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THE PROPHET

By Kahlil Gibran

New York: Alfred A. Knopf

1923

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The Author\_

“His power came from some great reservoir

of spiritual life else it could not have

been so universal and so potent, but the

majesty and beauty of the language with

which he clothed it were all his own?”

--Claude Bragdon

THE BOOKS OF KAHLIL GIBRAN

The Madman. 1918 Twenty Drawings. 1919

The Forerunner. 1920 The Prophet. 1923

Sand and Foam. 1926 Jesus the Son of

Man. 1928 The Forth Gods. 1931 The

Wanderer. 1932 The Garden of the Prophet

1933 Prose Poems. 1934 Nymphs of the

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THE PROPHET

|Almustafa, the{7} chosen and the

beloved, who was a dawn unto his own

day, had waited twelve years in the city

of Orphalese for his ship that was to

return and bear him back to the isle of

his birth.

And in the twelfth year, on the seventh

day of Ielool, the month of reaping, he

climbed the hill without the city walls

and looked seaward; and he beheld his

ship coming with the mist.

Then the gates of his heart were flung

open, and his joy flew far over the sea.

And he closed his eyes and prayed in the

silences of his soul.

\*\*\*\*\*

But as he descended the hill, a sadness

came upon him, and he thought in his

heart:

How shall I go in peace and without

sorrow? Nay, not without a wound in the

spirit shall I leave this city. {8}Long

were the days of pain I have spent

within its walls, and long were the

nights of aloneness; and who can depart

from his pain and his aloneness without

regret?

Too many fragments of the spirit have I

scattered in these streets, and too many

are the children of my longing that walk

naked among these hills, and I cannot

withdraw from them without a burden and

an ache.

It is not a garment I cast off this

day, but a skin that I tear with my own

hands.

Nor is it a thought I leave behind me,

but a heart made sweet with hunger and

with thirst.

\*\*\*\*\*

Yet I cannot tarry longer.

The sea that calls all things unto her

calls me, and I must embark.

For to stay, though the hours burn in

the night, is to freeze and crystallize

and be bound in a mould.

Fain would I take with me all that is

here. But how shall I?

A voice cannot carry the tongue and

{9}the lips that gave it wings. Alone

must it seek the ether.

And alone and without his nest shall the

eagle fly across the sun.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now when he reached the foot of the

hill, he turned again towards the sea,

and he saw his ship approaching the

harbour, and upon her prow the mariners,

the men of his own land.

And his soul cried out to them, and he

said:

Sons of my ancient mother, you riders of

the tides,

How often have you sailed in my dreams.

And now you come in my awakening, which

is my deeper dream.

Ready am I to go, and my eagerness with

sails full set awaits the wind.

Only another breath will I breathe in

this still air, only another loving look

cast backward,

And then I shall stand among you, a

seafarer among seafarers. {10}And you,

vast sea, sleepless mother,

Who alone are peace and freedom to the

river and the stream,

Only another winding will this stream

make, only another murmur in this glade,

And then shall I come to you, a

boundless drop to a boundless ocean.

\*\*\*\*\*

And as he walked he saw from afar men

and women leaving their fields and their

vineyards and hastening towards the city

gates.

And he heard their voices calling his

name, and shouting from field to field

telling one another of the coming of his

ship.

And he said to himself:

Shall the day of parting be the day of

gathering?

And shall it be said that my eve was in

truth my dawn?

And what shall I give unto him who has

left his plough in midfurrow, or to

him who has stopped the wheel of his

winepress? {11}Shall my heart become a

tree heavy-laden with fruit that I may

gather and give unto them?

And shall my desires flow like a

fountain that I may fill their cups?

Am I a harp that the hand of the mighty

may touch me, or a flute that his breath

may pass through me?

A seeker of silences am I, and what

treasure have I found in silences that I

may dispense with confidence?

If this is my day of harvest, in what

fields have I sowed the seed, and in

what unremembered seasons?

If this indeed be the hour in which I

lift up my lantern, it is not my flame

that shall burn therein.

Empty and dark shall I raise my lantern,

And the guardian of the night shall fill

it with oil and he shall light it also.

\*\*\*\*\*

These things he said in words. But much

in his heart remained unsaid. For {12}he

himself could not speak his deeper

secret.

\*\*\*\*\*

[Illustration: 0020]

And when he entered into the city all

the people came to meet him, and they

were crying out to him as with one

voice.

And the elders of the city stood forth

and said:

Go not yet away from us.

A noontide have you been in our

twilight, and your youth has given us

dreams to dream.

No stranger are you among us, nor

a guest, but our son and our dearly

beloved.

Suffer not yet our eyes to hunger for

your face.

\*\*\*\*\*

And the priests and the priestesses said

unto him:

Let not the waves of the sea separate us

now, and the years you have spent in our

midst become a memory.

You have walked among us a spirit,

{13}and your shadow has been a light

upon our faces.

Much have we loved you. But speechless

was our love, and with veils has it been

veiled.

Yet now it cries aloud unto you, and

would stand revealed before you.

And ever has it been that love knows

not its own depth until the hour of

separation.

\*\*\*\*\*

And others came also and entreated him.

But he answered them not. He only bent

his head; and those who stood near saw

his tears falling upon his breast.

And he and the people proceeded towards

the great square before the temple.

And there came out of the sanctuary a

woman whose name was Almitra. And she

was a seeress.

And he looked upon her with exceeding

tenderness, for it was she who had first

sought and believed in him when he had

been but a day in their city. {14}And

she hailed him, saying:

Prophet of God, in quest of the

uttermost, long have you searched the

distances for your ship.

And now your ship has come, and you must

needs go.

Deep is your longing for the land of

your memories and the dwelling place

of your greater desires; and our love

would not bind you nor our needs hold

you.

Yet this we ask ere you leave us, that

you speak to us and give us of your

truth.

And we will give it unto our children,

and they unto their children, and it

shall not perish.

In your aloneness you have watched with

our days, and in your wakefulness you

have listened to the weeping and the

laughter of our sleep.

Now therefore disclose us to ourselves,

and tell us all that has been shown

you of that which is between birth and

death.

\*\*\*\*\*

And he answered,

People of Orphalese, of what can I

{15}speak save of that which is even now

moving within your souls?

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

Then said Almitra, Speak to us of

\_Love\_.

And he raised his head and looked upon

the people, and there fell a stillness

upon them. And with a great voice he

said:

When love beckons to you, follow him,

Though his ways are hard and steep.

And when his wings enfold you yield to

him,

Though the sword hidden among his

pinions may wound you.

And when he speaks to you believe in

him,

Though his voice may shatter your dreams

as the north wind lays waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall

he crucify you. Even as he is for your

growth so is he for your pruning.

Even as he ascends to your height and

{16}caresses your tenderest branches

that quiver in the sun,

So shall he descend to your roots and

shake them in their clinging to the

earth.

\*\*\*\*\*

Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto

himself.

He threshes you to make you naked.

He sifts you to free you from your

husks.

He grinds you to whiteness.

He kneads you until you are pliant;

And then he assigns you to his sacred

fire, that you may become sacred bread

for God’s sacred feast.

\*\*\*\*\*

All these things shall love do unto you

that you may know the secrets of your

heart, and in that knowledge become a

fragment of Life’s heart.

But if in your fear you would seek only

love’s peace and love’s pleasure,

Then it is better for you that you

cover {17}your nakedness and pass out of

love’s threshing-floor,

Into the seasonless world where you

shall laugh, but not all of your

laughter, and weep, but not all of your

tears.

\*\*\*\*\*

Love gives naught but itself and takes

naught but from itself.

Love possesses not nor would it be

possessed;

For love is sufficient unto love.

When you love you should not say, “God

is in my heart,” but rather, “I am in

the heart of God.”

And think not you can direct the course

of love, for love, if it finds you

worthy, directs your course.

Love has no other desire but to fulfil

itself.

But if you love and must needs have

desires, let these be your desires:

To melt and be like a running brook that

sings its melody to the night. {18}To

know the pain of too much tenderness.

To be wounded by your own understanding

of love;

And to bleed willingly and joyfully.

To wake at dawn with a winged heart and

give thanks for another day of loving;

To rest at the noon hour and meditate

love’s ecstacy;

To return home at eventide with

gratitude;

And then to sleep with a prayer for

the beloved in your heart and a song of

praise upon your lips.

[Illustration: 0029]

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{19}Then Almitra spoke again and said,

And what of \_Marriage\_ master?

And he answered saying:

You were born together, and together you

shall be forevermore.

You shall be together when the white

wings of death scatter your days.

Aye, you shall be together even in the

silent memory of God.

But let there be spaces in your

togetherness,

And let the winds of the heavens dance

between you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Love one another, but make not a bond of

love:

Let it rather be a moving sea between

the shores of your souls.

Fill each other’s cup but drink not from

one cup.

Give one another of your bread but eat

not from the same loaf. {20}Sing and

dance together and be joyous, but let

each one of you be alone,

Even as the strings of a lute are alone

though they quiver with the same music.

\*\*\*\*\*

Give your hearts, but not into each

other’s keeping.

For only the hand of Life can contain

your hearts.

And stand together yet not too near

together:

For the pillars of the temple stand

apart,

And the oak tree and the cypress grow

not in each other’s shadow.

[Illustration: 0032]

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{21}And a woman who held a babe

against her bosom said, Speak to us of

\_Children\_.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of

Life’s longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they

belong not to you.

\*\*\*\*\*

You may give them your love but not your

thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their

souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of

tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not

even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek

not to make them like you. {22}For

life goes not backward nor tarries with

yesterday.

You are the bows from which your

children as living arrows are sent

forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path

of the infinite, and He bends you with

His might that His arrows may go swift

and far.

Let your bending in the Archer’s hand be

for gladness;

For even as he loves the arrow that

flies, so He loves also the bow that is

stable.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{23}Then said a rich man, Speak to us of

\_Giving\_.

And he answered:

You give but little when you give of

your possessions.

It is when you give of yourself that you

truly give.

For what are your possessions but things

you keep and guard for fear you may need

them tomorrow?

And tomorrow, what shall tomorrow bring

to the overprudent dog burying bones

in the trackless sand as he follows the

pilgrims to the holy city?

And what is fear of need but need

itself?

Is not dread of thirst when your well is

full, the thirst that is unquenchable?

There are those who give little of the

{24}much which they have--and they give

it for recognition and their hidden

desire makes their gifts unwholesome.

And there are those who have little and

give it all.

These are the believers in life and

the bounty of life, and their coffer is

never empty.

There are those who give with joy, and

that joy is their reward.

And there are those who give with pain,

and that pain is their baptism.

And there are those who give and know

not pain in giving, nor do they seek

joy, nor give with mindfulness of

virtue;

They give as in yonder valley the myrtle

breathes its fragrance into space.

Through the hands of such as these God

speaks, and from behind their eyes He

smiles upon the earth.

[Illustration: 0039]

It is well to give when asked, but it

is better to give unasked, through

understanding;

And to the open-handed the search for

{25}one who shall receive is joy greater

than giving.

And is there aught you would withhold?

All you have shall some day be given;

Therefore give now, that the season

of giving may be yours and not your

inheritors’.

You often say, “I would give, but only

to the deserving.”

The trees in your orchard say not so,

nor the flocks in your pasture.

They give that they may live, for to

withhold is to perish.

Surely he who is worthy to receive his

days and his nights, is worthy of all

else from you.

And he who has deserved to drink from

the ocean of life deserves to fill his

cup from your little stream.

And what desert greater shall there be,

than that which lies in the courage

and the confidence, nay the charity, of

receiving?

And who are you that men should rend

{26}their bosom and unveil their pride,

that you may see their worth naked and

their pride unabashed?

See first that you yourself deserve to

be a giver, and an instrument of giving.

For in truth it is life that gives unto

life--while you, who deem yourself a

giver, are but a witness.

And you receivers--and you are

all receivers--assume no weight of

gratitude, lest you lay a yoke upon

yourself and upon him who gives.

Rather rise together with the giver on

his gifts as on wings;

For to be overmindful of your debt, is

ito doubt his generosity who has the

freehearted earth for mother, and God

for father.

[Illustration: 0042]

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{27}Then an old man, a keeper of an

inn, said, Speak to us of \_Eating and

Drinking\_.

And he said:

Would that you could live on the

fragrance of the earth, and like an air

plant be sustained by the light.

But since you must kill to eat, and rob

the newly born of its mother’s milk to

quench your thirst, let it then be an

act of worship,

And let your board stand an altar on

which the pure and the innocent of

forest and plain are sacrificed for that

which is purer and still more innocent

in man.

\*\*\*\*\*

When you kill a beast say to him in your

heart,

“By the same power that slays you, I too

am slain; and I too shall be consumed.

{28}For the law that delivered you into

my hand shall deliver me into a mightier

hand.

Your blood and my blood is naught but

the sap that feeds the tree of heaven.”

\*\*\*\*\*

And when you crush an apple with your

teeth, say to it in your heart,

“Your seeds shall live in my body,

And the buds of your tomorrow shall

blossom in my heart,

And your fragrance shall be my breath,

And together we shall rejoice through

all the seasons.”

\*\*\*\*\*

And in the autumn, when you gather

the grapes of your vineyards for the

winepress, say in your heart,

“I too am a vineyard, and my fruit shall

be gathered for the winepress,

And like new wine I shall be kept in

eternal vessels.”

And in winter, when you draw the wine,

{29}let there be in your heart a song

for each cup;

And let there be in the song a

remembrance for the autumn days, and for

the vineyard, and for the winepress.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

{30} Then a ploughman said, Speak

to us of \_Work\_.

And he answered, saying:

You work that you may keep pace with the

earth and the soul of the earth.

For to be idle is to become a stranger

unto the seasons, and to step out of

life’s procession, that marches in

majesty and proud submission towards the

infinite.

When you work you are a flute through

whose heart the whispering of the hours

turns to music.

Which of you would be a reed, dumb and

silent, when all else sings together in

unison?

Always you have been told that work is a

curse and labour a misfortune.

But I say to you that when you work you

fulfil a part of earth’s furthest dream,

{31}assigned to you when that dream was

born,

And in keeping yourself with labour you

are in truth loving life,

And to love life through labour is to be

intimate with life’s inmost secret.

\*\*\*\*\*

But if you in your pain call birth an

affliction and the support of the flesh

a curse written upon your brow, then I

answer that naught but the sweat of

your brow shall wash away that which is

written.

You have been told also that life is

darkness, and in your weariness you echo

what was said by the weary.

And I say that life is indeed darkness

‘save when there is urge,

And all urge is blind save when there is

knowledge,

And all knowledge is vain save when

there is work,

And all work is empty save when there is

love;

And when you work with love you bind

{32}yourself to yourself, and to one

another, and to God.

\*\*\*\*\*

And what is it to work with love?

It is to weave the cloth with threads

drawn from your heart, even as if your

beloved were to wear that cloth.

It is to build a house with affection,

even as if your beloved were to dwell in

that house.

It is to sow seeds with tenderness and

reap the harvest with joy, even as if

your beloved were to eat the fruit.

It is to charge all things you fashion

with a breath of your own spirit,

And to know that all the blessed dead

are standing about you and watching.

Often have I heard you say, as if

speaking in sleep, “He who works in

marble, and finds the shape of his own

soul in the stone, is nobler than he who

ploughs the soil. {33}And he who seizes

the rainbow to lay it on a cloth in the

likeness of man, is more than he who

makes the sandals for our feet.”

But I say, not in sleep but in the

overwakefulness of noontide, that the

wind speaks not more sweetly to the

giant oaks than to the least of all the

blades of grass;

And he alone is great who turns the

voice of the wind into a song made

sweeter by his own loving.

\*\*\*\*\*

Work is love made visible.

And if you cannot work with love but

only with distaste, it is better that

you should leave your work and sit at

the gate of the temple and take alms of

those who work with joy.

For if you bake bread with indifference,

you bake a bitter bread that feeds but

half man’s hunger.

And if you grudge the crushing of the

grapes, your grudge distils a poison in

the wine. {34}And if you sing though as

angels, and love not the singing, you

muffle man’s ears to the voices of the

day and the voices of the night.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{35}Then a woman said, Speak to us of

\_Joy and Sorrow\_.

And he answered:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your

laughter rises was oftentimes filled

with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your

being, the more joy you can contain.

Is not the cup that holds your wine the

very cup that was burned in the potter’s

oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your

spirit, the very wood that was hollowed

with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your

heart and you shall find it is only

that which has given you sorrow that is

giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in

{36}your heart, and you shall see that

in truth you are weeping for that which

has been your delight.

\*\*\*\*\*

Some of you say, “Joy is greater than

sorrow,” and others say, “Nay, sorrow is

the greater.”

But I say unto you, they are

inseparable.

Together they come, and when one sits

alone with you at your board, remember

that the other is asleep upon your bed.

Verily you are suspended like scales

between your sorrow and your joy.

Only when you are empty are you at

standstill and balanced.

When the treasure-keeper lifts you to

weigh his gold and his silver, needs

must your joy or your sorrow rise or

fall.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{37}Then a mason came forth and said,

Speak to us of \_Houses\_.

And he answered and said:

Build of your imaginings a bower in the

wilderness ere you build a house within

the city walls.

For even as you have home-comings in

your twilight, so has the wanderer in

you, the ever distant and alone.

Your house is your larger body.

It grows in the sun and sleeps in the

stillness of the night; and it is not

dreamless. Does not your house dream?

and dreaming, leave the city for grove

or hilltop?

Would that I could gather your houses

into my hand, and like a sower scatter

them in forest and meadow.

Would the valleys were your streets, and

the green paths your alleys, that you

{38}might seek one another through

vineyards, and come with the fragrance

of the earth in your garments.

But these things are not yet to be.

In their fear your forefathers gathered

you too near together. And that fear

shall endure a little longer. A little

longer shall your city walls separate

your hearths from your fields.

\*\*\*\*\*

And tell me, people of Orphalese, what

have you in these houses? And what is it

you guard with fastened doors?

Have you peace, the quiet urge that

reveals your power?

Have you remembrances, the glimmering

arches that span the summits of the

mind?

Have you beauty, that leads the heart

from things fashioned of wood and stone

to the holy mountain?

Tell me, have you these in your houses?

Or have you only comfort, and the lust

for comfort, that stealthy thing that

{39}enters the house a guest, and then

becomes a host, and then a master?

\*\*\*\*\*

Ay, and it becomes a tamer, and with

hook and scourge makes puppets of your

larger desires.

Though its hands are silken, its heart

is of iron.

It lulls you to sleep only to stand by

your bed and jeer at the dignity of the

flesh.

It makes mock of your sound senses, and

lays them in thistledown like fragile

vessels.

Verily the lust for comfort murders

the passion of the soul, and then walks

grinning in the funeral.

But you, children of space, you restless

in rest, you shall not be trapped nor

tamed.

Your house shall be not an anchor but a

mast.

It shall not be a glistening film that

{40}covers a wound, but an eyelid that

guards the eye.

You shall not fold your wings that you

may pass through doors, nor bend your

heads that they strike not against a

ceiling, nor fear to breathe lest walls

should crack and fall down.

You shall not dwell in tombs made by the

dead for the living.

And though of magnificence and

splendour, your house shall not hold

your secret nor shelter your longing.

For that which is boundless in you

abides in the mansion of the sky, whose

door is the morning mist, and whose

windows are the songs and the silences

of night.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{41}And the weaver said, Speak to us of

\_Clothes\_.

And he answered:

Your clothes conceal much of your

beauty, yet they hide not the

unbeautiful.

And though you seek in garments the

freedom of privacy you may find in them

a harness and a chain.

Would that you could meet the sun and

the wind with more of your skin and less

of your raiment,

For the breath of life is in the

sunlight and the hand of life is in the

wind.

Some of you say, “It is the north wind

who has woven the clothes we wear.”

And I say, Ay, it was the north wind,

But shame was his loom, and the

softening of the sinews was his thread.

And when his work was done he laughed in

the forest. {42}Forget not that modesty

is for a shield against the eye of the

unclean.

And when the unclean shall be no more,

what were modesty but a fetter and a

fouling of the mind?

And forget not that the earth delights

to feel your bare feet and the winds

long to play with your hair.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{43}And a merchant said, Speak to us of

\_Buying and Selling\_.

And he answered and said:

To you the earth yields her fruit, and

you shall not want if you but know how

to fill your hands.

It is in exchanging the gifts of the

earth that you shall find abundance and

be satisfied.

Yet unless the exchange be in love and

kindly justice, it will but lead some to

greed and others to hunger.

When in the market place you toilers of

the sea and fields and vineyards meet

the weavers and the potters and the

gatherers of spices,--

Invoke then the master spirit of the

earth, to come into your midst and

sanctify the scales and the reckoning

that weighs value against value. {44}And

suffer not the barren-handed to take

part in your transactions, who would

sell their words for your labour.

To such men you should say,

“Come with us to the field, or go with

our brothers to the sea and cast your

net;

For the land and the sea shall be

bountiful to you even as to us.”

\*\*\*\*\*

And if there come the singers and the

dancers and the flute players,--buy of

their gifts also.

For they too are gatherers of fruit and

frankincense, and that which they bring,

though fashioned of dreams, is raiment

and food for your soul.

And before you leave the market place,

see that no one has gone his way with

empty hands.

For the master spirit of the earth shall

not sleep peacefully upon the wind

till the needs of the least of you are

satisfied.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{45}Then one of the judges of the city

stood forth and said, Speak to us of

\_Crime and Punishment\_.

And he answered, saying:

It is when your spirit goes wandering

upon the wind,

That you, alone and unguarded, commit

a wrong unto others and therefore unto

yourself.

And for that wrong committed must you

knock and wait a while unheeded at the

gate of the blessed.

Like the ocean is your god-self;

It remains for ever undefiled.

And like the ether it lifts but the

winged.

Even like the sun is your god-self;

It knows not the ways of the mole nor

seeks it the holes of the serpent.

{46}But your god-self dwells not alone

in your being.

Much in you is still man, and much in

you is not yet man,

But a shapeless pigmy that walks asleep

in the mist searching for its own

awakening.

And of the man in you would I now speak.

For it is he and not your god-self nor

the pigmy in the mist, that knows crime

and the punishment of crime.

\*\*\*\*\*

Oftentimes have I heard you speak of one

who commits a wrong as though he were

not one of you, but a stranger unto you

and an intruder upon your world.

But I say that even as the holy and the

righteous cannot rise beyond the highest

which is in each one of you,

So the wicked and the weak cannot fall

lower than the lowest which is in you

also.

And as a single leaf turns not yellow

but with the silent knowledge of the

whole tree, {47}So the wrong-doer cannot

do wrong without the hidden will of you

all.

Like a procession you walk together

towards your god-self.

[Illustration: 0064]

You are the way and the wayfarers.

And when one of you falls down he falls

for those behind him, a caution against

the stumbling stone.

Ay, and he falls for those ahead of him,

who though faster and surer of foot, yet

removed not the stumbling stone.

And this also, though the word lie heavy

upon your hearts:

The murdered is not unaccountable for

his own murder,

And the robbed is not blameless in being

robbed.

The righteous is not innocent of the

deeds of the wicked,

And the white-handed is not clean in the

doings of the felon.

Yea, the guilty is oftentimes the victim

of the injured,

And still more often the condemned is

{48}the burden bearer for the guiltless

and unblamed.

You cannot separate the just from the

unjust and the good from the wicked;

For they stand together before the face

of the sun even as the black thread and

the white are woven together.

And when the black thread breaks, the

weaver shall look into the whole cloth,

and he shall examine the loom also.

\*\*\*\*\*

If any of you would bring to judgment

the unfaithful wife,

Let him also weigh the heart of her

husband in scales, and measure his soul

with measurements.

And let him who would lash the offender

look unto the spirit of the offended.

And if any of you would punish in the

name of righteousness and lay the ax

unto the evil tree, let him see to its

roots;

And verily he will find the roots of the

good and the bad, the fruitful and the

{49}fruitless, all entwined together in

the silent heart of the earth.

And you judges who would be just,

What judgment pronounce you upon him

who though honest in the flesh yet is a

thief in spirit?

What penalty lay you upon him who slays

in the flesh yet is himself slain in the

spirit?

And how prosecute you him who in action

is a deceiver and an oppressor,

Yet who also is aggrieved and outraged?

\*\*\*\*\*

And how shall you punish those whose

remorse is already greater than their

misdeeds?

Is not remorse the justice which is

administered by that very law which you

would fain serve?

Yet you cannot lay remorse upon the

innocent nor lift it from the heart of

the guilty.

Unbidden shall it call in the night,

that men may wake and gaze upon

themselves. {50}And you who would

understand justice, how shall you unless

you look upon all deeds in the fullness

of light?

Only then shall you know that the erect

and the fallen are but one man standing

in twilight between the night of his

pigmy-self and the day of his god-self,

And that the corner-stone of the temple

is not higher than the lowest stone in

its foundation.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{51}Then a lawyer said, But what of our

\_Laws\_, master?

And he answered:

You delight in laying down laws,

Yet you delight more in breaking them.

Like children playing by the ocean who

build sand-towers with constancy and

then destroy them with laughter.

But while you build your sand-towers the

ocean brings more sand to the shore,

And when you destroy them the ocean

laughs with you.

Verily the ocean laughs always with the

innocent.

But what of those to whom life is not

an ocean, and man-made laws are not

sand-towers,

But to whom life is a rock, and the law

a chisel with which they would carve it

in their own likeness? {52}What of the

cripple who hates dancers?

What of the ox who loves his yoke and

deems the elk and deer of the forest

stray and vagrant things?

What of the old serpent who cannot shed

his skin, and calls all others naked and

shameless?

And of him who comes early to the

wedding-feast, and when over-fed and

tired goes his way saying that all

feasts are violation and all feasters

lawbreakers?

\*\*\*\*\*

What shall I say of these save that

they too stand in the sunlight, but with

their backs to the sun?

They see only their shadows, and their

shadows are their laws.

And what is the sun to them but a caster

of shadows?

And what is it to acknowledge the

laws but to stoop down and trace their

shadows upon the earth?

But you who walk facing the sun, what

{53}images drawn on the earth can hold

you?

You who travel with the wind, what

weather-vane shall direct your course?

What man’s law shall bind you if you

break your yoke but upon no man’s prison

door?

What laws shall you fear if you dance

but stumble against no man’s iron

chains?

And who is he that shall bring you to

judgment if you tear off your garment

yet leave it in no man’s path?

\*\*\*\*\*

People of Orphalese, you can muffle the

drum, and you can loosen the strings

of the lyre, but who shall command the

skylark not to sing?

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{54}And an orator said, Speak to us of

\_Freedom\_.

And he answered:

At the city gate and by your fireside

I have seen you prostrate yourself and

worship your own freedom,

Even as slaves humble themselves before

a tyrant and praise him though he slays

them.

Ay, in the grove of the temple and in

the shadow of the citadel I have seen

the freest among you wear their freedom

as a yoke and a handcuff.

And my heart bled within me; for you

can only be free when even the desire

of seeking freedom becomes a harness

to you, and when you cease to speak of

freedom as a goal and a fulfilment.

You shall be free indeed when your

days are not without a care nor your

{55}nights without a want and a grief,

But rather when these things girdle your

life and yet you rise above them naked

and unbound.

\*\*\*\*\*

And how shall you rise beyond your days

and nights unless you break the

chains which you at the dawn of your

understanding have fastened around your

noon hour?

In truth that which you call freedom is

the strongest of these chains, though

its links glitter in the sun and dazzle

your eyes.

And what is it but fragments of your

own self you would discard that you may

become free?

If it is an unjust law you would

abolish, that law was written with your

own hand upon your own forehead.

You cannot erase it by burning your law

books nor by washing the foreheads of

your judges, though you pour the sea

upon them.

And if it is a despot you would

{56}dethrone, see first that his throne

erected within you is destroyed.

For how can a tyrant rule the free and

the proud, but for a tyranny in their

own freedom and a shame in their own

pride?

And if it is a care you would cast off,

that cart has been chosen by you rather

than imposed upon you.

And if it is a fear you would dispel,

the seat of that fear is in your heart

and not in the hand of the feared.

\*\*\*\*\*

Verily all things move within your being

in constant half embrace, the desired

and the dreaded, the repugnant and the

cherished, the pursued and that which

you would escape.

These things move within you as lights

and shadows in pairs that cling.

And when the shadow fades and is no

more, the light that lingers becomes a

shadow to another light.

And thus your freedom when it loses its

fetters becomes itself the fetter of a

greater freedom.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{57}And the priestess spoke again

and said: Speak to us of \_Reason and

Passion\_.

And he answered, saying:

Your soul is oftentimes a battlefield,

upon which your reason and your judgment

wage war against your passion and your

appetite.

Would that I could be the peacemaker in

your soul, that I might turn the discord

and the rivalry of your elements into

oneness and melody.

But how shall I, unless you yourselves

be also the peacemakers, nay, the lovers

of all your elements?

Your reason and your passion are the

rudder and the sails of your seafaring

soul.

If either your sails or your rudder be

broken, you can but toss and drift,

or else be held at a standstill in

mid-seas. {58}For reason, ruling alone,

is a force confining; and passion,

unattended, is a flame that burns to its

own destruction.

Therefore let your soul exalt your

reason to the height of passion, that it

may sing;

And let it direct your passion with

reason, that your passion may live

through its own daily resurrection,

and like the phoenix rise above its own

ashes.

\*\*\*\*\*

I would have you consider your judgment

and your appetite even as you would two

loved guests in your house.

Surely you would not honour one guest

above the other; for he who is more

mindful of one loses the love and the

faith of both

Among the hills, when you sit in the

cool shade of the white poplars, sharing

the peace and serenity of distant fields

and meadows--then let your heart say in

silence, “God rests in reason.”

And when the storm comes, and the

{59}mighty wind shakes the forest,

and thunder and lightning proclaim the

majesty of the sky,--then let your heart

say in awe, “God moves in passion.”

And since you are a breath in God’s

sphere, and a leaf in God’s forest, you

too should rest in reason and move in

passion.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{60}And a woman spoke, saying, Tell us

of \_Pain\_.

And he said:

Your pain is the breaking of the shell

that encloses your understanding.

Even as the stone of the fruit must

break, that its heart may stand in the

sun, so must you know pain.

And could you keep your heart in wonder

at the daily miracles of your life, your

pain would not seem less wondrous than

your joy;

And you would accept the seasons of your

heart, even as you have always accepted

the seasons that pass over your fields.

And you would watch with serenity

through the winters of your grief.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.

It is the bitter potion by which the

physician {61}within you heals your sick

self.

Therefore trust the physician, and drink

his remedy in silence and tranquillity:

For his hand, though heavy and hard, is

guided by the tender hand of the Unseen,

And the cup he brings, though it burn

your lips, has been fashioned of the

clay which the Potter has moistened with

His own sacred tears.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{62}And a man said, Speak to us of

\_Self-Knowledge\_.

And he answered, saying:

Your hearts know in silence the secrets

of the days and the nights.

But your ears thirst for the sound of

your heart’s knowledge.

You would know in words that which you

have always known in thought.

You would touch with your fingers the

naked body of your dreams.

And it is well you should.

The hidden well-spring of your soul must

needs rise and run murmuring to the sea;

And the treasure of your infinite depths

would be revealed to your eyes.

But let there be no scales to weigh your

unknown treasure;

And seek not the depths of your

{63}knowledge with staff or sounding

line.

For self is a sea boundless and

measureless.

\*\*\*\*\*

Say not, “I have found the truth,” but

rather, “I have found a truth.”

Say not, “I have found the path of the

soul.” Say rather, “I have met the soul

walking upon my path.”

For the soul walks upon all paths.

The soul walks not upon a line, neither

does it grow like a reed.

The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of

countless petals.

[Illustration: 0083]

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{64}Then said a teacher, Speak to us of

\_Teaching\_.

And he said:

“No man can reveal to you aught but that

which already lies half asleep in the

dawning of your knowledge.

The teacher who walks in the shadow of

the temple, among his followers, gives

not of his wisdom but rather of his

faith and his lovingness.

If he is indeed wise he does not bid

you enter the house of his wisdom, but

rather leads you to the threshold of

your own mind.

The astronomer may speak to you of his

understanding of space, but he cannot

give you his understanding.

The musician may sing to you of the

rhythm which is in all space, but he

cannot give you the ear which arrests

the rhythm nor the voice that echoes it.

{65}And he who is versed in the science

of numbers can tell of the regions

of weight and measure, but he cannot

conduct you thither.

For the vision of one man lends not its

wings to another man.

And even as each one of you stands alone

in God’s knowledge, so must each one of

you be alone in his knowledge of God and

in his understanding of the earth.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{66}And a youth said, Speak to us of

\_Friendship\_.

And he answered, saying:

Your friend is your needs answered.

He is your field which you sow with love

and reap with thanksgiving.

And he is your board and your fireside.

For you come to him with your hunger,

and you seek him for peace.

When your friend speaks his mind you

fear not the “nay” in your own mind, nor

do you withhold the “ay.”

And when he is silent your heart ceases

not to listen to his heart;

For without words, in friendship, all

thoughts, all desires, all expectations

are born and shared, with joy that is

unacclaimed.

When you part from your friend, you

grieve not;

For that which you love most in him

may be clearer in his absence, as the

mountain to the climber is clearer

from the plain. {67}And let there be no

purpose in friendship save the deepening

of the spirit.

For love that seeks aught but the

disclosure of its own mystery is not

love but a net cast forth: and only the

unprofitable is caught.

\*\*\*\*\*

And let your best be for your friend.

If he must know the ebb of your tide,

let him know its flood also.

For what is your friend that you should

seek him with hours to kill?

Seek him always with hours to live.

For it is his to fill your need, but not

your emptiness.

And in the sweetness of friendship

let there be laughter, and sharing of

pleasures.

For in the dew of little things

the heart finds its morning and is

refreshed.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{68}And then a scholar said, Speak of

\_Talking\_.

And he answered, saying:

You talk when you cease to be at peace

with your thoughts;

And when you can no longer dwell in the

solitude of your heart you live in your

lips, and sound is a diversion and a

pastime.

And in much of your talking, thinking is

half murdered.

For thought is a bird of space, that in

a cage of words may indeed unfold its

wings but cannot fly.

There are those among you who seek the

talkative through fear of being alone.

The silence of aloneness reveals to

their eyes their naked selves and they

would escape.

And there are those who talk, and

{69}without knowledge or forethought reveal

a truth which they themselves do not

understand.

And there are those who have the truth

within them, but they tell it not in

words.

In the bosom of such as these the spirit

dwells in rhythmic silence.

\*\*\*\*\*

When you meet your friend on the

roadside or in the market place, let the

spirit in you move your lips and direct

your tongue.

Let the voice within your voice speak to

the ear of his ear;

For his soul will keep the truth of

your heart as the taste of the wine is

remembered

When the colour is forgotten and the

vessel is no more.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{70}And an astronomer said, Master, what

of \_Time\_?

And he answered:

You would measure time the measureless

and the immeasurable.

You would adjust your conduct and

even direct the course of your spirit

according to hours and seasons.

Of time you would make a stream upon

whose bank you would sit and watch its

flowing.

Yet the timeless in you is aware of

life’s timelessness,

And knows that yesterday is but today’s

memory and tomorrow is today’s dream.

And that that which sings and

contemplates in you is still dwelling

within the bounds of that first moment

which scattered the stars into space.

{71}Who among you does not feel that his

power to love is boundless?

And yet who does not feel that very

love, though boundless, encompassed

within the centre of his being, and

moving not from love thought to love

thought, nor from love deeds to other

love deeds?

And is not time even as love is,

undivided and paceless?

\*\*\*\*\*

But if in your thought you must measure

time into seasons, let each season

encircle all the other seasons,

And let today embrace the past with

remembrance and the future with longing.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{72}And one of the elders of the city

said, Speak to us of \_Good and Evil\_.

And he answered:

Of the good in you I can speak, but not

of the evil.

For what is evil but good tortured by

its own hunger and thirst?

Verily when good is hungry it seeks food

even in dark caves, and when it thirsts

it drinks even of dead waters.

You are good when you are one with

yourself.

Yet when you are not one with yourself

you are not evil.

For a divided house is not a den of

thieves; it is only a divided house.

And a ship without rudder may wander

aimlessly among perilous isles yet sink

not to the bottom. {73}You are good when

you strive to give of yourself.

Yet you are not evil when you seek gain

for yourself.

For when you strive for gain you are

but a root that clings to the earth and

sucks at her breast.

Surely the fruit cannot say to the root,

“Be like me, ripe and full and ever

giving of your abundance.”

For to the fruit giving is a need, as

receiving is a need to the root.

\*\*\*\*\*

You are good when you are fully awake in

your speech,

Yet you are not evil when you sleep

while your tongue staggers without

purpose.

And even stumbling speech may strengthen

a weak tongue.

You are good when you walk to your goal

firmly and with bold steps.

Yet you are not evil when you go thither

limping. {74}Even those who limp go not

backward.

But you who are strong and swift, see

that you do not limp before the lame,

deeming it kindness.

\*\*\*\*\*

You are good in countless ways, and you

are not evil when you are not good,

You are only loitering and sluggard.

Pity that the stags cannot teach

swiftness to the turtles.

In your longing for your giant self lies

your goodness: and that longing is in

all of you.

But in some of you that longing is a

torrent rushing with might to the sea,

carrying the secrets of the hillsides

and the songs of the forest.

And in others it is a flat stream that

loses itself in angles and bends and

lingers before it reaches the shore.

But let not him who longs much say to

{75}him who longs little, “Wherefore are

you slow and halting?”

For the truly good ask not the naked,

“Where is your garment?” nor the

houseless, “What has befallen your

house?”

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{76}Then a priestess said, Speak to us

of \_Prayer\_.

And he answered, saying:

You pray in your distress and in your

need; would that you might pray also

in the fullness of your joy and in your

days of abundance.

For what is prayer but the expansion of

yourself into the living ether?

And if it is for your comfort to pour

your darkness into space, it is also for

your delight to pour forth the dawning

of your heart.

And if you cannot but weep when your

soul summons you to prayer, she should

spur you again and yet again, though

weeping, until you shall come laughing.

When you pray you rise to meet in the

air those who are praying at that very

{77}hour, and whom save in prayer you

may not meet.

Therefore let your visit to that temple

invisible be for naught but ecstasy and

sweet communion.

For if you should enter the temple for

no other purpose than asking you shall

not receive:

And if you should enter into it to

humble yourself you shall not be lifted:

Or even if you should enter into it to

beg for the good of others you shall not

be heard.

It is enough that you enter the temple

invisible.

\*\*\*\*\*

I cannot teach you how to pray in words.

God listens not to your words save when

He Himself utters them through your

lips.

And I cannot teach you the prayer of the

seas and the forests and the mountains.

{78}But you who are born of the

mountains and the forests and the seas

can find their prayer in your heart,

And if you but listen in the stillness

of the night you shall hear them saying

in silence,

“Our God, who art our winged self, it is

thy will in us that willeth.

It is thy desire in us that desireth.

It is thy urge in us that would turn our

nights, which are thine, into days which

are thine also.

We cannot ask thee for aught, for thou

knowest our needs before they are born

in us:

Thou art our need; and in giving us more

of thyself thou givest us all.”

[Illustration: 0100]

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{79}Then a hermit, who visited the city

once a year, came forth and said, Speak

to us of \_Pleasure\_.

And he answered, saying:

Pleasure is a freedom-song,

But it is not freedom.

It is the blossoming of your desires,

But it is not their fruit.

It is a depth calling unto a height,

But it is not the deep nor the high.

It is the caged taking wing,

But it is not space encompassed.

Ay, in very truth, pleasure is a

freedom-song.

And I fain would have you sing it with

fullness of heart; yet I would not have

you lose your hearts in the singing.

Some of your youth seek pleasure as if

it were all, and they are judged and

rebuked. {80}I would not judge nor

rebuke them. I would have them seek.

For they shall find pleasure, but not

her alone;

Seven are her sisters, and the least of

them is more beautiful than pleasure.

Have you not heard of the man who was

digging in the earth for roots and found

a treasure?

\*\*\*\*\*

And some of your elders remember

pleasures with regret like wrongs

committed in drunkenness.

But regret is the beclouding of the mind

and not its chastisement.

They should remember their pleasures

with gratitude, as they would the

harvest of a summer.

Yet if it comforts them to regret, let

them be comforted.

And there are among you those who

are neither young to seek nor old to

remember;

And in their fear of seeking and

remembering {81}they shun all pleasures,

lest they neglect the spirit or offend

against it.

But even in their foregoing is their

pleasure.

And thus they too find a treasure though

they dig for roots with quivering hands.

But tell me, who is he that can offend

the spirit?

Shall the nightingale offend the

stillness of the night, or the firefly

the stars?

And shall your flame or your smoke

burden the wind?

Think you the spirit is a still pool

which you can trouble with a staff?

\*\*\*\*\*

Oftentimes in denying yourself pleasure

you do but store the desire in the

recesses of your being.

Who knows but that which seems omitted

today, waits for tomorrow?

Even your body knows its heritage

and its rightful need and will not be

deceived.

And your body is the harp of your soul,

And it is yours to bring forth {82}sweet

music from it or confused sounds.

\*\*\*\*\*

And now you ask in your heart, “How

shall we distinguish that which is

good in pleasure from that which is not

good?”

Go to your fields and your gardens, and

you shall learn that it is the pleasure

of the bee to gather honey of the

flower,

But it is also the pleasure of the

flower to yield its honey to the bee.

For to the bee a flower is a fountain of

life,

And to the flower a bee is a messenger

of love,

And to both, bee and flower, the giving

and the receiving of pleasure is a need

and an ecstasy.

People of Orphalese, be in your

pleasures like the flowers and the bees.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{83}And a poet said, Speak to us of

\_Beauty\_.

And he answered:

Where shall you seek beauty, and how

shall you find her unless she herself be

your way and your guide?

And how shall you speak of her except

she be the weaver of your speech?

The aggrieved and the injured say,

“Beauty is kind and gentle.

Like a young mother half-shy of her own

glory she walks among us.”

And the passionate say, “Nay, beauty is

a thing of might and dread.

Like the tempest she shakes the earth

beneath us and the sky above us.”

The tired and the weary say, “Beauty is

of soft whisperings. She speaks in our

spirit. {84}Her voice yields to our

silences like a faint light that quivers

in fear of the shadow.”

But the restless say, “We have heard her

shouting among the mountains,

And with her cries came the sound of

hoofs, and the beating of wings and the

roaring of lions.”

At night the watchmen of the city say,

“Beauty shall rise with the dawn from

the east.”

And at noontide the toilers and the

wayfarers say, “We have seen her leaning

over the earth from the windows of the

sunset.”

\*\*\*\*\*

In winter say the snow-bound, “She shall

come with the spring leaping upon the

hills.”

And in the summer heat the reapers

say, “We have seen her dancing with the

autumn leaves, and we saw a drift of

snow in her hair.” {85}All these things

have you said of beauty,

Yet in truth you spoke not of her but of

needs unsatisfied,

And beauty is not a need but an ecstasy.

It is not a mouth thirsting nor an empty

hand stretched forth,

But rather a heart enflamed and a soul

enchanted.

It is not the image you would see nor

the song you would hear,

But rather an image you see though you

close your eyes and a song you hear

though you shut your ears.

It is not the sap within the furrowed

bark, nor a wing attached to a claw,

But rather a garden for ever in bloom

and a flock of angels for ever in

flight.

\*\*\*\*\*

People of Orphalese, beauty is life when

life unveils her holy face.

But you are life and you are the veil.

{86}Beauty is eternity gazing at itself

in a mirror.

But you are eternity and you are the

mirror.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{87}And an old priest said, Speak to us

of \_Religion\_.

And he said:

Have I spoken this day of aught else?

Is not religion all deeds and all

reflection,

And that which is neither deed nor

reflection, but a wonder and a surprise

ever springing in the soul, even while

the hands hew the stone or tend the

loom?

Who can separate his faith from

his actions, or his belief from his

occupations?

Who can spread his hours before him,

saving, “This for God and this for

myself; This for my soul, and this other

for my body?”

All your hours are wings that beat

through space from self to self. {88}He

who wears his morality but as his best

garment were better naked.

The wind and the sun will tear no holes

in his skin.

And he who defines his conduct by ethics

imprisons his song-bird in a cage.

The freest song comes not through bars

and wires.

And he to whom worshipping is a window,

to open but also to shut, has not yet

visited the house of his soul whose

windows are from dawn to dawn.

\*\*\*\*\*

Your daily life is your temple and your

religion.

Whenever you enter into it take with you

your all.

Take the plough and the forge and the

mallet and the lute,

The things you have fashioned in

necessity or for delight.

For in revery you cannot rise above your

achievements nor fall lower than your

failures.

And take with you all men: {89}For in

adoration you cannot fly higher than

their hopes nor humble yourself lower

than their despair.

\*\*\*\*\*

And if you would know God be not

therefore a solver of riddles.

Rather look about you and you shall see

Him playing with your children.

And look into space; you shall see Him

walking in the cloud, outstretching His

arms in the lightning and descending in

rain.

You shall see Him smiling in flowers,

then rising and waving His hands in

trees.

\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

{90}Then Almitra spoke, saying, We would

ask now of \_Death\_.

And he said:

You would know the secret of death.

But how shall you find it unless you

seek it in the heart of life?

The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind

unto the day cannot unveil the mystery

of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit

of death, open your heart wide unto the

body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the

river and the sea are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires

lies your silent knowledge of the

beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow

your heart dreams of spring.

Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden

the gate to eternity. {91}Your fear

of death is but the trembling of the

shepherd when he stands before the king

whose hand is to be laid upon him in

honour.

Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his

trembling, that he shall wear the mark

of the king?

Yet is he not more mindful of his

trembling?

\*\*\*\*\*

For what is it to die but to stand naked

in the wind and to melt into the sun?

And what is it to cease breathing, but

to free the breath from its restless

tides, that it may rise and expand and

seek God unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of

silence shall you indeed sing.

And when you have reached the mountain

top, then you shall begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your

limbs, then shall you truly dance.

{92}And now it was evening.

And Almitra the seeress said, Blessed be

this day and this place and your spirit

that has spoken.

And he answered, Was it I who spoke? Was

I not also a listener?

\*\*\*\*\*

Then he descended the steps of the

Temple and all the people followed him.

And he reached his ship and stood upon

the deck.

And facing the people again, he raised

his voice and said:

People of Orphalese, the wind bids me

leave you.

Less hasty am I than the wind, yet I

must go.

We wanderers, ever seeking the lonelier

way, begin no day where we have ended

another day; and no sunrise finds us

where sunset left us. {93}Even while the

earth sleeps we travel.

We are the seeds of the tenacious

plant, and it is in our ripeness and our

fullness of heart that we are given to

the wind and are scattered.

\*\*\*\*\*

Brief were my days among you, and

briefer still the words I have spoken.

But should my voice fade in your ears,

and my love vanish in your memory, then

I will come again,

And with a richer heart and lips more

yielding to the spirit will I speak.

Yea, I shall return with the tide,

And though death may hide me, and the

greater silence enfold me, yet again

will I seek your understanding.

And not in vain will I seek.

If aught I have said is truth, that

truth shall reveal itself in a clearer

voice, and in words more kin to your

thoughts.

I go with the wind, people of

Orphalese, but not down into emptiness;

{94}And if this day is not a fulfilment

of your needs and my love, then let it

be a promise till another day.

Man’s needs change, but not his love,

nor his desire that his love should

satisfy his needs.

Know therefore, that from the greater

silence I shall return.

The mist that drifts away at dawn,

leaving but dew in the fields, shall

rise and gather into a cloud and then

fall down in rain.

And not unlike the mist have I been.

In the stillness of the night I have

walked in your streets, and my spirit

has entered your houses,

And your heart-beats were in my heart,

and your breath was upon my face, and I

knew you all.

Ay, I knew your joy and your pain,

and in your sleep your dreams were my

dreams.

And oftentimes I was among you a lake

among the mountains.

I mirrored the summits in you and the

{95}bending slopes, and even the

passing flocks of your thoughts and your

desires.

And to my silence came the laughter

of your children in streams, and the

longing of your youths in rivers.

And when they reached my depth the

streams and the rivers ceased not yet to

sing.

[Illustration: 0119]

But sweeter still than laughter and

greater than longing came to me.

It was the boundless in you;

The vast man in whom you are all but

cells and sinews;

He in whose chant all your singing is

but a soundless throbbing.

It is in the vast man that you are vast,

And in beholding him that I beheld you

and loved you.

For what distances can love reach that

are not in that vast sphere?

What visions, what expectations and what

presumptions can outsoar that flight?

Like a giant oak tree covered with apple

blossoms is the vast man in you. {96}His

might binds you to the earth, his

fragrance lifts you into space, and in

his durability you are deathless.

\*\*\*\*\*

You have been told that, even like a

chain, you are as weak as your weakest

link.

This is but half the truth. You are also

as strong as your strongest link.

To measure you by your smallest deed

is to reckon the power of ocean by the

frailty of its foam.

To judge you by your failures is to

cast blame upon the seasons for their

inconstancy.

Ay, you are like an ocean,

And though heavy-grounded ships await

the tide upon your shores, yet, even

like an ocean, you cannot hasten your

tides.

And like the seasons you are also,

And though in your winter you deny your

spring,

Yet spring, reposing within you, smiles

in her drowsiness and is not offended.

{97}Think not I say these things in

order that you may say the one to the

other, “He praised us well. He saw but

the good in us.”

I only speak to you in words of that

which you yourselves know in thought.

And what is word knowledge but a shadow

of wordless knowledge?

Your thoughts and my words are waves

from a sealed memory that keeps records

of our yesterdays,

And of the ancient days when the earth

knew not us nor herself,

And of nights when earth was up-wrought

with confusion.

\*\*\*\*\*

Wise men have come to you to give you

of their wisdom. I came to take of your

wisdom:

And behold I have found that which is

greater than wisdom.

It is a flame spirit in you ever

gathering more of itself,

While you, heedless of its expansion,

bewail the withering of your days.

{98}It is life in quest of life in

bodies that fear the grave.

\*\*\*\*\*

There are no graves here.

These mountains and plains are a cradle

and a stepping-stone.

Whenever you pass by the field where

you have laid your ancestors look well

thereupon, and you shall see yourselves

and your children dancing hand in hand.

Verily you often make merry without

knowing.

Others have come to you to whom for

golden promises made unto your faith

you have given but riches and power and

glory.

Less than a promise have I given, and

yet more generous have you been to me.

You have given me my deeper thirsting

after life.

Surely there is no greater gift to a man

than that which turns all his aims

into parching lips and all life into a

fountain.

[Illustration: 0125]

{99}And in this lies my honour and my

reward,--

That whenever I come to the fountain

to drink I find the living water itself

thirsty;

And it drinks me while I drink it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Some of you have deemed me proud and

over-shy to receive gifts.

Too proud indeed am I to receive wages,

but not gifts.

And though I have eaten berries among

the hills when you would have had me sit

at your board,

And slept in the portico of the temple

when you would gladly have sheltered me,

Yet was it not your loving mindfulness

of my days and my nights that made food

sweet to my mouth and girdled my sleep

with visions?

For this I bless you most:

You give much and know not that you give

at all. {100}Verily the kindness that

gazes upon itself in a mirror turns to

stone,

And a good deed that calls itself by

tender names becomes the parent to a

curse.

\*\*\*\*\*

And some of you have called me aloof,

and drunk with my own aloneness,

And you have said, “He holds council

with the trees of the forest, but not

with men.

He sits alone on hill-tops and looks

down upon our city.”

True it is that I have climbed the hills

and walked in remote places.

How could I have seen you save from a

great height or a great distance?

How can one be indeed near unless he be

tar?

And others among you called unto me, not

in words, and they said,

“Stranger, stranger, lover of

unreachable heights, why dwell you among

the summits where eagles build

their nests? {101}Why seek you the

unattainable?

What storms would you trap in your net,

And what vaporous birds do you hunt in

the sky?

Come and be one of us.

Descend and appease your hunger with our

bread and quench your thirst with our

wine.”

In the solitude of their souls they said

these things;

But were their solitude deeper they

would have known that I sought but the

secret of your joy and your pain,

And I hunted only your larger selves

that walk the sky.

\*\*\*\*\*

But the hunter was also the hunted;

For many of my arrows left my bow only

to seek my own breast.

And the flier was also the creeper;

For when my wings were spread in the

sun their shadow upon the earth was a

turtle.

And I the believer was also the doubter;

{102}For often have I put my finger

in my own wound that I might have the

greater belief in you and the greater

knowledge of you.

\*\*\*\*\*

And it is with this belief and this

knowledge that I say,

You are not enclosed within your bodies,

nor confined to houses or fields.

That which is you dwells above the

mountain and roves with the wind.

It is not a thing that crawls into

the sun for warmth or digs holes into

darkness for safety,

But a thing free, a spirit that envelops

the earth and moves in the ether.

If these be vague words, then seek not

to clear them.

Vague and nebulous is the beginning of

all things, but not their end,

And I fain would have you remember me as

a beginning.

Life, and all that lives, is conceived

in the mist and not in the crystal.

{103}And who knows but a crystal is mist

in decay?

\*\*\*\*\*

This would I have you remember in

remembering me:

That which seems most feeble and

bewildered in you is the strongest and

most determined.

Is it not your breath that has erected

and hardened the structure of your

bones?

And is it not a dream which none of you

remember having dreamt, that builded

your city and fashioned all there is in

it?

Could you but see the tides of that

breath you would cease to see all else,

And if you could hear the whispering of

the dream you would hear no other sound.

But you do not see, nor do you hear, and

it is well.

The veil that clouds your eyes shall be

lifted by the hands that wove it,

And the clay that fills your ears shall

be pierced by those fingers that kneaded

it. {104}And you shall see.

And you shall hear.

Yet you shall not deplore having known

blindness, nor regret having been deaf.

For in that day you shall know the

hidden purposes in all things,

And you shall bless darkness as you

would bless light.

After saying these things he looked

about him, and he saw the pilot of his

ship standing by the helm and gazing

now at the full sails and now at the

distance.

And he said:

Patient, over patient, is the captain of

my ship.

The wind blows, and restless are the

sails;

Even the rudder begs direction;

Yet quietly my captain awaits my

silence.

And these my mariners, who have heard

the choir of the greater sea, they too

have heard me patiently. {105}Now they

shall wait no longer.

I am ready.

The stream has reached the sea, and

once more the great mother holds her son

against her breast.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fare you well, people of Orphalese.

This day has ended.

It is closing upon us even as the

water-lily upon its own tomorrow.

What was given us here we shall keep,

And if it suffices not, then again must

we come together and together stretch

our hands unto the giver.

Forget not that I shall come back to

you.

A little while, and my longing shall

gather dust and foam for another body.

A little while, a moment of rest upon

the wind, and another woman shall bear

me.

Farewell to you and the youth I have

spent with you.

It was but yesterday we met in a

dream. {106}You have sung to me in my

aloneness, and I of your longings have

built a tower in the sky.

But now our sleep has fled and our dream

is over, and it is no longer dawn.

The noontide is upon us and our half

waking has turned to fuller day, and we

must part.

If in the twilight of memory we should

meet once more, we shall speak again

together and you shall sing to me a

deeper song.

And if our hands should meet in another

dream we shall build another tower in

the sky.

\*\*\*\*\*

So saying he made a signal to the

seamen, and straightway they weighed

anchor and cast the ship loose from its

moorings, and they moved eastward.

And a cry came from the people as from a

single heart, and it rose into the dusk

and was carried out over the sea like a

great trumpeting.

Only Almitra was silent, gazing after

{107}the ship until it had vanished into

the mist.

And when all the people were dispersed

she still stood alone upon the sea-wall,

remembering in her heart his saying,

“A little while, a moment of rest upon

the wind, and another woman shall bear

me.”

[Illustration: 0134]

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