

SPIRITS IN BONDAGE A CYCLE OF LYRICS

By Clive Hamilton

"The land where I shall never be The love that I shall never see"

Historical Background

Published under the pseudonym, Clive Hamilton, *Spirits in Bondage* was C. S. Lewis' first book. Released in 1919 by Heinemann, it was reprinted in 1984 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and included in Lewis' 1994 *Collected Poems*. It is the first of Lewis' major published works to enter the public domain in the United States. Readers should be aware that in other countries it may still be under copyright protection.

Most of the poems appear to have been written between 1915 and 1918, a period during which Lewis was a student under W. T. Kirkpatrick, a military trainee at Oxford, and a soldier serving in the trenches of World War I. Their outlook varies from Romantic expressions of love for the beauty and simplicity of nature to cynical statements about the presence of evil in this world. In a September 12, 1918 letter to his friend Arthur Greeves, Lewis said that his book was, "mainly strung around the idea that I mentioned to you before--that nature is wholly diabolical & malevolent and that God, if he exists, is outside of and in opposition to the cosmic arrangements." In his cynical poems, Lewis is dealing with the same questions about evil in nature that Alfred Lord Tennyson explored from a position of troubled faith in "In Memoriam A. H." (Stanzas 54f). In a letter written perhaps to reassure his father, Lewis claimed, "You know who the God I blaspheme is and that it is not the God that you or I worship, or any other Christian."

Whatever Lewis believed at that time, the attitude in many of these poems is quite different from the attitude he expressed in his many Christian books from the 1930s on. Attempts in movies and on stage plays to portray Lewis as a sheltered professor who knew little about pain until the death of his wife late in life, have to deal not only with the many tragedies he experienced from a boy on, but also with the disturbing issues he faced in many of these early poems.

Prologue

As of old Phoenician men, to the Tin Isles sailing Straight against the sunset and the edges of the earth, Chaunted loud above the storm and the strange sea's wailing, Legends of their people and the land that gave them birth- Sang aloud to Baal-Peor, sang unto the horned maiden, Sang how they should come again with the Brethon treasure laden, Sang of all the pride and glory of their hardy enterprise, How they found the outer islands, where the unknown stars arise; And the rowers down below, rowing hard as they could row, Toiling at the stroke and feather through the wet and weary weather, Even they forgot their burden in the measure of a song, And the merchants and the masters and the bondsmen all together, Dreaming of the wondrous islands, brought the gallant ship along; So in mighty deeps alone on the chainless breezes blown In my coracle of verses I will sing of lands unknown, Flying from the scarlet city where a Lord that knows no pity, Mocks the broken people praying round his iron throne, -Sing about the Hidden Country fresh and full of quiet green. Sailing over seas uncharted to a port that none has seen.

PART I The Prison House

I. Satan Speaks

I am Nature, the Mighty Mother, I am the law: ye have none other.

I am the flower and the dewdrop fresh, I am the lust in your itching flesh.

I am the battle's filth and strain, I am the widow's empty pain.

I am the sea to smother your breath, I am the bomb, the falling death.

I am the fact and the crushing reason To thwart your fantasy's new-born treason.

I am the spider making her net, I am the beast with jaws blood-wet.

I am a wolf that follows the sun And I will catch him ere day be done.

II. French Nocturne (Monchy-Le-Preux)

Long leagues on either hand the trenches spread And all is still; now even this gross line Drinks in the frosty silences divine The pale, green moon is riding overhead.

The jaws of a sacked village, stark and grim; Out on the ridge have swallowed up the sun, And in one angry streak his blood has run To left and right along the horizon dim.

There comes a buzzing plane: and now, it seems Flies straight into the moon. Lo! where he steers Across the pallid globe and surely nears In that white land some harbour of dear dreams!

False mocking fancy! Once I too could dream, Who now can only see with vulgar eye That he's no nearer to the moon than I And she's a stone that catches the sun's beam.

What call have I to dream of anything? I am a wolf. Back to the world again, And speech of fellow-brutes that once were men Our throats can bark for slaughter: cannot sing.

III. The Satyr

When the flowery hands of spring Forth their woodland riches fling,
Through the meadows, through the valleys Goes the satyr carolling.

From the mountain and the moor, Forest green and ocean shore All
the faerie kin he rallies Making music evermore.

See! the shaggy pelt doth grow On his twisted shanks below, And
his dreadful feet are cloven Though his brow be white as snow-

Though his brow be clear and white And beneath it fancies bright,
Wisdom and high thoughts are woven And the musics of delight,

Though his temples too be fair Yet two horns are growing there
Bursting forth to part asunder All the riches of his hair.

Faerie maidens he may meet Fly the horns and cloven feet, But, his
sad brown eyes with wonder Seeing-stay from their retreat.

IV. Victory

Roland is dead, Cuchulain's crest is low, The battered war-rear wastes
and turns to rust, And Helen's eyes and Iseult's lips are dust And dust the
shoulders and the breasts of snow.

The faerie people from our woods are gone, No Dryads have I found
in all our trees, No Triton blows his horn about our seas And Arthur sleeps
far hence in Avalon.

The ancient songs they wither as the grass And waste as doth a
garment waxen old, All poets have been fools who thought to mould A
monument more durable than brass.

For these decay: but not for that decays The yearning, high, rebellious
spirit of man That never rested yet since life began From striving with red
Nature and her ways.

Now in the filth of war, the baresark shout Of battle, it is vexed. And
yet so oft Out of the deeps, of old, it rose aloft That they who watch the
ages may not doubt.

Though often bruised, oft broken by the rod, Yet, like the phoenix,
from each fiery bed Higher the stricken spirit lifts its head And higher-till

the beast become a god.

V. Irish Nocturne

Now the grey mist comes creeping up From the waste ocean's weedy strand
And fills the valley, as a cup If filled of evil drink in a wizard's hand;
And the trees fade out of sight, Like dreary ghosts unhealthily, Into the damp,
pale night, Till you almost think that a clearer eye could see Some shape
come up of a demon seeking apart His meat, as Grendel sought in Harte
The thanes that sat by the wintry log- Grendel or the shadowy mass
Of Balor, or the man with the face of clay, The grey, grey walker who used
to pass Over the rock-arch nightly to his prey. But here at the dumb, slow
stream where the willows hang, With never a wind to blow the mists apart,
Bitter and bitter it is for thee. O my heart, Looking upon this land, where
poets sang, Thus with the dreary shroud Unwholesome, over it spread,
And knowing the fog and the cloud In her people's heart and head Even as
it lies for ever upon her coasts Making them dim and dreamy lest her sons
should ever arise And remember all their boasts; For I know that the
colourless skies And the blurred horizons breed Lonely desire and many
words and brooding and never a deed.

VI. Spooks

Last night I dreamed that I was come again Unto the house where my
beloved dwells After long years of wandering and pain.

And I stood out beneath the drenching rain And all the street was bare,
and black with night, But in my true love's house was warmth and light.

Yet I could not draw near nor enter in, And long I wondered if some
secret sin Or old, unhappy anger held me fast;

Till suddenly it came into my head That I was killed long since and
lying dead- Only a homeless wraith that way had passed.

So thus I found my true love's house again And stood unseen amid the
winter night And the lamp burned within, a rosy light, And the wet street
was shining in the rain.

VII. Apology

If men should ask, Despoina, why I tell Of nothing glad nor noble in
my verse To lighten hearts beneath this present curse And build a heaven
of dreams in real hell,

Go you to them and speak among them thus: "There were no greater
grief than to recall, Down in the rotting grave where the lithe worms crawl,
Green fields above that smiled so sweet to us."

Is it good to tell old tales of Troynovant Or praises of dead heroes,
tried and sage, Or sing the queens of unforgotten age, Brynhild and Maeve
and virgin Bradamant?

How should I sing of them? Can it be good To think of glory now,
when all is done, And all our labour underneath the sun Has brought us
this-and not the thing we would?

All these were rosy visions of the night, The loveliness and wisdom
feigned of old. But now we wake. The East is pale and cold, No hope is in
the dawn, and no delight.

VIII. Ode for New Year's Day

Woe unto you, ye sons of pain that are this day in earth, Now cry for
all your torment: now curse your hour of birth And the fathers who begat
you to a portion nothing worth. And Thou, my own beloved, for as brave
as ere thou art, Bow down thine head, Despoina, clasp thy pale arms over
it, Lie low with fast-closed eyelids, clenched teeth, enduring heart, For
sorrow on sorrow is coming wherein all flesh has part. The sky above is
sickening, the clouds of God's hate cover it, Body and soul shall suffer
beyond all word or thought, Till the pain and noisy terror that these first
years have wrought Seem but the soft arising and prelude of the storm
That fiercer still and heavier with sharper lightnings fraught Shall pour red
wrath upon us over a world deform.

Thrice happy, O Despoina, were the men who were alive In the great
age and the golden age when still the cycle ran On upward curve and
easily, for them both maid and man And beast and tree and spirit in the

green earth could thrive. But now one age is ending, and God calls home the stars And looses the wheel of the ages and sends it spinning back Amid the death of nations, and points a downward track, And madness is come over us and great and little wars. He has not left one valley, one isle of fresh and green Where old friends could forgather amid the howling wreck. It's vainly we are praying. We cannot, cannot check The Power who slays and puts aside the beauty that has been.

It's truth they tell, Despoina, none hears the heart's complaining For Nature will not pity, nor the red God lend an ear, Yet I too have been mad in the hour of bitter paining And lifted up my voice to God, thinking that he could hear The curse wherewith I cursed Him because the Good was dead. But lo! I am grown wiser, knowing that our own hearts Have made a phantom called the Good, while a few years have sped Over a little planet. And what should the great Lord know of it Who tosses the dust of chaos and gives the suns their parts? Hither and thither he moves them; for an hour we see the show of it: Only a little hour, and the life of the race is done. And here he builds a nebula, and there he slays a sun And works his own fierce pleasure. All things he shall fulfill, And O, my poor Despoina, do you think he ever hears The wail of hearts he has broken, the sound of human ill? He cares not for our virtues, our little hopes and fears, And how could it all go on, love, if he knew of laughter and tears?

Ah, sweet, if a man could cheat him! If you could flee away Into some other country beyond the rosy West, To hide in the deep forests and be for ever at rest From the rankling hate of God and the outworn world's decay!

IX. Night

After the fret and failure of this day, And weariness of thought, O Mother Night, Come with soft kiss to soothe our care away And all our little tumults set to right; Most pitiful of all death's kindred fair, Riding above us through the curtained air On thy dusk car, thou scatterest to the earth Sweet dreams and drowsy charms of tender might And lovers' dear delight before to-morrow's birth. Thus art thou wont thy quiet lands to leave And pillared courts beyond the Milky Way, Wherein thou tarriest all our solar day While unsubstantial dreams before thee weave A foamy

dance, and fluttering fancies play About thy palace in the silver ray Of some far, moony globe. But when the hour, The long-expected comes, the ivory gates Open on noiseless hinge before thy bower Unbidden, and the jewelled chariot waits With magic steeds. Thou from the fronting rim Bending to urge them, whilst thy sea-dark hair Falls in ambrosial ripples o'er each limb, With beautiful pale arms, untrammelled, bare For horsemanship, to those twin chargers fleet Dost give full rein across the fires that glow In the wide floor of heaven, from off their feet Scattering the powdery star-dust as they go. Come swiftly down the sky, O Lady Night, Fall through the shadow-country, O most kind, Shake out thy strands of gentle dreams and light For chains, wherewith thou still art used to bind With tenderest love of careful leeches' art The bruised and weary heart In slumber blind.

X. To Sleep

I will find out a place for thee, O Sleep- A hidden wood among the hill-tops green, Full of soft streams and little winds that creep The murmuring boughs between.

A hollow cup above the ocean placed Where nothing rough, nor loud, nor harsh shall be, But woodland light and shadow interlaced And summer sky and sea.

There in the fragrant twilight I will raise A secret altar of the rich sea sod, Whereat to offer sacrifice and praise Unto my lonely god:

Due sacrifice of his own drowsy flowers, The deadening poppies in an ocean shell Round which through all forgotten days and hours The great seas wove their spell.

So may he send me dreams of dear delight And draughts of cool oblivion, quenching pain, And sweet, half-wakeful moments in the night To hear the falling rain.

And when he meets me at the dusk of day To call me home for ever, this I ask- That he may lead me friendly on that way And wear no frightful mask.

XI. In Prison

I cried out for the pain of man, I cried out for my bitter wrath
Against the hopeless life that ran For ever in a circling path
From death to death since all began; Till on a summer night I lost my way
in the pale starlight And saw our planet, far and small,
Through endless depths of nothing fall A lonely pin-prick spark of light,
Upon the wide, enfolding night, With leagues on leagues of stars above it,
And powdered dust of stars below- Dead things that neither hate nor love it
Not even their own loveliness can know, Being but cosmic dust and dead.
And if some tears be shed, Some evil God have power,
Some crown of sorrow sit Upon a little world for a little hour-
Who shall remember? Who shall care for it?

XII. De Profundis

Come let us curse our Master ere we die, For all our hopes in endless
ruin lie. The good is dead. Let us curse God most High.

Four thousand years of toil and hope and thought Wherein man
laboured upward and still wrought New worlds and better, Thou hast made
as naught.

We built us joyful cities, strong and fair, Knowledge we sought and
gathered wisdom rare. And all this time you laughed upon our care,

And suddenly the earth grew black with wrong, Our hope was crushed
and silenced was our song, The heaven grew loud with weeping. Thou art
strong.

Come then and curse the Lord. Over the earth Gross darkness falls,
and evil was our birth And our few happy days of little worth.

Even if it be not all a dream in vain -The ancient hope that still will
rise again- Of a just God that cares for earthly pain,

Yet far away beyond our labouring night, He wanders in the depths of
endless light, Singing alone his musics of delight;

Only the far, spent echo of his song Our dungeons and deep cells can
smite along, And Thou art nearer. Thou art very strong.

O universal strength, I know it well, It is but froth of folly to rebel; For

thou art Lord and hast the keys of Hell.

Yet I will not bow down to thee nor love thee, For looking in my own heart I can prove thee, And know this frail, bruised being is above thee.

Our love, our hope, our thirsting for the right, Our mercy and long seeking of the light, Shall we change these for thy relentless might?

Laugh then and slay. Shatter all things of worth, Heap torment still on torment for thy mirth- Thou art not Lord while there are Men on earth.

XIII. Satan Speaks

I am the Lord your God: even he that made Material things, and all these signs arrayed Above you and have set beneath the race Of mankind, who forget their Father's face And even while they drink my light of day Dream of some other gods and disobey My warnings, and despise my holy laws, Even tho' their sin shall slay them. For which cause, Dreams dreamed in vain, a never-filled desire And in close flesh a spiritual fire, A thirst for good their kind shall not attain, A backward cleaving to the beast again. A loathing for the life that I have given, A haunted, twisted soul for ever riven Between their will and mine-such lot I give White still in my despite the vermin live. They hate my world! Then let that other God Come from the outer spaces glory-shod, And from this castle I have built on Night Steal forth my own thought's children into light, If such an one there be. But far away He walks the airy fields of endless day, And my rebellious sons have called Him long And vainly called. My order still is strong And like to me nor second none I know. Whither the mammoth went this creature too shall go.

XIV. The Witch

Trapped amid the woods with guile They've led her bound in fetters vile To death, a deadlier sorceress Than any born for earth's distress Since first the winner of the fleece Bore home the Colchian witch to Greece- Seven months with snare and gin They've sought the maid o'erwise within The forest's labyrinthine shade. The lonely woodman half afraid Far off her ragged form has seen Sauntering down the alleys green, Or crouched

in godless prayer alone At eve before a Druid stone. But now the bitter chase is won, The quarry's caught, her magic's done, The bishop's brought her strongest spell To naught with candle, book, and bell; With holy water splashed upon her, She goes to burning and dishonour Too deeply damned to feel her shame, For, though beneath her hair of flame Her thoughtful head be lowly bowed It droops for meditation proud Impenitent, and pondering yet Things no memory can forget, Starry wonders she has seen Brooding in the wildwood green With holiness. For who can say In what strange crew she loved to play, What demons or what gods of old Deep mysteries unto her have told At dead of night in worship bent At ruined shrines magnificent, Or how the quivering will she sent Alone into the great alone Where all is loved and all is known, Who now lifts up her maiden eyes And looks around with soft surprise Upon the noisy, crowded square, The city oafs that nod and stare, The bishop's court that gathers there, The faggots and the blackened stake Where sinners die for justice' sake? Now she is set upon the pile, The mob grows still a little while, Till lo! before the eager folk Up curls a thin, blue line of smoke. "Alas!" the full-fed burghers cry, "That evil loveliness must die!"

XV. Dungeon Grates

So piteously the lonely soul of man Shudders before this universal plan, So grievous is the burden and the pain, So heavy weighs the long, material chain From cause to cause, too merciless for hate, The nightmare march of unrelenting fate, I think that he must die thereof unless Ever and again across the dreariness There came a sudden glimpse of spirit faces, A fragrant breath to tell of flowery places And wider oceans, breaking on the shore From which the hearts of men are always sore. It lies beyond endeavour; neither prayer Nor fasting, nor much wisdom winneth there, Seeing how many prophets and wise men Have sought for it and still returned again With hope undone. But only the strange power Of unsought Beauty in some casual hour Can build a bridge of light or sound or form To lead you out of all this strife and storm; When of some beauty we are grown a part Till from its very glory's midmost heart Out leaps a sudden beam of larger light Into our souls. All things are seen aright Amid the

blinding pillar of its gold, Seven times more true than what for truth we hold
In vulgar hours. The miracle is done And for one little moment we are one
With the eternal stream of loveliness That flows so calm, aloft from all distress
Yet leaps and lives around us as a fire Making us faint with overstrong desire
To sport and swim for ever in its deep- Only a moment.

O! but we shall keep Our vision still.
One moment was enough, We know we are not made of mortal stuff. And we can bear
all trials that come after, The hate of men and the fool's loud bestial laughter
And Nature's rule and cruelties unclean, For we have seen the Glory-we have seen.

XVI. The Philosopher

Who shall be our prophet then, Chosen from all the sons of men To lead his fellows
on the way Of hidden knowledge, delving deep To nameless mysteries that keep
Their secret from the solar day! Or who shall pierce with surer eye! This shifting
veil of bittersweet And find the real things that lie Beyond this turmoil, which we
greet With such a wasted wealth of tears? Who shall cross over for us the bridge of
fears And pass in to the country where the ancient Mothers dwell? Is it an elder, bent
and hoar Who, where the waste Atlantic swell On lonely beaches makes its roar,
In his solitary tower Through the long night hour by hour Pores on old books with
watery eye When all his youth has passed him by, And folly is schooled and love
is dead And frozen fancy laid abed, While in his veins the gradual blood
Slackens to a marish flood? For he rejoiceth not in the ocean's might, Neither the
sun giveth delight, Nor the moon by night Shall call his feet to wander in the
haunted forest lawn. He shall no more rise suddenly in the dawn When mists are
white and the dew lies pearly Cold and cold on every meadow, To take his joy of
the season early, The opening flower and the westward shadow, And scarcely can he
dream of laughter and love, They lie so many leaden years behind. Such eyes are
dim and blind, And the sad, aching head that nods above His monstrous books can
never know The secret we would find. But let our seer be young and kind And fresh
and beautiful of show, And taken ere the lustyhead And rapture of his youth be
dead; Ere the gnawing, peasant reason School

him over-deep in treason To the ancient high estate Of his fancy's principate, That he may live a perfect whole, A mask of the eternal soul, And cross at last the shadowy bar To where the ever-living are.

XVII. The Ocean Strand

O leave the labouring roadways of the town, The shifting faces and the changeful hue Of markets, and broad echoing streets that drown The heart's own silent music. Though they too Sing in their proper rhythm, and still delight The friendly ear that loves warm human kind, Yet it is good to leave them all behind, Now when from lily dawn to purple night Summer is queen, Summer is queen in all the happy land. Far, far away among the valleys green Let us go forth and wander hand in hand Beyond those solemn hills that we have seen So often welcome home the falling sun Into their cloudy peaks when day was done- Beyond them till we find the ocean strand And hear the great waves run, With the waste song whose melodies I'd follow And weary not for many a summer day, Born of the vaulted breakers arching hollow Before they flash and scatter into spray, On, if we should be weary of their play Then I would lead you further into land Where, with their ragged walls, the stately rocks Shunt in smooth courts and paved with quiet sand To silence dedicate. The sea-god's flocks Have rested here, and mortal eyes have seen By great adventure at the dead of noon A lonely nereid drowsing half a-swoon Buried beneath her dark and dripping locks.

XVIII. Noon

Noon! and in the garden bower The hot air quivers o'er the grass, The little lake is smooth as glass And still so heavily the hour Drags, that scarce the proudest flower Pressed upon its burning bed Has strength to lift a languid head: -Rose and fainting violet By the water's margin set Swoon and sink as they were dead Though their weary leaves be fed With the foam-drops of the pool Where it trembles dark and cool Wrinkled by the fountain spraying O'er it. And the honey-bee Hums his drowsy melody And wanders in his course a-straying Through the sweet and tangled glade

With his golden mead o'erladen, Where beneath the pleasant shade Of the darkling boughs a maiden -Milky limb and fiery tress, All at sweetest random laid- Slumbers, drunken with the excess Of the noontide's loveliness.

XIX. Milton Read Again (In Surrey)

Three golden months while summer on us stole I have read your joyful tale another time, Breathing more freely in that larger clime And learning wiselier to deserve the whole.

Your Spirit, Master, has been close at hand And guided me, still pointing treasures rare, Thick-sown where I before saw nothing fair And finding waters in the barren land,

Barren once thought because my eyes were dim. Like one I am grown to whom the common field And often-wandered copse one morning yield New pleasures suddenly; for over him

Falls the weird spirit of unexplained delight, New mystery in every shady place, In every whispering tree a nameless grace, New rapture on the windy seaward height.

So may she come to me, teaching me well To savour all these sweets that lie to hand In wood and lane about this pleasant land Though it be not the land where I would dwell.

XX. Sonnet

The stars come out; the fragrant shadows fall About a dreaming garden still and sweet, I hear the unseen bats above me bleat Among the ghostly moths their hunting call, And twinkling glow-worms all about me crawl. Now for a chamber dim, a pillow meet For slumbers deep as death, a faultless sheet, Cool, white and smooth. So may I reach the hall With poppies strewn where sleep that is so dear With magic sponge can wipe away an hour Or twelve and make them naught. Why not a year, Why could a man not loiter in that bower Until a thousand painless cycles wore, And then-what if it held him evermore?

XXI. The Autumn Morning

See! the pale autumn dawn Is faint, upon the lawn That lies in
powdered white Of hoar-frost dight

And now from tree to tree The ghostly mist we see Hung like a
silver pall To hallow all.

It wreathes the burdened air So strangely everywhere That I could
almost fear This silence drear

Where no one song-bird sings And dream that wizard things
Mighty for hate or love Were close above.

White as the fog and fair Drifting through the middle air In magic
dances dread Over my head.

Yet these should know me too Lover and bondman true, One that
has honoured well The mystic spell

Of earth's most solemn hours Wherein the ancient powers Of dryad,
elf, or faun Or leprechaun

Oft have their faces shown To me that walked alone Seashore or
haunted fen Or mountain glen

Wherefore I will not fear To walk the woodlands sere Into this
autumn day Far, far away.

PART II Hesitation

XXII. L'Apprenti Sorcier

Suddenly there came to me The music of a mighty sea That on a bare and iron shore Thundered with a deeper roar Than all the tides that leap and run With us below the real sun: Because the place was far away, Above, beyond our homely day, Neighbouring close the frozen clime Where out of all the woods of time, Amid the frightful seraphim The fierce, cold eyes of Godhead gleam, Revolving hate and misery And wars and famines yet to be. And in my dreams I stood alone Upon a shelf of weedy stone, And saw before my shrinking eyes The dark, enormous breakers rise, And hover and fall with deafening thunder Of thwarted foam that echoed under The ledge, through many a cavern drear, With hollow sounds of wintry fear. And through the waters waste and grey, Thick-strown for many a league away, Out of the toiling sea arose Many a face and form of those Thin, elemental people dear Who live beyond our heavy sphere. And all at once from far and near, They all held out their arms to me, Crying in their melody, "Leap in! Leap in and take thy fill Of all the cosmic good and ill, Be as the Living ones that know Enormous joy, enormous woe, Pain beyond thought and fiery bliss: For all thy study hunted this, On wings of magic to arise, And wash from off thy filmed eyes The cloud of cold mortality, To find the real life and be As are the children of the deep! Be bold and dare the glorious leap, Or to thy shame, go, slink again Back to the narrow ways of men." So all these mocked me as I stood Striving to wake because I feared the flood.

XXIII. Alexandrines

There is a house that most of all on earth I hate. Though I have passed through many sorrows and have been In bloody fields, sad seas, and countries desolate, Yet most I fear that empty house where the grasses green Grow in the silent court the gaping flags between, And down the

moss-grown paths and terrace no man treads
Where the old, old weeds rise deep on the waste garden beds.
Like eyes of one long dead the empty windows stare
And I fear to cross the garden, I fear to linger there,
For in that house I know a little, silent room
Where Someone's always waiting, waiting in the gloom
To draw me with an evil eye, and hold me fast-
Yet thither doom will drive me and He will win at last.

XXIV. In Praise of Solid People

Thank God that there are solid folk
Who water flowers and roll the lawn,
And sit and sew and talk and smoke,
And snore all through the summer dawn.

Who pass untroubled nights and days
Full-fed and sleepily content,
Rejoicing in each other's praise,
Respectable and innocent.

Who feel the things that all men feel,
And think in well-worn grooves of thought,
Whose honest spirits never reel
Before man's mystery, overwrought.

Yet not unfaithful nor unkind,
with work-day virtues surely staid,
Theirs is the sane and humble mind,
And dull affections undismayed.

O happy people! I have seen
No verse yet written in your praise,
And, truth to tell, the time has been
I would have scorned your easy ways.

But now thro' weariness and strife
I learn your worthiness indeed,
The world is better for such life
As stout suburban people lead.

Too often have I sat alone
When the wet night falls heavily,
And fretting winds around me moan,
And homeless longing vexes me

For lore that I shall never know,
And visions none can hope to see,
Till brooding works upon me so
A childish fear steals over me.

I look around the empty room,
The clock still ticking in its place,
And all else silent as the tomb,
Till suddenly, I think, a face

Grows from the darkness just beside.
I turn, and lo! it fades away,
And soon another phantom tide
Of shifting dreams begins to play,

And dusky galleys past me sail,
Full freighted on a faerie sea;
I hear the silken merchants hail
Across the ringing waves to me

-Then suddenly, again, the room,
Familiar books about me piled,
And I alone amid the gloom,
By one more mocking dream beguiled.

And still no neared to the Light, And still no further from myself,
Alone and lost in clinging night -(The clock's still ticking on the shelf).

Then do I envy solid folk Who sit of evenings by the fire, After their
work and doze and smoke, And are not fretted by desire.

PART III The Escape

XXV. Song of the Pilgrims

O Dwellers at the back of the North Wind, What have we done to you?
How have we sinned Wandering the Earth from Orkney unto Ind?

With many deaths our fellowship is thinned, Our flesh is withered in
the parching wind, Wandering the earth from Orkney unto Ind.

We have no rest. We cannot turn again Back to the world and all her
fruitless pain, Having once sought the land where ye remain.

Some say ye are not. But, ah God! we know That somewhere,
somewhere past the Northern snow Waiting for us the red-rose gardens
blow:

-The red-rose and the white-rose gardens blow In the green Northern
land to which we go, Surely the ways are long and the years are slow.

We have forsaken all things sweet and fair, We have found nothing
worth a moment's care Because the real flowers are blowing there.

Land of the Lotus fallen from the sun, Land of the Lake from whence
all rivers run, Land where the hope of all our dreams is won!

Shall we not somewhere see at close of day The green walls of that
country far away, And hear the music of her fountains play?

So long we have been wandering all this while By many a perilous sea
and drifting isle, We scarce shall dare to look thereon and smile.

Yea, when we are drawing very near to thee, And when at last the
ivory port we see Our hearts will faint with mere felicity:

But we shall wake again in gardens bright Of green and gold for
infinite delight, Sleeping beneath the solemn mountains white, While from
the flowery copses still unseen Sing out the crooning birds that ne'er have
been Touched by the hand of winter frore and lean;

And ever living queens that grow not old And poets wise in robes of
faerie gold Whisper a wild, sweet song that first was told

Ere God sat down to make the Milky Way. And in those gardens we
shall sleep and play For ever and for ever and a day.

Ah, Dwellers at the back of the North Wind, What have we done to you? How have we sinned, That yes should hide beyond the Northern wind?

Land of the Lotus, fallen from the Sun, When shall your hidden, flowery vales be won And all the travail of our way be done?

Very far we have searched; we have even seen The Scythian waste that bears no soft nor green, And near the Hideous Pass our feet have been.

We have heard Syrens singing all night long Beneath the unknown stars their lonely song In friendless seas beyond the Pillars strong.

Nor by the dragon-daughter of Hypocras Nor the vale of the Devil's head we have feared to pass, Yet is our labour lost and vain, alas!

Scouring the earth from Orkney unto Ind, Tossed on the seas and withered in the wind, We seek and seek your land. How have we sinned?

Or is it all a folly of the wise, Bidding us walk these ways with blinded eyes While all around us real flowers arise?

But, by the very God, we know, we know That somewhere still, beyond the Northern snow Waiting for us the red-rose gardens blow.

XXVI. Song

Faeries must be in the woods Or the satyrs' laughing broods- Tritons in the summer sea, Else how could the dead things be Half so lovely as they are? How could wealth of star on star Dusted o'er the frosty night Fill thy spirit with delight And lead thee from this care of thine Up among the dreams divine, Were it not that each and all Of them that walk the heavenly hall Is in truth a happy isle, Where eternal meadows smile, And golden globes of fruit are seen Twinkling through the orchards green; Were the Other People go On the bright sward to and fro? Atoms dead could never thus Stir the human heart of us Unless the beauty that we see The veil of endless beauty be, Filled full of spirits that have trod Far hence along the heavenly sod And see the bright footprints of God.

XXVII. The Ass

I woke and rose and slipt away To the heathery hills in the morning

grey.

In a field where the dew lay cold and deep I met an ass, new-roused
from sleep.

I stroked his nose and I tickled his ears, And spoke soft words to quiet
his fears.

His eyes stared into the eyes of me And he kissed my hands of his
courtesy.

"O big, brown brother out of the waste, How do thistles for breakfast
taste?

"And do you rejoice in the dawn divine With a heart that is glad no
less than mine?

"For, brother, the depth of your gentle eyes Is strange and mystic as the
skies:

"What are the thoughts that grope behind, Down in the mist of a
donkey mind?

"Can it be true, as the wise men tell, That you are a mask of God as
well,

"And, as in us, so in you no less Speaks the eternal Loveliness,

"And words of the lips that all things know Among the thoughts of a
donkey go?

"However it be, O four-foot brother, Fair to-day is the earth, our
mother.

"God send you peace and delight thereof, And all green meat of the
waste you love,

"And guard you well from violent men Who'd put you back in the
shafts again."

But the ass had far too wise a head To answer one of the things I said,

So he twitched his fair ears up and down And turned to nuzzle his
shoulder brown.

XXVIII. Ballade Mystique

The big, red-house is bare and lone The stony garden waste and sere
With blight of breezes ocean blown To pinch the wakening of the year;
My kindly friends with busy cheer My wretchedness could plainly show.

They tell me I am lonely here- What do they know? What do they know?

They think that while the gables moan And easements creak in winter
drear I should be piteously alone Without the speech of comrades dear;
And friendly for my sake they fear, It grieves them thinking of me so
While all their happy life is near- What do they know? What do they
know?

That I have seen the Dagda's throne In sunny lands without a tear And
found a forest all my own To ward with magic shield and spear, Where,
through the stately towers I rear For my desire, around me go Immortal
shapes of beauty clear: They do not know, they do not know.

L'Envoi

The friends I have without a peer Beyond the western ocean's glow,
Whither the faerie galleys steer, They do not know: how should they
know?

XXIX. Night

I know a little Druid wood Where I would slumber if I could And have
the murmuring of the stream To mingle with a midnight dream, And have
the holy hazel trees To play above me in the breeze, And smell the thorny
eglantine; For there the white owls all night long In the scented gloom
divine Hear the wild, strange, tuneless song Of faerie voices, thin and high
As the bat's unearthly cry, And the measure of their shoon Dancing,
dancing, under the moon, Until, amid the pale of dawn The wandering
stars begin to swoon. . . . Ah, leave the world and come away!

The windy folk are in the glade, And men have seen their revels, laid
In secret on some flowery lawn Underneath the beechen covers, Kings of
old, I've heard them say, Here have found them faerie lovers That charmed
them out of life and kissed Their lips with cold lips unafraid, And such a
spell around them made That they have passed beyond the mist And found
the Country-under-wave. . . .

Kings of old, whom none could save!

XXX. Oxford

It is well that there are palaces of peace And discipline and dreaming
and desire, Lest we forget our heritage and cease The Spirit's work-to
hunger and aspire:

Lest we forget that we were born divine, Now tangled in red battle's
animal net, Murder the work and lust the anodyne, Pains of the beast
'gainst bestial solace set.

But this shall never be: to us remains One city that has nothing of the
beast, That was not built for gross, material gains, Sharp, wolfish power or
empire's gluttoned feast.

We are not wholly brute. To us remains A clean, sweet city lulled by
ancient streams, A place of visions and of loosening chains, A refuge of
the elect, a tower of dreams.

She was not builded out of common stone But out of all men's
yearning and all prayer That she might live, eternally our own, The Spirit's
stronghold-barred against despair.

XXXI. Hymn (For Boys' Voices)

All the things magicians do Could be done by me and you Freely, if
we only knew.

Human children every day Could play at games the faeries play If they
were but shown the way.

Every man a God would be Laughing through eternity If as God's his
eyes could see.

All the wizardries of God- Slaying matter with a nod, Charming spirits
with his rod,

With the singing of his voice Making lonely lands rejoice, Leaving us
no will nor choice,

Drawing headlong me and you As the piping Orpheus drew Man and
beast the mountains through,

By the sweetness of his horn Calling us from lands forlorn Nearer to
the widening morn-

All that loveliness of power Could be man's peculiar dower, Even mine, this very hour;

We should reach the Hidden Land And grow immortal out of hand, If we could but understand!

We could revel day and night In all power and all delight If we learn to think aright.

XXXII. "Our Daily Bread"

We need no barbarous words nor solemn spell To raise the unknown. It lies before our feet; There have been men who sank down into Hell In some suburban street,

And some there are that in their daily walks Have met archangels fresh from sight of God, Or watched how in their beans and cabbage-stalks Long files of faerie trod.

Often me too the Living voices call In many a vulgar and habitual place, I catch a sight of lands beyond the wall, I see a strange god's face.

And some day this work will work upon me so I shall arise and leave both friends and home And over many lands a pilgrim go Through alien woods and foam,

Seeking the last steep edges of the earth Whence I may leap into that gulf of light Wherein, before my narrowing Self had birth, Part of me lived aright.

XXXIII. How He Saw Angus the God

I heard the swallow sing in the eaves and rose All in a strange delight while others slept, And down the creaking stair, alone, tip-toes, So carefully I crept.

The house was dark with silly blinds yet drawn, But outside the clean air was filled with light, And underneath my feet the cold, wet lawn With dew was twinkling bright.

The cobwebs hung from every branch and spray Gleaming with pearly strands of laden thread, And long and still the morning shadows lay

Across the meadows spread.

At that pure hour when yet no sound of man, Stirs in the whiteness of
the wakening earth, Alone through innocent solitudes I ran Singing
aloud for mirth.

Till I had found the open mountain heath Yellow with gorse, and rested
there and stood To gaze upon the misty sea beneath, Or on the
neighbouring wood,

-That little wood of hazel and tall pine And youngling fir, where oft we
have loved to see The level beams of early morning shine Freshly from
tree to tree.

Through the denser wood there's many a pool Of deep and night-born
shadow lingers yet Where the new-wakened flowers are damp and cool
And the long grass is wet.

In the sweet heather long I rested there Looking upon the dappled,
early sky, When suddenly, from out the shining air A god came flashing
by.

Swift, naked, eager, pitilessly fair, With a live crown of birds about his
head, Singing and fluttering, and his fiery hair, Far out behind him
spread,

Streamed like a rippling torch upon the breeze Of his own glorious
swiftness: in the grass He bruised no feathery stalk, and through the trees
I saw his whiteness pass.

But when I followed him beyond the wood, Lo! He was changed into a
solemn bull That there upon the open pasture stood And browsed his
lazy full.

XXXIV. The Roads

I stand on the windy uplands among the hills of Down With all the
world spread out beneath, meadow and sea and town, And ploughlands on
the far-off hills that glow with friendly brown.

And ever across the rolling land to the far horizon line, Where the blue
hills border the misty west, I see the white roads twine, The rare roads and
the fair roads that call this heart of mine.

I see them dip in the valleys and vanish and rise and bend From

shadowy dell to windswept fell, and still to the West they wend, And over the cold blue ridge at last to the great world's uttermost end.

And the call of the roads is upon me, a desire in my spirit has grown To wander forth in the highways, 'twixt earth and sky alone, And seek for the lands no foot has trod and the seas no sail has known:

For the lands to the west of the evening and east of the morning's birth, Where the gods unseen in their valleys green are glad at the ends of the earth And fear no morrow to bring them sorrow, nor night to quench their mirth.

XXXV. Hesperus

Through the starry hollow Of the summer night I would follow, follow Hesperus the bright, To seek beyond the western wave His garden of delight.

Hesperus the fairest Of all gods that are, Peace and dreams thou bearest In thy shadowy car, And often in my evening walks I've blessed thee from afar.

Stars without number, Dust the noon of night, Thou the early slumber And the still delight Of the gentle twilit hours Rulest in thy right.

When the pale skies shiver, Seeing night is done, Past the ocean-river, Lightly thou dost run, To look for pleasant, sleepy lands, That never fear the sun.

Where, beyond the waters Of the outer sea, Thy triple crown of daughters That guards the golden tree Sing out across the lonely tide A welcome home to thee.

And while the old, old dragon For joy lifts up his head, They bring thee forth a flagon Of nectar foaming red, And underneath the drowsy trees Of poppies strew thy bed.

Ah! that I could follow In thy footsteps bright, Through the starry hollow Of the summer night, Sloping down the western ways To find my heart's delight!

XXXVI. The Star Bath

A place uplifted towards the midnight sky
Far, far away among the mountains old,
A treeless waste of rocks and freezing cold,
Where the dead, cheerless moon rode neighbouring by-
And in the midst a silent tarn there lay,
A narrow pool, cold as the tide that flows
Where monstrous bergs beyond Varanger stray,
Rising from sunless depths that no man knows;
Thither as clustering fireflies have I seen
At fixed seasons all the stars come down
To wash in that cold wave their brightness clean
And win the special fire wherewith they crown
The wintry heavens in frost. Even as a flock
Of falling birds, down to the pool they came.
I saw them and I heard the icy shock
Of stars engulfed with hissing of faint flame -
Ages ago before the birth of men
Or earliest beast. Yet I was still the same
That now remember, knowing not where or when.

XXXVII. Tu Ne Quaesieris

For all the lore of Lodge and Myers I cannot heal my torn desires,
Nor hope for all that man can speer
To make the riddling earth grow clear.
Though it were sure and proven well
That I shall prosper, as they tell,
In fields beneath a different sun
By shores where other oceans run,
When this live body that was I
Lies hidden from the cheerful sky,
Yet what were endless lives to me
If still my narrow self I be
And hope and fail and struggle still,
And break my will against God's will,
To play for stakes of pleasure and pain
And hope and fail and hope again,
Deluded, thwarted, striving elf
That through the window of my self
As through a dark glass scarce can see
A warped and masked reality?
But when this searching thought of mine
Is mingled in the large Divine,
And laughter that was in my mouth
Runs through the breezes of the South,
When glory I have built in dreams
Along some fiery sunset gleams,
And my dead sin and foolishness
Grow one with Nature's whole distress,
To perfect being I shall win,
And where I end will Life begin.

XXXVIII. Lullaby

Lullaby! Lullaby! There's a tower strong and high Built of oak and brick and stone, Stands before a wood alone. The doors are of the oak so brown As any ale in Oxford town, The walls are builded warm and thick Of the old red Roman brick, The good grey stone is over all In arch and floor of the tower tall. And maidens three are living there All in the upper chamber fair, Hung with silver, hung with pall, And stories painted on the wall. And softly goes the whirring loom In my ladies' upper room, For they shall spin both night and day Until the stars do pass away. But every night at evening. The window open wide they fling, And one of them says a word they know And out as three white swans they go, And the murmuring of the woods is drowned In the soft wings' whirring sound, As they go flying round, around, Singing in swans' voices high A lonely, lovely lullaby.

XXXIX. World's Desire

Love, there is a castle built in a country desolate, On a rock above a forest where the trees are grim and great, Blasted with the lightning sharp-giant boulders strewn between, And the mountains rise above, and the cold ravine Echoes to the crushing roar and thunder of a mighty river Raging down a cataract. Very tower and forest quiver And the grey wolves are afraid and the call of birds is drowned, And the thought and speech of man in the boiling water's sound. But upon the further side of the barren, sharp ravine With the sunlight on its turrets is the castle seen, Calm and very wonderful, white above the green Of the wet and waving forest, slanted all away, Because the driving Northern wind will not rest by night or day. Yet the towers are sure above, very mighty is the stead, The gates are made of ivory, the roofs of copper red.

Round and round the warders grave walk upon the walls for ever And the wakeful dragons couch in the ports of ivory, Nothing is can trouble it, hate of the gods nor man's endeavour, And it shall be a resting-place, dear heart, for you and me.

Through the wet and waving forest with an age-old sorrow laden
Singing of the world's regret wanders wild the faerie maiden, Through the
thistle and the brier, through the tangles of the thorn, Till her eyes be dim
with weeping and her homeless feet are torn.

Often to the castle gate up she looks with vain endeavour, For her
soulless loveliness to the castle winneth never.

But within the sacred court, hidden high upon the mountain,
Wandering in the castle gardens lovely folk enough there be, Breathing in
another air, drinking of a purer fountain And among that folk, beloved,
there's a place for you and me.

XL. Death in Battle

Open the gates for me, Open the gates of the peaceful castle, rosy in
the West, In the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide sea's breast,

Open the gates for me!

Sorely pressed have I been And driven and hurt beyond bearing this
summer day, But the heat and the pain together suddenly fall away, All's
cool and green.

But a moment ago, Among men cursing in fight and toiling, blinded
I fought, But the labour passed on a sudden even as a passing thought,

And now-alone!

Ah, to be ever alone, In flowery valleys among the mountains and
silent wastes untrod, In the dewy upland places, in the garden of God, This
would atone!

I shall not see The brutal, crowded faces around me, that in their toil
have grown Into the faces of devils-yea, even as my own- When I find
thee,

O Country of Dreams! Beyond the tide of the ocean, hidden and sunk
away, Out of the sound of battles, near to the end of day, Full of dim
woods and streams.