

Selected Poetry

THE CRISIS

(For the *N.Z. Tablet*.)

Midnight; sickles of candle-light
Flicking the dim wall;
Soft weeping, and over all
The dread hush of suspense—
Faces in the gloom—white and tense—
Hoping, despairing, watching
Death's cold eclipse
Chilling the pale brow—
Sealing the drawn lips—
Dulling the wide eyes—
Dim-unseeing now,
For Life, fleeting as a spent flame,
Wings to the great Giver whence it came.

Stillness! and a swift fear!
O God! he is here!
I feel the icy imminence of doom
Fraught with this voice—Thou too must pass
this room.

— HAROLD GALLAGHER.

Nelson.

COURAGE

Say not in scornful tones that we are weak,
Though we are only women, we are strong.
For man, the field of valor and the sword;
For us, the hearthstone and the cradle
song!

Have we not had our share of trials and
tears,
And all the sorrows that the world has
known?
In those dim paths trod by our weary feet
The seeds of courage and of life were sown!
Ever with courage by the Man we stand.
What is his gain is ours—his loss our loss.
Unseen, unsung, but still courageously
Down through the ages we shall bear our
cross!

I ask: Does it not take courage to go
Into the depths—out of the depths again?
Say not in scornful tones that we are weak—
We are the mothers of the sons of men!
—CATHERINE ELIZABETH HANSON in the *Irish
World*.

DESERT DUSK

Isled here a moment from the rising swell
Of night that brims these canyons like a sea,

I watch the desert's brazen savagery
Levelled like lands that mighty waters quell.
Stern is this touch, yet merciful its spell,
Which can so soothe the wind-tormented
sands,

And make a temple of these outcast lands,
Where for a night the peace of God may
dwell.

Vain were a Noah! Yet this flood foreshows
End of a life through deserts come to age;
The closing down of eyes that vainly weep;
That gracious respite which the spirit knows,
Summoned from passion's tyranny and rage
To taste the larger dignity of sleep.

—WILLIAM FOSTER ELLIOTT in the *Lyric West*

O WORLD, BE NOBLER

O World, be nobler, for her sake!

If she but knew thee what thou art,
What wrongs are borne, what deeds are done
In thee beneath thy daily sun,

Know'st thou not that her tender heart
For pain and very shame would break?
O World, be nobler for her sake!

—LAURENCE BINYON in *An Anthology of
Modern Verse*.

AT NIGHT

Home, home from the horizon far and clear,
Hither the soft wings sweep;
Flocks of the memories of the day draw near
The dove-cote doors of sleep.

Oh, which are they that come through sweet-
est light

Of all these homing birds?
Which the swiftest and the straightest flight?
Your words to me, your words!

—ALICE MEYNELL in an *Anthology of Modern
Verse*.

OUR LONGER LIFE

Some little creatures have so short a life
That they are orphans born—but why
should we

Be prouder of a life that gives more time
To think of death through all eternity?

Time bears us off, as lightly as the wind
Lifts up the smoke and carries it away;
And all we know is that a longer life
Gives but more time to think of our decay.

We live till Beauty fails, and Passion dies,
And Sleep's our one desire in every breath;
And in that strong desire our old love, Life,
Gives place to that new love whose name is
Death.

—W. F. DAVIES in the *Nation and the Athe-
naeum*.

THE TENT SPEAKS

I am the symbol of the soul of the circus—
For if the soul of the circus is anything,
It is the soul of the gypsy.

I am the charm of the Out-of-Doors—
The charm of blue sky; of fleecy white clouds,
Of storm-clouds; of wind, of rain;
Of crimson and golden sunsets,
Of glorious sunrises;

Of dew in Summer and of frost in Autumn;
Of sun and moon and stars—
The burning, pulsing, throbbing stars—
The red and silver and blue and golden stars.

I am also the symbol of happiness,
For I am the psychology of the laughing,
Shoving, pushing, joyous, care-free crowd:
To me human nature is an open book;
Wherever I go, men, women and children,
Of all castes and colors,
Keep me company.

Thus it is that I get out of life
Much more than I could possibly derive

If I were the palace of a king,
Or the office of a business man,
Or a store, or a hotel,
Or any other kinds of a building. . . .
—SAM J. BANKS in the *Connecticut Standard*.

AUTUMN

Great lady of the darkening skies,
Great lady of the lustrous eyes,
Stay, stay your hasty tread,
And lowly bend your golden head.
Ah! hush that rending moan
Far wandering that turns to stone,
And lead, my loves and every thought
And all the visions I have brought;
Ah, hush that bodeful sound!
Is it of sky or hollow ground?
That we together in good faith
May talk of the great god Death.
In charnel-house of little breath
Prisoners both are we to death,
And over all the freezing earth
Is not a sign of ancient mirth.
Here 'mong the ashes of the year,
In dregs of life, sorrow and no tear,
Memory on our minds doth lie
So intricate the old forget to die.
Great spirit of many moods,
Art thou god or devil of these woods?
Sometimes a spectre vast and gray,
Sombre, blotting out the light of day,
And then a lightsome fairy here and there,
Making mock of grovelling despair;

And then a being of such gracious semblance,
As turns to tears the anguish of remembrance
Ah, enchantress weaving spells,
What is it that thy riddle tells?
When sunset reddens the lofty trees,
And the birds are singing high jubilees,
And creeping night the woods doth darken,
Deep down in my heart I wait and hearken,
And in my heart is naught 'neath the arching
sky

Save a reedy, tremulous, timorous cry.

When Death makes of the young its capture,
Innocence can call it still a rapture;
Not so the old; from their strengthless eyes,
Has faded long the fire of paradise.
They see the bareness of the ended year,
The ended day, the sunken sun and a fear—
Dust to dust is all, and earth to earth
Spite of love, spite of hope, and wild bird's
mirth;
Great enchantress weaving spells,
Is this all thy riddle tells?

Hope's candle lights man's trembling way,
No more. There is no more to say,
Save that the sick man's latest sigh,
Blows out that candle standing nigh,
Alas for freedom, and oh, our frailty!
Be illusion mine and away reality,
When past is the surges thunderous roar,
And we list to the far recurrent lapse,
Of the ebbing tide on the desolate shore,
Comes, sweet as hope, the word—perhaps
In all the creeds and lexicons of sorrow,
Sleeps sweet with hope, the word—to-morrow.
—JOHN BUTLER YEATS in the *Literary Digest*.

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