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Ross Winn
The Agnostic
1905

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The Agnostic

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Says the Agnostic: "It may be so
Across the sky God sets his bow
Of promise, and each day and night
Gems the Universe with light.

But yet the angel of the darker gloom
Has cast the shadow of a deeper doom
Athwart the human heart and brain,
Whose name is Death, pale priest of pain.

Into this world, like a far flung lance,
Man is thrust by love, or lust perchance;
Opens his feeble eyes and utters a cry,
Nor knows that his end here is to die!

Within its prison of flesh and bone
The soul dwells apart and alone;
Flutters for a brief span 'twixt pleasure and pain,
And, like the snuffed candle, goes out again.

And whence he comes and whither he goes,
Nobody answers—for nobody knows.
Like a breath for a moment he blows in suspense,
And is gone and forgotten in the shadowy hence.

And the scent of the flower of the sweet-smelling
 rose
That pleases our senses when the summer wind
 blows,
Is less transient and fleeting than the thing we call
 life,
That is born out of darkness and survives but by
 strife.