

MUNDI VICTIMA

I



ENCEFORTH for each of us remains the world.
The gates have closed behind us, we are hurled
From the fixed paradise of our content
Into an outer world of banishment,
And, in this anger of the garden's Lord,
His serene angel with the fiery sword
Has yet more pitilessly cast us forth,
You by the gate that looks upon the North
And I by the gate looking on the South.
And so the lamentations of your mouth
I shall not hear, nor tears for this distress
Water my hours' unwatered barrenness.
For love is ended, love that was to be
Endless ; nay, love endures perpetually,
But I shall never kiss your lips again,
Nor hold your hand, nor feel your arms enchain
Body and soul in one extreme embrace,
Nor find again the kingdom of your face.
For I have lost you, you return no more.
And I have lost in you the years before
You gathered all my years within the glance
Of your supreme and triumphing countenance,
And all the years whose desultory flame
Shall yet smoke flickeringly after them.
Passion has burnt itself clean out for you.
I go back empty-hearted, to renew
The unprofitable, the vain following
Of every vain, unprofitable thing ;
You, with all seemly wishes satisfied,
Go forth to be the most unhappy bride

THE SAVOY

The sun shall shine upon in rich men's halls.
 Harken, I hear a voice, a voice that calls ;
 What shall remain for him? sadly it cries :
 Desolate years, eternal memories.
 And what for her? it cries, it cries with tears :
 Eternal memories, desolate years.

II

If the astrologers speak truth, who tell
 That the stars make for us our heaven and hell,
 My passionate and perverse horoscope,
 Where the intellectual forces may not cope
 With Scorpio, Herschel, Venus, and the Moon,
 Marked in my life that love in me should swoon
 Into the arms of strange affinities.
 It was myself looked at me with your eyes,
 Where Venus and the Moon with Herschel strove
 In some ambiguous paradox of love.
 When first I touched your hand I felt the thrill
 Knit heart to heart, and at the touch your will
 Became as my will, and my will became
 As your will, and an unappeasable flame
 Was lighted when your lips and mine first met
 In that long kiss my lips shall not forget
 When I am aged with eternity.
 I knew that my desire had come to me,
 And that the world was ended and begun,
 And I should never more beneath the sun
 Go lightly forth on any wayfaring.
 I knew that I should suffer for this thing,
 For this completion of the impossible,
 This mystical marriage of heaven and hell,
 With anguish and with extreme agony,
 Knowing that my desire had come to me.

III

I gaze upon your portrait in my hand.
And slowly, in a dream, I see you stand
Silent before me, with your pressing gaze
Of enigmatic calm, and all your face
Smiling with that ironical repose
Which is the weariness of one who knows.
Dare I divine, then, what your visage dreams,
So troubled and so strangely calm it seems?
Consuming eyes consenting to confess
The extreme ardour of their heaviness,
The lassitude of passionate desires
Denied, pale smoke of unaccomplished fires ;
Ah ! in those shell-curved, purple eyelids bent
Towards some most dolorous accomplishment,
And in the painful patience of the mouth,
(A sundered fruit that waits, in a great drouth,
One draught of living water from the skies)
And in the carnal mystery of the eyes,
And in the burning pallor of the cheeks :
Voice of the Flesh ! this is the voice that speaks,
In agony of spirit, or in grief
Because desire dare not desire relief.

IV

I have known you, I have loved you, I have lost.
Here in one woman I have found the host
Of women, and the woman of all these
Who by her strangeness had the power to please
The strangeness of my difficult desires ;
And here the only love that never tires
Even with the monotony of love.
It was your strangeness I was amorous of,
Mystery of variety, that, being known, yet does
Leave you still infinitely various,

THE SAVOY

And leave me thirsting still, still wondering
At your unknowable and disquieting
Certainty of a fixed uncertainty.
And thus I knew that you were made for me,
For I have always hated to be sure,
And there is nothing I could less endure
Than a fond woman whom I understood.
I never understood you : mood by mood
I watched you through your changes manifold,
As the star-gazing shepherd from his fold
Watches the myriad changes of the moon.
Is not love's mystery the supreme boon ?
Ah rare, scarce hoped-for, longed-for, such a goal
As this most secret and alluring soul !
Your soul I never knew, I guessed at it,
A dim abode of what indefinite
And of what poisonous possibilities !
Your soul has been a terror to mine eyes,
Even as my own soul haunts me, night and day,
With voices that I cannot drive away,
And visions that I scarce can see and live.
And you, from your own soul a fugitive,
Have you not fled, did not your pride disown
The coming of a soul so like your own,
Eyes that you fancied read you, yet but drew
Unknown affinities, yourself from you,
And hands that held your destiny, because
The power that held you in them, yours it was ?
Did you not hate me, did you not in vain
Avoid me and repel me and refrain ?
Was not our love fatal to you and me,
The rapture of a tragic ecstasy
Between disaster and disaster, given
A moment's space, to be a hell in heaven ?
Love, being love indeed, could be no less,
For us, than an immortal bitterness,
A blindness and a madness, and the wave
Of a great sea that breaks and is a grave.

Ah, more to us than many prosperous years,
 So brief a rapture and so many tears ;
 To have won, amid the tumults round about,
 The shade of a great silence from the shout
 Of the world's battles and the idle cry
 Of those vain faiths for which men live and die !
 And have we not tasted the very peace
 So passionate an escape must needs release,
 Being from the world so strangely set apart,
 The inmost peace that is the whirlpool's heart ?

V

Let me remember when you loved me best.
 When the intolerable rage possessed
 The spirit of your senses, and the breath
 As of the rushing of the winds of death
 Rapt you from earth, and in a fiery trance
 Exalted your transfigured countenance
 And bade your heart be rapturously still ?
 Or in the holy silence of that thrill
 Which stirs the little heart of grass, and swings
 The worlds upon their windy chariotings ?
 Or in the haunted trouble of those deep
 Enchantments of your visionary sleep,
 Ardent with dreams, and the delicious strife
 Of phantoms passionate with waking life ?
 Or when, as a fond mother o'er her child,
 You bent above me, and the mother smiled
 Upon the man re-born to be her own,
 Flesh of her very flesh, bone of her bone ?
 Of all your kisses which supremest one
 Out of the immeasurable million ?
 Or which denied, as on a certain day
 You tremulously turned your lips away,
 And I, who wronged you, thinking you unkind,
 Found it love's penance for a troubled mind,
 Grieved it had done some little wrong to love ?

Out of your silences which most did move
 The eternal heart of silence, ancient peace ?
 Or did you love me best, and then increase
 The best with better, till at last we stood,
 As he who was love's laureate in each mood
 Of passionate communion, bids us stand,
 First among lovers when but hand in hand

VI

It is all over, I am left alone.
 O visiting ghost, these eyes have never known
 So cold, calm, tearless, proud, dispassionate,
 Desperate, desolate, importunate,
 Whose wrong denied you life, and rent from me
 Your love, to be this ghost of memory ?
 Not yours, though you have left me ; and not mine,
 Though I have bade you leave me : the divine
 Right of the world's injustice, and that old
 Tyranny of dumb, rooted things, which hold
 The hearts of men in a hard bondage. Yet,
 Not for the world's sake, let me not forget
 That, in the world's eyes, I have done you wrong.
 And since to the world's judgment must belong
 The saving and damnation of all souls
 Whom that usurped sovereignty controls,
 Indeed I have done you wrong. I loved you more
 Than your own soul. I had not loved before,
 And love possessed me, fixed my wandering mind,
 And drove me onward, heedless, deaf, and blind,
 Wrapt in the fiery whirlwind, passion, drove
 Life to annihilation upon love.
 I had not loved before : I had been love's lord,
 I had delicately feasted at the board
 Where Folly's guests luxuriously admire
 Each dainty waiting handmaiden desire ;
 Where, when the feast is over, choice is free,
 I had feasted long, I had chosen riotously,

Kisses, and roses, and warm scented wine,
I had bound my forehead with the tangled vine,
I had bound about my heart the tangled hair
Of laughing light loves ; I had found love fair,
Of delicate aspect, and free from guile,
And I had bartered kisses for a smile,
And my vine-wreath for poppies twined for sleep,
And of a sleepy bowl I had drunk deep,
And, dreaming, never dreamed that hearts could ache,
For over-much desire, or for love's sake.
And then you came. The rose of yesterday
Petal by petal drooped, withering away,
And all my bright flowers drooped, withering dead,
And the vine-wreath had fallen from my head,
And the wine-red poppies dripped to earth, and spilled
The bowl of sleep, and all the air was filled,
As with the fluttering voices of soft doves,
With lamentations of the little loves.
Then a new life was born of the last breath
Of that which never lived ; I knew that death
Which love is, ere it is eternity.
And then I knew that love, I had thought so fair,
Is terrible of aspect, and heavy care
Follows the feet of love where'er he goes,
And lovers' hearts, because of many woes,
Ache sorer than all hearts most desolate,
And dearest love works most the work of hate.

VII

The world has taken you, the world has won.
In vain against the world's dominion
We fought the fight of love against the world,
For since about the tree of knowledge curled
The insidious snake, the snake's voice whispering
Has poisoned every fair and fruitful thing.
Did not the world's voice treacherously move
Even your fixed soul ? Did you not hold our love

Guilty of its own ardour, and the immense
 Sacrifice to its own omnipotence
 A sacrilege and not a sacrifice?
 Even in our love our love could not suffice
 (Not the rapt silence whose warm wings abound
 With all the holy plenitude of sound,
 At love's most shadowy and hushed hour of day)
 To keep the voices of the world away.
 O subtle voices, luring from the dream
 The dreamer, till love's very vision seem
 The unruffled air that phantom feet have crossed
 In the mute march of that processional host
 Whose passing is the passing of the wind ;
 Avenging voices, hurrying behind
 The souls that have escaped, and yet look back
 Reluctantly along the flaming track ;
 O mighty voices of the world, I have heard
 Between our heart-beats your reiterate word,
 And I have felt our heart-beats slackening.

VIII

Love, to the world, is the forbidden thing ;
 And rightly, for the world is to the strong,
 And the world's honour and increase must belong
 To the few mighty triumphing through hate
 And to the many meek who humbly wait
 The grudging wage of daily drudgery.
 The world is made for hate, for apathy,
 For labouring greed that mines the earth for gold,
 And sweats to gather dust into its hold :
 Is not the world bought for a little dust ?
 Kingdoms are shaken from their ancient trust,
 And kingdoms stablished upon treacheries ;
 Under the temple-roof of the same skies
 The stones of altars older than their gods
 Are beaten down, and in the old abodes
 The smoke of a new incense blinds the stars ;

The rind of earth is eaten up by wars,
As a rat, gnawing, leaves a mouldering heap ;
And the world drowns in a downy sleep,
The world being sworn confederate with success.
Yet will it pardon the forgetfulness
Of laughing loves that linger but a night
In the soft perfumed chambers of delight.
How should it pardon love ? love whose intent
Is from the world to be in banishment,
Love that admits but fealty to one,
Love that is ever in rebellion.
The world is made for dutiful restraint,
Its martyrs are the lover and the saint,
All whom a fine and solitary rage
Urges on some ecstatic pilgrimage
In search of any Holy Sepulchre.
The lover is a lonely voyager
Over great seas and into lonely lands,
He speaks a tongue which no man understands,
Much given to silence, no good citizen,
His utmost joy to be apart from men,
For his creating mind has given birth,
God-like, to a new heaven and a new earth ;
Where, if he dwell apart or in the crowd,
He talks with angels in a fiery cloud
Upon the mount of vision all his days.
Therefore the world, beholding in his face
Only the radiance of reflected light
Left by that incommunicable sight,
Which to the dim eyes of the world may seem
But the marsh-glimmer of a fevered dream,
Bids love renounce love, or be cast aside.
Has not the world's hate ever crucified,
From age to age, rejoicing in its loss,
Love on the same inevitable cross,
In every incarnation from above
Of the redeeming mystery of love ?

IX

The world has taken you, the world has won.
 Accursed be the world ! Was it well done
 To give the world, once more, its victory ?
 Was it well done to let you go from me ?
 For your own sake I suffered you to go.
 Did I do right, for your sake ? Say not no,
 Say not that I have left you to your fate,
 That I have made my own life desolate,
 Casting adrift upon a shoreless tide,
 While you, blind, shipwrecked, and without a guide,
 Fasting and footsore, desolately went
 Across an undiscovered continent !
 Should I have held you fast, in spite of all ?
 Perchance. Yet it was well, whate'er befall,
 To have renounced love, merely for love's sake.
 Ah, when in lonely nights I lie awake,
 And hear the windy voices of the rain,
 At least I shall not hear your voice complain
 " If you had loved me, you had let me go !"
 Have we not loved and sorrowed ? and we know
 It is well to have loved and sorrowed and not striven,
 And to endure hell, having passed through heaven,
 To know what heaven is, having passed through hell.
 Love's moment is a moment of farewell,
 Sorrow and weariness are all our years,
 And life is full of sighing, and much tears.

X

What shall your life be in the years to come ?
 The world, that recks not of love's martyrdom,
 Shall praise in you a weary passionate face,
 Where tears and memories have left their trace,
 Into a finer beauty fashioning
 Your beauty, ever an unquiet thing.

You shall have riches: jewels shall be brought
From the earth's ends to please a wandering thought,
And the red heart of rubies shall suspire
To kiss your fingers, and the inner fire
That wastes the diamond's imprisoned soul
Shall flame upon your brows, an aureole,
And your white breast shall be devoutly kissed
By the pale fasting lips of amethyst,
And the cold purity of pearls enmesh
Your throat that keeps my kisses in its flesh.
Your beauty shall be clothed in raiment fit
For the high privilege, to cover it ;
You shall be served ere any wish arise
With more than had seemed meet in your own eyes ;
You shall be shielded lest the sun should light
A rose too red on cheeks that blossom white ;
You shall be shielded from the wind that may
Tangle a tress delicately astray ;
You shall be fenced about with many friends ;
You shall be brought to many journeys' ends
By leisured stages ; what was mine of old
Shall now be yours, cities and skies of gold,
And golden waters, and the infinite
Renewal of the myriad-vested night.
Where cool stars tessellated the lagoon,
In Venice, under some old April moon,
Shall not some April, too, for you be lit
By the same moon that then wept over it ?
Shall you not drive beneath the boulevard trees
In that young Paris where I lived at ease ?
And you shall see the women I have known,
Before your voice called me to be your own
Out of that delicate, pale, lilac air.
And all this you shall find, as I did, fair,
And all this you shall find, as now I find,
Withered as leaves a ruinous winter wind
Casts in the face of any summer's guest
Revisiting some valley of old rest.

You will remember me in all these things,
 I shall go with you in your wanderings,
 I shall be nearer to you, far away,
 Than he who holds you by him, night and day ;
 Close let him hold you, close : what can he do ?
 For am I not the heart that beats in you ?
 And if, at night, you hear beside your bed
 The night's slow trampling hours with ceaseless tread
 Bearing the haggard corpse of morning on,
 You shall cry in vain for sleep's oblivion,
 Haunted by that unsleeping memory
 That wakes and watches with you ceaselessly.
 What shall your life be ? Loneliness, regret,
 A weary face beside a hearthstone set,
 A weary head upon a pillow laid
 Heavier than sleep ; pale lips that are afraid
 Of some betraying smile, and eyes that keep
 Their haunting memory strangled in its sleep.
 " O mother ! " is it I who hear you cry ?
 " O mother ! mother ! " is it only I ?
 " O my lost lover ! " shall she not, even she,
 Hear, and one moment pity you and me ?
 She must not hear, only the silence must
 Share in the jealous keeping of that trust.
 And when, perchance, telling some idle thing,
 Your husband rests his finger on my ring ;
 When your eye rests upon the casket where
 My letters keep the scent of days that were,
 My verses keep the perfume that was yours,
 And the key tells you how my love endures ;
 When you shall read of me, shall hear my name,
 On idle lips, in idle praise or blame ;
 Ah, when the world, perhaps, some day shall cry
 My name with a great shouting to the sky ;
 You must be silent, though your eyes, your cheek,
 Will answer for your heart, you must not speak,
 Though you would gladly dare a thousand harms
 To cry " The joy of life was in his arms ! "

Though you would give up all to cry one cry :
"I loved him, I shall love him till I die,
I am the man you tell of, he is I!"

XI

I write this for the world's eye, yet for one.
When she shall hear of me, and not alone,
Let her know always that my heart is hers,
As it was always. If my fancy errs
Into strange places, wildly following
The flying track of any flitting thing,
If I recapture any cast aside
Garlands, or twine for roses that have died
Fresh roses, or bid flower-soft arms entwine
My forehead flushed with some bewildering wine,
Then let her know that I am most forlorn.
There is no penance harder to be borne
Than, amid happy faces and the voice
Of revellers who in revelling rejoice,
To hear one's own sad heart keep time in vain
With some sad unforgotten old refrain.
For me, the world's eternal silence dwells
Not in the peace of those ecstatic cells
Where recollection goes the way of prayer
Into the void, the welcoming void air,
But here, in these bright crowds to be alone.
Then let her know that I am most her own!
Yet, if it might but save my soul from her,
O come to me, Folly the Comforter,
Fling those wild arms around me, take my hand,
And lead me back to that once longed-for land,
Where it is always midnight, and the light
Of many tapers has burnt out the night,
And swift life finds no moment set apart
For rest, and the seclusion of the heart,
And the return of any yesterday.
Come to me, Folly, now, take me away ;

I will be faithful to you until death
 Puff out this wavering and unsteady breath.
 Folly, the bride of such unhappy men
 As I am, were you not my mistress, when,
 Love having not yet chosen me to be proud,
 I followed all the voices of the crowd?
 But I forsook you : I return anew,
 And for my bride I claim, I capture you.
 Folly, I will be faithful to you now.
 I will pluck all your roses for my brow,
 And, with the thorns of ruined roses crowned,
 I will drink every poison life has found
 In the enchantments that your fingers brew.
 Finally I commend myself to you,
 Multitudinous senses : carry me
 Upon your beating wings where I may see
 The world and all the glory of the world,
 And bid my soul from lust to lust be hurled,
 Endlessly, precipitously, on.
 Only in you is there oblivion,
 Multitudinous senses ; in your fire
 I light and I exterminate desire.
 Though it cry all night long, shall I not steep
 My sorrow in the fever of your sleep ?
 Where, if no phantom with faint fingers pale
 Beckon to me, wildly, across the veil
 Of the dim waving of her sorcerous hair,
 I may yet find your very peace, despair !
 Benignant principalities and powers
 Of evil, powers of the world's abysmal hours,
 Take me and make me yours : I am yours : O take
 The sacrifice of soul and body, break
 The mould of this void spirit, scatter it
 Into the vague and shoreless infinite,
 Pour it upon the restless arrogant
 Winds of tumultuous spaces ; grant, O grant
 That the loosed sails of this determinate soul
 Hurry it to disaster, and the goal

Of swiftest shipwreck ; that this soul descend
The unending depths until oblivion end
In self-oblivion, and at last be lost
Where never any other wandering ghost,
Voyaging from other worlds remembered not,
May find it and remind of things forgot.

ARTHUR SYMONS.