The Works of Stefan George

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EXODUS OF THE FIRSTBORN

The lot is cast and we, who still are children, must
Already seek a new abode in foreign lands.
An ivy tendril from the feast still wreathes our hair.
Our mothers on the threshold gently sighed and kissed
Us long, and then with tightened lips our fathers went
With us until we reached the city-bounds, and when
They left us hung around our neck the tablets carved
Of spruce, but some of these we are to throw into
The grave when one of our beloved brothers dies.
We parted lightly. All of us restrained our tears,
Since what we do is done to serve our people's good.
And only once we turned our heads to look behind,
Then crossed without a twinge into the far-off blue.
We want to go! A noble goal is set for us.
We burn to go! The gods keep watch upon our course.

SECRET SACRIFICE

Appeased and released
We said our farewells
To sun-lighted fields,
To Memnon, the blithe,
To Mirra, the blonde,
Who ask us to stay.
Their joys are not ours!
The temple resounds,
We follow the call
That leads us to serve
The Beautiful: gloried and boundless.

The grove is our screen
From the people we hold
In reticent awe.
With poppies and milk-
White stars we have plucked,
We garland the shrine.

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