The Works of Stefan George

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Your glances will disparage
The games of callow comrades,
Austere and majestic thoughts
Shall guard and warn you away from
The work that debases.

When those who call you brother
Complain of their pain, confide your
Grief to the winds of dark.
The breast of the child shall bleed
Under his nail's armed thrust.

Do not forget: You must
Put to death your youth and freshness,
For only when their grave
Is wet with tears untold, it will beget
Under the matchless miracle of green,
The matchless beauty of roses.

II

You learned that only the house of want knows dejection,
But portals and pillars will show you a deeper dejection,

That only who dares the untried feels the bounds that are fated,
I teach that fulfilment brings with it the worst that is fated

For him who mourns through the day with an exquisite jewel,
Whose fingers listlessly play with the luminous jewel,

For him who is born to the folds of imperial purple,
And bows his pale and pensive face on the purple.

Though in the castle's dark and clanging hall
The many lyres hanging on the wall
Resound with fiercer joy and fuller fame,
Why is it that this first still holds the same
Delight and tremors for me, late and soon,
And that the chaste beginnings of its croon,
Awakened at a touch, still free the flow
Of tears today no less than long ago?
The traveller pauses midway on his road,
And after looking back on what he traversed,
Probes forward into clouds with timid doubt.
The hills and valleys he has crossed are worlds!
Behind him so much joy and stress! Can there
Be more to come? Shall he lie down to slumber
As if this were the journey’s end, or venture
To brighter peaks, to jubilate more loudly,
Or moan more hopelessly in wilder chasms?
Was all this nothing but a morning’s walk?

RECOLLECTIONS OF EVENINGS OF INNER COMPANIONSHIP

FLOWERS

In March we put the seeds into the earth,
While still we suffered in the angry vise
Of pain to which the yester-year gave birth,
And in the final bout of sun and ice.

We fetched them water from the glassy well
And tried to raise them, bound to slender stays,
We knew that in the light their buds would swell
And in the love and brightness of our gaze.

We kept them fresh with eager industry
And — leaned together — looked with questioning fear
Into the clouds, and waited patiently
To see a leaf unfold, a shoot appear.

We gathered them in gardens and above
Where vines were terraced on a neighbouring hill,
Enchanted by the golden night we roved
And held them in our hands as children will.