

*There is no song that travelleth
The highway between Life and Death,
But stops twixt night-fall and to-morrow
At the old inns of Joy and Sorrow.*

CHARIS

ENGLISH VERSES

BY

GEERHARDUS VOS

PREFATORY REMARK

The following collection of verses consists of material not before published in English. As will be readily perceived, a few of the pieces are (a free) translation into English from what had appeared before in the little bundle "Spiegel der Natuur." The majority, however, are English-born.

Perhaps it is not out of place to add, that the small appendix added to "Spiegel der Natuur" under the title "Lyra Anglica" has not been incorporated in the present volume.

Note: This is not the pagination of the original edition.

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GODSPEED

Go, little book, whose leaves to me are glowing
With light caught from uncharted sea and land;
I could not let thee go except for knowing
Thou goest from mine into a friendly hand,
Which, sensitive, will touch and turn thy pages,
Aware of pulses to its own akin;
Grateful to music where it pain assuages,
In love with music for the pain therein.

NATIVITY

“Elizabeth,” “Elizabeth”!
The Gospel saith,
A kinswoman with that good name¹
Greeted the Virgin as she came:
“Mother of her Lord Savior.”

None bears in Scripture-registry
That name but she,
Though many, doubtless, bore it well
Of handmaidens in Israel,
Ere it was linked with Mary’s.

And Mary, who the babe conceived,
Humbly believed,
Fore-feeling the exultant cry:
“Henceforth shall me beatify
All future generations.”

O soul, rise early on this morn
A world is born;
Be present on such dawn as this,
Lest thou the jubilation shouldst miss

Of morning-stars and Angels.

We, too, are of thy company,
Nativity!
With Kings that, guided by their star,
Brought gold and incense from afar,
With shepherds from their pastures.

How strange, while worshipping we kneel,
I seem to feel,
Midst all the marvels of the place,
Only the marvel on thy face,
Forgetful of the others.

The Kings, leaving their gifts, withdrew;
The shepherds, too.
Wilt thou not stay with me a while?
I love to see thine eyes the smile
Reflecting of the mother's.

EASTER

*"Jam moesta quiesce querela,
Lachrimas suspendite matres."*

·PRUDENTIUS

What will these plaintive women?
What means this shouting train?
It is the young Adonis,
Come back to life again.
Each Spring sees him awaking
From Winter's numb eclipse,
Clad in his wine-soaked garments,
And red with wine his lips.

How different our first Easter
That broke of Death the rod,
Slaying the sin behind it,
The Passover of God!
O Christian, prone to borrow
Some ancient pagan way,
Hast thou the grave forgotten,
Where for they sin He lay?

Right glorious was the season:
The garden in its bloom,
That kept on flowering even,
When in its breast that tomb;
Ah, these were living flowers,
Root-fed, kept green by rain;
Ours are the dead cut-flowers,
Each bearing wound and stain.

We in the house of mourning,
On and around the bier,
With hyacinthine odors
Make drowsy atmosphere.
We close up doors and windows,
Lest the sweet light stream in,
But banish every symbol,
That speaks of death and sin.

Our Easter should have flowers
From fields where nothing dies,
Transplanted from the life-streams
Of God's new paradise.
Thou sayest: this were a wonder,
Such as no memory knows;
Was it a lesser wonder,
That Christ from Hades rose?

How hard a press was trodden
By Him of wine and oil,
With which the sweat-drops mingled
That moistened grass and soil!
Omit not from remembrance
Good Friday's litany,
Nay, let its accents linger
Till Easter morn wakes thee.

"Jam moesta quiesce querela"
Thus sang Prudentius,
A lawyer and a soldier,
But singer he to us;
For songs of God-made singers
Are carried by God's Bird,
That wings them where He listeth,
Till distant chords are stirred.

Then strike thy lyre with rapture,
With oil anoint thy face;
But first sackcloth and ashes
For penitence and grace!
When tears precede thy laughter,
Laughter will follow tears,
E'en as before and after
Divide the sacral years.

Church, keep thine Easter sacred;
'T is thy distinctive feast,
More free e'en now than Christmas
From foam of modern yeast.
It is thy feast of yonder,
Yea, yonder without end,
Beyond all earthly wonder,
And earthly sacrament.

LOVING THE SEA

Seek not by quick assault the proud sea's heart to capture,
Through surface intercourse her confidence to gain;
She will have naught to do with "love at first sight's" rapture,
And treats the casual admirer with disdain.
He that desires the sea must without ceasing woo her,
Tireless, day upon day, night after night, pursue her;
Maintain long silences, when, with all sounds her own,
She sings her endless chant in every cadence known;
Must know, when ground is lost, through tender pleading
The lost ground to regain at her ebb-tide's receding;
Be playful to her play as sun-kissed she advances,
Keep step when moonlight in her surf-upcurling dances;
Enter into the storm moods settling on her brow,
When cruel winds her face into deep furrows plough.
Who thus persists, him will she show her loveliest pleasure,
Repay him finer things than pearl or coral treasure;
Invite him to her coolest, green-lit, seaweed bower,
Where shine, revealed, the mysteries of her charm and power.

SEA IDYL

Sea, hymned by countless singers,
Earth's tuneful ages through,
What play thy hidden fingers
Not even the greatest knew;
Guesses at the confiding
Done in thy caverns dim,
Like thine own swift gulls' gliding,
Scarcely the surface skim.

Theeward all streams are tending,
Thy stream nowhither flows;
For all things image lending,
Of thee none likeness knows.
The sun mounts up, dives under,
Waxes and wanes the moon;
Thou art the abiding wonder:
Midnight in one and noon.

Where morning airs are blowing
Inshore from the Southwest,
The hills, like jewels glowing,
Curve round thy heaving breast;
With soft caressing motion
Each wave asks of the strand:
Serves earth's delight the ocean?
Or my delight the land?

Here sea and land are married,
Scarce ruffled by the tides,
Unridden by the chariot
On which the storm-god rides.
Thus streams embraced the bowers,
United wonder-wise
Through sacramental powers
In the first paradise.

That bliss seemed nigh immortal,
Until in envious mood
The Serpent spied the portal,
Where soon the Cherubs stood.
And still, spite war of ages,
Not far upon thy main,
The chaos-dragon rages,

Full-cursed, but never slain.

Men who to marts of trading
Traverse the sea in ships,
They know his fierce invading,
When depths to foam he whips;
But they, too, know the wonder
Of storm-dispensing might,
When all that frowns goes under,
And naught is left but light.

This God has our adoring
In twofold Majesty:
Wrath in the tempest's roaring,
Love in the smiling sea;
No God for modern mending,
Unshakable his throne,
All to his purpose bending,
The sovereign God, our own.

SEA SILENCE

Spite wind- and rain-exposure
I scan her face immense;
She means no self-disclosure,
No voice nor message thence.

Soul, cease thy troubled asking,
No one was ever sure
What deep designs are masking
Her dalliance and her lure.

Would she to thee discover
What winds nor clouds she tells?
Be one brief spell her lover,
But more of someone else.

NIGHT AND SEA

Shallow are waking hours,
Thin rivers of the day,
Transparent to their bottoms
Of pebbles, sand and clay.

Rise high enough the rillets
To lap the grassy shore,
With every blade they gossip,
And with the flowers do more.

Some scarce beneath the surface
Trickle of moisture hold;
Both bed and bank were ruined
Through man's pursuit of gold.

But night is like the ocean,
Unfathomed, without end,
Where deeps to deeps are calling,
And never answer send.

And in remote recesses,
By sunlight never kissed,
Sleep painful unsolved problems,
That will not be dismissed.

And farther still and farther,
To God alone in thrall,
Run blackest depths of Satan,
The brooks of Belial.

Sinners who there seek refuge
From eyes that never close,
God makes the serpent bite them
For He its hiding knows.²

Who to such depths of Godhead
Frail worship would address,
Should wrap him in a mantle
Of humblest silences.

NAMES

Names are but tags through which we try
Un-ordered things to classify;
Trite formulas of cold address,
Conventional and colorless,
Futile to curse by or to bless,
With no life-pulses in them.

It was not so in days of old,
When God with man would converse hold,
And to hard-praying wrestlers came,
In earthquake, thunder, sheets of flame,
Then, trembling, would they ask his name,
A pledge of help and favor.

Because it was a sacrament,
No creature could such name invent;
It seemed a veritable part
Of God's own Self, his inmost heart,
A radiant Double which no art
Endeavor durst creating.

Those who received it dared and fought,
And through it saving victories wrought,
It was a buckler and a shield,
A weapon for attack to wield,
A tower uplifted in the field
Of the fierce-raging battle.

The prophets knew its mystery well,
Being sensitive to miracle;
There was in the revealing word,
Though through out-crowding voices heard,
A timbre that their heart-chords stirred,
The "name" in it was potent.

That Moses might his task fulfill,
Jehovah's name worked as one will,
Condensing all God's might and power;
Long pent-up forces in one hour
Slew all the youthful manhood's flower
Of Egypt in one slaying.

And for Isaiah, stranger yet,

The name did for itself beget
Concreteness; it became a word
That could be seen, not merely heard,
It lighted, as swoops down a bird;
He was a man of vision.

Then in Habakkuk much the same
Image is visioned of the name;
He was a man of smaller mould,
Yet what he spake was finest gold;
As a loud storm-bell through it tolled:
“The Lord has come from Paran.”³

Habakkuk shows how prophecy
Evokes sublimest psalmody;
The God who wrought sun, moon and stars,
And all the farther still “afars,”
Controls the inter-stellar wars,⁴
Made hymnodists of prophets.

The Psalter’s own most glorious themes
Describe how God his saints redeems
By putting in each fighter’s hand
His name through which the weakest band
Can, overwhelmed, maintain its stand,
And cut the foe to pieces.

There was in this no magic spell
To conjure aught from heaven or hell;
E’en from Sheol He suffered not
To have dim muttering voices brought
For learning chance or fixing lot,
Where He Himself had spoken.

For He had woven round the core
Of what seemed but blind sound before
An aura of bright luminous rays,
That made it a transparent face
In pitch-dark nights, sun-flooded days,
Pregnant with revelation.

And when at last the ripened age
Brought with itself the final stage
Then, with God’s work’s maturity,
Appeared the Name’s epiphany,

And in a great synonymy
Christ's Name and Face were blended.

Yet there are some of Christian kind,
Who, to this marriage-union blind,
Make a new idol of the name
Of Christ or Jesus which they claim
Must work within some magic frame,
Detached from every doctrine.

Thus is our holiest mystery
Turned back to ancient sorcery;
From the Christ-name its face they wipe;
In vaunted wisdom over-ripe,
They have reverted to the type
Of old barbaric custom.

WINTER'S DEATH

Here lies the Winter hated,
Goliath-like prostrated,
Whom David's stone laid low.
Recovered from earth's chillness,
Spring uses the first stillness
To put-left over illness
Beneath the thin-grown snow.

His efforts at retrieving
Lost ground were past believing;
How hard the giant died!
He drew on hidden power
Stored from his manhood's dower,
Fighting till the last hour;
It was a glorious fight!

In somber indoor musing
Methought I might be using
His stay to close mine own;
Take leave of life's embraces,
All its delights and graces,
To seek the nameless places,
Where North nor South is known.

Misfortune had been taking
My precious things and making
Them break like brittle glass.
I felt upon me creeping
Forebodings of death's reaping,
Of that blind dreamless sleeping,
That no possession has.

O Spring, thou wondrous daring,
To cause without preparing
Me strangest things befall!
Like one who, just returning
From burial rites or burning,
Finds friends busy adorning
For him the banquet hall.

Where ever was recorded
Such sudden change afforded
By turn in fortune's wheel?

Long ice-clogged streams set flowing,
Warm fragrant Southwinds blowing,
Through willows green mists showing,
The old, old, strange appeal!

Stream in light-world revealers,
Life-wakers and life-healers,
When flesh from soul would slip!
The feast but just commences;
This needs more than five senses,
The host so much dispenses
For eye and ear and lip.

And be it the last station
Of joy, on whose elation
Follows the endless rest,
Though Autumn weep discouraged,
Seeing withered all that flourished,
Yet shall new years be nourished
From the eternal breast.

AUTUMN ROSES

I sing not in these songs of full-blown Summer roses,
Trellised upon love's gate, or through her garden spread,
Drunk with the mystic moon, as she her eyelids closes,
Resplendent at her waking from the sunrise red.
Mine are but aftergrowth, such as, while Autumn lingers,
She nurses with much care, behind some sheltering wall,
Which, loath to cut in bloom, her sympathetic fingers
Gather most tenderly, when the wan petals fall.

HELEN-RUST

*“Helen’s bones are crumbling dust;
Ilion is consumed by rust.”*

Helen-Rust, Helen-Rust!
Gold comes from and goes to dust.
Traveling in a desert spot,
The printed name my fancy caught:
Fancy will spin and weave it must,
Helen rust? Helen rust?

Helen Rust, Helen Rust!
Seekers after gold a gust
Of sand-choked wind has often slain;
Never sought they gold again;
Gone the riches, gone gold-lust,
Helen Rust!

Helen Rust, Helen Rust!
Time has covered ’neath its crust
Valor, pride, beauty and joy,
All, except thy name, of Troy;
To its fragrance time was just,
Helen Rust!

Helen Rust, Helen Rust!
Not all gold is good to trust;
Gold that in the heart’s ground shines,
That love collects, sorrow refines,
It is safe from fortune’s thrust,
Helen Rust!

SOURCE OF SONG

O love, to me thou *art* and *makest* song,
And couldst not any make without being all.
Thy smiles, thy words, thy gestures, as we walk along,
Soft-touching summer raindrops on my heartstrings fall,
Rendering their every utterance musical.
Thou art in this like God, whose very bliss
Around Him one vast sea of music is,
Whence all the melody-filled fountains spring,
That in the creature's mouth from bird to Angel sing.

VESPERS

When the day's tasks are ended,
The hum of trade subsides,
And what they tore or mended
Drifts outward with the tides,
My world-snared thoughts unravel
Themselves and quickly travel
To where they know is rest.
As after distant roaming
At dusk the dove comes homing
To her accustomed nest;
As ewe-lambs and ewe-mothers
The old stalls above all others
Find for safe shelter best,
So, needing scarce endeavor,
I'll wing me on thy quest,
The last that night forever,
Elysium towards the West.

SPRINGTIME

Hasten, O love, do come; the Spring is not completed,
Unless thou be a part of its glad feast and song;
The buds, awaking, wonder, why they are not greeted
By thee, to whom their dreams went out all winter long.

The sky, the sun, the clouds, the earth, the trees, the flowers,
They all do something lack, thou canst alone impart;
Help us fulfill the office of these holiest hours,
Come, put our heart once more in tune with nature's heart.

Why should the year's young bloom, that fades so soon, be wasted?
Why all this music die, forgotten, on the air?
'Twere pity to let pass the cup of cups untasted;
Wine is not lover's wine but what two lovers share.

CHANGE

Love, thou hast changed for me the face of life,
It wears a new and understanding smile,
For thine is in it. Mile I walk on mile
Midst flowers ignorant of the fatal knife;
Fast ripening fields no sound of reaper hear;
The singing of the birds is all around,
Their notes are plaintless, jubilant and clear,
As had no sparrow ever fallen to the ground.

Love, thou hast changed for me the face of death;
I did not use to dread it over-sore;
Now, since thou art my life, I dread it more
Than all life's pain. Community of breath
And eyes in air and light with thee is sweet:
Even this will Death cut by his cruel shears.
Ah, would some miracle reverse the fly-wheel of my years,
Then stay it, for our equal youths to meet,
Whence, ever mounting sunward, we the noon might greet
Our faces radiant, time-forgot our feet.

TELL ME

Tell me, is kept in the recesses
Of thy heart's inner sanctuary,
Where love scarce to itself confesses,
A quiet place unclosed for me?
I lost thy face, and for restoring
The solace of my nights and days,
I've sent the winds and birds exploring
The footprints in thy garden-ways.

The threads that to thy presence bind me
Are spun of finest silken strand,
Too fine by far to help me find thee
In the mysterious far-off land;
A little stretch mine eyes pursue them
To where they lose themselves in air;
No waves of light nor sound run through them
That tidings from thy dwelling bear.

When first within my dreams unfolded
The flower-bud of thy loveliness,
I dared but at a distance hold it
For silent worship to address;
But now the prayers, no more contented
To feed on what themselves they gave,
For the rich sacrifice presented
A sacramental answer crave.

In old-world times a shipwrecked rover,
From much adventure over-filled,
That he might make his life's plan over,
Would him a virgin altar build;
Scarce grown constraints of incense feeling,
Some wistful god would note the place,
And on the offerer, humbly kneeling,
Pour out his plenitude of grace.

So, when the best seemed all delusion,
My whole world empty, graceless, vain,
I tried through sacrifice-effusion
Its void with thee to fill again;
I heeded each auspicious token
At morning and at evening tide,
The silences were never broken,

I went un-blessed, response denied.

Does not, when, with the day's declining,
A shadow on their mountain lies,
Even from the heart of gods a pining
For converse with the creature rise?
Does never a lonesomeness possess them
For what into the lump of clay
Themselves they breathed, nor fear distress them,
Lest it from man might die away?

Should such a mood invade thy gladness,
Silence anon thy spheres that sing,
Then vague disquietude of sadness
Might me to thy remembrance bring.
Perchance, with earth-caressing motion,
A form will through the gloaming glide,
Accept of me the soul's devotion,
And leave my altar sanctified.

JEALOUSY

How bitter, when my jealous
Unleashed imagining
Hears all thy golden palace
With song and music ring!
To see the colors' splendor
Across thy gardens lie,
What profit can it render
A pauper passing by?

I pined for solid treasures,
Tangible recompense,
Unstinted, upheaped measures
To fill the feel of sense.
Coveted all and any
High prizes in love's game,
And threw the almoner's penny
Back thither whence it came.

And yet, one instant's vision,
As thou doest cross my path,

Makes all this pride derision,
With shame for aftermath.
How could my soul turn traitor
To such supreme delight,
As left thy soul's Creator
Divinely satisfied?

Musical words, combining
To wordless melody;
Eyes of thine inward shining
A soft transparency;
Elusive intermarriage
Of body and garb around;
Steps that through rhythmic carriage
Of thee rejoice the ground.

Ah, in the virgin season
Of my first joy in thee
Of harboring such treason
My heart was pure and free.
To meet thee in the meadow,
Ungreeted, unobserved,
To be touched by thy shadow,
Seemed more than king deserved.

Why should the star I covet?
The star belongs to God.
But, though it knew not of it,
For me its light was wrought.
Communion with thy graces
Who shall to me deny?
Of trysts in dream-lit places
Who else has such as I?

Love, since I have repented
Of that unworthy mood,
I bear thee love contented;
To see thee shine is good.
Thine image shall enfold me,
Caress me shall thy words;
I in a music hold thee,
That thrills through all my chords.

DREAMS

Thou liest in that transparent sleep,
When the shy dreams begin to peep
Small openings through of half-waked eyes,
That still look in on paradise.
For dreams, though they would love to stay,
Cannot endure the winds of day,
Which blow their petals' bloom away,
Until they droop and wither.

Dreams, why not visit me till night?
In my heart's bower I bid you hide,
Where can afresh your play begin;
I have a slumberous place within.
When twilight and the evening blend,
I promise honestly to send
You back to her from whom ye went,
Like flustered doves in parting.

Alas, I find you all too mute,
Quite loath to touch your drowsy lute.
For hours I listen, but it seems,
That dreams will never dream in dreams.
Permit me for this once to fly
Eastward with you, and on the sly,
Lifting the latch, let me slip by
To watch within, unnoted.

Could she and I exchange our role,
Sleeping each in the other's soul,
To see, the curtain drawn aside,
Unveiled what soul from soul would hide,
Straightway this baffling mystery,
This discord in life's melody,
Would vanish, as the sun makes flee
The vapors off the mountains.

Most cruel gods brute shackles forge
Around my feet, while in a gorge
Unscalable they shut me in,
Where none beholds the day begin.
A narrow strip of sunless sky,
A few late-setting stars on high,
Some cloud-puffs, all else they deny

To my space-thirsty vision.

The half-dome in Yosemite
Is the sole clock tells hours for me;
It stops in early afternoon,
And then the darkness follows soon.
Even could the crags I overclimb,
Regions remote have different time,
Our hours would not together chime,
Our dreams would stay unmated.

FATEFUL GIFTS

The gods are thoughtless givers;
They give without regard,
Whether their gift delivers
To grief or joy the heart.
They raise fair flowers of feeling
From seeds of pleasantry,
On trellises concealing
A house of tragedy.

They let, free hearts to capture,
Fancies our dreams flit in,
And soon in rhythmic rapture
Pulses to sing begin.
Whereat the wine of being
Is drained into one cup;
All the delights of seeing
One vision swallows up.

The gods are jealous lenders,
Exempt from equal laws;
One hand the bounty tenders,

The other hand withdraws.
When they discover nearing
The cup too close our lips,
They cause some fate's appearing,
And from the hand it slips.

The gods are sole indwellers
Of a safe timeless state,
In need of no foretellers
Of what comes soon or late.
But when time-trammeled mortals
Would to that palace climb,
They close the golden portals,
And leave them prey to time.

They plan our lot's confounding
Through severance of years;
Lest notes unite in sounding,
They disconnect the spheres.
They mix before and after,
Forbid good stars to rise.
While filling ears with laughter,
They fill with tears the eyes.

Were I a youthful lover,
I would, denied of thee,
Seek strange lands to recover
My soul's serenity;
But, since with grim portending
Death presses close the chase,
What boots it to crave mending
From flight in time or space?

DEATH

Some call him tyrant,
More reverently King,
By terrors environed.
Though poets may dream,
And wise men esteem
Him kind to redeem,
Yet none see him nearing,
But think his appearing
A horrible thing.

Who will beguile him
With magic or prayer?
Who reconcile him?
He shamelessly saith:
I loathe vital breath,
For my name is Death;
No bud turns to flower,
No young life to power,
But I too am there.

Sweet love he despises,
And changes to strife;
What pleasure arises
He turns into pain,
Mars beauty with stain,
Treats fair with disdain:
“Why so much protesting,
Resisting, contesting,
Thou greedy of life?”

Death comprehends not
This time-thirst of mine;
Indignant, love ends not,
As end burnt-out fires,
Quick end he requires.
Yet, love, my desires
Sought no more of living
Than brief days for giving,
Till all should be thine.

MOVING

One hour sees me moving
(The notice was brief)
From mansions of joyance
To hovel of grief.
Most intimate treasures
Are ruthlessly thrown
From places they loved to
Consider their own.

All over the roadside
What wreckage of soul!
Among the things scattered
Not one thing is whole.
Indoors I must take them,
For nightfall is due;
The dark suits the business,
And holiday too.

The place faces Northward;
Sunshine is shut out;
Directions, exposures
Are all turned about.
No green thing will flourish;
Naught bloom that is fair;
No songbird will warble
In music-less air.

POWER OF PRAYING

At dusk, before thee kneeling,
Could I confess it all,
In one complete revealing,
The things both great and small,
Were room left for confiding,
With deep humility,
That, in great love abiding,
Thy heart would pardon me?

Words written may bring censure,
Estranging miles between,
But speech will win its venture,
Let eye to eye be seen.
Prayer overclimbs the mountains,
Till it has found the place
Where spring the mystic fountains
Of woman's sovereign grace.

Faith will, to force repairing,
God no release accord,
As showed with dauntless daring
Jacob at Jabbok's ford.
Firm hold on Him retaining,
It fights while sinews last;
What cords endure such straining
These hold forever fast.

DREAM SUFFERING

I suffered much for thee, as in the passion-night
The wife of Pilate did for Him who suffered all;
Late vision He to her; e'en so the selfsame light
That purpled in thy dawn proved my last sunset-call.

Predestined strangers we? I was not of the elect
Who witnessed from near by the unfolding of thy charm.
Though neighboring places knew us, I could not suspect
There passed me in the crowd and grazed perhaps mine arm

A slender girlish form, yet so shone round with grace,
I could, had God but willed, have paused upon the spot,
Retraced my steps for one more look at such rare face,
And by so doing, who knows, have changed my after lot.

It was not so to be. The envious winds of fate
Blew on thy ship and mine, and drove them far apart;
Nor was it distance merely kept us separate,
For, tossed on distant seas, the surface mind and heart

Will strangers grow, even though the inner life be one,
Wedded in depths where naught can severance make.
The gods allow one call; its pregnant moment gone,
No wistful touch of chords shall ever after wake

The perfect strains of music might have once been born,
Had soul been joined to soul in new-discovered tune,
Naught will transpose to jubilation of morn
The melancholy strains of waning afternoon.

Yet suffering can turn sweet; shut up in the walled city
Of missed beatitude, the ramparts rising high,
Not crave I from those blessed sympathy or pity,
Who in the vale beneath are, radiant, passing by.

Mine is the vision of a God-beholding face,
Its mystic beauty blended form a maid's and mother's,
Eyes that reflect a sacramental grace
Far richer than what would be love's from others.

Was my regret too deep? Thou knowest no word was spoken
But did the purest air of paradise beseech.
Lord, did I sin in thought, absolve me by this token:

One suffered much for me at night-time in no dream.

PAGAN REMEDIES

He turned him in the sickness of desire,
That could not be appeased and yet would live,
Unto his gods: "Have ye no help to give?
O, for physicians who can quench this fire

Of fever in my blood!" Anon an answer came:
"The nature of thy pain allows but three
Can work relief from this infirmity,
Their methods differing but their task the same.

Peace on her brow and lethe in her hand,
Night's first-born daughter shall attend thee, Sleep,
With lashes dark shading the slumbrous deep
Of her eyes' tranquil waters. To a land

Where sense is hushed she bids thee follow blind,
Or where, if stirred, it stirs but in a dream,
Causing the fruit of thy desire to seem
Within thy hand, upon thy lips. While kind

To all, for all are sufferers more or less,
Awake, yet men most desperately bested,
Like to a nurse by her sick lover's bed,

She touches with a tenderer tenderness,

And in the realm of Sorrow sits, a Queen
Of Consolation, who from untold hosts
Has grateful reverence the far-flung coasts
Of silence and oblivion between.”

So spake the gods. But he said: “O, my Lords,
Ye are the Unsleping Ones, and ye should know,
How oft that messenger disdains to go
Where sorest needed; no beguiling words

No magic spell her to the pillow woo
Of one within whose heart some passion burns,
Which, blazing up, all other presence spurns;
Jealous she flees and I in vain pursue.”

Responsive to his plaint, they from their feast
Paused long enough to render thus reply:
”Ourselves we too would fain encircled lie
By Sleep’s soft arms, from that same joy released,

Thee visits not, and from *us* not departs;
Could but oblivion with Immortals dwell,
We would not wait one instant to expel
All rival loves from our joy-weary hearts.

Thou, nursing thy desire, and yet for rest
Athirst, needest a healer of the mind,
In measures stern, but not withal unkind,
Who, unlike Sleep, will go at our behest

To pain so sore, it makes the soul afraid,
And mix thee, portioning a proper ration,
The cup distilled from herbs of resignation,
Than which to taste none bitterer can be made.

This, added scrupulously to thy due share
Of common toil, shall make of thee anon
A Stoic and an Idealist in one,
So finely tempered as not thence to care,

Whether thy lot be shorn of joy or sense,
Dreary the path where no fair faces smile,
Thankless the toil, and baffling all the while

The mystery of great love's small recompense,

For oft the soul from that most potent cup
Drinks freedom to herself and sovereign powers
To soar unto high spaces and far hours,
And from deep realms within to summon up

Whatever forms her calm clear orbs admire,
And, steeped in light surpassing manifold
The moon's soft silver and the sun's bright gold,
To enthrone on high all stars of her desire.

No hideous masks need here the soul deface;
Thou shalt not for thy thought's companions wear
Other apparel than the garments fair
Of thy song's innate beauty and its simple grace.

The world's small judgments matter little here;
As one whom wrap around the favor and light
Of a great woman's love, for wrong or right
Feels safe by that sole star his course to steer,

So thou in that rare upper air shalt find
The galling fetters gone, each alien rod
Departed off thy back, and like a god
Shalt live, men's praise or blame left far behind."

Thus far the gods; their voice still in his ears,
At first he stood as one who scarce has heard,
So futile of the tale seemed every word;
Then, roused, he spake: "Ah, strangers ye to tears,

Whose feasts are never-ending, cloudless, free
Of specters past and future, from whose lips
The cup of choicest vintage never slips,
Do ye, with wine-stained mouths, commend to me

A phantom meal where my starved soul shall sit
In sight of Eden, all the while aware,
That, weighted down with fruit, the tree stands there,
If one dared but to lay his hand on it?"

So spake he bitterly, yet straightway saw,
He had not paid the gods the reverence
Due them in speech, and that man's impotence

Aye beats its wings in vain against their law.

Still none reproved, as mortals might have done,
Resentment-free their unpassioned eyes
Turned full on him. As in clear noonday skies
A little floating cloud will veil the sun,

E'en so, it seemed, a shadow moved across
Their faces from remembrance of some fate,
Foretold to them of old, which soon or late
Would thunder down and sweep away in loss

And ruin their pride, and make them like to man,
And in compassion born from this they sought
Such healing, as would in their own case not
Avail, for him, through some unthought-of plan.

Their words fell soft, as one speaks to a child,
Acquainting it with some strange suffering,
Needful to bear, that to the unknown thing
Its mind may, ere it come, be reconciled:

“Think not thy lot a lot that ill compares
With ours, seeing thou do'st come and go,
Creature of time and change, whose every woe
Within it seed for its own healing bears.

Man's longest pain to us seems brief to endure:
When of our healers we have sent the last,
All strange desires are quickly overpast;
There is no wound this surgeon can not cure.

Misjudge him not, forbidding though his face:
Grave deep-set eyes, which somber brows o'erarch,
Unsmiling lips; yet on its pilgrim march
No truer friend accompanies thy race.

Those visited by him are as before
Life burned in them, and Nature takes control
Of each as healed, and they, merged body and soul
In her large health need no physician more.

All the un-mating things, now strange and far,
Heeding no call, shall then draw near to thee;
In one vast realm thou shalt united be

To land an sea and sky, sun, moon and star.

What here of love itself to thee denied,
Fused with thy blood, a strong ethereal wine,
Shall in the same wind blow, the same ray shine,
And each the other know till satisfied.

To sing alone suffices, without praise,
But better still upon the breeze to float,
Not singing, only sung, a self-weaned note
In the earth-melody that Nature plays.”

“What desperate counsels and what desperate end!”
Said I, who with misgiving long had seen
The unrolling and portending of this scene:
“These are the ways of paganism; they bend

Deep downward to exclusion from the light
And loveliness of God, into a dark
Abyss of nothingness, where neither mark
Of evil or good, nor sign of bliss or blight

Is set upon black gates opening nowhere;
Whence Sleep has vanished, Resignation fled;
No smile lights up a face, no tears are shed
From joy or grief; nor chance nor fate is there

To mock or thwart men’s ways; no Ate hangs,
Unmotivated, unsuspected, overhead;
And, if it did, could inspire no dread,
Since all is blind to all; neither the pangs

Of torture-fraught remorse, nor soothing dreams
Of gladsome things stored in some future’s lap
Excite unfeeling hearts; no quickening sap
Mounts up from twisted roots for slanting beams

Of vernal sunshine to beget fair flowers;
For luscious fruit there are no mouths to eat;
No scythe in tangled brush makes for the feet
A pathway; space from spaces, hour from hours

Have no distinction and no preference;
There are no colors and no notes of song,
All notes are mute, all colors blind among
The indwellers of those fields; no reverence

Is offered any gods; the temples barred,
The altars smokeless stand; no wreaths are laid
On mounds through long cult-usage sacred made,
For profane treatment has the surface scarred.

Over dishonored bones the grass grows sere,
Bereft of tendrils by affection spun;
Jealous is Death of Death, least rain or sun
Or things benign with his should interfere.

Such are the endings of the pagan round;
And these compose it: Dionysiac joy
To point of surfeit, where all pleasures cloy,
Narcosis, and from this a sharp rebound

Of the proud soul to climb upon the seat
Of its own sovereign will, proud of its pride
On scorning all good things to it denied
And on its readiness all ills to meet,

Denying pain's existence to its face,
In grim determination set to ignore
All hurts of body and mind, however sore,
Refusing to partake of medicine of grace.

Alas, as one excess provokes the other,
As error's pole calls for its antipole,
E'en so the Stoic pose falls from its role
Of self-sufficiency, and seeks to smother

In vain its latent urge towards the all
Wherein all units are submerged and drowned,
Extinction of desire and will is found;
This is the last, the irrevocable fall,

Which to accomplish some have dared and tried
The passionate embrace of Death, that he
Might the one Savior to quiescence be. . . .

Was ever uglier demon deified?

While, by such somber thoughts distressed, I stood,
A troubled sense upon my memory came
Of something similar, yet not quite the same;
Before me rose with his enquirer's mood

The Gospel figure named "the rich young man,"
He counsel sought from One, perhaps to him
No God, only a teacher who the dim
Recesses of the Law knew how to scan,

To illumine and assure a doubting soul;
The question was: how beatific ore,
Mined through good deeds, might best lay up a store
Of goldener gold, such as thief never stole.

The man addressed, He of the solemn face,
Answered the enquirer with the terse demand:
"Leave all thou hast, money and house and land!"
Alas, he turned for lace of just *one* grace.

Yet one more scene: I saw that figure sit;
He looked like one who for the last time sups;
Blood-wine He poured, for all sin's fatal cups
A cure, and more: eternal life with it.

JUDGMENT VISION

The last great prophet in his visions of the night
Saw blocks of stone down precipices hurled,
Which, trailing mountain masses, in their unchecked flight
Reduced to dust the kingdoms of the world;
He saw against the background of colossal clouds
The set-up thrones, the opened record books,
The Ancient One of Days, the Son-of-Man, the shrouds
Of men from billowing graves, grey ashen looks
On faces disaccustomed to the light of day,
The dread division: parents to the right,
And children to the left, far severed as the height
Of heaven is hidden from Gehenna's pit away.

I have my vision too, not prophet-like, inspired,
Yet back—and forward both; I see begin
With the first winsome smile mine eyes in thine admired
A sequence-chain, led us to entering in
Gardens of pleasantry where grows delicious sound,
Such as with little speech begets great bliss,
Through very lack of words in charming-power unbound,
As music free of words a finer music is.
And then, thrown close together, I behold the three
Great crises in whose tenseness just one word
My soul with barren tears, imploring, craved of thee
Through sleepless nights, at daybreak still unheard.
Follow slow lonely years, wherein the hard-trod press
Strains bitter wine, with never a vintage song,
Out of the grapes gathered from that acute distress,
A memory always sore, no matter nursed how long.
The vision then becomes a vision of white roses,
At which my age-dimmed eyes uncertain peer:
Are they a bridal wreath, or placed upon the bier
End-wise, where pale, but lovely still, reposes
Thy head? Nor do I to myself make clear,
Which of the twain one's heart should hold more dear.

Here Daniel's scene survenes, blotting that vision out.
We wander, silent spirits, midst the crowd,
The valley of decision through towards the throne,

Where men receive their judgments, each his own.
My mind, spite solemn stress of cosmic happening,
Intent on this concern alone seems travailing:
When o'er the Judge's lips, irrevocable, glides
The sentence, shall we go to different sides?
Or wilt thou take my hand? And which side shall it be,
Whither I follow thee or thou doest follow me?

SHEEP

When I have sung a pleasant song,
It bears me upward all day long,
As though I had acquired some right
In her whom my song glorified,
As nothing else before it.

But after, when at close of day
The fleecy cloud forms fade away,
I feel again: the song has served
No fruitful purpose; all unnerved
It leaves me and despondent.

'T is then I see them reappear,
From barren pastures drawing near,
A woe-begone, uncared-for flock,
Whose wistful eyes the cold stars mock,
Whom chill winds cause to shiver.

With lagging footsteps up the knoll
They one by one, converging, stroll,
To huddle round a bare-stripped tree;

The young lambs bleat so piteously,
The mother sheep stand helpless.

Draw hither sheep, since none will give
Shelter and food that ye may live;
She who should be your shepherdess,
Has clean forgot her tenderness;
I am, like you, forsaken.

ANDROMACHE

I see thee through a vista of foreshortened years
Stand, and myself with thee, the armor girded on
For that last battle where the chariot-driver steers
So close upon the brink of death that, even won,
The battle will allow none fallen to return,
Nor would, allowed, the warrior care again to burn
With fevers of earthly strife, after that once the fires
From Hades scorched him, purging his terrene desires
Of carnal dross.

 There comes to each who goes
A silent leave-taking from few rare ones he knows
Will miss him for a while.

 Thou wert the only one,
Hadst come to my good-bye; but through the precious tears,
Moistening thine eyes, as from a mist, shone out on me
The ancient world-famed smile of brave Andromache.
And, while it seemed by far the sweetest thing
I ever had of thee, yet kept I wondering:
Spake the desire in it as its deep inmost sense,
To give me for love's pain a last rich recompense?
Or did a subtler meaning from its chalice rise?

Was it the woman's smile, who, dreaming back, defies
Time's threat to efface from her, by death or otherwise,
The memory of her walk in love's still paradise?

LEAVETAKING

And now the leavetaking;
The songs have an end;
The singing, the singer,
Far, far away, went.
Some farewells when spoken
Mean lips turning mute,
And eye-mirrors broken,
And broken a lute.

THE END

(Footnotes)

¹ Elizabeth means "God is my Oath"; i.e. the one object of my religious devotion.

² Amos 9:3.

³ Cf. Job 25:2; Isa. 8:19; Hab. 3:3.

⁴ Cf. Job 25:2; Isa. 8:19; Hab. 3:3.