

JEANNE
A PASTORAL

TO RAYMOND RADCLYFFE

"Hey diddle diddle! the cat and the fiddle!
The cow jumped over the moon."

I LAID mine ear against your heart,
Jeanne!
A masterpiece of nature turned
A masterpiece of art,
With your blanched Egyptian beauty foiled
By the hungry eyes, and the red mouth soiled
By the honey of mine that your greed has spoiled,
Jeanne!
The body a corpse and the soul inurned!

Against your heart I laid mine ear,
Jeanne!
And the clock went ticking, ticking.
How could I choose but hear,
Jeanne!
Ah me! what thoughts came pricking
Like spurs in the flanks of a weary horse?
Nor heart nor clock could feel remorse,
But kept their definite deadly course,
Jeanne!
Alas! for man, for his life's disaster:
The clock beats fast, but a heart beats faster.

Oh, your love was a marvellous thing,
Jeanne!
It was dawn, it was fire, it was birth, it was spring,
Jeanne!
But this is the curse, that it quickens its rate,
Lest man by love should escape from fate
And win from the dust to the Uncreate,
Jeanne!
Nay, we are lovers, you and I—
And we must die, and our love must die!

How have we striven, each of us,
Jeanne!
To break the bars of the prison-house,
Jeanne!
We have raged like cats in a ring of fire,
Driven by desire that was true Desire,
The hate of the lower, the love of the Higher,
Jeanne!
What is the end of it, Jeanne? Why, that's
A mystery not to be solved by cats!

In the fields we wandered through to-day,
 Jeanne!
Hand in hand, this wonderful May,
 Jeanne!
This May we have made so marvellous
With the infinite longing and love of us,
In the fields all faery with flowers there lay
The placid cows—that had nothing to say,
 Jeanne!
No flame of words from maddening blood,
But complacent chewing of the cud.
I dared not whisper the sudden fear
Of my heart in your miracle of an ear,
 Jeanne!
I tightened my lips, and my hand on yours;
So that you might think I loved you more.
But now in the midnight the thought endures,
And the love—ah what is the dream we adore?

Suppose the infinite peace of the heart,
 Jeanne!
The crest and crown of labour and art,
Of the mystic quest, of the toil of the saint,
The mount on whose slopes the strongest faint,
 Jeanne!
Suppose that peace of God, that House
Of Delight of the Bridegroom and the Spouse,
Were only the calm of the chewing cows,
 Jeanne!
Suppose that in all the worlds inane
There were one thing only vexed and vain,
Turbulent, troubled, and insane,
 Jeanne!
Suppose that the universal plan
Had but one flaw, and that flaw were man!

Then—even then—we are here,
 Jeanne!
We love—we shall die, sweet heart, take cheer,
 Jeanne!
We are bound to a fate that brings release;
We move in a moil that must one day cease;
We shall win to the everlasting peace,
 Jeanne!
And how things are, and why, and whence
Are puzzles for fools that lack the sense
Of cows—enough of the future tense,
 Jeanne!
For the end of love and the end of art
Is just—my ear against your heart!

ALEISTER CROWLEY.