



THE  
WORLD'S TRAGEDY

THE  
WORLD'S TRAGEDY

PRICE TWO GUINEAS



THE  
WORLD'S TRAGEDY

BY

ALEISTER CROWLEY



PARIS

*Privately printed for circulation in free countries. Copies  
must not be imported into England or America.*

—

1910

## DEDICATION

Ω ΠΑΝ

*I owe this book, as all that I possess, to my playmates in the Garden of Eros ; but they are rich ; they want for nothing ; therefore I give it to the poor boys and girls of England, so that, shaking off morality and religion, they may be partakers in Love unto the glory of*

PAN.

## PREFACE

I have it on hearsay that I was born on the 12th of October in the year 1875 of Pseudo Christ. I was born dumb ; and the first incident of my career was the cutting of my fraenum linguae, that I might speak plainly. The operation, as this volume shews, was a complete success. Of my early life I remember little ; chiefly a large garden with, at the end of it, a wood which overlooked the road and afforded vantage for archers. There was war in the land ; my cousin Gregor Grant, six years older than myself, and a few other stern exiles, desperately banded against the rest of the neighbourhood. I remember leaping from the top of a sand pit in the character of Sir Garnet Wolseley and nearly transfixing with my father's alpenstock an astonished navy who had not properly prepared the trying rôle of Arabi Pasha, suddenly and without warning assigned to him by our Army Council. I remember too being disarmed and chased by a small Italian boy (the Mc. Callum Mohr) whose bandbox, containing doubtless an exquisite

bonnet, I as Greumoch Dhuibh Mc. Alpin had pierced with that same knotty lance. Nor shall I easily forget how we filled the tea-urn at the Brethrens' tea-fight with old Mr. Sherrall's castor-oil, to the discomfiture of the faithful, who were too polite to call the attention of the hostess to their interior pangs.

Joyful too was the great tea at Mr. Nunnerley's where we delayed the prayer meeting one whole hour by plying Mrs. Musty with avalanches of food after everyone else had finished. Ah joy! as piglike she munched on! while the hapless brethren (torn between impatience and politeness) wrung their hands in anguish.

Only my natural reluctance to strike a tragic chord so early in my narrative obliges me to omit some account of the circumstances in which the well-named Mrs. Clapham the fishmonger's wife was expelled from "fellowship".

But above all I remember how we soused Leggett's boy, known as the Living Mushroom from the shape of his hat, in old Ailes's pig-tub.

And then my father died, and the note changes. To explain, I find myself obliged to give a short account of the Plymouth Brethren, their tenets, character, and history.

#### THE PLYMOUTH BRETHERN

The religious movement which obtained this name through the sudden and enormous success of an evange

listic crusade at Plymouth in its early days was started in Ireland.

It was an aristocratic and intellectual movement. John Nelson Darby, a learned man of good family, reasoned thus :

The Bible is the Word of God.

If its literal interpretation is once abandoned, the whole structure crashes to earth.

This it will be seen is identically the Catholic position, save that for "literal" Rome reads "Ecclesiastical." Darby, too, found himself forced into the practical admission that "literal" meant Darbeian ; for some of the more obvious contradictions and absurdities in the Bible are too necessary to the practical side of religion to be ignored.

Seeing this, they devised an elaborate system of mental water-tight compartments. The contradictions of Old and New Testament were solved by a Doctrine that what was sauce for the Jewish "Dispensation" was not necessarily sauce for the Christian "Dispensation". Cleverer than Luther, they made possible the Epistle of James by a series of sophisms which really deserve to be exposed as master-pieces of human self-deception. My space forbids.

So, despite all the simplicity of the original logical position, they were found shifting as best they might from compromise to compromise. But this they never saw themselves ; and so far did they take their principle that my father would refuse to buy railway shares because

railways were not mentioned in the Bible! Of course the practice of finding a text for everything means ultimately "I will do as I like", and I suspect my father's heroics only meant that he thought a slump was coming.

Their attitude to human reason, too, was simply wonderful.

Some Wicked Man would point out that the Jonah story was contrary to our experience of possibility.

THE P. B. — The word is not "whale" in the Hebrew: it probably means "dog-shark".

*(This "solution" is actually printed in a book of the liar and slanderer Torrey).*

THE W. M. — Our experience of dog-sharks tells us —

THE P. B. — What, after all, is human reason?

To the Greeks foolishness, etc. The wisdom of man is foolishness, etc. We must have faith.

THE W. M. — In men?

THE P. B. — Never. In God!

THE W. M. — But you believe in the Bible?

THE P. B. — Every word of it, thank God!

THE W. M. — In the Protestant or the Catholic Bible?

The Bible was written by men, translated by men, criti-

cised by scholars again and again. You accept all the criticisms up to 1611 and reject all later. Why?

THE P. B. — There is a place prepared for the devil and his angels to which you (my poor dear brother) will most surely go! Why not simply accept Christ as your Saviour and Lord? (Then he gets started; and the rest must be heard to be believed).

So — is it a type of all logic? — their simple Yea and Nay became more casuistical than Dens or Escobar, and their strict adhesion to the Commands of the Bible became a mere loosening of the strings of conscience.

An irreligious man may have moral checks; a Plymouth Brother has none. He is always ready to excuse the vilest crimes by quoting the appropriate text, and invoking the name of Christ to cover every meanness which may delight his vain and vicious nature.

For the Plymouth Brethren were in themselves an exceptionally detestable crew. The aristocrats who began the movement were of course just aristocrats, and their curious system left them so. But they ran a form of “Early Christian” Spiritual Socialism, by having no appointed priest or minister, and they were foolish enough to favour their followers financially.

Thus Mr. Giblets — let us call him — the third-best butcher in the village found (on the one hand) that while at church he was nobody at all, and in the chapel and elder, in the little meeting in the Squire’s morning-room he was no less

than the minister of God and the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost; just as on the other hand it was only natural that the orders from the Hall should come his way, and leave the first-best butcher lamenting, and the second-best bewildered. So that in my time the sect (though it is only fair to point out that they refused to be described as a sect, since what they had done was not to form a new sect, but to “come out of sect”, — this they maintained in spite of the fact that they were far more exclusive than any other religious body in Europe) was composed of a few of the old guard, my father the last of them all, and the meanest crew of *canaille* that ever wriggled.

With my father’s death the small schisms which had hitherto lopped off a few members every year or two were altogether surpassed by the great Raven heresy which split the body into two equal halves, and extinguished the last sparks of its importance.

I am going beyond my subject, but I cannot refrain from telling the awful story of the Meeting at Oban.

The Meeting at Oban consisted of a Mr. Cameron and his wife and the bedridden mother of one of the two, I forget which. Now as it is written: “wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” it was all very well: but two forms a quorum. Jesus will not come for less. This has never been disputed by any doctor of the Brethren. Wigram is clear on the point; if Darby had ever been clear on any point, it would have been on that; Kelly never denied

it; even Stuart was sound in this matter, and Stoney himself (though reluctantly) gave his adhesion. To hold a Meeting you must have two persons present. Let nobody try to upset this; for once I positively insist. No less than two for a Meeting! I will brook no opposition; I mean to have my own way in the matter; I am not to be played with. Two or more make a Meeting. There; my foot is down, let's hear no more senseless cavil about it!

Well, I need hardly say that Mr. and Mrs. Cameron took opposite sides of the controversy. When the glad wires flashed the message that Mr. Raven in the Meeting at Ealing had deliberately said with slow and weighty emphasis: "He that hath the Son hath eternal life". Mrs. Cameron almost wept for joy. When (the message continued) Major Mc. Arthy had risen to his feet and retorted: "He that hath the Son of God hath everlasting life", Mr. Cameron executed a Highland though funereal fling.

When Mr. Raven, stung to the quick, had shaken his fist at the Major and yelled: "Brother, you're a sinful old man!" Mrs. Cameron "had always known there was something" and invented a ruined governess. But — oh the laughter of her husband when the telegraph brought the Major's retort "Brother, have you no sin?" Spoken with an accent of mildness which belied the purple of his face.

In short, the Meeting at Oban had split. Mr. Cameron

had withdrawn from the Lord's supper ! ! ! It was there fore absolutely necessary for both of them to assure themselves that the bedridden mother was of their way of thinking, or neither could hold the "Morning Meeting"; though I suppose either could preach the Gospel — morose vulptas!

Unhappily, that excellent lady was a hard case. She was quite deaf and very nearly blind; while mentally she had never been remarkable for anything beyond a not unamiable imbecility. However, there was but one thing to be done, to argue her into conviction.

They agreed to take eight-hour shifts; and for all I know, they are arguing still, and neither of the Meetings at Oban can meet!

#### A BOYHOOD IN HELL

The Revd. H. d'Arcy Champney M. A. of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, had come out of sect.

He had voted at the Parliamentary elections by crossing out the names of the candidates and writing: "I vote for King Jesus".

He had started a school for the Sons of Brethren at 51, Bateman Street, Cambridge. May God bite into the bones of men the pain of that hell on earth (I have prayed often) that by them it may be sowed with salt, accursed for ever! May the maiden that passes it be barren, and the pregnant woman that beholdeth it abort! May the birds of

the air refuse to fly over it! May it stand as a curse, as a fear, as an hate, among men! May the wicked dwell therein! May the light of the Sun be withheld therefrom, and the light of the Moon not lighten it! May it become the home of the shells of the dead, and may the demons of the pit inhabit it! May it be accursed, accursed, accursed — accursed for ever and ever!

And still, standing as I stand in the prime of early manhood, free from all the fetters of the body and the mind, do I curse the memory thereof unto the ages.

It was a good enough school from the point of examiners, I dare say. Morally and physically it was an engine of destruction and corruption. I am just going to put down a few facts haphazard as they come to my memory; you may form your own judgment.

1. We were allowed to play Cricket, but not to score runs, lest it should excite the vice of "emulation".

2. Champney told me, a child of not yet twelve years old, that he had never consummated his marriage, (Only the very acute verbal memory which I possess enabled me years after to recall and interpret his meaning. He used a coarser phrase).

3. We were told that "the Lord had a special care of the school, and brought to light that which was done in darkness", etc., etc., *ad nauseam*. "The instrument was on this occasion so-and-so, who had nobly come forward, etc., etc". In other words, hypocrisy and sneaking were the only virtues.

Naturally, one of several boys who might be involved in the same offence would take fright and save his skin by sneaking. The informer was always believed implicitly, as against probability, or even possibility, with complete disregard of the testimony of other and independent witnesses.

For instance, a boy named Glascott, with insane taint, told Mr. Champney that he had visited me (12 years old) at my mother's house during the holidays — true so far, he had — and found me “lying drunk at the bottom of the stairs”. My mother was never asked about this; nor was I told of it. I was put into “Coventry” i.e. nor master nor boy might speak to me, or I to them. I was fed on bread and water; during playhours I worked in the school-room; during work-hours I walked solitary round and round the playground. I was expected to “confess” the crime of which I was not only innocent, but unaccused.

This punishment, which I believe criminal authorities would consider severe on a poisoner, went on for a term and a half. I was, at last, threatened with expulsion for my refusal to “confess”, and so dreadful a picture of the horrors of expulsion did they paint me — the guilty wretch, shunned by his fellows, slinks on through life to a dishonoured grave, etc. — that I actually chose to endure my torture, and to thank my oppressor.

Physically, I broke down. The strain and the misery affected my kidneys; and I had to leave school altogether for two years. I should add in fairness that there were other

accusations against me, though, as you shall hear, almost equally silly.

I learnt at last, through the intervention of my uncle, in a lucid interval, what I was supposed to have done. I was said to have tried “to corrupt Chamberlain” — not our great patriotic statesman, shifty Joe — but a boy. (I was 12 years old, and quite ignorant of all sexual matters till long after). Also I had “held a mock prayer meeting”. This I remembered. I had strolled up to a group of boys in the playground, who were indeed holding one. As they saw me one said: “Brother Crowley will now lead us in prayer”. Brother Crowley was too wary, and walked away. But instead of doing what a wise boy would have done: gone straight to the head, and accused them of forty-six distinct unmentionable crimes, I let things slide. So, fearing that I might go, they hurried off themselves, and told him how that wicked Crowley had tried to lead them away from Jesus.

Worse, I had called Page I a Pharisee. That was true; I had said it. Dreadful of me! And Page I, who “walked very close to Jesus”, of course went and told.

Yes, they all walked very close to Jesus — as close as Judas did.

4. A boy named Barton was sentenced to 120 strokes of the cane on his bare shoulders, for some petty theft of which he was presumably innocent.

Superb was the process of trial. It began by an extra long prayer-time, and Joshua’s account of the sin of Achan,

impressively read. Next, an hour or two about the Lord's care of the school, the way He brought sin to light. Next, when well worked up, and all our nerves on the jump, who stole what? Silence. Next, the Lord's care in providing a witness — like the witnesses against Naboth! Then the witness and his story, as smooth as a policeman's. Next, sentence. Last, execution, with intervals of prayer!

Champney's physique being impaired, one may suppose by his excessive devotion of Jesus, he arranged to give 60 strokes one day, and 60 the next.

My memory fails — perhaps Barton will one day oblige with his reminiscences — but I fancy the first day came so near killing him that he escaped the second.

I remember one licking I got — on the legs, because flogging the buttocks excites the victim's sensuality! — 15 minutes prayer, 15 strokes of the cane, 15 minutes more prayer, 15 more strokes — and more prayer to top it!

5. On Sunday the day was devoted to "religion." Morning prayers and sermon (about 45 Min). Morning "Meeting" (I ½ to 2 hrs.). Open-air preaching on Parker's Piece (say I hour). Bible reading and learning by heart. Reading of the few books "sanctioned for Sunday" (say 2 hours). Prayer-meeting (called voluntary, but to stay away meant that some sneak in the school would accuse you of something next day), (say I hour). Evening prayer and Sermon (say 30 Minutes). Preaching of the Gospel in the meeting-room (I ½ hours), Ditto on Parker's Piece (say I hour). Prayer before retiring (say ½ hour).

6. The "Badgers' Meeting". Every Monday night the school was ranged round the back of the big school-room, and the scourgings of Barnswell (Cambridge's slum) let in, fed, preached to, and dismissed.

Result, epidemics of ring worm, measles, and mumps.

Oh no! not a result; the Lord's hand was heavy upon us because of some undiscovered sin.

I might go on for a long while, but I will not. I hope there are some people in the world happy enough to think that I am lying, or at least exaggerating. But I pledge my word to the literal truth of all I have said, and there are plenty of witnesses alive to confirm me, or to refute me. I have given throughout the actual names, addresses and other details.

#### ADOLESCENCE

Too ill with albuminuria brought on by the savage treatment of Champney to do any regular work, I was sent away with various tutors, mostly young men from Cambridge, members of the unspeakable C. I. C. C. U.

I remember in my first term at Cambridge how I was in the rooms of a leading light of the C. I. C. C. U., the Revd. Something Doddridge, my Uncle Tom's trusted henchman.

I remember how eloquently he held forth on the courage to stop any "impure conversation." I remember how impressed we were; how a gentleman with an "honou-

rable" in front of his name, destined to be celebrated in the world of motors and balloons, walked into the room and told us rather a lively story. The Reverend something Doddridge thought of the "honourable" and laughed pleasantly.

I remember how, boys as we were, we filed austere from the rooms without farewell. Oh, you must know the C. I. C. C. U.!

I remember too how this Doddridge, while in charge of my morals, aided and abetted me in extinguishing street lamps; and how when a policeman pounced upon me, he forsook me and fled! A true disciple of Jesus!

I had no playmates; my morals might be corrupted! Only the "children of brethren" were eligible, and these were as a rule socially impossible.

I was always being watched for signs of masturbation, and always being warned and worried about it. It says something for human innocence that after four years of this insane treatment I was still absolutely ignorant, though on fire in every nerve to learn the practice that people made so much fuss about.

But really — my tutors! Of all the surpassing prigs! I was so mentally shattered by the disease and torture — for both continued — that I remember practically nothing of the next two years.

But at least I shall take care that this book comes into the hands of the Very Reverend Armitage Robinson Esq., M. A., D. D., Dean of Westminster; for though I suppose

he knows how his missionary brother Jack seduced to sodomy his missionary brother Fred, he may still be ignorant of how that brother Fred (one of my tutors) attempted to seduce me in his own mother's house at Maze Hill. This came a little later; and I knew exactly what he was doing, as it happened. I let him go as far as he did, with the deliberate intention of making sure on that point.

I think my readers will agree — enough of my tutors!

I ought to make an honourable exception of one Archibald Douglas, an Oxford man and a traveller. He taught me sense and manhood, and I shall not easily forget my debt to him. I hear he is dead — may earth lie light upon him!

Of course my Mother and her brother my uncle Tom couldn't stand him. (I must excuse my mother and my Uncle. The former was the best of all possible mothers, only marred beyond belief by the religious monomania which perhaps started in what one may call "Hysteria of Widowhood"; the latter a typical sexual degenerate.) They stole his letters and faked up some excuse for getting rid of him. And if "an orphan's curse can drag to hell a spirit from on high" what of the curse of a child on those who betrayed him in their bigotry and meanness to such torture as I have described?

My whole soul cramped; society denied me; books debarred me, with the rare exceptions of Scott, Ballantyne, and some Dickens, with a few even worse!

To illustrate the domestic principles of literary criticism:

I was forbidden David Copperfield because of "little

Em'ly" — Emily being my Mother's name, I might cease to respect her. For the same reason she proscribed the Bab Ballads, recommended by a rash tutor, because "Emily Jane was a nursery maid"! Coleridge's Ancient Mariner was condemned because of the water-snakes whom he "blessed unaware"; snakes being cursed in Genesis!

As it happened, however, I had a backbone in me some where. I had always refused to join the sneaking hypocrite gang at Champney's; now I accepted the war, and began to fight for my freedom. I went long walks in the mountains, where my tutors could not follow me, and where delightful peasant girls could and did follow me — God bless them!

One day I had a difference of opinion with a tutor, in the course of which he fell from a rock into a loch (whose name I forget) near Forsinard. Memory fails to recall the actual cause of dispute; but I think I had thrown his fishing-rod into the loch, and thought that it was expedient for him to try and retrieve it.

The same night he found me in the heather with Belle Mc. Kay the local beauty (God bless her!), and gave me up as a bad job.

So I fought the swine! They sent me to Malvern, where my weakness made me the prey of every bully, and saved me from the attention of every budding Eulenburg. Sodomy was the rule at Malvern; my study-companion used even to take money for it. I cunningly used my knowledge of the fact to get taken away from the school.

It must not be supposed that we had no other amusements. There was "pill-ragging"; a form of fight whose object was to seize and hurt the opponent's testicles; and "greasing"; i.e., spitting either in each other's faces or secretly so the victim should not detect the act. In my time this had died out of the other houses; but still flourished in my house "Huntingdon's" No.4. There was bullying, too; and now and then cricket and football.

They sent me to Tonbridge; my health broke down; partly, one may say, through what would have been my own fault or misfortune if I had been properly educated; but, as it was, was the direct result of the vile system that, not content with torturing me itself, handed me over bound and blindfold to the outraged majesty of Nature.

I escaped then from Tonbridge. They sent me to Eastbourne to a P. B. family where I had more liberty, and could have been happy; but the revolting cruelties which they inflicted on the only pretty and decent member of the family, my dear "sister" Isabelle, caused me one day to knock their heads together and walk out of the house.

They sent me to Cambridge. I found myself my own master, and settled down to lead a righteous, sober and godly life; and to make up for lost time in the matter of education.

Outside purely scholastic subjects, they had taught me to fight, to love the truth, to hate oppression, — and by God! I think they taught me well.

On my soul, I should thank them!

## THE WRITING OF THE WORLD'S TRAGEDY

It has been necessary to sketch this part of my life in order to exhibit the atmosphere which I am bound to connect with Christianity, or at least English Christianity.

Certainly the vast majority of English people, of those who are religious at all, belong either to Evangelicalism or Dissent; and the tyranny of these is nearly if not quite as bad as that of the Plymouth Brethren.

I had, however, cut myself adrift from all these things.

I had lived among the great men of the earth, and the great mountains of the earth.

Pollitt had made a poet of me; Eckenstein had made a man of me; Cecil Jones and Allan Bennett had made a God of me. I had forgotten the Plymouth Brethren!

But early in this spring, I went down to Eastbourne to my mother's house, and some of the old bitterness came back.

In her house were two vile old women, hypocrites and slaves to the marrow. The mere meanness and old-maid-ishness of it would have sickened me. These mange-bitten cats!

But there was worse. Only one food was on the table for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; and that food cold boiled Jesus. I stomached it well enough — God's blood! I had my belly full of yore and knew to despise it — but in vain I tried to talk of other things. The Boulter blasphemy case was on, and the cold boiled Jesus was so

high that it literally stank. So did the women ! I stood it for breakfast, I stood it for lunch, I stood it for tea — but 'twasn't tea, 'twas Jesus!

Dinner came ; cold boiled Jesus, and the scrag end of it at that!

I went out and stood by the sea. I was lost in reverie. Here were these hags of hell, the product of an unvarying diet of cold boiled Jesus!

By God! could I not save somebody? These had once been fresh healthy English girls, fit for life and laughter. C. B. J. had mummified them to what they were. I would be the Saviour of the future!

I must have wandered in my meditation ; for presently I found myself lying on the grass under the full moon and the stars, the sea's low plash beneath my feet, the soft breeze blowing over me, a whisper — oh essence of the winds and of the seas of the world! — in my ears (I seem to remember even now that her name was Mabel — thank you, Mabel!) and then I gazed upon the moon and vowed myself knight of Artemis, to bring the truth into this England of hypocrisy, light in its superstition of rationalism, love in its prudery, chastity into its whoredom!

So I swore, and rose up and kissed Mabel and went home in the might of the holy vision — for the god Pan appeared to me, and abode in me and I in him — and wrote for four nights night by night, until the World's Tragedy lay finished and perfect before me.

All day I kept myself up to the mark by the stern

penance of C. B. J. ; all night I wrote — and wrote.

So fierce I wrote that — six months later — I have written no word since. I have poured forth all the vials, and loosed all the seals. From that supreme effort I am fallen exhausted — until, as it may chance, the Gods renew my vigour.

And all my other work I count as nothing; for I have written this in Pan, and in Pan I am content.

To the boys and girls of England I give my book, the charter of their freedom.

Alice Wesley Torr or Aleister Crowley?

With one thing and another to worry me I was a nervous wreck all this March and April of 1908. I was wasting my time in constructing anagrams on my name to publish this book under. Which shows how dependant the best of us is on his in'ards. If an Army marches on its belly, so does a philosopher think on his. My best on another's

So lost indeed was I in this jungle of delusion that I was quite surprised when one beautiful sunset in May, sitting at ease under the shadow of the Lion de Belfort, I became aware of a temptation of the devil. Quite a number of people had been asking me during the last few months to compromise with respectability. And by Jove! I nearly did! I was ill — forgive the wavering! I am

wise in time, luckily, and my "Retro Satanus" takes this form.

Let me define my position. It is quite true that my attitude to real life, the life of Nature, is perfectly "sane" and "wholesome". In a perfect society I should regard even my "Alice" as perverted art: for in a sane world one is insane to proclaim sanity. But art (which is the Word of the Masters to the World) must move with that world and follow it into its corruption, redeeming the same. The simple humanity, the great guffawing indecency, of Shakespeare is well enough for the pagan society of Elizabeth. The splendid savage Jehovah is sane enough and grand enough for nomadic Israel. But since then the World is Christianized, and there is a need for the bitterness of Shelley and Byron, the intense "justification by sin" doctrine of Swinburne. Perhaps we are wrong to have thought of Swinburne as having recanted; it may be that he said to himself: "Well, I'm sick of these dogs! I will write simple lyrics and shut out the world". Still, the result is not good. Moreover we who are in the forefront of the fight are annoyed with Achilles — and anyhow there is no excuse for such a Patroclus as Watts-Dunton!

Well, however that may be, here we are in the fight; and if I am called an anarchist, *soit!* But I throw my bomb with a difference. If I do not throw a physical bomb, it is only because there is none big enough. For the Government is in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the canaille, and it is for us aristocrats to throw the bombs.

There can be no peace between Socrates and Athens, between Jesus and Jerusalem. We must then first throw moral bombs, and this book is mine!

It is a curious position. All my sympathy is with my own class — birth, education, wealth, courage, pride. These are my heritage. But all my own people are busy pretending to live the dirty, stinking, lousy, poor; Coriolanus “licking the breech of a leprous hangman.” (Not Crowley, this time: Catullus).

So that on mature consideration I drop the Revd. C. Verey of “Clouds without Water” — it is only one more satire. The invention was not cowardice but art. My sympathies are entirely with the alleged author of the Quatorzains; in a world of Winnington-Ingrams it is about the best that any one can do.

At the same time, I have a foible: I should like to produce ideal poetry; poetry free from the false conditions of modern crapulence. “Clouds without Water” and this World’s Tragedy are mostly nonsense to a Nina Olivier or a Dorothy Lamb, those avatars of Pagan art. But to a Dilke, lamed by a kick from the British ass; or to a Burton, swimming in the Sea of Glue — they must seem miracles of virility and truth. Natural love and love of Nature are poetry everywhere; and (idleness!) I hope one day to be able to leave the English hypocrites to their own beastliness, and live in my own world. Until I am wanted; in the hour of battle.

One thing I must ask; let this book be assiduously

circulated among the young. There is hope there if anywhere. Let me seduce the boys of England, and the oldsters may totter unconverted to their graves. Then these boys, becoming men, may bring about the new heaven and the new earth. You are not a Crowleian till you can say fervently "Yes, thank God, I am an atheist." For the 'transvaluation of all values' must yet again take place, when those are all dead and damned who have forced us into the painful position we now occupy.

The "man-eating beasts because of whom we dare not love thee", once gone, we can revive the true cultus of the Logos; the chastitymongering masturbators once swept away, we can without reproach follow our natural inclination to purity: the lawyers and millionnaires and demagogues once squelched, we can enjoy our property without alarm.

Young men! there is the enemy. I am no coward, I hope; and believe that I may make a fairly good general — at least no traitor. But without an army I am useless; a Napoleon at St Helena.

Give me my army, young men; and we will sweep these dogs into the sea.

Those in the front rank will have the honour of getting killed first.

## PORNOGRAPHY

Now to give battle one must find a disputed point, and struggle for its mastery. English pudibundery being the main strong hold of the Puritan, I now concentrate my guns on that position.

With the exception of the Chinese classics and one or two of the Hindu and Buddhist, all authors of antiquity are wholly or partially concerned to discourse frankly, joyously, amusingly, of the sexual act. Of modern authors we observe that only the pornographic survive. Shakespeare, Sterne, Swift, Rabelais, Villon, — what names have we to put against these? Milton and some lesser.

And to-day? What authors of the last century do we find on our shelves? Byron, exiled, yet with wealth sufficient to mock his foes; Shelley, expelled from Oxford, exiled, robbed of his children; Keats, bullied into consumption; Blake, nigh starved; Flaubert, Baudelaire, Gautier, Zola, Richepin all prosecuted, suppressed; Verlaine, his life a mere holiday between spells of prison. I cannot quote you the good authors, the popular authors; neither I nor any one else can remember their names.

All this babble about indecency is the merest froth; as Vizetelly dies, broken by imprisonment for the crime of having translated Zola, that same Zola is being feasted at the Guildhall by the Lord Mayor of London.

But, then, of course, the question arises "what is pornography?"

It has been justly remarked that the greatest men are those who play upon the whole scale of human emotions, from the spiritual to the obscene. The humour of Aristophanes, Shakespere, Sterne, and Rabelais is identical with that of the ordinary smoking-room story; only a deal better done. Nor is there any other eternal humour; other kinds depend on the accidents of the age.

You never find a single impure line in any of these authors, any gloating on impurity. The laughter is hearty, there is no schoolboy sniggering — no consciousness of guilt.

(So even with Keats' Gadfly and Sharing Eve's Apple; Browning's bawdy jests in Pippa Passes, the Ring and the Book, One Word More, La Saisiaz and elsewhere; cleaner, truly, than the furtive eroticism in Prometheus Unbound. Shelley was more consciously under the curse of Jesus.) It is this *consciousness of sin* which is to my mind the essentially Christian attitude. It is this which inspires the outcry against art and simple pleasures; these swine nose everywhere for filth, and grunt with shocked glee when they find it.

All serious subject are tabooed as "bad form!" (I must add in parenthesis that the eugenic prigs and sex-problem pigs are every whit as bad. They are just as shocked at Rabelais as the other Puritans).

There is nothing impure in passion, if only it be ele-

mental and strong. The whole soul storms the height of heaven, exults, laughs, enjoys, falls exhausted. The thing is clean.

It is the lady novelist that drags her snail-track across the desert of bad literature. Nothing so excites my loathing as to see these ghouls licking their chops over the adventures of some dirty slut of a Princess. They scent indecency in passion beyond the marriage-tie: they will not even allow a man to be in love with his own wife. Why shouldn't he be? He is now and then. I happen to know it. The long and short of the whole matter is this, that there is nothing clean but ecstasy.

Whether that ecstasy is the divine spirituality of Visvarupadarshana, or the sexual splendour of Epipsychidion, or the laughter of Catullus, all is pure and perfect.

It is the vision of the God that is pure; it is the veils that stain. Whether the curtain of falsehood be moral, or ethical, or romantic, it is a stain. Weakness is evil and impure; strength is divine and clean.

A mountain is more naked than a marsh. By your leave, gentles, I will continue to live on the mountain.

#### SODOMY

Further, lest 'broad-minded' prigs come to smash me by their aid, I shall fight openly for that which no living Englishman dare defend, even in secret — sodomy!

At school I was taught to admire Plato and Aristotle, who recommend sodomy to youths. I am not so rebellious as to oppose their dictum ; and in truth there seems no better way to avoid the contamination of woman and the morose pleasures of solitary vice. (Not that women themselves are unclean ; it is the worship of them as ideals that rots the soul). Again we may say that all the great men of antiquity were sodomites : Socrates, Caesar, Alexander, Martial, Catullus, Virgil, Achilles ; Napoleon, Frederick the Great, Goethe, Shakespeare, Bacon, an unbroken line of English monarchs ; Mohammed, Benvenuto Cellini, Wilde, Symonds, Emerson, Pater, Fitz-Gerald, Leighton, Whitman, Michael Angelo, Leonardo, and a host of others — even unto this hour. But of this hour I will not speak. I am now collecting a great body of evidence similar to that which Herr Harden has gathered in Germany, and involving an even higher class of society. Not in the least to show the corruptions of that class ; but to proclaim sodomy as an aristocratic virtue, which our middle class had better imitate if they wish to be smart.

If I have not already published the correspondence in my possession between the late Duke of Clarence and « Boy Morgan » — as well as many other important papers — and a pretty penny they have cost me ! — it is not for any dog-in-the manger reasons, but because it would coincide so dramatically with the moment when, like Socrates, I get into trouble for corrupting morality, and because I never like to leave a job half done. It is almost incredible how

large a number of peers there are against whom I have not a shadow of evidence or even suspicion. Luckily the judges are less wary. While the bishops are such easy game as to be hardly worth powder and shot.

There, I've done it now!

Vous avez écrit contre le bon Dieu ; c'est mauvais, mais Il le vous pardonnera.

Vous avez écrit contre Jésus Christ ; c'est pire encore, mais Il le vous pardonnera.

Mais vous avez écrit contre Leurs Excellences, et Elles ne le vous pardonneront jamais.

But this lion can bite back!

Nor after all, is fear precisely the sentiment inspired by the spectacle of a nation which has so recently placed at the head of its affairs that William Ewart Gladstone who shaped his policy by the predictions of a charlatan clairvoyant in Bond Street, while his drunken harlot performed her watery exploits on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre.

The proofs, too, (in my hands) that a certain member of the present Cabinet derives much of his income from the profits of a brothel, lend a certain solidity to my position.

This lion can bite back.

#### CHRISTIANITY

But why — we may indeed ask — all this heavy metal to bombard a brothel? Has no good thing come out of Nazareth?

It is in a way extremely trying to live in a world where connotation varies so wildly.

The Sicilian peasant who can roar with laughter at some blasphemous obscenity of his village priest while preserving his devotion to the deities satirized, will justly be astonished and disgusted with me. He will hardly credit that anyone can take deities so seriously as to do anyone an injury on their behalf. He is at heart a Pagan; Mary is his mistress and Jesus his « Bambino », and he loves to play with them in the woods where the sunlight traces its faint fan-patterns among the leaves.

The idea of a Jesus who objected to people playing on a Sunday — who insisted on being worshipped in a silk hat and frock coat, who couldn't stand people obtaining refreshment after 12-30 — well, it never struck him, that's all !

So when I go wandering among country-side Catholics I am nearly as happy in their simple worship as I am with the grander and austerer conceptions of Mohammed. But England! The people have materialized their God into a Parish Councillor, at the best; at the worst, he has been made the excuse for every crime.

The prevalence of syphilis in the Indian army has increased from 8 % to 80 % lest God should be shocked by our unholy recognition of the human nature of the human soldier.

It is useless to multiply examples. All I wish to do is to justify my agreement with Shelley and Nietzsche in

defining Christianity as the religious expression of the slave-spirit in man.

I do not wish to argue that the doctrines of Jesus, they and they alone, have degraded the world to its present condition. I take it that Christianity is not only the cause but the symptom of slavery. There were slaves in Rome, of course, even under the republic. But it was only through Paul that the slime found tongue, and uttered its agony and blasphemy. Now, through the steady growth of altruism *pari-passu* with the Gospel that advocates it, the world is come to such a pass that the canaille is throned.

The Old Age Pensions folly, which is simply the official seal upon the survival of the unfittest, a check to honest ambition, a playing into the hands of the unskilful and the vicious, all of those (in short) whom a healthy organism crushes as the first condition of its well-being, is so "popular" that of all the House of Commons, the majority of whom see as plainly as I do how things stand, barely 1% are found to oppose it root and branch, and they from constituencies which the act will hardly touch, while the Lords — our bulwark, oh God! and what a fortress is that whose semi-lunes are Lord Townshend and Lord Tankerville! — pass the bill with scarce a protest. We are to be taxed beyond endurance, our defences neglected, our education left to sink or swim as it may, that our whole state may be clogged with its own excrement! It is no idle boast of the vermin socialists that their system is Christianity, and no other is genuine. And look at them! to a man —

or rather to a Tetragrammaton which is a Temurah of T. H. I. S. — they are atheists and in favour of Free Love — whatever that may mean. I have talked with many Socialists, but never with one who understood his subject. Empty babblers they are, muddle-headed philanthropists. They read a shilling abridgement of John Stuart Mill, and settle all economic problems over a « sirloin of turnips » in some filthy crank food dive. Ask them any simple question about detail, and the bubble is pricked.

Well, as I was saying, they are all in favour of «Free Love». Some paper mentioned the fact. What a stam-pede! Oh no! not me, please sir, it was the other boy. It would never do to shock the British public.

If I exclude Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells from these strictures, it is because Shaw is simply a masturbating monkey, and Wells a satirist playing at castles on his Sandgate sands.

So, then, it is Christianity considered as slavishness, as fear of all sorts, as altruism — that exquisite refinement of fear which we call sympathy — that I condemn. It is because we are afraid of death that the death of others affects us, except of course in the case of bereavement.

Just look at your Christian when he gets his modicum of manhood. He will not take the manly way, because (a) he is afraid of hurting the modesty of the poor girl (who is simply aching for him); (b) he is afraid of catching some disease: (c) he might get her into trouble; (d) what will the neighbours say?; (e) suppose she said no, what a fool

I should look!; (f) God said I musn't. And so on through the alphabet of cowardice.

Look at your Christian as he sits down to dinner.

He won't eat melon because the weather is hot, and he might get cholera; mutton? think of the poor sheep! potatoes? bad for his fat; artichoke? bad for his gout. Tomatoes? cause of cancer. Wine? the great curse of our day, my dear sir. Milk? a mere mass of tubercle bacilli. Water? Typhoid! do you want to poison me, my dear friend? Beer? Well, perhaps a little beer — for he has shares in a brewery.

You have already seen how this awful fear of nature and of God is twisted into an engine of oppression and torture against any one who declines to grovel and cringe before their filthy fetish.

It is obvious that cowardice is the cause of cruelty: the brave man strikes a strenuous blow, and all is over; the coward brought to bay snarls and strikes in desperation, and if by chance the blow goes home, he jumps on and mutilates and insults his victim.

Of course all this insane Christianity has produced its own toxin. Our prudery goes hand in hand with the most disgusting system of prostitution in the world, and our Theatres (too pure for that corrupter Sophocles) are disgraced by the most senseless and witless legshows. Our praise of poverty has produced the worst poor-laws in civilization; our democracy has perfected a snobbery which would make Thackeray stare with surprise. Queen Victoria the Good

— what a washerwoman lost to mankind! was the French nation's epitaph upon her — drove the last nail into the coffin of art in England. Though 'twas needless cruelty: whom have we had of the first rank in England since Elizabeth but the Revolutionaries? Blake, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Byron, Swinburne, Swift, Butler, Milton, every one exiled, starved, bullied, driven insane; except Milton, whose supreme hypocrisy saved him, as it damned the nation for ever. Anyhow, bad as it was, Victoria made it worse, and, under a queen with a high-necked collar, it is left for me to unite in myself all the blare of all the trumpets. Call me Israfel, last of the angles, and let the dead rise from their tombs!

I therefore hold the legendary Jesus in no wise responsible for the trouble: it began with Luther, perhaps, and went on with Wesley: but no matter! — what I am trying to get at is the religion which makes England to-day a hell for any man who cares at all for freedom. That religion they call Christianity; the devil they honour they call God. I accept these definitions, as a poet must do, if he is to be at all intelligible to his age, and it is their God and their religion that I hate and will destroy.

## THE POEM ITSELF

I should really leave this to my friend Captain Fuller to dissect at his leisure, that he might bye-and-bye edify the public in a little monograph of say 350,000 words. But

it seems to me important to explain the form to a reader before he begins. For the work so transcends my own critical faculties that I am sure others will find difficulty in getting my point of view without very serious attention.

In the first place, my predecessor Shelley was so naturally gentle that his Prometheus can be read to-day by our young ladies without their ever suspecting that he was getting at God.

Nietzsche on the other hand is very obscure, very superficial, very philosophical, and he did not write English.

I have been trained in a harder school than Shelley; and so my little finger is thicker than my father's loins. He went and "trode the glaciers of the Alps" — the Mer de Glace; I broke the record by my 68 days on the Baltoro glacier. He went out in a boat, and got drowned at that; I have travelled on the Bralduh in a Zak. He shrank from the sight of a butcher's shop; I followed wounded buffalo into the jungle on foot. He thought Indians were "mild"; I shot two Bengalis. He never had such a galaxy of imbecility before him as R. J. Campbell, Winnington-Ingram, Tolstoï, Bernard Vaughan, Torrey, Dowie, Bernard Shaw, Booth, Father Ignatius, and my Uncle Tom.

He had not read the Encyclical against Modernism; the religious essays of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, and the preposterous Balfour. He was unfamiliar with the spermatorrhoea of Tennyson's thought, and the diarrhoea of its simulacrum in G. K. Chesterton.

This explains why Shelley's wholesome indignation

appears in me as little less than a blind lust of Destruction. (That is to say, on the rare occasion when I so far fall from adeptship as to credit the evidence of my senses).

I have consequently done all I can to shock and hurt the enemy. I have painted their God as the obscene thing he is from my knowledge of my Uncle Tom; I have made his Trinity ridiculous and his scheme disgusting; I have painted Magdalen as the Syrian strumpet she was from the best models among English society whores (thank you, Ada; thank you, Kathleen!); I have painted Mary as a lascivious flapper from my knowledge of English virgins — thank you, Vera! thank you, Lydia! thank you, Millicent! — the hag is my mother-in-law, and the baboon the Reverend F. F. Kelly. I cannot pretend to remember exactly who 'sat' for the ox and the ass, though the names of Charles Watts and Joseph Mc. Cabe somehow instinctively suggest themselves in this connection. The satyr and nymph crowd are mostly painted from imagination, for on my honour I hardly know so many decent people; I painted Jesus first as a joke — the brass bottle of our braying clergy; I developed him as a low class Jew [not knowing any South African millionnaires I took him straight out of the Gospel] and lastly I miraculously turned him into a real man, chiefly out of compliment to the distinguished fictionist Ernest Renan. In other words, I have kept as close to my documents as any one has any reason to expect.

With regard to the plot, I must ask my readers to believe in the existence of a great magical brotherhood

formal or informal pledged to the guardianship of mankind.

With this postulate the way is clear.

In the prologue we find innocence: Pagan love, Pagan music, Pagan mysticism, and we find the Sabbatarians pretty sick about it, like the fox that lost his tail.

We next find Alexander, one of the guardians, anxious about humanity. He is not squeamish about a little blood, his own or another's, and he discovers the plot.

Next we find the dove achieving his foul purpose, not on a pure laughing Pagan girl, but on a furtive lecherous girl, already half a Christian. Enough of this painful subject!

Now comes the Nativity, with the guardians, under Alexander's presidency, on the watch. They are perfectly indifferent to all but the secret purpose — more magical ethics, my disciples! They are moved neither to pity nor to disgust, for the Great Pity and the Great Disgust have moved them to this Immobility.

Next we see love under Christianity, as guilt, disease, weariness; and the half-man rotten by its revolting filth, consenting to the ruin of mankind and his own death as relief from it.

Lastly we see the man magically awakened to a sense of his disaster, too weak to retrieve the past or avert the future, though alive to all its horror. In the meanwhile the corruption of Roman virtue begins; and we should end the play in despair were it not that Alexander comes forward and obligingly prophesies the arrival of Aleister

Crowley — the Saviour of the Earth. So that the reader need only turn back to the title-page to see that the Light hath indeed arisen in the darkness.

## THE ENGLISH SPIRIT

It was in my mind to discourse freely upon this engaging topic; but to say truth I am somewhat weary, having now written for some six hours, and being well assured that if I once laid down the pen nothing would persuade me to resume the distasteful task. For there is no ecstasy in argument and exposition as there is in Poetry. That is why journalists are such dull dogs, even when they start as brilliant men. My readers, too, may be weary. They may say to me, as Lord Tankerville said to me at eleven A. M. on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1907 “I’m sick of your teaching — teaching — teaching — as if you were God Almighty and I were a poor bloody shit in the street!” —

I could not blame them.

On the whole, too, I cannot see that I have left much unsaid in the proem — which was written long ago when I lived, as will be obvious from the style, in Paddington. I will therefore beg my readers to proceed to the same and thence to the work itself; and leave the Bal Bullier and his Dorothy to their glad work of restoring the victim of British stupidity — else why these miles of preface? — weary Aleister Crowley, to his Pagan rapture.



## PROEM

Master, I come. But ere the pregnant gloom  
Lighten at last, I ask myself for whom  
I take the pen, since English throbs and glows  
Forth from its gold, like streams from sunny snows.  
And if I write for England, who will read?  
As if, when moons of Ramazan recede,  
Some fatuous angel-porter should deposit  
His perfect wine within the privy closet!  
“What do they know, who only England know?”  
Only what England paints its face to show.  
Love mummied and relabelled “chaste affection,”  
And lust excused as “natural selection.”  
Caligula upbraids the cruel cabby,  
And Nero birches choir-boys in the Abbey;  
Semiramis sandpapered to a simper,  
And Clytemaestra whittled to a whimper!

The austerities of Loyola? to seek!  
But — let us have a “self-denial week”!  
The raptures of Teresa are hysteric;  
But — let us giggle at some fulsome cleric!  
“The age refines! You lag behind.” God knows!  
Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.  
That Crowley knows you as you are — that frets.  
He buys not doctored dung for violets!  
Your smug content, your Puritan surprise,  
All lies, and lies; all lies, and lies, and lies!  
Pathics from Eton, ever on their knees,  
Amazed at their twin brothers the Chinese!  
Pathics from Harrow, reeking of Patchouli,  
Shocked at the vice of the Mongolian coolie!  
Canons of Westminster, with boy-rape sterile,  
Hope Christ may save us from the Yellow Peril!  
To call forced labour slavery is rude,  
“Terminologic inexactitude”.

This from the masters of the winds and waves  
Whose cotton-mills are crammed with British slaves!  
Men pass their nights with German-Jewish whores,  
Their days in keeping “aliens” from our shores.  
They turn their eyes up at a Gautier’s tale,  
And run a maisonette in Maida Vale.

Murder poor Wakley — the assassin leaves  
Escorted by the Yard's blackmailing thieves,  
Lest dead men (or their papers) should tell tales  
And maybe compromise the Prince of Wales.  
Arrest poor Wilde — the creaking Channel tubs  
Groan with the consternation of the Clubs.  
Scared, hushed, and pale, our men of eminence  
Wait the result in sickening suspense.  
Announced, all Mayfair shrieks its decent joy;  
And, feeling safe, goes out and hires a boy.  
Your titles — oh! how proud you are to wear them?  
— What about "homo quatuor literarum?"  
The puissant all their time to vice devote;  
The impotent (contented) pay to gloat.  
The strumpet's carwheels splash the starving maiden  
In Piccadilly, deadlier than Aden.  
"England expects a man to do his duty."  
He calls truth lies, and sneers at youth and beauty,  
Pays cash for love and fancies he has won it —  
Duty means church, where he thanks God he's done it!  
Morley's Hotel is the one stance to see  
Our Nelson from! — Oh God! that I should be  
Alone among this slime! — I saw Thy Graal:  
Show me the men that have not bowed to Baal!

For as I love with spirit and with sense  
I nauseate at this crawling crapulence,  
Our whole state, summed in one supreme enigma,  
Solved (in a second) by a simple  $\Sigma$ .  
Monstrous conjunctions with black man and brute  
Level our ladies with the prostitute :  
Our spinsters chaste in criminal abortion,  
And matrons with the pox for marriage portion ;  
Husbands who pimp all day for their young wives,  
Athletes from Oxford, pathic all their lives,  
Who sport the “so” coat, the sotadic necktie,  
And lisp their filthy pun “Mens conscia recti”!  
Priests who are celibates — outside the choir!  
Maidens who rave in Lesbian desire ;  
The buck of sixty, cunning as a trapper,  
Stalking the pig-tailed, masturbating flapper ;  
The creeping Jesus — Caution! we may shock it! —  
With one hand through his torn-out breeches pocket ;  
Flagellates shrieking in our streets and schools,  
Our men all hogs, and all our women ghouls : —  
This is our England, pious dame and prude,  
Who calls me blasphemous, unchaste, and rude!

Come to sweet air, poor sirens of the stews!

A pox on all these yammering Yahoos!  
 My healthy sperm begets the Son of God  
 Winged with the dawn and with the star-stream shod!  
 Not on your purulence and ichorous itch,  
 O English girl, half baby and half bitch,  
 But on the glorious body and soul of her  
 Of whom I am the Lord and worshipper,  
 The brave gay cleanly maiden whose embrace  
 Flushes with shameless fervour the fair face,  
 Fills the whole leaping heaven with the light  
 Till all the world is drunken with delight.

You with your own authentic filth defiled  
 Robbed Keats of life, and Shelley of his child,  
 Corrupted Swinburne to your foul disease,  
 Denied Blake bread — are you fed full on these?  
 You hate the wise, true, beautiful, and holy: —  
 Dogs! is there nothing you can do to Crowley?

. . . . .  
 Therefore I see and speak, who would be dumb  
 And blind: but Thou dost call. Master, I come,

ALEISTER CROWLEY.



THE  
WORLD'S TRAGEDY



## THE PERSONS OF THE PROLOGUE

<p>MARSYAS SILENUS CHIRON</p>	}	<i>Satyrs</i>	<p>ANAXIMANDER LYSANDER ANAXAGORAS</p>	}	<i>Men</i>
<p>CHRYISIS DORIS ATTHIS</p>	}	<i>Nymphs</i>	<p>RHODON SALMACIS EROTION</p>	}	<i>Hermaphrodites</i>
<p>RHODOPE ERINNA EVADNE</p>	}	<i>Girls</i>	<p>HELIORUS HYACINTHUS OLYMPAS</p>	}	<i>Fauns</i>
<p>ANTINOUS GITON HYLAS</p>	}	<i>Young boys</i>	<p>HERACLEITUS a Philosopher. CHRYSSIPUS, his disciple. YAUGH WAUGH. A man vulture. A lambkin. A dove.</p>		

## THE PERSONS OF THE TRAGEDY

ALEXANDER, a wise king, ruling  
Macedon, Babylonia, etc.  
TWO SATYRS.  
A fair man child.  
TWO NYMPHS.  
MIRIAM a Syrian Girl.  
A white-robed youth.  
Legions of apes, worms and monsters.  
AGRIPPA, a Roman century.  
PUBLIUS, his lieutenant.  
A Roman guard.  
An hag.  
A blue-faced baboon.

An ox.  
ZAKARIAH, an ass.  
GOVINDA, king of the Indies.  
CHAU, SON of HEAVEN, king of Tar-  
tary and China.  
A company of rats.  
A company of toads.  
A brass bottle containing a Mannikin  
In blue.  
ISSA, the grown man thereof.  
MAGDA, an odalisque.  
JOHN, a young scribe.  
BYSTANDERS.



# PROLOGUE

THE GARDEN OF EROS



# PROLOGUE

## THE GARDEN OF EROS

See, in a glade of green moss, watered by a spring, a merry company languidly playing. Flutes, and harps, and panpipes are there ; and on wonderful chased silver, figured with the loves of the gods, are cups of beaded wine, and fruits, and honey, and cates of divers sort. It is night, but the moon is exceeding bright ; and the stars shine in the self-luminous blue of the vault. Around the glade are many trees ; the ground is a mass of flowers, and gathered roses cover the white limbs of many of the players. One girl is standing, and a full nightingale song trills from her ivory throast.

Upon a tall tree of massy foliage sits, hidden from the players, a vulture vast and vague in his black night of shadow. His face is human, of the ovine type, as that of a low-class Jew. He watches the scene throughout in silence, but with intense envy disguised as disgust.

DORIS

Praise the wine wittily !  
Praise the wine well !  
Footing it prettily  
Down through the dell.

Are there not playmates  
Enough and to spare,  
Gallant and gay mates,  
Each one of us fair ?

Bountiful measures of  
Beautiful wine :  
Infinite treasures of  
Bacchus divine !  
Hail to the Lord of us !  
Blithe is his reign.  
Be thou adored of us,  
Soul without stain !

Fair are the faces, and  
Limbs of us light,  
Tracing the paces, and  
Drunk with delight.  
Io ! let us tremble in  
Trance of the tune  
Here that assemble in  
Joyounce of June !

ATTHIS

Doris, our darling ! How subtle and sweet

The throb of thy throat to the flit of our feet !  
Come, I have chosen thee.

DORIS

Follow me then  
Deep in the dance to the heart of the glen !

MARSYAS

Ho ! you are rich, you are red, you are ripe !  
Pace me your passions to plaint of my pipe !

OLYMPAS

Nay, I am with thee, my master, to match  
Every my song to thy lyrical catch.

EROTION

Nay, let us follow you — all in a ring !  
Wonder of wisdom and wit on the wing !

ANAXIMANDER

Come, my Giton, of the hyacinth hair !  
Apollo, Apollo ! indeed they are fair !

HYLAS

Kiss me again, my Lysander, my love !  
Listen ! Olympas is singing above.

LYSANDER

Ah ! but Erotion beckons me yonder !  
Beautiful curls on her bosom that wander  
Tempt me to folly.

HYLAS

Indeed, let us press  
The exquisite doubt in a certain caress !

LYSANDER

Even as the feet of the maid on the grapes —  
Crush the wine of delight from ambiguous shapes !

OLYMPAS

Shrill, shrill the never-cloying  
Thirst of maid's enthusiasm !  
Atthis with her Doris toying  
In the moonlight filled with laughter,  
Wrestling, kissing — follow after  
To the summit of the spasm !

CHIRON

Ho, shall we sit idle gazing  
On such beauty spirit-crazing ?  
No, my ladies, I'm the song !

ATTHIS

We can sing you !

DORIS

Sweet and strong !

ANAXAGORAS

Laughter, laughter ! I'm for thee,  
Doris of the blue-black tresses !  
Mine are musical caresses  
Like the murmur of the sea.

HYACINTHOS

Chiron, shall we dance with these  
Under the acacia trees ?

CHIRON

Yes, if Rhodon there will lend us  
Her red fleece — like sunset glowing,  
With the doubtful venture showing  
Where — what God shall there befriend us ?

RHODON

Mocker ! I shall come. Beware  
Lest my manhood match you there !

SILENUS

Ha, you rogue, if Rhodon rage,  
Poets earn a cynic page ;  
And our lips with laughter curl  
If she treat you as a girl.

CHIRON

Brute, get back to wine, and leave us  
In our flower-love to inweave us.  
All we know the shameless chorus :  
“ Fie ! Silenus — Heliorus ! ”

HELIORUS

I had better right to mock you,  
Graceless Chiron, with the quip  
(Girls, come close — the jest will shock you)  
“ Pine-tree with the drooping tip ! ”

CHIRON

Oh, you little toad of spite !  
Come, and I will set you right.  
All your years of wantonness  
Shall not save you — much distress.

HELIORUS

Yes—the pain I had before.  
“ At the game that Chiron shouldn’t,  
Chiron would — and Chiron couldn’t. ”

RHODON

Never heed the little whore !  
Play a melody, Marsyas !

HELIORUS

He’s at Anaxagoras !

RHODOPE

Where is Doris, then ?

ERRINNA

By Zeus,  
Where her ribs are all in use !

ANTINOUS

Sprinkle me with poppy-juice  
From the flowers of Syracuse  
On the lips relaxed with pleasure  
Of their kisses overmeasure !

Let them suck the heavenly sleep !  
Let me sink into the deep !  
    Till the morning pale and fresh  
    Find my flesh against his flesh,  
And mine eyes within his eyes  
Watch the sun of glory rise !

All my breath is like new wine.  
I have flaxen hair and fine.  
    From my shoulders to my feet  
    Like the sunlight in the wheat !  
If I laugh, the moon-curved pearls  
Match and master any a girl's.  
    If I weep, as joy may weep,  
    One would say the fountain-steep  
Of Dione dropped its dew  
Through the vivid veil of blue.

I am limber like a snake.  
I am soft, and slow to slake —  
    For a curling, crimson fire  
    Floods my lips and feeds desire.  
I am passionate and pale ;  
Virile — and most faery frail.

All diverse delights are mine,  
Kiss within me, and combine  
To a languorous lyric lure  
Sweet as pleasure, and as sure !

SILENUS

Tut, my lad, you do not mention  
Modesty.

ANTINOUS

'Twas mine intention,  
But those loose lips wine-corrupt  
Always itch to interrupt !

SILENUS

Nay, boy, all the song was true.  
Come and frisk it once together !  
Ah, the goodly Grecian Weather !  
Ah, the heavenly haze of blue,  
That must set an azure frame  
Round the flaxen locks aflame !

CHRYISIS

Come, Evadne, let us fling  
Flowers upon them gambolling !

EVADNE

Chrysis ! could one weary of  
All thine opulence of love ?

CHRYISIS

I am fair ; I cannot fear.  
Was my tongue too eager, dear ?

EVADNE

Never, never, never ! Here,  
Coil the roses close, a cluster  
In the flax, the lyric lustre !

CHRYISIS

In the white waves that carouse  
On the satyr's beetle brows,  
Plait a wreath of laurustine  
With the broad leaves of the vine !

SALMACIS

Sweet Lysander, now thou knowest  
All the oracle obscure !

## LYSANDER

In my soul — my soul ! — thou flowest  
Suave and sibylline and sure.  
O the stream I launched this boat on !  
O the pool my fancies float on !  
I am drowned in bays of bliss —  
Salmacis ! — my Salmacis !

## HYACINTHOS

Heliorus, siren !  
I have overmatched thee now ;  
From the bag of Chiron  
Drawn a luckier lot than thou !

## SILENUS

Come, we have dallied long enough  
With music and with love.  
Set to the wine, and slide  
Each twined like vines, fair boy, fair bride,  
Down the long glade of sleep,  
At the sun's summoning.  
We shall be carolling, upon the steep,  
The happy dawn's return.  
We shall wake — and bathe — and burn.

## EROTION

Now the drowsy Lord unloose  
All his store of poppy-juice !  
    To the murmurous bell-clear fret  
    Of the tremulous rivulet  
Let us lisp the lullaby  
Of Arcady — in Arcady !

Me ye know, the dazzling dream  
Of the swimmer in the stream.  
    Boy to girl and maid to man,  
    Mine are all joys of Pan.  
Chrysis seeks the darling dove,  
Gets the eagle to her love.  
    Hylas, trembling towards the pine,  
    Finds the soft voluptuous vine.

## RHODOPE

Curl ye close ! Curl ye close !  
Fold your petals like the rose !  
All the satyr's lust of limb ;  
All the delicate and slim  
Slenderness of laughing faun  
Twine like serpents on the lawn ;

All the boy's undulant grace  
To the nymph's fantastic face ;  
All the maiden's chaste delight  
To the flushed hermaphrodite ;  
While the balanced strength of man  
Bears its witness unto Pan.

## CHRYSIS

Ah, the purple vein that glows  
Through the eyelids as they close !  
Hush ! the breeze that fans the fern  
Bids the midnight moon to turn.  
We must sleep  
Soft and deep :  
We must wake — and bathe — and burn.

The company being asleep, fallen lax in mid-caress, there enter a  
Philosopher Heracleitus and his Disciple Chrysippus.

## HERACLEITUS

Look, my darling, and confess  
Life one flame of loveliness !

## CHRYSIPPUS

Master ! Master ! How fairy fond  
Is yonder maid like a lily-frond !

Let us lie on the moss by the spring, let us share  
 In their silence serene, the languor rare !  
 For oh ! my lover, I never did see  
 So goodly a company.

## HERACLITUS

Wait but a moment — stand apart,  
 Revolving the light in thine innermost heart !  
 Content not the soul with the skin of the grape ! —  
 But the truer sense than the eye and the ear  
 Make to appear !

## CHRYSIPPUS

Verily, master, I obey.  
 I travel the exalted way.  
 I pierce the sense ; I gain the goal,  
 Distill the essence of the soul —

## HERACLEITUS

I shroud thee in the web of wool.  
 I lift the burden of the bull.  
 Lion and eagle ! dart ye forth  
 Into the cold clime of the North,

Where past the star points the pole  
Rest the unstirred axis of the soul.

## CHRYSIPPUS

Hear then ! By Abrasax ! the bar  
Of the unshifting star  
Is broken — Io ! Asar !  
My spirit is wrapt in the wind of light ;  
It is whirled away on the wings of night,  
Sable-plumed are the wonderful wings,  
But the silver of moonlight subtly springs  
Into the feathers that flash with the pace  
Of our flight to the violate bounds of space.  
Time is dropt like a stone from the stars :  
Space is a chaos of broken bars :  
Being is merged in a furious flood  
That rages and hisses and foams in the blood.  
See ! I am dead ! I am passed, I am passed  
Out of the sensible world at-last.  
I am not. Yet I am, as I never was,  
A drop in the sphere of molten glass  
Whose radiance changes and shifts and drapes  
The infinite soul in finite shapes.  
There is light, there is life, there is love, there is sense

Beyond speech, beyond song, beyond evidence.  
There is wonder intense, a miraculous sun,  
As the many are molten and mixed into one  
With the heat of its passion ; the one hath invaded  
The heights of its soul, and its laughter is braided  
With comets whose plumes are the galaxies  
Like winds on the night's inaccessible seas.  
Oh master ! my master ! nay, bid me not ride  
To the heaven beyond heaven ; for I may not abide.  
I faint : I am frail : not a mortal may bear  
The invisible light, the abundance of air.  
I fail : I am sinking : O Thou, be my friend !  
Bear me up ! Bear me up ! Bear me up to the end !  
Now ! Now ! In the heart of the bliss beyond being  
The None is involved in the One that, unseeing,  
Dashes its infinite splendour to death  
Beyond light, beyond love, beyond thought, beyond breath.  
Ah ! but my master ! the death of the sun —  
Break, break, the last veil ! It is done — It is done,

He falls, as one dead, upon the grass.

HERACLEITUS

I bless these happy virgins, souls unstained,  
Through whose delight my darling hath attained

Even to the uttermost silence that may be  
 Even in this vast circuit of eternity.  
 So, o my golden charioteer, I creep  
 Into thine arms, and dream the dream of sleep.

He sleeps. Upon the still beauty descends from his tree  
 the man-vulture.

## THE VULTURE

Yaugh Waugh !  
 Butch ! this is terrible  
 That all these people should be happy — Pss ! —  
 Without a thought of Me !  
 Ga ! Ga ! the plague  
 Rot them in hell !  
 Cramp ! Ague ! Pox ! Gout ! Stone — Hoo !  
 What shall I do to stop it ?  
 It's sin — sin — sin. I hate them. Oog !  
 I want them to go groaning  
 Over imaginary ills  
 With white eyes twisted up to Me,  
 Where I sit and croak  
 And snarl ! Ugh ! Faugh !  
 I'm Yaugh Waugh !  
 I'm Yaugh Waugh !

Ga! Oa! Hoo! Hoo!  
Scratch!  
I must invent a plan  
To ruin all this gladness.  
Ha! Plup! I have it.  
There's nothing here  
That would accept my favours —  
Uck! Bulch! —  
So I'll abuse myself to chaos  
And see what comes of it.  
Ha — Ba! Ha — Ba!  
Ab — ab — ab — ab — ab!  
Utch — what is this?  
Coagulated yolk of the addled egg  
Of chaos! Hatch it out!  
That's why I AM. Hoo — hoo — hoo — hoo — hoo!  
Oh! — now the white of the old egg is curdled  
Into a ragged fleece.  
Ga! Ga! I've got a son:  
What will it be?  
O heaven — a lamb!  
I'm Yaugh Waugh, Yaugh Waugh.  
I'll call it Yaugh Shaugh Waugh.  
Good! Can you talk,

First born ? — I'll never have another,  
I'm Yaugh Waugh, Yaugh Waugh.  
Bow to Me, you lumpy lambkin !  
Haw ! Haw ! Haw !  
Now at last a wooden thing  
That will do my business for me.  
Uck ! Uck ! The morning's carrion  
Bubbles in my paunch.  
I am belching dreadfully.  
What ? Uck ? Uck ? How strange !  
For the windy vomit of me  
Shapes itself into a sorry  
And bedraggled pigeon.  
Birdie, have you got religion ?  
Yes, he bows most properly.  
Come then, let us take our counsel  
How to stop this sad behaviour,  
This gross impropriety,  
Irreligion — Uck ! it's awful.  
Squat, then ! Pigeon, you're the youngest :  
You speak first.

THE DOVE

Almighty father !

I have magnificent  
And sublime and noble scheme.  
Listen ! I will find a woman —

THE VULTURE

Oh ! you dirty-minded rascal !

THE DOVE

Wait a moment — I will do it.  
Find a virgin — if I can,  
And on her beget this lambkin  
In the image of a man.

THE VULTURE

That seems complicated, pigeon.  
We've the lamb begotten here.

THE DOVE

Yes, I know ; it seems absurd ;  
But in practice I am certain  
It will work out splendidly.

THE VULTURE

Well, proceed !

THE DOVE

Of course I will ;  
I'm accustomed to 'proceeding'.  
Let the lamb grow up to manhood.  
Then we'll have him whipped and tortured  
And eventually killed.

THE VULTURE

That sounds lovely.

THE LAMB

Do you think so ?  
I record my vote against it.

THE DOVE

Stupid ! in a day or so  
We will have you rise again.

THE LAMB

Really ! I may be a dullard ;  
But I cannot see the point  
Of this most elaborate nonsense.

THE DOVE

Well, you will. We'll make a rule  
That anyone who disbelieves it  
Shall be strictly prosecuted  
— With the utmost rigour  
Of the majesty of law.

THE LAMB

And if any fool believes it —

THE DOVE

He shall come to live with Us.  
What a privilege !

THE VULTURE

Provided

He observe propriety,  
Never laugh, never dance,  
Never do the dreadful thing !

THE DOVE

Precisely so !

THE VULTURE

It's settled then,  
Charmingly unanimously  
Carried by a show of wings.

THE LAMB

I protest.

THE VULTURE

You did not vote.

THE LAMB

If I had a pair of wings —

THE DOVE

You might fly ; and so might pigs !

THE VULTURE

Pray, sir, do not mention pigs !  
Gru — utch !  
Scheme approved, and entered in  
The Minutes. I declare the board  
Quite indefinitely adjourned.



THE DOVE

Would you lend me your red star ?

THE VULTURE

With the greatest pleasure, pigeon !

THE DOVE

I'll be off, then.

THE LAMB

So will I.

THE VULTURE

I shall know where I can find you.

THE LAMB

Would you had a moment's patience !  
I had a much better scheme  
— One involving pigeon-pie !

THE VULTURE

Butch ! be off with you. I'll hop  
Up again to the tree-top.  
Yaugh Waugh ! That's me !  
Always at the top of the tree !

(They depart separately, yet together. The old Philosopher wakes).

## HERACLEITUS

Ah ! but some evil things have brooded here  
Over the sleepers. May it be indeed  
The truth that some strange fate threatens the world ?  
That Art and Love and Beauty, to renew  
Their glory, must be bathed in their own blood ?  
But who shall understand the Soul of Pan ?  
Involved in All and still apart from All !  
For steeped therein as I am all my life,  
I know but exquisite beatitude,  
Knowing the whole, Then who shall know or care  
What may befall the part ? One must remain ;  
Many must change. Then all is well. The strife  
Is but the ferment of the forward still  
Immune from grief, intolerant of ill,  
Fronting the double foe — of pain and joy —  
With equal eye — in the meantime —

Dear boy,

Wake ! Let us revel it the while we may,  
Love dawning ever with the dawning day.  
Wake, brothers, sisters ! It is time to stir.  
The owl, the night-hawk, sad and sinister,

Have fled, The first flush animates the hills,  
 Reddens the rushes, flashes on the rills.  
 Come while the breeze blows and the air is cool  
 Down through the forest to the Fairies' pool.

All rise and follow the sage, singing :

THE COMPANY

Praise Eros wittily !  
 Praise Eros well !  
 Tripping it prettily  
 Down through the dell !  
 Joyous and eager  
 Our tresses adorning,  
 Away to beleaguer  
 The city of morning !

Away to the leap to  
 The soft-smiling pool  
 Whose kisses shall creep to  
 Us virginal cool !  
 Race and besscatter  
 The dew in the grass ;  
 The nymph and her satyr !  
 The lad and his lass !

O blest is the laughter  
Of Arcady's groves  
That chases us after  
To delicate loves,  
The frolics, the fancies,  
The fires, the desires,  
The dives and the dances,  
The lutes and the lyres !

Follow, o follow,  
Sweet seed of the sun !  
Through the wood, through the hollow,  
The race is begun  
That shall fill the day up  
With the roses of pleasure,  
The rod — and the cup —  
And the crown of our treasure !

Sweet are our voices ;  
Our bodies are bare ;  
Their spirit rejoices  
Afloat in the air,

Coiling and curling  
    In maze of æons  
Its vision unfurling  
    A pageant of pæans !

Blessed be Love in his  
    Palace of praise  
Whom we follow above in his  
    Wonderful ways !  
Whom we follow above  
    To the stars and the snows,  
Immaculate Love ! —  
    We adore thee, Eros !

Praise Eros wittily !  
    Praise Eros well !  
Tripping it prettily  
    Down through the dell !  
Joyous and eager  
    Our tresses adorning,  
Away to beleaguer  
    The city of morning !



I

THE RED STAR



# I

## THE RED STAR

SCENE. — A grove of ilex in Arcadia. The terrace is of white marble. In the centre an image of the god Pan in Ivory and Gold. The pedestal is of lapis-lazuli, the space around of malachite. It is strewn with red roses. Before the image of the god stands a naked man, in whose hand is a sharp sword heavy and curved. Its blade is of blue steel, its hilt encrusted with rubies. The man is come to his full strength ; he is very dark with deep-set glittering eyes of green flecked with fire. His beard is short, square, curly, and black mingled with red. It is noon ; the sun stands sole and supreme in the abyss of azure. The grove is completely hidden from the outer world by its ilex, and by the dark fastnesses of yew and cypress about it.

The man — Alexander, the great king — stands upright, facing the God, his arms raised as if to smite with the sword.

ALEXANDER

Naked I stand  
In the Garden of Pan.  
Bare is the brand  
That maketh a man.  
The saying is said ;

The doing is done ;  
Bare is mine head  
To the fire of the sun.  
But thou, o my Lord, are quiet and still ;  
And the feathers are clipt from the wings of the will.

Still are thy lips  
And void of motion,  
Like red-sailed ships  
On a windless ocean ?  
Hast thou no lust  
To involve in a curse  
The insane dust  
Of the universe ?  
Speak, o my Lord ! I have journeyed afar  
In the wake of the terrible crimson star.

A harp between mine hands,  
Murmurous and musical,  
I come from far-off lands  
To seek Thee who are All.  
Amid my warrior bands  
I rode in kingly wise :  
Thy light upon mine eyes !

I came from very far  
Led by that strange red star  
At noon that fadeth now  
Dim on the snow-crowned brow  
    Of royal Caucasus,  
A mystical portent  
Of some obscure event  
    Darkly miraculous  
Written below the West  
In Fate's dark palimpsest ;  
Obscure — the sun to eclipse !

I fed my flaming lips  
Upon the limbs of slaves,  
Great Nubian girls that bled  
Upon the sands — so laves  
The sun his fire in cloud  
When the sea glows glassy red  
At the buffet of the wind  
On its cheek all wrinkle-lined.  
Ah! thou Lord God! thus thrice  
I made thy sacrifice.

Still thou art dumb,  
Though I am duly come

Within thy secret grove  
Naked and armless, save  
For this seraphic glaive.  
How then? What other price  
May serve thy sacrifice?

Ah! by the evil glint  
Of sun, portends an hint.  
Shall I the childless king,  
Chaste in thy praise, resign  
That which was never mine,  
The power of — spring?

Ay! by the fierce glad gleam  
On thy dark lips, I see  
Thy sober ecstasy  
To watch the soft bright stream  
Bubble and curl, like passion-flowers alight  
On the seductive malachite,  
To take with greedy joy  
This — toy.  
The jewels all-precious of a man  
Waste death before thee — Pan!

Steady I stare  
Into Thine eyes luxuriose glare  
Swimming with lust — as if I were  
Some wandering Arab chief enthralled  
By a sphinx with eyes of emerald,  
As a bird fixed by an hissing asp,  
As a maiden in a giant's grasp,  
As a mariner caught in the viewless iron  
And velvet vice of a singing siren!

I lift this blade to sheer  
In one deliberate sweep  
Of startling light  
All that man holdeth dear.  
From the sun's high steep to the great deep  
Of unimaginable night  
To dive — I dive.  
Lord, now!  
Pan! Pan!  
Accept the supreme vow!  
The man  
Shall be no more a man —  
Stay! who are these?

The stroke swings aside, as the pavement of malachite opens before him, at his feet, and two satyrs rise, with a little fair-haired child.

From what barbaric seas  
Ringing the icy North  
Thus suddenly sprung forth  
Come ye to mar mine — ease?  
For I was nigh at peace  
With the great soul of things.

## IST SATYR

Hail, king of Kings!  
It is our Master's will  
That thou partake  
Of — this!  
So do the goat and snake  
Dance on the pavement of sapphire  
To the sound of the wind-haunted lyre.  
And the light of a lewd understanding  
Shines in them, and they lick their lips, and spill  
Slaver of the stars! Hail, king! With Him fulfil  
The sacrament of earth  
Imperiously commanding  
That leaps again to birth  
At the divided flood

Of sun and rain. Arise!  
The red gleam in thine eyes!  
Up, up and slay!

## 2ND SATYR

Fair child,  
Laugh thou; God honours thee  
(Look! then, methinks, he smiled!)  
To condescend to bless  
That unripe loveliness.  
The acid of thine immaturity  
Shall be a sharpness in his mouth  
Cloyed with too clinging sweet  
Of the full-bosomed South.

## 1ST SATYR

Beside those rose-fair feet  
Dimpled with fairy kisses  
There's no bright-tinted bird  
In all the blue abysses  
Worth even a plumeless word.

## THE CHILD

I do not like this place.

The god hath on harsh face.  
Take me home now!

ALEXANDER to the 1st satyr

What next?

How shall a babe scarce-sexed  
Avail when the dread offering  
Of the world's mightiest king  
Is not received?

1ST SATYR

Impale

You trembling fawn too frail  
Upon that ivory ruby rod  
That juts from the azure throne of God!  
Then — as the scream chills the blue air,  
Draw the curved steel along  
The snow-pure throat! Hold the bright hair  
Firm in one swarthy grip;  
And ere the blood leap strong  
Suck with insensate lip  
That wine of Pan! Ah, drink!  
Great king — as if the brink  
Of Ganymede's own cup flowed over,

And thou, his languid lover,  
Sank back into the arms of Zeus  
With thine head hanging loose,  
And the long curls adrip  
With the dew oozing from his lip.

ALEXANDER

So! unto Thee! Come hither,  
Child! You must pass before  
Unto the land where all flowers wither  
And the sea hath never a shore.

2ND SATYR

Ha! he hath dashed the babe to die,  
And caught his first convulsive sigh.  
With a fierce kiss biting into his lips,  
As a storm-fiend tears the reeling ships.  
His fingers clutch the golden hair.  
The head goes back, and the neck is bare.  
Now for the sweep of the steel!

1ST SATYR

Pan! Pan!

THE CHILD

Oh mamma! mamma!

2ND SATYR

Ha! what a man!

With a sweep he has severed the lamb-soft throat,  
And the crimson blood in his cheeks afloat  
Flames, an irradiate blaze to environ  
Etna with mountains of molten iron.

ALEXANDER

Pan! o Pan! dissolve in bliss!  
Take these severed lips to kiss!  
Thou and I are partners of  
This, the sacrament of love.  
By the violatè babe's blue eyes,  
By his sucked-out arteries,  
By the blood-bedabbled gold,  
By the body void and cold,  
Make me partner of thy power  
Over this obscurest hour!

## 1ST SATYR

O the rich red blood that swims on  
Over all the malachite!

## 2ND SATYR

Ah! the banquet gold and crimson  
Like the sun afeast at night!

## ALEXANDER

Out of the fume of the blood arise  
Two lithe nymphs with amethyst eyes,  
Sparkling with the wanton pleasure  
That their small and laughing scarlet  
Mouths betrayed, as overmeasure  
Bubbled out the dancing harlot  
Music of them, snaky slim,  
Panther-smooth and light of limb  
Wreathed with wealth of mystic berry,  
As they leap, divinely drunken  
On the very blood that gat them,  
Insolent and lewd and merry  
— With the satyr-eyes deep-sunken  
Looking things prophetic at them!

Ah! my pan, if blood suffice,  
Crush the world as in a vice!

IST NYMPH

King of kings, the world shall bleed  
In the vilest vice of vices.

2ND NYMPH

While the riddle thou hast ree'd  
Mocks them with its "Blood suffices".

ALEXANDER

Know ye, bright ones, who I am?  
I have slain a thing adored  
At this altar to its Lord,  
As a butcher kills a lamb.

IST NYMPH

That shall be — thou rightly fearest —  
Till the Balance weigh the Ram.

2ND NYMPH

Men shall even slay their dearest  
For the sake of that slain lamb.

ALEXANDER

He was softer than a dove ;  
He was made for human love.  
I have given him for food  
To the lusty panic rood,  
And the obscure brotherhood.

1ST NYMPH

So the doves of men begotten  
Shall be plucked, and bruised, and rotten.

2ND NYMPH

So shall full-fed brothel-knaves  
Kick them to indecent graves  
In the name of the sweet Dove  
That is God — for God is Love.

ALEXANDER

See ye naught but cruelty  
In the infinite To-Be ?  
Look you, I have seen a star  
Threatening pestilence or war  
In the vault that hangs — a splash  
Like a scar.

1ST NYMPH

From what a lash!

2ND NYMPH

O the monstrous travail—gape  
In the belly of the sky!

1ST NYMPH

Shall the man beget the ape,  
All the wine of time run dry?

2ND NYMPH

Ah! the grisly spoil of rape  
Dark with vilest ecstasy!

1ST NYMPH

Listen, how shall life escape  
From such death it breedeth by?

2ND NYMPH

Hangs there not a single grape  
From that nightshade galaxy?

1ST NYMPH

Name the sharp accursed shape,  
Stigma of its prodigy!

2ND NYMPH

Is it but a whirling storm?

ALEXANDER

Nay! the star is cruciform.

1ST NYMPH

Thus the holy cross is cloven  
From Pan's purpose purple-woven.  
Even for centuries nine and ten,  
Life of women — death of men!  
In that sinister sad star  
Men shall bear the upright bar,  
Hanged for honesty and truth,  
Wisdom, courage, love, or youth.  
Women bear the cross-bar, living  
In the filth beyond believing.  
Svelte or buxom, fair or dark,  
Go to the maw of the greedy shark

Whose lascivious appetite  
Is most swiftly set alight  
By their beauty or their wealth,  
By their passion or their weakness,  
In sheer lust of hate, it may be ;  
In the open or by stealth,  
By their slenderness or sleekness.  
For harlot worn and blubbing baby  
Nineteen centuries shall see  
Life run horizontally.

## 2ND NYMPH

Soul shall follow body's station.  
They shall cling to degradation,  
Dance to the clank of the chains that eat  
Deep ulcers in their fettered feet.  
Lock love the dove in a close cage,  
And loose the tiger marriage :  
To the camel of joy be a needle's eye,  
And a wolf's-throat to monogamy.  
Youth's lusty god shall turn them sick,  
While they dote on age's gilded stick.  
Beauty shall shiver in the cold  
While they warm their buttocks at the fire

Of lust and ugliness and gold,  
The rank goats of the whorish mire.  
So falls their flame to that decayed  
Glow of wet rot in the wintry wood.  
Ay! from this star disaster-rayed  
A very wormwood draught is brewed :  
The light of life shall shrink dismayed  
At the dawn of prostitute and prude ;  
And the pagan glory fade  
From the brows of womanhood.

## 1ST SATYR

But the boy shall thrust the maid  
From the sunlight to the shade.  
He shall make her passion good.

## 2ND SATYR

Nay! for all the world-decay  
Rots from sapphirine to grey.  
All the leprous lichen clings  
Round the comeliness of things.  
Brothers! sisters! fauns and elves!  
Dryads! Oreads! Undines!  
Fairies, let us hide ourselves

In our innermost ravines  
Inaccessible to man,  
That our perfect peace in Pan  
Hide from us the knowledge of  
This eclipse of joy and love!

ALEXANDER

Is there nothing but distress  
In the mystic vision lurking?

IST NYMPH

Ah! but were thy loveliness  
With the God supremely working!

ALEXANDER

Nymph, thy face is like a flower  
Fairer than the driven foam!  
Shining like an honeycomb  
Is thy body — and thy soul  
Shoots me to the gilded goal.  
I shall master yet the hour.

SATYRS

King of Kings, we bow before Thee;  
As our Master we adore Thee.

Grant us leave — the midmost wood  
Calls us to its solitude.  
We to bowers of flower and fern ;  
Thou to suffer—and to learn !

They vanish, embracing the nymphs.

ALEXANDER

I am alone —  
— With Pan —  
With the cold stone.  
Nay! with the riotous god that ran  
Through all, and conquered all,  
And became all, and now is all.  
— Oh matchless musical  
Seven-throated god, I hear thy stridency  
Like nereids playing on the wind-struck sea  
That heaves herself with sensuous swaying!

I have seen a wild girl woven in gold  
Stained with blue and scarlet — playing  
Before me — she transported me  
With the writhings of her painted hips  
And her belly jerking up to my lips,  
Into an azure abyss of sea,

With the sun glittering amorously.  
But now, o Pan, the whole world falls  
With its reeling rout of Bacchanals  
Into the gulf, and thy wild note  
Shrills up from the black Nothing's throat  
Like an enchanted harp that playeth  
Melodies, melodies magniloquent of death.  
Yea! o thou golden wan strange-smiling one,  
Thou art not only cold.  
Thine ivory came from fierce bull-elephants  
That trampled Persians in their battle-rage;  
Thy gold was found by men most grave and sage  
Among the sands of a strange river.  
How my breast pants!  
How my sides quiver!  
Surely the breath of God is bubbling in  
These veins, their blood that held its calm discourse  
Lit with electric force  
By Him for whom I have done sin,  
Sin grievous against every part  
To purge the whole through to the heart.  
And lo! thine eyes that dazzle me  
Like peacock's fans with many a million  
Eyes of azure and vermilion

Each in its emerald pavilion  
Like the death-god's majesty  
Burning his ensanguine pain  
In my blood, my heart, my brain.

Yea! with the scent of myrrh  
And musk, and oliban, and strange perfumes  
Begotten in pre-natal glooms  
When all was — what? with infinite ambergris  
The excellent kiss  
Of Pan enshrouds me and invades.  
See how the night-borne shades  
Darken the grove!  
There is no moon to-night  
The foul red star blots out the stars.

So, Pan, thy love  
That brooks not any light  
Shall brand its shameful scars  
Even on this flesh — this royal flesh shall serve  
For the brute lust whose nerve  
Shall eat up blindness in me, and discover  
The mind of Pan, maker of all,  
In all — his lover.

Now still I stand entranced  
And the faint fires that danced  
Before the sunset like a vivid crown  
Of blood upon thine head,  
(O thou severe  
And strong, my lover, my delight!)  
Have all died down ;  
And in the darkness, clear  
As the dawn's transient light  
Are thy lips, live at last ;  
Thine eyes, aflame at the red holocaust  
Of me thou gloatest over.  
See, I draw close,  
(O vital, murder-loving lover!)  
And all my being flows  
In a flood to my lips, and I kiss kiss kiss  
Madly, madly kiss,  
Out of rhythm, out of rime,  
Out of space, sense, time,  
Thy mouth — and I am thine :  
Sealed, sealed at last, enthroned upon  
The very star thou ridest on.  
O wine! o wine!  
Wine of thy luminous body rushing, gushing,

Conquering, penetrating, crushing —  
All the seeds of darkness in me  
Splashed with fire and water,  
So that spring arises in me  
Like a warrior weary of slaughter  
Striding to the striped lair  
Of deftly-woven camel's hair,  
Where the trembling captive-woman  
Waits his pleasure-hour inhuman!  
All the roots of love and power  
Flushed at last into a flower.  
All the films of sense dissolved;  
All the spirit sight evolved,  
So that after myriad aeons  
Filled with trumpet-pealing paeans,  
With the nuptial bliss of man  
Prostituted unto Pan,  
Rises on the vast inane  
Your dread red star again!

O star, thy secret I possess :  
I, watcher for man's happiness.  
I go to ward thy craven curse  
From the maiden Universe.



## II

### THE WHITE WIND



## II

### THE WHITE WIND

A bare volcanic desert. A foul lake stagnant in the distance. A crazy hovel on the edge of the squalid village. The clamour of Syrian dogs. A young girl stealing through the shadows of the moonless night, craftily.

#### THE GIRL

They have not stirred.  
I am unseen, unheard.  
Now for some honey of note  
Plucked from the black lion's throat!  
There is no moon: earth is too still.  
A heat, yet bitter chill,  
Is in the air, the windless air.  
O for a breath of snow-wind on  
The crest of Lebanon!  
I would that boy that laughed

Upon me in the market would come by.  
He twitched his robe awry,  
And I beheld — ah! what a fatal graft  
In that strange tree of youth! What gnarled and knobbed  
Live tree throbbled, throbbled  
With formidable threat — why did I fear?  
What mystery encloses me?  
My God! protect me! See  
On the horizon what strange star awakes,  
Like a gross lion that shakes  
His tawny mane — and roars. Am I the prey?  
See! like a tangle of black snakes  
An evil smoke obscures the firmament  
Belched from his throat! Now I repent  
This mine adventure; I must creep, creep in —  
I fear the night — oh day — day — come, sweet day!  
Best was thy spur, the bloodied silver ache  
That stings me like a snake,  
The itch of blood, the shapeless thing that nestles  
Between my baby breasts,  
The lion lust that wrestles  
With mine own soul — I understand so little —  
Nay! not the tiniest tittle!  
All that I know is this — the pangs consume

My maiden lily-bloom.  
For all my cheeks are flooded with desire  
And shame, and black foul fire  
That bubbles in my soul, and shoots its terror  
Out of these sloe-black eyes  
Into the lake's unfathomable mirror,  
That, laughing back upon me laughing, lies.  
I will creep in — afar  
From the frenzy of yon nameless star.

But who art thou  
Descending in a cloud of cherubim?  
A moon-white sickle crowns that flashing brow;  
Thine head like the wise bird  
Splendidly grim  
That utters that unutterable word;  
Thy body like the bright sun in his strength;  
And all thy virgin length  
Armed with the sword and balances,  
Gold as the ultimate galaxies —

Thou art vanished.  
Surely the Presence of the Lord wast thou

To utter forth some doom of dread —  
But now?

A young man in a white robe is found standing before her.

THE YOUTH

Maiden, be comforted!  
The Lord hath listened unto thy lament,  
The ululation of that wolfish stress;  
And I am sent  
To heal thy loneliness.

MIRIAM

Ah! thou art not as he that saw me  
To-day. Thou art comelier than he,  
And softly mayest thou draw me  
From this perplexity.  
But hast thou — hast thou such a thing of fear  
(Like an old giant's knotty spear)  
As he? Thou dost not laugh and leer  
As he did. No! I will not show my face

She drops her veil.

Stand back, stand back a space!

She advances toward him.

Nay, touch me not. I am a virgin vowed —

She lays her hand upon his arm.

I am of royal race  
Most mortal proud —

She kneels, kissing his robe.

Spare me, sweet sir!

She pretends to stagger, and falls back upon the ground.  
Her robe falls from her.

#### THE YOUTH

I am a messenger.

He disappears.

#### MIRIAM

Shaitan! he slipped my grip.  
Is there no flood to drip  
Some icy liquor on this hell-scarred brow?  
See! The red star glows fainter now.  
All is a velvet heat of horror. Night  
Holds me in torture.

Hark! the lake  
Stirs in its sleep; the ripples shake.  
— Oh for the wind! Here naked will I lie  
And let its coolness bite into my blood.

— Ho! What a whistle of wind  
 Whirling the spumy scud  
 Of the lake into a column of ecstasy!  
 Like a sharp spear it rushes up to me,  
 And in my face it flutters like a dove  
 Whispering strange words of love.  
 It sunders me! it cuts me — now, ah! touch!  
 These empty arms that grope, that strain, that clutch  
 Mere air, grow limp.....

The wind is like a scythe

That cuts its swathe through my green field,  
 Even as I groan and writhe  
 In the agony that pierces to the marrow.  
 The wind! the wind! an arrow  
 That hath smitten me through the shield —  
 I float in mine own virgin tide  
 Let loose — ah! who are these that haunt me now,  
 Tumbling from the desert brow  
 Of the wild ensorcelled ridge,  
 Like a warrior's sacrilege;  
 Gnashing laughter sobbed or swelling  
 To a pestilence of yelling,  
 These gibbering apes that mop and mow  
 And leap upon me? Surely this is Fear

With face averted that constrains me to him —  
And this blind worm is avarice. Let me woo him!  
Sweet God! I'll serve thee. This is Piety  
Twin-bodied with Hypocrisy that darts  
His icy slime into my heart of hearts.  
Here cringing Pity my wet womb inflates,  
And puffed-out Charity with loose red cheeks  
And greasy eyes. The Bigotry that sneaks  
Home to my home; and once installed there, hates  
The bleeding wound his mouth is fastened on;  
And here is Chastity that slavering sates  
His lust without the walls, grins, and is gone,  
Preening himself that his lewd lips relent.  
This must be Cunning that insinuates  
His venom; this deformed and bent  
Dog-like abortion, stinking excrement,  
Is Slave-morality. Come all! I have  
A lyre still tuneable to your great theme,  
A pit as hospitable as the grave.  
Come, dead and living! I am yours to-night.  
Score after score! oh God — is this a dream?  
Then let me never wake! Exhaustless might  
Thrills me — as ever it shall — from the first thrust  
Of that white wind whose steeltipped gust

Broke in my body to its lust.  
 What? Are ye done?

There is a distant chorus

Of robust voices; the earth heaves and pants  
 As if the seven and seventy elephants  
 Snow-white of Solomon made hither, marched  
 On the black earth sun-parched  
 Into the battle-front; grave and sonorous,  
 A clang of arms salutes these ears, that twitch  
 To catch the zenith pitch  
 Of aught that, human or divine,  
 Might pour some drowsy wine,  
 Poppy-heads bruised and seethed  
 In milk of asses ivy-wreathed  
 With honey and spice and wine moon-pale  
 Strained though a virgin's veil —  
 To ease this itch.

Enter a Roman Centurion and his guard.

THE CENTURION

Ha! Publius, saidst thou: "Jewish girls are chaste"?

PUBLIUS

Good — a barbarian Clodia Croup-in-air!

THE CENTURION

The brazenest whore in Syria, I dare swear!

PUBLIUS

Look at the blood! A very Hymen flare!

THE CENTURION

New meat to-night. She hath acquired the taste.  
Come, friends, enjoy her. Have we time to waste?  
I heard the cock crow.

He embraces her rudely.

PUBLIUS

Let it crow for her!

One by one they defile her.

MIRIAM

Scarce forty! Yet the dawn begins to stir:  
The Wolf's tail blots my star. At last I strain  
Some strength that strains my body back again.

THE CENTURION

Enough, lads! If she breed not, at my peril  
I shall uphold it "Jewish girls are sterile."

MIRIAM

Stay, will you go? What, are you men — or tame?

PUBLIUS

Faugh, wench! is there no shame?

He kicks her brutally. The guard moves off.

MIRIAM

The dawn! oh, curses on the dawn that breaks  
This night of joy. God! my whole being wakes  
Into a world of rapture. I am I  
At last — the little fool that wondered why!  
I am abreast of God's whole tide of thought.  
Like gold into fine linen, I am wrought  
Into the royal vesture of the globe.  
I am the Empress of the City of Sin,  
Wrapped in its purple robe  
Stained with mine own maid's blood.  
Yea! for all glorious within  
Am I, most like the daughter of a king,  
Voluptuously languishing  
Like a great queen afloat upon the flood  
In gilded barge

On rugs of fur and silk  
Broidered with curious device  
Of basilisk and cockatrice  
Upon the broad-woven scarlet marge.  
— God! how this bosom boils with milk,  
Its veined radiance swelling —

Ah! the light grows —  
Back, from these splendid woes  
And joys obscure  
Into the squalid and impure  
House, and the filth indwelling!

She crawls within the hovel.



### III

## THE BLUE DWARF



### III

#### THE BLUE DWARF

SCENE, a stable containing three stalls. In the first, an ox ; in the second, the girl Miriam ; in the third, the ass Zakariah. The first is chewing the cud peaceable ; the second, stretched naked on the straw, holds her sides and groans ; the third lifts up his voice ever and anon in a formidable bray. The stable is lighted by two torches held respectively by an old and withered hag, her two remaining teeth — long yellow fangs — exposed in a grin ; and by a blue faced baboon, who revels in his corner in the filth.

THE HAG, addressing the baboon.

Ho! her time is not yet come ;  
We may dance together, dear.  
Say, how beautiful art thou  
With thy shining shame protruding!  
Darling, apeling, why so glum ?  
Turn away that rosy sphere ;  
Show me the delicious brow  
Ever brooding, ever brooding

Surely on my loveliness.

They dance a jig together.

Look at her obscene distress!  
 How it makes me laugh to see her  
 Writhing in her pains. — Come hither,  
 Mistress! join us, laughing freer  
 As thy lips and cheeks grow whiter,  
 And the old loves shrink and wither  
 At the kisses of the smiter!  
 Ho! Ho! Ho! a knock I hear...  
 By my maidhood, who comes here?

The stable door is pushed in, and three holy kings appear, surrounded by their retinue. They enter in solemn procession, and seat themselves at the central stall.

GOVINDA

Say, my brother, is the vision  
 That thou sawest in the grove  
 Answered?

CHAU

Doth the exact division  
 Of the azimuth rightly prove  
 That the star points hither truly?

## ALEXANDER

Brothers, all is proven duly.  
Memory joins with astrolabe :  
This the maiden — hers the babe.

## MIRIAM

Who are ye ? I would be alone.  
Now the loose and heaving zone  
Frets me. Go, my mates, carouse  
With the cuckold of the house  
With his adze and awl and chisel!  
Zakariah with gilded pizzle  
And this bull grown sleek and smooth  
To an ox suffice, in sooth,  
Love's exalted task — and thus  
Kings are grown superfluous.  
Ai! but now the monster splits me  
Struggling in his bloody cage.  
Is it in his sport or rage ?  
Answer that, thou doting sage!  
For his cacodaemon shape  
Twisting round no longer fits me.  
This is like some hellish rape

Of one's soul the grisly ape!  
 Get ye forth to Aggereth  
 Riding in her golden car  
 Yoked to ox and ass that prance  
 In their evil Hinnom-dance!  
 I am writhing with my death  
 Born of the infernal Star.

## ALEXANDER

Nay, our lady, we are come  
 To thy worship — high and holy;  
 From our heaven-wide halidom  
 To the manger dark and lowly  
 We have brought taraxacum,  
 Mandrake, amrit, myrrh and moly;  
 Many a royal gift of gree  
 From the land of Danae,  
 From the coral-breeding sea,  
 From the steppes of Tartary!

## GOVINDA

I have brought a treasure-chest  
 Full of gold, red gold galore,

All a pirate's hoarded store  
From the islands of the West  
Gathered far with blood and tears  
For three score and seven years.  
All this wealth of virgin gold  
This thy babe shall held and hold.  
He shall buy the souls of priests ;  
Forge men chains, and make them beasts ;  
Give the carrion soldier meat,  
And corrupt the judgment-seat.  
With it he shall seethe the snake  
Of his faith in fire-hot blood ;  
Hurt the humble, strew the stake  
With the faggots ; gild the rood  
That for many a year shall brand  
With its blight full many a land.

## CHAU

I have brought him frankincense.  
He shall dull therewith the sense  
Of his slaves, that they may be  
Docile in their slavery.  
He shall fill their aching minds

With the smoke that madness finds  
The sole cloak of anarchy.  
Misty vapours demon-wrought  
Fill the cold clear dome of thought.

## ALEXANDER

Mother, I have brought him myrrh.  
Sorrow black and sinister  
Shall his name bring to the race.  
Wheresoever on the earth  
Shall be heard his hissing name  
Shall be madness and disgrace,  
Falsehood, barrenness, and shame  
For the folk of praise and worth.

All the pure, the fair, the young  
Shall taste curses on his tongue ;  
But the old, the chill, the base,  
Shall find beauty in his face.

Also, of Astarte's fruit  
We have brought him orchis root.  
Cinquefoil, and musk, and fins  
Of the turtle and the shark  
Scraped with damiana-bark,  
Every grain a score of sins !

In this flask of crystal lurks  
Bruised virility of Turks,  
Boiled with wine and ambergris —  
Every drop an hour of bliss!

This cornelian box contains  
Datura-seeds and sparrow-brains,  
Mixed and smoothed with asses' fat.

Here the marrow of a bat  
Consecrated by a wizard  
And the seed-cells of a lizard  
Banned by a Thessalian witch,  
Lie like twins — royally rich  
In this casket wrought with gems  
Fit for Mogul diadems.

## MIRIAM

O dogs, kings, gods, begone!  
Bone splits from bone.  
I am ripped up like a sweating sow  
On the horn of a buffalo!  
What care I for your gifts, unless  
They might relieve this wretchedness?  
God! I am split asunder  
Like a cloud by a clap of thunder!

GOVINDA

The sweat is on thy forehead like bright stars  
Amid the milk of the great galaxy.

CHAU

Thy body gapes like a valley of deodars  
Between two snowy hills in Tartary.

ALEXANDER

Ho! Ho! a million rats  
Herald the brat's  
First yelp.

A vast company of rats issue from her, and  
rush squeaking into the darkness.

MIRIAM

God be mine help!  
Adrammelek exacts a death  
For every dance with Astoreth.

GOVINDA

Cling to the ass-god, quean!  
Now while his loud obscene

Bray deafens us — now cling  
To the lewd stark dripping thing  
Thou has caressed and gilt  
From the point to the gross hilt  
With the babe-gold of thy bright skin,  
Wolfig it in  
As the dragon swallows up the moon!

## CHAU

See, she will swoon.  
This is magnificent.  
I would not lose the event —  
Ho! boy, bring wine! Black wine in jars of jade  
Cooled all these months in hoarded snow!  
Black wine with purple starlight in its bosom,  
Oily and sweet as the soul of a brown maid  
Brought from the forenoon's archipelago,  
Her brows bound bright with many a scarlet blossom —  
Like the blood of the slain that flowered free  
When we met the black men knee to knee!

## ALEXANDER

Brothers, how found you me?

GOVINDA

I have a gipsy girl  
Skilled in the mystic art.  
She knows the trick to curl  
Dried leaves in fire, and augur thence.  
I bought her in the mart  
From an old Greek — a vile old man!  
He told me she was a Bohemian;  
And by a fabulous conjuring with cards  
Indeed she can divine.

CHAU

So can our bards.  
These girls are shifty.

GOVINDA

Maybe so; but list!  
(I pray you) She can take an amethyst  
And see a thousand visions.

CHAU

So can I

When the wine fills me. Pray you!

His slave presents wine to Govinda, who drinks.

GOVINDA

Health, my lord!

This wine is marvellous dry!  
Scented like clover reaching up the broad  
Edge of some glacier in my northern marches.

CHAU

Look, how she writhes — speechless distemperature  
Her shriek within her gorge that parches!

GOVINDA

Boy, bid that cup-slave from Ferozapur  
Make me an ode of this — nay, while I think!  
An elegy.

CHAU

Please your majesty to drink?

GOVINDA

Thanks, brother. Well, my gipsy girl divined

The purport of the star we saw enshrined  
In the eclipse — to say so — of the sky.  
I feared her perfidy ;  
The journey might prove tedious — (nay, my lords!  
Star or no star, I am honoured, glad, to find  
Such royal mates!). But her, I had her stripped  
And most magnificently whipped  
By two tall slaves (a Tartar and a Goth)  
Till all the flesh was ripped  
From her olive back — she looked like a dead camel  
When a man frightens off the kites ;  
And her rich blood came all afroth  
To her lips' vermeil enamel  
— The lips that I had kissed!  
And still she would persist.  
    You see, she had her rights ;  
For here am I come — a feast I had not missed  
Willingly, for a thousand beads of jade,  
Or a broad-hipped Nubian maid,  
Or a diamond flask of rose-perfume,  
Or a Shiraz boy in his first best bloom!  
Oh, I rewarded her well altogether,  
For she slept at my feet through the cold mountain weather.

## CHAU

I who am come from the remote abode  
 Beyond the highest snows,  
 Beyond the swiftest river,  
 Was moved thereto by a strange goad —  
 Stranger, my lords, than all your wisdom knows!  
 For in the city of gold and jade  
 Beyond where my vassal Tartars shiver  
 I have a dagger gold-inlaid  
 Sharp as an arrow from the heavenly quiver;  
 Its hilt of clustered fires, a crusted jewel  
 Fashioned in the likeness of a demon-king  
 Most exquisitely cruel: —  
 Daily I try my luck  
 By the Oracle of the Bleeding Duck.

## GOVINDA

Look! what a horrid horde of toads  
 Hops from the Syrian wench!

Toads, issuing from the maid, hop off croaking into  
 the darkness.

## MIRIAM

Ah! ribald croak!

Intolerable stench!  
Spasm on spasm of agony still goads  
My soul to get to God.

GOVINDA

The third should be the final period.  
What portent may we look for?

ALEXANDER

By this dial  
We must wait yet a little, majesties!

CHAU

I tell you of the Oracle. I took  
(So that it might be an exhaustive trial)  
A snow-white bird with purple tail-feathers  
Wherein pale flames of gold mingled and shook.  
Here, too, my wisest ministers  
Gathered to solve the riddle of the Star.  
But so the balky brute  
Crushed in this gnarled fist  
Maintained the unequal war  
That at the dagger-sweep  
Strongly she leapt — I missed!

And all my joy and all her crimson flux  
Sprang in a mingled river to the West.

GOVINDA

See how she tears her breast!

CHAU

She is like a wounded horse  
Gored by some old rogue-elephant.  
For now the mouth springs open, and a yell  
Like the shriek of the throat of hell  
Bursts, and is choked by a vomit of black worms.

ALEXANDER

All this most critically confirms  
Our calculations. Boy! the long pale glass  
Fashioned of ambergris and chrysopras.  
Fill it with the old, the ripe Satyrion,  
And bear it to their Majesties. Anon  
We shall see? —

GOVINDA

Sure, a son

CHAU

I wager thirty loads of merchandise  
Most precious — sandalwood and gold and spice  
And jewels, and divine medicaments,  
And goat-hair broideries, and silken tents —  
And thirty diamonds of the purest water,  
It is a daughter!

ALEXANDER

I take it — and yours too, my lord. Maybe  
You both are wrong.

GOVINDA

True, this much mystery  
Veils the whole matter — it were hard to say.

CHAU

Shang Ti! how fierce a bray  
The amorous ass gives.

MIRIAM

Heave, o heave, my sides!  
Stretch! Split! This pang decides

For life or death. Now! — — Stretch! —  
Plague on the wretch!  
Friends, ease me — with a scimitar!

ALEXANDER

We learnt not that from the dark Star.

MIRIAM

Why then, be cursed!  
My belly is about to burst.

The hag and the baboon come forward.

THE HAG

Ho! we will lift the prudish latch.  
Dear apeling, hold the torches while I catch  
This monster. So. Dispatch!

MIRIAM

God! let it be a boy.  
I would enjoy  
His love.  
Who hath come forth with such keen pain  
Owes keener pleasure, going back again.  
A curse upon that Dove.

Whose windy letch hath blown me out  
Like a rich man with flatulence and gout!

THE HAG

Ho! stanch thy throttle!  
Come forth!

She delivers her.

O jest insane!  
For all this pious pain  
Naught but an old brass bottle!

GOVINDA

Maybe it holds the two and seventy Jinn  
That Solomon screwed in.

ALEXANDER

More like, the wine that Dionysus spilled  
From Cyprus grapes distilled.

CHAU

We lose our wagers? It may be  
Best to unscrew it, and to see.

## MIRIAM

Have ye no pity, kings, at this disease?  
O then I am a mere muck-midden of shame.  
But yet my body feeds on flame  
As if some masterpiece  
Were wrought — I know not how — pray cease!  
Leave me with these!

## CHAU

Midden or maiden, we must see the birth  
Of thy black womb.  
Why do these moans disturb our mirth?  
I will have thee lashed to shreds  
By this vile groom  
Unless thou quit thy prating.

## THE HAG

Here's pay for months of waiting.

She detaches the placenta.

A black old rotten wine-skin, mangy goat  
Patched with bat, stork, and stoat!

ALEXANDER

Here come the bottle back, washed bright.  
Yes, this is certainly the seal  
Of Solomon.

GOVINDA

I feel  
That we are on the brink of some strange sight.

CHAU

The whole event has seemed improbable.  
Scribes, you record this well!  
Or I will have you sliced with the keen steel  
My cook keeps razor-sharp for salted swine.  
Nine thousand cuts, nine hundred cuts,  
And ninety cuts and nine  
Cut exquisitely fine,  
And the last slash in your guts  
If by an hair's breadth your recital  
Obscure the true, omit the vital!

ALEXANDER

Out springs the screw.  
Ho! the mannikin slim and sprightly

Dressed in a neat surtout of blue  
With the head of a goat and the nose of a Jew  
And the...

GOVINDA

Would your Pasiphae challenge him lightly?

CHAU

Truly, a marvel. Come, little man!  
We kiss your hands, and sail back home  
Over the desert and over the foam.

ALEXANDER

And I go back to the grove of Pan.

GOVINDA

What is thy name?  
I will proclaim  
Thy marvellous fame  
From the Gulf of Kutch to the shores of Orissa.

MIRIAM

I pray your Majesty, call him Issa.

## THE BABE

Nay! I am come to the hour appointed.  
Anoint me, sirs, and call me 'Anointed'!

## GOVINDA

Rather be Baa-Baa called, for thy jerkin  
Is a fleece like his friends wrap an holy Turk in,  
When he twirls on his toes  
Regarding his nose  
Or his paunch that would hold a firkin!

## THE HAG

The little beast is double-jointed.  
Dance a spring, thou springal strutting  
Like a stag in the glades at the season of rutting!

## ALEXANDER

Dance, o thou imp  
Of the bottle of brass  
With the hag and the pimp  
And the ox and the ass!

GOVINDA

Dance, o thou mannikin  
Dwarf and malign  
To the clink of Earth's pannikin  
Drained of its wine!

CHAU

Dance, to the scream  
Of strangled humanity,  
The delirious dream  
Of the Vampires of Vanity!  
The kings rise, bow, and depart.

THE KINGS

Away, away like the wanton wind!  
One to the groves of ilex tall;  
One to the plains of infinite Ind;  
One beyond the Mongol wall.  
As we met, so we part.  
Three great kings and one true heart!



# IV

## THE BLACK BEAN



## IV

### THE BLACK BEAN

SCENE — A small Syrian mud hut. On a truckle bed strewn with dirty straw lie a naked man and woman.

MAGDA

Give me more money, Baa-Baa, for a kiss ;  
One of my kisses.

ISSA

Youdesch has the bag.  
(A pause.)

Also I weary of thy sordidness.  
Love is at bottom a most noisome hag.  
Mother and brothers! all the pageant passes  
Like a loud caravan of braying asses ;  
And now I — love thee! in this hole of hell.  
A rotting camel by a dried-up well!

Pah! but the brothel-reek contaminates.  
 There is no air — thy bed is poisonous,  
 Thy breath — thy leper-life lascivious —  
 Fill me with loathing. Murder-waking hates  
 Surge in upon me as I see thee there  
 Wanton and white in that red touzle of hair  
 As if a sow were wreathed with poppy-flowers.  
 Pah! I am sick of these delirious hours.  
 John's lips are cool like olive-oil — and thine,  
 Even at the best, like some black stormy wine.

MAGDA

Oh beast thou art! Didst thou not surely quicken me  
 With child?

ISSA

Thy lewdness and thy lowness sicken me.  
 Nay, let the heavy-fringed purple lashes  
 Lie still — my lust is burnt to bitter ashes!  
 The wrinkled eyepits black with grime and kohl  
 Are like black bogs to suck away my soul.  
 The coarse vermilion on thy cheeks is fire  
 Of hell to blast the charred stump of desire.  
 The blue tattoo-marks stain thy mouth like bruises;  
 The fat creeps on thy body as it chooses,

Fighting the leanness of thy lechery  
That hags thee — Faugh!

MAGDA

Art thou not lewd with me?

ISSA

Ay! and the rot of Egypt pays me for't.

MAGDA

To match thy rotten soul, thou pimping ort!  
Marrowless bone! Dry fig!

ISSA

Enough, black bitch!  
The Seventy shall stone thee for a witch.

MAGDA

More than enough. I'll call thy darling itch,  
Thy—

He fists her in the abdomen.

ISSA

Take the name back to thy bloated belly!  
Speak, and I kick thy carcass to a jelly!

MAGDA

Thou empty bottle of brass of Bethlehem!  
John, come and loose this surly saviour's phlegm!

John descends a rickety ladder from a loft.  
Magda spits, and goes out.

JOHN

Hail, master, let me soothe thy time of teen!

ISSA

Wine rots the liver; fever swells the spleen;  
Meat clogs the belly; dusts inflames the eye:  
Stone irks the bladder; gout — plague — leprosy!  
Man born of woman is most full of trouble;  
God a gorged fool that belches him, a bubble! —  
But of all plagues wherewith a man is cursed,  
Take my word for it, woman is the worst!

JOHN

Maybe, dear Lord, of all the words men say  
Of thine, that one shall never pass away.  
But what hath the wench done?

ISSA

Undone me quite,  
Nagged me with sordid greediness all night,  
Greed for my gold, my person — all I have.  
Saith not the prophet: “Cruel as the grave”?  
That grinning mask, that musk-rat, hath enriched  
Her rags by every inch of me that itched;  
And for one itch hath planted me another,  
The “friend that sticketh closer than a brother”.  
Ten groans of mine for every grin of hers!  
What saith the prophet? — “Whited sepulchres!”

JOHN

Nay, Lord, the phrase unique is all thine own.

ISSA

Then write it down, an nothing less atone.  
And add — of all the itches that breed bile  
No itch beats the papyrus and the style.

JOHN

Hast thou no love for me, Lord?

ISSA

Yes, lad, yes.

— Tinged through with many-coloured bitterness!  
 For as I lay this night of hateful heat,  
 The blow-flies buzzing, the eternal bleat  
 Of strayed sheep, the intense malefic hum  
 Of the accurst mosquito, the far drum  
 Of the winged beetle, the reiterate stings  
 Of fouler vermin, the hot breath that brings  
 The sunset's garlic to the midnight's rose,  
 The red whore's writhings, clutches swift to close  
 On this worn limb, exact the woman-debt  
 To the last mite, the cold grey glutinous sweat  
 — These things, I say, assailed me, bade me pause  
 Praising the goodness of the great First Cause.

JOHN

Yet all we know His vast benevolence.

ISSA

Thou hast religion, but no common sense.  
 The cud of wisdom is not duly chewed  
 When whoredom's whittled with a platitude.

JOHN

The upshot?

ISSA

I am sick of everything.

JOHN

Of me, Lord?

ISSA

Thou the least, sweet queen and king.  
But — finally — in sooth, lad — even of thee.

JOHN

Lord, have I failed in love?

ISSA

Failure must be.  
Not by thy fault, but fixed in every feature  
Of Mistress Smirking Whore, our Mother Nature,  
Whose filthy digs our poisoned kisses suck.  
Pah! the whole world is just a mass of muck.

JOHN

Wait, master! that's a Phrase.

ISSA

Take note of it :

Matter is muck!

JOHN

True wisdom and true wit!

The upshot, Lord?

ISSA

Than living, I would rather  
Play the fool's game of my unnatural Father.

JOHN

Thy father, Lord? Thy pardon, but we heard —

ISSA

No odds — all genealogy's absurd.

JOHN

Suppose, Lord, I should simply call Thee "Word"?

ISSA

Happy the thought! But, in thy secret ear,  
There was a scheme — thou mark'st me?

JOHN

Crystal clear.

ISSA

I came from heaven.

JOHN

We guessed it.

ISSA

Guess again!

What follows?

JOHN

— Er —

ISSA

To humbug me is vain.

Guess!

JOHN

Well, to come from heaven — Thou com'st to reign?

ISSA

I die — thou mark'st me?

JOHN

Truly: plain as plain!

ISSA

And then, to counterbalance the effect —  
What next ?

JOHN

I cannot say.

ISSA

I resurrect.

JOHN

What good would that do ?

ISSA

As I understand,  
It would spoil life for everyone.

JOHN

How grand !  
How simple !

ISSA

Look, boy, I am tired of things.  
Joy, that had legs before, hath now got wings.  
I am exceeding weary.

JOHN

Even of me?

ISSA

Yes — no — yes — what thou wilt. All's one.

JOHN

I see.

Then thou wilt slay thyself?

ISSA

'Twere too much trouble,  
Having cut the corn, to clear away the stubble.  
Hire thou a knave to slay me.

JOHN

Lord, I dare not.

ISSA

Denounce me to the Seventy — I care not.  
Indeed, since Death is Death, small odds the plan of it!  
I'll rather choose to get what fun I can of it.

JOHN

I have it, Lord! Well make thy death suggest



At their phylacteries, my clever stroke  
At God, my break-and-build-the-temple joke :  
And make the fell indictment yet completer  
With my bewildering pun on 'rock' and 'Peter'!

JOHN

It shall be done.

ISSA

Nay, thou wouldst feel remorse.  
Let the whole matter simply take its course!  
Our Youdesh is a thief; so, sure to rat.  
He'll raise their camel to conceal his gnat.

JOHN

How choice a metaphor! How terse! How dry!  
Apt as thy'camel and the needle's eye'.

ISSA

Agreed, then! Now if Brothers Louse and Bug  
Will let me be, I'll settle slack and snug  
Till noon.

JOHN

I too, Lord, I would sleep with Thee.

ISSA

Lie down, then! On thine oath, no knavery!

JOHN

Sleep well, dear master! Kiss me!

ISSA

Pah, young thickhead!

The door opens.

No peace, saith someone somewhere, for the wicked!

Enter Magda.

What is it now?

MAGDA

If Rabbi Pip is gone,

It's Back to Bed!

Issa wearily rises.

ISSA

Then — Back to Bed with John!

JOHN

What, wilt Thou go?

ISSA

Yea, by the holy hem

Of Aaron's robe — off to Jerusalem!

He goes out, followed by the protesting pair.

V

THE GREY NIGHT



## V

### THE GREY NIGHT

SCENE. — The thick darkness of the Emptiness of Things. Yet in the midst appears a certain glory veiling the figure of a tall stern man, the king Alexander. In his hand is a black rod clothed with twin glittering snakes, the royal Uraeus serpents of ancient Khem ; at its point gleams faint and blue A star of six rays, whose light now illumines the pale and tortured features of a man, with outstretched arms, who is hanging (apparently) in space. It is Issa, but the weariness is gone ; and noble-strong is the scarred brow of his agony.

ALEXANDER.

In the puissance of my will,  
Issa, I uphold thee still.

ISSA.

Thou art ?

ALEXANDER

Keeper of the Way.

ISSA

I am ?

ALEXANDER

Man, at mine essay.  
By the Balance reaching forth  
To the south and to the North  
Have I consecrated thee  
Co-victim with humanity.

O mis-begotten, miscreate  
Dwarf as thou wast, the child of hate ;  
Thou who hast felt the sordidness  
Of thine own effect on thine own distress ;  
Art come thereby to the stature of man  
By my power, who am Pan.  
And by this death shalt laugh to know  
Thy father's final overthrow.

My soul the heights and depths has spanned.  
I hold the star-streams in mine hand.  
I am the master of life and death  
And of every spirit that quickeneth.  
Yea! in the light of knowledge, Pan

Hath grasped at the blackness of the ban :  
And thus do I crush it. As the storm  
Whirls shrieking round thy ghastly form  
Thy spirit's torture shall abate  
The bodily pangs of thy fearsome fate.  
Weak fool! The fate of Arcady  
And the whole world — that hung on thee!  
Hadst thou but made thee Emperor,  
And led thy legions into war!  
Thou broken reed — a birth unclean,  
A life sucked up in sordid spleen,  
A death absurd, most foully wrought  
To the shape of thy father's leper-thought.  
This be thy doom, that thou shalt see  
The curses that are born of thee!  
Thou black bat that hast barred the sun  
From the sight of man, thou minion  
Of death and disease, of toil and want,  
Of slavery, knavery, greed and cant,  
Of bigotry, murder, hypocrisy  
— Speak thou the things that are seen of thee!

ISSA

Canst thou not save me, Pan,  
And balk the bestial plan?

ALEXANDER

I too have died to Pan, and he  
Hath begotten upon me  
A secret wonder that must wait  
For the hour of the falling of thy fate,  
Nineteen centuries shalt thou  
Plague earth with that agonizing brow,  
And then that age of sordid strife  
Give place to the aeon of love and life.

A lion shall rise and swallow thee,  
Bringing back life into Arcady.  
So strong shall he roar that the worlds shall quake  
And the waters under the heaven break,  
That the earth, of thy father's hate accurst,  
Shall be greener and gladder than at first.

ISSA

I shall endure then, if the Ultimate  
Be reached through the black fate.

ALEXANDER

Let that sustain thee — yet this hour  
I put forth all my torture-power

To grind thee in the mills of martyrdom,  
That at last thy spirit may fully come  
To understand and to repent —  
Else might thy new-born strength relent  
And all thy father's hate corrode  
Thy will, as the breath of a bloat toad  
Might rot the lungs of a young child.  
Then were indeed the earth defiled  
And the sole seedling that must lurk  
In the desert world — waste by thy Work —  
Itself its loveliness transplant  
To a flawless field whose grace should grant  
Life to that bright inhabitant.

## ISSA

These eyes are blind with blood and tears ;  
They strain across the doubtful years ;  
They search the stars : the earth they scan ;  
All, all spells Misery to Man.

Of whom I am. First, fables gross and foul  
Hooted and hissed by human snake and owl  
About me, twisted into doleful engines  
Of greed, hate, envy, jealousy and vengeance.

Next, scythes laid to the root of every flower  
That asks but sunshine for its brief glad hour.  
Next, axes at the root of every tree  
That strains its top to immortality.  
Yea, o thou terrible magician,  
I see the black wings of suspicion  
Fanning each ear with tales of spite,  
Blasting each bud with bitter blight.  
I see the poisonous upas-tree,  
Its shade the ghastly trinity  
— Religion, law, morality —  
Sicken with its stifling breath  
Human loveliness to death.  
I myself the tool of priests,  
Tyrants, merchants, hags and beasts,  
Lawyers, doctors, artizans,  
Whores and theologians!  
All my life misunderstood  
Built in slime and nursed with blood!  
This my death divinely hallows  
Boot and rack, stake and gallows.  
Strong men crushed beneath my domes,  
Children tortured in my homes,  
Women tricked and raked and herded

In the stinking styie bemerded  
With the putrid excrement  
Of the marriage sacrament.  
Every scourge and sore and shame  
Blest in mine accursed name!  
Love and beauty under ban!  
Wit and wisdom barred to man!  
Nature smirched by hideous lies!  
Meanness lauded to the skies!  
Pain and ruin and disease  
Praised, as if they made mine ease.  
Dead be dance and dream and revel!  
Thought and courage, things of evil!  
Corn and milk, wine and oil,  
The guerdon of degrading toil!  
Life's bright draught of honied leisure  
Soured to sick and tasteless pleasure.  
All the gracious grape degraded,  
To a fatuous foulness faded;  
Ecstasy divinely deep  
Bartered for a brutal sleep  
In whose grunting crapulence  
They may forget the glory whence  
They came, and hide in a stinking slum

The beastliness they have become.  
 Wealth complaining in its styel  
 Stark starvation standing by!  
 Poet, painter, sculptor, sage  
 Prostituted to their age;  
 Or starved or tortured, should they hold  
 To the clear sunlight and the age of gold,  
 — Scarce a tithe of all I see,  
 Yet — thou dost not pity me ?

ALEXANDER

Thou art near death: thy corpse light dawns on us.  
 See! the tenebrous glare and venomous  
 And all it shews. Enough! I leave thee, man,  
 To hide me in the secret place of Pan  
 Beneath the fallen groves Arcadian.

He fades away, as if the new light, making the filth  
 visible, made him invisible.

ISSA

I am nailed here too fast: —  
 I strain in agony aghast;  
 For I have blotted out the sun  
 From the sight of everyone.

With me on either hand lie slain  
— Ah! Never more to rise again! —  
Virtue and beauty. Dark and dank,  
The low hill's baked and barren bank!  
There at my feet the glib scribe scrawls  
His flatulent gnostic caterwauls  
For gaping agapic festivals.  
By him the red-haired harlot sprawls,  
And the blotchy beast that suckled me  
Squats like a toad, and shamelessly  
Ogles the crowd of bystanders  
With those wicked glittering eyes of hers.  
Perched high above me the foul bird  
My father belches his lewd word,  
Triumphant in his scheme's success  
That binds the globe in bitterness.  
Blithe, the hag and the baboon  
Frisk it to the tuneless tune  
Of a sow that drums upon  
A half-rotted skeleton.  
Round me stretch the busy lines  
Of architects at their designs —  
Brothels, jails and hospitals,  
Legislatures, arsenals,

Churches — towers and spires and domes,  
 Houses — nay! But the white tribe's homes  
 Whose chalky skins shall match their shores,  
 While their itching prudes and satiate whores  
 Bear — strange fate! — in that puritan den  
 The goodliest graft of the race of men  
 'Mid the ruck of hypocrite and slave  
 That grovel and groan from the womb to the grave.  
 Sadly keeping watch and ward  
 Are the century and his guard.

AGRIPPA

These portents much oppress me.

PUBLIUS

Bodes

Also my soul.

AGRIPPA

Such anger goads  
 My spirit at this strange black time.  
 — This duty hath the eyes of crime!

PUBLIUS

Duty insists.

AGRIPPA

But fear persuades.  
— This deathly light, these foul grey shades!

PUBLIUS

Portending little enough of good  
To Rome, that beats with our heart's blood.  
See how dejected on their spears  
The guard lean!

AGRIPPA

Rather a thousand years  
Of strife than this black peace. Accurst  
I know this night shall be.

ISSA

I thirst.

AGRIPPA

Give him to drink!

PUBLIUS

How strange a fate!  
Those noble eyes irradiate  
This leprous luster.

AGRIPPA

See, the foul  
Black thing that sits with sneer and scowl  
Over his head.

PUBLIUS

What now? Beshrew  
Me, but its face is like a Jew!

YAUGH WAUGH

Butch! The game is fairly started.  
I will back to night and chaos. — Ha! Hoo!  
Formlessly presiding  
Over the ruined earth.  
Ga! Ga!  
Ab — ab — ab — ab — ab —

He flies off.

ISSA

Behold! He hath forsaken me.  
The doom is fixed, but my spirit is free  
From his loathsome company.

AGRIPPA

What was that cry?

1ST SOLDIER

I hardly heard it.

2ND SOLDIER

I heard, sir, but I could not word it.

MAGDA

I understood, my lord.

AGRIPPA

Well, slattern?

MAGDA

He called for a prophet.

PUBLIUS

A Priest of Saturn

That is, I fancy. These barbarians  
Are really like our Unitarians.

AGRIPPA

So I have heard. Last year I flirted  
With Isis — but was unconverted.  
If this man's prophet loose my nails  
I'll gibe no more at prophet's whales.

PUBLIUS

I loathe and despise all kinds of fiction  
Whether or no it ease life's friction.

AGRIPPA

Anoint the next fair lambkin's fleece  
With rock-sand in the stead of grease.

PUBLIUS

He speaks again.

ISSA

Forgive me, brothers!  
I knew not what I did.

PUBLIUS

His mother's  
Here; wants the body.



JOHN

Nay, thou Greek heretic devil, have done!  
Before He is dead a schism begun?  
Say Homooousios!

THE GREEK

Never, dog Jew!  
Homoiousios!

JOHN

Master, decide!

ISSA

O may I cease! If my spirit to you  
I must commend.

JOHN

Are you now satisfied?  
Clear as —

THE GREEK

You lie, pathic!

JOHN

Pandar!

THE GREEK

Demented!

JOHN

Here is the argument Ehud invented!

(He thrusts a dagger into the belly of the Greek disciple from  
Alexandria. The dirt comes out. To the Bystander,

Say Homoousios!

PUBLIUS

Surely they will  
While his logic is backed with such surgical skill.

TWO BYSTANDERS

We fly to do as you desire us.

JOHN

And bring me up a clean papyrus!  
These chapters will make of no account  
The ridiculous sermon on the mount.  
Where was I? With twelve aeon-chains  
Somewhere revolving in these brains;  
Synoches, teletarchs, iynges,  
All turning as smoothly as if on hinges:

Identity of Father and Son  
And a Comforter, comforting everyone  
Who reads the beautiful message of John!

AGRIPPA

Know, I can hardly hold myself in.  
The whole scene tests our discipline  
Somewhat too harshly. Were it not best  
For a soldier to run him through the breast?  
We should be free for a bath and a meal.

PUBLIUS

Sir!

AGRIPPA

I know well; but I somehow feel  
My backbone slacked to the writhe of a worm.

PUBLIUS

The prefect would know how to keep you firm  
At the cost of a handful of nails — up there!

AGRIPPA

Tis the influence of this filthy glare.  
Stronger it grows.

PUBLIUS

How very surprising,  
For the sun shews devil a sign of rising!

AGRIPPA

The guard should have come an hour ago  
To relieve us.

1ST SOLDIER

By Zeus! 'twas a foul throw!

2ND SOLDIER

Throw again!

3RD SOLDIER

It's Venus! The coat is mine.  
Silky-soft and rainbow-fine!  
Would the world were never duller  
Than this cool cascade of colour!

AGRIPPA

Something serious is occurring.  
All the town is lighted, stirring.  
We had best bring reinforcement.

PUBLIUS

Death was duty's one divorcement.

AGRIPPA

Pooh! The stern old Roman! Fudge!  
Even Horatio would budge.  
Kill that Jew, men!

A SOLDIER

Heard and done.

ISSA

It is finished!

PUBLIUS

Ill begun  
When the Roman virtue sleeps!

AGRIPPA

Death, man! See the tide that sweeps  
From his side, a pinkish flood  
Of foaming water mixed with blood.  
It swells; it washes all the hill —

## PUBLIUS

It sweeps out valour, duty, will.  
Sordid luxury shall tame  
The grand old Roman fame.  
Let us go! The filthy spate  
Washes out all good within me.  
Fear and softness, hurry and hate  
Seem to stab me, storm me, win me.  
Virtue reels inebriate:  
Rome is flung upon her fate.

(He wheels with the rest, as they march down the hill. Above, a faintly luminous Shadow, appears Alexander the king, or as it were an image of his image.)

## ALEXANDER

The flood sweeps on  
From horizon to horizon.  
Beauty, strength, virtue, all are gone.

(the eclipse passes.)

Now sudden springs the natural face  
Of all the earth's old grace.  
The broad sun smiles, as if that fatal close  
Of the revel in the garden of Eros

Had never been.  
Yet to this keen  
Sight, to this sleuth-hound scent for subtle truth,  
The essential youth  
Of all things is corrupt. I will away  
Into the mystic palaces of Pan  
Hidden from day,  
Hidden from man,  
Awaiting there the coming of the Sphinx  
Whose genius drinks  
The poison of this pestilence, and saves  
The world from all its lords and slaves.  
Ho! for his chariot-wheels that whirl afar!  
His hawk's eye flashing through the silver star!  
Upon the heights his standard shall be plant  
Free, equal, passionate, pagan, dominant,  
Mystic, indomitable, self-controlled,  
The red rose glowing on its cross of gold...

Yea! I will wait throughout the centuries  
Of the universal man-disease  
Until the morn of his titanic birth...  
The Saviour of the Earth!

EXPLICIT  
TRAGEDIA MUNDI

