

AUGUSTE RODIN

ROSA MUNDI

H. D. CARR

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## EDITION

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# ROSA MUNDI

A POEM

BY

H. D. CARR

WITH AN ORIGINAL COMPOSITION BY

AUGUSTE RODIN

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AND THROUGH ALL BOOKSELLERS

1905

Rose of the World !  
Red glory of the secret heart of Love !  
Red flame, rose-red, most subtly curled  
Into its own infinite flower, all flowers above !  
Its flower in its own perfumed passion,  
Its faint sweet passion, folded and furled  
In flower fashion ;  
And my deep spirit taking its pure part  
Of that voluptuous heart  
Of hidden happiness !

Arise, strong bow of the young child Eros !  
(While the maddening moonlight, the memoried caress  
Stolen of the scented rose  
Stirs me and bids each racing pulse ache, ache !)  
Bend into an agony of art  
Whose cry is ever rapture, and whose tears  
For their own purity's undivided sake

Are molten dew, as, on the lotus leaves  
Sliver-coiled in the Sun  
Into green-girdled spheres  
Purer than all a maiden's dream enweaves,  
Lies the unutterable Beauty of  
The waters. Yea, arise, divinest dove  
Of the Idalian, on your crimson wings  
And soft grey plumes, bear me to yonder shrine  
Of that most softly-spoken one,  
Mine Aphrodite ! Touch the imperfect strings,  
Oh thou, immortal, throned above the moon !  
Inspire a holy tune  
Lighter and lovelier than flowers and wine  
Offered in gracious gardens unto Pan  
By any soul of man !

In vain the solemn stars pour their pale dews  
Upon my trembling spirit ; their caress  
Leaves me moon-rapt in waves of loveliness  
All thine, O rose, O wrought of many a muse  
In Music, O thou strength of ecstasy  
Incarnate in a woman-form, create  
Of her own rapture, infinite, ultimate,  
Not to be seen, not grasped, not even imaginable,  
But known of one, by virtue of that spell  
Of thy sweet will toward him : thou, unknown,  
Untouched, grave mistress of the sunlight throne  
Of thine own nature ; known not even of me,

But of some spark of woven eternity  
Immortal in this bosom. Phosphor paled  
And in the grey upstarted the dread veiled  
Rose light of dawn. Sunshapen shone thy spears  
Of love forth darting into myriad spheres,  
Which I the poet called this light, that flower,  
This knowledge, that illumination, power  
This and love that, in vain, in vain, until  
Thy beauty dawned, all beauty to distil  
Into one drop of utmost dew, one name  
Choral as floral, one thin, subtle flame  
Fitted to a shaft of love. O bear me far  
Up and up yet to where thy sacred star  
Burns in its brilliance ! Thence the storm be shed  
A passion of great calm about this head,  
This head no more a poet's . Ay ! the dream  
Of beauty gathered close into a stream  
Of tingling light, and, gathering ever force  
From thine own love, its unextended source,  
Became the magic utterance that makes Me,  
Dissolving self into the starless sea  
That makes one lake of molten joy, one pond  
Steady as light and hard as diamond ;  
One drop, one atom of constraint intense,  
Of elemental passion scorning sense,  
All the concentrated music that is I.  
O ! hear me not ! I die ;  
I am borne away in misery of dumb life



That would in words flash forth the holiest heaven  
That to the immortal God of Gods is given,  
And, tongue-tied, stammers forth — my wife !

I am dumb with rapture of thy loveliness.  
All metres match and mingle ; all words tire ;  
All lights, all sounds, all perfumes, all gold stress  
Of the honey-palate, all soft strokes expire  
In abject agony of broken sense  
To hymn the emotion tense  
Of somewhat higher — O ! how highest ! — than all  
Their mystery : fall, O fall,  
Ye unavailing eagle-flights of song !  
O wife ! these do thee wrong.

Thou knowest how I was blind ;  
How for mere minutes thy pure presence  
Was nought ; was ill-defined ;  
A smudge across the mind,  
Drivelling in its brutal essence,  
Hog-wallowing in poetry,  
Incapable of thee.

Ah ! when the minutes grew to hours,  
And yet the beast, the fool, saw flowers  
And loved them, watched the moon rise, took delight  
In perfumes of the summer night,

Caught in the glamour of the sun,  
Thought all the woe well won.  
How hours were days, and all the misery  
Abode, all mine : O thou ! didst thou regret ?  
Wast thou asleep as I ?  
Didst thou not love me yet ?  
For, know ! the moon is not the moon until  
She hath the knowledge to fulfil  
Her music, till she know herself the moon.  
So thou, so I ! The stone unhewn,  
Foursquare, the sphere, of human hands immune,  
Was not yet chosen for the corner-piece  
And key-stone of the Royal Arch of Sex ;  
Unsolved the ultimate x ;  
The virginal breeding breeze  
Was yet of either unstirred ;  
Unspoken the Great Word.

Then on a sudden, we knew. From deep to deep  
Reverberating, lightning unto lightning  
Across the sundering brightening  
Abyss of sorrow's sleep,  
There shone the sword of love, and stuck, and clove  
The intolerable veil,  
The woven chain of mail  
Prudence self-called, and folly known to who  
May know. Then, O sweet drop of dew,  
Thy limpid light rolled over and was lost

In mine, and mine in thine.  
Peace, ye who praise ! ye but disturb the shrine !  
This voice is evil over against the peace  
Here in the West, the holiest. Shaken and crossed  
The threads Lachesis wove fell from her hands.  
The pale divided strands  
Where taken by thy master-hand, Eros !  
Her evil thinkings cease,  
Thy miracles begin.  
Eros ! Eros ! — Be silent ! It is sin  
Thus to invoke the oracles of order  
Their iron gates to unclose.  
The gross, inhospitable warder  
Of Love's green garden of spice is well awake.  
Hell hath enough of Her three-headed hound ;  
But Love's severer bound  
Knows for His watcher a more fearful shape,  
A formidable ape  
Skilled by black art to mock the Gods profound  
In their abyss of under ground.  
Beware ! Who hath entered hath no boast to make,  
And conscious Eden surelier breeds the snake.  
Be silent ! O ! for silence' sake !

That asks the impossible. Smite ! Smite !  
Profaned adytum of pure light,  
Smite ! but I must sing on.  
Nay ! can the orison

Of myriad fools provoke the Crowned-with-Night  
Hidden beyond sound and sight  
In the mystery of His own high essence ?  
Lo, Rose of all the gardens of the world,  
Did thy most sacred presence  
Not fill the Real, then this voice were whirled  
Away in the wind of its own folly, thrown  
Into forgotten places and unknown.  
So I sing on !

Sister and wife, dear wife,  
Light of my love and lady of my life,  
Answer if thou canst from the unsullied place,  
Unveiling for one star-wink thy bright face !  
Did we leave then, once cognisant,  
Time for some Fear to implant  
His poison ? Did we hesitate ?  
Leave but one little chance to Fate ?  
For one swift second did we wait ?  
There is no need to answer : God is God,  
A jealous God and evil ; with His rod  
He smiteth fair and foul, and with His sword  
Divideth tiniest atoms of intangible time,  
That men may know he is the Lord.  
Then, with that sharp division,  
Did He divide our wit sublime ?  
Our knowledge bring to nought ?  
We had no need of thought.  
We brought His malice in derision.

So thine eternal petals shall enclose  
Me, O most wonderful lady of delight,  
Immaculate, indivisible circle of night,  
Inviolata, invulnerable Rose !

The sound of my own voice carries me on.  
I am as a ship whose anchors are all gone,  
Whose rudder is held by Love the indomitable —  
Purposeful helmsman ! Were his port high Hell,  
Who should be fool enough to care ? Suppose  
Hell's waters wash the memory of this rose  
Out of my mind, what misery matters then ?  
Or, if they leave it, all the woes of men  
Are as pale shadows in the glory of  
That passionate splendour of Love.  
Ay ! my own voice, my own thoughts. These, then, must be  
The mutiny of some worm's misery,  
Some chained despair knotted into my flesh,  
Some chance companion, some soul damned afresh  
Since my redemption, that is vocal at all ;  
For I am wrapt away from light and call  
In the sweet heart of the red rose.  
My spirit only knows  
This woman and no more ; who would know more ?  
I, I am concentrate  
In the unshakable state  
Of constant rapture. Who should pour  
His ravings in the air for winds to whirl,

Far from the central pearl  
Of all the diadem of the universe ?  
Let God take pen, rehearse  
Dull nursery tales ; then, not before, O rose,  
Red rose ! shall the belov'd of thee,  
Infinite rose ! pen puerile poetry  
That turns in writing to vile prose.

Were this the quintessential plume of Keats  
And Shelley and Swinburne and Verlaine,  
Could I outsoar them, all their lyric feats,  
Excel their utterance vain  
With one convincing rapture, beat them hollow  
As an ass's skin ; wert thou, Apollo,  
Mere slave to me, not Lord — thy fieriest flight  
And stateliest shaft of light  
Thyself thyself surpassing : all were dull,  
And thou, O rose, sole, sacred, wonderful,  
Informing all, in all most beautiful,  
Circle and sphere, perfect in every part,  
High above hope of Art :  
Though, be it said ! thou art nowhere now,  
Save in the secret chamber of my heart.  
Behind the brass of my anonymous brow.

Ay ! let the coward and slave who writes write on !  
He is no more harm to Love than the grey snake  
Who lurks in the dusk brake

For the bare-legged village-boy, is to the Sun,  
The Sire of Life.  
The Lover and the Wife,  
Sun-canopied, ignore. The people hear ;  
Then, be the people smitten of grey Fear,  
It is no odds !

I have seen the eternal Gods  
Sit, star-wed, in old Egypt by the Nile ;  
The same calm pose, the inscrutable, wan smile,  
On every lip alike.  
Time hath not had his will to strike  
At them ; they abide, they pass through all.  
Though their most ancient names may fall,  
They stir not nor are weary of  
Life, for with them, even as with us, Life is but Love.  
They know, we know ; let, then, the writing go !  
That, in the very truth, we do not know.

It may be in the centuries of our life  
Since we were man and wife  
There stirs some incarnation of that love.  
Some rosebud in the garden of spices blows,  
Some offshoot from the Rose  
Of the World, the Rose of all Delight,  
The Rose of Dew, the Rose of Love and Night,  
The Rose of Silence, covering as with a vesture  
The solemn unity of things

Beheld in the mirror of truth,  
The Rose indifferent to God's gesture,  
The Rose on moonlight wings  
That flies to the House of Fire,  
The Rose of Honey-in-Youth !  
Ah ! No dim mystery of desire  
Fathoms this gulph ! No light invades  
The mystical musical shades  
*Of a faith in the future, a dream of the day*  
*When athwart the dim glades*  
*Of the forest a ray*  
*Of sunlight shall flash and the dew die away !*

Let there then be obscurity in this !  
There is an after rapture in the kiss.  
The fire, flesh, perfume, music, that outpaced  
All time, fly off ; they are subtle : there abides  
A secret and most maiden taste ;  
Salt, as of the invisible tides  
Of the molten sea of gold  
Men may at times behold  
In the rayless scarab of the sinking sun ;  
And out of that is won  
Hardly, with labour and pain that are as pleasure,  
The first flower of the garden the stored treasure  
That lies at the heart's heart of eternity.  
This treasure is for thee.



O ! but shall hope arise in happiness ?  
That may not be.  
My love is like a golden grape ; the veins  
Peep through the ecstasy  
Of the essence of ivory and silk,  
Pearl, moonlight, mother-milk  
That is her skin ;  
Its swift caress  
Flits like an angel's kiss in a dream ; remains  
The healing virtue ; from all sin,  
All ill, one touch sets free.  
My love is like a star — oh fool ! oh fool !  
Is not thy back yet tender from the rod ?  
Is there no learning in the poet's school ?  
Wilt thou achieve what were too hard for God ?  
I call Him to the battle ; ask of me  
When the hinds calve ? What of eternity  
When he built chaos ? Shall Leviathan  
Be drawn out with a hook ? Enough ; I see  
This I can answer — or Ernst Haeckel can !  
Now, God Almighty, rede this mystery !  
What of the love that is the heart of man ?  
Take stars and airs, and write it down !  
Fill all the interstices of space  
With myriad verse — own Thy disgrace !  
Diminish Thy renown !  
Approve my riddle ! This Thou canst not do.

O living Rose ! O dowered with subtle dew  
Of love. The tiny eternities of time,  
Caught between flying seconds, are well filled  
With these futilities of fragrant rhyme :  
In Love's retort distilled,  
In sunrays of fierce loathing purified,  
In moonrays of pure longing tried,  
And gathered after many moons of labour  
Into the compass of a single day :  
And wrought into continuous tune,  
One laughter with one langour for its neighbor,  
One thought of winter with one word of June,  
Muddled and mixed in mere dismay,  
Chiselled with the cunning chisel of despair,  
Found wanting, well aware  
Of its own fault, even insistent  
Thereon ; some fragrance rare  
Stolen from my lady's hair  
Perchance redeeming now and then the distant  
Fugitive tunes ; — Ah ! Love ! the hour is over !  
The moon is up, the vigil overpast.

Call me to thee at last,  
O Rose, O perfect miracle lover,  
Call me ! I hear thee though it be across  
The abyss of the whole universe,  
Though not a sign escape, delicious loss !  
Though hardly a wish rehearse

The imperfection underlying ever  
The perfect happiness.  
Thou knowest that not in flesh  
Lies the fair fresh  
Delight of Love ; not in mere lips and eyes  
The secret of these bridal ecstasies,  
Since thou art everywhere,  
Rose of the World, Rose of the Uttermost  
Abode of Glory, Rose of the High Host  
Of heaven, mystic, rapturous Rose !  
The extreme passion glows  
Deep in this breast ; thou knowest (and love knows)  
How every word awakes its own reward  
In a thought akin to thee, a shadow of thee ;  
And every tune evokes its musical Lord ;  
And every rhyme tingles and shakes in me  
The filaments of the great web of Love.

O Rose all roses far above  
In the garden of God's roses,  
Sorrowless, thornless, passionate Rose, that lies  
Full in the flood of its own sympathies  
And makes my life one tune that curls and closes  
On its own self delight ;  
A circle, never a line ! Safe from all wind,  
Secure in its own pleasure-house confined,  
Sure lord of its own rapture, deaf and blind  
To aught but its own mastery of song

And light, shown ever as silence and deep night  
Secret as death and final. Let me long  
Never again for aught ! This great delight  
Involves me, weaves me in its pattern of bliss,  
Seals me with its own kiss,  
Draws me to thee with every dream that glows,  
Poet, each word ; maiden, each burden of snows  
Extending beyond sunset, beyond dawn !  
O Rose, inviolate, utterly withdrawn  
In the truth : — for this is truth : Love knows !  
Ah ! Rose of the World ! Rose ! Rose !

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