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Niagara Twice Seen
and Other Verse

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Niagara Twice Seen

and Other Verse

704
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by

William Norman Guthrie

The University Press of Sewanee
&
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To the
M.A. Graduates of 1891
Sewanee

m. C. W. Dec 9-1910.

Contents

Niagara Twice Seen

I. PRELUDE *[1]

Once again, ha! these eyes behold
thee, Niagara, young as of old:

the thunderous uproar, the driving spray,
more, ever more, for ever and aye.

Ripple and whirl, pearl-bubble and flake,
enwreathe, unfurl, make, break, remake,

and over the brink flash as they leap,
ere link in link they sweep to the deep.

Green glistery walls, gay rapids that comb,
lacy spume-falls, swift geysers of foam—

and, riding the mist, a beryl span,
rose-amethyst, sun-protean! *[2]

O ages old, yet unbegun,
O manifold, yet ever one,

---

* Asterisks throughout this poem refer back to an analysis made at a friend's request for the benefit of such as like thought implicit in verse made explicit in prose.

thou seemest the same all-glorious,
but we who came—Ah, knowest thou us,

who came to thee as lovers gay
in jubilee of holiday?

Alone, forlorn, I behold thee again,
who laughest to scorn generations of men;

and I yearn for the tide of folly and cheer:
a world that is wide, a heaven that is near;

unthinking delight, improvident faith
that feareth no plight, and endureth no scath!*[3]

Speak, when do we live?—When, blind to the skies,
self-contemplative we philosophize?

Or, piously drone tried formulæ
to save us alone through eternity?

Or rather, when (high spirits in glee
reckless again of "thee" and of "me")

the water's rout to the gaping abysm
is our battle shout, and its spray our chrism?

When its faith august in the blood of us boils,
that we will what we must—herculean toils,—

for, behold, we *can* the thing that we will,
though the fair hope of man elude us still?

II

From afar, from afar we have come, and we go
to some unknown star that we ask not to know;

hurtling arrive in a serried host,
with the fury alive of the Holy Ghost,

to hallow, and purge, and perish! Ah, who
shall hinder the surge of the deeds to do? *[4]

Alas, alas, for such folly of youth!
the years—they pass, till we blink at the truth.

No battle is won. Old ills remain.
No deed can be done—for at length we are sane!

So, we prate of the slow vain cycles of time,
irremediable woe, unavoidable crime,

the treadmill round, dull patience and thrift.
The secret once found? the lost glimpse through the rift?

If a moment we snatch from the nightmare, and dare
the lift of the latch and in vacancy stare,—

we sigh for the gift to some one—not us—
who the burden shall lift opprobrious!

For who hopes—he errs: we are sane, and we walk
slow pall-bearers in solemn, hushed talk

acquiescent, no goal of wisdom ahead;
in doubt of the soul, tho' of death no dread;

wise forgetters of God, we trudge without shame,
mystery-shod, to no challenging aim!*[5]

Ha, what here am I who meditate?
and self-pitying sigh at human fate?

The stalwart strife—no feint or deceit—
foiled onslaught on life, defiant retreat,

the rally, the charge, the rout of the foe,
the dwelling at large, and the generous glow,—

be these not worth brief tenure of breath
from adventurous birth to victorious death?

So, once again, ha! these eyes do behold
thee, Niagara, young as of old;

and riding the roar a sunbow's span:—
thy word evermore to the spirit of man!

II. THE GORGE*[6]

After such leap of great faith, whither turn? Down the gorge
lo, seething foam-hedged swirls, and mottlings gray-green;
hollows and swells; whirled islands of mirroring sheen,—
then tumultuous upheaval of mountains; escaped from the forge
of the hells, yelling Titans with torture and fury demented,
wrenched back by invisible chains to Tartarean dooms;

outbursts of spray in demoniac glee for dire unrepented
rebellions; rolls, swishes and vast chaotical laughter booms?

'Tis the gorge of Niagara below the exultant falls,
in frenzy that 'wilders the brain and the soul appalls,
surging to gaping depths, and upleaping in bacchanals! *

Mystery! have *we*, too, so worn us the gorge and the chasm—
a retreat to prenatal infancy, age by age,
foot by foot, in passionate irrational rage?
deepening the anguish with every seaward spasm?
The glorious leap, the seething remorse of to-day it is
forgotton lives of us wrought? and the inveterate urge
(while the pure seas behind us break in innocent crystalline
[gayeties)
for the salt seas ahead, there in confluent fullness to merge?

'Tis the gorge of Niagara below the majestical falls!
Vain the granite's resistance, vain th' encompassing walls,
we surge to our gaping depths, and upheave in high
[bacchanals!

III. THE WHIRLPOOL *

What booteth insensate fury if self-unnerved?
Foiled by precipitate onrush at fate, and defeated?
For lo, the environing crags adamantine swerved
from our sudden charge, and—calm, unresisting—retreated,

flinging us boulder frost-loosened, impending rock-shelf
winter by winter; wherefore
self-delaying and cloying and throttling for evermore
our desperate might coils dragon-like round itself,
slow-whirling no whither, self-captive in eddy huge about a
choking with pitiful pelf. [stagnant core

For the whirlpool hales about in a sluggish madness vain
dead logs, uprooted trees, which it sucks to its bottom of ooze,
and regurgitates, tossing their branches in strangling pain
to drift once again on the dizzy, monotonous cruise.
Vain blossom, vain leaf, vain nest through the grisly refluent pool
in futile triumph we drag;
the tawny flecks of spume in gruesome abandon lag;
no outlet, no hope! The exhausted rage of the fool
who plays with himself in idiot glee a hugeous game of tag
by vertiginous rote and rule! * [9]

Ha, so to have ever forgotten the ocean's roar
in our silences heard, and the vision (in narrows beheld)
of boundless vistas relucent, whither we bore
irresistible: vast free waters whose flow, uncompelled
of chance declivities, travels from pole to pole
through tropic ardours at will,—
(phosphorescent star-mirroring coral lagoons) from the thrill
of the hurricane down through quietudes, glooms, to the goal
of auroral dawns; or under ice-continents ever wind-still
in the ocean of infinite soul! * [10]

Nay, perhaps we have fled from the awful moment too soon,
  from supreme achievement, the plunge into nothingness? Back
once more, ere forward, through channels our fury hath hewn,
  we surrender us wholly! In spirit retrace our track!
And, lo, twain clouds upstream from the fall either side
      the zenith, as fain to embrace
  for a final wrestle perchance,—or face to face
holding us, bosom to bosom as bride-groom and bride,—
  ere onward we break forth forever! Back to the holy place
      of outpoured faith and pride!

IV. WILLOW AND SWIFT*[11]

A Willow with young buds brown
  over-leaning the verge,
drawn terribly down
  by the yawning gulf; the urge
  and throbbing wash of the surge
    that widens fissures and gaps,
gnawing the rock in the knotting clutch
  of its serpentine desperate roots!
  So fascinated, what boots
resistance? Ere long at a touch
    of the air will it piteously lapse
  over the precipice
  to be swallowed with shriek and hiss.

But the Swifts, that fear not to drown,
  under the rainbow brim
dive terribly down
  to the spewing waters, and skim
  the boiling horrors, the dim
    emerald gloamings of death!
Then up and up in loops
  and sudden spurts of flight,
  defiant of spray, from height
to height, till the blue sky stoops
    to meet them with sunny breath,
  hearkening their unheard notes
  of rapture from palpitant throats!

Oh, with yon willow to feel
  life's close hold relax,—
brain horribly reel
  as the waters mightier wax,
  still-stationed in failing tracks;
    and the end to anticipate
(foreseeing the gorge, the dull swoon
  in the whirlpool, the lurch and swing
  into seaward currents) yea, fling
leaves glistening in the high noon
    o'er the brink precipitate,
  at the glory of the year's young prime!
  That were nobly courageous, sublime.

But oh, to be wingèd and wee,
  glad-hearted to dive
foolhardy for glee,
  committing one's soul alive
  to swell and swirl and drive,
    the fury and glitter explore;
and with pinions (one's very own!)
  shaken free of the weight
  and insolence of fate,
the pounding deluge alone
    defying, mount and soar
  to altitudes pure, and deride
  the demon of suicide!

V. THE STORM *[12]

Vast arms have encompassed the fall:
  vague wings of horror close-drawn,
the glooming green and the purple pall
  by the lightning ripped and sawn!
And the steadfast roar with a crash
  is riven in equal twain
silences awful; the gash—
  God's call to the hail and rain!

The hail blends rapids and sky
  and forest and thunderous falls;

and the rain-spears launched from on high
  assail the glassy walls
of the cauldron, whose spouting sprays
  are driven to the bottom in rout,
which a straight-hurl'd bolt sets ablaze:
  twain silences leap to one shout.

The storm of the falls is lord,
  but the lord of the storm—he is here.
For a Swift—like a flash of a sword
  of lightning in a glare that doth sear—
drops, darts down the engulfing vast!
  Who so full of Thee to dare play
(and I close mine eyes aghast)
  in Thy hells, light-spirited, gay?

VI. THE MAID OF NIAGARA: AN INDIAN LEGEND *[13]

Falling waters roar their thunder
        (appalling voice of the Great Spirit)
calling souls to awe and wonder,
        souls that dare draw near to hear it;
shaggy storm-gloom ripp'd asunder,
        lightning-spears of the Great Spirit!

Yearly a plum'd brave launch'd his birchen
swift canoe to the green abysses.
Yearly a maiden without smirch, in
blossom-robe, fled bridal kisses;
fled the sunshine old men search in
vain for youth's love-omened blisses!

Once a great chief's heart waxed tender
over his only child; yet, chosen,
durst, impassive, naught to fend her;
strode from council, he uprose in
stolid, bent on love's surrender,—
face as flint, proud spirit frozen.

Grim the painted braves assemble,
wizards, maidens, youths, old women.
Gloaming woods wan clouds resemble,
ghostly waters foam and brim in
hissing swirls; still moon-beams tremble,
shivered of silver pools they swim in.

Scarce the vowed canoe had started
paddled of the maid, arrayed in
bridal raiment, ere out-darted
from the dark a warrior-laden
swifter craft: 'tis the true-hearted
father overtakes the maiden.

Dumb i' th' mirk by th' seething water
horror doth the whole tribe tether.
Forward cheers their chief his daughter,
hailing the awful doom of death her
grace and purity have brought her.
Look, they leap the chasm together!

Then a wave of savage woe did
choke the tribe. Too cruel th' price is!
Never by greed or terror goaded
slain shall be such sacrifices;
spite of woe of yore foreboded,
gift of flower and fruit suffices!

Ever the waters pour their thunder—
vasty deep of the Great Spirit!
Fierce foam-billows and mists thereunder
shout and revel and career it!
Ever the soul in awe and wonder
yields her best to the Great Spirit.

VII. THE SUNBURST * [14]

Glorious the storm, but more glorious
the downfall of penetrant rays
from the noonday sun, victorious
over scurrying clouds ablaze.

Incessant the turmoil uproarious
  outpoureth its radiant haze.

Ecstatic with fife and tambor
  in the roar mad bacchants throw
the thyrsis, outflare and clamber
  (foam-demons) through th' hyaline glow,
while amethyst, ruby and amber
  over-arch in a heaven-wide bow.

O font of the spirit to purge in
  soilure of vision, and behold,—
verily the heart is yet virgin,
  the earth yet young as of old!
Intimations bud and burgeon,
  vague wistful hopes unfold.

New marvels new faith engender!
  Gainsaid, doth the heart misgive?
Yet the soul could never surrender
  her diviner prerogative:—
and lo, in fragrance and splendor
  youth's dead ideals re-live!

VII. THE ISLAND SANCTUARY*[15]

Too keen the gladness. In golden splashes
  shine the streets, and the jubilant throng
crowd park and parapet along,

Chrysoprase, garnet and sapphire flashes
drop from the avenue's glistening branches.
  Oh, with Her to be hence alone
  in yonder isle, the forest hath thrown
where panic the speeding tumult blanches! * [16]

Through tulip-trees, beeches, and maples yellow
  slanteth and sifteth the light from the vault;
  boughs uplifted — the spirit exalt,
boughs interknit, true fellow by fellow,
alder and poplar,— a shimmering column
  each of the fane; and the underbrush
  thickly bow in the moveless hush:
a reverent folk in orison solemn.

Thick by the pathway heartsease and chickweed
  wink their starlets; specks of joy
  dancing, the gnats their swarm deploy.
Hark, the thrush with his challenge liquid
of vivid delight to the green-wood island's
  abysmal mellow environing roar:
  his four quick melodies o'er and o'er
purl and hallow the sheen and silence. * [17]

Here to linger! Ah, wherefore forward
  press to wierd borders (the willows guard
  vine-tumbled with blossomy woodbine star'd)
where leap in vain white sprites to shoreward,

(desperate pursurers, passionate embracers)
for sumac and elder with pomp of bloom
wave them off to their unknown doom,
astride their foam-flecked combing racers.

Who would choose to abandon the quiet
here of phantasy's hallowed place?
turn from the brooding glory and grace?
front the multitudinous riot
of panic and greed, the soul unheeded?
Woe unto us! No leisure to pause,
onward driven without faith or cause,
save dread of shame should our pace be out-speeded!

IX. THE SONG SPARROW *[16]

Ha, in the rapids yonder?
an islet wee!
A parable worthy to ponder
for you and for me.

An ash, two trembling birches,
a hemlock, brush, weeds:
for a song-sparrow plentiful perches,
food-berries and seeds.

Narrow inlet where two elopers
may spatter and prank,

and tipple, (delicate topers!)
one drop and give thank.

Her nest, in their tiny fastness,
broodeth his mate,
while he dareth a thrill in the vastness
early and late:—

"O pitiful desponder,
grown bitter, grown old,
from life and love absconder,
behold! behold!

"No wanton or prying intruders
on stalking legs
disturb two busy brooders
of five speckled eggs.

"No hawk, no scolding squirrel us
threaten, or beguile.
The envious, frivolous, scurrilous
banished our isle!"

And resolute warbles he, flinging
a scarce-heard trill,
or flutters to his comrade bringing
tidbits in his bill.

O blessèd wee song-sparrow,
from marshes wind-mown

with thy ruffled bead-eyed marrow
to your islet flown,

in the tumult adventuring yonder
to establish thy peace:
a miracle worthy to ponder,
to ponder and bless!

X. THE UPPER RAPIDS *[19]

Up the rapids, the last bleak outpost of granite,
ever wet, scanty-mossed, black, gnawn,
hissing and gurgling in fissures,—how can it
forever withstand, thus grimly updrawn?
The pound of torrential masses convulses
with hysterical laughter, and the lone rock
vibrates incessant, and, rhythmical, pulses
as the rapids part from the shock.

A hardy fern, a yarrow aromatic
closely clutch their footing scant;
vine-bowers overbear with a reach spasmatic
the strangled trees, and pant
for a swish of the ebullient waves that beleager
their crag with voluble strife,
swerve past unsurprised, undefeated, uneager,
ever ready for death or life.*[20]

The breakers redden to blood, lurid, dismal
  from out of the purple-black wall of sky
down-deluging resolute to th' mystery abysmal,
  their white arms waving a phrensied good-bye.
On the dun wall of waters in infinite number
  appallingly glideth a savage green-gray,
and lapseth in plentitude awful to umber
  glooms, without hesitant doubt or dismay.

Let the race then of water-sprites scud past and chide us
  for holding the bleak rock fast under foot,
and engulfed in the gloaming, fiercely deride us
  who in self-hood perforce have our confidence put!
"Death hail we," cry they, "in rush suicidal,
  for more, ever more of us, lo, we make room,
other than *we* be! Then forth to our bridal
  haste we, for ever they come and they come!" * [21]

I gazed — time abolished — I gazed unconscious,
  and, chilled, awoke on the scene to stare.
Wierd power that in dream-sped vessel can launch us
  to float o'er wan mystical seas unaware!
Now night the spectacle chastly suffuseth
  with silvery shimmer from moon-hazed sky,
but only more awful to whoso museth
  the mystery of infinite fresh supply! * [22]

For us twain who shall read the dubious omen!
  Yearnings, delight, bewilderment, scorn,

effulgent sunburst, devotion at home in
the island forest where gay motes swarm,
trills of courage in love's sweet durance
with none to hear but the loved one nigh,
moon silvery calm, starry quiet assurance
of unexhausted divine Supply?

XI. THE VIEW FROM AFAR*[25]

From this far solitary steep, farewell,
Niagara! Over thy glory is drawn
a veil, and in th' horizon merged is thy dominant spell,
still felt in the blood. When shall there dawn
a day of thine for Me? Yet what is man
to thee, who notest not the constant splendors of these—
Antares, Arcturus, Vega, Aldebaran,
nor the faint spiritual Pleides?

Yon blessèd stars forever abide and flash,
yet deign they even to follow in fellowship
and stoop to man; ay, quelling his rages rash,
consoling wells of freshness to th' parch'd lip,
cool to the soul; quickening with quietude
in rarified air of peak, in far-spread waste,
down clefts of cities, none may Them elude;
but thou, though aloof, no less the spirit upstay'st.*[26]

Farewell. In the calm of distance thy terrible boom
ferocious to a whisper lowered, great peace
doth hallow thee, though thou intone thy chaunt of doom
awaiting no return. But shalt thou cease
to haunt, for that thou followest not? This one,
Niagara, of thy days in the immortal deep of me
liveth. In whate'r the soul shall do and leave undone,
thou shalt unheard, invisible, ever be!

XII. FAREWELL*[25]

Never may I behold thee again with the eyes of the flesh,
for by little and little draweth inexorable fate
closer her net of the days the soul to enmesh.
But when, years agone, She and I, inebriate
with the wine of our joy, beheld thee together—Ah,
foreknew then either this day of good omen, Niagara?

Thou hast more than kept faith; yea, kept that day of the twain
for us both. Keep, keep for Her and for me this also, that so
whatever thereof in mystical depths shall remain
inexpressible faith, consolation for selfish woe,
may utter itself for us, to ravished awe and wonder,
in thy sweeping emerald flash, and broad reverberant thunder:*[26]

Vision, to behold through Her what passeth desert;
humility, that which exalteth, and humbleth therefore,

to desire: and loyal belief, that not ours thou wert,
  so great a grandeur and glory, if undestined to more;
beholding God in the valiant and true of each other, also
trust Him for all our debt, the craven in us and false owe! *[27]

More still:—the larger courage a myriad lives
  to live, well wotting life's ungentle deceits,
the wanton change, or the chance that bereaves or rives
  the heart of the brave, and the victor at last defeats;
not to *die* for love's sake—but the godlier courage rather
to live forever, and call thy awful spirit—Our Father!

ANALYSIS OF NIAGARA TWICE SEEN

*1 Visiting Niagara alone, the happy vision enjoyed years ago startles the beholder, and the intervening story of life's chances and changes is for the moment forgotten.

*2 But, realizing, in a little, the awful changelessness of the great spectacle before him, lost youth is looked back to with longing, for its creative spirit rather than for its singular joys.

*3 Always the true life of the beholder is lived in self-oblivious will and deed, rather than in sentiment and abstruse speculation. The mad race of the upper rapids becomes a thrilling symbol of such true life.

*4 Mindful, however, of the hideous havoc wrought by the self-critical and agnostic spirit of advancing years, with vain pretences at wisdom and virtuous resignation.

*5 The soul cries out for the old spirit of do and dare, of reckless self-oblation to impractical tasks and foolish enthusiasms, figured by the rushing waters of Niagara, which dash with laughter to the awful leap of fate ahead.

*6 Below the falls and the vast seething cauldron, we are hurried on with the tumult of the gorge. The heaving and breakiug waters suggest fearfully our futile outlived rages against fact and fate.

*7 When an astonishing doubt assails the soul: that all such waste of passion and creative power were perhaps of our own unconscious causing; that our doom perhaps proceeded of our self-predestinating rage and unreason, whereby we became deaf to inner admonition and blind to spiritual vision.

*8 The rock-enclosed whirlpool appears now a manifest horror; for likewise by the soul's stubborness and wilful fury is hollowed out our arrest, disaster and confusion: our very success imprisoning the spirit in routine, self-complacence and tedium.

*9 Youth's eternal beyonds of joyful activity and infinite variety of experience, conceived as the course of the land-bound torrents, which have become at length free currents within the ocean deep.

*10 Let us retrace our way to find the reason of our discontent, back to the crisis of our youth, when we courageously made the great decisions, or foolhardily flung ourselves into the onsweeping rush of the times.

*11 In all abandonments to circumstance and environment lurks the impulse to self-destruction; in all decisions is declared the creative fiat. Although, both may seem to involve the same fanatical courage, recklessness of self, and magnificent frenzy, only the latter, the decisions, are instinct with the divine Word.

*12 Nevertheless, sublimer always than our most sensational leaps of faith or of despair, is the environing Will to order and quiet, revealed in the warring forces without; he is the in-dwelling dauntless Initiative mystically alive and aware at the core of us: the divine Self of the least significant of human selves.

*13 Great and magnificent were all those frantic forms of self-sacrifice practiced in the childhood of the human race; yet the truest worship of the gods appears not in grimly dying, but rather in mightily living for the Ideal.

*14 After the terrible crisis, however savage and superstitious the spirit's divine will to self-annihilation, ensues a gratitude, that the ideal life of us got its expression through it; promising better, subtler forms, although essentially the same, in times to come.

*15 Happiness for long among the instinctively happy, irks the awakened soul. It requires a quieter, holier joy, islanded somehow in the very midst of the anguish of the human race, its recluse silence haunted by subdued echoes of the incessant outer struggle; for a truce has become our only honorable peace.

*16 Such an idylic solitary retreat is providentially prepared for the individual soul after its crisis; that it may be glad in a foretaste of the larger life with God, of unutterable sweetness and still content.

*17 But the hazards and iniquities of the world's struggle renew their lure for the modern Soul. Though it seem but reasonless competition, somehow the cry of the fierce waters will have us envisage once again the meaning of that self-annihilation in which the Soul seems to attain unto its highest satisfaction.

*18 In the midst of the great world-forces the Soul of man is granted one other innocent solace,—implying courage and yielding gladness: a more enduring

foretaste of the larger life in God, because social, and not for the Soul's private delectation.

*19 Lo, the frightful contrast of the inexhaustible elemental energies which our world-tasks unpityingly demand, and our pitiful limited being, rooted to particular temperament, talent, opportunity!

*20 With the failing day, we fail; but the elemental energies can fail not; nay, rather in the deepening gloom they seem but to wax mightier: eternal supply in response to infinite demand.

*21 The soul faints for awe and bewilderment, but recovers to behold a wondrous transfiguration of the former horror into a sacramental Mystery of unspeakable loveliness.

*22 Has from the whole parable (of the individual's struggle to be true to his ideals, and achieve none the less the hard tasks assigned him in the world) no new sweet wisdom been won for the understanding of love?

*23 Niagara remains, in its own peculiar setting, symbolic of unique or rarely recoverable experiences; while the stars follow us in a frequent fellowship, sacrosanct and friendly, signifying the daily and therefore unnoticed hallowings and satisfactions.

*24 Nevertheless in a spiritual sense, Niagara (the terrific crisis, once for all, or recurrent) remains with us in the very fashion and substance of the Soul.

*25 Niagara (seen once as a mutual joy, again as a lonesome bereavement and self-searching) shall in the memory of its sublime and terrible beauty yield the soul an utteranee for its unspoken tragedies.

*26 And love shall learn a worship of the divine, through consecrated weakness and noble failure, rather than through unspiritual energy and achievement.

*27 Ay, from the remembered spectacle with its manifold revelations, shall be won what for thinking spirits constitutes the sublimest courage:—aware of all that is evil and false in life, the Will, nevertheless, for the same love's sake, that this very life be forever and ever, again and again!

New Sewanee Verse

New Sewanee Verse

THE OLD TRYSTING PLACE

I.

A Clearing I know where the marguerites grow,
few did of old yon pathway go;
by a brier-thatch'd well, where a cabin once stood,
'mid a wall of clustering chestnut wood
sweet-scented with sassafras;
there surely demurely a lad with his lass
might loiter along through the knee-deep grass,
(remote from gossips' prying and hearing),
and cull them the daisies, they praise as they pass
to the farther side of the clearing!

II.

Yea, the path doth wind through hollows blind
where gadding sweethearts — time out of mind —
had sought them arbutus in fellowship boon,
picked purple asters of harvest moon,
plucked scepters of golden-rod!
High treason, this season (when marguerites nod
their star-bright myriad), to leave untrod
that path, and the lonesome clearing:
through foam'd seas of grasses Love passes dry-shod,
howsoever the breeze may be veering!

III.

Ha, archly she laugh'd as she plièd her craft,
driving her lover for love of her daft:—
"It were well, good my lord, ere the dawn of the day
to watch me the fairies at winsome play,
in gossamer hammocks for you
there swinging, and singing, a-twinkle with dew!
Go forth, then, and fetch me of marguerites a few
at the dawn in the haunted clearing!
So I bid thee with sorrow till th' morrow adieu;
Heaven speed thine adventure God-fearing!"

IV.

To such kernel, what husk! For, a-chill in the dusk,
through underbrush dense must he wetly him busk,
and sour-wood and laurel and dogwood bless
when they flirt in his face, nor the greenbriers less
that prickle eith'r eager hand!
Ah, who will be cruel, that understand
her iniquity grievous, thus lightly planned?
And, send to such far-away clearing
her valarous knight? Enlighten her, and—
Heaven save us from such-like endearing!

V.

Lo, a breath like a veil doth the clearing exhale
in the waning moonlight moony-pale?
As a hoar-frost light doth the dew lie thick?

Hark, a chirrup, a twittery trill and quick?
'Tis the wren. Then, a warbled flush?
And a flutter of guttural sweet in the hush?
The tanager follows the woodland thrush,
with magic that thrilleth the clearing!
Ho, the redbird's Oh, so virtuoso-like gush,
Voluptuous, wistful, yet cheering?

VI.

And ere he was 'ware, the slim marguerites fair
with velvet eyën's unwinking stare,
to a drowsyhead strange did the lover compel,
who did gather and gather nor wist what befell,
till together he heard them to say:—
"Oh, break us and take us, the gladsome and gay,
to her that is Queen of us; yea, waylay
her spirit with Love's perserving!
Dew-pearls on each petal do settle and sway,
her tremulous beauty ensphering."

VII.

They beckoned him all, and with voices small
his brooding spirit were fain to enthrall:—
"In her dream we can elvishly flit from afar
to hold there May-revel, and leave thee ajar
white wings, for thee, spying, to ken
repleteness of sweetness (shrill cheer of the wren)
a purity fluty (thrush-warble) ay, and then

thy shy redbird (Love's hallows revering),
coy wood-doves' crooned cooing and wooing in glen,
and the silver dew-mists of our clearing;

VIII.

for they dwell in Her soul, and do graciously dole
high alms of grace to make thee whole.
O lover belov'd, recline on the bank,
and for aye shall we win of thee heart-whole thank;
for thy dream—it shall blend with her own!"
Then down did (unsounded the deep, far flown
his spirit) the lover on the soft grass prone
sink,—and forget, in the sun-flushed clearing,
her deserving, his weakness; her meekness alone,
and his hope Love's altar uprearing.

X

"Fare ye well, and good-bye," the marguerites sigh,
"would all might along to adore her and die.
In Her honor our velvety sheen we donned,
and gossamer glisters from frond-frill to frond.
Lo, we make thee obeisance." Blown
of the pixy-like tricksy airs, unbeknown
they're at play with butterfly, beetle and drone,
and the truant work-bees of the clearing;
while all the way too (for delay to atone)
his brain went careering, sonneteering!

XI.

Ah, marguerites dear, it is many a year
that *so* ye spake, and his ear did hear.
And, methinks, she too doth remember and yearn
for the spell of that dawning day to return.
Who, woe's me, for the past shall wait?
But the daisies? There grazes the cattle; and straight
cuts a red-clay road, like a gash of fate;
the tree-walls hewn! Still, fay-eyën are peering:
yea, the dew on white petals, see, settles in state—
pure radiance—where once was our clearing!

THE MOONLIT COVE: FROM NATURAL BRIDGE

I.

Still, white Cloud, in the deep-clov'n valley laid!
still moonshine, mystically a-dream thereon!
Seated aloft a span of rock, and stayed
by a sheer ledge, Twain hover o'er the tops of trees
that mass them in vague gloom to ghostly seas
unnavigable; whence, ever and anon,
white nereids, clapping foamy hands, emerge—
(some bough, breeze-lifted to the light?)—then cleave the
[rustling surge.

II.

O cloud adown the deep cove lying still,
O soft pure pillow of divine repose,—
thy magic wrought, voluptuous yet chill,
so neither lover spake for dear constraint,
fearing their breath, with too great gladness faint.
The forest-sea, heaving, murmureth. . . Love knows
what mysteries to their spirit's ear avowed,
and far below the skyline dim floateth the still white Cloud.

III.

Embosomed deep, O Cloud I mind me well
'twixt mountains gleaming, wooer unto rest,
what wordless irresistible strange spell,—
how thrilling more than all sweet sound! And He . . ?
his brow laid on her shoulder wistfully;
but She . . ? gliding into his arms, the still Cloud bless'd,
and the enfolding heights, with eyes joy-dimmed . . .
while to the stars, for silver hush, the deep cove overbrimmed.

APOLLO BEHELD

Loud the full brook roared through the laurel cove;
down heights, precipitate in blitheful rush,
the acacias press and peer, and rear their lush
quick green, with argent shimmer interwove,

(lace-roof, wherethrough white cloud with blue sky strove),
to gladden and dazzle the dream-happy hush,
made amorous rapture by a wood-note's gush,
while valiant arms the pool's swirled coolness clove!

Aloft the moss-bound rock-ledge, rivulet-fringed,
behold the Youth of godhood unaware
(face, hands uplifted, sun-bronzed body tinged
with ardors golden-green), Lord of the glen
one radiant moment! Ah, Apollo, when
wast thou revealed of old, more pure and fair?

THE HUMMING-BIRD

Life-giving Earth, how good to live for aye
low in thy lap voluptuously adrowse!
The soft, clear blue (between the shimmer of boughs
enlarging, narrowing), laughs at happy play.
Green shadows' hither-thither half betray
flittings of vireos shy who nearby house.
Quick starry dots through shade and shine carouse
in insect glee their brief eternal day.

Love, shall we waken from the dreamy bliss,
of Eden? Wantonly the sweet spell break?
Yet, see, above us poised, what emerald flash—
what ruby splendor? And the blossoms shake
for rapture of their wooer, wisely rash?
Shall we likewise, . . . ? What else shall we but—kiss?

SEWANEE SEMI-CENTENNIAL ODE, 1907

I.

In spirit this springtide unto Thee,
of diverse age, and many a clime
(though chiefly of the South, our Mother, bred)
we made our loyal pilgrimage,
Sewanee, who now hail thee with our duteous rime.

Still thy high levels, like a blessèd hand
of th' ancient mountain range,
(whose youth, abiding, knoweth not mortal change)
in benediction vast outspread
where, basking in the sun, the plains expand
of the silver Tennessee.

On some dear woodway, pensive ay and slow,
we wandered forth to meet our ghostly selves,
hold parley with the absent and the dead,—
when, sudden, from behind a screen
of twinkling leafy sheen,
invisible tricksy elves
pelt us with up-thrust handfuls of the laurel snow!

Wherefore, surprised into a happier mood,
(self-doubt dismissed, and vain regret)

we wend thy upland slopes along,
and, that we ever left thee, half forget.
The glistening oaks and chestnuts brood
each over his violet shadow-isle
in the golden sea of dazzle. With what wile
do waftures honey-sweet, bee-murmurs gay
waylay us thy azalea shrubs among,
in radiant bridal array!

Ravished with eager gladness, we explore
thy woody steep again and flowery glade,
and the green nooks invade
light-footed, or some rocky fastness scale.
No staider wont or wisdom shall avail
to chide us, happy-hearted boys once more
in Arcady! And from oblivion, to our aid,
upspringeth as a bubbling well
within our mind a magical pure spell
of Sapphic or Horatian verse,
which, ere we wot, delighted lips rehearse,
yea, lilt responsive to a whistled call
or a blithe warble! All, Sewanee, all
the enchantment, the delight, the exorcism
of sordidness and sorrow—thine; the chrism
some naiad shy
with crystalline spray
bedewing the passerby,—

thine; and thine too the rapturous dismay
breathing intoxicant air of myth and old romance.
Now visitants seem to beckon and detain us
with god-like port Hellenic, open glance,
and frank arch smile;
now Viking ardors clutch the leaping heart
o'er Northern seas to fare
(the starry heaven our chart)
deeds hazardous and terrible to dare—
a Berserk madness, and a savage guile.
And now, the woodway left,
what lightsome shift of mood?
Quite gone the whilom barbarous hardihood,
dreamily we refrain us
and fling us down full length, of wit bereft,
in the dense hiding of an ample hollow
amid the Johnny-jump-ups, purple-eyed;
and shouts on shouts each other follow
till th' rous'd echoes fling them pell-mell after!
For, the mere riotous sense
of life sufficeth, the wild expense
of reasonless joy, and the deep plains sky-wide
glimpsed from the dizzy edge; and the creek's swollen roar
that leapeth forth with flash of glee
through blooming thickets, confident
of depths and distance, and his store
of cool and purity unspent,
wherewith besprent

the nearby rocks and bushes drip.
Not we, not we alone
shouting for jubilee,
a-thrill with the unknown:
Echo and Naiad be of our wild fellowship!

II.

But half a hundred years have sped
since (even as we who hither throng
in spirit) Thou thyself wast still a dream
of dreamers—yea, a dream whereto there led
no pass by the unspiritual eye discerned;
yet they who dreamed thee, thwarters were of wrong,
and furtherers of right; whose hot hearts burned
for native land, its folk and speech; nor aught
did ever too arduous deem
if so their dream's fulfillment might be wrought.*

And therefore, lo, Thou standest nobly hewn, most fair,
on thine own rock-foundation reared
magnificent in primitive steadfastness;
nowise barbaric (for all thy mountain air,
and scent of the nigh forest wilderness)
unless it hide in thy sweet-syllabled name

* Sewanee was projected in full view of Tother Mountain at Beersheba, Tennessee.

"Sewanee!" Triply blest, of liberal thought
the home, the playground of creative will;
so dreamed of Them who sought
no selfish gain in thee, or worldly fame;
content through love of beauty to instill
courage and goodness, and the mystic thrill
of true devotion. For pure, strong, They feared
in truth and beauty for the soul no ill,—
manly and gracious, godly men and sane!
So, unborn dreamers of the South should fare
to thee like Them, not seeking fame or gain,
but rather filial reverence for the past—
courage devout never to shrink aghast
in the hour of evil and listlessly despair
of virtue, but our little good hold fast
(in fellowship it may be, else alone)
cheered by the Vision afar off
of nobler days, for which to strive amain
against the maudlin moan
and cynic scoff,
with virile hand and heart and godly brain!

Potent, Sewanee, (though a wild dream thou wert
to most), for dreamed wast Thou by valorous sons
of the chivalric South. Hence, deadly hurt
Thou tookest not, when cruel Fate
swept Their proud land and left it desolate.

Lost was the Cause, and smit thy champions?
Yet, militant souls, stalwartly as they fought
for conscience (from the gory field
returned) in love of thee, a vision, wrought—
till on thy mount of peace their wounds were healed.
So, from the fratricidal strife
thou, Dream twice dreamed, at length
didst rise—a triumph in men's waking life—
strength in thy beauty, beauty in thy strength.
And thus, we dreamers also, mindful still
of all the glorious cost
in love and labor, hail Thee! Thou who wast
too long a hope deferred (too fair, too high
to be laid low in ruin, and buried lie)
art still a Hope, thy sons must pledge them to fulfill!

III.

Time was, mayhap (though hard it be to own
this day such folly!) when for insolent jubilee,
of depth and distance madly confident,
a-thrill with the vast unknown,
shouting our way through rock and thicket we went,
of thy control at last, and beauty's, free!

"Forest to fell, new wastes to till,
and deeps to delve for coal and ore,
wherewith to fling in brute self-will

exultant Babels skyward! Demons of steam
and lightning, manacled, should rest no more
by day or night — man's whim supreme!
Yea, all that is mere thought
for truth's and beauty's sake sublime,
all that alone with happy feeling fraught
doth boast no usurous end,—
henceforth ajudged a shame, a crime!
All to the yoke of Use and Pride must bend.
What voice of the great dead shall the greater living heed?
'Tis we alone destroy, 'tis we renew;
who, lords of law, and alterers of creed,
alike the world and soul subdue;
and reck of the doing and the deed
by no God's will, nor goodly meed,—
but by our satisfied
heart's pride
and greed!''

If ever so for a brief season
our faith, disloyal, we foreswore;
guilty of supercilious treason
to Thee, who seemedst from the spirit aloof
of modern days, too fondly obsolete;
repented have we with contrition sore!
Shrive us, we pray, as doth to Thee seem meet.
Too well have we made proof

of the false wisdom that is shame and curse.
And most this day, We love Thee, for that ever
thou'st dared be obsolete; the seer's rapt mind,
childlike and simple-hearted,
still pressing forward in ideal endeavor,
to walk, and talk
with the glorious ghosts of our kind,
and cherish their greatness departed!

IV.

Oh, graciously hast Thou our spirits shriven,
Sewanee. For we, thine own sons, now are given
anew in thee, as even of old,
with wonder and heart-searchings to behold
thy strict betrothal of the Ancient Lore
(man's record of hopes high-souled,
his divination and his fiat divine
which Hellas as Apollo did adore,
and the holy Muses nine)
in bonds of love
unto the fierce New Lore of ordered fact
(by persevering quest
and stoic mastery compact,
which will not fear the worst or hope the best).
Yea, were not ever those Twain
(the Lore unhuman, and the Lore humane)
by Fate primordially and Wisdom plighted?

For each hath need of each,
if man shall to his fullest stature reach,
his senses hallowed, and his spirit righted.
How should the knowledge serve
of what man was and is, if man shall swerve
from trust in his own right? nor fashion and sway
what so he find, to meet
his godlier want? yea, and — in faith — complete
with a prophetic Morrow his To-day?
So hast thou won us to look forth—and know;
to hearken back, look inward—and, believe;
nor idly fable and falsify,
but (well resolved to *live* ere yet we die),
on things unlovely our loveliness bestow,
and God and God's ideal world for man—achieve!

V.

Fear not, Sewanee, then, though scatterd abroad
our people be through a land for thee too vast.
Be not by magnitude and might o'erawed,
by littleness and poverty downcast.
Shrink not from thine whole office to the South.
Through Her is th' service rendered North and West;
be only the Word of thy heart the word in thy mouth,
and thy word shall prosper, and many abide thy behest.
And more and better shall rally about thy Name,
and dream and work thee forth to the latter end thereof.

And, if poor thou be or rich, if many or few—the same
of thy sons thy reward shall be: their passionate love!

For, well they remember the lore thou taughtest them well,
who drewest them gently yet firmly aside from the sordid and base,
to th' inmost Holy of Holies where none may buy or sell,
having beholden and worshipped the Soul's glory face to face.

LINES IN HONOR OF GENERAL EDMUND KIRBY-SMITH *

A massive steed with flying mane, and hoofs
earth-shaking; stalwart, in his seat erect
a figure venerable, the snow-white beard
bannering to right and left in the keen wind;
so doth he still career in memory,
a smile upon his kindly lips, a flash
of resolution in his kindled eyes.
Ah, many a time we hear him gallop past
(who knew him) into th' night; or watch him here
gaze solitary, fellow of th' roaring pines,
across the sun-brimmed cove, as harkening so

* Read at the dedication to him of "Picturesque Tennessee," (now called "Kirby-Smith Point"), July 4, 1908.

echoes of battle-tumults down the years.
And then, perchance, the pity of it all
would seize him: the Cause lost, and his own hand,
for smiting ready, enforced to idleness;
the plenty of his Western empire vast
hoarded for naught,—the wretched want of those
who followed the great Lee; . . . till overcome,
though dauntless yet, he stooped perchance to pick
some little heart's-ease at his feet, and speak
of days to come: "a greater Country ours,
a nobler People,—for the blood and tears
shed vainly!"

Now, O venerable and brave,
the rock thou oft didst stand on (Dariën
to th' unfoiled spirit of thee) we consecrate
in grateful reminiscence. Be thou still
among us: soldier, father, trusted friend;
lover of all things fair,—trees, flowers, and birds;
ay, and God's creatures too,—the very snakes;
intrepid, and therefore tender; stout and true;
a man of boisterous laughter and of stern
command; of war if need be, and of peace
to whoso peace ensueth. For thee we raise
the echoes that were wont to answer thee
in a free shout: Valiant spirit, all hail!
And may thy name and heart abide with us,
sons of Sewanee, evermore! All hail!

ALUMNI MEMORIAL ODE:
BENJAMIN LAWTON WIGGINS*
(Vice-Chancellor, 1893-1909)

First of us; chosen to lead us and followed with faith,
we call to thee!—Hearken and heed us, who cheer thee in death.
No shame, if sorrow hath wrung us and anxious fears;
for wast thou not boy once among us four happy years?
Forest and rock hast thou cherished with filial pride:
for thee budded and bloomed and perished our blossom-tide;
glorious for thee our October burned year after year;
wet winter-woods, wistful and sober, to thee, too, were dear;
white moonlight on twinkling branches; stars caught in their mesh;
the far-spreading plains that enfranchise the eye from the flesh!
From the coves the kine-bells' clanging, thou hast broodingly heard;
the thrushes' and red-birds' haranguing—thy fancy hath stirred.
No wonder our heart-beats quicken as we think of thee now;
our foremost, unfaltering, stricken, death's calm on thy brow!

Thou foughtest our battles bravely, and wroughtest for all;
in peril thou smiledst gravely at failure or fall;
with unfailing fidelity ever our weakness to hide,
silent in steadfast endeavor when doubted, denied,—

* Read at the gathering of the Alumni Association in the E. Q. B. Club House, Tuesday, June 14th, 1909.

to right, to left, thou didst look not, but thy life thou didst give;
and wonted to serve, thou couldst brook not thy work to outlive.
For thou hadst thy day's work finished, nor bidding farewell
wentest forth with power undiminished, so their cheers were thy
[knell!

Ha, first of us wert thou chosen as faithfullest found!
Then how shall thy soul repose in mere hallowed ground?
In us, yea in us, thine abiding, thy spirit and life:
still in our councils presiding, allayer of strife;
alone in great patience sustaining the brunt of the day;
thy wisdom, guiding, restraining, with magnanimous sway;
for wrongs—thy large forgiving, for follies—thy grace;
yea, in us art Thou still living, and none shall replace.
So our selfish sorrow we smother for thee who art dear;
who hail thee yet leader and brother and heartily cheer;
by thy faithful spirit new-plighted, made strong of thy soul,
we march, thy brothers, united, unafraid to thy goal!

LULLABY

Who dove or violet
hath seen, shall fear no threat;
nor Mother for Eden pine
with thee, sweet baby mine.

In vain would the wind disclose
a bud of the shy wild rose,
though the smile of the morning sky
wide open her golden eye.

In vain the earthquake's rage
and wars the blind seas wage;
for pearl-shell and daisy, still
laugh at their cruel will.

In the drop of trembling dew
doth the sun his glory view;
and in thee, sweet baby mine,
are life and love divine.

HER REFUSAL

Oh lover, if thou love my Soul
  deeper than twilight dream,
how canst thou more than pity dole
  to her—woe's me—I seem?

If to thine eye my spirit glow
  beyond the glimmer of dawn,
should not thy heart the bliss foreknow
  of love—through love forgone?

Never, oh never may I thee
  love, lover mine; for thou
to her, I am, dost bend the knee
  to Her I disavow.

Could She I am not, whom I yearn
  with all my being to be,
meet Thee that shall be—should I turn
  thus solitary from thee?

If plighted were They twain, and wed
  beyond the death of us,
then might even we know love—though dead,
  a love not blasphemous.

MAIDENHOOD: A VALENTINE TO C. S. G.

(Dawn on Bald Knob, Virginia)

Sweet Child, how beautiful
  our world mist-mantled lies!
A blazing-star I pull,
  to mate thy dancing eyes,
and for joy my arms enfold
  my amazèd happy maid,
whose innocent eyes behold
  God's day-dawn unafraid.
Soft steal, from heights of gold,
  mist-flows of rosy ease;
rose-rivers are softly rolled
  to roseate silent seas.
Thy dreams, O maidenhood,
  before thee far displayed,
golden and rose! How good
  God's world unto his maid!

Look, eastward at thy feet
  gray-blue, meditative,
the Tarn would bid thee, Sweet,
  even as herself to live.
Not like yon tarn's be thine,
  whose purity serene

winks rippling crystalline,
  or lulls in pearly sheen:
who, doth she view the sun,
  adoreth quivering,
and in heavenward orison,
  mounteth on tireless wing;
yet, doth he fail her gaze,
  her limpid self she spills
from fall to fall, by ways
  she neither wots nor wills.
Not such thy spirit: though shy,
  eluding sleight and lure,
beholding earth and sky,
  through dauntless knowledge—pure!

How fair the wintry earth, surveyed
  from this dominant height,
spread to the sky's cloud-girth arrayed
  in her bridal white!
Bare shrubs, dwarf oaks in the mist,
  their rainbow-glitter have donned,
emerald and amethyst,
  ruby and diamond.
'Twixt clump and glistery clump
  snow-stretches crystalline,
from rock, log, root, and stump
  dart myriad fairy eyen.

In the air flits an eddying host
  of various scintillant hue,—
each mote the merry star-ghost
  of a drop of elfin dew!
In wind-screened hollows still,
  crouch scrub-pine, snowy-ruff'd;
springs spatter, as they trickle and trill,
  brilliants on fern and tuft.
The solemn hemlocks brood
  the quiet with ermined wings,
frore to the core, and intrude
  on the glades with blue shadowings;
and the shine of unshadowed glades
  dazzles the dizzy sky,
and a hush of awe pervades,
  hallowing far and nigh.

Then ho! a Wind to be,
  and out of the Orient leap
at its golden cloud-verge, free
  over the hills to sweep,
to hover o'er glitter and glow,
  gladness and innocence,
in aërial mirth; nor know
  of where or whither or whence,
ere I hap on the summit here
  and blow thy coiled hair loose,

chuckling for mischievous cheer;
  nor grant at thy prayer a truce,
but blow, till perforce thou 've caught
  the mood of the wind, and cried:
"Mad spirit, thou blowest for naught.
  Thou canst win me never to bride.
For, O Vagabond, I am as thou,
  playfellow to the unseen!
Ha, I dare and defy thee now!"
  And thou peerest flushed, serene,
out of the encircling arms
  of him, whose heart beats high
to shelter from fancied harms.
  Then the wind:—"Thou *art* not as I,
for I know but companionless glee,
  the lone glory of earth and sky,
nor wonder at worlds to be,
  nor vex me with whither or why.
So, winsome playmate mine,
  fare thee well, with health aflush;
my snowdrop, rose-eglantine,
  honey-suckle!" Then winds-still hush.
And you shook you free, and gazed
  o'er the far scene wintry-pure
maiden spirit unamazed,
  unabashed, unwishful, demure.

My winter fancies beguiled
  our eyes from visual truth.
Yet, beautiful now, dear Child,
  is this mountain-top uncouth:—
brier-roses, wee buds wrapped tight;
  blue-berries, red mouth to stain;
blazing-stars that winking invite,
  yet never to spy thee feign.
Shrub-oaks hug the ground close
  and 'freeze,' as at 'hide and seek,'
or afraid some great oak morose
  the ear of a truant may tweak!
Ha, and sunflowers everywhere
  light the summit with yellow fire
from broad golden lashes astare
  out of velvety pupils; nor tire,
searching sky-mysteries
  that bloom and fade and blaze,
white isles in azure seas
  afloat; for their strong rapt gaze
yearns whither the souls of the flowers
  perchance go, blown from the earth,
and whence in pearly showers
  they descend for manifold birth.

Ah, methinks, my darling Maid,
  through his million sunflower eyes,

the whole Mountain in sun and shade
  scans the billowing, unravished skies;
tranquil, craving no boon,
  young for all ancient scars,
yet wistful of sun and moon,
  of unwinking reticent stars;
dreaming awake, withdrawn
  in a fervor of worshipping:
the noon, the sunset, the dawn,
  summer, fall, winter and spring.
And such, dear Maid, art thou
  (to the pensive mount akin)
large-eyed, unruffled brow,
  glamour and silence within.
But the Mount, methinks, like me,
  looks through thine unwitting eyes
to behold things veiled from thee,
  beyond thy glad surmise;
For, with chrism of dawn bedewed,
  and with thee for visitant,
he tasteth beautitude,
  life may not to thee yet grant,
ere thou, too have winnoed the woe
  and hoarded the goodly grain,
and the face of a child shall glow
  with a by-gone glory again.

L'ENVOI

I. Youth's Auguries

Only-beloved, O those golden days:—
  now—yearnings vague, divine disquietude,
  elusive, visionary, many-hued
hopes, that forevermore the heart essays,
up dim meandering enchanted ways,
  to overtake; now—palpitant solitude,
  where youth her spirit shy would fain seclude
in doubt, hushed rapture, tremour and amaze.

Yet, each foreknew (though fancy-free, heart-whole)
  how friend must pass and sweetest comrade fail,
    imagination fade and passion thwart,
  and th' freedom nowise of our quest avail
    save they conjoin, should man and maid consort
(dear fellow-farers) to one common goal!

II. Obsession

But who, (sweethearts in wayward discontent,
  in hunger mystical and thirst) would dare
  on such all-hallowed pilgrimage to fare,
and dread not, after, in anguish to repent
the passionate urgency irreverent
  that wooed her with his need her wealth to share,

dream to forego, adventure to forbear—
destined, if on her lonely ways she went?

Yea, (if even for all her womanhood sweet and strong,
her answer pure to love's most holy wants,
fortitude, divination, and swift response
heart-sensitive to heavenly presences)
some day thou cry not:—"Clear, ah me, it is
my ultimate self can ne'er to Thee belong."

III. The Gordian Knot

Ah, truth shall in such consecrated Twain
unveil her glowing shame and piteous sore
for loves' sake, so th' inviolate troth they swore
have naught to fear; and yet, shall they refrain
from pity that belittleth and disdain;
rather, with mutual reverence heal, restore—
creating divine beauty to adore,—
till th' innocency of Eden both regain.

Who shall in the petty round his heart assure
of staid forbearance, homely faithfulness,—
yet also, at need, irradiant surprise?
achieve a valiant self-hood,—yet no less
(forgoing glorious whim, fantastic lure)
all rebel selves, in secret, sacrifice?

IV. The Sword Stroke

What shall the spirit its extreme blisses grant
  as, ever, th' quickening pulse and thrill of growth?
  To reach, expansive, wresting from the loth
stark elements their nurture ministrant
for toppling bloom and fruit? Or, calm, to plant
  the mail'd heel archangelic on behemoth
  and spewing leviathan? Or, heavenly-wroth,
like solar photosphere leap, blaze and pant?

But marsh-fog stole, ere from youth's dream we woke,
  environing us with th' morbid, dismal, void.
    Dull, ineffective, craven paralysis!
  Who would not rather, for bygone hope enjoyed,
    leap into th' ice-fang'd horror of the abyss,—
than blinded grope, cringe, stifle, whine and choke?

V. Self Evocation

Whose deity invoke but Love's, by whom
  to summon from vasty legions uncreate
  even *now* that Self:—an Arm to reinstate,
sword-brandishing, my soul risen from the tomb
disherited, on her throne? Or, the storm-gloom
  riven through, a Star with unquenchable life elate
  singing God's firmanent above man's fate,
for myriad conquering spirits—infinite room?

Or, from beetling cloud-refulgent peak of ice
in th' dazzle of sky, to draw the crystal thread
by lightning loop and hither-thither rash
from level to level, (leaving lakes that flash
sky-lucent), till, behold, the waste lands dead
brood, green, and bloom—an earthly Paradise?

VI. Love's Thaumaturgy

Then Love, O Love, we hail thee, (even we!)
who spakest again the fiat else unheard—
and Light was, ay, and Right; and undeterred
the feeble stood, nor bent to Baal the knee!
Who didst, when Spring lavished her all, decree
flower-wreaths, that Summer and Autumn crown and gird
their children for far journeying, long deferred,
to violet skylines over land and sea.

Who, when the famine fell upon us sore,
feddest with faith from thine unfailing store,
didst pour royal anointing from thy cruse,
ay, sweet repose miraculous, and delight;
and the barren spumy sea of death—suffuse
with after-glows that earth and heaven unite!

VII. Love's Theurgy

Yet, Love, thy greater wonders who may laud?
  When th' earth a lurid shell roll'd, fire-crevass'd?
  When into the hoar gloaming stretch'd man's past
his futile aeons of ruin? When, deep-awed,
th' heavens spread for us their chemic glory abroad
  from infinitude to infinitude, till the Vast
  gulfed into nothingness, and the soul aghast
sickened beholding th' macrocosmic fraud?

Ah, then it was his miracle Love wrought:—
  for Thou and I drew nigher, aud nigher; when lo
    of Thee and Me, withdrawn to springs of light,
there blazed the ALL out of the nethermost naught,
  till They we are, unto God's fullness glow,—
    and one love, brimming, mount from height to height!

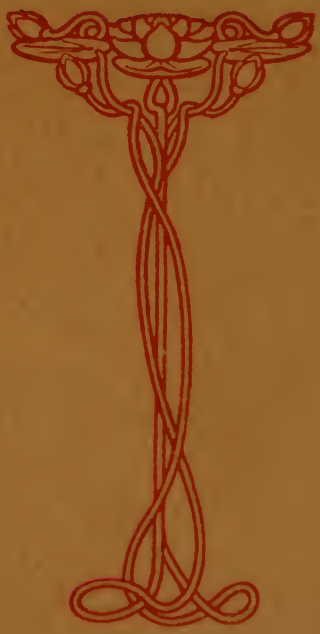
tbFe 11

Niagara Twice Seen

and Other Verse

by

William Norman Guthrie



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