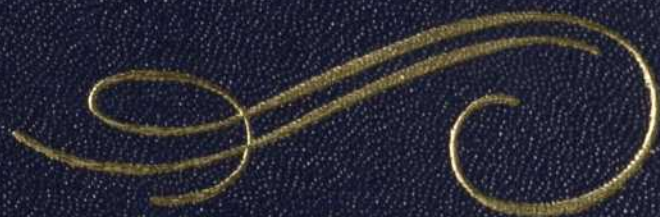


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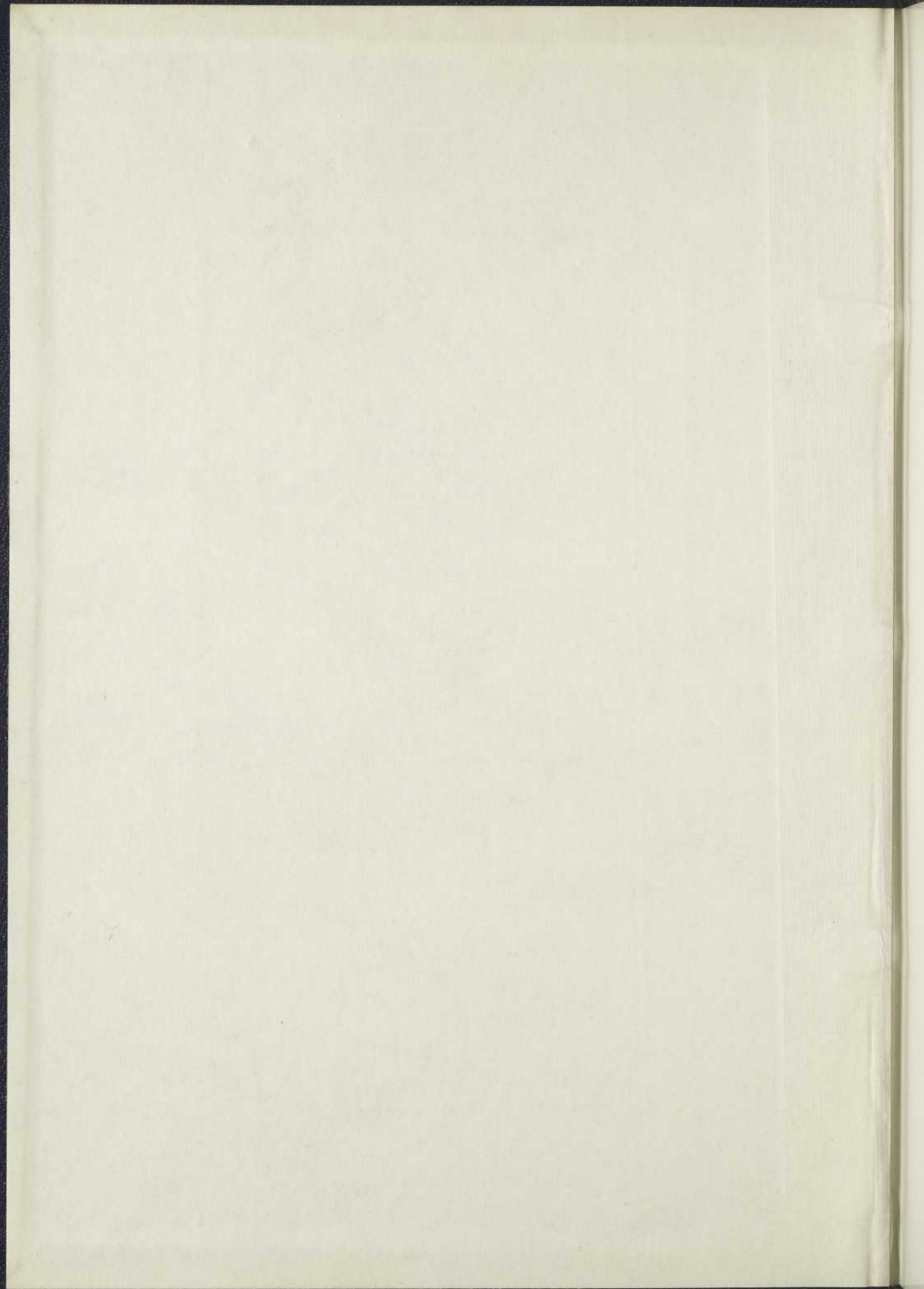
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by

F. S. SYMONS

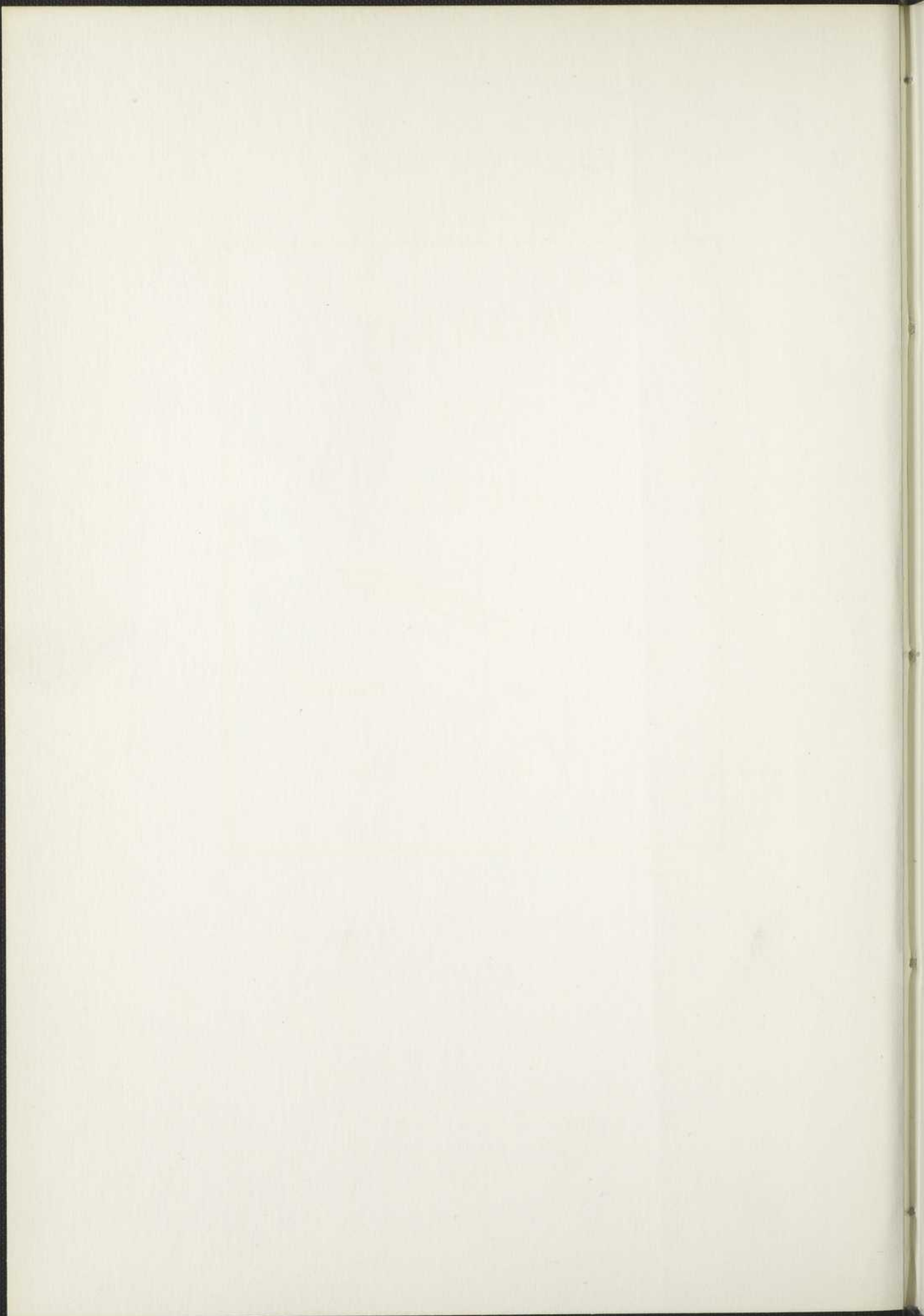


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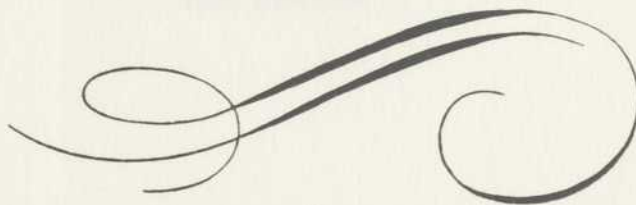
Heslie Roberts
with deep respect

J. S. Symonds,

Notes: NL v. 17 + a few



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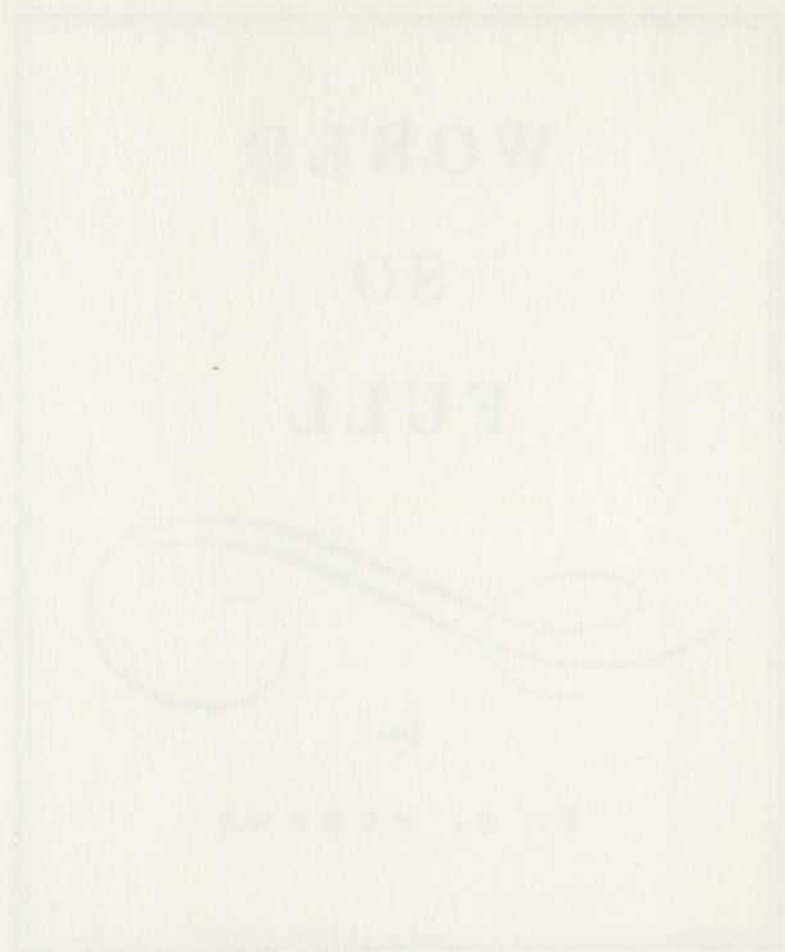


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F. S. SYMONS

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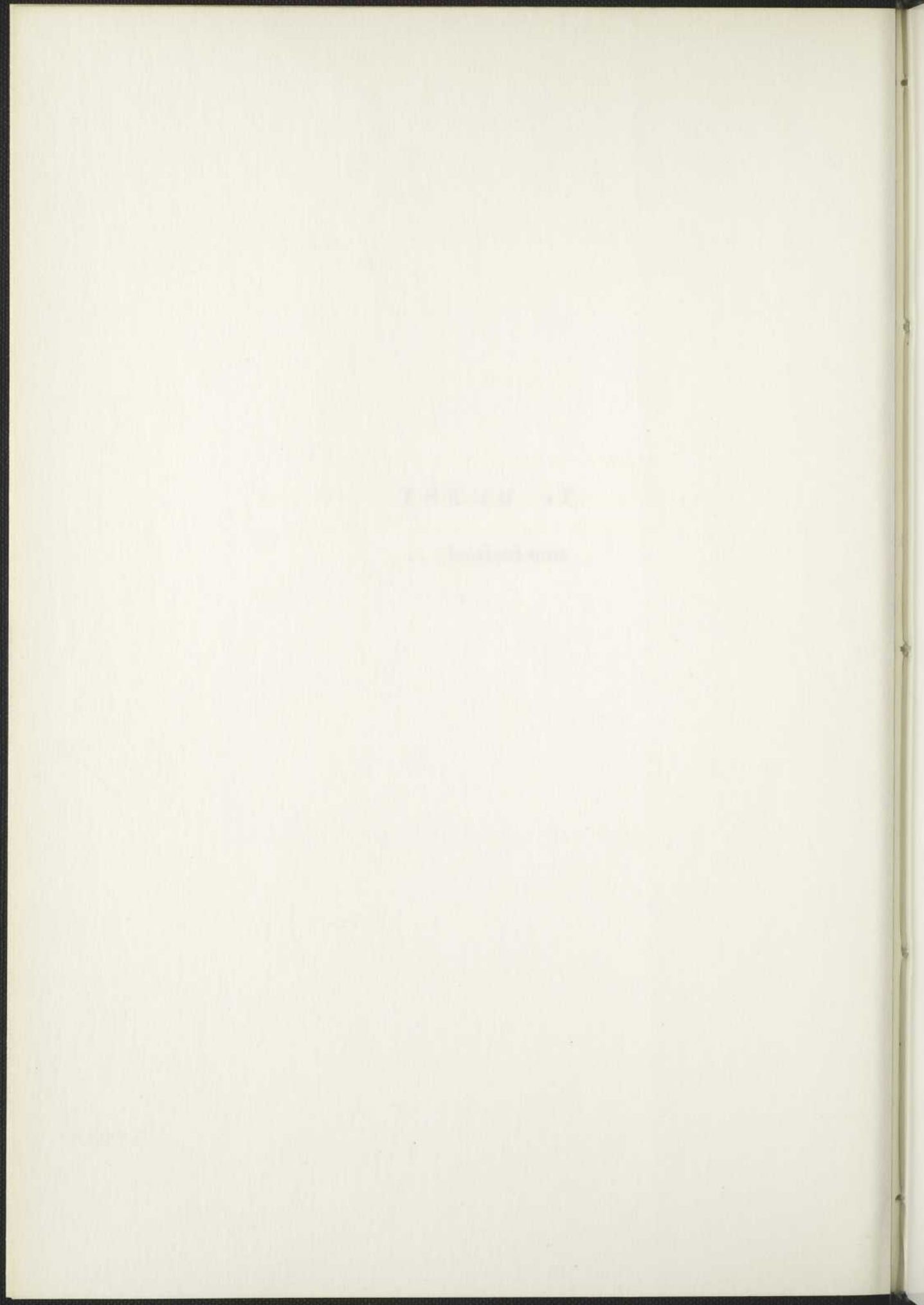
GAZETTE PRINTING COMPANY LIMITED
MONTREAL



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TO BETSY

who insisted . . .



My grateful thanks

to

MARY MARGARET MILLER

who has encouraged an old duffer to indulge his whim
and given him valuable assistance in preparing
the material for printing.

F. S. S.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1911

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F O R E W O R D

The writing of a foreword to any work is a task not to be undertaken lightly, although these preambles often bore readers who, anxious to meet the matter of the book, pass them by. Still, one feels that, for the record, the proper presentation should contain some analysis, some enlightening, constructive criticism, some appreciation, and some account of the origins of the work to follow.

I, who have been close to these poems for a considerable period, can see, in introducing them to the public, no need for any detailed description or evaluation. F. S. Symons herein demonstrates that he is eloquently able to speak for himself, and the functions and purposes of the "amateur poet" have been debated frequently elsewhere, sometimes with levity, sometimes with sobriety. The most important aspect of the publication of a book by any part-time poet is the fact that he found time to write at all. Particularly is this true of F. S. Symons. While living and working in the world of St. James Street and Wall Street, he has still, sometimes on plane or train, made opportunities for writing; and he writes painstakingly, enthusiastically and perceptively. In these days, we should exult that a very

busy man can respond joyfully to the impulse to record and create and can accept the demands and discipline of an artist's life as well as those of a business man's life.

The many personal friends of F. S. Symons have long enjoyed his poems. They reveal much of a man who thinks deeply, whose thoughts are provocative. It is time they reached a wider circle.

M. M. M.

C O N T E N T S

A Business Man	15-19
Renaissance	20
Dreams	21
Reality	22
Fancies	23, 24
Gratitude	25
Subjectivity.	26
Significance	27
Letters	28
Greetings	29, 30
Midsummer in the City	31
Scene in a Public Dining Room	32-36
The Philosopher	37, 38
Tension	39
Worship	40
A Prayer	41, 42
Creation.	43-45
For the flyleaf of a copy of "A History of Western Philosophy"	46
Music	47, 48
Richard Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde"	49
Waltz Time	50
"Blessed Are the Pure in Heart for They Shall See God"	51
Spring Song.	52
Summer's Day	53
In the Rocky Mountains	54
In the Canadian Rockies	55
The "Little People"	56, 57
A Garden	58

The Valley of Windermere in the Canadian Rockies	59-61
Ice Bucket Row	62, 63
Cycle of Life	64
Correction	65, 66
A Story that Cannot Be Told	67
The Healer	68, 69
Discontent	70, 71
To Zara Nelsova	72
To Cary Cameron: A Portrait	73
Of Angus	74
To Mary Margaret Miller	75
A Song About Doris	76
Of a Friend	77
The Lady of my Dreams	78
A Message	79
Secrets	80, 81
You Whispered	82
Who Are the Saints?	83, 84
G. B. S.	85, 86
"A King's Story"	87, 88
Recollection.	89
A Vision	90, 91
After Reading the News in November 1945	92
August 1951	93, 94
Reverie	95, 96
Reflections on Attaining the Age of 58	97, 98
On Achieving the Age of 59	99-101
On Achieving the Age of 60	102
On Achieving the Age of 61	103
On Achieving the Age of 62	104, 105
On Achieving the Age of 63	106, 107
On Achieving the Age of 64	108-110
On Achieving the Age of 65	111, 112

*Give me your hand as you read, my Dear,
as you read me the poet's tales
of stricken hearts and of valiant deeds —
all of them telling of love. My Dear,
give me your hand.*

*Give me your hand as you read, my Dear.
Your low and melodious voice
makes live these tales and my heart is stirred,
is stirred by their changing moods; my Dear,
give me your hand.*

*Give me your hand as you read, my Dear.
By your magic the splendid words
become more splendid, their message clear;
let us share with the poet his dreams, my Dear,
give me your hand.*

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A BUSINESS MAN

I'm just a typical business man,
with sense of success, wear the right clothes —
expensive — hoping everyone knows
I've arrived. A large briefcase in tan
earns many a laugh — sighs of compassion.
I'm typical — dream at work and play
but, from the record, some might well say,
I dream in peculiar fashion.

Down Town

Inside the door, the receptionist
greeting extends — see the polished square —
desks — rows of heads — no lack of air —
clatter of typewriters will persist
despite sound-proofing; further I look —
dignity sits in the private rooms —
prestige well earned — one room entombs
the boss — that's me — in the corner nook.

"Good morning! Any specials today?"
(Should study that cursèd case of 'x' —
see him and fix it; it's not complex
if only he'd stick to the point. We'll play
'Elektra' tonight — God! the brittle tone
of Klytaimnestra) "Oh! send him in.
Contract — stick fast — you will surely win —
count on our help." (Damn that blasted phone.)

Leaving for lunch — to my secretary: —
"The Eastern Club — back about two."
(Hope White is there — like him through and through —
what chance for business? Best go wary.)
"A drink — yes, on me — my turn this time;
What's yours? A foursome — quite soon? Why yes.
Let's not talk shop — anyhow I guess
best discussed in your office or mine."

Returning to work:— (I like his ways —
heard somewhere he is one for the arts)
"Yes, at two-fifteen — bring me the charts —
call in our friends. Now find me a phrase
to put our point over — yes, that's fair"
(fair — — Gigli struts but, singing that air
from 'Manon' — 'Le Rêve' — gorgeous) — "Will wear?
Well — adopt it." (Wish I could be there.)

Leaving: — "Lock up — thanks, the same to you —
away two days — you know where to reach me."
(Pretty fair day — liked that letter to "G.G." —
thought me pedantic, why? — no clue.
I love precision — watch obsession —
Rats! think of Symonds, Russell and Fry)
"Good night all; on returning I'll try
tell you the news" (but use discretion).

In the street: — "Thanks, my car's over there."
(Saw that man at the B Minor Mass —
must cultivate him — can't be an ass.
Damn the rain — shall I never prepare.
A stunning girl that — wish I knew her.
Wish I could think of that missing line —
must be subtle the sense to refine.)
"That's my car — No, I've no passenger."

Driving home in my car: — "Oil — gas ? Thanks."
(Today, that fellow pretending tough —
broke him down only when I acted rough —
he shall have his rights but curse all cranks)
"Oh lady, watch the red lights — yes, go;
I'll wait 'til you're safe." (Must change that rhyme
and preserve the sense — make it chime.)
(Home at last — those new pictures I'll show.)

At Home

Attentive wife: — "Yes — rest before dinner —
leaving tonight — a drink — sorry — must —
the pictures ? — later, music I trust
before leaving." (Again poor sinner
you're on the move — but may be some chance
indulge my vice — pretty poor writing
perhaps — hopes, fears, truth, dreams uniting
in beauty if not significance.)

En Route

"Single room C — thanks — yes, one hour please."
(That problem must be handled with care
tomorrow; sure my argument's fair.
Eva-Hans Sachs — in the Square — her pleas
for information — music, superb —
glad we heard it. Jove! Russell's quite tough
in parts — better sleep. God! the road's rough.)
"Thanks — slept well — I'll watch out for the curb."

The Conference

(This should be easy but for that one)
"Gentlemen, we've agreed certain things —
that's irrelevant" (how Sayao sings
in 'La Damoiselle') "please defer fun
until conclusion — those in favour
say aye — splendid — that's settled — thanks all —
I think we've earned it — just down the hall."
(Good bunch when forced truth to discover.)

Hotel Dining Room

(I've written about this scene before)
"Thanks, a drink, then later, I'll order."
(Same sort of crowd as across the border)
"Quick service please — who's that near the door —
quite a celebrity — yes, more coffee —
thanks — good night." (Hope that show is worth it —
her taste's pretty good, but I like to profit
from what I see; we'll both be happy.)

Hotel Bedroom

(Good show, quite a message, and funny.
Before reading that preface by Shaw
I'll work awhile. That worn out old whore —
poor thing — only way to earn money.
Get to work — concentrate — dream away!
How sweet was "K" tonight, so charming —
sometimes wish she were more alarming —
just kidding myself — I've had my day.)

Conclusion

Then I write doggerel — oft like this —
most weak — some better — some almost good.
My innermost thoughts this way I would
record; the doing I find sheer bliss.
All day long impressions are hoarded —
avocations, vocation, grist to the mill;
"might have been" pictures, deferred hopes, fill
my mind; thus so richly rewarded.

Stories I read in peoples' faces —
philosophers' selfless search for truth
delights me — passionate hopes of youth
thrill — and the patterns the artist traces.
The blessing of imagination —
drama, inseparable from life —
music, the language of love, peace, strife —
enrich and serve my integration.

I'm just a typical business man
yet dream in peculiar fashion —
indulge in a dangerous passion
for versification — artisan
quite untutored; but strive as I can
to discipline words, by their fit use
the glory of life known whole deduce —
labour of joy for this business man.

RENAISSANCE

My bones, my blood, my spirit and my heart
are stirred again. The vast appeal of spring
has me in thrall, her message whispering
"The time is now to draw the soul apart
from the compulsion gripping you to chart
your path through life, by urgent reasoning
to learn what destiny from you will wring,
that fair the reckoning when you depart."
Come gleaming sunlight, boisterous happy wind,
the shaking ecstasy of leaves newborn;
come spirit of rebirth, death's hold rescind
and, for a spell, philosophy I'll scorn.
Today I would abandon waking sleep —
— sleep awake — a tryst with my soul to keep.

DREAMS

Imagination's spell
hold me.

I love thee, oh so well,
charm me.

Sunlight and waves and spray
sparkling;
tall trees, their leaves asway,
darkling.

Laughter from joyful lips
springing;
eyes shine to mine; a voice
singing.

REALITY

Dreams
are such ethereal things.
If one become reality,
retaining its fragility —
near and tender quality —
know that a miracle is wrought
and keep within the secret heart
the memory.

FANCIES

Sky!

when fathomless and very blue,
when torn with clouds and thunder loud,
when filled with stars and aurora's shroud,
Oh why,
does my heart beat so fast with my breathing?

Sea!

when still and blue, reflecting me,
when stirred by storm to rage and roar,
when lapping gently on the shore
Oh say
why am I overcome with nameless longing?

Hills!

gentle, and dressed in green and gold,
higher, with paths to ledges clinging,
highest and bare, round which wild winds singing,
proclaim
why I find no rest unless I be climbing.

Child!

with your unsophistication and your trust,
with a look of wonder in your eyes,
with your eagerness and hope for surprise,
know Dear,
when near, you are more precious than my own day-dreaming.

Youth!

as you meet life with your heart full of hope,
as you wonder too, when you first learn of pain
and of joy, which you thought the World could not contain,
I burn
with hope you will be wise in your choosing.

Oh my love!
Oh, my heart's desire, as mate and friend,
challenging brain and body to meet your perfection,
warming my heart with your beauty and your affection,
I must
search for thee, till in death my senses are reeling.

GRATITUDE

Beauty,
for your conspiracy with my imagination,
by which experience so limited is magnified
that I know delights of Heaven and pains of Hell,
deep gratitude.

For Words,
used with simplicity in scrupulous narration
of man encompassing his destiny, alone
or with his fellows or some strong friend,
I am grateful.

For Sight,
that by mysterious means enriches so my mind
with pageantry of form and colour, which
creates and partly satisfies a yearning of the soul,
I am grateful.

For Sound,
the vehicle of speech and that so vast invention
music, through which man shares with fellow man
his joy and pain, his ecstasy and grief,
profound gratitude.

SUBJECTIVITY

Hurt of the stars relentless looking down —
pain of impersonal beauty —
delight in sharp or subtle dissonance —
courage for reluctant duty —
gratitude in presence of lovely forms
(of nature's ecstatic dreaming)
visions of beauty born of the storm
in the poet's soul seething.

These are the breath of life; grant me the crown —
isolation's walls demolished
by one whose need is mine; who ardently
dares break the prison of her peace —
hazarding all — to know the "breath" as flame,
strong to consume the dross — unite
our souls in permanent embrace, scorning
peril of shared ecstasy.

SIGNIFICANCE

In a room,
suddenly,
one sees:—
a piece of silver,
a flower in place,
the angle of a chair,
a curtain drawn or closed
and one knows
the gods dwell there.

In a room,
suddenly,
one hears:—
a low voice speaking,
hearty laughter,
music that brings a hush,
a voice quiver in response,
and one knows
the gods dwell there.

LETTERS

Simple,
as the spoken word is simple,
when the lips tremble lest they frame
aught that might disturb
the perfect harmony
that is love.

Precious
record of events for eyes dear —
dear, that they reflect the vision
once unique, now shared, since love's
miracle has dispelled
loneliness.

Writing,
the hurt of separation dulls.
The letter, wingèd messenger
to one who waits, brings swift balm,
dissolving bitter pain
of waiting.

GREETINGS

Grand Central,
Union Station,
the vestibule of a theatre
or concert hall—
hotel lobby.

Stands waiting,
anticipating
one the arrival of another,
who means so much
or so little.

Polite arriving; brushed
with a stiff ritualistic greeting;
then brittle kiss;
hand shaking done,
they pass along.

Cold arriving; stark;
no kiss; observance of the code
at minimum;
antipathy!
God save their souls!

Joyful arriving; swift
embrace; reunion, mutual
their confidence.
Faces aglow!
The Kingdom's here!

Lonely arriving; met
by the eyes of a stranger; souls stripped;
destiny recognized;
fate intervenes.
Paradise lost!

Observing,
the spirit stirs
in sympathy with each, impotent
to intervene
'gainst fate's decrees.

MIDSUMMER IN THE CITY

The city streets —
bronze sun beats down,
no wind stirs; on trial
is mankind;
tested his strength.

Sweating bodies;
a few defy
fatigue and rejoice;
lethargy
the lot of most.

But work is done,
to some a boon;
active brain relieves
undue strain
upon taut nerves.

To others pain —
daily struggle
shown in their faces
lined and sad —
awaiting relief.

The strong, old, young,
relaxed, tasks done,
before they sleep,
find relief
in open spaces.

A copper moon;
lovers, hands clasped,
winter's tensions gone,
new beauty
find in loving.

SCENE IN A PUBLIC DINING ROOM

Stately scene —
soft carpet,
seen between long rows
of tables evenly
spaced — glassware,
reflecting
soft lights. Faces
faces, faces; the bent forms
of waiters.

Four young men —
extrovert,
life of the party —
two on business bent,
weaving spells —
introvert,
straining to join
jollity of the others —
daydreaming.

Bride and groom —
eyes shining —
oblivious they
of all but themselves;
for a space
both believe
the loneliness
decreed for each one of us
conquered.

Old and young —
one the boss,
aware of the game,
age old, to win his
confidence;
the other
subservient
to win favours much desired
for himself.

Two couples,
middle-aged —
women, black-haired,
more alert than men;
men smiling,
grey and tired;
all occupied
in ardent attempt to hide
emptiness.

Aged couple —
courtesy —
no meeting of minds,
each intent on dreams
personal,
accepting
with fortitude
pale reflection of the past.
Dignity!

Business man —
companion
for one bright evening.
She — disordered hair,
hat too large,
disorganized,
until sherry
brings light to her eyes — winsome
ways and looks.

A tryout;
man and maid
seeking to discover
qualities desired
in each other.
Charming sight!
gradually,
searching glances give way to
confidence.

A woman
and two men —
she, with practised
hand, controls the two,
securing
atmosphere
agreeable — men,
enchanted, are satisfied
with their roles.

Drinking beer,
the young men
become more boisterous;
weavers continue
their weaving;
extrovert
still leads the fun;
the other, no longer caring,
laughs and dreams.

Bride and groom,
first to leave,
depart happily
content with their lot.
The couples,
satisfied —
no infringement
of the code and peace preserved —
leave their place.

Boss and youth
match their wits;
benevolently
the old one allows
to the young
the victory.
They leave; the youth
fancies his wit alone brought
him success.

The old ones,
by the wine
softened, courtesies
of their youth exchange,
erasing
the hard lines
of age, briefly
reliving the bygone days
of their youth.

Business man's
companion
calls for more sherry,
leaves on obvious
errand — returns —
talks loudly —
future meetings —
sees compunction in man's face —
recovers.

The young ones,
drop their guards,
having sought and found
ground for comradeship
delicious;
aware,
yet unafraid
by danger of closer tie —
friendship grows.

The trio,
happily
converse in vein
humorous, but soon
boredom lurks —
diversion
is sought by each.
Watcher meets eyes, pools of wisdom
and delight.

Awakened to his isolation,
the watcher leaves —
compares his lot present and to be
with those observed —
resolves afresh
to win the unequal fight with destiny —
avoid the sordid and valueless
to gain the pearls with which his way
is strewn.

THE PHILOSOPHER

Devoted to the ancient quest to solve the mystery of man,
imprisoned in a world of time and space; believing that
 you can,
by disciplines severe and new, find means these prison
 walls to breach
bringing, for your enlightenment, new vistas wide within
 your reach.

Your task to synthesize for us the growing knowledge of
 our day,
instructed of your wisdom, indicate for man the only way
to find in the infinity of nature's vast variety
a plan consistent with his origin and strange heredity.

Man craves to learn his destiny, to know the whither and
 the when,
the meaning of the world, the stars, time, distance,
 motion, beasts and men,
the mystery of sacrifice of many that a few survive
to conquer their environment and save their glowing souls
 alive.

The conquest of the secrets of the world your soul has
 overcome
with reverence for that vast power supreme which lately
 you've discerned.
Without your steadfast faith, intention, clear conclusions
 hardly won
to share, what hope for us; condemned are we to endless
 wandering.

Discarding cynic's pointless lack of faith in reason, crown
supreme
of any plan in which man's estimate of value counts, you
scan
the record of his eager search and venture into paths
untrod
seeking, in your integrity, for values linking man with
God.

TENSION

Struggle! Struggle! Struggle!
Devils, angels, fighting to the death,
seek mastery — mastery —
seek control, and juggle
with the mixèd mass of my desires
for victory — victory.

Confused! My loves! My hates!
The dire conflict prospers, obscuring
the course, which alone, alone
I must plot. Valueless
to seek while indirection frustrates
hope for compromise with fate.

Dwells in my soul a spark
of divinity, cohesive force, fragment
of reality, with power
to save; awake! direct
my searching and my hope — integrate
my being that I know peace.

WORSHIP

Free men
envision being as process
all embracing — struggle of mind
with entropy, the common lot
had not will, long in gestation,
appeared to battle with blind chance —
impose values indigenous
to the kingdom of the mind.

Free men,
by their littleness undeterred,
growing bold, fettered no longer
by fear of gods who may destroy
or ease the burden of free choice —
witnessing the mighty drama —
godhead in the making — must stand
in reverence and worship — what?

Free men —
by nature reverent, knowing
their frailty, humble before
the power in their keeping, bound
to play their little parts — recognize
divinity within; must strive
for wisdom and strength to worship
the godhead shared, that it may live.

A PRAYER

God!

No! not a tribal god,
not a god
anthropomorphic,
who will betray
his own glory —
law of his creation —
sought by us, his creatures —
our hope of salvation —
source of our faith and trust.

God!

unfulfilled until we,
thy creatures,
learn to share with thee
the dream that bred us —
seeking the way
from insensibility
to knowledge of thy plan —
to see in part thy vision —
the sole reality.

God!

dream of perfection that
justifies
our being; that we prove
worthy thy trust
grant but fleeting
visions of thy glory,
that we may keep the faith,
informed by the blessing
and bliss of thy beauty.

God!
flow, flow through my being,
endless fount
of strength; utterly
possess mind and soul
that I may learn
to know the good —
service in thy cause,
reign of thy beauty everywhere;
may passion grow
to seize it for my own.

CREATION

Privileged appear our human minds, tuned
to conceive of distances
measurable only by speed of light;
yet dreaming of molecules,
atoms, their hardly conjectured structures —
universes in themselves,
microcosmic. Privileged! also plagued
and blessed by curiosity
to probe the mystery of our being.

Now it appears that interstellar space
is not empty; tenuous
clouds pervade it, of lonely molecules,
atoms, mostly hydrogen,
in vast quantities because space is vast.
Growing stars, by processes
lately learned, attract this primordial stuff—
enrich its structure to build
the varied magnificence of our worlds.

Likewise, as waking dispels cherished dreams,
these wonders perish when stars
explode and die, their components vanish,
discomposed. How can nature
dispel her own bright dreams? Did we but know,
the mystery of matter
might be solved, the frontiers of our knowledge
widened, and our awe increased —
challenge to saints devoted to research.

Mathematicians, astrophysicists,
and their brother scientists,
combined in the quest, with humility
common to their kind, dream now
of matter, energy, as twin aspects
of the primordial stuff
of being; of lost atoms becoming
energy, awaiting birth
as the minute components of new worlds.

Only a dream, since, as philosophers
perceive, the concept matter,
existing in space and time, is human,
born of man's inhibitions,
his inability to apprehend
dimensions as yet dimly
conceived, still less the significance of
events and their relations —
the common stuff of knower and the known.

Yet curiosity persists. I see
in this inspired fantasy
of science — discomposition but change
of form — matter, phoenix-like,
arising from its own ashes —
marvel greater than myths still
proclaimed as truth, earning but lip-service —
creation sudden, unique,
subject to the will of capricious gods.

For some, this new dream of reality —
continuous creation —
destroys faith in God and the soul of man,
but they are of little faith.
As insight deepens, and man feels himself
partner in an eternal
miracle "the Word made Flesh" — my spirit
glows with inspiration to
know and think the thoughts of its Creator.

For the flyleaf of a copy of
"A HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY"
by Bertrand Russell

A bible, Dear, is this indeed
to me. Peculiar is my need
of counsel — not for me a creed —
regarding what is good and true
in nature — how in the chaos find
cosmos coextensive with the mind —
and peace for me and you.

Divining you with me may care
this quest to join, your time to spare
though precious, that we two may share
others' dreams of the Creator's art —
into your hands I give this treasure —
integrity's monument. At leisure
may it stir your heart.

Think not 'tis stern relentless fare
I offer you. The story's rare
of the quest to which we all fall heir.
With wit and humour the tale is told,
refreshing the spirit, setting free
the mind of the curious. Join with me
in the quest that never grows old.

MUSIC

Clapped hands;
recognition
of rhythm,
affecting the nerves
'til limbs respond —
the whole body —
breathing — the brain —
surrender complete
to rhythm.

Drums heard;
sounded with hands —
sticks; and bands
of drums introducing
changes in pitch.
Reeds and horns
sing and wail
in rhythm; throw
magic spell.

Plucked strings —
strings sonorous
when by bow
held captive — released,
at will high or low,
make music sad,
tender or gay —
subtle to express
changing moods.

Startling
cacophony —
instruments
in combinations
sophisticated —
outcome of long
experiment
by loving masters
of the art.

And song —
perhaps earliest
expression,
unconscious, of a
yearning of the soul —
heard with surprise
by the singer —
and delight.

The voice,
subtlest of instruments,
whether soft,
in intimate song,
or ringing clear,
proud conqueror
of unleashed might
of the orchestra.

Was pitch or rhythm
incentive primeval
to discipline sound?
We do not know;
only the victory glorious —
that man has made his own
the language
of the gods.

RICHARD WAGNER'S
"TRISTAN UND ISOLDE"

To me, the restless movement of the music,
at times subordinate to glittering themes,
oft mingling with them to form rich tapestries
of sound, is both song of the relentless sea
and pulse of passion in the lovers' hearts.

I hear the sad question in the opening bars,
exalt in the symphonic storm, descriptive
of their growing love, passion, fulfillment, peace;
heed the deep toned warning, the stern prophecy
of hopeless yearning, to end only in death.

To me, it is as if the very motion
of the stars were stayed, a bird stopped suddenly
in flight, when the storm is stilled to celebrate
the transformation effected by the draught,
abrupt disruption of the lovers' dreaming,
Isolde's agony as Tristan's soul takes leave.

WALTZ TIME
(Moderato — then accelerando)

Moving in time with the
music, my feet find their
way 'cross the floor or a-
round it; then motion in
circles, or 'lipses or
forwards or backwards or
touching it only to
beat of the music but
may be while waiting a
passage to gain I move
gently or only my
toes to the rhythm res-
pond without moving; comes
joy and delight when a
partner more graceful than
I am responds to my
calling, accepts my em-
brace and both feel the glad
fever of motion or
rhythm enveloping
both as in delicate
posture we stand while our
bodies receive the ca-
ress of the music, then
off with the others or,
fingers touched lightly, we
separate only to
meet again warmly em-
bracing; the time is in-
creased, we move faster and
faster, our feet become
wings as we whirl to the
music; the beat becomes
quicker and quicker 'til
will to endure us for-
sakes and the music stops
too and we happily
bow and retire.

"BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART
FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD"

First impulse,
giving rise to form and all creation, including man;
infinite expression;
name it God.

Cosmic process,
moulding man and moulded in turn by his ideas;
recreation eternal;
name it God.

The concept
of ourselves, the world, and the reality of our concepts;
incomprehensible;
name it God.

Mysterious,
the Universe and the dweller therein,
creature and creator;
name it God.

The miracle
of perception, giving knowledge of what is perceived,
to share with fellow man;
name it God.

Form, colour, sound,
and the response in us which glows as beauty,
bringing light to the soul;
name it God.

Common nature
of consciousness and that of which it is aware;
greatest of mysteries;
name it God.

SPRING SONG

This morning I see from my window new gold in the
sunlight,
the blackness and sleekness of trees with their buds
freshly opened,
their boughs lifted high with fresh vigour. My bones know
the story
how spring, with her beauty, has conquered the sleep of
the winter.

Hand in hand, cares forsaken, let's share in this glory
and gladness;
today, sleep the hurt in our hearts at the world's pain and
sadness;
we'll follow the streams in the woods amid sunlight and
shadows,
a song in our hearts, finding ecstasy in the green meadows.

The trees and the grass and the sky and the sunlight will
bless us,
the balm of the wind soft and sweet with its perfume
caress us;
the hours pass unnoticed, our spirits, united, receiving
the gift of all gifts, beauty's wound; souls refreshed by
this healing.

SUMMER'S DAY

Today, the sky is blue shot through with gold,
white messengers float in it, swift and high,
leaves are upturned in rapture to the sun,
the river ever seawards coursing on,
its white breasts raised the blessing to receive
of wind and sun; the music of the breeze
sounds in my ears, singing its ancient song
of paradise, so near, by so few won.

Today, with longing burns my secret heart
to realize this paradise; 'tis part
of the charmed world of our most cherished dreams,
and, on this day, beyond all doubt it seems
a world unreal is real but by a thread;
our private worlds the true reality.
I would that thread destroy that, by some spell,
in the same world my love and I might dwell.

IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Water, in a gorge of rocks,
rushing to the sea, green blue,
promontories, receive shocks
of the strong urge to win through
and find rest —
directionless motion —
the Ocean.

IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

Unmoved the giants stand,
arms raised
in permanent salute,
fingers pointing to the sky,
snow in their palms.
Valleys, forest clad,
protect secrets
of bird and beast,
shore of rushing stream,
dark fringe of hidden lake
reflecting on its still surface
the majesty above.

The forest spends its strength,
striving upward,
seeking nourishment
upon firm feet, spread thighs,
broad haunches,
mighty torsos, shoulders
of the giants.
Inviolable
the storm-swept peaks,
naked and chaste —
their privacy a quest
only for heroes.

Pioneers,
undaunted by the challenge
of the mighty barrier,
sought and found
a way.
A stream,
intent upon its freedom,
winds through cleft and gorge,
singing its ecstasy,
or dreams in tranquil pool,
ringed by the silent forest —
sure guide to the plains —
the distant sea.

THE "LITTLE PEOPLE"

Little People,
I see you,
silhouetted
'gainst the blue;
stealthily, o'er
rock and tree
stepping; see you
smile at me.

Little People,
sprites are you
delicate as
morning dew.
Yet, while splendid
dreams survive,
dearly cherished
you shall live.

In this garden
you and I
common language
learned; that's why
understanding
we connive —
"they" its guardians
here shall thrive.

"They", the charmed and
favoured three,
guard and cherish
faithfully
their kingdom — well
they know and bless
fortune for her
brave largess.

"Little People"
may your spell,
never sleeping,
guard it well —
this domain — this
loveliness —
these souls; all I
too would bless.

A GARDEN

Guardians of this stirring loveliness
again you speak;
again I know the healing quietness,
your gift unique.

Again the tryst — my eyes rejoice to see,
my ears to hear —
the "little people" peeping from each tree
the heart to cheer.

THE VALLEY OF WINDERMERE IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

Sunrise!

The purple promise of the sun,
hidden yet by the mighty mass
of the Rockies,
touches
the summits of the Selkirks, ranged
in majesty across the lake;
gladly they flash
acceptance
of the glory that is day; blue
of the sky gains intensity,
as particles
of gold
enrich her breath; the valley laughs
in ecstasy; the lake mirrors
the glory above,
welcoming day.

Daytime!

Fickle the lake, her bosom bared
to the sun's caress or the rough
wooing of
the winds.
Down the corridor of the hills,
from East or West, come her lovers —
the gentle breeze —
the storm.
News of the seething world is late
to reach this haven. Best accept
her offering —
her peace —
sunlit days, blessing of the hills,
the lake, coquetting in the sun
or in battle
with the storm.

Sunset

The tall spire of a pine is crowned
by an eagle, keeping his watch
over the vast
domain
of the valley, as the sun sinks
beyond the sharpened ridge of the
Selkirks, bathing
in light
the Rocky Mountains. The rainbow
is no match for the pageant of
green sky, shot through
with beams —
a "Goetterdaemmerung"; the ridge,
a knife edge etched against the sky,
becomes tracery
in the blue of the moon.

The Village

In Windermere, there stands a church
whose history repays research.
The story runs — the records show —
'twas moved by stealth; its churchmen know
how rail and barge its timbers brought
from Donald, where they vainly sought,
and, learning of the thievery,
to others made complaint. But see
the church is there, in Windermere;
the bell alone was lost, I hear.

Now Revelstoke this building sought,
and learning of its passage hence,
determined on some relic rare
to comfort them in their despair.
A silver bell, from England sent,
to worshippers had brought content;
a zealot watched by night and seized
the bell for Revelstoke. Displeased,
complaint made Windermere, but tell
how lure back a twice stolen bell.

One summer eve, the vespers sung,
into this church was brought along
a newborn child to gain the name
his parents wished; two sponsors came —
godparents — ready to declare
their faith, and duties to the heir.
The mystic words were duly said —
the water sprinkled on his head —
words from an ancient rhapsody.
The scene is redolent for me.

Yes redolent, despite the rite —
my spirit moved to see the mite
cradled in loving arms, the smile
upon the happy faces, while
spoken the words — for why compel
their souls to suffer words from hell
condemning life's desired event —
mating of lovers — true love spent
that one may live. Precious to me
their honest act of perjury.

ICE BUCKET ROW

See the four neat cottages
on the cliff, ranged in a row;
the "Lodge" keeping guard behind them;
nought but the lake below.

Behold merry companions,
two and two and two and one,
ensconced therein; soon harmony
reigns, for each single one —

saw in the others some part
of himself — confidence spread,
laid bare were private histories,
their inmost wishes said.

The sun and the wind
brought days of peace;
most went their separate ways;
but as evening fell
all felt the spell
old Bacchus was wont to praise.

The goblets were found,
the nectar poured,
cooled with ice brought from the shed.
More buckets of ice,
were oft required,
as the warmth and jollity spread.

So "Ice Bucket Row",
the row was named
to celebrate the event —
passage of buckets
seen from the "Lodge"
as gaily the hours were spent.

On one such eve,
in one of the "Row",
gathered the crew, at their ease;
some on the bed,
on the chesterfield,
others sprawling to catch the breeze.
In talk, each one
many things confessed —
those things held nearest his heart —
hobbies and dreams —
riding, fishing, scenes
of beauty, the lure of art.

One spoke of poetry he'd made
to ease the burden within.
Another skilled in the magic of words
agreed to read it for him.
She read it slow, with reverence
for what to the poet seemed good.
Peace descended over the group,
no sound in the neighbourhood,
for the words, ennobled by her art,
seemed precious; the poet stood
entranced that he could have said
such things to be understood.
Then, two others joined in song,
antiphonal, sad and gay.
Again the silence; all rejoiced
for the evidence that they
were joined in love. So ended
a never forgotten day.

"Ice Bucket Row" —
ephemeral,
since the spirit gave it birth;
will be recreated only
when congenial souls of worth
join in its resurrection
from memory to earth.

CYCLE OF LIFE

Winter

The time for lovers, hands entwined,
to dream of yesterdays and find,
in script or score, responsive chord —
encouragement that love's reward
for constancy they'll know, new bliss
when spring wakes winter with her kiss.

Spring

Windows wide, their hearts expand
to wind-swept skies, moist buds' demand
for welcome. They go, hand in hand,
to greet the beckoning wonderland.
Smell of pines, sounding breeze,
happy rills, moving trees,
witchery of sun-filled skies —
happy laughter in their eyes.

Summer

Trees overladen — cobalt sky —
golden sand in the cove near-by.
Joy of the water's soft caress
to lovers floating in idleness.
Sun-bathed strand — with shining eyes
each sees in each the yearning rise
for one-ness — ecstasy — release.
The night protects their secret peace.

Autumn

Brilliant the garb of her exuberance;
prelude magnificent to nature's sleep.
The lovers watch, calm in their vigilance —
their passion too the law of life must keep —
and waiting, let imagination drift
to weave its spell, glory of days to be
when, in fulfilment, love's most precious gift
is theirs — a new life — blessed mystery.

CORRECTION

Some give to the attraction
of cell for cell,
pull of steel
for steel, subjection
to nature's law,
the blessèd name
of love.

To me, 'tis rank confusion
to nominate
attractions,
invariable
as so-called fate,
to company
with love.

Equal regard for friend, foe —
true brotherhood
in flower
(cure for hate and war —
goal of sainthood)
heralds the kingdom
of love.

Precious the intimate bond
of like for like,
maturing
with age — conquering
the sting of death;
worthy the name
of love.

High the adventure of heart
calling to heart,
wagering
treasured solitude
for bliss; high the stakes:—
isolation
exchanged
for short-lived ecstasy, doomed
as autumn leaves;
or glory
of pain and passion
shared, forging bond
inviolate
for lovers.

A STORY THAT CANNOT BE TOLD

The ancient drama of man and maid —
in the hallowed setting of choir stalls — played
the organ, descant high and true she sang,
her face aglow; the eyes of the man
shone — saw the vision of dreams fulfilled,
of comradeship, trysting, in her a shield
against the loneliness stilling his heart —
and vowed that never the two should part.

Long separation abated not
the pledge freely given, changed not a jot
the mutual dream each stored in his heart —
ocean, continent, keeping apart
each from the other; came at long last
the day when time of their waiting was past.
Sincere were the vows they took side by side —
set out on life's journey, wings spread wide.

Each learnt, in due time, the soul apart
must endure in its world alone, the heart
seeking, through love, to breach the law
of solitude. So neither can speak
for the other to relate the story —
how they lived through days of trial and glory,
days of estrangement — of souls nigh one —
each integrity kept — their peace they won.

THE HEALER

Love is an inclusive thing,
piercing solitude to fling
wide the gates and, entering,
end the night of suffering
where reigned loneliness as King.
Love is an inclusive thing.

Love is an inclusive thing.
In her arms our spirits sing,
doubt and fear have lost their sting,
fortune's whims can to us bring
nought but cleansing chastening.
Love is an inclusive thing.

Love is an inclusive thing.
At her touch our souls take wing;
beauty rules, fair reasoning
our doubts replace, and poets sing
the language of our wondering.
Love is an inclusive thing.

Love is an inclusive thing.
Shared is joy in everything;
rising sun, her westerning
wind in trees, leaves whispering,
mighty ocean's murmuring.
Shared is joy in everything.

Shared is joy in everything.
Rocky paths ascending cling
to mountain sides, distant ring
of village bells, colouring
of sea and sky — crystal spring.
Love is an inclusive thing.

Love is an inclusive thing.
Slow talk — friendly chattering —
music's magic — two hearts sing,
knowing harmony within,
closer drawn beneath her wing.
Shared is joy in everything.

Shared is joy in everything.
Love's embrace transforms all things —
All creation to us sings —
Spirits rise as though on wings —
gone the solitude that clings.
Love is an inclusive thing.

DISCONTENT

My heart is often rent;
and basis biological
or even neurological,
some might say theological
can probably be found
for this my discontent.

Such diagnoses may
to some seem true and very wise;
to me it seems quite otherwise;
in that I long to realize
success on some high plane
I dream of day by day.

The truth I'd learn of what
philosophers dispute about,
and scientists research about,
psychologists don't know about.
To find the answers true
I wrestle with the knot.

The techniques I would learn
of art, but to be very plain,
it takes a man of moderate brain
and, while my own I don't disdain,
I'll leave it to the few
desirous fame to earn.

Of music, by some chance
I have by now a smattering.
My joy I'd share by scattering
wise words which, myself flattering,
the mysteries dispel
and others' joy enhance.

Remains my discontent.
Decisions made in early days
can't be reversed; resent I praise
ignobly won by knowing ways
my ignorance to hide
and questions circumvent.

TO ZARA NELSOVA

In childhood, hand and bow were placed upon
a bastard instrument, reduced to fit her size.
She heeded not, sweet music came therefrom;
only a need was met, not yet the prize.

By some sure instinct, guiding hand and brain,
as child and maid she strove with ardour strong,
and, long before her heart was stirred, acclaim
was hers by all who heard her cello's song.

And leaving maidenhood, she learned of life
the strange entanglement of joy and pain,
and found surcease from pettiness and strife
when she had entered music's vast domain.

It happened on a day, her ear first heard
the searching beauty of a single phrase.
With grateful joy her ready heart was stirred
and music's magic set her heart ablaze.

Her head she bows her instrument to tend,
her shining hair seems mingled with the strings,
then flung aloft as, straightening to her task,
she'll gaze afar as if more strength to ask.

Stately, before the orchestra, alone —
kinship with the Saints — their secrets known —
with matchless art their songs does she proclaim —
music the masters heard — her heart aflame.

TO CARY CAMERON
A PORTRAIT

For your exuberance thanks, for your stout heart,
accepting life, unconquered, with a will,
in all its varied facets; ever still,
obedient your spirit and apart,
knowing for beauty's spell no counterpart.
The unearned grief of others does instil
in you desire to circumvent the skill
of those who care not for another's smart.
Choice spirit, large to share your fellow's joy,
his pain or night of doubt, strong to sustain
both friend and foe — no thought of your own gain —
your heart intent all evil to destroy.
My dear, your slow sweet smile, your laughter gay,
your wit, your beauty, please me every day.

OF ANGUS

In tender mood,
he sighs;
his spirit moved,
he sighs;
concentrating,
he sighs.
He sighs.

Facing stiff odds,
he's grim;
injustice makes
him grim;
to flippancy
he's grim.
He's grim.

Humorous, he
has charm;
solemn or gay —
such charm;
disarming is
his charm.
Such charm.

In rare despair,
he roars;
when exalted
he roars;
in joy and play,
he roars.
He roars.

When the battle's on,
he's calm;
his public find
him calm;
but is his soul
so calm?
Calm?

TO MARY MARGARET MILLER

All right Mary!
No poetry of you
I can do.
So contrary,
I cannot hope break through
the taboo
I feel you place,
should curious I pry
to find why
seductive grace
and stern monogamy
each defy.

So well I know
your awful deep learning,
your yearning
that you bestow
new light, no truth spurning —
discerning
contribution;
your searching for the way
to allay
doubt — solution
find to life's questions — slay
fear for aye.

Your charm I feel;
rejoice in your keen wit —
blithe spirit —
before it kneel;
find you, I must admit,
exquisite.
You see, my dear,
when you I try to paint,
how restraint
grips me, like fear;
and so these lines, though quaint,
poetry ain't.

A SONG ABOUT DORIS

Strong, as a taut fine spun wire,
are you;
like it, responsive to lightest touch,
are you;
moving with swift and competent grace,
do you
evoke delight. May life's full flood be known
to you.

Yet if, as the well worn phrase proclaims,
"The eyes
are the windows of the soul" — again
"The lips
the gateway of the spirit's full content",
you seek
in dungeon barred and windowless to keep
your soul —

but fail. Exposed to conquest the road
leading
to your heart; powerless the dungeon
to keep
life's arrows from the citadel you guard
in vain.

Upon your face the lines of grief are sharp;
like sudden sunlight is the magic
of your smile.

OF A FRIEND

In eyes that sparkle endlessly, one sees
a spirit gay, deep wisdom, and a heart
warm to respond. She has no counterpart
in my experience for the sure ease
of her unerring instinct, swift to seize
the moment precious; with unconscious art
open the gate to vistas new, and chart
a way 'tis joy to follow and heart's-ease.
Two worlds are hers, and both she finds are bright —
the one of action and the one of dreams —
beauty in both she finds. Who'll tell aright
which real; in both she makes her home it seems.
She stimulates the spirit, cheers the heart;
I take her fragrance with me when we part.

THE LADY OF MY DREAMS

The lady of my dreams it seemed once came to me
and, knowing of my dreams, her eyes she raised to me
in recognition sweet; and then most tenderly
she took my hand and led me to the tryst.

No word was said, for nought there was unknown to us
of what was hidden in the heart of each of us;
the sky and sea and hills looked at us gratefully,
and earth's heart beat more quickly as we passed.

Compulsion sweet our spirits seized; no more of me,
no more of thee; just one instead of thee and me;
not death, but life's strong urge, enhanced so mightily,
possession of us took and wrought its will.

When time resumed its sway, and we were two again,
and from the tryst, our hands entwined, we walked again,
a low glad song my lady sang, then smiled to me;
lips met and she was gone: my dream was done.

A MESSAGE

My love, though pass the years, I am content.
Remains the endless quest, yet how lament
when you your sweetness give and I can take
it for my own, and barren paths forsake.

Life's riddles are unsolved — the search remains.
Wide open beauty's arms — supreme she reigns —
my blood responds to her imperious call.
Your hand in mine, I care not what befall.

SECRETS

You tell of great deeds —
of hope and despair —
of love's great rewards —
(you have beautiful hair)
of life's tangled strand —
your search for the light;
(a touch of your hand
and I see with your sight).

You pause in your tale;
with scrupulous choice
you search for the words;
(your low singing voice)
the secrets you tell
how can you reveal?
(but you've woven a spell,
what you feel, I must feel).

Intent on the truth,
you lie still and calm,
a saga of love —
(the curve of your arm)
relentless, with care,
sparing not as you speak
(you touch gently my hair —
Oh, the shape of your cheek).

Though fast beats your heart,
no reproach, no sighs,
regrets, just wonder
(the fire in your eyes)
that life singled you
to receive its full tide
(they hold mine, clear and true,
may that bondage abide).

You cease, in repose
like that of deep sleep —
but bright in your eyes —
(your breathing so deep)
stirs passion's strong sway
that you share without fear.
(Oh how lovely, today,
your slim body, my Dear).

YOU WHISPERED

You whispered "Is it well you love me so?"
I stunned "Would you prohibit my life's breath,
urge me surrender to the call of death,
as near I did so lately?" Well you know,
as the suns sustain life, the constant glow
of your rich spirit, your dear heart, brings peace
to my troubled soul. Tell me, can I cease
to know the benediction you bestow —
your body's grace, the healing of your voice,
the eagerness and wonder in your eyes —
revealing a blithe spirit truly wise
in realms where beauty's gifts are our free choice?
No good is wrought when nature's clear decree
is rift. How tame my ardent love for thee?

WHO ARE THE SAINTS ?

Pondering,
the reader closed the record of a quest
pursued with unwavering devotion —
the tale of Gandhi's saintliness —
of his renunciations
maintained at bitter cost —
of his long life dedicated
to abstain from sin — the sin
of violence — yet free his people,
and all peoples, from the pit
of misery, ever deepened
by ignorance and despair.

Brooding,
the conflict, subdued these many times
but only lulled to sleep, awakened
as he relived the stirring scenes
of victories near won — surrendered
because of Gandhi's virtue — — —
He forged a mighty weapon,
yet, how find courage to resist
impulse to defend, lust
for vengeance, forgo human justice ?
Two thousand years ago another said
"Resist not evil", and knew peace.
Is peace for all ?

Reverie!

Peace is the reward of integrity
in action — in obedience when commanded to abstain.

In truth, renunciation
brought peace to Gandhi, the saint. But
who are the saints? Is it not
saintly to embrace the abundant life,
eschewing peace for boundless hope,
sustaining the weak. Some did
and will choose renunciation —
some the challenge of expendable gifts —
their common bond sincerity.
"The pure in heart — — —."

Welcome! Come!

Yes, I was reading — — —

Yes, it led me to think, perhaps . . .

Oh no! I am serious — —

You should not say that.

Laughter — merry-making —

his near nakedness —

"girls" — prayer meetings —

pretended fasts —

"He got what was coming to him."

God! Shall sympathy wait
and ignorance rule forever?

G. B. S.

His stage folk are his spiritual heirs,
bearing his stamp and worthy to extol
the virtues he embraced, as foils to draw
his fire upon the evils he would slay.
Did he not stand as Caesar with the Sphinx
to tell the loneliness his freedom brought?
Did not the Maid, by trickery betrayed,
in ringing tones proclaim his faith in life?
Eliza, gaining dignity and poise,
but illustrates his love of humankind.
And who can doubt that Dubedat, so ill,
alone in his love's bosom finding rest,
constrained to bare his innocence, his creed,
in simple words "redemption of all things
by beauty everlasting"; who can doubt
the declaration is his own, his creed —
he innocent as his own Dubedat?

Perhaps Don Juan, the disembodied soul,
unhappy with delights he found in Hell,
repudiating that urbane defence
Infernal of the realm of the unblessed,
is most of all himself, proclaiming faith
in Life Force — struggling aeons long to find,
by trial and error, brain, man's special brain
with knowledge of itself, the brain of the
philosopher, to be its willing slave —
long blind, that it, through man, may know itself,
learn its destination, choose its path.
Don Juan, like his creator, hated shams,
disdained Hells of fulfilment, kept his bond
with Life, preferred the Heavens of the blessed
where truth rewards devotion to the quest.

* * *

"So tired", his mighty spirit from its sheath
is sped, and, saddened, his vast audience
realize that he was mortal. Beloved,
he ministered to generations past
and living, bent on opening the eyes
of his grim world to fairer prospects, well
within its reach, if truth replace old shibboleths.
Like careless Jove, enlivening the earth
and heaven with his fire, or Socrates
goadng Athenians to repent, he
was God-like, yet human; betimes his vision
failed, but revealing time will vindicate
his wisdom where our own perception erred.

"A KING'S STORY"

By right of his own commoners,
he desired a mate
of his own choosing
for his lawful spouse.
Church and State combined to check
his just desire, yet he, beloved
of his people, withdrew
rather than cause
dissension in his realm.

Constitutional monarchy
won his approval,
though none knew better
than he how the vast power
of the "King's First Minister"
could be used with merciless skill
to sunder bond of
affection between
a king and his people.

A "King's Party" he forbade
to promote his cause.
One of lesser breed
might well have fought and kept
his freedom and his crown.
He chose to honour honour,
honouring himself
and she whom he loved,
losing a kingdom.

And when, at last, his late subjects he addressed,
in simple language, bidding them farewell,
with brief reference to his own suffering —
pledging allegiance to his own brother
the new King,

calling for God's blessing on them and him;
and when, his duty done, he bowed before
the new King in all humility, left
the people he had served so well — by stealth,
lest affection breed rebellion against
entrenched authority,
who can refuse honour to him
who was a King and remains a man.

Comfort to him the loyalty
of friends who questioned
not his wish —
loyalty of his royal loved
and loving kin, suffering
the blow to their royal pride,
a son and brother
into
exile cast.

An epic is the tale unfolded here,
telling of conflicts, old but ever new,
inherent in a world that still relies
on forms outmoded while proclaiming true
freedom for all — concept without content
until the scope of freedom is defined,
its limitations known and the just claims
of the spirit from old obsessions freed.
This tale epitomizes for all
the struggle of men with officialdom
of their own creation, which betrays its trust —
a struggle that will cease only when men,
all men, discard expediency
for the rule of love proclaimed long ago
by him whom they aspire to serve.

RECOLLECTION

A little boy sat in the fork of a tree.
The sky was so blue and the wind blowing free.
He looked up, he looked down, and wriggled his toes,
he clung to the branches and wrinkled his nose
in a smile of profound satisfaction.

A VISION



Born of a strong bow harshly drawn
over vibrating strings —
a song that conquered death of sleep —
to my memory clings
as I recall what late I saw —
vision of long dead things.

As sleep gave way to wakefulness
the vision came to me,
so vivid and so beautiful
its memory remained
to haunt my waking hours and sleep —
moment of time regained.

He was more real than a day-dream,
that lad I saw again
standing there. After fifty years
of joy, struggle and pain,
I heard once more the song of youth,
long dormant in my brain.

Familiar cottage, painted white,
perched on a small steep hill,
intense against blue sky and sea —
the scene was known to me —
in sunlight bathed, I see it still —
cottage, the sea and hill.

And by that cottage, motionless,
feet firm, braced to the breeze,
there stood a lad, spellbound it seemed
yet how I loved the ease
of his dear body full of grace
outlined as in a frieze.

Gazing into infinity,
his face declared his joy —
ecstasy uninhibited
of one who hears the song
of nature's chosen warriors,
adventurous and strong.

With breath nigh stopped, I saw that face,
that figure dear to me;
for by a miracle there stood,
defying time's decree,
he who alone, a reckoning
might ask and set me free.

My spirit joined that other self —
alliance strange, but true.
The blue, the white, the humming breeze
become the sharp refrain
dreamed by stern Brahms — strange guest in my
sophisticated brain.

Dear God! how, as the vision died,
it thundered in my ears;
fell burning tears — Have I betrayed
the lad I was and Thee?
The Recording Angel's hand I know
cannot be stayed by me.

AFTER READING THE NEWS IN
NOVEMBER 1945

Out of the chaos and out of the moaning,
in spite of the eagle-like struggle for power,
in spite of the callous indifference to suffering,
in spite of preponderance of lies and deceiving,
out of this darkness and into the morning
at last shall come blessings of law and of peace.

The men who abhor all the lying and cheating,
all those still alive to the groan of oppression,
all those with hearts wrung at the waste and the folly,
all those who speak out without fear of reprisals,
unite and we'll fight this conspiracy loathsome,
and surely to God shall our numbers prevail.

We have means, we have power, we have will without ending,
must oust from our hearts the dark mood of despairing,
must recognize truth and be strong to support it,
must learn to distinguish 'tween prophet and Devil,
break out of our bonds and gird us for battle,
fight power of privilege and selfish old men.

AUGUST 1951

Confidence is unavailing.
Short-term prospects rule today.
Swift transition now unveiling—
prophets hardly dare assay
the outcome. Changes so immense
our spirits fill with doubt intense.

Conflicts bare and cruel beset us;
ideologies, race, creed
vie for power; means unscrupulous
oft belie the goals they plead.
Credulous, the faithful tend
to sacrifice in deed the end.

Two solutions lie before us;
leading to the same sure end —
supranational government,
based on violence, or blend
of law and force with justice plied
that human rights be recognized.

If military victory
break opposition, what then?
Slavery for all the vanquished;
slavery for all just men.
Rule by force alone will grip us —
ends of life betrayed — amen!

If, with integrity, were faced
competing cultures, aims not shared;
if origins of fear were traced,
the value of forbearance bared;
the strong might find the way to quell
this mutual distrust, this hell —

of insecure security,
gross insatiable greed,
leading to conflict profitless,
victories planting the seed
of slavery. Strong leaders we
beg for the holier victory.

REVERIE

There was a man in love —
poor soul —
well nigh from the date of his birth —
poor soul;
he could not remember what first caught his love —
a firefly, it might be, or soft cooing dove;
he loved balls of clay on the end of a switch,
lurking newts at bottom of slow flowing ditch,
in church warmth and comfort of mother's fur coat,
the perilous angle of toy sailing boat,
fireworks, bright sunlight, moon and stars in the sky,
trees perched on grey rocks, waves with spray flying by;
all contributed to his sad state.

No respite in his youth —
poor soul;
his longing he could not control —
poor soul;
music solemn or gay did his heart expand,
in softly read words he could scarce understand
he found rhythm; by curiosity seized
he delved into knowledge — read what he pleased;
found drama in books, saw drama in living —
joy in the search for the truth, still believing
the quest not in vain, day-dreamed of perfection
in all things; no wonder he had this infection.
His youth served but to seal his sad fate.

When loneliness he knew —
poor soul —
and longed that his love be returned —
poor soul;
reason told him others might share his sad fate —
looked in eyes that sought his — lest perchance their state
matched his own — leapt his heart when discovery made —
looked out of those windows souls seeking his aid
to lessen their pain. Earlier loves so erratic
were fused into one by a flame ecstatic
that burned in his heart, knowing how, with others,
he could sing the glad songs of permanent lovers.
Earth and stars were now in his keeping.

Remains this man in love —
poor soul;
please God, to the day of his death —
poor soul;
well knowing the law that alone he must stand,
sustained by the nearness love grants, and the hand
of friendship — no longer he's burdened by love,
accepting its pain and its vast treasure trove;
still welcomes the sharp joy of beauty's arrow,
lives more for today than with thought for tomorrow —
accepts the world's evil without power to harm him —
finds pleasures of body and spirit to charm him.
Rich, not poor, the soul in his keeping.

REFLECTIONS ON ATTAINING THE AGE OF 58

Choices, affecting life's long course and tone,
are made before the soul's true yearning known;
mysterious and urgent, able if but strong
to point to disciplines most hard but sweet as song.
They're made, and the lot of many is to work
at odds with his true nature and to shirk
that which inheritance conspired for him to be,
and, but too late, he learns his destiny.

But, if the strife engendered by this state
has compensations which, accepted not too late,
provide enchantments, lost to integrated souls
whose paths inevitable lead to stated goals,
perhaps frustration, be it not complete,
incentive is to seize the longed for sweet
of what his heart desires, when pressures cease
to occupy his mind and he finds peace.

Perhaps for him inaction was decreed,
eschewing the world, in search of that great need
to solve the mystery, which but few have found,
to know in joy the Universal Ground.
Or life of action may have been his forte,
using his gifts, with just impatience taught
to lead his fellows from a meagre life
into abundance free from useless strife.

Or Art, the sweet of life to those who dare
encounter naked truth and find it fair,
beckons, and, while he may not seize the prize,
beauty shines forth from all that meets his eyes;
and glory of metered words and truth expressed
in words inspired, in tenderness, in jest,
and dance and song and music's magic might,
comfort his soul and fill the world with light.

That much has been denied 'tis ill to plead.
Thanks for the ecstasy and joy, generous meed
of calm enjoyment, when my soul was stilled
by kinship with those whose paths directly willed.
Thanks, too, for sensitivity — sweet discipline —
that blood leaps to meet warm blood to mine akin.
Bless those companions good and kind and dear
whose hands touched mine and rid my heart of fear.

ON ACHIEVING THE AGE OF 59

Since last I wrote
in celebration of advancing age,
we have Wells' testament —
"Mind at the end of its Tether"
and he has gone;
and Russell writes
of western thought a history; a sage
with mind intently bent
to pierce the veil of life, that still
man might hope on.

To Wells his due!
for his integrity; voicing — to him,
in age, the truth — refuted
by his adventurous life — harsh verdict —
denial complete.
To Russell too!
for his firm faith in good, knowing that truth
inclusive is not yet,
and trusting reason, above all,
to guide our steps.

Abandoned hope
have men of lasting peace; rampant is hate
by patriotisms false
engendered; myth of chosen race
divides; class war
invades our peace.
Prophets, obedient to the still small voice
of reason, raise their hands
in warning and — unheard — proclaim
the brotherhood of man.

To faiths outworn —
product of an age of ignorance,
hope of salvation
purchased at price of sacrifice
to unknown gods —
unworthily
men turn; few valiant to the quest hold fast —
from cold neutrality
to wring a destiny
worthy of our dreaming.

Recorded too,
if nought may be withheld from this report,
must be that conflict — between
desire, no wit less keen, to know,
in full flood glories
freely offered
to those untrammelled, and relentless
entropy, the common fate.
Good must I count my soul's denial
to fate the victory.

A year has passed.
Despite the "testament", tumult and false hope,
remains belief — cosmos,
co-extensive with the mind,
into being was dreamed;
intelligence
from his environment separates man
that he may know himself —
evaluate experience —
know ecstasy and grief.

A postscript —
above all — without which valueless
to me would be a life,
the Universe to do its will —
friendships and love
remain and grow.
Vain the quest and all my curiosity
were there not seeking too —
sharing the thrill of new found truth —
a kindred soul.

ON ACHIEVING THE AGE OF 60

When last I wrote to mark a year expired,
I think my faith was low, my spirit tired —
dismayed that once again men were denied
the fruits of hard won victory, that pride
with fear and hate together had conspired
to dash the hope old Omar in us sired —
the sorry scheme to shatter and entire
reshape it nearer to the heart's desire.

Though nought has changed (the battle lines still drawn—
the pure in heart, the knaves, and the forlorn —
disaster threatens, ignorance widespread
thwarts dawn of justice, and the meek are bled)
my restless soul finds peace beyond desert;
old friends and new conspire to ease the hurt;
I must endure because of others' pain —
refreshed, a happier theme is my refrain.

Our world is full of glory to be shared.
Suffers mankind but grateful men are spared
the agony of an all-seeing eye
a god must know; barren the constant sigh
for other worlds, disdaining gifts so vast
within our grasp. So I with others cast
my lot to share their griefs without complaint;
with them the glory take without restraint.

Yes! Beauty keeps her secret tryst with me
my heart to gladden, unexpectedly
with sudden splendour, or by subtle means
open my eyes, that in familiar scenes
new tenderness and worth I see. What bliss
to meet her glance — the heartbreak of her kiss.
Though numbered are my days, with joy I sing —
each one transfigured at her beckoning.

ON ACHIEVING THE AGE OF 61

Older, perchance the banking of life's fires
with undiminished hope for light conspires
to spur conviction — generous reward —
beauty, mysterious aspect of the "Word"
is our liaison with reality —
concept ineradicable for me.

The secret of diversity at war
with entropy — inexorable quest —
holds me in thrall. The chaste austerity
of nature's course — our rude necessity —
is unrelenting, yet — dismay will cease
this liaison established — we find peace.

No less austere is beauty's sovereign reign,
no less severe the discipline to gain
the consolation granted those who see
the awful splendour of reality.
Serene, we shall not shrink from destiny
the "good" within our grasp, since we are free.

Stay with me highest joy that I could miss,
the shade of beauty's wing, her touch, her kiss;
her face, transfiguring, will overcome
the desolation of that martyrdom
death; yes "martyrdom", less bitter if she keep
a tryst with me 'til gently I find sleep.

ON ACHIEVING THE AGE OF 62

Two thousand million other souls
upon this planet dwell.
Humility be mine this day
as I set out to tell
how fares one spirit privileged
so long by grace of hell.

Stern are the words that must be writ,
for much I see amiss —
Leaders of men betray the meek,
with kiss of Judas plan,
at price of peace, to save the strong,
transgressing rights of man.

Power enthroned true virtue shuns,
deaf to gospel of worth —
that all dwelling in righteousness —
all the peoples of the earth —
be judged by their own faithfulness,
what colour, race, or birth.

Some saints among us dwell and cry
peril of plans to steer
mankind to slavery — defy
their makers; sadly hear
groans rising from the sore oppressed,
manacled by fear.

Price of safety and privilege —
a conscience wracked with doubt.
Fighting to oust complacency,
my spirit will not cringe
before the strong who, thoughtlessly,
man's basic rights infringe.

Greeting to friends both old and new;
your mercy serves me well,
cleansing my soul that I may know
the joy of beauty's spell.
Life's gift supreme, love freely given,
is mine — bars gates of hell.

ON ACHIEVING THE AGE OF 63

As age approaches and one looks within,
a curious trait of our humanity
asserts itself; from our Gethsemane
desire is born the narrative to spin
of our experience, encompassing
both fact and fancy; an apostrophe
of what has been, of what we wished to be —
fragments of dreams fulfilled, hopes withering.
Careless of time and place, it should be told
and, autobiographical, it could not end.
"Vengeance is mine" 'twas said — what use defend.
"Everyman's" tale in truth I would unfold;
in retrospect glean from experience
what grace and beauty in each circumstance.

Yet, despite blows of fortune, is it well,
on this my natal day, to search the past?
The future beckons; still my glance is cast
forward; burns bright the longing nought can quell —
desires untamed that in my spirit dwell —
the lover's hope to see again the face
of his beloved, to dare the fierce embrace
of beauty — willing slave beneath her spell.
Tragedy rules, some say, our destiny —
concept subtle, philosophic, with content;
yet how can living loving eyes but see
the glory that attends life's sacrament.
Though fancy roam the past, the present scene,
my tale delights to come shall from them glean.

As moonlight's soft encroachment conquers night —
stars pierce the velvet dark —, so, on my flight,
my spirit has been won by what befell,
and hope for future joy these lines must tell.

I'll see again the question in youth's eyes,
flowing of muscle seen through silken skin,
wind-shaken leaves fantastic patterns spin,
the restless ocean meet with lowering skies;
delicate forehead crowned with fine spun hair,
the light old Rembrandt captured from his dreams,
magnificence of Rodin's vital themes,
da Vinci's cadavers in postures rare.
I'll see again the moonlight's soft caress
on dimpled water, see the sun's decline
through angry clouds, wheat bending in distress
before the prairie wind, as waves incline.
Such visions rare I trust will tend my flight
through years to come and bring their old delight.

I'll know the gift of friends who prize the heart,
the skylark's song from out the distant blue,
tinkle of hidden cowbells sweet and true,
sharp challenge of debate, all sting apart;
relief of pain in arms of gracious sleep,
stab of the gladness brought us by the spring,
autumn's exuberance bright but sobering,
the peace of closeness after passion's sweep.
The poet's message touches still my soul,
the pageantry of music, priceless friend,
brings solace and delight; how best extol
the thrill when voice and instrument well blend.
Perhaps, for me, supreme is music's spell —
appeal so deep, no other can excel.

In fact or fancy may such pleasures bless
the years until my soul I must confess.
May beauty hold me worthy of her kiss,
her lightest touch my spirit stir to bliss.

ON ACHIEVING THE AGE OF 64

Swiftly
a year has passed.
Again
I feel the urge
to render an accounting
of my stewardship —
of that separate thing
some would call
my soul.

To me,
it seems certain
that "it" —
that which knows both
impressions, with sensation
of past and present,
memory and action —
is indeed
unique.

To say
"it" is a soul,
implies life separate
from the body, but who knows?
I know only that
realization of
"its" powers
is life.

Living
is creating —
is bliss;
death — loss of desire
to create, to fashion from
the raw material
of events worlds nearer
the desires
of men.

Lately,
it seemed that no
accounting
would be required
this day. Darkness and pain
extinguished all desire,
for the good life
or bliss.

For death
beckoned; yet power
to resist
grew, encouraged
by the love seen in the eyes
of friends. The battle won,
again I know
desire.

Precious
the company
of friends,
to break the spell
of dire distress, to enhance
the joy of those rare
moments when the full tide
of life's gift
is known.

This year,
inclination
to tell
of the world's woes
is absent. Perhaps passage
of years tends to blunt
sensibility to
others' pain;
and yet . . .

no less
than in the past
my heart
is moved; with age
grows faith that good will conquer
evil — steadfastness
in pursuit of the goal,
elusive
but bright.

So if,
faithfully, I
render
an account of
my stewardship, admitting
opportunities
for good neglected, through
weariness
or sloth, —

thankful
am I to know
desire
unabated
for fulfilment — to be blessed
with fierce joy — and peace;
beauty my sole mistress,
beckoning
me home.

ON ACHIEVING THE AGE OF 65

This year I honour Omar's brilliant wit,
the rendering Fitzgerald gave of it —
a rebel's song, frustration's passionate
revolt — swift ecstasy — the waiting pit.

I know that spring must vanish with the rose!
that youth's sweet-scented manuscript must close.
Ah yes! but nature offers fresh delights
maturity alone may seize — and knows.

The wish I know that I with love conspire
to grasp the sorry scheme of things entire
and shatter it to bits; but what insight
could mould it nearer to the heart's desire.

In youth, but no less now, do I frequent
Doctor and Saint, delight in argument
about it and about. Great the reward —
with joy I prize the hours in discourse spent.

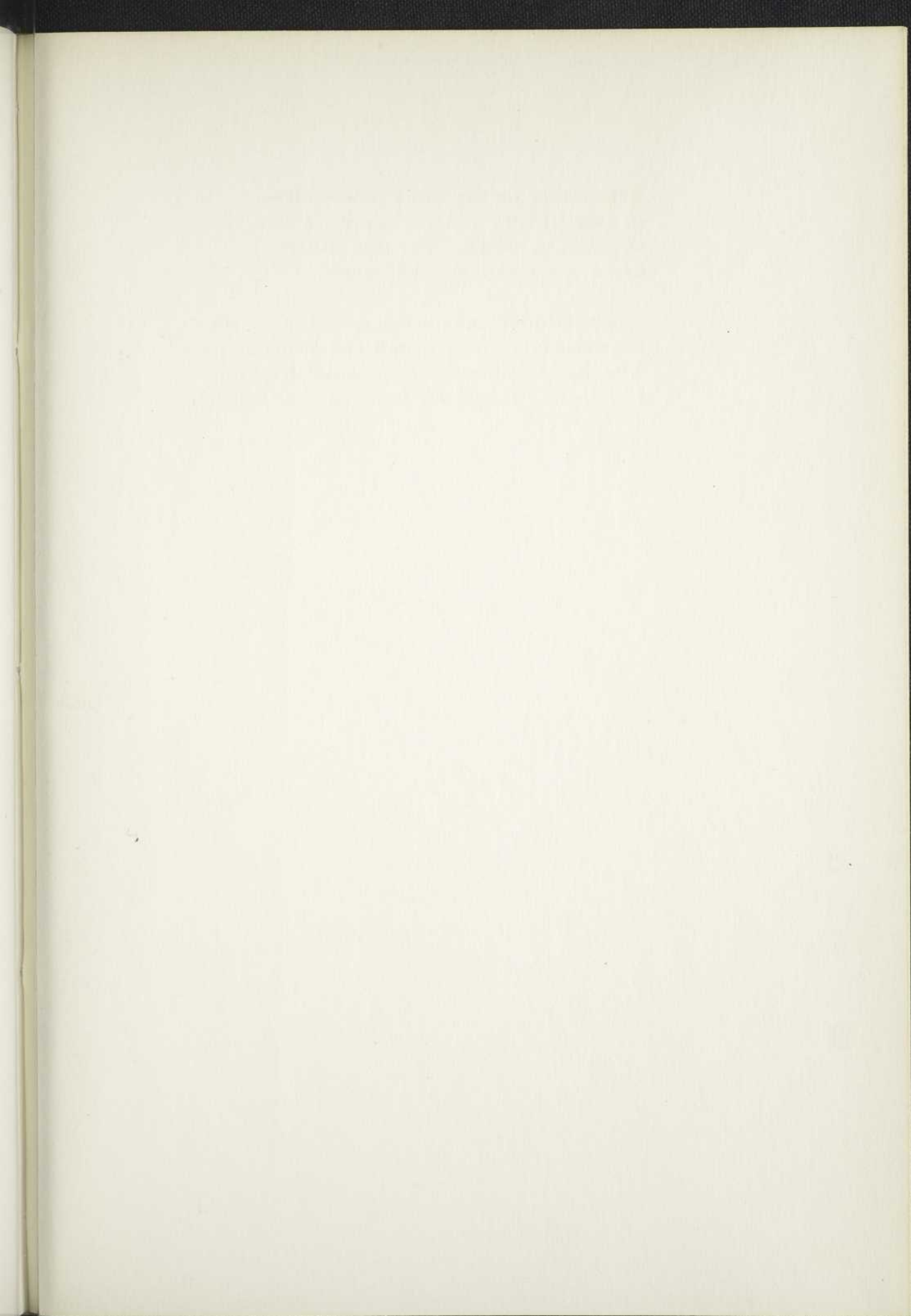
Like Omar, seeds of wisdom did I sow
and them endeavoured earnestly to know.
With some descried a star to mark a path;
I knew brief ecstasy that it was so.

"How long, how long, in infinite pursuit
of this and that endeavour and dispute?"
"Til death, I answer, though impregnable
the truth; the game itself a precious fruit.

Repentance for my sins I now confess,
so long I be the judge. So, must I bless
the gifts so prodigal I've not disdained —
oases in a threatened wilderness.

When nature crooks her finger, and my glass
too must be turned, I shall not shrink to pass.
Nor shall bewilderment nor stark despair
encompass, though the heavens' face be brass.





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