The Works of Stefan George

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Marx, Olga and Ernst Morwitz.
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Ah, if he guessed the charms my lips invent:
— I guess them since my dreams revealed his face —
The oleanders drowning in their scent
And others soft as jessamine’s embrace.

Too long I lean against the gate and gaze
Through iron fretwork toward the lawn.
I hear a flute that yearns for far-aways,
In glossy laurel laughs a faun.

WARNING

You follow hordes that hail you to a throne
Of glaring yellow silk and massive gold,
From which a rain of blood has often rolled
While fires soared through seas of broken stone.

Now hallow every murder, every lust!
As mad as surf against the cliffs your mind
Exults in icy and destroying gust
And scorns the quiet well, the quiet wind.

They stammer their allegiance to your shoe,
The ravished women wail, and one is more
Distraught and shameless in her fear: Before
Your lordly eyes she tears her dress in two.

They bring you coral, diamonds, emeralds, pearls,
As if these were but common trumpery,
The priestess, whom her virgin mantle furls,
Cries: “Take me as your slave!” and bends her knee.

And lonely through a savage scene you move,
Your hair is fouled with offal from the street,
Your pride impatient to frequent the groove
Which sordid creatures plotted with their feet.
Is this, indeed, the land for which you warred?
Oh, disregard the voice that lured and lied!
And do not say that sorrow was your guide,
Nor cast aside the raiment of a lord!

The squares are forsaken and silent the song and the lute.
In frantic search I sped
Through palace and church and where dances and tilts are afoot.
How many tears I shed,
And still she fled from me!
Nor is she here, and yet I distinctly recall
How often these battlements beckoned, how turret and wall
Gave joyful prophecy.

I fly from the place where I never have tasted of bliss,
And roam through barren sand.
And uphill and downhill the thistles leave barbs in my flesh,
Like serpents the succulent creepers entwine the land.

Up over here I see
The mountain-top: an island of pastoral green,
A single Thuja tree,
And bushes along the ledge.
Below — as if primitive masters had painted the scene —
The meadows and cities are patterned with spire and bridge.
What new and varied goals!
The glory of evening melts into ochreous swirls.
The cup of a saffron surrenders its fragrance and furls,
And silver manna falls.

Sovereign dream I trusted at heart,
Oh, that your daughters were mates of my mirth
Stauncheer than those I encountered on earth.

Long I watched them though I stood apart.