

1

Bamboos

Among all branched things, I for beauty choose
The yellowness and slimness of bamboos,
Whose bunched leaves twinkle on a gusty day
And back and forth the clattering branches sway.

And when from frozen skies the pure snows fall
In large white flakes that softly mantle all
The loaded branches stoop without a sound
Till their green leaf-tips almost touch the ground.

Then, when they seem a kind of crystal tree
Sparkling with diamond buds and silvery
Shoots, by the snowflakes' overburdening
And their own patience freed, the lithe boughs spring

Up, and in powdery showers the white snow flies
Flung by the wind across the freezing skies,
While, as the bamboos dance in wind and rain,
Like stars the bunched leaves twinkle forth again.

Hence, among branched things I for beauty choose
The yellowness and slimness of bamboos,
Which taught me, more than what in books is writ,
That life is conquered when we yield to it.

2

The Evening Walk

We walked where thick green bamboo groves
Point down their speary leaves,
Feeling the quietness of the hills,
The silence that is eve's.

The sun's last light, all flecked with gold,
Full on our path did lie,
And mountains piled up inky blue
Against a pale green sky.

How strange, that when night's first white star
Burned through the heavens wide,
My heart should be so lonely, though
My love walked at my side!

3

The Secret

Roll on, roll on for ever,
Thou Wheel of Death and Birth -
Build up another Heaven,
Spread out another Earth,
Where men may reap the harvest
Of deeds done ill or well,
Scoop out a place of torment,
Hollow another Hell -
Lift to the heights or hurl me
Sheer down the steep abyss;
I shall not laugh for that,
I shall not weep for this.
Who knows this wondrous secret
Has naught to seek or shun:
That the pain of the Wheel of Death and Birth
And Nirvana's peace are one.

4

Longing

For the Boundless, the Unlimited, the Infinite I long.
Unfold the wings of my heart like the wings of a bird in
song
At the midmost arch of the sky, in the full blue blaze of day,
When the ear can hear its note, though the eye tracks not
its way.

For the height of the Beyondless, All-Transcending, do I
yearn.
My heart's desire flames upward, as the red fires upward
burn
From the earth's fierce fiery centre, through the cold grey
crust that bars
Life's journey up the Milky Way, love's flight among the
stars.

5

Man's Way

The red rose does not whisper
'What loveliness is mine!'
Nor the sun upon his azure tower
Cry out 'Behold, I shine!'
Yet some poor mortal women,
By passion crazed or worse,
Can flaunt a rag of beauty
O'er half the universe;
And men no whit the better
Think that if they but frown
A cloud will darken heaven
And the stars come raining down.
Even the ragged goose-girl
Preens as her bare feet pass
By her face's muddied image
In the rain-filled rut, her glass;
While the young wretch, her brother,
Leaps towards her with a gun
And a dead crow, shouting joyfully
'Oh look what I have done!'

6

Peace

Turn away from the world, weary pilgrim,
There is no rest for thee there;
The quietness of star-communing hills
'Twere better for thee to share;
In the silence that lies at the forest's heart
Breathes a peace beyond compare.

In glades where Spring-buds quicken
When frosts no more appal,
in fields and leafy by-lanes red
With ripened fruits of Fall,
The leaves, now green, now yellow, teach
That change must come to all.

Comes peace more cool than the moonlight is
That silvers the gliding stream,
When the stilled-heart knows, in the forest depths,
The world is an empty dream,
And turns with delight to the Things That Are
From the things that merely seem.

Messengers from Tibet

Whence come these asses, brazen-belled,
That jingle down the dusty lane
With big brown bales of tufty wool -
A hundred in a single train?

Whence comes their master, crimson-cloaked,
Who drives them onward from the rear,
With braided and beribboned locks,
And gold- and turquoise-studded ear?

Whence comes this music, weird and wild,
Of clashing cymbals, tinkling bells,
And trumpets deep that thunder out,
The sorrows of a hundred hells?

Whence come these banners, bright as gems,
Above the images unfurled
On shadowy temple walls, that seem
Like glimpses of another world?

Whence comes these memories, vague as dreams,
Of peaks where snow eternal reigns,
Of boundless grassy wastes beyond-
The silent Central Asian plains?

Whence comes this yearning, sharp as life,
Strong as death's self, to mount and go
Beyond the hundred-headed hills
High up the sky-ascending snow?

Oh land of turquoise, land of gold,
Land of the whispered, mystic lore,
Land of the Buddha, land unknown,
Were you *my* land in days of yore?

Though dense the mists of birth and death
Your messengers are riding through.
How shall peace fill my heart again
Unless I journey back to you?

The Bodhisattva

Because I could not muse apart
In world-oblivious ecstasy,
But felt like fire-drops on my heart
The tears of all humanity,
I cast aside that source of pride
The glittering robe of selfish peace,
And donned the dress of painfulness
Until all others' pain should cease.

In house and market, shop and cell,
Wherever men in bondage be,
Yes, in the very depth of Hell,
My puissant pity sets them free.
Nor shall I cease to strive for peace
Till every trembling blade of grass
That feels with pain the sting of rain
Into Nirvana's bliss shall pass.

Let me endure unending pains,
Drain to the dregs grief's bitterest cup;
While one unhappy life remains
My own I cannot render up.
Nirvana's joy would only cloy
Should it to me alone befall:
Closed evermore Nirvana's door
Unless I enter last of all!