

PROSE SKETCHES

AND

POETRY

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## Night and Evening Skies

Evening August 23.

Thin, misty, frail clouds haste by, marshalled by the blustering northwest. A militant host, a crusading band they seem, speeding out on tremendous adventures across the light, bright, high evening sky. The barred gold and red of sunset stand in glorious aloofness as they pass, looking impassively on, as tho' they are mourners round the bier of dying day, or ministrants attendant at the altar of approaching night.

The ugliness of redbrick chimneys is slowly merging into the calm serene beauty of celestial silhouettes. The hills, that all

day long, with their green freshness  
beckoned, are slowly, darkly, sinking  
back into the bosom of the shadowy  
earth. Then, like Hope, peeps out a  
single star.

Evening Sept 16 9 o'clock.

Day is not wholly gone, but the stars  
gleam pale like stars at a June midnight.  
A long low, long narrow cloud slips like  
a sandbank cleaving the sea. Earth  
seems closely wrapt in a funereal  
cerement of black, obscuring the dim  
hills, behind which dies a faint  
day glow. Houses, for windows are  
not yet lit, loom like the cuttings  
of a child on thick black cardboard,  
with blunt scissors. There is no  
wind, for it had preceded day in  
its flight beyond the hills.

4  
11.30 AM

September 16th

The sky is strange now, like a dim snow-drift on a dark night, like billows or billows of cannon smoke rolling tumultuously away from some daemonic battlefield, for the wind is rising. Tho' a rent in the tremendous barrage is a deep black pool of nothingness, pierced by two pinpricks of star. A gentle rain has fallen; multiplying the rows of chimneys on the faint, dull gleaming roofs: while lamps, a street distant, throw a horrid yash across the sleeping houses and silence.

3 P.M.

September 21st. 5

Silence: pale stars dim in the moon. The hills are low in sleep. The chimneys are poised like rankt angels with pinions ready for flight, or like hooded vultures half-asleep, brooding over some Orient waste of sand.

Once, twice comes a late train's hoot. Silence smooths its ruffled wings and drowns again.....

A dog barks and rattles its chain at some shadow of a shadow.....

Silence profound: a cistern trickles intensifying stillness. Near by, a clock whirs, ping-pings the hour. No wind comes down from the enwoven tapestry of Heaven's paleness and stillness.

The Jealous Worshipper  
Modern Prose.

O great god Pan

I am thy jealous worshipper

I who have bow'd at thine altar in  
all seasons

dead brown wrinkled leaves have  
swirl'd round my steps thro' the  
mine whatime trees shiver stark  
when moon falls slow down and  
sharp stars stand up bright

I have caught a  
gentle throbbing  
throbbing

from thy mighty heart

by the long white hard dusty  
roadside <sup>h</sup>were a riot of rank  
weeds <sup>rows</sup> and <sup>revels</sup> I passing  
have inly murmur'd a youthanks

but I am jealous now and why  
One day to the high hill I went  
and to the woodland glen  
to catch phrasing

praising

of earliest birds to touch hot lips  
the coolit primrose to feel the  
coolth of thick soft sweet grass  
underfoot spring  
and lo

in the glen where the chatter of the  
brook skipt aforetime to branch  
from branch of greening trees I saw  
a red fire dry crackling twigs and  
eyesmarting white smoke and  
eager faces round a black kettle  
and where above the windworn

bent tree made a squirrel bridge  
a yellow fire dry crackling twigs and  
eager faces and eyesmarting

round a blue kettle

I turned away uneasy in deepheart  
abyss and the chatterlaughter of  
the brook hung  
roughly  
harshly grating

the hoarse  
coarse  
gruff stones

I climb the high hill  
and where the four winds frolic  
and tell each other tales of  
southness and eastness and westness  
a group of people  
a man red face white collar  
black hat red face blue suit  
a woman large pink blouse  
draggly wisps of greying hair

and a basket with crinkling paper  
and tinkling bottles chinking and  
three fighting squirming screaming  
children  
and paperbags and orange peel  
and rude initial L's and M's  
cut in the soft springy

And the tale of southness was sad  
in ears joy gone away in the  
wan warm westwind  
for these eastermonday-picnic people  
are come out of smoke and stir  
and breathe black soot of a  
twelvemonth to taste the goodness  
of the godmade  
for votive offering  
they throw debris round thy doors  
and with raucous laughing  
ribald shouting

shully

sc a H e r

the sad sweet sunshinesongs of  
thy sacred choisters  
therefore

o great god Pan  
am I very jealous  
in my worshipping

## The Moon and the Fool, A Parable.

There was once a fool who had occasion to stay out after dark for the first time. On his way home he was surpris'd to see the moon orange, broad and close, rising over the little town. He had only seen it as a white little smudge on the day sky ever before. Trees, chimneys, and the steeple of the wied church were cast into bold silhouette. Sitting down, he watch'd the slow large rising: a sense of unutterable, indescribable beauty crept over him. All was quiet, still as a grave. Not a sound, save twice the bark of an aroused dog and a nearby reply, stole across the indigo heaven

But beyond the moonlight's reach  
 Three silver stars and a host of  
 steel dull ones seemed to be almost  
 tinkling. Rime and dew had on  
 the grass on which he sat. The trees  
 were inky black, grotesquely gnarled,  
 sometimes stretching out beckoning fingers,  
 other times lifting hands of mystic  
 supplication to the moon.

The calm serene peacefulness entered  
 his being and he sat long, contemplating  
 his long shadow as the moon over his  
 shoulder, threw it in a ripple across  
 the frosted grass.

Suddenly a thought terrific in its  
 impendency startled him —  
 all that he had ever heard or read  
 about the moon was wrong, absolutely  
 wrong. The moon was plainly only  
 a huge balloon. There it was

attesting to that, for all who paid to see.  
 Some time it would rise and touch  
 the sharp tip of the black churchspire  
 and then — thunderous explosion —  
 a raking earth, shattered and reeling,  
 careering aimlessly thro' space.  
 He turned round now and in dread  
 saw how near to the spire it was — a  
 span to the left.

An agonising eternity crawled by.  
 So it stood now above the fatal steeple  
 just to the right. The icy grip of  
 that abysmic horror suddenly broke.  
 He laughed, laughed till he shivered  
 the stillness that hung from the trees  
 with the reverberations of his laughter.  
 Then he rose and hurried home to  
 reveal to his brother the miraculous  
 escape the Earth had enjoyed.  
 His brother was greatly

agitated and after a lengthy consideration he said "The catastrophe did not occur tonight, but the time will surely come. It must. Come then let us go out into the streets, and tell people who come and go there, the danger and bid them repent and turn again". and he went out when it was day and stood in the streets until dark crying "Repent - Turn again". But he was unheeded and the people went past without hearing him.

That night the fool went back to his previous vantage ground and sat waiting for the rising of the moon. For many nights he came: sometimes there was no moon: sometimes is dwindled to a lily cup, or shrunk to a

sickle shape; but it never toucht the spire.

The nights pass, and the days, and the years, and the fool still sits there, waiting, waiting for the moon to touch the spire.

## A Old Tale Retold.

There was aforetime a highway into a certain far country: and it was much beset with holes and pits of noisome waters, shallow and deep. Among the dwellers and sojourners in this land a great contention arose how they might overcome and utterly bring to naught these stumbling blocks. Some cried "Ye must have faith": others "Heed but what is writ in a certain book" and one spake "Lo, three paces to the right, twelve cubits forward, two to the left. Yea, of a surety ye must have system": and one "Walk ye down the middle way and ye shall only touch the pool edges, and come to little hurt". and the name of this way is compromise.

Again, several with loud voices after the manner of their kind said "We have a sure antidote to all ills. When ye fall into the holes but clamber out, anoint yourselves with this stuff and behold, ye shall become whiter than 'snow!'"

While they were yet speaking some men went forth and came to the pits and fill'd the shallower ones, and those they could not fill in plac'd they fences about.

Now which of these think ye — ?

## The Vase. a Parable

Many years ago, in a far distant land, a certain Artist, an Artificer of Beautiful Things, dwelt in an amethyst palace on a blue mountain top. Below lay a fertile valley whose tillers liv'd in a tiny white village on the mountain foot.

The summit was usually surrounded and concealed by mists and clouds, so that few villagers had ever seen the palace, and they so long ago, that it seem'd to have been a childish phantasy. Some from time to time, had attempted to ascend the mountain, but always they return'd, footsore and weary, beaten; it was too steep. Then the young - and those who had not been

vouchsaf't the vision, agreed that it was all a myth, a legend, an old wives, a fireside tale; therefore they bent their backs over the furrows and gaz'd no more toward the mountain.

The Artist had made many wonderful and beautiful things, but none excell'd in wonder and beauty two vases which he had fashion'd. They were chisel'd from a strange stone hewn out of the mountain side, which had caught its colours from sunshine and starlight, from sunset dayglow, and dawn, and the false dawn.

One day as the Artist was worshipping his handiwork after the manner of his craft a thought sprang forth from his brain

"So surely I am a selfish Artificer of Beautiful Things, who is here but myself, to glory in the splendour of these my creations? And behold! far down in the valley there strive and labour a race of men, nor have they any such to admire or in whose beauty they can glory. Yea, to them will I give one of these my highest and best"

Taking one he threw it down from the peak. It tumbled and turned over and over, dwindling to a speck. Then with a crash, faint heard by the Artist, it fell in the midst of the village market-place. And it was shattered and shivered into a myriad fragments; they sparkled, shone, glittered like precious jewels in costly

settings, but the subtle grace, the spellbinding beauty which belonged to the complete vase was gone.

And the Artist wept.

Recovering from their terror at this strange visitant the villagers timidly approached the scattered pieces, splendid in destruction. One picked up a piece, and fearfully put it to his eye. Blue sky, grey clouds, white walls, green fields, yellow fields, all were bathed in a celestial sapphire hue. Shouting his discovery he turned and made his way home, clutching securely his newfound treasure. In a short time every fragment was appropriated

for never in memory of man had such gems been seen. All admired their finding and fervent and loud were their praises.

And thro' his tears the Artist smiled.

But with the passing of time as all met on the village green, when toil was done and twilight fell, a disputation began concerning whose was the most beautiful.

"mine is perfect; look at those colours"

"Nay 'tis too narrow, behold mine"

"Thine is too broad and jagged edged, see mine"

"Lo all is red thro' mine, so all must be really red"

"Nay all's blue, see"

Then each went homeward with hate in his heart, cursing his

neighbour and his neighbour's gem. And the Artist wept anew.

When the vase had fallen none had seen whence it came, for the folk lookt always toward their spades and long daylabour in the sun had bent their backs and hegd their eyes. But beyond the village in the furthest field a boy toiled apart. The day was clear, the crystal air, sweet and pure: as he cut with his scythe he heard a skylark's song throbbing in tremulous phrasing. Raising his eyes to see the blith songster, he was startled to perceive standing out clear, limed in holy light the Palace: before it he could discern a figure holding in his hand a vase twin-hued of

the broken pieces, and he was weeping.

Dazzled by the sight, the boy stood enraptur'd, bewitch'd for a long time; so long that a field-mouse returning home, had to skip over his scythe lying in the dew damp corn; so long that the sun had gone down in red, and the halfaid moon had risen large and near. Then a playful gust of wind, hand in hand with darkness caught and whirl'd the mountain from view. Turning away the boy hastening set out for the village.

There on the green were the people, their voices high and shrill, and brandishing pieces of stone; the boy, pushing and thrusting his way thro' the gesticulation, till

he reach'd the middle of the throng, cried "O I have seen the Palace, and I have seen more!

I have seen an artificer of Beautiful Things."

But they did not heed him, continuing in their strife. Louder he shouted "And I too, can make things of Beauty.

Ho there! Give me thy fragment of stone. And thou, that splinter, and we will put them together, and will shape us all a Thing of Beauty to be admir'd. For I have seen a Vase made of such stuff, and the Artist held it in his hand. What we have each is but a small part, a very fraction of a like one. We shall make it, and it shall be ours, and none shall say behold! mine is more beautiful than thine

But the crowd heard him not, then,  
after a short while they did hear  
him, but they pushed him aside.

He returned and clamourously began  
his cry, then the rage of the people  
was roused against him, and they  
belaboured him with their fists, and  
calling him mad, they cast him into  
a dungeon whence even at midnight  
one might hear agonising cries and  
a muffled voice shouting behind  
thick walls.

"How long O Lord How long?"

In the furthest field a skylark  
sings.

And the artist weeps still.

Bells across the meadows.

I caught the title of a melody  
last night - "Bells across the meadows"  
and in my mind's eye I called up  
a half-forgotten, dimly remembered  
scene.

Before me stretched a broad green  
field sprinkled with buttercups and  
dog-daisies. A herd of reddish  
brown and white cattle, munchingly,  
with lowered heads, moved slowly,  
go-itily stalking, round and round  
in ceaseless migration, their  
whiplike tails flicking and twitching  
in nervous protest against the heat.

By a barred gate three or four  
calves stood, feet sunk in a  
rutted and muddy hollow where  
the grass was trampled bare.  
Behind was the undulating

field was a wooded plantation which seemed to whisper coolness from its varying shades of green, across the sunstept meadow.

Thro' the trees a spire pierc'd, with a weathertarnisht clockface: Its bells were ringing, pealing, booming, beating, carillonning, jangling, throbbing, palpitating and crashing, an outpour, a cascade, a cataract of sound into the heavy, ~~wary~~, stilled air.

High fill'd white clouds, looking as tho' they had been shilt and tumbled together before the heat had petrified them in their agure places, were on all sides.

Distantly, behind the trees they threw vividly into view a wheeling flock of pigeons, flying distraught

around their lofty spirehome, which to them had become a live menace with brass tongue.

Soberly drest figures went up the white road to the church, singly, in couples, in groups.....

Here and there, a trap with jingling silver, and a sharp clattering pony..... the figures divert to the side of the white road, and the jingle passes by in a white dust.

Before me the cows muncht and miv'd slowly on and on.....

The calves by the gate thrust fever'd nuzzles thro' the bars at the passing people, lowing plaintively.... and no wind stir'd the long stemmed buttercups, or the golden hearted dogdaisies.....

# The New Poet Arrives.

Hi there! Stop a minute.

Listen to me -

I'm a Poet this is my song don't go  
I know

You're tired hearing poems - baby  
jingles - Stop - Listen to me

I'm tired of them too  
tired as you

Ha ha rime! Damnably silly but  
sweet.

Mine's a new song ragged rugged  
romping rambling rubbish yes  
I once saw a rosebush grow out of  
a rubbish heap - Here's another.  
Ordinary man listen to me you're  
tired of skylarks and springs and  
stars and rainbows and dawns  
on saffron seas so am I!

# Philosophisings I

## Agnosticism.

There is too little time here to try  
to explain Life, even if it were  
possible; the wisest words I can  
say are "I don't know-but I hope...."  
We have enough to do if we but gaze  
and admire, look and adore, without  
bedimming the dawn in a dust  
of debate, without cloaking the  
sunset in a cloud of controversy.

You're tired of rimes your ear expects  
I can't rime - those weren't.

### My Song's about Belfast

(Listen to me) its lovely s-shush

You can't hear me? Alright I'll  
bellow louder! no good? Sorry I  
cant command the buses and trams  
and carts to stop rattling, clanging  
It's not my fault that you're deaf is it?

Did you ever see dawn in Belfast?

no - I thought so

manalive its great!

A dirty white smear on the sky low  
down.

A cold cold cold wind whistling  
round a thousand corners.

- No buses then!

Still sunsets better -

Busy buzzy blind people hurrying

about the streets

Lamps like voices in a wilderness  
Prophets before their time - Its  
not quite dark.

All cold cold cold cold damp  
and draughtly (silly way to spell it)  
in the streets.

The Sky. God bless it

A timid banner of silverwashed  
sunshine

That's a good One!

How did you like it?  
And me?

Damn good  
I agree.

I'm the new Poet

So long

You'll hear from me later.

Night sky  
November 11th 5 o'clock

Night is coming on. Behind the City lie tiers of clouds like the Himalayas at dawn, so pink they are and magic. The whole roof of Heaven is the essence of light powdered with the blueness of eternity. A delicate lune swings low. Between me and the sky float four thin clouds like smoke puffs from God's pipe.

The Singer of Sweet Songs:  
A Parable.

Now a certain merchant was setting out upon a journey to a far country so he gathered his retainers together. And some he armed with spears, for, he said; we may hap upon robbers. And some he commanded to lead his camels and some his horses, for, he said: We must travel apace. Then said he: ho I will seek me out a singer of sweet songs, for what is life without a song? and a singer was brought. And he departed, and his spearmen, and his camels and his horses and his drivers of horses and camels. And the singer sang the song of setting-out, how adventure lay before them and all good or evil chance.

And when they cross the desert which lay at hand he sang of the pleasant pastures and places beyond; and on the lonely road he sang the joys of companionship: and when the day grew long and dreary he sang in praise of slumber and repose.

Thus it was that the time sped swiftly tho' not without strife and trouble were they gat where they were. For by the wayside they met with robbers who sought to destroy and utterly despoil: but the spearmen gained the mastery and put the robbers to the sword. Then sang the singer a song of victory and the merchant was well pleased.

Now it hap't that the cavalcade enter'd a land the merchant knew not, nor his horsemen nor his cameldrivers. Their path lay ruggedly over dark brackish streams and green slind rocks while on either hand rose up black walls and sheer to the very stars. And the wind moan'd sadly down the winding way between the precipices and afar they heard the lions roar and the vultures screech and the sun was blotted out. The camels fell in the mire and the horses pranc'd in their purple panoplies no more and the spearmen look'd darkly each at his fellow and fear was upon all. So the merchant bestird himself and cried:  
O Singer of sweet songs sing me a song: for what is life

without a song?

And the singer made answer and  
said: O Master I have no song  
for this Valley is the Valley of the  
Shadow of Death.

## The Parcel of Thorns.

I saw a man with a parcel of thorns:  
and so I thought of Jesus:  
A clergyman with his dull dark clothes  
- a parcel of thorns under his arm -  
running for a bright red tram.

He was thinking of his garden,  
and how well it was going to look  
in the summertime,  
Tho' wint'ry autumn's subtle smell  
of rotten leaves and rain  
hung round and over his desolate  
dank grassy lawn,  
unbright save for soot drencht  
chrysanthemums.  
I heard him tell a friend in the tram  
that the thorns were for his garden  
so he wasn't thinking of Jesus.



42.