those hideous shocks.
No matter if our poor of hunger die,
Us she gave peace and ease and property.
Were't not for Clive, Dalhousie, Curzon, all,
You never would have heard of Srinath Paul.
But is this then good cause we should not meet,
Kiss their benevolent and booted feet,
Remonstrate mildly, praise and pray and cry,

“Have sympathy, great Minto, or we die”?
 If he’ll not hear, let then our humble oration
 Travel with Gokhale to the British nation.
 To be industrious, prayerful, tearful, meek
 Is the sole end for which we meet this week.
 Yet are there men, misunderstanding whites,
 Who much misconstrue these our holy rites
 Deeming it a bad criminal consultation
 How best to free — O horrid thought! — our nation,
 And send the English packing bag and baggage,
 Polo and hockey stick, each scrap of luggage.
 They think we are rank and file and proletariat
 Fit to be throttled with the hangman’s lariat.
 Fie, sirs! that we should be confused with the mob,
 We who with Viceroys and great men hobnob!
 To be mistook, — Oh faugh! for the mere people,
 Things that eat common food and water tippie,
 Mere men, mere flesh and blood! — we, the elect,
 The aristocracy of intellect
 To be thus levelled with the stinking crowd!
 No, sirs, I dare pronounce it very loud,
 We are the sober, moderate wise men, needing
 Scope only to be famed for light and leading,
 Full of co-operative amorous loyalty
 To Minto, Morley and Britannic Royalty.
 O some there are impatient and too wild,
 To that Curzonian lash unreconciled,
 Repudiate with violence unchancy
 Our gospel proud of futile mendicancy.
 Strange that they can’t perceive the utility
 And nobleness of absolute futility!
 O sirs, be moderate, patient, persevering;
 Shun, shun the extremists and their horrid sneering.
 O sirs, from loyalty budge not an inch;
 What if your masters love your throats to pinch?
 It’s pure affection. Even if they kick,
 Is that sufficient reason to feel sick?

No, though they thrash and cudgel, kick and beat,
Cling like the devil to their sacred feet!
Where are we? Is this the French Revolution
Infects our sacred Ind with its pollution?
Is Minto Louis? Kitchener Duke Broglie?
Away, away with revolutionary folly!
What, is this France or Russia? Are we men,
Servitude to reject and bonds disdain?
No, we are loyal, good religious dogs,
Born for delightful kicks and pleasant shogs.
It is a canine gospel that I preach.
Be dogs, be dogs, and learn to love the switch.
Whatever the result, be loyal still
To Minto, Morley and their mighty will.
Be loyal still, my prosperous countrymen,
Nor heed the moaning of the million's pain.
For serfdom in our very bones is bred,
And our religion teaches us to dread, —
Shivaji's creed and Pratap's though it be, —
More than the very devil disloyalty.
O constitutionally agitate your tails
And see whether that agitation fails.
The course of true love never did run smooth!
Morley will still relent, — that gracious youth.
Beg for new Legislative Councils, sirs,
Or any blessed thing your mind prefers.
The Shah's agreeable, why not the British?
Then there's Mysore — Great Scott! I feel quite skittish.
Local self-government we'll beg that's now
A farce, — (I'm getting quite extreme, I vow!)
And many other things. Prayers let us patter;
Whether we get them or not, can't really matter.
But one thing let me tell you, countrymen,
That clubs a boon and blessing are to men,
Where white with black and black can mix with white
And share a particoloured deep delight.
Great thanks we owe then, loyalists, to "Max",

Who his capacious brain the first did tax.
Behold the great result! Apollo Paeon!
The holy club, the Indo-European!
Approach, approach the holy precincts, come
And chat with Risley of affairs at home;
With Fraser arm-in-arm like friends we'll walk,
To Luson and to Lee familiarly talk.
Mind! trousers and a hat. They keep good whiskey
And we shall feel particularly frisky.
As for Comilla, it was sad and bad,
But Minto's sympathy o'er that fell raid
Dropped like the gentle dew from heaven to heal;
No longer for our injured kin we feel.
And now think not of politics too much.
Three days or four is quite enough for such.
Much better done to store substantial honey
Of commerce, taste the joys that roll in money.
Be rich, my friends! who cares then to be free
In hard uncomfortable liberty?
Of boycott talk but not of Swaraj, sirs,
And if of independence you'd discourse,
Let it of economic independence be.
For that the law proscribes no penalty,
Nor will your gentle hearts grow faint and sick
At shadow of the fell policeman's stick.
What folly to disturb our comfort fatty
And cudgelled be with regulation *lathi*?
Such the reflections, sirs — Well, let it drop.
Don't hiss so much, dear friends! for here I stop.

Short Poems
Published in 1909 and 1910

The Mother of Dreams

Goddess, supreme Mother of Dream, by thy ivory doors when thou
standest,
Who are they then that come down unto men in thy visions that troop,
group upon group, down the path of the shadows slanting?
Dream after dream, they flash and they gleam with the flame of the stars
still around them;
Shadows at thy side in a darkness ride where the wild fires dance, stars
glow and glance and the random meteor glistens;
There are voices that cry to their kin who reply; voices sweet, at the heart
they beat and ravish the soul as it listens.
What then are these lands and these golden sands and these seas more
radiant than earth can imagine?
Who are those that pace by the purple waves that race to the cliff-bound
floor of thy jasper shore under skies in which mystery muses,
Lapped in moonlight not of our night or plunged in sunshine that is not
diurnal?
Who are they coming thy Oceans roaming with sails whose strands are not
made by hands, an unearthly wind advances?
Why do they join in a mystic line with those on the sands linking hands in
strange and stately dances?
Thou in the air, with a flame in thy hair, the whirl of thy wonders watching,
Holdest the night in thy ancient right, mother divine, hyacinthine, with a
girdle of beauty defended.
Sworded with fire, attracting desire, thy tenebrous kingdom thou keepest,
Starry-sweet, with the moon at thy feet, now hidden now seen the clouds
between in the gloom and the drift of thy tresses.
Only to those whom thy fancy chose, O thou heart-free, is it given to see
thy witchcraft and feel thy caresses.
Open the gate where thy children wait in their world of a beauty
undarkened.
High-throned on a cloud, victorious, proud I have espied Maghavan ride
when the armies of wind are behind him;
Food has been given for my tasting from heaven and fruit of immortal
sweetness;

The Birth of Sin

Lucifer Sirioth

LUCIFER

What mighty and ineffable desire
Impels thee, Sirioth? Thy accustomed calm
Is potently subverted and the eyes
That were a god's in sweet tranquillity,
Confess a human warmth, a troubled glow.

SIRIOTH

Lucifer, son of Morning, Angel! thou
Art mightiest of the architects of fate.
To thee is given with thy magic gaze
Compelling mortals as thou leanst sublime
From heaven's lucent walls, to sway the world.
Is thy felicity of lesser date,
Prince of the patient and untiring gods,
The gods who work? Dost thou not ever feel
Angelic weariness usurp the place
Where the great flame and the august desire
Were wont to urge thee on? To me it seems
That our eternity is far too long
For service and there is a word, a thought,
More godlike.

LUCIFER

Sirioth, I will speak the word.
Is it not Power?

SIRIOTH

No, Lucifer, 'tis Love.

LUCIFER

Love? It was love that for a trillion years
 Gave me the instinct and immense demand
 For service, for activity. It fades.
 Another and more giant passion comes
 Striding upon me. I behold the world
 Immeasurably vast, I see the heavens
 Full of an azure joy and majesty,
 I see the teeming millions of the stars.
 Sirioth, how came the Master of the world
 To be the master? Did He seize control
 Pushing some ancient weaker sovereign down
 From sway immemorable? Did He come
 By peaceful ways, permission or inheritance,
 To what He is today? Or if indeed
 He is for ever and for ever rules,
 Are there no bounds to His immense domain,
 No obscure corner of unbounded space
 Forgotten by His fate, that I may seize
 And make myself an empire as august,
 Enjoy a like eternity of rule?

SIRIOTH

Angel, these thoughts are mighty as thyself.
 But wilt thou then rebel? If He be great
 To conquer and to punish, what of thee?
 Eternity of dreadful poignant pain
 May be thy fate and not eternal rule.

LUCIFER

Better than still to serve desirelessly,
 Pursued by a compulsion dull and fierce,
 Looking through all vast time for one brief hour
 Of rest, of respite, but instead to find
 Iron necessity and pant in vain
 For space, for room, for freedom.

SIRIOTH

Thou intendest?

LUCIFER

Sirioth, I do not yet intend; I feel.

SIRIOTH

For me the sense of active force within
Set me to work, as the stars move, the sun
Resistless flames through space, the stormwind runs.
But I have felt a touch as sweet as spring,
And I have heard a music of delight
Maddening the heart with the sweet honied stabs
Of delicate intolerable joy.
Where, where is One to feel the answering bliss?
Lucifer, thou from love beganst thy toil.
What love?

LUCIFER

Desire august to help, to serve.

SIRIOTH

That is not mine. To embrace, to melt and mix
Two beings into one, to roll the spirit
Tumbling into a surge of common joy, —
'Tis this I seek.

LUCIFER

Will He permit?

SIRIOTH

A bar

I feel, a prohibition. Someone used
A word I could not grasp and called it sin.

LUCIFER

The word is new, even as these things are.

SIRIOTH

I know not who he was. He laughed and said,
“Sin, sin is born into the world, revolt
And change, in Sirioth and in Lucifer,
The evening and the morning star. Rejoice,
O world!” And I beheld as in a dream
Leaping from out thy brain and into mine
A woman beautiful, of grandiose mien,
Yet terrible, alarming and instinct
With nameless menace. And the world was full
With clashing and with cries. It seemed to me
Angels and Gods and men strove violently
To touch her robe, to occupy the place
Her beautiful and ominous feet had trod,
Crying, “Daughter of Lucifer, be ours,
O sweet, adorable and mighty Sin!”
Therefore I came to thee.

LUCIFER

Sirioth, await

Her birth, if she must be. For this I know,
Necessity rules all the infinite world,
And even He perhaps submits unknown
To a compulsion. When the time is ripe,
We will consult once more what we shall do.

Epiphany

Immortal, moveless, calm, alone, august,
A silence throned, to just and to unjust
One Lord of still unutterable love,
I saw Him, Shiva, like a brooding dove
Close-winged upon her nest. The outcasts came,
The sinners gathered to that quiet flame,
The demons by the other sterner gods
Rejected from their luminous abodes
Gathered around the Refuge of the lost
Soft-smiling on that wild and grisly host.
All who were refugeless, wretched, unloved,
The wicked and the good together moved
Naturally to Him, the shelterer sweet,
And found their heaven at their Master's feet.
The vision changed and in its place there stood
A Terror red as lightning or as blood.
His strong right hand a javelin advanced
And as He shook it, earthquake stumbling danced
Across the hemisphere, ruin and plague
Rained out of heaven, disasters swift and vague
Neighbouring, a marching multitude of ills.
His foot strode forward to oppress the hills,
And at the vision of His burning eyes
The hearts of men grew faint with dread surmise
Of sin and punishment. Their cry was loud,
"O master of the stormwind and the cloud,
Spare, Rudra, spare! Show us that other form
Auspicious, not incarnate wrath and storm."
The God of Force, the God of Love are one;
Not least He loves whom most He smites. Alone
Who towers above fear and plays with grief,
Defeat and death, inherits full relief
From blindness and beholds the single Form,
Love masking Terror, Peace supporting Storm.

The Friend of Man helps him with life and death
 Until he knows. Then, freed from mortal breath,
 Grief, pain, resentment, terror pass away.
 He feels the joy of the immortal play;
 He has the silence and the unflinching force,
 He knows the oneness and the eternal course.
 He too is Rudra and thunder and the Fire,
 He Shiva and the white Light no shadows tire,
 The Strength that rides abroad on Time's wide wings,
 The Calm in the heart of all immortal things.

To R.

On Her Birthday

The repetition of thy gracious years
 Brings back once more thy natal morn.
 Upon the crest of youth thy life appears, —
 A wave upborne.

Amid the hundreds thronging Ocean's floor
 A wave upon the crowded sea
 With regular rhythm pushing towards the shore
 Our life must be.

The power that moves it is the Ocean's force
 Invincible, eternal, free,
 And by that impulse it pursues its course
 Inevitably.

We, too, by the Eternal Might are led
 To whatsoever goal He wills.
 Our helm He grasps, our generous sail outspread
 His strong breath fills.

Exulting in the grace and strength of youth
Pursue the Ocean's distant bound,
Trusting the Pilot's voice, the Master's ruth
That rings us round.

Rejoice and fear not for the waves that swell,
The storms that thunder, winds that sweep;
Always our Captain holds the rudder well,
He does not sleep.

If in the trough of the enormous sea
Thou canst not find the sky for spray,
Fear never, for our Sun is there with thee
By night and day.

Even those who sink in the victorious flood,
Where do they sink? Into His breast.
He who to some gives victory, joy and good,
To some gives rest.

But thou, look to the radiant days that wait
Beyond the driving rain and storm.
I have seen the vision of a happier fate
Brightening thy form.

Confident of His grace, expect His will;
Let Him lead; though hidden be the bourne,
See Him in all that happens; that fulfil
For which thou wert born.

Transiit, Non Periiit

*(My grandfather, Rajnarain Bose,
died September 1899)*

Not in annihilation lost, nor given
To darkness art thou fled from us and light,
O strong and sentient spirit; no mere heaven
Of ancient joys, no silence eremite
Received thee; but the omnipresent Thought
Of which thou wast a part and earthly hour,
Took back its gift. Into that splendour caught
Thou hast not lost thy special brightness. Power
Remains with thee and the old genial force
Unseen for blinding light, not darkly lurks:
As when a sacred river in its course
Dives into ocean, there its strength abides
Not less because with vastness wed and works
Unnoticed in the grandeur of the tides.

Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1909–1910

Perfect thy motion

Perfect thy motion ever within me,
 Master of mind.
Grey of the brain, flash of the lightning,
 Brilliant and blind,
These thou linkest, the world to mould,
Writing the thought in a scroll of gold
 Violet lined.

Tablet of brain thou hast made for thy writing,
 Master divine.
Calmly thou writest or full of thy grandeur
 Flushed as with wine.
Then with a laugh thou erasest the scroll,
Bringing another, like waves that roll
 And sink supine.

A Dialogue

ACHAB

Stamp out, stamp out the sun from the high blue
 And all o'erarching firmament of heaven;
 Forget the mighty ocean when it spumes
 Under the thunder-deafened cliffs and soars
 To crown their tops with spray, but never hope
 That Baal will excuse, Baal forgive.
 That's an ambition more impossible,
 A thought more rebel from the truth.

ESARHADDON

Baal!

It seems to me that thou believ'st in Baal!

ACHAB

And what dost thou believe in? The gross crowd
 Believe the sun is God or else a stone.
 This though I credit not, yet Baal lives.

ESARHADDON

And if he lives, then you and I are Baal,
 Deserve as much the prayer and sacrifice
 As he does. Nay, then, sit and tell him, "Lord,
 If thou art Baal, let the fire be lit
 Upon thy altar without agency,
 Let men believe." Can God do this, and if
 He cannot, if he needs a flint and fuel
 And human hands to light his sacred fire,
 Is he not less than man? The flint and fuel
 Are for our work sufficient. What is he
 If not a helpless name that cannot live
 Unless men's lips repeat him?

ACHAB

And the flint,
The fuel? Who made these or formed the hands
That lit the fire? the lips that prove him nothing?
Or who gave thee thy clear and sceptic brain,
Thy statecraft and thy bold and scornful will
Despising what thou usest? Was it thou
That mad'st them?

ESARHADDON

No, my parents did. Say then
The seed is God that touched my mother's womb
And by familiar process built this house
Inhabited by Esarhaddon.

ACHAB

Who
Fashioned the seed?

ESARHADDON

It grew from other seed,
That out of earth and water, light and heat,
And ether, eldest creature of the world.
All is a force that irresistibly
Works by its nature which it cannot help,
And that is I and that the wood and flint,
That Achab, that Assyria, that the world.

ACHAB

How came the force in being?

ESARHADDON

From of old
It is.

ACHAB

Then why not call it Baal?

ESARHADDON

For me

I care not what 'tis called, Mithra or God.
 You call it Baal, Perizade says
 'Tis Ormuzd, Mithra and the glorious Sun.
 I say 'tis force.

ACHAB

Then wherefore strive to change
 Assyria's law, o'erthrow the cult of Baal?

ESARHADDON

I do not, for it crumbles of itself.
 Why keep the rubbish? Priest, I need a cult
 More gentle and less bloody to the State,
 Not crying at each turn for human blood
 Which means the loss of so much labour, gold,
 Soldiers and strength. This Mithra's worship is.
 Come, priest, you are incredulous yourself,
 But guard your trade, so do I mine, so all.
 Will it be loss to you, if it be said
 Baal and Mithra, these are one, but Baal
 Changes and grows more mild and merciful,
 A friend to men? Or if instead of blood's
 Unprofitable revenue we give
 Offerings of price, and heaps of captive gold
 In place of conquered victims?

ACHAB

So you urge,
 The people's minds are not so mobile yet.

ESARHADDON

If you and I agree, who will refuse?
I care not, man, how it is done. Invent
Scriptures, forge ancient writings, let the wild
Mystics who slash their limbs on Baal's hill,
Cry out the will of Baal while they slash.
You are subtle, if you choose. The head of all
Assyria's state ecclesiastical,
Assured a twentieth of my revenues,
And right of all the offerings votaries heap
On Mithra, that's promotion more than any
Onan can give, the sullen silent slave,
Or Ikbal Sufa with his politic brain.

ACHAB

Why that?

ESARHADDON

You think I do not know! I see
Each motion of your close conspiring brains,
Achab.

ACHAB

And if you do, why hold your hand?

ESARHADDON

That's boldly questioned, almost honestly.
Because a State is ill preserved by blood.
The policy that sees a fissure here,
A wall in ill repair, and builds it up,
Is better than to raze the mansion down
And make it new. I know the people's mind
Sick of a malady no leech can name;
I see a dangerous motion in the soil,

And make my old foundations sure. Achab,
You know I have a sword, and yet it sleeps;
I offer you the gem upon the hilt
And friendship. Will you take it? See, I need
A brain as clear as yours, a heart as bold.
What should I do by killing you, but lose
A statesman born?

ACHAB

You have conquered, King. I yield.

ESARHADDON

'Tis well. Here is my hand on our accord.

Narrative Poems
Published in 1910

Baji Prabhou

Author's Note

This poem is founded on the historical incident of the heroic self-sacrifice of Baji Prabhou Deshpande, who to cover Shivaji's retreat, held the pass of Rangana for two hours with a small company of men against twelve thousand Moguls. Beyond the single fact of this great exploit there has been no attempt to preserve historical accuracy.

Baji Prabhou

A noon of Deccan with its tyrant glare
Oppressed the earth; the hills stood deep in haze,
And sweltering athirst the fields glared up
Longing for water in the courses parched
Of streams long dead. Nature and man alike,
Imprisoned by a bronze and brilliant sky,
Sought an escape from that wide trance of heat.
Nor only on inanimate hills and trees,
Nor on rare herdsman or the patient hind
Tilling the earth or tending sleeplessly
The well-eared grain that burden fell. It hung
Upon the Mogul horsemen as they rode
With lances at the charge, the surf of steel
About them and behind, as they recoiled
Or circled, where the footmen ran and fired,
And fired again and ran; "For now at last,"
They deemed, "the war is over, now at last
The panther of the hills is beaten back
Right to his lair, the rebel crew to death
Is hunted, and an end is made at last."
Therefore they stayed not for the choking dust,
The slaying heat, the thirst of wounds and fight,
The stumbling stark fatigue, but onward pressed
With glowing eyes. Far otherwise the foe,
Panting and sore oppressed and racked with thirst
And blinded with the blazing earth who reeled
Backward to Raigurh, moistening with their blood
Their mother, and felt their own beloved hills
A nightmare hell of death and heat, the sky
A mute and smiling witness of their dire
Anguish, — abandoned now of God and man,
Who for their country and their race had striven, —
In vain, it seemed. At morning when the sun

Was yet below the verge, the Bhonsle sprang
At a high mountain fortress, hoping so
To clutch the whole wide land into his grasp;
But from the North and East the Moguls poured,
Swords numberless and hooves that shook the hills
And barking of a hundred guns. These bore
The hero backward. Silently with set
And quiet faces grim drew fighting back
The strong Mahrattas to their hills; only
Their rear sometimes with shouted slogan leaped
At the pursuer's throat, or on some rise
Or covered vantage stayed the Mogul flood
A moment. Ever foremost where men fought,
Was Baji Prabhou seen, like a wild wave
Of onset or a cliff against the surge.
At last they reached a tiger-throated gorge
Upon the way to Raigurh. Narrowing there
The hills draw close, and their forbidding cliffs
Threaten the prone incline. The Bhonsle paused,
His fiery glance travelled in one swift gyre
Hill, gorge and valley and with speed returned
Mightily like an eagle on the wing
To a dark youth beside him, Malsure
The younger, with his bright and burning eyes,
Who wordless rode quivering, as on the leash;
His fierce heart hungered for the rear, where Death
Was singing mid the laughter of the swords.
"Ride, Suryaji," the Chieftain cried, his look
Inward, intent, "and swiftly from the rear
Summon the Prabhou." Turning at the word
Suryaji's hooves sped down the rock-strewn slope
Into the trenchant valley's depth. Swiftly,
Though burdened with a nation's fate, the ridge
They reached, where in stern silence fought and fell,
Their iron hearts broken with desperate toil,
The Southron rear, and to the Prabhou gave
The summons of the Chief: "Ride, Baji, ride,

The Bhonsle names thee, Baji.” And Baji spoke
No word, but stormed with loose and streaming rein
To the high frowning gorge and silent paused
Before the leader. “Baji, more than once
In battle thou hast stood, a living shield,
Between me and the foe. But more today,
O Baji, save than any single life, —
Thy nation’s destiny. Thou seest this gorge
Narrow and fell and gleaming like the throat
Of some huge tiger, with its rocky fangs
Agrin for food: and though the lower slope
Descends too gently, yet with roots and stones
It is hampered, and the higher prone descent
Impregably forbids assault; too steep
The sides for any to ascend and shoot
From vantage. Here might lion-hearted men,
Though few, delay a host. Baji, I speed
To Raigurh and in two brief hours return.
Say with what force thy iron heart can hold
The passage till I come. Thou seest our strength,
How it has melted like the Afghan’s ice
Into a pool of blood.” And while he paused
Who had been chosen, spoke an iron man
With iron brows who rode behind the Chief,
Tanaji Malsure, that living sword:
“Not for this little purpose was there need
To call the Prabhau from his toil. Enough,
Give me five hundred men; I hold the pass
Till thy return.” But Shivaji kept still
His great and tranquil look upon the face
Of Baji Prabhau. Then, all black with wrath,
Wrinkling his fierce hard eyes, the Malsure:
“What ponders then the hero? Such a man
Of men, he needs not like us petty swords
A force behind him, but alone will hold
All Rajasthan and Agra and Cabool
From rise to set.” And Baji answered him:

“Tanaji Malsure, not in this living net
 Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind
 Is a man’s manhood seated. God within
 Rules us, who in the Brahmin and the dog
 Can, if He will, show equal godhead. Not
 By men is mightiness achieved; Baji
 Or Malsure is but a name, a robe,
 And covers One alone. We but employ
 Bhavani’s strength, who in an arm of flesh
 Is mighty as in the thunder and the storm.
 I ask for fifty swords.” And Malsure:
 “Well, Baji, I will build thee such a pyre
 As man had never yet, when we return;
 For all the Deccan brightening shall cry out,
 Baji the Prabhou burns!” And with a smile
 The Prabhou answered: “Me thou shalt not burn.
 For this five feet or more of bone and flesh,
 Whether pure flame or jackals of the hills
 Be fattened with its rags, may well concern
 Others, not Baji Prabhou.” And the Chief
 With a high calmness in his shining look,
 “We part, O friend, but meet again we must,
 When from our tasks released we both shall run
 Like children to our Mother’s clasp.” He took
 From his wide brow the princely turban sown
 With aigrette diamond-crowned and on the head
 Of Baji set the gleaming sign, then clasped
 His friend and, followed by the streaming host
 That gathered from the rear, to farther hills
 Rode clattering. By the Mogul van approached
 Baji and his Mahrattas sole remained
 Watched by the mountains in the silent gorge.

Small respite had the slender band who held
 Fate constant with that brittle hoop of steel;
 For like the crest of an arriving wave
 The Moslem van appeared, though slow and tired,

Yet resolute to break such barrier faint,
And forced themselves to run: — nor long availed;
For with a single cry the muskets spoke,
Once and again and always, as they neared,
And, like a wave arrested, for a while
The assailants paused and like a wave collapsed
Spent backward in a cloud of broken spray,
Retreating. Yielding up, the dangerous gorge
Saw only on the gnarled and stumbling rise
The dead and wounded heaped. But from the rear
The main tremendous onset of the North
Came in a dark and undulating surge
Regardless of the check, — a mingled mass,
Pathan and Mogul and the Rajput clans,
All clamorous with the brazen throats of war
And spitting smoke and fire. The bullets rang
Upon the rocks, but in their place unhurt,
Sheltered by tree and rock, the silent grim
Defenders waited, till on root and stone
The confident high-voiced triumphant surge
Began to break, to stumble, then to pause,
Confusion in its narrowed front. At once
The muskets clamoured out, the bullets sped,
Deadly though few; again and yet again,
And some of the impetuous faltered back
And some in wrath pressed on; and while they swayed
Poised between flight and onset, blast on blast
The volleyed death invisible hailed in
Upon uncertain ranks. The leaders fell,
The forward by the bullets chosen out,
Prone or supine or leaning like sick men
O'er trees and rocks, distressed the whole advance
With prohibition by the silent slain.
So the great onset failed. And now withdrawn
The generals consulted, and at last
In slow and ordered ranks the foot came on,
An iron resolution in their tread,

Hushed and deliberate. Far in the van,
Tall and large-limbed, a formidable array,
The Pathan infantry; a chosen force,
Lower in crest, strong-framed, the Rajputs marched;
The chivalry of Agra led the rear.
Then Baji first broke silence, “Lo, the surge!
That was but spray of death we first repelled.
Chosen of Shivaji, Bhavani’s swords,
For you the gods prepare. We die indeed,
But let us die with the high-voiced assent
Of Heaven to our country’s claim enforced
To freedom.” As he spoke, the Mogul lines
Entered the menacing wide-throated gorge,
Carefully walking, but not long that care
Endured, for where they entered, there they fell.
Others behind in silence stern advanced.
They came, they died; still on the previous dead
New dead fell thickening. Yet by paces slow
The lines advanced with labour infinite
And merciless expense of valiant men.
For even as the slopes were filled and held,
Still the velocity and lethal range
Increased of the Mahratta bullets; dead
Rather than living held the conquered slope, —
The living who, half-broken, paused. Abridged,
Yet wide, the interval opposed advance,
Daunting those resolute natures; eyes once bold
With gloomy hesitation reckoned up
The dread equivalent in human lives
Of cubits and of yards, and hardly hoped
One could survive the endless unacquired
Country between. But from the Southron wall
The muskets did not hesitate, but urged
Refusal stern; the bullets did not pause,
Nor calculate expense. Active they thronged
Humming like bees and stung strong lives to death
Making a holiday of carnage. Then

The heads that planned pushed swiftly to the front
The centre yet unhurt, where Rajasthan,
Playmate of death, had sent her hero sons.
They with a rapid royal reckless pace
Came striding over the perilous fire-swept ground,
Nor answered uselessly the bullets thick
Nor paused to judge, but o'er the increasing dead
Leaping and striding, shouting, sword in hand,
Rushed onward with immortal courage high
In mortal forms, and held the lower slope.
But now the higher incline, short but steep,
Baffled their speed, and as they clambered up,
Compact and fiery, like the rapid breath
Of Agra's hot simoom, the sheeted flame
Belched bullets. Down they fell with huge collapse,
And, rolling, with their shock drove back the few
Who still attempted. Banned advance, retreat
Threatening disgrace and slaughter, for a while
Like a bound sacrifice the Rajputs stood
Diminishing each moment. Then a lord
High-crested of the Rathore clan stood out
From the perplexed assailants, with his sword
Beckoning the thousands on against the few.
And him the bullets could not touch; he stood
Defended for a moment by his lease
Not yet exhausted. And a mighty shout
Rose from behind, and in a violent flood
The Rajputs flung themselves on the incline
Like clambering lions. Many hands received
The dead as they descended, flinging back
Those mournful obstacles, and with a rush
The lead surmounted and on level ground
Stood sword in hand; yet only for a while, —
For grim and straight the slogan of the South
Leaped with the fifty swords to thrust them back,
Baji the Prabhau leading. Thrice they came,
Three times prevailed, three times the Southron charge

Repelled them; till at last the Rathore lord,
As one appointed, led the advancing death,
Nor waited to assure his desperate hold,
But hurled himself on Baji; those behind
Bore forward those in front. From right and left
Mahratta muskets rang their music out
And withered the attack that, still dissolved,
Still formed again from the insistent rear
And would not end. So was the fatal gorge
Filled with the clamour of the close-locked fight.
Sword rang on sword, the slogan shout, the cry
Of guns, the hiss of bullets filled the air,
And murderous strife heaped up the scanty space,
Rajput and strong Mahratta breathing hard
In desperate battle. But far off the hosts
Of Agra stood arrested, confident,
Waiting the end. Far otherwise it came
Than they expected. For, as in the front
The Rathore stood on the disputed verge
And ever threw fresh strength into the scale
With that inspiring gesture, Baji came
Towards him singling out the lofty crest,
The princely form: and, as the waves divide
Before a driving keel, the battle so
Before him parted, till he neared, he slew.
Avoiding sword, avoiding lifted arm
The blade surprised the Rajput's throat, and down
As falls an upright poplar, with his hands
Outspread, dying, he clutched Mahratta ground.
Loud rose the slogan as he fell. Amazed,
The eager hosts of Agra saw reel back
The Rajput battle, desperate victory
Turned suddenly into entire defeat,
Not headlong, but with strong discouragement,
Sullen, convinced, rejecting the emprise.
As they retired, the brilliant Pathan van
Assumed the attempt. "Exhaust," the generals cried,

“Exhaust the stubborn mountaineers; for now
Fatigued with difficult effort and success
They hardly stand, weary, unstrung, inert.
Scatter this fringe, and we march on and seize
Raigurh and Shivaji.” Meanwhile, they too
Not idle, covered by the rocks and trees,
Straining for vantage, pausing on each ledge,
Seizing each bush, each jutting promontory,
Some iron muscles, climbing, of the south
Lurked on the gorge’s gloomy walls unseen.
On came the Pathans running rapidly,
But as the nearest left the rocky curve
Where lurked the ambush, loud from stone and tree
The silence spoke; sideways, in front, behind
Death clamoured, and tall figures strewed the ground
Like trees in a cyclone. Appalled the rest
Broke this way and broke that, and some cried, “On!”
Some shouted, “Back!” for those who led, fell fast.
So the advance dissolved, divided, — the more
In haste towards the plains, greeted with death
Even while they ran; but others forward, full
Of panic courage, drove towards the foe
They could not reach, — so hot a blast and fell
Stayed their unsteady valour, their retreat
So swift and obstinate a question galled,
Few through the hail survived. With gloom their chiefs
Beheld the rout and drawing back their hosts
In dubious council met, whether to leave
That gorge of slaughter unredeemed or yet
Demand the price of so immense a loss.

But to the Prabhau came with anxious eyes
The Captain of the band. “Baji,” he cried,
“The bullets fail; all the great store we had
Of shot and powder by unsparing use
Is spent, is ended.” And Baji Prabhau turned.
One look he cast upon the fallen men

Discernible by their attire, and saw
His ranks not greatly thinned, one look below
Upon the hundreds strewing thick the gorge,
And grimly smiled; then where the sun in fire
Descending stooped, towards the vesper verge
He gazed and cried: “Make iron of your souls.
Yet if Bhavani wills, strength and the sword
Can stay our nation’s future from o’erthrow
Till victory with Shivaji return.”
And so they waited without word or sound,
And over them the silent afternoon
Waited; the hush terrestrial was profound.
Except the mountains and the fallen men
No sight, no voice, no movement was abroad,
Only a few black-winged slow-circling birds
That wandered in the sky, only the wind
That now arose and almost noiselessly
Questioned the silence of the wooded sides,
Only the occasional groan that marked the pang
By some departing spirit on its frame
Inflicted. And from time to time the gaze
Of Baji sought the ever-sinking sun.
Men fixed their eyes on him and in his firm
Expression lived. So the slow minutes passed.
But when the sun dipped very low, a stir
Was felt far off, and all men grasped the hilt
Tighter and put a strain upon their hearts.
Resolved at last the stream of Mogul war
Came once more pouring, not the broken rout
Of Pathans, not discouraged Rajput swords,
But Agra’s chivalry glancing with gold
And scimitars inlaid and coloured robes.
Swiftly they came expecting the assault
Fire-winged of bullets and the lethal rain,
But silence met them and to their intent
So ominous it seemed, awhile they paused,
Fearing some ruse, though for much death prepared,

Yet careful of prevention. Reassured,
Onward with a high shout they charged the slope.
No bullet sped, no musket spoke; unhurt
They crossed the open space, unhurt they climbed
The rise; but even as their hands surprised
The shrubs that fringed the vantage, swords unseen
Hacked at their fingers, through the bushes thrust
Lances from warriors unexposed bore through
Their bosoms. From behind the nearest lines
Pressed on to share their fate, and still the sea
Of men bore onward till with violent strain
They reached the perilous crest; there for a while
A slaughter grim went on and all the verge
Was heaped and walled and thickly fortified
With splendid bodies. But as they were piled,
The raging hosts behind tore down their dead
And mounted, till at last the force prevailed
Of obstinate numbers and upon a crest
Swarming with foemen fought 'gainst desperate odds
The Southron few. Small was the space for fight,
And meeting strength with skill and force with soul
The strong and agile keepers of the hills
Prevailed against the city-dwelling hosts,
With covert and the swiftly stabbing blades
O'erpowering all the feints of Agra's schools.
So fought they for a while; then suddenly
Upon the Prabhau all the Goddess came.
Loud like a lion hungry on the hills
He shouted, and his stature seemed to increase
Striding upon the foe. Rapid his sword
Like lightning playing with a cloud made void
The crest before him, on his either side
The swordsmen of the South with swift assault
Preventing the reply, till like a bank
Of some wild river the assault collapsed
Over the stumbling edge and down the rise,
And once again the desperate moment passed.

The relics of the murderous strife remained,
 Corpses and jewels, broidery and gold.
 But not for this would they accept defeat.
 Once more they came and almost held. Then wrath
 Rose in the Prabhou and he raised himself
 In soul to make an end; but even then
 A stillness fell upon his mood and all
 That godlike impulse faded from his heart,
 And passing out of him a mighty form
 Stood visible, Titanic, scarlet-clad,
 Dark as a thunder-cloud, with streaming hair
 Obscuring heaven, and in her sovran grasp
 The sword, the flower, the boon, the bleeding head,—
 Bhavani. Then she vanished; the daylight
 Was ordinary in a common world.
 And Baji knew the goddess formidable
 Who watches over India till the end.
 Even then a sword found out his shoulder, sharp
 A Mogul lance ran grinding through his arm.
 Fiercely around him gathered in a knot
 The mountaineers; but Baji, with a groan,
 “Moro Deshpande, to the other side
 Hasten of the black gorge and bring me word.
 Rides any from the West, or canst thou hear
 The Raigurh trumpets blow? I know my hour
 Is ended; let me know my work is done.”
 He spoke and shouted high the slogan loud.
 Desperate, he laboured in his human strength
 To push the Mogul from the gorge’s end
 With slow compulsion. By his side fell fast
 Mahratta and Mogul and on his limbs
 The swords drank blood, a single redness grew
 His body, yet he fought. Then at his side
 Ghastly with wounds and in his fiery eyes
 Death and rejoicing a dire figure stood,
 Moro Deshpande. “Baji, I have seen
 The Raigurh lances; Baji, I have heard

The trumpets." Conquering with his cry the din
He spoke, then dead upon a Mogul corpse
Fell prone. And Baji with a gruesome hand
Wiping the blood from his fierce staring eyes
Saw round him only fifteen men erect
Of all his fifty. But in front, behind,
On either side the Mogul held the gorge.
Groaning, once more the grim Mahratta turned
And like a bull with lowered horns that runs,
Charged the exultant foe behind. With him
The desperate survivors hacking ran,
And as a knife cuts instantly its way
Through water, so the yielding Mogul wall
Was cleft and closed behind. Eight men alone
Stood in the gorge's narrow end, not one
Unwounded. There where hardly three abreast
Have room to stand, they faced again the foe;
And from this latest hold Baji beheld
Mounting the farther incline, rank on rank,
A mass of horsemen; galloped far in front
Some forty horse, and on a turbaned head
Bright in the glory of the sinking sun
A jewelled aigrette blazed. And Baji looked
Over the wide and yawning field of space
And seemed to see a fort upon a ridge,
Raigurh; then turned and sought again the war.
So for few minutes desperately they strove.
Man after man of the Mahrattas fell
Till only three were left. Then suddenly
Baji stood still and sank upon the ground.
Quenched was the fiery gaze, nerveless the arm:
Baji lay dead in the unconquered gorge.
But ere he fell, upon the rocks behind
The horse-hooves rang and, as the latest left
Of the half hundred died, the bullets thronged
Through the too narrow mouth and hurled those down
Who entered. Clamorous, exultant blared

The Southron trumpets, but with stricken hearts
The swords of Agra back recoiled; fatal
Upon their serried unprotected mass
In hundreds from the verge the bullets rained,
And in a quick disordered stream, appalled,
The Mogul rout began. Sure-footed, swift
The hostile strength pursued, Suryaji first
Shouting aloud and singing to the hills
A song of Ramdas as he smote and slew.
But Shivaji by Baji's empty frame
Stood silent and his gaze was motionless
Upon the dead. Tanaji Malsure
Stood by him and observed the breathless corpse,
Then slowly said, "Thirty and three the gates
By which thou enterest heaven, thou fortunate soul,
Thou valiant heart. So when my hour arrives,
May I too clasp my death, saving the land
Or winning some great fortress for my lord."
But Shivaji beside the dead beheld
A dim and mighty cloud that held a sword
And in its other hand, where once the head
Depended bleeding, raised the turban bright
From Baji's brows, still glittering with its gems,
And placed it on the chief's. But as it rose
Blood-stained with the heroic sacrifice,
Round the aigrette he saw a golden crown.

Chitrangada

Chitrangada

In Manipur upon her orient hills
Chitrangada beheld intending dawn
Gaze coldly in. She understood the call.
The silence and imperfect pallor passed
Into her heart and in herself she grew
Prescient of grey realities. Rising,
She gazed afraid into the opening world.
Then Urjooon felt his mighty clasp a void
Empty of her he loved and, through the grey
Unwilling darkness that disclosed her face,
Sought out Chitrangada. "Why dost thou stand
In the grey light, like one from joy cast down?
O thou whose bliss is sure. Leave that grey space,
Come hither." So she came and leaning down,
With that strange sorrow in her eyes, replied:
"Great, doubtless, is thy love, thy very sleep
Impatient of this brief divorce. And yet
How easily that void will soon be filled!
For thou wilt run thy splendid fiery race
Through cities and through regions like a star.
Men's worship, women's hearts inevitably
Will turn to follow, as the planets move
Unbidden round the sun. Thou wilt accept them,
Careless in thy heroic strength and beauty,
And smile securely kind, even as a God
Might draw an earthly maiden to his arms
And marry his immortal mouth to hers.
Then will thy destiny seize thee, thou wilt pass
Like a great light in heaven and leave behind
Only a memory of force and fire.
No lesser occupation can for ever
Keep thee, O hero, whose terrestrial birth
Heaven fostered with her seed, — for what but this
To fill thy soul with battle, and august

Misfortunes and majestic harms embrace
 And joys to thy own nature mated. Last,
 Empire shall meet thee on some mighty field
 Disputing thee with death. Thou art not ours
 More than the wind that lingers for a while
 To touch our hair, then passes to its home.”
 And Urjoon silently caressing her,
 “Muse not again, beloved Chitrangada,
 Alone beside the window looking out
 On the half-formed aspect and shape of things
 Before sunlight was made. For God still keeps
 Near to a paler world the hour ere dawn
 And one who looks out from the happy, warm
 And mortal limit of mankind that live
 Enhoused, defended by companionship
 With walls and limitations, is outdrawn
 To dateless memories he cannot grasp
 And infinite yearnings without form, until
 The sense of an original vastness grows,
 Empty of joyous detail, desolate,
 In labour of a wide unfinished world.
 Look not into that solemn silence! Rather
 Protect thyself with joy, take in my arms
 Refuge from the grey summons and defend
 Thy soul until God rises with the sun.
 Friendly to mortals is the living sun’s
 Great brilliant light, friendly the cheerful noise
 Of earth arising to her various tasks
 And myriad hopes. But this grey hour was born
 For the ascetic in his silent cave
 And for the dying man whose heart released
 Loosens its vibrant strings.” She answered him,
 “Near to the quiet truth of things we stand
 In this grey moment. Neither happy light
 Nor joyful sound deceives the listening heart,
 Nor Night inarms, the Mother brooding vast,
 To comfort us with sleep. It helps me not

To bind thee for a moment to my joy.
The impulse of thy mighty life will come
Upon thee like a wind and drive thee forth
To toil and battle and disastrous deeds
And all the giant anguish that preserves
Our world. Thou as resistlessly wast born
To these things as the leopard's leap to strength
And beauty and fierceness, as resistlessly
As women are to love, — even though they know
Pain for the end, yet, knowing, still must love.
Ah, quickly pass! Why shouldst thou linger here
Vainly? How will it serve God's purpose in thee
To tarry soothing for her transient hour
Merely a woman's heart, meanwhile perhaps
Lose some great moment of thy life which once
Neglected never can return." She paused
And great Urjoon made answer, deeply moved:
"Has my clasp slackened or hast thou perceived
A waning passion in my kiss? Much more
My soul needs thee than on that fated day
When through Bengal of the enormous streams
With careless horsehooves hurrying to the East
I came, a wandering prince, companioned only
By courage and my sword; nor knew such flowers
Were by the wayside waiting to be plucked
As these dark tresses and sweet body small
Of white Chitrangada. Dost thou remember?
O fair young sovereign ruling with pure eyes
And little fearless hand fragile and mild
This strong and savage nation! Didst thou know?
Didst thou expect me in thy soul? Assuredly
Thy heart's first flutterings recognised their lord.
And never with such gladness mountain queen
Exchanged tremendous seat and austere powers,
Her noble ancient right, for only leave
To lay her head upon my feet and wear
My kisses, not the crown. Content with love

All else thou gavest. Now thou speakest sadly,
Too like a mind matured by thought and pain.”
And she with passion cried: “Do I remember?
Yes, I remember. What other thing can I
Remember, till forgetfulness arrives?
O endless moments, O rain-haunted nights,
When thou art far! And O intolerable,
The grey austere discomfortable dawn
To which I shall awake alone! And yet
This year of thee is mine until the end.
The Gods demand the rest. With all myself
I loved thee, not as other women do,
Piecemeal, reluctantly, but my whole heart
And being like a sudden spring broke forth
To flowers and greenness at my sungod’s touch,
Ceding existence at thy feet. Therefore
I praise my father’s wise and prescient love
That kept me from the world for thee, unsought
Amid the rugged mountains and fenced in
With barbarous inhospitable laws.
Around the dying man the torches flared
From pillar to weird pillar; and one discerned
In fitful redness on the shadowy walls
Stone visages of grim un-Aryan gods.
The marble pallor of my father’s face
Looked strange to me in that unsteady glare,
As if an alien’s; and dream-fantasies
Those figures seemed of Manipurian lords
Strange-weaponed, rude, with faces fierce and gnarled,
Like those they worship. Unafraid I stood
With grave and wide-orbed gaze contemplating
Their rugged pomp and the wild majesty
Of that last scene around my dying sire.
About me stood a circle fierce and strong,
Men high like rough gnarled trees or firm squat towers;
A human fortress in its savage strength
Enringed my future with bright jealous spears.

To them he entrusted me, calling each name,
And made their hearts my steps to mount a throne:
Each name was made a link in a great chain,
A turretted gate inwalling my rule,
Each heart a house of trust, a seal of fealty.
So were their thoughts conciliated; so
Their stern allegiance was secured. He spoke,
And, though of outward strength deprived, his voice
Rang clear yet as when over trumpets heard
It guided battle. 'Warriors of my East,
Take now this small white-bosomed queen of yours,
Surround her with the cincture of your force
And guard her from the thieves of destiny
Who prowl around the house of human life
To impoverish the meanings of the gods.
For I am ended and the shadow falls.
She is the stem from which your kings shall grow
Perpetual. Guard her well lest Fate deceived
Permit unworthier to usurp her days
Than the unconquerable seed of gods.
Oppose, oppose all alien entry here,
Whether by force or guile the stranger comes,
To clutch Nature's forbidden golden fruit.
Serry your bucklers close to overwhelm
The invader, seal your deaf and pitiless ears
To the guest's appeal, the suppliant call. He sole,
Darling of Fate and Heaven, shall break through all
Despising danger's threat and spurning death,
To grasp this prize, whether Ixvacou's clan
Yield a new Rama or the Bhoja hear
And raven for her beauty, — Vishny-born,
Or else some lion's whelp of those who lair
In Hustina the proud, coveting two worlds,
Leaping from conquered earth to climb to Heaven,
Life's pride doubling with the soul's ethereal crown.'
He closed his eyes against the earthly air,
The last silence fell on him: he spoke no more

Save the great name until his spirit passed.
Then the grim lords forgot their savage calm.
A cry arose, 'Our queen!' and I was caught
From breast to breast of wild affection; all
Crowded upon me kissing feet and hands,
Recording silent oaths of love. Secure,
Alone in this wild faithful barbarous world,
I ruled by weakness over rugged hearts,
A little queen adored, — until at length
Thou camest. Rumour and wide-mouthed alarm
Running before thy chariot-wheels thou cam'st,
Defeat and death thy envoys and a cry:
O Manipurians, Manipurians, arm!
Some god incensed invades you, — surely a god
Incensed and fatal, for his bowstring huge
Sounds like the crack of breaking worlds and thick
His arrows as the sleet descends of doom
When the great Serpent wakes in wrath. Behind
That cry the crash of hostile advent came,
Thy chariot caked with mire and blood, its roof
Bristling and shattered from the fight, thy steeds
White with the spume of leagues, though yet they neighed
Lusting for speed and battle, and in the car
Thy grandiose form o'ertowering common mould,
While victory shone from eyes where thunder couched
Above his parent lightning. Swift to arms
My warriors sprang, dismayed but faithful, swift
Around me grew a hedge of steel. Enraged,
Thy coursers shod with wind rushed foaming on
And in with crash and rumour stormed the car
To that wide stone-paved hall; there loudly paused,
While thunderous challenge of the stamping hooves
Claimed all the place. Clanging thou leapedst down,
Urjoon, Gandiva in thy threatening grasp.
Then I beheld thy face, then rose, then stretched
My arms out, pausing not to think what god
Compelled me from my throne. But war came in

Between me and those sudden eyes. One bold
Beyond his savage peers stood questioning forth:
‘Who art thou that with challenge insolent
Intruding, from what land of deathless gods
Stormest with disallowed exulting wheels
In white Chitrangada’s domain? To death
Men hasten not so quickly, Aryan lord.’
Hero, thy look was calm, yet formidable,
Replying, by thy anger undisturbed.
‘To death I haste indeed, but not to mine.
Nor think that Doom has claimed me for her own
Because I sole confront you. For my name
Ask the pale thousands whose swift-footed fear
Hardly escaped my single onset; ask
Your famous chieftains cold on hill or moor
Upon my fatal route. Yet not for war
I sought this region nor by death equipped,
Inhospitable people who deny
The human bond, but as a man to men
Alone I came and without need of fear,
If fear indeed were mine to feel. Nor trumpets blared
My coming nor battalions steel enforced,
Who claimed but what the common bond allows.’”

Poems Written in 1910
and Published in 1920–1921

The Rakshasas

(The Rakshasa, the violent kinetic Ego, establishes his claim to mastery of the world replacing the animal Soul, — to be followed by controlled and intellectualised but unregenerated Ego, the Asura. Each such type and level of consciousness sees the Divine in its own image and its level in Nature is sustained by a differing form of the World-Mother.)

“Glory and greatness and the joy of life,
Strength, pride, victorious force, whatever man
Desires, whatever the wild beast enjoys,
Bodies of women and the lives of men,
I claim to be my kingdom. I have force
My title to substantiate, and I seek
No crown unearned, no lordship undeserved.
Ask what austerity Thou wilt, Maker of man,
Expense of blood or labour or long years
Spent in tremendous meditations, lives
Upon Thy altar spent of brutes or men,
Or if with gold Thy favour purchasable
I may command, rich offerings to glut
Thy temples and Thy priests. I have a heart,
A hand for any mighty sacrifice,
A fiery patience in my vehement mood;
I will submit. But ask not this of me,
Meek silence and a pale imprisoned soul
Made colourless of its humanity;
Ask not the heart that quakes, the hand that spares.
What strength can give, not weakness, that demand.
O Rudra, O eternal Mahádev,
Thou too art fierce and mighty, wrathful, bold,
Snuffing Thy winds for blood of sacrifice,
And angrily Thou rul’st a prostrate world.
O Rákshasa Almighty, look on me,

Rávan, the lord of all Thy Rákshasas,
 Give me Thy high command to smite Thy foes;
 But most I would afflict, chase and destroy
 Thy devotees who traduce Thee, making Thee
 A God of love, a God too sweet to rule.
 I have the knowledge; what Thou art, I know,
 And know myself, for Thou and I are one.”
 So prayed the Lord of Lunca, and in Heaven
 Sri Krishna smiled, the Friend of all mankind,
 A smile of sweetness and divine delight,
 And asked, “O Masters of the knowledge, Seers
 Who help me by your thoughts to help mankind,
 Harken what Rávan cries against the stars,
 Demanding earth for heritage. Advise,
 Shall he then have it?” And a cry arose,
 “He would root out the Brahmin from the earth,
 Impose his dreadful Yoga on mankind,
 And make the violent heart, the iron hand
 Sovereign of all.” Sri Krishna made reply,
 “From out Myself he went to do My will.
 He has not lied, he has the knowledge. He
 And I are one. How then shall I refuse?
 Does it not say, the Veda that you know,
 ‘When one knows That, then whatso he desires,
 It shall be his’?” And Atri sage replied,
 “Let him then rule a season and be slain.”
 And He who reigns, “Something you know, O Seers,
 Not all My purpose. It is long decreed,
 The Rákshasa shall rule the peopled earth.
 He takes the brute into himself for man,
 Yielding it offerings, while with grandiose thoughts
 And violent aspirations he controls;
 He purifies the demon in the race,
 Slaying in wrath, not cruelty. Awhile
 He puts the Vánara out of the world,
 Accustoming to grandeur all mankind;

The Ifrit¹ he rejects. Were he denied
His period, man could not progress. But since
He sees himself as Me, not Me in him,
And takes the life and body for the whole,
He cannot last. Therefore is Atri's word
Accepted." And before the Rákshasa,
Out of the terror of the sacrifice,
Naked and dark, with a blood-dripping sword
And dreadful eyes that seemed to burn the world,
Ká lí the Rákshasí in flames arose.
"Demand a boon!" she cried, and all the gods
Trembled. "Give me the earth for my delight,
Her gods to be my slaves," the Giant cried,
"Of strength and passion let me have my fill,
Of violence and pride." "So let it be,"
She answered. "Shall it be eternal then?"
Rávan demanded and she thundered, "No!
For neither thou nor I are best nor last.
The Asurí shall rise to fill my place,
The Asura thy children shall dethrone.
An aeon thou hast taken to evolve,
An aeon thou shalt rule. But since thy wish
I have denied, ask yet another boon."
"Let this be mine, that when at last I sink,
Nor brute nor demon, man nor Titan's hand,
Nor any lesser creature shall o'erthrow,
But only God Himself compel my fall."
And Ká lí answered, smiling terribly,
"It is decreed," and laughing loud she passed.
Then Rávan from his sacrifice arose.

¹ The Ifrit, the Djinn, is the demoniac element in Nature.

Kama

(According to one idea Desire is the creator and sustainer of things, — Desire and Ignorance. By losing desire one passes beyond the Ignorance, as by passing beyond Ignorance one loses desire; then the created world is surpassed and the soul enters into the Divine Reality. Kama here speaks as Desire the Creator, an outgoing power from the Bliss of the Divine Reality to which, abandoning desire, one returns, *ānandam brahmaṇo vidvān*, possessing the bliss of the Brahman.)

O desolations vast, O seas of space
 Unpeopled, realms of an unfertile light,
 Grow multitudinous with living forms,
 Enamoured of desire! I send My breath
 Into the heart of being, and the storm
 Of sweet attraction shall break up its calm
 With quivering passionate intensity
 And silence change to a melodious cry,
 And all the world be rose. Out of My heart
 Suns shall flame up into the listless void,
 And the stars wheel in magic dances round
 Weaving the web of mortal life. For I
 Am love, am passion; I create the world.
 I am the only Brahma. My desire
 Takes many forms; I change and wheel and race,
 And with Me runs creation. I preserve,
 For I am Love. I weary of Myself,
 And the world circles back into the Vast.
 Delight and laughter walking hand in hand
 Go with Me, and I play with grief and pain.
 I am the dance of Krishna, I the dance
 Of Kālī. Might and majesty are Mine,
 And yet I make the heart a child at play,
 The soul of things a woman full of bliss.
 Hunger and Thirst, arise and make the world!

Delight, go down and give it strength to live!
O Ether, change! O Breath of things, grow full
Of the perpetual whirl! Break out, O Fire,
In seas of magic colour, infinite waves
Of rainbow light! Thou, liquid element,
Be sap, be taste in all created things
To please the senses. Thou, O solid earth,
Enter into all life, support the worlds.
I send forth Joy to lure the hearts of men,
I send forth Law to harmonise and rule.
And when these things are done, when men have learned
My beauty, My desirability, My bliss,
I will conceal Myself from their desire
And make this rule of the eternal chase,
“They who abandon Me, shall to all time
Clasp and possess; they who pursue, shall lose.”

The Mahatmas

Kuthumi

(This poem is purely a play of the imagination, a poetic reconstruction of the central idea only of Mahatmahood.)

The seven mountains and the seven seas
Surround me. Over me the eightfold sun
Blazing with various colours — green and blue,
Scarlet and rose, violet and gold and white,
And the dark disk that rides in the mortal cave —
Looks down on me in flame. Below spread wide
The worlds of the immortals, tier on tier,
Like a great mountain climbing to the skies,
And on their summit Shiva dwells. Of old
My goings were familiar with the earth,
The mortals over whom I hold control

Were then my fellows. But I followed not
 The usual path, the common thoughts of men.
 A thirst of knowledge and a sense of power,
 A passion of divine beneficence
 Pursued me through a hundred lives. I rose
 From birth to birth, until I reached the peak
 Of human knowledge. Then in Bharat born
 I, Kuthumi, the Kshatriya, the adept,
 The mighty Yogin of Dwaipayan's school,
 To Vyása came, the great original sage.
 He looked upon me with the eye that sees
 And smiled, august and awful. "Kuthumi,"
 He cried, "now gather back what thou hast learned
 In many lives, remember all thy past,
 Cease from thy round of human births, resume
 The eightfold power that makes a man as God,
 Then come again and learn thy grandiose work,
 For thou art of the souls to death denied."
 I went into the mountains by the sea
 That thunders pitilessly from night to morn,
 And sung to by that rude relentless sound,
 Amid the cries of beasts, the howl of winds,
 Surrounded by the gnashing demon hordes,
 I did the Hathayoga in three days,
 Which men with anguish through ten lives effect, —
 Not that now practised by earth's feebler race,
 But that which Rávan knew in Lunca, Dhruv
 Fulfilled, Hiranyakashipu performed,
 The Yoga of the old Lemurian Kings.
 I felt the strength of Titans in my veins,
 The joy of gods, the pride of Siddhas. Tall
 And mighty like a striding God I came
 To Vyása; but he shook his dense piled locks,
 Denying me. "Thou art not pure," he cried.
 I went in anger to Himaloy's peaks,
 And on the highest in the breathless snows
 Sat dumb for many years. Then knowledge came

Streaming upon me and the hills around
Shook with the feet of the descending power.
I did the Rájayoga in three days,
Which men with care and accuracy minute
Ceaselessly follow for an age in vain —
Not Kali's Rájayoga, but the means
Of perfect knowledge, purity and force
Bali the Titan learned and gave to men,
The Yoga of the old Atlantic Kings.
I came to Vyása, shining like a sun.
He smiled and said, "Now seek the world's great Lord,
Sri Krishna, where he lives on earth concealed;
Give up to him all that thou knowst and art.
For thou art he, elect from mortal men
To guard the Knowledge, — yet an easy task
While the third Age preserves man's godlike force, —
But when thou seest the iron Kali come,
And he from Dwarca leaves the earth, know then
The time of trial, help endangered Man,
Preserve the knowledge that preserves the world,
Until Sri Krishna utterly returns.
Then art thou from thy mighty work released
Into the worlds of bliss for endless years
To rest, until another aeon comes,
When of the seven Rishis thou art one."
I sent my knowledge forth across the land;
It found him not in Bharat's princely halls,
In quiet asrams, nor in temples pure,
Nor where the wealthy traffickers resort;
Brahmin nor Kshatriya body housed the Lord,
Vaishya nor Sudra nor outcaste. At length
To a bare hut on a wild mountain's verge
Led by the star I came. A hermit mad
Of the wild Abhirs, who sat dumb or laughed,
And ran and leaped and danced upon the hills,
But told the reason of his joy to none, —
In him I saw the Lord, behind that mask

Perceived the Spirit that contains the worlds.
I fell before him, but he leaped and ran
And smote me with his foot, and out of me
All knowledge, all desire, all strength was gone
Into its Source. I sat, an infant child.
He laughed aloud and said, “Take back thy gifts,
O beggar!” and went leaping down the slope.
Then full of light and strength and bliss I soared
Beyond the spheres, above the mighty gods,
And left my human body on the snows;
And others gathered to me, more or less
In puissance, to assist, but mine the charge
By Vishnu given. I gather knowledge here,
Then to my human frame awhile descend
And walk mid men, choosing my instruments,
Testing, rejecting and confirming souls,
Vessels of the Spirit; for the golden age
In Kali comes, the iron lined with gold.
The Yoga shall be given back to men,
The sects shall cease, the grim debates die out,
And Atheism perish from the earth
Blasted with knowledge, love and brotherhood
And wisdom repossess Sri Krishna’s world.

Part Five

Pondicherry
Circa 1910–1920

Two Poems in
Quantitative Hexameters

Ilion

BOOK I

The Book of the Herald

Dawn in her journey eternal compelling the labour of mortals,
Dawn the beginner of things with the night for their rest or their ending,
Pallid and bright-lipped arrived from the mists and the chill of the Euxine.
Earth in the dawn-fire delivered from starry and shadowy vastness
Woke to the wonder of life and its passion and sorrow and beauty,
All on her bosom sustaining, the patient compassionate Mother.
Out of the formless vision of Night with its look on things hidden
Given to the gaze of the azure she lay in her garment of greenness,
Wearing light on her brow. In the dawn-ray lofty and voiceless
Ida climbed with her god-haunted peaks into diamond lustres,
Ida first of the hills with the ranges silent beyond her
Watching the dawn in their giant companies, as since the ages
First began they had watched her, upbearing Time on their summits.
Troas cold on her plain awaited the boon of the sunshine.
There, like a hope through an emerald dream sole-pacing for ever,
Stealing to wideness beyond, crept Simois lame in his currents,
Guiding his argent thread mid the green of the reeds and the grasses.
Headlong, impatient of Space and its boundaries, Time and its slowness,
Xanthus clamoured aloud as he ran to the far-surgng waters,
Joining his call to the many-voiced roar of the mighty Aegean,
Answering Ocean's limitless cry like a whelp to its parent.
Forests looked up through their rifts, the ravines grew aware of their
shadows.

Closer now gliding glimmered the golden feet of the goddess.
Over the hills and the headlands spreading her garment of splendour,
Fateful she came with her eyes impartial looking on all things,
Bringer to man of the day of his fortune and day of his downfall.
Full of her luminous errand, careless of eve and its weeping,
Fateful she paused unconcerned above Ilion's mystieried greatness,
Domes like shimmering tongues of the crystal flames of the morning,
Opalesque rhythm-line of tower-tops, notes of the lyre of the sungod.
High over all that a nation had built and its love and its laughter,
Lighting the last time highway and homestead, market and temple,
Looking on men who must die and women destined to sorrow,

Looking on beauty fire must lay low and the sickle of slaughter,
 Fateful she lifted the doom-scroll red with the script of the Immortals,
 Deep in the invisible air that folds in the race and its morrows
 Fixed it, and passed on smiling the smile of the griefless and deathless,—
 Dealers of death though death they know not, who in the morning
 Scatter the seed of the event for the reaping ready at nightfall.
 Over the brooding of plains and the agelong trance of the summits
 Out of the sun and its spaces she came, pausing tranquil and fatal,
 And, at a distance followed by the golden herds of the sungod,
 Carried the burden of Light and its riddle and danger to Hellas.

Even as fleets on a chariot divine through the gold streets of ether,
 Swiftly when Life fleets, invisibly changing the arc of the soul-drift,
 And, with the choice that has chanced or the fate man has called and now
suffers

Weighted, the moment travels driving the past towards the future,
 Only its face and its feet are seen, not the burden it carries.
 Weight of the event and its surface we bear, but the meaning is hidden.
 Earth sees not; life's clamour deafens the ear of the spirit:
 Man knows not; least knows the messenger chosen for the summons.
 Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts, his heart's ignorant whisper,
 Whistle of winds in the tree-tops of Time and the rustle of Nature.
 Now too the messenger hastened driving the car of the errand:
 Even while dawn was a gleam in the east, he had cried to his coursers.
 Half yet awake in light's turrets started the scouts of the morning
 Hearing the jar of the wheels and the throb of the hooves' exultation,
 Hooves of the horses of Greece as they galloped to Phrygian Troya.
 Proudly they trampled through Xanthus thwarting the foam of his anger,
 Whinnying high as in scorn crossed Simois' tangled currents,
 Xanthus' reed-girdled twin, the gentle and sluggard river.
 One and unarmed in the car was the driver; grey was he, shrunken,
 Worn with his decades. To Pergama cinctured with strength Cyclopean
 Old and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals,
 Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.
 Iliion, couchant, saw him arrive from the sea and the darkness.
 Heard mid the faint slow stirrings of life in the sleep of the city,
 Rapid there neared a running of feet, and the cry of the summons
 Beat round the doors that guarded the domes of the splendour of Priam.

“Wardens charged with the night, ye who stand in Laomedon’s gateway,
Waken the Ilian kings. Talthybius, herald of Argos,
Parleying stands at the portals of Troy in the grey of the dawning.”
High and insistent the call. In the dimness and hush of his chamber
Charioted far in his dreams amid visions of glory and terror,
Scenes of a vivid world, — though blurred and deformed in the brain-cells,
Vague and inconsequent, there full of colour and beauty and greatness, —
Suddenly drawn by the pull of the conscious thread of the earth-bond
And of the needs of Time and the travail assigned in the transience
Warned by his body, Deiphobus, reached in that splendid remoteness,
Touched through the nerve-ways of life that branch to the brain of the
dreamer,

Heard the terrestrial call and slumber startled receded
Sliding like dew from the mane of a lion. Reluctant he travelled
Back from the light of the fields beyond death, from the wonderful kingdoms
Where he had wandered a soul among souls in the countries beyond us,
Free from the toil and incertitude, free from the struggle and danger:
Now, compelled, he returned from the respite given to the time-born,
Called to the strife and the wounds of the earth and the burden of daylight.
He from the carven couch upreared his giant stature.
Haste-spurred he laved his eyes and regained earth’s memories, haste-spurred
Donning apparel and armour strode through the town of his fathers,
Watched by her gods on his way to his fate, towards Pergama’s portals.

Nine long years had passed and the tenth now was wearily ending,
Years of the wrath of the gods, and the leaguer still threatened the ramparts
Since through a tranquil morn the ships came past Tenedos sailing
And the first Argive fell slain as he leaped on the Phrygian beaches;
Still the assailants attacked, still fought back the stubborn defenders.
When the reward is withheld and endlessly lengthens the labour,
Weary of fruitless toil grows the transient heart of the mortal.
Weary of battle the invaders warring hearthless and homeless
Prayed to the gods for release and return to the land of their fathers:
Weary of battle the Phrygians beset in their beautiful city
Prayed to the gods for an end of the danger and mortal encounter.
Long had the high-beached ships forgotten their measureless ocean.
Greece seemed old and strange to her children camped on the beaches,
Old like a life long past one remembers hardly believing

But as a dream that has happened, but as the tale of another.
 Time with his tardy touch and Nature changing our substance
 Slowly had dimmed the faces loved and the scenes once cherished:
 Yet was the dream still dear to them longing for wife and for children,
 Longing for hearth and glebe in the far-off valleys of Hellas.
 Always like waves that swallow the shingles, lapsing, returning,
 Tide of the battle, race of the onset relentlessly thundered
 Over the Phrygian corn-fields. Trojan wrestled with Argive,
 Caria, Lycia, Thrace and the war-lord mighty Achaia
 Joined in the clasp of the fight. Death, panic and wounds and disaster,
 Glory of conquest and glory of fall, and the empty hearth-side,
 Weeping and fortitude, terror and hope and the pang of remembrance,
 Anguish of hearts, the lives of the warriors, the strength of the nations
 Thrown were like weights into Destiny's scales, but the balance wavered
 Pressed by invisible hands. For not only the mortal fighters,
 Heroes half divine whose names are like stars in remoteness,
 Triumphed and failed and were winds or were weeds on the dance of the
surges,

But from the peaks of Olympus and shimmering summits of Ida
 Gleaming and clanging the gods of the antique ages descended.
 Hidden from human knowledge the brilliant shapes of Immortals
 Mingled unseen in the mellay, or sometimes, marvellous, maskless,
 Forms of undying beauty and power that made tremble the heart-strings
 Parting their deathless secrecy crossed through the borders of vision,
 Plain as of old to the demigods out of their glory emerging,
 Heard by mortal ears and seen by the eyeballs that perish.
 Mighty they came from their spaces of freedom and sorrowless splendour.
 Sea-vast, trailing the azure hem of his clamorous waters,
 Blue-lidded, maned with the Night, Poseidon smote for the future,
 Earth-shaker who with his trident releases the coils of the Dragon,
 Freeing the forces unborn that are locked in the caverns of Nature.
 Calm and unmoved, upholding the Word that is Fate and the order
 Fixed in the sight of a Will foreknowing and silent and changeless,
 Hera sent by Zeus and Athene lifting his aegis
 Guarded the hidden decree. But for Ilion, loud as the surges,
 Ares impetuous called to the fire in men's hearts, and his passion
 Woke in the shadowy depths the forms of the Titan and demon;

Dumb and coerced by the grip of the gods in the abyss of the being,
 Formidable, veiled they sit in the grey subconscious darkness
 Watching the sleep of the snake-haired Erinnys. Miracled, haloed,
 Seer and magician and prophet who beholds what the thought cannot
 witness,

Lifting the godhead within us to more than a human endeavour,
 Slayer and saviour, thinker and mystic, leaped from his sun-peaks
 Guarding in Iliou the wall of his mysteries Delphic Apollo.
 Heaven's strengths divided swayed in the whirl of the Earth-force.
 All that is born and destroyed is reborn in the sweep of the ages;
 Life like a decimal ever recurring repeats the old figure;
 Goal seems there none for the ball that is chased throughout Time by the
 Fate-teams;

Evil once ended renews and no issue comes out of living:
 Only an Eye unseen can distinguish the thread of its workings.
 Such seemed the rule of the pastime of Fate on the plains of the Troad;
 All went backwards and forwards tossed in the swing of the death-game.
 Vain was the toil of the heroes, the blood of the mighty was squandered,
 Spray as of surf on the cliffs when it moans unappeased, unrequited
 Age after fruitless age. Day hunted the steps of the nightfall;
 Joy succeeded to grief; defeat only greatened the vanquished,
 Victory offered an empty delight without guerdon or profit.
 End there was none of the effort and end there was none of the failure.
 Triumph and agony changing hands in a desperate measure
 Faced and turned as a man and a maiden trampling the grasses
 Face and turn and they laugh in their joy of the dance and each other.
 These were gods and they trampled lives. But though Time is immortal,
 Mortal his works are and ways and the anguish ends like the rapture.
 Artists of Nature content with their work in the plan of the transience,
 Beautiful, deathless, august, the Olympians turned from the carnage,
 Leaving the battle already decided, leaving the heroes
 Slain in their minds, Troy burned, Greece left to her glory and downfall.
 Into their heavens they rose up mighty like eagles ascending
 Fanning the world with their wings. As the great to their luminous mansions
 Turn from the cry and the strife, forgetting the wounded and fallen,
 Calm they repose from their toil and incline to the joy of the banquet,
 Watching the feet of the wine-bearers rosily placed on the marble,

Filling their hearts with ease, so they to their sorrowless ether
 Passed from the wounded earth and its air that is ploughed with men's
anguish;

Calm they reposed and their hearts inclined to the joy and the silence.
 Lifted was the burden laid on our wills by their starry presence:
 Man was restored to his smallness, the world to its unconscious labour.
 Life felt a respite from height, the winds breathed freer delivered;
 Light was released from their blaze and the earth was released from their
greatness.

But their immortal content from the struggle titanic departed.
 Vacant the noise of the battle roared like the sea on the shingles;
 Wearily hunted the spears their quarry; strength was disheartened;
 Silence increased with the march of the months on the tents of the leaguer.
 But not alone on the Achaians the steps of the moments fell heavy;
 Slowly the shadow deepened on Ilion mighty and scornful:
 Dragging her days went by; in the rear of the hearts of her people
 Something that knew what they dared not know and the mind would not
utter,

Something that smote at her soul of defiance and beauty and laughter,
 Darkened the hours. For Doom in her sombre and giant uprising
 Neared, assailing the skies: the sense of her lived in all pastimes;
 Time was pursued by unease and a terror woke in the midnight:
 Even the ramparts felt her, stones that the gods had erected.
 Now no longer she dallied and played, but bounded and hastened,
 Seeing before her the end and, imagining massacre calmly,
 Laughed and admired the flames and rejoiced in the cry of the captives.
 Under her, dead to the watching immortals, Deiphobus hastened
 Clanging in arms through the streets of the beautiful insolent city,
 Brilliant, a gleaming husk but empty and left by the daemon.
 Even as a star long extinguished whose light still travels the spaces,
 Seen in its form by men, but itself goes phantom-like fleeting
 Void and null and dark through the uncaring infinite vastness,
 So now he seemed to the sight that sees all things from the Real.
 Timeless its vision of Time creates the hour by things coming.
 Borne on a force from the past and no more by a power for the future
 Mighty and bright was his body, but shadowy the shape of his spirit
 Only an eidolon seemed of the being that had lived in him, fleeting

Vague like a phantom seen by the dim Acherontian waters.

But to the guardian towers that watched over Pergama's gateway
Out of the waking city Deiphobus swiftly arriving
Called, and swinging back the huge gates slowly, reluctant,
Flung Troy wide to the entering Argive. Iliou's portals
Parted admitting her destiny, then with a sullen and iron
Cry they closed. Mute, staring, grey like a wolf descended
Old Talthybius, propping his steps on the staff of his errand;
Feeble his body, but fierce still his glance with the fire within him;
Speechless and brooding he gazed on the hated and coveted city.
Suddenly, seeking heaven with her buildings hewn as for Titans,
Marvellous, rhythmic, a child of the gods with marble for raiment,
Smiting the vision with harmony, splendid and mighty and golden,
Iliou stood up around him entrenched in her giant defences.
Strength was uplifted on strength and grandeur supported by grandeur;
Beauty lay in her lap. Remote, hieratic and changeless,
Filled with her deeds and her dreams her gods looked out on the Argive,
Helpless and dumb with his hate as he gazed on her, they too like mortals
Knowing their centuries past, not knowing the morrow before them.
Dire were his eyes upon Troya the beautiful, his face like a doom-mask:
All Greece gazed in them, hated, admired, grew afraid, grew relentless.
But to the Greek Deiphobus cried and he turned from his passion
Fixing his ominous eyes with the god in them straight on the Trojan:
"Messenger, voice of Achaia, wherefore confronting the daybreak
Comest thou driving thy car from the sleep of the tents that besiege us?
Fateful, I deem, was the thought that, conceived in the silence of midnight,
Raised up thy aged limbs from the couch of their rest in the stillness, —
Thoughts of a mortal but forged by the Will that uses our members
And of its promptings our speech and our acts are the tools and the image.
Oft from the veil and the shadow they leap out like stars in their brightness,
Lights that we think our own, yet they are but tokens and counters,
Signs of the Forces that flow through us serving a Power that is secret.
What in the dawning bringst thou to Troya the mighty and dateless
Now in the ending of Time when the gods are weary of struggle?
Sends Agamemnon challenge or courtesy, Greek, to the Trojans?"
High like the northwind answered the voice of the doom from Achaia:
"Trojan Deiphobus, daybreak, silence of night and the evening

Sink and arise and even the strong sun rests from his splendour.
 Not for the servant is rest nor Time is his, only his death-pyre.
 I have not come from the monarch of men or the armoured assembly
 Held on the wind-swept marge of the thunder and laughter of ocean.
 One in his singleness greater than kings and multitudes sends me.
 I am a voice out of Phthia, I am the will of the Hellene.
 Peace in my right I bring to you, death in my left hand. Trojan,
 Proudly receive them, honour the gifts of the mighty Achilles.
 Death accept, if Ate deceives you and Doom is your lover,
 Peace if your fate can turn and the god in you chooses to hearken.
 Full is my heart and my lips are impatient of speech undelivered.
 It was not made for the streets or the market, nor to be uttered
 Meanly to common ears, but where counsel and majesty harbour
 Far from the crowd in the halls of the great and to wisdom and foresight
 Secrecy whispers, there I will speak among Ilion's princes."
 "Envoy," answered the Laomedontian, "voice of Achilles,
 Vain is the offer of peace that sets out with a threat for its prelude.
 Yet will we hear thee. Arise who are fleetest of foot in the gateway, —
 Thou, Thrasymachus, haste. Let the domes of the mansion of Ilus
 Wake to the bruit of the Hellene challenge. Summon Aeneas."
 Even as the word sank back into stillness, doffing his mantle
 Started to run at the bidding a swift-footed youth of the Trojans
 First in the race and the battle, Thrasymachus son of Aretes.
 He in the dawn disappeared into swiftness. Deiphobus slowly,
 Measuring Fate with his thoughts in the troubled vasts of his spirit,
 Back through the stir of the city returned to the house of his fathers,
 Taming his mighty stride to the pace infirm of the Argive.

But with the god in his feet Thrasymachus rapidly running
 Came to the halls in the youth of the wonderful city by Ilus
 Built for the joy of the eye; for he rested from war and, triumphant,
 Reigned adored by the prostrate nations. Now when all ended,
 Last of its mortal possessors to walk in its flowering gardens,
 Great Anchises lay in that luminous house of the ancients
 Soothing his restful age, the far-warring victor Anchises,
 High Bucoleon's son and the father of Rome by a goddess;
 Lonely and vagrant once in his boyhood divine upon Ida
 White Aphrodite ensnared him and she loosed her ambrosial girdle

Seeking a mortal's love. On the threshold Thrasymachus halted
Looking for servant or guard, but felt only a loneliness of slumber
Drawing the soul's sight within away from its life and things human;
Soundless, unheeding, the vacant corridors fled into darkness.
He to the shades of the house and the dreams of the echoing rafters
Trusted his high-voiced call, and from chambers still dim in their twilight
Strong Aeneas armoured and mantled, leonine striding,
Came, Anchises' son; for the dawn had not found him reposing,
But in the night he had left his couch and the clasp of Creüsa,
Rising from sleep at the call of his spirit that turned to the waters
Prompted by Fate and his mother who guided him, white Aphrodite.
Still with the impulse of speed Thrasymachus greeted Aeneas:
"Hero Aeneas, swift be thy stride to the Ilian hill-top.
Dardanid, haste! for the gods are at work; they have risen with the morning,
Each from his starry couch, and they labour. Doom, we can see it,
Glows on their anvils of destiny, clang we can hear of their hammers.
Something they forge there sitting unknown in the silence eternal,
Whether of evil or good it is they who shall choose who are masters
Calm, unopposed; they are gods and they work out their iron caprices.
Troy is their stage and Argos their background; we are their puppets.
Always our voices are prompted to speech for an end that we know not,
Always we think that we drive, but are driven. Action and impulse,
Yearning and thought are their engines, our will is their shadow and helper.
Now too, deeming he comes with a purpose framed by a mortal,
Shaft of their will they have shot from the bow of the Grecian leaguer,
Lashing themselves at his steeds, Talthybius sent by Achilles."
"Busy the gods are always, Thrasymachus son of Aretes,
Weaving Fate on their looms, and yesterday, now and tomorrow
Are but the stands they have made with Space and Time for their timber,
Frame but the dance of their shuttle. What eye unamazed by their workings
Ever can pierce where they dwell and uncover their far-stretching purpose?
Silent they toil, they are hid in the clouds, they are wrapped with the
midnight.

Yet to Apollo I pray, the Archer friendly to mortals,
Yet to the rider on Fate I abase myself, wielder of thunder,
Evil and doom to avert from my fatherland. All night Morpheus,
He who with shadowy hands heaps error and truth upon mortals,

Stood at my pillow with images. Dreaming I erred like a phantom
 Helpless in Ilion's streets with the fire and the foeman around me.
 Red was the smoke as it mounted triumphant the house-top of Priam,
 Clang of the arms of the Greeks was in Troya, and thwarting the clangour
 Voices were crying and calling me over the violent Ocean
 Borne by the winds of the West from a land where Hesperus harbours."
 Brooding they ceased, for their thoughts grew heavy upon them and
voiceless.

Then, in a farewell brief and unthought and unconscious of meaning,
 Parting they turned to their tasks and their lives now close but soon severed:
 Destined to perish even before his perishing nation,
 Back to his watch at the gate sped Thrasymachus rapidly running;
 Large of pace and swift, but with eyes absorbed and unseeing,
 Driven like a car of the gods by the whip of his thoughts through the
highways,

Turned to his mighty future the hero born of a goddess.
 One was he chosen to ascend into greatness through fall and disaster,
 Loser of his world by the will of a heaven that seemed ruthless and adverse,
 Founder of a newer and greater world by daring adventure.
 Now, from the citadel's rise with the townships crowding below it
 High towards a pondering of domes and the mystic Palladium climbing,
 Fronted with the morning ray and joined by the winds of the ocean,
 Fate-weighed up Troy's slope strode musing strong Aeneas.
 Under him silent the slumbering roofs of the city of Ilus
 Dreamed in the light of the dawn; above watched the citadel, sleepless
 Lonely and strong like a goddess white-limbed and bright on a hill-top,
 Looking far out at the sea and the foe and the prowling of danger.
 Over the brow he mounted and saw the palace of Priam,
 Home of the gods of the earth, Laomedon's marvellous vision
 Held in the thought that accustomed his will to unearthly achievement
 And in the blaze of his spirit compelling heaven with its greatness,
 Dreamed by the harp of Apollo, a melody caught into marble.
 Out of his mind it arose like an epic canto by canto;
 Each of its halls was a strophe, its chambers lines of an epode,
 Victor chant of Ilion's destiny. Absent he entered,
 Voiceless with thought, the brilliant megaron crowded with paintings,
 Paved with a splendour of marble, and saw Deiphobus seated,

Son of the ancient house by the opulent hearth of his fathers,
 And at his side like a shadow the grey and ominous Argive.
 Happy of light like a lustrous star when it welcomes the morning,
 Brilliant, beautiful, glamoured with gold and a fillet of gem-fire,
 Paris, plucked from the song and the lyre by the Grecian challenge,
 Came with the joy in his face and his eyes that Fate could not alter.
 Ever a child of the dawn at play near a turn of the sun-roads,
 Facing destiny's look with the careless laugh of a comrade,
 He with his vision of delight and beauty brightening the earth-field
 Passed through its peril and grief on his way to the ambiguous Shadow.
 Last from her chamber of sleep where she lay in the Ilian mansion
 Far in the heart of the house with the deep-bosomed daughters of Priam,
 Noble and tall and erect in a nimbus of youth and of glory,
 Claiming the world and life as a fief of her strength and her courage,
 Dawned through a doorway that opened to distant murmurs and laughter,
 Capturing the eye like a smile or a sunbeam, Penthesilea.

She from the threshold cried to the herald, crossing the marble,
 Regal and fleet, with her voice that was mighty and dire in its sweetness.
 "What with such speed has impelled from the wind-haunted beaches of
 Troas,

Herald, thy car though the sun yet hesitates under the mountains?
 Comest thou humbler to Troy, Talthybius, now than thou camest
 Once when the streams of my East sang low to my ear, not this Ocean
 Loud, and I roamed in my mountains uncalled by the voice of Apollo?
 Bringest thou dulcet-eyed peace or, sweeter to Penthesilea,
 Challenge of war when the spears fall thick on the shields of the fighters,
 Lightly the wheels leap onward chanting the anthem of Ares,
 Death is at work in his fields and the heart is enamoured of danger?
 What says Odysseus, the baffled Ithacan? what Agamemnon?
 Are they then weary of war who were rapid and bold and triumphant,
 Now that their gods are reluctant, now victory darts not from heaven
 Down from the clouds above Ida directing the luminous legions
 Armed by Fate, now Pallas forgets, now Poseidon slumbers?
 Bronze were their throats to the battle like bugles blaring in chorus;
 Mercy they knew not, but shouted and ravened and ran to the slaughter
 Eager as hounds when they chase, till a woman met them and stayed them,
 Loud my war-shout rang by Scamander. Herald of Argos,

What say the vaunters of Greece to the virgin Penthesilea?”

High was the Argive’s answer confronting the mighty in Troya.
 “Princes of Pergama, whelps of the lion who roar for the mellay,
 Suffer my speech! It shall ring like a spear on the hearts of the mighty.
 Blame not the herald; his voice is an impulse, an echo, a channel
 Now for the timbrels of peace and now for the drums of the battle.
 And I have come from no cautious strength, from no half-hearted speaker,
 But from the Phthian. All know him! Proud is his soul as his fortunes,
 Swift as his sword and his spear are the speech and the wrath from his bosom.
 I am his envoy, herald am I of the conquering Argives.
 Has not one heard in the night when the breezes whisper and shudder,
 Dire, the voice of a lion unsatisfied, gnawed by his hunger,
 Seeking his prey from the gods? For he prowls through the glens of the
mountains,

Errs a dangerous gleam in the woodlands, fatal and silent.
 So for a while he endures, for a while he seeks and he suffers
 Patient yet in his terrible grace as assured of his banquet;
 But he has lacked too long and he lifts his head and to heaven
 Roars in his wonder, incensed, impatiently. Startled the valleys
 Shrink from the dreadful alarum, the cattle gallop to shelter.
 Arming the herdsmen cry to each other for comfort and courage.”

So Talthybius spoke, as a harper voicing his prelude
 Touches his strings to a varied music, seeks for a concord;
 Long his strain he prepares. But one broke in on the speaker, —
 Sweet was his voice like a harp’s though heard in the front of the onset, —
 One of the sons of Fate by the people loved whom he ruined,
 Leader in counsel and battle, the Priamid, he in his beauty
 Carelessly walking who scattered the seeds of Titanic disaster.
 “Surely thou dreamedst at night and awaking thy dreams have not left thee!
 Hast thou not woven thy words to intimidate children in Argos
 Sitting alarmed in the shadows who listen pale to their nurses?
 Greek, thou art standing in Iliion now and thou facest her princes.
 Use not thy words but thy king’s. If friendship their honey-breathed burden,
 Friendship we clasp from Achilles, but challenge outpace with our challenge
 Meeting the foe ere he moves in his will to the clash of encounter.
 Such is the way of the Trojans since Phryx by the Hellespont halting
 Seated Troy on her hill with the Ocean for comrade and sister.”

Shaking in wrath his filleted head Talthybius answered:
“Princes, ye speak their words who drive you! Thus said Achilles:
‘Rise, Talthybius, meet in her spaces the car of the morning;
Challenge her coursers divine as they bound through the plains of the Troad.
Hasten, let not the day wear gold ere thou stand in her ramparts.
Herald charged with my will to a haughty and obstinate nation,
Speak in the palace of Priam the word of the Phthian Achilles.
Freely and not as his vassal who leads, Agamemnon, the Argive,
But as a ruler in Hellas I send thee, king of my nations.
Long I have walked apart from the mellay of gods in the Troad,
Long has my listless spear leaned back on the peace of my tent-side,
Deaf to the talk of the trumpets, the whine of the chariots speeding;
Sole with my heart I have lived, unheeding the Hellene murmur,
Chid when it roared for the hunt the lion pack of the war-god,
Day after day I walked at dawn and in blush of the sunset,
Far by the call of the seas and alone with the gods and my dreaming,
Leaned to the unsatisfied chant of my heart and the rhythms of ocean,
Sung to by hopes that were sweet-lipped and vain. For Polyxena’s brothers
Still are the brood of the Titan Laomedon slain in his greatness,
Engines of God unable to bear all the might that they harbour.
Awe they have chid from their hearts, nor our common humanity binds them,
Stay have they none in the gods who approve, giving calmness to mortals:
But like the Titans of old they have hugged to them grandeur and ruin.
Seek then the race self-doomed, the leaders blinded by heaven —
Not in the agora swept by the winds of debate and the shoutings
Lion-voiced, huge of the people! In Troya’s high-crested mansion
Speak out my word to the hero Deiphobus, head of the mellay,
Paris the racer of doom and the stubborn strength of Aeneas.
Herald of Greece, when thy feet shall be pressed on the gold and the marble,
Rise in the Ilian megaron, curb not the cry of the challenge.
Thus shalt thou say to them striking the ground with the staff of defiance,
Fronting the tempests of war, the insensate, the gamblers with downfall.
“Princes of Troy, I have sat in your halls, I have slept in your chambers;
Not in the battle alone as a warrior glad of his foemen,
Glad of the strength that mates with his own, in peace we encountered.
Marvelling I sat in the halls of my enemies, close to the bosoms
Scarred by the dints of my sword and the eyes I had seen through the battle,

Ate rejoicing the food of the East at the tables of Priam
 Served by the delicatèst hands in the world, by Hecuba's daughter,
 Or with our souls reconciled in some careless and rapturous midnight
 Drank of the sweetness of Phrygian wine, admiring your bodies
 Shaped by the gods indeed, and my spirit revolted from hatred,—
 Softening it yearned in its strings to the beauty and joy of its foemen,
 Yearned from the death that o'ertakes and the flame that cries and desires
 Even at the end to save and even on the verge to deliver
 Troy and her wonderful works and her sons and her deep-bosomed
 daughters.

Warned by the gods who reveal to the heart what the mind cannot hearken
 Deaf with its thoughts, I offered you friendship, I offered you bridal,
 Hellas for comrade, Achilles for brother, the world for enjoyment
 Won by my spear. And one heard my call and one turned to my seeking.
 Why is it then that the war-cry sinks not to rest by the Xanthus?
 We are not voices from Argolis, Lacedaemonian tricksters,
 Splendid and subtle and false; we are speakers of truth, we are Hellenes,
 Men of the northland faithful in friendship and noble in anger,
 Strong like our fathers of old. But you answered my truth with evasion
 Hoping to seize what I will not yield and you flattered your people.
 Long have I waited for wisdom to dawn on your violent natures.
 Lonely I paced o'er the sands by the thousand-throated waters
 Praying to Pallas the wise that the doom might turn from your mansions,
 Buildings delightful, gracious as rhythms, lyrics in marble,
 Works of the transient gods, and I yearned for the end of the war-din
 Hoping that Death might relent to the beautiful sons of the Trojans.
 Far from the cry of the spears, from the speed and the laughter of axles,
 Heavy upon me like iron the intolerable yoke of inaction
 Weighed like a load on a runner. The war-cry rose by Scamander;
 Xanthus was crossed on a bridge of the fallen, not by Achilles.
 Often I stretched out my hand to the spear, for the Trojan beaches
 Rang with the voice of Deiphobus shouting and slaying the Argives;
 Often my heart like an anxious mother for Greece and her children
 Leaped, for the air was full of the leonine roar of Aeneas.
 Always the evening fell or the gods protected the Argives.
 Then by the moat of the ships, on the hither plain of the Xanthus
 New was the voice that climbed through the din and sailed on the breezes,

High, insistent, clear, and it shouted an unknown war-cry
Threatening doom to the peoples. A woman had come in to aid you,
Regal and insolent, fair as the morning and fell as the northwind,
Freed from the distaff who grasps at the sword and she spurns at subjection
Breaking the rule of the gods. She is turbulent, swift in the battle.
Clanging her voice of the swan as a summons to death and disaster,
Fleet-footed, happy and pitiless, laughing she runs to the slaughter;
Strong with the gait that allures she leaps from her car to the slaying,
Dabbles in blood smooth hands like lilies. Europe astonished
Reels from her shock to the Ocean. She is the panic and mellow,
War is her paean, the chariots thunder of Penthesilea.
Doom was her coming, it seems, to the men of the West and their legions;
Ajax sleeps for ever, Meriones lies on the beaches.
One by one they are falling before you, the great in Achaia.
Ever the wounded are borne like the stream of the ants when they forage
Past my ships, and they hush their moans as they near and in silence
Gaze at the legions inactive accusing the fame of Achilles.
Still have I borne with you, waited a little, looked for a summons,
Longing for bridal torches, not flame on the Ilian housetops,
Blood in the chambers of sweetness, the golden amorous city
Swallowed by doom. Not broken I turned from the wrestle Titanic,
Hopeless, weary of toil in the ebb of my glorious spirit,
But from my stress of compassion for doom of the kindred nations,
But for her sake whom my soul desires, for the daughter of Priam.
And for Polyxena's sake I will speak to you yet as your lover
Once ere the Fury, abrupt from Erebus, deaf to your crying,
Mad with the joy of the massacre, seizes on wealth and on women
Calling to Fire as it strides and Iliou sinks into ashes.
Yield; for your doom is impatient. No longer your helpers hasten,
Legions swift to your call; the yoke of your pride and your splendour
Lies not now on the nations of earth as when Fortune desired you,
Strength was your slave and Troya the lioness hungrily roaring
Threatened the western world from her ramparts built by Apollo.
Gladly released from the thralldom they hated, the insolent shackles
Curbing their manhood the peoples arise and they pray for your ruin;
Piled are their altars with gifts; their blessings help the Achaians.
Memnon came, but he sleeps, and the faces swart of his nation

Darken no more like a cloud over thunder and surge of the onset.
 Wearily Lycia fights; far fled are the Carian levies.
 Thrace retreats to her plains preferring the whistle of stormwinds
 Or on the banks of the Strymon to wheel in her Orphean measure,
 Not in the revel of swords and fronting the spears of the Hellenes.
 Princes of Pergama, open your gates to our Peace who would enter,
 Life in her gracious clasp and forgetfulness, grave of earth's passions,
 Healer of wounds and the past. In a comity equal, Hellenic,
 Asia join with Greece, one world from the frozen rivers
 Trod by the hooves of the Scythian to farthest undulant Ganges.
 Tyndarid Helen resign, the desirable cause of your danger,
 Back to Greece that is empty long of her smile and her movements.
 Broider with riches her coming, pomp of her slaves and the waggons
 Endlessly groaning with gold that arrive with the ransom of nations.
 So shall the Fury be pacified, she who exultant from Sparta
 Breathed in the sails of the Trojan ravisher helping his oarsmen.
 So shall the gods be appeased and the thoughts of their wrath shall be
cancelled,

Justice contented trace back her steps and for brands of the burning
 Torches delightful shall break into Troy with the swords of the bridal.
 I like a bridegroom will seize on your city and clasp and defend her
 Safe from the envy of Argos, from Lacedaemonian hatred,
 Safe from the hunger of Crete and the Locrian's violent rapine.
 But if you turn from my voice and you hearken only to Ares
 Crying for battle within you deluded by Hera and Pallas,
 Swiftly the fierce death's surges shall close over Troy and her ramparts
 Built by the gods shall be stubble and earth to the tread of the Hellene.
 For to my tents I return not, I swear it by Zeus and Apollo,
 Master of Truth who sits within Delphi fathomless brooding
 Sole in the caverns of Nature and hearkens her underground murmur,
 Giving my oath to his keeping mute and stern who forgets not,
 Not from the panting of Ares' toil to repose, from the wrestle
 Locked of hope and death in the ruthless clasp of the mellay
 Leaving again the Trojan ramparts unmounted, leaving
 Greece unavenged, the Aegean a lake and Europe a province.
 Choosing from Hellas exile, from Peleus and Deidamia,
 Choosing the field for my chamber of sleep and the battle for hearthside

I shall go warring on till Asia enslaved to my footsteps
Feels the tread of the God in my sandal pressed on her bosom.
Rest shall I then when the borders of Greece are fringed with the Ganges;
Thus shall the past pay its Titan ransom and, Fate her balance
Changing, a continent ravished suffer the fortune of Helen.
This I have sworn allying my will to Zeus and Ananke.””

So was it spoken, the Phthian challenge. Silent the heroes
Looked back amazed on their past and into the night of their future.
Silent their hearts felt a grasp from gods and had hints of the heavens.
Hush was awhile in the room, as if Fate were trying her balance
Poised on the thoughts of her mortals. At length with a musical laughter
Sweet as the jangling of bells upon anklets leaping in measure
Answered aloud to the gods the virgin Penthesilea.
“Long I had heard in my distant realms of the fame of Achilles,
Ignorant still while I played with the ball and ran in the dances
Thinking not ever to war; but I dreamed of the shock of the hero.
So might a poet inland who imagines the rumour of Ocean,
Yearn with his lust for the giant upheaval, the dance as of hill-tops,
Toss of the yellow mane and the tawny march and the voices
Lionlike claiming earth as a prey for the clamorous waters.
So have I longed as I came for the cry and the speed of Achilles.
But he has lurked in his ships, he has sulked like a boy that is angry.
Glad am I now of his soul that arises hungry for battle,
Glad, whether victor I live or defeated travel the shadows.
Once shall my spear have rung on the shield of the Phthian Achilles.
Peace I desire not. I came to a haughty and resolute nation,
Honour and fame they cherish, not life by the gift of a foeman.
Sons of the ancient house on whom Ilion looks as on Titans,
Chiefs whom the world admires, do you fear then the shock of the Phthian?
Gods, it is said, have decided your doom. Are you less in your greatness?
Are you not gods to reverse their decrees or unshaken to suffer?
Memnon is dead and the Carians leave you? Lycia lingers?
But from the streams of my East I have come to you, Penthesilea.”

“Virgin of Asia,” answered Talhybius, “doom of a nation
Brought thee to Troy and her haters Olympian shielded thy coming,
Vainly who feedest men’s hearts with a hope that the gods have rejected.
Doom in thy sweet voice utters her counsels robed like a woman.”

Answered the virgin disdainfully, wroth at the words of the Argive:
 “Hast thou not ended the errand they gave thee, envoy of Hellas?
 Not, do I think, as our counsellor cam’st thou elected from Argos,
 Nor as a lover to Troy hast thou hastened with amorous footing
 Hurting thy heart with her frowardness. Hatred and rapine sent thee,
 Greed of the Ilian gold and lust of the Phrygian women,
 Voice of Achaian aggression! Doom am I truly; let Gnessus
 Witness it, Salamis speak of my fatal arrival and Argos
 Silent remember her wounds.” But the Argive answered the virgin:
 “Hearken then to the words of the Hellene, Penthesilea.
 ‘Virgin to whom earth’s strongest are corn in the sweep of thy sickle,
 Lioness vain of thy bruit who besiegest the paths of the battle!
 Art thou not satiate yet? hast thou drunk then so little of slaughter?
 Death has ascended thy car; he has chosen thy hand for his harvest.
 But I have heard of thy pride and disdain, how thou scornest the Argives
 And of thy fate thou complainest that ever averse to thy wishes
 Cloisters the Phthian and matches with weaklings Penthesilea.
 “Not of the Ithacan boar nor the wild-cat littered in Locris
 Nor of the sleek-coat Argive wild-bulls sates me the hunting;”
 So hast thou said, “I would bury my spear in the lion of Hellas.”
 Blind and infatuate, art thou not beautiful, bright as the lightning?
 Were not thy limbs made cunningly linking sweetness to sweetness?
 Is not thy laughter an arrow surprising hearts imprudent?
 Charm is the seal of the gods upon woman. Distaff and girdle,
 Work of the jar at the well and the hush of our innermost chambers,
 These were appointed thee, but thou hast scorned them, O Titaness, grasping
 Rather the shield and the spear. Thou, obeying thy turbulent nature,
 Tramplest o’er laws that are old to the pleasure thy heart has demanded.
 Rather bow to the ancient Gods who are seated and constant.
 But for thyself thou passest and what hast thou gained for the aeons
 Mingled with men in their works and depriving the age of thy beauty?
 Fair art thou, woman, but fair with a bitter and opposite sweetness
 Clanging in war when thou matchest thy voice with the shout of assemblies.
 Not to this end was thy sweetness made and the joy of thy members,
 Not to this rhythm Heaven tuned its pipe in thy throat of enchantment,
 Armoured like men to go warring forth and with hardness and fierceness
 Mix in the strife and the hate while the varied meaning of Nature

Perishes hurt in its heart and life is emptied of music.
Long have I marked in your world a madness. Monarchs descending
Court the imperious mob of their slaves and their suppliant gesture
Shameless and venal offends the majestic tradition of ages:
Princes plead in the agora; spurred by the tongue of a coward,
Heroes march to an impious war at a priestly bidding.
Gold is sought by the great with the chaffering heart of the trader.
Asia fails and the Gods are abandoning Ida for Hellas.
Why must thou come here to perish, O noble and exquisite virgin,
Here in a cause not thine, in a quarrel remote from thy beauty,
Leaving a land that is lovely and far to be slain among strangers?
Girl, to thy rivers go back and thy hills where the grapes are aspirant.
Trust not a fate that indulges; for all things, Penthesilea,
Break with excess and he is the wisest who walks by a measure.
Yet, if thou wilt, thou shalt meet me today in the shock of the battle:
There will I give thee the fame thou desirest; captive in Hellas,
Men shall point to thee always, smiling and whispering, saying,
“This is the woman who fought with the Greeks, overthrowing their heroes;
This is the slayer of Ajax, this is the slave of Achilles.””

Then with her musical laughter the fearless Penthesilea:
“Well do I hope that Achilles enslaved shall taste of that glory
Or on the Phrygian fields lie slain by the spear of a woman.”
But to the herald Achaian the Priamid, leader of Troya:
“Rest in the halls of thy foes and ease thy fatigue and thy winters.
Herald, abide till the people have heard and reply to Achilles.
Not as the kings of the West are Ilion’s princes and archons,
Monarchs of men who drive their nations dumb to the battle.
Not in the palace of Priam and not in the halls of the mighty
Whispered councils prevail and the few dispose of the millions;
But with their nation consulting, feeling the hearts of the commons
Ilion’s princes march to the war or give peace to their foemen.
Lightning departs from her kings and the thunder returns from her people
Met in the ancient assembly where Ilus founded his columns
And since her famous centuries, names that the ages remember
Leading her, Troya proclaims her decrees to obedient nations.”

Ceasing he cried to the thralls of his house and they tended the Argive.
Brought to a chamber of rest in the luminous peace of the mansion,

Grey he sat and endured the food and the wine of his foemen,
Chiding his spirit that murmured within him and gazed undelighted,
Vexed with the endless pomps of Laomedon. Far from those glories
Memory winged it back to a sward half-forgotten, a village
Nestling in leaves and low hills watching it crowned with the sunset.
So for his hour he abode in earth's palace of lordliest beauty,
But in its caverns his heart was weary and, hurt by the splendours,
Longed for Greece and the smoke-darkened roof of a cottage in Argos,
Eyes of a woman faded and children crowding the hearthside.
Joyless he rose and eastward expected the sunrise on Ida.

BOOK II

The Book of the Statesman

Now from his cycle sleepless and vast round the dance of the earth-globe
Gold Hyperion rose in the wake of the dawn like the eyeball
Flaming of God revealed by his uplifted luminous eyelid.
Troy he beheld and he viewed the transient labour of mortals.
All her marble beauty and pomp were laid bare to the heavens.
Sunlight streamed into Ilion waking the voice of her gardens,
Amorous seized on her ways, lived glad in her plains and her pastures,
Kissed her leaves into brightness of green. As a lover the last time
Yearns to the beauty desired that again shall not wake to his kisses,
So over Ilion doomed leaned the yearning immense of the sunrise.
She like a wordless marble memory dreaming for ever
Lifted the gaze of her perishable immortality sunwards.
All her human past aspired in the clearness eternal,
Temples of Phryx and Dardanus touched with the gold of the morning,
Columns triumphant of Ilus, domes of their greatness enamoured,
Stones that intended to live; and her citadel climbed up to heaven
White like the soul of the Titan Laomedon claiming his kingdoms,
Watched with alarm by the gods as he came. Her bosom maternal
Thrilled to the steps of her sons and a murmur began in her high-roads.
Life renewed its ways which death and sleep cannot alter,
Life that pursuing her boundless march to a goal which we know not,
Ever her own law obeys, not our hopes, who are slaves of her heart-beats.
Then as now men walked in the round which the gods have decreed them
Eagerly turning their eyes to the lure and the tool and the labour.
Chained is their gaze to the span in front, to the gulfs they are blinded
Meant for their steps. The seller opened his shop and the craftsman
Bent o'er his instruments handling the work he never would finish,
Busy as if their lives were for ever, today in its evening
Sure of tomorrow. The hammers clanged and the voice of the markets
Waking desired its daily rumour. Nor only the craftsman,
Only the hopes of the earth, but the hearts of her votaries kneeling
Came to her marble shrines and upraised to our helpers eternal
Missioned the prayer and the hymn or silent, subtly adoring
Ventured upwards in incense. Loud too the clash of the cymbals

Dropped like a silent boon of purity soft from the branches:
Flowers by the wayside were budding, cries flew winged round the
tree-tops.

Bright was the glory of life in Iliou city of Priam.

Thrice to the city the doom-blast published its solemn alarum;
Blast of the trumpets that call to assembly clamoured through Troya
Thrice and were still. From garden and highway, from palace and temple
Turned like a steed to the trumpet, rejoicing in war and ambition,
Gathered alert to the call the democracy hated of heaven.
First in their ranks upbearing their age as Atlas his heavens,
Eagle-crested, with hoary hair like the snow upon Ida,
Iliou's senators paced, Antenor and wide-browed Anchises,
Athamas famous for ships and the war of the waters, Tryas
Still whose name was remembered by Oxus the orient river,
Astyoche and Ucalegon, dateless Pallachus, Aetor,
Aspetus who of the secrets divine knew all and was silent,
Ascanus, Ilioues, Alcesiphron, Orus, Aretes.
Next from the citadel came with the voice of the heralds before him
Priam and Priam's sons, Aeneas leonine striding,
Followed by the heart of a nation adoring her Penthesilea.
All that was noble in Troy attended the regal procession
Marching in front and behind and the tramp of their feet was a rhythm
Tuned to the arrogant fortunes of Iliou ruled by incarnate
Demigods, Ilus and Phryx and Dardanus, Tros of the conquests,
Tros and far-ruling Laomedon who to his soul's strong labour
Drew down the sons of the skies and was served by the ageless immortals.
Into the agora vast and aspirant besieged by its columns
Bathed and anointed they came like gods in their beauty and grandeur.
Last like the roar of the winds came trampling the surge of the people.
Clamorous led by a force obscure to its ultimate fatal
Session of wrath the violent mighty democracy hastened;
Thousands of ardent lives with the heart yet unslain in their bosoms
Lifted to heaven the voice of man and his far-spreading rumour.
Singing the young men with banners marched in their joyous processions,
Troed in martial measure or dancing with lyrical paces
Chanted the glory of Troy and the wonderful deeds of their fathers.
Into the columned assembly where Ilus had gathered his people,

Thousands on thousands the tramp and the murmur poured; in their
armoured
 Glittering tribes they were ranked, an untameable high-hearted nation
 Waiting the voice of its chiefs. Some gazed on the greatness of Priam
 Ancient, remote from their days, the last of the gods who were passing,
 Left like a soul uncompanioned in worlds where his strength shall not
conquer:

Sole like a column gigantic alone on a desolate hill-side
 Older than mortals he seemed and mightier. Many in anger
 Aimed their hostile looks where calm though by heaven abandoned,
 Left to his soul and his lucid mind and its thoughts unavailing,
 Leading the age-chilled few whom the might of their hearts had not blinded,
 Famous Antenor was seated, the fallen unpopular statesman,
 Wisest of speakers in Troy but rejected, stoned and dishonoured.
 Silent, aloof from the people he sat, a heart full of ruins.
 Low was the rumour that swelled like the hum of the bees in a meadow
 When with the thirst of the honey they swarm on the thyme and the linden,
 Hundreds humming and flitting till all that place is a murmur.
 Then from his seat like a tower arising Priam the monarch
 Slowly erect in his vast tranquillity silenced the people:
 Lonely, august he stood like one whom death has forgotten,
 Reared like a column of might and of silence over the assembly.
 So Olympus rises alone with his snows into heaven.
 Crowned were his heights by the locks that swept like the mass of the
snow-swathe

Clothing his giant shoulders; his eyes of deep meditation,
 Eyes that beheld now the end and accepted it like the beginning
 Gazed on the throng of the people as on a pomp that is painted:
 Slowly he spoke like one who is far from the scenes where he sojourns.
 “Leader of Ilion, hero Deiphobus, thou who hast summoned
 Troy in her people, arise; say wherefore thou callest us. Evil
 Speak thou or good, thou canst speak that only: Necessity fashions
 All that the unseen eye has beheld. Speak then to the Trojans;
 Say on this dawn of her making what issue of death or of triumph
 Fate in her suddenness puts to the unseeing, what summons to perish
 Send to this nation men who revolt and gods who are hostile.”

Rising Deiphobus spoke, in stature less than his father,

Joy of mornings secure and death repulsed from your hearthsides.
 Yield these and live, else I leap on you, Fate in front, Hades behind me.
 Bound to the gods by an oath I return not again from the battle
 Till from high Ida my shadow extends to the Mede and Euphrates.
 Let not your victories deceive you, steps that defeat has imagined;
 Hear not the voice of your heroes; their fame is a trumpet in Hades:
 Only they conquer while yet my horses champ free in their stables.
 Earth cannot long resist the man whom Heaven has chosen;
 Gods with him walk; his chariot is led; his arm is assisted.
 High rings the Hellene challenge, earth waits for the Ilian answer.
 Always man's Fate hangs poised on the flitting breath of a moment;
 Called by some word, by some gesture it leaps, then 'tis graven, 'tis granite.
 Speak! by what gesture high shall the stern gods recognise Troya?
 Sons of the ancients, race of the gods, inviolate city,
 Firmer my spear shall I grasp or cast from my hand and for ever?
 Search in your hearts if your fathers still dwell in them, children of Teucer."
 So Deiphobus spoke and the nation heard him in silence,
 Awed by the shadow vast of doom, indignant with Fortune.

Calm from his seat Antenor arose as a wrestler arises,
 Tamer of beasts in the cage of the lions, eyeing the monsters
 Brilliant, tawny of mane, and he knows if his courage waver,
 Falter his eye or his nerve be surprised by the gods that are hostile,
 Death will leap on him there in the crowded helpless arena.
 Fearless Antenor arose, and a murmur swelled in the meeting
 Cruel and threatening, hoarse like the voice of the sea upon boulders;
 Hisses thrilled through the roar and one man cried to another,
 "Lo he will speak of peace who has swallowed the gold of Achaia!
 Surely the people of Troy are eunuchs who suffer Antenor
 Rising unharmed in the agora. Are there not stones in the city?
 Surely the steel grows dear in the land when a traitor can flourish."
 Calm like a god or a summit Antenor stood in the uproar.
 But as he gazed on his soul came memory dimming the vision;
 For he beheld his past and the agora crowded and cheering,
 Passionate, full of delight while Antenor spoke to the people,
 Troy that he loved and his fatherland proud of her eloquent statesman.
 Tears to his eyes came thick and he gripped at the staff he was holding.
 Mounting his eyes met fully the tumult, mournful and thrilling,

Conquering men's hearts with a note of doom in its sorrowful sweetness.

“People of Iliou, blood of my blood, O race of Antenor,
Once will I speak though you slay me; for who would shrink from
destruction

Knowing that soon of his city and nation, his house and his dear ones
All that remains will be a couch of trampled ashes? Athene,
Slain today may I join the victorious souls of our fathers,
Not for the anguish be kept and the irremediable weeping.
Loud will I speak the word that the gods have breathed in my spirit,
Strive this last time to save the death-destined. Who are these clamour
‘Hear him not, gold of the Greeks bought his words and his throat is
accursèd’?

Troy whom my counsels made great, hast thou heard this roar of their frenzy
Tearing thy ancient bosom? Is it thy voice, heaven-abandoned, my mother?
O my country, O my creatress, earth of my longings!
Earth where our fathers lie in their sacred ashes undying,
Memoried temples shelter the shrines of our gods and the altars
Pure where we worshipped, the beautiful children smile on us passing,
Women divine and the men of our nation! O land where our childhood
Played at a mother's feet mid the trees and the hills of our country,
Hoping our manhood toiled and our youth had its seekings for godhead, —
Thou for our age keepst repose mid the love and the honour of kinsmen,
Silent our relics shall lie with the city guarding our ashes!
Earth who hast fostered our parents, earth who hast given us our offspring,
Soil that created our race where fed from the bosom of Nature
Happy our children shall dwell in the storied homes of their fathers,
Souls that our souls have stamped, sweet forms of ourselves when we perish!
Once even then have they seen thee in their hearts, or dreamed of thee ever
Who from thy spirit revolt and only thy name make an idol
Hating thy faithful sons and the cult of thy ancient ideal!
Wake, O my mother divine, remember thy gods and thy wisdom,
Silence the tongues that degrade thee, prophets profane of thy godhead.
Madmen, to think that a man who has offered his life for his country,
Served her with words and deeds and adored with victories and triumphs
Ever could think of enslaving her breast to the heel of a foeman!
Surely Antenor's halls are empty, he begs from the stranger
Leading his sons and his children's sons by the hand in the market

Showing his rags since his need is so bitter of gold from the Argives!
 You who demand a reply when Laocoon lessens Antenor,
 Hush then your feeble roar and your ear to the past and the distance
 Turn. You fields that are famous for ever, reply for me calling,
 Fields of the mighty mown by my sword's edge, Chersonese conquered,
 Thrace and her snows where we fought on the frozen streams and were
 victors

Then when they were unborn who are now your delight and your leaders.
 Answer return, you columns of Ilus, here where my counsels
 Made Troy mightier guiding her safe through the shocks of her foemen.
 Gold! I have heaped it up high, I am rich with the spoils of your haters.
 It was your fathers dead who gave me that wealth as my guerdon,
 Now my reproach, your fathers who saw not the Greeks round their

ramparts:

They were not cooped by an upstart race in the walls of Apollo,
 Saw not Hector slain and Troilus dragged by his coursers.
 Far over wrathful Jaxartes they rode; the shaken Achaian
 Prostrate adored your strength who now shouts at your portals and conquers
 Then when Antenor guided Troy, this old man, this traitor,
 Not Laocoon, nay, not even Paris nor Hector.
 But I have changed, I have grown a niggard of blood and of treasure,
 Selfish, chilled as old men seem to the young and the headstrong,
 Counselling safety and ease, not the ardour of noble decisions.
 Come to my house and behold, my house that was filled once with voices.
 Sons whom the high gods envied me crowded the halls that are silent.
 Where are they now? They are dead, their voices are silent in Hades,
 Fallen slaying the foe in a war between sin and the Furies.
 Silent they went to the battle to die unmourned for their country,
 Die as they knew in vain. Do I keep now the last ones remaining,
 Sparing their blood that my house may endure? Is there any in Troya
 Speeds to the front of the mellay outstripping the sons of Antenor?
 Let him arise and speak and proclaim it and bid me be silent.
 Heavy is this war that you love on my heart and I hold you as madmen
 Doomed by the gods, abandoned by Pallas, by Hera afflicted.
 Who would not hate to behold his work undone by the foolish?
 Who would not weep if he saw Laocoon ruining Troya,
 Paris doomed in his beauty, Aeneas slain by his valour?

Still you need to be taught that the high gods see and remember,
Dream that they care not if justice be done on the earth or oppression!
Happy to live, aspire while you violate man and the immortals!
Vainly the sands of Time have been strewn with the ruins of empires,
Signs that the gods had left, but in vain. For they look for a nation,
One that can conquer itself having conquered the world, but they find none.
None has been able to hold all the gods in his bosom unstagged,
All have grown drunken with force and have gone down to Hell and to Ate.
'All have been thrust from their heights,' say the fools; 'we shall live and
for ever.

We are the people at last, the children, the favourites; all things
Only to us are permitted.' They too descend to the silence,
Death receives their hopes and the void their stirrings of action.

“Eviller fate there is none than life too long among mortals.

I have conversed with the great who have gone, I have fought in their
war-cars;

Tros I have seen, Laomedon's hand has dwelt on my temples.
Now I behold Laocoon, now our greatest is Paris.
First when Phryx by the Hellespont reared to the cry of the ocean
Hewing her stones as vast as his thoughts his high-seated fortress,
Planned he a lair for a beast of prey, for a pantheress dire-souled
Crouched in the hills for her bound or self-gathered against the avenger?
Dardanus shepherded Asia's coasts and her sapphire-girt islands.
Mild was his rule like the blessing of rain upon fields in the summer.
Gladly the harried coasts reposed confessing the Phrygian,
Caria, Lycia's kings and the Paphlagon, strength of the Mysian;
Minos' Crete recovered the sceptre of old Rhadamanthus.
Ilus and Tros had strength in the fight like a far-striding Titan's:
Troy triumphant following the urge of their souls to the vastness,
Helmeted, crowned like a queen of the gods with the fates for her coursers
Rode through the driving sleet of the spears to Indus and Oxus.
Then twice over she conquered the vanquished, with peace as in battle;
There where discord had clashed, sweet Peace sat girded with plenty,
There where tyranny counted her blows, came the hands of a father.
Neither had Teucer a soul like your chiefs' who refounded this nation.
Such was the antique and noble tradition of Troy in her founders,
Builders of power that endured; but it perishes lost to their offspring,

Trampled, scorned by an arrogant age, by a violent nation.
 Strong Anchises trod it down trampling victorious onwards
 Stern as his sword and hard as the silent bronze of his armour.
 More than another I praise the man who is mighty and steadfast,
 Even as Ida the mountain I praise, a refuge for lions;
 But in the council I laud him not, he who a god for his kindred,
 Lives for the rest without bowels of pity or fellowship, lone-souled,
 Scorning the world that he rules, who untamed by the weight of an empire
 Holds allies as subjects, subjects as slaves and drives to the battle
 Careless more of their wills than the courser's yoked to his war-car.
 Therefore they fought while they feared, but gladly abandon us falling.
 Yet had they gathered to Teucer in the evil days of our nation.
 Where are they now? Do they gather then to the dreaded Anchises?
 Or has Aeneas helped with his counsels hateful to wisdom?
 Hateful is this, abhorred of the gods, imagined by Ate
 When against subjects murmuring discord and faction appointed
 Scatter unblest gold, the heart of a people is poisoned,
 Virtue pursued and baseness triumphs tongued like a harlot,
 Brother against brother arrayed that the rule may endure of a stranger.
 Yes, but it lasts! For its hour. The high gods watch in their silence,
 Mute they endure for a while that the doom may be swifter and greater.
 Hast thou then lasted, O Troy? Lo, the Greeks at thy gates and Achilles.
 Dream, when Virtue departs, that Wisdom will linger, her sister!
 Wisdom has turned from your hearts; shall Fortune dwell with the foolish?
 Fatal oracles came to you great-tongued, vaunting of empires
 Stretched from the risen sun to his rest in the occident waters,
 Dreams of a city throned on the hills with her foot on the nations.
 Meanwhile the sword was prepared for our breasts and the flame for our
 housetops.

Wake, awake, O my people! the fire-brand mounts up your doorsteps;
 Gods who deceived to slay, press swords on your children's bosoms.
 See, O ye blind, ere death in pale countries open your eyelids!
 Hear, O ye deaf, the sounds in your ears and the voices of evening!
 Young men who vaunt in your strength! when the voice of this aged Antenor
 Governed your fathers' youth, all the Orient was joined to our banners.
 Macedon leaned to the East and her princes yearned to the victor,
 Scythians worshipped in Ilion's shrines, the Phoenician trader

Bartered her tokens, Babylon's wise men paused at our thresholds;
Fair-haired sons of the snows came rapt towards golden Troya
Drawn by the song and the glory. Strymon sang hymns unto Ida,
Hoarse Chalcidice, dim Chersonesus married their waters
Under the o'erarching yoke of Troy twixt the term-posts of Ocean.
Meanwhile far through the world your fortunes led by my counsels
Followed their lure like women snared by a magical tempter:
High was their chant as they paced and it came from continents distant.
Turn now and hear! what voice approaches? what glitter of armies?
Loud upon Trojan beaches the tread and the murmur of Hellas!
Hark! 'tis the Achaian's paeon rings o'er the Pergaman waters!
So wake the dreams of Aeneas; reaped is Laocoon's harvest.
Artisans new of your destiny fashioned this far-spreading downfall,
Counsellors blind who scattered your strength to the hooves of the Scythian,
Barren victories, trophies of skin-clad Illyrian pastors.
Who but the fool and improvident, who but the dreamer and madman
Leaves for the far and ungrasped earth's close and provident labour?
Children of earth, our mother gives tokens, she lays down her signposts,
Step by step to advance on her bosom, to grow by her seasons,
Order our works by her patience and limit our thought by her spaces.
But you had chiefs who were demigods, souls of an earth-scorning stature,
Minds that saw vaster than life and strengths that God's hour could not limit!
These men seized upon Troy as the tool of their giant visions,
Dreaming of Africa's suns and bright Hesperian orchards,
Carthage our mart and our feet on the sunset hills of the Latins.
Iliou's hinds in the dream ploughed Libya, sowed Italy's cornfields,
Troy stretched to Gades; even the gods and the Fates had grown Trojan.
So are the natures of men uplifted by Heaven in its satire.
Scorning the bit of the gods, despisers of justice and measure,
Zeus is denied and adored some shadow huge of their natures
Losing the shape of man in a dream that is splendid and monstrous.
Titans, vaunting they stride and the world resounds with their footsteps;
Titans, clanging they fall and the world is full of their ruin.
Children, you dreamed with them, heard the roar of the Atlantic breakers
Welcome your keels and the Isles of the Blest grew your wonderful gardens.
Lulled in the dream, you saw not the black-drifting march of the storm-rack,
Heard not the galloping wolves of the doom and the howl of their hunger.

Greece in her peril united her jarring clans; you suffered
 Patient, preparing the north, the wisdom and silence of Peleus,
 Atreus' craft and the Argives gathered to King Agamemnon.
 But there were prophecies, Pythian oracles, mutterings from Delphi.
 How shall they prosper who haste after auguries, oracles, whispers,
 Dreams that walk in the night and voices obscure of the silence?
 Touches are these from the gods that bewilder the brain to its ruin.
 One sole oracle helps, still armoured in courage and prudence
 Patient and heedful to toil at the work that is near in the daylight.
 Leave to the night its phantoms, leave to the future its curtain!
 Only today Heaven gave to mortal man for his labour.
 If thou hadst bowed not thy mane, O Troy, to the child and the dreamer,
 Hadst thou been faithful to Wisdom the counsellor seated and ancient,
 Then would the hour not have dawned when Paris lingered in Sparta
 Led by the goddess fatal and beautiful, white Aphrodite.
 Man, shun the impulses dire that spring armed from thy nature's abysses!
 Dread the dusk rose of the gods, flee the honey that tempts from its petals!
 Therefore the black deed was done and the hearth that welcomed was sullied.
 Sin-called the Fury uplifted her tresses of gloom o'er the nations
 Maddening the earth with the scream of her blood-thirst, bowless,
stone-eyed,
 Claiming her victims from God and bestriding the hate and the clamour.
 Yet midst the stroke and the wail when men's eyes were blind with the
blood-mist,
 Still had the high gods mercy recalling Teucer and Ilus.
 Just was the heart of their anger. Discord flaming from Ida,
 Hundred-voiced glared from the ships through the camp of the victor
Achaians, —
 Love to that discord added her flowerlike lips of Briseis;
 Faltering lids of Polyxena conquered the strength of Pelides.
 Vainly the gods who pity open the gates of salvation!
 Vainly the winds of their mercy breathe on our fevered existence!
 Man his passions prefers to the voice that guides from the heavens.
 These too were here whom Hera had chosen to ruin this nation:
 Charioteers cracking the whips of their speed on the paths of destruction,
 Demigods they! they have come down from Heaven glad to that labour,
 Deaf is the world with the fame of their wheels as they race down to Hades.

O that alone they could reach it! O that pity could soften
Harsh Necessity's dealings, sparing our innocent children,
Saving the Trojan women and aged from bonds and the sword-edge!
These had not sinned whom you slay in your madness! Ruthless, O mortals,
Must you be then to yourselves when the gods even faltering with pity
Turn from the grief that must come and the agony vast and the weeping?
Say not the road of escape sinks too low for your arrogant treading.
Pride is not for our clay; the earth, not heaven was our mother
And we are even as the ant in our toil and the beast in our dying;
Only who cling to the hands of the gods can rise up from the earth-mire.
Children, lie prone to their scourge, that your hearts may revive in their
sunshine.

This is our lot! when the anger of heaven has passed then the mortal
Raises his head; soon he heals his heart and forgets he has suffered.
Yet if resurgence from weakness and shame were withheld from the creature,
Every fall without morrow, who then would counsel submission?
But since the height of mortal fortune ascending must stumble,
Fallen, again ascend, since death like birth is our portion,
Ripening, mowed, to be sown again like corn by the farmer,
Let us be patient still with the gods accepting their purpose.
Deem not defeat I welcome. Think not to Hellas submitting
Death of proud hope I would seal. Not this have I counselled, O nation,
But to be even as your high-crested forefathers, greatest of mortals.
Troya of old enringed by the hooves of Cimmerian armies
Flamed to the heavens from her plains and her smoke-blackened citadel
sheltered

Mutely the joyless rest of her sons and the wreck of her greatness.
Courage and wisdom survived in that fall and a stern-eyed prudence
Helped her to live; disguised from her mightiness Troy crouched waiting.
Teucer descended whose genius worked at this kingdom and nation,
Patient, scrupulous, wise, like a craftsman carefully toiling
Over a helmet or over a breastplate, testing it always,
Toiled in the eye of the Masters of all and had heed of its labour.
So in the end they would not release him like souls that are common;
They out of Ida sent into Iliou Pallas Athene;
Secret she came and he went with her into the luminous silence.
Teucer's children after their sire completed his labour.

Now too, O people, front adversity self-gathered, silent.
 Veil thyself, leonine mighty Ilion, hiding thy greatness!
 Be as thy father Teucer; be as a cavern for lions;
 Be as a Fate that crouches! Wordless and stern for your vengeance
 Self-gathered work in the night and secrecy shrouding your bosoms.
 Let not the dire heavens know of it; let not the foe seize a whisper!
 Ripen the hour of your stroke, while your words drip sweeter than honey.
 Sure am I, friends, you will turn from death at my voice, you will hear me!
 Some day yet I shall gaze on the ruins of haughty Mycenae.
 Is this not better than Ilion cast to the sword of her haters,
 Is this not happier than Troya captured and wretchedly burning,
 Time to await in his stride when the southern and northern Achaians
 Gazing with dull distaste now over their severing isthmus
 Hate-filled shall move to the shock by the spur of the gods in them driven,
 Pelops march upon Attica, Thebes descend on the Spartan?
 Then shall the hour now kept in heaven for us ripen to dawning,
 Then shall Victory cry to our banners over the Ocean
 Calling our sons with her voice immortal. Children of Ilus,
 Then shall Troy rise in her strength and stride over Greece up to Gades.”

So Antenor spoke and the mind of the hostile assembly
 Moved and swayed with his words like the waters ruled by Poseidon.
 Even as the billows rebellious lashed by the whips of the tempest
 Curvet and rear their crests like the hooded wrath of a serpent,
 Green-eyed under their cowls sublime, — unwilling they journey,
 Foam-bannered, hoarse-voiced, shepherded, forced by the wind to the
margin
 Meant for their rest and can turn not at all, though they rage, on their
driver, —

Last with a sullen applause and consenting lapse into thunder,
 Where they were led all the while they sink down huge and astonished,
 So in their souls that withstood and obeyed and hated the yielding,
 Lashed by his censure, indignant, the Trojans moved towards his purpose:
 Sometimes a roar arose, then only, weakened, rarer,
 Angry murmurs swelled between sullen stretches of silence;
 Last, a reluctant applause broke dull from the throats of the commons.
 Silent raged in their hearts Laocoon's following daunted;
 Troubled the faction of Paris turned to the face of their leader.

He as yet rose not; careless he sat in his beauty and smiling,
Gazing with brilliant eyes at the sculptured pillars of Ilus.
Doubtful, swayed by Antenor, waited in silence the nation.

The Island - Sun

I have sailed the golden ocean
And crossed the silver bar,
I have reached the Sun of knowledge
The earth-self's midnight star.

Its fields of flaming vision,
Its mountains of bare night,
Its peaks of fiery rapture,
Its air of absolute light,

Its seas of self-oblivion,
Its vales of Titan rest
Became my soul's dominion,
Its Island of the Blest.

Alas with God and silence,
Familiar it lived in Time's
Life was the fugue of music,
Thought was Truth's ardent rhyme.

The Light was still around me
When I came back to earth
Bringing the immortal's knowledge
Into man's case of birth.

October 3. 1939

Once more he started erect and his voice o'er the hearts of his hearers
Swept like Ocean's impatient cry when it calls from its surges,
Ocean loud with a thought sublime in its measureless marching,
Each man felt his heart like foam in the rushing of waters.

“Iliad is vanquished then! she abases her grandiose spirit
Mortal found in the end to the gods and the Greeks and Antenor,
And when a barbarous chieftain's menace and insolent mercy
Bring here their pride to insult the columned spirit of Ilus,
Trojans have sat and feared! For a man has arisen and spoken,
One whom the gods in their anger have hired. Since the Argive prevailed not,
Armed with his strength and his numbers, in Troya they sought for her slayer,
Gathered their wiles in a voice and they chose a man famous and honoured,
Summoned Ate to aid and corrupted the heart of Antenor.
Flute of the breath of the Hell-witch, always he scatters among you
Doubt, affliction and weakness chilling the hearts of the fighters,
Always his voice with its cadenced and subtle possession for evil
Breaks the constant will and maims the impulse heroic.
Therefore while yet her heroes fight and her arms are unconquered,
Troy in your hearts is defeated! The souls of your Fathers have heard you
Dallying, shamefast, with vileness, lured by the call of dishonour.
Such is the power Zeus gave to the wingèd words of a mortal!
Foiled in his will, disowned by the years that stride on for ever,
Yet in the frenzy cold of his greed and his fallen ambition
Doom from heaven he calls down on his countrymen, Trojan abuses
Troy, his country, extolling her enemies, blessing her slayers.
Such are the gods Antenor has made in his heart's own image
That if one evil man have not way for his greed and his longing
Cities are doomed and kings must be slain and a nation must perish!
But from the mind of the free and the brave I will answer thy bodings,
Gold-hungry raven of Troy who croakst from thy nest at her princes.
Only one doom irreparable treads down the soul of a nation,
Only one downfall endures; 'tis the ruin of greatness and virtue,
Mourning when Freedom departs from the life and the heart of a people,
Into her room comes creeping the mind of the slave and it poisons
Manhood and joy and the voice to lying is trained and subjection
Easy feels to the neck of man who is next to the godheads.
Not of the fire am I terrified, not of the sword and its slaying;

Vileness of men appals me, baseness I fear and its voices.
 What can man suffer direr or worse than enslaved from a victor
 Boons to accept, to take safety and ease from the foe and the stranger,
 Fallen from the virtue stern that heaven permits to a mortal?
 Death is not keener than this nor the slaughter of friends and our dear ones.
 Out and alas! earth's greatest are earth and they fail in the testing,
 Conquered by sorrow and doubt, fate's hammerers, fires of her furnace.
 God in their souls they renounce and submit to their clay and its promptings.
 Else could the heart of Troy have recoiled from the loom of the shadow
 Cast by Achilles' spear or shrunk at the sound of his car-wheels?
 Now he has graven an oath austere in his spirit unpliant
 Victor at last to constrain in his stride the walls of Apollo
 Burning Troy ere he sleeps. 'Tis the vow of a high-crested nature;
 Shall it break ramparted Troy? Yea, the soul of a man too is mighty
 More than the stone and the mortar! Troy had a soul once, O Trojans,
 Firm as her god-built ramparts. When by the spears overtaken,
 Strong Sarpedon fell and Zeus averted his visage,
 Xanthus red to the sea ran sobbing with bodies of Trojans,
 When in the day of the silence of heaven the far-glancing helmet
 Ceased from the ways of the fight, and panic slew with Achilles
 Hosts who were left unshepherded pale at the fall of their greatest,
 Godlike Troy lived on. Do we speak mid a city's ruins?
 Lo! she confronts her heavens as when Tros and Laomedon ruled her.
 All now is changed, these mutter and sigh to you, all now is ended;
 Strength has renounced you, Fate has finished the thread of her spinning.
 Hector is dead, he walks in the shadows; Troilus fights not;
 Resting his curls on the asphodel he has forgotten his country:
 Strong Sarpedon lies in Bellerophon's city sleeping:
 Memnon is slain and the blood of Rhesus has dried on the Troad:
 All of the giant Asius sums in a handful of ashes.
 Grievous are these things; our hearts still keep all the pain of them treasured,
 Hard though they grow by use and iron caskets of sorrow.
 Hear me yet, O fainters in wisdom snared by your pathos,
 Know this iron world we live in where Hell casts its shadow.
 Blood and grief are the ransom of men for the joys of their transience,
 For we are mortals bound in our strength and beset in our labour.
 This is our human destiny; every moment of living

Toil and loss have gained in the constant siege of our bodies.
Men must sow earth with their hearts and their tears that their country
may prosper;
Earth who bore and devours us that life may be born from our remnants.
Then shall the Sacrifice gather its fruits when the war-shout is silent,
Nor shall the blood be in vain that our mother has felt on her bosom
Nor shall the seed of the mighty fail where Death is the sower.
Still from the loins of the mother eternal are heroes engendered,
Still Deiphobus shouts in the war-front trampling the Argives,
Strong Aeneas' far-borne voice is heard from our ramparts,
Paris' hands are swift and his feet in the chases of Ares.
Lo, when deserted we fight by Asia's soon-wearied peoples,
Men ingrate who enjoyed the protection and loathed the protector,
Heaven has sent us replacing a continent Penthesilea!
Low has the heart of Achaia sunk since it shook at her war-cry.
Ajax has bit at the dust; it is all he shall have of the Troad;
Tall Meriones lies and measures his portion of booty.
Who is the fighter in Ilion thrills not rejoicing to hearken
Even her name on unwarlike lips, much more in the mellay
Shout of the daughter of battles, armipotent Penthesilea?
If there were none but these only, if hosts came not surging behind them,
Young men burning-eyed to outdare all the deeds of their elders,
Each in his beauty a Troilus, each in his valour a Hector,
Yet were the measures poised in the equal balance of Ares.
Who then compels you, O people unconquered, to sink down abjuring
All that was Troy? For O, if she yield, let her use not ever
One of her titles! shame not the shades of Teucer and Ilus,
Soil not Tros! Are you awed by the strength of the swift-foot Achilles?
Is it a sweeter lure in the cadenced voice of Antenor?
Or are you weary of Time and the endless roar of the battle?
Wearier still are the Greeks! their eyes look out o'er the waters
Nor with the flight of their spears is the wing of their hopes towards Troya.
Dull are their hearts; they sink from the war-cry and turn from the
spear-stroke
Sullenly dragging backwards, desiring the paths of the Ocean,
Dreaming of hearths that are far and the children growing to manhood
Who are small infant faces still in the thoughts of their fathers.

Therefore these call you to yield lest they wake and behold in the dawn-light
 All Poseidon whitening lean to the west in his waters
 Thick with the sails of the Greeks departing beaten to Hellas.
 Who is it calls? Antenor the statesman, Antenor the patriot,
 Thus who loves his country and worships the soil of his fathers!
 Which of you loves like him Troya? which of the children of heroes
 Yearns for the touch of a yoke on his neck and desires the aggressor?
 If there be any so made by the gods in the nation of Ilus,
 Leaving this city which freemen have founded, freemen have dwelt in,
 Far on the beach let him make his couch in the tents of Achilles,
 Not in this mighty Ilion, not with this lioness fighting,
 Guarding the lair of her young and roaring back at her hunters.
 We who are souls descended from Ilus and seeds of his making,
 Other-hearted shall march from our gates to answer Achilles.
 What! shall this ancient Ilion welcome the day of the conquered?
 She who was head of the world, shall she live in the guard of the Hellene
 Cherished as slavegirls are, who are taken in war, by their captors?
 Europe shall walk in our streets with the pride and the gait of the victor?
 Greeks shall enter our homes and prey on our mothers and daughters?
 This Antenor desires and this Ucalegon favours.
 Traitors! whether 'tis cowardice drives or the sceptic of virtue,
 Cold-blooded age, or gold insatiably tempts from its coffers
 Pleading for safety from foreign hands and the sack and the plunder.
 Leave them, my brothers! spare the baffled hypocrites! Failure
 Sharpest shall torture their hearts when they know that still you are Trojans.
 Silence, O reason of man! for a voice from the gods has been uttered!
 Dardanans, hearken the sound divine that comes to you mounting
 Out of the solemn ravines from the mystic seat on the tripod!
 Phoebus, the master of Truth, has promised the earth to our peoples.
 Children of Zeus, rejoice! for the Olympian brows have nodded
 Regal over the world. In earth's rhythm of shadow and sunlight
 Storm is the dance of the locks of the God assenting to greatness,
 Zeus who with secret compulsion orders the ways of our nature;
 Veiled in events he lives and working disguised in the mortal
 Builds our strength by pain, and an empire is born out of ruins.
 Then if the tempest be loud and the thunderbolt leaping incessant
 Shatters the roof, if the lintels flame at last and each cornice

Shrieks with the pain of the blast, if the very pillars totter,
Keep yet your faith in Zeus, hold fast to the word of Apollo.
Not by a little pain and not by a temperate labour
Trained is the nation chosen by Zeus for a dateless dominion.
Long must it labour rolled in the foam of the fathomless surges,
Often neighbour with death and ere Ares grow firm to its banners
Feel on the pride of its Capitol tread of the triumphing victor,
Hear the barbarian knock at its gates or the neighbouring foeman
Glad of the transient smile of his fortune suffer insulting; —
They, the nation eternal, brook their taunts who must perish!
Heaviest toils they must bear; they must wrestle with Fate and her Titans,
And when some leader returns from the battle sole of his thousands
Crushed by the hammers of God, yet never despair of their country.
Dread not the ruin, fear not the storm-blast, yield not, O Trojans.
Zeus shall rebuild. Death ends not our days, the fire shall not triumph.
Death? I have faced it. Fire? I have watched it climb in my vision
Over the timeless domes and over the rooftops of Priam;
But I have looked beyond and have seen the smile of Apollo.
After her glorious centuries, after her world-wide triumphs,
If near her ramparts outnumbered she fights, by the nations forsaken,
Lonely again on her hill, by her streams, and her meadows and beaches,
Once where she revelled, shake to the tramp of her countless invaders,
Testings are these from the god. For Fate severe like a mother
Teaches our wills by disaster and strikes down the props that would weaken,
Fate and the Thought on high that is wiser than yearnings of mortals.
Troy has arisen before, but from ashes, not shame, not surrender!
Souls that are true to themselves are immortal; the soulless for ever
Lingers helpless in Hades a shade among shades disappointed.
Now is the god in my bosom mighty compelling me, Trojans,
Now I release what my spirit has kept and it saw in its vision;
Nor will be silent for gibe of the cynic or sneer of the traitor.
Troy shall triumph! Hear, O ye peoples, the word of Apollo.
Hear it and tremble, O Greece, in thy youth and the dawn of thy future;
Rather forget while thou canst, but the gods in their hour shall remind thee.
Tremble, O nations of Asia, false to the greatness within you.
Troy shall surge back on your realms with the sword and the yoke of the
victor.

Troy shall triumph! Though nations conspire and gods lead her foemen,
 Fate that is born of the spirit is greater than they and will shield her.
 Foemen shall help her with war; her defeats shall be victory's moulders.
 Walls that restrain shall be rent; she shall rise out of sessions unsettled.
 Oceans shall be her walls at the end and the desert her limit;
 Indus shall send to her envoys; her eyes shall look northward from Thule.
 She shall enring all the coasts with her strength like the kingly Poseidon,
 She shall o'ervault all the lands with her rule like the limitless azure."

 Ceasing from speech Laocoon, girt with the shouts of a nation,
 Lapsed on his seat like one seized and abandoned and weakened; nor ended
 Only in iron applause, but throughout with a stormy approval
 Ares broke from the hearts of his people in ominous thunder.
 Savage and dire was the sound like a wild beast's tracked out and hunted,
 Wounded, yet trusting to tear out the entrails live of its hunters,
 Savage and cruel and threatening doom to the foe and opponent.
 Yet when the shouting sank at last, Ucalegon rose up
 Trembling with age and with wrath and in accents hurried and piping
 Faltered a senile fierceness forth on the maddened assembly.
 "Ah, it is even so far that you dare, O you children of Priam,
 Favourites vile of a people sent mad by the gods, and thou risest,
 Dark Laocoon, prating of heroes and spurning as cowards,
 Smiting for traitors the aged and wise who were grey when they spawned
 thee!

Imp of destruction, mane of mischief! Ah, spur us with courage,
 Thou who hast never prevailed against even the feeblest Achaian.
 Rather twice hast thou raced in the rout to the ramparts for shelter,
 Leading the panic, and shrieked as thou ranst to the foemen for mercy
 Who were a mile behind thee, O matchless and wonderful racer.
 Safely counsel to others the pride and the firmness of heroes.
 Thou wilt not die in the battle! For even swiftest Achilles
 Could not o'ertake thee, I ween, nor wind-footed Penthesilea.
 Mask of a prophet, heart of a coward, tongue of a trickster,
 Timeless Ilion thou alone ruinst, helped by the Furies.
 I, Ucalegon, first will rend off the mask from thee, traitor.
 For I believe thee suborned by the cynic wiles of Odysseus
 And thou conspirest to sack this Troy with the greed of the Cretan."
 Hasting unstayed he pursued like a brook that scolds amid pebbles,

Voicing angers shrill; for the people astonished were silent.
Long he pursued not; a shouting broke from that stupor of fury,
Men sprang pale to their feet and hurled out menaces lethal;
All that assembly swayed like a forest swept by the stormwind.
Obstinate, straining his age-dimmed eyes Ucalegon, trembling
Worse yet with anger, clamoured feebly back at the people,
Whelmed in their roar. Unheard was his voice like a swimmer in surges
Lost, yet he spoke. But the anger grew in the throats of the people
Lion-voiced, hurting the heart with sound and daunting the nature,
Till from some stalwart hand a javelin whistling and vibrant
Missing the silvered head of the senator rang disappointed
Out on the distant wall of a house by the side of the market.
Not even then would the old man hush or yield to the tempest.
Wagging his hoary beard and shifting his aged eyeballs,
Tossing his hands he stood; but Antenor seized him and Aetor,
Dragged him down on his seat though he strove, and chid him and silenced,
“Cease, O friend, for the gods have won. It were easier piping
High with thy aged treble to alter the rage of the Ocean
Than to o’erbear this people stirred by Laocoon. Leave now
Effort unhelpful, wrap thy days in a mantle of silence;
Give to the gods their will and dry-eyed wait for the ending.”
So now the old men ceased from their strife with the gods and with Troya;
Cowed by the storm of the people’s wrath they desisted from hoping.
But though the roar long swelled, like the sea when the winds have subsided,
One man yet rose up unafraid and beckoned for silence,
Not of the aged, but ripe in his look and ruddy of visage,
Stalwart and bluff and short-limbed, Halamus son of Antenor.
Forward he stood from the press and the people fell silent and listened,
For he was ever first in the mellay and loved by the fighters.
He with a smile began: “Come, friends, debate is soon ended
If there is right but of lungs and you argue with javelins. Wisdom
Rather pray for her aid in this dangerous hour of your fortunes.
Not to exalt Laocoon, too much praising his swiftness,
Trojans, I rise; for some are born brave with the spear in the war-car,
Others bold with the tongue, nor equal gifts unto all men
Zeus has decreed who guides his world in a round that is devious
Carried this way and that like a ship that is tossed on the waters.

Why should we rail then at one who is lame by the force of Cronion?
Not by his will is he lame; he would race, if he could, with the swiftest.
Yet is the halt man no runner, nor, friends, must you rise up and slay me,
If I should say of this priest, he is neither Sarpedon nor Hector.
Then, if my father whom once you honoured, ancient Antenor,
Hugs to him Argive gold which I see not, his son in his mansion,
Me too accusest thou, prophet Laocoon? Friends, you have watched me
Sometimes fight. Did you see with my house's allies how I gambolled,
Changed, when with sportive spear I was tickling the ribs of my Argives,
Nudges of friendly counsel inviting to entry in Troya?
Men, these are visions of lackbrains; men, these are myths of the market.
Let us have done with them, brothers and friends; hate only the Hellene.
Prophet, I bow to the oracles. Wise are the gods in their silence,
Wise when they speak; but their speech is other than ours and their wisdom
Hard for a mortal mind to hold and not madden or wander;
But for myself I see only the truth as a soldier who battles
Judging the strength of his foes and the chances of iron encounter.
Few are our armies, many the Greeks, and we waste in the combat
Bound to our numbers, — they by the ocean hemmed from their kinsmen,
We by our fortunes, waves of the gods that are harder to master,
They like a rock that is chipped, but we like a mist that disperses.
Then if Achilles, bound by an oath, bring peace to us, healing,
Bring to us respite, help, though bought at a price, yet full-measured,
Strengths of the North at our side and safety assured from the Achaian,
For he is true though a Greek, will you shun this mighty advantage?
Peace at least we shall have, though gold we lose and much glory;
Peace we will use for our strength to breathe in, our wounds to recover,
Teaching Time to prepare for happier wars in the future.
Pause ere you fling from you life; you are mortals, not gods in your glory.
Not for submission to new ally or to ancient foeman
Peace these desire; for who would exchange wide death for subjection?
Who would submit to a yoke? Or who shall rule Trojans in Troya?
Swords are there still at our sides, there are warriors' hearts in our bosoms.
Peace your senators welcome, not servitude, breathing they ask for.
But if for war you pronounce, if a noble death you have chosen,
That I approve. What fitter end for this warlike nation,
Knowing that empires at last must sink and perish all cities,

Than to preserve to the end posterity's praise and its greatness
 Ceasing in clangour of arms and a city's flames for our death-pyre?
 Choose then with open eyes what the dread gods offer to Troya.
 Hope not now Hector is dead and Sarpedon, Asia inconstant,
 We but a handful, Troy can prevail over Greece and Achilles.
 Play not with dreams in this hour, but sternly, like men and not children,
 Choose with a noble and serious greatness fates fit for Troya.
 Stark we will fight till buried we fall under Iliou's ruins,
 Or, unappeased, we will curb our strength for the hope of the future."
 Not without praise of his friends and assent of the thoughtfuller Trojans,
 Halamus spoke and ceased. But now in the Iliou forum
 Bright, of the sun-god a ray, and even before he had spoken
 Sending the joy of his brilliance into the hearts of his hearers,
 Paris arose. Not applauded his rising, but each man towards him
 Eagerly turned as if feeling that all before which was spoken
 Were but a prelude and this was the note he has waited for always.
 Sweet was his voice like a harp's, when it chants of war, and its cadence
 Softened with touches of music thoughts that were hard to be suffered,
 Sweet like a string that is lightly struck, but it penetrates wholly.

"Calm with the greatness you hold from your sires by the right of
your nature

I too would have you decide before Heaven in the strength of your spirits,
 Not to the past and its memories moored like the thoughts of Antenor
 Hating the vivid march of the present, nor towards the future
 Panting through dreams like my brother Laocoon vexed by Apollo.
 Dead is the past; the void has possessed it; its drama is ended,
 Finished its music. The future is dim and remote from our knowledge;
 Silent it lies on the knees of the gods in their luminous stillness.
 But to our gaze God's light is a darkness, His plan is a chaos.
 Who shall foretell the event of a battle, the fall of a footstep?
 Oracles, visions and prophecies voice but the dreams of the mortal,
 And 'tis our spirit within is the Pythoness tortured in Delphi.
 Heavenly voices to us are a silence, those colours a whiteness.
 Neither the thought of the statesman prevails nor the dream of the prophet,
 Whether one cry, 'Thus devise and thy heart shall be given its wanting,'
 Vainly the other, 'The heavens have spoken; hear then their message.'
 Who can point out the way of the gods and the path of their travel,

Born on a night of the gods and of Ate, clothed in a body.
Scornful I strode on my path secure of the light in my bosom,
Turned from the muttering voices of envy, their hates who are fallen,
Voices of hate that cling round the wheels of the triumphing victor;
Now if I speak, 'tis the strength in me answers, not to belittle,
That excusing which most I rejoice in and glory for ever,
Tyndaris' rape whom I seized by the will of divine Aphrodite.
Mortal this error that Greece would have slumbered apart in her mountains,
Sunk, by the trumpets of Fate unaroused and the morning within her,
Only were Paris unborn and the world had not gazed upon Helen.
Fools, who say that a spark was the cause of this giant destruction!
War would have stridden on Troy though Helen were still in her Sparta
Tending an Argive loom, not the glorious prize of the Trojans,
Greece would have banded her nations though Paris had drunk not Eurotas.
Coast against coast I set not, nor Ilion opposite Argos.
Phryx accuse who upreared Troy's domes by the azure Aegean,
Curse Poseidon who fringed with Greece the blue of his waters:
Then was this war first decreed and then Agamemnon was fashioned;
Armed he strode forth in the secret Thought that is womb of the future.
Fate and Necessity guided those vessels, captained their armies.
When they stood mailed at her gates, when they cried in the might of their
union,
'Troy, renounce thy alliances, draw back humbly from Hellas,'
Should she have hearkened persuading her strength to a shameful
compliance,
Ilion queen of the world whose voice was the breath of the storm-gods?
Should she have drawn back her foot as it strode towards the hills of the
Latins?
Thrace left bare to her foes, recoiled from Illyrian conquests?
If all this without battle were possible, people of Priam,
Blame then Paris, say then that Helen was cause of the struggle.
But I have sullied the hearth, I have trampled the gift and the guest-rite,
Heaven I have armed with my sin and unsealed the gaze of the Furies,
So was Troy doomed who righteous had triumphed, locked with the Argive.
Fools or hypocrites! Meanest falsehood is this among mortals,
Veils of purity weaving, names misplacing ideal
When our desires we disguise and paint the lusts of our nature.

Men, ye are men in your pride and your strength, be not sophists and
tonguesters.

Lie not! prate not that nations live by righteousness, justice
 Shields them, gods out of heaven look down wroth on the crimes of the
mighty!

Known have men what thing has screened itself mouthing these
semblances. Crouching

Dire like a beast in the green of the thickets, selfishness silent
 Crunches the bones of its prey while the priest and the statesman are glozing.
 So are the nations soothed and deceived by the clerics of virtue,
 Taught to reconcile fear of the gods with their lusts and their passions;
 So with a lie on their lips they march to the rapine and slaughter.
 Truly the vanquished were guilty! Else would their cities have perished,
 Shrieked their ravished virgins, their peasants been hewn in the vineyards?
 Truly the victors were tools of the gods and their glorious servants!
 Else would the war-cars have ground triumphant their bones whom they
hated?

Servants of God are they verily, even as the ape and the tiger.
 Does not the wild-beast too triumph enjoying the flesh of his captives?
 Tell us then what was the sin of the antelope, wherefore they doomed her,
 Wroth at her many crimes? Come, justify God to his creatures!
 Not to her sins was she offered, not to the Furies or Justice,
 But to the strength of the lion the high gods offered a victim,
 Force that is God in the lion's breast with the forest for altar.
 What, in the cities stormed and sacked by Achilles in Troas
 Was there no just man slain? Was Brises then a transgressor?
 Hearts that were pierced in his walls, were they sinners tracked by the Furies?
 No, they were pious and just and their altars burned for Apollo,
 Reverent flamed up to Pallas who slew them aiding the Argives.
 Or if the crime of Paris they shared and his doom has embraced them,
 Whom had the island cities offended, stormed by the Locrian,
 Wave-kissed homes of peace but given to the sack and the spoiler?
 Was then King Atreus just and the house accursèd of Pelops,
 Tantalus' race, whose deeds men shuddering hear and are silent?
 Look! they endure, their pillars are firm, they are regnant and triumph.
 Or are Thyestean banquets sweet to the gods in their savour?
 Only a woman's heart is pursued in their wrath by the Furies!

No, when the wrestlers meet and embrace in the mighty arena,
Not at their sins and their virtues the high gods look in that trial;
Which is the strongest, which is the subtlest, this they consider.
Nay, there is none in the world to befriend save ourselves and our courage;
Prowess alone in the battle is virtue, skill in the fighting
Only helps, the gods aid only the strong and the valiant.
Put forth your lives in the blow, you shall beat back the banded aggressors.
Neither believe that for justice denied your subjects have left you
Nor that for justice trampled Pallas and Hera abandon.
Two are the angels of God whom men worship, strength and enjoyment.
Into this life which the sunlight bounds and the greenness has cradled,
Armed with strength we have come; as our strength is, so is our joyance.
What but for joyance is birth and what but for joyance is living?
But on this earth that is narrow, this stage that is crowded, increasing
One on another we press. There is hunger for lands and for oxen,
Horses and armour and gold desired; possession allures us
Adding always as field to field some fortunate farmer.
Hearts too and minds are our prey; we seize on men's souls and their bodies,
Slaves to our works and desires that our hearts may bask golden in leisure.
One on another we prey and one by another are mighty.
This is the world and we have not made it; if it is evil,
Blame first the gods; but for us, we must live by its laws or we perish.
Power is divine; divinest of all is power over mortals.
Power then the conqueror seeks and power the imperial nation,
Even as luminous, passionless, wonderful, high over all things
Sit in their calmness the gods and oppressing our grief-tortured nations
Stamp their wills on the world. Nor less in our death-besieged natures
Gods are and altitudes. Earth resists, but my soul in me widens
Helped by the toil behind and the agelong effort of Nature.
Even in the worm is a god and it writhes for a form and an outlet.
Workings immortal obscurely struggling, hints of a godhead
Labour to form in this clay a divinity. Hera widens,
Pallas aspires in me, Phoebus in flames goes battling and singing,
Ares and Artemis chase through the fields of my soul in their hunting.
Last in some hour of the Fates a Birth stands released and triumphant;
Poured by its deeds over earth it rejoices fulfilled in its splendour.
Conscious dimly of births unfinished hid in our being

Rest we cannot; a world cries in us for space and for fullness.
 Fighting we strive by the spur of the gods who are in us and o'er us,
 Stamping our image on men and events to be Zeus or be Ares.
 Love and the need of mastery, joy and the longing for greatness
 Rage like a fire unquenchable burning the world and creating,
 Nor till humanity dies will they sink in the ashes of Nature.
 All is injustice of love or all is injustice of battle.
 Man over woman, woman o'er man, over lover and foeman
 Wrestling we strive to expand in our souls, to be wide, to be happy.
 If thou wouldst only be just, then wherefore at all shouldst thou conquer?
 Not to be just, but to rule, though with kindness and high-seated mercy,
 Taking the world for our own and our will from our slaves and our subjects,
 Smiting the proud and sparing the suppliant, Trojans, is conquest.
 Justice was base of thy government? Vainly, O statesman, thou liest.
 If thou wert just, thou wouldst free thy slaves and be equal with all men.
 Such were a dream of some sage at night when he muses in fancy,
 Imaging freely a flawless world where none were afflicted,
 No man inferior, all could sublimely equal and brothers
 Live in a peace divine like the gods in their luminous regions.
 This, O Antenor, were justice known but in words to us mortals.
 But for the justice thou vauntest enslaving men to thy purpose,
 Setting an iron yoke, nor regarding their need and their nature,
 Then to say 'I am just; I slay not, save by procedure,
 Rob not save by law,' is an outrage to Zeus and his creatures.
 Terms are these feigned by the intellect making a pact with our yearnings,
 Lures of the sophist within us draping our passions with virtue.
 When thou art weak, thou art just, when thy subjects are strong and
remember.
 Therefore, O Trojans, be firm in your will and, though all men abandon,
 Bow not your heads to reproach nor your hearts to the sin of repentance;
 For you have done what the gods desired in your breasts and are blameless.
 Proudly enjoy the earth that they gave you, enthroning their natures,
 Fight with the Greeks and the world and trample down the rebellious,
 What you have lost, recover, nor yield to the hurricane passing.
 You cannot utterly die while the Power lives untired in your bosoms;
 When 'tis withdrawn, not a moment of life can be added by virtue.
 Faint not for helpers fled! Though your yoke had been mild as a father's

They would have gone as swiftly. Strength men desire in their masters;
All men worship success and in failure and weakness abandon.
Not for his justice they clung to Teucer, but for their safety,
Seeing in Troy a head and by barbarous foemen afflicted.
Faint not, O Trojans, cease not from battle, persist in your labour!
Conquer the Greeks, your allies shall be yours and fresh nations your
subjects.

One care only lodge in your hearts, how to fight, how to conquer.
Peace has smiled out of Phthia; a hand comes outstretched from the Hellene.
Who would not join with the godlike? who would not grasp at Achilles?
There is a price for his gifts; it is such as Achilles should ask for,
Never this nation concede. O Antenor's golden phrases
Glorifying rest to the tired and confuting patience and courage,
Garbed with a subtlety lax and the hopes that palliate surrender!
Charmed men applaud the skilful purpose, the dexterous speaker;
This they forget that a Force decides, not the wiles of the statesman.
'Now let us yield,' do you say, 'we will rise when our masters are weakened'?
Nay, then, our master's master shall find us an easy possession!
Easily nations bow to a yoke when their virtue relaxes;
Hard is the breaking fetters once worn, for the virtue has perished.
Hope you when custom has shaped men into the mould of a vileness,
Hugging their chains when the weak feel easier trampled than rising
Or though they groan, yet have heart nor strength for the anguish of effort,
Then to cast down whom, armed and strong, you were mastered opposing?
Easy is lapse into uttermost hell, not easy salvation.
Or have you dreamed that Achilles, this son of the gods and the ocean,
Aught else can be with the strong and the bold save pursuer or master?
Know you so little the mood of the mighty? Think you the lion
Only will lick his prey, that his jaws will refrain from the banquet?
Rest from thy bodings, Antenor! Not all the valour of Troya
Perished with Hector, nor with Polydamas vision has left her;
Troy is not eager to slay her soul on a pyre of dishonour.
Still she has children left who remember the mood of their mother.
Helen none shall take from me living, gold not a drachma
Travels from coffers of Priam to Greece. Let another and older
Pay down his wealth if he will and his daughters serve Menelaus.
Rather from Ilion I will go forth with my brothers and kinsmen;

Troy I will leave and her shame and live with my heart and my honour
Refuged with lions on Ida or build in the highlands a city
Or in an isle of the seas or by dark-driven Pontic waters.
Dear are the halls of our childhood, dear are the fields of our fathers,
Yet to the soul that is free no spot on the earth is an exile.
Rather wherever sunlight is bright, flowers bloom and the rivers
Flow in their lucid streams to the Ocean, there is our country.
So will I live in my soul's wide freedom, never in Troya
Shorn of my will and disgraced in my strength and the mock of my rivals.
First had you yielded, shame at least had not stained your surrender.
Strength indulges the weak! But what Hector has fallen refusing,
Men! what through ten loud years we denied with the spear for our answer,
That what Trojan will ever renounce, though his city should perish?
Once having fought we will fight to the end nor that end shall be evil.
Clamour the Argive spears on our walls? Are the ladders erected?
Far on the plain is their flight, on the farther side of the Xanthus.
Where are the deities hostile? Vainly the eyes of the tremblers
See them stalking vast in the ranks of the Greeks and the shoutings
Dire of Poseidon they hear and are blind with the aegis of Pallas.
Who then sustained so long this Troy, if the gods are against her?
Even the hills could not stand save upheld by their concert immortal.
Now not with Tydeus' son, not now with Odysseus and Ajax
Trample the gods in the sound of their chariot-wheels, victory leading;
Argos falls red in her heaps to their scythes; they shelter the Trojans;
Victory unleashed follows and fawns upon Penthesilea.
Ponder no more, O Ilion, city of ancient Priam!
Rise, O beloved of the gods, and go forth in thy strength to the battle.
Not by the dreams of Laocoon strung to the faith that is febrile,
Nor with the tremblings vain and the haunted thoughts of Antenor,
But with a noble and serious strength and an obstinate valour
Suffer the shock of your foes, O nation chosen by Heaven;
Proudly determine on victory, live by disaster unshaken.
Either Fate receive like men, nay, like gods, nay, like Trojans.”
So like an army that streams and that marches, speeding and pausing,
Drawing in horn and wing or widened for scouting and forage,
Bridging the floods, avoiding the mountains, threading the valleys,
Fast with their flashing panoply clad in gold and in iron

Moved the array of his thoughts; and throughout delight and approval
Followed their march, in triumph led but like prisoners willing,
Glad and unbound to a land they desire. Triumphant he ended,
Lord of opinion, though by the aged frowned on and censured,
But to this voice of their thoughts the young men vibrated wholly.
Loud like a storm on the ocean mounted the roar of the people.
“Cease from debate,” men cried, “arise, O thou warlike Aeneas!
Speak for this nation, launch like a spear at the tents of the Hellene
Ilion’s voice of war!” Then up mid a limitless shouting
Stern and armed from his seat like a war-god helmèd Aeneas
Rose by King Priam approved in this last of Ilion’s sessions,
Holding the staff of the senate’s authority. “Silence, O commons,
Hear and assent or refuse as your right is, masters of Troya,
Ancient and sovereign people, act that your kings have determined
Sitting in council high, their reply to the strength of Achilles.
‘Son of the Aeacids, vain is thy offer; the pride of thy challenge
Rather we choose; it is nearer to Dardanus, King of the Hellenes.
Neither shall Helen be led back, the Tyndarid, weeping to Argos,
Nor down the paths of peace revisit her fathers’ Eurotas.
Death and the fire may prevail o’er us, never our wills shall surrender
Lowering Priam’s heights and darkening Ilion’s splendours.
Not of such sires were we born, but of kings and of gods, O Larissan.
Not with her gold Troy traffics for safety, but with her spear-points.
Stand with thy oath in the war-front, Achilles; call on thy helpers
Armed to descend from the calm of Olympian heights to thy succour
Hedging thy fame from defeat; for we all desire thee in battle,
Mighty to end thee or tame at last by the floods of the Xanthus.’”
So Aeneas resonant spoke, stern, fronted like Ares,
And with a voice that conquered the earth and invaded the heavens
Loud they approved their doom and fulfilled their impulse immortal.
Last Deiphobus rose in their meeting, head of their mellay:
“Proudly and well have you answered, O nation beloved of Apollo;
Fearless of death they must walk who would live and be mighty for ever.
Now, for the sun is hastening up the empyrean azure,
Hasten we also. Tasting of food round the call of your captains
Meet in your armèd companies, chariots and hoplites and archers.
Strong be your hearts, let your courage be stern like the sun when it blazes;

Fierce will the shock be today ere he sink blood-red in the waters.”
They with a voice as of Oceans meeting rose from their session, —
Filling the streets with her tread Troy strode from her Ilian forum.

BOOK IV

The Book of Partings

Eagerly, spurred by Ares swift in their souls to the war-cry,
All now pressed to their homes for the food of their strength in the battle.
Ilion turned her thoughts in a proud expectancy seaward
Waiting to hear the sounds that she loved and the cry of the mellay.
Now to their citadel Priam's sons returned with their father,
Now from the gates Talthylbius issued grey in his chariot;
But in the halls of Anchises Aeneas not doffing his breastpiece
Hastily ate of the corn of his country, cakes of the millet
Doubled with wild-deer's flesh, from the quiet hands of Creüsa.
She, as he ate, with her calm eyes watching him smiled on her husband:
"Ever thou hastest to battle, O warrior, ever thou fightest
Far in the front of the ranks and thou seekest out Locrian Ajax,
Turnest thy ear to the roar for the dangerous shout of Tydides;
There, once heard, leaving all thou drivest, O stark in thy courage.
Yet am I blest among women who tremble not, left in thy mansion,
Quiet at old Anchises' feet when I see thee in vision
Sole with the shafts hissing round thee and say to my quivering spirit,
'Now he is striking at Ajax, now he has met Diomedes.'
Such are the mighty twain who are ever near to protect thee,
Phoebus, the Thunderer's son, and thy mother, gold Aphrodite;
Such are the Fates that demand thee, O destined head of the future.
But though my thoughts for their own are not troubled, always, Aeneas,
Sore is my heart with pity for other Ilian women
Who in this battle are losing their children and well-loved husbands,
Brothers too dear, for the eyes that are wet, for the hearts that are silent.
Will not this war then end that thunders for ever round Troya?"

But to Creüsa the hero answered, the son of Anchises:
"Surely the gods protect, yet is Death too always mighty.
Most in his shadowy envy he strikes at the brave and the lovely,
Grudging works to abridge their days and to widow the sunlight.
Most, disappointed, he rages against the beloved of Heaven;
Striking their lives through their hearts he mows down their loves and their
pleasures.

Truly thou sayst, thou needst not to fear for my life in the battle;

Ever for thine I fear lest he find thee out in his anger,
 Missing my head in the fight, when he comes here crossed in his godhead.
 Yet shall Phoebus protect and my mother, gold Aphrodite.”

But to Aeneas answered the tranquil lips of Creüsa:
 “So may it be that I go before thee, seeing, Aeneas,
 Over my dying eyes thy lips bend down for the parting.
 Blissfullest end is this for a woman here mid earth’s sorrows;
 Afterwards there we hope that the hands shall join which were parted.”

So she spoke, not knowing the gods: but Aeneas departing
 Clapsed his father’s knees, the ancient mighty Anchises.
 “Bless me, my father; I go to the battle. Strong with thy blessing
 Even today may I hurl down Ajax, slay Diomedes,
 And on the morrow gaze on the empty beaches of Troas.”
 Troubled and joyless, nought replying to warlike Aeneas
 Long Anchises sat unmoving, silent, sombre,
 Gazing into his soul with eyes that were closed to the sunlight.
 “Prosper, Aeneas,” slowly he answered him, “son of a goddess,
 Prosper, Aeneas; and if for Troy some doom is preparing,
 Suffer always the will of the gods with a piety constant.
 Only they will what Necessity fashions compelled by the Silence.
 Labour and war she has given to man as the law of his transience.
 Work; she shall give thee the crown of thy deeds or their ending appointed,
 Whether glorious thou pass or in silent shadows forgotten.
 But what thy mother commands perform ever, loading thy vessels.
 Who can know what the gods have hid with the mist of our hopings?”

Then from the house of his fathers Aeneas rapidly striding
 Came to the city echoing now with the wheels of the chariots,
 Clanging with arms and astream with the warlike tramp of her thousands.
 Fast through the press he strode and men turning knew Aeneas,
 Greatened in heart and went on with loftier thoughts towards battle.
 He through the noise and the crowd to Antenor’s high-built mansion
 Striding came, and he turned to its courts and the bronze of its threshold
 Trod which had suffered the feet of so many princes departed.
 But as he crossed its brazen square from the hall there came running,
 Leaping up light to his feet and laughing with sudden pleasure,
 Eurus the youngest son of Polydamas. Clasping the fatal
 War-hardened hand with a palm that was smooth as a maiden’s or infant’s,

“Well art thou come, Aeneas,” he said, “and good fortune has sent thee!
Now I shall go to the field; thou wilt speak with my grandsire Antenor
And he shall hear thee though chid by his heart reluctant. Rejoicing
I shall go forth in thy car or warring by Penthesilea,
Famous, give to her grasp the spear that shall smite down Achilles.”
Smiling answered Aeneas, “Surely will, Eurus, thy prowess
Carry thee far to the front; thou shalt fight with Epeus and slay him.
Who shall say that this hand was not chosen to pierce Menelaus?
But for a while with the ball should it rather strive, O hero,
Till in the play and the wrestle its softness is trained for the smiting.”
Eagerly Eurus answered, “But they have told me, Aeneas,
This is the last of our fights; for today will Penthesilea
Meet Achilles in battle and slay him ending the Argives.
Then shall I never have mixed in this war that is famous for ever.
What shall I say when my hairs are white like the aged Antenor’s?
Men will ask, ‘And what were thy deeds in the warfare Titanic?
Whom didst thou slay of the Argives, son of Polydamas, venging
Bravely thy father?’ Then must I say, ‘I lurked in the city.
I was too young and only ascending the Ilian ramparts
Saw the return or the flight, but never the deed and the triumph.’
Friend, if you take me not forth, I shall die of grief ere the sunset.”
Plucking the hand of Aeneas he drew him into the mansion
Vast; and over the floor of the spacious hall they hastened
Laughing, the gracious child and the mighty hero and statesman,
Flower of a present stock and the burdened star of the future.

Meanwhile girt by his sons and the sons of his sons in his chamber
Cried to the remnants left of his blood the aged Antenor.
“Hearken you who are sprung from my loins and children, their offspring!
None shall again go forth to the fight who is kin to Antenor.
Weighed with my curse he shall go and the spear-points athirst of the Argives
Meet him wroth; he shall die in his sin and his name be forgotten.
Oft have I sent forth my blood to be spilled in vain in the battle
Fighting for Troy and her greatness earned by my toil and my fathers’.
Now all the debt has been paid; she rejects us driven by the immortals.
Much do we owe to the mother who bore us, much to our country;
But at the last our life is ours and the gods’ and the future’s.
Gather the gold of my house and our kin, O ye sons of Antenor.

Warned by a voice in my soul I will go forth tonight from this city
 Fleeing the doom and bearing my treasures; the ships shall receive them
 Gathered, new-keeled by my care and the gods', in the narrow Propontis.
 Over God's waters guided, treading the rage of Poseidon,
 Bellying out with their sails let them cleave to the untravelled distance
 Ocean's crests and resign to their Fates the doomed and the evil."

So Antenor spoke and his children heard him in silence;
 Awed by his voice and the dread of his curse they obeyed, though in sorrow.
 Halamus only replied to his father: "Dire are the white hairs
 Reverend, loved, of a father, dreadful his curse to his children.
 Yet in my heart there is one who cries, 'tis the voice of my country,
 She for whose sake I would be in Tartarus tortured for ever.
 Pardon me then, if thou wilt; if the gods can, then let them pardon.
 For I will sleep in the dust of Troy embracing her ashes,
 There where Polydamas sleeps and the many comrades I cherished.
 So let me go to the darkness remembered or wholly forgotten,
 Yet having fought for my country, true in my fall to my nation."

Then in his aged wrath to Halamus answered Antenor:
 "Go then and perish doomed with the doomed and the hated of heaven;
 Nor shall the gods forgive thee dying nor shall thy father."
 Out from the chamber Halamus strode with grief in his bosom
 Wrestling with wrath and he went to his doom nor looked back at his dear
 ones.

Crossing the hall the son of Antenor and son of Anchises
 Met in the paths of their fates where they knotted and crossed for the parting,
 One with the curse of the gods and his sire fast wending to Hades,
 Fortunate, blessed the other; yet equal their minds were and virtues.
 Cypris' son to the Antenorid: "Thee I have sought and thy brothers,
 Bough of Antenor; sore is our need today of thy counsels,
 Endless our want of their arms that are strong and their hearts that recoil not
 Meeting myriads stark with the spear in unequal battle."
 Halamus answered him: "I will go forth to the palace of Priam,
 There where Troy yet lives and far from the halls of my fathers;
 There will I speak, not here. For my kin they repose in the mansion
 Sitting unarmed in their halls while their brothers fall in the battle."
 Eurys eagerly answered the hero: "Me rather, therefore,
 Take to the fight with you; I will make war on the Greeks for my uncles;

One for all I will fill their place in the shock with the foemen.”

But from his chamber-door Antenor heard and rebuked him:

“Scamp of my heart, thou torment! in to thy chamber and rest there,
Bound with cords lest thou cease, thou flutter-brain, scourged into quiet;
So shall thy lust of the fight be healed and our mansion grow tranquil.”
Chid by the old man Eurus slunk from the hall discontented,
Yet with a dubious smile like a moonbeam lighting his beauty.
But to Antenor the Dardanid born from the white Aphrodite:
“Late the Antenorids learn to flinch from the spears of the Argives,
Even this boy of their blood has Polydamas’ heart and his valour.
Nor should a life that was honoured and noble be stained in its ending.
Nay, then, the mood of a child would shame a grey-headed wisdom,
If for the fault of the people virtue and Troy were forgotten.
For, though the people hear us not, yet are we bound to our nation:
Over the people the gods are; over a man is his country;
This is the deity first adored by the hearths of the noble.
For by our nation’s will we are ruled in the home and the battle
And for our nation’s weal we offer our lives and our children’s.
Not by their own wills led nor their passions men rise to their manhood,
Selfishly seeking their good, but the gods’ and the State’s and the fathers’.”

Wroth Antenor replied to the warlike son of Anchises:

“Great is the soul in thee housed and stern is thy will, O Aeneas;
Onward it moves undismayed to its goal though a city be ruined.
They too guide thee who deepest see of the ageless immortals,
One with her heart and one in his spirit, Cypris and Phoebus.
Yet might a man not knowing this think as he watched thee, Aeneas,
‘Spurring Priam’s race to its fall he endangers this city,
Hoping to build a throne out of ruins sole in the Troad.’
I too have gods who warn me and lead, Athene and Hera.
Not as the ways of other mortals are theirs who are guided,
They whose eyes are the gods and they walk by a light that is secret.”

Coldly Aeneas made answer, stirred into wrath by the taunting:

“High wert thou always, nurtured in wisdom, ancient Antenor.
Walk then favoured and led, yet watch lest passion and evil
Feign auguster names and mimic the gait of the deathless.”
And with a smile on his lips but wrath in his bosom answered,
Wisest of men but with wisdom of mortals, aged Antenor:

“Led or misled we are mortals and walk by a light that is given;
 Most they err who deem themselves most from error excluded.
 Nor shalt thou hear in this battle the shout of the men of my lineage
 Holding the Greeks as once and driving back Fate from their country.
 His alone will be heard for a space while the stern gods are patient
 Even now who went forth a victim self-offered to Hades,
 Last whom their wills have plucked from the fated house of Antenor.”

They now with wrath in their bosoms sundered for ever and parted.
 Forth from the halls of Antenor Aeneas rapidly striding
 Passed once more through the city hurrying now with its car-wheels,
 Filled with a mightier rumour of war and the march of its thousands,
 Till at Troy’s upward curve he found the Antenorid crestward
 Mounting the steep incline that climbed to the palace of Priam
 White in her proud and armèd citadel. Silent, ascending
 Hardly their feet had attempted the hill when behind them they hearkened
 Sweet-tongued a call and the patter and hurry of light-running sandals,
 Turning they beheld with a flush on his cheeks and a light on his lashes
 Challenging mutely and pleading the boyish beauty of Eurus.
 “Racer to mischief,” said Halamus, “couldst thou not sit in thy chamber?
 Surely cords and the rod await thee, Eurus, returning.”
 Answered with laughter the child, “I have broken through ranks of the
 fighters,

Dived under chariot-wheels to arrive here and I return not.
 I too for counsel of battle have come to the palace of Priam.”
 Burdened with thought they mounted slowly the road of their fathers
 Breasting the Ilian hill where Laomedon’s mansion was seated,
 They from the crest down-gazing saw their country’s housetops
 Under their feet and heard the murmur of Troya below them.

But in the palace of Priam coming and going of house-thralls
 Filled all the corridors; smoke from the kitchens curled in its plenty
 Rich with savour and breathed from the labouring lungs of Hephaestus.
 Far in the halls and the chambers voices travelled and clustered,
 Anklets jangling ran and sang back from doorway to doorway
 Mocking with music of speed and its laughters the haste of the happy,
 Sound came of arms, there was tread of the great, there were murmurs of
 women,—

Voices glad of the doomed in Laomedon’s marvellous mansion.

Six were the halls of its splendour, a hundred and one were its chambers
Lifted on high upon columns that soared like the thoughts of its dwellers,
Thoughts that transcended the earth though they sank down at last into
ashes;

So had Apollo dreamed to his lyre; and its tops were a grandeur
Domed, as if seeking to roof men's lives with a hint of the heavens;
Marble his columns rose and with marble his roofs were appointed,
Conquered wealth of the world in its largeness suffered, supporting
Purities of marble, glories of gold. Nor only of matter
Blazed there the brutal pomps, but images mystic or mighty
Crowded ceiling and wall, a work that the gods even admire
Hardly believing that forms like these were imagined by mortals
Here upon earth where sight is a blur and the soul lives encumbered.
Scrolls that remembered in gems the thoughts austere of the ancients
Bordered the lines of the stone and the forms of serpent and Naiad
Ran in relief on those walls of pride in the palace of Priam
Mingled with Dryads who tempted and fled and Satyrs who followed,
Sports of the nymphs in the sea and the woods and their meetings with
mortals,

Sessions and battles of Trojan demigods, deaths that were famous,
Wars and loves of men and the deeds of the golden immortals.
Pillars sculptured with gods and with giants soared up from bases
Lion-carved or were seated on bulls and bore into grandeur
Amplify those halls where they soared, or in lordliness slenderly fashioned,
Dressed in flowers and reeds like virgins standing on Ida,
Guarded the screens of stone and divided alcove and chamber.
Ivory carved and brodered robes and the riches of Indus
Cherished in sandalwood triumphed and teemed in the palace of Priam;
Doors that were carven and fragrant sheltered the joys of its princes.

Here in a chamber of luminous privacy Paris was arming.
Near him moved Helen, a whiteness divine, and intent on her labour
Fastened his cuirass, bound the greaves and settled the hauberk
Thrilling his limbs with her touch that was heaven to the yearning of mortals.
She with her hands of delight caressing the senseless metal
Pressed her lips to his brilliant armour; she bowed down, she whispered:
“Cuirass, allowed by the gods, protect the beauty of Paris;
Keep for me that for which country was lost and my child and my brothers.”

Yearning she bent to his feet, to the sandal-strings of her lover;
Then as she gazed up, changed grew her mood; for the Daemon within her
Rose that had banded Greece and was burning Troy into ashes.
Slowly a smile that was perfect and perilous over her beauty
Dawned like the sunlight on Paradise; strangely she looked on her lover.
So might a goddess have gazed as she played with the love of a mortal
Passing an hour on the earth ere she rose up white to Olympus.
“So art thou winner, Paris, yet and thy spirit ascendant
Leads this Troy where thou wilt, O thou mighty one veiled in thy beauty.
First in the dance and the revel, first in the joy of the mellay,
Who would not leave for thy sake and repent it not country and homestead?
Winning thou reignest still over Troy, over Fate, over Helen.
Always so canst thou win? Has Death no claim on thy beauty,
Fate no scourge for thy sins? How the years have passed by in a glory,
Years of this heaven of the gods, O ravisher, since from my hearthstone
Seizing thou borest me compelled to thy ships and my joy on the waters.
Troy is enringed with the spears, her children fall and her glories,
Mighty souls of heroes have gone down prone to the darkness;
Thou and I abide! the mothers wail for our pleasure.
Wilt thou then keep me for ever, O son of Priam, in Troya?
Fate was my mother, they say, and Zeus for this hour begot me.
Art thou a god too, O hero, disguised in this robe of the mortal,
Brilliant, careless of death and of sin as if sure of thy rapture?
What then if Fate today were to lay her hands on thee, Paris?”
Calmly he looked on the face of which Greece was enamoured, the body
For whose desire great Troy was a sacrifice, tranquil regarded
Lovely and dire on the lips he loved that smile of a goddess,
Saw the daughter of Zeus in the woman, yet was not shaken.
“Temptress of Argos,” he answered, “thou snare for the world to be seized in,
Thou then hop’st to escape! But the gods could not take thee, O Helen,
How then thy will that to mine is a captive, or how, though with battle,
He who has lost thee, unhappy, the Spartan, bright Menelaus?
All things yield to a man and Zeus is himself his accomplice
When like a god he wills without remorse or longing.
Thou on this earth art mine since I claimed thee beheld, not speaking,
But with thy lids that fell thou veiledst thy heart of compliance.
Then in whatever beyond I shall know how to take thee, O Helen,

Even as here upon earth I knew, in heaven as in Sparta;
I on Elysian fields will enjoy thee as now in the Troad.”
Silent a moment she lingered like one who is lured by a music
Rapturous, heard by himself alone and his lover in heaven,
Then in her beauty compelling she rose up divine among women.
“Yes, it is good,” she cried, “what the gods do and actions of mortals;
Good is this play of the world; it is good, the joy and the torture.
Praised be the hour of the gods when I wedded bright Menelaus!
Praised, more praised the keels that severed the seas towards Helen
Churning the senseless waves that knew not the bliss of their burden!
Praised to the end the hour when I passed through the doors of my husband
Laughing with joy in my heart for the arms that bore and enchained me!
Never can Death undo what life has done for us, Paris.
Nor, whatsoever betide, can the hour be un-lived of our rapture.
This too is good that nations should meet in the shock of the battle,
Heroes be slain and a theme be made for the songs of the poets,
Songs that shall thrill with the name of Helen, the beauty of Paris.
Well is this also that empires should fall for the eyes of a woman;
Well that for Helen Hector ended, Memnon was slaughtered,
Strong Sarpedon fell and Troilus ceased in his boyhood.
Troy for Helen burning, her glory, her empire, her riches,
This is the sign of the gods and the type of things that are mortal.
Thou who art kin to the masters of heaven, unconstrained like thy kindred
High on this ancient stage of the Troad with gods for spectators
Play till the end thy part, O thou wondrous and beautiful actor:
Fight and slay the Greeks, my countrymen; victor returning
Take for reward of the play, thy delight of Argive Helen.
Force from my bosom a hint of the joy denied to the death-claimed,
Rob in the kiss of my lips a pang from the raptures of heaven.”
Clasping him wholly her arms of desire were a girdle of madness,
Cestus divine of the dread Aphrodite. He with her kisses
Flushed like the gods with unearthly wine and rejoiced in his ruin.

Thus while they conversed now in this hour that was near to their
parting

Last upon earth, a fleet-footed slavegirl came to the chamber:
“Paris, thy father and mother desire thee; there in the strangers’
Outer hall Aeneas and Halamus wait for thy coming.”

So with the Argive he wended to Priam's ample chamber
 Far in Laomedon's house where Troy looked upwards to Ida.
 Priam and Hecuba there, the ancient grey-haired rulers,
 Waiting him sat in their chairs of ivory calm in their greatness;
 Hid in her robes at their feet lay Cassandra crouched from her visions.
 "Since, O my father," said Paris, "thy thoughts have been with me, thy
 blessing

Surely shall help me today in my strife with the strength of Achilles.
 Surely the gods shall obey in the end the might of our spirits,
 Pallas and Hera, flame-sandalled Artemis, Zeus and Apollo.
 Ever serve the immortal brightnesses man when he stands up
 Firm with his will uplifted a steadfast flame towards the heavens,
 Ares works in his heart and Hephaestus burns in his labour."
 Priam replied to his son: "Forewilled by the gods, Alexander,
 All things happen on earth and yet we must strive who are mortals,
 Knowing all vain, yet we strive; for our nature seizing us always
 Drives like the flock that is herded and urged towards shambles or pasture.
 So have the high gods fashioned these tools of their action and pleasure;
 Failure and grief are their engines no less than the might of the victor;
 They in the blow descend and resist in the sobs of the smitten.
 Such are their goads that I too must walk in the paths that are common,
 Even I who know must send for thee, moved by Cassandra.
 Speak, O my child, since Apollo has willed it, once, and be silent."

But in her raiment hidden Cassandra answered her father:
 "No, for my heart has changed since I cried for him, vexed by Apollo.
 Why should I speak? For who will believe me in Troy? who believed me
 Ever in Troy or the world? Event and disaster approve me
 Only, my comrades, not men in their thoughts, not my brothers and kinsmen.
 All by their hopes are gladly deceived and grow wroth with the warner,
 Half-blind prophets of hope entertained by the gods in the mortal!
 Wiser blind, if nothing they saw or only the darkness.
 I too once hoped when Apollo pursued me with love in his temple.
 Round me already there gleamed the ray of the vision prophetic,
 Thrill of that rapture I felt and the joy of the god in his seeing
 Nor did I know that the knowledge of mortals is bound unto blindness.
 Either only they walk mid the coloured dreams of the senses
 Treading the greenness of earth and deeming the touch of things real,

Or if they see, by the curse of the gods their sight into falsehood
Easily turns and leads them more stumbling astray than the sightless.
So are we either blind in a darkness or dazzled by seeing.
Thus have the gods protected their purpose and baffled the sages;
Over the face of the Truth their shield of gold is extended.
But I deemed otherwise, urged by the Dreadful One, he who sits always
Veiled in us fighting the gods whom he uses. I cried to Apollo,
'Give me thy vision sheer, not such as thou giv'st to thy prophets,
Troubled though luminous; clear be the vision and ruthless to error,
Far-darting god who art veiled by the sun and by death thou art shielded.
Then I shall know that thou lovest.' He gave, alarmed and reluctant,
Driven by Fate and his heart; but I mocked him, I broke from my promise,
Courage fatal helping my heart to its ruin with laughter.
Always now I remember his face that grew tranquil and ruthless,
Hear the voice divine and implacable: 'Since thou deceivest
Even the gods and thou hast not feared to lie to Apollo,
Speak shalt thou henceforth only truth, but none shall believe thee:
Scorned in thy words, rejected yet more for their bitter fulfilment,
Scourged by the gods thou must speak though thy sick heart yearns to be
silent.

For in this play thou hast dared to play with the masters of heaven,
Girl, it is thou who hast lost; thy voice is mine and thy bosom.'
Since then all I foreknow; therefore anguish is mine for my portion:
Since then all whom I love must perish slain by my loving.
Even of that I denied him, violent force shall bereave me
Grasped mid the flames of my city and shouts of her merciless victors."
But to Cassandra answered gently the voice of her brother:
"Sister of mine, afflicted and seized by the dreadful Apollo,
All whose eyes can pierce that curtain, gaze into dimness;
This they have glimpsed and that they imagine deceived by their natures
Seeing the forms in their hearts of dreadful things and of joyous;
As in the darkness our eyes are deceived by shadows uncertain,
Such is their sight who rend the veil that the dire gods have woven.
Busy our hearts are weaving thoughts and images always:
After their kind they see what here we call truth. So thy nature
Tender and loving, plagued by this war and its fears for thy loved ones,
Sees calamity everywhere; when the event like the vision

Seems, as in every war the beloved must fall and the cherished,
 Then the heart cries, 'It has happened as all shall happen I mourn for.'
 All that was bright it misses and only seizes on sorrow.
 Dear, on the brightness look and if thou must prophesy, tell us
 Rather of great Pelides slain by my spear in the onset."
 But with a voice of grief the sister answered her brother:
 "Yes, he shall fall and his slayer too perish and Troy with his slayer."
 But in his spirit rejoicing Paris answered Cassandra:
 "Let but this word come true; for the rest, the gods shall avert it.
 Look once more, O Cassandra, and comfort the heart of thy mother,
 See, O seer, my safe return with the spoils of Achilles."
 And with a voice of grief the sister answered her brother:
 "Thou shalt return for thy hour while Troy yet stands in the sunshine."
 But in his spirit exultant Paris seizing the omen:
 "Hearst thou, my father, my mother? She who still prophesied evil
 Now perceives of our night this dawning. Yet is it grievous,
 Since through a heart that we love must be pierced the heart of Achilles.
 Fate, with this evil satisfied, turn in the end from Troya.
 Bless me, my father, and thou, O Hecuba, mother long-patient,
 Still forgive that thy children have fallen for Helen and Paris."
 Tenderly yearning his mother drew him towards her and murmured:
 "All for thy hyacinth curls was forgiven even from childhood
 And for thy sunlit looks, O wonder of charm, O Paris.
 Paris, my son, though Troy must fall, thy mother forgives thee,
 Blessing the gods who have lent thee to me for a while in their sunshine.
 Theirs are fate and result, but ours is the joy of our children;
 Even the griefs are dear that come from their hands while they love us.
 Fight and slay Achilles, the murderer dire of thy brothers;
 Venging Hector return, my son, to the clasp of thy mother."
 But in his calm august to Paris Priam the monarch:
 "Victor so mightst thou come, so gladden the heart of thy mother."
 Then to the aged father of Paris Helen the Argive
 Bright and immortal and sad like a star that grows near to the dawning
 And on its pale companions looks who now fade from its vision:
 "Me too pardon and love, my parents, even Helen,
 Cause of all bane and all death; but I came from the gods for this ruin
 Born as a torch for the burning of empires, cursed with this beauty.

Nor have I known a father's embrace, a mother's caresses,
But to the distant gods I was born and nursed as an alien
Here by earth from fear, not affection, compelled by the thunders.
Two are her monstrous births, from the Furies and from the immortals;
Either touching mortality suffers and bears not the contact.
I have been both, a monster of doom and a portent of beauty."
Slowly Priam the monarch answered to Argive Helen:
"That which thou art the gods have made thee; thou couldst not be other:
That which thou didst, the gods have done; thou couldst not prevent them.
Who here shall blame or whom shall he pardon? Should not my people
Rail at me murmuring, 'Priam has lost what his fathers had gathered;
Cursed is this king by heaven and cursed who are born as his subjects'?
Masked the high gods act; the doer is hid by his working.
Each of us bears his punishment, fruit of a seed that's forgotten;
Each of us curses his neighbour protecting his heart with illusions:
Therefore like children we blame each other and hate and are angry.
Take, my child, the joy of the sunshine won by thy beauty.
I who lodge on this earth as an alien bound by the body,
Wearing my sorrow even as I wear the imperial purple,
Praise yet the gods for my days that have seen thee at last in my ending.
Fifty Troy may cease having gazed on thy beauty, O Helen."
He became silent, he ceased from words. But Paris and Helen
Lightly went and gladly; pursuing their footsteps the mother,
Mother once of Troilus, mother once of Hector,
Stood at the door with her death in her eyes, nor returned from her yearning,
But as one after a vanishing sunbeam gazes in prison,
Gazed down the corridors after him, long who had passed from her vision.

Then in the silent chamber Cassandra seized by Apollo
Staggered erect and tossing her snow-white arms of affliction
Cried to the heavens in her pain; for the fierce god tortured her bosom:
"Woe is me, woe for the guile and the bitter gift of Apollo!
Woe, thrice woe, for my birth in Troy and the lineage of Teucer!
So do you deal, O gods, with those who have served you and laboured,
Those who have borne for your sake the evil burden of greatness.
Blessed is he who holds mattock in hand or who bends o'er the furrow
Taking no thought for the good of mankind, with no yearnings for
knowledge.

Woe unto me for my wisdom which none shall value nor hearken!
 Woe unto thee, O King, for thy strength which shall not deliver!
 Better the eye that is sealed, more blest is the spirit that's feeble.
 Vainly your hopes with iron Necessity struggle, O mortals.
 Virtue shall lie in her pangs, for the gods have need of her torture;
 Sin shall be scourged, though her deeds were compelled by the gods in their
 anger.

None shall avail in the end, the coward shall die and the hero.
 Troy shall fall in her sin and her virtues shall not protect her;
 Argos shall grow by her crimes till the gods shall destroy her for ever.
 Now have I fruit of thy love, O Loxias, dreadful Apollo.
 Woe is me, woe for the flame that approaches the house of my fathers!
 Woe is me, woe for the hand of Ajax laid on my tresses!
 Woe, thrice woe to him who shall ravish and him who shall cherish!
 Woe for the ships that shall bound too swift o'er the azure Aegean!
 Woe for thy splendid shambles of hell, O Argive Mycenae!
 Woe for the evil spouse and the house accursèd of Atreus!"
 So with her voice of the swan she clanged out doom on the peoples,
 Over the palace of Priam and over the armèd nation
 Marching resolved to the war in the pride of its centuries conquered,
 Centuries slain by a single day of the anger of heaven.
 Dim to the thoughts like a vision of Hades the luminous chamber
 Grew; in his ivory chair King Priam sat like a shadow
 Throned mid the ghosts of departed kings and forgotten empires.

But in his valiance careless and blithe the Priamid hastened
 Seeking the pillared megaron wide where Deiphobus armoured
 Waited his coming forth with the warlike chiefs of the Trojans.
 Now as he passed by the halls of the women, the chambers that harboured
 Daughters and wives of King Priam and wives of his sons and their
 playmates,
 Niches of joy that were peopled with murmurs and sweet-tongued laughers,
 Troubled like trees with their birds in a morning of sun and of shadow
 Where in some garden of kings one walks with his heart in the sunshine,
 Out from her door where she stood for him waiting Polyxena started,
 Seized his hand and looked in his face and spoke to her brother.
 Then not even the brilliant strength of Paris availed him;
 Joyless he turned his face from her eyes of beauty and sorrow.

“So it is come, the hour that I feared, and thou goest, O Paris,
Armed with the strength of Fate to strike at my heart in the battle;
For he is doomed and thou and I, a victim to Hades.
This thou preferrest and neither thy father could move nor thy mother
Burning with Troy in their palace, nor could thy country persuade thee,
Nor dost thou care for thy sister’s happiness pierced by thy arrows.
Will she remember it all, my sister Helen, in Argos
Passing tranquil days with her husband, bright Menelaus,
Holding her child on her knees? But we shall lie joyless in Hades.”
Paris replied: “O sister Polyxena, blame me not wholly.
We by the gods are ensnared; for the pitiless white Aphrodite
Doing her will with us both compels this. Helpless our hearts are
And when she drives perforce must love, for death or for gladness:
Weighed in unequal scales she deals them to one or another.
Happy who holding his love can go down into bottomless Hades.”
But to her brother replied in her anguish the daughter of Priam:
“Evilly deal with my days the immortals happy in heaven;
Yes, I accuse the gods and I curse them who heed not our sorrow.
This they have done with me, forcing my heart to the love of a foeman,
One whose terrible hands have been stained with the blood of my brothers.
This now they do, they have taken the two whom I love beyond heaven,
Brother and husband, and drive to the fight to be slain by each other.
Nay, go thou forth; for thou canst not help it, nor I, nor can Helen.
Since I must die as a pageant to satisfy Zeus and his daughter,
Since now my heart must be borne as a victim bleeding to please them,
So let it be, let me deck myself and be bright for the altar.”
Into her chamber she turned with her great eyes blind, unregarding;
He for a moment stood, then passed to the megaron slowly;
Dim was the light in his eyes and clouded his glorious beauty.
Meanwhile armed in the palace of Priam Penthesilea.
Near her her captains silent and mighty stood, from the Orient
Distant clouds of war, Surabdas and iron Surenas,
Pharatus planned like the hills, Somaranes, Valarus, Tauron,
High-crested Sumalus, Arithon, Sambus and Artavoruxes.
There too the princes of Phrygian Troya gathered for counsel
And with them Eurys came, Polydamas’ son, who most dearly
Loved was of all the Trojan boys by the glorious virgin.

She from her arming stayed to caress his curls and to chide him:
 “Eurus, forgotten of grace, dost thou gad like a stray in the city
 Eager to mix with the armoured men and the chariots gliding?
 High on the roofs wouldst thou watch the swaying speck that is battle?
 Better to aim with the dart or seek with thy kind the palaestra;
 So wilt thou sooner be part of this greatness rather than straining
 Yearn from afar to the distance that veils the deeds of the mighty.”
 But with an anxious lure in his smile on her Eurus answered:
 “Not that remoteness to see have I come to the palace of Priam
 Leaving the house of my fathers, but for the spear and the breastpiece.
 Hast thou not promised me long I shall fight in thy car with Achilles?”
 Doubtful he eyed her, a lion’s cub at play in his beauty,
 And mid the heroes who heard him laughter arose for a moment,
 Yet with a sympathy stirred; they remembered the days of their childhood,
 Thought of Troy still mighty, life in its rose-touched dawning
 When they had longed for the clash of the fight and the burden of armour.
 Glad, with the pride of the lioness watching her cub in the desert, —
 Couchant she lies with her paws before her and joys in his gambols,
 Over the prey as he frisks and is careless, — answered the virgin:
 “Younger than thou in my nation have mounted the steed and the war-car.
 Eurus, arm; from under my shield thou shalt gaze at the Phthian,
 Reaching my shafts for the cast from the rim of my car in the battle
 Handle perhaps the spear that shall smite down the Phthian Achilles.
 What sayst thou, Halamus? Were not such prowess a perfect beginning
 Worthy Polydamas’ son and the warlike house of Antenor?”
 Halamus started and smiting his hand on the grief of his bosom,
 Sombre replied and threatened with Fate the high-hearted virgin.
 “Virgin armipotent, wherefore mockst thou thy friend, though unwitting?
 Nay, — for the world will know at the end and my death cannot hide it, —
 Slain by a father’s curse we fight who are kin to Antenor.
 Take not the boy in thy car, lest the Furies, Penthesilea,
 Aim through the shield and the shielder to wreak the curse of the grandsire.
 They will not turn nor repent for thy strength nor his delicate beauty.”
 Swiftly to Halamus answered the high-crested might of the virgin:
 “Curses leave lightly the lips when the soul of a man is in anger
 Even as blessings easily crowd round the head that is cherished.
 Yet have I never seen that a curse has sharpened a spear-point;

Never Death drew back from the doomed by the power of a blessing.
Valour and skill and chance are Fate and the gods and the Furies.
Give me the boy; a hero shall come back formed from the onset.”
“Do as thou wilt,” replied Halamus; “Fate shall guard or shall end him.”
Then to the boy delighted and smiling-eyed and exultant
Cried with her voice like the call of heaven’s bugles waking the heroes,
Blown by the lips of gold-haired Valkyries, Penthesilea.
“Go, find the spear, gird the sword, don the cuirass, child of the mighty.
Armed when thou standst on the plain of the Xanthus, field of thy fathers,
See that thou fight on this day like the comrade of Penthesilea.
Bud of a hero, gaze unalarmed in the eyes of Achilles.”
Light as a hound released he ran to the hall of the armour
Where were the shields of the mighty, the arms of the mansion of Teucer;
There from the house-thralls he wrung the greaves and the cuirass and helmet
Troilus wore, the wonderful boy who, ere ripened his prowess,
Conquered the Greeks and drove to the ships and fought with Achilles.
These on his boyish limbs he donned and ran back exulting
Bearing spears and a sword and rejoiced in the clank on his armour.
Meanwhile Deiphobus, head of the mellay, moved by Aeneas
Opened the doors of their warlike debate to the strength of the virgin:
“Well do I hope that our courage outwearying every opponent
Triumph shall lift to her ancient seat on the Pergaman turrets;
Clouds from Zeus come and pass; his sunshine eternal survives them.
Yet we are few in the fight and armoured nations besiege us.
Surging on Troy today a numberless foe well-captained
Hardly pushed back in shock after shock with the Myrmidon numbers
Swelled returns; they fight with a hope that broken refashion
Helpful skies and a man now leads them who conquers and slaughters,
One of the sons of the gods and armed by the gods for the struggle.
We unhelped save by Ares stern and the mystic Apollo
And but as mortals striving with stubborn mortal courage,
Hated and scorned and alone in the world, by the nations rejected,
Fight with the gods and mankind and Achilles and numbers against us
Keeping our country from death in this bitter hour of her fortunes.
Therefore have prudence and hardihood severed contending our counsels
Whether far out to fight on the seaward plain with the Argives
Or behind Xanthus the river impetuous friendly to Troya.

This my brother approves and the son of Antenor advises,
 Prudent masters of war who prepare by defence their aggression.
 But for myself from rashness I seek a more far-seeing wisdom,
 Not behind vain defences choosing a tardy destruction,
 Rather as Zeus with his spear of the lightning and chariot of tempest
 Scatters and chases the heavy mass of the clouds through the heavens,
 So would I hunt the Greeks through the plains to their lair by the Ocean,
 Straight at the throat of my foeman so would I leap in the battle.
 Swiftly to smite at the foe is prudence for armies outnumbered.”
 Then to the Dardanid answered the high-crested Penthesilea:
 “There where I find my foe I will fight him, whether by Xanthus
 Or at the fosse of the ships where they crouch behind bulwarks for shelter,
 Or if they dare by Scamander the higher marching on Troya.”
 Sternly approved her the Trojan, “So should they fight who would triumph
 Meeting the foe ere he move in his will to the clash of encounter.”
 But with his careless laughter the brilliant Priamid Paris:
 “Joy of the battle, joy of the tempest, joy of the gamble
 Mated are in thy blood, O virgin, daughter of Ares.
 Thou like the deathless wouldst have us combat, us who are human?
 Come, let the gods do their will with us, Ares let lead and his daughter!
 Always the blood is wiser and knows what is hid from the thinker.
 Life and treasure and fame to cast on the wings of a moment,
 Fiercer joy than this the gods have not given to mortals.”
 Highly to Paris the virgin armipotent Penthesilea,
 “Paris and Halamus, shafts of the war-god, fear not for Troya.
 Not as a vaunt do I speak it, you gods who stern-thoughted watch us,
 But in my vision of strength and the soul that is seated within me,
 Not while I live and war shall the host of the Myrmidon fighters
 Forcing the currents lave, as once they were wont, in Scamander
 Vaunting their victor car-wheels red with the blood of the vanquished.
 Then when I lie by some war-god slain on the fields of the Troad,
 Fight again if you will behind high-banked fast-flowing Xanthus.”
 Halamus answered her, “Never so by my will would I battle
 Flinging Troy as a stake on the doubtful diceboard of Ares.
 But you have willed it and so let it be; yet hearken my counsel.
 Massed in the fight let us aim the storm of our spears at one greatness,
 Mighty Pelides’ head who gives victory still to the Argives.

Easy the Greeks to destroy lay Achilles once slain on the Troad,
But if the Peleid lives the fire shall yet finish with Troya.
Join then Orestes' speed to the stubborn might of Aeneas,
Paris' fatal shafts and the missiles of Penthesilea.
Others meanwhile, a puissant screen of our bravest and strongest,
Fighting shall hold back Pylos and Argolis, Crete and the Locrian.
Thou, Deiphobus, front the bronze-clad stern Diomedes,
I with Polydamas' spear will dare to restrain and discourage
Ajax' feet though they yearn for pursuit and are hungry for swiftness.
Knot of retreat behind let some strong experienced captain
Stand with our younger levies guarding the fords of the Xanthus,
Fortify the wavering line and dawn as fresh strength on the wearied.
Then if the fierce gods prevail we shall perish not driven like cattle
Over the plains, but draw back sternly and slowly to Troya."
Answered the Priamid, "Wise is thy counsel, branch of Antenor.
Chaff are the southern Achaians, only the hardihood Hellene,
Only the savage speed of the Locrian rescues their legions.
Marshal we so this field. Stand, Halamus, covering Xanthus,
Helping our need when the foe press hard on the Ilian fighters.
Paris, my brother, thou with our masses aid the Eoan.
I with Aeneas' single spear am enough for the Argive."
"Gladlier" Halamus cried "would I fight in the front with the Locrian!
This too let be as you will; for one is the glory and service
Fighting in front or guarding behind the fate of our country."

So in their thoughts they ordered battle. Meanwhile Eurus
Gleaming returned and the room grew glad with the light of his armour.
Glad were its conscious walls of that vision of boyhood and valour;
Gods of the household sighed and smiled at his courage and beauty,
They who had seen so many pass over their floors and return not
Hasting to battle, the fair and the mighty, the curled and the grizzled,
All of them treading one path like the conscious masks of one pageant
Winding past through the glare of a light to the shadows beyond them.
But on her captains proudly smiling Penthesilea
Seized him and cried aloud, her wild and warlike nature
Moved by the mother's heart that the woman loses not ever.
"Who then shall fear for the fate of Troy when such are her children?
Verily, Eurus, yearning has seized me to meet thee in battle

Rather than Locrian Ajax, rather than Phthian Achilles.
 There acquiring a deathless fame I would make thee my captive,
 Greedy and glad who feel as a lioness eyeing her booty.
 Nay, I can never leave thee behind, my delicate Trojan,
 But, when this war ends, will bear thee away to the hills of my country
 And, as a robber might, with my captive glad and unwilling
 Bring thee a perfect gift to my sisters Ditis and Anna.
 Eurus, there in my land thou shalt look on such hills as thy vision
 Gazed not on yet, with their craggy tops besieging Cronion,
 Sheeted in virgin white and chilling his feet with their vastness.
 Thou shalt rejoice in our wooded peaks and our fruit-bearing valleys,
 Lakes of Elysium dreaming and wide and rivers of wonder.
 All day long thou shalt glide between mystic woodlands in silence
 Broken only by call of the birds and the plashing of waters.
 There shalt thou see, O Eurus, the childhood of Penthesilea.
 Thou shalt repose in my father's house and walk in the gardens
 Green where I played at the ball with my sisters, Ditis and Anna."
 Musing she ceased, but if any god had touched her with prescience
 Bidding her think for the last time now of the haunts of her childhood,
 Gaze in her soul with a parting love at the thought of her sisters
 And of the lovely and distant land where she played through her summers,
 Brief was the touch; for she changed at once and only of triumph
 Dreamed and only yearned in her heart for the shock of Achilles.

So they passed from the halls of Priam fated and lofty,
 Halls where the air seemed sobbing yet with the cry of Cassandra;
 Clad in their brilliant armour, bright in their beauty and courage,
 Sons of the passing demigods, they to their latest battle
 Down the ancestral hill of the Pergamans moved to the gateway.
 Loud with an endless march, with a tireless gliding to meet them,
 All Troy streamed from her streets and her palaces armed for the combat.
 Then to the voice of Deiphobus clanging high o'er the rumour
 Wide the portals swung that shall close on a blood-red evening,
 Slow, foreboding, reluctant, and through the yawn of the gateway
 Drove with a cry her steeds the virgin Penthesilea
 Calling aloud, "O steeds of my east, we drive to Achilles."
 Blithe in the car behind her Eurus scouted around him
 Scared with his eyes lest Antenor his grandsire should rise in the gateway,

Hardly believing his fate that led him safe through the portals.
After her trampled and crashed the ranks of her orient fighters.
Paris next with his hosts came brilliant, gold on his armour,
Gold on his helm; a mighty bow hung slack on his shoulder,
Propped o'er his arm a spear, as he drove his car through the gateway.
Next Deiphobus drove and the hero strong Aeneas,
Leading their numbers on. Behind them Dus and Polites,
Helenus, Priam's son, Thrasymachus, grizzled Aretes,
Came like the tempest his father, Adamas, son of the Northwind—
Orus old in the fight and Eumachus, kin to Aeneas,
Who was Creüsa's brother and richest of men in the Troad
After Antenor only and Priam, Ilion's monarch.
Halamus drove and Arintheus led on his Lycian levies.
Who were the last to speed out of Troya of all those legions
Doomed to the sword? for never again from the ancient city
Foot would march or chariots crash in their pride to the Xanthus.
Aetor the old and Tryas the conqueror known by the Oxus.
They in the portals met and their ancient eyes on each other
Looked amazed, admiring on age the harness of battle.
They in the turreted head of the gateway halted and conversed.
"Twenty years have passed, O Tryas, chief of the Trojans,
Since in the battle thy car was seen and the arm of thy prowess
Age has wronged. Why now to the crowded ways of the battle
Move once more thy body infirm and thy eyes that are faded?"
And to Antenor's brother the Teucrian, "Thou too, O Aetor,
Old and weary hast sat in thy halls and desisted from battle.
Now in Troy's portals I meet thee driving forth to the mellay."
Aetor answered, "Which then is better, to wretchedly perish
Crushed by the stones of my falling house or slain like a victim
Dragged through the blood of my kin on the sacred hearth of my fathers,
Or in the battle to cease mid the war-cry and hymn of the chariots
Knowing that Troy yet stands in her pride though doomed in her morrows?
So have the young men willed and the old like thee who age not,
Old are thy limbs, but thy heart is still young and hot for the war-din."
Tryas replied, "To perish is better for man or for nation
Nobly in battle, nor end disgraced by disease or subjection.
So have I come here to offer this shoulder Laomedon leaned on,

Arms that have fought by the Oxus and conquered the Orient's heroes
Famous in Priam's wars, and a heart that is faithful to Troya.
These I will offer to death on his splendid altar of battle,
Tribute from Ilion. If she must fall, I shall see not her ending.”
Aetor replied to Tryas, “Then let us perish together,
Joined by the love of our race who in life were divided in counsel.
All things embrace in death and the strife and the hatred are ended.”
Silent together they drove for the last time through Ilion's portals
Out with the rest to the fight towards the sea and the spears of the Argives.
Only once, as they drove, they gazed back silent on Troya
Lifting her marble pride in the golden joy of the morning.
So through the ripening morn the army, crossing Scamander,
Filling the heavens with the dust and the war-cry, marched on the Argives.
Far in front Troy's plain spread wide to the echoing Ocean.

BOOK V

The Book of Achilles

Meanwhile grey from the Trojan gates Talthylus journeyed
Spurred by the secret thought of the Fates who change not nor falter.
Simois sighed round his wheels and Xanthus roared at his passing,
Troas' god like a lion wroth and afraid; to meet him
Whistling the ocean breezes came and Ida regarded.
So with his haste in the wheels the herald oceanward driving
Came through the gold of the morn, o'er the trampled green of the pastures
Back to the ships and the roar of the sea and the iron-hooped leaguer.
Wide to the left his circle he wrote where the tents of Achilles
Trooped like a flock of the sea-fowl pensive and still on the margin.
He past the outposts rapidly coursed to the fosse of the Argives.
In with a quavering cry to the encampment over the causeway
Bridging the moat of the ships Talthylus drove in his chariot
Out of the wide plains azure-roofed and the silence of Nature
Passing in to the murmur of men and the thick of the leaguer.
There to a thrall of the Hellene he cast his reins and with labour
Down from the high seat climbed of the war-car framed for the mighty.
Then betwixt tent-doors endless, vistaed streets of the canvas,
Slowly the old man toiled with his eager heart, and to meet him
Sauntering forth from his tent at the sound of the driving car-wheels
Strong Automedon came who was charioteer of Achilles.

“Grey Talthylus, whence art thou coming? From Troya the ancient?
Or from a distant tent was thy speed and the King Agamemnon?
What in their armoured assembly counsel the kings of the Argives?”
“Not from the host but from Troy, Automedon, come I with tidings,
Nor have I mixed with the Greeks in their cohorts ranked by the Ocean,
Nor have I stood in their tents who are kings in sceptred Achaia,
But from Achilles sent to Achilles I bring back the message.
Tell me, then, what does Pelides, whether his strength he reposes
Soothed by the lyre or hearing the chanted deeds of the mighty
Or does he walk as he loves by the shore of the far-sounding waters?”
And to the Argive herald grey Automedon answered:
“Now from the meal he rests and Briseis lyres to him singing
One of the Ilian chants of old in the tongue of the Trojans.”

“Early, then, he has eaten, Automedon, early reposes?”

“Early the meat was broached on the spits, Talthybius, early
High on the sands or under the tents we have eaten and rested.
None knows the hour of the hunt, red, fierce, nor the prey he shall leap on,
All are like straining hounds; for Achilles shares not his counsels,
But on the ships, in the tents the talk has run like Peneus;
These upon Troy to be loosed and the hard-fighting wolf-brood of Priam,
These hope starkly with Argos embraced to have done with the Spartan,
Ending his brilliance in blood or to sport on the sands of the margent
Playing at bowls with the heads of the Cretan and crafty Odysseus.
Welcome were either or both; we shall move in the dances of Ares,
Quicken heart-beats dulled and limbs that are numb with reposing.
War we desire and no longer this ease by the drone of the waters.”

So as they spoke, they beheld far-off the tent of Achilles
Splendid and spacious even as the hall of a high-crested chieftain,
Lofty, held by a hundred stakes to the Phrygian meadow.
Hung were its sides with memories bronze and trophies of armour,
Sword and spear and helmet and cuirass of fallen heroes
Slain by the hand of the mighty Achilles warring with Troya.
Teemed in its canvas rooms the plundered riches of Troas,
Craftsman’s work and the wood well-carved and the ivory painted,
Work of bronze and work of gold and the dreams of the artist.
And in those tents of his pride, in the dreadful guard of the Hellene,
Noble boys and daughters of high-born Phrygians captive,
Borne from the joyless ruins that now were the sites of their childhood,
Served in the land of their sires the will of the Phthian Achilles.
There on a couch reclined in his beauty mighty and golden,
Loved by the Fates and doomed by them, spear of their will against Troya,
Peleus’ hero son by the foam-white child of the waters
Dreaming reposed and his death-giving hand hung lax o’er the couch-side.
Near him dark-eyed Briseis, the fatal and beautiful captive,
Sang to the Grecian victor chants of the land of her fathers,
Sang the chant of Ilus, the tale of the glories of Troya.
Trojan boys and maidens sat near the singer and listened
Heart-delighted if with some tears; for easy are mortal
Hearts to be bent by Fate and soon we consent to our fortunes.
But in the doorway Automedon stood with the shadowy Argive

And at the ominous coming the voice of the singer faltered,
Faltering hushed like a thought melodious ceasing in heaven.

But from his couch the Peleid sprang and he cried to the herald.
“Long hast thou lingered in Ilium, envoy, mute in the chambers
Golden of Priam old, while around thee darkened the counsels
Wavering blindly and fiercely of minds that revolt from compulsion,
Natures at war with the gods and their fortunes. Fain would I fathom
What were the thoughts of Deiphobus locked in that nature of iron
Now that he stands confronting his fate in the town of his fathers.
Peace dwells not in thy aspect. Sowst thou a seed then of ruin
Cast from the inflexible heart and the faltering tongue of Aeneas,
Or with the golden laugh of the tameless bright Alexander?”
Grey Talthibius answered, “Surely their doom has embraced them
Wrapping her locks round their ears and their eyes, lest they see and escape
her,

Kissing their tongue with her fatal lips and dictating its answers.
Dire is the hope of their chiefs and fierce is the will of their commons.
‘Son of the Aeacids, spurned is thy offer. The pride of thy challenge
Rather we choose; it is nearer to Dardanus, King of the Hellenes.
Neither shall Helen captive be dragged to the feet of her husband,
Nor down the paths of peace revisit her fathers’ Eurotas.
Death and the fire may prevail on us, never our wills shall surrender
Lowering Priam’s heights and darkening Ilium’s splendours;
Not of such sires were we born, but of kings and of gods. Larissan,
Not with her gold Troy purchases safety but with her spear-point.
Stand with thy oath in the war-front, Achilles, call on thy helpers
Armed to descend from the calm of Olympian heights to thy succour
Hedging thy fame from defeat; for we all desire thee in battle,
Mighty to end thee or tame at last by the floods of the Xanthus.’
So they reply; they are true to their death, they are constant for ruin.
Humbler answer hope not, O hero, from Penthesilea;
Insolent, warlike, regal and swift as herself is her message.
‘Sea of renown and of valour that fillest the world with thy rumour,
Speed of the battle incarnate, mortal image of Ares!
Terror and tawny delight like a lion one hunts or is hunted!
Dread of the world and my target, swift-footed glorious hero!
Thus have I imaged thee, son of Peleus, dreaming in countries

Far from thy knowledge, in mountains that never have rung to thy war-cry.
 O, I have longed for thee, warrior! Therefore today by thy message
 So was I seized with delight that my heart was hurt with its rapture,
 Knowing today I shall gaze with my eyes on that which I imaged
 Only in air of the mind or met in the paths of my dreaming.
 Thus have I praised thee first with my speech; with my spear I would answer.
 Yet for thy haughty scorn who deeming of me as some Hellene
 Or as a woman weak of these plains fit but for the distaff,
 Promisest capture in war and fame as thy slavegirl in Phthia, —
 Surely I think that death today will reply to that promise, —
 Now I will give thee my answer and warn thee ere we encounter.
 Know me queen of a race that never was conquered in battle!
 Know me armed with a spear that never has missed in the combat!
 There where my car-wheels run, good fruit gets the husbandman after.
 This thou knowest. Ajax has told thee, thy friend, in his dying.
 Has not Meriones' spirit come in thy dreams then to warn thee?
 Didst thou not number the Argives once ere I came to the battle?
 Number them now and measure the warrior Penthesilea.
 Such am I then whom thy dreams have seen meek-browed in Larissa,
 And in the battle behind me thunder the heroes Eoan,
 Ranks whose feeblest can match with the vaunted chiefs of the Argives.
 Never yet from the shock have they fled; if they turn from the foeman,
 Always 'tis to return like death recircling on mortals.
 Yet being such, having such for my armies, this do I promise:
 I on the left of the Trojans war with my bright-armed numbers,
 Thou on the Argive right come forth, Achilles, and meet me!
 If thou canst drive us with rout into Troy, I will own thee for master,
 Do thy utmost will and make thee more glorious than gods are
 Serving thy couch in Phthia and drawing the jar from thy rivers.
 Nay, if thou hast that strength, then hunt me, O hunter, and seize me,
 If 'tis thy hope indeed that the sun can turn back from the Orient,
 But if thou canst not, death of myself or thyself thou shalt capture.'”

Musing heard and was silent awhile the strength of Achilles,
 Musing of Fate and the wills of men and the purpose of Heaven,
 Then from his thoughts he broke and turned in his soul towards battle.
 “Well did I know what reply would come winged from the princes of Troya.
 Prone are the hearts of heroes to wrath and to God-given blindness

When from their will they are thrust and harried by Fate and disaster:
Fierceness then is the armour of strength against grief and its yieldings.
So have the gods made man for their purpose, cunningly fashioned.
Once had defiance waked from my depths a far-striding fury,
Flaming for justice and vengeance, nor had it, satisfied, rested,
Sunk to its lair, till the insulter died torn or was kneeling for pardon.
Fierce was my heart in my youth and exulted in triumph and slaughter.
Now as I grow in my spirit like to my kin the immortals,
Joy more I find in saving and cherishing than in the carnage.
Greater it seems to my mind to be king over men than their slayer,
Nobler to build and to govern than what the ages have laboured
Putting their godhead forth to create or the high gods have fashioned,
That to destroy in our wrath of a moment. Ripened, more widely
Opens my heart to the valour of man and the beauty of woman,
Works of the world and delight; the cup of my victory sweetens
Not with the joys of hate, but the human pride of the triumph.
Yet was the battle decreed for the means supreme of the mortal
Placed in a world where all things strive from the worm to the Titan.
So will I seize by the onset what peace from my soul would sequester,
So will I woo with the sword and with love the delight of my foeman,
Troy and Polyxena, beauty of Paris and glory of Priam.
This was the ancient wrestling, this was the spirit of warfare
Fit for the demigods. Soon in the city of gold and of marble,
There where Ilus sat and Tros, where Laomedon triumphed,
Peleus' house shall reign, the Hellene sit where the Trojan
Thought himself deathless. Arise, Automedon! Out to the people!
Send forth the cry through the ships and the tents of the Myrmidon nation.
Let not a man be found then lingering when o'er the causeway
Thunder my chariot-wheels, nor let any give back in the battle,
Good if he wills from me, till through the conquered gates of the foeman
Storming we herd in their remnants and press into Troy as with evening
Helios rushing sinks to the sea. But thou, Briseis,
Put by thy lyre, O girl; it shall gladden my heart in my triumph
Victor returned from Troy to listen pleased to thy singing,
Bearing a captive bound to my car-wheels Penthesilea,
Bearing my valour's reward, Polyxena, daughter of Priam,
Won in despite of her city and brothers and spears of her kindred.

So by force it is best to take one's will and be mighty."
 Joyful, Automedon ran through the drowsy camp of the Hellenes
 Changing the hum of the tents as he raced into shoutings of battle;
 For with the giant din of a nation triumphant arising
 Hellas sprang from her irksome ease and mounted her war-car;
 Donning her armour bright she rejoiced in the trumpets of battle.

But to the herald grey the Peleid turned and the old man
 Shuddered under his gaze and shrank from the voice of the hero:
 "Thou to the tents of thy Kings, Talthybius, herald of Argos!
 Stand in the Argive assembly, voice of the strength of Achilles.
 Care not at all though the greatest and fiercest be wroth with thy message.
 Deem not thyself, old man, as a body and flesh that is mortal,
 Rather as living speech from the iron breast of the Hellene.
 Thus shalt thou cry to the vanquished chiefs who fled from a woman,
 Thus shalt thou speak my will to the brittle and fugitive legions:
 'Now Achilles turns towards Troya and fast-flowing Xanthus,
 Now he leaps at the iron zone, the impregnable city.
 Two were the forms of the Gods that o'erhung the sails of Pelides
 When with a doubtful word in his soul he came wind-helped from Hellas
 Cleaving the Aegean deep towards the pine-crested vision of Ida.
 Two are the Fates that stride with the hero counting his exploits.
 Over all earthly things the soul that is fearless is master,
 Only on death he can reckon not whether it comes in the midnight
 Treading the couch of Kings in their pride or speeds in the spear-shaft.
 Now will I weigh down that double beam of the Olympian balance
 Claiming one of the equal Fates that stand robed for the fighter,
 For to my last dire wrestle I go with the Archer of heaven,
 And ere the morning gleam have awakened the eagles on Ida,
 Troy shall lie prone or the earth shall be empty of Phthian Achilles.
 But for whatever Fate I accept from the ageless Immortals,
 Whether cold Hades dim or Indus waits for my coming
 Pouring down vast to the sea with the noise of his numberless waters,
 I with Zeus am enough. Your mortal aid I desire not,
 Rushing to Troy like the eagle of Zeus when he flies towards the thunders, —
 Winged with might, the bird of the spaces, upbuoying his pinions.
 Nor shall my spirit look back for the surge of your Danaan fighters,
 Tramp of the Argive multitudes helping my lonely courage,

Neither the transient swell of the cry Achaian behind me
Seek, nor the far-speeding voice of Atrides guiding his legions.
Need has he none for a leader who himself is the soul of his action.
Zeus and his fate and his spear are enough for the Phthian Achilles.
Rest, O wearied hosts; my arm shall win for you Troya,
Quelled when the stern Eoans break and Penthesilea
Lies like a flower in the dust at my feet. Yet if Ares desire you,
Come then and meet him once more mid the cry and the trampling! Assemble
Round the accustomed chiefs, round the old victorious wrestlers
Wearied strengths Deiphobus leaves you or sternest Aeneas.
But when my arm and my Fate have vanquished their gods and Apollo,
Brilliant with blood when we stand amid Ilion's marble splendours,
Then let none seat deaf flame on the glory of Phrygia's marbles
Or with his barbarous rapine shatter the chambers of sweetness
Slaying the work of the gods and the beauty the ages have lived for.
For he shall moan in the night remote from the earth and her greenness,
Spurred like a steed to its goal by my spear dug deep in his bosom;
Fast he shall fleet to the waters of wailing, the pleasureless pastures.
Touch not the city Apollo built, where Poseidon has laboured.
Seized and dishelmed and disgirdled of Apollonian ramparts,
Empty of wide-rolling wheels and the tramp of a turbulent people
Troy with her marble domes shall live for our nations in beauty
Hushed mid the trees and the corn and the pictured halls of the ancients,
Watching her image of dreams in the gliding waves of Scamander,
Sacred and still, a city of memory spared by the Grecians.'
So shalt thou warn the arrogant hearts of Achaia's chieftains
Lest upon Greece an evil should fall and her princes should perish.
Herald, beware how thou soften my speech in the ears of thy nation
Sparing their pride and their hearts but dooming their lives to the
death-stroke.

Even thy time-touched snows shall not shield thy days from my sword-edge."

Wroth the old man's heart, but he feared Achilles and slowly
Over the margin grey on the shore of the far-sounding ocean
Silent paced to the tents of the Greeks and the Argive assembly.
There on the sands while the scream of the tide as it dragged at the pebbles
Strove in vain with their droning roar, awaiting their chieftains
Each in his tribe and his people far down the margin Aegean

Argolis' sons and Epirote spears and the isles and the southron,
 Locris' swarms and Messene's pikes and the strength of the Theban,
 Hosts bright-armed, bright-eyed, bright-haired, time-hardened to Ares,
 Stretched in harsh and brilliant lines with a glitter of spear-points
 Far as the eye could toil. All Europe helmeted, armoured
 Swarmed upon Asia's coasts disgorged from her ships in their hundreds.
 There in the wide-winged tent of the council that peered o'er the margin,
 High where the grass and the meadow-bloom failed on the sand-rifted
sward-edge,

Pouring his argent voice Epeus spoke to the princes,
 Rapid in battle and speech; and even as a boy in a courtyard
 Tosses his ball in the air and changes his hands for the seizing
 So he played with counsel and thought and rejoiced in his swiftness.
 But now a nearing Fate he felt and his impulse was silenced.
 Stilled were his thoughts by the message that speeds twixt our minds in
their shadows

Dumb, unthought, unphrased, to us dark, but the caverns of Nature
 Hear its cry when God's moment changing our fate comes visored
 Silently into our lives and the spirit too knows, for it watches.
 Quiet he fell and all men turned to the face of the herald.
 Mute and alone through the ranks of the seated and silent princes
 Old Talhybius paced, nor paused till he stood at the midmost
 Fronting that council of Kings and nearest to Locrian Ajax
 And where Sthenelus sat and where sat the great Diomedes,
 Chiefs of the South, but their love was small for the Kings of the Spartans.
 There like one close to a refuge he lifted his high-chanting accents.
 High was his voice like the wind's when it whistles shrill o'er a forest
 Sole of all sounds at night, for the kite is at rest and the tiger
 Sleeps from the hunt returned in the deepest hush of the jungle.
 "Hearken, O Kings of the world, to the lonely will of the Phthian!
 One is the roar of the lion heard by the jungle's hundreds,
 One is the voice of the great and the many shall hear it inclining.
 Lo, he has shaken his mane for the last great leap upon Troya
 And when the eagle's scream shall arise in the dawn over Ida,
 Troy shall have fallen or earth shall be empty of Phthian Achilles.
 But by whatever Fate he is claimed that waits for the mortal,
 Whether the fast-closed hands above have kept for his morrows

Chill of the joyless shades of earth and her wooings of sunlight
Still shall detain his days with the doubtful meed of our virtues,
He and Zeus shall provide, not mortals. Chaff are men's armies
Threshed by the flails of Fate; 'tis the soul of the hero that conquers.
Not on the tramp of the multitudes, not on the cry of the legions
Founds the strong man his strength but the god that he carries within him.
Zeus and his Fate and his spear are enough for the Phthian Achilles.
Prudence of men shall curb no more his god-given impulse.
He has no need of thy voice, O Atrides, guiding the legions,
He is the leader, his is the soul of magnificent emprise.
Rest, O ye sons of the Greeks, the Phthian shall conquer for Hellas!
Rest! expose not your hearts to the war-cry of Penthesilea.
Yet if the strength in you thirsts for the war-din, if Ares is hungry,
Meet him stark in the mellay urging Deiphobus' coursers,
Guiding Aeneas' spear; recover the souls of your fathers.
Bronze must his heart be who looks in the eyes of the implacable war-god!
But when his Fate has conquered their gods and slaughtered their heroes,
And in this marble Iliad forced to the tread of her foemen
Watched by the ancient domes you stand, by the timeless turrets,
Then let no chieftain garbed for the sacrifice lift against Troya,
Counselled of Ate, torch of the burning, hand of the plunder
Groping for gold but finding death in her opulent chambers.
For he shall moan in the night regretting the earth and her greenness,
Spurred by the spear in his arrogant breast like a steed to the gorges:
Fast he shall fleet to the flowerless meadows, the sorrowful pastures.
Touch not the city Apollo built, where Poseidon has laboured,
Slay not the work of the gods and the glory the ages have lived for.
Mute of the voice of her children, void of the roll of her war-cars
Timeless Troy leave solitary dreaming by ancient Scamander
Sacred and still, a city of memory spared by the Phthian."
So Talthibius spoke and anger silenced the Argives.
Mute was the warlike assembly, silent Achaia's princes.
Wrath and counsel strove in the hush for the voice of the speakers.

BOOK VI

The Book of the Chieftains

Then as from common hills great Pelion rises to heaven
So from the throng uprearing a brow that no crown could ennoble,
Male and kingly of front like a lion conscious of puissance
Rose a form august, the monarch great Agamemnon.
Wroth he rose yet throwing a rein on the voice of his passion,
Governing the beast and the demon within by the god who is mighty.
“Happy thy life and my fame that thou com’st with the aegis of heaven
Shadowing thy hoary brows, thou herald of pride and of insult.
Well is it too for his days who sent thee that other and nobler
Heaven made my heart than his who insults and a voice of the immortals
Cries to my soul forbidding its passions. O hardness of virtue,
Thus to be seized and controlled as in fetters by Zeus and Athene.
Free is the peasant to smite in the pastures the mouth that has wronged him,
Chained in his soul is Atrides. Bound by their debt to the fathers,
Curbed by the god in them painfully move the lives of the noble,
Forced to obey the eye that watches within in their bosoms.
Ever since Zeus Cronion turned in our will towards the waters,
Scourged by the heavens in my dearest, wronged by men and their clamours,
Griefs untold I have borne in Argos and Aulis and Troas,
Yoked to this sacred toil of the Greeks for their children and country,
Bound by the gods to a task that is heavy, a load that is bitter.
Seeing the faces of foes in the mask of friends I was silent.
Hateful I hold him who sworn to a cause that is holy and common
Broods upon private wrongs or serving his lonely ambition
Studies to reap his gain from the labour and woe of his fellows.
Mire is the man who hears not the gods when they cry to his bosom.
Grief and wrath I coerced nor carried my heart to its record
All that has hurt its chords and wounded the wings of my spirit.
Nobler must kings be than natures of earth on whom Zeus lays no burden.
Other is Peleus’ son than the race of his Aeacid fathers,
Nor like his sire of the wise-still heart far-sighted and patient
Bearing the awful rein of the gods, but hastes to his longings,
Dire in his wrath and pursued by the band of his giant ambitions.
Measure and virtue forsake him as Ate grows in his bosom.

Yet not for tyrant wrong nor to serve as a sword for our passions
 Zeus created our strength, but that earth might have help from her children.
 Not of our moulding its gifts to our soul nor were formed by our labour!
 When did we make them, where were they forged, in what workshop or
 furnace?

Found in what aeon of Time, that pride should bewilder the mortal?
 Bowed to our will are the folk and our prowess dreadful and godlike?
 Shadows are these of the gods which the deep heavens cast on our spirits.
 Transient, we made not ourselves, but at birth from the first we were
 fashioned

Valiant or fearful and as was our birth by the gods and their thinkings
 Formed, so already enacted and fixed by their wills are our fortunes.
 What were the strength of Atrides and what were the craft of Odysseus
 Save for their triumphing gods? They would fail and be helpless as infants.
 Stronger a woman, wiser a child were favoured by Heaven.
 Ceased not Sarpedon slain who was son of Zeus and unconquered?
 Not to Achilles he fell, but Fate and the gods were his slayers.
 Kings, to the arrogant shaft that was launched, the unbearable insult,
 Armoured wisdoms oppose, let not Ate seize on your passions.
 Be not as common souls, O you who are Greece and her fortunes,
 Nor of your spirits of wrath take counsel but of Athene.
 Merit the burden laid by Zeus, his demand from your natures
 Suffer, O hearts of his seed, O souls who are chosen and mighty,
 All forgetting but Greece and her good; resolve what is noble.
 I will not speak nor advise, for 'tis known we are rivals and foemen."

Calmed by his words and his will he sat down mighty and kinglike;
 But Menelaus arose, the Spartan, the husband of Helen,
 Atreus' younger son from a lesser womb, in his brilliance
 Dwarfed by the other's port, yet tall was he, gracile and splendid,
 As if a panther might hunt by a lion's side in the forest.
 Smiting his thigh with his firm-clenched hand he spoke mid the Argives:
 "Woe to me, shameless, born to my country a cause of affliction,
 Since for my sake all wrongs must be borne and all shames be encountered;
 And for my sake you have spun through the years down the grooves of
 disaster

Bearing the shocks of the Trojans and ravaged by Zeus and by Hector,
 Slaughtered by Rhesus and Memnon, Sarpedon and Penthesilea;

Or by the Archer pierced, the hostile dreadful Apollo,
Evilly end the days of the Greeks remote from their kindred —
Slain on an alien soil by Asian Xanthus and Ida.
Doomed to the pyre we have toiled for a woman ungracious who left us
Passing serenely my portals to joy in the chambers of Troya.
Here let it cease, O my brother! how much wilt thou bear for this graceless
Child of thy sire, cause still of thy griefs and never of blessing?
Easily Zeus afflicts who trouble their hearts for a woman;
But in our ships that sailed close-fraught with this dolorous Ate
Worse was the bane they bore which King Peleus begot on white Thetis.
Evil ever was sown by the embrace of the gods with a mortal!
Alien a portent is born and a breaker of men and their labours,
One who afflicts with his light or his force mortality's weakness
Stripping for falsehoods their verities, shaking the walls they erected.
Hostile all things the scourge divine overbears or, if helpful,
Neither without him his fellows can prosper, nor will his spirit
Fit in the frame of things earthly but shatters their rhythm and order
Rending the measures just that the wise have decreed for our growing.
So have our mortal plannings broken on this fateful Achilles
And with our blood and our anguish Heaven has fostered his greatness.
It is enough; let the dire gods choose between Greece and their offspring.
Even as he bids us, aloof let our hosts twixt the ships and the Xanthus
Stand from the shock and the cry where Hellene meets with Eoan,
Troy and Phthia locked, Achilles and Penthesilea,
Nor any more than watchers care who line an arena;
Calm like the impartial gods, approve the bravest and swiftest.
Sole let him fight! The fates shall preserve him he vaunts of or gather,
Even as death shall gather us all for memory's clusters,
All in their day who were great or were little, heroes or cowards.
So shall he slay or be slain, a boon to mankind and his country.
Since if he mow down this flower of bale, this sickle by Hades
Whirled if he break, — for the high gods ride on the hiss of his spear-shaft, —
Ours is the gain who shall break rejoicing through obdurate portals
Praising Pallas alone and Hera daughter of Heaven.
But if he sink in this last of his fights, as they say it is fated, —
Nor do I deem that the man has been born in Asia or Hellas
Who in the dreadful field can prevail against Penthesilea, —

If to their tents the Myrmidons fleeing cumber the meadows
Slain by a girl in her speed and leaving the corpse of their leader,
Ours is the gain, we are rid of a shame and a hate and a danger.
True is it, Troy shall exultant live on in the shadow of Ida,
Yet shall our hearts be light because earth is void of Achilles.
And for the rest of the infinite loss, what we hoped, what we suffered,
Let it all go, let the salt floods swallow it, fate and oblivion
Bury it out in the night; let us sail o'er the waves to our country
Leaving Helen in Troy since the gods are the friends of transgressors.”
So Menelaus in anger and grief miscounselled the Argives.

Great Idomeneus next, the haughty king of the Cretans,
Raised his brow of pride in the lofty Argive assembly.
Tall like a pine that stands up on the slope of Thessalian mountains
Overpeering a cascade's edge and is seen from the valleys,
Such he seemed to their eyes who remembered Greece and her waters,
Heard in their souls the torrent's leap and the wind on the hill-tops.
“Oft have I marvelled, O Greeks, to behold in this levy of heroes
Armies so many, chieftains so warlike suffer in silence
Pride of a single man when he thunders and lightens in Troas.
Doubtless the nations that follow his cry are many and valiant,
Doubtless the winds of the north have made him a runner and spearman.
Shall not then force be the King? is not strength the seal of the Godhead?
This my soul replies, 'Agamemnon the Atreid only
Choosing for leader and king I have come to the toil and the warfare.
Wisdom and greatness he owns and the wealth and renown of his fathers.'
But for this whelp of the northlands, nursling of rocks and the sea-cliff
Who with his bleak and rough-hewn Myrmidons hastes to the carnage,
Leader of wolves to their prey, not the king of a humanised nation,
Not to such head of the cold-drifting mist and the gloom-vigilled Chaos,
Crude to our culture and light and void of our noble fulfilments
Minos shall bend his knee nor Crete, a barbarian's vassal,
Stain her old glories. Oh, but he boasts of a goddess for mother
Born in the senseless seas mid the erring wastes of the Ocean,
White and swift and foam-footed, vast Oceanus' daughter.
Gods we adore enough in the heavens, and if from us Hades
Claim one more of this breed, we can bear that excess of his glories,
Not upon earth these new-born deities huge-passioned, sateless

Who with their mouth as of Orcus and stride of the ruinous Ocean
 Sole would be seen mid her sons and devour all life's joy and its greatness.
 Millions must empty their lives that a man may o'ershadow the nations,
 Numberless homes must weep, but his hunger of glory is sated!
 Troy shall descend to the shadow; gods and men have condemned her,
 Weary, hating her fame. Her dreams, her grandeur, her beauty,
 All her greatness and deeds that now end in miserable ashes,
 Ceasing shall fade and be as a tale that was forged by the poets.
 Only a name shall go down from her past and the woe of her ending
 Naked to hatred and rapine and punished with rape and with slaughter.
 Never again must marble pride high-domed on her hill-top
 Look forth dominion and menace over the crested Aegean
 Shadowing Achaia. Fire shall abolish the fame of her ramparts,
 Earth her foundations forget. Shall she stand affronting the azure?
 Dire in our path like a lioness once again must we meet her,
 Leap and roar of her led by the spear of Achilles, not Hector?
 Asia by Peleus guided shall stride on us after Antenor?
 Though one should plan in the night of his thoughts where no eye can
pursue him,
 Instincts of men discover their foe and like hounds in the darkness
 Bay at a danger hid. No silence of servitude trembling
 Trains to bondage sons of the race of whom Aeolus father
 Storm-voiced was and free, nor like other groupings of mortals
 Moulded we were by Zeus, but supremely were sifted and fashioned.
 Other are Danaus' sons and other the lofty Achaians:
 Chainless like Nature's tribes in their many-voiced colonies founded
 They their god-given impulse shall keep and their natures of freedom.
 Only themselves shall rule them, only their equal spirits
 Bowed to the voice of a law that is just, obeying their leaders,
 Awed by the gods. So with order and balance and harmony noble
 Life shall move golden, free in its steps and just in its measure,
 Glad of a manhood complete, by excess and defect untormented.
 Freedom is life to the Argive soul, to Aeolia's peoples.
 Dulled by a yoke our nations would perish, or live but as shadows,
 Changed into phantoms of men with the name of a Greek for a byword.
 Not like the East and her sons is our race, they who bow to a mortal.
 Gods there may be in this flesh that suffers and dies; Achaia

Knows them not. Need if he feels of a world to endure and adore him,
 Hearts let him seek that are friends with the dust, overpowered by their
 heavens,

Here in these Asian vastnesses, here where the heats and the perfumes
 Sicken the soul and the sense and a soil of indolent plenty
 Breeds like the corn in its multitudes natures accustomed to thralldom.
 Here let the northern Achilles seek for his slaves and adorers,
 Not in the sea-ringed isles and not in the mountains Achaian.
 Ten long years of the shock and the war-cry twixt rampart and ocean
 Hurting our hearts we have toiled; shall they reap not their ease in the
 vengeance?

Troas is sown with the lives of our friends and with ashes remembered;
 Shall not Meriones slain be reckoned in blood and in treasure?
 Cretan Idomeneus girt with the strength of his iron retainers
 Slaying and burning will stride through the city of music and pleasure,
 Babes of her blood borne high on the spears at the head of my column,
 Wives of her princes dragged through her streets in its pomp to their passion,
 Gold of Troy stream richly past in the gaze of Achilles.
 Then let him threaten my days, then rally the might of his triumphs,
 Yet shall a Cretan spear make search in his heart for his godhead.
 Limbs of this god can be pierced; not alone shall I fleet down to Hades.”

After him rose from the throng the Locrian, swift-footed Ajax.
 “Kings of the Greeks, throw a veil on your griefs, lay a curb on your anger.
 Moved man’s tongue in its wrath looses speech that is hard to be pardoned,
 Afterwards stilled we regret, we forgive. If all were resented,
 None could live on this earth that is thick with our stumblings. Always
 This is the burden of man that he acts from his heart and his passions,
 Stung by the goads of the gods he hews at the ties that are dearest.
 Lust was the guide they sent us, wrath was a whip for his coursers,
 Madness they made the heart’s comrade, repentance they gave for its
 scourger.

This too our hearts demand that we bear with our friend when he chides us.
 Insult forgive from the noble embittered soul of Achilles!
 When with the scorn and the wrath of a lover our depths are tormented,
 Who shall forbid the cry and who shall measure the anguish?
 Sharper the pain that looses the taunt than theirs who endure it.
 Rage has wept in my blood as I lived through the flight o’er the pastures,

Shame coils a snake in my back when thought whispers of Penthesilea.
Bright shine his morns if he mows down this hell-bitch armed by the Furies!
But for this shaft of his pity it came from a lesser Pelides,
Not from the slayer of Hector, not from the doom of Sarpedon,
Memnon's mighty o'erthrower, the blood-stained splendid Achilles.
These are the Trojan snares and the fateful smile of a woman!
This thing the soul of a man shall not bear that blood of his labour
Vainly has brought him victory leaving life to the hated;
This is a wound to our race that a Greek should whisper of mercy.
Who can pardon a foe though a god should descend to persuade him?
Justice is first of the gods, but for Pity 'twas spawned by a mortal,
Pity that only disturbs God's measures and false and unrighteous
Holds man back from the joy he might win and troubles his bosom.
Troy has a debt to our hearts; she shall pay it all down to the obol,
Blood of the fall and anguish of flight when the heroes are slaughtered,
Days without joy while we labour and see not the eyes of our parents,
Toil of the war-cry, nights that drag past upon alien beaches,
Helen ravished, Paris triumphant, endless the items
Crowd on a wrath in the memory, kept as in bronze the credit
Stretches out long and blood-stained and savage. Most for the terror
Graved in the hearts of our fathers that still by our youth is remembered,
Hellas waiting and crouching, dreading the spear of the Trojan,
Flattering, sending gifts and pale in her mortal anguish,
Agony long of a race at the mercy of iron invaders,
This she shall pay most, the city of pride, the insolent nation,
Pay with her temples charred and her golden mansions in ruins,
Pay with the shrieks of her ravished virgins, the groans of the aged
Burned in their burning homes for our holiday. Music and dancing
Shall be in Troy of another sort than she loved in her greatness
Merry with conquered gold and insulting the world with her flutings.
All that she boasted of, statue and picture, all shall be shattered;
Out of our shame she chiselled them, rich with our blood they were coloured.
This not the gods from Olympus crowding, this not Achilles,
This not your will, O ye Greeks, shall deny to the Locrian Ajax.
Even though Pallas divine with her aegis counselling mercy
Cumbered my path, I would push her aside to leap on my victims.
Learn shall all men on that day how a warrior deals with his foemen."

Darting flames from his eyes the barbarian sate, and there rose up
 Frowning Tydeus' son, the Tiryntian, strong Diomedes.
 "Ajax Oileus, thy words are foam on the lips of a madman.
 Cretan Idomeneus, silence the vaunt that thy strength can fulfil not.
 Strong art thou, fearless in battle, but not by thy spear-point, O hero,
 Hector fell, nor Sarpedon, nor Troilus leading the war-cry.
 These were Achilles' deeds which a god might have done out of heaven.
 Him we upbraid who saved, nor would any now who revile him
 Still have a living tongue for ingratitude but for the hero.
 Much to the man forgive who has saved his race and his country:
 Him shall the termless centuries praise when we are forgotten.
 Curb then your speech, crush down in your hearts the grief and the choler;
 Has not Atrides curbed who is greatest of all in our nations
 Wrath in the heart and the words that are winged for our bale from our
 bosoms?

For as a load to be borne were these passions given to mortals.
 Honour Achilles, conquer Troy by his god-given valour.
 Now of our discords and griefs debate not for joy of our foemen!
 First over Priam's corpse stand victors in Ilion's ramparts;
 Discord then let arise or concord solder our nations."
 Rugged words and few as fit for the soul that he harboured
 Great Tydides spoke and ceased; and there rose up impatient
 Tall from the spears of the north the hero king Prothoënor,
 Prince in Cadmeian Thebes who with Leitus led on his thousands.

"Loudly thou vauntest thy freedom Ionian Minos recalling,
 Lord of thy southern isles who gildst with tribute Mycenae.
 We have not bowed our neck to Pelops' line, at Argos'
 Iron heel have not crouched, nor clasped like thy time-wearied nations,
 Python-befriended, gripped in the coils of an iron protection,
 Bondage soothed by a name and destruction masked as a helper.
 We are the young and lofty and free-souled sons of the Northland.
 Nobly Peleus, the Aeacid, seer of a vaster Achaia,
 Pride of his strength and his deeds renouncing for joy of that vision,
 Yielded his hoary right to the sapling stock of Atrides.
 Noble, we gave to that nobleness freely our grandiose approval.
 Not as a foe then, O King, who angered sharpens his arrows,
 Fits his wrath and hate to the bow and aims at the heart-strings

But from the Truth that is seated within me compelling my accents,
 Taught by my fathers stern not to lie nor to hide what I harbour,
 Truth the goddess I speak, nor constrain the voice in my bosom.
 Monarch, I own thee first of the Greeks save in valour and counsel,
 Brave, but less than Achilles, wise, but not as Odysseus,
 First still in greatness and calm and majesty. Yet, Agamemnon,
 Love of thy house and thy tribe disfigures the king in thy nature;
 Thou thy brother preferrest, thy friends and thy nations unjustly,
 Even as a common man whose heart is untaught by Athene,
 Beastlike favours his brood forgetting the law of the noble.
 Therefore Ajax grew wroth and Teucer sailing abandoned
 Over the angry seas this fierce-locked toil of the nations;
 Therefore Achilles has turned in his soul and gazed towards the Orient.
 Yet are we fixed in our truth like hills in heaven, Atrides;
 Greece and her safety and good our passions strive to remember.
 Not of this stamp was thy brother's speech; such words Lacedaemon
 Hearing may praise in her kings; we speak not in Thebes what is shameful.
 Shamefuller thoughts have never escaped from lips that were high-born.
 We will not send forth earth's greatest to die in a friendless battle,
 Nor will forsake the daughter of Zeus and white glory of Hellas,
 Helen the golden-haired Tyndarid, left for the joy of our foemen,
 Chained to Paris' delight, earth's goddess the slave of the Phrygian,
 Though Menelaus the Spartan abandon his wife to the Trojans
 And from the field where he lavished the unvalued blood of his people
 Flee to a hearth dishonoured. Not the Atreid's sullied grandeurs,
 Greece to defend we have toiled through the summers and lingering autumns
 Blind with our blood; for our country we bleed repelling her foemen.
 Dear is that loss to our veins and still that expense we would lavish
 Claiming its price from the heavens, though thou sail with thy brother and
 cohorts.

Weakling, flee! take thy southern ships, take thy Spartan levies.
 Still will the Greeks fight on in the Troad helped by thy absence.
 For though the beaches vast grow empty, the tents can be numbered
 Standing friendless and few on the huge and hostile champaign,
 Always a few will be left whom the threatenings of Fate cannot conquer,
 Always souls are born whose courage waits not on fortune;
 Hellas' heart will be firm confronting the threat of the victor,

Sthenelus war and Tydides, Odysseus and Locrian Ajax,
 Thebes' unconquered sons and the hero chiefs of the northland.
 Stern and persistent as Time or the seas and as deaf to affliction
 We will clash on in the fight unsatisfied, fain of the war-cry,
 Helped by the gods and our cause through the dawns and the
blood-haunted evenings,
 Rising in armour with morn and outstaying the red of the sunset,
 Till in her ashes Troy forgets that she lusted for empire
 Or in our own the honour and valour of Greece are extinguished.”
 So Prothoënor spoke nor pleased with his words Agamemnon;
 But to the northern kings they were summer rain on the visage.

Last Laertes' son, the Ithacan, war-wise Odysseus,
 Rose up wide-acclaimed; like an oak was he stunted in stature,
 Broad-shouldered, firm-necked, lone and sufficient, as on some island
 Regnant one peak whose genial streams flow down to the valley,
 Dusk on its slopes are the olives, the storms butt in vain at its shoulders, —
 Such he stood and pressed the earth with his feet like one vanquished,
 Striving, but held to his will. So Atlas might seem were he mortal,
 Atlas whose vastness free from impatience suffers the heavens,
 Suffering spares the earth, the thought-haunted motionless Titan,
 Bearer of worlds. In those jarring tribes no man was his hater;
 For as the Master of all guides humanity, so this Odysseus
 Dealt with men and helped and guided them, careful and selfless,
 Crafty, tender and wise, — like the Master who bends o'er His creatures,
 Suffers their sins and their errors and guides them screening the guidance;
 Each through his nature He leads and the world by the lure of His wisdom.

“Princes of Argolis, chiefs of the Locrians, spears of the northland,
 Warriors vowed to a sacred hate and a vengeance that's holy,
 Sateless still is that hate, that vengeance cries for its victims,
 Still is the altar unladen, the priest yet waits with the death-knife.
 Who while the rites are unfinished, the god unsatisfied, impious
 Turns in his heart to the feuds of his house and his strife with his equals?
 None will approve the evil that fell from the younger Atrides;
 But it was anger and sorrow that spoke, it was not Menelaus.
 Who would return from Troy and arrive with his war-wasted legions
 Back to his home in populous city or orcharded island;
 There from his ships disembarked look round upon eyes that grow joyless

Seeking a father or husband slain, a brother heart-treasured,
 Mothers in tears for their children, and when he is asked, 'O our chieftain,
 What dost thou bring back in place of our dead to fill hearts that are empty?'
 Who then will say, 'I bring back my shame and the shame of my nation;
 Troy yet stands confronting her skies and Helen in Troya?'
 Not for such foil will I go back to Ithaca or to Laertes,
 Rather far would I sail in my ships past southern Cythera,
 Turning away in silence from waters where on some headland
 Gazing south o'er the waves my father waits for my coming,
 Leaving Sicily's shores and on through the pillars of Gades.
 Far I would sail whence sound of me never should come to Achaia
 Out into tossing worlds and weltering reaches of tempest
 Dwarfing the swell of the wide-wayed Aegean, — Oceans unbounded
 Either by cliff or by sandy margin, only the heavens
 Ever receding before my keel as it ploughs on for ever
 Frail and alone in a world of waves. Even there would I venture
 Seeking some island unknown, not return with shame to my fathers.
 Well might they wonder how souls like theirs begot us for their offspring.
 Fighters war-afflicted, champions banded by heaven,
 Wounds and defeat you have borne; bear too their errors who lead you.
 Mortals are kings and have hearts; our leaders too have their passions.
 Then if they err, yet still obey lest anarchy fostered,
 Discord and deaf rebellion that speed like a poison through kingdoms,
 Break all this army in pieces while Ate mocking at mortals
 Trails to a shameful end this lofty essay of the nations.
 Who among men has not thoughts that he holds for the wisest, though
foolish?
 Who, though feeble and nought, esteems not his strength o'er his fellow's?
 Therefore the wisest and strongest choose out a king and a leader,
 Not as a perfect arbiter armed with impossible virtues
 Far o'er our heads and our ken like a god high-judging his creatures,
 But as a man among men who is valiant, wise and far-seeing,
 One of ourselves and the knot of our wills and the sword of our action.
 Him they advise and obey and cover his errors with silence.
 Not Agamemnon the Atreid, Greeks, we obey in this mortal;
 Greece we obey; for she walks in his gait and commands by his gestures.
 Evil he works then who loosens this living knot of Achaia;

Afterwards bale that is best shall be done persuading Achilles;
Doubt not the gods' decisions, awful, immutable, ruthless.
Flame shall lick Troy's towers and the limbs of her old men and infants.
O not today nor now remember the faults of the hero!
Follow him rather bravely and blindly as children their leader,
Guide your fate through the war-surge loud in the wake of his exploits.
Rise, O ye kings of the Greeks! leave debate for the voices of battle.
Peal forth the war-shout, pour forth the spear-sleet, surge towards Troya.
Ilion falls today; we shall turn in our ships to our children."
So Odysseus spoke and the Achaians heard him applauding;
Ever the pack by the voice of the mighty is seized and attracted!
Then from his seat Agamemnon arising his staff to the herald
Gave and around him arose the Kings of the west and its leaders,
Loud their assembly broke with a stern and martial rumour.

BOOK VII

The Book of the Woman

So to the voice of their best they were bowed and obeyed undebating;
Men whose hearts were burning yet with implacable passion
Felt Odysseus' strength and rose up clay to his counsels.
King Agamemnon rose at his word, the wide-ruling monarch,
Rose at his word the Cretan and Locrian, Thebes and Epirus,
Nestor rose, the time-tired hoary chief of the Pylians.
Round Agamemnon the Atreid Europe surged in her chieftains
Forth from their tent on the shores of the Troad, splendid in armour,
Into the golden blaze of the sun and the race of the sea-winds.
Fierce and clear like a flame to the death-gods bright on its altar
Shone in their eyes the lust of blood and of earth and of pillage;
For in their hearts those fires replaced the passions of discord
Forging a brittle peace by a common hatred and yearning.
Joyous they were of mood; for their hopes were already in Troya
Sating with massacre, plunder and rape and the groans of their foemen
Death and Hell in our mortal bosoms seated and shrouded;
There they have altars and seats, in mankind, in this fair-builded temple,
Made for purer gods; but we turn from their luminous temptings;
Vainly the divine whispers seek us; the heights are rejected.
Man to his earth drawn always prefers his nethermost promptings,
Man, devouring, devoured who is slayer and slain through the ages
Since by the beast he soars held and exceeds not that pedestal's measure.
They now followed close on the steps of the mighty Atrides
Glued like the forest pack to the war-scarred coat of its leader,
Glued as the pack when wolves follow their prey like Doom that can turn not.
Perfect forms and beautiful faces crowded the tent-door,
Brilliant eyes and fierce of souls that remembered the forest,
Wild-beasts touched by thought and savages lusting for beauty.
Dire and fierce and formidable chieftains followed Atrides,
Merciless kings of merciless men and the founders of Europe,
Sackers of Troy and sires of the Parthenon, Athens and Caesar.
Here they had come to destroy the ancient perishing cultures;
For, it is said, from the savage we rose and were born to a wild-beast.
So when the Eye supreme perceives that we rise up too swiftly,

Drawn towards height but fullness contemning, called by the azure,
Life when we fail in, poor in our base and forgetting our mother,
Back we are hurled to our roots; we recover our sap from the savage.
So were these sent by Zeus to destroy the old that was grandiose.
Such were those frames of old as the sons of Heaven might have chosen
Who in the dawn of eternity wedded the daughters of Nature,
Cultures touched by the morning star, vast, bold and poetic,
Titans' works and joys, but thrust down from their puissance and pleasure
Fainting now fell from the paces of Time or were left by his ages.
So were these born from Zeus to found the new that should flower
Lucid and slender and perfectly little as fit for this mortal
Ever who sinks back fatigued from immortality's stature;
Man, repelled by the gulfs within him and shrinking from vastness,
Form of the earth accepts and is glad of the lap of his mother.
Safe through the infinite seas could his soul self-piloted voyage,
Chasing the dawns and the wondrous horizons, eternity's secrets
Drawn from her luminous gulfs! But he journeys rudderless, helmless,
Driven and led by the breath of God who meets him with tempest,
Hurls at him Night. The earth is safer, warmer its sunbeams;
Death and limits are known; so he clings to them hating the summons.
So might one dwell who has come to take joy in a fair-lighted prison;
Amorous grown of its marble walls and its noble adornments,
Lost to mightier cares and the spaces boundlessly calling
Lust of the infinite skies he forgets and the kiss of the stormwind.
So might one live who inured to his days of the field and the farm-yard
Shrinks from the grandiose mountain-tops; shut up in lanes and in hedges
Only his furrows he leads and only orders his gardens,
Only his fleeces weaves and drinks of the yield of his vine-rows:
Lost to his ear is the song of the waterfall, wind in the forests.
Now to our earth we are bent and we study the skies for its image.
That was Greece and its shining, that now is France and its keenness,
That still is Europe though by the Christ-touch troubled and tortured,
Seized by the East but clasping her chains and resisting our freedom.
Then was all founded, on Phrygia's coasts, round Ilion's ramparts,
Then by the spear of Achilles, then in the Trojan death-cry;
Bearers mute of a future world were those armoured Achaians.
So they arrived from Zeus, an army led by the death-god.

So one can see them still who has sight from the gods in the trance-sleep
Out from the tent emerging on Phrygia's coasts in their armour;
Those of the early seed Pelasgian slighter in stature,
Dark-haired, hyacinth-curved from the isles of the sea and the southron,
Soft-eyed men with pitiless hearts; bright-haired the Achaians,
Hordes of the Arctic Dawn who had fled from the ice and the death-blast;
Children of conquerors lured to the coasts and the breezes and olives,
Noons of Mediterranean suns and the kiss of the southwind
Mingled their brilliant force with the plastic warmth of the Hamite.
There they shall rule and their children long till Fate and the Dorian
Break down Hellene doors and trample stern through the passes.
Mixed in a glittering rout on the Ocean beaches one sees them,
Perfect and beautiful figures and fronts, not as now are we mortals
Marred and crushed by our burden long of thought and of labour;
Perfect were these as our race bright-imagined was first by the Thinker
Seen who in golden lustres shapes all the glories we tarnish,
Rich from the moulds of Gods and unmarred in their splendour and
swiftness.

Many and mighty they came over the beaches loud of the Aegean,
Roots of an infant world and the morning stars of this Europe,
Great Agamemnon's kingly port and the bright Menelaus,
Tall Idomeneus, Nestor, Odysseus Atlas-shouldered,
Helmeted Ajax, his chin of the beast and his eyes of the dreamer.
Over the sands they dispersed to their armies ranked by the Ocean.

But from the Argive front Acirrus loosed by Tydides
Parted as hastens a shaft from the string and he sped on intently
Swift where the beaches were bare or threading the gaps of the nations;
Crossing Thebes and Epirus he passed through the Lemnian archers,
Ancient Gnosus' hosts and Meriones' leaderless legions.
Heedless of cry and of laughter calling over the sea-sands
Swiftly he laboured, wind in his hair and the sea to him crying,
Straight he ran to the Myrmidon hosts and the tents of Achilles.
There he beheld at his tent-door the Phthian gleaming in armour,
Glittering-helmeted with the sun that climbed now the cusp of Cronion,
Nobly tall, excelling humanity, planned like Apollo.
Proud at his side like a pillar upreared of snow or of marble,
Golden-haired, hard and white was the boy Neoptolemus, fire-eyed.

New were his feet to the Trojan sands from the ships and from Scyros:
 Led to this latest of all his father's fights in the Troad
 He for his earliest battle waited, the son of Achilles.
 So in her mood had Fate brought them together, the son and the father,
 Even as our souls travelling different paths have met in the ages
 Each for its work and they cling for an hour to the names of affection,
 Then Time's long waves bear them apart for new forms we shall know not,
 So these two long severed had met in the shadow of parting.
 Often he smote his hand on the thigh-piece for sound of the armour,
 Bent his ear to the plains or restless moved like a war-horse
 Curbed by his master's will, when he stands new-saddled for battle
 Hearing the voice of the trumpets afar and pawing the meadows.
 Over the sands Acirrous came to them running and toiling,
 Known from far off, for he ran unhelmeted. High on the hero
 Sunlike smiled the golden Achilles and into the tent-space
 Seized by the hand and brought him and seated. "War-shaft of Troezen,
 Whence was thy speed, Acirrous? Com'st thou, O friend, to my tent-side
 Spurred by thy eager will or the trusted stern Diomedes?
 Or from the Greeks like the voice still loved from a heart that is hollow?
 What say the banded princes of Greece to the single Achilles?
 Bringest thou flattery pale or an empty and futureless menace?"
 But to the strength of Pelides the hero Acirrous answered:
 "Response none make the Greeks to thy high-voiced message and challenge;
 Only their shout at thy side will reply when thou leapest into Troya.
 So have their chieftains willed and the wisdom calm of Odysseus."
 But with a haughty scorn made answer the high-crested Hellene:
 "Wise is Odysseus, wise are the hearts of Achaia's chieftains.
 Iliion's chiefs are enough for their strength and life is too brittle
 Hurrying Fate to advance on the spear of the Phthian Achilles."
 "Not from the Greeks have I sped to thy tents, their friendship or quarrel
 Urged not my feet; but Tiryns' chieftain strong Diomedes
 Sent me claiming a word long old that first by his war-car
 Young Neoptolemus come from island Scyros should enter
 Far-crashing into the fight that has lacked this shoot of Achilles,
 Pressing in front with his father's strength in the playground of Ares,
 Shouting his father's cry as he clashed to his earliest battle.
 So let Achilles' son twin-carred fight close by Tydides,

Seal of the ancient friendship new-sworn twixt your sires in their boyhood
Then when they learned the spear to guide and strove in the wrestle.”
So he spoke recalling other times and regretted
And to the Argive’s word consented the strength of Pelides.
He on the shoulder white of his son with a gesture of parting
Laid his fateful hand and spoke from his prescient spirit:

“Pyrrhus, go. No mightier guide couldst thou hope into battle
Opening the foemen’s ranks than the hero stern Diomedes.
Noble that rugged heart, thy father’s friend and his father’s.
Journey through all wide Greece, seek her prytanies, schools and palaestras,
Traverse Ocean’s rocks and the cities that dream on his margin,
Phocian dales, Aetolia’s cliffs and Arcady’s pastures,
Never a second man wilt thou find, but alone Diomedes.
Pyrrhus, follow his counsels always losing thy father,
If in this battle I fall and Fate has denied to me Troya.
Pyrrhus, be like thy father in virtue, thou canst not excel him;
Noble be in peace, invincible, brave in the battle,
Stern and calm to thy foe, to the suppliant merciful. Mortal
Favour and wrath as thou walkst heed never, son of Achilles.
Always thy will and the right impose on thy friend and thy foeman.
Count not life nor death, defeat nor triumph, Pyrrhus.
Only thy soul regard and the gods in thy joy or thy labour.”
Pyrrhus heard and erect with a stride that was rigid and stately
Forth with Acirrous went from his sire to the joy of the battle.
Little he heeded the word of death that the god in our bosom
Spoke from the lips of Achilles, but deemed at sunset returning,
Slaying Halamus, Paris or dangerous mighty Aeneas,
Proudly to lay at his father’s feet the spoils of the foeman.

But in his lair alone the godlike doomed Pelides
Turned to the door of his tent and was striding forth to the battle,
When from her inner chamber Briseis parting the curtain, —
Long had she stood there spying and waiting her lonely occasion, —
Came and caught and held his hand like a creeper detaining
Vainly a moment the deathward stride of the kings of the forest.
“Tarry awhile, Achilles; not yet have the war-horns clamoured,
Nor have the scouts streamed yet from Xanthus fierily running.
Lose a moment for her who has only thee under heaven.

Nay, had war sounded, thou yet wouldst squander that moment, Achilles,
 Harkening a woman's fears and the voice of a dream in the midnight.
 Art thou not gentle even as terrible, lion of Hellas?
 Others have whispered the deeds of thy wrath; we have heard, but not seen it;
 Marvelling much at their pallor and awe we have listened and wondered.
 Never with thrall or slavegirl or captive saw I thee angered,
 Hero, nor any humble heart ever trembled to near thee.
 Pardoning rather our many faults and our failures in service
 Lightly thou layedst thy yoke on us kind as the clasp of a lover
 Sparing the weak as thou breakest the mighty, O godlike Achilles.
 Only thy equals have felt all the dread of the death-god within thee;
 We have presumed and have played with the strength at which nations
have trembled.

Lo, thou hast leaned thy mane to the clutch of the boys and the maidens."
 But to Briseis white-armed made answer smiling Achilles:
 "Something sorely thou needst, for thou flatterest long, O Briseis.
 Tell me, O woman, thy fear or thy dream that my touch may dispel it,
 White-armed net of bliss slipped down from the gold Aphrodite."
 And to Achilles answered the captive white Briseis:
 "Long have they vexed my soul in the tents of the Greeks, O Achilles,
 Telling of Thetis thy mother who bore thee in caves of the Ocean
 Clasped by a mortal and of her fear from the threats of the Ancients,
 Weavers of doom who play with our hopes and smile at our passions
 Painting Time with the red of our hearts on the web they have woven,
 How on the Ocean's bosom she hid thee in vine-tangled Scyros
 Clothed like a girl among girls with the daughters of King Lycomedes, —
 Art thou not fairer than woman's beauty, yet great as Apollo? —
 Fearing Paris' shafts and the anger of Delian Phoebus.
 Now in the night has a vision three times besieged me from heaven.
 Over the sea in my dream an argent bow was extended;
 Nearing I saw a terror august over moonlit waters,
 Cloud and a fear and a face that was young and lovely and hostile.
 Then three times I heard arise in the grandiose silence, —
 Still was the sky and still was the land and still were the waters, —
 Echoing a mighty voice, 'Take back, O King, what thou gavest;
 Strength, take thy strong man, sea, take thy wave, till the warfare eternal
 Need him again to thunder through Asia's plains to the Ganges.'

That fell silent, but nearer the beautiful Terror approached me,
Clang I heard of the argent bow and I gazed on Apollo.
Shrilly I cried; it was thee that the shaft of the heavens had yearned for,
Thee that it sought like a wild thing in anger straight at its quarry,
Quivering into thy heel. I awoke and found myself trembling,
Held thee safe in my arms, yet hardly believed that thou livest.
Lo, in the night came this dream; on the morn thou arisest for battle.”
But to Briseis white-armed made answer the golden Achilles:
“This was a dream indeed, O princess, daughter of Brises!
Will it restrain Achilles from fight, the lion from preying?
Come, thou hast heard of my prowess and knowest what man is Achilles.
Deemst thou so near my end? or does Polyxena vex thee,
Jealousy shaping thy dreams to frighten me back from her capture?”
Passionate, vexed Briseis, smiting his arm with her fingers,
Yet with a smile half-pleased made answer to mighty Achilles.
“Thinkst thou I fear thee at all? I am brave and will chide thee and threaten.
See that thou recklessly throw not, Achilles, thy life into battle
Hurting this body, my world, nor venture sole midst thy foemen,
Leaving thy shielders behind as oft thou art wont in thy war-rage
Lured by thy tempting gods who seek their advantage to slay thee,
Fighting divinely, careless of all but thy spear and thy foeman.
Cover thy limbs with thy shield, speed slowly restraining thy coursers.
Dost thou not know all the terrible void and cold desolation
Once again my life must become if I lose thee, Achilles?
Twice then thus wilt thou smite me, O hero, a desolate woman?
I will not stay behind on an earth that is empty and kingless.
Into the grave I will leap, through the fire I will burn, I will follow
Down into Hades’ depths or wherever thy footsteps go clanging,
Hunting thee always, — didst thou not seize me here for thy pleasure? —
Stronger there by my love as thou than I here, O Achilles.
Thou shalt not dally alone with Polyxena safe in the shadows.”
But to Briseis answered the hero, mighty Pelides,
Holding her delicate hands like gathered flowers in his bosom,
Pressing her passionate mouth like a rose that trembles with beauty.
“There then follow me even as I would have drawn thee, O woman,
Voice that chimes with my soul and hands that are eager for service,
Beautiful spoil beloved of my foemen, perfect Briseis.

But for the dreams that come to us mortals sleeping or waking,
 Shadows are these from our souls and who shall discern what they figure?
 Fears from the heart speak voiced like Zeus, take shape as Apollo.
 But were they truer than Delphi's cavern voice or Dodona's
 Moan that seems wind in his oaks immemorable, how should they alter
 Fate that the stern gods have planned from the first when the earth was
unfashioned,
 Shapeless the gyre of the sun? For dream or for oracle adverse
 Why should man swerve from the path of his feet? The gods have invented
 Only one way for a man through the world, O my slavegirl Briseis,
 Valiant to be and noble and truthful and just to the humble,
 Only one way for a woman, to love and serve and be faithful.
 This observe, thy task in thy destiny noble or fallen;
 Time and result are the gods'; with these things be not thou troubled."
 So he spoke and kissed her lips and released her and parted.
 Out from the tent he strode and into his chariot leaping
 Seized the reins and shouted his cry and drove with a far-borne
 Sound of wheels mid the clamour of hooves and the neigh of the war-steeds
 Swift through the line of the tents and forth from the heart of the leaguer.
 Over the causeway Troyward thundered the wheels of Achilles.
 After him crashing loud with a fierce and resonant rumour
 Chieftains impetuous prone to the mellay and swift at the war-cry
 Came, who long held from the lust of the spear and the joy of the war-din
 Rushed over earth like hawks released through the air; a shouting
 Limitless rolled behind, for nations followed each war-cry.
 Lords renowned of the northern hills and the plains and the coast-lands,
 Many a Dorian, many a Phthian, many a Hellene,
 Names now lost to the ear though then reputed immortal!
 Night has swallowed them, Zeus has devoured the light of his children;
 Drawn are they back to his bosom vast whence they came in their fierceness
 Thinking to conquer the earth and dominate Time and his ages.
 Nor on their left less thick came numerous even as the sea-sands
 Forth from the line of the leaguer that skirted the far-sounding waters,
 Ranked behind Tydeus' son and the Spartan, bright Menelaus,
 Ithaca's chief and Epeus, Idomeneus lord of the Cretans,
 Acamas, Nestor, Neleus' son, and the brave Ephialtus,
 Prothous, Meges, Leitus the bold and the king Prothoënor,

Wise Alceste's son and the Lemnian, stern Philoctetes,
These and unnumbered warlike captains marching the Argives.
Last in his spacious car drove shaping the tread of his armies,
Even as a shepherd who follows his flock to the green of the pastures,
Atreus' far-famed son, the monarch great Agamemnon.
They on the plain moved out and gazing far over the pastures
Saw behind Xanthus rolling with dust like a cloud full of thunder,
Ominous, steadily nearing, shouting their war-cry the Trojans.

BOOK VIII

The Book of the Gods

So on the earth the seed that was sown of the centuries ripened;
Europe and Asia, met on their borders, clashed in the Troad.
All over earth men wept and bled and laboured, world-wide
Sowing Fate with their deeds and had other fruit than they hoped for,
Out of desires and their passionate griefs and fleeting enjoyments
Weaving a tapestry fit for the gods to admire, who in silence
Joy, by the cloud and the sunbeam veiled, and men know not their movers.
They in the glens of Olympus, they by the waters of Ida
Or in their temples worshipped in vain or with heart-strings of mortals
Sated their vast desire and enjoying the world and each other
Sported free and unscourged; for the earth was their prey and their
playground.

But from his luminous deep domain, from his estate of azure
Zeus looked forth; he beheld the earth in its flowering greenness
Spread like an emerald dream that the eyes have enthroned in the sunlight,
Heard the symphonies old of the ocean recalling the ages
Lost and dead from its marches salt and unharvested furrows,
Felt in the pregnant hour the unborn hearts of the future.
Troubled kingdoms of men he beheld, the hind in the furrow,
Lords of the glebe and the serf subdued to the yoke of his fortunes,
Slavegirls tending the fire and herdsmen driving the cattle,
Artisans labouring long for a little hire in men's cities,
Labour long and the meagre reward for a toil that is priceless.
Kings in their seats august or marching swift with their armies
Founded ruthlessly brittle empires. Merchant and toiler
Patiently heaped up our transient wealth like the ants in their hillock.
And to preserve it all, to protect this dust that must perish,
Hurting the eternal soul and maiming heaven for some metal
Judges condemned their brothers to chains and to death and to torment,
Criminals scourgers of crime, — for so are these ant-heaps founded, —
Punishing sin by a worse affront to our crucified natures.
All the uncertainty, all the mistaking, all the delusion
Naked were to his gaze; in the moonlit orchards there wandered
Lovers dreaming of love that endures — till the moment of treason;

Helped by the anxious joy of their kindred supported their anguish
Women with travail racked for the child who shall rack them with sorrow.
Hopes that were confident, fates that sprang dire from the seed of a moment,
Yearning that claimed all time for its date and all life for its fuel,
All that we wonder at gazing back when the passion has fallen,
Labour blind and vain expense and sacrifice wasted,
These he beheld with a heart unshaken; to each side he studied
Seas of confused attempt and the strife and the din and the crying.
All things he pierced in us gazing down with his eyelids immortal,
Lids on which sleep dare not settle, the Father of men on his creatures;
Nor by the cloud and the mist was obscured which baffles our eyeballs,
But he distinguished our source and saw to the end of our labour.
He in the animal racked knew the god that is slowly delivered;
Therefore his heart rejoiced. Not alone the mind in its trouble
God beholds, but the spirit behind that has joy of the torture.
Might not our human gaze on the smoke of a furnace, the burning
Red, intolerable, anguish of ore that is fused in the hell-heat,
Shrink and yearn for coolness and peace and condemn all the labour?
Rather look to the purity coming, the steel in its beauty,
Rather rejoice with the master who stands in his gladness accepting
Heat of the glorious god and the fruitful pain of the iron.
Last the eternal gaze was fixed on Troy and the armies
Marching swift to the shock. It beheld the might of Achilles
Helméd and armed, knew all the craft in the brain of Odysseus,
Saw Deiphobus stern in his car and the fates of Aeneas,
Greece of her heroes empty, Troy enringed by her slayers,
Paris a setting star and the beauty of Penthesilea.
These things he saw delighted; the heart that contains all our ages
Blessed our toil and grew full of its fruits, as the Artist eternal
Watched his vehement drama staged twixt the sea and the mountains,
Phrased in the clamour and glitter of arms and closed by the firebrand,
Act itself out in blood and in passions fierce on the Troad.
Yet as a father his children, who sits in the peace of his study
Hearing the noise of his brood and pleased with their play and their quarrels,
So he beheld our mortal race. Then, turned from the armies,
Into his mind he gazed where Time is reflected and, conscient,
Knew the iron knot of our human fates in their warfare.

Calm he arose and left our earth for his limitless kingdoms.

Far from this lower blue and high in the death-scorning spaces
 Lifted o'er mortal mind where Time and Space are but figures
 Lightly imagined by Thought divine in her luminous stillness,
 Zeus has his palace high and there he has stabled his war-car.
 Thence he descends to our mortal realms; where the heights of our
mountains

Meet with the divine air, he touches and enters our regions.
 Now he ascended back to his natural realms and their rapture,
 There where all life is bliss and each feeling an ecstasy mastered.
 Thence his eagle Thought with its flashing pinions extended
 Winged through the world to the gods, and they came at the call, they
ascended

Up from their play and their calm and their works through the infinite azure.
 Some from our mortal domains in grove or by far-flowing river
 Cool from the winds of the earth or quivering with perishable fragrance
 Came, or our laughter they bore and the song of the sea in their paces.
 Some from the heavens above us arrived, our vital dominions
 Whence we draw breath; for there all things have life, the stone like the ilex,
 Clay of those realms like the children of men and the brood of the giants.
 There Enceladus groans oppressed and draws strength from his anguish
 Under a living Aetna and flames that have joy of his entrails.
 Fiercely he groans and rejoices expecting the end of his foemen
 Hastened by every pang and counts long Time by his writhings.
 There in the champagnes unending battle the gods and the giants,
 There in eternal groves the lovers have pleasure for ever,
 There are the faery climes and there are the wonderful pastures.
 Some from a marvellous Paradise hundred-realmed in its musings,
 Million-ecstasied, climbed like flames that in silence aspire
 Windless, erect in a motionless dream, yet ascending for ever.
 All grew aware of the will divine and were drawn to the Father.

Grandiose, calm in her gait, imperious, awing the regions,
 Hera came in her pride, the spouse of Zeus and his sister.
 As at her birth from the foam of the spaces white Aphrodite
 Rose in the cloud of her golden hair like the moon in its halo.
 Aegis-bearing Athene, shielded and helmeted, answered
 Rushing the call and the heavens thrilled with the joy of her footsteps

Dumbly repeating her name, as insulted and trampled by beauty
Thrill might the soul of a lover and cry out the name of its tyrant.
Others there were as mighty; for Artemis, archeress ancient,
Came on her sandals lightning-tasselled. Up the vast incline
Shaking the world with the force of his advent thundered Poseidon;
Space grew full of his stride and his cry. Immortal Apollo
Shone and his silver clang was heard with alarm in our kingdoms.
Ares' impetuous eyes looked forth from a cloud-drift of splendour;
Themis' steps appeared and Ananke, the mystic Erinnys;
Nor was Hephaestus' flaming strength from his father divided.
Even the ancient Dis to arrive dim-featured, eternal,
Seemed; but his rays are the shades and his voice is the call of the silence.

Into the courts divine they crowded, radiant, burning,
Perfect in utter grace and light. The joy of their spirits
Calls to eternal Time and the glories of Space are his answer:
Thence were these bright worlds born and persist by the throb of their
heart-beats.

Not in the forms that mortals have seen when assisted they scatter
Mists of this earthly dust from their eyes in their moments of greatness
Shone those unaging Powers; nor as in our centuries radiant
Mortal-seeming bodies they wore when they mixed with our nations.
Then the long youth of the world had not faded still out of our natures,
Flowers and the sunlight were felt and the earth was glad like a mother.
Then for a human delight they were masked in this denser vesture
Earth desires for her bliss, — thin veils, for the god through them glimmered.
Quick were men's days with the throng of the brilliant presences near them:
Gods from the wood and the valley, gods from the obvious wayside,
Gods on the secret hills leaped out from their light on the mortal.
Oft in the haunt and the grove they met with our kind and their touches
Seized and subjected our clay to the greatness of passions supernal,
Grasping the earthly virgin and forcing heaven on this death-dust.
Glorifying human beauty Apollo roamed in our regions
Clymene when he pursued or yearned in vain for Marpessa;
Glorifying earth with a human-seeming face of the beauty
Brought from her heavenly climes Aphrodite mixed with Anchises.
Glimpsed in the wilds were the Satyrs, seen in the woodlands the Graces,
Dryad and Naiad in river and forest, Oreads haunting

You who are lovers of Ilium turn from the moans of her people,
 Chase from your hearts their prayers, blow back from your nostrils the
 incense.

Let not one nation resist by its glory the good of the ages.
 Twilight thickens over man and he moves to his winter of darkness.
 Troy that displaced with her force and her arms the luminous ancients,
 Sinks in her turn by the ruder strength of the half-savage Achaeans.
 They to the Hellene shall yield and the Hellene fall by the Roman.
 Rome too shall not endure, but by strengths ill-shaped shall be broken,
 Nations formed in the ice and mist, confused and crude-hearted.
 So shall the darker and ruder always prevail o'er the brilliant
 Till in its turn to a ruder and darker it falls and is shattered.
 So shall mankind make speed to destroy what 'twas mighty creating.
 Ever since knowledge failed and the ancient ecstasy slackened,
 Light has been helper to death and darkness increases the victor.
 So shall it last till the fallen ages return to their greatness.
 For if the twilight be helped not, night o'er the world cannot darken;
 Night forbidden how shall a greater dawn be effected?
 Gods of the light who know and resist that the doomed may have succour,
 Always then shall desire and passion strive with Ananke?
 Conquer the cry of your heart-strings that man too may conquer his sorrow,
 Stilled in his yearnings. Cease, O ye gods, from the joy of rebellion.
 Open the eye of the soul, admit the voice of the Silence."

So in the courts of Heaven august the Thunderer puissant
 Spoke to his sons in their souls and they heard him, mighty in silence.
 Then to her brother divine the white-armed passionless Hera:
 "Zeus, we remember; thy sons forget, Apollo and Ares."
 "Hera, queen of the heavens, they forget not, but choose to be mindless.
 This is the greatness of gods that they know and can put back the knowledge;
 Doing the work they have chosen they turn not for fruit nor for failure,
 Griefless they walk to their goal and strain not their eyes towards the ending.
 Light that they have they can lose with a smile, not as souls in the darkness
 Clutch at every beam and mistake their one ray for all splendour.
 All things are by Time and the Will eternal that moves us,
 And for each birth its hour is set in the night or the dawning.
 There is an hour for knowledge, an hour to forget and to labour."

Great Cronion ceased and high in the heavenly silence

Rose in their midst the voice of the loud impetuous Ares
Sounding far in the luminous fields of his soul as with thunder.
“Father, we know and we have not forgotten. This is our godhead,
Still to strive and never to yield to the evil that conquers.
I will not dwell with the Greeks nor aid them save forced by Ananke
And because lives of the great and the blood of the strong are my portion.
This too thou knowest, our nature enjoys in mankind its fulfilment.
War is my nature and greatness and hardness, the necks of the vanquished;
Force is my soul and strength is my bosom; I shout in the battle
Breaking cities like toys and the nations are playthings of Ares:
Hither and thither I shove them and throw down or range on my table.
Constancy most I love, nobility, virtue and courage;
Fugitive hearts I abhor and the nature fickle as sea-foam.
Now if the ancient spirit of Titan battle is over, —
Tros fights no more on the earth, nor now Heracles tramples and struggles,
Bane of the hydra or slaying the Centaurs o’er Pelion driven, —
Now if the earth no more must be shaken by Titan horsehooves,
Since to a pettier framework all things are fitted consenting,
Yet will I dwell not in Greece nor favour the nurslings of Pallas.
I will await the sons of my loins and the teats of the she-wolf,
Consuls browed like the cliffs and plebeians stern of the wolf-brood,
Senates of kings and armies of granite that grow by disaster;
Such be the nation august that is fit for the favour of Ares!
They shall fulfil me and honour my mother, imperial Hera.
Then with an iron march they shall move to their world-wide dominion,
Through the long centuries rule and at last because earth is impatient,
Slowly with haughtiness perish compelled by mortality’s transience
Leaving a Roman memory stamped on the ages of weakness.”
But to his son far-sounding the Father high of the Immortals:
“So let it be since such is the will in thee, mightiest Ares;
Thou shalt till sunset prevail, O war-god, fighting for Troya.”
So he decreed and the soul of the Warrior sternly consented.
He from his seats arose and down on the summits of Ida
Flaming through Space in his cloud in a headlong glory descended,
Prone like a thunderbolt flaming down from the hand of the Father.
Thence in his chariot drawn by living fire and by swiftness,
Thundered down to earth’s plains the mighty impetuous Ares.

Far where Deiphobus stern was labouring stark and outnumbered
 Smiting the Achaian myriads back on the right of the carnage,
 Over the hosts in his car he stood and darkened the Argives.

But in the courts divine the Thunderer spoke to his children:
 “Ares resisting a present Fate for the hope of the future,
 Gods, has gone forth from us. Choose thou thy paths, O my daughter,
 More than thy brother assailed by the night that darkens o’er creatures.
 Choose the silence in heaven or choose the struggle mid mortals,
 Golden joy of the worlds, O thou roseate white Aphrodite.”
 Then with her starry eyes and bosom of bliss from the immortals
 Glowing and rosy-limbed cried the wonderful white Aphrodite,
 Drawing her fingers like flowers through the flowing gold of her tresses,
 Calm, discontented, her perfect mouth like a rose of resistance
 Chidingly budded ’gainst Fate, a charm to their senses enamoured.
 “Well do I know thou hast given my world to Hera and Pallas.
 What though my temples shall stand in Paphos and island Cythera
 And though the Greek be a priest for my thoughts and a lyre for my singing,
 Beauty pursuing and light through the figures of grace and of rhythm, —
 Forms shall he mould for men’s eyes that the earth has forgotten and
mourns for,
 Mould even the workings of Pallas to commune with Paphia’s sweetness,
 Mould Hephaestus’ craft in the gaze of the gold Aphrodite, —
 Only my form he pursues that I wear for a mortal enchantment,
 He to whom now thou givest the world, the Ionian, the Hellene,
 But for my might is unfit which Babylon worshipped and Sidon
 Palely received from the past in images faint of the gladness
 Once that was known by the children of men when the thrill of their members
 Was but the immortal joy of the spirit overflowing their bodies,
 Wine-cups of God’s desire; but their clay from my natural greatness
 Faltered betrayed to pain, their delight they have turned into ashes.
 Nor to my peaks shall he rise and the perfect fruit of my promptings,
 There where the senses swoon but the heart is delivered by rapture:
 Never my touch can cling to his soul nor reply from his heart-strings.
 Once could my godhead surprise all the stars with the seas of its rapture;
 Once the world in its orbit danced to a marvellous rhythm.
 Men in their limits, gods in their amplitudes answered my calling;
 Life was moved by a chant of delight that sang from the spaces,

Sang from the Soul of the Vast, its rapture clasping its creatures.
 Sweetly agreed my fire with their soil and their hearts were as altars.
 Pure were its crests; 'twas not dulled with earth, 'twas not lost in the hazes
 Then when the sons of earth and the daughters of heaven together
 Met on lone mountain peaks or, linked on wild beach and green meadow,
 Twining embraced. For I danced on Taygetus' peaks and o'er Ida
 Naked and loosing my golden hair like a nimbus of glory
 O'er a deep-ecstasied earth that was drunk with my roses and whiteness.
 There was no shrinking nor veil in our old Saturnian kingdoms.
 Equals were heaven and earth, twin gods on the lap of Dione.
 Now shall my waning greatness perish and pass out of Nature.
 For though the Romans, my children, shall grasp at the strength of their
 mother,
 They shall not hold the god, but lose in unsatisfied orgies
 Yet what the earth has kept of my joy, my glory, my puissance,
 Who shall but drink for a troubled hour in the dusk of the sunset
 Dregs of my wine Pandemian missing the Uranian sweetness.
 So shall the night descend on the greatness and rapture of living;
 Creeds that refuse shall persuade the world to revolt from its mother.
 Pallas' adorers shall loathe me and Hera's scorn me for lowness;
 Beauty shall pass from men's work and delight from their play and their
 labour;
 Earth restored to the Cyclops shall shrink from the gold Aphrodite.
 So shall I live diminished, owned but by beasts in the forest,
 Birds of the air and the gods in their heavens, but disgraced in the mortal."
 Then to the discontented rosy-mouthed Aphrodite
 Zeus replied, the Father divine: "O goddess Astarte,
 What are these thoughts thou hast suffered to wing from thy rose-mouth
 immortal?
 Bees that sting and delight are the words from thy lips, Cytherea.
 Art thou not womb of the world and from thee are the thronging of
 creatures?
 And didst thou cease the worlds too would cease and the aeons be ended.
 Suffer my Greeks; accept who accept thee, O gold Dionaeon.
 They in the works of their craft and their dreams shall enthrone thee for ever,
 Building thee temples in Paphos and Eryx and island Cythera,
 Building the fane more enduring and bright of thy golden ideal.

Even if natures of men could renounce thee and God do without thee,
 Rose of love and sea of delight, O my child Aphrodite,
 Still wouldst thou live in the worship they gave thee protected from fading,
 Splendidly statued and shrined in men's works and men's thoughts,
Cytherea."

Pleased and blushing with bliss of her praise and the thought of her
empire

Answered, as cries a harp in heaven, the gold Aphrodite:
 "Father, I know and I spoke but to hear from another my praises.
 I am the womb of the world and the cause of this teeming of creatures,
 And if discouraged I ceased, God's world would lose heart and would perish.
 How will you do then without me your works of wisdom and greatness,
 Hera, queen of heaven, and thou, O my sister Athene?
 Yes, I shall reign and endure though the pride of my workings be conquered.
 What though no second Helen find a second Paris,
 Lost though their glories of form to the earth, though their confident gladness
 Pass from a race misled and forgetting the sap that it sprang from,
 They are eternal in man in the worship of beauty and rapture.
 Ever while earth is embraced by the sun and hot with his kisses
 And while a Will supernal works through the passions of Nature,
 Me shall men seek with my light or their darkness, sweetly or crudely,
 Cold on the ice of the north or warm in the heats of the southland,
 Slowly enduring my touch or with violence rapidly burning.
 I am the sweetness of living, I am the touch of the Master.
 Love shall die bound to my stake like a victim adorned as for bridal,
 Life shall be bathed in my flames and be purified gold or be ashes.
 I, Aphrodite, shall move the world for ever and ever.
 Yet now since most to me, Father of all, the ages arriving,
 Hostile, rebuke my heart and turn from my joy and my sweetness,
 I will resist and not yield, nor care what I do, so I conquer.
 Often I curbed my mood for your sakes and was gracious and kindly,
 Often I lay at Hera's feet and obeyed her commandments
 Tranquil and proud or o'ercome by a honeyed and ancient compulsion
 Fawned on thy pureness and served thy behests, O my sister Pallas.
 Deep was the love that united us, happy the wrestle and clasping;
 Love divided, Love united, Love was our mover.
 But since you now overbear and would scourge me and chain and control me,

War I declare on you all, O my Father and brothers and sisters.
Henceforth I do my will as the joy in me prompts or the anger.
Ranging the earth with my beauty and passion and golden enjoyments
All whom I can, I will bind; I will drive at the bliss of my workings,
Whether men's hearts are seized by the joy or seized by the torture.
Most I will plague your men, your worshippers and in my malice
Break up your works with confusion divine, O my mother and sister;
Then shall you fume and resist and be helpless and pine with my torments.
Yet will I never relent but always be sweet and malignant,
Cruel and tyrannous, hurtful and subtle, a charm and a torture.
Thou too, O father Zeus, shalt always be vexed with my doings;
Called in each moment to judge thou shalt chafe at our cry and our quarrels,
Often grope for thy thunderbolt, often frown magisterial
Joining in vain thy awful brows o'er thy turbulent children.
Yet in thy wrath recall my might and my wickedness, Father;
Hurt me not then too much lest the world and thyself too should suffer.
Save, O my Father, life and grace and the charm of the senses;
Love preserve lest the heart of the world grow dulled and forsaken."
Smiling her smile immortal of love and of mirth and of malice
White Aphrodite arose in her loveliness armed for the conflict.
Golden and careless and joyous she went like a wild bird that winging
Flits from bough to bough and resumes its chant interrupted.
Love where her white feet trod bloomed up like a flower from the spaces;
Mad round her touches billowed incessantly laughter and rapture.
Thrilled with her feet was the bosom of Space, for her amorous motion
Floated, a flower on the wave of her bliss or swayed like the lightning.
Rich as a summer fruit and fresh as Spring's blossoms her body
Gleaming and blushing, veiled and bare and with ecstasy smiting
Burned out rosy and white through her happy ambrosial raiment,
Golden-tressed and a charm, her bosom a fragrance and peril.
So was she framed to the gaze as she came from the seats of the Mighty,
So embodied she visits the hearts of men and their dwellings
And in her breathing tenement laughs at the eyes that can see her.
Swift-footed down to the Troad she hastened thrilling the earth-gods.
There with ambrosial secrecy veiled, admiring the heroes
Strong and beautiful, might of the warring and glory of armour,
Over her son Aeneas she stood, his guard in the battle.

But in the courts divine the Thunderer spoke mid his children:
 “Thou for a day and a night and another day and a nightfall,
 White Aphrodite, prevail; o’er thee too the night is extended.
 She has gone forth who made men like gods in their glory and gladness.
 Now in the darkness coming all beauty must wane or be tarnished;
 Joy shall fade and mighty Love grow fickle and fretful;
 Even as a child that is scared in the night, he shall shake in his chambers.
 Yet shall a portion be kept for these, Ares and white Aphrodite.
 Thou whom already thy Pythoness bears not, torn by thy advent,
 Caverned already who sittest in Delphi knowing thy future,
 What wilt thou do with the veil and the night, O burning Apollo?”
 Then from the orb of his glory unbearable save to immortals
 Bright and austere replied the beautiful mystic Apollo:
 “Zeus, I know that I fade; already the night is around me.
 Dusk she extends her reign and obscures my lightnings with error.
 Therefore my prophets mislead men’s hearts to the ruin appointed,
 Therefore Cassandra cries in vain to her sire and her brothers.
 All I endure I foresee and the strength in me waits for its coming;
 All I foresee I approve; for I know what is willed, O Cronion.
 Yet is the fierce strength wroth in my breast at the need of approval
 And for the human race fierce pity works in my bosom;
 Wroth is my splendid heart with the cowering knowledge of mortals,
 Wroth are my burning eyes with the purblind vision of reason.
 I will go forth from your seats and descend to the night among mortals
 There to guard the flame and the mystery; vast in my moments
 Rare and sublime to sound like a sea against Time and its limits,
 Cry like a spirit in pain in the hearts of the priest and the poet,
 Cry against limits set and disorder sanities bounded.
 Jealous for truth to the end my might shall prevail and for ever
 Shatter the moulds that men make to imprison their limitless spirits.
 Dire, overpowering the brain I shall speak out my oracles splendid.
 Then in their ages of barren light or lucidity fruitful
 Whenso the clear gods think they have conquered earth and its mortals,
 Hidden God from all eyes, they shall wake from their dream and recoiling
 Still they shall find in their paths the fallen and darkened Apollo.”
 So he spoke, repressing his dreadful might in his bosom,
 And from their high seats passed, his soul august and resplendent

Drawn to the anguish of men and the fierce terrestrial labour.
Down he dropped with a roar of light invading the regions,
And in his fierce and burning spirit intense and uplifted
Sure of his luminous truth and careless for weakness of mortals
Flaming oppressed the earth with his dire intolerant beauty.
Over the summits descending that slept in the silence of heaven,
He through the spaces angrily drew towards the tramp and the shouting
Over the speeding of Xanthus and over the pastures of Troya.
Clang of his argent bow was the wrath restrained of the mighty,
Stern was his pace like Fate's; so he came to the warfare of mortals
And behind Paris strong and inactive waited God's moment
Knowing what should arrive, nor disturbed like men by their hopings.

But in the courts of Heaven Zeus to his brother immortal
Turned like a menaced king on his counsellor smiling augustly:
"Seest thou, Poseidon, this sign that great gods revolting have left us,
Follow their hearts and strive with Ananke? Yet though they struggle,
Thou and I will do our will with the world, O earth-shaker."

Answered to Zeus the besieger of earth, the voice of the waters:
"This is our strength and our right, for we are the kings and the masters.
Too much pity has been and yielding of Heaven to mortals.
I will go down with my chariot drawn by my thunder-maned coursers
Into the battle and thrust down Troy with my hand to the silence,
Even though she cling round the snowy knees of our child Aphrodite
Or with Apollo's sun take refuge from Night and her shadows.
I will not pity her pain, who am ruthless even as my surges.
Brother, thou knowest, O Zeus, that I am a king and a trader;
For on my paths I receive earth's skill and her merchandise gather,
Traffic richly in pearls and bear the swift ships on my bosom.
Blue are my waves and they call men's hearts to wealth and adventure.
Lured by the shifting surges they launch their delight and their treasures
Trusting the toil of years to the perilous moments of Ocean.
Huge man's soul in its petty frame goes wrestling with Nature
Over her vasts and his fragile ships between my horizons
Buffeting death in his solitudes labour through swell and through storm-blast
Bound for each land with her sons and watched for by eyes in each haven.
I from Tyre up to Gades trace on my billows their trade-routes
And on my vast and spuming Atlantic suffer their rudders.

Carthage and Greece are my children, the marts of the world are my
term-posts.

Who then deserves the earth if not he who enriches and fosters?
But thou hast favoured thy sons, O Zeus; O Hera, earth's sceptres
Still were denied me and kept for strong Ares and brilliant Apollo.
Now all your will shall be done, so you give me the earth for my nations.
Gold shall make men like gods and bind their thoughts into oneness;
Peace I will build with gold and heaven with the pearls of my caverns."
Smiling replied to his brother's craft the mighty Cronion:
"Lord of the boundless seas, Poseidon, soul of the surges,
Well thou knowest that earth shall be seized as a booth for the trader.
Rome nor Greece nor France can drive back Carthage for ever.
Always each birth of the silence attaining the field and the movement
Takes from Time its reign; for it came for its throne and its godhead.
So too shall Mammon take and his sons their hour from the ages.
Yet is the flame and the dust last end of the silk and the iron,
And at their end the king and the prophet shall govern the nations.
Even as Troy, so shall Babylon flame up to heaven for the spoiler
Wailed by the merchant afar as he sees the red glow from the ocean."
Up from the seats of the Mighty the Earth-shaker rose. His raiment
Round him purple and dominant rippled and murmured and whispered,
Whispered of argosies sunk and the pearls and the Nereids playing,
Murmured of azure solitudes, sounded of storm and the death-wail.
Even as the march of his waters so was the pace of the sea-god
Flowing on endless through Time; with the glittering symbol of empire
Crowned were his fatal brows; in his grasp was the wrath of the trident,
Tripled force, life-shattering, brutal, imperial, sombre.
Resonant, surging, vast in the pomp of his clamorous greatness
Proud and victorious he came to his home in the far-spuming waters.
Even as a soul from the heights of thought plunges back into living,
So he plunged like a rock through the foam; for it falls from a mountain
Overpeering the waves in some silence of desolate waters
Left to the wind and the sea-gull where Ocean alone with the ages
Dreams of the calm of the skies or tosses its spray to the wind-gods,
Tosses for ever its foam in the solitude huge of its longings
Far from the homes and the noises of men. So the dark-browed Poseidon
Came to his coral halls and the sapphire stables of Nereus

Ever where champ their bits the harnessed steeds of the Ocean
Watched by foam-white girls in the caverns of still Amphitrite.
There was his chariot yoked by the Tritons, drawn by his coursers
Born of the fleeing sea-spray and shod with the northwind who journey
Black like the front of the storm and clothed with their manes as with
thunder.

This now rose from its depths to the upper tumults of Ocean
Bearing the awful brows and the mighty form of the sea-god
And from the roar of the surges fast o'er the giant margin
Came remembering the storm and the swiftness wide towards the Troad.
So among men he arrived to the clamorous labours of Ares,
Close by the stern Diomedes stood and frowned o'er the battle.
He for the Trojan slaughter chose for his mace and his sword-edge
Iron Tydeus' son and the adamant heart of young Pyrrhus.

But in the courts divine the Father high of the immortals
Turned in his heart to the brilliant offspring born of his musings,
She who tranquil observes and judges her father and all things.
"What shall I say to the thought that is calm in thy breasts, O Athene?
Have I not given thee earth for thy portion, throned thee and armoured,
Darkened Cypris' smile, dimmed Hera's son and Latona's?
Swift in thy silent ambition, proud in thy radiant sternness,
Girl, thou shalt rule with the Greek and the Saxon, the Frank and the Roman.
Worker and fighter and builder and thinker, light of the reason,
Men shall leave all temples to crowd in thy courts, O Athene.
Go then and do my will, prepare man's tribes for their fullness."

But with her high clear smile on him answered the mighty Athene, —
Wisely and soberly, tenderly smiled she chiding her father
Even as a mother might rail at her child when he hides and dissembles:
"Zeus, I see and I am not deceived by thy words in my spirit.
We but build forms for thy thought while thou smilest down high o'er our
toiling;

Even as men are we tools for thee, who are thy children and dear ones.
All this life is thy sport and thou workst like a boy at his engines
Making a toil of the game and a play of the serious labour.
Then to that play thou callest us wearing a sombre visage,
This consulting, that to our wills confiding, O Ruler;
Choosing thy helpers, hastened by those whom thou lures to oppose thee

Guile thou usest with gods as with mortals, scheming, deceiving,
 And at the wrath and the love thou hast prompted laughest in secret.
 So we two who are sisters and enemies, lovers and rivals,
 Fondled and baffled in turn obey thy will and thy cunning,
 I, thy girl of war, and the rosy-white Aphrodite.
 Always we served but thy pleasure since our immortal beginnings,
 Always each other we helped by our play and our wrestlings and quarrels.
 This too I know that I pass preparing the paths of Apollo
 And at the end as his sister and slave and bride I must sojourn
 Rapt to his courts of mystic light and unbearable brilliance.
 Was I not ever condemned since my birth from the toil of thy musings
 Seized like a lyre in my body to sob and to laugh out his music,
 Shake as a leaf in his fierceness and leap as a flame in his splendours!
 So must I dwell overpowered and so must I labour subjected
 Robbed of my loneliness pure and coerced in my radiant freedom,
 Now whose clearness and pride are the sovereign joy of thy creatures.
 Such the reward that thou keepst for my labour obedient always.
 Yet I work and I do thy will, for 'tis mine, O my father.”
 Proud of her ruthless lust of thought and action and battle,
 Swift-footed rose the daughter of Zeus from her sessions immortal:
 Breasts of the morning unveiled in a purity awful and candid,
 Head of the mighty Dawn, the goddess Pallas Athene!
 Strong and rapacious she swooped on the world as her prey and her booty
 Down from the courts of the Mighty descending, darting on Ida.
 Dire she descended, a god in her reason, a child in her longings, —
 Joy and woe to the world that is given to the whims of the child-god
 Greedy for rule and play and the minds of men and their doings!
 So with her aegis scattering light o'er the heads of the nations
 Shining-eyed in her boyish beauty severe and attractive
 Came to the fields of the Troad, came to the fateful warfare,
 Veiled, the goddess calm and pure in her luminous raiment
 Zoned with beauty and strength. Rejoicing, spurring the fighters
 Close o'er Odysseus she stood and clear-eyed governed the battle.
 Zeus to Hephaestus next, the Cyclopean toiler
 Turned, Hephaestus the strong-souled, priest and king and a bond-slave,
 Servant of men in their homes and their workshops, servant of Nature,
 He who has built these worlds and kindles the fire for a mortal.

“Thou, my son, art obedient always. Wisdom is with thee,
Therefore thou know’st and obeyest. Submission is wisdom and knowledge;
He who is blind revolts and he who is limited struggles:
Strife is not for the infinite; wisdom observes to accomplish.
Troy and her sons and her works are thy food today, O Hephaestus.”

And to his father the Toiler answered, the silent Seer:

“Yes, I obey thee, my Father, and That which than thou is more mighty;
Even as thou obeyest by rule, so I by my labour.

Now must I heap the furnace, now must I toil at the smithy,
I who have flamed on the altar of sacrifice helping the sages.
I am the Cyclops, the lamester, who once was pure and a high-priest.
Holy the pomp of my flames ascendant from pyre and from altar
Robed men’s souls for their heavens and my smoke was a pillar to Nature.
Though I have burned in the sight of the sage and the heart of the hero,
Now is no nobler hymn for my ear than the clanging of metal,
Breath of human greed and the dolorous pant of the engines.
Still I repine not, but toil; for to toil I was yoked by my Maker.
I am your servant, O Gods, and his of whom you are servants.”

But to the toiler Zeus replied, to the servant of creatures:

“What is the thought thou hast uttered betrayed by thy speech, O
Hephaestus?

True is it earth shall grow as a smithy, the smoke of the furnace
Fill men’s eyes and their souls shall be stunned with the clang of the hammers;
Yet in the end there is rest on the peak of a labour accomplished.
Nor shall the might of the thinker be quelled by that iron oppression,
Nor shall the soul of the warrior despair in the darkness triumphant;
For when the night shall be deepest, dawn shall increase on the mountains
And in the heart of the worst the best shall be born by my wisdom.
Pallas thy sister shall guard man’s knowledge fighting the earth-smoke.
Thou too art mighty to live through the clamour even as Apollo.
Work then, endure; expect from the Silence an end and thy wages.”
So King Hephaestus arose and passed from the courts of his father;
Down upon earth he came with his lame omnipotent motion;
And with uneven steps absorbed and silent the Master
Worked employed mid the wheels of the cars as a smith in his smithy,
But it was death and bale that he forged, not the bronze and the iron.
Stark, like a fire obscured by its smoke, through the spear-casts he laboured

Helping Ajax' war and the Theban and Phocian fighters.

Zeus to his grandiose helper next, who proved and unmoving,
 Calm in her greatness waited the mighty command of her husband:
 "Hera, sister and spouse, what my will is thou knowest, O consort.
 One are our blood and our hearts, nor the thought for the words of the
speaker

Waits, but each other we know and ourselves and the Vast and the heavens,
 Life and all between and all beyond and the ages.

That which Space not knows nor Time, we have known, O my sister.
 Therefore our souls are one soul and our minds become mirrors of oneness.
 Go then and do my will, O thou mighty one, burning down Troya."

Silent she rose from the seats of the Blissful, Hera majestic,
 And with her flowing garment and mystical zone through the spaces
 Haloed came like the moon on an evening of luminous silence
 Down upon Ida descending, a snow-white swan on the greenness,
 Down upon Ida the mystic haunted by footsteps immortal
 Ever since out of the Ocean it rose and lived gazing towards heaven.
 There on a peak of the mountains alone with the sea and the azure
 Voiceless and mighty she paused like a thought on the summits of being
 Clasped by all heaven; the winds at play in her gust-scattered raiment
 Sported insulting her gracious strength with their turbulent sweetness,
 Played with their mother and queen; but she stood absorbed and unheeding,
 Mute, with her sandalled foot for a moment thrilling the grasses,
 Dumbly adored by a soul in the mountains, a thought in the rivers,
 Roared to loud by her lions. The voice of the cataracts falling
 Entered her soul profound and it heard eternity's rumour.
 Silent its gaze immense contained the wheeling of aeons.
 Huge-winged through Time flew her thought and its grandiose vast

revolutions

Turned and returned. So musing her timeless creative spirit,
 Master of Time, its instrument, grieflessly hastening forward
 Parted with greatneses dead and summoned new strengths from their
stables;

Maned they came to her call and filled with their pacings the future.
 Calm, with the vision satisfied, thrilled by the grandeurs within her,
 Down in a billow of whiteness and gold and delicate raiment
 Gliding the daughter of Heaven came to the earth that received her

Glad of the tread divine and bright with her more than with sunbeams.
 King Agamemnon she found and smiling on Sparta's levies
 Mixed unseen with the far-glinting spears of haughty Mycenae.

Then to the Mighty who tranquil abode and august in his regions
 Zeus, while his gaze over many forms and high-seated godheads
 Passed like a swift-fleeing eagle over the peaks and the glaciers
 When to his eyrie he flies alone through the vastness and silence:
 "Artemis, child of my loins and you, O legioned immortals,
 All you have heard. Descend, O ye gods, to your sovereign stations,
 Labour rejoicing whose task is joy and your bliss is creation;
 Shrink from no act that Necessity asks from your luminous natures.
 Thee I have given no part in the years that come, O my daughter,
 Huntress swift of the worlds who with purity all things pursuest.
 Yet not less is thy portion intended than theirs who o'erpass thee:
 Helped are the souls that wait more than strengths soon fulfilled and
exhausted.
 Archeress, brilliance, wait thine hour from the speed of the ages."

So they departed, Artemis leading lightning-tasselled.

Ancient Themis remained and awful Dis and Ananke.

Then mid these last of the gods who shall stand when all others have
perished,

Zeus to the Silence obscure under iron brows of that goddess, —
 Griefless, unveiled was her visage, dire and unmoved and eternal:
 "Thou and I, O Dis, remain and our sister Ananke.
 That which the joyous hearts of our children, radiant heaven-moths
 Flitting mid flowers of sense for the honey of thought have not captured,
 That which Poseidon forgets mid the pomp and the roar of his waters,
 We three keep in our hearts. By the Light that I watch for unsleeping,
 By thy tremendous consent to the silence and darkness, O Hades,
 By her delight renounced and the prayers and the worship of mortals
 Making herself as an engine of God without bowels or vision, —
 Yet in that engine are only heart-beats, yet is her riddle
 Only Love that is veiled and pity that suffers and slaughters, —
 We three are free from ourselves, O Dis, and free from each other.
 Do then, O King of the Night, observe then with Time for thy servant
 Not my behest, but What she and thou and I are for ever."

Mute the Darkness sat like a soul unmoved through the aeons,

Then came a voice from the silence of Dis, from the night there came wisdom.
 “Yes, I have chosen and that which I chose I endure, O Cronion, —
 Though to the courts of the gods I come as a threat and a shadow,
 Even though none to their counsels call me, none to their pastime,
 None companions me willingly; even thy daughter, my consort,
 Trembling whom once from our sister Demeter I plucked like a blossom
 Torn from Sicilian fields, while Fate reluctant, consenting,
 Bowed her head, lives but by her gasps of the sun and the azure;
 Stretched are her hands to the light and she seeks for the clasp of her mother.
 I, I am Night and her reign and that of which Night is a symbol.
 All to me comes, even thou shalt come to me, brilliant Cronion.
 All here exists by me whom all walk fearing and shunning;
 He who shuns not, He am I and thou and Ananke.
 All things I take to my bosom that Life may be swift in her voyage;
 For out of death is Life and not by birth and her motions
 And behind Night is light and not in the sun and his splendours.
 Troy to the Night I will gather a wreath for my shadows, O grower.”
 So in his arrogance dire the vast invincible Death-god
 Triumphant passed out of heaven with Themis and silent Ananke.
 Zeus alone in the spheres of his bliss, in his kingdoms of brilliance
 Sat divine and alarmed; for even the gods in their heavens
 Scarce shall live who have gazed on the unveiled face of Ananke,
 Heard the accents dire of the Darkness that waits for the ages.
 Awful and dull grew his eyes and mighty and still grew his members.
 Back from his nature he drew to the passionless peaks of the spirit,
 Throned where it dwells for ever uplifted and silent and changeless
 Far beyond living and death, beyond Nature and ending of Nature.
 There for a while he dwelt veiled, protected from Dis and his greatness;
 Then to the works of the world he returned and the joy of his musings.
 Life and the blaze of the mighty soul that he was of God’s making
 Dawned again in the heavenly eyes and the majestied semblance.
 Comforted heaven he beheld, to the green of the earth was attracted.

But through this Space unreal, but through these worlds that are
shadows

Went the awful Three. None saw them pass, none felt them.
 Only in the heavens was a tread as of death, in the air was a winter,
 Earth oppressed moaned long like a woman striving with anguish.

Ida saw them not, but her grim lions cowered in their caverns,
Ceased for a while on her slopes the eternal laughter of fountains.
Over the ancient ramparts of Dardanus' high-roofed city
Darkening her victor domes and her gardens of life and its sweetness
Silent they came. Unseen and unheard was the dreadful arrival.
Troy and her gods dreamed secure in the moment flattered by sunlight.
Dim to the citadel high they arrived and their silence invaded
Pallas' marble shrine where stern and white in her beauty,
Armed on her pedestal, trampling the prostrate image of darkness
Mighty Athene's statue guarded imperial Troya.
Dim and vast they entered in. Then through all the great city
Huge a rushing sound was heard from her gardens and places
And in their musings her seers as they strove with night and with error
And in the fane of Apollo Laocoon torn by his visions
Heard aghast the voice of Troy's deities fleeing from Troya,
Saw the flaming lords of her households drive in a death-rout
Forth from her ancient halls and their noble familiar sessions.
Ghosts of her splendid centuries wailed on the wings of the doom-blast.
Moaning the Dryads fled and her Naiads passed from Scamander
Leaving the world to deities dumb of the clod and the earth-smoke,
And from their tombs and their shrines the shadowy Ancestors faded.
Filled was the air with their troops and the sound of a vast lamentation.
Wailing they went, lamenting mortality's ages of greatness,
Ruthless Ananke's deeds and the mortal conquests of Hades.
Then in the fane Palladian the shuddering priests of Athene
Entered the darkened shrine and saw on the suffering marble
Shattered Athene's mighty statue prostrate as conquered,
But on its pedestal rose o'er the unhurt image of darkness
Awful shapes, a Trinity dim and dire unto mortals.
Dumb they fell down on the earth and the life-breath was slain in their
bosoms.
And in the noon there was night. And Apollo passed out of Troya.

BOOK IX

Meanwhile moved by their unseen spirits, led by the immortal
Phalanxes, who of our hopes and our fears are the reins and the drivers, —
Minds they use as if steam and our bodies like power-driven engines,
Leading our lives towards the goal that the gods have prepared for our
striving, —

Men upon earth fulfilled their harsh ephemeral labour.

But in the Troad the armies clashed on the plain of the Xanthus.

Swift from their ships the Argives marched, — more swiftly through Xanthus

Driving their chariots the Trojans came and Penthesilea

Led and Anchises' son and Deiphobus the Priamid hero.

Now ere the armies met, ere their spears were nearer, Apollo

Sent a thought for his bale to the heart of Zethus the Hellene.

He to Achilles' car drew close and cried to the hero:

“Didst thou not promise a boon to me, son of Peleus and Thetis,

Then when I guarded thy life-breath in Memnon's battle from Hades?

Therefore I claim the proudest of boons, one worthy a Hellene.

Here in the front I will fight against dangerous Penthesilea.

Thou on our left make war with the beauty and cunning of Paris.”

But from his heart dismayed Achilles made answer to Zethus:

“What hast thou said, O Zethus, betrayed by some Power that is hostile?

Art thou then hired by the gods for the bale and the slaughter of Hellas?”

Zethus answered him, “Alone art thou mighty, Achilles, in Phthia?

Tyrant art thou of this fight and keepst for thee all of its glory —

We are but wheels of thy chariot, reins of thy courser, Achilles.

What though dire be thy lust, yet here thou canst gather not glory,

Only thy shame and the Greeks', if a girl must be matched with Achilles!”

“Zethus, evil thy word and from death are the wings of its folly.

Even a god might hesitate fronting the formidable virgin.

Many the shafts that, borne in her chariot, thirst for the blood-draught.

Pages ride in her car behind and hand to her swiftly

Death in the rapid spears and she hurls them and drives and she stays not.

Forty wind-footed men of the mountains race with her chariot

Shielded and armed and bring back the spears from their hearts whom she
slaughters.

So like the lightning she moves incessantly flashing and slaying,

Not like men's warring her fight who battle for glory and plunder.
 Never she pauses to pluck back her point nor to strip off the armour.
 Only to slay she cares and only the legions to shatter.
 Come thou not near to her wheels; preserve thy life for thy father.
 Pity Arithoa's heart who shall wait in vain for her children."
 Wroth at Pelides' scorn made answer Zethus the Hellene,
 "Give me my boon I have chosen and thou fight far from my battle
 Lest it be said that Achilles was near and therefore she perished.
 Cycnus and I [.....]¹ will strike down the terror of Argos."
 Moved the mighty Achilles answered him, "Zethus and Cycnus,
 Granted your will; I am bound by my truth, as are you now by Hades."
 So he spoke and cried to his steeds, who the wings of the southwind
 Racing outvied to the left where from Xanthus galloping swiftly
 Came in a mass the Ilian chariots loud towards the Hellenes.
 Phoces was with him and Echemus drove and Drus and Threataon,
 They were like rays of the sun, but nighest him, close to his shadow
 Ascanus, Phrinix' son, who fought ever near to his war-car.
 And from the Trojan battle gleaming in arms like the sungod
 Paris beheld that dangerous spear and he cried to the heroes:
 "See now where death on the Trojans comes in the speed of that war-car.
 Warriors, fight not [.....] Achilles
 But where you see him guiding his spear or turning his coursers,
 Menace his days and shield the Trojan life that he threatens.
 Fighting together hide with your spear-rain his head from the heavens.
 Zeus perhaps shall, blinded, forget to cover the hero."
 So as he spoke, the armies neared and they clashed in the mellay.
 Who first shed the blood [.....] that fell in that combat
 Thick with the fall of the mighty, last of the battles of Troya?
 Helenus first, King Priam's son, smote down in that battle
 Phoces, Amarus' son, who fought in the front of Pelides.
 He by the point twixt his brows surprised left the spear he had lifted;
 Down he clanged from his car with his armour sounding upon him.
 Echemus wroth let drive at Helenus, grieved for his comrade.
 Him he missed but Ahites slew who was Helenus' henchman.
 Helenus wroth in his turn at Echemus aimed and his spear-point

¹ Here and below some words have been lost as a result of damage to the manuscript.
—Ed.

Bit through the shield and quivering paused, — by Ananke arrested.
 Back avoiding death the Hellene shrank from the forefront.
 Nor had Achilles mingled yet his strength with the fighters.
 But like a falconer on a hillock lone in his war-car
 Shouting his dreadful cry in the pause ere the shock he had lingered
 Wheeling slowly his gaze for the choice of a prey or a victim
 For with his host was his heart [.....] behind Zethus
 Herding in shepherded [.....]
 Ill at ease was his heart [.....] or lying
 Slain on the Trojan [.....] Ares.
 Forward [.....] towards the Trojans
 [.....] helmet.
 Helenus [.....] his shield from the death-blow.
 But o'er his [.....] Apollo extended.
 And from the left and the right the heroes of Ilion gathered.
 Dyus and Polites came and Eumachus threatened Achilles.
 Paris' fatal shafts sang joyously now from the bowstring.
 Fast from the Hellene [.....]
 Ares' iron [.....]
 Neighing [.....] of the war-cries.
 Nor could the Trojan fighters break through the wall of their foemen,
 Nor could the mighty Pelides slay in his war-rage the Trojans.
 Ever he fought surrounded or drew back compelled to his legions;
 For to each spear of his strength full twenty hissed round his helmet,
 Rang on his shield, attempted his cuirass or leaped at his coursers
 Or at Automedon ran like living things in their blood-thirst.
 Galled the deathless steeds high-neighing pawed in their anger;
 Wrathful Achilles wheeled and threatened seeking a victim.
 So might a fire on the high-piled altar of sacrifice blazing
 Seek for its tongues an offering fit for the gods, but 'tis answered
 Only by spitting rain that a dense cloud sends out of heaven.
 Sibillant hiss the drops on the glowing wood and the altar.
 Chill a darkness o'erhangs and its brief and envious spirits
 Rail at the glorious flame desiring an end of its brilliance.
 Meanwhile behind by the ranks of the fighters sheltered from Hades
 Paris loosed his lethal shafts at the head of the Hellene.
 Then upon Helenus wrath from the gods who are noble descended,

Seized on the tongue of the prophet and framed their thoughts in his accents,
Thoughts by men rejected who follow the beast in their reason,
Only advantage seek, and honour and pride are forgotten:
“Paris, not thus shalt thou slay Achilles but only thy glory.
Hast thou no heed that the women should mock in the streets of our city
Thee and thy bow and thy numbers, hearing this shame of the Trojans?
Dost thou not fear the gods and their harms? Not so do they combat
Who have the awe of their deeds and follow the way of the mighty.”
Paris the Priamid answered his brother: “Helenus, wherefore
Care should I have for fame, or the gods and their punishments, heeding
Breath of men when they praise or condemn me? Victory I ask for,
Joy for my living heart, not a dream and a breath for my ashes.
Work I desire and the wish of my heart and the fruit of my labour.
Nay, let my fame be crushed into mire for the ages to spit at,
But let my country live and her foes be slain on her beaches.”
So he spoke and fitted another shaft to the bowstring.

Always they fought and were locked in a fierce unyielding combat.
But on the Hellene right stood the brothers stark in their courage
Waiting the Eoan horsehooves that checked at the difficult crossing
Late arrived through field and through pasture. Zethus exultant
Watched their advent stern and encouraged the legions behind him.
“Now is the hour of your highest fame, O ye sons of the Hellenes.
These are the iron squadrons, these are the world-famed fighters.
Here is a swifter than Memnon, here is a greater than Hector.
Who would fight with the war-wearied Trojans, the Lycian remnants,
When there are men in the world like these? O Phthians, we conquer
Asia’s best today. And you, O my brothers, with courage
Reap all the good I have won for our lives this morn from Achilles.
Glad let our fame go before us to our mother Arithoa waiting
Lonely in Phthia, desiring death or the eyes of her children.
Soon will our sails pursue their herald Fame, with our glory
Belying out and the winds. They shall bear o’er the murmurs of Ocean
Heaped up Iliou’s wealth and the golden bricks of King Priam
And for the halls of our fathers a famous and noble adornment
Severed the beautiful head of the virgin Penthesilea.”
So he cried and the Hellenes shouted, a savage rumour,
Proud of their victories past and incredulous grown of disaster.

Now from the Xanthus dripping-wheeled came the Eoan war-cars
 Rolling thunder-voiced with the tramp of the runners behind them,
 Dust like a flag and dire with the battle-cry, full on the Hellenes.
 They to the mid-plain arrived where the might of the Hellene brothers
 Waited their coming. Zethus first with his cry of the cascade
 Hurrying-footed, headlong that leaps far down to the valley:
 “Curb, but curb thy advance, O Amazon Penthesilea!
 These are not Gnosus’ ranks and these are not levies from Sparta.
 Hellas’ spears await thee here and the Myrmidon fighters.”
 But like the northwind high and clear answered Penthesilea,
 High like the northwind racing and whistling over the icefields,
 Death at its side and snow for its breath in the pitiless winter:
 “Who art thou biddest to pause the horsehooves of Penthesilea?
 Hellene, thou in thy strength who standest forth from thy shielders,
 Turn yet, save thy life; for I deem that thou art not Achilles.”
 “Zethus the Hellene I am and Cynus and Pindus, my brothers,
 Stand at my either side, and thou passest no farther, Bellona.
 Lioness, turn thou back, for thou canst not here be a hunter.”
 “Zethus and Cynus and Pindus, little you loved then your mother
 Who in this field that is wide must needs all three perish together
 Piled on one altar of death by the spear-shafts of Penthesilea.
 Empty for ever your halls shall be, childless the age of your father.”
 High she rose to the spear-cast, poised like a thunderbolt lifted,
 Forward swung to the blow and loosed it hissing and ruthless
 Straight at the Hellene shield, and it tore through the bronze and groaning
 Butted and pushed through the cuirass and split the breast of the hero.
 Round in his car he spun, then putting his hands out before him,
 Even as a diver who leaps from the shed of the bath to the current,
 Launched out so headlong, struggled, sideward collapsed, then was quiet,
 Dead on Trojan earth. But dismay and grief on his brothers
 Yet alive now seized, then rage came blinding the eyeballs.
 Blindly they hurled, yet attained, for Athene guided the spear-shafts;
 Death like a forest beast yet played with the might of the virgin.
 One on her shield and one on her cuirass rang, but rejected
 Fell back like reeds that are thrown at a boulder by boys on the seashore.
 She unmoved replied; her shafts in their angry succession
 Hardly endured delay between. Like trees the brothers,

Felled, to each side sank prone. So lifeless these strong ones of Hellas
Lay on their couch of the hostile soil reunited in slumber
As in their childhood they lay in Hellas watched by their mother,
Three of them side by side and she dreamed for her darlings their future.
But on the ranks of the Hellenes fear and amazement descended,—
Messengers they from Zeus to discourage the pride and the blood-lust.
Back many yards their foremost recoiled in a god-given terror,
As from a snake a traveller scorned for a bough by the wayside,
But it arises puffing its hood and hisses its hatred.
Forward the henchmen ran and plucked back the spears from the corpses;
Onward the Eoan thousands rolled o'er the ground that was conquered
Trampling the fallen men into earth with the wheels of their war-cars.

But in her speed like the sea or the stormwind Penthesilea
Drove towards the ranks of the foe and her spear-shafts hastened before her,
Messengers whistling shrilly to Death; he came like a wolfhound
Called by his master's voice and silently fell on the quarry.
Hyrtamus fell, Admetus was wounded, Charmidas slaughtered;
Cirrhos died, though he faced not the blow while he hastened to shelter.
Itylus, bright and beautiful, went down to night and to Hades.
Back, ever back the Hellenes recoiled from the shock of the Virgin,
Slain by her prowess fierce, alarmed by the might of her helpers.
For at her right Surabdas threatened and iron Surenas,
And at her left hill-shouldered Pharatus slaughtered the Hellenes.
Then in the ranks of the Greeks a shouting arose and the leaders
Cried to their hosts and recalled their unstained fame and their valour
Never so lightly conquered before in the onsets of Ares
And of Achilles they spoke and King Peleus waiting in Phthia,
Listening for Troy o'erthrown not his hosts overcome by a woman.
And from the right and the left came heroes mighty to succour.
Chiefs of the Dolopes Ar and Aglauron came mid the foremost,
Hyllus fair as a drifting moon but fierce as the winter;
Pryas came the Thessalian and Sebes whom Pharsalus honoured,
Victors in countless fights who had stood against Memnon and Hector.
But though their hands were mighty, though fierce their obdurate natures,
Mightier strengths they met and a sterner brood of the war-god.
Light from the hand of the Virgin the spear ran laughing at Sebes,
Crashed through his helmet and left him supine on the pastures of Troya;

Ar to Surabdas fell and the blood-spirting head of Aglauron
Dropped like a fruit from a branch by its weight to the discus of Sambus;
Iron Surenas' mace-head shattered the beauty of Hillus;
Pryas by Pharatus slain lay still and had rest from the war-cry.
Back, ever back reeled the Hellene host with the Virgin pursuing.
Storm-shod the Amazon fought and she slew like a god unresisted.
None now dared to confront her burning eyes; the boldest
Shuddered back from her spear and the cry of her tore at their heart-strings.
Fear, the daughter of Zeus, had gripped at the hearts of the Hellenes.
So as their heroes yielded before her, Penthesilea
Lifted with victory cried to her henchman, Aurus of Ellae,
Who had the foot of the wind and its breath that scants not for running,
"Hasten, hasten, Aurus; race to the right where unwarring
Valarus leads his host; bid him close with the strength of the Hellenes.
Soon will they scatter like chaff on the threshing-floor blown to the beaches.
But when he sees their flight by Sumalus shepherded seaward,
Swift let him turn like the wind in its paths and follow me, pouring
All in a victor flood on the Myrmidon left and Achilles.
Then shall no Hellene again dare embark in ships for the Troad.
Cursed shall its beaches be to their sons and their sons and for ever."
So she spoke and Aurus ran by the chariots protected.
Then had all Hellas perished indeed on the beaches of Troas,
But from the Argives' right where she battled Pallas Athene
Saw and was wroth and she missioned her thought to Automedon speeding.
Splendid it came and found him out mid the hiss of the spear-shafts
Guiding, endangered, Achilles' steeds in the thick of the battle.
Shaped like a woman clad in armour and fleeing from battle,
Helmmed with the Hellene crest it knocked at the gates of his spirit
Shaking the hero's heart with the vision that came to his eyeballs;
Silent he stared aghast and turned his ear to the war-din.
"Dost thou not hear to our right, Achilles, these voices of Ares?
High is the sound of Eoan battle, a woman's war-cry
Rings in my ears, but faint and sparse come the shouts of our nation.
Far behind is their call and nearer the ships and the beaches."
Great Pelides heard and groaned in the caves of his spirit:
"It is the doom that I feared and the fatal madness of Zethus;
Slain are the men of my nation or routed by Penthesilea.

Drive, Automedon, drive, lest shame and defeat upon Hellas
Fasten their seal and her heroes flee from the strength of a woman.”
And to the steeds divine Automedon called and they hearkened,
Rose as if seeking their old accustomed paths in the heavens,
Then through the ranks that parted they galloped as gallops the dust-cloud
When the cyclone is abroad and the high trees snap by the wayside,
And from the press of the Hellenes into the plain of the Xanthus
Thundering, neighing came with the war-car borne like a dead leaf
Chased by the blast. Then Athene opened the eyes of Achilles,
Eyes that in all of us sleep, yet can see the near and the distant,
Eyes that the gods in their pity have sealed from the giant confusion,
Sealed from the bale and the grief. He saw like one high on a summit
Near him the Eoans holding the plain and out in the distance
Breaking the Hellene strengths. Like a dream in the night he regarded
High-crested Sumalus fight, Somaranes swift in the onset,
Bull-shouldered Tauron’s blows and the hero Artavoruxes.
But in the centre fiercest the cry and the death and the fleeing.
There were his chieftains ever reforming vainly resistance, —
Even in defeat these were Hellenes and fit to be hosts of Achilles, —
But like a doom on them thundered the war-car of Penthesilea,
Pharatus smote and Surabdas and Sambus and iron Surenas.
Down the leaders fell and the armies reeled towards the Ocean.
Wroth he cried to his coursers and fiercely they heard and they hastened;
Swift like a wind o’er the grasses galloped the car of Achilles.
Echemus followed, Ascanus drove and Drus and Threton:
Phoces alone in the dust of the Troad lay there and moved not.
Yet brought not all of them help to their brothers oppressed in the combat:
For from the forefront forth on the knot of the swift-speeding war-cars
High an Eoan chariot came drawn fast by its coursers
Bearing a mighty chieftain, Valarus son of Supatures.
Fire-footed thundered past him the hooves of the heavenly coursers,
Nor to his challenging shout nor his spear the warlike Pelides
Answered at all, but made haste like a flood to the throng and the mellay.
But twixt the chariots behind and their leader the mighty Eoan
Drove his dark-maned steeds and stood like a cliff to their onset.
“Great is your haste, O ye Kings of the Greeks! Abide yet and converse.
Scatheless your leader has fled from me borne by the hooves of his coursers;

Ye, abide! For we meet from far lands on this soil of the Trojans.
 All of us meet from afar, but not all shall return to their hearthsides.
 Valarus stays you, O Greeks, and this is the point of his greeting.”
 So as he spoke he launched out his spear as a cloud hurls its storm-flash;
 Nor from that fatal hand parted vainly the pitiless envoy,
 But of its blood-thirst had right. Riven through and through with the
 death-stroke

Drus fell prone and tore with dying fingers the grasses.
 Sobbing his soul fled out to the night and the chill and the silence.
 They like leaves that are suddenly stayed by the fall of a wind-gust
 Ceased from their headlong speed. And Echemus poisoning his spear-shaft:
 “Sharp are thy greetings, chieftain Eoan. Message for message
 Echemus son of Aëtes, one of the mighty in Hellas,
 Thus returns. Let Ares judge twixt the Greek and the Eastern.”
 Fast sped the spear but Valarus held forth his shield and rebutted
 Shouting the deadly point that could pierce not his iron refusal.
 “Echemus, surely thy vaunt has reached me, but unfelt is thy spear-point.
 Weak are men’s arms, it seems, in Hellas; a boy there Ares
 Aims with reeds not spears at pastoral cheeses not iron.
 Judge now my strength.” Two spears from him ran at the hearts of his
 foemen.

Crouching Threton heard the keen death over him whistle;
 Ascanus hurt in the shoulder cried out and paused from his war-lust.
 Echemus hurled now again and hurled with him stalwart Threton.
 Strong Threton missed, but Echemus’ point at the helmet
 Bit and fastened as fastens a hound on the ear of the wild-boar
 Wroth with the cry and the hunt that gores the pack and his hunters.
 Valarus frowning tugged at the heavy steel; yet his right hand
 Smote at Echemus. Him he missed but valiant Threton
 Sat back dead in his seat and the chariot wild with its coursers
 Snorting and galloping bore his corpse o’er the plains to the Hellenes.
 But while yet Valarus strove with the shaft, obscured and encumbered,
 Ascanus sprang down swift from his car and armed with his sword-point
 Clove the Eoan’s neck as the lightning springs at an oak-trunk
 Seized in the stride of the storm and severs that might with its sharpness.
 Slain the hero fell; his mighty limbs the spirit
 Mightier released to the gods and it rose to the heavens of the noble.

Ascanus gathered the spear-shafts; loud was his shout as exulting
Back he leaped to the car triumphant o'er death and its menace.
“Lie there, Valarus, king of the East, with imperial Troya.
Six rich feet of her soil she gives thee for couch of the nuptials.
Rest then! talk not again on the way with the heroes of Hellas.”
So delivered they hastened glad to the ranks of their brothers.
After them rolled the Eoan war-cars, Arithon leading,
Loud with the clamour of hooves and the far-rolling gust of the war-cry;
Wroth at their chieftain's fall they moved to the help of their nation
Now by the unearthly horses neared and the might of Achilles.
Then from the Hellenes who heard the noise and the cry of their coming,
Lifted eyes dismayed, but saw the familiar war-car,
Saw the heaven-born steeds and the helm unconquered in battle,
Cry was of other hopefulness. Loud as the outbursting thunder
Rises o'er lower sounds of the storm, o'er the din of the battle
Rose the Hellene shout and rose the name of Achilles.

Abana

Ahana

(Ahana, the Dawn of God, descends on the world where amid the strife and trouble of mortality the Hunters of Joy, the Seekers after Knowledge, the Climbers in the quest of Power are toiling up the slopes or waiting in the valleys. As she stands on the mountains of the East, voices of the Hunters of Joy are the first to greet her.)

Vision delightful alone on the hills whom the silences cover,
Closer yet lean to mortality; human, stoop to thy lover.
Wonderful, gold like a moon in the square of the sun where thou strayest
Glimmers thy face amid crystal purities; mighty thou playest
Sole on the peaks of the world, unafraid of thy loneliness. Glances
Leap from thee down to us, dream-seas and light-falls and magical trances;
Sun-drops flake from thy eyes and the heart's caverns packed are with
pleasure
Strange like a song without words or the dance of a measureless measure.
Tread through the edges of dawn, over twilight's grey-lidded margin;
Heal earth's unease with thy feet, O heaven-born delicate virgin.
Children of Time whose spirits came down from eternity, seizing
Joys that escape us, yoked by our hearts to a labour unceasing,
Earth-bound, torn with our longings, our life is a brief incompleteness.
Thou hast the stars to sport with, the winds run like bees to thy sweetness.
Art thou not heaven-bound even as I with the earth? Hast thou ended
All desirable things in a stillness lone and unfriended?
Only is calm so sweet? is our close tranquillity only?
Cold are the rivers of peace and their banks are leafless and lonely.
Heavy is godhead to bear with its mighty sun-burden of lustre.
Art thou not weary of only the stars in their solemn muster,
Sky-hung the chill bare plateaus and peaks where the eagle rejoices
In the inhuman height of his nesting, solitude's voices
Making the heart of the silence lonelier? strong and untiring,
Deaf with the cry of the waterfall, lonely the pine lives aspiring.
Two are the ends of existence, two are the dreams of the Mother:

Heaven unchanging, earth with her time-beats yearn to each other, —
 Earth-souls needing the touch of the heavens peace to recapture,
 Heaven needing earth's passion to quiver its peace into rapture.
 Marry, O lightning eternal, the passion of a moment-born fire!
 Out of thy greatness draw close to the breast of our mortal desire!
 Is he thy master, Rudra the mighty, Shiva ascetic?
 Has he denied thee his world? In his dance that they tell of, ecstatic,
 Slaying, creating, calm in the midst of the movement and madness,
 Stole there no rhythm of an earthly joy and a mortal sadness?
 Wast thou not made in the shape of a woman? Sweetness and beauty
 Move like a song of the gods in thy limbs and to love is thy duty
 Graved in thy heart as on tablets of fate; joy's delicate blossom
 Sleeps in thy lids of delight; all Nature hides in thy bosom
 Claiming her children unborn and the food of her love and her laughter.
 Is he the first? was there none then before him? shall none come after?
 He who denies and his blows beat down on our hearts like a hammer's,
 He whose calm is the silent reply to our passion and clamours!
 Is not there deity greater here new-born in a noble
 Labour and sorrow and struggle than stilled into rapture immobile?
 Earth has beatitudes warmer than heaven's that are bare and undying,
 Marvels of Time on the crest of the moments to Infinity flying.
 Earth has her godheads; the Tritons sway on the toss of the billows,
 Emerald locks of the Nereids stream on their foam-crested pillows,
 Dryads peer out from the branches, Naiads glance up from the waters;
 High are her flame-points of joy and the gods are ensnared by her daughters.
 Artemis calls as she flees through the glades and the breezes pursue her;
 Cypris laughs in her isles where the ocean-winds linger to woo her.
 Here thou shalt meet amid beauty forgotten the dance of the Graces;
 Night shall be haunted for ever with strange and delicate faces.
 Music is here of the fife and the flute and the lyre and the timbal,
 Wind in the forests, bees in the grove, — spring's ardent cymbal
 Thrilling, the cry of the cuckoo; the nightingale sings in the branches,
 Human laughter is heard and the cattle low in the ranches.
 Frankly and sweetly she gives to her children the bliss of her body,
 Breath of her lips and the green of her garments, rain-pourings heady
 Tossed from her cloud-carried beaker of tempest, oceans and streamlets,
 Dawn and the mountain-air, corn-fields and vineyards, pastures and hamlets,

Tangles of sunbeams asleep, mooned dream-depths, twilight's shadows,
 Taste and scent and the fruits of her trees and the flowers of her meadows,
 Life with her wine-cup of longing under the purple of her tecture,
 Death as her gate of escape and rebirth and renewal of venture.
 Still must they mutter that all here is vision and passing appearance,
 Magic of Maya with falsehood and pain for its only inherence.
 One is there only, apart in his greatness, the End and Beginning, —
 He who has sent through his soul's wide spaces the universe spinning.
 One eternal, Time an illusion, life a brief error!
 One eternal, Master of heaven — and of hell and its terror!
 Spirit of silence and purity rapt and aloof from creation, —
 Dreaming through aeons unreal his splendid and empty formation!
 Spirit all-wise in omnipotence shaping a world but to break it, —
 Pushed by what mood of a moment, the breath of what fancy to make it?
 None is there great but the eternal and lonely, the unique and unmated,
 Bliss lives alone with the self-pure, the single, the forever-uncreated.
 Truths? or thought's structures bridging the vacancy mute and unsounded
 Facing the soul when it turns from the stress of the figures around it?
 Solely we see here a world self-made by some indwelling Glory
 Building with forms and events its strange and magnificent story.
 Yet at the last has not all been solved and unwisdom demolished,
 Myth cast out and all dreams of the soul, and all worship abolished?
 All now is changed, the reverse of the coin has been shown to us; Reason
 Waking, detecting the hoax of the spirit, at last has arisen,
 Captured the Truth and built round her its bars that she may not skeddaddle,
 Gallop again with the bit in her teeth and with Fancy in the saddle.
 Now have the wise men discovered that all is the craft of a super-
 Magic of Chance and a movement of Void and inconscient Stupor.
 Chance by a wonderful accident ever her ripples expanding
 Out of a gaseous circle of Nothingness, implacably extending
 Freak upon freak, repeating rigidly marvels on marvels,
 Making a world out of Nothing, started on the arc of her travels.
 Nothingness born into feeling and action dies back to Nothing.
 Sea of a vague electricity, romping through space-curves and clothing
 Strangely the Void with a semblance of Matter, painfully flowered
 Into this giant phenomenon universe. Man who has towered
 Out of the plasm and struggled by thought to Divinity's level,

Man, this miniature second creator of good and of evil,
 He too was only a compost of Matter made living, organic,
 Forged as her thinking tool by an Energy blind and mechanic.
 Once by an accident queer but quite natural, provable, simple,
 Out of blind Space-Nought lashed into life, wearing Mind as its wimple,
 Dupe of a figment of consciousness, doped with behaviour and feature,
 Matter deluded claimed to be spirit and sentient creature.
 All the high dreams man has dreamed and his hopes and his deeds, his
soul's greatness
 Are but a food-seeking animal's acts with the mind for their witness, —
 Mind a machine for the flickers of thought, Matter's logic unpremissed, —
 Are but a singular fireworks, chemistry lacking the chemist,
 Matter's nervous display; the heart's passion, the sorrow and burning
 Fire of delight and sweet ecstasy, love and its fathomless yearning,
 Boundless spiritual impulses making us one with world-being,
 Outbursts of vision opening doors to a limitless seeing,
 Gases and glands and the genes and the nerves and the brain-cells have
done it,
 Brooded out drama and epic, structured the climb of the sonnet,
 Studied the stars and discovered the brain and the laws of its thinking,
 Sculptured the cave-temple, reared the cathedral, infinity drinking
 Wrought manufacturing God and the soul for the uplift of Nature, —
 Science, philosophy, head of his mystical chemical stature,
 Music and painting revealing the godhead in sound and in colour,
 Acts of the hero, thoughts of the thinker, search of the scholar,
 All the magnificent planning, all the inquiry and wonder
 Only a trick of the atom, its marvellous magical blunder.
 Who can believe it? Something or someone, a Force or a Spirit
 Conscious, creative, wonderful shaped out a world to inherit
 Here for the beings born from its vast universal existence, —
 Fields of surprise and adventure, vistas of light-haunted distance,
 Play-routes of wisdom and vision and struggle and rapture and sorrow,
 Sailing in Time through the straits of today to the sea of tomorrow.
 Worlds and their wonders, suns and their flamings, earth and her nations,
 Voyages endless of Mind through the surge of its fate-tossed creations,
 Star upon star throbbing out in the silence of infinite spaces,
 Species on species, bodies on bodies, faces on faces,

Souls without number crossing through Time towards eternity, aeons
 Crowding on aeons, loving and battle, dirges and paeans,
 Thoughts ever leaping, hopes ever yearning, lives ever streaming,
 Millions and millions on trek through the days with their doings and
 dreaming,
 Herds of the Sun who move on at the cry of the radiant drover, —
 Countless, surviving the death of the centuries, lost to recover,
 Finished, but only to begin again, who is its tireless creator,
 Cause or the force of its driving, its thinker or formless dictator?
 Surely no senseless Vacancy made it, surely 'twas fashioned
 By an almighty One million-ecstasied, thousand-passioned.
 Self-made? then by what self from which thought could arise and emotion,
 Waves that well up to the surface, born from what mystieried ocean?
 Nature alone is the fountain. But what is she? Is she not only
 Figure and name for what none understands, though all feel, or a lonely
 Word in which all finds expression, spirit-heights, dumb work of Matter, —
 Vague designation filling the gaps of our thought with its clatter?
 Power without vision that blunders in man into thinking and sinning?
 Rigid, too vast inexhaustible mystery void of a meaning?
 Energy blindly devising, unconsciously ranging in order?
 Chance in the march of a cosmic Insanity crossing the border
 Out of the eternal silence to thought and its strangeness and splendour?
 Consciousness born by an accident until an accident end her?
 Nought else is she but the power of the Spirit who dwells in her ever,
 Witness and cause of her workings, lord of her pauseless endeavour.
 All things she knows, though she seems here unseeing; even in her slumber
 Wondrous her works are, design and its magic and magic of number,
 Plan of her mighty cosmic geometry, balance of forces,
 Universe flung beyond universe, law of the stars and their courses,
 Cosmos atomic stretched to the scale of the Infinite's measure.
 Mute in the trance of the Eternal she sleeps with the stone and the azure.
 Now she awakes; for life has just stirred in her, stretching first blindly
 Outward for sense and its pleasure and pain and the gifts of the kindly
 Mother of all, for her light and her air and the sap from her flowing,
 Pleasure of bloom and incontinent beauty, pleasure of growing.
 Then into mind she arises; heart's yearning awakes and reflection
 Looks out on struggle and harmony, — conscious, her will of selection

Studies her works and illumines the choice of her way; last, slowly
 Inward she turns and stares at the Spirit within her. Holy
 Silences brood in her heart and she feels in her ardent recesses
 Passions too great for her frame, on her body immortal caresses.
 Into the calm of the Greatness beyond her she enters, burning
 Now with a light beyond thought's, towards Self and Infinity turning,
 Turned to beatitude, turned to eternity, spiritual grandeur,
 Power without limit, ecstasy imperishable, shadowless splendour.
 Then to her mortals come, flashing, thoughts that are wisdom's fire-kernel;
 Leaping her flame-sweeps of might and delight and of vision supernal
 Kindle the word and the act, the Divine and humanity fusing,
 Illuminations, trance-seeds of silence, flowers of musing, —
 Light of our being that yet has to be, its glory and glimmer
 Smiting with sunrise the soul of the sage and the heart of the dreamer.
 Or is it all but a vain expectation and effort ungrounded,
 Wings without body, sight without object, waters unsounded,
 Hue of a shimmer that steals through some secret celestial portal,
 Glory of a gleam or a dream in an animal brief-lived and mortal?
 Are they not radiances native to heaven's more fortunate ether,
 Won when we part from this body, this temporal house of a nether
 Mystery of life lived in vain? Upon earth is the glory forbidden,
 Nature for ever accursed, frustrated, grief-vexed, fate-ridden?
 Half of the glory she dreamed of forgotten or lost in earth's darkness,
 Half of it mangled and missed as the death-wheels whirl in their starkness,
 Cast out from heaven a goddess rebellious with mind for her mirror,
 Cursed with desire and self-will and doomed to self-torture and error,
 Came she to birth then with God for her enemy? Were we created
 He unwilling or sleeping? did someone transgress the fated
 Limits he set, outwitting God? In the too hasty vision
 Marred of some demiurge filmed there the blur of a fatal misprision,
 Making a world that revolves on itself in a circuit of failure,
 Aeons of striving, death for a recompense, Time for our tenure?
 Out of him rather she came and for him are her cry and her labour;
 Deep are her roots in him; topless she climbs, to his greatness a neighbour.
 All is himself in her, brooding in darkness, mounting the sun-ways;
 Air-flight to him is man's journey with heaven and earth for the runways.
 He is the witness and doer, he is the loved and the lover,

He the eternal Truth that we look in ourselves to discover.
 All is his travel in Time; it is he who turns history's pages,
 Act and event and result are the trail that he leaves through the ages;
 Form and idea are his signs and number and sound are his symbols,
 Music and singing, the word and its rhythm are Divinity's cymbals,
 Thunder and surge are the drums of his marching. Through us, with urges
 Self-ward, form-bound, mute, motionless, slowly inevitably emerges
 Vast as the cosmos, minute as the atom, the Spirit eternal.
 Often the gusts of his force illumining moments diurnal
 Flame into speech and idea; transcendences splendid and subtle
 Suddenly shoot through the weft of our lives from a magical shuttle;
 Hid in our hearts is his glory; the Spirit works in our members.
 Silence is he, with our voices he speaks, in our thoughts he remembers.
 Deep in our being inhabits the voiceless invisible Teacher;
 Powers of his godhead we live; the Creator dwells in the creature.
 Out of his Void we arise to a mighty and shining existence,
 Out of Inconscience, tearing the black Mask's giant resistance;
 Waves of his consciousness well from him into these bodies in Nature,
 Forms are put round him; his oneness, divided by mind's nomenclature,
 High on the summits of being ponders immobile and single,
 Penetrates atom and cell as the tide drenches sand-grain and shingle.
 Oneness unknown to us dwells in these millions of figures and faces,
 Wars with itself in our battles, loves in our clinging embraces,
 Inly the self and the substance of things and their cause and their mover
 Veiled in the depths which the foam of our thoughts and our life's billows
cover,

Heaves like the sea in its waves; like heaven with its star-fires it gazes
 Watching the world and its works. Interned in the finite's mazes,
 Still shall he rise to his vast superconscience, we with him climbing;
 Truth of man's thought with the truth of God's spirit faultlessly timing,
 That which was mortal shall enter immortality's golden precincts,
 Hushed breath of ecstasy, honey of lotus depths where the bee sinks,
 Timeless expanses too still for the voice of the hours to inveigle,
 Spaces of spirit too vast for the flight of the God-bearing eagle, —
 Enter the Splendour that broods now unseen on us, deity invading,
 Sight without error, light without shadow, beauty unfading,
 Infinite largeness, rapture eternal, love none can sever,

Life, not this death-play, but a power God-driven and blissful for ever.
 “No,” cry the wise, “for a circle was traced, there was pyloned a limit
 Only we escape through dream’s thin passages. None can disclaim it;
 All things created are made by their borders, sketched out and coded;
 Vain is the passion to divinise manhood, humanise godhead.
 None can exceed himself; even to find oneself hard for our search is:
 Only we see as in night by a lustre of flickering torches.
 To be content with our measure, our space is the law of our living.
 All of thyself to thy manhood and Nature and Circumstance giving,
 Be what thou must be or be what thou canst be, one hour in an era.
 Knowing the truth of thy days, shun the light of ideal and chimera:
 Curb heart’s impatience, bind thy desires down, pause from self-vexing.”
 Who is the nomad then? who is the seeker, the gambler risking
 All for a dream in a dream, the old and the sure and the stable
 Flung as a stake for a prize that was never yet laid on the table?
 Always the world is expanding and growing from minute to minute;
 Playing the march of the adventure of Time with our lives for her spinet
 Maya or Nature, the wonderful Mother, strikes out surprising
 Strains of the spirit disprisoned; creation heavenward rising
 Wrestles with Time and Space and the Unknown to give form to the Formless.
 Bliss is her goal, but her road is through whirlwind and death-blast and
 storm-race.

All is a wager and danger, all is a chase and a battle.
 Vainly man, crouched in his corner of safety, shrinks from the fatal
 Lure of the Infinite. Guided by Powers that surround and precede us
 Fearful and faltering steps are our perishing efforts that lead us
 On through the rooms of the finite till open the limitless spaces
 And we can look into all-seeing eyes and imperishable faces.
 But we must pass through the aeons; Space is a bar twixt our ankles,
 Time is a weight that we drag and the scar of the centuries rankles:
 Caught by the moments, held back from the spirit’s timelessness, slowly
 Wading in shallows we take not the sea-plunge vastly and wholly.
 Hard is the way to the Eternal for the mind-born will of the mortal
 Bound by the body and life to the gait of the house-burdened turtle.
 Here in this world that knows not its morrow, this reason that stumbles
 Onward from error to truth and from truth back to error while crumbles
 All that it fashioned, after the passion and travail are ended,

After the sacrifice offered when the will and the strength are expended,
 Nothing is done but to have laid down one stone of a road without issue,
 Added our quota of evil and good to an ambiguous tissue.
 Destiny's lasso, its slip-knot tied by delight and repining,
 Draws us through tangles of failure and victory's inextricable twining.
 In the hard reckoning made by the grey-robed accountant at even
 Pain is the ransom we pay for the smallest foretaste of heaven.
 Ignorance darkens, death and inconscience gape to absorb us;
 Thick and persistent the Night confronts us, its hunger enormous
 Swallowing our work and our lives. Our love and our knowledge squandered
 Lie like a treasure refused and trod down on the ways where we wandered;
 All we have done is effaced by the thousands behind us arriving.
 Trapped in a round fixed for ever circles our thought and our living.
 Fiercely the gods in their jealousy strike down the heads that have
neighbourhood
 Even for a moment their skies; in the sands our achievements are gravured.
 Yet survives bliss in the rhythm of our heart-beats, yet is there wonder,
 Beauty's immortal delight, and the seals of the mystery sunder.
 Honied a thousand whispers come, in the birds, in the breezes,
 Moonlight, the voices of streams; with a hundred marvellous faces
 Always he lures us to love him, always he draws us to pleasure
 Leaving remembrance and anguish behind for our only treasure.
 Passionate we seek for him everywhere, yearn for some sign of him, calling,
 Scanning the dust for his footprints, praying and stumbling and falling;
 Nothing is found and no answer comes from the masks that are passing.
 Memories linger, lines from the past like a half-faded tracing.
 He has passed on into silence wearing his luminous mantle.
 Out of the melodied distance a laugh rings pure-toned, infantile,
 Sole reminder that he is, last signal recalling his presence.
 There is a joy behind suffering; pain digs our road to his pleasure.
 All things have bliss for their secret; only our consciousness falters
 Fearing to offer itself as a victim on ecstasy's altars.
 Is not the world his disguise? when that cloak is tossed back from his
shoulders,
 Beauty looks out like a sun on the hearts of the ravished beholders.
 Mortals, your end is beatitude, rapture eternal his meaning:
 Joy, which he most now denies, is his purpose: the hedges, the screening

Were but the rules of his play; his denials came to lure farther.
 These too were magic of Maya, smiles of the marvellous Mother.
 Oh, but the cruelty! oh, but the empty pain we go rueing!
 Edges of opposite sweetness, calls to a closer pursuing.
 All that we meet is a symbol and gateway; cryptic intention
 Lurks in a common appearance, smiles from a casual mention:
 Opposites hide in each other; in the laughter of Nature is danger,
 Glory and greatness their embryos form in the womb of her anger.
 Why are we terrified? wherefore cry out and draw back from the smiting —
 Blows from the hands of a lover to direr exactions exciting,
 Fiery points of his play! Was he Rudra only the mighty?
 Whose were the whispers of sweetness, whose were the murmurs of pity?
 Something opposes our grasp on the light and the sweetness and power,
 Something within us, something without us, trap-door or tower,
 Nature's gap in our being — or hinge! That device could we vanquish,
 Once could we clasp him and hold, his joy we could never relinquish.
 Then we could not be denied, for our might would be single and flawless.
 Sons of the Eternal, sovereigns of Nature absolute and lawless,
 Termlessly our souls would possess as he now enjoys and possesses,
 Termlessly probe the delight of his laughter's lurking recesses,
 Chasing its trail to the apex of sweetness and secrecy. Treasured
 Close to the beats of Eternity's heart in a greatness unmeasured,
 Locked into a miracle and mystery of Light we would live in him, — seated
 Deep in his core of beatitude ceaselessly by Nature repeated,
 Careless of Time, with no fear of an end, with no need for endeavour
 Caught by his ecstasy dwell in a rapture enduring for ever.
 What was the garden he built when the stars were first set in their places,
 Soul and Nature together mid streams and in cloudless spaces
 Naked and innocent? Someone offered a fruit of derision,
 Knowledge of good and of evil, cleaving in God a division.
 Though He who made all said, "It is good; I have fashioned perfection,"
 "No, there is evil," someone whispered, "'tis screened from detection."
 Wisest he of the beasts of the field, one cunning and creeping;
 "See it," he said, "be wise; you shall be as the gods are, unsleeping,
 They who know all." And they ate. The roots of our being were shaken;
 Hatred and weeping and wrath at once trampled a world overtaken,
 Terror and fleeing and anguish and shame and desires unsated;

Cruelty stalked like a lion; Revenge and her brood were created.
 Out to the desert he drove the rebellious. Flaming behind them
 Streamed out the sword of his wrath and it followed leaping to find them,
 Stabbing at random. The pure and the evil, the strong and the tempted,
 All are confounded in punishment; justly is no one exempted.
 Virtuous? yes, there are many, but who is there innocent? Toiling
 Therefore we seek, but find not that Eden. Planting and spoiling,
 "This is the garden," we say, "lo, the trees and this is the river."
 Vainly redeemers came, not one has availed to deliver.
 Never can Nature go back to her careless and childlike beginning,
 Laugh of the babe and the song of the wheel in its delicate spinning,
 Smile of the sun upon flowers and earth's beauty, life without labour
 Plucking the fruits of the soil and rejoicing in cottage and arbour.
 Once we have chosen to be as the gods, we must follow that motion.
 Knowledge must grow in us, might like a Titan's, bliss like an ocean,
 Calmness and purity born of the spirit's gaze on the Real,
 Rapture of his oneness embracing the soul in a clasp hymeneal.
 Was it not he once in Brindavan? Woods divine to our yearning,
 Memorable always! O flowers, O delight on the tree-tops burning,
 Grasses his herds have grazed and crushed by his feet in the dancing,
 Yamuna flowing with song, through the greenness always advancing,
 You unforgotten remind; for his flute with its sweetness ensnaring
 Sounds in our ears in the night and our souls of their teguments baring
 Hales us out naked and absolute, out to his woodlands eternal,
 Out to his moonlit dances, his dalliance sweet and supernal,
 And we go stumbling, maddened and thrilled to his dreadful embraces,
 Slaves of his rapture to Brindavan crowded with amorous faces,
 Luminous kine in the green glades seated, soft-eyed gazing,
 Flowers on the branches distressing us, moonbeams unearthly amazing,
 Yamuna flowing before us, laughing low with her voices,
 Brindavan arching o'er us where Shyama sports and rejoices.
 Inly the miracle trembles repeated; mist-walls are broken
 Hiding that country of God and we look on the wonderful token,
 Clasp the beautiful body of the Eternal; his flute-call of yearning
 Cries in our breast with its blissful anguish for ever returning;
 Life flows past us with passionate voices, a heavenly river,
 All our being goes back as a bride of his bliss to the Giver.

Even an hour of the soul can unveil the Unborn, the Everlasting,
 Gaze on its mighty Companion; the load of mortality casting,
 Mind hushes stilled in eternity; waves of the Infinite wander
 Thrilling body and soul and its endless felicity squander;
 All world-sorrow is finished, the cry of the parting is over;
 Ecstasy laughs in our veins, in our heart is the heart of the Lover.
 As when a stream from a highland plateau green mid the mountains
 Draws through broad lakes of delight the gracious sweep of its fountains,
 Life from its heaven of desire comes down to the toil of the earth-ways;
 Streaming through mire it pours still the mystical joy of its birthplace,
 Green of its banks and the green of its trees and the hues of the flower.
 Something of child-heart beauty, something of greatness and power,
 Dwell with it still in its early torrent laughter and brightness,
 Call in the youth of its floods and the voice of the wideness and whiteness.
 But in its course are set darkness and fall and the spirit's ordeal.
 Hating its narrowness, forced by an ardour to see all and be all,
 Dashed on the unconscious rocks and straining through mud, over gravel,
 Flows, like an ardent prisoner bound to the scenes of his travail,
 Life, the river of the Spirit, consenting to anguish and sorrow
 If by her heart's toil a loan-light of joy from the heavens she can borrow.
 Out of the sun-rays and moon-rays, the winds' wing-glimmer and revel,
 Out of the star-fields of wonder, down to earth's danger and evil
 Headlong cast with a stridulant thunder, the doom-ways descending,
 Shuddering below into sunless depths, across chasms unending,
 Baulked of the might of its waters, a thread in a mountainous vastness,
 Parcelled and scanted it hurries as if storming a Titan fastness,
 Carving the hills with a sullen and lonely gigantic labour.
 Hurlled into strangling ravines it escapes with a leap and a quaver,
 Breaks from the channels of hiding it grooves out and chisels and twistens,
 Angry, afraid, white, foaming. A stony and monstrous resistance
 Meets it piling up stubborn limits. Afflicted the river
 Treasures a scattered sunbeam, moans for a god to deliver,
 Longing to lapse through the plain's green felicity, yearning to widen
 Joined to the ocean's shoreless eternity far-off and hidden.
 High on the cliffs the Great Ones are watching, the Mighty and Deathless,
 Soaring and plunging the roadway of the Gods climbs uplifted and
breathless;

Ever we hear in the heart of the peril a flute go before us,
 Luminous beckoning hands in the distance invite and implore us.
 Ignorant, circled with death and the abyss, we have dreamed of a human
 Paradise made from the mind of a man, from the heart of a woman,
 Dreamed of the Isles of the Blest in a light of perpetual summer,
 Dreamed of the joy of an earthly life with no pain for incomer.
 Never, we said, can these waters from heaven be lost in the marshes,
 Cease in the sands of the desert, die where the simoom parches;
 Plains are beyond, there are hamlets and fields where the river rejoices
 Pacing once more with a quiet step and with amical voices:
 Bright amid woodlands red with the berries and cool with the breezes
 Glimmer the leaves; all night long the heart of the nightingale eases
 Sweetly its burden of pity and sorrow. There amid flowers
 We shall take pleasure in arbours delightful, lengthening the hours,
 Time for our servitor waiting our fancy through moments unceasing,
 Under the cloudless blue of those skies of tranquillity resting,
 Lying on beds of lilies, hearing the bells of the cattle
 Tinkle, and drink red wine of life and go forth to the battle,
 Fight and unwounded return to our beautiful home by the waters,
 Fruit of our joy rear tall strong sons and radiant daughters.
 Then shall the Virgins of Light come down to us clad in clear raiment
 Woven from sunbeam and moonbeam and lightnings, limitless payment
 Bring of our toil and our sorrow, carrying life-giving garlands
 Plucked by the fountains of Paradise, bring from imperishable star-lands
 Hymn-words of wisdom, visions of beauty, heaven-fruit ruddy,
 Wine-cups of ecstasy sending the soul like a stream through the body.
 Fate shall not know; if her spies come down to our beautiful valley,
 They shall grow drunk with its grapes and wander in woodland and alley.
 There leaps the anger of Rudra? there will his lightnings immortal
 Circle around with their red eye of cruelty stabbing the portal?
 Fearless is there life's play; I shall sport with my dove from his highlands,
 Drinking her laughter of bliss like a god in my Grecian islands.
 Life in my limbs shall grow deathless, flesh with the God-glory tingle,
 Lustre of Paradise, light of the earth-ways marry and mingle.
 These are but dreams and the truth shall be greater. Heaven made woman!
 Flower of beatitude! living shape of the bliss of the Brahman!
 Art thou not she who shall bring into life and time the Eternal?

Body of the summer of the Gods, a sweetness virginal, vernal,
 Breathes from thy soul into Nature; Love sits dreaming in thy bosom,
 Wisdom gazes from thy eyes, thy breasts of God-rapture are the blossom.
 If but the joy of thy feet once could touch our spaces smiting
 Earth with a ray from the Unknown, on the world's heart heaven's script
writing,
 All then would change into harmony and beauty, Time's doors shudder
 Swinging wide on their hinges into Eternity, other
 Voices than earth's would be fire in our speech and make deathless our
thinking.

One who is hidden in Light would grow visible, multitudes linking,
 Lyres of a single ecstasy, throbs of the one heart beating,
 Wonderful bodies and souls in the spirit's identity meeting
 Even as stars in sky-vastness know their kindred in grandeur.
 Yet may it be that although in the hands of our destiny stands sure
 Fixed to its hour the Decree of the Advent, still it is fated
 Only when kindling earth's bodies a mightier Soul is created.
 Far-off the gold and the greatness, the rapture too splendid and dire.
 Are not the ages too young? too low in our hearts burns the fire.
 Bringest thou only a gleam on the summits, a cry in the distance,
 Seen by the eyes that are wakened, heard by a spirit that listens?
 Form of the formless All-Beautiful, lodestar of Nature's aspiration,
 Music of prelude giving a voice to the ineffable Silence,
 First white dawn of the God-Light cast on these creatures that perish,
 Word-key of a divine and eternal truth for mortals to cherish,
 Come! let thy sweetness and force be a breath in the breast of the future
 Making the god-ways alive, immortality's golden-red suture:
 Deep in our lives there shall work out a honeyed celestial leaven,
 Bliss shall grow native to being and earth be a kin-soil to heaven.
 Open the barriers of Time, the world with thy beauty enamour.
 Trailing behind thee the purple of thy soul and the dawn-moment's glamour,
 Forcing the heart of the Midnight where slumber and secrecy linger,
 Guardians of Mystery, touching her bosom with thy luminous finger,
 Daughter of Heaven, break through to me moonlike, mystic and gleaming;
 Tread through the margins of twilight, cross over borders of dreaming.
 Vision delightful alone on the peaks whom the silences cover,
 Vision of bliss, stoop down to mortality, lean to thy lover.

AHANA

Voice of the sensuous mortal, heart of eternal longing,
Thou who hast lived as in walls, thy soul with thy senses wronging!
But I descend at last. Fickle and terrible, sweet and deceiving,
Poison and nectar one has dispensed to thee, luring thee, leaving.
We two together shall capture the flute and the player relentless.
Son of man, thou hast crowned thy life with the flowers that are scentless,
Chased the delights that wound. But I come and midnight shall sunder.
Lo, I come, and behind me Knowledge descends and with thunder
Filling the spaces Strength, the Angel, bears on his bosom
Joy to thy arms. Thou shalt look on her face like a child's or a blossom,
Innocent, free as in Eden of old, not afraid of her playing,
When thy desires I have seized and devoured like a lioness preying.
Thou shalt not suffer always nor cry to me lured and forsaken:
I have a snare for his footsteps, I have a chain for him taken.
Come then to Brindavan, soul of the joyous; faster and faster
Follow the dance I shall teach thee with Shyama for slave and for master.
Follow the notes of the flute with a soul aware and exulting;
Trample Delight that submits and crouch to a sweetness insulting.
Then shalt thou know what the dance meant, fathom the song and the singer,
Hear behind thunder its rhymes, touched by lightning thrill to his finger,
Brindavan's rustle shalt understand and Yamuna's laughter,
Take thy place in the Ras¹ and thy share of the ecstasy after.

¹ The dance-round of Krishna with the cowherdesses in the moonlit groves of Brindavan, type of the dance of Divine Delight with the souls of men liberated in the world of Bliss secret within us.

Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1912–1913

The Descent of Ahana

I

AHANA

Strayed from the roads of Time, far-couched on the void I have slumbered;
Centuries passed me unnoticed, millenniums perished unnumbered.
I, Ahana, slept. In the stream of thy sevenfold Ocean,
Being, how hast thou laboured without me? Whence was thy motion?
Not without me can thy nature be satisfied. But I came fleeing; —
Vexed was my soul with the joys of sound and weary of seeing;
Into the deeps of my nature I lapsed, I escaped into slumber.
Out of the silence who call me back to the clamour and cumber?
Why should I go with you? What hast thou done in return for my labour,
World? what wage had my soul when its strength was thy neighbour,
Though I have loved all, working and suffering, giving them pleasure?
I have escaped from it all; I have fled from the pitiless pressure.
Silence vast and pure, again to thy wideness receive me;
For unto thee I turn back from those who would use me and grieve me.

VOICES

Nay, thou art thrilled, O goddess; thy calm thou shalt not recover,
But must come down to this world of pain and the need of thy lover.
Joy as thou canst, endure as thou must, but bend to our uses.
Vainly thy heart repines, — thou wast made for this, — vainly refuses.

AHANA

Voices of joy, from the roseate arbour of sense and the places
Thrilled with the song and the scent and peopled with beautiful faces,
Long in your closes of springtime, lured to joyaunce unsated
Tarried my heart, and I walked in your meadows, your chaplets I plaited,
Played in your gardens of ease and, careless of blasts in the distance,
Paced, pursued by the winds, your orchard of autumn's persistence,
Saw on the dance of a ripple your lotus that slumbers and quivers,
Heard your nightingales warbling in covert by moon-gilded rivers.

But I relinquished your streams and I turned from your moonbeams and
 flowers;
 Now I have done with space and my soul is released from the hours.
 Saved is my heart from the need of joy, the attraction to sorrow,
 Who have escaped from my past and forgotten today and tomorrow;
 I have grown vacant and mighty, naked and wide as the azure.
 Will you now plant in this blast, on this snow your roses of pleasure?
 Once was a dwelling here that was made for the dance of the Graces,
 But I have hewn down its gardens and ravaged its delicate places,
 Driven the revellers out from their pleasaunce to wander unfriended,
 Flung down the walls and over the debris written 'tis ended.
 Now, and I know not yet wherefore, the Mighty One suffers you near Him,
 But in their coming the great Gods hesitate seeming to fear Him.
 Thought returns to my soul like a stranger. Sweetness and feature
 Draw back appalled to their kind from the frozen vasts of my nature.
 Turn back you also, angels of yearning, vessels of sweetness.
 Have I not wandered from Time, left ecstasy, outstripped completeness?

VOICES

Goddess, we moaned upon earth and we wandered exiled from heaven.
 Joy from us fled; our hearts to the worm and the arrow were given.
 Old delights we remembered, natures of ecstasy keeping,
 Hastened from rose to rose, but were turned back wounded and weeping:
 Snatches of pleasure we seized; they were haunted and challenged by sorrow.
 Marred was our joy of the day by a cloud and the dread of the morrow.
 Star of infinity, we have beheld thee bright and unmoving
 Seated above us, in tracts unattained by us, throned beyond loving.
 Lonely thou sittest above in the fruitless vasts of the Spirit.
 Waitest thou, goddess, then for a fairer world to inherit?
 Wilt thou not perfect this rather that sprang too from Wisdom and Power?
 Taking the earthly rose canst thou image not Heaven in a flower?
 Nay, if thou save not this, will another rise from the spaces?
 Is not the past fulfilled that gives room for the future faces?
 Winging like bees to thy limbs we made haste like flames through the azure;
 O we were ploughed with delight, we were pierced as with arrows of
 pleasure.

Rapture yearned and the Uswins cried to us; Indra arising
Gazed from the heights of his mental realms and the moonbeams surprising
Flowed on him out of the regions immortal; their nectar slowly
Mixed with the scattered roses of dawn and mastered us wholly.
Come, come down to us, Woman divine, whom the world unforgetting
Yearns for still, — we will draw thee, O star, from thy colourless setting.
Goddess, we understand thee not; Woman, we know not thy nature;
This yet we know, we have need of thee here in our world of misfeature.
Therefore we call to thee and would compel if our hands could but reach
thee.

O, we have means to compel; we have many a sweetness to teach thee
Charming thee back to thy task mid our fields and our sunbeams and flowers,
Weaving a net for thy feet with the snare of the moonlit hours.

AHANA

Spirits of helpless rapture, spirits of sweetness and playtime,
Thrilled with my honey of night and drunk with my wine of the daytime,
If there were strengths that could seize on the world for their passion and
rapture,
If there were souls that could hunt after God as a prey for their capture,
Such might aspire to possess me. I am Ahana the mighty,
I am Ashtaroth, I am the goddess, divine Aphrodite.
You have a thirst full sweet, but earth's vineyards quickly assuage it:
There must be thoughts that outmeasure existence, strengths that besiege it,
Natures fit for my vastness! Return to your haunts, O ye shadows
Beautiful. Not of my will I descend to the bee-haunted meadows,
Rivulets stealing through flowers. Let those who are mighty aspire,
Gods if there are of such greatness, to seize on the world's Desire.

VOICES

Good, it is spoken. We wait thee, Ahana, where fugitive traces
Came of the hunted prey of the Titans in desert places
Trode by thee once, when the world was mighty and violent. Risen,
Hark, they ascend; they are freed by thy call from the seals of their prison.

AHANA

Rush I can hear as of wings in the void and the march of a nation.
 Shapes of old mightiness visit me; movements of ancient elation
 Stride and return in my soul, and it turns like an antelope fleeing.
 What was the cry that thou drewst from my bosom, Lord of my being?
 Lo, their souls are cast on my soul like forms on a mirror!
 Hark, they arise, they aspire, they are near, and I shudder with terror,
 Quake with delight and attraction. Lord of the worlds, dost Thou leave me
 Bare for their seizing? of peace and of strength in a moment bereave me?
 Long hast Thou kept me safe in Thy soul, but I lose my defences.
 Thought streams fast on me; joy is awake and the strife of the senses.
 Ah, their clutch on my feet! my thighs are seized by them! Legions
 Mighty around me they stride; I feel them filling the regions.
 Seest Thou their hands on my locks? Wilt Thou suffer it, Master of Nature?
 I am Thy force and Thy strength; wilt Thou hand me enslaved to Thy
 creature?

Headlong they drag me down to their dreadful worlds far below me.
 What will you do with me there, O you mighty Ones? Speak to me, show me
 One of your faces, teach me one of your names while you ravish,
 Dragging my arms and my knees while you hurry me. Tell me what lavish
 Ecstasy, show me what torture immense you seize me for. Quittance
 When shall I have from my labour? What term has your tyranny, Titans?
 Masters fierce of your worlds who would conquer the higher creation,
 What is your will with me, giants of violence, lords of elation?

VOICES

In the beginning of things when nought was abroad but the waters,
 Ocean stirred with longing his mighty and deep-bosomed daughters.
 Out of that longing we rose from the voiceless heart of the Ocean;
 Candid, unwarmed, O Ahana, the spaces empty of motion
 Stretched, enormous, silent, void of the breath of thy greatness,
 Hushed to thy sweetnesss, fixed in the calm of their ancient sedateness.
 We are the gods who have mapped out Time and measured its spaces,
 Raised there our mansions of pride and planted our amorous places.
 Trembling like flowers appeared in the void the immense constellations;
 Gods grew possessed of their heavens, earth rose with her joy-haunted
 nations.

Calm were we, mighty, magnificent, hunting and seizing
Whatso we willed through the world in a rapture that thought not of
ceasing.

But thou hast turned from us, favouring gods who are slighter and fairer,
Swift-footed, subtle of mind; but the sword was too great for the bearer,
Heavy the sceptre weighed upon hands not created to bear it.
Cruel and jealous the gods of thy choice were, cunning of spirit,
Suave were their eyes of beauty that mastered thy heart, O woman!
They who to govern our world, made it tarnished, sorrowful, common.
Mystic and vast our world, but they hoped in their smallness to sum it
Schooled and coerced in themselves and they sank an ignorant plummet
Into infinity, shaping a limited beauty and power,
Confident, figuring Space in an inch and Time in an hour.
Therefore pleasure was troubled and beauty tarnished, madness
Mated with knowledge, the heart of purity sullied with sadness.
Strife began twixt the Infinite deathless within and the measure
Falsely imposed from without on its thought and its force and its pleasure.
We who could help were condemned in their sunless Hells to languish,
Shaking the world with the heave of our limbs, for our breath was an
anguish.

There were we cast down, met and repulsed by the speed of their thunder,
Earth piled on us, our Mother; her heart of fire burned under.
Now we escape, we are free; our triumph and bliss are before us,
Earth is our prey and the heavens our hunting ground; stars in their chorus
Chant, wide-wheeling, our paean; the world is awake and rejoices:
Hast thou not heard its trampling of strengths and its rapturous voices?
Is not our might around thee yet? does not our thunder-winged fleetness
Drag thee down yet to the haunts of our strength and the cups of our
sweetness?

There thou shalt suffer couched on our mountains, over them stretching
All thy defenceless bliss, thy pangs to eternity reaching.
Thou shalt be taken and whelmed in our trampling and bottomless Oceans,
Chained to the rocks of the world and condemned to our giant emotions.
Violent joy thou shalt have of us, raptures and ruthless revulsions
Racking and tearing thee, and each thrill of thy honeyed convulsions,
We, as it shakes the mountains, we as thou spurnst up the waters,
Laughing shall turn to a joy for Delight and her pitiless daughters.

They shall be changed to a strength for the gods and for death-besieged
natures.
 When we have conquered, when thou hast yielded to earth and her creatures,
 Boundless, thy strength, O Ahana, delivered, thy sorrowless joyaunce,
 Hope, if thou canst, release from the meed of thy pride and defiance.

AHANA

Gods irresistible, blasts of His violence, fighters eternal,
 Churners of Ocean, stormers of Heaven! but limits diurnal
 Chafe you and bonds of the Night. I know in my soul I am given,
 Racked, to your joys as a sacrifice, writhing, to raise you to heaven.
 Therefore you seize on me, vanquish and carry me swift to my falling.
 Fain would I linger, fain resist, to Infinity calling;
 But you possess all my limbs, you compel me, giants of evil.
 Am I then doomed to your darkness and violence, moonlight and revel?
 Hast thou no pity, O Earth, my soul from this death to deliver?
 Who are you, luminous movements? around me you glimmer and quiver,
 Visible, not to the eyes, and not audible, circling you call me,
 Teaching my soul with sound, O you joys that shall seize and befall me.
 What are you, lords of the brightness vague that aspires, but fulfils not?
 For you possess and retire, but your yearning quenches not, stills not.
 Yet is your touch a pleasure that thrills all my soul with its sweetness;
 I am in love with your whispers and snared by your bright incompleteness.
 Speak to me, comfort me falling. Bearing eternity follow
 Down to the hills of my pain and into the Ocean's hollow.

VOICES

We are the Ancients of knowledge, Ahana, the Sons of the Morning.
 Why dost thou cry to us, Daughter of Bliss, who left us with scorning?
 We too dwelt in delight when these were supreme in their spaces;
 We too were riven with pain when they fell down prone from their places.
 Hast thou forgotten the world as it was ere thou fledst from our nations?
 Dost thou remember at all the joy of the ancient creations?
 Thrilled were its streams with our intimate bliss and our happy contriving;
 Sound was a song and movement the dance of our rhythmical living.
 Out of our devious delight came the senses and all their deceptions;

Earth was our ring of bliss and the map of our mighty conceptions.
For we sustained the inert sitting secret in clod and in petal,
And we awoke to a twilight of life in the leaf and the metal.
Active we dreamed in the mind and we ordered our dreams to a measure,
Making an image of pain and shaping an idol of pleasure.
Good we have made by our thoughts and sin by our fear and recoiling;
It was our weakness invented grief, O delight! reconciling
Always the touch that was borne with strength that went out for possessing,
Somewhere, somehow we failed; there was discord, a pang, a regressing.
Goddess, His whispers bewildered us; over us vainly aspirant
Galloped the throng of His strengths like the steeds of a pitiless tyrant.
Since in the woods of the world we have wandered, thrust from sereneness,
Erring mid pleasures that fled and dangers that coiled in the greenness,
Someone surrounds and possesses our lives whom we cannot discover,
Someone our heart in its hunger pursues with the moans of a lover.
Knowledge faints in its toil, amasses but loses its guerdon;
Strength is a worker blinded and maimed who is chained to his burden,
Love a seeker astray; he finds in a seeming, then misses;
Weariness hampers his feet. Desire with unsatisfied kisses
Clings to each object she lights upon, loving, forsaking, returning:
Earth is filled with her sobs and the cry of her fruitlessly burning.
All things we sounded here. Everything leaves us or fails in the spending;
Strength has its weakness, knowledge its night and joy has its ending.
Is it not thou who shalt rescue us, freeing the Titans, the Graces?
Hast thou not hidden thyself with the mask of a million faces?
Nay, from thyself thou art hidden; thy secret intention thou shunest
And from the joy thou hast willed like an antelope fleest and runnest.
Thou shalt be forced, O Ahana, to bear enjoyment and knowing
Termlessly. Come, O come from thy whiteness and distance, thou glowing,
Mighty and hundred-ecstasied Woman! Daughter of Heaven,
Usha, descend to thy pastimes below and thy haunts that are given.
She-wolf avid of cruelty, lioness eager for battle,
Tigress that prowlest in the night and leapest out dire on the cattle,
Sarama, dog of the heavens, thou image of grosser enjoying,
Hungry slave of the worlds, incessantly pawing and toying,
Snake of delight and of poison, gambolling beast of the meadows,
Come to thy pastures, Ahana, sport in the sunbeams and shadows.

Naiad swimming through streams and Dryad fleeing through forest
 Wild from the clutch of the Satyr! Ahana who breakst and restorest!
 Oread, mountain Echo, cry to the rocks in thy running!
 Nymph in recess and in haunt the pursuit and the melody shunning!
 Giantess, cruel and false and grand! Gandharvi that singest
 Heavenward! bird exultant through storm and through sapphire who
wingest!

Centauress galloping wild through the woods of Himáloy high-crested!
 Yakshini brooding o'er treasure down in earth's bowels arrested!
 Demoness gnashing thy teeth in the burial-ground! Titaness striding
 Restless through worlds for thy rest, the brain and the bosom not ridding
 Even one hour of the ferment-waste and the load beyond bearing,
 Recklessly slaying the peoples in anger, recklessly sparing,
 Spending the strength that is thine to inherit the doom of another!
 Goddess of pity who yearnst and who helpst, Durga, our Mother!
 Brooder in Delphi's caverns, Voice in the groves of Dodona!
 Goddess serene of an ancient progeny, Dian, Latona!
 Virgin! ascetic frank or remote, Athene the mighty!
 Harlot supine to the worlds, insatiate white Aphrodite!
 Hundred-named art thou, goddess, a hundred-formed, and thy bosom
 Thrills all the world with its breasts. O starlight, O mountain, O blossom!
 Rain that descendest kissing our lips and lightning that slayest!
 Thou who destroyest to save, to delight who hurtst and dismayest!
 Thou art our mother and sister and bride. O girdled with splendour,
 Cruel and bright as the sun, O moonlike, mystic and tender!
 Thou art the perfect peopling of Space, O Ahana; thou only
 Fillest Time with thy forms. Leave then thy eternity lonely,
 Come! from thy summits descending arrive to us, Daughter of Heaven,
 Usha, Dawn of the world, for our ways to thy footsteps are given.
 Strength thou hast built for the floor of the world and delight for its rafter.
 Calm are thy depths, O Ahana; above is thy hundred-mouthed laughter.
 Rapture can fail not in thee though he rend like a lion preying
 Body and soul with his ecstasies vast. Thou for ever delaying,
 Feigning to end, shalt renew thyself, never exhausting his blisses,
 Joy shall be in thy bosom satisfied never with kisses;
 Strength from thy breasts drawing force of the Titans shall unrelaxing
 Stride through the worlds at his work. One shall drive him ruthlessly taxing

Sinew and nerve, though our slave, yet seized, driven, helpless to tire,
Borne by unstumbling speed to the goal of a God's desire.
What shall thy roof be, crown of thy building? Knowledge, sublimely,
High on her vaulted arches where thought, half-lost, wings dimly,
Luring the flaming heart above and the soul to its shadows,
Winging wide like a bird through the night and the moonlit meadows.
Vast, uncompelled we shall range released and at peace with our nature,
Reconciled, knowing ourselves. To her pain and the longings that reach her
Come from thy summits, Ahana; come! our desire unrelenting
Hales thee down from God and He smiles at thee sweetly consenting.
Lo, she is hurried down and the regions live in her tresses.
Worlds, she descends to you! Peoples, she nears with her mighty caresses.
Man in his sojourn, Gods in their going, Titans exultant
Thrill with thy fall, O Ahana, and wait for the godhead resultant.

AHANA

Calm like a goddess, alarmed like a bride is my spirit descending,
Falling, O Gods, to your arms. I know my beginning and ending;
All I have known and I am not astonished; alarmed and attracted
Therefore my soul descends foreknowing the rapture exacted,
Gulf of the joys you would doom me to, torment of infinite striving,
Travail of knowledge. Was I not made for your mightier living?
Gods, I am falling, I am descending, cast down as for ever,
Thrown as a slave at your feet and a tool for your ruthless endeavour.
Yet while I fall, I will threaten you. Hope shall be yours, so it trembles.
I have a bliss that destroys and the death in me woos and dissembles.
Will you not suffer then my return to my peace beyond telling?
You have accepted death for your pastime, Titans rebelling!
Hope then from pain delight and from death an immortal stature!
Slaves of her instruments, rise to be equals and tyrants of Nature!
Lay not your hands so fiercely upon me! compel me not, falling!
Gods, you shall rue it who heed not the cry of my prayer and my calling.
'Tis not a merciful One that you seize. I fall and, arisen,
Earth strides towards me. Gods, my possessors, kingdoms, my prison,
So shall you prosper or die as you use or misuse and deceive me.
Vast, I descend from God. O world and its masters, receive me!

II

AHANA

Lo, on the hills I have paused, on the peaks of the world I have halted
 Here in the middle realms of Varuna the world-wide-exalted.
 Gods, who have drawn me down to the labour and sobs of creation,
 First I would speak with the troubled hearts and the twilit nation,
 Speak then, I bend my ear to the far terrestrial calling,
 Speak, O thou toiling race of humanity, welcome me falling,
 Space for whose use in a boundless thought was unrolled and extended;
 Time in its cycles waited for man. Though his kingdom is ended,
 Here in a speck mid the suns and his life is a throb in the aeons,
 Yet, O you Titans and Gods, O Rudras, O strong Aditeians,
 Man is the centre and knot; he is first, though the last in the ages.
 I would remember your cycles, recover your vanished pages;
 I have the vials divine, I rain down the honey and manna;
 Speak, O thou soul of humanity, knowing me. I am Ahana.

A VOICE

Vision bright, that walkest crowned on the hills far above me,
 Vision of bliss, stoop down from thy calm and thy silence to love me.
 Only is calm so sweet? Is our end tranquillity only?
 Chill are your rivers of peace and their banks are leafless and lonely.
 Art thou not sated with sunlight only, cold in its lustre?
 Art thou not weary of only the stars in their solemn muster?
 Always the hills and the high-hung plateaus, — solitude's voices
 Making the silence lonelier! Only the eagle rejoices
 In the inhuman height of his nesting, — austerely striving,
 Deaf with the cry of the waterfall, only the pine there is thriving.
 We have the voice of the cuckoo, the nightingale sings in the branches,
 Human laughter leads and the cattle low in the ranches.
 Come to our tangled sunbeams, dawn on our twilights and shadows,
 Taste with us, scent with us fruits of our trees and flowers of our meadows.
 Art thou an angel of God in His heavens that they vaunt of, His sages?
 Skies of monotonous calm and His stillness filling the ages?
 Is He thy master, Rudra the mighty, Shiva ascetic?

Has He denied thee his worlds? In His dance that they tell of, ecstatic,
Slaying, creating, calm in the midst of His movement and madness,
Was there no place for an earthly joy, for a human sadness?
Did He not make us and thee? O Woman, joy's delicate blossom
Sleeps in thy lids of delight! All Nature laughs in thy bosom
Hiding her children unborn and the food of her love and her laughter.
Is He then first? Was there none before Him? shall none come after?
We too have gods, — the Tritons rise in the leap of the billows,
Emerald locks of the Nereids stream on their foam-crested pillows,
Dryads sway out from the branches, Naiads glance up through the waters;
Heaven has dances of joy and the gods are ensnared by her daughters.
Artemis calls as she flees through the glades and the breezes pursue her,
Cypris laughs in her isles where the Ocean-winds linger to woo her.
Thou shalt behold in glades forgotten the dance of the Graces,
Night shall be haunted for ever with strange and delicate faces.
Lo, all these peoples and who was it fashioned them? Who is unwilling
Still to have done with it? laughs beyond pain and saves in the killing?
Nature, you say; but is God then her enemy? Was she created,
He unknowing or sleeping? Did someone transgress the fated
Limits He set, outwitting God? Nay, we know it was fashioned
By the Almighty One, million-ecstasied, thousand-passioned.
But He created a discord within it, fashioned a limit?
Fashioned or feigned? for He set completeness beyond. To disclaim it,
To be content with our measure, they say, is the law of our living.
Rather to follow always and, baffled, still to go striving.
Yes, it is true that we dash ourselves stark on a barrier appearing,
Fall and are wounded. But He insists who is in us, the fearing
Conquers, the grief. We resist; His temptations leap down compelling;
Virtue cheats us with noble names to a lofty rebelling.
Fiercely His wrath and His jealousy strike down the rebel aspiring,
Thick and persistent His night confronts our eager inquiring;
Yet 'tis His strengths descend crying always, "Rebel; aspire!"
Still through the night He sends rays, to our bosoms a quenchless fire.
Most to our joys He sets limits, most with His pangs He perplexes;
Yet when we faint it is He that spurs. Temptation vexes;
Honied a thousand whispers come, in the birds, in the breezes,
Moonlight, the voice of the streams; from hundreds of beautiful faces

Always He cries to us, "Love me!", always He lures us to pleasure,
 Then escapes and leaves anguish behind for our only treasure.
 Shall we not say then that joy is greatest, rapture His meaning?
 That which He most denies, is His purpose. The hedges, the screening,
 Are they not all His play? In our end we have rapture for ever
 Careless of Time, with no fear of the end, with no need for endeavour.
 What was the garden He built when the stars were first set in their places,
 Man and woman together mid streams and in cloudless spaces,
 Naked and innocent? Someone offered a fruit of derision,
 Knowledge of good and of evil, cleaving in God a division,
 Though He who made all, said, "It is good; I have fashioned perfection."
 "Nay, there is evil," someone whispered, "'tis screened from detection."
 Wisest he of the beasts of the field, one cunning and creeping.
 "See it," he said, "be wise. You shall be as the gods are, unsleeping,
 They who know all," and they ate. The roots of our being were shaken;
 Hatred and weeping and death at once trampled a world overtaken,
 Terror and fleeing and wrath and shame and desire unsated;
 Cruelty stalked like a lion; Revenge and her brood were created.
 Out to the desert He drove the rebellious. Flaming behind them
 Streamed out the sword of His wrath; it followed, eager to find them,
 Stabbing at random. The pure and the evil, the strong and the tempted,
 All are confounded in punishment. Justly is no one exempted.
 Virtuous? Yes, there are many; but who is there innocent? Toiling,
 Therefore, we seek, but find not that Eden. Planting and spoiling,
 "This is the garden," we say, "lo, the trees! and this is the river."
 Vainly! Redeemers come, but none yet availed to deliver.
 Is it not all His play? Is He Rudra only, the mighty?
 Whose are the whispers of sweetness? Whence are the murmurs of pity?
 Why are we terrified then, cry out and draw back from the smiting?
 Blows of a lover, perhaps, intended for fiercer inciting!
 Yes, but the cruelty, yes, but the empty pain we go ruing!
 Edges of sweetness, it may be, call to a swifter pursuing.
 Was it not He in Brindâvun? O woods divine to our yearning,
 Memorable always! O flowers, O delight on the treetops burning!
 Grasses His kine have grazed and crushed by His feet in the dancing!
 Yamuna flowing with sound, through the greenness always advancing!
 You unforgotten remind! For His flute with its sweetness ensnaring

Sounds in our ears in the night and our souls of their teguments baring
Hales them out naked and absolute, out to His woodlands eternal,
Out to His moonlit dances, His dalliance sweet and supernal,
And we go stumbling, maddened and thrilled, to His dreadful embraces,
Slaves of His rapture to Brindâvun crowded with amorous faces,
Luminous kine in the green glades seated soft-eyed grazing,
Flowers from the branches distressing us, moonbeams unearthly amazing,
Yamuna flowing before us, laughing low with her voices,
Brindâvun arching o'er us where Shyâma sports and rejoices.
What though 'tis true that the river of Life through the Valley of Peril
Flows! But the diamond shines on the cliffside, jacinth and beryl
Gleam in the crannies, sapphire, smaragdus the roadway bejewel,
Down in the jaws of the savage mountains granite and cruel.
Who has not fathomed once all the voiceless threat of those mountains?
Always the wide-pacing river of Life from its far-off fountains
Flows down mighty and broad, like a warhorse brought from its manger
Arching its neck as it paces grand to the gorges of danger.
Sometimes we hesitate, often start and would turn from the trial,
Vainly: a fierce Inhabitant drives and brooks no denial.
Headlong, o'ercome with a stridulant horror the river descending
Shudders below into sunless depths among chasms unending, —
Angry, afraid, white, foaming. A stony and monstrous resistance
Meets it, piling up stubborn limits, an iron insistence.
Yet in the midst of our labour and weeping not utterly lonely
Wander our steps, nor are terror and grief our portion only.
Do we not hear in the heart of the peril a flute go before us?
Are there not beckoning hands of the gods that insist and implore us?
Plains are beyond; there are hamlets and fields where the river rejoices
Pacing once more with a quiet step and amical voices.
There in a woodland red with berries and cool with the breezes, —
Green are the leaves, all night long the heart of the nightingale eases
Sweetly its burden of pity and sorrow, fragrant the flowers, —
There in an arbour delightful I know we shall sport with the Hours,
Lying on beds of lilies, hearing the bells of our cattle
Tinkle, and drink red wine of our life and go forth to the battle
And unwounded return to our beautiful home by the waters,
Pledge of our joys, rear tall strong sons and radiant daughters.

Shall God know? Will His spies come down to our beautiful valley?
 They shall grow drunk with its grapes and wander in woodland and alley.
 There will His anger follow us, there will His lightnings immortal
 Wander around with their red eye of cruelty stabbing the portal?
 Yes, I shall fear then His play! I will sport with my dove from His highlands,
 Pleased with her laughter of bliss like a god in my Grecian islands.
 Daughter of Heaven, break through to me, moonlike, mystic and gleaming.
 Come through the margins of twilight, over the borders of dreaming.
 Vision bright that walkest crowned on the hills far above me,
 Vision of bliss, stoop down! Encircle me, madden me, love me.

AHANA

Voice of the sensuous mortal! heart of eternal longing!
 Thou who hast lived as in walls, thy soul with thy senses wronging!
 But I descend to thee. Fickle and terrible, sweet and deceiving,
 Poison and nectar One has dispensed to thee, luring thee, leaving.
 We two together shall capture the flute and the player relentless.
 Son of man, thou hast crowned thy life with flowers that are scentless,
 Chased the delights that wound. But I come and the darkness shall sunder.
 Lo, I come and behind me knowledge descends and with thunder
 Filling the spaces Strength the Angel bears on his bosom
 Joy to thy arms. Thou shalt look on her face like a child's or a blossom,
 Innocent, free as in Eden of old, not afraid of her playing.
 Pain was not meant for ever, hearts were not made but for slaying.
 Thou shalt not suffer always nor cry to me, lured and forsaken.
 I have a snare for His footsteps, I have a chain for Him taken.
 Come then to Brindâvun, soul of the joyous; faster and faster
 Follow the dance I shall teach thee with Shyâma for slave and for master, —
 Follow the notes of the flute with a soul aware and exulting,
 Trample Delight that submits and crouch to a sweetness insulting.
 Thou shalt know what the dance meant, fathom the song and the singer,
 Hear behind thunder its rhymes, touched by lightning thrill to His finger,
 Brindâvun's rustle shalt understand and Yamuna's laughter,
 Take thy place in the Râs and thy share of the ecstasy after.

The Meditations of Mandavya

I

O joy of gaining all the soul's desire!
O stranger joy of the defeat and loss!
O heart that yearnest to uplift the world!
O fiercer heart that bendest over its pain
And drinkst the savour! I will love thee, O Love,
Naked or veiled or dreadfully disguised;
Not only when thou flatterest my heart
But when thou tearst it. Thy sweet pity I love
And mother's care for creatures, for the joys
I love thee that the lives of things possess,
And love thee for the torment of our pains;
Nor cry, as some, against thy will, nor say
Thou art not. Easy is the love that lasts
Only with favours in the shopman heart!
Who, smitten, takes and gives the kiss, he loves.

2

Blue-winged like turquoise, crimson-throated, beaked,
Enormous, fluttering over the garden wall
He came to me, some moments on a bough
Was perched, then flew away, leaving my heart
Enchanted. It was as if thou saidst, "Behold, my love,
How beautiful I am! To show thee this,
I came, my beauty. Now I flee away
Since thou hast seen and lov'st." So dealst thou always,
Luring and fleeing; but our hearts pursue.

3

While on a terrace hushed I walked at night,
He came and stung my foot. My soul surprised

Rejoiced in lover's contact; but the mind
 Thought of a scorpion and was snared by forms.
 Still, still my soul remembered its delight,
 Denying mind, and midst the body's pain,
 I laughed contented.

4

All is attained, attained! The pain is dead,
 The striving. O thou joy that since this world
 Began, wast waiting for me in thy lair.
 O Wild Beast of the ways who torest my soul
 With rapture felt as pain.
 O cruelty divine! O pity fierce!
 O timeless rapture of the nights that pass
 Embraced, poignant and pure with Thy caress!
 Humanity, acceptable I find
 Thy ages that have wept out sweat and blood,
 Since all was made to give its utter price
 To one wild moment of thy hidden God.
 Let the whole world end now, since all for which
 It was created is fulfilled at last
 And I am swallowed up in Thee, O God.

II

Who made of Nature here a tyrant? Who
 Condemned us to be slaves? It was not God.
 Nay, we ourselves chose our own servitude
 And we ourselves have forged and heaped our chains
 On our own members. God only watched the while
 And mocked us sweetly at our childish task.
 Then if He seized us helpless in our bonds,
 Then if He played with us despite our cries
 And answered with His dreadful laugh our wrath,
 Ours was the fault who chose that bondage first,
 Ours is the folly whom His play affrights

While all the time He tells us, "It is nought."
And now we say we never can be free,
For Nature binds us, for the fire must burn,
The water drown and death must seize his prey
And grief and torture do their will with us
And sin be like a lion with the world,
Because 'tis Nature. Man's not infinite,
The proof is with us every day, they cry,
And God Himself's a huge machine at last.
Yet over us all the while Thought's lightnings play
And all the while within us works His love.
Now more than when the play began, He laughs.

2

Now I believe that it is possible
To manage the arising clouds, to silence
The thunder when it roars and put our rein
Upon the lightnings. Only first within
The god we must coerce who wallows here
In love with his subjection and confined
By his own servants, wantonly enslaved
To every lure and every tempting bond.
And therefore man loves power, but power o'ercome,
Force that accepts its limits. Wherefore then
A limit? Why not dare the whole embrace,
The vast attraction? Let us risk extinction then
If by that venture immortality
And high omnipotence come near our grasp.
'Tis not the little rippling wayward seas,
Nor all huge ocean tumbled by its storms
That can be our exemplar. The vault of heaven
Is not a true similitude for man
Whose space outgyres thought's last horizon. Something
There is in us fears not the night beyond,
But breathless sails, unanchored, without helm,
Where mind and senses fail. Our naked soul

Can journey to the farther unshaped void
 Where nothing is except ourselves, arrive, hold on,
 Not shake, not ask return. Who accepts at last
 His limit save the beast and plant and clod?
 O to be perfect here, to exceed all bounds,
 To feel the world a toy between our hands!
 Yet now enough that I have seized one current
 Of the tremendous Force that moves the world.
 I know, O God, the day shall dawn at last
 When man shall rise from playing with the mud
 And taking in his hands the sun and stars
 Remould appearance, law and process old.
 Then, pain and discord vanished from the world,
 Shall the dead wilderness accept the rose
 And the hushed desert babble of its rills;
 Man once more seem the image true of God.

3

I will not faint, O God. There is this thirst,
 And thirst supposes water somewhere. Yes,
 But in this life we may not ever find;
 Old nature sits a phantom by the way,
 Old passions may forbid, old doubts return.
 Then are there other lives here or beyond
 To satisfy us. I will persist, O Lord.

III

What is this Love that I have never found?
 I have imagined in the skies a God,
 And seen Him in the stirring of the leaves,
 And heard Him in the purling of the brooks,
 And feared Him in the lightning's flashing tusk,
 And missed Him in the mute eternal night,
 And woke to Him in the returning Dawns.
 And now I say there is no God at all,

But only a dumb Void that belches forth
Numberless larvae and phantasmal shapes
Into a void less happy than itself
Because this feels. O if this dream were true,
This iron, brute, gigantic helpless toy
They call a world, this thing that turns and turns
And shrieks and bleeds and cannot stop, this victim
Broken and living yet on its own wheel,
And if a Will created this, what name
Shall best blaspheme against that tyrant God?
Let all men seek it out and hurl it up
Against Him with one cry, if yet perchance
Complete denial may destroy His life
With happy end to His unhappy world.
For where in all these stars is any sign of Love?
It is not here, but that which seems like Love
Is a sleek cruel cheat that soon unmasks,
Sent here to make the final suffering worse, —
Not Love, but Death disguised that strokes its food!
And all good in the world is only that.
A death that eats and eating is devoured,
This is the brutal image of the world.

—

Lo, I have cursed Thee, lo, I have denied
Thy love, Thy being. Strike me with Thy rod,
Convince me that Thou art. O leave it not
To Thy dumb messengers that have no heart,
No wrath in the attack, no angered love,
No exultation in the blow that falls,
The cry that answers. Let me feel a Heart,
Even though an evil one, that throbs and is
Against our tears, our pressure and our search.
Beware, for I will send my soul across the earth
And all men turn against Thee at my word.
There is no sign, there comes not any voice.
And yet, alas! I know He will return

And He will soothe my wounds and charm my heart;
I shall again forgive, again shall love,
Again shall suffer, be again deceived.
And where is any end, O Heaven, O Earth?
But there is never any end when one has loved.

A sudden silence and a sudden sound,
The sound above and in another world,
The silence here; and from the two a thought.
Perhaps the heart of God for ever sings
And worlds come throbbing out from every note;
Perhaps His soul sits ever calm and still
And listens to the music rapturously,
Himself adoring, by Himself adored.
So were the singer and the hearer one
Eternally. The anthem buoyant rides
For ever on the seas of Space and Time
And worships the white Bliss from which 'twas born;
The ineffable Delight leans silent down
And clasps the creatures of its mystic cry
For ever and for ever without end.

Who art thou that pursuest my desire
Like a wild beast behind the jungle's screen
And throw'st a dread upon its fiercest fire,
A shadow on its flowering joy and green?
Thou madest and deniest me my need,
Thou jealous Lover and devouring Greed!

Who spoke of God? There is a hungry Beast
In ambush for the world who all devours,
Yet is his hunger sated not the least.
He tears our beauty, strength and happiest hours,
And eats our flesh and drinks our blood and tears,

Ranging as in a thicket through the years.

—

Dost thou desire my last vain hope? Take it, rejoice!
Wilt thou exact my dying bliss? Tear it and end!
But give me this at least, dying, to hear thy voice
By thee as foeman slain if never clasped as friend.

—

Foeman or friend, lover or slayer, only thee
I need and feel, O personal Eternity.

—

If what thou gavest, thou must needs again exact,
Cancel thy forms, deny thy own accomplished fact,
With what wilt thou replace them? Is thy nameless void
Embraceable by arms? Or can the soul upbuoyed
Rest on a shoreless emptiness without a name?
Can Love find rapture by renouncing all his flame?
Thou hast forgotten or our nature is misled.
Lur'st thou to utter life beyond the silence dead?

—

Not sound, nor silence, neither world nor void,
But the unthinkable, absolute, unalloyed
One, multitudinous, nameless, yet a Name,
Innumerably other, yet the same.
Immeasurable ecstasy where Time
And Space have fainted in a swoon sublime!

—

Of silence I have tired, from the profounder Night
I come rejected. All the immensities overhead
Are given to my fierce upwinging soul at last
Rapt into high impossible ranges huge outspread.
Unnumbered voices thrill the silent waiting Vast,
A million flames converge into the rayless Light.

Incomplete Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1912–1920

Thou who controllest

Thou who controllest the wide-spuming Ocean and settest its paces,
Hear me, thou strong and resistless Poseidon, lord of the waters.
Dancing thy waves in their revel Titanic, tossing my vessel
One to another, laugh from their raucous throats of derision,
Dropping it deep in their troughs till it buries its prow in the welter.
Comrades dear as the drops of my heart have been left when it rises,
Left in thy salt and lonely seas, and the scream of the tempest
Chides me that still I live, but I live and I yield not to Hades.
Staggering on as one laughed at and buffeted, straining for shelter,
Hopes despairingly, so by the pitiless mob of thy billows
Seized the ship goes stumbling on and is wounded and blinded,
Seeming allowed to run through their ranks, but they mock at the
struggle,
Seeming allowed to escape, but they mean it not. They are thy minions.
They are thy servants, thy nation, heartless and loud and triumphant,
God of the waters, ruthless Poseidon.

Sole in the meadows of Thebes

Sole in the meadows of Thebes Teiresias sat by the Dirce,
Blind Teiresias lonely and old. The song of the river
Moaned in his ears and the scent of the flowers afflicted his spirit
Wandering naked and chill in the winds of the world and its greyness.
Silent awhile, then he smote on the ground with the stay of his
blindness,
Calling "O murmuring waters of Dirce, loved by my childhood,
Waters of murmuring Dirce, flowers that were dear to the lover,
Then was your perfume a sweetness, then were your voices a carol;
Now you are dark to me, scents that hurt; you are dirges, O waters.

We are weary of sorrow,
Sated with salt of human tears; and the thronèd oppressor

Seems not divine to our eyes, but a worm that stings and is happy —
 Groans of the sad oppressed have no tone for our ears any longer.
 Death we have taken in horror, the anguish of others afflicts us
 And with the pangs of an alien heart we are shaken and troubled.
 Lo, I am torn by a woman's sobs that come up in the midnight.

O Will of God

O Will of God that stirrest and the Void
 Is peopled, men have called thee force, upbuoyed
 Upon whose wings the stars borne round and round
 Need not one hour of rest; light, form and sound
 Are masks of thy eternal movement. We
 See what thou choosest, but 'tis thou we see.

I Morcundeya, whom the worlds release,
 The Seer, — but it is God alone that sees! —
 Soar up above the bonds that hold below
 Man to his littleness, lost in the show
 Perennial which the senses round him build;
 I find them out and am no more beguiled.
 But ere I rise, ere I become the vast
 And luminous Infinite and from the past
 And future utterly released forget
 These beings who themselves their bonds create,
 Once I will speak and what I see declare.
 The rest is God. There's silence everywhere.

My eyes within were opened and I saw.

The Tale of Nala [1]

Nala, Nishadha's king, paced by a stream
Which ran, escaping from the solitudes
To flow through gardens in a pleasant land.
Murmuring it came of the green souls of hills
And of the towns and hamlets it had seen,
The brown-limbed peasants toiling in the sun,
And the tired bullocks in the thirsty fields.
In its bright talk and laughter it recalled
The moonlight and the lapping dangerous tongues,
The sunlight and the skimming wings of birds,
And gurgling jars, and bright bathed limbs of girls
At morning, and its noons and lonely eves.
This memory to the jasmine trees it sang
Which dropped their slow white petalled kisses down
Upon its haste of curling waves. Far off
A mountain rose, alone and purple vague,
Wide-watching from its large stone-lidded eye
The drowsy noontide earth; vastly outspread
Like Vindhya changed, against the height of heaven
It stood and on the deep-blue nearness leaned
Its shoulder in a mighty indolence.
Reclined for giant rest the Titan paused.
The birds were voiceless on the unruffled boughs;
The spotted lizard in a dull unease
Basked on his sentinel stone, a single kite
Circled above; white-headed over rust
Of brown and gold he stained the purple noon.
Solitary in the spaces of his mind
Among these sights and sounds King Nala paced
Oblivious of the joy of outward things.
Shrill and dissatisfied the wanderer's cry
Came to his ear; he saw with absent eyes
The rapid waters in their ripple run
Nor marked the ruddy sprouting of the leaves,
Nor heard the dove's rare cooing in the trees.

His thoughts were with a face his dreams had seen
Diviner than the jasmine's moon-flaked glow;
He listened to a name his dreams had learned
Sweeter than passion of the crooning bird.
Its delicate syllables yearning through his mind
Repeated longingly the soft-wreathed call,
As if some far-off bright forgotten queen
From whom his heart had wandered through the world,
Were summoning back to her her truant thrall,
Luring him with the music of her name.
But soon some look on him he seemed to feel.
The summit self-uplifted to the sky
Mounting the air in act to climb and join
Heaven's sapphire longing with earth's green unease
Drew his far gaze, which coned as for a thought
The undecipherable character
Of rocks and mingled woods; but all was lost
In too much light. Dull glared the giant stones;
The woods, fallen sleepy on their mountain couch,
Had nestled in their coverlet of haze.
Like dim-seen shapes of virgins stoled in blue
In huddled grace sleeping close-limbed they lay.
Then from some covert bosom's shrouded riches
A revelation came; for like a gleam
Of beauty from a purple-guarded breast
One lovely glint of passionate whiteness broke.
Fluttering awhile towards him soon it fled
Seeking his vision; and its glowing race
Splintered the sapphire with its silvery hue,
And now a flame-bright flock of swans was seen
Flying like one and breasting with its shock
Of faery speed the vastness of the noon.
Not only with an argent flashing ran
The brilliant cohort on its skiey path,
But shaking from wild wings a hail of gold.
Heaven's lustrous tunic of transparent air
Regretted the bright ornament as they passed.

They flew not like the snowy cranes, like wreaths
Of flowers driven in the rain-wind's breath,
When thunder calls them northward, but came fast
Ranked in magnificent and lovely lines,
Cleaving the air with splendour, while the pride
And rushing glory of their bosoms and wings
Assailed his eyes with silver and with flame.
Over the Nishadhan gardens flying round
They came down whirring softly, then filled awhile
With gentle clamour from their liquid throats
The region, and disturbed with dipping plumes
The turquoise slumber of the motionless lake
Lulled to unrippling rest by windless noon.
A hundred wonderful shapes in mystic crowd
Covered the water like a living robe.
Next on the stream they spread their glorious breasts.
Each close-ranked by her sweet companion's side,
Floating they came and preened above the flood
Their long and stately necks like curving flowers.
The water petted with enamoured waves
Their bosoms and the slow air swooned along
Their wings; their motion set a wordless chant
To flow against the chidings of the stream.
And hard to speak their beauty, what silver mass
On mass, what flakes and peacock-eyes of gold,
What passion of crimson flecked each pure white breast.
It seemed to his charmed sense that in this form
The loveliness of a diviner world
Had come to him winged. Their beauty to tender greed
Moved him of all that living silver and gold.

“For now thy heaven-born pride must learn to range
My gardens of the earth and haunt my streams,
And to my call consent. If thou resist
I will imprison thee in a golden cage
And bind thy beauty with a silver chain.”
A laughter beautiful arose from her,

Thrilling her throat with bubbling ecstasies,
Sweet, satisfied because he praised her grace.
And with mysterious mild deep-glowing eyes
In long and softly-wreathing syllables
The wonder spoke. "Release me, for no birds
Are we, O mortal, but the moon-bosomed nymphs
Who to the trance-heard music of the gods
Sway in the mystic dances of the sky,
Apsaras, daughters of the tumbling seas.
Shaped by thy fancy is my white-winged form."
But Nala to his bright prisoner swan replied:
"And more thou doomst thyself by all thy words,
Bird of desire or goddess luminous-limbed,
To satisfy my pride and my delight,
My divine captive and white-bosomed slave
Who stoopst to me from unattainable heavens.
Thou shalt possess my streams, O white-winged swan,
And dance, O Apsara, singing in my halls.
Between the illumined pillars thou shalt glide
When flute and breathing lyre and timbrel call,
Adorning with thy golden rhythmic limbs
The crystalline mosaic of my floors.
What I have seized by force, by force I keep."
Her eyes now smiled on him; submissively
She laid in all its tender curving grace
The long white wonder of her neck upraised
In suppliant wreaths against his bosom and pressed
Flatteringly her silver head upon his cheek
And with her soft alluring voice replied:
"Because thou art bright and beautiful and bold
So have I come to thee and thou hast seized
Whom if thou hadst set free, thy joy were lost.
So to thy mind from some celestial space
A name and face have come, yet are on earth,
Which if thou hadst not held with yearning's stays,
Thy mortal life would have been given in vain.
Forced by thy musing in the sapphire noon

Out of the mountain's breast to thee I flew
Unknowing, a heavenly envoy to her heart
That was thy own by glad necessity
Before its beatings in her breast began.
All are the links of one miraculous chain."

The Tale of Nala [2]

Nala, Nishadha's king, paced by a stream
That sings to jasmine-bushes where they dream
Dropping their petal kisses on the flood.
A mountain purple-vague
Wide-watching, half-reclined against the sky,
The drowsy earth with its stone-lidded eye,
Pressing upon the nearness blue and dense
Its shoulder in a mighty indolence.
The birds were silent on the unruffled trees;
The spotted lizard in a dull-eyed ease
Basked on his sentinel-stone; a lonely kite
Circled above, half rusty-gold, half-white.
Shrill and dissatisfied the wanderer's sky
To an unlistening ear sailed shadowy-high.
He saw with absent eyes the ripple-run
Of waters curling in the noonday sun.
His thoughts were with a face his dreams had seen,
And like a floating charm it came between
His vision and the jasmines' virgin glow,
Warmer than clusterings of their moon-flaked snow.
He listened to a name his dreams had heard
Sweeter than passion of a crooning bird.
In long and softly-wreathing sounds were twined
The delicate syllables yearning through his mind;
His beating heart was to their charm compelled.
But now he raised his eyelids and beheld
Possess the air in act to climb and seize

Heaven's sapphire longing for earth's green unease,
The summit self-uplifted to the sky
With undecipherable character
Of woods half-outlined in a passionate haze.
Bright violently as if to force his gaze
Broke from the blue-stoled secrecy of the hill
Such radiance as when softly visible
Breaks stealing from a purple-covered breast
A lovely glint of whiteness. Now, increased,
Like a snow-feathered arrow-head it flew
Splintering the sapphire with its silvery hue.
But before long there gleamed a flame-bright flock
Flying like one and breasting with its shock
Of faery speed the widenesses of noon.
So rapidly the wonder travelled, soon
He saw distinct the feathers proud and fine
Not only with a splendour argentine,
But shaken from the wings was shed a hail
Of gold that left the sunbeam's glory pale.
They flew not like the snowy cranes, a wreath
Of flowers driven in the rainwind's breath,
But ranked in lovely lines magnificent came
Filling the eyes with silver and with flame.
They over Nala's garden flying round
Whirring descended with a far-heard sound,
A gentle thunder falling sweetly slack
As line by line they filled the slumbering lake.
A hundred wonderful shapes in mystic crowd
Covered the water like a living cloud.
Next on the stream they spread their glorious bosoms
And preening over the waves like curving blossoms
Their long and delicate necks came floating on.

Part Six

Baroda and Pondicherry

Circa 1902–1936

Poems Past and Present

Musa Spiritus

O Word concealed in the upper fire,
 Thou who hast lingered through centuries,
Descend from thy rapt white desire,
 Plunging through gold eternities.

Into the gulfs of our nature leap,
 Voice of the spaces, call of the Light!
Break the seals of Matter's sleep,
 Break the trance of the unseen height.

In the uncertain glow of human mind,
 Its waste of unharmonied thronging thoughts,
Carve thy epic mountain-lined
 Crowded with deep prophetic grots.

Let thy hue-winged lyrics hover like birds
 Over the swirl of the heart's sea.
Touch into sight with thy fire-words
 The blind indwelling deity.

O Muse of the Silence, the wideness make
 In the unplumbed stillness that hears thy voice;
In the vast mute heavens of the spirit awake
 Where thy eagles of Power flame and rejoice.

Out, out with the mind and its candle flares,
 Light, light the suns that never die.
For my ear the cry of the seraph stars
 And the forms of the Gods for my naked eye!

Let the little troubled life-god within
 Cast his veils from the still soul,
His tiger-stripes of virtue and sin,
 His clamour and glamour and thole and dole;

All make tranquil, all make free.

Let my heart-beats measure the footsteps of God
As He comes from His timeless infinity
To build in their rapture His burning abode.

Weave from my life His poem of days,

His calm pure dawns and His noons of force.
My acts for the grooves of His chariot-race,
My thoughts for the tramp of His great steeds' course!

Bride of the Fire

Bride of the Fire, clasp me now close, —
Bride of the Fire!

I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose,
I have slain desire.

Beauty of the Light, surround my life, —
Beauty of the Light!

I have sacrificed longing and parted from grief,
I can bear thy delight.

Image of ecstasy, thrill and enlase, —
Image of bliss!

I would see only thy marvellous face,
Feel only thy kiss.

Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart, —
Call of the One!

Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,
O living Sun.

The Blue Bird

I am the bird of God in His blue;
Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
For the god's and the seraph's ear.

I rise like a fire from the mortal's earth
Into a griefless sky
And drop in the suffering soil of his birth
Fire-seeds of ecstasy.

My pinions soar beyond Time and Space
Into unfading Light;
I bring the bliss of the Eternal's face
And the boon of the Spirit's sight.

I measure the worlds with my ruby eyes;
I have perched on Wisdom's tree
Thronged with the blossoms of Paradise
By the streams of Eternity.

Nothing is hid from my burning heart;
My mind is shoreless and still;
My song is rapture's mystic art,
My flight immortal will.

A God's Labour

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
 Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
 My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
 Marrying the soil to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
 The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
 Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
 The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
 Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
 And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
 Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
 Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
 Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
 A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
 To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
 Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
 Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
 Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
 And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
 His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;
 For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
 Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope
 That lead to a failing edge;
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
 An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
 The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
 Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
 Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
 Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
 And the Titan kings assail,
But I dare not rest till my task is done
 And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
 “Thy hope is Chimera’s head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
 Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

“Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
 And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas
 And bound to life’s iron doom?

“This earth is ours, a field of Night
 For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the sacred Light
 Or suffer a god’s desires?

“Come, let us slay him and end his course!
 Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
 And the curb of his wide white peace.”

But the god is there in my mortal breast
 Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
 For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, “Go where none have gone!
 Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
 And knock at the keyless gate.”

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
 At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God’s riddle sleep
 On the Dragon’s outspread wings.

I left the surface gauds of mind
 And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alleys blind
 To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
 And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
 And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
 And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
 I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
 Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
 Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
 All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
 On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
 And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
 And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
 And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
 The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stairway wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness' end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

Hell and Heaven

In the silence of the night-time,
In the grey and formless eve,
When the thought is plagued with loveless
Memories that it cannot leave,

When the dawn makes sudden beauty
Of a peevish clouded sky,
And the rain is sobbing slowly
And the wind makes weird reply,

Always comes her face before me
And her voice is in my ear,
Beautiful and sad and cruel
With the azure eyes austere.

Cloudy figure once so luminous
With the light and life within
When the soul came rippling outwards
And the red lips laughed at sin!

Com'st thou with that marble visage
From what world instinct with pain
Where we pay the price of passion
By a law our hearts disdain?

Cast it from thee, O thou goddess!
Earning with a smile release
From these sad imaginations,
Rise into celestial peace.

Travel from the loveless places
That our mortal fears create,
Where thy natural heavens claim thee
And the Gods, thy brothers, wait.

Then descend to me grown radiant,
Lighting up terrestrial ground
With the feet that brighten heaven
When the mighty dance goes round

And the high Gods beating measure
Tread the maze that keeps the stars
Circling in their luminous orbits
Through the eternal thoroughfares.

All below is but confusion
Of desires that strive and cry,
Some forbidden, some achieving
Anguish after ecstasy.

But above our radiant station
Is from which by doubt we fell,
Reaching only after Heaven
And achieving only Hell.

Let the heart be king and master,
Let the brain exult and toil;
Disbelieve in good and evil,
God with Nature reconcile.

Therefore, O rebellious sweetness,
Thou tookst arms for joy and love.
There achieve them! Take possession
Of our radiant seats above.

Kamadeva

When in the heart of the valleys and hid by the roses
The sweet Love lies,
Has he wings to rise to his heavens or in the closes
Lives and dies?

On the peaks of the radiant mountains if we should meet him
Proud and free,
Will he not frown on the valleys? Would it befit him
Chained to be?

Will you then speak of the one as a slave and a wanton,
The other too bare?
But God is the only slave and the only monarch
We declare.

It is God who is Love and a boy and a slave for our passion
He was made to serve;
It is God who is free and proud and the limitless tyrant
Our souls deserve.

Life

Mystic daughter of Delight,
Life, thou ecstasy,
Let the radius of thy flight
Be eternity.

On thy wings thou bearest high
Glory and disdain,
Godhead and mortality,
Ecstasy and pain.

Take me in thy bold embrace
Without weak reserve,
Body dire and unveiled face;
Faint not, Life, nor swerve.

All thy bliss I would explore,
All thy tyranny.
Cruel like the lion's roar,
Sweet like springtide be.

Like a Titan I would take,
Like a God enjoy,
Like a man contend and make,
Revel like a boy.

More I will not ask of thee,
Nor my fate would choose;
King or conquered let me be,
Vanquish, Life, or lose.

Even in rags I am a god;
Fallen, I am divine;
High I triumph when down-trod,
Long I live when slain.

One Day

The Little More

One day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.

Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.

Part Seven

Pondicherry

Circa 1927–1947

Six Poems

Trance

A naked and silver-pointed star
 Floating near the halo of the moon;
 A storm-rack, the pale sky's fringe and bar,
 Over waters stilling into swoon.

My mind is awake in stirless trance,
 Hushed my heart, a burden of delight;
 Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,
 Mute the body aureate with light.

O star of creation pure and free,
 Halo-moon of ecstasy unknown,
 Storm-breath of the soul-change yet to be,
 Ocean self enraptured and alone!

Shiva

The Inconscient Creator

A face on the cold dire mountain peaks
 Grand and still; its lines white and austere
 Match with the unmeasured snowy streaks
 Cutting heaven, implacable and sheer.

Above it a mountain of matted hair
 Aeon-coiled on that deathless and lone head
 In its solitude huge of lifeless air
 Round, above illimitably spread.

A moon-ray on the forehead, blue and pale,
 Stretched afar its finger of chill light
 Illumining emptiness. Stern and male
 Mask of peace indifferent in might!

But out from some Infinite born now came
 Over giant snows and the still face
A quiver and colour of crimson flame,
 Fire-point in immensities of space.

Light-spear-tips revealed the mighty shape,
 Tore the secret veil of the heart's hold;
In that diamond heart the fires undrape,
 Living core, a brazier of gold.

This was the closed mute and burning source
 Whence were formed the worlds and their star-dance;
Life sprang, a self-rapt inconscient Force,
 Love, a blazing seed, from that flame-trance.

The Life Heavens

A life of intensities wide, immune
 Floats behind the earth and her life-fret,
A magic of realms mastered by spell and rune,
 Grandiose, blissful, coloured, increate.

A music there wanders mortal ear
 Hears not, seizing, intimate, remote,
Wide-winged in soul-spaces, fire-clear,
 Heaping note on enrapturing new note.

Forms deathless there triumph, hues divine
 Thrill with nets of glory the moved air;
Each sense is an ecstasy, love the sign
 Of one outblaze of godhead that two share.

The peace of the senses, the senses' stir
 On one harp are joined mysteries; pain
Transmuted is ravishment's minister,
 A high note and a fiery refrain.

All things are a harmony faultless, pure;
Grief is not nor stain-wound of desire;
The heart-beats are a cadence bright and sure
Of Joy's quick steps, too invincible to tire.

A Will there, a Force, a magician Mind
Moves, and builds at once its delight-norms,
The marvels it seeks for surprised, outlined,
Hued, alive, a cosmos of fair forms,

Sounds, colours, joy-flamings. Life lies here
Dreaming, bound to the heavens of its goal,
In the clasp of a Power that enthrals to sheer
Bliss and beauty body and rapt soul.

My spirit sank drowned in the wonder surge:
Screened, withdrawn was the greatness it had sought;
Lost was the storm-stress and the warrior urge,
Lost the titan winging of the thought.

It lay at ease in a sweetness of heaven-sense
Delivered from grief, with no need left to aspire,
Free, self-dispersed in voluptuous innocence,
Lulled and borne into roseate cloud-fire.

But suddenly there soared a dateless cry,
Deep as Night, imperishable as Time;
It seemed Death's dire appeal to Eternity,
Earth's outcry to the limitless Sublime.

“O high seeker of immortality,
Is there not, ineffable, a bliss
Too vast for these finite harmonies,
Too divine for the moment's unsure kiss?”

“Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,
An unwall’d mind dissolved in the Infinite,
Force one with unimaginable rest?”

“I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven;
My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys,
A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven; —
My dumbness fills with echoes of a far Voice.

“By me the last finite, yearning, strives
To reach the last infinity’s unknown,
The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives
And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone.”

Dissolving the kingdoms of happy ease
Rocked and split and faded their dream-chime.
All vanished; ungrasped eternities
Sole survived and Timelessness seized Time.

Earth’s heart was felt beating below me still,
Veiled, immense, unthinkable above
My consciousness climbed like a topless hill,
Crossed seas of Light to epiphanies of Love.

Jivanmukta

There is a silence greater than any known
To earth’s dumb spirit, motionless in the soul
That has become Eternity’s foothold,
Touched by the infinitudes for ever.

A Splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,
That floods some deep flame-covered all-seeing eye;
Revealed it wakens when God’s stillness
Heavens the ocean of moveless Nature.

A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,
Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters,
A single might of luminous quiet
Tirelessly bearing the worlds and ages.

A Bliss surrounds with ecstasy everlasting,
An absolute high-seated immortal rapture
Possesses, sealing love to oneness
In the grasp of the All-beautiful, All-beloved.

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence.

Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the aeons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the unconscious darkness,

He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession
Infinity and the sempiternal
All is his guide and beloved and refuge.

NOTES

(From *Letters of the Author*)

THE BIRD OF FIRE — TRANCE

These two poems are in the nature of metrical experiments. The first is a kind of compromise between the stress system and the foot measure. The stanza is of four lines, alternately of twelve and ten stresses. The second and fourth line in each stanza can be read as a ten-foot line of mixed iambs and anapaests, the first and third, though a similar system subject to replacement of a foot anywhere by a single-syllable half-foot could be applied, are still mainly readable by stresses.

The other poem is an experiment in the use of quantitative foot measures not following any existing model, but freely invented. It is a four-line stanza reading alternately

 — — — | — — — | — — — |
 — — — | — — — | |
and — — — | — — — | — — — |

It could indeed be read otherwise, in several ways, but read in the ordinary way of accentual feet it would lose all lyrical quality and the soul of its rhythm.

The Bird of Fire is the living vehicle of the gold fire of the Divine Light and the white fire of the Divine Tapas and the crimson fire of Divine Love — and everything else of the Divine Consciousness.

SHIVA — The Inconscient Creator

The quantitative metre of *Trance* is suited only for a very brief lyrical poem. For longer poems I have sought to use it as a base but to liberate it by the introduction of an ample number of modulations which allow a fairly free variation of the rhythm without destroying the consistency of the underlying rhythmic measure. This is achieved in *Shiva* by allowing as the main modulations (1) a paeon anywhere in place of an amphibrach, (2) the

substitution of a long for a short syllable either in the first or the last syllable of an amphibrach, at will, thus substituting a bacchius or an antibacchius, (3) the substitution of a dactyl for an initial amphibrach, (4) the substitution of a long instead of short syllable in the middle of the final anapaest, both this and the ultimate syllable to be in that case stressed in reading, e.g.,

deathless | and lone head —

a bacchius replacing the anapaest.

The suppression of the full value of long syllables to make them figure as metrical shorts has to be avoided in quantitative metre.

Scan:

Ǻ fācē ōn | thē cōld dīre | mountāin pēaks

Grānd and still; | its līnes whīte | and aūstēre

Match with thē | unmeasured | snōwŷ streaks

Cutting heav|en, implacā|blē and sheēr.

The Inconscient as the source and author of all material creation is one of the main discoveries of modern psychology, but it agrees with the idea of a famous Vedic hymn. In the Upanishads, Prajna, the Master of Sushupti, is the Ishwara and therefore the original Creator out of a superconscient sleep. The idea of the poem is that this creative Inconscient also is Shiva creating here life in matter out of an apparently inconscient material trance as from above he creates all the worlds (not the material only) from a superconscient trance. The reality is a supreme Consciousness — but that is veiled by the appearance on one side of the superconscient sleep, on the other of the material Inconscience. Here the emphasis is on the latter; the superconscient is only hinted at, not indicated, — it is the Infinity out of which comes the revealing Flame.

THE LIFE HEAVENS

Further modulations have been introduced in this poem — a greater use is made of tetrasyllabic feet such as paeons, epitrites, di-iambes, double trochees, ionics and, once only, the antispast — and in a few places the foot of three long syllables (molossus) has been used, and in others a foot extending to five syllables (e.g., *Delivered from grief*).

Scan:

Ā līfē ōf | ĩntēnsīties | wīde, ĩmmūne
 Floats bēhind | thē ēarth ānd | hēr līfē-frēt,
 Ā māgīc ōf | rēalms māstēred bŷ | spēll ānd rūne,
 Grāndiōse, blīssfūl, colōured, | ĩncrēate.

There were two places in which at the time of writing there did not seem to me to be a satisfactory completeness and the addition of a stanza seemed to be called for — one at the end of the description of the Life Heavens, a stanza which would be a closing global description of the essence of the vital Heavens, the other (less imperatively called for) in the utterance of the Voice. There it is no doubt very condensed, but it cannot be otherwise. I thought, however, that one stanza might be added hinting rather than stating the connection between the two extremes. The connection is between the Divine suppressed in its opposites and the Divine eternal in its own unveiled and undescended nature. The idea is that the other worlds are not evolutionary but tygal and each presents in a limited perfection some aspect of the Infinite, but each complete, perfectly satisfied in itself, not asking or aspiring for anything else, for self-exceeding of any kind. That aspiration, on the contrary, is self-imposed on the imperfection of Earth; the very fact of the Divine being there, but suppressed in its phenomenal opposites, compels an effort to arrive at the unveiled Divine — by ascent, but also by a descent of the Divine Perfection for evolutionary manifestation here. That is why the Earth declares itself a deeper Power than Heaven because it holds

in itself that possibility implied in the presence of the suppressed Divine here, — which does not exist in the perfection of the vital (or even the mental) Heavens.

JIVANMUKTA

Written in Alcaics. These Alcaics are not perhaps very orthodox. I have treated the close of the first two lines not as a dactyl but as a cretic and have taken the liberty in any stanza of turning this into a double trochee. In one closing line I have started the dactylic run with two short preliminary syllables and there is occasionally a dactyl or anapaest in unlawful places; the dactyls too are not all pure dactyls. The object is to bring in by modulations some variety and a more plastic form and easier run than strict orthodoxy could give. But in essence, I think, the alcaic movement remains in spite of these departures.

The basic form of this Alcaic would run,

1, 2 ≍= | ∪— | ≍ || — ∪ ∪ | = ≍ = ∪

3 ∪— | ∪— | ∪— | ∪— | ≍

4 — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ = ≍

but with an opening to other modulations.

The subject is the Vedantic ideal of the living liberated man — *jīvanmukta* — though perhaps I have given a pull towards my own ideal which the strict Vedantin would consider illegitimate.

IN HORIS AETERNUM

This poem on its technical side aims at finding a halfway house between free verse and regular metrical poetry. It is an attempt to avoid the chaotic amorphousness of free verse and keep to a regular form based on the fixed number of stresses in each line and part of a line while yet there shall be a great plasticity and variety in all the other elements of poetic rhythm, the number of syllables, the management of the feet, if any, the distribution of the stress-beats, the changing modulation of the rhythm. *In*

Horis Aeternum was meant as a first essay in this kind, a very simple and elementary model. The line here is cast into three parts, the first containing two stresses, the second and third each admitting three, four such lines rhymed constituting the stanza.

Poems

Transformation

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream;
It fills my members with a might divine:
I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.
Time is my drama or my pageant dream.
Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme
And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine
Channels of rapture opal and hyaline
For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.

I am no more a vassal of the flesh,
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
My body is God's happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.

Nirvana

All is abolished but the mute Alone.
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.
The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still,
Replaces all, — what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

The Other Earths

An irised multitude of hills and seas,
 And glint of brooks in the green wilderness,
 And trackless stars, and miracled symphonies
 Of hues that float in ethers shadowless,

A dance of fireflies in the fretted gloom,
 In a pale midnight the moon's silver flare,
 Fire-importunities of scarlet bloom
 And bright suddenness of wings in a golden air,

Strange bird and animal forms like memories cast
 On the rapt silence of unearthly woods,
 Calm faces of the gods on backgrounds vast
 Bringing the marvel of the infinitudes,

Through glimmering veils of wonder and delight
 World after world bursts on the awakened sight.

Thought the Paraclete

As some bright archangel in vision flies
 Plunged in dream-caught spirit immensities,
 Past the long green crests of the seas of life,
 Past the orange skies of the mystic mind
 Flew my thought self-lost in the vasts of God.
 Sleepless wide great glimmering wings of wind
 Bore the gold-red seeking of feet that trod
 Space and Time's mute vanishing ends. The face
 Lustred, pale-blue-lined of the hippogriff,
 Eremite, sole, daring the bourneless ways,
 Over world-bare summits of timeless being
 Gleamed; the deep twilights of the world-abyss
 Failed below. Sun-realms of supernal seeing,

NOTE

In some of these poems, as in others of the *Six Poems*, a quantitative metrical system has been used which seems to have puzzled some critics, apparently because it does not follow the laws of quantity obtaining in the ancient classical languages. But those laws are quite alien to the rhythm and sound-structure of the English tongue; the attempt to observe them has always ended in deserved and inevitable failure. Another system has been followed here which is in agreement with the native rhythm of English speech. There what determines the metrical length or brevity of syllables is weight, the weight of the voice emphasis or the dwelling of the voice upon the sound. Where there is that emphasis or that dwelling of the voice, the syllable may be considered metrically long; where both are absent there will be, normally, a recognisable shortness which can only be cured by some aid of consonant weight or other lengthening circumstance. All stressed syllables are metrically long in English and cannot be otherwise, however short the vowel may be, for they dominate the verse movement; this is a fact which is ignored in the traditional account of English quantity and which many experimenters in quantitative verse have chosen to disregard with disastrous consequences, — all their genius or skill in metrical technique could not save them from failure. On the other hand, a long-vowel syllable can be regarded as metrically long even if there is no stress upon it. In the quantitative system used in these poems this possibility is converted into a law: metrical length is obligatory for all such natural syllabic longs, while a short-vowel syllable unstressed is normally short for metrical purposes unless it is very heavily weighted with consonants. But the mere occurrence of two or more consonants after a short vowel does not by itself make the syllable long as it necessarily does in Greek, Latin or Sanskrit.

The system may then be reduced to the following rules:

1. All stressed syllables are regarded as metrically long, as also all syllables supported on a long vowel.
2. All short-vowel syllables not stressed are regarded as

short, unless they are heavily weighted with consonants. But on this last point no fixed rule can be given; in each case the ear must be the judge.

3. There are a great number of sounds in English which can be regarded according to circumstances either as longs or as shorts. Here too the ear must decide in each case.

4. English quantity metres cannot be as rigid as the metres of ancient tongues. The rhythm of the language demands a certain variability, free or sparing, without which monotony sets in; accordingly in all English metres modulation is admitted as possible. Even the most regular rhythms do not altogether shut out the substitution of other feet than those fixed in the normal basic arrangement of the line; they admit at least so much as is needed to give the necessary pliancy or variety to the movement. There is sometimes a very free use of such variations; but they ought not to be allowed to break the basic movement or overburden or overlay it. The same rule must apply in quantitative metres; especially in long poems modulations are indispensable.

This system is not only not at discord with the sound-structure of the language, it accords closely with its natural rhythm; it only regulates and intensifies into metrical pitch and tone the cadence that is already there even in prose, even in daily speech. If we take passages from English literature which were written as prose but with some intensity of rhythm, its movement can be at once detected. E.g.

Con̄sider | thē lilies | of̄ thē field, | hōw̄ theȳ grow; || theȳ toil̄ not, |
neither̄ do | theȳ spin; || yet̄ I | saȳ unto | yoū that̄ even | Solōmon̄ |
in̄ all̄ his̄ | glōrȳ || was̄ not̄ arrayed | likē unto | onē of̄ these: ||

or again,

Blessed̄ are | thē meek; | for̄ theȳ shall | inherit | thē earth |
Blessed̄ are | thē purē in̄ heart; | for̄ theȳ shall̄ see | God;

or again, from Shakespeare's prose,

This goodly frame | the earth seems to | me a sterile | prom-
ontory, | this most excell|ent canopy | the air, look you, | this
brave o'erhang|ing firmament, | this majestic|al roof fretted |
with golden fire |

and so on with a constant recurrence of the same quantitative movement all through; or, yet more strikingly,

How art thou | fallen from | Heaven, O | Lucifer, | son of the |
morning!

This last sentence can be read indeed as a very perfect hexameter. The first of these passages could be easily presented as four lines of free quantitative verse, each independent in its arrangement of feet, but all swaying in a single rhythm. Shakespeare's is most wonderfully balanced in a series of differing four-syllabled, with occasional shorter, feet, as if of deliberate purpose, though it is no intention of the mind but the ear of the poet that has constructed this fine design of rhythmic prose. A free quantitative verse in this kind would be perfectly possible.

A more regular quantitative metre can be of two kinds. There could be lines all with the same metrical arrangement following each other without break or else alternating lines with a different arrangement for each, forming a stanza, — as in the practice of accentual metres. But there could also be an arrangement in strophe and antistrophe as in the Greek chorus.

In "Thought the Paraclete" the first rule is followed; all the lines are on the same model. The metre of this poem has a certain rhythmic similarity to the Latin hendecasyllable which runs — — | — — — | — — | — — | — —, e.g.

Solēs | occidēr(e) | et rē|dirē | possunt.

Nobīs | cūm sēmēl | occidit brē|vis lux,

Nōx ēst | p̄p̄etū(a) | ūnā | dōrmi|ēndā.*

But here the metre runs — ◡ | — — | — ◡ ◡ | — ◡ | —; a trochee is transferred from the closing flow of trochees to the beginning of the line, the spondee and dactyl are pushed into the middle; the last syllable of the closing trochee is most often dropped altogether. Classical metres cannot always with success be taken over just as they are into the English rhythm; often some modifications are needed to make them more malleable.

In “Moon of Two Hemispheres” the strophe antistrophe system has been used: the lines of the stanza differ from each other in the nature and order of the feet, no identity or approach to identity is imposed; but each line of the antistrophe follows scrupulously the arrangement of the corresponding line of the strophe. An occasional modulation at most is allowed, e.g. the substitution of a trochee for a spondee. The whole poem, however, in spite of its metrical variations, follows a single general rhythmic movement.

“Rose of God”, like a previous poem “In Horis Aeternum”, is written in pure stress metre. As stress and high accentual pitch usually coincide, it is possible to scan accentual metre on the stress principle and stress metre also can be so written that it can be scanned as accentual verse; but pure stress metre depends entirely on stress ictus. In ordinary poetry stress and natural syllabic quantity enter in as elements of the rhythm, but are not, qua stress and quantity, essential elements of the basic metre: in pure stress metre there is a reversal of these values; quantity and accentual inflexion are subordinate and help to build the rhythm, but stress alone determines the metrical basis. In “Rose of God” each line is composed of six stresses, and the whole poem is built of five stanzas, each containing four such lines; the arrangement of feet varies freely to suit the movement of thought and feeling in each line. Thus,

* Suns may set and come again;
For us, when once our brief light has set,
There is one perpetual night to be slept.

Rose of | God, | damask force of | Infinity, | red icon of | might,
Rose of | Power | with thy diam|ond halo | piercing | the night!
Ablaze | in the will of | the mortal, | design | the wonder of | thy
plan,
Image of | Immor|tality, | outbreak of | the Godhead | in man.

Poems Published in
On Quantitative Metre

Ocean Oneness

Silence is round me, wideness ineffable;
White birds on the ocean diving and wandering;
A soundless sea on a voiceless heaven,
Azure on azure, is mutely gazing.

Identified with silence and boundlessness
My spirit widens clasping the universe
Till all that seemed becomes the Real,
One in a mighty and single vastness.

Someone broods there nameless and bodiless,
Conscious and lonely, deathless and infinite,
And, sole in a still eternal rapture,
Gathers all things to his heart for ever.

Trance of Waiting

Lone on my summits of calm I have brooded with voices around me,
Murmurs of silence that steep mind in a luminous sleep,
Whispers from things beyond thought in the Secrecy flame-white for
ever,
Unscanned heights that reply seek from the unconscious deep.
Distant below me the ocean of life with its passionate surges
Pales like a pool that is stirred by the wings of a shadowy bird.
Thought has flown back from its wheelings and stoopings, the
nerve-beat of living
Stills; my spirit at peace bathes in a mighty release.
Wisdom supernal looks down on me, Knowledge mind cannot
measure;
Light that no vision can render garments the silence with
splendour.
Filled with a rapturous Presence the crowded spaces of being

The River

Wild river in thy cataract far-rumoured and rash rapids to sea
hasting,
Far now is that birth-place mid abrupt mountains and slow
dreaming of lone valleys
Where only with blue heavens was rapt converse or green orchards
with fruit leaning
Stood imaged in thy waves and, content, listened to thy rhapsody's
long murmur.

Vast now in a wide press and a dense hurry and mass movement of
thronged waters
Loud-thundering, fast-galloping, might, speed is the stern message
of thy spirit,
Proud violence, stark claim and the dire cry of the heart's hunger on
God's barriers
Self-hurled, and a void lust of unknown distance, and pace reckless
and free grandeur.

Calm yet shall release thee; an immense peace and a large streaming
of white silence,
Broad plains shall be thine, greenness surround thee, and wharved
cities and life's labour
Long thou wilt befriend, human delight help with the waves'
coolness, with ships' furrows
Thrill, — last become, self losing, a sea-motion and joy boundless
and blue laughter.

Journey's End

The day ends lost in a stretch of even,
A long road trod — and the little farther.
Now the waste-land, now the silence;
A blank dark wall, and behind it heaven.

The Dream Boat

Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire,
With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?
Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur,
“Do you come now? is the heart's fire ready?”

Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered.
It recalled all that the life's joy cherished,
Imaged the felicity it must leave lost for ever,
And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.

Now within the hollowness of the world's breast inhabits —
For the love died and the old joy ended —
Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,
And the gold god and the dream boat come not.

Soul in the Ignorance

Soul in the Ignorance, wake from its stupor.
Flake of the world-fire, spark of Divinity,
Lift up thy mind and thy heart into glory.
Sun in the darkness, recover thy lustre.

One, universal, ensphering creation,
Wheeling no more with inconscient Nature,
Feel thyself God-born, know thyself deathless.
Timeless return to thy immortal existence.

The Witness and the Wheel

Who art thou in the heart comrade of man who sitst
August, watching his works, watching his joys and griefs,
Unmoved, careless of pain, careless of death and fate?
Witness, what hast thou seen watching this great blind world
Moving helpless in Time, whirled on the Wheel in Space,
That yet thou with thy vast Will biddest toil our hearts,
Mystic, — for without thee nothing can last in Time?
We too, when from the urge ceaseless of Nature turn
Our souls, far from the breast casting her tool, desire,
Grow like thee. In the front Nature still drives in vain
The blind trail of our acts, passions and thoughts and hopes;
Unmoved, calm, we look on, careless of death and fate,
Of grief careless and joy, — signs of a surface script
Without value or sense, steps of an aimless world.
Something watches behind, Spirit or Self or Soul,
Viewing Space and its toil, waiting the end of Time.
Witness, who then art thou, one with thee who am I,
Nameless, watching the Wheel whirl across Time and Space?

Descent

All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,
Soul and body stir with a mighty rapture,
Light and still more light like an ocean billows
Over me, round me.

Rigid, stonelike, fixed like a hill or statue,
Vast my body feels and upbears the world's weight;
Dire the large descent of the Godhead enters
Limbs that are mortal.

Voiceless, thronged, Infinity crowds upon me;
Presses down a glory of power eternal;
Mind and heart grow one with the cosmic wideness;
Stilled are earth's murmurs.

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,
Blaze in my spirit.

Slow the heart-beats' rhythm like a giant hammer's;
Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,
Ecstasy's chariots.

All the world is changed to a single oneness;
Souls undying, infinite forces, meeting,
Join in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,
Rhythm of the Deathless.

Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal, —
Light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom
Clasping for ever.

The Lost Boat

At the way's end when the shore raised up its dim line and remote
lights from the port glimmered,
Then a cloud darkened the sky's brink and the wind's scream was
the shrill laugh of a loosed demon
And the huge passion of storm leaped with its bright stabs and the
long crashing of death's thunder;
As if haled by an unseen hand fled the boat lost on the wide
homeless forlorn ocean.

Is it Chance smites? is it Fate's irony? dead workings or blind
purpose of brute Nature?
Or man's own deeds that return back on his doomed head with a
stark justice, a fixed vengeance?
Or a dread Will from behind Life that regards pain and salutes
death with a hard laughter?
Is it God's might or a Force rules in this dense jungle of events,
deeds and our thought's strivings?

Yet perhaps sank not the bright lives and their glad venturings
foiled, drowned in the grey ocean,
But with long wandering they reached an unknown shore and a
strange sun and a new azure,
Amid bright splendour of beast glories and birds' music and deep
hues, an enriched Nature
And a new life that could draw near to divine meanings and touched
close the concealed purpose.

In a chance happening, fate's whims and the blind workings or dead
drive of a brute Nature,
In her dire Titan caprice, strength that to death drifts and to doom,
hidden a Will labours.
Not with one moment of sharp close or the slow fall of a dim
curtain the play ceases:
Yet is there Time to be crossed, lives to be lived out, the unplayed
acts of the soul's drama.

Renewal

When the heart tires and the throb stills recalling
 Things that were once and again can be never,
 When the bow falls and the drawn string is broken,
 Hands that were clasped, yet for ever are parted,

When the soul passes to new births and bodies,
 Lands never seen and meetings with new faces,
 Is the bow raised and the fall'n arrow fitted,
 Acts that were vain rewedded to the Fate-curve?

To the lives sundered can Time bring rejoining,
 Love that was slain be reborn with the body?
 In the mind null, from the heart's chords rejected,
 Lost to the sense, but the spirit remembers!

Soul's Scene

The clouds lain on forlorn spaces of sky, weary and lolling,
 Watch grey waves of a lost sea wander sad, reckless and rolling,
 A bare anguish of bleak beaches made mournful with the
 breath of the Northwind
 And a huddle of melancholy hills in the distance.

The blank hour in some vast mood of a Soul lonely in Nature
 On earth's face puts a mask pregnantly carved, cut to misfeature,
 And man's heart and his stilled mind react hushed in a spiritual
 passion
 Imitating the contours of her desolate waiting.

Impassible she waits long for the sun's gold and the azure,
 The sea's song with its slow happy refrain's splashes of pleasure, —
 As man's soul in its depths waits the outbreaking of the light
 and the godhead
 And the bliss that God felt when he created his image.

Ascent

(1)

The Silence

Into the Silence, into the Silence,
Arise, O Spirit immortal,
Away from the turning Wheel, breaking the magical Circle.
Ascend, single and deathless:
Care no more for the whispers and the shoutings in the darkness,
Pass from the sphere of the grey and the little,
Leaving the cry and the struggle,
Into the Silence for ever.

Vast and immobile, formless and marvellous,
Higher than Heaven, wider than the universe,
In a pure glory of being,
In a bright stillness of self-seeing,
Communing with a boundlessness voiceless and intimate,
Make thy knowledge too high for thought, thy joy too deep for
emotion;
At rest in the unchanging Light, mute with the wordless self-vision,
Spirit, pass out of thyself; Soul, escape from the clutch of Nature.
All thou hast seen cast from thee, O Witness.
Turn to the Alone and the Absolute, turn to the Eternal:
Be only eternity, peace and silence,
O world-transcending nameless Oneness,
Spirit immortal.

(2)

Beyond the Silence

Out from the Silence, out from the Silence,
Carrying with thee the ineffable Substance,
Carrying with thee the splendour and wideness,

Ascend, O Spirit immortal.
 Assigning to Time its endless meaning,
 Blissful enter into the clasp of the Timeless.
 Awake in the living Eternal, taken to the bosom of love of the Infinite,
 Live self-found in his endless completeness,
 Drowned in his joy and his sweetness,
 Thy heart close to the heart of the Godhead for ever.

Vast, God-possessing, embraced by the Wonderful,
 Lifted by the All-Beautiful into his infinite beauty,
 Love shall envelop thee endless and fathomless,
 Joy unimaginable, ecstasy illimitable,
 Knowledge omnipotent, Might omniscient,
 Light without darkness, Truth that is dateless.
 One with the Transcendent, calm, universal,
 Single and free, yet innumerably living,
 All in thyself and thyself in all dwelling,
 Act in the world with thy being beyond it.
 Soul, exceed life's boundaries; Spirit, surpass the universe.
 Outclimbing the summits of Nature,
 Transcending and uplifting the soul of the finite,
 Rise with the world in thy bosom,
 O Word gathered into the heart of the Ineffable.
 One with the Eternal, live in his infinity,
 Drowned in the Absolute, found in the Godhead,
 Swan of the supreme and spaceless ether wandering winged through
 the universe,
 Spirit immortal.

The Tiger and the Deer

Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart
of the forest,
Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of
grandeur and murder?
The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice and the
noise of its steps perturb the pitiless Splendour,
Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and crept,
and crept and crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal,
Till suddenly death leaped on the beautiful wild deer as it drank
Unsuspecting at the great pool in the forest's coolness and shadow,
And it fell and, torn, died remembering its mate left sole in the deep
woodland, —
Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in
Nature.
But a day may yet come when the tiger crouches and leaps no more
in the dangerous heart of the forest,
As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia;
Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness of
great pools in the leaves' shadow.
The mighty perish in their might;
The slain survive the slayer.

Sonnets

Three Sonnets

Man the Enigma

A deep enigma is the soul of man.

His conscious life obeys the Inconscient's rule,

His need of joy is learned in sorrow's school,

His heart is a chaos and an empyrean.

His subtle Ignorance borrows Wisdom's plan;

His mind is the Infinite's sharp and narrow tool.

He wades through mud to reach the Wonderful,

And does what Matter must or Spirit can.

All powers in his living's soil take root

And claim from him their place and struggling right:

His ignorant creature mind crawling towards light

Is Nature's fool and Godhead's candidate,

A demigod and a demon and a brute,

The slave and the creator of his fate.

The Infinitesimal Infinite

Out of a still immensity we came.

These million universes were to it

The poor light-bubbles of a trivial game,

A fragile glimmer in the Infinite.

It could not find its soul in all that Vast:

It drew itself into a little speck

Infinitesimal, ignobly cast

Out of earth's mud and slime strangely awake, —

A tiny plasm upon a casual globe

In the small system of a dwarflike sun,

A little life wearing the flesh for robe,

A little mind winged through wide space to run.

It lived, it knew, it saw its self sublime,

Deathless, outmeasuring Space, outlasting Time.

The Cosmic Dance

(Dance of Krishna, Dance of Kali)

Two measures are there of the cosmic dance.
Always we hear the tread of Kali's feet
Measuring in rhythms of pain and grief and chance
Life's game of hazard terrible and sweet.

The ordeal of the veiled Initiate,
The hero soul at play with Death's embrace,
Wrestler in the dread gymnasium of Fate
And sacrifice a lonely path to Grace,

Man's sorrows made a key to the Mysteries,
Truth's narrow road out of Time's wastes of dream,
The soul's seven doors from Matter's tomb to rise,
Are the common motives of her tragic theme.

But when shall Krishna's dance through Nature move,
His mask of sweetness, laughter, rapture, love?

Sonnets from Manuscripts
Circa 1934–1947

Man the Thinking Animal

A trifling unit in a boundless plan
 Amidst the enormous insignificance
 Of the unpeopled cosmos' fire-whirl dance,
Earth, as by accident, engendered man,

A creature of his own grey ignorance,
 A mind half shadow and half gleam, a breath
 That wrestles, captive in a world of death,
To live some lame brief years. Yet his advance,

Attempt of a divinity within,
 A consciousness in the inconscient Night,
 To realise its own supernal Light,
Confronts the ruthless forces of the Unseen.

Aspiring to godhead from insensible clay
He travels slow-footed towards the eternal day.

Contrasts

What opposites are here! A trivial life
 Specks the huge dream of Death called Matter; intense
 In its struggle of weakness towards omnipotence,
A thinking mind starts from the unthinking strife

In the order of the electric elements.
 Immortal life breathed in that monstrous death,
 A mystery of Knowledge wore as sheath
Matter's mute nescience. Its enveloped sense

Or dumb somnambulist will obscurely reigns
 Driving the atoms in their cosmic course
 Whose huge unhearing movement serves perforce
The works of a strange blind omniscience.

The world's deep contrasts are but figures spun
Draping the unanimity of the One.

The Silver Call

There is a godhead of unrealised things
 To which Time's splendid gains are hoarded dross;
 A cry seems near, a rustle of silver wings
 Calling to heavenly joy by earthly loss.

All eye has seen and all the ear has heard
 Is a pale illusion by some greater voice
 And mightier vision; no sweet sound or word,
 No passion of hues that make the heart rejoice

Can equal those diviner ecstasies.
 A Mind beyond our mind has sole the ken
 Of those yet unimagined harmonies,
 The fate and privilege of unborn men.

As rain-thrashed mire the marvel of the rose,
 Earth waits that distant marvel to disclose.

Evolution [1]

I passed into a lucent still abode
 And saw as in a mirror crystalline
 An ancient Force ascending serpentine
 The unhasting spirals of the aeonic road.
 Earth was a cradle for the arriving god
 And man but a half-dark half-luminous sign
 Of the transition of the veiled Divine
 From Matter's sleep and the tormented load
 Of ignorant life and death to the Spirit's light.
 Mind liberated swam Light's ocean vast,
 And life escaped from its grey tortured line;
 I saw Matter illumining its parent Night.
 The soul could feel into infinity cast
 Timeless God-bliss the heart incarnadine.

The Call of the Impossible

A godhead moves us to unrealised things.

Asleep in the wide folds of destiny,

A world guarded by Silence' rustling wings

Shelters their fine impossibility:

But parting quiver the caerulean gates;

Strange splendours look into our dreaming eyes;

We bear proud deities and magnificent fates;

Faces and hands come near from Paradise.

What shines above, waits darkling here in us:

Bliss unattained our future's birthright is,

Beauty of our dim souls grows amorous,

We are the heirs of infinite widenesses.

The impossible is our mask of things to be,

Mortal the door to immortality.

Evolution [2]

All is not finished in the unseen decree;

A Mind beyond our mind demands our ken,

A life of unimagined harmony

Awaits, concealed, the grasp of unborn men.

The crude beginnings of the lifeless earth,

The mindless stirrings of the plant and tree

Prepared our thought; thought for a godlike birth

Broadens the mould of our mortality.

A might no human will nor force can gain,

A knowledge seated in eternity,

A bliss beyond our struggle and our pain

Are the high pinnacles of our destiny.

O Thou who climb'dst to mind from the dull stone,

Face now the miracled summits still unwon.

Man the Mediator

A dumb Inconscient drew life's stumbling maze,
 A night of all things, packed and infinite:
 It made our consciousness a torch that plays
 Between the Abyss and a supernal Light.

Our mind was framed a lens of segment sight
 Piecing out inch by inch the world's huge mass,
 And reason a small hard theodolite
 Measuring unreally the measureless ways.

Yet is the dark Inconscient whence came all
 The self-same Power that shines on high unwon:
 Our Night shall be a sky purpureal,
 Our torch transmute to a vast godhead's sun.

Rooted in mire heavenward man's nature grows, —
 His soul the dim bud of God's flaming rose.

Discoveries of Science

I saw the electric stream on which is run
 The world turned motes and spark-whirls of a Light,
 A Fire of which the nebula and sun
 Are glints and flame-drops, scattered, eremite;

And veiled by viewless Light worked other Powers,
 An Air of movement endless, unbegun,
 Expanding and contracting in Time's hours
 And the intangible ether of the One.

The surface finds, the screen-phenomenon,
 Are Nature's offered ransom, while behind
 Her occult mysteries lie safe, unknown,
 From the crude handling of the empiric Mind.

Our truths discovered are but dust and trace
 Of the eternal Energy in her race.

All here is Spirit

All here is Spirit self-moved eternally
 For Matter is its seeming or its form,
 A finite motion of Infinity
 Built up by energy's electric storm,
 A flux of solid instability
 Whirled into shape by a tremendous Force
 That labours out the world's fabric endlessly,
 Creates and then destroys without remorse
 Titan and worm, the dew-drop and the sea,
 Our fragile bodies like the aeoned star,
 But through it all remains immortally
 The secret spirit we for ever are.
 Matter is Spirit's semblance glamorous
 Self-woven for its own field and robe and house.

The Ways of the Spirit [1]

What points ascending Nature to her goal?
 'Tis not man's lame transcribing intellect
 With its carved figures rigid and erect
 But the far subtle vision of his soul.
 His instruments have served his weakness well
 But they must change to tread the paths of Fire
 That lead through his calm self immeasurable
 To the last rapture's incandescent spire.
 The spirit keeps for him its ample ways,
 A sense that takes the world into our being,
 A close illumined touch and intimate seeing,
 Wide Thought that is a god's ensphering gaze,
 A tranquil heart in sympathy with all,
 A will wide-winging, armed, imperial.

The Ways of the Spirit [2]

Aroused from Matter's sleep when Nature strove
 Into the half lights of the embodied mind
 She left not all imprisonment behind
 But trailed an ever lengthening chain, and the love
 Of shadows and half lustres went with her.
 In timid mood were shaped our instruments;
 Horizon and surface barriered thought and sense,
 Forbidden to look too high, too deep to peer.
 An algebra of signs, a scheme of sense,
 A symbol language without depth or wings,
 A power to handle deftly outward things
 Are our scant earnings of intelligence.
 Yet towards a greater Nature paths she keeps
 Threading the grandeur of her climbing steeps.

Science and the Unknowable

In occult depths grow Nature's roots unshown;
 Each visible hides its base in the unseen,
 Even the invisible guards what it can mean
 In a yet deeper invisible, unknown.
 Man's science builds abstractions cold and bare
 And carves to formulas the living whole;
 It is a brain and hand without a soul,
 A piercing eye behind our outward stare.
 The objects that we see are not their form,
 A mass of forces is the apparent shape;
 Pursued and seized, their inner lines escape
 In a vast consciousness beyond our norm.
 Follow and you shall meet abysses still,
 Infinite, wayless, mute, unknowable.

The Yogi on the Whirlpool

On a dire whirlpool in the hurrying river,
 A life-stilled statue naked, bronze, severe,
 He kept the posture of a deathless seer
Unshaken by the mad water's leap and shiver.
Thought could not think in him, flesh could not quiver;
 The feet of Time could not adventure here;
 Only some unknown Power nude and austere,
Only a Silence mighty to deliver.

His spirit world-wide and companionless,
 Seated above the torrent of the days
 On the deep eddy that our being forms,
Silent sustained the huge creation's stress,
 Unchanged supporting Nature's rounds and norms,
 Immobile background of the cosmic race.

The Kingdom Within

There is a kingdom of the spirit's ease.
 It is not in this helpless swirl of thought,
 Foam from the world-sea or spray whispers caught,
With which we build mind's shifting symmetries,
Nor in life's stuff of passionate unease,
 Nor the heart's unsure emotions frailly wrought
 Nor trivial clipped sense-joys soon brought to nought,
Nor in this body's solid transiencies.

Wider behind than the vast universe
 Our spirit scans the drama and the stir,
 A peace, a light, an ecstasy, a power
Waiting at the end of blindness and the curse
 That veils it from its ignorant minister
 The grandeur of its free eternal hour.

Now I have borne

Now I have borne Thy presence and Thy light,
 Eternity assumes me and I am
 A vastness of tranquillity and flame,
 My heart a deep Atlantic of delight.
 My life is a moving moment of Thy might
 Carrying Thy vision's sacred oriflamme
 Inscribed with the white glory of Thy name
 In the unborn silence of the Infinite.

My body is a jar of radiant peace,
 The days a line across my timelessness,
 My mind is made a voiceless breadth of Thee,
 A lyre of muteness and a luminous sea;
 Yet in each cell I feel Thy fire embrace,
 A brazier of the seven ecstasies.

Electron

The electron on which forms and worlds are built,
 Leaped into being, a particle of God.
 A spark from the eternal Energy spilt,
 It is the Infinite's blind minute abode.

In that small flaming chariot Shiva rides.
 The One devised innumerably to be;
 His oneness in invisible forms he hides,
 Time's tiny temples to eternity.

Atom and molecule in their unseen plan
 Buttress an edifice of strange onenesses,
 Crystal and plant, insect and beast and man, —
 Man on whom the World-Unity shall seize,

Widening his soul-spark to an epiphany
 Of the timeless vastness of Infinity.

The Indwelling Universal

I contain the wide world in my soul's embrace:
 In me Arcturus and Belphegor burn.
 To whatsoever living form I turn
 I see my own body with another face.

All eyes that look on me are my sole eyes;
 The one heart that beats within all breasts is mine.
 The world's happiness flows through me like wine,
 Its million sorrows are my agonies.

Yet all its acts are only waves that pass
 Upon my surface; inly for ever still,
 Unborn I sit, timeless, intangible:
 All things are shadows in my tranquil glass.

My vast transcendence holds the cosmic whirl;
 I am hid in it as in the sea a pearl.

Bliss of Identity

All Nature is taught in radiant ways to move,
 All beings are in myself embraced.
 O fiery boundless Heart of joy and love,
 How art thou beating in a mortal's breast!

It is Thy rapture flaming through my nerves
 And all my cells and atoms thrill with Thee;
 My body Thy vessel is and only serves
 As a living wine-cup of Thy ecstasy.

I am a centre of Thy golden light
 And I its vast and vague circumference;
 Thou art my soul great, luminous and white
 And Thine my mind and will and glowing sense.

Thy spirit's infinite breath I feel in me;
 My life is a throb of Thy eternity.

The Witness Spirit

I dwell in the spirit's calm nothing can move
 And watch the actions of Thy vast world-force,
 Its mighty wings that through infinity move
 And the Time-galloping of the deathless Horse.

This mute stupendous Energy that whirls
 The stars and nebulae in its long train,
 Like a huge Serpent through my being curls
 With its diamond hood of joy and fangs of pain.

It rises from the dim inconscient deep
 Upcoiling through the minds and hearts of men,
 Then touches on some height of luminous sleep
 The bliss and splendour of the eternal plane.

All this I bear in me, untouched and still,
 Assenting to Thy all-wise inscrutable will.

The Hidden Plan

However long Night's hour, I will not dream
 That the small ego and the person's mask
 Are all that God reveals in our life-scheme,
 The last result of Nature's cosmic task.

A greater Presence in her bosom works;
 Long it prepares its far epiphany:
 Even in the stone and beast the godhead lurks,
 A bright Persona of eternity.

It shall burst out from the limit traced by Mind
 And make a witness of the prescient heart;
 It shall reveal even in this inert blind
 Nature, long veiled in each inconscient part,

Fulfilling the occult magnificent plan,
 The world-wide and immortal spirit in man.

The Pilgrim of the Night

I made an assignation with the Night;
 In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:
In my breast carrying God's deathless light
 I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.

I left the glory of the illumined Mind
 And the calm rapture of the divinised soul
And travelled through a vastness dim and blind
 To the grey shore where her ignorant waters roll.

I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime
 And still that weary journeying knows no end;
Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,
 There comes no voice of the celestial Friend.

And yet I know my footprints' track shall be
A pathway towards Immortality.

Cosmic Consciousness

I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self
 And Time and Space my spirit's seeing are.
I am the god and demon, ghost and elf,
 I am the wind's speed and the blazing star.

All Nature is the nursling of my care,
 I am the struggle and the eternal rest;
The world's joy thrilling runs through me, I bear
 The sorrow of millions in my lonely breast.

I have learned a close identity with all,
 Yet am by nothing bound that I become;
Carrying in me the universe's call
 I mount to my imperishable home.

I pass beyond Time and life on measureless wings,
Yet still am one with born and unborn things.

Liberation [1]

I have thrown from me the whirling dance of mind
 And stand now in the spirit's silence free;
 Timeless and deathless beyond creature kind,
 The centre of my own eternity.

I have escaped and the small self is dead;
 I am immortal, alone, ineffable;
 I have gone out from the universe I made,
 And have grown nameless and immeasurable.

My mind is hushed in wide and endless light,
 My heart a solitude of delight and peace,
 My sense unsnared by touch and sound and sight,
 My body a point in white infinities.

I am the one Being's sole immobile Bliss:
 No one I am, I who am all that is.

The Inconscient

Out of a seeming void and dark-winged sleep
 Of dim inconscient infinity
 A Power arose from the insentient deep,
 A flame-whirl of magician Energy.

Some huge somnambulist Intelligence
 Devising without thought process and plan
 Arrayed the burning stars' magnificence,
 The living bodies of beasts and the brain of man.

What stark Necessity or ordered Chance
 Became alive to know the cosmic whole?
 What magic of numbers, what mechanic dance
 Developed consciousness, assumed a soul?

The darkness was the Omnipotent's abode,
 Hood of omniscience, a blind mask of God.

Life-Unity

I housed within my heart the life of things,
 All hearts athrob in the world I felt as mine;
 I shared the joy that in creation sings
 And drank its sorrow like a poignant wine.

I have felt the anger in another's breast,
 All passions poured through my world-self their waves;
 One love I shared in a million bosoms expressed.
 I am the beast man slays, the beast he saves.

I spread life's burning wings of rapture and pain;
 Black fire and gold fire strove towards one bliss:
 I rose by them towards a supernal plane
 Of power and love and deathless ecstasies.

A deep spiritual calm no touch can sway
 Upholds the mystery of this Passion-play.

The Golden Light

Thy golden Light came down into my brain
 And the grey rooms of mind sun-touched became
 A bright reply to Wisdom's occult plane,
 A calm illumination and a flame.

Thy golden Light came down into my throat,
 And all my speech is now a tune divine,
 A paeon song of Thee my single note;
 My words are drunk with the Immortal's wine.

Thy golden Light came down into my heart
 Smiting my life with Thy eternity;
 Now has it grown a temple where Thou art
 And all its passions point towards only Thee.

Thy golden Light came down into my feet;
 My earth is now Thy playfield and Thy seat.

The Infinite Adventure

On the waters of a nameless Infinite
 My skiff is launched; I have left the human shore.
 All fades behind me and I see before
 The unknown abyss and one pale pointing light.
 An unseen Hand controls my rudder. Night
 Walls up the sea in a black corridor, —
 An unconscious Hunger's lion plaint and roar
 Or the ocean sleep of a dead Eremite.

I feel the greatness of the Power I seek
 Surround me; below me are its giant deeps,
 Beyond, the invisible height no soul has trod.
 I shall be merged in the Lonely and Unique
 And wake into a sudden blaze of God,
 The marvel and rapture of the Apocalypse.

The Greater Plan

I am held no more by life's alluring cry,
 Her joy and grief, her charm, her laughter's lute.
 Hushed are the magic moments of the flute,
 And form and colour and brief ecstasy.
 I would hear, in my spirit's wideness solitary,
 The Voice that speaks when mortal lips are mute:
 I seek the wonder of things absolute
 Born from the silence of Eternity.

There is a need within the soul of man
 The splendours of the surface never sate;
 For life and mind and their glory and debate
 Are the slow prelude of a vaster theme,
 A sketch confused of a supernal plan,
 A preface to the epic of the Supreme.

The Universal Incarnation

There is a wisdom like a brooding Sun,
 A Bliss in the heart's crypt grown fiery white,
The heart of a world in which all hearts are one,
 A Silence on the mountains of delight,

A Calm that cradles Fate upon its knees;
 A wide Compassion leans to embrace earth's pain;
A Witness dwells within our secrecies,
 The incarnate Godhead in the body of man.

Our mind is a glimmering curtain of that Ray,
 Our strength a parody of the Immortal's power,
Our joy a dreamer on the Eternal's way
 Hunting the unseizable beauty of an hour.

Only on the heart's veiled door the word of flame
Is written, the secret and tremendous Name.

The Godhead

I sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves
 In the shouting street that seemed a futurist's whim,
And suddenly felt, exceeding Nature's grooves,
 In me, enveloping me the body of Him.

Above my head a mighty head was seen,
 A face with the calm of immortality
And an omnipotent gaze that held the scene
 In the vast circle of its sovereignty.

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze;
 The world was in His heart and He was I:
I housed in me the Everlasting's peace,
 The strength of One whose substance cannot die.

The moment passed and all was as before;
Only that deathless memory I bore.

The Stone Goddess

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
 From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me, —
 A living Presence deathless and divine,
 A Form that harboured all infinity.

The great World-Mother and her mighty will
 Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,
 Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,
 Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.

Now veiled with mind she dwells and speaks no word,
 Voiceless, inscrutable, omniscient,
 Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard
 The secret of her strange embodiment,

One in the worshipper and the immobile shape,
 A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.

Krishna

At last I find a meaning of soul's birth
 Into this universe terrible and sweet,
 I who have felt the hungry heart of earth
 Aspiring beyond heaven to Krishna's feet.

I have seen the beauty of immortal eyes,
 And heard the passion of the Lover's flute,
 And known a deathless ecstasy's surprise
 And sorrow in my heart for ever mute.

Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
 Life shudders with a strange felicity;
 All Nature is a wide enamoured pause
 Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.

For this one moment lived the ages past;
 The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.

Shiva

On the white summit of eternity
 A single Soul of bare infinities,
 Guarded he keeps by a fire-screen of peace
 His mystic loneliness of nude ecstasy.
 But, touched by an immense delight to be,
 He looks across unending depths and sees
 Musing amid the unconscious silences
 The Mighty Mother's dumb felicity.

 Half now awake she rises to his glance;
 Then, moved to circling by her heart-beats' will,
 The rhythmic worlds describe that passion-dance.
 Life springs in her and Mind is born; her face
 She lifts to Him who is Herself, until
 The Spirit leaps into the Spirit's embrace.

The Word of the Silence

A bare impersonal hush is now my mind,
 A world of sight clear and inimitable,
 A volume of silence by a Godhead signed,
 A greatness pure of thought, virgin of will.

 Once on its pages Ignorance could write
 In a scribble of intellect the blind guess of Time
 And cast gleam-messages of ephemeral light,
 A food for souls that wander on Nature's rim.

 But now I listen to a greater Word
 Born from the mute unseen omniscient Ray:
 The Voice that only Silence' ear has heard
 Leaps missioned from an eternal glory of Day.

 All turns from a wideness and unbroken peace
 To a tumult of joy in a sea of wide release.

The Self's Infinity

I have become what before Time I was.
 A secret touch has quieted thought and sense:
 All things by the agent Mind created pass
 Into a void and mute magnificence.

My life is a silence grasped by timeless hands;
 The world is drowned in an immortal gaze.
 Naked my spirit from its vestures stands;
 I am alone with my own self for space.

My heart is a centre of infinity,
 My body a dot in the soul's vast expanse.
 All being's huge abyss wakes under me,
 Once screened in a gigantic Ignorance.

A momentless immensity pure and bare,
 I stretch to an eternal everywhere.

The Dual Being

There are two beings in my single self.
 A Godhead watches Nature from behind
 At play in front with a brilliant surface elf,
 A time-born creature with a human mind.

Tranquil and boundless like a sea or sky,
 The Godhead knows himself Eternity's son.
 Radiant his mind and vast, his heart as free;
 His will is a sceptre of dominion.

The smaller self by Nature's passions driven,
 Thoughtful and erring learns his human task;
 All must be known and to that Greatness given
 His mind and life, the mirror and the mask.

As with the figure of a symbol dance
 The screened Omniscient plays at Ignorance.

Lila

In us is the thousandfold Spirit who is one,
 An eternal thinker calm and great and wise,
 A seer whose eye is an all-regarding sun,
 A poet of the cosmic mysteries.

A critic Witness pieces everything
 And binds the fragments in his brilliant sheaf;
 A World-adventurer borne on Destiny's wing
 Gambles with death and triumph, joy and grief.

A king of greatness and a slave of love,
 Host of the stars and guest in Nature's inn,
 A high spectator spirit throned above,
 A pawn of passion in the game divine,

One who has made in sport the suns and seas
 Mirrors in our being his immense caprice.

Surrender

O Thou of whom I am the instrument,
 O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
 Let all my mortal being now be blent
 In Thy still glory of divinity.

I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,
 I have offered up my will to be Thy will:
 Let nothing of myself be left behind
 In our union mystic and unutterable.

My heart shall throb with the world-beats of Thy love,
 My body become Thy engine for earth-use;
 In my nerves and veins Thy rapture's streams shall move;
 My thoughts shall be hounds of Light for Thy power to loose.

Keep only my soul to adore eternally
 And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee.

The Divine Worker

I face earth's happenings with an equal soul;
 In all are heard Thy steps: Thy unseen feet
 Tread Destiny's pathways in my front. Life's whole
 Tremendous theorem is Thou complete.

No danger can perturb my spirit's calm:
 My acts are Thine; I do Thy works and pass;
 Failure is cradled on Thy deathless arm,
 Victory is Thy passage mirrored in Fortune's glass.

In this rude combat with the fate of man
 Thy smile within my heart makes all my strength;
 Thy Force in me labours at its grandiose plan,
 Indifferent to the Time-snake's crawling length.

No power can slay my soul; it lives in Thee.
 Thy presence is my immortality.

The Guest

I have discovered my deep deathless being:
 Masked by my front of mind, immense, serene
 It meets the world with an Immortal's seeing,
 A god-spectator of the human scene.

No pain and sorrow of the heart and flesh
 Can tread that pure and voiceless sanctuary.
 Danger and fear, Fate's hounds, slipping their leash
 Rend body and nerve, — the timeless Spirit is free.

Awake, God's ray and witness in my breast,
 In the undying substance of my soul
 Flamelike, inscrutable the almighty Guest.
 Death nearer comes and Destiny takes her toll;

He hears the blows that shatter Nature's house:
 Calm sits he, formidable, luminous.

The Inner Sovereign

Now more and more the Epiphany within
 Affirms on Nature's soil His sovereign rights.
My mind has left its prison-camp of brain;
 It pours, a luminous sea from spirit heights.

A tranquil splendour, waits my Force of Life
 Couched in my heart, to do what He shall bid,
Poising wide wings like a great hippogriff
 On which the gods of the empyrean ride.

My senses change into gold gates of bliss;
 An ecstasy thrills through touch and sound and sight
Flooding the blind material sheath's dull ease:
 My darkness answers to His call of light.

Nature in me one day like Him shall sit
Victorious, calm, immortal, infinite.

Creation

Since Thou hadst all eternity to amuse,
 O sculptor of the living shapes of earth,
 O dramatist of death and life and birth,
World-artist revelling in forms and hues,

Hast Thou shaped the marvel of the whirling spheres,
 A scientist passing Nature through his tubes,
 And played with numbers, measures, theorems, cubes,
O mathematician Mind that never errs,

Building a universe from Thy theories?
 Protean is Thy spirit of delight,
 Craftsman minute and architect of might,
World-adept of a thousand mysteries.

Or forged some deep Necessity, not Thy whim,
Fate and Inconscience and the net of Time?

A Dream of Surreal Science

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
 At the Mermaid, capture immortality;
 A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
 Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.

A thyroid, meditating almost nude
 Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light
 And, rising from its mighty solitude,
 Spoke of the Wheel and eightfold Path all right.

A brain by a disordered stomach driven
 Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell,
 From St Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven.
 Thus wagged on the surreal world, until

A scientist played with atoms and blew out
 The universe before God had time to shout.

In the Battle

Often, in the slow ages' wide retreat
 On Life's long bridge through Time's enormous sea,
 I have accepted death and borne defeat
 If by my fall some gain were clutched for Thee.

To this world's unconscious Power Thou hast given the right
 To oppose the shining passage of my soul:
 She levies on each step the tax of Night.
 Doom, her unjust accountant, keeps the roll.

Around my way the Titan forces press;
 This earth is theirs, they hold the days in fee,
 I am full of wounds and the fight merciless:
 Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?

Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,
 O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest.

The Little Ego

This puppet ego the World-Mother made,
This little profiteer of Nature's works,
Her trust in his life-tenancy betrayed,
Makes claim on claim, all debt to her he shirks.

Each movement of our life our ego fills;
Inwoven in each thread of being's weft,
When most we vaunt our selflessness, it steals
A sordid part; no corner void is left.

One way lies free, our heart and soul to give,
Our body and mind to Thee and every cell,
And steeped in Thy world-infinity to live.
Then lost in light, shall fade the ignoble spell.

Nature, of her rebellion quit, shall be
A breath of the spirit's vast serenity.

The Miracle of Birth

I saw my soul a traveller through Time;
From life to life the cosmic ways it trod,
Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,
Evolving from the worm into the god.

A spark of the eternal Fire, it came
To build a house in Matter for the Unborn.
The inconscient sunless Night received the flame,
In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn

Life stirred and Thought outlined a gleaming shape
Till on the stark inanimate earth could move,
Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep,
A thinking creature who can hope and love.

Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,
The Immortal's gradual birth mid mire and stone.

The Bliss of Brahman

I am swallowed in a foam-white sea of bliss,
 I am a curving wave of God's delight,
 A shapeless flow of happy passionate light,
 A whirlpool of the streams of Paradise.
 I am a cup of His felicities,
 A thunderblast of His golden ecstasy's might,
 A fire of joy upon creation's height;
 I am His rapture's wonderful abyss.

 I am drunken with the glory of the Lord,
 I am vanquished by the beauty of the Unborn;
 I have looked alive on the Eternal's face.
 My mind is cloven by His radiant sword,
 My heart by His beatific touch is torn,
 My life is a meteor-dust of His flaming Grace.

Moments

If perfect moments on the peak of things,
 These tops of knowledge, greatness, ecstasy,
 Are only moments, this too enough might be.
 I have put on the rapid flaming wings
 Of souls whom the Ignorance black-robed Nature brings
 And the frail littleness of mortality
 Can bind not always. A high sovereignty
 Makes them awhile creation's radiant kings.

 These momentary upliftings of the soul
 Prepare the spirit's glorious permanence.
 The peace of God, a mighty transience,
 Is now my spirit's boundless atmosphere.
 All parts are gathered into a timeless whole;
 All moments blaze in an eternal year.

The Body

This body which was once my universe,
 Is now a pittance carried by the soul, —
 Its Titan's motion bears this scanty purse,
 Pacing through vastness to a vaster goal.

Too small was it to meet the giant need
 That only infinitude can satisfy:
 He keeps it still, for in the folds is hid
 His secret passport to eternity.

In his front an endless Time and Space deploy
 The landscape of their golden happenings;
 His heart is filled with sweet and violent joy,
 His mind is upon great and distant things.

How grown with all the world conterminous
 Is the little dweller in this narrow house!

Liberation [2]

My mind, my soul grow larger than all Space;
 Time founders in that vastness glad and nude:
 The body fades, an outline, a dim trace,
 A memory in the spirit's solitude.

This universe is a vanishing circumstance
 In the glory of a white infinity
 Beautiful and bare for the Immortal's dance,
 House-room of my immense felicity.

In the thrilled happy giant void within
 Thought lost in light and passion drowned in bliss,
 Changing into a stillness hyaline,
 Obey the edict of the Eternal's peace.

Life's now the Ineffable's dominion;
 Nature is ended and the spirit alone.

Light

Light, endless Light! darkness has room no more,
 Life's ignorant gulfs give up their secrecy:
 The huge unconscious depths unplumbed before
 Lie glimmering in vast expectancy.

Light, timeless Light immutable and apart!
 The holy sealed mysterious doors unclose.
 Light, burning Light from the Infinite's diamond heart
 Quivers in my heart where blooms the deathless rose.

Light in its rapture leaping through the nerves!
 Light, brooding Light! each smitten passionate cell
 In a mute blaze of ecstasy preserves
 A living sense of the Imperishable.

I move in an ocean of stupendous Light
 Joining my depths to His eternal height.

The Unseen Infinite

Arisen to voiceless unattainable peaks
 I meet no end, for all is boundless He,
 An absolute joy the wide-winged spirit seeks,
 A Might, a Presence, an Eternity.

In the unconscious dreadful dumb Abyss
 Are heard the heart-beats of the Infinite.
 The insensible midnight veils His trance of bliss,
 A fathomless sealed astonishment of Light.

In His ray that dazzles our vision everywhere,
 Our half-closed eyes seek fragments of the One:
 Only the eyes of Immortality dare
 To look unblinded on that living Sun.

Yet are our souls the Immortal's selves within,
 Comrades and powers and children of the Unseen.

“I”

This strutting “I” of human self and pride
 Is a puppet built by Nature for her use,
 And dances as her strong compulsions bid,
 Forcefully feeble, brilliantly obtuse.

Our thinking is her leap of fluttering mind,
 We hear and see by her constructed sense:
 Our force is hers; her colours have combined
 Our fly-upon-the-wheel magnificence.

He sits within who turns on her machine
 These beings, portions of his mystery,
 Many dwarf beams of his great calm sunshine,
 A reflex of his sole infinity.

One mighty Self of cosmic act and thought
 Employs this figure of a unit nought.

The Cosmic Spirit

I am a single Self all Nature fills.
 Immeasurable, unmoved the Witness sits:
 He is the silence brooding on her hills,
 The circling motion of her cosmic might.

I have broken the limits of embodied mind
 And am no more the figure of a soul.
 The burning galaxies are in me outlined;
 The universe is my stupendous whole.

My life is the life of village and continent,
 I am earth’s agony and her throbs of bliss;
 I share all creatures’ sorrow and content
 And feel the passage of every stab and kiss.

Impassive, I bear each act and thought and mood:
 Time traverses my hushed infinitude.

Self

He said, "I am egoless, spiritual, free,"
 Then swore because his dinner was not ready.
 I asked him why. He said, "It is not me,
 But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady."
 I asked him why. He said, "It is his play.
 I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.
 I care not what may happen day by day."
 I questioned him, "Are you so very sure?"
 He answered, "I can understand your doubt.
 But to be free is all. It does not matter
 How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,
 Making a row over your daily platter.
 To be aware of self is liberty.
 Self I have got and, having self, am free."

Omnipresence

He is in me, round me, facing everywhere.
 Self-walled in ego to exclude His right,
 I stand upon its boundaries and stare
 Into the frontiers of the Infinite.
 Each finite thing I see is a façade;
 From its windows looks at me the Illimitable.
 In vain was my prison of separate body made;
 His occult presence burns in every cell.
 He has become my substance and my breath;
 He is my anguish and my ecstasy.
 My birth is His eternity's sign, my death
 A passage of His immortality.
 My dumb abysses are His screened abode;
 In my heart's chamber lives the unworshipped God.

The Inconscient Foundation

My soul regards its veiled subconscious base;
 All the dead obstinate symbols of the past,
 The hereditary moulds, the stamps of race
 Are upheld to sight, the old imprints effaced.

In a downpour of supernal light it reads
 The black Inconscient's enigmatic script —
 Recorded in a hundred shadowy screeds
 An inert world's obscure enormous drift;

All flames, is torn and burned and cast away.
 Here slept the tables of the Ignorance,
 There the dumb dragon edicts of her sway,
 The scriptures of Necessity and Chance.

Pure is the huge foundation now and nude,
 A boundless mirror of God's infinitude.

Adwaita

I walked on the high-wayed Seat of Solomon
 Where Shankaracharya's tiny temple stands
 Facing Infinity from Time's edge, alone
 On the bare ridge ending earth's vain romance.

Around me was a formless solitude:
 All had become one strange Unnameable,
 An unborn sole Reality world-nude,
 Topless and fathomless, for ever still.

A Silence that was Being's only word,
 The unknown beginning and the voiceless end
 Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
 On an incommunicable summit reigned,

A lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace
 On the dumb crest of Nature's mysteries.

The Hill-top Temple

After unnumbered steps of a hill-stair
 I saw upon earth's head brilliant with sun
 The immobile Goddess in her house of stone
 In a loneliness of meditating air.
 Wise were the human hands that set her there
 Above the world and Time's dominion;
 The Soul of all that lives, calm, pure, alone,
 Revealed its boundless self mystic and bare.

 Our body is an epitome of some Vast
 That masks its presence by our humanness.
 In us the secret Spirit can indite
 A page and summary of the Infinite,
 A nodus of Eternity expressed
 Live in an image and a sculptured face.

The Divine Hearing

All sounds, all voices have become Thy voice,
 Music and thunder and the cry of birds,
 Life's babble of her sorrows and her joys,
 Cadence of human speech and murmured words,

 The laughter of the sea's enormous mirth,
 The winged plane purring through the conquered air,
 The auto's trumpet-song of speed to earth,
 The machine's reluctant drone, the siren's blare

 Blowing upon the windy horn of Space
 A call of distance and of mystery,
 Memories of sun-bright lands and ocean ways, —
 All now are wonder-tones and themes of Thee.

 A secret harmony steals through the blind heart
 And all grows beautiful because Thou art.

Because Thou art

Because Thou art All-beauty and All-bliss,
My soul blind and enamoured yearns for Thee;
It bears Thy mystic touch in all that is
And thrills with the burden of that ecstasy.

Behind all eyes I meet Thy secret gaze
And in each voice I hear Thy magic tune:
Thy sweetness hunts my heart through Nature's ways;
Nowhere it beats now from Thy snare immune.

It loves Thy body in all living things;
Thy joy is there in every leaf and stone:
The moments bring Thee on their fiery wings;
Sight's endless artistry is Thou alone.

Time voyages with Thee upon its prow, —
And all the future's passionate hope is Thou.

Divine Sight

Each sight is now immortal with Thy bliss:
My soul through the rapt eyes has come to see;
A veil is rent and they no more can miss
The miracle of Thy world-epiphany.

Into an ecstasy of vision caught
Each natural object is of Thee a part,
A rapture-symbol from Thy substance wrought,
A poem shaped in Beauty's living heart,
A master-work of colour and design,
A mighty sweetness borne on grandeur's wings;
A burdened wonder of significant line
Reveals itself in even commonest things.

All forms are Thy dream-dialect of delight,
O Absolute, O vivid Infinite.

Divine Sense

Surely I take no more an earthly food
 But eat the fruits and plants of Paradise!
 For Thou hast changed my sense's habitude
 From mortal pleasure to divine surprise.

Hearing and sight are now an ecstasy,
 And all the fragrances of earth disclose
 A sweetness matching in intensity
 Odour of the crimson marvel of the rose.

In every contact's deep invading thrill,
 That lasts as if its source were infinite,
 I feel Thy touch; Thy bliss imperishable
 Is crowded into that moment of delight.

The body burns with Thy rapture's sacred fire,
 Pure, passionate, holy, virgin of desire.

The Iron Dictators

I looked for Thee alone, but met my glance
 The iron dreadful Four who rule our breath,
 Masters of falsehood, Kings of ignorance,
 High sovereign Lords of suffering and death.

Whence came these formidable autarchies,
 From what inconscient blind Infinity, —
 Cold propagandists of a million lies,
 Dictators of a world of agony?

Or was it Thou who bor'st the fourfold mask?
 Enveloping Thy timeless heart in Time,
 Thou hast bound the spirit to its cosmic task,
 To find Thee veiled in this tremendous mime.

Thou, only Thou, canst raise the invincible siege,
 O Light, O deathless Joy, O rapturous Peace!

Form

O worshipper of the formless Infinite,
 Reject not form, what dwells in it is He.
 Each finite is that deep Infinity
Enshrining His veiled soul of pure delight.
Form in its heart of silence recondite
 Hides the significance of His mystery,
 Form is the wonder-house of eternity,
A cavern of the deathless Eremite.

There is a beauty in the depths of God,
 There is a miracle of the Marvellous
 That builds the universe for its abode.
Bursting into shape and colour like a rose,
 The One, in His glory multitudinous,
 Compels the great world-petals to unclose.

Immortality

I have drunk deep of God's own liberty
 From which an occult sovereignty derives:
 Hidden in an earthly garment that survives,
I am the worldless being vast and free.
A moment stamped with that supremacy
 Has rescued me from cosmic hooks and gyves;
 Abolishing death and time my nature lives
In the deep heart of immortality.

God's contract signed with Ignorance is torn;
 Time has become the Eternal's endless year,
 My soul's wide self of living infinite Space
Outlines its body luminous and unborn
 Behind the earth-robe; under the earth-mask grows clear
 The mould of an imperishable face.

Man, the Despot of Contraries

I am greater than the greatness of the seas,
 A swift tornado of God-energy:
 A helpless flower that quivers in the breeze,
 I am weaker than the reed one breaks with ease.

I harbour all the wisdom of the wise
 In my nature of stupendous Ignorance;
 On a flame of righteousness I fix my eyes
 While I wallow in sweet sin and join hell's dance.

My mind is brilliant like a full-orbed moon,
 Its darkness is the caverned troglodyte's.
 I gather long Time's wealth and squander soon;
 I am an epitome of opposites.

I with repeated life death's sleep surprise;
 I am a transience of the eternities.

The One Self

All are deceived, do what the One Power dictates,
 Yet each thinks his own will his nature moves;
 The hater knows not 'tis himself he hates,
 The lover knows not 'tis himself he loves.

In all is one being many bodies bear;
 Here Krishna flutes upon the forest road,
 Here Shiva sits ash-smear'd, with matted hair.
 But Shiva and Krishna are the single God.

In us too Krishna seeks for love and joy,
 In us too Shiva struggles with the world's grief.
 One Self in all of us endures annoy,
 Cries in his pain and asks his fate's relief.

My rival's downfall is my own disgrace:
 I look on my enemy and see Krishna's face.

The Inner Fields

There is a brighter ether than this blue
 Pretence of an enveloping heavenly vault,
 A deeper greenness than this laughing assault
Of emerald rapture pearled with tears of dew.
Immortal spaces of caerulean hue
 Are in our reach and fields without this fault
 Of drab brown earth and streams that never halt
In their deep murmur which white flowers strew

Floating like stars upon a strip of sky.
 This world behind is made of truer stuff
 Than the manufactured tissue of earth's grace.
There we can walk and see the gods go by
 And sip from Hebe's cup nectar enough
 To make for us heavenly limbs and deathless face.

Lyrical Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1934–1947

Symbol Moon

Once again thou hast climbed, O moon, like a white fire on the glimmering
edge,
Floating up, floating up from the haunted verge of a foam-tremulous
sea.

Mystic-horned here crossing the grey-hued listless nights and days,
Spirit-silver craft from the ports of eternity.

Overhead with thy plunging and swaying prow thou fleetest, O ship of the
gods,
Glorifying the clouds with thy halo, but our hearts with a rose-red
rapture shed from the secret breasts of love;
Almost thou seemest the very bliss that floats in opaline air over heaven's
golden roads,
Embodied here to capture our human lives like a nectar face of light
in the doubtful blue above.

Dumbly blithe, shuddering, the air is filled from thy cup of pale mysterious
wine:
Gleam quivers to longing gleam; and the faery torches lit for Night's
mysteries are set in her niches stark and deep;
The unconscious gulfs stir and are vaguely thrilled, while their unheard
voices cry to the Wonder-light new-seen
Till descending its ray shall unlock with a wizard rod of fire the dumb
recesses of sleep.

Bright and alone in a white-foam-glinted delicate dim-blue ocean of sky,
Ever thou runst and thou floatest as a magic drifting bowl
Flung by the hand of a drunken god in the river of Time goes tossing by,
O icon and chalice of spiritual light whose spots are like Nature's
shadow stains on a white and immaculate soul.

How like one frail and haunted thou com'st, O white moon, at my lonely
call from thy deep sky-covert heights,
A voyager carrying through the myriad-isled archipelago of the
spear-pointed questioning stars

The earth's seeking is mine and the immense scope of the slow aeons my
heart's way;
For I follow a secret and sublime Will and the steps of thy
Mother-might.
In the dim brute and the peering of man's brain and the calm sight in a
god's eyes
It is I questing in Life's broken ways for thy laughter and love and light.

When Time moved not nor yet Space was unrolled wide, for thy game of
the worlds I gave
Myself to thy delightful hands of power to govern me and move and
drive;
To earth's dumbness I fell for thy desire's sport weaving my spirit stuff
In a million pattern-shapes of souls made with me alive.

The worlds are only a playfield of Thou-I and a hued masque of the
Two-One,
I am in thee as thou art in me, O Love; we are closer than heart and
breast;
From thee I leaped forth struck to a spirit spark, I mount back in the soul's
fire;
To our motion the stars whirl in the swing of Time, our oneness is
Nature's rest.

When Light first from the unconscious Immense burst to create nebula and
sun
'Twas the meeting of our hands through the empty Night that
enkindled the fateful blaze;
The huge systems abandoned their inert trance and this green crater of life
rose
That we might look on each other form on form from the depths of a
living gaze.

The mind travelled in its ranges tier on tier with its wide-eyed or its rapt
thought,
My thought toiling laboured to know all myself in thee to our atoms
and widths and deeps,

My all yearns to thy all to be held close, to the heart heart and to self self,
 As a sea with a sea joins or limbs with limbs, and as waking's delight
 with sleep's.

When mind pinnacled is lost in thy Light-Vasts and the man drowns in the
 wide god,
 Thy Truth shall ungirdle its golden flames and thy diamond whiteness
 blaze;

My souls lumined shall discover their joy-self, they shall clasp all in the
 near One,
 And the sorrow of the heart shall turn to bliss and thy sweetness
 possess earth's days.

Then shall Life be thy arms drawing thy own clasped to thy breast's
 rapture or calm peace,
 With thy joy for the spirit's immortal flame and thy peace for its
 deathless base.

Our eyes meeting the long love shut in deep eyes and our beings held fast
 and one,
 I shall know that the game was well worth the toil whose end is thy
 divine embrace.

Who art thou that camest

Who art thou that camest
 Bearing the occult Name,
Wings of regal darkness,
 Eyes of an unborn flame?

Like the august uprising
 Of a forgotten sun
Out of the caverned midnight
 Fire-trails of wonder run.

Captured the heart renouncing
 Tautness of passion-worn strings
Allows the wide-wayed sweetness
 Of free supernal things.

One

The mind of a man
 And the mind in a stone.
But the Mind of minds
 Sits bright and alone.

The life of a tree,
 The life in a clod,
To the Life of all life
 That men call God.

The heart of a beast
 And a seraph's heart, —
But the Heart of all hearts
 Throbs ever apart.

A body beloved
 And a body slain.
 Yet both were the bodies
 Of One in their pain.

In a mounting as of sea-tides

In a mounting as of sea-tides, in a rippling as of invisible waters,
 On a cry in me my soul is uplifted, in a passion of my nature
 My heart climbs up towards thee, O unimaginable Wonder and
Resplendence,
 In a striving for the caress of thy Light and for the embrace of thy Presence.

If once given were but a touch of thy feet on the thrilled bosom of my longing,
 But a glance of thy eyes mingling with mine in the recesses and the silence,
 Such a rapture would envelop me, such a fire of transfiguring effulgence,
 I could never again be as a man upon this earth, but one immortal.

For my mind would be dissolved in a sun-glory of God-vision and of
knowledge,
 And my heart would be made suddenly more pure and illumined and
self-tranquil,
 And my nerves and my body would transmute into an ethereal divineness,
 A fit vesture for the godhead thou buildst in me, for the immortal thy adorer.

O thou Life of my life and the unseen heart of its ecstasy and its beating,
 O Face that was disclosed in the beginning of the worlds amid the
immenseness,
 Let thy Flame-wisdom leap down upon the coilings of our python
inconscience,
 Let the Love-wine be poured out in thy chalice, let me be drunk with it for
ever.

I shall meet thee in the ocean of thy stillness, in the ether of thy splendour,
 Thy Force shall be in my veins like the ichor in the Unaging who are deathless;
 My soul shall be as one breath with thy soul and thy infinity around thee,
 And shall quiver with the vision of thy beauty and the marvel of thy
sweetness.

The Island Sun

I have sailed the golden ocean
 And crossed the silver bar;
I have reached the Sun of knowledge,
 The earth-self's midnight star.

Its fields of flaming vision,
 Its mountains of bare might,
Its peaks of fiery rapture,
 Its air of absolute light,

Its seas of self-oblivion,
 Its vales of Titan rest,
Became my soul's dominion,
 Its Island of the Blest.

Alone with God and silence,
 Timeless it lived in Time;
Life was His fugue of music,
 Thought was Truth's ardent rhyme.

The Light was still around me
 When I came back to earth
Bringing the Immortal's knowledge
 Into man's cave of birth.

Despair on the Staircase

Mute stands she, lonely on the topmost stair,
An image of magnificent despair;
The grandeur of a sorrowful surmise
Wakes in the largeness of her glorious eyes.
In her beauty's dumb significant pose I find
The tragedy of her mysterious mind.
Yet is she stately, grandiose, full of grace.
A musing mask is her immobile face.
Her tail is up like an unconquered flag;
Its dignity knows not the right to wag.
An animal creature wonderfully human,
A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman,
Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat,
Is now the problem I am wondering at.

The Dwarf Napoleon

(Hitler. October 1939)

Behold, by Maya's fantasy of will
A violent miracle takes sudden birth,
The real grows one with the incredible.
In the control of her magician wand
The small achieves things great, the base things grand.
This puny creature would bestride the earth
Even as the immense colossus of the past.
Napoleon's mind was swift and bold and vast,
His heart was calm and stormy like the sea,
His will dynamic in its grip and clasp.
His eye could hold a world within its grasp
And see the great and small things sovereignly.
A movement of gigantic depth and scope
He seized and gave coherence to its hope.

Far other this creature of a nether clay,
Void of all grandeur, like a gnome at play,
Iron and mud his nature's mingled stuff,
A little limited visionary brain
Cunning and skilful in its narrow vein,
A sentimental egoist poor and rough,
Whose heart was never sweet and fresh and young,
A headlong spirit driven by hopes and fears,
Intense neurotic with his shouts and tears,
Violent and cruel, devil, child and brute,
This screaming orator with his strident tongue,
This prophet of a scanty fixed idea,
Plays now the leader of our human march;
His might shall build the future's triumph arch.
Now is the world for his eating a ripe fruit.
His shadow falls from London to Corea.
Cities and nations crumble in his course.
A terror holds the peoples in its grip:
World-destiny waits upon that foaming lip.
A Titan Power upholds this pigmy man,
The crude dwarf instrument of a mighty Force.
Hater of the free spirit's joy and light,
Made only of strength and skill and giant might,
A Will to trample humanity into clay
And unify earth beneath one iron sway,
Insists upon its fierce enormous plan.
Trampling man's mind and will into one mould
Docile and facile in a dreadful hold,
It cries its demon slogans to the crowd.
But if its tenebrous empire were allowed,
That mastery would prepare the dismal hour
When the Inconscient shall regain its right,
And man who emerged as Nature's conscious power,
Shall sink into the deep original night
Sharing like all her forms that went before
The doom of the mammoth and the dinosaur.
It is the shadow of the Titan's robe

That looms across the panic-stricken globe.
In his high villa on the fatal hill
Alone he listens to that sovereign Voice,
Dictator of his action's sudden choice,
The tiger leap of a demoniac skill.
An energy his body cannot invest, —
Too small and human for that dreadful guest,
A tortured channel, not a happy vessel, —
Drives him to think and act and cry and wrestle.
Thus driven he must stride on conquering all,
Threatening and clamouring, brutal, invincible,
Until he meets upon his storm-swept road
A greater devil — or thunderstroke of God.

The Children of Wotan

1940

“Where is the end of your armoured march, O children of Wotan?
Earth shudders with fear at your tread, the death-flame laughs in your eyes.”
“We have seen the sign of Thor and the hammer of new creation,
A seed of blood on the soil, a flower of blood in the skies.
We march to make of earth a hell and call it heaven.
The heart of mankind we have smitten with the whip of the sorrows seven;
The Mother of God lies bleeding in our black and gold sunrise.”

“I hear the cry of a broken world, O children of Wotan.”
“Question the volcano when it burns, chide the fire and bitumen!
Suffering is the food of our strength and torture the bliss of our entrails.
We are pitiless, mighty and glad, the gods fear our laughter inhuman.
Our hearts are heroic and hard; we wear the belt of Orion:
Our will has the edge of the thunderbolt, our acts the claws of the lion.
We rejoice in the pain we create as a man in the kiss of a woman.”

“Have you seen your fate in the scales of God, O children of Wotan,
 And the tail of the Dragon lashing the foam in far-off seas?”
 “We mock at God, we have silenced the mutter of priests at his altar.
 Our leader is master of Fate, medium of her mysteries.
 We have made the mind a cypher, we have strangled Thought with a cord;
 Dead now are pity and honour, strength only is Nature’s lord.
 We build a new world-order; our bombs shout Wotan’s peace.

“We are the javelins of Destiny, we are the children of Wotan,
 We are the human Titans, the supermen dreamed by the sage.
 A cross of the beast and demoniac with the godhead of power and will,
 We were born in humanity’s sunset, to the Night is our pilgrimage.
 On the bodies of perishing nations, mid the cry of the cataclysm coming,
 To a presto of bomb and shell and the aeroplane’s fatal humming,
 We march, lit by Truth’s death-pyre, to the world’s satanic age.”

The Mother of God

A conscious and eternal Power is here
 Behind unhappiness and mortal birth
 And the error of Thought and blundering trudge of Time.
 The mother of God, his sister and his spouse,
 Daughter of his wisdom, of his strength the mate,
 She has leapt from the Transcendent’s secret breast
 To build her rainbow worlds of mind and life.
 Between the superconscient absolute Light
 And the Inconscient’s vast unthinking toil,
 In the rolling and routine of Matter’s sleep
 And the somnambulist motion of the stars
 She forces on the cold unwilling Void
 Her adventure of life, the passionate dreams of her heart.
 Amid the work of darker Powers she is here
 To heal the evils and mistakes of Space
 And change the tragedy of the ignorant world
 Into a Divine Comedy of joy

And the laughter and the rapture of God's bliss.
The Mother of God is mother of our souls;
We are the partners of his birth in Time,
Inheritors we share his eternity.

The End?

Is this the end of all that we have been,
And all we did or dreamed, —
A name unremembered and a form undone, —
Is this the end?

A body rotting under a slab of stone
Or turned to ash in fire,
A mind dissolved, lost its forgotten thoughts, —
Is this the end?

Our little hours that were and are no more,
Our passions once so high
Dying mocked by the still earth and calm sunshine, —
Is this the end?

Our yearnings for the human Godward climb
Passing to other hearts
Deceived, while sinks towards death and hell the world, —
Is this the end?

Fallen is the harp; shattered it lies and mute;
Is the unseen player dead?
Because the tree is felled where the bird sang,
Must the song too hush?

One in the mind who planned and willed and thought,
Worked to reshape earth's fate,
One in the heart who loved and yearned and hoped,
Does he too end?

The Immortal in the mortal is his Name;
 An artist Godhead here
 Ever remoulds himself in diviner shapes,
 Unwilling to cease

Till all is done for which the stars were made,
 Till the heart discovers God
 And soul knows itself. And even then
 There is no end.

Silence is all

1

Silence is all, say the sages.
 Silence watches the work of the ages;
 In the book of Silence the cosmic Scribe has written his cosmic
 pages:
 Silence is all, say the sages.

2

What then of the word, O speaker?
 What then of the thought, O thinker?
 Thought is the wine of the soul and the word is the beaker;
 Life is the banquet-table as the soul of the sage is the drinker.

3

What of the wine, O mortal?
 I am drunk with the wine as I sit at Wisdom's portal,
 Waiting for the Light beyond thought and the Word immortal.
 Long I sit in vain at Wisdom's portal.

4

How shalt thou know the Word when it comes, O seeker?
How shalt thou know the Light when it breaks, O witness?
I shall hear the voice of the God within me and grow wiser and
meeker;
I shall be the tree that takes in the light as its food, I shall drink
its nectar of sweetness.

Poems Written as Metrical
Experiments

O pall of black Night

O pall of black Night painted with still gold stars,
Hang now thy folds, close, clinging against earth's bars,
 O dim Night!
Then Slumber shall come swinging the unseen
Gates, and to lands guarded by a screen
 Of strange light
Set out, my soul charioted on a swift dream
From earth escape slipping into the unknown gleam,
 The Ray white.

To the hill-tops of silence

To the hill-tops of silence from over the infinite sea,
 Golden he came,
 Armed with the flame,
Looked on the world that his greatness and passion must free.

Oh, but fair was her face

Oh, but fair was her face as she lolled in her green-tinted robe,
 Emerald trees,
 Sapphire seas,
Sun-ring and moon-ring that glittered and hung in each lobe.

In the ending of time

In the ending of time, in the sinking of space
 What shall survive?
 Hearts once alive,
 Beauty and charm of a face?
 Nay, these shall be safe in the breast of the One,
 Man deified,
 World-spirits wide, —
 Nothing ends, all but began.

In some faint dawn

In some faint dawn,
 In some dim eve,
 Like a gesture of Light,
 Like a dream of delight
 Thou com'st nearer and nearer to me.

In a flaming as of spaces

In a flaming as of spaces
 Curved like spires,
 An epiphany of faces,
 Long curled fires,
 The illumined and tremendous
 Masque drew near,
 A God-pageant of the aeons
 Vast, deep-hued,
 And the thunder of its paeans
 Wide-winged, nude,
 In their harmony stupendous
 Smote earth's ear.

O Life, thy breath is but a cry

O Life, thy breath is but a cry to the Light
Immortal, whence has come thy swift delight,
Thy grasp.

All things in vain thy hands seize;
Earth's music fails, the notes cease
Or rasp.

Aloud thou callst to blind Fate,
"Remove the bar, the gold gate
Unhasp."

But never hast thou the goal yet of thy race
Neared, nor thrilled with the ineffable Face,
The clasp.

Vast-winged the wind ran

Vast-winged the wind ran, violent, black-cowled the waves
O'er-topped with fierce green eyes the deck,
Huge heads upraised.
Death-hunted, wound-weary, groaned like a whipped beast
the ship,
Shrank, cowered, sobbed, each blow like Fate's
Despairing felt.

Winged with dangerous deity

Winged with dangerous deity,
 Passion swift and implacable
 Arose and, storm-footed,
 In the dim heart of him

Ran insatiate, conquering,
 Worlds devouring and hearts of men,
 Then perished, broken by
 The irresistible

Occult masters of destiny,
 They who sit in the Secrecy
 And watch unmoved ever
 Unto the end of all.

Outspread a Wave burst

Outspread a Wave burst, a Force leaped from the unseen,
 Vague, wide, some veiled Maker, masked Lighter of the Fire:
 With dire blows the Smith of the World
 Forged strength from hearts of the weak;
 Earth's hate the edge of the axe,
 Smitten by the gods,
 Hewn, felled, the Form crashed that touched heaven and its
stars.

On the grey street

On the grey street and the lagging winding waters
One sees far off stealing away to meet the rich drooping purple
of the sky
A stillness falls, — a supernatural silence
Lies on the lap of Nature.

The street man's life, and the waters earth's sky-dowry,
And this rich span's unreal splendour, symbol hue, sign to sight
of the Unseen;
Man's life lies mute, the waters run to the splendour;
The Unseen is this mighty Silence.

Cry of the ocean's surges

Cry of the ocean's surges, the long hexameter rolling
Covers my spirit as tides roll over rapturous shores.
Foam on its tops the pentameter curls to its cadenced closing,
Two high waves, then a hush swoons on the ear in its fall.

Nonsense and “Surrealist” Verse

A Ballad of Doom

There was an awful awful man
 Who all things knew and none
And never met a Saracen
 And always drank a bun.
He said he was a bullywag
 And that he did it for fun.
I don't know what a bullywag is
 And I don't think he was one.
Of nonsense and Omniscience
 He spoke as one who knew
That this was like a temperament
 And that was like a hue.
He said there was a phantom sun
 That saw a branching sky
And he who could but never should
 Was always God's best boy.
And he who should but never could
 Was not in the savoury jam
That thronged the gates of Paradise
 Jostling the great I am.
He said he saw a smudgy moon
 Adown a patterned ridge
And that Beethoven to his ear
 Rang like a bluzzing midge
That bluzzed and bluzzed and bluzzed and bluzzed
 Until the eye grew green
With shouting for dear visible things
 Where nothing could be seen.
For nothing can be seen, my child,
 And when it's seen it's read,
And when red nothing once is seen
 The world can go to bed.

Surrealist

I heard a foghorn shouting at a sheep,
And oh the sweet sound made me laugh and weep
But ah, the sheep was on the hither shore
Of the little less and the ever-never more.
I sprang on its back; it jumped into the sea.
I was near to the edges of eternity.
Then suddenly the foghorn blared again.
There was no sheep — it had perished of ear pain.
I took a boat and steered to the Afar
Hoping to colonise the polar star.
But in the boat there was a dangerous goose
Whom some eternal idiot had let loose.
To this wild animal I said not “Bo!”
But it was not because I did not know.
Full soon I was on shore with dreadful squeals
And the fierce biped cackling at my heels.
Alarmed I ran into a lion’s den
And after me ran three thousand armoured men.
The lion bolted through his own back door
And set up a morose dissatisfied roar.
At this my courage rose; I grew quite brave
And shoved myself into a tiger’s cave.
The tiger snarled; I thought it best instead
To don my pyjamas and go to bed.
But the tiger had a strained objecting face,
So I turned my eyes away from his grimace.
At night the beast began my back to claw
And growled out that I was his brother-in-law.
I rose and thought it best to go away
To a doctor’s house: besides ’twas nearly day.
The doctor shook his head and cried “For a back
Pepper and salt are the remedy, alack.”
But I objected to his condiments
And thought the doctor had but little sense.
Then I returned to my own little cot

For really things were now extremely hot.
 Then fiercely the world cracked Nazily down
 And I looked about to find my dressing gown.
 I was awake (I had tumbled on the floor).
 A shark was hammering at my front-door.

Surrealist Poems

1

I heard the cockcuck jabbering on the lea
 And saw the spokesman sprinting on the spud;
 The airmale soared to heaven majestically
 And dropped down with a strange miraculous thud.

I could not break the bosom of the blue;
 I went for a walk and waltzed with woe awhile.
 The cat surprised me with a single mew;
 The porridge was magnificently vile.

These things are symbols if you understand,
 But who can understand when poets resolve
 To nothing mean. The beautiful beast is banned;
 The problem grows too difficult to solve.

[The heart of the surrealist poet should be unfathomable. The problem is how to mean nothing, yet seem to mean anything or everything. His poetry should be at once about nothing at all and about all things in particular; nonsensically profound and irrationally beautiful. Unknown and extraordinary words are not indispensable in its texture but can have a place, if sparingly and mystically used. One who can do these things and others of a congenital character is a surrealist poet: *Willy Whistler*.]

2

The Crossing of the Moro

My way is over the Moro river,
Amid projectiles and sad smiles.
Wind bottles in a ghastly jam
Explode before you can say damn.
But the jam is over and we have passed:
Alas, felicity can never last!
I see an aeroplane on high,
I hear it sob and sigh.
Fate happier has been yours, my lad,
For you are dead and I am mad.
Kiss not the corpse but shove it in.
Ah let the booby trap be.
There is a moan upon the moving sea.

Incomplete Poems from Manuscripts
Circa 1927–1947

Thou art myself

Thou art myself born from myself, O child.
O thou who speakst art thou my greater self?
And knowst my destiny and why I came
Into the narrow limits of this form?

Vain, they have said

Vain, they have said, is the anguish of man and his labour
diurnal,
Vainly his caravans cross through the desert of Time to the
Eternal.
Thick and persistent the night confronts all his luminous
longings;
Dire death's sickle mows like a harvest his hosts and his
throngings.
Even if all life has failed, must it therefore be failure for ever?
Are not the ages before us still for a grander endeavour?
Have we not Beauty around in a dangerous world but
enthraling,
Courage inciting our steps and Thought to infinity calling?

Pururavus

Pururavus from converse held with Gods
On unseen crests of Nature high, occult,
Traversed the tumult of the flame-tossed seas
That cast their fire between the spirit's poles.
Alone like a bright star twixt earth and heaven,
He reached the crossways of eternity.
A Soul to our apparent life reborn

Out of the vastness of the original Self,
Journeying in dim momentous solitude
Led by the flickering of uncertain suns,
He essayed the fringe of Night's tremendous home.
Before him lay the subtle realm of light
Our organed sense conceals, the light that gleams
Across the sealless musings of the seer,
A slumberless wide eye upon our scene.
But destined to earth's darkly pregnant dream
He tarried not on these mysterious shores,
But still descending the divine abyss
To new adventure in the eternal Night
Transgressed the wonder-line of things beyond
Abruptly into mortal space and time.
A universe appeared of difficult birth,
The labour of eclipsed and ignorant gods,
An immortality of chance and change.
Bridging the gulf between antagonist planes
He saw the circles of Heaven's rash advance.
Sun upon sun, God's sentinels in the void,
Life's radiant and immeasurable camp
Blazed in the order of the aeonic Will.
But with the menace of the dragon depths
The old blind vigilant Nescience stretched afar
Hungering in serpent dumb infinitude,
And her dark shade besieged the luminaries.
Silence and Death opposed the invading Fire.
And even before he broke into our pale
There came on him a breath from tarnished worlds.
Averse from an obscure material touch
The images of the supernal field
That he had left sank from the front of thought
And held their session in the heart's dumb cave;
The glory and grace, the light, the sacred life
Receded as behind a burning door:
Subliminal beneath the lid of mind
The grandeur and the passion and the calm.

His mind became a beat of memory.
Sight, hearing changed towards our diminished scale;
The little views grew great, the great grew small.
As yet some largeness was of inmost things
And he remembered in the formless sense
Proud kingdoms of intense and beautiful life
And love left free to do his absolute will
And dreams at once commuted into power.
Affronting many starfields of our space
And shortening ever the vast lens of Time
He met a smaller movement of desire
Prisoned in the orbit of a few pale globes
And knew in front our little solar belt
Hung casually among the giant stars.
Our earth received him mid her living forms.
Her deep unconscious motions packed and mute,
Her darknesses more wise than her small lights
Oppressed again his young divinity.

The Death of a God [1]

THE EARTH VOICES

Arise now, tread out the fire!
Scatter the ashes of a God through the stars.
Forget to hope and aspire.
Let us paint our prison, let us strengthen its bars.
Lo, now he is dead and the greatness that cumbered the world
and Time's ways
Has vanished like a golden shadow thrust out from the
anguish of the ages;
The glory and burden, the sunlight and the passion have left
our days;
Once more we can wear the grey livery of Death and
gather in his wages.

All that drew back from his splendour fleeing as ashamed from
the light and the beauty and invincible sweetness
Now returns vaunting their darkness and littleness, this fret of
life's fever, its cruel and sad incompleteness.

The Death of a God [2]

Arise, tread out the fire,
Scatter the ashes of a god through the stars!
Forget to hope and aspire.
He is dead and his greatness that cumbered the world has
vanished like a golden shadow from the ages.
The whip of glory, the splendid burden behind us are cast,
Earth is free from fire and stress, left to the joy of her
smallness, rid of his mighty spirit at last.
All that is false and wry and little are freed to follow their
nature once more.
Close time's brilliant pages!
Give back to man's life the old tables, its dull ease, its bowed
greyness restore.

The Inconscient and the Traveller Fire

THE INCONSCIENT

Flame that invadest my empire of sorrow wordless and sombre,
Arrow of azure light golden-winged, barbed with delight,
Who was it aimed thee into this crucified Soul that for ever
Passions and beats in the womb of a universe built for its tomb?

Lo, I am Death and I live in the boundless cavern of Nature,
Death who cannot die, Shadow of Eternity,
Vainly I burn in stars as they err through a Void without feature,
Scintillant forms of my Nought vast without life, without thought.

O by my thought to escape from myself out of thought into Nothing—
 Thus I had hoped to dissolve, rapt in some tensionless Bliss,
 Rending the Illusion I made to be immobile and formless and timeless—
 This dream too now I leave, long not even to cease.

Into my numb discontent I have lapsed of a universe barren,
 Goalless, condemned to survive, a spirit of matter in pain.
 Now have I known myself as this boundless finite, this darkness
 Shadowily self-lit, grown content to strive without end and in vain.

Fire that travellest from immortality, spark of the Timeless,
 Why hast thou come to my night, an unbearable Idol of Light?
 Ah from what happier universe strayedst thou kindling my torpor?
 Thou, O spirit of Light, perturb not my vastness of Night.

I walked beside the waters

I walked beside the waters of a world of light
 On a gold ridge guarding two seas of high-rayed night.
 One was divinely topped with a pale bluish moon
 And swam as in a happy deep spiritual swoon
 More conscious than earth's waking; the other's wide delight
 Billowed towards an ardent orb of diamond white.
 But where I stood, there joined in a bright marvellous haze
 The miracled moons with the long ridge's golden blaze.
 I knew not if two wakings or two mighty sleeps
 Mixed the great diamond fires and the pale pregnant deeps,
 But all my glad expanding soul flowed satisfied
 Around me and became the mystery of their tide.
 As one who finds his own eternal self, content,
 Needing naught else beneath the spirit's firmament,
 It knew not Space, it heard no more Time's running feet,
 Termless, fulfilled, lost richly in itself, complete.
 And so it might have lain for ever. But there came
 A dire intrusion wrapped in married cloud and flame,

Across the blue-white moon-hush of my magic seas
A sudden sweeping of immense peripheries
Of darkness ringing lambent lustres; shadowy-vast
A nameless dread, a Power incalculable passed
Whose feet were death, whose wings were immortality;
Its changing mind was time, its heart eternity.
All opposites were there, unreconciled, un eased,
Struggling for victory, by victory unappeased.
All things it bore, even that which brings undying peace,
But secret, veiled, waiting for some supreme release.
I saw the spirit of the cosmic Ignorance;
I felt its power besiege my gloried fields of trance.

But now its huge Enigma had a voice, a cry
That echoed through my oceans of felicity.

A Voice arose that was so sweet and terrible
It thrilled the heart with love and pain, as if all hell
Tuned with all heaven in one inextricable note.
Born from abysmal depths on highest heights to float,
It carried all sorrow that the souls of creatures share,
Yet hinted every rapture that the gods can bear.
“O Son of God who cam’st into my blackest Night
To sound and know its gulfs and bring the immortal light
Into the passion of its darkness, castst thou man’s fate
For thy soul’s freedom and its magic are forfeit,
Renouncing the high pain that gave thee mortal birth
And made thy soul a seeker on the common earth?
When first the Eternal cast Himself abroad to be
His own unimaginable multiplicity,
Expressing in Time and shape what timelessly was there,
The mighty Mother stood alone in diamond air
And took into her that Godhead streaming from above
And worlds of her endless beauty and delight and love
Leaped from her fathomless heart.

A strong son of lightning

A strong son of lightning came down to the earth with fire-feet
of swiftmess splendid;
Light was born in a womb and thunder's force filled a
human frame.

The calm speed of heaven, the sweet greatness, pure passion,
winged power had descended;
All the gods in a mortal body dwelt, bore a single name.

A wide wave of movement stirred all the dim globe in each
glad and dreaming fold.
Life was cast into grandeur, ocean hands took the wheels
of Time.

Man's soul was again a bright charioteer of days hired by gods
impetuous, bold,
Hurled by One on His storm-winged ways, a shaft aimed
at heights sublime.

The old tablets clanging fell, ancient slow Nature's dead wall
was rent asunder,
God renewed himself in a world of young beauty, thought
and flame:

Divine voices spoke on men's lips, the heart woke to white
dawns of gleaming wonder,
Air a robe of splendour, breath a joy, life a godlike game.

I made danger my helper

I made danger my helper and chose pain for thy black anvil my
strength hammering to sheen,
And have reckoned the snare and the pit as nought for
the hope of one lonely ray;
I turned evil into good, drew out of grief force and returned
love to the hate in men:

I have dared the abyss, I have climbed the night, I
have cloven the perfect Way.

The Inconscient

Artist of cosmos wrapped in thy occult shadow,
Godhead sole awake in the dreams of Matter,
Thee and thy truth men searching for ever vainly,
Find and are baffled.

Always thou workst and seemst not to know thy workings,
Yet thy touch, Geometer, wide-wayed Builder,
Vastest things can shape and minutest, potent,
Patient, unerring.

All is thou or is thine but who art thou, Dreamer,
Paradox ensouling the soulless spaces,
Self-creator weaving thy magic figures,
Mechanist Mystic?

Who thou art none knoweth, ungrasped thy nature,
Ever we see thee veiled by thy titan forces,
Only some dim greatness we feel, a mute-eyed
Inscrutable Presence.

Ageless, formless, nameless and uncreated,
Lost in night where never was seed of living,
Ancient, mighty, lone is thy wordless spirit,
Blind and immortal.

All at first was only thy giant shadow;
Time then was not, space was not yet imagined,
Thoughtless, soundless lay the inconscient ocean
Emptily brooding.

THE FIRE KING

What flame wearst thou that wraps thee with its power
 Protecting from the Guardians of the Way?
 What wanderer born from the eternal Hour?
 What fragment of the inconceivable Ray?

THE MESSENGER

It is the fire of an awakened soul
 Aspiring from death to reach Eternity,
 The wings of sacrifice flaming to their goal,
 The burning godhead of humanity.

THE FIRE KING

What seekst thou here, child of the transient ways?
 Wouldst thou be free and still in endless peace?
 Or gaze for ever on the Eternal's face,
 Hushed in an incommunicable release?

THE MESSENGER

I claim for men the peace that shall not fail,
 I claim for earth the unwounded timeless bliss,
 I seek God-strength for souls that suffer in hell,
 God-light to fill the ignorant abyss.

THE FIRE KING

Ascend no more with thy presumptuous prayer
 But safe return to the forsaken globe,
 Wake not heaven's Lightning from its slumber's lair
 To clothe thee with the anguish of its robe.

O ye Powers

O ye Powers of the Supreme and of the Mother, the Divine,
 I have come to you initiate, a bearer of the sign.
 For I carry the Name in me that nothing can efface.
 I have breathed in an illimitable spiritual Space
 And my soul through the unfathomable stillnesses has heard
 The god-voices of knowledge and the marvels of the Word.
 It has listened to the secret that was hidden in the night
 Of the inconscient infinities first when by His might
 He arose out of the caverns of the darkness self-enwrapped
 And the nebulae were churned up like to foam-froth and were shaped
 Till these millions of universes mystical upbuoyed
 Were outsprinkled as if stardust on the Dragon of the Void.
 I was there then in the infinitesimal and obscure
 As a seed soul in the fire seeds of the energies that endure.
 I have learned now to what purpose I have loitered as His spark
 In the midnight of earth Matter like a glow-worm in the dark
 And my spirit was imprisoned in the muteness of a stone,
 A soul thoughtless and left voiceless and impuissant and alone.

Hail to the fallen

Hail to the fallen, the fearless! hail to the conquered, the noble!
 I out of ancient India great and unhappy and deathless,
 I in a loftiest nation though subject born, salute thee,
 Thou too great and unfortunate! All is not given by Nature
 Only to Force and the strong and the violent. Courage and wisdom,
 Steadfast will and the calm magnificent dream of thy spirit
 Crown thee for ever, O Emperor! Fiercely by Destiny broken,
 Cast from thy throne and defeated, forsaken, a wandering exile,
 Far from the hills of thy land and thy fallen and vanquished nation,
 Yet has thy glory overtopped and the deathless pride of thy laurel
 Conquered the conqueror's, Haile Selassie, Lion of Judah.

France for her southern borders fearing spared the aggressor.
England the sea-queen, England the fortunate, England the victor
Fled like a dog from the whip of his menace yelping for succour,
Loudly to Frank and to Greek and to Turk and to Yugoslav calling
“Help me! I dare not alone; he will shatter my fleet and my empire,”
You did not cower, O African people, you did not tremble.
Armed but with rifle and spear you fronted the legions of Caesar.

*

Statesman wise and beneficent, emperor, patriot, hero,
King of the Amharas, Haile Selassie, Lion of Judah.

Man is but man and the weapons of Hell are too fierce for his spirit,
Forged by the scientist burrowing deep in the bowels of Nature,
Death and destruction to draw from her torn from her anguished
entrails,
Death for his kind, the destruction of earth and her high-aiming
peoples,
Engines for Satan to handle, tools for the mischief of Ate.

Seer deep-hearted

Seer deep-hearted, divine king of the secrecies,
Occult fountain of love sprung from the heart of God,
Ways thou knewest no feet ever in Time had trod.
Words leaped flashing, the flame-billows of wisdom's seas.
Vast thy soul was a tide washing the coasts of heaven.
Thoughts broke burning and bare crossing the human night,
White star-scripts of the gods born from the book of Light
Page by page to the dim children of earth were given.

Soul, my soul [1]

Soul, my soul, reascend over the edge of life,—
 Far, far out of the din burn into tranquil skies.
 Cross bright ranges of mind murmurless, visioned, white;
 Thoughts sail down as if ships carrying bales of light,
 Truth's form-ropes by the Seers woven from spirit threads,
 From wide havens above luminous argosies,
 Gold-robed Wisdom's divine traffic and merchandise.
 But then pause not but go far beyond Space and Time
 Where thy natural home motionless vast and mute
 Waits thy tread; on a throne facing infinity
 Thought-nude, void of the world, one with the silence be.
 Sole, self-poised and unmoved thou shalt behold below
 Hierarchies and domains, godheads and potencies,
 Titans, demons and men each in his cosmic role:
 Midst all these in the live centre of forces spun,
 Fate there under thy feet turning the wheels of Time,
 The World Law thou shalt view mapped in its codes sublime,
 Yet thyself shalt remain ruleless, eternal, free.

Soul, my soul [2]

Soul, my soul, yet ascend crossing the marge of life:
 Mount out far above Time, reach to the golden end,
 Mind-belt's verge and the vague Infinite's spirit seas.
 Crossed by sails of the gods, luminous argosies,
 Silence reigns and the pure vastness of Self alone,
 Fulgent, shadowless, white, limitless, signless, one.
 God-light brooding above, spreading eternal wings,
 Free, held high above thought, void of the form of things,
 Live there lost in God space, rapturous, vacant, mute,
 Sun-bright, timeless, immense, single and absolute.

I am filled with the crash of war

I am filled with the crash of war and the shout of Cain,
Victories and marchings and agonised retreats,
I feel the bombs burst and the cries of pain
In Barcelona and in Canton streets.

In the silence of the midnight

In the silence of the midnight, in the light of dawn or noontide
I have heard the flutings of the Infinite, I have seen the sun-wings of
the seraphs.
On the boundless solitude of the mountains, on the shoreless roll of
ocean,
Something is felt of God's vastness, fleeting touches of the Absolute
Momentary and immeasurable smite the sense nature free from its
limits, —
A brief glimpse, a hint, it passes, but the soul grows deeper, wider:
God has set his mark upon the creature.

In the flash or flutter of flight of bird and insect, in the passion of
wing and cry on treetops,
In the golden feathers of the eagle, in the maned and tawny glory of
the lion,
In the voiceless hierophants of Nature with their hieratic script of
colour,
Orchid, tulip and narcissus, rose and nenuphar and lotus,
Something of eternal beauty seizes on the soul and nerves and
heartstrings.

Here in the green of the forest

Here in the green of the forest, lost in the stillness of Nature
 Long like lovers together alone with our hearts we had wandered,
 Hands linked, thoughts linked, listening mute to the voices of Silence,
 Light of the spaces, sovereign beauty, comrade of rapture.
 Golden the tresses that fell on her shoulders, a mantle of sunlight,
 Golden the thoughts came cast from her lips like jewels of wonder,
 Golden the smile in her heart and her radiant ripple of laughter.
 First in the silence we knew each other; the eyes were the gateways
 Opening soul into soul and spirit was bare to the spirit.
 Speech only covers the mind and the heart when it strives to reveal
them!

Silence, the wizard interpreter, drew us closer to oneness,
 First in the silence we felt our heart-throbs beating together.

*

As in the body a man and a woman marry and mingle,
 Hearts locked, limbs locked, twisted to one by the serpent of passion,
 So our spirits were locked in each other, hurled into oneness,
 Hurlted and hurled on a rapid and violent ocean of rapture.

Voice of the Summits

Voice of the summits, leap from thy peaks of ineffable splendour,
Wisdom's javelin cast, leonine cry of the Vast.
Voice of the summits, arrow of gold from a bow-string of silence!
Leap down into my heart, blazing and clangorous dart!
Here where I struggle alone unheeded of men and unaided,
Here by the darkness down-trod, here in the midnight of
God.

I have come down from the heights and the outskirts of Heaven
Into the gulfs of God's sleep, into the inconscient Deep.
All I had won that the mind can win of the Word and the wordless,
Knowledge sun-bright for ever and the spiritual crown of
endeavour,
Share in the thoughts of the cosmic Self and its orders to Nature,
Cup of its nectar of bliss, dreams on the breast of its peace.

Appendix

Poems in Greek and in French

Greek Epigram

μῶρος Ἔρωσ ἀλάος θ'· ὁ δ' ὄμως ἄ γ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ κεῖται
ἡμῶν, ὀφθαλμοὺς ὦν ἀλάος καθορᾷ.
παῖ, σὺ γὰρ ἠδὺ γελῶν ἰοβόστρυχε καλλιπρόσωπε,
δικτύῳ ἄνδρα καλῶ καὶ σοφὸν ἐξαπατᾷς.
οὐδὲ σοφὸς περ ἀνήρ σε, δολόπλοκε, φύξιμος οὐδεις·
καὶ πρότερος πάντων δοῦλος ἔρωτι σοφὸς.

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

Sri Aurobindo once wrote that he was “a poet and a politician” first, and only afterwards a philosopher. One might add that he was a poet before he entered politics and a poet after he ceased to write about politics or philosophy. His first published work, written apparently towards the end of 1882, was a short poem. The last writing work he did, towards the end of 1950, was revision of the epic poem *Savitri*. The results of these sixty-eight years of poetic output are collected in the present volume, with the exception of *Savitri*, dramatic poetry, poetic translations, and poems written in Bengali and Sanskrit. These appear, respectively, in *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, *Collected Plays and Stories*, *Translations*, and *Writings in Bengali and Sanskrit*, volumes 33–34, 3–4, 5, and 9 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

The poems in the present volume have been arranged in seven chronological parts. The dates of the parts overlap because some of the books that define each period contain poems from a wide range of dates. Within each part, poems from books published by the author are followed by complete and incomplete poems published posthumously. Poems that appeared in books published by Sri Aurobindo during his lifetime are arranged as they were in those books. Otherwise, poems within each section of each part are arranged chronologically. Poems written in Greek and in French appear in an appendix at the end of the volume.

PART ONE: ENGLAND AND BARODA, 1883–1898

Sri Aurobindo went to England as a child of seven in 1879. He lived in Manchester until 1884, when he went to London to study at St. Paul’s School. From there he went to Cambridge in 1890. Three years later he returned to India, and until 1906 lived and worked in the princely state of Baroda. He began writing poetry in Manchester, and continued

in London, Cambridge and Baroda. His first collection, published in Baroda in 1898, contained poems written in England and Baroda. This collection is reproduced in the present part, along with other poems written during these years.

Poem Published in 1883

Light. Published 1883. Asked in 1939, “When did you begin to write poetry?”, Sri Aurobindo replied: “When my two brothers and I were staying at Manchester. I wrote for the Fox family magazine. It was an awful imitation of somebody I don’t remember.” The only English journal having a name resembling “the Fox family magazine” is *Fox’s Weekly*, which first appeared on 11 January 1883 and was suspended the following November. Published from Leeds, it catered to the middle and working classes of that industrial town. A total of nine poems appeared in *Fox’s Weekly* during its brief existence. All but one of them are coarse adult satires. The exception is “Light”, published in the issue of 11 January 1883. Like all other poems in *Fox’s Weekly*, “Light” is unsigned, but there can be no doubt that it was the poem to which Sri Aurobindo referred when he said that his first verses were published in “the Fox family magazine”. The poem’s stanza is an imitation of the one used by P. B. Shelley in the well-known lyric “The Cloud”. Sri Aurobindo remarked in 1926 that as a child in Manchester, he went through the works of Shelley again and again. He also wrote that he read the Bible “assiduously” while living in the house of his guardian, William H. Drewett, a Congregationalist clergyman.

Songs to Myrtilla

This, Sri Aurobindo’s first collection of poems, was printed in 1898 for private circulation by the Lakshmi Vilas Printing Press, Baroda, under the title *Songs to Myrtilla and Other Poems*. No copy of the first edition survives. The second edition, which was probably a reimpression of the first, is undated. The date of publication must therefore be inferred from other evidence. The book’s handwritten manuscript, as well as the second edition, contains the poem “Lines on Ireland”, dated 1896. The second edition contains a translation from Chandidasa that almost

certainly was done using an edition of Chandidasa's works published in 1897. On 17 October 1898, Sri Aurobindo's brother Manmohan wrote in a letter to Rabindranath Tagore: "My brother . . . has just published a volume of poems at Baroda." This book evidently is *Songs to Myrtilla*. In another letter Manmohan tells Tagore: "Aurobinda is anxious to know what you think of his book of verses." This second letter is dated 24 October 1894, but the year clearly is wrong. Manmohan had not even returned to India from England by that date. When the two letters are read together and when other documentary evidence is evaluated, it becomes clear that the second letter also was written in 1898, and that this was the year of publication of the first edition of *Songs to Myrtilla*.¹ The "second edition" apparently appeared a year or two later.

A new edition of the book, entitled simply *Songs to Myrtilla*, was published by the Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, in April 1923.

When a biographer suggested during the 1940s that all the poems in *Songs to Myrtilla* were written in Baroda, except for five that were written in England, Sri Aurobindo corrected him as follows: "It is the other way round; all the poems in the book were written in England except five later ones which were written after his return to India." The following poems certainly were written in Baroda after his return to India in 1893: "Lines on Ireland" (dated 1896), "Saraswati with the Lotus" and "Bankim Chandra Chatterji" (both written after the death of Bankim in 1894), and "To the Cuckoo" (originally subtitled "A Spring morning in India"). "Madhusudan Dutt" was probably also written in Baroda, as were the two adaptations of poems by Chandidasa. This makes seven poems. The number five, proposed by the biographer and not by Sri Aurobindo, was probably not meant by Sri Aurobindo to be taken as an exact figure.

The handwritten manuscript of *Songs to Myrtilla* contains one poem, "The Just Man", that was not printed in any edition of the book. (It is reproduced here in the third section of Part One.) The manuscript and the second edition contain a dedication and a Latin epigraph, which Sri Aurobindo later deleted. They are reproduced here

¹ Manmohan Ghose's letters to Tagore are reproduced and discussed in *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*, volume 12 (1988), pp. 86–87, 89–91.

from the manuscript:

To my brother
Manmohan Ghose
these poems
are dedicated.

Tale tuum nobis carmen, divine poeta,
Quale sopor fessis in gramine, quale per aestum
Dulcis aquae saliente sitim restinguere rivo.

* * *

Quae tibi, quae tali reddam pro carmine dona?

The Latin lines are from Virgil's fifth *Eclogue*, lines 45–47 and 81. They may be translated as follows:

So is thy song to me, poet divine,
As slumber on the grass to weary limbs,
Or to slake thirst from some sweet-bubbling rill
In summer's heat . . .
How, how repay thee for a song so rare?

Four of the poems in *Songs to Myrtilla* are adaptations of works written in other languages: two in ancient Greek and two in mediaeval Bengali. These adaptations are published here in their original context. They are also published in *Translations*, volume 5 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

Songs to Myrtilla. Circa 1890–98. This, the title-poem of the collection, is headed in the manuscript “Sweet is the night”.

O Coil, Coil. Circa 1890–98. The coil is the *koyel* or Indian cuckoo.

Goethe. Circa 1890–98.

The Lost Deliverer. Circa 1890–98. In the manuscript and the Baroda edition, this epigram is entitled “Ferdinand Lassalle”. Lassalle (1825–64), a German socialist leader, was killed in a duel over a woman.

Charles Stewart Parnell. Dated 1891, the year of the Irish nationalist leader's death.

Hic Jacet. Dated 1891 in the manuscript; subtitled in the manuscript

and in all printed editions: “Glasnevin Cemetery”. This is the cemetery in Dublin where Parnell is buried.

Lines on Ireland. Dated 1896 in the manuscript and all printed editions.

On a Satyr and Sleeping Love. Circa 1890–98. This is a translation of a Greek epigram attributed to Plato.

A Rose of Women. Circa 1890–98. This is a translation of a Greek epigram by Meleager (first century B.C.).

Saraswati with the Lotus. 1894 or later. Written after the death of the Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838–94).

Night by the Sea. Circa 1890–98.

The Lover’s Complaint. Circa 1890–98.

Love in Sorrow. Circa 1890–98.

The Island Grave. Circa 1890–98.

Estelle. Circa 1890–98.

Radha’s Complaint in Absence. Circa 1890–98, probably towards the end of this period. This is an adaptation of a poem by the Bengali poet and mystic Chandidasa (late fourteenth to early fifteenth century).

Radha’s Appeal. Circa 1890–98, probably towards the end of this period. Another adaptation of a poem by Chandidasa.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Circa 1894–98. Certainly written after Bankim’s death in 1894. The poem is entitled in the manuscript “Lines written after reading a novel of Bunkim Chundra Chatterji”.

Madhusudan Dutt. Circa 1893–98.

To the Cuckoo. Circa 1893–98. Subtitled in the manuscript “A Spring morning in India”. The subtitle may have been deleted from the Baroda edition simply for lack of space.

Envoi. Circa 1890–98, probably closer to 1898. Entitled “Vale” in the manuscript. No title was printed in the Baroda edition, perhaps for lack of space. The title “Envoi” was given when a new edition of *Songs to Myrtila* was brought out in 1923. The Latin epigraph is from the *Appendix Vergiliana* (poems once ascribed to Virgil, but more likely by a contemporary), Catalepton, Carmen 5, lines 8–11. The following translation of these lines is by Joseph J. Mooney (*The Minor Poems of Vergil* [Birmingham, 1916]):

O Muses, off with you, be gone with all the rest!
Ye charming Muses, for the truth shall be confessed

Ye charming were, and modestly and rarely still
 Ye must revisit pages that I then shall fill.

Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1891–1898

All but one of the pieces in this section and the next are taken from a notebook Sri Aurobindo used at Cambridge between 1890 and 1892.

To a Hero-Worshipper. September 1891. From the Cambridge notebook.

Phaethon. Circa 1891–92. From the Cambridge notebook.

The Just Man. Circa 1891–98. This poem forms part of the manuscript of *Songs to Myrtilla* but was not included by Sri Aurobindo in the printed book.

Incomplete Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1891–1892

Thou bright choregus. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1891–92. These two stanzas are from the Cambridge notebook. Published here for the first time.

Like a white statue. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1891–92. This incomplete prose poem is from the Cambridge notebook. In the manuscript, there is a comma at the end of the last line.

The Vigil of Thaliard. 1891–92. Sri Aurobindo wrote this incomplete ballad in the Cambridge notebook. He dated certain passages of it August and September 1891 and March and April 1892.

PART TWO: BARODA, CIRCA 1898–1902

Complete Narrative Poems

Urvasie. Circa 1898. This poem first appeared in a small book printed for private circulation by the Vani Vilas Press, Baroda. (A deluxe edition was printed later by the Caxton Works, Bombay.) In 1942, Sri Aurobindo informed the editors of *Collected Poems and Plays* that *Urvasie* was printed “sometime before I wrote ‘Love and Death’”, that is, before 1899. He also indicated that *Urvasie* was subsequent

to *Songs to Myrtilla*, which was published in 1898. Taking these data together, one is obliged to assign *Urvasio* to 1898–99.

Love and Death. The handwritten manuscript of this poem is dated “June. July 1899”. The poem first appeared in print in the review *Shama’a* in January 1921, and was reprinted the same year by Mrinalini Chattopadhyay, Aghore Mandir, Madras.

A Note on *Love and Death*. Circa 1921. This is the longest of three handwritten drafts of a note Sri Aurobindo thought of adding to *Love and Death* when it was published in 1921. In the event, the poem was published without a note.

Incomplete Narrative Poems, circa 1899–1902

Khaled of the Sea. 1899. The handwritten manuscript of this poem is dated in three places: “Jan 1899” at the end of the Prologue, “Feb. 1899” in the middle of Canto I, and “March, 1899” at the end.

Uloupie. Circa 1901–2. A portion of the rough draft of this poem was written below some notes that may be dated to May 1901. The poem was never completed, but was drawn upon in the writing of *Chitrangada* (see below, Part Four).

Sonnets from Manuscripts, circa 1900–1901

Sri Aurobindo wrote the twelve sonnets in this section, as well as the fourteen poems in the next section, in a notebook that contains the fair copy of *Uloupie*, which was written in 1901–2. The other contents of the notebook may have been drafted sometime earlier; “The Spring Child” certainly was. The notebook was seized by the British police when Sri Aurobindo was arrested in 1908. This made it impossible for him to revise or publish these poems after his release from jail in 1909. In the manuscript, the first four sonnets are grouped together under the heading: “Four Sonnets”. None of the twelve have titles.

O face that I have loved. Circa 1900–1901.

I cannot equal. Circa 1900–1901.

O letter dull and cold. Circa 1900–1901.

My life is wasted. Circa 1900–1901.

Because thy flame is spent. Circa 1900–1901.

Thou didst mistake. Circa 1900–1901.
Rose, I have loved. Circa 1900–1901.
I have a hundred lives. Circa 1900–1901.
Still there is something. Circa 1900–1901.
I have a doubt. Circa 1900–1901.
To weep because a glorious sun. Circa 1900–1901.
What is this talk. Circa 1900–1901.

Short Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1900–1901

Sri Aurobindo wrote these fourteen poems in the notebook he used also for *Uloupie* and the above sonnets. He wrote the heading “Miscellaneous” above the poems. They are arranged here in the order in which they appear in Sri Aurobindo’s notebook.

The Spring Child. 1900. As recorded in the subtitle, this poem was written for Sri Aurobindo’s cousin Basanti Mitra, who was born on 9 Jyestha 1292 (22 May 1886). The title and opening of the poem involve a play on the Bengali word *bāsantī*, which means “vernal”, “of the spring”.

A Doubt. Circa 1900–1901.

The Nightingale. Circa 1900–1901.

Euphrosyne. Circa 1900–1901. The Greek word *euphrosunē* means “cheerfulness, mirth, merriment”. In Greek mythology, Euphrosyne was one of the three Graces.

A Thing Seen. Circa 1900–1901.

Epitaph. Circa 1900–1901.

To the Modern Priam. Circa 1900–1901.

Song. Circa 1900–1901.

Epigram. Circa 1900–1901.

The Three Cries of Deiphobus. Circa 1900–1901.

Perigone Prologuises. Circa 1900–1901.

Since I have seen your face. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1900–1901.

So that was why. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1900–1901. Sri Aurobindo wrote this passage at the bottom of several pages of the notebook that contains the above poems. Dramatic in style, it may

have been intended for a play.

World's delight. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1900–1901.

PART THREE: BARODA AND BENGAL, CIRCA 1900–1909

Poems from Ahana and Other Poems

Ahana and Other Poems was published in 1915. It consists of the long poem *Ahana*, written in Pondicherry, and twenty-four shorter poems, most of which were written in Baroda. Sometime after 1915, Sri Aurobindo wrote in his copy of the book, “Written mostly between 1895 and 1908, first published at Pondicherry in 1915.” This inscription shows a degree of uncertainty: “1895” was written over “1900”, while “1908” was written over “1907”. Neither of the dates, written more than a decade after the poems, need be considered exact. Surviving manuscript drafts of these poems do not appear to be earlier than 1900. Near-final drafts of many of them are found in a typed manuscript that may be dated to 1904–6. When Sri Aurobindo looked over these poems in 1942 while his *Collected Poems and Plays* was being arranged, he commented: “I find that most of the poems are quite early in Baroda, others later on and others in the second period [of poems in the book, i.e. 1906–9]. It would be a pity to break up these poems, as they form a natural group by themselves.” In the present volume, these twenty-four poems are published in a single group, while “Ahana” is published along with other works written in Pondicherry. Two of the poems in this section, “Karma” and “Appeal”, are adaptations of mediaeval Indian lyrics. They are published here in their original context, and also in *Translations*, volume 5 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

Invitation. 1908–9. This poem was published in Sri Aurobindo’s weekly newspaper *Karmayogin* on 6 November 1909, under the inscription: “(Composed in the Alipur Jail)”. Sri Aurobindo was a prisoner in Alipore Jail between 5 May 1908 and 6 May 1909.

Who. Circa 1908–9. Published in the *Karmayogin* on 13 November 1909.

Miracles. Circa 1900–1906.

Reminiscence. Circa 1900–1906. A typewritten copy of this poem was an exhibit in the Alipore Bomb Case in 1908 (see *Bande Mataram* weekly, 5 July 1908, p. 13).

A Vision of Science. Circa 1900–1906.

Immortal Love. Circa 1900–1906.

A Tree. Circa 1900–1906.

To the Sea. Circa 1900–1906. A version of the poem was published in the *Modern Review* in June 1909.

Revelation. Circa 1900–1906. A draft of this poem, entitled “The Vision”, is found in the manuscript notebook that contains “Uloupie” and other poems included in Part Two. This draft differs considerably from the version found in the typed manuscript of 1904–6, which was used as the basis of the text published in *Ahana and Other Poems*.

Karma. Circa 1900–1906 or later. This is a free rendering of a poem by the mediaeval Bengali poet Chandidasa.

Appeal. Circa 1900–1906 or later. This poem is based in part on a song by the mediaeval Maithili poet Vidyapati. The first stanza follows Vidyapati’s text fairly closely; the next two stanzas are Sri Aurobindo’s own invention.

A Child’s Imagination. Circa 1900–1906.

The Sea at Night. Circa 1900–1906.

The Vedantin’s Prayer. Circa 1900–1906.

Rebirth. Circa 1900–1906.

The Triumph-Song of Trishuncou. Circa 1900–1906.

Life and Death. Circa 1900–1906.

Evening. Circa 1900–1906.

Parabrahman. Circa 1900–1906.

God. Circa 1900–1906.

The Fear of Death. Circa 1900–1906.

Seasons. Circa 1900–1906.

The Rishi. Circa 1900–1908. Sheets containing draft passages of this poem were seized by the British police when Sri Aurobindo was arrested in 1908. Sometime after the poem was published in *Ahana and Other Poems*, Sri Aurobindo wrote under it in his copy of the book “(1907–1911)” — but see the note under the section title above.

In the Moonlight. Circa 1900–1906.

Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1900–1906

Sri Aurobindo wrote these poems around the same time that he wrote those making up the previous section. Many of them form part of a typed manuscript that contains poems included in *Ahana and Other Poems*. Sri Aurobindo chose not to include the poems in the present section in that book when it was published in 1915. They first appeared in print posthumously.

To the Boers. Circa 1900–1902. According to the subtitle, this poem was written “during the progress of the Boer War”. The Boer War began in 1899 and ended in 1902.

Vision. Circa 1900–1906.

To the Ganges. Circa 1900–1906.

Suddenly out from the wonderful East. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1900–1902. This poem is Sri Aurobindo’s earliest surviving attempt to write a poem in dactylic hexameters. A fair copy is found on the same sheet as a fair copy of “To the Boers”, which was written around 1900–1902. This and another draft of the poem were seized by the British police when Sri Aurobindo was arrested in 1908. Several years later, in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo began what appears to be a new or revised version of this poem, but wrote only three lines:

Where in a lapse of the hills leaps lightly down with laughter
White with her rustle of raiment upon the spray strewn boulders,
Cold in her virgin childhood the river resonant Ganges.

On the Mountains. Circa 1900–1906.

PART FOUR: CALCUTTA AND CHANDERNAGORE, 1907–1910

Sri Aurobindo left his teaching position in Baroda in February 1906 and went to Calcutta to join the national movement. Between November 1906 and May 1908 he was the editor of the daily newspaper *Bande Mataram*, and had little occasion to write poetry. In May 1908 he was arrested and imprisoned in Alipore Jail. During the year of his detention he managed to compose a few poems that were published after his release in May 1909. Between June 1909 and February 1910,

he was the editor of the weekly journal *Karmayogin*, in which several of his poems appeared. In February 1910 he went from Calcutta to Chandernagore, and six weeks later to Pondicherry, where he spent the rest of his life.

Satirical Poem Published in 1907

Reflections of Srinath Paul, Rai Bahadoor, on the Present Discontents. This poem was published on 5 April 1907 in the daily *Bande Mataram*. This political newspaper, edited by Sri Aurobindo and others, carried a number of satirical poems, most of which were the work of Sri Aurobindo's colleague Shyam Sundar Chakravarti. This piece is the exception. Sri Aurobindo remembered writing it in 1942 when his poems were being collected for publication in *Collected Poems and Plays*. (It was not published in that collection because the file of the daily *Bande Mataram* was not then available.) Later the poem was independently ascribed to Sri Aurobindo by Hemendra Prasad Ghose, another *Bande Mataram* editor and writer, who was in a way responsible for its composition. In his report on the session of the Bengal Provincial Conference held in Behrampore in 1907, Hemendra Prasad wrote that the chairman of the Reception Committee, a loyalist named Srinath Paul (who bore the honorary British title Rai Bahadoor), finished his address "perspiring and short of breath" (*Bande Mataram*, 2 April 1907). This phrase moved Sri Aurobindo to write this amusing piece of political satire. It was published under the heading "By the Way", which was the headline he used for his occasional column in *Bande Mataram*. The same words were used in place of a signature at the end.

Short Poems Published in 1909 and 1910

The Mother of Dreams. 1908–9. Published in the *Modern Review* in July 1909, two months after Sri Aurobindo's release from the Alipore Jail. The following note was appended to the text: "This poem was composed by Mr. Aurobindo Ghose in the Alipore Jail, of course without the aid of any writing materials. He committed it to memory and wrote it down after his release. There are several other poems of his, composed in jail."

An Image. Circa 1909. Published in the *Karmayogin* on 20 November 1909. (This was the third poem by Sri Aurobindo that he published in the *Karmayogin*. The first two, “Invitation” and “Who”, were included in *Ahana and Other Poems* in 1915, and so are included in Part Three of the present volume.) “An Image”, Sri Aurobindo’s first published lines in quantitative hexameters, may be related in some way to *Ilion*, his epic poem in that metre, which he began to write in Alipore Jail (see below, Part Five).

The Birth of Sin. Circa 1909. Published in the *Karmayogin* on 11 December 1909. A fragmentary draft of a related piece is found in one of Sri Aurobindo’s notebooks in handwriting of the 1909–10 period. That piece, which is more in the nature of a play than a poem, is published in *Collected Plays and Stories*, volume 4 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

Epiphany. Circa 1909. Published in the *Karmayogin* on 18 December 1909. Around 1913, Sri Aurobindo copied the *Karmayogin* text into a notebook, making a few deliberate changes as he did so. Later he revised the opening and close of this version. Three decades later, when *Collected Poems and Plays* was being compiled, the editors, not knowing about the 1913 version, sent the *Karmayogin* text to Sri Aurobindo, who made a few revisions to it. This version was used in *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942) and reproduced in *Collected Poems* in 1972. The editors of the present volume have selected the more extensively revised version of 1913 for the text reproduced here. The 1942 version is reproduced in the Reference Volume.

To R. 1909. Published in the *Modern Review* in April 1910 under the title “To R — ” and dated 19 July 1909. “R” stands for Ratna, which was the pet name of Sri Aurobindo’s cousin Kumudini Mitra, who was born on 3 Sraban 1289 (18 July 1882). In the *Modern Review*, the poem was signed “Auro Dada” (big brother Auro).

Transiit, Non Periit. 1909 or earlier. This sonnet by Rajnarain Bose, Sri Aurobindo’s maternal grandfather and a well-known writer and speaker, was first published at the beginning of *Atmcharit*, Rajnarain’s memoirs, in 1909. As mentioned in the note beneath the title, Rajnarain died in September 1899. Sri Aurobindo may have written the poem anytime between 1899 and 1909; but since there are no drafts among his Baroda manuscripts, and since the poem belongs stylistically with

those of 1909, it seems likely that it was written close to the date of the publication of that book. Quite possibly it was written especially for the book in 1909. The Latin title means: “He has gone beyond, he has not perished.”

Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1909–1910

Perfect thy motion. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1909. The single manuscript text of this poem is found in a notebook that Sri Aurobindo used for the dramatic version of “The Birth of Sin” (see the previous section) and for the dialogue that follows. All these poems are in the handwriting of the 1909–10 period.

A Dialogue. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1909. Written in the same notebook and in the same handwriting as “Perfect thy motion” and the dramatic version of “The Birth of Sin”. Unlike that piece, it is not structured as a play, and so has been printed here as a dramatic poem.

Narrative Poems Published in 1910

Baji Prabhou. Circa 1904–9. Sri Aurobindo wrote that this work was “conceived and written in Bengal during the period of political activity”. This leaves the precise date of its composition unclear. Sri Aurobindo went to Bengal and openly joined the national movement in February 1906, but he had been active behind the scenes for some years before that. A partial draft of *Baji Prabhou* is found in a notebook he used from around 1902 to around 1910. The handwriting of this draft is that of the later years in Baroda (1904–6), and it is probable the poem was written during that period. (Sri Aurobindo spent a good deal of time in Bengal during these years.) *Baji Prabhou* was published for the first time in three issues of the *Karmayogin*: 19 February, 26 February and 5 March 1910. At some point he revised the first instalment of the *Karmayogin* text, but did not make use of this revision subsequently. In 1922 he published the *Karmayogin* text (with new, very light, revision) at the Modern Press, Pondicherry. This text became the basis of a further revised version published in *Collected Poems and Plays* in 1942. This 1942 version is the basis of the present text. (In the version published in *Collected Poems* [1972],

the editors included readings from the revised *Karmayogin* text. In the present edition these readings have been ignored, but the 1922 and 1942 revisions, both approved by Sri Aurobindo, have been included.) **Chitrangada.** 1909–10. This incomplete poem is related in theme and form to “Uloupie” (see above, Part Two), which Sri Aurobindo wrote around 1901–2. The manuscript of “Uloupie” was confiscated by the police in 1908 and never returned. There were, however, two draft passages of the poem in a notebook that Sri Aurobindo had with him in 1909–10, and he apparently drew on these to write *Chitrangada*. Many of the lines in the final version are identical or almost identical to those in the draft passages. Sometime before he left Bengal in February 1910, he gave the manuscript of *Chitrangada* to the *Karmayogin* staff for publication. The poem appeared in that newspaper in the issues of 26 March and 2 April 1910. “To be continued” was printed at the end of the second instalment, but the issue in which it appeared was the last to come out. The manuscript of the rest of the poem has been lost. Around 1930, one of Sri Aurobindo’s disciples typed the incomplete poem out from the *Karmayogin* and sent it to Sri Aurobindo, who expressed some dissatisfaction with it. In 1937 he indicated that the poem required some revision before it could be published, but that it was “not the moment” for that. More than a decade later, he revised *Chitrangada* for publication in the 1949 number of the *Sri Aurobindo Circle* annual. The following note was printed along with the *Circle* text: “Sri Aurobindo had completed this poem but the original has been lost, only this fragment remains. It has been revised for publication.” The revision considerably enlarged the passage containing the speech of Chitrangada’s “dying sire”. The new lines appear to be the last poetical lines Sri Aurobindo composed, with the exception of the final revisions and additions to *Savitri*.

Poems Written in 1910 and Published in 1920–1921

These three poems have an unusual history. They form part of a manuscript containing material apparently intended for three issues of the *Karmayogin*. This manuscript also contains articles on yoga, historical studies, satirical sketches, and pieces headed “Passing Thoughts”, which was the name Sri Aurobindo gave to his weekly column in the

Karmayogin early in 1910. (See the Note on the Texts to *Early Cultural Writings*, volume 1 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, for more information on this “Chandernagore Manuscript”.) In the middle of February 1910, Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta for Chandernagore, where he remained for six weeks before departing for Pondicherry. It would appear that he left the manuscript containing these poems behind in Chandernagore, that someone there made copies of the poems and other contents of the manuscript, and that at some point the original manuscript was sent to him in Pondicherry. (See Arun Chandra Dutt, ed., *Light to Superlight* [Calcutta: Prabartak Publishers, 1972], p. 207.) In 1920–21 defective texts of the poems (as well as some of the other contents of the manuscript) were published in the *Standard Bearer*, a journal brought out from Chandernagore. Sometime after their publication, Sri Aurobindo revised the *Standard Bearer* texts. In 1942, the *Standard Bearer* versions were given to Sri Aurobindo for further revision before inclusion in *Collected Poems and Plays*. Evidently he and the editors of the volume had by this time forgotten about the existence of the original manuscripts. These manuscripts, however, are superior to the defective *Standard Bearer* texts and also to the 1942 version, which is based on those texts. The editors of the present volume have therefore based the texts printed here on the original manuscripts, incorporating the deliberate changes made by Sri Aurobindo in 1942. The texts printed in *Collected Poems and Plays* are included in the Reference Volume.

The Rakshasas. 1910. This poem was intended for the first issue of the *Karmayogin* to be printed from the manuscript described in the above note. A corrupt version was printed in the *Standard Bearer* on 14 November 1920. This version was revised by Sri Aurobindo for inclusion in *Collected Poems and Plays* in 1942. The present version is based on the original manuscript.

Kama. 1910. This poem was intended for the second issue of the *Karmayogin* to be printed from the manuscript described in the above note. A corrupt version was printed in the *Standard Bearer* on 27 March 1921. This version was revised by Sri Aurobindo for inclusion in *Collected Poems and Plays* in 1942. The present version is based on the original manuscript.

The Mahatmas. 1910. This poem was intended for the third issue of the *Karmayogin* to be printed from the manuscript described in the above note. In the manuscript, the poem is entitled “The Mahatmas: Kutthumi”. A corrupt version was printed under the title “The Mahatma Kuthumi” in the *Standard Bearer* on 12 and 26 December 1920. This version was revised by Sri Aurobindo for inclusion in *Collected Poems and Plays* in 1942. The present version is based on the original manuscript.

PART FIVE: PONDICHERRY, CIRCA 1910–1920

Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry in 1910 and remained there until his passing in 1950. During this period he published four collections of short poems as well as *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942). He also published a number of short poems in journals, and wrote scores of poems, long and short, that were not brought out until after his passing.

Two Poems in Quantitative Hexameters

Iliion. Sri Aurobindo began work on this epic in quantitative hexameters in 1908 or 1909. The earliest surviving manuscript lines of the poem — then entitled “The Fall of Troy: An Epic” — were dated by the author as follows: “Commenced in jail, 1909, resumed and completed in Pondicherry, April and May 1910.” Between then and 1914, he worked steadily on this “completed” poem, transforming it from a brief narrative into an epic made up of several books. During the first stage of this enlargement, between April 1910 and March 1913, he produced almost a dozen drafts of the first book and a smaller number of drafts of the second. In March 1913, a sudden fluency permitted him to complete and revise a version of the epic extending up to the end of what is now Book VIII. He wrote the fragmentary ninth book (untitled and not actually headed “Book IX” in the manuscript) in 1914. Probably before then, he copied out the first eight books into notebooks that bear the title *Iliion*. Subsequently he revised and recopied the completed books, or passages from them, several times. This work continued until around 1917. It would appear that two

factors—the writing-load of the monthly journal *Arya* (1914–21) and the attention demanded by his other epic, *Savitri*—caused him to stop work on *Ilion* before completing what presumably was intended to be a twelve-book epic.

During the twenties and thirties, Sri Aurobindo returned to *Ilion* from time to time. As late as 1935, he complained jocularly that if he could get an hour's freedom from his correspondence every day, “in another three years *Savitri* and *Ilion* and I don't know how much more would all be rewritten, finished, resplendently complete”. He in fact never found time to complete *Ilion*, but in 1942 he revised the opening of the first book to serve as an illustration of the quantitative hexameter in “On Quantitative Metre”, an essay that was published in *Collected Poems and Plays* in 1942 and also in a separate booklet issued the same year. This revised passage of 371 lines was the only portion of *Ilion* to appear in print during his lifetime. The full text was transcribed from his manuscripts and published in 1957. A new edition, corrected against the manuscripts and with the addition of the opening of the fragmentary ninth book, was brought out in 1989. The present text has been rechecked against the manuscripts.

Ahana. This poem in rhymed hexametric couplets, grew out of “The Descent of Ahana” (see below), which took its final form around 1912–13. “The Descent of Ahana” is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a long dialogue between Ahana and “Voices”; the second consists of a speech by Ahana, a speech by “A Voice”, and a final speech by Ahana. In the final draft of “The Descent”, the last two speeches of the second part comprise 160 lines. In or before 1915, Sri Aurobindo revised and enlarged these 160 lines into the 171-line poem that was published in *Ahana and Other Poems*. In this version, Sri Aurobindo added a head-note setting the scene of the poem and a footnote glossing the term “Ras”. Sometime after 1915, he revised the 1915 text, but apparently forgot about this revision, which has never been published. In or before 1942, he again revised the 1915 text for publication in *Collected Poems and Plays*. This 1942 revision brought the poem to its present length of 518 lines.

Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1912–1913

The Descent of Ahana. Circa 1912–13. The earliest known draft of this poem is found among the papers that the police seized from Sri Aurobindo’s room when he was arrested in May 1908. A complete fair copy is found in a manuscript notebook that may be dated circa 1912–13. The second part of the fair copy was subsequently revised and published under the title “Ahana” in *Ahana and Other Poems* (1915). See the note to “Ahana” in the previous section.

The Meditations of Mandavya. 1913. Sri Aurobindo wrote the date “April 12, 1913” at the end of a draft of the first part of this poem. The incident of the scorpion-sting happened before 14 February 1911, when Sri Aurobindo mentioned it in *Record of Yoga* as something that had happened in the past. In the mid 1930s, when the book entitled *Poems Past and Present* was being prepared, a copy of “The Meditations of Mandavya” was typed for Sri Aurobindo, who revised it lightly. He chose however not to include the poem in that collection. The revisions done at that time are incorporated in the text for the first time in the present edition.

Incomplete Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1912–1920

Thou who controllest. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1912. Sri Aurobindo wrote these lines in dactylic hexameter inside the back cover of a notebook that he used sometime before November 1912. He was working on *Ilion* at this time, but these lines do not seem to belong to that poem. Neither do they appear to be a translation of lines from the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* or any other classical text.

Sole in the meadows of Thebes. No title in the manuscript. 1913. Written on the same manuscript page as the following poem, at around the same time. It is almost certainly to this poem that Sri Aurobindo was referring when he wrote in *Record of Yoga* on 21 September 1913 of beginning an “Eclogue in hexameter”.

O Will of God. No title in the manuscript. 1913. Written on the same manuscript page as the previous poem.

The Tale of Nala [1]. Circa 1916–20. There are very few clues by

which this incomplete poem might be dated. Judging from the handwriting, it was composed towards the end of the second decade of the century. It obviously is based on the story of Nala, as recounted in the Mahabharata and later texts, but does not seem to be a translation of any known Sanskrit work. The passages separated by a blank line were written separately and not joined together.

The Tale of Nala [2]. Circa 1916–20. Sri Aurobindo seems to have written this rhymed version of the opening of his proposed poem on Nala after the blank verse version. He retained several lines from the earlier version unchanged or practically unchanged.

PART SIX: BARODA AND PONDICHERRY, CIRCA 1902–1936

Poems Past and Present

These eight poems were published as a booklet by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1946. (Four of them — “Musa Spiritus”, “Bride of the Fire”, “The Blue Bird” and “A God’s Labour” — had appeared in journals connected with the Ashram earlier the same year.) All the poems were written at least a decade, one of them four and a half decades, before 1946. The first draft of “Hell and Heaven” dates back to around 1902, early drafts of “Kamadeva” and “Life” to around 1913. A notebook containing these three early poems was uncovered by Sri Aurobindo’s secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta, in April 1932. He typed out copies and sent them to Sri Aurobindo with this note: “I have copied these poems out of a notebook that was being hopelessly eaten away by insects. I do not know how far I have been able to recover the text.” Sri Aurobindo revised these poems around that time, adding a fourth, “One Day”, while he worked. Several years later these four poems were published along with four that had been written in 1935 and 1936 under the title *Poems Past and Present*. The eight poems are reproduced here in the order in which they are printed in that book.

Musa Spiritus. 1935. An early draft of this poem occurs between drafts of “A God’s Labour” and “The Blue Bird” (see below). Sri Aurobindo wrote the date “31.7.35” at the end of a later draft. There are two

handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript of this poem.

Bride of the Fire. 1935. The first draft of this poem is dated 11 November 1935. There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

The Blue Bird. 1935. The first draft of this poem is dated 11 November 1935. There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

A God's Labour. 1935–36. A late draft of this poem is dated as follows: “31.7.35 / Last 4 stanzas 1.1.36”. There are four handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

Hell and Heaven. Circa 1902–30s. The earliest extant draft of this poem is found in the typed manuscript that contains drafts of “To the Ganges”, “To the Boers”, etc. (see above, Part Three). Around 1912 Sri Aurobindo copied the poem out by hand in a notebook. Twenty years later, his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta typed this and the next two poems out from this notebook and presented them to Sri Aurobindo for revision. Fourteen years after that they were included in *Poems Past and Present*. There are one handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

Kamadeva. Circa 1913. The earliest surviving drafts of this poem and the next one are found in the notebook that contains “The Meditations of Mandavya” (see above, Part Five), the opening of which is dated 1913. In 1932 they were typed out and fourteen years later included in *Poems Past and Present*. There is one handwritten and one typed manuscript.

Life. Circa 1913. The earliest surviving drafts of this poem and the previous one are found in the notebook that contains “The Meditations of Mandavya” (see above, Part Five), the opening of which is dated 1913. In 1932 they were typed out and fourteen years later included in *Poems Past and Present*. There is one handwritten and one typed manuscript.

One Day. Circa 1932. Sri Aurobindo wrote the first draft of this poem in the notebook containing drafts of the previous three poems, which Nolini Kanta Gupta uncovered and sent to him in 1932. This draft was lightly revised and later included in *Poems Past and Present*. There is one handwritten and one typed manuscript.

PART SEVEN: PONDICHERRY, CIRCA 1927–1947

Sri Aurobindo published three short volumes of poetry, and a volume on poetics that included poems as illustrations, between 1934 and 1946. One of the volumes of poems, *Poems Past and Present*, comprises Part Six of the present volume. The other volumes are included in this part, which also contains complete and incomplete poems from his manuscripts of the same period.

Six Poems

These poems were written in 1932, 1933 and 1934. In 1934 a book was planned that would include the six poems along with translations of them into Bengali by disciples of Sri Aurobindo. This book was published by Rameshwar & Co., Chandernagore, before the end of the year. Shown a proposed publicity blurb for the book, Sri Aurobindo wrote: “One can’t blow one’s own trumpet in this monstrous way, nor do I want it to be indicated that I am publishing this book. It is Nolini’s publication, not mine. Why can’t a decent notice be given instead of these terrible blurbs?” He also wrote his own descriptive paragraph stating that the six poems were in “novel English metres” and that the book included “notes on the metres of the poems and their significance drawn from the letters of Sri Aurobindo”. The texts as well as the notes were reprinted in *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942).

The Bird of Fire. 17 October 1933. No handwritten manuscripts of this poem survive. There are three typed manuscripts, two of which are dated 17 October 1933. In a letter written shortly afterwards, Sri Aurobindo said that “Bird of Fire” was “written on two consecutive days—and afterwards revised”. He also wrote that this poem and “Trance” (see below) were completed the same day.²

Trance. 16 October 1933. There are two handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript, which is dated “16.10.33”. In the same letter in which Sri Aurobindo wrote about the composition of “The Bird of Fire” (see above), he noted that “Trance” was written “at one sitting

² Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Poetry and Art*, volume 27 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 244.

—it took only a few minutes”. In *Six Poems* “Trance” was placed after “The Bird of Fire”.

Shiva. 6 November 1933. There are two handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript, which is dated “6.11.33”.

The Life Heavens. 15 November 1933. There are four handwritten and three typed manuscripts. The typed manuscripts are dated “15.11.33”.

Jivanmukta. 13 April 1934. There are four handwritten and two typed manuscripts. The typed manuscripts are dated “13.4.34”. The poem was published in the *Calcutta Review* in June 1934.

In Horis Aeternum. 19 April 1932. Sri Aurobindo began this poem while corresponding with Arjava (J. A. Chadwick, a British disciple) about English prosody. He wrote the first stanza in a letter to Arjava and the full poem in a subsequent letter (*Letters on Poetry and Art*, pp. 231–34). There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts. One of the typed manuscripts is dated “19.4.32”.

Notes. These notes were compiled from Sri Aurobindo’s letters and revised by him for publication while *Six Poems* was under production.

Poems

These six poems were written during the early 1930s and published as a booklet by the Government Central Press, Hyderabad, in 1941. The next year they were reprinted in *Collected Poems and Plays* under the heading “Transformation and Other Poems”. Sometime in the 1940s a small edition of the book was published by the India Library Society, New York.

Transformation. Circa 1933. This sonnet was published in the *Calcutta Review* in October 1934. Two months earlier, Sri Aurobindo asked his secretary to type copies of this poem and three others (“The Other Earths”, “The World Game” and “Symbol Moon”) from the notebook in which they and others had been written. When “Transformation” and “The Other Earths” were published in 1934, Sri Aurobindo informed a disciple that they were “some years old already” (*Letters on Poetry and Art*, p. 211), but it is unlikely that they were more than a year old at that time. The first draft of “Transformation” occurs in a notebook just after the first draft of “Trance”, which is dated 16

October 1933; it is probable that “Transformation” was written the same year. There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts of this poem.

In a note written after “Transformation” and the next two sonnets were typed for publication, Sri Aurobindo said that he wanted the sestets of Miltonic sonnets to be set as they have been set in the present book, irrespective of rhyme scheme.

Nirvana. August 1934. This sonnet was written while the texts of “Transformation” and “The Other Earths” were being prepared for publication in the *Calcutta Review*. It was published along with them in that journal in October 1934. There are two handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript of this poem.

The Other Earths. Circa 1933. This sonnet was published in the *Calcutta Review* in October 1934. Its first draft occurs just after the first draft of “Transformation”, which is dated 16 October 1933; thus it belongs, in all probability, to the year 1933. See the note to “Transformation” for more details. Writing to a disciple who was trying to translate it into Bengali, Sri Aurobindo wrote that the line “Fire importunities of scarlet bloom” meant “an abundance of scarlet blossoms importuning (constantly insisting, besieging) with the fire of their vivid hues”. There are two handwritten and two typed manuscripts of this poem.

Thought the Paraclete. 31 December 1934 (this is the date on a typed manuscript; the handwritten manuscripts were probably written in June 1934). This poem originated as a metrical experiment, in which Sri Aurobindo tried to match a Bengali metrical model submitted to him by his disciple Dilip Kumar Roy.³ There are at least three handwritten and two typed manuscripts of this poem. A printed text was produced sometime before 1941, but apparently was never published.

Moon of Two Hemispheres. July 1934. Like “Thought the Paraclete”, this poem originated in an attempt to duplicate a Bengali metre proposed by Dilip Kumar Roy. Replying to Dilip, Sri Aurobindo began: “After two days of wrestling I have to admit that I am beaten by your last metre. I have written something, but it is a fake.” He then wrote out the first stanza of the poem, pointing out where he had

³ Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1952), p. 237.

failed to meet Dilip's specifications. He closed by saying: "I have some idea of adding a second stanza", though "it may never take birth at all" (*Letters on Poetry and Art*, pp. 235–36). He did write a second stanza later. The poem was published in the "Sri Aurobindo Number" (volume 2, number 5) of the Calcutta fortnightly journal *Onward* in August 1934. There are four handwritten and two typed manuscripts of this poem.

Rose of God. 29–30 December 1934. There is one handwritten and one typed manuscript of this poem. The typed manuscript is dated 31 December 1934; however Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter to a disciple that "Rose of God" was ready "on the 30th having been written on that and the previous day". On 31 December, he wrote to his secretary that the just-typed "Rose of God" could be "circulated first as a sort of New Year invocation". On 2 March 1935, his secretary wrote to him saying that the editor of a quarterly journal had asked for a poem to be published, and asking whether "Rose of God" could be sent. Sri Aurobindo replied: "I feel squeamish about publishing the 'Rose of God' in a magazine or newspaper. It seems to me the wrong place altogether."

Note. This note did not form part of *Poems* (1941); it was first published in 1942 in *Collected Poems and Plays*.

Poems Published in *On Quantitative Metre*

With two exceptions, these poems were written in 1942 for publication in *Collected Poems and Plays*. Sri Aurobindo later commented that he wrote them "very rapidly — in the course of a week, I think". In regard to "Flame-Wind" and "Trance of Waiting", this would refer not to the composition but the revision, since the first drafts of these pieces were written during the mid 1930s. The fourteen poems, along with the first 371 lines of *Ilion*, first appeared as an appendix to *On Quantitative Metre*. This text was published as part of *Collected Poems and Plays*, and also as a separate book, in 1942. Each of the poems was followed by a footnote written by the author giving details of the metre used. These notes have not been included in the present volume, but may be seen in the text of *On Quantitative Metre*, published in *The Future Poetry with On Quantitative Metre*, volume 26 of THE COMPLETE

WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The first 371 lines of *Ilion* appear in Part Five of the present volume as part of the full text of the poem.

Ocean Oneness. 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts, both entitled “Brahman”, precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Trance of Waiting. Circa 1934. The first draft of this poem was written around the same time as “Jivanmukta”, which is dated 1934. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work in 1942.

Flame-Wind. 1937. A handwritten draft of this poem is dated 1937. This draft is entitled “Dream Symbols”. Three other handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work in 1942.

The River. 1942. Three handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Journey’s End. 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

The Dream Boat. 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Soul in the Ignorance. 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

The Witness and the Wheel. 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Descent. 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

The Lost Boat. 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Renewal. 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Soul’s Scene. 1942. Three handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Ascent. 1942. Two handwritten manuscripts precede the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

The Tiger and the Deer. 1942. A single handwritten manuscript precedes the *On Quantitative Metre* revision work.

Sonnets

Sri Aurobindo wrote a total of seventy-five sonnets between 1933 and 1947. Only three of them were published in a book during his lifetime (see above under *Poems*). The other seventy-two are reproduced in the present section. See the note to “Transformation” for typographical conventions. Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1934 that he intended his sonnets to “be published in a separate book of sonnets”. This was done in the book *Sonnets*, first published in 1980.

Three Sonnets

One of these sonnets was written around 1934, the other two in 1939. Sri Aurobindo selected them from among his completed sonnets for publication in the *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Bombay, in 1948. They were published under the heading “Three Sonnets”.

Man the Enigma. 17 September 1939. Three handwritten and two typed manuscripts precede the *Circle* publication in 1948.

The Infinitesimal Infinite. Circa 1934. Three handwritten and four typed manuscripts precede the *Circle* publication in 1948.

The Cosmic Dance. 15 September 1939. Four handwritten and two typed manuscripts precede the *Circle* publication in 1948.

Sonnets from Manuscripts, circa 1934–1947

On 31 December 1934, Nolini Kanta Gupta wrote in a note to Sri Aurobindo: “Sometime ago I typed *Seven Sonnets* — Are they not in their final form?” Sri Aurobindo replied: “No. I have had no time to see them — and I am still a little doubtful about their quality.” The seven sonnets were (in the order of Nolini’s typed copies): “Contrasts”, “Man the Thinking Animal”, “Evolution [1]”, “Evolution [2]”, “The Call of the Impossible”, “Man the Mediator”, and “The Infinitesimal Infinite”. Sri Aurobindo later revised most of the seven, along with an eighth, “The Silver Call”, which is related to “The Infinitesimal Infinite”. After further revision he published “The Infinitesimal Infinite” as part of “Three Sonnets” in 1948 (see above).

Man the Thinking Animal. Circa 1934. Five handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript, the earliest contemporaneous with close-to-final drafts of “Transformation” and “The Other Earths”.

Contrasts. Circa 1934. Five handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript, the earliest contemporaneous with close-to-final drafts of “Transformation” and “The Other Earths”.

The Silver Call. Written on or before 25 April 1934 (when Sri Aurobindo quoted five lines in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy); revised 1944. Five handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript; the first handwritten manuscript was written shortly after those of the two preceding sonnets. The original poem went through several versions, eventually becoming two, “The Silver Call” and “The Call of the Impossible”. The final version of “The Silver Call” is dated “193-(?)/23.3.44”.

Evolution [1]. Circa 1934, revised 1944. Five handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript, that is dated “193-(?)/22.3.44”. This poem and the one above were often worked on together, as were the two that follow.

The Call of the Impossible. 1934; revised subsequently. Four handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript. This poem began as a variant of “The Silver Call”: the first lines of the two poems were once identical — “There is a godhead in unrealised things” — and the first rhyming words remain the same even in the final versions.

Evolution [2]. Circa 1934. Two handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript. The handwritten drafts were written around the same time as early drafts of “The Call of the Impossible”; the final typed versions of the two poems are also contemporaneous. The present sonnet has the same title as the one which forms a pair with “A Silver Call” (see “Evolution [1]” above). There is no textual relation between it and its namesake, but there is some between it and “The Silver Call”: its closing couplet was first used as the close of “The Silver Call” and its second and fourth lines are similar to the tenth and twelfth lines of “The Silver Call”.

Man the Mediator. Circa 1934. Four handwritten manuscripts and one typed manuscript.

Sri Aurobindo wrote the next five sonnets in 1934 or 1935, at around

the same time. He did not ask his secretary to make typed copies of any of the five, and gave titles to only three of them. The other two (one of which began as a variant of one of the first three) were found recently among the manuscripts of this group and recognised as separate poems.

Discoveries of Science. Circa 1934–35. Three handwritten manuscripts.

All here is Spirit. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934–35. One handwritten manuscript. Published here for the first time.

The Ways of the Spirit [1]. Circa 1934–35. Four handwritten manuscripts.

The Ways of the Spirit [2]. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934–35. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Science and the Unknowable. Circa 1934–35. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Sri Aurobindo wrote the next two sonnets in the early part of 1936.

The Yogi on the Whirlpool. 1936. Two handwritten manuscripts, neither of them dated, but certainly written just before “The Kingdom Within”.

The Kingdom Within. 14 March 1936. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Sri Aurobindo wrote the next three sonnets in the early part of 1938.

Now I have borne. No title in the manuscript. 2 February 1938. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Electron. 15 July 1938. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Indwelling Universal. 15 July 1938. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Sri Aurobindo wrote the next nine sonnets in July and August 1938 and revised them in March 1944.

Bliss of Identity. 25 July 1938, revised 21 March 1944. Two handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “Identity”.

The Witness Spirit. 26 July 1938, revised 21 March 1944. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Hidden Plan. 26 July 1938, revised 18 and 21 March 1944. Two

handwritten manuscripts.

The Pilgrim of the Night. 26 July 1938, revised 18 March 1944. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “In the Night”.

Cosmic Consciousness. 26 July 1938, revised apparently on 21 March 1944. Two handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “The Cosmic Man”.

Liberation [1]. 27 July 1938, revised 22 March 1944. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Inconscient. 27 July 1938, revised 21 March 1944. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Life-Unity. 8 August 1938, revised 22 March 1944. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Golden Light. 8 August 1938, revised 22 March 1944. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Sri Aurobindo wrote the next thirty-nine sonnets between 11 September and 16 November 1939. He wrote two other sonnets, “Man the Enigma” and “The Cosmic Dance” during the same period (see above under “Three Sonnets”).

The Infinite Adventure. 11 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Greater Plan. 12 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Universal Incarnation. 13 September 1939. Four handwritten manuscripts.

The Godhead. 13 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts. This sonnet is about an experience Sri Aurobindo had during the first year of his stay in Baroda (1893).

The Stone Goddess. 13 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts. This sonnet is about an experience Sri Aurobindo had at a temple in Karnali, on the banks of the Narmada, near the end of his stay in Baroda (c. 1904–6).

Krishna. 15 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Shiva. 16 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Word of the Silence. 18–19 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Self’s Infinity. 18–19 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, the second entitled “Self-Infinity”.

The Dual Being. 19 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Lila. 20 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, the second entitled “The Thousandfold One”.

Surrender. 20 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Divine Worker. 20 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Guest. 21 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “The Guest of Nature”.

The Inner Sovereign. 22 September 1939, revised 27 September. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “The Sovereign Tenant”.

Creation. 24 September 1939, revised 28 September. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “The Conscious Inconscient”.

A Dream of Surreal Science. 25 September 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

In the Battle. 25 September 1939. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Little Ego. 26 September 1939, revised 29 September. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Miracle of Birth. 27 September 1939, revised 29 September. Six handwritten manuscripts, the second entitled “The Divine Mystery”, the third “The Divine Miracle-Play”, and the fourth and fifth “The Miracle-Play”.

The Bliss of Brahman. 29 September 1939, revised 21 October. Five handwritten manuscripts; the first has the epigraph: “He who has found the bliss of Brahman, has no fear from any quarter. / Upanishad [Taittiriya Upanishad 2.4]”.

Moments. 29 September 1939, revised 2 October. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Body. 2 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Liberation [2]. 2–3 October 1939, revised 5 November. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Light. 3–4 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Unseen Infinite. 4 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “The Omnipresent”.

“I”. 15 October 1939, revised 5 November. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Cosmic Spirit. 15 October 1939, revised 5 November. Two handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “Cosmic Consciousness”, revised

to “Cosmic Self”.

Self. 15 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “Liberty”.

Omnipresence. 17 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first two entitled “The Omnipresent”.

The Inconscient Foundation. 18 October 1939, revised 7 February 1940. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Adwaita. 19 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts. This sonnet was written about an experience Sri Aurobindo had while walking on the Takht-i-Sulaiman (“Seat of Solomon”), near Srinagar, Kashmir, in 1903.

The Hill-top Temple. 21 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, the first two entitled “The Temple on the Hill-Top”. This sonnet is about an experience Sri Aurobindo had at a shrine in the temple-complex on Parvati Hill, near Poona, probably in 1902.

The Divine Hearing. 24 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, one of which is entitled “Sounds”.

Because Thou art. 25 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts, all untitled.

Divine Sight. 26 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Divine Sense. 1 November 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Iron Dictators. 14 November 1939. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Form. 16 November 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Sri Aurobindo wrote the next two sonnets in 1940.

Immortality. 8 February 1940. One handwritten manuscript.

Man, the Despot of Contraries. 29 July 1940. Two handwritten manuscripts, the first entitled “The Spirit of Man”.

Sri Aurobindo wrote the next two sonnets during the middle to late 1940s.

The One Self. Circa 1945–47. One handwritten manuscript, undated, but in the almost illegible handwriting of the late 1940s.

The Inner Fields. 14 March 1947. One handwritten manuscript, legible only with difficulty, and another in the handwriting of Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo’s scribe.

Lyrical Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1934–1947

Sri Aurobindo once wrote that he wanted his short poems published in two separate books, one of sonnets and one of “(mainly) lyrical poems”. In the present section are published all complete short poems, sonnets excluded, that he wrote between 1934 and 1947. Parodies written as amusements, poems written primarily as metrical experiments, and incomplete poems have been placed in the sections that follow. It sometimes is difficult to determine whether Sri Aurobindo considered a given poem to be complete when he stopped work on it.

Symbol Moon. Circa 1934. Three handwritten and two typed manuscripts. On 7 August 1934, Sri Aurobindo asked his secretary to type the first drafts of “Symbol Moon”, “The World Game”, “Transformation” and “The Other Earths” from the notebook in which he wrote these and other poems.

The World Game. Circa 1934. Three handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

Who art thou that comest. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934–36. One handwritten manuscript, written in a notebook used otherwise for *Savitri*.

One. 14 March 1936. One handwritten manuscript, written on a sheet of a small “Bloc-Memo” pad.

In a mounting as of sea-tides. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936–37. One handwritten manuscript.

Krishna. Circa 1936–37. One handwritten manuscript.

The Cosmic Man. 15 September 1938. One handwritten manuscript.

The Island Sun. 13 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

Despair on the Staircase. October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Dwarf Napoleon. 16 October 1939. Three handwritten manuscripts.

The Children of Wotan. 30 August 1940. Two handwritten manuscripts.

The Mother of God. One handwritten manuscript, undated, but in the handwriting of the mid 1940s.

The End? 3 June 1945. One handwritten manuscript.

Silence is all. No title in the manuscript. 14 January 1947. (The manuscript is dated “January 14, 1946”, but this is probably a slip, as the rest of the contents of the notebook in which the poem is written are from 1947.) One handwritten manuscript.

Poems Written as Metrical Experiments

Sri Aurobindo wrote most of these pieces in a somewhat playful effort to match metrical models submitted to him by his disciple Dilip Kumar Roy. As Dilip writes in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, p. 233: “At the time I was transposing some English modulations into our Bengali verse which he [Sri Aurobindo] greatly appreciated in so much that, to encourage me, he composed short poems now and then as English counterparts to my Bengali bases.” One such experiment resulted in the poem “Thought the Paraclete”, which Sri Aurobindo later revised and included in the book *Poems* (see above). All but one of the others exist in one or more drafts in Sri Aurobindo’s notebooks of the period. The exception, “In some faint dawn”, is known only by the text published by Dilip in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*. The nine poems published in that book are reproduced here in the same order. Another poem written in response to a letter from Dilip is placed before the rest, while two others, also metrical experiments, have been placed at the end of Dilip’s set. All the poems except the last seem to have been written in 1934. All but one are untitled in the manuscripts.

O pall of black Night. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934. Three handwritten manuscripts. See *Letters on Poetry and Art*, pp. 236–37, for a letter that shows the genesis of this poem.

To the hill-tops of silence. No title in the manuscript. 1934. One handwritten transcript in Nolini Kanta Gupta’s hand.

Oh, but fair was her face. No title in the manuscript. 1934. One handwritten transcript in Nolini Kanta Gupta’s hand.

In the ending of time. No title in the manuscript. 1934. One handwritten transcript in Nolini Kanta Gupta’s hand.

In some faint dawn. No title in the printed text in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*. 1934.

In a flaming as of spaces. No title in the manuscript. 1934. One

handwritten manuscript.

O Life, thy breath is but a cry. 1934. Early typed copies of this poem are dated 21 June 1934 and are entitled “Life and the Immortal”. Sri Aurobindo took up this poem in 1942 while preparing poems to be published in *On Quantitative Metre*. He gave the revised draft the title “Life” and indicated the rhyme scheme as follows: “Iambics; modulations, spondee, anapaest, pyrrhic, long monosyllable”. Eventually, however, he decided not to include the revised poem in *On Quantitative Metre*. The editors have incorporated his final revisions in the text, but used the first line as title as with the other poems in this subsection. Two handwritten manuscripts.

Vast-winged the wind ran. No title in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*. 1934. No manuscripts. An early typed copy of this piece is dated 25 June 1934. Note that in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* this piece and the two that follow are placed after the mention of “Thought the Paraclete”.

Winged with dangerous deity. No title in the manuscript. 20 June 1934. See *Letters on Poetry and Art*, pp. 234–35 for a letter that shows the genesis of this poem. Two handwritten and two typed manuscripts.

Outspread a Wave burst. No title in the manuscript. 26 June 1934. Two handwritten manuscripts, one in Nolini Kanta Gupta’s hand.

On the grey street. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934. One handwritten manuscript.

Cry of the ocean’s surges. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1940–41. One handwritten manuscript.

Nonsense and “Surrealist” Verse

Sri Aurobindo wrote the first of these poems in isolation during the late 1920s or early 1930s. He wrote the other items as an amusement after some of his disciples tried to interest him in the subject of surrealist poetry. See also the more serious sonnet “A Dream of Surreal Science” in the section “Lyrical Poems”.

A Ballad of Doom. Late 1920s or early 1930s. There is one handwritten manuscript of this piece, the writing of which has completely faded away. A transcription made years ago was published in the

journal *Mother India* in April 1974. The editors have verified and corrected this transcription using images made by means of infrared photography, scanning and imaging software. Several words in the text remain somewhat doubtful.

Surrealist. Circa 1936. One handwritten manuscript, written before 28 December 1936, when Sri Aurobindo mentioned it in a letter to a disciple.

Surrealist Poems. Circa 1943. (The Moro River, mentioned in the second poem, is a river in Italy that was the site of a battle between Canadian and German forces in December 1943; the notebook in which the poem is written was in use during the early 1940s.) One handwritten manuscript, consisting of two pages of a “Bloc-Memo” pad. Sri Aurobindo first wrote, in the upper left hand corner, “Parody”, then, as title, “Surrealist Poems”. Beneath the first poem, he wrote a tongue-in-cheek explanation within his own square brackets, then, after “2”, the title and text of the second poem.

Incomplete Poems from Manuscripts, circa 1927–1947

Thou art myself. No title in the manuscript. 1927–29. One handwritten manuscript, jotted down in a notebook used otherwise for diary entries, essays, etc. In the manuscript, the word “Or”, presumably the beginning of an unwritten second stanza, comes after the fourth line.

Vain, they have said. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1927. Although written, like “Ahana”, in rhymed dactylic hexameter couplets, these lines do not seem to have been intended for inclusion in that poem. (The phrase “to infinity calling” does occur both here and in “The Descent of Ahana”, but in different contexts.) One handwritten manuscript.

Pururavus. Circa 1933. Several handwritten drafts in a single notebook. It would appear from the manuscript that Sri Aurobindo began this passage as a proposed revision to the opening of the narrative poem “Urvasie”. The passage developed on different lines, however, and Sri Aurobindo soon stopped work on it.

The Death of a God [1]. Circa 1933. Two handwritten manuscripts; a third manuscript is published as “The Death of a God [2]”.

The Death of a God [2]. Circa 1933. One handwritten manuscript.

The Inconscient and the Traveller Fire. Circa 1934. Two handwritten

manuscripts, the first entitled “Death and the Traveller Fire”.

I walked beside the waters. No title in the manuscript. April 1934. Sri Aurobindo wrote the first part of this poem (down to “gloried fields of trance”) on 25 April 1934 after Dilip Kumar Roy asked him for some lines in alexandrines (*Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, pp. 226–29). In an accompanying letter, he explained how the caesura dividing the lines into two parts could come after different syllables. Dilip, noting that in Sri Aurobindo’s passage there were examples of the caesura falling after the second, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth syllables, asked for an example of a line with the caesura coming after the third syllable. Sri Aurobindo obliged by sending him the couplet:

And in the silence of the mind life knows itself
Immortal, and immaculately grows divine.

On 28 April 1934, three days after Sri Aurobindo sent the first passage, his secretary asked him: “Can your last poem (in Alexandrines, sent to Dilip) be put into circulation?” Sri Aurobindo replied: “No. It is not even half finished.” He wrote two more passages but never wove the three together into a completed poem. The editors have reproduced the passages as they are found in Sri Aurobindo’s notebooks and loose sheets, separating the three passages by blank lines.

A strong son of lightning. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934. Three handwritten manuscripts.

I made danger my helper. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934. Two handwritten manuscripts. Sri Aurobindo wrote these four lines on the back of a typed manuscript of “The World Game”. They do not, however, appear to have been intended for inclusion in that poem. The metre is not the same as, though possibly related to, the metre of “The World Game”.

The Inconscient. Circa 1934. Four handwritten manuscripts.

In gleam Konarak. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1934–35. A single handwritten manuscript on the back of a sheet used for a draft of “Thought the Paraclete”, which is dated 31 December 1934. The fragment consists of three stanzas, the second of which is incomplete.

Bugles of Light. Circa 1934–35. A single handwritten manuscript on the back of a note written to Sri Aurobindo on 31 December 1934.

The Fire King and the Messenger. Circa 1934–35. A single manuscript, written in a notebook near a draft of “Thought the Paraclete”.

God to thy greatness. No title in the manuscript. March 1936. A single manuscript, written between drafts of “The Yogi on the Whirlpool” and “The Kingdom Within”, both of which are dated 14 March 1936.

Silver foam. No title in the manuscript. March 1936. One handwritten manuscript, written on a sheet of a “Bloc-Memo” pad between “The Kingdom Within” and “One”, both of which are dated 14 March 1936. In the manuscript, there is no full stop at the end, suggesting that the piece is incomplete.

Torn are the walls. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936. Two handwritten manuscripts.

O ye Powers. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936. Three handwritten manuscripts. In the final manuscript, the last line ends in a comma, indicating that the piece is incomplete.

Hail to the fallen. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936. Italy invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in October 1935. Britain and France stopped trying to broker a peace in December, and in May 1936, after a heroic resistance, Emperor Haile Selassie fled the country. “Lion of Judah” was a title borne by the Emperors of Ethiopia. The star towards the end was written by Sri Aurobindo. One handwritten manuscript.

Seer deep-hearted. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936–37. One handwritten manuscript.

Soul, my soul [1]. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936–37. Two handwritten manuscripts; a third is published as “Soul, my soul [2]”.

Soul, my soul [2]. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1936–37. This is the most completely revised, but shortest, manuscript of this poem.

I am filled with the crash of war. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1938. Compare the third and fourth line of this poem with the third line of “The Cosmic Man” (see above); the two poems seem to be related. “The Cosmic Man” is dated 15 September 1938. One handwritten manuscript.

In the silence of the midnight. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1938. One handwritten manuscript.

Here in the green of the forest. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1939. One handwritten manuscript. The star before the last four lines was written by Sri Aurobindo.

Voice of the Summits. Circa 1946–47. One handwritten manuscript. The poem was probably written after “The Inner Fields”, which is dated 14 March 1947.

APPENDIX: POEMS IN GREEK AND IN FRENCH

As a student in England Sri Aurobindo wrote many poems in Greek and in Latin as school or college assignments. A typical assignment would be to render an English poem into Greek or Latin verse of a given metre. The Greek epigram below appears to be an example of such an assignment. Sri Aurobindo also learned French in England, and in later years wrote two poems in that language.

Greek Epigram. January 1892. Sri Aurobindo wrote this epigram in a notebook he used at Cambridge. At the end he wrote “Jan. 1892 (Porson Schol)”. This refers to the Porson Scholarship examination, which was held at Cambridge that month. In order to win this scholarship, candidates had to take twelve papers over the course of a week. One of the papers required contestants to provide a Greek translation of the following poem by Richard Carlton (born circa 1558), an English madrigal composer:

The witless boy that blind is to behold
Yet blinded sees what in our fancy lies
With smiling looks and hairs of curled gold
Hath oft entrapped and oft deceived the wise.
No wit can serve his fancy to remove,
For finest wits are soonest thrall'd to love.

Sir Edmund Leach, late provost of King’s College, Cambridge, who provided the information on the scholarship examination, went on to add:

It is possible that [Sri Aurobindo] Ghose was a candidate for the Porson Scholarship; alternatively it is possible that his King’s College supervisor set him the Porson Scholarship paper as an exercise to provide practice for the Classical Tripos examination which he was due to take in June 1892.

Sri Aurobindo's epigram is not a literal translation of the English poem, but an adaptation of it in Greek verse. Transliterated into the Latin alphabet, the Greek text reads as follows:

Mōros Erōs alaos th'; ho d'homōs ha g'eni phresi keitai
 Hēmōn, ophthalmous ōn alaos kathora.
 Pai, su gar hēdu gelōn iobostrukhe kalliprosōpe,
 Diktuō andra kalō kai sophon exapatas.
 Oude sophos per anēr se, doloploke, phuximos oudeis;
 Kai proteros pantōn doulos erōti sophos.

Lorsque rien n'existait. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1914–20. Sri Aurobindo seems to have written this prose poem during a fairly early period of his stay in Pondicherry. Published here for the first time.

Sur les grands sommets blancs. No title in the manuscript. Circa 1927. Sri Aurobindo wrote this incomplete poem in a notebook he used otherwise for the *Record of Yoga* of 1927.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

During his lifetime, Sri Aurobindo published poetry in a number of periodicals: *Fox's Weekly* (1883), *Bande Mataram* (1907), *The Modern Review* (1909, 1910), *Karmayogin* (1909, 1910), *Shama'a* (1921), *The Calcutta Review* (1934), *Sri Aurobindo Circle* (1948, 1949), and others. He also published poetry in twelve books: *Songs to Myrtilla and Other Poems* (c. 1898), *Urvsie* (c. 1899), *Ahana and Other Poems* (1915), *Love and Death* (1921), *Baji Prabhau* (1922), *Six Poems* (1934), *Poems* (1941), *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942), *On Quantitative Metre* (1942), *Poems Past and Present* (1946), *Chitrangada* (1949) and *Savitri* (1950–51). Details on the first editions of all these books except the last two may be found in the above notes. Four of the books had further editions during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime: *Songs to Myrtilla* (1923), *Urvsie* (c. 1905), *Love and Death* (1924, 1948), and *Baji Prabhau* (1949).

Collected Poems and Plays was the first attempt to bring out a comprehensive edition of Sri Aurobindo's known poetic output. It was planned by Nolini Kanta Gupta for release on 15 August 1942, Sri

Aurobindo's seventieth birthday. Following Sri Aurobindo's instructions that "only poems already published should be included in this collection", Nolani collected all poems, poetic translations and plays that had been published until then, typed them and sent them to Sri Aurobindo for revision. The book was published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, and printed at the Government Central Press, Hyderabad. Work on the book extended from around February to August 1942.

Between 1950 and 1971 a number of poems that had remained unpublished at the time of Sri Aurobindo's passing were printed in various journals connected with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and in three books: *Last Poems* (1952), *More Poems* (1957) and *Ilion* (1957). In 1971, all of Sri Aurobindo's known poetical works were published in *Collected Poems: The Complete Poetical Works*, volume 5 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. A few other poems were included in the *Supplement* (volume 27) to the Centenary Library in 1973. About a dozen poems discovered between then and 1985 were published in the journal *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*. The first almost complete collection of Sri Aurobindo's *Sonnets* was published in 1980. *Lyrical Poems 1930–1950* came out in 2002.

In the present volume are collected all previously published poems and at least three that appear here for the first time in print: "Thou bright choregus", "All here is Spirit" and "Lorsque rien n'existait". The poems have been arranged chronologically. As far as possible, books published during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime have been presented in their original form. The texts of all the poems have been checked against the author's manuscripts and printed editions.

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