



*THE AUGUSTAN BOOKS OF
MODERN POETRY*

SIR EDMUND
GOSSE

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It is sometimes taken for granted that this series is one of reprints only. But almost every one of the copyright volumes contains poetry previously only in manuscript or periodicals; one of the booklets is entirely new work, and another two consist of poetry largely inaccessible, since out of print through twenty years past.

SIR EDMUND GOSSE

Born 1849; Librarian to the House of Lords, 1904-14;
C.B., LL.D., D.Litt.

Sir Edmund Gosse's eminence as a critic, as well as a poet, and his services as a pioneer in the study of modern European literatures are too well known to call for any note here.

Thanks are again due to Messrs. Heinemann, whose generosity has done so much to make this series possible.

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To Austin Dobson

NEIGHBOUR of the near domain,
Stay awhile your passing wain!
Though to give is more your way,
Take a gift from me to-day!
From my homely store I bring
Signs of my poor husbanding;—
Here a spike of purple phlox,
Here a spicy bunch of stocks,
Mushrooms from my moister fields,
Apples that my orchard yields,—
Nothing,—for the show they make,
Something,—for the donor's sake;
Since for ten years we have been
Best of neighbours ever seen;
We have fronted evil weather,
Nip of critic's frost, together;
We have shared laborious days,
Shared the pleasantness of praise;
Brother not more close to brother,
We have cheered and helped each other;
Till so far the fields of each
Into the other's stretch and reach,
That perchance when both are gone
Neither may be named alone.

June, 1885.

Lying in the Grass

To Thomas Hardy

BETWEEN two russet tufts of summer grass,
I watch the world through hot air as through glass,
And by my face sweet lights and colours pass.

Before me, dark against the fading sky,
I watch three mowers mowing, as I lie:
With brawny arms they sweep in harmony.

Brown English faces by the sun burnt red,
Rich glowing colour on bare throat and head,
My heart would leap to watch them, were I dead!

And in my strong young living as I lie,
I seem to move with them in harmony,—
A fourth is mowing, and that fourth am I.

The music of the scythes that glide and leap,
The young men whistling as their great arms sweep,
And all the perfume and sweet sense of sleep,

The weary butterflies that droop their wings,
The dreamy nightingale that hardly sings,
And all the lassitude of happy things,

Is mingling with the warm and pulsing blood
That gushes through my veins a languid flood
And feeds my spirit as the sap a bud.

Behind the mowers, on the amber air,
A dark-green beech-wood rises, still and fair,
A white path winding up it like a stair.

And see that girl, with pitcher on her head,
And clean white apron on her gown of red,—
Her even-song of love is but half-said:

She waits the youngest mower. Now he goes;
Her cheeks are redder than a wild blush-rose;
They climb up where the deepest shadows close.

But though they pass and vanish, I am there;
I watch his rough hands meet beneath her hair,
Their broken speech sounds sweet to me like prayer.

Ah! now the rosy children come to play,
And romp and struggle with the new-mown hay;
Their clear high voices sound from far away.

They know so little why the world is sad,
They dig themselves warm graves and yet are glad;
Their muffled screams and laughter make me mad!

I long to go and play among them there;
Unseen, like wind, to take them by the hair,
And gently make their rosy cheeks more fair.

The happy children! full of frank surprise,
And sudden whims and innocent ecstasies;
What godhead sparkles from their liquid eyes!

No wonder round those urns of mingled clays
That Tuscan potters fashioned in old days,
And coloured like the torrid earth ablaze,

We find the little gods and loves portrayed,
Through ancient forests wandering undismayed,
Or gathered, whispering, in some pleasant glade.

They knew, as I do now, what keen delight
A strong man feels to watch the tender flight
Of little children playing in his sight.

I do not hunger for a well-stored mind,
I only wish to live my life, and find
My heart in unison with all mankind.

My life is like the single dewy star
That trembles on the horizon's primrose-bar,—
A microcosm where all things living are.

And if, among the noiseless grasses, Death
Should come behind and take away my breath,
I should not rise as one who sorroweth;

For I should pass, but all the world would be
Full of desire and young delight and glee,
And why should men be sad through loss of me?

The light is dying; in the silver blue
The young moon shines from her bright window through:
The mowers all are gone, and I go too.

The Menad's Grave

THE girl who once, on Lydian heights,
Around the sacred grove of pines,
Would dance through whole tempestuous nights
When no moon shines,
Whose pipe of lotus featly blown
Gave airs as shrill as Cotys' own,—

Who, crowned with buds of ivy dark,
Three times drained deep with amorous lips
The wine-fed bowl of willow bark,
With silver tips,
Nor sank, nor ceased, but shouted still
Like some wild wind from hill to hill,—

She lies at last where poplars wave
Their sad gray foliage all day long,
The river murmurs near her grave
A soothing song;
Farewell, it saith! Her days have done
With shouting at the set of sun.

Greece and England

WOULD this sunshine be completer,
Or these violets smell sweeter,
Or the birds sing more in metre,
If it all were years ago,
When the melted mountain-snow
Heard in Enna all the woe
Of the poor forlorn Demeter?

Would a stronger life pulse o'er us
If a panther-chariot bore us,
If we saw, enthroned before us,
Ride the leopard-footed god,
With a fir-cone tip the rod,
Whirl the thyrsus round, and nod
To a drunken Mænad-chorus?

Bloomed there richer, redder roses
Where the Lesbian earth encloses
All of Sappho? where reposes
Meleager, laid to sleep
By the olive-girdled deep?
Where the Syrian maidens weep,
Bringing serpolet in posies?

Ah! it may be! Greece had leisure
For a world of faded pleasure;
We must tread a tamer measure,
To a milder, homelier lyre;
We must tend a paler fire,
Lay less perfume on the pyre,
Be content with poorer treasure!

Were the brown-limbed lovers bolder?
Venus younger, Cupid older?
Down the wood-nymph's warm white shoulder

Trailed a purpler, madder vine?
Were the poets more divine?
Brew we no such golden wine
Here, where summer suns are colder?

Yet for us too life has flowers,
Time a glass of joyous hours,
Interchange of sun and showers,
And a wealth of leafy glades,
Meant for loving men and maids,
Full of warm green lights and shades,
Trellis-work of wild-wood bowers.

So while English suns are keeping
Count of sowing-time and reaping,
We've no need to waste our weeping,
Though the glad Greeks lounged at ease
Underneath their olive-trees,
And the Sophoclean bees
Swarmed on lips of poets sleeping!

Alcyone

Sonnet

PHŒBUS

WHAT voice is this that wails above the deep?

ALCYONE

A wife's, that mourns her fate and loveless days.

PHŒBUS

What love lies buried in these waterways?

ALCYONE

A husband's, hurried to eternal sleep.

PHŒBUS

Cease, O beloved, cease to wail and weep

ALCYONE

Wherefore?

PHŒBUS

The waters in a fiery blaze
Proclaim the godhead of my healing rays.

ALCYONE

No god can sow where fate hath stood to reap.

PHŒBUS

Hold, wringing hands! cease, piteous tears, to fall!

ALCYONE

But grief must rain and glut the passionate sea.

PHŒBUS

Thou shalt forget this ocean and thy wrong,
And I will bless the dead, though past recall.

ALCYONE

What canst thou give to me or him in me?

PHŒBUS

A name in story and a light in song.

The Tomb of Sophocles

A BOUNDING satyr, golden in the beard,
That leaps with goat-feet high into the air,
And crushes from the thyme an odour rare,
Keeps watch around the marble tomb revered
Of Sophocles, the poet loved and feared,
Whose sovereign voice once called out of her lair
The Dorian muse severe, with braided hair,

Who loved the thyrsus and wild dances weird.
Here all day long the pious bees can pour
 Libations of their honey; round this tomb
 The Dionysiac ivy loves to roam :
The satyr laughs; but He awakes no more,
Wrapped up in silence at the grave's cold core,
Nor sees the sun wheel round in the white dome.

On a Lute Found in a Sarcophagus

To L. A. T.

WHAT curled and scented sun-girls, almond-eyed,
With lotos-blossoms in their hands and hair,
Have made their swarthy lovers call them fair,
With these spent strings, when brutes were deified,
And Memnon in the sunrise sprang and cried,
And love-winds smote Bubastis, and the bare
Black breasts of carven Pasht received the prayer
Of suppliants bearing gifts from far and wide!
This lute has out-sung Egypt; all the lives
Of violent passion, and the vast calm art
That lasts in granite only, all lie dead;
This little bird of song alone survives,
As fresh as when its fluting smote the heart
Last time the brown slave wore it garlanded.

The Pipe-Player

COOL, and palm-shaded from the torrid heat,
The young brown tenor puts his singing by,
And sets the twin pipe to his lips to try
Some air of bulrush-glooms where lovers meet;
O swart musician, time and fame are fleet,
Brief all delight, and youth's feet fain to fly!
Pipe on in peace! To-morrow must we die?

What matter, if our life to-day be sweet!
Soon, soon, the silver paper-reeds that sigh
 Along the Sacred River will repeat
 The echo of the dark-stoled bearers' feet,
Who carry you, with wailing, where must lie
Your swathed and withered body, by-and-by,
 In perfumed darkness with the grains of wheat.

A Syrian Inscription

BENEATH this arch, I, Tabnit, lie at rest;
I, Tabnit, Priest of Ashtoreth, and King
 Of Sidon where the tideless waters swing.
O man, with hands and footsteps all unblest,
Who comest, an unseasonable guest,
 Depart in haste, nor o'er my ashes fling
 Thy furtive shadow. Go, nor dream I bring
Silver and gold for thy unhallowed quest.

Else,—if this screed thou connest, and dost yet
 Presume upon my slumber,—be there shed
 The curse of Ashtoreth on thy moonstruck head;
Thee may the living in thy life forget,
No seed in fields of childhood mayest thou set,
 Nor couch at last among the peaceful dead.

The Bath

WITH rosy palms against her bosom pressed
 To stay the shudder that she dreads of old,
 Lysidice glides down, till silver-cold
The water girdles half her glowing breast;
A yellow butterfly on flowery quest
 Rifles the roses that her tresses hold:
 A breeze comes wandering through the fold on fold

Of draperies curtaining her shrine of rest.
Soft beauty, like her kindred petals strewed
Along the crystal coolness, there she lies.
What vision gratifies those gentle eyes?
She dreams she stands where yesterday she stood,
Where, while the whole arena shrieks for blood,
Hot in the sand a gladiator dies.

Songs from "King Erik" (1876)

I

AUTUMN closes
Round the roses,
Shatters, strips them, head by head;
Winter passes
O'er the grasses,
Turns them yellow, brown and red;
Can a lover
E'er recover
When his summer love is dead?

Yet the swallow
Turns to follow
In the northward wake of spring,
To refashion
Wasted passion
With a sweep of his dark wing,
As returning
Love flies burning
To these stricken lips that sing.

II

I bring a garland for your head,
Of blossoms fresh and fair,
My own hands wound their white and red
To ring about your hair :

Here is a lily, here a rose,
A warm narcissus that scarce blows,
And fairer blossoms no man knows.

So crowned and chapleted with flowers,
I pray you be not proud;
For after brief and summer hours
Comes autumn with a shroud;—
Though fragrant as a flower you lie,
You and your garland, by-and-by,
Will fade and wither up and die.

The Cruise of the "Rover"

A.D. 1575

THEY sailed away one morning when sowing-time was
over,
In long red fields above the sea they left the sleeping
wheat;
Twice twenty men of Devonshire who manned their ship
the *Rover*,
Below the little busy town where all the schooners meet.

Their sweethearts came and waved to them, and filled with
noise of laughter
The echoing port below the cliff where thirty craft can
ride.
Each lad cried out, "Farewell to thee!" the captain shouted
after,
"By God's help we'll be back again before the harvest-
tide."

They turned the Start and slipped along with speedy wind
and weather;
Passed white Terceira's battlements, and, close upon the
line,
Ran down a little carrack full of cloth and silk and leather,
And golden Popish images and good Madeira wine.

The crew with tears and curses went tacking back to Flores;
The English forty cut the seas where none before had
been,
And spent the sultry purple nights in English songs, and
stories
Of England, and her soldiers, and her Spaniard-hating
queen.

At last the trade-wind caught them, the pale sharks reeled
before them,
The little *Rover* shot ahead across the western seas;
All night the larger compass of a tropic sky passed o'er them,
Till they won the Mexique waters through a strait of
banyan-trees.

And there good luck befell them, for divers times they
sighted
The sails of Spanish merchantmen bound homeward with
their wares;
And twice they failed to follow them, and once they stopped
benighted;
But thrice the flag of truce flew out, and the scented prize
was theirs.

But midsummer was on them, with close-reef gales and
thunder,
Their heavy vessel wallowed beneath her weight of gold;
A long highway of ocean kept them and home asunder,
So back they turned towards England with a richly-laden
hold.

But just outside Tampico a man-of-war was riding,
And all the mad young English blood in forty brains
awoke,
The *Rover* chased the monster, and swiftly shorewards
gliding,
Dipped down beneath the cannonade that o'er her bul-
warks broke.

Three several days they fought her, and pressed her till she
grounded
On the sandy isle of Carmen, where milky palm-trees
grow;
Whereat she waved an ensign, a peaceful trumpet sounded,
And all the Spaniards cried for truce, surrendering in a
row.

Alas the wiles and jesuitries of scoundrel-hearted Spaniards,
The scarlet woman dyes their hands in deeper red than
hers,
For every scrap of white that decked their tackling and their
lanyards
Just proved them sly like devils and cowardly like curs.

For out from countless coverts, from low palm-shaded
islands,
That fledged in seeming innocence the smooth and
shining main,
The pinnaces came gliding and hemmed them round in
silence,
All manned with Indian bravos and whiskered dogs of
Spain.

Our captain darted forwards, his fair hair streamed behind
him,
He shouted in his cheery voice, "For home and for the
Queen!"

Three times he waved his gallant sword, but the flashes
seemed to blind him,
And a hard look came across his mouth where late a smile
had been.

We levelled with our muskets, and the foremost boat went
under,
The ship's boy seized a trumpet and blew a merry blast;
The Spanish rats held off awhile, and gazed at us in wonder,
But the hindmost pushed the foremost on, and boarded
us at last.

They climbed the larboard quarter with their hatchets and
their sabres;
The Devon lads shot fast and hard, and sank their second
boat,
But the Popish hordes were legion, and Hercules his
labours
Are light beside the task to keep a riddled barque afloat.

And twenty men had fallen, and the *Rover's* deck was
reeling,
And the brave young captain died in shouting loud
"Elizabeth!"
The Spaniards dragged the rest away just while the ship
was heeling,
Lest she should sink and rob them of her sailors' tortured
breath.

For they destined them to perish in a slow and cruel
slaughter,
A feast for monks and Jesuits too exquisite to lose;
So they caught the English sailors as they leaped into the
water,
And a troop of horse as convoy brought them north to
Vera Cruz.

They led them up a sparkling beach of burning sand and coral,
They dragged the brave young Englishmen like hounds within a leash;
They passed beneath an open wood of leaves that smelt of laurel,
Bound close together, each to each, with cords that cut the flesh.

And miles and miles along the coast they tramped beneath no cover,
Till in their mouths each rattling tongue was like a hard dry seed,
And ere they came to Vera Cruz when that long day was over,
The coral cut their shoes to rags, and made them wince and bleed.

Then as they clambered up the town, the jeering crowd grew thicker,
And laughed to see their swollen feet and figures marred and bent,
And women with their hair unloosed stood underneath the flicker
Of torch and swinging lantern, and cursed them as they went.

And three men died of weariness before they reached the prison,
And one fell shrieking with the pain of a poniard in the back,
And when dawn broke in the morning three other souls had risen
To bear the dear Lord witness of the hellish Spaniard pack.

But the monks girt up their garments, the friars bound
their sandals,

They hurried to the market-place with faggots of dry
wood,
And the acolytes came singing, with their incense and
their candles,
To offer to their images a sacrifice of blood.

But they sent the leech to tend them, with his pouch
and his long phial,

And the Jesuits came smiling, with honied words at
first,
For they dared not burn the heretics without some show
of trial,
And the English lads were dying of poisoned air and
thirst.

So they gave them draughts of water from a great cold
earthen firkin,

And brought them to the courtyard where the tall
hidalgo sat,
And he looked a gallant fellow in his boots and his rough
jerkin,
With the jewels on his fingers, and the feather in
his hat.

And he spoke out like a soldier, for he said, "Ye caught
them fighting,

They met you with the musket, by the musket they
shall fall.
They are Christians in some fashion, and the pile you're
bent on lighting
Shall blaze with none but Indians, or it shall not blaze
at all."

So they led them to a clearing in the wood outside the city,
Struck off the gyves that bound them, and freed each
crippled hand,

And dark-eyed women clustered round and murmured
in their pity,
But won no glance nor answer from the steadfast
English band.

For their lives rose up before them in crystalline com-
pleteness,
And they lost the flashing soldiery, the sable horde of
Rome,
And the great magnolias round them, with wave on wave
of sweetness,
Seemed just the fresh profusion and hawthorn lanes of
home.

They thought about the harvests, and wondered who
would reap them;
They thought about the little port where thirty craft can
ride;
They thought about their sweethearts, and prayed the
Lord to keep them;
Then kissed each other silently, and hand in hand they
died.

On Yes Tor

BENEATH our feet, the shuddering bogs
Made earthquakes of their own,
For greenish-grizzled furtive frogs
And lizards lithe and brown;

And high to east and south and west,
Girt round the feet with gorse,
Lay, summering, breast by giant breast,
The titan brood of tors;

Golden and phantom-pale they lay,
Calm in the cloudless light,
Like gods that, slumbering, still survey
The obsequious infinite.

Plod, plod, through herbage thin or dense;
Past chattering rills of quartz;
Across brown bramble-coverts, whence
The shy black ouzel darts;

Through empty leagues of broad, bare lands,
Beneath the empty skies,
Clutched in the grip of those vast hands,
Cowed by those golden eyes,

We fled beneath their scornful stare,
Like terror-hunted dogs,
More timid than the lizards were,
And shyer than the frogs.

At Anstey's Cove

THE breeze inscribes with ring on ring
The grizzled oily seas of Spring;
Around the headland, gray and pale,
Comes, like a ghost, a gliding sail.

Through brooding tides I see her come
Where once I rowed, where once I swum;
Ah! then that weltering water's hue
Was rainbow-purple, peacock blue.

She veers and fades; she dies away
In gulfs of universal gray;
And of my boyhood and its boast
She seems the melancholy ghost.

Inscription for a Fountain

DEEP in the heart of this dim wood
Our Naiad pours her slender urn,
Nor dreams that round its gathering flood
The fortunes of a world will turn.

With a Copy of Herrick

FRESH with all airs of woodland brooks
And scents of showers,
Take to your haunt of holy books
This saint of flowers.

When meadows burn with budding May,
And heaven is blue,
Before his shrine our prayers we say,—
Saint Robin true.

Love crowned with thorns is on his staff,—
Thorns of sweet-briar;
His benediction is a laugh,
Birds are his choir.

His sacred robe of white and red
Unction distils;
He hath a nimbus round his head
Of daffodils.

To Teresa

DEAR child of mine, the wealth of whose warm hair
Hangs like ripe clusters of the apricot,
Thy blue eyes, gazing, comprehend me not,
But love me, and for love alone I care;
Thou listenest with a shy and serious air,
Like some Sabrina from her weedy grot
Outpeeping coyly when the noon is hot

To watch some shepherd piping unaware.
'Twas not for thee I sang, dear child;—and yet
 Would that my song could reach such ears as thine,
Pierce to young hearts unsullied by the fret
 Of years in their white innocence divine;
Crowned with a wreath of buds still dewy-wet,
 O what a fragrant coronal were mine!

A Portrait

SHE hath lived so silently and loved so much,
That she is deeply stirred by little things,
 While pain's long ache and sorrow's sharper stings
Scarce move her spirit that eludes their clutch;
But one half-tone of music, or the touch
 Of some tame bird's eager vibrating wings,
 Breaks up the seal'd fountain's murmurings
To storm, or what in others might seem such;
So, when she lifts her serious lids to turn
 On ours her soft and magical dark eyes,
 All womanhood seems on her, in disguise;
As on the pale white peacock we discern
 The pencilled shadows of the radiant dyes
And coloured moons that on her sisters burn.

Revelation

INTO the silver night
She brought with her pale hand
The topaz lanthorn-light,
And darted splendour o'er the land;
 Around her in a band,
Ringstrak'd and pied, the great soft moths came flying,
 And, flapping with their mad wings, fanned
The flickering flame, ascending, falling, dying.

Behind the thorny pink
Close wall of blossom'd may,
I gaz'd thro' one green chink,
And saw no more than thousands may,—
Saw sweetness, tender and gay,—
Saw full rose lips as rounded as the cherry,
Saw braided locks more dark than bay,
And flashing eyes, decorous, pure and merry.

With food for furry friends,
She passed, her lamp and she,
Till eaves and gable-ends
Hid all that saffron sheen from me :
Around my rosy tree
Once more the silver-starry night was shining,
With depths of heaven, dewy and free,
And crystals of a carven moon declining.

Alas! for him who dwells
In frigid air of thought,
When warmer light dispels
The frozen calm his spirit sought,
By life too lately taught,
He sees the ecstatic Human from him stealing;
Reels from the joy experience brought,
And dares not clutch what Love was half revealing.

The Prodigal

WHEN life is young, and all the world seems waiting
To crown the bright prince Self, his bondage done,
The callow eager heart feels no debating,
But takes affection as flowers drink the sun.

A little while, he saith, and men must know me;
A few feet more, and I must reach the light;
The private love these homely bosoms show me
Perchance may lift me into public sight.

But ah! time slowly strips the vain illusion,
And decks the fairy prince in common clothes;
The breathless ages prove a boy's delusion,
And naught so faithless as the Muses' oaths.

When battling hopes that made the fresh pulse martial,
Spring up no more behind the fife and drum,
Success may come, yet cropped and tame and partial,
And joys,—but life has faded ere they come;

Then in that pause, when pride has lost its splendour,
When foiled ambition smiles itself to sleep,
Back rush old thoughts, familiar thoughts and tender,
That slumber'd in the conscience, dumb and deep.

Then all the withered loves that once fell fading,
Stir like long weeds below a tidal sea;
Then all the thankless past returns, upbraiding,—
Then all my memory turns in shame to thee.

The trustful bird close to thy window flutters,
The squirrel takes his breakfast from thy hand,
And every accent that thy whisper utters
Thrills the meek subjects of thy garden-land.

Thou hast the crafty voice, the magic fingers
That round the woodland pulse have art to twine,
Yet oft I think, among thy serfs and singers,
The wildest capture was this heart of mine.

Ah! take me home; my pride of pinion broken,
My song untuned, my morning-light decayed!
I bring thee back thine own old love for token
That I am he for whom it toiled and prayed.

Undone the toil, and vain the intercession!
But ah! beneath thy fire for my success
There lurked a hungry sense of lost possession,
And for my failure thou'lt not love me less.

Dear! for my sake the streets will ne'er be lighted;
The senate never ring with cheers for me!
Open thy garden-gate to one benighted,
And take me safely back to peace and thee.

Two Points of View

IF I forget,—
May joy pledge this weak heart to sorrow!

If I forget,—

May my soul's coloured summer borrow
The hueless tones of storm and rain,
Of ruth and terror, shame and pain,—

If I forget!

Though you forget,—

There is no binding code for beauty;

Though you forget,—

Love was your charm, but not your duty;
And life's worst breeze must never bring
A ruffle to your silken wing,—

Though you forget.

If I forget,—

The salt creek may forget the ocean;

If I forget

The heart whence flows my heart's bright motion,
May I sink meanlier than the worst,
Abandoned, outcast, crushed, accurst,—

If I forget!

Though you forget,—

No word of mine shall mar your pleasure;

Though you forget,—

You filled my barren life with treasure,
You may withdraw the gift you gave,
You still are lord, I still am slave,—

Though you forget.

Henry Patmore

THIS virgin soul looked shyly forth, and knew
The fiery face of Love, and then withdrew,
Just when the spices through its garden blew.

With this one glimpse so full a rapture came,
It shrank from earthly joy as pain and shame,
And passed to God on that first mystic flame.

Dissolved, assumed in ardours so intense,
It rose to heights untouched by mortal sense,
Like some pure cloud of molten frankincense.

And that pale lamp of verse, which God had given
To guide this soul, while o'er life's ocean driven,
Was quenched within the blazing glow of heaven.

John Henry Newman

August 11, 1890

PEACE to the virgin heart, the crystal brain!
Truce for one hour thro' all the camps of thought!
Our subtlest mind hath rent the veil of pain,
Hath found the truth he sought.

Who knows what script those opening eyes have read?
If this set creed, or that, or none be best?
Let no strife jar above this snow-white head!
Peace for a saint at rest!

Leconte de Lisle

July 17, 1894

HIS verse was carved in ivory forms, undying
As those that deck the marble Phidian frieze.
Over his plaintive hearse to-night is flying
A phantom genius from the Cyclades.

It hovers till our idle rites be over;
And then will bear him in its arms away
To islands cinctured by the sun, their lover,
And spicy woodlands thrilled with fiery day.

There his dark hours of toil shall drop, forgotten;
There all he loved, simple and calm and grand—
All the white creatures by his Muse begotten—
Shall cluster round him in a stately band.

Then shall he smile, appeased by sovereign beauty,
Contented that he strove and waited long,
Since in those worlds where loveliness is duty
His bronze and marble leap to life and song.

Epilogue

BEFORE my tale of days is told,
O may I watch, on reverent knees,
The Unknown Beauty once unfold
The magic of her mysteries!

Before I die, O may I see,
Clasp'd in her violet girdle, Spring;
May April breezes blow to me
Songs that the youngest poets sing!

Old eyes are dull to sights unseen,
Old ears are dull to songs unsung,
But if the heart stay warm and green,
Perchance the senses may keep young.

Howe'er it be, I will not quail
To tell the lapse of years like sand;
My faith in beauty shall not fail
Because I fail to understand.

New arts, new raptures, new desires
Will stir the new-born souls of men;
New fingers smite new-fashioned lyres,—
And O! may I be listening then.

The centaur crashes thro' the wood,
And shoots his arrow there and thus:
Shall I prefer my solitude
Because his form be fabulous?

Shall I reject the green and rose
Of opals, with their shifting flame,
Because the classic diamond glows
With lustre that is still the same?

Change is the pulse of life on earth;
The artist dies, but Art lives on;
New rhapsodies are ripe for birth
When every rhapsodist seems gone.

So, if I pray for length of days,
It is not in the barren pride
That looks behind itself, and says,
"The Past alone is deified!"

Nay, humbly, shrinkingly, in dread
Of fires too splendid to be borne,—
In expectation lest my head
Be from its Orphic shoulders torn,—

I wait, till, down the eastern sky
Muses, like Mænads in a throng,
Sweep my decayed traditions by,
In startling tones of unknown song.

So, to my days' extremity,
May I, in patience infinite,
Attend the beauty that must be,
And, though it slay me, welcome it.

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