

THE NATURAL FIT

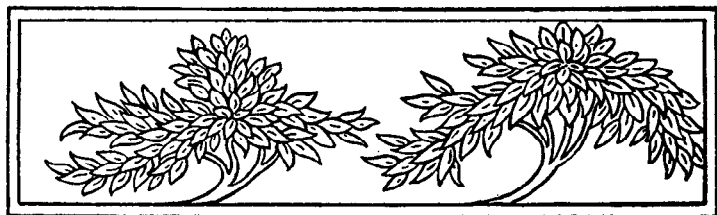
By
WARREN S. McCULLOCH



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*Wish Adam's Son
And Eve's Daughter,
Every One,
Share We Ever
Earth And Air
And Fire And Water.*

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THE NATURAL FIT

THREE characters have worn the carcass that you see before you, each for a score of years. Aside from an interest in communication they have little in common. I could tell you next to nothing of the first, or prospective theologian, for I doubt if I would recognize him. I need say nothing of the third, your familiar scientific friend. The second was born of a war to make the world safe for democracy and was lost in a war without a song. I remember him well, and I believe you may enjoy meeting him. As his literary executor, I have taken the liberty of making a small sample from each of his fits. By way of introduction I might remind you of the world into which he was born aged twenty-one. The place is "well this side of Paradise." What you are about to hear are personal communications to his friends. They were not intended for publication, not for posterity. Judge them, not as art, but as an expression of his hot ideas. Take them as he meant them and make his acquaintance.

The legend of the Sophomoric Fit is from Boetius xxxi K. Ælfred. Say A.D. 888. "þe wisdom þa þas fitte asungen hæfde."

THE NATURAL FIT

APPOINTMENTS

November 16, 1919

(His Birthday)

Yesterday:

Christ thought for me in the morning,
Nietzsche in the afternoon.

Today:

Their appointments are at the same hour.

Tomorrow:

I shall think for myself all day long.
That is why I am rubbing my hands.

THE NATURAL FIT

FOUR HOKUS

Night Walker

Whippoorwill,
All night
Only the sound
Of my shoes.

Religion

Men
Gallop into the northern lights
A sun
That will not rise.

Requiescat

Jade bowl
Of the greatest antiquity
'Bout time it got broke.

Fate

After the storm
Upon the beach
An oar
Worn in the leather
Broken in the blade.

THE NATURAL FIT

MONISM

Chong saith, "All things are one thing."
Chong hath a wife whose words correspond to things.
Therefore,
Chong saith, "All things are one thing."

Great accidents of beauty in the maze
Of life's recurrent death, for these we live.
The voice of distant duty through the haze
Of pain to foggy breath no goal can give.

The heart, insatiate, demands of sin
The wisdom and the life to do and grow.
The flesh we consecrate can never win,
Unless, still crazed with strife, again it glow.

Most welcome then be war, and crazy sin,
And my old jailer, pain, till once again
Knocks beauty at my door and stumbles in.

THE VOLSTEAD ACT

Bacchus, if I bend the knee
And a glowing face incline
Sabbath morn at Christian shrine,
'Tis no infidelity.
I have still no God—but Wine!

THE NATURAL FIT

HIS SUNDIAL

"Pereunt et Imputantur"

The gods are passing.
One by one with pensive and averted faces
All are passing.
Do not let them go without your tears.
They were greater than your kings.
Lords they were of love and laughter,
Hopes and fears.
They were false to thoughts and things;
But you loved them for their glory.

There are places
That you never could have reached,
Visions that would still be haunting,
Had they never been.
There are truths no fool had preached
Had they never been.
Bless them then ere you go flaunting
Your prefigured prophesies.
They have shaped your years.

So much for the Gods—Now for love

I loved my lover Saturday night.
'Tis Sunday morning now.
The cock that crew in the cold grey light
Absolved my only vow.
I loved my lover Saturday night,
Why should I love him now?

THE NATURAL FIT

Though she is passing fair
More lines to kisses has she seen
Than kisses on her lips have been
Or she has wanted there.

ON GOING STAG

I went a thousand paces into the country
to gather the earliest flowers.

I did not want the earliest flowers.

Why did I go a thousand paces into the country
to gather the earliest flowers?

To his hostess who thought every woman should be one

The Sphinx was stone 'tis said,
And in its head
There was no mystery,
And now the Sphinx is dead,
And in its stead
—Its history.

THE NATURAL FIT

NO MORE TOMBSTONES

How shall we bury Love?

A hole in the dirt—six feet—
A spark struck out in the tinder
Under his pyre,
A shot in his winding sheet.
No ceremonious tears,
Nor the notes of a lyre.

Thus shall ye bury Love!

REWARD OF PATIENCE

They buried Job in heaven,
Where the angels watch his head;
Vega guards the coffin,
But poor old Job is dead.

Wisdom is in his grave;
Let him lie!
He was a dreary knave,
Cold and dry.

You were his droning slave?
So was I!
Wisdom is in his grave!
Let him lie.

This our cry:
We were too bold and brave,
Ready to starve and stave,
Live and die!

Wisdom is in his grave?
Pass him by.

FINIS

Formerly
I drew
No stoic breath.
I flew Epicurus' home
And too sequestered grove,
Passionately wooing Life that frights
The littlehearted; won her sumptuous breast
And crushed her lusty youth.
But Life has proved a sluttish bawd at best,
Promiscuous in her tawdry appetites,
Perverted in her love.
Divorced at last I come
To you, ambiguous Death,
And woo
With apathy.

He must have been all of twenty-three when he wrote this.

THE NATURAL FIT

This brings us to a still briefer selection from

THE OUTLANDISH FIT

Its superscription is from Chaucer, "Sir Thopas," 117—1386.

Lo, lordes, heer is a fyt;
If ye wil eny more of it,
To telle it wol I fonde.

It is dedicated to the Lords

MY CHILDREN

Ercke, Ercke, Oetbern Muthur

ANTEUS

Mother Earth, our hearts are breaking
With a thousand warring wills,
And the sun that would be waking
Smites us dizzy on the hills,

Where our passion led us groping
To explore the vaulted sky,
With the life you gave us, hoping
For a life that would not die.

Let us feel your arms beneath us
With the strength that shaped the clay,
And your love with courage sheath us,
And your wisdom end our day.

Then, with hearts that echo laughter,
We will welcome sombre night,
And the sleep it brings us after
Glories fade that crowned the fight.

Is Helen dead? Go tell the dead
And not the living; for we know
She is not dead while lips are red
And breasts are warmer than the snow.

The living ask of death no dream
Of vanished Helen's loveliness.
Only the dead have lost the gleam
In vanquished hope of her caress.

Tell me of Helen once again
Whose body is a Grecian joy.
Her beauty shall to us remain
Launching of ships and sack of Troy.

Go tell the dead that she is dead;
'Tis Helen still that lights the fire.
And, while we bleed as Grecians bled,
Her beauty is our heart's desire.

THE NATURAL FIT

OBAN, SCOTLAND

1922

I know the ways of little men
Who, like the brook that brawls the glen
Till echo cataracts again
 Without a pause,
Down tumble, though I guess nor when
 Nor what the cause.

I know the ways of lazy louts,
Like marshes where the mallow pouts,
Lizards sprawl and the iris floats
 Her Tyrian show.
A gutter swaggers water spouts
 But they? Lord no.

I know the ways of shallow fools,
Who spread themselves as sandy pools,
Whose ferny bank the willow cools.
 How smooth they lie!
But when day's heat takes up her tools,
 How soon gone dry!

I know the secrets of the deep,
Where surges bosom and tides creep.
I know the silences they keep
 In midmost motion;
And, when the weary heart would sleep,
 I'll home to ocean.

THE NATURAL FIT

TO TAFFY ON MY SHOULDER

(*about 1928*)

If I could sing
With the breath of spring
When the moon is full and fair,
I would carol my love
To the stars above
Till the night let down her hair,
For over the brink of the brimming soul
I would pour the wine of song
Till the night was drunk with the sparkling sound,
And the moon had sunk to the silvery ground
To live in the sea of song.

If I had eyes
As the bird that flies
Through the evening leaves and dew,
I would paint my dream
'Till the stars should seem
But a part of a larger view.
The curtain that covers a greater sky
Would fall from the glowing west,
And the dwindling day, as it glided down,
Would linger and lay its lustrous crown
At the feet of a better best.

'Tis great to live
With a life to give
And the duty of heart and hand
Where color and song and the amorous throng
Of beauty have plundered the land,
Till one with the lip of the whirlwind
And one from the radiant star
Have met in the midnight, and under the moon
The dream of the twilight is granted its boon,
And the song has ravished the star.

THE NATURAL FIT

The world was made for fools.
Their reckless laughter leaps the facts
And acts
Ere passion cools.

Were but the wise as brave!
Their ponderous judgments wait for speech
Till each
Is in his grave.

Then call the fools the wise.
They're better fitted to the earth
With mirth
Than wisdom's sighs.

There is no sin
For me but this,
That I should win
A minor bliss,

That I begin
And end amiss:
There is no sin
For me but this.

To take a kiss
To please the skin,
And be within
My heart remiss;
There is no sin
For me but this.

But yesterday,
If you had come!
I cannot stay
So frolicsome;

My heart's away,
And I am dumb.
But yesterday,
If you had come!

All Christendom
Can never stay
The hearts that stray
To martyrdom;
But yesterday,
If you had come!

Dear Dreams of mine, whose thwarted eyes
Behold Despair and mock her cries,
You have forgot your mother's care,
Her leaden eyelids and her stare
That puzzled the imprisoning skies.

You were the children of her sighs;
In you she lives, in all else dies;
And yours her wisdom, if you dare,
Dear Dreams of mine.

Silvery silence and golden tongue,
Which of the wares of love will buy?
Fire in the eye, breath in the lung,
Fairest of dreams; then forth they fly.

Tears in the eye and songs unsung,
Death in the heart that may not die;
Silvery silence and golden tongue,
These are the wares of love they buy.

Twilight is creeping over the sky,
Silver replacing the gold of the young;
Silence is hearing the dull sighs wrung
Still from our hearts by tongues that lie;
Silvery silence and golden tongue,
These are the wares of love they buy.

I need no sign to summon you
From ferny hillocks starred with dew,
Forever in the daily round
Some droning labor loses ground
To fancies neither faint nor few.

Again returns the touch I knew,
Again the eyes look through and through,
And then, as on that starry ground,
I need no sign.

We build our castles in the air,
And from the air they tumble down,
Unless we carry them up there
Until they crack the pate they crown.

And we must lug them everywhere,
From garden walk to crowded town;
We build our castles in the air,
And from the air they tumble down.

And lucky, if when sere and brown,
Before our eyes too lofty stare,
We scape with life and pate, though bare,
On which to plant an honest frown.
We build our castles in the air,
And from the air they tumble down.

I cannot paint the days I've seen
 When, through the prism of the dawn,
 The haze, vermilion, ochre, green,
 Leaves gossamers upon the lawn
 To catch the cobalt symphonies.
 They hold my senses in their spell.
 Speak, twilight's lapis lazuli,
 Is Heaven secret? So is Hell.

I cannot speak the love I feel
 When pulsing blood in aching brain,
 In trembling hands and knees that reel,
 Is mad with an exulting pain
 That holds the panting breath uppent
 In patience that she cannot tell.
 Speak passion, waiting, still unspent,
 Is Heaven secret? So is Hell.

I cannot name the God I serve,
 While down the furrow of my days
 I goad a life that shall not swerve
 For senses' sweet nor love's warm ways.
 I serve in truth the King of kings,
 The Name of names that none may spell.
 Speak Reason, emptiest of things,
 Is Heaven secret? So is Hell.

Prince, for the Idiot, cold and blind,
 I would not ask thy clemency,
 But by my cyes, my heart, my mind,
 I do implore thee set me free.
 Then would I welcome friendly death,
 And praise the Prince that willed me well,
 Should this not haunt my dying breath,
 Is Heaven secret? So is Hell.

So we come to

THE NATURAL FIT

Its superscription is from Samuel Johnson's The Prince of Abyssinia, xi

"To be a poet," said Imlac, "is indeed very difficult."

"So difficult," returned the Prince, "that I will at present hear no more of it."

The form of the sonnet is difficult, but the required compression of his enthusiasm was natural to his way of thinking hot. The samples are a few from many; their arrangement, roughly chronological.

THE NATURAL FIT

As when before the sculptor's eye there gleams
The vision of a form within the stone,
He grasps the chisel and he swings the mallet
Till muscles ripple on the rough-hewn bone.

So I, with newborn thoughts of larger themes,
Have chiseled the first portion of my days
To a crude semblance of the broad and tall
And stalwart wanderer through all earth's ways.

Yet, even when this rough-hewn figure seems
Balanced to walk the earth and not to fall,
I may not polish part lest it betray
The form's entirety, and in my stone
One small perfection be the death of all,
And I, no sculptor, but the dupe of dreams.

There was a lovely lady and she died.
The barons for her flesh relinquished life.
The statesmen for her favor fostered strife.
For her very fame historians lied.

When I was in my teens, I even tried
To find me such a lady for a wife;
Victory, I dreamed, the envious knife
That followed Mary, faring by my side.

Tony, beware the error of my way,
Looking for beauty whither none has gone,
Nor hope a miracle of stone today.

No loveliness like hers was ever born
To catch the brutish eye of furtive clay,
But Fancy, paranoid, and Poem, forlorn.

What shall I call you? Be content with Eve.
I know no other name would suit so well.
I was a child until you came to me
And all my little heaven took its leave.
I never wondered that it went away,
And, though I loved its sweet simplicity,
The coming of your love meant so much more
To me, I never asked that it should stay.

There was a song you sang within the garden
Ere the gates were closed, and then before
The gates you sang it. God it may offend,
But we never sued for peace or pardon.
Love with us from Eden's pleasure fell.
Sing then, for love shall conquer in the end.

Knowest thou a young man diligent with old women? Lo—
 LITTLE NIETZSCHE IN THE ARMS OF AUTUMN

Through hazy hours of autumn somnolence
 And russet leaves that sifted slowly down
 We lay along the sward and, with a hand
 That promised soft repose, you stroked my brow.
 I longed to sleep, admit feigned impotence,
 And buy my peace. There's no release from frown
 And furrowed forehead. They are me and stand
 Unchanged, though all else change, to seal my vow.
 "More life," I cried, "more hours before the dark
 For love and fighting. I will wear the mark
 Of any God who gives both grit and guile;
 Too long I've dawdled here!" You sighed and pressed
 My panting lassitude against your breast
 And pitied me with autumn's wistful smile.

For such a year as this was Antony,
 Who else had ruled all earth, contemned by earth:
 For such a summer Tristan bent the knee
 And never rose again to war and mirth:
 For less than this Leander's struggling arms
 Were broken by the stormy Hellespont:
 And, for an instant's grip on all her charms,
 Porphyria's lover dared his God confront.
 All may not be too great a price to pay
 For such a transient heaven as these have known.
 Each one, transfigured ere he went his way,
 Each one, knew glory that was his alone:
 But Cleopatra, who can tell of her?
 Of Iseult? Hero? Lost Porphyria?

THE NATURAL FIT

I want a woman with a windy cheek
And eyes as steely as a leveled gun;
A woman, wooer of the bronzing sun,
Who listens to the open heavens speak.
I care not if her hair of oakum reek,
Or of the earth as woods where rivers run.
I need her mind that flashes to its fun
As salmon leaping in the rapid creek.

Fair ladies, dressed, perfumed with studied grace,
That preen yourselves upon your subtle ways,
How many seasons will you clog my sight
Till she, with frank intent, lifts face to face,
Demanding furrows in a field of days
And beds of love beneath the leafy night.

SANG REAL

There is a Secret Glory in whose train,
Marshaled, the Captains of a thousand creeds,
Templar on crested steed, the turbaned Moor,
Flame, Cross and Crescent, o'er the rim of day;

And virile prophets in whose purple vein
Ran wine for gods as yet unknown to deeds,
The pride to suffer and be sick and poor,
To replant Eden in the wastrel clay.

Yet I who raise the scarlet throat's refrain
And marvel how the heart still beats and bleeds,
Yes, I who to the end might still endure,
And humbly tramp the palmers' holy way,
I may no longer in their ranks remain,
Who glory not in that divine amour.

THE NATURAL FIT

SANG FROID

To the Great War that hallows every cause
I yield my panting breath and turbulent blood.
Not for the silence of oblivious night
Was I engendered in a flesh so free—
Not for the short sleeping or the final pause
Am I so conscious of the primal flood
Of Passion. Youth is Spring. Life at its height
Wars with the lethal nothingness to be.
Cry "Reason" to the fool, for I am wise
With the first wisdom of humanity.
Cry "Peace" to cowardice till strife be o'er.
What boots the Cause of Battle so it rise
To hate's red harvest or love's ecstasy.
The world's too small a field—too short the War.

Like that stupendous and amazing light
That breaks on captives and on captive kings
When dungeon wall and palace draperies go down,
And the sun shines suddenly into their night,
Abruptly leaps the End upon our own
Habit-hoodwinked following of strings,
Our dickering with a familiar plight,
Our tribute to dead selves, our slavery.
But we, the manumitted of old things,
Stand and are silent, bewildered, blind but stark
Until we see—and in that second sight
Our portraits' passionless fidelity
Lifts the new-found eternal 'till it sing
Palace and Dungeon down—and the Sun's Height.

The sonnet sequence that follows is too easily dated after the war, while there was still hope (in the hopeful generation) for a league of nations. He had entitled it sometimes "Communication" and sometimes "Communion."

It is consoling to recall that we once felt so well about our one world, and it is interesting to note how ingeniously this builder dovetailed these sonnets, sense and sound.

Sweet Language, child of human Loneliness
 Engendered in the ravished soul of Sound,
 Long keeper of the keys of paradise,
 Open it quickly to the dumb heart of man.
 Beneath your gaze melt years whose moments seemed
 Unending through the gloom of solitude.
 These could not tell what depth of consciousness,
 What wealth of life, in man was yet unfound,
 What agonies of parting, what surprise,
 What rage, what glorying in battle of the strong.
 Warder of paradise, Music began
 In the first sigh of the first soul that dreamed;
 Music continually yourself has wooed;
 Welcome him to your breast and give our world our song.

Oh, ancestry of silence, though I scan
 For ever your obliterated page,
 I cannot learn when first the seed was sown,
 And the heart's agony began.
 But this I know, that some succeeding age,
 The soul, no longer mingling in the sea,
 A self, an entity to prescience grown,
 Had more to give. But still the heart fore ran
 The laggard tongue, and silence mocked the sage,
 No confluence of the soul, no ecstasy,
 Just sorrow's old dream, was there, without a plan.
 That was the passion that we plead—our own,
 Artist or artisan, whose pilgrimage
 Is ever onward toward United Man.

THE NATURAL FIT

We know no motive in symphonic time
As poignant as religion or as bold,
Where deep disconsolation and dear hope,
Contending in the lonely prison cell,
Murdered the mind, till men held nature crime
And thundered dreams as fact a thousandfold.
No answer yet awarded to that prayer
With confirmation crowns their martyrdom.
They loved too well and would with love sublime
The lonely heart out of earth's mould,
Recrystallized from death on Heaven's slope,
In reuniting flame go up God's stair.
Nor can we answer them that loved so well
Till earth is ours, and love's communion come.

Not with our loneliness, not with our dream,
Can earth be taken and our heaven won,
But with our toil and ponderous reasoning,
And with our little changing of the cosmic stream.
Slow science patiently from law and fact
Designs the implements for laboring,
And love's proud home, our earth, which man
shall build,
A temple to the happiness he so long lacked.
Land and sea and sky, with careful thought
And toiling hand controlled, shall soon be filled
With the calm pulse of our united peace;
And Time and Space, no longer feared and fought,
Drop back neglected in the course we run
To be forgotten ere our daylight cease.

THE NATURAL FIT

Sing then to the men that make the road
And tunnels through the hills and bridges slung
Over the wide valley and the deep ravine,
Till streets are crowded with the whirling cars,
And the long-leveled track rumbles to the train.
Sing to the men that left some safe abode
And gazing fixedly on distant stars
Conquered the sea's tumultuous domain.
With oar and sail and steam, gallant they clung
To their wide quest, over unfathomed green
Bearing the timorous body and the heart's load,
Till now through space the wireless word is flung,
And the skilled pilot guides the soaring plane.
With these we win the world. To these my ode.

And we who feel the deeper solitude
Of our lone souls and know our speech too crude
To tell the nature and the strength of love
Seek for some medium to share our mood,
And in the studied gestures of the stage
Commune with you. Rhythmic as dancers move
Our music and our words, for love beats time.
This is the magic of the printed page,
Of canvases that glow with subtle feeling,
The poignancy of statues and towers that climb
Halfway to heaven: Some man in silence' cloud
On Lethe's shore, with all his art appealing,
Into your lonely heart would cry aloud
The rich notes of his love, rending Death's shroud.

THE NATURAL FIT

In sad humility we learn of death,
Of lonely tears and half the world at war,
With our dimmed eyes we come again to read
The lesson that we should have learned of home,
Among familiar needs whose every breath,
Inspired with love's beatitude, far more
Than all the prophecies of all the years,
Was panting for the union of the race.
But we to little State and transient God
Gave all our souls and let our loved ones bleed.
Thus have we bought again the vanished grace
Of nature's moral law. Again we come
Out of our lesser loyalties, in tears,
To build love's well-earned city in the rich sod.

Lift up your hearts and sing! Gather the clan,
The human brotherhood. Bend to the clay.
Build with exultant song and eager cry
Our desolation's dream, our nature's plan,
Our earth, a temple to the yearning heart,
A city for the Soul. Let love hold sway,
And stupid selfishness and lonely lie
In silence end; while beauty that fore ran
Our wisdom shares in the language of a finished art
Its tranquil mood 'till work is one with play;
And we, the transients of life's finite span,
Make room for greater man and gladly die,
Leaving to them the wages of our day,
The deep communion of the whole of man.

THE NATURAL FIT

Years later of this sequence

he wrote

a sonnet in a single sentence

to

POSTERITY—RADAMANTHOS OF POESIE

THE NATURAL FIT

Though this remain until that time of which
As yet there is no prophecy worth so
Much trust as one might put in seed to grow
On stone, in fire or in the winds that switch
Loam, clay and sand from the unwatered ditch,
That time may only reap of what we sow,
In days now dying and in ways we know
Are little like to make men more than itch
Impatiently for times that faster go,
Of that which grows, or stock or stalk or switch,
The same we planted, though to them it show
Of our intent, worn threadbare, not one stitch
To tell them of the glamour or the glow
With which we wrought to make them poor or rich.

COMMAND PERFORMANCE ON THE LINCOLN PENNY

One from the many made, of many one,
And one among that many of whom made:
This is the mystery love's mint has laid
On every penny. It's a pigmy pun
To make the lined face lift to mighty fun
As, to his last of nights, life's masquerade
Enticed him to delight, for which he paid
But silence to the sound of one small gun.

One of the many made, from many one,
And one among that many whom he made;
He smiled while hell was freezing in the sun
And laughed when heaven melted in the shade.
For death had ceased to count where he'd begun
A love whose mystery our lives evade.

THE NATURAL FIT

If after I have ceased to percolate
Clean wit through grounds of drugging rhyme,
There still is left some pure, quiet time
I'll spend it drinking to my puny fate.

For I am one of those insatiate
Whom pepper makes no thirstier for slime,
Being by nature born for such hot climb
That even critics make me not irate.

How far from festive is my silly song,
Having no theme beyond its void distress,
And that's not only devious but wrong!

It wants the venison that good men bless,
With graces godly—ay—but never long,
Which I, naïve, forgot and now confess.

Leafless November now into her leaden dome
From damp and pungent fires exhales grey smoke
To soot the winter's toga and to soak
Into its coming candor death's black loam.

Now, like barbarians at sack of Rome,
Nor'easters swirl them in the purple cloak,
While the white beards of fathers of the folk
Fall on denuded shoulders like dried foam.

Comes so the festival of harvest home
When labor falls beneath the last load yoke
And gobblers' wattles wilt as the cock's comb;
While, unconsolated, they fast whom sorrows choke,
Their eyes too blurred for comfort of time's tome
And likest leaves that cling still to the oak.

THE NATURAL FIT

Why now you turbulent and tardy ghost
Do you, like some ill-omened bird of prey,
Dart up betwixt me and the molten sun
To fall a cinder from your flaming post?

Too late, black augury for my bold wings,
You clutter the frail pathways of the day;
For ere my wings in earth's dull labyrinth were done,
My heart, close harbored in yon glistening coast,
Swept me abandoned up the breathless way,
Where to the unachieved the godhead clings.

Though more in cunning and in craft my boast,
Who, more than Daedalus could dream, have done,
My dream that lent the strength to my frail clay
Fails utterly and quits its frustrate host.

If I addressed you at a time and place
More certain than this earth and century,
Belittling so the brilliant wizardry
That beckons couriers to your bright face,

I should be guilty of my own disgrace,
For such explicit linking, you to me,
Would prove a gesture of humility
Too large for truth, too low for your embrace.

Clumsy the brain that speaks as brawn and bone
To wit that needs no signpost by the way
And hastens eagerly unto its own.

So take in silence what I would not say
Though I could crush the earth to us alone
And crowd whole centuries into our day.

Since you have seen how each, my yesterday,
Back to its yesterday no tribute sent,
But, as today, in living all were spent,
Leaving tomorrow richer for their stay,

You will not frown and from me turn away,
Nor curse as faithless one who never meant
More honor than love's irony has lent
To lust's impatience of the least delay;

So I am coming, as I only may
Who count the wit that is with beauty blent
The priceless gist of its complete display,

And know that none with this ingredient,
Whose loveliness is worth love's disarray,
While joys remain to taste, would rest content.

Like every man who writes English, faced with the many meanings of his words and the many constructions of his sentences, he had to train himself to speak so that, whatever sense we give to his successive sounds, his sonnets say one and the same thing to us all. He came to hate constraints of sense that written words with jots and tittles put so relentlessly upon the ambiguities of sound. In spoken English, sequences of words are so familiar that, having heard some, we rightly hear the rest and understand with half a mind and half an ear. Words that he knows we have anticipated we find only when their sense is unexpected. More often we encounter something that at most recalls the words we had imagined. He means us to hear both. By this compression he can tie ever more complexions of emotions into fourteen knottier lines. His sonnets grow well-nigh intolerable. His early poems fairly picture their origins in all the gratuitous particularity of sensory experience. We feel at home in them, for we know what he was doing. But this is irrelevant to the impassioned ideas which are in fact ambiguous as to their occasions. Was he experimenting? was he in love? was he thinking? was he building? when he wrote

We know not when for us to know will break
That surest of all days of sure desire
When certainty will flame of certain fire
And dreams, defeated, find the dream awake.

Does it matter? It does—but not what he was doing. So I read you only a few of these, the last of his sonnets.

THE NATURAL FIT

Since, after I have lost faith's fairest form,
And certain am of my uncertainty
Of aught of evidence to comfort me,
My forte must evidently be this storm
That rises now to raze old verity
Back to the dust of such a backward lee
As was where silt, from the Sahara blown,
Sanding the blood that Saracens had strown
Instead of roses in red Tripoli,
Started the brig upon the startled sea;
Brigand and I emboldened by this storm
To boldest blows entrust security
And, on the instant, launch as instantly
A faith as fair as it is free of form.

Now from my rifted wreck seek I the reef
And nearer strive to what strove once too near,
Fearless for finding the well-founded fear,
Thankful to time that is my dear time's thief.

Out of a loneliness, alone in grief,
From tears that spring because they sprung no tear,
Comes joy that none are joyless now to hear
Of this my loneliness, its lone relief.

Up from a depth too deep to height too high,
Of breadth too broad and of a strength too strong,
I heaved and sprang into the vacant sky.

But from that vault I fell as falls the song
Sung by delighted singers that will die
Only as life has length to live too long.

He was a physician

These short words speak those wounds that wrung from men
 The grunts and groans of pain, which not the grace
 Of God had strength to stop nor held hope space
 To mend. But death's self stills that sound, till then
 Life's clutch and grasp on breath else forced out when
 Quits flesh near flesh, rifts heart from hearts close place.
 Now worst—time takes you! Sweet my brain bulge case!
 Burst bone! Bleed stress! Woe's word lasts out care's ken.

Vain sigh and sweet life's waste with these words bid
 Time hold back, cease to rend from us the moon
 We most loved. More than vain to sob so, rid
 The breast of short breath but to gasp too soon
 For lack air lung to cramp the heart that hid
 Lost love's night ache too long from death's dark noon.

He was a psychiatrist, and this was his prayer

"Ordine quest 'amore, O tu che m'ame"

Why pressed hard heart hide ostrich head in habit?
Estopped so, grief outshrieks stark silence. Thought,
Cliché-cozened, siezes—throat—singeth naught.
Lip, mine, my lips press, wanting kiss to (strange) stab it.

Never mine, God, pour now in place Babbit?
Why? Idles worldaxle well oiled. What's caught
'S else. Other's the woe we would . . . have . . . sought;
But it, flame teuyere-blast—I, handfast—how grab it?

Frenzied of Love, how to council He calls come?
Mum as inchoate or, wracked redeless, scry wise?
Never! Not either! Nor absent, but sing:
Praise life (contagious) that to Love's every-home
Hails all worths, eeriest guests in earth's guise,
Among whom to abide us *shall* time bring.

THE NATURAL FIT

I had thought this character was dead, but the other day I found this on my desk, unpunctuated and the ink wet.

farewell sweet morrows hopes deferred and all
crisp years fat earnest in defect of youth
indian summers quicken to keen fall
as brisk october blazons times no ruth

i cry no quarter of my age and call
on coming wits to prove the truth
of my stark venture into fates cold hall
where thoughts at hazard cast the die for sooth

from me great days are gone and after none
array the ardour that i scarce compress
in temperance terrible charged i abide
the desperate victor of my last race run
wanting bold challenge to lifes dread excess
to fire that frenzy i must else wise hide

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