

The Lost Eden *

By William Watson

PROFFERING fortunes
Out of his indigence,
Royal the dowry
Man promised his soul.

“Not as the beasts
That perish, am I,” he said.
“Mine is eternity,
Theirs the frail day.”

Crown of creation
Long he conceited him
Next to their fashioner,
Lord of the worlds.

So

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So in an Eden
Dwelt he, of fantasies.
Here and not elsewhere
Eve was his bride.

Eve the hot-hearted !
Eve the wild spirit
Of quest—the adventurer !
Eve the unslaked.

She it was showed him
Where, in the midst
Of his pleasance, the knowledge-tree
Waiting him grew.

Wondrous the fruitage,
Maddening the taste therof ;
Fiery like wine was it,
Fierce like a sting.

Straightway

Straightway his Eden
Irked like a prison-house.
Vastness invited him.
“Come,” said the stars.

Thunderous behind him
Clang the gold Eden-gates.
Boundless in front of him
Opens the world.

Never returns he!—
Never again,
In the valleys that nurtured him,
Breathes the old airs!

Only in dreams
He seeks his lost heritage,
Knocks at the Eden-gate,
Wistful, athirst.

Ah,

Ah, he is changed—
The sentinels know him not !
Here, ev'n in dreams,
He may enter no more.