

ROSA IGNOTA
A POEM FOR PILGRIMS

BY

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βασιὰ μέγα, ἀλλὰ ῥόδα

“There is no Samadhi without Sila.”—BUDDHA.

ROSAE

VERAE

SEMPER QUAE VIVIT

ET DILIGET

VICTOR NEUBURG

I SEARCHED the world for life; at length I came
 Unto a gateway I could not pass through;
And then I turned, calling upon the name
 Of you.

And so you came to me: each dawn was new,
 And every sunset was a scarlet flame,
And noon was glorious in gold and blue.

So now I care not for my mystic shame;
 Love brings no fears, and life gives nought to rue,
So I may sing unto the love and fame
 Of you.

ROSA IGNOTA

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THE PROEM

A MINSTREL, through a forest wayfaring,
Feeling his heart stirred in him, seized his lyre,
And tuned his strings, and so began to sing:
 Oh! Woe to me who have to sing this thing!

The sun uprose, and his song mounting higher,
Reached to the summit of the Olympian hill,
Filling the gods with new and strange desire
To stain earth's mire with their immortal fire:
 Oh! Woe to me who have to sing this thing!

He sang of blood, and how men mar and spill;
He sang of love, and how men love and kill;
He sang the world as never yet twas sung;
He sang the will to fashion joy from ill:
 Oh! Woe to me who have to sing this thing!

And even as he sang with easy tongue,
With lips that quivered as his spirit stung,
Crying aloud unto the Muse who sings,
New glory flung unto him to him clung:
 Oh! Woe to me who have to sing this thing!

Oh! Woe to me who have to sing these things;
I was the Minstrel whom Enchantment brings:
She led her Poet captive through the world;
Alas! his wings were tangled in life's strings:
 Oh! Woe to me who have to sing this thing!

Oh! Woe to me whose soul's wings are unfurled,
Within my heart's core ever shall be curled

VICTOR NEUBURG

A little tendril softly that doth cling,
Softly impearled, a thing from heaven hurled;
Oh! Woe to me who have to sing this thing!

A minstrel through a forest wayfaring
Hath brought his love a shy and tender thing,
A gentle bloom of the gods' gardening.
Oh! woe to me who have to tell this thing!
The Rose doth sing: my song hath here its sting:
Oh! Woe to me who have to sing this thing!

*O Rose Unknown! I heard the secret Call
Out of the dark: there came unto mine ears
A sound of laughter and a sound of tears,
And then an utter silence. That was all;
Until it happened one day to befall,
There came to me the spirits of the years
That I had wasted: Lose, they said, thy fears;
Thou art before Love's throne imperial!*

*So then I bent mine eyes unto the earth,
And fell upon my knees, and cried for grace,
Fearing to gaze upon the royal face.
But suddenly there came the sound of mirth
Mingled with tears, from that imperial throne,
And then a voice: Come, Lord, unto thine own.*

ROSA IGNOTA

I

INVOCATION

My unknown Rose!
Sweet-hearted, scented purely
With all the passion of my heart, if now
I sing new songs to thee
Where many songs before have marked thee surely
Their own, let vagrant Liberty
Inform my songs; for I, of the pure brow
And the soul that glows
With the fervency of eld, invoke thee; for I have known thee:
Wandering far into the cities I found thee,
Unsuspected still, and round thee
The idle worshippers that the wind hath blown thee.
It is well; for I know thee and thy magic grace,
And the history of thy race,
And the times of eld
When thou wast born, compelled
By sundawn to ope thine eyes.—
Ah! Wise!
Thou hast not shadowed the thunder,
And thereunder
Is set the manifold wonderment of thee,
Star, star of the sea! . . .
Well do I know my magic shall not avail
To unveil thee.
Too well I know I may not hope to impale thee
On the spear of my song; my song
Is thine, and thou dost not remain for long:

VICTOR NEUBURG

Thou tarriest not at all,
Thou guardest all man's bale
Within the web of the Mystery called Time.
And so no rime
Of beauty or of truth shall serve
Thee, until thou shalt swerve
And fall.

Who shall undo the wrong?
What hand shall set thee free?
And who shall lend his light that it may bring
An end to the light I sing?
My song, my song
Is blasphemy to thee,
Who knowest naught, I know, of thee and me;
But only the wild grace,
Abandoned, but in silent harmony,
Under the starred sky's face,
Under the green hills, free
In the most sacred time, in the most secret place,
Is thine.
Oh, Wine! Wine! Wine!
Sang the poet of the world.
But what wine may suit thee,
Thee, with thy petals curled,
And thy scented breath
That only may be known in tranced death
To me?—
Yea! And to all those
That worship thee, my Rose,
My Rose! My Rose! My Rose!

For thou dost glance through all the veils of life,
Lending thy light unwon,
O subtlest siren thou, who wouldst entrance the sun!
Behind what secret hill shall I find thee?
In what chains shall I bind thee?
O Rose! Wert thou but mine

ROSA IGNOTA

I would blind thee
With the sacred sign
Of five,
Making thee mine.
Alive
Thou wouldst kill me.
But dead, dead thou wouldst fill me
With the low breath I seek, and I should be
The incarnate spring's gold immortality.
Rose of the mire
Where courses sacred fire. . . .

Oh! In what far land
Shall I weave thee a garland
That shall contain thee,
And shall not contain thee?
That shall restrain thee,
And shall not restrain thee?
O thou whose scent enchanted my vain youth
From the more bitter truth
Of easy things,
How hast thou led me on
To the mire?
Thou madest thyself wings
Of false and fecund fire;
Thou bad'st me don
An alien robe of shame.
Ah! Sweetheart, thee I blame,
And may not blame,
For the sweet, eternal shame
That seared my soul,
And left my spirit free,
Free! to weep before thee,
And thou hast slain me;
Thou hast slain me whole,
I am all dead to thee,
My Rose, my Rose, my Rose,
And the things I have said to thee

VICTOR NEUBURG

Are but the foolish echoes the wind blows
Into mine ears from the most secret world
Wherein thy faded petals dropped,
And stopped
Decaying, for eternally are curled
Tightly new petals. So this my song shall be
The last I shall sing to thee,
To thee. Oh, the wind blows
Thy secret to me, Rose!

II

THE GARDEN

BECAUSE of the gray dreams
In the garden of yellow roses,
A thrill of the quiet streams
In the garden of lost delight:
Ah! youth, so slim and white,
The one sure blossom uncloses:
When thou art lying still and dead, it blooms in the heart
of the night.

Shattered the golden sword in the great bronze hands of
the old
Hermaphrodite of the ages!
O youth, so sad and wise,
Shattered the strong hilt lies;
The great bronze god for wages
Has a hilt of gold, and eyes of gold,
Beneath the sunless skies.

Yet it were well to have been
Idle and young and tender,
Ignorantly and idly wise, disdainful in the dawn,
Sweetest of all the green
And gold that the gods surrender
Of the sweet dead times that have seen
The marriage of nymph with faun.

See! With an idle rime
I slip again to the splendour,
With eyes all blinded by time,

VICTOR NEUBURG

To this thing that the gods surrender—
Ineffably sad and tender
As a girl-babe born to die
Ere she hath known the blue of the sky.
And the light that her love shall lend her.

So in an idle dream
I have slipped from the yellow-gray;
On the wings of song I have crossed the stream
To the dawn of immortal youth—
To the long-lost love-lit day
When the gods in glamour and ruth
Passed as a dream away,
In a dream that was known for truth.

III

AMOR INTELLECTUALIS

THE soft, gray autumn's radiant stars
Bend down, like pallid nenuphars
Over a woodland pool, and I
See night, blind night, beyond the sky:
Autumn in London, gray and gold.
Autumn in London, chaste and cold.
By woodland ways, with silent tread,
Pass, dusty dreams! dreams dim and dead
In the gold of a faded summer sun
Burnished and dull, in clouds of dun
And brilliant amber. Soft! Let be
The tender dream! Stay here with me!
So, to this dream, this dream, I give
Again the pulsing life I live:
The faded sunset thrills the sweet
Core of my soul;—ah! nimble feet
Grown old! Oh! autumn woodlands fraught
With pensiveness of waking thought!
The gray night gathers, soft and cold,
The old dead dreams, dead dreams of old,—
The cold, gray, windy breath of time,
The old dead loves, the unsung rime:
Autumn, the pale, gray, crisped star,
Virginal, golden nenuphar,
Folden upon itself to sleep,
To sleep and die, to wake and weep
Soft silver tears of old desire.
O molten silver of my lyre,
Transmute, transmute my autumn dream,

VICTOR NEUBURG

Transmute the winding star-lit stream
To the stream of olden grace and love;
The earth beneath, the sky above;
And round the russet autumn's chill
The brown leaves swirling, swirling still
Where London autumn waxes cold,
Where night grows younger, fold on fold.
The short, gray day fades softly down
To dusk; Night bears the radiant crown
Of twilight's dim remembered dreams
Seen through a tremulous veil: who deems
The past is dead—let London lights
Mingle with London's autumn nights! . . .
The dull-red gleams of burnished fire,
The wind-harp songs of old desire,
Lost, pallid, steal through Autumn's veils,
The unsung songs, forgotten tales. . . .
Autumn in London, young and bare,
Autumn in London, gray and fair. . . .
Through hazes of the times of eld
Through mazes of the world compelled
By the magic of the memory
Of the love born by a sunlit sea—
Through the gray dusk a faint pink glows,
The aureole of a flower that blows
In the garden of the gods: too long
I linger lost in sense of song;
Too long I stay, too late, too late
I wander by the hidden gate
Of the garden, and the night-wind blows
Around me still, ah, Rose, my Rose!
From thee the wind-borne breezes float:
From thee! the secret word, the note
On the lips of a dying god, pierced through
By the spear of Dawn. Is Dawn still new,
Now thou art faded in the gloom?
Now thou art lost in death and doom?
I know not yet; nor shall I know

ROSA IGNOTA

Till thou art faded quite, and snow
Upon thy grave shows bare and white
In the chill heart of winter's night.
Still shall I feel the wind that blows.
From the secret grave of thee, my Rose.

IV

DECADENCE

TWILIGHT, that is the thin gray ghost of day,
Holds the dim way of death; the darkness grows
More sanguine-hearted as the hour is sped,
 And with less light is fed;
 Thine hour grows, grows away:
Thou art mine, mine own, mine own, thou sanguine Rose.

Thou sanguine Rose! Deep-hearted as the hour
Thou bearest as a flame; more argent-shod
Than the eloquent bringer of the god's delight:
 Here, from the edge of night
 I pluck thee forth, a flower
Too fair for the garish day, the barren sod.

My Rose! My ensanguined Rose! For ever mine,
Mine in the birth of the spirit: the flash that fades,
Unveiling still, lights thee, that bloomest still
 Till that thou dost fulfil
 The old gray world, divine
With the breath of thee in the cool, white colonnades.

Thou art too pure to love, too sweet to know,
Too fair to bear unsullied through the world,
Where love is blind with lust, and hate grows strong
 On thine immortal song;
 Nor do the world's winds blow
Abroad the forbidden word, in thee, in thee imperaled.

ROSA IGNOTA

My Rose! my Rose! my Rose! my ensanguined Rose,
Blood o' the heart of the love transcending life,
Than death more cool, more eloquent, more still:
 There is moonlight on the hill,
 But thou art gone, as goes
The promised joy of thee, the world's still-virgin wife.

They spurn thee from the temples of their Lady,
Nor know the passion of thy virgin will,
Nor heed the murmurous song of thee, that blows
 Over their heads, my Rose:
 But in cool paths and shady
Of the old secret woods, ah! they might find thee still!

Rose! Rose! the driving rain, the shadows growing
Over the pathway of the doubtful land,
Obscure thee from me, and no foot-fall now
 I hear; if it be thou,
 So silent, that art going,
I shall not know, nor in this darkness understand.

V

OF THE ROSE

"THAT love and the lover
Are mingled in me
Night shall discover:
Dreams shall not be
The veil of the world that my heart doth disclose:
The long night is over,
And I am the Rose.

"Night, like a cancer,
Spread over my breast:
There was no answer,
No truce to this rest,
That, holding the world in a shower of white snows,
Chilled the mad dancer
Who bore me, the Rose.

"Day, like a vision,
Before me is fled;
Hate and derision
Have fouled my soft bed.
In the heart of the water the quenched vision
glows;
Unborne, in division,
By me, the world's Rose."

"Ah! Rose of the mire
That festering runs
Through the lands of desire
In the blaze of the suns;—

ROSA IGNOTA

I am stirred to the depths of me when the wind
blows
The notes of the lyre
To me, O lost Rose!

"My rose of the world,
My rose of the mire,
With petals soft-curved
O'er the heart of desire.—
I am he who shall bear thee; who knows not
and knows;
Whose heart is impearled
In the heart of the Rose.

"By the bow that is bent,
By the veil that is torn,
By the strength that is spent,
By the babe that is born,
By the river of starlight that ceaselessly flows
By the god's starlit tent,
Oh, I hail thee, my Rose.

So day and her lover,
And night and her dream,
Have passed thee, Rose, over;
And over the stream
Thou shalt pass, and thy vigil not seek to impose,
Nor thy secret discover,
O thou, the world's Rose.

VI

THE VALLEY

It is undone, the spell, and I am cast
Out to the winds; at last
I shall perish utterly, I know:
But I shall lie asleep on the breast of the Past,
Nor feel the sun, nor the tempest, nor the snow,
And all my woe
Shall be as naught to me,
For I shall be utterly free
As I am utterly dead.
So let no requiem be said
Over my mouldering head,
And let no vague, sweet songs be sung
By any tongue!
For he to whom the songs are given
Hath no ear to receive.
The chord is riven,
And he did not believe.
He had no fear to die, for death could give
No more pain
That that he knew whilst he did live.
He lives again
In the earth
Whence he had birth.
Gladly he lies at rest, asleep, unknown,
His ashes scattered to the four winds, blown
About the world: his songs
Forgotten utterly as he.
So let him lie unknown where he belongs,
Ask of the murmuring sea,
Of the silent stars that roll so ceaselessly,

ROSA IGNOTA

Where he be fled,—
It is enough; one word is enough: he is dead.

Rose! Ever-virgin Rose of the pulsing world,
Whereover are thy petals curled,—
It is for me alone to sing of thee,
It is for me alone.
Yea! let my songs of thy fame
Be as flame,
That shall enhance, maybe,
The liberty
Of one.—
If one alone shall say:
It is not dead, the day,
Not utterly dead while one many sings,
Having been brushed by the morning's wings,"
It shall suffice
For him; and as for thee,
Though the age be as ice,
In one heart thou hast blossomed; one was free
To sing these things,
These things.

For ever more the light shall fade from him,
His eyes shall wax more dim,
His ear more dull.
And so the wonderful world less beautiful
Shall grow: he shall know no more
The wonder of spring:
He shall sing—
But a shadow shall lie before.
He shall find no thing
Whereby he may linger, and say,
Behold! I have found the day.

His day is over: utterly he shall die,
My Rose, under the sky.
He shall lie with the worm,

VICTOR NEUBURG

And so no more with thee;
There shall be set this term
To his mortality.

Yet shall he worship thee
With his tears
For a few short years.
And then he shall be
Nothing at all to thee,
Who sang thee when no other man would sing thee,
Who brought unto thee all that he could bring thee.

Night, that art mother of our quietness,
Who bendest deep, dark eyes o'er our distress,
In thee shall sleep his ashes; let him lie
Alone under the sky,
Nor wake again:
He hath paid for his life with his pain.
He oweth naught
Unto the universe,

For that whereof
He was wrought
Was bound up with the curse
Of love.
So let him lie with earth above,
And earth below.
He hath forgotten who was fulfilled of woe.
He is buried deep, oh! deep:
Leave him alone to sleep.
Leave him to sleep alone under the sky;
He had one mighty vision, and did die.
Now he is dead that dream shall be fulfilled
While he doth sleep.
For, whilst his song is utterly stilled,
His dream doth wake again,
And laugh and weep.
But he is free, and knoweth no more pain.

VII

THE SONG

YEA! I who have lain dead among the roses
Have slain love utterly in my soul
By mine own death! O constant-playing fount
Under the shadow of our Venus' mount—
Thou whom I love, unto whose vine uncloses
The gaping wound whose sap hath made me whole,—
O riot of the gods! O thou!
O thou of the pale brow,
And pale, most pale, blue eyes,
Upon thy bosom
Oh, the bud and blossom!
The flaunting wanton leaps on the stage of the world,
And cries:
I am the love, the love that never dies,
Being born with the lover's death,
Yielding mine easy breath
Under the never-failing skies,
That fail not for shelter over the dim world.
And so am I closely curled
Upon myself, with petals still, still furled. . . .

Over the plains of Art with scornful feet
And trailing amber robes, a nymph of time
Floats, nimbly fleet
Before the vision,
And in derision
She mocks me for my rime,
Mocks me with song most sweet,
Most utterly sweet, and I,

VICTOR NEUBURG

Who have slain the shells
Of the gods who haunted me
And flaunted me,
Lie,
Listening to the spells
That she hath woven about me.
Yea! should she flout me,
I should burst with song, I know,
And go,
An ill-starred victim, to the lost low land
Where the wailing voices—
That are voices only,
Having burst the husk of song—
Wander lonely,
While the Muse rejoices,
Bearing within her hand
The lyre,
And the sacred fire,
Serene and strong,
That lights the dusky underworld.
Ah! hurled, ah! hurled
By Zeus
From the skies,
Prometheus, lost Prometheus
Gasps and dies
For ever on the rock of my desire,
And the lusty Raven
Hath sought at last his haven,
Under the streams that flow from that lost fire. . . .

Oh, woe! Oh, woe to me that have seen this,
Oh, woe unutterable! the last long kiss
Hath slain me, O thou nymph with wanton eyes!
And now the sunlight dies
A moment from the skies
Over the Abyss. . . .
Descent! Descent! Ah! I am fallen far
Under the low, bright star

ROSA IGNOTA

That led me on, a dreamer, to the veil
That parted, and left pale
The dark beyond; for there was nothing there—
Nothing! A shell! A husk
Born of the dusk
In the afterglow of passion, wild and fair
I saw it. Yea!
I had been stolen away,
A changeling bodily; my soul was thrust
To moulder with the dust:
I was the love that dies,
And I had slain the lover
With song.
Ah! Night! discover
Her of the wanton eyes
That fled before me
So long,
And scattered o'er me
Alas! the star-dust that should blind mine eyes,
And hide me from the skies.
Is love so strong?
So weak the lover?
Yea, night shall yet discover
My song, my veiled song.

VIII

INSPIRATION

THE wingèd globe that holds the stars enchained,
The secret, silver pools of the lost desires—
These by thy fires, thy fires!
O lone Osiris in thy wintry tomb
Of doom
O lonely one, so utterly silent there,
Too weary for despair—
Yea, I have found thee too, thee too,
And round thee all the blue
Of the skies is blackened; waned
The light of thine eyes to the dusk.
The husk, the husk
Of all dead dreams, dead dreams
Is come upon thee;
Dust and ash and musk, and musk, and musk—
All these are on thee. . . .

I bear a chalice of red-tipped lilies under the moon.
Bestrewn
The dim pathway of delight
With night,
And her dim, pale stars that swoon
In the circle of the skies.
Thine eyes,
O radiant god, are waning, and there dies
Along the barren waste thine echoing cry.
And all the sky
Is a chalice of white lilies rimmed with blood,
With blood; and the bitter flood

ROSA IGNOTA

Of thy tears is dying away, away, away,
Beyond the hills, the hidden hills of day.

These are but lilies, O my silent god;
Where thy feet have trod
Upon the earthly way
They have sprung,
And the songs that have been sung
Are faded with the day.
My little heap of ashes, thou was god,
Yea, utterly wast thou god!

So there are no more roses, no more roses;
There shall be no more songs to thee,
Lord of the lilies and the silent sea
Of Time.
No rime
This night brings to thee: closes
The hour in dusk; there is no song sung to thee,
And thou art fled from all thy toil, set free. . . .

IX

THE DESCENT INTO MATTER

YEA! All the veils of the spirit come to this—
To this, that they are veils of thee, of thee;
And the flesh, alas! is the core of thee. Be it so.
I have wandered through the worlds in seeking thee,
And I have found thee, and thou art as pure
As dung, as sweet as sweat, as light as lust.
All these, all these I have found, oh, bitterness!
O forsaken one, whom I have found, thou art ravished
By the phallus of Time, of Time that pierceth thee
So keenly that thou art torn, thy virgin body
A prey to the lust of Time! Oh, bitterness!
Oh, threefold sadness! I have found thee now
Too late, too late, too late. I am weary of flesh;
It burns me now I have lost thee! I sicken of time,
It sears me, sears me! Now, no longer unknown,
I have found thee, the harlot goddess. Why camest thou not
When thou wast pure as I, a new-purged soul
Weary for a space from the lusts of the world, set free
From the clutches of flesh? For ever I have lost thee,
And I damn thee, for that thou hast seduced me far
From the olden way of the gods. O Rose! Rose! Rose
Unknown, ah! wherefore hast thou done this thing?
The spirit is dead within me, and the flesh
Wearies of thee, whom never I have known:
For thou art foul to me—a leprous worm
Of sticky slime; a clamorous courtesan
With itching sores, thou bidd'st me scratch thee, ease
Thine ill with the touches of love. Ah! slimy one,
Rose of the world polluted, thou who holdest

ROSA IGNOTA

A boy's dreams in derision, a man's desires
As food for thy body—thy body!—how shall I come to thee
Who am at last awakened? Oh, my Rose,
My Rose of my lost World, O Rose! Rose! Rose!
Pity me for that now I may not love thee,
Pity me for the unquenchable desire,
Never to be gratified, I bear toward thee!
Pity me for my youth, the scattered dreams
That are fallen from the shattered casket of my soul.

Yet will I ravish thee even now, my queen;
I will fasten my fangs in thy breast, and drink thy blood,
Thy leprous blood, to make me mad with hate,
And frenzied with unsatisfied desire.—
I will make my bed with thee, thou harlot Rose
Set twixt the limbs of the world, hate and desire.
I will make me foul as thou that I may be
A citizen of the world! I will quench the fire
Immortal in me! I will be as thou,
Prostitute unto Pan and unto Time.—
I will live upon the dreams thou givest me
In fee for sated passion! Yea! I will be
A vanquisher of genius, a dream palled
With life and time, knowing naught else there be
But thou, who art slime, whose fingers through the veil
Transform the world to dust, the sun to fire,
Life unto lust, love to polluted dreams
Of rose-buds ruined by slimy worms that crawl,
Seeking desire, through the crapulous bed of love.
So shall the lust of love be sated on thee
In spite of thee, who knowest no ecstasy.
And I will win a pallid way to the stars
In spite of thee! Yea, and because of thee.
For the end of every path must be the same,
And at the end of thee, immortal one,
Is Nothing! Yea, thou shalt know, Rose, even as I,
How the last dust of the world is naught but dust,
And how thou shalt die, being the Immortal Rose.

X

LIFE

MEN say: "For love's sake and for beauty's sake
We would make our songs immortal; we would give
The passionate cry of summer, the secret ache
That thou, our poet, knowest;" I would live
A lonely virgin for thy sake, and I
Would fret no more the earth, nor tire the sky
With ever-unbidden song. Ah! I would give
All that my spirit hath learned of thee, to live
Lonely and pure with the memory of thy kiss,
And thy passionate, tearing lips, and thine arms around me,
Knowing naught of the world, and caring naught, save this:
Love, through this woman, hath found me. . . .
But last night, when betwixt thy breasts I lay,
Sucking thy soul away,
I dreamed of a song I would make thee, a song so fair,
It should charm the wandering air,
And make it stay with me for ever,
A thought of thee within my mind:
Dearest, I am deaf and blind,
Believe me, to all but thee; yea, too, I am dumb,
Save when I sing thee,
When my songs I bring thee.
O passionate endeavour!
O love more rare
Than the fabled loves of the gods, I too succumb
Unto the olden immemorial spell,
And have no words to tell
Of thee, and of the grace of thee,
And of the face of thee,
Who art mine, whom I made mine own.

Rosa Ignota! Ah! the Rose is blown.

XI

MELANCHOLY

OVER all is the greenness, in the slow-falling night
 Over the fields with dusk and dew, with dusk and dew
 there flees
A dying echo, faint and dim, fleeing towards the light;
 Sombre streams cry mournfully in the sighing breeze
With the rustling trees.

The old brown mellow houses grow mellow in the nightfall;
 A charmed air is about them of the keen old days that
 are dead.
Oh, hushed is the song of the morning, hushed in the tremu-
 lous light-fall,
 For the light is fading slowly now, and all the legends
 are said,
 And all the glamour is fled.

Here in the soft grey twilight the mournful evening lingers
 Upon the road to dream and sleep and all the things that
 are past;
Here in the shadowy night-fall, with slow reluctant fingers,
 The poet touches the silent strings, and falls into calm at
 last
 As the night grows dim and vast.

And the passionate hour of love, of love, is come unto dust
 and slumber,
 A gracious memory only stays, a passionless sense remains
Of golden hours that are passed and fled, when the joys of love
 without number

VICTOR NEUBURG

Fanned into fire his smouldering heart, and turned into
flame his brains

With purple and crimson stains.

And the hour of the Rose is fallen, and the light of her eyes is
fled,

There is only a sense of vaguest dream, of calm, unending
repose

On the breast of a love that is fled afar, this is soft, and gentle,
and dead;

That passed away on the stream of night; that flows and
flows and flows

From the heart of a faded Rose.

XII

THE SEER

OVER the billows
 Of soft green grass,
Under the willows,
 The gray sprites pass.
In twilight's glamour
 The shadows grow,—
Cadent life's clamour!
 So low, so low,
That the world is hushed
 As the white light pales;
No longer flushed
 The daylight fails;
The fading light
 No longer glows
In the west; the night
 Still deeper grows:
 O secret Rose!

O secret Rose!
 O secret Name!
The west wind blows
 As the hot red flame
Dies down to dusk;
 The day is dim. . . .
Hawthorn and musk. . . .
 The seraphim
Play on the breeze:
 The ponds are stirred
By the mysteries

VICTOR NEUBURG

Of the secret Word.
The lost Word floats
Over the dunes
In silver notes
And golden tunes,
And mystic runes.

O secret Rose!
O secret Flame!
The west wind blows
The secret Name
Into the ears
Of the wandering lights
That love their fears
In the summer nights,
And in autumn rejoice
By the haunted meres,
Hearing the voice
Of the seven spheres,
Who are merged in the sun,
Whom the moonlight frees,
And whose orison
The soft night-breeze
Blows over the leas.

To softest sleep
In the scented west
In the moonlight deep
His ear is pressed
To the earth, who wanders,
Unseen, alone;
Who dreams and ponders,
Whose face is stone,
Carven by thought:
He unveils the skies,
And the star-dreams wrought
By his frozen eyes
Take shape and stand

ROSA IGNOTA

In his argent dream;
And the old gray land
And the swift gray stream
Glitter and gleam.

The silver wonder
Of silent stars,
The silent thunder
Of sunset's bars,
The crimson flare
In the ashes of day,
Are everywhere
On the secret way:
Under the hill
The clamouring gnomes,
For a moment still
In their darkened homes,
Hear the deep night,
And the secret word
That dies in light
Is seen as a bird,
As a vision heard.

The sylphs that skim
The upper air,
Light of limb,
With floating hair,
Tune their lyres
To the faded west,
And the sacred fires,
As they pass to rest,
For a moment stay
As a note half-heard
On their homeward way
As a weary bird
Lingers in space.
O molten air!
O dying grace!

VICTOR NEUBURG

O dream most rare!
O fire most fair!

The waves that wander
Under the night,
As stars that ponder
The birth of light,
Lift their crests
To the flash of fire,
And in their breasts
There is born desire
For the maidens that float
In the heart of the river;
And the secret note
Sets the waves aquiver
Till the naiads arise
To hear the choir
Of the star-lit skies,
And the secret fire
Of death and desire.

And the rim of the flame
Is pierced and torn
With the spirits made tame
By the breath of the morn,
And the life of the fire
That surges and swells
From the swamp and the mire,
From the million hells,
And the one soft heaven
Where meetly blooms
The heart of the seven
Supernal dooms.
The water of life
Still flashes and flows
From the heart of the strife
To the pathway that goes
To the core of the Rose.

XIII

DEATH

THE ways are fixed unto the last abode
Of death; there is no sign-post on that road;
No man hath found it, and no man shall find
The secret way under the heavens: blind
Is knowledge, for within man's mortal brain
There is an end to thought, an end to pain;
And there is death, a cool, gray, silent place,
Calm in the afterglow of life; one grace
Kept pure and holy, and one sacred thing
In the deep centre of the mystic ring
Of life, whence all roads lead, a winding path
Through plains of dumb despair and sunless wrath.
There is one holy spot under the skies
Kept sacred from the screaming herd: there lies
The silent singer, and the dreamer asleep,
Calm in the mother-earth, and sunken deep
From all the toil of the world and the heat of day,
Buried and quite forgotten; hidden away
From jarring strife, the myriad tongues that shout
Their petty shibboleths of faith and doubt.
One truth, one knowledge, and one thing shall save:
The cool, dark temple of the silent grave.
One knowledge and one truth: one thing alone
Shall yield the calm man seeks—the upright stone.
One life, one love, one death; and Death at last
Is master of all life to be, far passed
Into his silence; from the earth where he
Reigns in his silent, sunless dignity
One hope still blossoms, one last flower still blows
Upon the mystic earth, my Rose, my Rose.

XIV

THE BEGINNING

ROSE of the gardens of old Babylon,
Red, scarlet Rose of fire in the breast of light:—
I had a dream of thee, my Babylon;
Yea; all thy petals were crimson with delight:
And under the soft stars, the silent night
Grew deeper, deeper, till the heart o' the world
Lay bare before me, with no robe to don
Save the lucent veil of spirit, argent-white;
And then there came a voice: Arise! Smite! Smite!
Ere the portal of the temple may be won!
Crash down the walls! Lend all thy hidden might!
I, in the bosom of the deep imperiled,
Cry from the cloud-place of the Underworld.
Let the gold banner of the day be unfurled
That I may manifest the secret curled
In the darkling bosom of the world's great night!

Then I arose in majesty, and came,
Spurning the loves of the world for thee, for thee,
For that my soul had quenched all meaner flame,
Than the flame that burned still for thy majesty!
And the voice of the world swept ever over me,
And I gave answer: Come thou forth, my star!
Oh! be it mine to see thy chariot flee!
Oh! come thou in thine own triumphal car!
And at the naming of the secret Name
Thou camest unto me, Istar! Istar!

ROSA IGNOTA

Istar! thou flaming rose-bud of the world!
Istar! I call thee by thy secret Name!
Istar! the snake within the red Rose curled,
Come in thy triumph! Come thou in thy shame
All uncontaminate—a lambent flame.
Lick, lick the sores upon me!* ah! thy name
Hath burned me through: I scorch within thy star!
Drain me to death, and slay me with thy flame!
Death and destruction! O Istar! Istar!

Palace of dream! Red rose-leaves subtly hurled
At the chariot-wheels of Time! O charioteer,
Who drivest on the molten car o' the world
Over desire, and love, and hope and fear,
Hath not the name of the goddess on thine ear
Fallen, and art thou still abashed with shame?
Apollo! Apollo! Apollo! I name the Name,
And the silver of the moon grows gold and clear;
The sun-dawn breaks in everlasting flame,
Shaming desire, and burning up the fear
Of the world! O thou! I call thee by thy name
Most secret! Yea! I smite the age-long year
Of man's deliverance! And thy steeds I tame
With the word of the sun-god! And the molten bar
Of flaming gold is flung back from thy throne!
I stand unarmed before thee, and alone,
Bearing the fallen mantle of a star;
Rose of the world! Istar! Istar! Istar!

* *Merci, non.*

XV

THE BLUE CIRCLE

FOR all the blue heart of the shifting summer,
And all the grace of green, the fire of spring
Grown olden in the world of space and time—
Let the twin worlds rejoice! The sacrilege
Of the mystery is unveiled; there is no word
Uttered within the bosom of the spring.
But the horned satyrs under the beechen boughs
Still linger, as the hour of triumph grows
In the Ram's mouth: and the heart of day is torn
With the fear of the new Birth: no more is set
The Crown on the temples of the dawn; no more
Is heard the clarion of the day; the ways
Are darkened for delight, and pure for pain
Of birth, stretch forth to the ends of the universe—
A long, still road of longing, passion-pale
With the dust of lives, and strewn with the bitterness
Of the heart of man, the weary heart of man!
And deeply set betwixt the pillars of day,
There stands the statue of a god, awaking
From torpor; reaching up to the pale blue skies,
And wingless, and with longing in his eyes
For the unattainable goal; with lips that quiver
With slow anticipation of delight.
Ah! mouth half-opened to the warm spring air!
Ah! eyes that smouldering never burst in flame!
Ah! thou unsatisfied, immutable one
In the key of blue . . . the threefold destiny,
Is not for thee, nor ever shall be thine!

ROSA IGNOTA

The lust of joy incarnate! Incarnate youth
Of the world! Alack! No longer art thou King
Of the Underworld; no more thy road is peace,
For not by longing nor by wonderment
Shalt thou gain the drooping west, the starless place,
The sun-shot centre of the folden stars.
The palace of the cloudy Underworld.
Oh! in the key of blue my lyre is tuned
To the threefold mystery. O wandering stars!
O lonely lights! The mysteries of time
Fade and grow pale before the eternal cry!
Light! Light! The doom of time is thrown to the
winds—

And I have set the secret wide and still
In the heart of thee, my Mother; I have known
The incarnate miracle of the birth of man,
The twin of Time, the heir of the gods' debauch;
The shedder of the raiment of the loom
Whereon are woven birth and life and death.
Yea! Is revealed the Sword, the eye of light!
Hail to the fivefold star! The secret awe
Of the world unborn; and thou, that hast the key,
Let the lyre sound before thee! Let thy breath
Herald the day! Aha! Aha! Aha!
Ho! Dance in the secret dances of the night,
In the mystic windings of the mossy ways
Of eld! Oh! let the silence break, break, break
At the birth of man from out the universe!
Hail to the Lord of the Sun, and the Sacred Rose!

Master of space and time, thou subject god!—
Master of space and time! From the Underworld
I speed upon the Way! Ho! Jupiter!
I am Mercury, the little light-heeled god,
The summoner of the stars at choiring-time,
When they sing thine earth, thine earth, thy sun-child.
Yea!
From out the deep is sung the song of joy,

VICTOR NEUBURG

And the branches of all the trees in all the world
Are shaken, and the twilight pools are stirred
From slumber by the softly spoken word.
And I am thine! Sunk in the heart of Time
Is the memory of thee! Ah! deep! deep! deep
In the core of the world! And I am set, a flame,
On the altar of song; the old, forgotten ways
Are set in me! I am the risen Pan,
Risen from the rainy earth to bear the spring
Within me! Oh, thou little soft, shy god,
Half girl, half beauteous youth, oh, hail to thee
Hail! For the morning is a misty birth,
And the sun a shadow, and the world a lie!
And I that sing in the early key of blue
Am the Rose o' the World, the long-forgotten Rose!
Hail! on the altar of the awakening day;
Hail! in the temple of the night outworn
By the vigils of the gods! Soft, secret Rose,
I bear upon my breast the golden sign;
I wear thee on my breast, and I am thine—
Light as the summer oak-leaves, gold as the god
On the shimmering sea calling the winds to rest.
Light, light be the earth upon thee, and below,
Breath of the world unborn, long wave of song!
Hail unto thee, and hail unto the star
That bore thee! Hail! and hail! and hail! and hail
Hail! For the word is spoken, and the light
Is fallen, and the Rose is mine, is mine!
The Rose is mine! O Rose! O secret Rose!

XVI

THE SILVER CRESCENT

In the little cleft of the rocks whence life first sprang
To birth, by the secret, shadowy, molten sea,
Where Aphrodite sprang to greet the sun,
Low voices murmur: shadowy Underworld
In the void of time, light song of Erebus
On the lips of a courtesan of Rome, ah! list!
A wandering singer caught the light o' the stars
On his lips, and the sun-dawn of the world in his heart.
For I that dwelt within the city of Time
Was lost in a cloudy dawn; the silken veil
Of dew that clothed the green grass of the fields
Was the veil of Olympus! Now the shadowy night
That sang to me, that sang, that sang to me
Sprang from the underworld of Eld; the moon
That circled in the heavens sang to me.
And I that heard the olden monstrous lays
Of eld, the dreaming wonders of the dawn,
Died, and still lie imprisoned in the rocks
By the salt sea, knowing of the doom of man,
But being dumb, as is the doom of man.

For nightfall is delight of Eld, and I
Wander bareheaded under the dark sky;
Calling and calling from the windy deeps,
The olden Night still draws me: moonlight weeps
For sunlight faded in the dark; the sun
Is under the dark clouds; still one by one
Soft, silent stars creep silently upon me,
Leaving soft trails of light. O wonder-dawn
Of the inverted thunder of the skies—

VICTOR NEUBURG

Back to the gardens of old Babylon!
The hanging lamps, the slow enchanted moon,
The gold-eyed stars, the pillars of the sea,
And the call of Her forgotten! Oh! I lie
Under the stars, upon the dewy sward,
And all around me is the silent city,
The soft, white city, softened by the dawn.
And I hear the sistrons, and I hear the songs
Sung to the hanging moon! And thou, Istar,
Radiantly comest on the brains of men
To slow illumination of desire;
The old enchanted palace of the will
Is thine, and god-like dreams of Eld are thine,
Of the Underworld of the stars, beneath the sea,
Beyond the cloudy palaces of the hills.
Ah! never hath the dawn been nearer thee!

Fallen to idle sleep, and borne within
The temple of Mind, the soul of Night is laid
Under the starry canopy of the worlds,
And the lamp is set upon her bier; let be,
Let her still slumber! Oh, my radiant one,
Thou that art born of the dew and of the stars,
Come thou to me, while that the soft night sleeps,
O thou most inner and supernal dawn,
Thou that bearest the torch for the feast of the gods!
In the heart of eld I found thee, and a rose
Was thy heart, and a rose thy crown, and tiny rosebuds
Girt thy green mantle, and thy yellow hair.
Glittered with the dust of the stars! By the river-side
Thou camest to me! Oh, the secret night
When I stared into the water under the moon,
Singing and tumbling on its way to the sea!
The soft stream flowed under the milky stars;
And there were poplars by the water-side,
Gazing upon themselves; but I was blind,
Blinder than wood, more silent than the moon.
And so thou camest to me, O my darling!

ROSA IGNOTA

My little rose-lipped darling! Fountain-cool
Thy hands, and thine eyes warm with celestial fire
Drawn from the world's heart! Oh! my little one,
Come to me here in the great, slow silences,
In the radiant dimness of the after-glow
Of the passionate ache of the world: I am Pan no more,
But on my brow is set Diana's tiara!
Diana, O Diana of the woods!
Lie thou with me, for I am Pan no more,
But the Virgin of the Star-drift of the world!
Here in the silence, in the great green woods.
Lie thou with me! Slumber with me to-night
Under the stars, and the yellow, drifting moon.
We will love no more as Syrinx and Pan: Diana!
Come unto me, and I will grant the thing
Thou cravest! Oh! the foaming milk of the stars!
I bear the red-tipped lilies under the moon!

Rosa Ignota! Ah! the pale moon-flowers,
The soft, shy glances, and the virgin unwon!
Oh! the sweet burden of the sunless hours:
Love! I am conquered! Nay, love! I have won!
O feeble moonlight! O sweet stars undone
By the pale longing of eld! O virgin word!
Under the silent moon I bear the sword!

Oh! the soft burden of the sunken sun!
I bear a chalice of lilies under the moon!
I bear the red-tipped lilies under the moon!
Light is no more: oh! let us swoon and die!
And the secret way is star-lit, star-bestrewn,
Star-guarded, star-set, under the starry moon!
Is there no way but this under the sky?
Oh, moon of Eld, ah! shall we die or swoon?
O Rose eclipsed! O Rose! my rose of roses!
The night is pale to death: the lyre reposes
Under the star-shot glamour of the moon.
And all her palest roses.

XVII

THE RED TRIANGLE

THE eye of Fate is closed; the olden doom
Lies in the wrack of things. There is no sign;
Only the wind cries through the lonely woods,
And the barren motherhood of the world is manifest
Shamelessly; in the dank, pale, autumn woods
The fallen leaves lie squelching under the feet
Of the desolate gnomes: and now the birds are silent,
And the streams are sluggish in the veins of the world.
Dark gray and cloudy, the skies no more are blue,
And grayness reigning solitary makes music
Drearly on the wind-harp. The dripping rain
Soddens the earth, and the stones lie thick and wet
Among the leaves; and the trees wave naked arms
In despair to the sky. The light is quickly dying,
And there is no more day; the dull red sun,
A sore and aching eye in a face of gray,
Droops down to slumber. All the world seems dead.

Rose! Rose! Where art thou? O my Rose! my Rose!
My secret Rose! Art lost among the gray?
There is no voice in the silence; in the woods
The brownness glistens under the weeping rain,
And I am in despair of Thee and Time.
Weeping the trees, and all the streams grown sullen,
Under the lowering skies and the bitter blasts—
There is no living thing in the temple of Summer,
And the ashes of spring lie cold on the hearth of day.

ROSA IGNOTA

Gray dreams again! And all my hope is fled.
Gray dreams! gray dreams! and the day is tired and dead.
The bitter aftermath of summer brings
Time's memory back to the world: there are no stings
In the world's pain, but only bitterness
Of the memory of Time; no sore distress,
Save for the thought of Summer waned and dead,
and faded with the gold skies overhead,
And the young green beneath; ah! secret Rose!
Here from the heart of the woods I pluck thee forth,
Fragrant with the smell of summer, crimson-bright!
And, for the world under the stars to-night,
It shall be thine, and thine the star that draws
The world to worship thee: the days are faded
Under the heavens; there is no more sun,
And no more love. The world is hushed and dead.
Slim-passing dryads through the lonely woods,
I will follow ye in the paths of dank decay;
Decadent Autumn, with thy lonely broods
Of active gnomes and little red-capped fays,
That feasted in the summer under the trees
Now dripping with Autumn rains—ah! take me too,
Me too into the silence of the past,
The grave of desolation; I am weary
Of all things: let me dream my life away.

The breast of Fate is pregnant with Despair,
Got on her by the piercing shaft of Time.
Oh! Unborn child of Fate and Time, I am weary
Of them that gave thee birth. Shall I love thee?
O darling! Wilt thou come to me in the silence,
Saying: "I bear the mystery of Time,
And the secret of Fate?" I know not yet, but surely
Thou shalt know of the Rose, the Rose, the Rose o' the World!
With thee shall I bear the chalice of blood-tipped lilies,
The chalice of red, sweet lilies under the moon?
But now there is no moon, nor any sun;
Only the world's gray noon is for thee and me;

VICTOR NEUBURG

There is no sound in the nerveless silences
Of the fading world; there is no quiver of light
On the river of life; we are unwed, my Rose,
Nor knoweth each the other; we are undone,
My Rose, my secret Rose, my unknown Rose.

And still the Autumn woods are rustling dankly
With sodden leaves made brown by wind and rain;
And the satyrs are fled under the earth to hide
From the sunless world, and the nymphs are frozen to air
To be reborn in the sunlight; there is no more joy,
For mournfulness is fallen on the world,
And decadence, and decay, and the odour of Eld.
The spirit sleeps; the Rose o' the World lies buried
Under the soil of every star that glows,
A hanging lamp, under the Firmament:
There shall be no more roses, no more roses . . .
Until the spring of the stars shall fall on the world;
Then shall be light again, O secret Rose,
And thou shalt be born anew, with radiant starlight
For dew, and all thy petals shall be dreams
Crystallised of the gods who swing the wheels
Of the worlds in space; and at the heart of thee
Shall be to secret knowledge, the sacred Word,
The ΛΟΓΟΣ of the throbbing Universe.
And the years shall pass in myriads over the Tree
Whereon thou bloomest, O my rose o' the worlds,
And one shall pluck thee forth; and Love and Death
Shall lie together, and there shall be born
He who shall bear for ever into life
The rose-tipped lilies under the silent stars,
The silent stars, and the new-blushing roses.
O Rose! my Rose o' the World, my Rose of Roses,
Thou shalt be born anew, and live for ever!

XVIII

THE YELLOW SQUARE

DEATH! Death! In the cool green colonnades of time
I pursue thee; thou art fled before me now
In the silence. By the secret door I wait
For a sign of thee; but thou art fled before me
In the mist, and in the sunshine, and the day!
Thou art married to Love, maybe, for Love sits weeping
In my desolate heart, nor know I what can ail him,
Save it be that thou art fled; immortal Love
And mortal Death, and are ye separate still,
Even as I and as the unknown Rose?

Maybe the Rose is Death, and I am Love,
Wed to young Life, and jealous of desire
Of Death! Oh, in the cool green colonnades
I have lingered late, even till the night's slow fall,
And I have heard the dying voices of day,
The market-women's chatter growing faint
In the twilight, and the drovers plodding home
With their heavy beasts; and the dark blue sky and the stars
Have lingered together there, and stayed with me,
So sunset's hour hath passed before me, slow
Receding on the pathway of the day.

Wherefore still strive when all must end in death?
How shall there be freedom when the insistent lover
Shall seize thee at length in sleep, and, ravishing thee,
Bear thee, unknowing, back to the heart of things,
The dim, black centre whence sprang Love and Fire
Who made the world, and made all suns and worlds,

VICTOR NEUBURG

Tearing the thing I now make manifest
From the heart of the silent god? Oh, wherefore strive?

Art thou not still content to die, sweetheart?
Or wilt thou seek me still through all the lives
Whose yoke we must bear? And wilt thou break the spell?
But now the murmur comes to me again,
Insistent as the rain upon the thatch,
And the cry of the lonely wind at the blurring pane:
I bear the red-tipped lilies under the moon
For ever! the red-tipped lilies under the moon!

And now there is no cry to stir the dark,
And the day is faded; there is no more light.
There is no more light, but through the dusky air
The wind-harps play, the strings respond to the winds,
As the droning oceans call to the listening skies;
The hills stand dark and deep in steadfast gloom;
Twilight is slain by the old black, wandering god.
Summer is buried. There is no more light.

But in the breast of the world there stirs again
The flaming heart that is my Rose, my Rose,
My secret Rose, whom but to name, to name,
Is a sacrament upon the altar of Fire:
Oh! yellow Fire! Oh! aureate-petalled Rose!

Because swift Sorrow hath stricken me, I sing
Here in wavering gloom, the sunless deep,
Calling slow dreams from their immortal sleep;
Wakening the murmuring sigh, the spirit's spring—
The bitter pangs of the birth of everything,
Immortal Matter and the wandering Soul.
And they have sought to slay me in the night,
Because I am blind, and hear not the dark wings;
Because I am prisoner in the flesh;
Because I am mortal, O immortal Rose!

XIX

THE BLACK EGG

THE splendid summer splashes on the city
In little leaping lights, the flames of spring;
And the waters of the world and the Underworld
Are stirred by the quickening breath of the unknown god.
Life, a strong pulse within the heart of Day,
Glowes in the western skies; the morning pales
Before the influx of this newer dawn.—
This for the argent dream that stands apart,
The image of Activity unveiled,
The violation of Life by the thorn of Time.
Ah! fever of a strong distempered god,
Stirred into life by the mystery of birth:
Sure and secure is set the secret Way
Through all this endless maze of whirling things.

Ah! let me pierce to the heart, to the heart of the Rose.
I am pale as the Rose: last night came Love to me,
And brushed me with his wing; and I arose,
And stared out from my window into the dark.
There was rain and wind, and the unforgotten cry
Of her who hath striven for ever, and failed at last
For that Life had conquered her. But she came to me,
Crying, "Wilt thou not lend me of thy strength,
And yield thy love to me?" How should I tell
Of this silent thing, this wise debauch of a goddess,
Who hath no way but this to know she lives?
She cried: "I bring you wonder from the skies,
And star-lit lilies, and pale, purple roses;
Roses; still roses; still the intoxication

VICTOR NEUBURG

Of the scent of the world; the virgin still unborn
To this riot of life, this sensuous crash of things,
This fulsome fever fretting out her life."

So! It is said! No more may I unveil
The mystery! The way is hidden from me.
I know not; but the aching dream still stays,
Burning me up to death; the cool, strong death,
Even death I shall slay in the cool, strong colonnades:
I shall bear the Rose of life to the heart of death.
And death shall lead me back to the shadowy river,
The murmuring waters shall mock me then no more.
I shall know, and knowing I shall strive again,
Shall ever strive until the petals fall!

There is no way for me, my darling, now,
Save one; the hour is passed, and I have chosen.
I have chosen, and the mellow river calls
Insistently; the darkness grows more deep,
And night more luminous, yielding me her heart.
For I have chosen: it is over now.
We are one for ever, O my secret Rose,
Pale phantom of the vastest god of rest,
His wandering ghost, obsessed by space and time,
Set free, a torment to the rolling worlds.

And Life, a foe for ever more of Time
Springs still, the ghost of No thing. Oh, sweet hour
Of this sweet spring, I hear the call again:
I bear the chalice of lilies under the moon.
I bear the red-tipped lilies under the moon.

And the blue light is merged into the flame
Unquenchable of matter. We are sunk to sleep
In the clods of earth. . . . and now we have forgotten,
And the moods break upon us as they list
From all the quarters of the lower worlds.
Calling us hither and thither; where, we know not,

ROSA IGNOTA

We know not, O my silent one, but still
The sorrowfulness of Eld, the romance of sorrow,
Are ours; we are parted, but the search is still
Through all the worlds wherethrough we have ever ranged:
Through all the planes where we have ever sought
The hidden root, and the pale, yellow blossom.
Oh, I must name thee again, my Rose, my Rose.

Through the blue depths of the skies; in the tumbling waters;
Midst the antic winds; through the red heart of the fire;
How shall I know thee in the maze of things,
In the monotonous gold of the rolling worlds?
The mage hath seen thee with the eye of fire;
The lover hath known thee in the sea of Air.
The worlds hath hung all trembling on the lyre
That the old god bears still with unwearying hand,
Touching the strings to passionate mortal prayer,
Answering or answering not, immortal still.
Oh, through the maze how can I understand?

How can I know thee, O my secret Rose!
In the old enchanted palace of the Will
Still shall I bear the lilies under the moon,
The blood-rimmed lilies under the harvest moon?
But there are no more roses, no more roses,
And the ways stretch out, unending; no god knows
If thou shalt be reborn or late or soon.
O poet of the world! the agony closes
Shall there be no more roses, no more roses
Under the immortal moon?

XX

THE KEY

THE sign of the lover is hidden in vain
From the eyes of the mage, from the sight of the sun:
The laughter of life and the paean of pain,
The chords of the lyre and the answer of one.
The toil of the pilgrim shall never be done;
The love of the lover shall never be over:
The there is no end, ah! no end to the Way,
As there is no end to the love of the lover.
And there is no cry: but some god shall obey,
And there is no toil that shall ever know ending;
And there is no answer to life and to love,
The mystical union unblending and blending.
The pathway is set twixt the Eagle and Dove.

Gray world, the petals of the ensanguined Rose
Open at dusk, and with the daylight close,
Because the priest is risen from the sod,
Because he bears the mantle of a god.
The hour has struck at last; henceforth the Way
Is sundered from the sunlight and the day.
No one shall heed my singing; there shall be
—How well I know!—no seer that shall see.
And none shall know the secret thing I write
With speeding pen in the dim candle-light.
Because my Rose is mine, no man shall find
Wherefore I know, that was erewhile so blind;
Nor wherefore, by the light of one dim star,
I see thee here, Lady of the Rose, Istar.

XXI

THE POET SPEAKS

*HERE shall be set the sigil of the sun,
Gray world, soft light, strong wind, and burning day.
I take the arrows cast by Blake away.
And fling them surely at the sacred One.
And the barbed arrow on its way shall run
More swiftly: my swift heart it shall obey:
And it shall hit! And thou no more shalt say
The archer was blind, for the thing that I have done.*

*Swift might, slow-burning stars, the wavering lyre
Breathes fitfully beneath the moon's white fire,
In rhythm to the cadence of the sigil
Whose symbols sing, making the night to swoon,
The day to tremble: from my secret vigil
I shall return to meet thee, Love, and soon.*

*When for an age of craft-long loveliness
I lay mine head against thy beating heart,
And hear thy bosom throb, and soft sighs start
Through all thy hot young breath, ah! canst thou guess
How the artist longs to frame thy murmured "yes"
In Parian marble, wrought with subtle art
To immortal wonder, so to rend apart
The curtains of the tomb with easy stress?*

*Ah! wert thou here, sweetheart, I would not sing
These foolish songs. I only turn to rime
When thou art absent; for thine eyes would bring
A light too dazzling for mine eyes; but time,
When thou art from me, surely makes thee live
For ever, from mine arms a fugitive.*

VICTOR NEUBURG

(I)

Red light and mirrored roses! Is the world
A mirror only of life? Is death the thing
Within the heart of life so deeply curled
That only at life's end the thorn can sting?
It may be. Yet I only care to know
The imagery of the most fairest Rose;
So that I dwell where that last Rose doth blow,
I can forget life in the garden-close.

Sweet wind of all the wide world's empery!
Slow-purling streams of pure and fresh delight;
Within thy breath and voices can I see
White flesh, dark eyes, and longing dusky-bright:
I care not any more for death, O life,
Being slain by love with one thrust of the knife!

(II)

I care not though my love hath murdered me
With one soft touch of her most tender lips;
For dying on her breast, love's face I see:
Love calls me back from death; my spirit slips
Back to the old forgetfulness, ere I
Was risen to life's surface, virgin-pure
To tinge my soul with the blueness of the sky,
The sun's gold, and earth's blacknesses secure.

Wherefore shall I repine that I must fade?
Shall there not always be immortal roses?
How, losing life then, shall I be afraid
If at the sunset my tired soul reposes?
Oh, I shall lie on my love's breast for ever,
For we, being dead, shall lose each other never!

ROSA IGNOTA

(III)

I turn to mortal love; imagining
Hath made a world that I may wander in;
Where Love sits crowned, a blind and winged thing,
Winged for delight of roving, blind to sin.
This temple of Desire is pure and white,
Transparent to the sunlight and the day!
Most deeply calm under the star-lit night:
Love's lamp guides lonely pilgrims on their way.

My staff hath flowered with love's immortal Rose;
And I, that long be exommunicate,
At early noon wait till the gates unclose:
I loll in the sunshine at the Eastern gate.
O love, my love; I make my songs while waiting,
My lips in missing thine but idly prating.

(IV)

For all the glowing panoply of earth
The wingèd god must stand responsible;
The mavis' song, the roses' scent, the mirth
Of spring, the spirit's passion, aping hell.
So I, knowing my love, am girded round
With all the armour of the wanton spring
And her pagan festivals; the swelling ground,
The ripe blue sky, the ever-moving wing
Of birth, have lent me glamour of desire,
And I will go as a god, to mould afresh
With my most inner and supernal fire
A veil for a soul, a veil of soft, white flesh;
Yea! I will mould from out the universe
A new blind angel, with a spirit's curse.

VICTOR NEUBURG

(V)

The hour of love is passed; we lie asleep
 Dreaming of love; we wake to love again.
Upon my heart you hide your eyes and weep,
 And so I understand, and share your pain.
And when you ask of love I will not speak,
 But crush your lips for only answering;
I feel your hot breath on my neck and cheek,
 And crush you to my breast, a tender thing.

The livid lightning strikes us, and we fall
 With one last cry into a vast abyss,
And time and space exist there not at all:
 We have encompassed heaven in a kiss.
And for a moment we are gods, immortal,
Stricken to death within the secret portal.

(VI)

In the red dusk of Autumn, when the day
 Died down to night, and lamps were lit, and we
Stared at the flames that made the ceiling gray
 With wavering shadows, sporting eerily,
We lay all naked, talking of the things
 Of the old dim world, when life and art were young;
Of the old bards who lightly touched their strings;
 Who sang of love and life as I have sung.

And then I felt you kiss me as I roved
 Back to the brightness of the world of old;
And so the past grew dearer, as I loved
 And loved you more: the path grew ever gold,
Merging at last into the golden light
Of the Golden Age: we were re-born that night.

ROSA IGNOTA

(VII)

More sombrely the secret summer broods
 Upon the world; there is no sense of green
—In all the listening, virgin solitudes
 Of the spirit—that is not stirred; ah, love! we lean
Over the brink of the world to cull fresh roses;
 Roses, still roses, myriad roses bloom
In the silence. Oh! the world's great Rose uncloses
 Her petals still, to the Nothingness of doom.
Last Rose! Last love! Last night thou camest to me,
 A silver dream under a sapphire sky;
The winds of the world ran ever and ever through me,
 Until, at last, the end: then did I lie
In dream, and dream that made mine eyes unclose,
And so I lost thee, O immortal Rose.

(VIII)

I swing a censer in a temple of fire;
 I chant slow mantrams to a holy Name;
I fall in swoon unstained by earth's gray mire,
 Being wrapped about in a sheet of scarlet flame.
Lo! through the fire the mantram comes to me,
 Shouted by the world in chorus, and I lie
In utter rapture; the virginity
 Of the inmost Light, that knows not how to die.

Oh, cast thy mantle over me! I am taken
 By the goddess! Sprinkle water on my head,
Lest I in rapture care not to awaken,
 Knowing the utter glory of the dead.
Oh! I am back, wet-eyed, with panting breath:
I have seen the nuptials of Desire and Death!

(IX)

There are no mortal songs that shall avail
 To bring the Mystery into the mind
Of him who hath not been behind the veil,

VICTOR NEUBURG

Who, having ears, is deaf; and eyes, is blind.
Yet, wherefore do I know not, I must sing,
 Being of them to whom the Song is given:
My only gift in reverent love I bring
 Before the bowl is shattered, and is riven

The chord that binds the spirit to the flesh:
 I sing because the notes have sought so long,
And found at last one soul serene and fresh
 To bear the burden of eternal song.
So for this hour of song I have tuned my lyre
Unto the Rose of the Immortal Fire.

(X)

When I am faded into nothingness,
 And thou of whom I sing art earth and dust;
And when the soul I bear for my distress
 Is faded in the sun; when love and lust
Are nothing to us, dear—my songs shall tell
 Of all thou wast to those who knew not thee:
In the immortal groves of asphodel,
 They shall seek, drawn onwards by my melody.

There shall be no more songs for us, I know,
 When at the last my throbbing lyre reposes
In endless sleep; yet one last rose shall blow
 Upon our graves, one rose, one Rose of roses.
"Out of his heart a rose, from hers a briar."
O Love! my flame-flower of immortal fire!

(XI)

I gaze into the calm, cool eyes of death;
 I seize him gladly by his strong, calm hand;
I hear him murmur, underneath his breath,
 Thou knowest me; dost thou not understand?
Thou hast sought Love; he hath eluded thee
 In the shadows; live hath worn thy soul away;

ROSA IGNOTA

Wilt thou not dwell in endless rest with me,
No more deceived by hope, nor burned by day?

Wherefore delay? My love is calm and sure,
Not passionate, but certain of its end;
Wilt thou not come—and gladly? I can cure
Alone the weariness of time, O friend.
I shall not weary of thee; thou shalt sleep
For ever on my breast, nor wake, nor weep.

(XII)

Still must I sing of thee? O Fate, delaying
The last reward of unremitting toil,
Give me the cup I crave! How shall my praying
Avail me? For alas! I've neither oil,
Nor wine, nor grape, nor corn, nor anything
That may palliate thee! One only thing is mine,
And that is but a sweet and bitter thing,
Rarer than grape, or corn, or oil, or wine.

I may not speak it. Yet my tongue still mutters
Cravingly, eagerly, oh! desperately.
What is the thing that still my glad mouth utters?
I may not say it, Darling, even to thee:
Thou that hast granted heaven in a kiss.
O Darling, need I tell thee what is this?

(XIII)

I linger happily by the muddy river,
Watching the lights, the dappled waters shine
Under them, and the little leaves that quiver
Along the dull green waters' broken line.
And thou art there still mirrored; thou art calling
Through the trees, and through the clouds, and through
the rain;
In reverie I wander: oh, enthralling,

VICTOR NEUBURG

To see thee mirrored in my poet's pain!
O mariner! What wayward, rock-bound stream
Is this? Past what immemorable town
Of fable blows it? What forgotten dream
Evokes this image—rill and moor and down,
And a far shore where, under a rainy moon,
Are nuptials, and a feasting, and a swoon?

(XIV)

For art's sake let there be no more delaying;
Since we have found Love, with him let us linger:
Upon our hearts new chords he'll still be playing—
Upon what secret strings shall stray his finger?
We talk so foolishly of love! We lie
Lip unto lip, heart pressed to beating breast
All too oblivious of the hours that fly
For ever onward to eternal rest.

Oh, shall they be renewed, those sacred hours?
Or shall the jealous gods our love destroy,
Being jealous that with only mortal powers
We have dared to steal their own immortal joy?
Yet, for each hour that we have stolen, give
An aeon of the life the high gods live!

IN THE END

FROM bud to bud the butterfly of thought
 Hovers; around the red Rose of the Will
He lingers, seeking for the honey wrought
 In its golden heart; the long hours linger still
In silent sweetness, and from flower to flower
He brings desire of love from hour to hour.

The song is sung; the way is sharply set
 Under dim willow woods; the thing is done:
For me no more to linger or regret;
 Fulfilment comes, in sight of day and sun.
From night's dense darkness let the spark be struck,
With life for candle, and with love for luck.

Green Night, the virgin mother of my song,
 Green Youth, the sire of all my songs; let be:
It may befall I shall not linger long
 Under the daylight's golden empery;
In light and dark still shall the silent river
Bear on my soul, my soul shall bear for ever.

The dusk is fallen; there is no more green;
 The day is past, and love and life are fled:
Out from my window in the night I lean
 To hear the waiting ghosts of hours long dead.
But, being dead, they dwell at rest in me,
Turned into song by love's strange alchemy.

Wherefore I sing of things long past and dead;
 Wherefore I murmur foolishly in sleep;
The old, old pain still throbbing through my head

VICTOR NEUBURG

In dreams of desert valleys, mountains steep,
With winding paths; hot suns and scorching plains.
There is a fire unquenched within my brains.

Because I sing in unknown cadences,
Because I strive so hotly to recall
Some murmur I have heard on sunken seas,
Some vision I have seen beyond the wall,
Now sombrely I await the secret rime,
Known of the poet—and the Ghost of Time!

And so before the bloom has left the Rose,
While life's strong youth is surging through me still,
I end the songs here wrought; the loves and woes
Of old dead lives and lovers and their ill—
Because a poet's curse I bear away,
My payment for the vision of the day.

Because my heart is as a ten-stringed lyre,
I cannot still the music of my mouth;
Because my tongue is wrought of molten fire,
I cannot quench my spirit's ceaseless drouth:
Till the gods grant me sleep I drink and drink
Immortal dew: I am drunken on the brink. . . .

So may I fall into the shadowy sea
That surges under my unsteady feet;
Already has the morning fled from me,
And the stars call, and they are madly sweet
With some lost vision that I know not of:
It is not Death; I think it is not Love.

For I have tasted death and love, and these
Shall not suffice; for love and death are one;
In all the secret star-wrought harmonies,
By married death and love is man undone.
There is some secret thing I wot not of;
It is not death; I know it is not love.

ROSA IGNOTA

So do my songs end here; the hour is fled,
And there are no more roses; I am fain
To cease from singing. Wait! the hour is sped,
My songs are turning into dreams again.
Oh! now the hour is dead, and I am fain
Awake life's young song back to soul again!

VICTOR NEUBURG

THE EPILOGUE

SHALL they avail, O wind,
The things that I have heard?
Because I am utterly blind,
Did I hear the wings that whirred?

Even as flutters a bird,
I fluttered: before and behind
Thundered the secret Word
Into mine ears. I have pined

Because the Word was unkind;
But now the spirit hath stirred.
I sought not, yet did I find,
For the wonderful thing occurred.

Though I be blind, shall I gird
Because I see not? The gods bind
Mine eyes. But I heard! I heard!
Shall it avail, O wind?

EXPLICIT OPUSCULUM

NONDUM
FINIS