

Reflections



By and for men and women of
good will

ANN KEITH

SELECTED POEMS

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Thunderstorm Spell

Ten o'clock strikes. Outside torrential rain
Roars on the roof. Tonight I will remain
Before the open upper window, high
Above the hundred streams that flood the plain.
Flashes like day -- electric sheets of flame --
Exalt my soul but nowise satisfy
A hunger rendered more intense thereby,
Desires no earthly limits can contain,
And fires that would consume the earth and sky.

Before my open window I intone
A potent spell: -- Oh, make me now your own,
Strong stormblast! Take me with you now to shake
And bow the forest branches till they groan
And plough the lake beneath to churning foam!
Strengthen the spell! Extend it lest it break!
And never bring me back! Obliterate
All things this heart before has seen and known!
Release me never! Never let me wake!

A man no more, tonight am I possessed
Of pure unthwarted being, boundless, blessed.
Perils and pleasures throng my heart and crowd
Encircling limitations from my breast.
I revel in the riotous unrest;
I call upon the thunderbolt aloud;
I mount the clouds, with aerial powers endowed;
No more confined by bounds, no more compressed,
I am the wind, the tempest, and the cloud.

To One Spiritually Discouraged

But one
Day
More!
A day and a single night!
And the flame
That you thought
Extinguished
Shall kindle into light,
To shine as never it shone before --
Forty-nine times as bright!

O you who lie in darkness
Without the hope of dawn,
Whose strength has grown so feeble now
You would not be reborn --
No, not to the pulp of a mollusc --
No, not to so much as the form
Of a blade of grass that all who pass
Trample and crush and that does not heed --
Of the tree that a hundred storm-blasts rock
And that knows it not -- of the marble block
That the mallet breaks and the chisel-edge flakes
And mars or carves of it splendid shapes
And that does not flinch or bleed!
But a day to wait, and this evil dream
That seemed to have no waking
Shall fade from out of your eyes, like night
From the western sky when the widening light
Of dawn in the east is breaking!

*What became of me then, you will marvelling ask,
In the whirlwind's heart where I was cast --
I had dreamt there was no escaping.*

And you who laid down your crown of stars
Once in your lassitude
Will demand it again of the gods and will ask
To be granted a greater more arduous task --
World-thresholds to be overpassed
And quests beyond renewed.

Drawn back to its source,
That primordial fire,
Which, seen through veils, men call Desire
Abides its hour alive.

But these be the days of oblivious rest.
So sleep, nor doubt that sleep is best
Till you
Shall see
Revive
That insatiable thirst that has been the proof
From the first that a man is a man in truth,
And fit to command the courses
Of the manifest world of symbol-things
And the spirit world of forces.

The Spell Of The Quickening Word

*I wrought with power.
She gazed and heard.
And her soul, as I wrought, was moved and stirred.*

What words they were I spoke to her
And from what depths they came,
I do not know; in a ceaseless flow
They rose, each clothed in flame.

In a flaming flood the torrent fell,
And the source was undiminished.
My soul was become a bottomless well
Or that urn of largess of which legends tell,
Miraculously replenished.

And, as one who has seen in a far off dream,
Full of calling voices and lights that gleam,
Dissolving shape on shape,
She gazed at me as if to see
If this dream too would break.
And there grew in her eyes the divine surprise
Of a soul that begins to wake.

*I wrought with power.
She gazed and heard.
And her soul, as I wrought, to its depths was stirred.
By love I was taught: love clothed each thought.
And the words were runes, and the spell was wrought.
The Spell of the Quickening Word.*

The Relaying

The dead of past ages are seeking
Always the souls they can reach,
And out of the lips of the living
They constantly teach.

The trace of the comet of genius
Seems to fade in a moment from sight,
But not before, trailing behind it,
The tail of its luminous flight
Has kindled the terrain predestined,
As mind reaches outward to mind
And the soul, overleaping the ages,
Makes contact with souls of its kind,

For the gods have prescribed a condition
Of power that is never repealed:
In music and language and symbol
To show forth the wisdom revealed,
And they give to their favoured this mission:
To seek out their own upon earth,
That out of a mystical fusion
A new soul of power shall have birth --

Who too shall awake to his aim,
Inscribed as in letters of flame
Emblazoned above him to follow.
And so shall his quest be the same.

Thoughts Flash And Gleam

Thoughts flash and gleam, from worlds unseen,
To fade within the hour;
That, flickering, seemed to pulse and teem
With untold life and power.
Oh, seize them, try... before they fly...
To probe and explore to the full
What of real may lie, that men deny,
In Things Impossible!

Am I not to be spurred by will or by word,
But alone with pitchfork prods?
And my thoughts, when stirred, are vague and blurred
And all my aims at odds.
What work I begin is lost again...
One thought outruns another,
And they whirl and they spin like a windmill within,
Now this way, then the other.

No time to deplore my squandered store.
Back to the task! I swear,
What escaped before shall be mine once more!
The future still is there.
What was ever attained that was fit to be gained,
And the labour was not great?
One march maintained... one strength sustained...
Drive, drive... without a break!

Oh, shut from mind the undefined
And doubtful future day!
The eyes go blind with straining to find
Horizons too far away.

For in this our night we have but light
For the first step that we take,
And thence gain sight to see aright
The next we are to make.

The Idol Is Gone

The idol is gone, but the lover is blessed;
for love has compelled him,
descended upon him and made him his own,
Possessed him once, and raised him up,
become a devotee.
Released him and lifted him out of the dreary,
heartless, mechanical bondage of limits,
to him is the air of the summits familiar,
the region of passion and freedom and light.
The idol is gone, but the lover though scorned
is perpetually blessed; for whose life has been warmed
by love once
shall be left
transformed
and reborn.

Mysteries

Deeper and further
And further and deeper,
As into enchanted
And fabulous seas --

What better and sweeter
Has ever been granted
Than after long fasting
Such banquets as these?

The prayers of all women
Condensed and distilled in
One magnified potion of power --
Aeons of brimming
Existence fulfilled in
The scope of one fathomless hour --

This well of abundance
That changes and blesses,
This flame that transfigures --
What tongue can frame this
That is better and higher than all earth possesses,
No letter nor symbol terrestrial expresses
This nameless
Ineffable bliss.

Lover And Sufi

This be the goal of your zeal --
This be the whole of your zeal --
With every song reveal --
With every breath attest --
That the ultimate vision of Love's ideal
But waits for two wills to become the real,
Living and manifest.

For the heart is a mirror
And, as we draw nearer,
The image within it grows steadily clearer,
Till we
Shall be
Aware
That the flawless reflection of Love's perfection
Exists embodied there.

All That Signifies

The evidently present realised
State of the soul is all that signifies.
Whatever else the multiple perceptions mediate
Is apposite and worthy of regard but insofar
As it can work to shape that inward state.

Love's Bondage Liberates

From all the apparitions that oppressed
With counsels of despair my fog-distressed
And starless course, your love delivers me;
Shaped from the first to bless me, you have blessed.
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

Your love redeems me from myself and saves
My spirit from the horror that enslaves
My life, for now your face is all I see;
Your voice pervades me like magnetic waves.
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

How strong this love is rooted and how deep,
My very dreams make known to me in sleep;
The very dreams at night that visit me
Make manifest this love too strong to speak.
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

If my hand touch a table, cup, or door,
Or other thing your hand has touched before,
A trembling poignant longing seizes me.
Oh, bind me well! Oh, loose the spell no more!
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

Oh, to receive impossible commands!
To seek and win from undiscovered lands
Beyond Atlantis and the seventh sea,
Your heart's desire and place it in your hands!
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

Not by your will or mind this love arose.
I never wished or willed. I never chose;
But bowed before a power I could not see,
And serve perforce the source from which it flows.
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

With strength too great to be suppressed or quelled,
With flooding force too strong to be withheld,
My soul seeks yours as rivers seek the sea.
Caught up, compelled, engulfed, rushed onwards, held,
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

I know what turned my feet from the abyss;
I know what crowned my life with blessedness;
And in that force my faith must henceforth be --
This is my redemption now, and only this!
My everlasting bondage sets me free.

The Soul's Desire

The flower desires the sun
By day, by night the moth the flame.
All things desire eternally.
The soul's desire is harmony:
Two notes that strike as one
And soaring suddenly blend
Will seem to swell a thousandfold
In widening waves of sound to send
A thrill of poignant joy through all the frame.

Dedicated To The Conquest Of The Unknown

Deep in studies from the first,
Now yet deeper still immersed,
The more my labours teach to me,
The more intensely burns my thirst,
Until the fruit make known the tree.

I wake by nights of moonlight, drawn
To take my books and read till dawn,
Stretched on the rocks beside the sea,
That so pure knowledge there be born,
And fruit unknown adorn the tree.

I turn and seek on every side
Where gleams of light can be descried,
My zeal a thirst that parches me,
A burning flame unsatisfied
Until the fruit reveal the tree.

What sacrifice would I not make?
What task would I not undertake?
Have I not bowed to the decree:
My life and hope and soul to stake
To feed the fruit and crown the tree?

No remission must I know
In vigilance, nor once forego
My watchfulness, for I am he
Whose unremitting zeal must grow
The fruit that shall reveal the tree.

My purposes are pure, and I
May claim erect with dauntless eye
The recompense reserved for me --
The days of labour soon are by --
The hour will come for fruit and tree.

The elements of heaven will flow
Around in fiery streams and grow
Till space and time are lost to me;
While perfect through the flood will glow
The fruit full-ripened on the tree.

My thought and I are but one whole;
My faith: the Culture of the Soul;
I cross a world I never see,
Rapt in visions of my Goal:
The fruit shall sanctify the tree.

Come Lord Of My Existence

Come, lord of my existence, who possess
The depths and flaming heights of paradise
With all its hundred levels and its light
And wait - - and still command
Patience and try my soul and have
All heaven in your hand - -
Come, lord of my existence, and require
Love only. Perfect. Passionate. Entire
Devotion. Nothing else and nothing less.