The Works of Stefan George

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And if at last it leaned above my bed,
Or drew the symbols of grace and salvation, I doubt
My arm would have power to clasp, for the hour is sped,
The fiery love on my lips has burned itself out.

STRAINS OF A WANDERING GLEEMAN

Words elude and words deceive,
Only song can seize the soul,
And if mine has missed its goal,
Though the fault be grave — forgive!

Like a village child who walks
In the meadow, let me sing,
I shall leave the halls of kings,
Fabled realms where giants stalk.

Mock me for my gentle smart!
Once, I know I shall confess
That I dreamed you, and caress
You since then within my heart.

From the buds the dewdrops run
Slow, and full, and clear
Where they glisten in the sun.

But the tears I cannot rein?
Yesterday I did not know
What today is my despair:
That my last delight would go
Should I never taste again
Rising sun and spring of year.
Shall I offer sheaves of bloom
So your innocence may waver?
Shall I cherish as my favour
Colours which you choose to wear?
On my lute before your room
Humbly play a pleading air?

Is not all this very plain?
Shall I wander on in pain?
Shall I say it? Shall I dare?

Is it much to plead
Once and silently,
After bitter need
Now to kneel to you?

Clasp your fingertips,
Only this of you,
Graze them with my lips
Awed and silently?

Do you call it much
If stern and silently
You endure my touch
And let me stay with you?

When I mourn, I think
This and only this:
That you are at my side
And listen as I sing.

Then I hear a tone,
Almost words you spoke,
Long they echo on,
And I feel less forlorn.