

Two Poems

By Douglas Ainslie

I—The Death of Verlaine

“Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise.”

VERLAINE.

So the poet of grey slips away,
The poor singer from over the strait,
Who sat by the Paris highway,
Whose life was the laughter of fate ;

The laughter of fate, but the woe
Of the gods and the mortals who heard
The mystical modes as they flow—
Broken phrase, riven lute, broken word,

Broken up as the attar is crushed
By the steel of the mercantile weights
From the soul of the roses that blushed
Through the scroll of Elysian gates.

As a sphynx-moth with shivering wings
Hangs over the thyme in the garden
But an instant, then fairyward brings
The honey he gathers for guerdon ;

So you the oases of life
Just touched with your frayed, rapid wings,
Poor poet, and drew from the strife
The peculiar honey that clings

To your magical measures and ways,
As they sway with the moods of the soul,
Semi-conscious, through haze, in amaze,
Making on toward a dim distant goal.

“ Be always a poet or saint ”—
Poor Lélian was saint and was poet,
But not always—for sometimes we faint—
Then he must forget that we know it ;

In iris and opal forget—
His iris, his bow in the sky,
Fickle bow for the storm, and that yet
Was his only storm-bow to steer by.

Good-bye, then, poor poet, good-bye !
You will not be long there alone :
Very soon for your help we shall cry,
Lost souls in a country unknown.

Two Poems

Then Lélian, king of the land,
 Rich Lélian will teach us the speech
 That here we but half understand—
 Kind Lélian will reach us his hand.

II—Her Colours

ROSE, grey, and white—
 Roses, sad seas, and light
 Straight from the sun—
 These are your colours.

Red necklet spun
 When the Eastern day was done
 By fairy fingers
 Of lotus flowers.

In those white ivories
 Your arms, a charm there lies,
 Charm to conquer
 The bravest singers :

And for your grey
 Sweet, deep eye-oceans—they
 Do yet declare
 Queen Venus lingers.