The Works of Stefan George

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But you know nothing of the solemn rite
Of burnished candelabra, tier on tier,
Of vessels breathing clouds of stainless white
To warm the temple, sombre and austere,

Of niches brimming with their angel throngs
Reflected in the lustre's prised glass,
Of ardent prayers told with faltering tongues,
Of darkness sighing with a faint: Alas!

And nothing of desires that awake
Upon the festive altar's lower rows.
Uncertain, cold, and dubious, you take
The jewel born of glitter, tears, and glows.

I taught you to discern the winning peace
Within these walls, the quiet rays which fall
From lamp and hearth, the croon in nook and niche,
You have the same and vague amaze for all.

I cannot fan your pallor into flame,
And in the room beside I kneel and break
My silent thoughts with doubt I cannot tame:
Will you awaken — ever? Oh awake!

But when I venture to approach the door,
You still are lost in dreams, your eye upon
The emptiness of space, just as before.
Your shadow blots the carpet's same festoon.

And there is nothing now to stem the plea
I never practiced and I know is vain:
O Mother — great and sad — concede to me
That solace spring within this soul again!
Your beauty while you mourn, my loyalty
Compel me to remain and cherish you.
That I may share your grief more perfectly
I try devoutly to be mournful too.

With tender words I never shall be met.
Up to the latest hour that holds us twined,
I must accept with stoical regret
The bitter destiny of winter's find.

The flower in its pot of sallow clay,
Against my window, sheltered from the frost,
Sags on its stalk as though it died away
And ill repays the loving care it cost.

To free my mind from memories of bloom
And lavish destinies it had before,
I take a whetted blade and cut the stem
Of the pale flower with the ailing core.

Why shall I keep what only serves to pain!
I long to have it vanish from my sight...
And now I lift my empty eyes again,
And empty hands into the empty night.

Your magic broke when veils of azure blew
From green of graves and certainty of grace.
Now let me — gone so soon — a little space,
As to the heart of sorrow, pray to you.

To rapid parting you must needs agree,
For riven is the water's frozen rind,
Perhaps a bud will be tomorrow's find!
I cannot take you into spring with me.