

DIOGENES.

“ALL things are good” exclaimed the boy.
Who taste the sweetmeat find it cloy.

“All things are ill” the dotard sang.
Who stir the serpent feel the fang.

“All is a dream!” the wise man spake.
Who grasp the bubble find it break.

Aye, to all three the saga saith:
There is no joy in life but death.

There is this limit set to lust:
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

O fools and blind that sickly strive
To amass, to glut yourselves, to swive,

To drink to acquire respect and praise:—
These visions perish as you gaze.

Eternal mockery is the real;
Eternal falsehood, the ideal.

Choose: nay, abstain from choice of these.
Go, be alone, and be at ease!

Retire: renounce: the hermit's cell
Hath all of earth, and naught of hell.

Renouncing all, keep naught enshrined
A lurking serpent is the mind.

Deem not to catch some goodlier gain
Than these; the goodliest prize were pain.

Know that the utmost heaven is void
Of aught save star or asteroid!

Or, an it please thee, idly dream
A God therein, a force supreme,

A heart of love, a crown of light,
An infinite music of delight;—

This, but no more; let fancy sway
But never fix the transient ray!

All things are lawful, so they be
At most a marshalled imagery.

Dream of Earth's glories higher and higher,
Mounting the minaret, desire;

Never attaining to the sky,
Realization—lest thou die.

So dream, possessing all; so dream,
Possessing nothing: I esteem

These twain as one, since dreams they are.
Thus mayst thou journey far and far

And far! to climes unguessed, to seas
Proud with seignorial argosies,

To mountains strange with golden snows,
To gardens green with many a rose,

To secrets past the sense of sense,
Skies virgin of experience,

Untrodden avenues of mind,
Things far from hurrying humankind.

Thus spins out life its splendid charm:—
Live, love, enjoy yet do no harm.

No rose of thought may bear or breed
The poisonous thorn of word and deed.

Call “homo sapiens” him who thinks;
Talkers and doers—missing links!

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Such songs are twilight's, when I stretch
My limbs, and wander down to fetch

My water from the cool cascade,
My wood from the enchanted glade,

My berries from the rustling bough :—
Return, and eat, and sleep. Allow

For me, the silence and the night ;
Life, peace ; and death, a welcome wight.