

Sonnets

From the Portuguese
of Anthero de Quental

By Richard Garnett, C.B., LL.D.

I

WITH thistle's azure flower my home I hung,
And did with redolence of musk perfume,
And, robed in purple raiment's glowing gloom,
Low prelude to my coming carol sung.
Spikenard, from Orient groves transported, clung
To brow and hand ; if so my humble room
Might undishonoured harbour her, for whom
Soon should its welcoming door be widely flung.
What princess, fairy, angel from above,
Some radiant sphere relinquishing for me,
Bowed to my habitation poor and cold ?
Princess nor sprite nor fay, but memory
Of thee it was that came to knock where Love
Expecting sat behind a gate of gold.

II

Royal I dream myself, and realm is mine
 Isled far apart in Oriental seas,
 Where night is lustrous glow and balmy peace,
 And the full moon doth on the waters shine.
 Spices their aromatic breath consign
 To lucid space untroubled by a breeze,
 And 'neath the shadow of the fringing trees
 Gleams the light foamwork of the lipping brine.
 There I in ivory pavilion keep,
 And question with myself, and find no end ;
 But thou, my Love, dost wander through the glade
 Of sward secluse, where moon and night contend ;
 Or couched beneath a palm dost taste of sleep,
 Low at thy feet thy guardian lion laid.

III

When, hand in hand enlinked, we hie to fill
 Our baskets with the valley's modest flowers ;
 Or at a bound the grassy crest is ours
 Of the high mount, where dews are sparkling still ;
 Or, gazing from the solitary hill,
 View the pale sea remote, as evening lours
 And clouds, like ruins of fantastic towers,
 Are piled and crumbled at the breeze's will :
 How oft doth silence seize on thee at once !
 With light, whence caught who knows ? thine eye is rife,
 Thy

Thy clasped hand throbs in mine, thy bloom departs.
The water and the wind chant orisons ;
And the eternal poetry of life
Little by little steals into our hearts.

IV

May rose and lily on thy bosom shower !
And hymns triumphal peal around thy way !
Glory and peace to thee, whose spell doth sway
This captive soul submissive to thy power.
Sky dedicate her star, and earth her flower !
Shade, scent and song thy summons all obey !
Sea roll thee dreams from her resounding bay
When slow tides ripple in the moonlit hour !
Preserve no memory of me who weep ;
Be all my worship banished from thy thought ;
But should'st thou pass regardless by, the while
I sit lamenting, from my tears be wrought
A fragrant carpeting, a flowery heap
For thee to crush, or scatter with a smile.

V

O let her go, the bird of brood and nest
By wicked hands despoiled ! forth let her fare
On wings to the illimitable air
Dispread to waft her from the spot unblest.
The drifting bark that tempest from the west
Smote at sunseting, let the billow bear
O'er the void deep, of mast and rudder bare,
Till the abyss engulf, let drive, 'tis best.

The

The spirit waning to its hour extreme,
 That faith and joy and peace may never know,
 Away with it to death without a dream !
 The last faint notes that falter in the flow
 Of dying strains, and dying hope's last gleam,
 Last breath, last love—O let them, let them go !

VI

Where at the precipice's foot the wave
 Ceaseless with sullen monotone doth roar,
 And the wild wind flies plaining to the shore,
 Be my dead heart committed to the grave.
 There let the suns with fiery torrents lave
 The parching dust, till summer shines no more,
 And eddies of dry sand incessant soar
 Around, when whirlblasts of the winter rave.
 And with its own undoing be undone,
 And with its viewless motes enforced to flit,
 Rapt far away upon the hurricane,
 All sighs and strifes that idly cumbered it,
 And idlest Love, sunk to oblivion
 In bosom of the barren bitter main.

VII

This sable steed, whose hoofs with clangour smite
 My sense, while dreamful shade on earth is cast,
 Onward in furious gallop thundering past
 In the fantastic alleys of the night,

Whence

Whence cometh he? What realms of gloom or light
Behind him lie? Through what weird terrors last
Thus clothed in stormy grandeur sped so fast,
Dishevelling his mane with wild affright?
A youth with mien of martial prowess, blent
With majesty no shock disquieteth,
Vested in steely armour sheening clear,
Fearless bestrides the terrible portent.
“I,” the tremendous steed declares, “am Death!”
“And I am Love!” responds the cavalier.