

The Question

By Stephen Phillips

I

FATHER, beneath the moonless night,
This heavy stillness without light,
There comes a thought which I must speak ;
Why is my body then so weak ?
Why do I falter in the race,
And flag behind this mighty pace ?
Why is my strength so quickly flown ?
And hark ! My mother sobs alone !

II

My son, when I was young and free,
When I was filled with sap and glee,
I squandered here and there my strength,
And to thy mother's arms at length
Weary I came, and over-tired ;
With fever all my bones were fired.
Therefore so soon thy strength is flown,
Therefore thy mother sobs alone.

Father,

III

Father, since in your weaker thought,
And in your languor I was wrought,
Put me away, as creatures are ;
I am infirm and full of care.
Feebly you brought me to the light ;
Then softly hide me out of sight.
Now sooner will my strength be flown,
Nor will my mother sob alone.

IV

My son, stir up the fire, and pass,
Quickly the comfortable glass !
The infirm and evil fly in vain
Is toiling up the window pane.
Fill up ! For life is so, nor sigh ;
We cannot run from destiny.
Then fire thy strength that's quickly flown,
Hark ! how thy mother sobs alone !