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THE
LATHE OF MORPHEUS

OR

THE DREAM SONG

THE
LATHE OF MORPHEUS

OR

THE DREAM SONG

A TRIBUTE

TO

B. C.

FROM

E. M.

PRIVATELY PRINTED

1915

H. G. COMMINS,
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PART I.

TO BRIDGET.

THE INVOCATION.

THOUGH oft-times ill-sifting memory
with deft digits thickly draws
Ashen grey curtains thwart my vagrant
brain ;

She ne'er from me can hide thy face and form,
Nor cloaked Oblivion, from streams of Lethe
borne.

Ensnare in sable trammel, behind her basalt
doors

Thy eyes, thy lips, thy smile,—that ere again
My gaping senses steep
And lull to fragrant sleep.

Fiercer in Morning Sun than in
turgid hues of Night

Calcined and adust, parching my
thirsting sight

Thy welcome form appears,
Grief-giving while it cheers.

THE INVOCATION.

Bridget! Unreal! Dead phantom of a
form
Yet living, breathing—sneering, wreathed
in olive scorn
Haunt not my seered soul pierced by thy
secret sting ;
Death to a pulsing throb, Life to a pulse-
less thing !

Now through the Gardens of Sleep, I see thy
lovely mystic face
Pale 'gainst the scandent tendrils and resin-
bleeding cones
Paler than ivory white, colder than bleached
bones,
Pallid and alburnous, fired for a lingering
space
By eyes that never human in earthy regions
saw.

Let me yet behold thee, far fairer than ere of
yore !
For 'neath that polished painted mask of
seeming deadened Love
I know some poignant passion must course in
sinuous stream

THE INVOCATION.

Plashing with crystal foam in lustrous realms
above,

From a sea, where the gods' romances are
woven in wondrous dream.

Bridget unmask! speak to me, awake, and
radiant rise!

Phœnix-inspired flying from former fires into
cerulean skies!

Though still wrapped in the scented cerements
of the mummy I thought was you

I would gaze on the risen Bridget, as a being
both real and true;

Nothing strange or new—just true.

In the place of a ghost of a woman, whose
self I never knew

In the place of an empty phantom as cold as
the summer dew.

PART II.

THE GARDEN OF SLEEP.

LO! there in the Garden I behold my
princess

Yea! there in the Garden of Sleep.

There in the Garden I fain would caress

My lovely princess

In the Garden of Sleep.

'Neath the jasmine trees, and the lilac and
rose

There stands my princess—so close—yes so
close.

Alloyed with the lilies— the orange pink lilies—

Among the roses and lilies

Stands my azure princess

Lo! there in the Garden of Sleep.

Midst the trembling narcissus and cadmium
dillies

Midst the daf-o-down-dilies

Glides my faëry princess

In her gold-azure dress.

THE GARDEN OF SLEEP.

Veridian the foliage packed heavy in creepers,
Olive the pine tree with sap-oozing cones ;
Each rustling leaf bestirring the sleepers,
The brown buzzing bees and the resonant
drones.

Dreaming with legs all bespattered with
pollen ;

—The passionate kiss of a love giving flower—
While velvety moths in flight silent and
solemn,

Creep dreamily forth from each scent-giving
bower ;

And purple clematis with quivering tendrils
Drink in the pure air, and sleep-whisp'ring
wind

Sad pale perfumed firs wave feathery branches
In Columbine's fingers gently clasped and
entwined

In Columbine's pensile and pale greeny
tendrils

There in the Garden of Sleep.

Where silver fountains leap

Hid in a deep recess

There roams my dear princess

'Neath the Castle of Dreams.

THE GARDEN OF SLEEP.

Sunk there in a carpet of starwort and cress,
Where myrtle and eglantines gracefully
sway

Arent the feet of my lovely princess
Lies a large bronzen bowl where the dragon-
flies play

In the sunbeams that blue amber lotus
caress.

Filled to the brim through a lazuli funnel,
Fed from the meads by a soft lispng brook ;
Pours itself forth int' a silvery runnel,
Which laughing, flows on through that cool
shaded nook,

Cool as the shadows that lie in the dress
Of my peerless princess ;
Blue and crystal the bronzen bowl, reflecting
the vault above

Sapphire and crystal the red bronze bowl,
reflecting the face of my love

Red and gold the glittering carp that sport in
the waters below

Ruby and gold the shimmering carp—the
hues of a sunset glow.

THE GARDEN OF SLEEP

White, ivory-white, and golden green are the
lights that fall from the lilies

Golden-orange and orange-green, the shades
of the daf-o-down-dilies.

But far more fair in that fair recess

Are the ivory hands of my pale princess

—There in the Garden of Sleep—

And her lustrous eyes of ebon black

Curtained with lashes so silken and sleek,

The poise of her head, the line of her back,

Arched, as she culls the blood red rose

What a wonderful, classical, graceful pose

One tapering finger wantonly plays

With a lambent jewel that gently sways

O'er her breast.

In that Garden of Rest,

Where all that is purest, tenderest—best

One with another loving contest

For a smile or a kiss or a passing caress

From my azure princess.

PART III.

* THE LATHE OF MORPHEUS.

HID in a tenebrose valley veiled by the
mushroom pine,
Aloof in the lathe of Morpheus—I
know a sombre tomb

Engraved on its brazen portal is enchiseled
this mystic sign :

“ Behold thou vagrant pilgrim, dark Morphia’s
Hetacomb.”

Seizing the knocker in my outstretched hand
I crashed the head athwart the leaden
sign ;

An answering echo wandered o’er the Land
Breaking in thunderous knocks, a pale
reflex of mine.

* Lathe (lath)—Anglo-Saxon laeth : a division of a county.
Here the Division belonging to Morpheus in the County
of Sleep, itself a division of the Realm of Unconsciousness.

THE LATHE OF MORPHEUS.

Slowly before my wondering eyes the
door

Broke in a thousand fragments to the
floor ;

Disclosing a gaping orifice with rusty
mildewed rim

The entrance to a stairway, torturous,
long and grim,

Whose polished steps trailed from the
sight to denser gloom within.

Then passing 'twixt two monoliths
engraved one "Death," one "Sin."

I heard in the chasm below me the
Marid's enchanted hymn,

And I felt the chill of their icy breath,
As they dully intoned that Song of
Death :—

" Black and green ; with sober sheen ;
They wander to and fro.

But none of mortal birth may glean
The rhythm ; or why 'tis so."

Aghast by these secret words of power,
From my forehead dripped an acrid shower
Of clotted sweat, and my trembling knees
Quaked together, like nude limbs of trees

THE LATHE OF MORPHEUS.

Bark and knock on a wintry night,
For the pith of my soul was bathed in fright.
So catching my breath for a mighty shout,
I felt my life with my breath go out.

Yet only a whisper hissed forth from my
lips,

Breaking between my chattering teeth in
strangled shivering lisps

As I wailed to the dimness within ;

“O! ye who haunt these foetid bowers, cold
Winter has gone and Spring
Hath come with her flowers.”

But all that I heard in answer, up the ebon
polished stair

Was the Deathless chant of the Marids ;
the Jinn with the shimmering hair ;

That woeful hymn of the Marids—that
canticle of despair.

“Scarlet and blue in radiant hue

They wander through Space and Time.

But none of mortal birth, save Thou

May know the rhythm or rhyme.

Great is Suleyman Daood's son !

Great is Allah ! the Only One !

When Life is lost, then Death is won.

THE LATHE OF MORPHEUS.

But by virtue of the sacred fire
Here be the few who may ne'er
expire."

Faint and weary with soul oppressed,
I was fearful to list for the fateful rest
Of the Song of Death—the dirge they sang—
That ne'er had been learned by mortal man.

So grasping the banister lest I fell,
Madly I shouted : " Hail, Jans of Hell!
Servants of Iblees ! Peace where ye dwell !
Ye chanters of songs that none may tell,
Ye who shun the light of God's good day,
Answer me ! set me on my way
Down these labyrinth corridors of this Tomb
of fire ;
Built by Magins round smoking Pyre
Where Vathek offered through lust of Power
All the youth of his City,
Without sorrow or pity,
To the gluted ghool who on evil hour
Came to his Palace with Satan's dower."
And still no answer—but louder grew
That fearful hymn that no mortal knew.

THE LATHE OF MORPHEUS.

And through the transcendent stillness of the
air

I saw their beryl eyes and gleaming hair ;
Each holding aloft one leprous quivering
hand

The other chained o'er the heart by a molten
burning band.

And up from the darkness, deep down
beneath,

There came the murmur of voices and the
moving of teeth.

Then as if at a sign, or previously bidden,
The two pillars close and the entrance is
hidden,

And from corner to corner the vaulting is riven.

The banisters vanish to float thinly away,
The black sheeny steps coil, totter and sway,
All is Darkness around, above and below,
And blood-chilling fingers brush my forehead,
like snow ;

A hurricane rose, and a wild whistling wind
Swept up from beneath, and in it entwined

THE LATHE OF MORPHEUS.

Were the shadowy Marids with luminous
eyes,
And a stench like to woodlands where the
undergrowth dies
Assailed the dank ether; whilst thousands of
flies,
The minions of Iblees sped whirling around;
And flesh semi-fermented smoked on the
ground.
Then in the midst of this utter distress
I breathed forth the NAME of my azure
Princess.

.

To me awaking from this evil dream,
Rose tinted morn appeared in fulgent light,
While great Apollo with his spears did seem
To be dispelling all the hosts of night,
Proud Helios in chariot thwart the sky,
Coursing through fleecy clouds kept on his
way,
And in the dimmer distance, I descry
—Where Night her maukish raiment casts
away—

THE LATHE OF MORPHEUS.

A crowd of fleeing objects, gleaming hair
Flying behind them in the morning air.
But brimming joys my sorrowing senses
greet,
For 'midst the blossoms, sun-kissed at my
feet,
There where the leaping springs the thirsty
banks caress
Appeared the vision of my pale Princess.

PART IV.

THE VISION GLORIOUS.

WHEN Luna o'er the vault would fain
hold sway
Striving the steeds of Phœbus to
assay ;
And he, the drifting racks with gilded spear
had riven ;
With ochreous steeds coursing the plain of
Heaven,
Bore high aloft his flambent crimson bowl
Steering on ruddy Hesperus for goal.
And far behind his chariot's dust did leave
That frail ætherial gleam—the Star of eve.
I, wearied with the day's fatiguing sorrow
Called to proud Helios "Hasten thou the
morrow" !
Then clapped dim eyes upon the scene
around
The sullen austere hills, the humid misty
ground
Sad that the spectral lances of the moon
Essayed the glowing firmament so soon.

THE VISION GLORIOUS.

For when tired Earth the arms of Day is
leaving
For those of sterner Night, yet fondly
cleaving
Still to Sunshine's fingers, rose tipped as they
lie
Aslant the woods, the valleys, ground and
sky,
The heart of man,—in that calm solitude—
alone
Sighs for his faded hopes now cold as stone
Weeps for his sins, hoping yet to atone
For actions past, unalterable—and done—
Performed, accomplished, finished—every-
one—
Then inly prays with eager expectation
To Holy patron Saint,—for his salvation—
With some such thoughts as these, I sadly
gazed
Over the moonlit garden's scented air
And peering through the mist, I stood
amazed,
For—lo ! my patron Saint was standing there.
Gabled in raiment pale-azure as the sea
Of Northern climes, thus she appeared to me ;

THE VISION GLORIOUS.

Azure and Silver, like to a frozen tear
Shed into Ocean by some arctic Mear ;
Holy her features—haloed her raven hair,
Black eyebrows curving over dreaming eyes
She stood awhile in ecstasy, radiant, passing
fair ;

No one more lovely being beyond our earthy
skies

Stirred by this hallowed mirage, my heart
gave forth a cry,

“Blessed St. Bridget save me ! intercede for
my soul on High.”

Then came back a whispered echo over the
sighing spray

“Blessed St. Bridget save me ! *Ora pro me.*”

Serenely the lovely vision smiled peacefully
on me,

Then slowly faded into the even's mist.

Drying my dewy eyelids I sank on bended
knee,

And prayed to the One who had suffered,
nailed to a torture-tree,

Whose gaping wounds poor doubting Thomas
kissed.

PART V.

THE LEADEN TABLET.

THEN to my couch I bent my weary
way,
And deep in sage reflection sank my
soul.

Striving in halting phrases still to pray.
Striving to purge my heart, my mind, my
whole.

Sinuous seductive music charmed the air,
Sweet fragrance cast such perfume all around
That I was dazed, and seeking everywhere,
No trace or sign of ought was to be found.
Then in the pentiled garth in virent ramage
clothed

Open to view when lying on my bed,
—A spot that in the sunlight much I
loathed—

Transpired the vision of a lovely head.
Golden of hair with slanting eyes of green,
Sharp pearléd teeth, of glassy, milky sheen,

THE LEADEN TABLET.

Red rounded lips, like cherry cut in twain,
Chiseled and shapely ears straight backward
lain,

A nose that Venus, of the Greeks adored,
Would madly envy; e'en she could scarce
afford

To match her perfect body with the limbs
That tardy came to view below the head.
And still my haunted memory dizzy swims
When'er I view in thought her glowing form.
Mutely voluptuous, standing by my bed,
Redolent of Eve! Scented like fragrant morn!
Those rounded breasts like snowy apple fruit
Culled from pomegranate tree with leaves of
tourmaline

Not even Heaven could stand contented mute
If He beheld those arms so serpentine
Those humid lips, like plum blooms when the
sun is warm,

Nude to the waist, there kirtled round
With Zone of silver, prank'd with palest grey,
Like misty fleeces which at dawn are found
Clinging round hills to greet the break of
Day.

THE LEADEN TABLET.

Then draperies of leaden hue
Veiled her legs and feet from view.
With supple motion, noble tread
Smiling she glided t'ward my bed ;
And stretching forth her rippling arms
She bade me look upon her charms.
And forth from her lips this triplet came
" Ivan, Ivan, *je t'aime, le t'aime.*
Je te tiens et je te maintendrai
Je ne cherche qu'un et je l'ai mérité "
Purling this triplet to a murmuring strain
A magic mean of pleasure and of pain
Languid toward my bed she came,
And my soul was burnt with a lusting flame.

Rising I seized her serpent hand, icy as
Death it lay on my palm
As she kissed my lips, the winds' wild
band played through her hair the Marids
psalm.
There 'twixt her naked bosoms swayed that
awful leaden sign
Bearing that occult message, that terrible
fateful line,

THE LEADEN TABLET.

Lo! there trembled the leaden Tablet that
hung on the Brazen tomb,

“Behold! thou vagrant pilgrim dark
Morphia’s Hecatomb!”

With a howl of ghoulish laughter,
Like the noise of pouring water
She leapt into the air above me,
High into the air above me.

“Take me into thy arms and love me!

Or Burn till the crack of Doom!

Yea, I am the leaden tablet!

From the Night mare’s stable tomb

Forsake thou the eyes of thy Bridget!

The ebon eyes of thy Bridget!

And work with a sulphur digit

Through the weft of my firey loom.

Work on my loom of Passion

Where the threads of every fashion

That in Zamiel’s flax fields bloom.

Come twin-soul to my cavern!

Press firm thy lips against mine!

Drink from Love’s joyous tavern,

Drink deep of Passion’s wine!

And care no more and care no less

For the ebon eyes of thy pale Princess.

THE LEADEN TABLET.

I will give you a golden promise of a pleasure
that none have known,
And in mine own arms thou shalt learn it;
just we two beings alone
Shall live in a world of Pleasure, in a Palace
of utter Delight
Come sweet child, the love of my leisure,
sleep in mine arms to-night."

"Dost thou give me a golden promise of
pleasure apart from pain?
Of a life that is always happy, of a rose-bed
that none may gain,
Save we two being together, alone in a world
of our own?
Take me, 'my sacrifice,' take me, to the
Loom and the flaxen Zone."
She lifted me into her bosom, caressing my
hair the while,
And over her lips of crimson there played a
terrible smile
"Yourself for the coming bridal, myself I will
comely deck,"
And she fastened her teeth white and gleam-
ing deep into the vein of my neck.

THE LEADEN TABLET.

And I dreamed as ye dream with Morphia
Just a floating, fainting away ;
A dream that is bought from Morphia
And Death is the price ye pay.

But horrid terror seized upon my heart
Bidding me fight.
So vainly struggling in unequal part
I fought for right.
Seeking by blows my ebbing life to save,
On through the night ;
Fighting the fiend, who thirsting, tightly clave ;
—A ghastly sight—
Teeth deep embedded, drinking from my
 vein ;
Till morning light
Greeted by crowing cockerel, smiling came ;
Then gripping tight,
I seized her gulping throat in clenching hands.
With all my might,
Thumbs fixed like iron bands.
Panting I crushed her skull,
Kneeling upon her breast.

THE LEADEN TABLET.

Then with a vicious pull
I tore out her pulsing throat,
Leaving the quivering rest,
Eyes stagnant glazed and dull
Wrapped, morient in my coat.

Sweating and breathless, blindly I sought for
water ;
Prone to the floor I fell stumbling thwart
Zamiel's daughter.
Blood, from my aching wound, dripped to
the floor ;
Faint in a numbing swoond I lay in my gore.
Then gentle hands poured cooling draught
betwixt my parchéd lips
Forcing the elixir of life back in thirsty sips
And bending o'er my tumbled couch my
azure pale Princess
Left on the Vampire's burning wounds her
cooling lips' impress.

PART VI.

THE APOLOGIA.

O BRIDGET! whose white skin is like
to petals of the gladiola flower,
Remember this, that from that
destined hour

When thou was christened, thou was named
“POWER.”

Power thou hast—and that a wonderous awful
gift,—

Under whose diction thou can’st sink or lift
Souls, spirits, hearts, from mirky cleft and rift
To higher ways. But also thou can’st drive
Creatures so deep, that few can ever dive
Down to the depths and bring them up alive,
Power thy sister e’er will be through life.

“POWER” will rise victorious from every
worldly strife.

Power is “POWER’S” heritage, manifest
and rife,

Beware of Power—two edged—a double-
bladed knife.

THE APOLIGIA.

Dreams and haunting visions by thy name alone
I oft-times have conquered ; trusting in thee

I've gone

Through perils gaunt and numerous ground
on Passion's stone.

Bridget, although it ere may be thy mission
To play at games with Power's mate—
Ambition—

See! hidden at her back stands Sinuous
Sedition!

Lovingperhaps too much thy tenderer, truer side
I to my inward passion have at length complied,
Lest in the smothering of it, I to myself had lied.
Crudely and roughly shaken from Euterpe's
sieve

These frail halting stanzas now to thy care I
give,
Feeling that every letter by thee wast made
to live.

Scorn not then this limping, poor, procession
Of rhythmic lines; nor treat with proud aggression
These faulty verses; waiting at thy session
For tempered judgment; merciful then be
Ever with kindness keeping within thy memory,
That every written sentiment, is a living part
of me.

Written at "Stagsden,"
Bournemouth, 1915.

TO BRIDGET.

“CARMEN TRISTIS.”

HOW can I sing a song, love, when my
heart is full of woe ?
Grief that is hard to bear, love ; grief
that is gnawing and slow
Crimson rimmed are my eyes, love ; bitter my
soul within ;
Bid me to mope and mourn, love, for I haven't
the mind to sing.

Though the Sun may shine in the skies, dear,
Though the day be blithesome and gay ;
When the Mirth of my heart quietly dies, dear,
Poor homage to joy can I pay:

For I am far from thy love, dear,
From thee who my heart feeds with smiles ;
More fair than the blossoms above, dear,
Or the Pearls of the fairy isles.

How then can I sing a song, love ?
How then may I carol a lay ?
When thee, for whom my eyes long, love,
Art far from my sight away.

Bournemouth,

April 10th, 1915.

"CARMEN LAETI."

WHEN Mirth and Joy come fitting in,
The heart with glee is filled within.
When I shall journey back to thee
My soul will dance in gaiety.

Merriment shall reign supreme,
In every eye a joyous beam ;
Mirth shall caper all day long,
In every heart an airy song.

Bid me to sing a round-a-lay
And I will trill to break of day
A Ballad, pastorage, stave or air
Or roulade to my Lady's hair.

As blithesome lark from Morn's pearl dew
Is lost to sight in Heaven's blue
Rising with carol to the skies
So am I lost in my lady's eyes.

Bournemouth,

April 11th, 1915.

NOTE: The form of these two Songs was suggested from reading a book of Elizabethan verse.

SONNET TO A BOWL OF GOLD
AND SCARLET TULIPS.

O BLOSSOMS! when I gaze
Down into your fair radiant faces,
Glowing up at me from verdant graces;
Your rarities amaze.

The very gold-bars of the Summer Sun
May well give place to your more candent hue.
For sunshine yet, I still can seek in you ;
E'en when the Orb's illuminèd course is run.
Your damask pinions, furled about your form
Give subtle sheen and incense to the air ;
Your gold-dust tongues kiss to the winds pale
care

Alone for peace and pleasure were ye borne.
Whilst to my mind ye bring me, by your
grace,
A yet more lovely and more radiant face.

Bournemouth.

April 12th, 1915,



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