

# THE GROWTH OF GOD

(AS DEVELOPED ON A MOONLESS NIGHT IN  
THE TROPICS)

**E**VEN as beasts, where the sepulchral ocean  
Sobs, and their fins and feet keep Runic pace,  
Treading in water mysteries of motion,  
Witch-dances: where the ghastly carapace  
Of the blind sky hangs on the monstrous verge:  
Even as serpents, wallowing in the slime;  
So my thoughts raise misshapen heads, and urge  
Horrible visions of decaying Time.

For in the fiery dusk arise distorted  
Grey shapes in moonless phosphorus glow of  
death;  
The keen light of the eyes thrust back and thwarted,  
The quick scent stabbed by the miasma breath.  
The day is over, when the lizard darted,  
A flash of green, the emerald outclassed;  
Night is collapsed upon the vale: departed  
All but the Close, suggestive of the Vast.

The heavy tropic scent-inspiring gloom  
Clothes the wide air, the circumambient aether.

The earth grins open, as it were a tomb,  
And struggling earthquakes gnash their teeth be-  
neath her.

The night is monstrous: in the flickering fire  
Strange faces gibber as the brands burn low;  
Old shapes of hate, young phantoms of desire  
More hateful yet, shatter and change and grow.

There is a sense of terror in the air,  
And dreadful stories catch my breath and bind me,  
Soft noises as of breathing: unaware  
What devils or what ghosts may lurk behind me!  
Even my horse is troubled: vain it is  
Invoking memory for sweet sound of youth;  
The song, the day, the cup, the shot, the kiss!  
This night begets illusion—ay! the truth.

I know the deep emotion of that birth,  
When chaos rolled in terror and in thunder;  
The abortion of the infancy of earth;  
The monsters moving in a world of wonder;  
The Shapeless, racked with agony, that grew  
Into these phantom forms that change and shatter;  
The falling of the first toad-spotted dew;  
The first lewd heaving ecstasy of matter.

I see all Nature claw and tear and bite,  
All hateful love and hideous: and the brood  
Misshapen, misbegotten out of spite;  
Lust after death; love in decrepitude.

Thus, till the monster-birth of serpent-man  
Linked in corruption with the serpent-woman,  
Slavering in lust and pain—creation's ban.  
The horrible beginning of the human.

The savage monkey leaping on his mate ;  
The upright posture for sure murder taken ;  
The gibberings modified to spit out hate :  
Struggle to manhood—surely God-forsaken.  
The bestial cause of Morals—fear and hate.  
At last the anguish-vomit of despair,  
The growth of reason—and its pangs abate  
No whit : the knife replaces the arm bare.

Fear grows, and torment ; and distracted pain  
Must from sheer agony some respite find ;  
When some half-maddened miserable brain  
Projects a God in his detesting mind.  
A God who made him—to the core all evil,  
In his own image—and a God of Terror ;  
A vast foul nightmare, and impending devil ;  
Compact of darkness, infamy, and error.

Some bestial woman, beaten by her mates,  
In utter fear broke down the bar of reason ;  
Shrieked, crawled to die ; delirium abates  
By some good chance her terror in its season.  
Her ravings picture the cessation of  
Such life as she had known : her mind conceives

A God of Mercy, Happiness, and Love ;  
Reverses life and fact : and so believes.

So man grew up ; and so religion grew.  
Now when the aeons grow to millionfold,  
Hath earth one mystery, one glory new ?  
Are not these thoughts immeasurably old ?  
Only—day breaks as I am musing sadly ;  
The phantoms scatter—is not earth divine ?  
I leap to saddle ; gallop forward madly  
Into the morning strong and keen as wine.

The gold air whistles and the glad horse thunders,  
Spurning the quiet woodland : now the light  
Stirs bird and beast—a thousand glowing wonders  
Flash into glory, lambent to the sight.  
I know, I feel the Godhead set above me,  
My own high part in His celestial sphere ;  
In life, in death, the universe cries—love me !—  
God in my heart, and all the world is dear !