The Works of Stefan George

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IN RETROSPECT

Once more I guess behind the curtain: scraps of mist the evening twines, 
Behind the boughs of plane trees threaded through the grain in curious lines, 
The realm my scepter yesterday still ruled, but now transformed and far, 
A Tyrus, pond, and garden-frond in liquid tints of dew and tar. 
Here beech-tops on the shore divide the airy villa from the street, 
A clearing in the forest hums with flocks of deer on flitting feet. 
O ships, parade of haughty swans! Your colours were a gift to me! 
O you, that like a mother swelled my faith in my own songs, O sea!

ON THE TERRACE

Before the boastful balustrade, the slopes 
Effuse the skye green of gliding glaze, 
A web of trees and houses lit with hopes — 
The goddess casts her shadow on the vase.

I hurry forward to the flaming wheel, 
A flash! For us a chain of runic light, 
On sudden pinnacles of grace we reel 
And then are buried in abysmal night.

And now the tracks are blotted. I return. 
The goddess casts her shadow on the vase. 
If you were great enough and could discern... 
My foolish transport scars me with its blaze.

Oh, triumph! It is you! In sunset flame 
Of glances we exchanged I read my grief. 
A herald of your self you staunchly came, 
And our togetherness was proud and brief.
ADDRESS

I never shall rejoice in cold esteem,
When you deny your flesh with regal pride
To common wenches and their brazen dream.
You held aloof from them and yet you sighed.

Your hands, indeed, must all in vain be wrung
For draught of solace from a higher sphere,
Oh, would that from a mother I were sprung
So I myself could bring it to you here!

Whether you begged or bade imperiously,
No double red would pour into my face.
I should surround you with a silken sea,
On sumptuous purple yield to your embrace.

But I can only soothe with phantom kiss,
A child of buoyant cloud and crystal air,
I cleave through chaos, sing your state of bliss,
And bear as I divine you also bear.

PICTURES

THE INFANTE

With shield and dagger under fallow frieze,
He stands in a dark oval rimmed with gold,
A pale and smiling child. His brother-twin
Was only briefly in this hall where then
No stranger gawked. The frosty mountain-breeze
Had proved a playmate who was more than bold.

But he himself will never grieve at all
That he was kept from growing old and grim
Like this or that one on the neighbouring wall,
For blessedness has been accorded him: