

Amsterdam, December 23rd, 1897.

LET me pass out beyond the city gate.
All day I loitered in the little streets
Of black worn houses tottering, like the fate
That hangs above my head even now, and meets
Prayer and defiance as not hearing it.
They lean, these old black streets, a little sky
Peeps through the gap, the rough stone path is lit
Just for a little by the sun, and I
Watched his red face pass over, fade away
To other streets, and other passengers,
Saw him take pleasure where the heathen pray,
Saw him relieve the hunter of his furs,
All the wide world awaiting him, all folk
Glad at his coming, only I must weep:
Rise he or sink, my weary eyes invoke
Only the respite of a little sleep;
Sleep, just a little space of sleep, to rest
The fevered head and cool the aching eyes;
Sleep for a space, to fall upon the breast
Of the dear God, that He may sympathize.
Long has the day drawn out; a bitter frost
Sparkles along the streets; the shipping heaves

With the slow murmur of the sea, half lost
In the last rustle of forgotten leaves.
Over the bridges pass the throngs; the sound,
Deep and insistent, penetrates the mist—
I hear it not, I contemplate the wound
Stabbed in the flanks of my dear silver Christ.
He hangs in anguish there; the crown of thorns
Pierces that palest brow; the nails drip blood;
There is the wound; no Mary by Him mourns,
There is no John beside the cruel wood;
I am alone to kiss the silver lips;
I rend my clothing for the temple veil;
My heart's black night must act the sun's eclipse;
My groans must play the earthquake, till I quail
At my own dark imagining; and now
The wind is bitterer; the air breeds snow;
I put my Christ away; and turn my brow
Towards the south stedfastly; my feet must go
Some journey of despair. I dare not turn
To meet the sun; I will not follow him:
Better to pass where sand and sulphur burn,
And days are hazed with heat, and nights are
dim
With some malarial poison. Better lie
Far and forgotten on some desert isle,
Where I may watch the silent ships go by,
And let them share my burden for awhile.
Let me pass out beyond the city gate
Where I may wander by the water still,
And see the faint few stars immaculate

Watch their own beauty in its depth, and chill
Their own desire within its icy stream.

Let me move on with vacant eyes, as one
Lost in the labyrinth of some ill dream,

Move and move on, and never see the sun
Lap all the mist with orange and red gold,

Throw some lank windmill into iron shade,
And stir the chill canal with manifold

Rays of clear morning; never grow afraid
When he dips down beyond the far flat land,

Know never more the day and night apart,
Know not where frost has laid his iron hand,

Save only that it fastens on my heart;
Save only that it grips with icy fire

These veins no fire of hell could satiate;
Save only that it quenches this desire.

Let me pass out beyond the city gate.