

THE UNLOVED



THESE are the women whom no man has loved.
Year after year, day after day has moved
These hearts with many longings, and with tears,
And with content ; they have received the years
With empty hands, expecting no good thing ;
Life has passed by their doors, not entering.

In solitude, and without vain desire,
They have warmed themselves beside a lonely fire ;
And, without scorn, beheld as in a glass
The blown and painted leaves of Beauty pass.
Their souls have been made fragrant with the spice
Of costly virtues lit for sacrifice ;
They have accepted Life, the unpaid debt,
And looked for no vain day of reckoning.

Yet

They too in certain windless summer hours
Have felt the stir of dreams, and dreamed the powers
And the exemptions and the miracles
And the cruelty of Beauty. Citadels
Of many-walled and deeply-moated hearts
Have suddenly surrendered to the arts
Of so compelling magic ; entering,
They have esteemed it but a little thing
To have won so great a conquest ; and with haste
They have cast down, and utterly laid waste,
Tower upon tower, and sapped their roots with flame ;
And passed on that eternity of shame
Which is the way of Beauty on the earth.
And they have shaken laughter from its mirth,
To be a sound of trumpets and of horns
Crying the battle-cry of those red morns
Against a sky of triumph.

On some nights
Of delicate Springtide, when the hesitant lights
Began to fade, and glimmer, and grow warm,
And all the softening air is quick with storm,
And the ardours of the young year, entering in,
Flush the gray earth with buds ; when trees begin
To feel a trouble mounting from their roots,
And all their green life blossoming into shoots,
They too, in some obscure, unblossoming strife,
Have felt the stirring of the sap of life.
And they have wept, with bowed heads ; in the street
They hear the twittering of little feet,
The rocking of the cradles in their hearts.

This is a mood, and, as a mood, departs
With the dried tears ; and they resume the tale
Of the dropt stitches : these must never fail
For a dream's sake ; nor, for a memory,
The telling of a patient rosary.

ARTHUR SYMONS.