COTERIE

Easter, 1920.
E. M. O'R. DICKEY
COTERIE  A Quarterly
ART, PROSE, AND POETRY

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STREET MEETING

ANYWHERE, coming out of any place,
Suddenly turning the head,
I might meet that face to face—
The long sought, the long fled.

Speaking without thinking, one would say—
"Is it you? How strange!"—That sort of thing.—
"It is cold," or "It is good weather to-day"—
Or "This street affects me as unpleasing."

It is always the same suburban sort of street:
There are houses neither old nor new, neither large nor small;
Starved trees in cages—front gardens meanly neat—
It is almost any street at all.

Should I murmur—"This unique occasion,
Really altogether unexpected"?—
There are so many streets, one surfeits on resemblances,
But should one be dejected?

And if I should chance to meet
One who bears within the grey soul of this street,
One who is the grey street prowling among men—
What then?

There will be lines of houses that converge.
There will be street lamps in the thin dragging mist.—
But in fact I do not at all wish that to emerge,
So why should I persist?
I should wish to have no desire nor purpose now,
But, like Lord Alfred Tennyson, expect
That somehow good will probably come along somehow,
Or words to that effect.

PROFITEER WILLIAMSON PURSUES CULTURE

THE orange and vermilion lights
Twinkle among the indigo trees.
Williamson in violet tights
Converses with the blonde marquise.

Troops of parrots madly squawk,
Streaming out of Africa.
"Madame la marquise, will you walk
Serenely into Asia?"

Evidence of rumbling gongs,
Peacock silk and porcelain.—
Fat Jewesses roaring songs
Surge and squeeze down Petticoat Lane.

All the lanterns gaily swing,
All the gongs and all the drums.—
"Madame, hear these maidens sing
Poignant lyrics of the slums!

"Shall we be grotesque?—and why,
Madame, do you stint your mirth?
In my country's service I
Earned my bulbousness and girth."
Tropical and sultry note
In the night blared suddenly.—
"Parrot, your conspicuous coat
Is but protective mimicry!

"Shall we indeed await the dawn,
Or something else to talk about?"—
The blonde marquise to hide a yawn
Puts delicate lilac fingers out.

Williamson grows old again—
Stares down at his sagging paunch.
Dew is falling; a sudden pain
Pierces his rheumatic haunch.

Rolling ships approaching port,
Coloured seamen wreathed in smiles.
Apes and birds of every sort
Brought from garish, tropic isles.

Coloured seamen leave the sea.—
Williamson becomes absurd.—
"Coloured men, oh come to me!
I will purchase many a bird!"

Lanterns out and music dumb,
And the rain descending fast.—
"Madame, if you will not come,
I shall leave you to your past.

"Every one has gone to bed."—
"Would that I were every one!"—
"There is nothing to be said."—
"There is nothing to be done."
CONRAD AIKEN

PORTRAIT OF ONE DEAD

THIS is her house: on one side there is darkness,
On one side there is light.
Into the darkness you may lift your lanterns—
O, any number—it will still be night.
And here are echoing stairs to lead you downward
To long, sonorous halls;
And here is spring for ever at these windows,
With roses on the walls.

This is her room: on one side there is music—
On one side not a sound.
At one step she could move from love to silence,
Feel myriad darkness coiling round.
And here are balconies from which she heard you,
Your steady footstep on the stair.
And here the glass in which she saw your shadow
As she unbound her hair.

Here is the room— with ghastly walls dissolving—
The twilight room in which she called you "lover";
And the floorless room in which she called you "friend."
So many times, in doubt, she ran between them!—
Through windy corridors of darkening end.

Here she could stand with one dim light above her
And hear far music, like a sea in caverns,
Roaring away at hollowed walls of stone.
And here in a roofless room, where it was raining,
She bore the patient sorrow of rain alone.
Your words were walls which suddenly froze around her.
Your words were windows—large enough for moonlight,—
Too small to let her through.
Your letters—fragrant cloisters faint with music;
The music that assuaged her there was you.

How many times she heard your step ascending,
Yet never saw your face!
She heard them turn again, ring slowly fainter,
Till silence swept the place.
Why had you gone?... The door, perhaps, mistaken...
You would go elsewhere. The deep walls were shaken.

A certain rose-leaf—sent without intention—
Became, with time, a woven web of fire—
She wore it, and was warm.
A certain hurried glance, let fall at parting,
Became, with time, the flashings of a storm.

Yet there was nothing asked, no hint to tell you
Of secret idols carved in secret chambers
From all you did and said.
Nothing was done, until at last she knew you.
Nothing was known till, somehow, she was dead.

How did she die?—You say she died of poison.
Simple and swift. And much to be regretted.
You did not see her pass
So many thousand times from light to darkness,
Pausing so many times before her glass;

You did not see how many times she hurried
To lean from certain windows, vainly hoping,
Passionate still for beauty, remembered spring.
You did not know how long she clung to music,
You did not hear her sing.
Did she, then, make her choice, and step out bravely  
From sound to silence—close, herself, those windows?  
Or was it true, instead,  
That darkness moved,—for once,—and so possessed her?...  
We'll never know, you say, for she is dead.

COFFINS

WIND blows. Snow falls. The great clock in its tower  
Ticks with reverberant coil and tolls the hour;  
At the deep sudden stroke the pigeons fly...  
The fine snow flutes the cracks between the flagstones.  
We close our coats, and hurry, and search the sky.

We are like music, each voice of it pursuing  
A golden separate dream, remote, persistent,  
Climbing to fire, receding to hoarse despair.  
What do you whisper, brother? What do you tell me?...  
We pass each other, are lost, and do not care.

One mounts up to beauty, serenely singing,  
Forgetful of the steps that cry behind him;  
One drifts slowly down from a waking dream.  
One, foreseeing, lingers for ever unmoving...  
Upward and downward, past him there, we stream.

One has death in his eyes: and walks more slowly.  
Death, among jonquils, told him a freezing secret,  
A cloud blows over his eyes, he ponders earth.  
He sees in the world a forest of sunlit jonquils:  
A slow black poison huddles beneath that mirth.
Death, from street to alley, from door to window,
Cries out his news,—of unplumbed worlds approaching,
Of a cloud of darkness soon to destroy the town.
But why comes death—he asks—in a world so perfect?
Or why the minute’s grey in the golden hour?

Music, a sudden glissando, sinister, troubled,
A drift of wind-torn petals, before him passes,
Down jangled streets, and dies.
The bodies of old and young, of maimed and lovely,
Are slowly borne to earth with a dirge of cries.

Down cobbled streets they come; down huddled stairways;
Through silent halls; through carven golden doorways;
From freezing rooms as bare as rock.
The curtains are closed across deserted windows.
Earth streams out of the shovel, the pebbles knock.

Mary, whose hands rejoiced to move in sunlight;
Silent Elaine, grave Anne, who sang so clearly;
Fugitive Helen, who lived and walked alone;
Miriam, too soon dead, darkly remembered;
Childless Ruth, who sorrowed, but could not atone;

Jean, whose laughter flashed over depths of terror,
And Eloise, who desired to love but dared not;
Doris, who turned alone to the dark and cried,—
They are blown away like windflung chords of music;
They drift away; the sudden music has died.

And one, with death in his eyes, comes walking slowly
And sees the shadow of death in many faces,
And thinks the world is strange.
He desires immortal music, and spring for ever,
And beauty that knows no change.
LE MAUDIT

WOMEN'S tears are but water;
    The tears of men are blood.

He sits alone in the firelight
And on either side drifts by
Sleep, like a torrent whirling,
Profound, wrinkled and dumb.

Circuitously, stealthily,
Dawn occupies the city;
As if the seasons knew of his grief
Spring has suddenly changed into snow.

Disaster and sorrow
Have made him their pet;
He cannot escape their accursed embraces.
For all his dodgings
Memory will lacerate him.

What good does it do to wander
Night hours through city streets?
Only that in poor places
He can be with common men
And receive their unspoken
Instinctive sympathy.

What has life done for him?
He stands alone in the darkness
Like a sentry never relieved,
Looking over a barren space,
Awaiting the tardy finish.
ON FREDERICK MANNING

In 1909, Mr. Manning published a book of prose which he called *Scenes and Portraits*. He has also issued two or three books of poems, of which *Eidola* is the latest. But he is most significant, most poetic in his prose, which is philosophy expressed by a poet. His book will not be widely popular, but it will always retain a certain tranquil charm for reflective and sceptical minds. His philosophy, his religion—if you like—is that "of men like Protagoras, Lucretius, and Montaigne, a religion of doubt, of tolerance." Perhaps this generation is weary of doubt, however beautifully modified by imagination, and men, especially young men, are eager to find something defined and absolute. But this desire is not peculiar to this age; it is common to every intellectual society. The value of Mr. Manning's book lies in its reconciliation of doubt and beauty, of knowledge and enthusiasm, of scepticism and happiness; in the fact that it grapples with eternal problems of thought and conduct. Its method is symbolic and imaginative. Mr. Manning argues no abstract thesis, but creates "scenes and portraits," showing men at different periods engaged in debating similar problems and striving for similar ideals. He demonstrates "how often man has crept up toward civilisation and then receded from it again, as the tides recede from the beach; how the light of the world has passed from nation to nation and none has brought it to the goal; how man forgets the evils which the last generation had abolished, and rushes back upon them to escape from present evils." He is duped by none of the quack receipts for universal happiness; examines institutions and systems to discover the vitality, the enthusiasms which have become crystallised in them; passes with an ironic smile those short cuts to the millennium which seduce unbalanced minds and pursues his own harder path of truth-seeking. He loves the common people whose characters are formed by long contact with natural objects and scenes; and he loves those rare detached minds which after long wandering among perplexities have at
last found tranquillity "in the free exercise of reason and a profound irony." He hates what is in between them, the "dreary waste of formalism, Pharisaism," that clumsy mass of half-educated, half-civilised, wholly intolerant and tyrannical people.

That reaction against over-subtlety which has produced a cult of childishness and that reaction against prettiness which has forgotten Taine's remark "Le laid est beau sans doute, mais le beau est plus beau," each of these will deplore a prejudice against the tranquil subtlety of Mr. Manning's mind and the grace and softness of its expression. Mr. T. S. Eliot has recently shown us that the modern artist need not pretend to abolish his predecessors and that beauty is not an impossible quality in an original mind. I would add this; when you are satiated with acrid tragedies of sex, with brilliant but sometimes vulgar cynicisms, with mock childishness and false simplicity, and with the deliberate hatred of life, which is like that of a churchman, Tertullian or St. Bernard, then you will find in Mr. Manning an agreeable corrective. He provides no apocalyptic denunciations, no bitter expression of sordidness, no universal hatred; he attempts to reconcile us to life, a much more difficult task. He is a seeker after truth, a hunter of wisdom. His integrity, the profound ideas he elucidates, should excuse that decorative speech which is now so unfashionable. He is one of the very few among the younger writers of whom it may be said that he possesses "that kindly love of humanity, that sympathy with its smallest interests; that toleration of its errors and of its conflicting opinions; that interest in local and familiar affairs, in which the highest culture is at one with the unlearned rustic mind." It may be argued that Mr. Manning has nothing new to tell us, and I like to fancy that he would not disagree with the accusation, but would merely reply that he reminded people of things they had formerly learned and then forgotten. Novelty is of small importance to a mind like Mr. Manning's which expends its highest faculties upon those sentiments and ideas which are the essence of civilisation.
AND God sat throned above the abyss, while the heavenly choirs bowed down before him, and hid their faces beneath their wings, for the hour of judgment was at hand.

And God sent his four angels, into the four corners of the universe, to gather all things unto him, that he might judge them, and cast the wicked into the abyss.

And all the dead things of the world were driven before him, like dead leaves by the wind, yea, like dead leaves from all the four corners of the world.

And the worlds were driven before God, as by a great wind, and he judged the worlds, and none were cast into the abyss.

And the elements were driven before him, the waves of water, the flames of fire, the unstable air, and the earth; and he judged them, and cast none into the abyss.

And all living things were driven before him, the birds of the air, the beasts of the fields, the fishes of the sea, all worms and creeping things, and he cast none into the abyss.

And all mankind came before the throne of God to be judged; and one man was found worthy of being cast into the abyss, one man only of all that the womb of Earth had brought forth.

And God looked at the abyss and at the soul before him, and God spoke: I shall not cast even you into the abyss lest you be lonely there.

II

THERE was a man of the city of Ur called Shaman, and he went out into the wilderness to look for God, and he abode there for twenty years. At the end of that time he rose up
and looking toward the sun he spake, saying: I have not found God in the wilderness. I shall betake me back into the ways of men, and the city of Ur. Perchance God dwelleth there.

And having taken a lodging in a house by the wall he continued to seek for God, and he found him not. He went unto the priests of Bel, and spake unto them saying: For twenty years I have dwelt in the desert seeking God, and I have not found him. For twenty years I have dwelt in the ways of men, yet though I sought diligently I have not found him. Where is the God? In what place shall I seek him?

And the priests of Bel were confounded; but they remembered their head-priest, who dwelt apart on the highest tower looking at the stars, and they brought Shaman in unto him, and spake, saying: Here is one who has sought God through the world and has not found him. Tell us, we pray thee, where he is to be found!

And the old priest lifted up his head, and spake unto Shaman saying: When you have found God by what signs will you know him?

And Shaman was dumb.

III

WHEN Anulallat was a young man, his mind was given up wholly to wisdom, and as he considered astrology the finest of all the branches of science he became a servant of the priests of Bel, and abode with them. For many years he abode with them, and passed through all the orders of the hierarchy until he became head-priest, and he had all the knowledge of the priests.

And being come to the age of eighty years, a great loneliness came upon him, and his life seemed to have been but a day, or the hour of a day.

"It is not knowledge that men should strive after, but love," he said. "I shall go down into the city and find a woman who will love me."
So he left the high places of the temple and went down into the streets of the city; and a woman passed him, a young woman, very beautiful, and richly attired; and her feet hastened like the feet of one who hasteneth after a great joy; and he laid hands upon her, beseeching her that she would teach him love.

But she put him aside, saying: "What have the old to do with love? I am looking for my lover, a young man in his first strength. Get thee away!"

And she left him; her feet hastening like the feet of one who hasteneth after a great joy.
CHARLES BEADLE

AN AFRICAN LOVE SONG

IMAGE.

Against the green sky are blue cones,
huddling, like pookoo up on a hill,
From the restless mutter of the forest
and the murmur of the river.

STATEMENT.

This is the home of my love,
whose beauties are sung by the mosquitoes
by night
and danced by the flies
by day.

SONG.

(High tenor chant.)
I have feasted upon venison and fish,
yams roasted and wild orange!
I have drunk of the wine of the palm,
and made merry to the sound of drums upon the hill!

CHORUS.

(Bass.)
Wei-walli! ......Ow!
Wei-walli! ......Ow!

For they have prepared against the coming of my love
a bed of young grass from the softest flanks of the river!

While I have anointed my body
in the smoke of the greenwood fire!

Wei-walli! ......Ow!
Wei-walli! ......Ow!
My love walks like unto a leopard stalking buck!
And her belly is as smooth and as round
as yonder river rock!
Did you hear that monkey chatter?
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!

Her legs are like young palm-trees whispering!
Her thighs are as soft as the kernel of the baobab!
Supple is she as the neck of a young giraffe!
Did you hear that hippo snort?
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!

And her breasts are like unto small ant-hills!
Her eyes are two storm-veiled moons,
and her flesh is as cool and as smooth as a banana
frond!
Did you hear the jealous night-hawk screech?
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!

The complexion of my love is woven from forest
shadows,
And her teeth were stolen from a baby crocodile!
Did you hear that big one flop?
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!

Her hair is crisp like unto young mealies between
the teeth,
and her nose is exquisitely flattened like a wild plum!
Did you hear the parrot scream?
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!
   Wei-walli! ......Ow!
My love sits beside me upon the bridal couch!
Her touch is like a green grass snake!
Did you hear the welcome of the frogs?
   Wei-walli! ..... Ow!
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!

Her acrid smell is more pungent than the green-wood smoke,
and far sweeter than the wild honey of the country
of the M'Xosa!
Did you hear the cricket shrilling?
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!

Her chines are as firm as the filled bladder of a kid,
and smoother than an elephant's tusk!
Did you hear the hyena swear?
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!

Her love song blends in harmony
with a jealous lion's roar!
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!

Her clutch is like an orchid!
Ehh! the mosquitoes bite!
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!
   Wei-walli! .....Ow!

..........................OW!
GIGUE MACABRE

As the dainty moon arose
To pirouette on nimble toes,
Columbine and Harlequin

Met upon the windy sands:
Laughed: and joining slender hands
Trod a dance of grace and sin.

Merry devils in the dark
Twitched their subtle hands, to harp
The wizard rays of moon and star.

And as they danced, the nimble moon
Followed: and the crazy tune
Tinkled on the winds afar—

Till their flesh fell limp and white:
Mummy-dust upon the night
Curled away like misty breath,

Fell in rags from hip and thigh,
Rib and socket creaked awry
In that merry dance of death:
And the grass they trampled there
Stood up like a dead man's hair,
Twittered like a swarm of gulls—

As they leaped, obscene and blind,
And the voices of the wind
Fluted in their hollow skulls.

BONGWI, THE BABOON

GROWN wrinkled in the suns of noon
And mad from yearning on the moon,
With empty eyes and lifted hands
Our ancient father, Bongwi, stands
Sharp-pencilled on the moonlit sky:
And upward sends his dismal cry,
Blending with eddies of the air
Vague fragments of a mumbled prayer,
That shed upon the plains around
Their ghostly sediment of sound.

So, wandering from wind to wind,
His gibbered vesperals come to find,
Where vast ancestral shadows nod,
The drifting dust of some dead god:
And mingle there: and wake again
The latent impulse of that brain:
Revive the crumbled limbs: and sweep
From faded eyes the films of sleep.
The stars curl down in misty rings:
Crown him: proclaim him King of kings,
Who tears the slender weft of sky
Wherewith to gird each hairy thigh,
And dances on the hills, and climbs
Up tuskèd peaks of ancient times,
Humping his mighty back to tangle
His tail around the moon: and dangle
A pendulum of glory there.
Fulfilled at last is Bongwi's prayer!

The Sound of that remembered Voice
Makes all the solemn hills rejoice,
And the stars hail with eager cry
His simian twitch of ear and eye.

But who shall bear these tidings shrill
To Bongwi, dead upon the hill?
At about the time of Candlemas the snowdrops, like small pale tapers, rose from the ground and illumined with their wistful and pregnant innocence the lilac mists of February dawns. The aconite was a baby sun with its frilled bib of yellow rays: it swung in a tiny cradle of dew, and its round eye, like a miniature Cyclops, winked at the melancholy procession of the watery Hours.

Aqueous and glassy indeed were the hours, great pellucid bubbles of grey light, glimmering with a mute sublustrous eloquence, as of palaces and parliaments pinnacled under the sea. They swung in the day like monstrous bells, moaning and mildly-tinted, across which the infantine rainbows shed their occasional gleam. The cathedrals of the Infinite re-echoed to their hollow tolling, and muffled notes escaped at times as they swayed slowly in the luminous void. Such was the season in which the Sun, like a small flower or intensely white six-rayed star, was barely visible beyond and between the peaked towers of those infinite cathedrals, whom mortals call “the sky.”

But the Enchanter, as he paced in his scarlet mantle betwixt the February mists and the sleeping worlds of beasts and flowers, beheld as it were mighty flames rising like sworded tongues of intenseset fire round him in a circle on all sides, from the horizon to the zenith, intolerable laminations, flowers of the infernal deluge tamed at last and reduced to the service of the soul. Psyche, he perceived, had come into a certain inheritance, and he pondered a dream which had visited him as he fell asleep, wearied with his toil amid pentagram and hexagram and alembic, in a room that teemed with volumes whose black letter concealed the mysteries of the Rosy Cross.
He had seen in a space of light a Child, almost a Babe, whose face, the colour of snowdrops, bore at the same time the look of an extreme wondering innocence and that of an experience ageless as eternity. It resembled the Christ-Child in the ascetical art of the earliest masters of Bruges and Cologne; but it seemed as if it were also bowed down by the weight of some enormous and but half-comprehended mystery. This human snowdrop, in which spirituality burned like a taper—this tiny and mystical monk with its eggshell brow, delicate and majestic, and its brooding, downcast eyes—was clothed in a long coat resembling a cope, exceedingly gorgeous, richly embroidered, and woven from cloth of gold. In one hand it held a slender sceptre, graceful and liliated, and in the other a great orb blazing like a diamond from which darted at times rays of white and coloured fire.

But the thing upon which it stood was almost more marvellous than itself. A monstrous serpent, or dragon, wingless, glittering with the colour of gold, was the resting-place of the Child's feet, and it extended its mighty head, mild and terrible, crowned with a glittering tiara, and the sleepless anguish of its adorable eyes, as if in willing abasement before the sceptre and the orb held by the tiny Babe. And the Enchanter, overwhelmed, heard a passionless voice saying: "This is that almighty Oceanus whose waves embrace and engirdle the whole world: and this is that golden Ladon who, in the Atlantic garden, guarding the Tree of Life, listens to the voices of the daughters of the Evening Star."
ENGLAND my heart, Mother of ships and towers,
Queen of that old dark tavern of my dreams,
This is the season mild of wine-red flowers,
Soft cowslip-scents and silver sliding streams.

O Lady of those red cities by the sea,
Vaned, walled and gabled, fane upon wise fane
Of chanting clerks, whence gilded Argosy
Set out to plough the perilous, endless main.

This is the season calm of far blue hills
Beyond the brown; it is the time of bells:
My musing mind with scarlet Seraphs fills;
I hear the sound of clamorous caravels.

I adore thy hill-towns washed by the still wind,
Church upon church, roof over gray roof piled;
My soul becomes thy chapel, where I find,
Instead of altar, a violet-lidded child!
A CURVED white ship comes not more white
Out of darkness
Than you came out of your wine-dark robe.

Your wide garment fell away from you sweetly,
Lay about you,
A heap of petals clinging yet to the snow-white stalk.

When my eyes beheld you so tall, so white,
Your head drooping,
Flowerwise—a flower gently frost-stricken,

My thoughts of kisses ere you disrobed paused
Even at the start,
White birds winging too quickly to their own nest.

For my eyes beheld you a white statue,
With enchantment,
My firm clear eyes held back the lover’s heart.

Then the restive heart rose up impetuous,
A stream of flame,
Flooding the sculptor’s eyes until they melted.

A lover’s kisses fell about your head and shoulders,
Drops of rich dew,
And a drunken sculptor’s hands passed over you.

A delicate gentle flower, you quivered—shook,
Your dear frail head
Rose slowly upward, face sweet toward the sun.
I have hoarded up memories
As other men hoard money and corn,
I have made them into rubies and pearls
For the crown of my love.
They are threads in the patterns
Of the rugs in my house,
Where beauty may feel the repose
Of beautiful things.
They are strewn across the years of my life
As daffodils across the spring meadows,
As the stars across the night skies.

When I was a tiny boy of three
My father once bought me some sweets.
How good were the sweets!
I do not remember my father.

When I grew up and was five,
I walked in the streets of Kieff,
The town I was born in,
With my brother, a schoolboy.
He was in regulation grey, with silver buttons.
I remember the grey and the silver—
I do not remember him.

Two years went by.
One morning, when I woke from sleep,
My baby brother lay dead—
But I cried for my tea.
My mother led me by the hand
To show me that he was dead.
He lay there in his small cradle
So yellow and waxen and still.
I was seven then,
I did not understand;
As I turned away—
I still cried for my tea.

Later I was nine,
I remember I played in the woods;
The sunlight was bright,
And I lay on my back
And looked into the blue.
Then suddenly—
It all comes back to me now
With the vividness of a dream—
Everything became black,
Some one's hand drew a black curtain
Across the sky;
The wind leapt
As from ambush.
I remember I was frightened,
I had lost my way, I ran on...
There was a rumble of thunder...
I darted across a glade.
A woman ran towards me:
Her hair, loose in the wind,
Fluttered across her face.
She looked mad,
And her eyes gleamed.
She was as some distraught Fury,
Herself hunted and pursued
By the winds.
Her hair now darted frantic in the wind,
Stood out erect
Like serpents on Medusa's head,
Reaching out to sting;
Now streamed in the wind
Like the tops of the maddened trees.
She was our housemaid,
She was afraid of storms and lightnings.
I was nine then.

I remember quieter pictures.
There was my governess,
A delicate, fragile girl
With a pale face,
Which now seems like a phantom's.
Behind her gentleness there was fire.
She wished to blow off the head
Of the chief of police of our town.
She is dead, poor girl;
Her lungs rotted in the dank town air.
I remember her angelic, phantasmic face
As a thing remembered in dream.

And so all life passes by
In memories, pictures and dreams,
Woven into a decoration by Time's fingers,
Which know the wonder of tragic things.
Bitter experience and pain become sweet
When your mistress is Art.
A gift remembered evokes the face of the giver,
A face hardly seen—saintly perhaps.
Life's irony is in that memory of silver and grey,
Because no man knows his brother.
I seem even now to cry for my tea
When men are dead and are dying.
Life is a madwoman run amock in the wind,
Against a background of storm and cloud.
Here are the scene-shifters,
Come to roll up the dark curtain,
To release the sun from its place in the wings.
Tragic actress once more becomes housemaid.
Or is life a sick, pale-faced sphinx,
Whose eyes only are alive
Fed by the fire of her heart—
The governess whom I remember
As the fragrance of an invisible flower?
ERIC C. DICKINSON

ABSENCE

The nights are dead without you, love,
The nights are cold and dead;
They lift their thin, cold faces up,
For the veins are oped and bled.

Oh, the nights are cold, and the moon is hid,
Since a night I lived with you;
For the lips of that night were warm to mine,
And the moon—was a face I knew.

FALSE WAKING

I dreamed I heard the hoofbeats of the dawn
Come sounding through the last quiet town of night;
I turned me in my bed to catch the light
Within his eyes of wonders yet unborn.

But then I woke, and found the dream was vain,
The wind but knocked upon the leaded pane;
Night was a hag who sold me to dismay
And mewed the grey steed and his hoof-beats far away.
TO THE MUSE

O

MY queen, O royalty fleshy,
With tawny hair and blinding eyes,
I bring you an antelope loyalty meshed,
A fluttering, timid prize.

And though he was wild, till hill, till hollow
His happy fleetings no more told,
Now beckon or call, and he will follow
Your robe with flowing fold.

Awkward, indeed, yet he'll try doing
With spring and speed for you, his best,
To win your smile with his shy wooing,
And then at your feet rest.

THE FORSAKEN SHEPHERD

THOUGH like a spear-shaft was her carriage,
She laughed at her own curious mind,
And, stooping, gave herself in marriage,
A half-goddess to mankind.

When blossom snowed the fields in may-time
She filled my cottage with delight,
A lilied wonder in the daytime,
A white glory in the night.

But when a summer evening trembled
With longing for the nightingale,
When closer the great oaks assembled,
And the dark crept up the vale,
From out the leafy heart of quiet
    There came hallooing, and hounds’ bay,
And shrill horns, gathering up the riot,
    Pealed and sped our dream away.

She rose, though I stretched arms to hold her;
    The woman faded, the nymph came.
Powerless, I saw the night enfold her,
    And the far-off torches flame.

SUMMER

T
HE wasp's bite stabs the pear,
    The sharp scythe hisses,
Under the apples there
    A rogue drops kisses.

Ripeness, with downy cheeks
    Of fruit and maiden,
Sweet ravishment bespeaks
    For treasure laden.

The burnished sunset paints
    To-day’s to-morrow,
This teeming gladness faints
    And wakes in sorrow;

For autumn brings red fire
    Cruelly to cherish
The summer's rapt desire,
    Till ardours perish.

Then since time must be scold
    To what joy lingers,
The precious we behold
    We clasp with keeping fingers.
THE great dark cave of steel
Where, all day long, feet clattered to the trains
Is almost silent now;
All but the last train of the night has gone.

Upon the waiting platform
A little knot of people sit or stand,
Incurious, unalert,
Waiting for time to fall.

A lover and his girl
Look in each other's eyes;
Women with dancing-slippers tap the stone,
A helpless drunkard in a corner snores.

A weary labourer nods upon a bench;
A girl with painted lips
Leers sidewise at a man;
A cat walks slowly over the littered floor.

Here are the wrecks, the lost,
Who pass out, drugged with weariness,
From dark illusion's shrine
To suburbs in the night.

And what they take away
From Babel, none of them has strength to tell,
Their eyes are filmed with sleep,
Their slackened hands grasp nothingness.
THE EAGLES

A BOVE the valley, in the breathlessly still air, hang the eagles. Through the burning heat, they wheel and veer endlessly.

I have seen the sea-eagles, old as time itself; the grey, lustreless eyes, the hookéd beaks, the angrily quivering feathers. I have watched the black eagles of greed hop out, like harpies, from the hollow of the rocks, and feast horribly upon carrion. And aloft is the red eagle of wrath soaring; while, on his dry rock, the weary golden eagle guards a treasure crumbled away to dust, as his eyes blink at the advancing sun.

I am waiting for the white eagle, with his wings tipped with fire, to arise, in a night of wind and lightning, out of the naked plain, and to sweep above black forests, where over burnt-out mountain peaks pours the pale dawn.

LONDON NIGHTFALL

I SAW the shapes that stood upon the clouds:
And they were tiger-breasted, shot with light,
And all of them, lifting long trumpets together,
Blew over the city, for the night to come.
Down in the street, we floundered in the mud;
Above, in endless files, gold angels came
And stood upon the clouds, and blew their horns
For night.

Like a wet petal crumpled,
Twilight fell soddenly on the weary city;
The 'buses lurched and groaned,
The shops put up their doors.
But skywards, far aloft,
The angels, vanishing, waved broad plumes of gold,
Summoning spirits from a thousand hills
To pour the thick night out upon the earth.
THE BRIDGE

EASILY leaping, a single arch between two banks of darkness,
The bridge at evening goes across the river;
Where the old road, descending towards the willows,
Glides into foliage on the other side:
Out of the town it goes and seeks the hills,
Upon whose summits, travellers find the sea;
Deep-bosomed river valleys opening outwards
Into the sunset stillness of the ocean.

This bridge, a single arch,
Is like the summit of a human life;
Behind it, doors are barred;
Before it open out the hills;
And, under it, grey waters
Glide with a solemn motion;
Mirroring banks and stars of autumn twilight,
Towards the sea which knows all, and takes all.

One on his bay horse passes here at evening
Scattering roses;
One on his horse has paused now at the summit,
A golden wine-cup held within his hand;
One flings with sudden gesture
The empty cup to the waters;
One has passed over
Into the kingdom of shadows.
HENRY J. FELTON

ON H. D.

In her book, *Sea-Garden*, you will find nothing political, no arguments, no denunciations, nothing trivial and transient. Her poetry is pure emotion, a record of intense spiritual experiences, the revelation of an unique personality. There is nothing in contemporary English and French poetry which can be compared with it. The sincerity of her utterance, the masterly use of language give an air of immortality to her chaste, hieratic poetry. As Sturge Moore says, H. D. is the grandest among the so-called rebel poets. Her adoration of the earth, her sense of mysterious divinities in gardens, in woodlands, by the seashore, her sharp cries of ecstasy or despair uttered in moments of communion with beautiful or terrible presences which we dimly apprehend but which she sees clearly by flashes—these make her poetry essentially and significantly religious. Her theme is not man in his earthly passions, not the ordinary appearances of things, but man in his emotional relationship to the mysteries of the universe. She does indeed strip the veil of familiarity from common things. She is one of those rare, rather primitive characters who, like shepherds, fishermen, and nomads, have become saturated with "green haunts and loneliness" so that the aspects of the world have for them a significance which is religious in its intensity. That feeling, more subtle, more intellectual, is the basis of H. D.'s poetry.

H. D. is not a sort of English Madame de Noailles. She is not just a city-dweller who likes to gush about the country; still less is she a "nature-faker" or a "faux naïf"—her poetry is packed with thought, her economy of words is so ruthless that to careless or indolent readers her poems are obscure. They
have profound meaning for those who will read them intelligently. Her poetry is not the perverse and rather anaemic neurasthenia of a writer like Renée Vivien; it is primitive, not over-refined, chaste, not exotic, sincere, not an affectation.

"For this beauty,
beauty without strength,
chokes out life.
I want wind to break,
scatter these pink stalks,
snap off their spiced heads,
fling them about with dead leaves—
spread the paths with twigs,
limbs broken off,
trail great pine branches,
hurled from some far wood
right across the melon-patch,
break pear and quince—
leave half-trees, torn, twisted,
but showing the fight was valiant.

O to blot out this garden,
to forget, to find a new beauty
in some terrible
wind-tortured place."

This fierce controlled emotion is the dominant quality in H. D.'s poetry. Her poetry is that of desolate places by the sea-edge, of cliffs, which nourish sparse flowers salt with the spray of waves and beaten by winds. Her country is this austere and virile landscape, which has however one or two sheltered valleys, rich with woodland, fruit-trees, and flowers. She knows the savage moods of the sea, "the crust left by the sea . . . the hurled sand and the broken shells, the words of sea-hawks and gulls and seabirds that cry discords," "the boulders" which "cut and wreck the staggering ships," "the rollers shot with blue cut under deeper blue," "the splendor of a ragged coast," "the heavy
sea-mist” which “stiffes—a curious peril,” the winds which boom and whistle and growl, and the Atlantic waves:

“ You will trail across the rocks
and wash them with your salt,
you will curl between sand-hills—
you will thunder along the cliff—
break—retreat—get fresh strength—
gather and pour weight upon the beach.”

Yet she also knows the opulence of summer heat, the mysterious significance of flowers: she knows the beauty of sea-roses “marred and with stint of petals, thin, sparse of leaf,” the sea-lily, “slashed and torn but doubly rich,” sea-poppies “amber husk fluted with gold, fruit on the sand,” and “the sea-violet, fragile as agate.” She knows pine-hills and wood-grass, “oak and scrub-oak tangles,” “knotted roots and acorns, leaf-mould and earth, wood and wood-bank,” “tufts of coarse grass in the shorter grass.” Hers are white-ash and rock-cistus, myrtle, citron-lily and myrrh-hyacinths and violets. She knows the pear-tree’s “flower-tufts thick on the branch,”

“fallen hazel nuts
stripped late of their green sheaths,
grapes, red-purple,
their berries
dripping with wine.”

And she knows the parching heat

“that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes,”—

the mid-day heat when

“the shrivelled seeds
are spilt on the path—
the grass bends with dust,
the grape slips
under its crackled leaf.”
Are these poems so "inhuman" as journalists complain? They are rather the passionate reveries of a lonely personality for whom nothing exists but eternal beauty. It is said that H. D. is exclusively Hellenic, and indeed there is something Hellenic in her disinterested passion for ideal loveliness, but to me these poems have often the wild ring of Saxon poetry:

"Ofer maera gebland,
On lides bosme . . .
On duniges mere
Ofer deopne waeter."

Or the song of the "war-screamers":

"Wiges hremige
laetan him behinden.
Hra Bryttinga,
salowig padan,
thone sweartan hraefan
hynnet nebban,
and thone hasu-wadan earn,
aeftan hit aeses brucan;
and thaet grege deor,
wulfon wealde."
CRASH on crash of the sea,
straining to wreck men, sea-boards, continents,
raging against the world, furious,
stay at last, for against your fury
and your mad fight,
the line of heroes stands, godlike:

Akroneos, Oknolos, Elatreus,
helm-of-boat, loosener-of-helm, dweller-by-sea,
Nauteus, sea-man,
Prumneos, stern-of-ship,
Agchialos, sea-girt,
Elatreus, oar-shaft:
lover-of-the-sea, lover-of-the-sea-ebb,
lover-of-the-swift-sea,
Poneteus, Proreus, Oōos:
Anabesneos, who breaks to anger
as a wave to froth:
Amphiolos, one caught between
wave-shock and wave-shock:
Eurualos, broad sea-wrack,
like Ares, man's death,
and Naubolidos, best in shape,
of all first in size:
Phaekous, sea's thunderbolt—
ah, crash on crash of great names—
man-tamer, man's-help, perfect Laodamos:
and last the sons of great Alkinōos,
Laodamos, Halios, and god-like Clytomeos.
Of all nations, of all cities,
of all continents,
she is favoured above the rest,
for she gives men as great as the sea,
to battle against the elements and evil:
greater even than the sea,
they live beyond wrack and death of cities,
and each god-like name spoken
is as a shrine in a godless place.

But to name you,
we, reverent, are breathless,
weak with pain and old loss,
and exile and despair—
our hearts break but to speak
your name, Oknaleos—
and may we but call you in the feverish wrack
of our storm-strewn beach, Eretmeos,
our hurt is quiet and our hearts tamed,
as the sea may yet be tamed,
and we vow to float great ships,
named for each hero,
and oar-blades, cut of mountain-trees
as such men might have shaped:
Eretmeos, and the sea is swept,
baffled by the lordly shape,
Akroneos has pines for his ship's keel;
to love, to mate the sea?
Ah there is Ponteos,
the very deeps roar,
hailing you dear—
they clamour to Ponteos,
and to Proēos
leap, swift to kiss, to curl, to creep,
lover to mistress.
What wave, what love, what foam,
For Oōos who moves swift as the sea?
Ah stay, my heart, the weight
of lovers, of loneliness
drowns me,
 alas that their very names
so press to break my heart
with heart-sick weariness,
what would they be,
the very gods,
rearing their mighty length
beside the unharvested sea?
WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

NEIGHBOURS

I
HENRY TURNBULL

He planked down sixpence, and he took his drink,
Then slowly picked the change up from the zinc,
And in his breeches' pocket buttoned tight
Two greasy coppers which that very night
Were used by Betty Cant, whom they called in
To lay him out, when she'd tied up his chin,
To keep his eyelids shut: and so he lies
With tu'ppence change till doomsday on his eyes.

II
MATILDA BURGIN

I wonder what she thinks of, sitting there
Beside the fire in her dead husband's chair—
The easy-chair his first wife brought—her feet
On the gay beaded hassock that his neat
Industrious second wife went almost blind
To finish just according to his mind?
But who is there can tell what that old wife
Or any other woman thinks of life—
Unless, maybe, the parrot at her side
Her husband bought the day his third wife died?
III

GEORGE HOGARTH

Nay, none for me to-day.
What! None for you?
In all my born days, George, I never knew
Your gullet to refuse a drink before.

True, true; but I'm not taking any more—
Leastways, not more than six pints in a day.
I'm getting on, and mayn't have long to stay;
And as, down there, there'll be no drink for me,
It's best to break the habit gradually.

IV

SAM HOGARTH.

He sits—his open bible on his knee,
Nell, his old whippet, curled up at his feet—
Muttering at whiles and nodding drowsily
Over the damped slack fire that dully burns
In the little grate: then shifting in his seat
He lifts the book with shaky hands, his head
Wagging with eagerness, and fumbling turns
From the tenth chapter of Genesis, unread,
To the well-thumbed flyleaf at the back, to pore
With spectacled weak reverent eyes once more,
Lest it escape his failing memory,
On Nell's proud scrawl-recorded pedigree.
ZADKINE

Head of a Boy (Stone)
V

SALLY DAGLISH

And now, it's Samuel—ay, he married me
All right and proper at the registry:
For Samuel's always been a moral man
Since his first match with old Salvation Ann—
Leastways, my orchard 'twas, he took to bride,
That came to me when old Bill Pencoat died:
For Samuel fancied 't would be very nice
When crops were sold to pocket each year's price:
But he was reckoning without Sally then,
And Sally's always been upsides with men.
So, since he wedded cherries, I take care
Early and late that Samuel's out to scare
The rascal birds—each morning out of bed
By half-past two when the fruit's turning red.
He takes a deal of prodding, but it's well
Worth any trouble just to hear the bell,
And think of Samuel snuffling in the dews
As I turn over for another snooze.
He knows I'd waken from the soundest sleep
If he stopped ringing once; so he must keep
Jingling and jangling till his wrists fair ache
If he would have some breakfast when I wake.
Yes, I'll miss Samuel when he's gone, I will.
Though he's a ninny-witted fellow, still
I'm getting used to him; and when he lies
Straiked on the bed with pennies on his eyes,
There'll be a chuckle or so the less for me
When next year's cherries ripen on the tree.
POST-GEORGIAN POET IN SEARCH OF
A MASTER

I had been well brought up: I liked the best.
My prose was modelled on Rebecca West,
My "little things" erstwhile reflected tone,
My brother poets claimed me as their own.
In those blithe days, before the War began—
Ah me, I was a safe young Georgian!

Now all is chaos, all confusion.
Bolshevists have cast E. M. from his high throne:
Wild women have rushed in, and savage Yanks
Blather of Booth and Heaven: and T. S. E.
Uses great words that are as Greek to me.
Tell me the Truth, and ah, forgo these pranks—
Whom must I imitate? Who's really It?
On whose embroidered footstool should I sit?

There's Podgrass now—he seems a coming man;
Writes unintelligible stuff, half French, half Erse.
He told me Philomela had technique
But not much feeling; Crashaw knew his trade,
But Keats had no idea of writing verse...
The thing to read (he said) had just come out,
His latest work, entitled "Bloody Shout."

And then there's Father Michael, Secker's pal,
Who's left dear Sylvia for the Clergy-house.
Michael lives sumptuously: silver, old oak,
Incunabula, the Yellow Book, Madonnas, Art;
Excited wobblings on the brink of Rome;
The “Inner Life,” birettas, candles, Mass;
Fun with Church Times and Bishops; four hair shirts,
And Mr. Percy Dearmer’s Parson’s Book.
He talked to me of Antinomianism
And stirred the incense, while two candles burned,
Then read aloud his works, with eye upturned.
(Somehow I felt I’d heard it all before—
When I was “boat-boy,” in a pinafore.)

Are Sitwells really safe? Is Iris Tree
A certain guide to higher poesy?
Can Nicholls be relied on, for a lead;
Or should I thump it with Sassoon and Read?
Or would it not be vastly better fun
To write of Nymphs, with Richard Aldington?
Or shall I train, and nervously aspire
To join with Edward Shanks and J. C. Squire
—A modest “chorus” in a well-paid choir?

I’ve thought of middling Murry and Sturge Moore,
I’ve thought of Yeats (I thought of him before).
I’ve toyed with Aldous Huxley and Monro—
I don’t know where I am, or where to go.

Oh, mighty Mr. Gosse! Unbend, I pray!
Guide one poor poet who has lost his way...
DESPAIRS

DESPAIRS I have met and conquered—who has not?
Man's high and restless heart is braced for these;
He has his candour for the mysteries,
His spring and summer for the years that rot
Into oblivion; bravery is hot
Against the cold leap of the seeking seas;
The soul is lawful by its own decrees;
And grief remembers what mere joy forgot.

But happiness defeats me: in the sun
I shiver with chill fear and sick surmise
Suddenly: when my easy task is done,
I know my task too hard, my way too steep.
Beauty is young and happy in your eyes,
And when I see that beauty I must weep.
WHEN megalomania's in the blood
    And waves of flame along its flood
Roar revolutionary songs
Of modern rights and ancient wrongs,
When without drink you can be drunk,
When in impersonal ardour sunk
You merge your personality
For an immense fluidity,
A formless sea whose tide can pour
In any hue on any shore,
White, Red, or Black, to meet the need
Of any mood or any creed,
An infinite dramatic soul
Bounded alone by pole and pole
Of birth and death in crowns of ice
On thrones of mountainous device,
Then let a grandiose bell be rung
And tell them all you still are young.

* * *

But when you care for what they say
Of you to-day or yesterday,
When the conspiracies of place,
The sequence of intriguing time,
Begin to grave upon your face
The waxen creases of a mime
Recording what your critics say
 Has now become your leading trait,
When you feel neat, small, round, and ripe,
Efficient, egocentric, cold—
Damn it! You've recognised your type
And know that you are growing old!
AUTUMN

I

AEOLIAN winds sighing into my room
At the edge of the city from the tenuous gloom
Haunted with autumn leaves, where have I heard
Your thin, immortal voice? O bodiless bird,
Wingless, unseeing, with your ominous songs
Of beauties dead and of undying wrongs
That rise at night and walk in wildernesses
Of stale and senile earth. O lost caresses
Of gentle hands that have forgotten me!
Where have I heard that voice on land and sea,
On heathered hill and over city gables?
I have heard that voice in the forgotten fables
Of my reading days, and murmuring in the grass,
Clean, long, and coarse, where the low sandhills pass
From cape to cape along the silent bay.
It is the spiritual voice of yesterday.

II

ALL day long, all day long
A warm wind blows, a west wind goes
Around the gaunt, square house.
Across the sky grey clouds lie
All day long, all day long.
The wind blows free in the autumn tree
Bared of leaves, bared of leaves.
Twilight droops, soon, very soon,
On the November afternoon.
The lost wind blows under the eaves
Singing low an old sad song.
The wind blows, the wind goes,
Sighing and singing, low and high,
Down from the low, the gray sky,
All day long.
The wind shudders against the panes
Like tattered ribbons in a high gale,
Shudders, ceases, moans, complains,
Flaps and clatters like a sail
Suddenly luffed in a gusty nor'-wester
When grey waves spume and buffet and pester
Sailors on equinoctial mains.

And in the gloom of this long room
The shadows clasp each chair and table
Afraid of the wind that whistles round the gable.

MEDITATION

I
Saw the stars against the summer night
Still trembling as they trembled when the light
First fell upon them from the further world.

I could not bend my proud humanity
To kneel before the cold immensity,
I, who had youth and love, I, who could know,—
They, flotsam on the ethereal ebb and flow,
Dead things unmoved by immaterial fire
Of hope and anguish and divine desire.

They were not more omnipotent than I;
They could not see and dream and change and die.

I could not bow before infinity;
The silent grandeur could not conquer me.
The night is warm. Faint summer rain is falling,
And to the Park, like coloured beetles crawling
Come in huge droves the worshippers of fire.
For them the sky shall wear a crown of flame
And livid jewels of a strange desire,
To mock the laboured aftermath of shame,
And bid the phosphorescent snake aspire
To scale the Godhead, whence the curse arose.

Deep on all sides the sacred hunger grows,
With craving for the tawdry ecstasy,
Lust of the eye, the smell of sacrifice,
Reverberation of the symphony,
Wherein the voice of thunder and the cries
Of devotees shall consecrate the hour.

So Moloch too, in Carthage, long ago
Found ministers to give the living dower
Of their oblation; while the drums beat slow
The dirge of children whom the brazen-lipped
Kissed and caressed with hot metallic hands
Whence steaming blood upon the altar dipped.
Such reverence the deity demands.

Long is the silence broken by the rain
And expectation murmured in the dark,
While round each heart yet closer coils the chain
Of agonised foreboding,—till a spark
Brings ultimate fulfilment, and the old
Brown cardboard corpses show the life within.
Then waxes great the dragon gleaming gold,
That fabled dragon, called the Lucifer,
And seeks once more to stroke the Seraphin
With tongues high-darted, vivid tongues that stir
The angels from their dreams. The house of Heaven
Suffers a second chaos, and the hordes
Of Hell ride through the air with burning swords,
Vaunting the fury of the unforgiven.

Not now for you these banners are unfurled,
Nor weeps the moaning snake its eyes away
In coloured rain for you. The veil of grey,
The smoky veil that dims the shrieking world,
Is dust of magic stars,—a coronal
That had been yours to-night. Alas, the gaze
Of man is idly winged, ephemeral
And sees but smoke, that mingles with the haze
Of evening, and wanders riverwards
Across deserted streets and hidden squares,
While the uncherished moon alone regards
The fleeting symbol of unanswered prayers.
AMY LOWELL

GRANADILLA

I cut myself upon the thought of you
And yet I come back to it again and again,
A kind of fury makes me want to draw you out
From the dimness of the present
And set you sharply above me in a wheel of roses.
Then, going obviously to inhale their fragrance,
I touch the blade of you and cling upon it,
And only when the blood runs out across my fingers
Am I at all satisfied.

CARREFOUR

O you,
Who came upon me once
Stretched under apple-trees just after bathing,
Why did you not strangle me before speaking
Rather than fill me with the wild white honey of your words
And then leave me to the mercy
Of the forest bees.
TRIBUNAL

WELL-CHOSEN is the haunt wherein they hold
Their addle-pated hustings. Is this not
The shrine of Godhead Jobbery! I yawn,
Gazing upon the chamfered wainscot, and
The ceiling, that, concave and cherubimed,
Dangles a chandelier above the throne
Where loll our camarilla.

May the plagues
That goaded Egypt (and surpassingly,
The lice, the blains, the locusts) light upon
This junto of attorneys, hucksters, skunks,
Dressers of tripe, drysalters, hangers-on,
Crapulous numskulls, bottle-snouted hogs,
And doddering poltroons.

See how they suck
Their stubby meerschaums, or inflatedly
Belch blue Virginian rankness forth. They lounge,
And nod and ape acumen, purse their lips,
Rustle with papers, browbeat, snarl, perpend,
Dispense not righteousness, but with it.

Hark to their snuffling clack, and marvel how
Yon uppish dandyprat is learning not
To form squad on the left, but loiters here
Fumbling with vellum ledgers, and prepares
Targets for missiles; or aghast I stare
Upon the midmost daïs where a hunk
Of scurriness is sprawling, Caliban
In spectacles, grown sleek and hoary with
Faking of balance-sheets and contracts—he,  
Knavery's altar-ministrant-in-chief,  
Mouths out his liturgy of lies, the rest  
Intoning their antiphonies thereto  
With fitting counterpoint.  

In fancy, I  
Another Paul in the prætorium,  
Frame an harangue, thus:—  

'Sirs, I warrant, ye  
Know of me not, nor of my versicles,  
Nor of my treatise on the genitive  
In Umbrian. Ye have not dipped into  
The prolegomena, wherein I shew  
Zelená Hora's manuscript is false,  
Clumsily ante-dated... Pardon, Sirs,—  
I tax your Worships' tolerance. Turn we  
To matters touching on this session.  

Know,  
I am not parcel of a self-formed sect  
That shrinks from shoe-leather and the flesh of kine,  
Or prates of Christ; and therefore ask me not  
How I should quit me if,—aposiopesis  
Shall veil the rest. Nor do I ward off dearth  
From three bed-ridden aunts, five cousins, and  
Two palsied grandams,—speak not then of doles  
And stinted halfpence. Nor do I chaffer pants  
And haggle over bird-seed (for the which  
Ye erst gave gracious verdict unto one  
Who likewise, strangely, something is akin  
To yonder puffy quidnunc) I do not  
Bake bread or whittle pellets on a lathe,  
Neither indite among the scribes, who keep  
The fiscal archives going. Wherefore, then,  
Brazenly do I pester this august  
And wise assemblage?  

Sirs, I'll tell ye, I
Hold not of great account my carcase, yet  
I rate its worth beyond the likes of you,  
Of you and all your counterparts, who hold  
The same uncouth assize within the same  
Several dens of thievishness and sloth,  
Where monstrous pygmies up and down the land  
Perform the self-same antics. Ye abet  
Those Higher Few, like to the scum that floats  
Above the hogwash; leprous peers who run  
Leprous gazettes; garotters, pimps en gros,  
Cambrian lickspittles, Yankee chandlers, dolts,  
Lackeys and liars, in whose cancered grasp  
The country festers. These, Sirs, to protect,  
My body is too precious. What think ye?  
Ha, speechless?

Pooh, what does it boot a man  
To talk Chaldee to porcupines? A truce  
To sycophantic animadversions. So  
I'll steal from hence and tarry till the day  
When in a faded mustard livery,  
Half-bravo and half-convict, I shall march  
In file, incline, and lurch about, and form  
Column of section (this, the jargon of  
Bramarbas); I shall dally with a blunderbuss,  
The while some simian-visaged corporal  
Bloodily gibes at me . . .

Sirs, fare ye well!
THE FAUN

WOMEN warmly ripened for harvests of love, their limbs of alabaster,
Whose carnal seething only the prowess of youth can slake:
(Wherefore the potency of their passion I master)
Women burdened with splendour of beauty,—these for my paramours I take.

O lips whose bloom of wanton scarlet more richly glimmers
For the delicate shadow of down. O flesh with supple weft,
O nestling rondures and breasts as fragrant gourds wherein
rapture simmers,
O marvel of bodies, with plying of love grown lissom and deft.

What though their wombs are barren? The offspring of our espousals,
Zeus-like, I quicken amid the matrix of my brain;
And in the tumultuous nights of our espousals,
New thoughts are begotten, the spirit is born again.
L. A. STRONG

DALLINGTON

"GOOD morning, old mother,"
"And you, sir, good day."
"I'm for Dallington bound;
Will you show me the way?"

"Will I point you the way, sir?
Why surely I will.
That is Dallington Church
On the top of the hill.

"The venturesome bodies,
They built it so high
As if they were minded
To put out God's eye!"

Little folk like maggots
Climb the high hill
In the yellow sunset
To work God's will.

THE MADWOMAN

As well within her billowed skirts
Like a great ship with sails unfurled,
The madwoman goes gallantly
Upon the ridges of her world.
With eagle nose and wisps of gray
She strides upon the westward hills,
Swings her umbrella joyously
And waves it to the waving mills.

Talking and chuckling as she goes
Indifferent to sun or rain,
With all that merry company
The singing children of her brain.

MICHAELMAS NIGHT

MICHAELMAS night, Michaelmas night,
And a dreaming hour and still.
The fir-trees stand in a ragged row
On the slope of Dallington Hill.

Michaelmas night and a misty night,
And a cloud is across the moon,
And the hillside waiting stiller than sleep
For the thing which will happen soon.

Silver and clear the midnight chime
Drops from the soft church bell;
The fir-trees suddenly shiver and sway
And break their year-old spell.

They climb the hill to the churchyard high,
And enter it one by one,
And bow three times to the Father there,
And bow three times to the Son,
NINA HAMNETT
ANDRÉ DERAIN

Nature Morte
(From a Painting)
And three times more to the Holy Ghost,
Then mutter and sigh in prayer.
The farmer's wife wakes up with a start
And sees the hillside bare.

*   *   *   *

The fir-trees stand in a ragged row,
Still as the church they seem:
And the farmer's wife has looked again
And thinks she has dreamed a dream.
I HAVE seen faces flagrantly questioning,
Silently beckoning for fresher words
To cloth their stammering curiosity—
Quizzical faces strung in a row
Or flung together as a crowd of leaves
Blown by the hissing "why" of the wind
Against some hooded listener—
These quaint inquiring faces forming rings
As though among their midst a shrouded truth
Should bare its naked body to be felt
With querying hands, and kissed with tasting lips—
They even press their noses to my windows,
Gropes round me, swim like fishes in a bowl—
Their hands are in the pockets of my soul,
Desire and poverty are in their thieving . . .
I have seen interrogatory profiles that remind me
Of those hooked signs we use for questioning . . .
But I have never seen a quiet face
Sloped downwards to the hands that hold simply
Truth, as one holds a flower.
It is night on the terrace outside the Hotel Cimarosa. Part of the garden façade of the hotel is seen at the back of the stage—a bare white wall, with three French windows giving on to balconies about ten feet from the ground, and below them, leading from the terrace to the lounge, a double door of glass, open now, through which a yellow radiance streams out into the night. On the paved terrace stand two or three green iron tables and chairs. To the left a mass of dark foliage, ilex and cypress, in the shadow of which more tables and chairs are set. At the back to the left a strip of sky is visible between the corner of the hotel and the dark trees, blue and starry, for it is a marvellous June evening. Behind the trees the ground slopes steeply down and down to an old city in the valley below, of whose invisible presence you are made aware by the sound of many bells wafted up from a score of slender towers in a sweet and melancholy discord that seems to mourn the passing of each successive hour. When the curtain rises the terrace is almost deserted; the hotel dinner is not yet over. A single guest, Count Alberto Tiretta, is discovered, sitting in a position of histrionic despair at one of the little green tables. A waiter stands respectfully sympathetic at his side. Alberto is a little man with large lustrous eyes and a black moustache, about twenty-five years of age. He has the pathetic charm of an Italian street-boy with an organ—almost as pretty and sentimental as Murillo's little beggars.

Alberto (making a florid gesture with his right hand and with his left covering his eyes). Whereupon, Waiter (he is reciting a tale of woes), she slammed the door in my face. (He brings down his gesticulating right hand with a crash on to the table.)

Waiter. In your face, Signore? Impossible!

Alberto. Impossible, but a fact. Some more brandy, please, I am a little weary. (The Waiter uncorks the bottle he has been holding under his arm and fills Alberto's glass.)
WAITER. That will be one lira twenty-five, Signore.

ALBERTO (throwing down a note). Keep the change.

WAITER (bowing). Thank you, Signore. But if I were the Signore, I should beat her. (He holds up the Cognac bottle and by way of illustration slaps its black polished flanks.)

ALBERTO. Beat her? But I tell you I am in love with her.

WAITER. All the more reason then, Signore. It will be not only a stern disciplinary duty, but a pleasure as well; oh, I assure you, Signore, a pleasure.

ALBERTO. Enough, enough. You sully the melancholy beauty of my thoughts. My feelings at this moment are of an unheard-of delicacy and purity. Respect them, I beg you. Some more brandy, please.

WAITER (pouring out the brandy). Delicacy, purity... Ah, believe me, Signore... That will be one lira twenty-five.

ALBERTO (throwing down another note with the same superbly aristocratic gesture). Keep the change.

WAITER. Thank you, Signore. But as I was saying, Signore: delicacy, purity... You think I do not understand such sentiments. Alas, Signore, beneath the humblest shirt-front there beats a heart. And if the Signore's sentiments are too much for him, I have a niece. Eighteen years old, and what eyes, what forms!

ALBERTO. Stop, stop. Respect my feelings, Waiter, as well as the ears of the young lady (he points towards the glass doors). Remember she is an American. (The Waiter bows and goes into the hotel.)

SIDNEY DOLPHIN and MISS AMY TOOMIS come out together on to the terrace. Miss Amy supports a well-shaped head on one of the most graceful necks that ever issued from Minneapolis. The eyes are dark, limpid, ingenuous; the mouth expresses sensibility. She is twenty-two and the heiress of those ill-gotten Toomis millions. SIDNEY DOLPHIN has a romantic aristocratic appearance. The tailoring of 1830 would suit him. Balzac would have described his face as 'plein de poésie.' In effect he does happen to be a poet. His two volumes of verse, "Zoetrope" and "Trembling Ears," have been recognised by intelligent critics as remarkable. How far they are poetry nobody, least of all Dolphin himself, is certain. They
may be merely the ingenious products of a very cultured and elaborate brain. Mere curiosities; who knows? His age is twenty-seven.

They sit down at one of the little iron tables. Alberto they do not see; the shadow of the trees conceals him. For his part, he is too much absorbed in savouring his own despair to pay any attention to the newcomers. There is a long, uncomfortable silence. Dolphin assumes the Thinker's mask—the bent brow, the frown, the finger to the forehead. Amy regards this romantic gargoyle with some astonishment. Pleased with her interest in him, Dolphin racks his brains to think of some way of exploiting this curiosity to his own advantage; but he is too shy to play any of the gambits which his ingenuity suggests. Amy makes a social effort and speaks, in chanting Middle Western tones.

AMY. It's been a wonderful day, hasn't it?

DOLPHIN (starting, as though roused from profoundest thought). Yes, yes, it has.

AMY. You don't often get it fine as this in England, I guess.

DOLPHIN. Not often.

AMY. Nor do we over at home.

DOLPHIN. So I should suppose. (Silence. A spasm of anguish crosses Dolphin's face; then he reassumes the old Thinker's mask. Amy looks at him for a little longer, then, unable to suppress her growing curiosity, she says with a sudden burst of childish confidence:)

AMY. It must be wonderful to be able to think as hard as you do, Mr. Dolphin. Or are you sad about something?

DOLPHIN (looks up, smiles and blushes: a spell has been broken). The finger at the temple, Miss Toomis, is not the barrel of a revolver.

AMY. That means you're not specially sad about anything. Just thinking.

DOLPHIN. Just thinking.

AMY. What about?

DOLPHIN. Oh, just life, you know, life and letters.

AMY. Letters? Do you mean love letters.

DOLPHIN. No, no. Letters in the sense of literature; letters as opposed to life.

AMY (disappointed). Oh, literature. They used to teach us
literature at school. But I could never understand Emerson. 
What do you think about literature for?
DOLPHIN. It interests me, you know. I read it; I even try to write it.

AMY (very much excited). What, are you a writer, a poet, Mr. Dolphin?
DOLPHIN. Alas, it is only too true; I am.

AMY. But what do you write?
DOLPHIN. Verse and prose, Miss Toomis. Just verse and prose.

AMY (with enthusiasm). Isn’t that interesting! I’ve never met a poet before, you know.
DOLPHIN. Fortunate being. Why, before I left England I attended a luncheon of the Poetry Union at which no less than a hundred and eighty-nine poets were present. The sight of them made me decide to go to Italy.

AMY. Will you show me your books?
DOLPHIN. Certainly not, Miss Toomis. That would ruin our friendship. I am insufferable in my writings. In them I give vent to all the horrible thoughts and impulses which I am too timid to express or put into practice in real life. Take me as you find me here, a decent specimen of a man, shy but able to talk intelligently when the layers of ice are broken, aimless, ineffective, but on the whole quite a good sort.

AMY. But I know that man already, Mr. Dolphin. I want to know the poet. Tell me what the poet is like.
DOLPHIN. He is older, Miss Toomis, than the rocks on which he sits. He is villainous. He is . . . but there, I really must stop. It was you who set me going, though. Did you do it on purpose?

AMY. Do what on purpose?
DOLPHIN. Make me talk about myself. If you want to get people to like you, you must always lead the conversation on to the subject of their characters. Nothing pleases them so much. They’ll talk with enthusiasm for hours and go away saying that you’re the most charming, cleverest person they’ve ever met. But of course you knew that already. You’re Machiavellian.
AMY. Machiavellian? You’re the first person that’s ever said that. I always thought I was very simple and straightforward. People say about me that... Ah, now I’m talking about myself. That was unscrupulous of you. But you shouldn’t have told me about the trick, if you wanted it to succeed.

DOLPHIN. Yes. It was silly of me. If I hadn’t, you’d have gone on talking about yourself and thought me the nicest man in the world.

AMY. I want to hear about your poetry. Are you writing any now?

DOLPHIN. I have composed the first line of a magnificent epic. But I can’t get any further.

AMY. How does it go?

DOLPHIN. Like this (he clears his throat). “Casbeen has been, and Moghreb is no more.” Ah, the transience of all sublunary things! But inspiration has stopped short there.

AMY. What exactly does it mean?

DOLPHIN. Ah, there you’re asking too much, Miss Toomis.

_WAITER_ (who is standing in the door of the lounge). Si, Signore. Will the lady and gentleman take it here, or in the gardens, perhaps?

DOLPHIN. A good suggestion. Why shouldn’t the lady and gentleman take it in the garden?

AMY. Why not?

DOLPHIN. By the fountain, then, Waiter. We can talk about ourselves there to the tune of falling waters.

AMY. And you shall recite your poetry, Mr. Dolphin. I just love poetry. Do you know Mrs. Wilcox’s _Poems of Passion_? (They go out to the left. A nightingale utters two or three phrases of song and from far down the bells of the city jangle the three-quarters and die slowly away into the silence out of which they rose and came together.)

_LUCREZIA GRATTORAL_ has come out of the hotel just in time to overhear Miss Toomis’s last remark, just in time to see her walk slowly away with a hand on Sidney Dolphin’s arm. _Lucrezia_ has a fine thoroughbred
appearance, an aquiline nose, a finely curved sensual mouth, a superb white
brow, a quivering nostril. She is the last of a family whose name is as
illustrious in Venetian annals as that of Foscarni, Tiepolo or Tron. She
stamps a preposterously high-heeled foot and tosses her head.)

LUCREZIA. Passion! Passion, indeed! An American!
(\textit{She starts to run after the retreating couple, when Alberto, who
has been sitting with his head between his hands, looks up and
catches sight of the newcomer.)

ALBERTO. Lucrezia!

LUCREZIA \textit{(starts, for in the shade beneath the trees she had
not seen him). Oh! You gave me such a fright, Alberto. I'm
in a hurry now. Later on, if you . . .}

ALBERTO \textit{(in a desperate voice that breaks into a sob).
Lucrezia! You must come and talk to me. You must.

LUCREZIA. But I tell you I can't now, Alberto. Later on.

ALBERTO \textit{(the tears streaming down his cheeks). Now, now,
now! You must come now. I am lost if you don't.}

LUCREZIA \textit{(looking indecisively first at Alberto and then
along the path down which Amy and Sidney Dolphin have
disappeared). But supposing I am lost if I do come?}

ALBERTO. But you couldn't be as much lost as I am. Ah,
you don't know what it is to suffer. Nur wer die sehnsucht
kennt weiss wass ich leide. Oh, Lucrezia . . . (He sobs unre-
strainedly.)

LUCREZIA \textit{(goes over to where Alberto is sitting. She pats
his shoulder and his bowed head of black curly hair). There,
there, my little Bertino. Tell me what it is. You mustn't cry.
There, there.}

ALBERTO \textit{(drying his eyes and rubbing his head, like a cat,
avid of caresses, against her hand). How can I thank you
enough, Lucrezia? You are like a mother to me.}

LUCREZIA. I know. That's just what's so dangerous.

ALBERTO \textit{(lets his head fall upon her bosom). I come to you
for comfort, like a tired child, Lucrezia.}

LUCREZIA. Poor darling! (\textit{She strokes his hair, twines its thick
black tendrils round her fingers. Alberto is abjectly pathetic.)}
ALBERTO (with closed eyes and a seraphic smile). Ah, the suavity, the beauty of this maternal instinct!

LUCREZIA (with a sudden access of energy and passion). The disgustingness of it, you mean. (She pushes him from her. His head wobbles once, as though it were inanimate, before he straightens into life.) The maternal instinct. Ugh! It's been the undoing of too many women. You men come with your sentimental babyishness and exploit it for your own lusts. Be a man, Bertino. Be a woman, I mean, if you can.

ALBERTO (looking up at her with eyes full of dog-like, dumb reproach). Lucrezia! You, too? Is there nobody who cares for me? This is the unkindest cut of all. I may as well die. (He relapses into tears.)

LUCREZIA (who has started to go, turns back, irresolute). Now don't cry, Bertino. Can't you behave like a reasonable being? (She makes as though to go again.)

ALBERTO (through his sobs). You too, Lucrezia! Oh, I can't bear it, I can't bear it.

LUCREZIA (turning back desperately). But what do you want me to do? Why should you expect me to hold your hand?

ALBERTO. I thought better of you, Lucrezia. Let me go. There is nothing left for me now but death. (He rises to his feet, takes a step or two, and then collapses into another chair, unable to move.)

LUCREZIA (torn between anger and remorse). Now do behave yourself sensibly, Bertino. There, there... you mustn't cry. I'm sorry if I've hurt you. (Looking towards the left along the path taken by Amy and Dolphin.) Oh, damnation! (She stamps her foot.) Here, Bertino, do pull yourself together. (She raises him up.) There, now you must stop crying. (But as soon as she lets go of him his head falls back on to the iron table with an unpleasant, meaty bump. That bump is too much for Lucrezia. She bends over him, strokes his head, even kisses the lustrous curls.) Oh, forgive me, forgive me! I have been a beast. But tell me first, what's the matter, Bertino? What is it, my poor darling? Tell me.
ALBERTO. Nobody loves me.
LUCREZIA. But we're all devoted to you, Bertino mio.
ALBERTO. She isn't. To-day she shut the door in my face.
LUCREZIA. She? You mean the Frenchwoman, the one you told me about? Louise, wasn't she?
ALBERTO. Yes, the one with the golden hair.
LUCREZIA. And the white legs. I remember: you saw her bathing.
ALBERTO (lays his hand on his heart). Ah, don't remind me of it. (His face twitches convulsively.)
LUCREZIA. And now she's gone and shut the door in your face.
ALBERTO. In my face, Lucrezia.
LUCREZIA. Poor darling!
ALBERTO. For me there is nothing now but the outer darkness.
LUCREZIA. Is the door shut for ever, then?
ALBERTO. Definitively, for ever.
LUCREZIA. But have you tried knocking? Perhaps, after all, it might be opened again, if only a crack.
ALBERTO. What, bruise my hands against the granite of her heart?
LUCREZIA. Don't be too poetical, Bertino mio. Why not try again in any case.
ALBERTO. You give me courage.
LUCREZIA. There's no harm in trying, you know.
ALBERTO. Courage to live, to conquer. (He beats his breast.) I am a man again, thanks to you, Lucrezia, my inspirer, my Muse, my Egeria. How can I be sufficiently grateful. (He kisses her.) I am the child of your spirit. (He kisses her again.)
LUCREZIA. Enough, enough. I am not ambitious to be a mother, yet awhile. Quickly now, Bertino, I know you will succeed.
ALBERTO (cramming his hat down on his head and knocking with his walking-stick on the ground). Succeed or die, Lucrezia. (He goes out with a loud and martial stamp.)
LUCREZIA (to the waiter who is passing across the stage with a coffee-pot and cups on a tray). Have you seen the Signorina Toomis, Giuseppe?

WAITER. The Signorina is down in the garden. So is the Signore Dolphin. By the fountain, Signorina. This is the Signore's coffee.

LUCREZIA. Have you a mother, Giuseppe?

WAITER. Unfortunately, Signorina.

LUCREZIA. Unfortunately? Does she treat you badly, then?

WAITER. Like a dog, Signorina.

LUCREZIA. Ah, I should like to see your mother. I should like to ask her to give me some hints on how to bring up children.

WAITER. But surely, Signorina, you are not expecting, you—ah . . .

LUCREZIA. Only figuratively, Giuseppe. My children are spiritual children.

WAITER. Precisely, precisely! My mother, alas! is not a spiritual relation. Nor is my fiancée.

LUCREZIA. I didn't know you were engaged.

WAITER. To an angel of perdition. Believe me, Signorina, I go to my destruction in that woman—go with open eyes. There is no escape. She is what is called in the Holy Bible (crosses himself) a Fisher of Men.

LUCREZIA. You have remarkable connections, Giuseppe.

WAITER. I am honoured by your words, Signorina. But the coffee becomes cold. (He hurries out to the left.)

LUCREZIA. In the garden! By the fountain! And there's the nightingale beginning to sing in earnest! Good heavens! what may not already have happened? (She runs out after the waiter.)

(Two persons emerge from the hotel, the Vicomte Paul de Barbazange and the Baroness Koch de Worms. Paul de Barbazange is a young man—twenty-six perhaps—of exquisite grace. Five foot ten, well built, dark hair, sleek as marble, the most refined aristocratic features, and a monocle. Simone de Worms is forty, a ripe Semitic beauty. Five years more and
the bursting point of over-ripeness will have been reached. But now, thanks to massage, powerful corsets, skin foods and powder, she is still a beauty—a beauty of the type Italians admire, cushioned, steatopygous. Paul, who has a faultless taste in bric-à-brac and women, and is by instinct and upbringing an ardent anti-Semite, finds her infinitely repulsive. The Baronne enters with a loud shrill giggle. She gives Paul a slap with her green feather fan.)

SIMONE. O you naughty boy! Quelle histoire! Mon dieu! How dare you tell me such a story.

PAUL. For you, Baronne, I would risk anything—even your displeasure.

SIMONE. Charming boy! But stories of that kind... And you look so innocent, too! Do you know many more like it?

PAUL (suddenly grave). Not of that description. But I will tell you a story of another kind, a true story, a tragic story.

SIMONE. Did I ever tell you how I saw a woman run over by a train? Cut to pieces, literally, to pieces. So disagreeable. I'll tell you later. But now, what about your story?

PAUL. Oh, it's nothing, nothing.

SIMONE. But you promised to tell it me.

PAUL. It's only a commonplace anecdote. A young man, poor but noble, with a name and a position to keep up. A few youthful follies, a mountain of debts and no way out except the revolver. This is all dull and obvious enough. But now follows the interesting part of the story. He is about to take that way out, when he meets the woman of his dreams, the goddess, the angel, the ideal. He loves, and he must die without a word. (He turns his face away from the Baronne, as though his emotion were too much for him, which indeed it is.)

SIMONE. Vicomte—Paul—this young man is you?

PAUL (solemnly). He is.

SIMONE. And the woman?

PAUL. Oh, I can't, I mayn't tell you.

SIMONE. The woman! Tell me, Paul.

PAUL (turning towards her and falling on his knees). The woman, Simone, is you. Ah, but I had no right to say it.
SIMONE (quivering with emotion). My Paul! (She clasps his head to her bosom. A grimace of disgust contorts Paul’s classical features. He endures Simone’s caresses with a stoical patience.) But what is this about a revolver? That is only a joke, Paul, isn’t it? Say it isn’t true.

PAUL. Alas, Simone, too true. (He taps his coat pocket.) There it lies. To-morrow I have a hundred and seventy thousand francs to pay, or be dishonoured. I cannot pay the sum. A Barbazange does not survive dishonour. My ancestors were crusaders, preux chevaliers to a man. Their code is mine. Dishonour for me is worse than death.

SIMONE. Mon dieu, Paul, how noble you are! (She lays her hands on his shoulder, leans back and surveys him at arm’s length, a look of pride and anxious happiness on her face.)

PAUL (dropping his eyes modestly). Not at all. I was born noble, and noblesse oblige, as we say in our family. Farewell, Simone, I love you—and I must die. My last thought will be of you. (He kisses her hand, rises to his feet and makes as though to go.)

SIMONE (clutching him by the arm). No, Paul, no. You must not, shall not do anything rash. A hundred and seventy thousand francs, did you say? It is paltry. Is there no one who could lend or give you the money?

PAUL. Not a soul. Farewell, Simone.

SIMONE. Stay, Paul. I hardly dare to ask it of you—you with such lofty ideas of honour—but would you . . . from me?

PAUL. Take money from a woman? Ah, Simone, tempt me no more. I might do an ignoble act.

SIMONE. But from me, Paul, from me. I am not in your eyes a woman like any other woman, am I?

PAUL. It is true that my ancestors, the crusaders, the preux chevaliers, might in all honour receive gifts from the ladies of their choice—chargers, swords, armour, or tenderer mementoes, such as gloves or garters. But money—no; who ever heard of their taking money?

SIMONE. But what would be the use of my giving you swords
and horses? You could never use them. Consider, my knight, my noble Sir Paul, in these days the contests of chivalry have assumed a different form; the weapons and the armour have changed. Your sword must be of gold and paper; your breast-plate of hard cash; your charger of gilt-edged securities. I offer you the shining panoply of the modern crusader. Will you accept it?

Paul. You are eloquent, Simone. You could win over the devil himself with that angelic voice of yours. But it cannot be. Money is always money. The code is clear. I cannot accept your offer. Here is the way out. (He takes an automatic pistol out of his pocket.) Thank you, Simone, and good-bye.

How wonderful is the love of a pure woman.

Simone. Paul, Paul, give that to me! (She snatches the pistol from his hand.) If anything were to happen to you, Paul, I should kill myself with this. You must live, you must consent to accept the money. You mustn’t let your honour make a martyr of you.

Paul (brushing a tear from his eyes). No, I can’t... Give me that pistol, I beg you.

Simone. For my sake, Paul.

Paul. Oh, you make it impossible for me to act as the voices of dead ancestors tell me I should... For your sake, then, Simone, I consent to live. For your sake I dare to accept the gift you offer.

Simone (kissing his hand in an outburst of gratitude). Thank you, thank you, Paul. How happy I am!

Paul. I, too, light of my life.

Simone. My month’s allowance arrived to-day. I have the cheque here. (She takes it out of her corsage.) Two hundred thousand francs. It’s signed already. You can get it cashed as soon as the banks open to-morrow.

Paul (moved by an outburst of genuine emotion kisses indiscriminately the cheque, the Baronne, his own hands.) My angel, you have saved me. How can I thank you? How can I love you enough? Ah, mon petit bouton de rose.
SIMONE. Oh, naughty, naughty! Not now, my Paul; you must wait till some other time.

PAUL. I burn with impatience.

SIMONE. Quelle fougue! Listen, then. In an hour's time, Paul chéri, in my boudoir; I shall be alone.

PAUL. An hour? It is an eternity.

SIMONE (playfully). An hour. I won't relent. Till then, my Paul. (She blows a kiss and runs out: the scenery trembles at her passage.)

(PAUL looks at the cheque, then pulls out a large silk handkerchief and wipes his neck inside his collar.)

(DOLPHIN drifts in from the left. He is smoking a cigarette, but he does not seem to be enjoying it.)

PAUL. Alone?

DOLPHIN. Alas!

PAUL. Brooding on the universe as usual? I envy you your philosophic detachment. Personally, I find that the world is very much too much with us; and the devil too; (he looks at the cheque in his hand) and above all the flesh. My god, the flesh . . . (He wipes his neck again.)

DOLPHIN. My philosophic detachment? But it's only a mask to hide the ineffectual longings I have to achieve contact with the world.

PAUL. But surely nothing is easier. One just makes a movement and impinges on one's fellow beings.

DOLPHIN. Not with a temperament like mine. Imagine a shyness more powerful than curiosity or desire, a paralysis of all the faculties. You are a man of the world. You were born with a forehead of brass to affront every social emergency. Ah, if you knew what a torture it is to find yourself in the presence of some one—a woman, perhaps—some one in whom you take an interest that is not merely philosophic; to find oneself in the presence of such a person and to be incapable, yes, physically incapable, of saying a word to express your interest in her or your desire to possess her intimacy. Ah, I notice I have slipped into the feminine. Inevitably, for of course the person is always a she.
PAUL. Of course, of course. That goes without saying. But what's the trouble? Women are so simple to deal with.

DOLPHIN. I know. Perfectly simple if one's in the right state of mind. I have found that out myself; for moments come—alas, how rarely!—when I am filled with a spirit of confidence, possessed by some angel or devil of power. Ah, then I feel myself to be superb. I carry all before me. In those brief moments the whole secret of the world is revealed to me. I perceive that the supreme quality in the human soul is effrontery. Genius in the man of action is simply the apotheosis of charlatanism. Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Mr. Gladstone, Lloyd George—what are they? Just ordinary human beings projected through the magic lantern of a prodigious effrontery and so magnified to a thousand times larger than life. Look at me. I am far more intelligent than any of these fabulous figures; my sensibility is more refined than theirs; I am morally superior to any of them. And yet, by my lack of charlatanism I am made less than nothing. My qualities are projected through the wrong end of a telescope and the world perceives me far smaller than I really am. But the world—who cares about the world? The only people who matter are the women.

PAUL. Very true, my dear Dolphin. The women... (He looks at the cheque and mops himself once more with his mauve silk handkerchief.)

DOLPHIN. To-night was one of my moments of triumph. I felt myself suddenly free of all my inhibitions.

PAUL. I hope you profited by the auspicious occasion.

DOLPHIN. I did. I was making headway. I had—but I don't know why I should bore you with my confidences. Curious that one should be dumb before intimates and open one's mind to an all but stranger. I must apologise.

PAUL. But I am all attention and sympathy, my dear Dolphin. And I take it a little hardly that you should regard me as a stranger. (He lays a hand on Dolphin's shoulder.)

DOLPHIN. Thank you, Barbazange, thank you. Well, if you consent to be the receptacle of my woes, I shall go on...
pouring them out . . . Miss Toomis . . . But tell me frankly what you think of her.

PAUL. Well . . .

DOLPHIN. A little too ingenuous, a little silly even, eh?

PAUL. Now you say so, she certainly isn't very intellectually stimulating.

DOLPHIN. Precisely. But . . . oh, those china-blue eyes, that ingenuousness, that pathetic and enchanting silliness! She touches lost chords in one's heart. I love the Chromatic Fantasia of Bach, I am transported by Beethoven's hundred-and-eleventh Sonata; but the fact doesn't prevent my being moved to tears by the last luscious waltz played by the hotel orchestra. In the best-constructed brains there are always spongy surfaces that are sensitive to picture postcards and Little Nelly and the End of a Perfect Day. Miss Toomis has found out my Achilles' heel. She is boring, ridiculous, absurd to a degree, but oh! how moving, how adorable.

PAUL. You're done for, my poor Dolphin, sunk—spoorlos.

DOLPHIN. And I was getting on so well, was revelling in my new-found confidence and, knowing its transience, was exploiting it for all I was worth. I had covered an enormous amount of ground and then, hey presto! at a blow all my labour was undone. Actuated by what malice I don't know, la Lucrezia swoops down like a vulture, and without a by-your-leave or excuse of any kind carries off Miss Toomis from under my very eyes. What a woman! She terrifies me. I am always running away from her.

PAUL. Which means, I suppose, that she is always pursuing you.

DOLPHIN. She has ruined my evening and, it may be, all my chances of success. My precious hour of self-confidence will be wasted (though I hope you'll not take offence at the word)—wasted on you.

PAUL. It will return.

DOLPHIN. But when—but when? Till it does I shall be impotent and in agony.
PAUL. I know the agony of waiting. I myself was engaged to a Rumanian Princess in 1916. But owing to the sad collapse in the Rumanian rate of exchange I have had to postpone our union indefinitely. It is painful, but, believe me, it can be borne. (He looks at the cheque and then at his watch.) There are other things which are much worse. Believe me, Dolphin, it can be borne.

DOLPHIN. I suppose it can. For, when all is said, there are damned few of us who really take things much to heart. Julie de Lespinasses are happily not common. I am even sub-normal. At twenty I believed myself passionate: one does at that age. But now, when I come to consider myself candidly, I find that I am really one of those who never deeply felt nor strongly willed. Everything is profoundly indifferent to me. I sometimes try to depress myself with the thought that the world is a cesspool, that men are pathetic degenerates from the ape whose laboriously manufactured ideals are pure nonsense and find no rhyme in reality, that the whole of life is a bad joke which takes a long time coming to an end. But it really doesn't upset me. I don't care a curse. It's deplorable; one ought to care. The best people do care. Still, I must say I should like to get possession of Miss Toomis. Confound that Grattarol woman. What did she want to rush in like that for?

PAUL. I expect we shall find out now. (PAUL jerks his head towards the left. LUCREZIA and AMY are seen entering from the garden. LUCREZIA holds her companion's arm and marches with a firm step towards the two men. AMY suffers herself to be dragged along.)

LUCREZIA. Vicomte, Miss Toomis wants you to tell her all about Correggio.

AMY (rather scared). Oh, really—I . . .

LUCREZIA. And (sternly)—and Michel Angelo. She is so much interested in art.

AMY. But please—don't trouble . . .

PAUL (bowing gracefully). I shall be delighted. And in return I hope Miss Toomis will tell me all about Longfellow.

AMY (brightening). Oh, yes, don't you just love Evangeline?
Paul. I do; and with your help, Miss Toomis, I hope I shall learn to love her better.

Lucrezia (to Dolphin, who has been looking from Amy to the Vicomte and back again at Amy with eyes that betray a certain disquietude). You really must come and look at the moon rising over the hills, Mr. Dolphin. One sees it best from the lower terrace. Shall we go?

Dolphin (starts and shrinks). But it’s rather cold, isn’t it? I mean—I think I ought to go and write a letter.

Lucrezia. Oh, you can do that to-morrow.

Dolphin. But really . . .

Lucrezia. You’ve no idea how lovely the moon looks.

Dolphin. But I must . . .

Lucrezia (lays her hand on his sleeve and tows him after her, crying as she goes). The moon, the moon . . . (Paul and Amy regard their exit in silence.)

Paul. He doesn’t look as though he much wanted to go and see the moon.

Amy. Perhaps he guesses what’s in store for him.

Paul (surprised). What, you don’t mean to say you realised all the time?

Amy. Realised what?

Paul. About la belle Lucrezia.

Amy. I don’t know what you mean. All I know is that she means to give Mr. Dolphin a good talking to. He’s so mercenary. It made me quite indignant when she told me about him. Such a schemer too! You know, in America we have very definite ideas about honour.

Paul. Here too, Miss Toomis.

Amy. Not Mr. Dolphin. Oh dear, it made me so sad; more sad than angry. I can never be grateful enough to Signorina Grattarol.

Paul. But I’m still at a loss to know exactly what you’re talking about.

Amy. And I am quite bewildered myself. Would you have believed it of him? I thought him such a nice man.
PAUL. But what has he done?

AMY. It's all for my money. Miss Grattarol told me. She knows. He was just asking me to marry him, and I believe I would have said Yes. But she came in just in the nick of time. It seems he only wanted to marry me because I'm so rich. He doesn't care for me at all. Miss Grattarol knows what he's like. It's awful, isn't it? Oh dear, I wouldn't have thought it of him.

PAUL. But you must forgive him, Miss Toomis. Money is a great temptation. Perhaps if you gave him another chance . . .

AMY. Impossible.

PAUL. Poor Dolphin! He's such a nice young fellow.

AMY. I thought so too. But he's false.

PAUL. Don't be too hard on him. Money probably means too much to him. It's the fault of his upbringing. No one who has not lived among the traditions of our ancient aristocracy can be expected to have that contempt, almost that hatred of wealth, which is the sign of true nobility. If he had been brought up, as I was, in an old machicolated castle on the Loire, surrounded by ancestral ghosts, imbued with the spirit of the crusaders and preux chevaliers who had inhabited the place in the past, if he had learnt to know what noblesse oblige really means, believe me, Miss Toomis, he could never have done such a thing.

AMY. I should just think he couldn't, Monsieur de Barbazange.

PAUL. You have no idea, Miss Toomis, how difficult it is for a man of truly noble feelings to get over the fact of your great wealth. When I heard that you were the possessor of a hundred million dollars . . .

AMY. Oh, I'm afraid it's more than that. It's two hundred million.

PAUL. . . . of two hundred million dollars, then . . . it only makes it worse; I was very melancholy, Miss Toomis. For those two hundred million dollars were a barrier, which a descendant
of crusaders and preux chevaliers could not overleap. Honour, Miss Toomis, honour forbade. Ah, if only that accursed money had not stood in the way . . . When I first saw you—oh, how I was moved by that vision of beauty and innocence—I wanted nothing better than to stand gazing on you for ever. But then I heard about those millions. Dolphin was lucky to have felt no restraints. But enough, enough. (He checks a rising tide of emotion.) Give poor Dolphin another chance, Miss Toomis. At bottom he is a good fellow, and he may learn in time to esteem you for your own sake and to forget the dazzling millions.

Amy. Never. I can only marry a man who is entirely disinterested.

Paul. But can't you see, no disinterested man could ever bring himself to ask you. How could he prove his disinterestedness? No one would believe the purity of his intentions.

Amy (much moved). It is for me to judge. I know a disinterested man when I see him. Even in America we can understand honour.

Paul (with a sob in his voice). Good-bye, Miss Toomis.

Amy. But no. I don't want it to be good-bye.

Paul. It must be. Never shall it be said of a Barbazange that he hunted a woman for her money.

Amy. But what does it matter what the world says, if I say the opposite?

Paul. You say the opposite? Thank you, thank you. But no, good-bye.

Amy. Stop. Oh! you're forcing me to do a most unwomanly thing. You're making me ask you to marry me. You're the only disinterested man I've ever met or, to judge from what I've seen of the world, I'm ever likely to meet. Haven't you kept away from me in spite of your feelings? Haven't you even tried to make me listen to another man—a man not worthy to black your boots? Oh, it's so wonderful, so noble! It's like something in a picture play. Paul, I offer myself to you. Will you take me in spite of my millions?
PAUL (falling on his knees and kissing the hem of AMY's skirt). My angel, you're right; what does it matter what the world says as long as you believe in me. Amy, amie, bien-aimée... Ah, it's too good! too, too good to be true! (He rises to his feet and embraces her with an unfeigned enthusiasm.)

AMY. Paul, Paul... And so this is love. Isn't it wonderful...?

PAUL (looking round anxiously). You mustn't tell any one about our engagement, my Amy. They might say unpleasant things in the hotel, you know.

AMY. Of course I won't talk about it. We'll keep our happiness to ourselves, won't we?

PAUL. Entirely to ourselves; and to-morrow we'll go to Paris and arrange about being married.

AMY. Yes, yes; we'll take the eight o'clock train.

PAUL. Not the eight o'clock, my darling. I have to go to the bank to-morrow to do a little business. We must wait till the twelve-thirty.

AMY. Very well then. The twelve-thirty. Oh, how happy I am!

PAUL. So am I, my sweetheart. More than I can tell you. (The sound of a window being opened is heard. They look up and see the BARONESS dressed in a peignoir of the tenderest blue, emerging on to the right hand of the three balconies.)

AMY. Oh, my soul! I think I'd better go in. Good-night, my Paul.

(She runs in.)

SIMONE. Has that horrid little American girl gone? (She peers down; then, reassured, she blows a kiss to PAUL.) My Romeo!

PAUL. I come, Juliet.

SIMONE. There's a kiss for you.

PAUL (throwing kisses with both hands). And there's one for you. And another, and another. Two hundred million kisses, my angel.

SIMONE (giggling). What a lot!

PAUL. It is, you're quite right. Two hundred million...
I come, my Juliet. (He darts into the hotel, pausing when just inside the door and out of sight of the Baroness, to mop himself once again with his enormous handkerchief. The operation over, he advances with a resolute step. The Baroness stands for a moment on the balcony. Then, seeing Dolphin and Lucrezia coming in from the left, she retires, closing the window and drawing the curtains behind her. Dolphin comes striding in; Lucrezia follows a little behind, looking anxiously up at him.)

Lucrezia. Please, please . . .

Dolphin. No, I won't listen to anything more. (He walks with an agitated step up and down the stage. Lucrezia stands with one hand resting on the back of a chair and the other pressed on her heart.) Do you mean to say you deliberately went and told her that I was only after her money? Oh, it's too bad, too bad. It's infamous. And I hadn't the faintest notion that she had any money. Besides, I don't want money; I have quite enough of my own. It's infamous, infamous!

Lucrezia. I know it was a horrible thing to do. But I couldn't help it. How could I stand by and see you being carried off by that silly little creature?

Dolphin. But I cared for her.

Lucrezia. But not as I cared for you. I've got red blood in my veins; she's got nothing but milk and water. You couldn't have been happy with her. I can give you love of a kind she could never dream of. What does she know of passion?

Dolphin. Nothing, I am thankful to say. I don't want passion, can't you understand that? I don't possess it myself and don't like it in others. I am a man of sentimental affections, with a touch of quiet sensuality. I don't want passion, I tell you. It's too violent; it frightens me. I couldn't possibly live with you. You'd utterly shatter my peace of mind in a day. Oh, how I wish you'd go away!

Lucrezia. But Sidney, Sidney, can't you understand what it is to be madly in love with somebody? You can't be so cruel.
DOLPHIN. You didn’t think much of my well-being when you interfered between Miss Toomis and me, did you? You’ve probably ruined my whole life, that’s all. I really don’t see why you should expect me to have any pity for you.

LUCREZIA. Very well then, I shall kill myself. (She bursts into tears.)

DOLPHIN. Oh, but I assure you, one doesn’t kill oneself for things like that. (He approaches her and pats her on the shoulder.) Come, come, don’t worry about it.

LUCREZIA (throws her arms round his neck). Oh, Sidney, Sidney . . .

DOLPHIN (freeing himself with surprising energy and promptitude from her embrace). No, no, none of that, I beg. Another moment and we shall be losing our heads. Personally I think I shall go to bed now. I should advise you to do the same, Miss Grattarol. You’re overwrought. We might all be better for a small dose of bromide. (He goes in.)

LUCREZIA (looking up and stretching forth her hands). Sidney . . . ! (DOLPHIN does not look round, and disappears through the glass door into the hotel. LUCREZIA covers her face with her hands and sits for a little, sobbing silently. The nightingale sings on. Midnight sounds with an infinite melancholy from all the twenty campaniles of the city in the valley. From far away comes the spasmodic throbbing of a guitar and the singing of an Italian voice, high-pitched, passionate, throaty. The seconds pass. LUCREZIA rises to her feet and walks slowly into the hotel. On the threshold she encounters the VICOMTE coming out.)

PAUL. You, Signorina Lucrezia? I’ve escaped for a breath of fresh, cool air. Mightn’t we take a turn together? (LUCREZIA shakes her head.) Ah, well, then, good-night. You’ll be glad to hear that Miss Toomis knows all about Correggio now. (He inhales a deep breath of air. Then looking at his dinner-jacket he begins brushing at it with his hand. A lamentable figure creeps in from the left. It is ALBERTO. If he had a tail, it would be trailing on the ground between his legs.)

PAUL. Hullo, Alberto. What is it? Been losing at cards?
ALBERTO. Worse than that.
Paul. Creditors foreclosing?
ALBERTO. Much worse.
Paul. Father ruined by imprudent speculations?
ALBERTO. No, no, no. It's nothing to do with money.
Paul. Oh, well then. It can't be anything very serious. It's women, I suppose.
ALBERTO. My mistress refuses to see me. I have been beating on her door for hours in vain.
Paul. I wish we all had your luck, Bertino. Mine opens her door only too promptly. The difficulty is to get out again. Does yours use such an awful lot of this evil-smelling powder? I'm simply covered with it. Ugh? (He brushes his coat again.)
ALBERTO. Can't you be serious, Paul?
Paul. Of course I can... about a serious matter. But you can't expect me to pull a long face about your mistress, can you, now? Do look at things in their right proportions.
ALBERTO. It's no use talking to you. You're heartless, soulless.
Paul. What you mean, my dear Alberto, is that I'm relatively speaking bodiless. Physical passion never goes to my head. I'm always compos mentis. You aren't, that's all.
ALBERTO. Oh, you disgust me. I think I shall hang myself to-night.
Paul. Do. It will give us something to talk about at lunch to-morrow.
ALBERTO. Monster! (He goes into the hotel. Paul strolls out towards the garden, whistling an air from Mozart as he goes. The window on the left opens and Lucrezia steps on to her balcony. Uncoiled, her red hair falls almost to her waist. Her nightdress is always half slipping off one shoulder or the other, like those loose-bodied Restoration gowns that reveal the tight-blown charms of Kneller's Beauties. Her feet are bare. She is a marvellously romantic figure, as she stands there, leaning on the balustrade, and with eyes more sombre than night, gazing into the darkness. The nightingales, the bells, the guitar and passionate voice strike up.
Great stars palpitate in the sky. The moon has swum imperceptibly to the height of heaven. In the garden below flowers are yielding their souls into the air, censers invisible. It is too much, too much . . . Large tears roll down Lucrezia’s cheeks and fall with a splash to the ground. Suddenly, but with the noiselessness of a cat, Alberto appears, childish-looking in pink pyjamas, on the middle of the three balconies. He sees Lucrezia, but she is much too deeply absorbed in thought to have noticed his coming. Alberto plants his elbows on the rail of the balcony, covers his face and begins to sob, at first inaudibly, than in a gradual quickening crescendo. At the seventh sob Lucrezia starts and becomes aware of his presence.)

Lucrezia. Alberto! I didn’t know . . . Have you been there long? (Alberto makes no articulate reply, but his sobs keep on growing louder.) Alberto, are you unhappy? Answer me.

Alberto (with difficulty, after a pause). Yes.

Lucrezia. Didn’t she let you in?

Alberto. No. (His sobs become convulsive.)

Lucrezia. Poor boy!

Alberto (lifting up a blubbered face to the moonlight). I am so unhappy.

Lucrezia. You can’t be more unhappy than I am.

Alberto. Oh, yes, I am. It’s impossible to be unhappier than me.

Lucrezia. But I am more unhappy.

Alberto. You’re not. Oh, how can you be so cruel, Lucrezia? (He covers his face once more.)

Lucrezia. But I only said I was unhappy, Alberto.

Alberto. Yes, I know. That showed you weren’t thinking of me. Nobody loves me. I shall hang myself to-night with the cord of my dressing-gown.

Lucrezia. No, no, Alberto. You mustn’t do anything rash.

Alberto. I shall. Your cruelty has been the last straw.

Lucrezia. I’m sorry, Bertino mio. But if you only knew how miserable I was feeling. I didn’t mean to be unsym-
pathetic. Poor boy. I'm so sorry. There, don't cry, poor darling.

Alberto. Oh, I knew you wouldn't desert me, Lucrezia. You've always been a mother to me. (He stretches out his hand and seizes hers, which has gone half-way to meet him; but the balconies are too far apart to allow him to kiss it. He makes an effort and fails. He is too short in the body.) Will you let me come on to your balcony, Lucrezia? I want to tell you how grateful I am.

Lucrezia. But you can do that from your own balcony.

Alberto. Please, please, Lucrezia. You mustn't be cruel to me again. I can't bear it.

Lucrezia. Well, then... Just for a moment, but for no more. (Bertino climbs from one balcony to the other. One is a little reminded of the trousered monkeys on the barrel organs. Arrived, he kneels down and kisses Lucrezia's hand.)

Alberto. You've saved me. You've given me a fresh desire to live and a fresh faith in life. How can I thank you enough, Lucrezia, darling?

Lucrezia (patting his head). There, there. We are just two unhappy creatures. We must try and comfort one another.

Alberto. What a brute I am! I never thought of your unhappiness. I am so selfish. What is it, Lucrezia?

Lucrezia. I can't tell you, Bertino; but it's very painful.

Alberto. Poor child, poor child. (His kisses, which started at the hand, have mounted, by this time, some way up the arm, changing perceptibly in character as they rise. At the shoulder they have a warmth which could not have been inferred from the respectful salutes which barely touched the fingers.) Poor darling. You've given me consolation. Now you must let me comfort your unhappiness.

Lucrezia (with an effort). I think you ought to go back now, Bertino.

Alberto. In a minute, my darling. There, there, poor Lucrezia. (He puts an arm round her, kisses her hair and neck. Lucrezia leans her bowed head against his chest. The
sound of footsteps is heard. They both look up with scared, wide-open eyes.)

Lucrezia. We mustn’t be seen here, Bertino. What would people think?

Alberto. I’ll go back.

Lucrezia. There’s no time. You must come into my room. Quickly.

(They slip through the French window, but not quickly enough to have escaped the notice of Paul, returning from his midnight stroll. The Vicomte stands for a moment looking up at the empty balcony. He laughs softly to himself, and, throwing his cigarette away, passes through the glass door into the house. All is now silent, save for the nightingales and the distant bells. The curtain comes down for a moment to indicate the passage of several hours. It rises again with the sun. Lucrezia’s window opens and she appears on the balcony. She stands a moment with one foot over the threshold of the long window in a listening pose. Then her eyes fall on the better half of a pair of pink pyjamas lying crumpled on the floor, like a body bereft of its soul; with her bare foot she turns it over. A little shudder plucks at her nerves, and she shakes her head as though, by this symbolic act, to shake off something clinging and contaminating. Then she steps out into the full glory of the early sun, stretching out her arms to the radiance. She bows her face into her hands, crying out loud to herself.)

Lucrezia. Oh, why, why, why? (The last of these Why’s is caught by the Waiter, who has crept forth in shirt-sleeves and list-slippers, duster in hand, to clean the tables. He looks up at her admiringly, passes his tongue over his lips. Then, with a sigh, turns to dust the tables.)

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