

## THE TRIADS OF DESPAIR.

BY  
ALEISTER CROWLEY

Published in the 12 March 1903 issue of *The Weekly Critical Review*.

### I.

I lie in liquid moonlight poured from the exalted orb.  
Orion waves his jewelled sword; the tingling waves absorb  
Into their lustre as they move the light of all the sky.  
I am so faint for utter love I sigh and long to die.  
Far on the misty ocean's verge flares out the southern Cross,  
And the long billows on the marge of coral idly toss,  
This night of nights! The stars disdain a lustre dusk or dim.  
Twin love-birds on the land complain, a wistful happy hymn.  
I turn my face toward the main: I laugh and dive and swim.

Now fronts me foaming all the light of surf-bound waters pent;  
Now from the black breast of the night the Southern Cross is rent.  
I top the might wall of fears; the dark wave rolls below.  
A tall swift ship on wings appears, a cataract of snow  
Plunging before the white east wind; she meets the eager sea  
As forest green by thunder thinned meets fire's emblazonry.  
Then I sink back upon the breast of mighty-flinging foam,  
Ride like a ghost upon the crest, the silver-rolling comb;  
Float like a warrior to his rest, majestically home.

But oh! my soul, what seest thou, whose eyes are open wide?  
What thoughts inspire me idling now, lone on the lonely tide?  
Here in the beauty of the place, hope laughs and says me nay;  
In nature's bosom, in God's face, I read *Decay, Decay*.  
Here in the splendour of the Law that built the eternal sphere,  
Beauty and majesty and awe, I fail of any cheer.  
Here, in caprice, in will divine, I see no perfect peace;  
Here, in the Law's impassive shrine, no hope is of release.  
All things escape me, all repine, all alter, ruin, cease.

## II.

But thou, O Lord, O Apollo,  
Must thou utterly change and pass?  
Thy light be lost in the hollow?  
Thy face as a maid's in a glass  
Go out and be lost and be broken  
As the face of the maid is withdrawn,  
And thy people with sorrow unspoken  
Wait, wait for the dawn?

But thou, O Diana, our Lady,  
Shall it be as if never had been?  
The vales of the sea grown shady  
And silver and amber and green  
As thy light passed over and kissed them?  
Shall thy people lament thee and swoon,  
And we miss thee if thy love missed them,  
Awaiting the moon?

But thou, who art Light, and above them,  
Who art fire and above them as fire,  
Shall thy sightless eyes not love them  
Who are all of thine own desire?  
Immaculate daughters of passion,  
Shalt thou as they pass be past?  
And thy people bewail thee, Thalassian,  
Lost, lost at the last?

## III.

Nay, ere ye pass your people pass,  
As snow on summer hills,  
As dew upon the grass,  
As one that love fulfils,  
If he in folly wills  
Love a lass.

Yet on this night of smiles and tears  
A maiden is the theme.  
The universe appears  
An idle summer dream  
Lost in the grey supreme  
Mist of years.

For she is all the self I own,  
And all I want of will.  
She speaks not, and is known.  
Her window shining chill  
Whispers "He lingers still.  
I am alone."

#### IV.

But to-night the lamp must be wasted,  
And the delicate hurt must ache,  
And the sweet lips moan untasted,  
My lady lie lonely awake.  
The night is taken from love, and love's guerdon  
Is life and its burden.

To-night if I turn to my lover  
I must ask: mIf she be ? who am I?  
To-night if her heart I uncover  
No heart in the night I espy.  
I am grips with the question of eld, and the sphinx holds fast  
My eyes to the past.

Who am I, when I say I languish?  
Who is she, if I call her mine?  
And the fool's and the wise man's anguish  
Are burnt in the bitter shrine.  
The god is far as the stars, and the wine and fire  
Salt with desire.

*Honolulu, May 1901*