

THREE POEMS FOR JANE CHÉRON

I

THE WAIF OF OCEANUS

TO FRANK HARRIS

SHE is like a flower washed up
On the shore of life by the sea of luck;
A strange and venomous flower, intent
To prove an unguessed continent.
New worlds of love in the curve of its cup!
New fruits to crush, new flowers to pluck.

White waif, white champak-blossom blown
From the jungle to the lost lagoon!
White lily swayed by the wind of time!
Grey eyes that crave the chrism of crime!
Blanched face like a note on a clarion!
Red mouth like the sun through simoon, typhoon!

Hurricanes howl, howl in her heart;
Serpents sleep in her smile; I hear
Horrible happenings long ago,
Direful deeds, weirds of woe,
Things beyond history and art
In the tresses that tumble over her ear!

In what grim gloom did Satan get
This child on what wood-nymph dishevelled?
Whence was the wind that swayed the woods
On their bestial beatitudes?
Or what garden of rose and violet
Lay under the moon wherein they revelled?

She is like a poppy-petal.
All the seas of sleep are hidden
Under the languorous eyelids, whose
Lashes are long and strong to bruise
My heart where her lusts like hornets settle
On sacred leaves, on flowers forbidden.

She is like a drug of wonder.
All the limits of sense dissolve
When we fall like snows from the precipice
Sun-kissed to the black ravines of ice.
I am drowned in the universal thunder;
The hours disrupt, the aeons involve.

Ah! not in any mortal mood
Ends the great verb we conjugate.
From the highest hyperbole she doth swerve
In an incommensurable curve,
And the line of our beatitude
Is one with the sigil of our Fate.

Pallid, a mummy throned, she sits;
The Egyptian eyes, the Egyptian hair,
The band on her brows, the slender hands,
All hieroglyphs of a God's commands
Beyond the rimes that a poet knits
With fruitless travail, sterile care!

Marvellous! marvellous, marvellous!
And again a marvel, a lotus-bud
Dropt from the brows of a Goddess unknown
On the ivory steps of the golden throne,
Virginal brows and luminous
With the star-stream flowing therein for blood.

Ah, but electric thrills the Host
Of the esoteric Eucharist!
The Pagan power of the corn and wine
Mystical, magical, hers and mine,
The dove-plumed snake of the Holy Ghost
That wings and writhes in the wounds unknissed!

Lie there, love—if I love you indeed
Who adore and wonder and faint for drouth
Of the passion-flower fallen from the other side
Of time and space the tedious tide.
Lie there, lie there, and let me bleed
To death in the breath of the murderous mouth!

II

THE SNOW MAIDEN

TO MARGARET CALLAGHAN

My love is like the lucent globes
That drip from lips of cool crevasses,
To clothe them with the virgin robes
Of mosses, flowers, and grasses.

O spheres compact of fire and dew,
Lamps of the hollows of the mountain,
What dream angelic fathered you
On what celestial fountain?

Nay! but I lay on lower earth
Stagnant in sunless meres! The prison
Of monstrous spawn, detested birth—
Behold me rearisen!

It was yon fierce diurnal star
That licked me up with his huge kisses,
And dropped me in his rain afar
Upon these froze abysses!

Yea! as I press to the cool moss
My mouth, and drink at its delirious
Delight—acclaim the Sun across
The menaces of Sirius!

Doth not the World's great Alchemist
Rule earth's alembic with the sun?
Is not the mind a foolish mist,
And is not water one?

The slim white body that you gave,
Wild Jaja', with exotic nautches
Wanton and wonderful, a wave
Of debonair debauches,

Is worth the virgin limbs and lips
Of her the virtuous, the viceless,
With life who never came to grips,
Who gave me nothing priceless.

Give me the purity distilled
From dervish sweat and satyr bruises.

The Holy Graal with wine is filled
From no unbroken cruses.

Doth not the World's great Alchemist
Corrupt His oysters to make pearls?
Shall not these lips praise Him?
They kissed No cold reluctant girl's.

Jaja' hath woven the web of God
From threads of lust and laughter spun.
In heaven the rose is worth the rod;
And love as water, One.

III

JEANNE
A PASTORAL

TO RAYMOND RADCLYFFE

"Hey diddle diddle! the cat and the fiddle!
The cow jumped over the moon."

I LAID mine ear against your heart,
Jeanne!
A masterpiece of nature turned
A masterpiece of art,
With your blanched Egyptian beauty foiled
By the hungry eyes, and the red mouth soiled
By the honey of mine that your greed has spoiled,
Jeanne!
The body a corpse and the soul inurned!

Against your heart I laid mine ear,
Jeanne!
And the clock went ticking, ticking.
How could I choose but hear,
Jeanne!
Ah me! what thoughts came pricking
Like spurs in the flanks of a weary horse?
Nor heart nor clock could feel remorse,
But kept their definite deadly course,
Jeanne!
Alas! for man, for his life's disaster:
The clock beats fast, but a heart beats faster.

Oh, your love was a marvellous thing,
Jeanne!
It was dawn, it was fire, it was birth, it was spring,
Jeanne!
But this is the curse, that it quickens its rate,
Lest man by love should escape from fate
And win from the dust to the Uncreate,
Jeanne!
Nay, we are lovers, you and I—
And we must die, and our love must die!

How have we striven, each of us,
Jeanne!
To break the bars of the prison-house,
Jeanne!

We have raged like cats in a ring of fire,
Driven by desire that was true Desire,
The hate of the lower, the love of the Higher,
Jeanne!

What is the end of it, Jeanne? Why, that's
A mystery not to be solved by cats!

In the fields we wandered through to-day,
Jeanne!

Hand in hand, this wonderful May,
Jeanne!

This May we have made so marvellous
With the infinite longing and love of us,
In the fields all faery with flowers there lay
The placid cows—that had nothing to say,
Jeanne!

No flame of words from maddening blood,
But complacent chewing of the cud.
I dared not whisper the sudden fear
Of my heart in your miracle of an ear,
Jeanne!

I tightened my lips, and my hand on yours;
So that you might think I loved you more.
But now in the midnight the thought endures,
And the love—ah what is the dream we adore?

Suppose the infinite peace of the heart,
Jeanne!

The crest and crown of labour and art,
Of the mystic quest, of the toil of the saint,
The mount on whose slopes the strongest faint,
Jeanne!

Suppose that peace of God, that House
Of Delight of the Bridegroom and the Spouse,
Were only the calm of the chewing cows,
Jeanne!

Suppose that in all the worlds inane
There were one thing only vexed and vain,
Turbulent, troubled, and insane,
Jeanne!

Suppose that the universal plan
Had but one flaw, and that flaw were man!

Then—even then—we are here,
Jeanne!

We love—we shall die, sweet heart, take cheer,
Jeanne!

We are bound to a fate that brings release;
We move in a moil that must one day cease;
We shall win to the everlasting peace,
Jeanne!

And how things are, and why, and whence
Are puzzles for fools that lack the sense

Of cows—enough of the future tense,
Jeanne!
For the end of love and the end of art
Is just—my ear against your heart!

ALEISTER CROWLEY.