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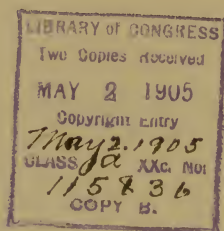
RICHARD G. BADGER

The Gorham Press

1905

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THE GORHAM PRESS
Boston, U. S. A.

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FIRST LEAF

“Make thy calculations, O Disciple, if thou
wouldst learn the correct age of thy Small
Wheel. Its Fourth Spoke is our Mother.
Reach the Fourth Fruit of the Fourth Path of
Knowledge that leads to Wisdom, and thou
shalt comprehend, for thou shalt see . . .”

BOOK OF WISDOM

B. H. Jan 4, 1930

FIRST LEAF

An ancient land, so ancient its very name is now forgotten. An ancient people—who were they? What man living knows? A Temple wonderful, who planned it? Of glistening white, translucent, golden, crystal. Was it marble? No; yet what man can say the nature of the stone, what delver in the bowels of the earth conceive its marvelous structure. Set in a grove of trees, dark, mysterious, mighty. Were they cedars, pines, or myrtle? No, none of these; yet who among the tracers of plant life and history has ever rested 'neath such mystic shades or dreamed in harmony with their wordless whisperings.

A people tall, fair, fearless, wise: their wisdom, who has treasured it? Of their history who holds the record?

Stray Leaves

Yet I was one of these; I, of the Dual Soul. A priestess and a priest, for we were One; a priest and priestess He, for we were One.

A glimpse of a vast fane, a breath of strange, wild odors from the grove; and He and I together, our child held hand in hand, standing with the throng upon the square, a glimpse, a breath—that's all. Yet this was life, consciousness, reality so long passed by, so faintly caught; a blossom of the seed sown many lives before; the fruitful seed from which have sprung the many lives since then.

REVERIE

Can bloom so perfect grow to fruit less fair? Can fruit so rich and sweet conceal a blighted seed?

Search well the ways of nature's working, pierce deep into the heart of things; what do you find? A single point where "oneness" means "alike"? A single form which just repeats its fellow? Why is this difference, what its hidden source? And who shall say that in the "blighted" seed is not expressed some feature of those hidden springs of life which seek expression, so.

Who has ever caught and held the Soul of things? Whose eye has seen the spark of Power glowing unheeded in the human heart? Who has solved the riddle of the Soul's desire, or fathomed the whole purpose of its wanderings?

Stray Leaves

Weary of peace, the Spark within growing hot and urging on, the Soul stands at the gate of Paradise, gazing wide-eyed into the surging blackness of the untried Beyond; craving for what? For experience, for PAIN—which it has never known.

Who shall say the waking of these fires is a "blight"? Who dare call the first step taken into those surging depths by the untried Soul, a fall?

No lasting joy can be in ignorance; true peace is not known until unrest is found; oneness becomes monotony to that which has never known the pain of separation, of lonely wandering, of the striving to understand.

Only when quiescence has given place to activity, only when each Spark of that One Hidden Flame has learned, glowing in the darkness, to see itself, its twin, and all the countless other fires around it whirling, as the expressions of the Great Idea, can it conceive the joy of shining all together; the peace of union in one perfect flame.

So within these two, this One, my Soul and I, was born a restiveness, a desire,—we knew

First Leaf

not what. We would not speak of it, but when it chafed we smiled together.

Through all that day it showed no other sign; yet it was there; a tiny sting within the blossom's very heart; a little seed that must bear fruit; the fanning of the tiny spark of Power to flame; the flame which must burn ignorance to ashes no matter what the cost, no matter what the pain. For the wisdom of that age and time was given, not won; and such the Soul can value not when once the energy Divine has quickened it to life and thought.

Thus through succeeding days and nights the flame, growing ever, showed two tongues; and these with bitter tears drew wide apart, to wander through the mazes of that labyrinthine night; groping at first, stumbling, failing of their goal yet struggling on until they both should KNOW. Until the day "Be With Us" dawning, they should meet and once again unite, in joyful recognition of the peace that knows no night, of the peace that knows no day, of that PEACE which built

Stray Leaves

on these, is its own light, its own knowledge,
LOVE, WISDOM, all-embracing, perfect, true.

* * * *

What is this WISDOM—perfect, true?
What is it that the Soul must KNOW? Why
is not Wisdom “given” as satisfying as Wis-
dom “won”?

Shall we answer? No; let each retire with-
in his own Secure Retreat; let each there raise
the veil which hides his Holy Place; then to
his eager eyes will stand revealed this mystery
his *own*. We may not speak of it. 'Tis not
for ears to hear, 'tis for the Soul to find; we
can but point the way along which Peace,
Wisdom, Power may at last be found.

What is the way?

The way of life. The transient touch with
this, and that; transient, but *remembered*.
The meeting close with many other souls, the
journey with them through a space of time, a
sympathy established, a long enduring feud,
an effort to pierce through the veil which
hides their True from its realities, the dawn-

First Leaf

ing recognition of their common aim however clogged, however staid. This could not be where the Dual Soul in perfect peace dwelt still apart. Such would be a universe of *ones* which, soon or late, because of the inherent power for ever pressing on, would war together like the children of the Dragon's Teeth for naught. But such are the inherent laws of souls, that war in Paradise has never been; and what seems war without, is but the effort of them all to attune experience, to that heavenly song within the Heart.

Thus in the many days which the Soul journeys through, it cements ties—for good? for ill? who dares to say? So long as it *remembers*, *learns*, and *seeks*, it shall most surely win to its own place.

SECOND LEAF

“——Listen, ye Sons of Earth, to your instructors—the Sons of the Fire. Learn, there is neither first nor last; for all is One Number, issued from No-Number.”

BOOK OF WISDOM

SECOND LEAF

The screen of time moves slowly by, before the eye of fitful memory; and ever anon some form, some face, an hour of triumph, a night of failure or despair; a child at play in sunny lands, another child near by; a man bent over with the weight of toil, the voiceless song but faintly echoing to his dulled senses and heavy, sordid cares. All these and many more take shadowy shape and pass, lost in the mists of the first shifting shades, lurking outside the gates of that fair Paradise.

Suddenly, one stands out clear and strong in light of Eastern sun blazing high at noon.

A calm blue river flowing toward the sea through sandy wastes, cities, gardens, fruitful fields. Great temples with wide mystic facades, guarded by great figures, which with

Stray Leaves

wistful eyes look toward the desert where the type of Wisdom stands, seeking perhaps, as did their living models, the answer to that riddle of the Sphynx, still unsolved by the struggling world, but yielding in those days, rich store of possibilities to such as truly sought.

Beside a playing fountain which showers its sparkling drops into the lotus' hearts thronging its basin to the rim; neath shade of palms, past beds of roses which fill the air with their rare perfume; conscious, but not thinking of the temple just beyond, whose great broad steps flanked by symbolic monsters, lead to the river's edge; I see One pacing, pacing back and forth, deep in thought, fired with ardent zeal to win the Great Accomplishment. White robed, of swarthy skin, yet blue eyed; of humble parentage, but with a heart set to the highest purposes of life; he ponders on the mystery of Being—his own and all these others whom he knows—he seeks and seeks the answer to that question which once propounded he must meet, or fail of that toward which his whole life has been bent.

The noonday sun changes to slanting rays of

Second Leaf

afternoon and that again slips softly into night.

He sweeps the heaven's starry depths with eyes that question still:—"What is this thing that I should know? How shall I solve the riddle? I must not fail—yet I must speak to-morrow. The answer hides somewhere within my very soul; this I know; but what it is, what form 'twill take, in what letters it is spelled—this still escapes me, still flies within obscurity the more I seek, the nearer I may seem to come. What, WHAT"?

Thus through the radiant moonlit night, through the dark solemn hours before the dawn; with reverent prayer and hymn of praise greeting the glorious Lord of day; unheeding sounds of wakening life in the great city, lying majestic on the other shore, he passes on, the riddle still unsolved.

Unnoticed, the hours creep on and grow towards noon; the noon of his great test, his test of Self.

A murmur from the temple; the sound of feet that haste to meet a call which must come soon; voices raised in solemn chant; a pungent

Stray Leaves

incense smoke that seems to fill the heated, quivering air. He turns to go, dejected; for he has not found the answer.

But he has the courage to say "I do not know—I have not found"; the patience that will seek and seek again undaunted, and so, with head erect and shoulders broad and square, he passes swiftly through the garden's winding ways to meet—a thicket of rich scented rose stirred not by the breeze—a little laughing face which peeps at him from the midst of thorny stems, great eyes full of love such as a child's heart knows, two tiny hands which reaching plead, "Ah take me up." He stops for just a moment; gathers the child close to his heart and kisses it, the clinging arms flung tight about his neck. Just a moment—but the clanging gong from out the temple calls; "Too late, too late." He stands aghast.

* * * *

Failed, failed!

The words hammer on his very soul with each beat of his devoted heart.

Second Leaf

Failed!—Failed of the answer; but worst of all, failed by a *moment* to meet the incense's subtle, floating signal. Failed to appear at the appointed hour, failed to meet his MASTER—and for what? A passing impulse, a child's ignorant demand; in all a lurking fault in duty hidden there, where he believed himself most strong.

Failed. What shall he do? He cannot meet his fellows, cannot look into their eyes with this shame upon him. He cannot face his MASTER, no, even though he *knows* He would be merciful. Where shall he go? What shall his future purpose be?

The laughing child, in changing mood as of some April day, tossing the petals of a crimson rose full in his face, has danced singing, far into the garden's peaceful shade.

Alone he stands under the tropic's blazing sun, heedless of all save that one thought—failed, failed! How long I cannot say; but—the sound of steps along the path and like a startled stag, wide-eyed he stands and waits at bay. He who is approaching, on seeing him, with hastened step and strong hand held forth,

Stray Leaves

comes to him saying gently:—"My friend, my friend."

They look into each other's eyes; no other word is spoken, yet do they understand; and presently, he whose long vigil had availed so little, slowly turns and never looking back, passes for the last time through all those shaded, scented ways he loved so well, out toward the desert, out toward lands unknown—alone. And he who could not help, stands looking after.

* * * *

Poor groping Soul to whom the knowledge it had gained thus far, availed so little at this step.

Poor wayward Heart, faltering on the Soul's Path to follow *human* ways, only to be held back.

The question pondered on, the answer sought were there,—and yet he could not see.

Self-exiled, laboring on, still seeking, dying, —through many trials has he still to pass ere realization comes, that love is not mere im-

Second Leaf

pulse, that duty first, a pledge fulfilled—leads straightest to the heart's inmost desire. 'Tis the Good Physician whose healing hand removes the scales from blinded eyes, brings to the Soul its "Life's Elixir."

THIRD LEAF

“If thou canst not fulfil thy pledge refuse to take it; but once thou hast bound thyself to any promise, carry it out even if thou hast to die for it.”

BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

THIRD LEAF

The rising tide is softly lapping on the gleaming sand; each ripple seems to hold a kiss for the Sea's bride—the Land.

The full moon radiant, white, moves through a heaven of rich soft blue, even at this late hour. She sends a shimmering silver path across the water's quiet swell, she turns the glossy laurel leaves to sparkling points of quivering light and flings dense shadows all beneath the mystic pines and whispering acacias.

The low grey wall which sweeps along the sea's soft shingle bed, guarding with loving arm from its advance, the virgin grove within; looks, 'neath her fairy touch, as white as marble.

Ah, tempting and transforming Moon!
You fling illusion over all your ways and even

Stray Leaves

human hearts become entangled, within the lacey network of your rays.

Your narrowing path which seems to lead within heaven's perfect blue, finds goal alas, but on and on across the sea's unstable breast—from whence at dawn it fades and dies. Your very charm, your tempting light and shade, are of night skies!

There comes a faint, far sound of oars; the even stroke draws nearer, nearer. A tiny boat driven forward by a boy whose glossy curls look black against the blue of that soft night; the golden fillet binding them has changed to violet; and the face beneath, soft-eyed, full-lipped, eager—turns over with a look intent upon the boundary wall, seeking for some sign, some signal, that should float from out the velvet blackness just behind.

Still no response—he frowns and sighs; and drawing in the oars, waits for a time, within his gently tilting boat; then, all at once determined, with two or three strong, steady strokes he brings his boat to land and springing out, draws it still nearer, that the rope ly-

Third Leaf

ing in its prow, may be made fast to a great ring which hangs upon the wall.

With cautious step along the sand he goes, until he comes to where two great azalias shed their snowy petals in wanton ecstasy upon the wings of night. Here, listening breathless, for a sound which does not come, he gives a low, soft call—and waits again.

What is it that he hears? Is it some wandering son of the night airs, straying uninvited through the sleeping trees? Is it a dove within her nest among the cyprus boughs drawing her downy young closer within the shelter of her wings? Is it the foot-fall of some woodland thing; some faun, some nymph, tempted by the moon's enticing rays to dream and wander nearer man's abode? Surely 'tis a driad he now sees, forcing her way through the rough bark, that held her prisoner, to sport awhile for this, her one short hour of fitful liberty, along the sand, upon the wall; and dip her poor cramped limbs and gleaming hair deep, deep into the cooling bosom of the sea.

Again he calls—the answer comes. No

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driad this, no nymph, no faun—only a timid girl, who speeding noiselessly 'neath protecting shades the moon flings dense to cover her, has come to keep the word she gave at dawn that day when, as with others she bore the torch which was to light the Hestian fire (should such disaster ever come that it had died) he, unobserved by any from his hiding place behind the bole of a great sacred tree, had whispered to her startled ear "I love you—meet me;" and she, who had long dreamt upon his face so often seen near by, made answer quickly "How, where?" "Tonight, the sea wall, the great white azalias"! and he drew back to his retreat while she passed on.

With one bound the wall is passed—a step or two—he's caught her in his arms and their lips meet.

Why is it that she has no fear of him? Whence springs this confidence, this perfect trust? She does not ask, no shade of questioning clouds her thought or even enters in; she only knows that here is fullness, joy, delight—she loves him.

So still the hush that falls upon the night;

Third Leaf

the tide is full, the sea asleep upon the sand's white breast; the roving breeze has passed far on leaving the azalias motionless; their very scent hangs heavy round their hearts—an offering of love no longer prized by the wind's careless mood. The moon stands still to hear the whispering of these human souls and all the shadows she has cast stand sentinel to guard their secret hour.

Along the path that travels by the wall, through light and shade, through dusk and gleam they pass, these two, as One. Their silence speaks, their words but half express that which they long to say. Then, reclining under the azalias' bloom, they talk of this strange thing that they both feel. He tells her he has known her always in his dreams and she replies, that when their eyes first met she felt that she was his. Then why, he queries, since all this is true, should she remain forever prisoned here behind this wall, within this grove—a slave. For where is freedom to be found when the heart is bound to vows which only strive to stop its beating, calling that sin, which is but true, and sweet, and fair, and

Stray Leaves

good. And she, poor child, urged by a voice within which cries:—"I love him, can this be wrong?"—yields for a time to the sweet ecstasy of his demand, and smiles—as on her neck, her arms, her hands, he presses kisses speaking more than words. She lets her fingers stray among his curls; she presses her lips timidly upon their glossy mass and with the flowers that fall about them weaves a crown which she insists makes him her king forever. He answers—"No; for you were always mine and I've been yours since times began. There shall be no crown for me, unless you wear one too." She smiles, and yet she sighs; "Perhaps 'tis so; but how can we tell, how can we know? For, if it be true that we are of those whom the Gods have made to be together, *why* should I have bound myself by vows, so that I cannot rightly now, be yours?"

Startled, she hears the echo of her words upon the night, she springs in terror to her feet. "What have I done—what have I said?" she cries; but he, as quick as thought, gathers her again within his close embrace, kisses the terror from her eyes, and 'neath his

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magic touch her fears grow faint, the warning voice of conscience dies.

He pleads and gently argues as they stray, unknown to her, towards the spot at which his boat lies moored. "The Law of Souls is first; the law of creeds, framed in darkened human hearts, is last; and why should it prevail?" She listens, all too willing to assent, she sees it clearly now. "Vows made in ignorance are of so little worth that breaking them is what? Only a recognition of the True."

The point is reached, he springs upon the wall still holding her hand fast, and turning, invites her to his side. She follows dreamily, scarce knowing what it is he asks—so full her mind is of contending thoughts, this struggle of her heart to meet her heart. Stooping, he unknots the cords from out the ring, then turning, moves to have her spring with him upon the now, narrow strip of sand.

A strange vibration seems to thrill the air; the moon, unobserved, has long since passed beyond the far clear line of the sea's blue. A motion seems to wake within the water at their feet; a crisp, clean breath floats lightly

Stray Leaves

through their hair; a soft sigh passes over all the grove. The tide is going out—the dawn is near.

But in those few short moments while his head was turned, a change has come to her—a change so subtle he cannot trace from whence it came or how it stays. But—it is there.

Freeing the hand he held, with an unconscious action of resolve, she clasps it tightly in her other one and standing motionless, with white face set as if carved out of stone she speaks four words—"I will not go." So simply can the whole dread weight of years to come, the whole great purpose of the ages past be spoken by the Human Will.

To all his prayers she only answers "No." To all his arguments she makes the same reply 'til, stung by the pain of thwarted, honest purpose, scorched by the fires of love he cannot stay, he cries—"You are afraid, you do not trust me!" She quivers at the thrust of his reproach but meeting with strange courage his beseeching eyes she answers quietly—"The day will come when you will understand. You

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cannot now but the time will be when these reproaches sounding in your ears will, to your heart as to mine now, be but the cry of a hurt child who seeks to heal, by pressing harder on the wounded place. If as you say, if as I feel, your soul and mine are one, then at some future dawn your eyes, as mine do now, will open wide and see that vows, though made in ignorance, can *only* be annulled by faithful keeping; not by flight, not by breaking, which would be the fruit of ignorance as dark as that which held the Soul when they were taken. A voice there is which seems to say to me that Light can only come when we have traversed patiently the long Dark. To sleep, to dream of day, is but to halt our steps awhile in self-indulgent rest; we wake, in the same place, our journey still to make, no nearer to our goal; and all the hours spent in building fancy's pictures, are but one more long delay to the still hungry Soul. Have patience; we shall yet meet the light of Dawn together."

Thus, like a prophetess she spoke; spoke far better than she knew; raised by that one great

Stray Leaves

effort for the right she had been taught, a moment within the kingdom of the True.

But on his ears in which the throbbing cry of love, love, love, kept beating hot and strong, her words fell only as do icy drops from mountain's snows upon a fire; they could not cool, they could not soothe nor quench, but disappeared in its fierce glowing depths devoured and yet not known of by the flame.

He would have made one last appeal but looking in her set, pale face, the words died on his lips.

Reckless, he sprang into his boat, took oars in hand and rowing without thought or pause, plunged on upon the track of the receding tide; nor did he look again to see her standing sibyl-like, upon the long, grey wall.

* * * *

Faithfully she kept her vow; her hair grew grey and much esteemed she was, in its fulfillment. Called, "Of the Stainless Soul," with reverence were her counsels sought, in gratitude obeyed; and those who looked into her

Third Leaf

patient face exclaimed:—"Peace is most surely written there"—so little does one human heart perceive the secret springs of others' lives; for, *peace* she never knew.

She kept her vow, never passed beyond the walls, never left the scented grove, ne'er raised her eyes again to look in any man's; her body pure indeed, according to the rules by which she held. But the azalias' bloom, the murmur of the sea, the path, the wall, spoke but one thing to her persistent memory; held but one form round which her dreams would weave sweet fancies, dear illusions, pictures; *these* were her life, her Soul's companions. And shall all those years of yearning go for naught? Have they no moulding power? Do they leave no lasting stamp upon the Soul?

And what of him?

Denied the sweet communion that he sought, from grave to gay, from toil to sport; in stern reserve, in passion's madest whirl, he sought to feed the heart's hunger ever there and died—sate perhaps with life's deverse ways, but still unsatisfied.

* * * *

Stray Leaves

Can human law then hold the Soul apart?
Can human creeds proclaim its union "sin"?
Should It repudiate its right Divine, to be-
come One again?

Who made the laws? Who built the creeds?
Whose faltering steps marked out the intri-
cate network of paths which cross and cross
again to form the substance upon which these
stand?

Shall It refuse to find an answer to the pro-
blem it has helped to frame? *Can* it find peace
until it sees the light of Wisdom shining
from behind. Can It *know* love indeed, be-
fore that day when, looking in the mirror of
the Heart it sees all others as its Self—its Self
as They?

REVERIE

How strange, how intricate, and yet how simple life becomes, when once the Soul remembers.

A whisper here, a passing glimpse; a look exchanged, a hand clasp there; and, as a bit of melody unheard for years, an odor familiar to childhood's days will bring to mind some incident, some habit, some accustomed round long since forgotten; so these, with instant clearness may recall the face of friends, a mutual purpose, a climatic struggle; or some peaceful hour spent together in those far distant times when, although other than we are now, yet, even as now, seeking to unravel the massed strands of fate which we have tangled in our blind flutterings here and there; our endeavors by the "touch with this and that" to resolve the mystery—I AM, by coming close

Stray Leaves

to THOU, THINE, MINE, OURS—WE—and where some common answer has been reached, if only to the first figure of the sum; by war, by peace, by love, by hate, by soul's communion—a mark we set upon our Record Book which times, which ages never can efface.

Then is made clear the dynamic, subtle power of thought, of motive. Then is perceived the unfailing, true relation of act to purpose. Then will appear where lay the flaw between the thought, word and deed; that whether it were recognized or not, it has striven within the Soul's experience, until a perfect balance should be reached. For, in the purposes of that Divine which is the Soul's Accomplishment—simplicity, directness, understanding, are as the "tonic" of a perfect scale, whereby it mounts and mounts through vast progressions, to harmonies yet undreamed of by the waiting world.

So, where to the Soul which still asleep remembers nothing, this present life seems but a chaos of events beginning nowhere and, but in rare instances, leading definitely to an end;

Third Leaf

to the Soul which truly lives, whose eyes are open, each incident, each "new acquaintance," may suddenly stand out as a bar in the symphony we've wrought together. The eyes we meet for the "first time," may be of a comrade of the long gone by; the work we do, the outcome of our purposes in ages past; the perfect union and communion of two souls, the dawn of a bright day which they shall know, having traversed patiently "the long Dark" of ignorance, of misconception, fear, and doubt; and the bitter tears they shed along the way, held in Wisdom's golden cup, are the sacrificial draught which, if once drained, becomes the magic philter so long sought in vain, whereby passion turns to love—love, to COMPASSION whose waters pouring into the waiting Heart there REST—an exhaustless spring of heavenly sweetness from which if any drink, they can never thirst again.



FOURTH LEAF

“The Pupil must regain *the child-state he has lost* 'ere the first sound can fall upon his ear.”

VOICE OF THE SILENCE

FOURTH LEAF

Down, down, down a narrow, stone-cut stair; so dark one could not see one's hand before one's face save for the ruddy flare of a torch which, in the stillness of this almost airless space, scarcely flickers. The torch is born by a boy not more than twelve years old, to light the steps of One who follows close behind.

Down, down, down; will the stairway never end? Even to the child who has traveled its full length before, the way seems long; what must it be to him who follows?

Down, down, down; this must lead to the very bowels of the earth. The child turns with a warning gesture but no word, and suddenly extinguishes the torch. The last part of the way is covered in Stygian darkness.

In the dense silence broken only by the

Stray Leaves

ghostly sound of their own footfalls, even the child's brave heart, thrills with a kind of fear, although he knows the end is Light. He knocks upon an unseen door; noiselessly it opens and they step within a vast, high-roofed hall. They stand in the presence of the BROTHERS.

Silently They rise, these great, white-robed forms; silently they stand as the Boy Guide, taking the candidate by the hand, leads him to a spot marked out by mystic symbols where he shall wait, and then glides softly back to his place beside the door.

The hall is luminous, but from whence the light, none could discern. It seems to pervade the very atmosphere; to be present everywhere; steady, still, overpowering; not in its volume but in its nature, for though subdued, unglaring—it has *life*.

The Boy drops his eyes. He has no part in this, save the secret of the covered way o'er which he guides and guides, those who *may* face the light, who may “pass on;” his only work, his only privilege—is *this*.

The silence seems as endless as the stair;

Fourth Leaf

the light becomes as awful to the waiting soul as was the darkness to the quick-beating heart. Then, from where he sits at the far end, upon a chair of marvelous workmanship, the MASTER rises; and about him glows a radiance indescribable, awe-inspiring; and all the white-robed BROTHERS pronounce as in one mighty chord, a Word which sounds and sounds again, out, as it would seem, in waves on waves vibrating to the very limit of the Limitless.

The Boy beside the door trembling, ecstatic, overpowered, falls upon his face. He rises, the MASTER lifts his hand in benediction, and turning, the child passes silently through the noiseless-moving door, his duty done, approved. And this was all.

FIFTH LEAF

“Think not that breaking bone, that rending flesh and muscle, unites thee to thy ‘silent Self’. Think not that when the sins of thy gross form are conquered, O Victim of thy Shadows, thy duty is accomplished by nature and by man.”

“The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life—has lived in vain.”

“Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race and kin, to friend and foe—.”

THE TWO PATHS

FIFTH LEAF

A jagged wall of reddish rock rising unfriendly from a narrow strip of sand, reflected in a pool, turbid, unrefreshing.

Where has Love gone?—How far he must have flown that e'en one spot upon this little Ball should be so lonely, so deserted, harsh, unfriendly.

The rocks are softened only by drifted sand, borne here as, through the narrow gorge now and again, the hot simoom comes rushing from the desert just beyond. The desert!—even it has not been left so friendless. Here and there the palm trees wave, the soft grass sways beside some limpid pool or bubbling spring, whose secret source must hide somewhere close to the desert's heart. But this place, where e'en the sun can shine but for an hour or two each day, closed from any breath

Stray Leaves

of heaven's pure airs save at the very peak of its rugged almost hopeless height, no flower blooms, no herbage dares to struggle faintly through the hungry sand save in a stunted fringe close down at the muddy water's edge. Not even birds will halt awhile. Some weaklings growing faint on the long journey they must take, loose heart at times and sink exhausted on a rocky ledge, to rest. Poor foolish birds—their rest means *death!* Their stronger comrades speeding fast across the dreary, love-forgotten spot, rather to die upon the wide-spreading desert sands than here, are soon lost to sight, and hope and courage fail the timid little hearts to take up their flight again.

Can any living thing have chosen such a place for any purpose and call its fulfilment *life?* Yet such must be for, toiling painfully along, leaning upon a staff, a little wallet hanging from the cord which binds the loin-cloth upon his wasted form—there comes One who seems to have grown so much a part of this lone spot, that almost he might be a bit of

Fifth Leaf

sandstone rock by some strange chance given life, and motion, and the look of man.

What brings him here—there is naught to find? See how well he seems to know each step upon the way. He even notes what may to him be land-marks; while to another, each jagged form seems but a repetition of the last.

He reaches a spot at which he turns and slowly, very slowly, begins to climb. Up, up, and up—and now 'tis clear there is a thread of pathway worn along the rocky, frowning face—worn by his feet. How many, many times he must have traveled it! Poor wasted form, poor shrunken heart, striving in this awful solitude to unlock by patience, loneliness and prayer, the door of his own soul! He reaches a hollow at the pathway's end, dug out with rude implements by his own patient hands to serve him as a shelter of a sort.

The charred and now dead embers of a fire lie in the middle of this space; a ragged bit of cloth heaped in one corner, must be his bed, if ever he yield to so great a weakness as to rest his bent old limbs upon a softer couch than the rough rock floor. A little brazen bowl, a skin

Stray Leaves

for water—these are the furnishings of his retreat.

Muttering, he takes the wallet from its cord and flings it down. Far has he gone and waited long to gather up a few stray dates spilled from the glutted sacks borne across the desert by the camel-trains. A rich oasis lies quite close to the entrance of this gorge; but even there he dare not go, lest he be tempted to enjoy a draught of its clear waters, the taste of its rich fruits flung generously about by Nature's ample, loving hand.

With bits of flint he starts his fire. The sun has long since left the place and a dense, strange chill has settled everywhere; his poor old limbs are trembling with the cold. Yet the fire is no indulgence, for his purpose is quite other than the search for comfort.

The fire grows and lives but he dares not look upon its friendly flame lest it should cheer him. With eyes cast down and muttered invocations, he takes his little brazen bowl and prepares his offering; then, the blaze having died down, leaving a bed of red, live coals, he sets the bowl upon it—and the sweet perfume

Fifth Leaf

of his sacrifice rises to fill the little cave, passes out into the lonely gorge, and mounting ever higher is wafted to the skies; whilst he, in ecstasy of pain and renunciation of what he fears is *Sin*—knows not for all his prayer, his searching, his self-blinded service, that the very heart of it is *Love*; which he in ignorance and folly has mismade *Passion*.

* * * *

Will the Soul never learn? How, long, how long it makes the way! 'Tis all so simple! Yet, the stumbling and the struggle much avail; for each error holds the seed of future victory; and the sacrifice though made in ignorance, where the purpose is to seek the True, must surely at some point of the tear-sodden Path, reveal at last, the Secret Shrine where in ever-present joy, sits LOVE, the heavenly mystery.

SIXTH LEAF

“The Universe exists for the experience of
the Soul.”

ALCHEMICAL AXIOM

SIXTH LEAF

Spring!

Wakening life. The Earth hungering for the seeds which she shall nurse and foster that they may learn the joy of growth and air and blessed rain and sun.

The trees are full awake and could you hear it, their juices sing a hymn of praise as mounting they give birth to fresh green leaves and plan the blooms and fruits that must so surely follow, with the help of Ceres and Apollo.

The brown fields ploughed but yesterday, stand ready for man's help nor must he tarry. Great is his responsibility since he has coerced them to his will and forced them to produce nought but weeds and brambles save he help them to a better purpose now.

The little village, of some forty one-roomed homes, built of soft earth hardened to a ce-

Stray Leaves

ment like stone, is astir. The men are in the fields, stripped save for a loin-cloth and a wide rush woven hat; the women at their work within the house, work made up of so many little things.

The soft earth floor must be smoothed over and all trace of crossing feet wiped out. The table of a fine hard wood, must be well scrubbed with sand and all the stains of wine and oil and fruit cleaned quite away. The sleeping-mats of rushes, lying along the sides of the one room with their coverings of skins—for the nights are still quite cool—must be laid out upon the grass awhile that the sun and air may purify them and then rolled up and stacked away where they belong, till night again. Fresh flowers must be brought to deck the little shrine standing in every house where it may be saluted from the entrance door. A fresh lamp filled with oil and the wick transferred to it with the greatest care, that the flame shall not go out. Then the cooking of the noon-day meal and all those other details of a home, be it large or small, of any race, or clime, or age.

Sixth Leaf

Along the road whose side the village houses fringe, a slight, girlish figure bounds; the very type she seems, of the buoyancy and vigorous, early life of this spring day. Now and again she sings a snatch of song or breaks into a run or dances lightly over the stony way; yet for all her careless aspect her purpose is well defined.

The first care in her day is the service of the shrine just as with her brother, the smoke of his burnt offering curls straight and blue from the midst of his brown field's breast, before one seed is placed within the waiting furrows. Others may find the household cares supreme, or planting best before the early dews have been drawn off by Apollo's thirsty rays. Not so these two. Should they not first recognize and thank the gracious mother of the fields, the patron of their house, the faithful watcher over all whose earthly parents are no more? Ah! Mother Ceres, most gracious and most tender of the Gods, those who are loved by Thee can lack for nothing; and shall they not rejoice in thy sweet service?

Such thoughts as these may flit athwart the

Stray Leaves

fancy of the tripping girl; but she is all intent to reach the spot she knows, upon the margin of the brook, where grow in chaste confusion the early flowers of the Spring.

Some seven miles away there stands a hill toward which this roadway leads, crowned by a rough wall and ruder citadel, outlined against a sky so blue it seems almost a silken curtain hung behind. The girl takes note of this yet how should she guess that these rough beginnings are the corner-stone of a future empire which shall rule the world. She takes note, and dwells a little upon how it may seem behind those walls; but her attention quickly flies to something nearer; for she has come upon her wild, self-planted garden.

Forget-me-nots here crowd the brook's moist margin; the blue of heaven has painted their soft eyes; their rosy buds speak of the dawn of life? of day? the year?—'tis all the same; joyous, exultant, a promise of what may be. Purple violets hide in dewy, playful shyness neath their spreading leaves or nestle close to the forget-me-nots as though to say: "Now which of us is which—say, mortal, can

Sixth Leaf

you tell? The shrines in this fair land need never lack for offerings while we are here; for together we are Hope and Promise; and these are given to mortals by the Gods: therefore 'tis fit that we should be returned to our own place—the door of Paradise—and on the shrine breath our sweet prayers with thine, to Her who holds us in Her bosom through all the dark months of the year." And as she gathers, they sway and jostle whispering "Pick me—and me—and me"'til she has filled her hands with more than she can need. Then kissing those near by which she must leave behind; promising faithfully to return "to-morrow"; she turns her back upon the hill, its frowning crest, its azure canopy, and dances back to her own home, which is the last house at this end of the village.

Straight through the wide open door, to where the Altar with its delicately cut stone figure, stands against the wall, she lays the flowers at the feet of the smiling, benignant Goddess and turns with a heart of peace to take up her daily tasks.

To facilitate her movements she draws the

Stray Leaves

skirt of her one garment up somewhat, through the girdle which she wears, clasped with bronze, its curiously wrought straps passing over the shoulders to return around the waist. Her bare feet patter lightly here and there and as if by magic, the disorder of the night is changed into the simple order of the day.

Then she turns her attention to the hearth where the various implements of bronze or baked earth lie scattered, and begins to place them in their proper order.

In these houses the hearth holds the place of honor in the center of the room, while a round opening in the roof serves for chimney. Passing over a rude wheel hung from bronze brackets set in this opening, the pot-hook chain with its great bronze pot swings above the fire.

'Tis to the pot she first gives her care. Stopping only to pick up a little rush mat, very thick and soft, which her brother has woven, that she may kneel with comfort at her work, she bears the pot outside the door and scrubs it well with sand and water from the spring;

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then trips back with it and places it in its own socket on the hearth.

She loves this hearth; 'tis a source of unfailing admiration for, in the cool winter evenings, her brother had cut a border all around of fruits and flowers and animals. It mattered not that she did not like to ask just what creatures of their woods and fields all these might be; they were animals, that she could see; and it was very wonderful that he cut them out of stone.

The pot in place, its hook and chain drawn over and fastened to a staple at one side somewhat above her head upon the wall, and the other vessels cleaned and set in order, she sees by the line of sunlight on the floor (so near the door-sill that it must very soon pass out) the day has come to noon.

With her little rush mat and her skirt turned well above her knees, she kneels to blow the smouldering embers into life and prepare the meal her brother will be eager for now very soon. Only some lentils boiled and salted very little—for salt is hard to get—some bits of dough which she prepares, baked

Stray Leaves

in the hot ashes; a vial of oil to dress these with; yet it all seems so good she wishes her brother would hurry, for she is hungry and she knows he must be too.

Again she kneels to draw the cakes from out the ashes, the lentils from the fire; so eager she cannot take time to fasten back a lock of red gold hair which will fall across her face just as she wants to see. She kneels—and stops—one cake but half drawn from the fire. What is this she feels? She sits upon her heels, every sense alert; she drags the rush mat from under her tender knees and presses their smooth white domes upon the earthen floor. Her face flushes and pales—the knees are not the messengers she needs; she presses the palms of her hands upon the floor, then stooping lower, lays her ear upon it. This tells the truth—there is no mistaking now—'tis not an earthquake but the approach of many horses which cause the earth to tremble. She knows the direction too—along the road from that frowning battlemented hill. What do they want here? Their passing bodes no good, their stopping, certain ill. Well does she

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know how like hawks they've swept down upon outlying towns and farms! Where is her brother! Has he not heard! She springs to the door—along the side of the little house from where she can see him in his field, shrieks to him, he pays no heed. He too is bending with his ear upon the ground—ah—he has heard! She sees his lithe form straighten, she sees the look upon his face as quickly gathering his peaceful implements he turns and runs swiftly towards her. That is enough—she does not tarry; but entering the house takes down from where it hangs upon the wall, their father's rusty sword, tearing her hands in her hurried efforts to unclasp the sharp-tined buckles. She is ready for him as he enters. Throwing his tools aside, he helps her clasp the stiff old belt about his naked waist.

No words are spoken but they note the young men running from the fields on every hand; and by the time the belt is fastened and the youth has drawn his weapon and glanced it over, a party of his comrades—equipped like himself or still in the act of fastening their buckles—come running toward this end

Stray Leaves

of the village. He steps quickly to meet them; she, following at a little distance, intent, while the young men discuss the possibilities and their means of defense if such should prove necessary.

The shaking of the earth which has brought them all together has now developed to the distinct clatter of many hoofs and looking down the road, there can be clearly distinguished the clouds of dust thrown up by galloping horses and through it, under that brilliant sun, the glint of helm, of spear, of shield and cuirass. This is not a friendly party.

The sight decides action. Springing back into the house, the brother begins to haul down the long pot-hook chain, while his fellows rush off to do the same. For the first time he speaks to her;—"Little sister you cannot stay here—the house stands alone and I could not defend it without help. 'Tis not our goods they want, 'tis ourselves and you, my sister—oh my sister!"—almost with a sob he speaks it "you know the fate." She bows her head; she knows only too well. "Come"—he winds the heavy chain about him and seizes

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her by the hand. "Come! Be brave little one, we may be able to stand, but I must leave you safe with the other women first—we have but one chance." Thus he speaks, panting, as they speed along the road towards that part of the village where the houses stand close together. She utters not a word but already she feels his death stroke piercing through her heart. To make a stand! Others have done that before; the end was always the same. But she will not let him know her fears, she will not say a word or even let him see her face, lest the terror which she knows is written there should shake his nerve.

With a hasty kiss, he leaves her there among the huddled, terror stricken women, and hastens back to where the young men are hastily constructing a check—weak though it may be, but a check, which may give them a slight advantage—of the pot-chains they have gathered, fastened as securely as time will permit, between two houses facing across the village street. The chains are set close together; some, longer than the rest, hastily woven through the level strands the better to resist

Stray Leaves

the shock of horse so rapidly approaching as now to show the features of the riders and all the details of their full accoutrement.

So, behind their fragile fortress the naked youths take stand, their rusty blades in hand, furious, determined, hopeless.

A sudden rush—a laughing battle cry—a cloud of blinding dust, a half smothered invocation to the God of Life and Justice—the shock of horse against the netted chains, the clatter of their falling riders, furious exclamations of surprise and rage, keen filing of swords between the protecting chains, piercing here, gashing there; men, horses, anything to build up a barrier between themselves and their dread foes.

Short-lived success! The attacking party retreat for a moment to escape the blinding dust, the surge of men and horses heaped in front, to take in clearly the situation. Why it is nothing! They care no more for dying comrades than for dying foes; the thing they want is all.

Another rush the fragile chains give way—and the end is just what all the others were.

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What use for the old men to struggle out to help their dying sons, to save their trembling daughters? And yet they try! So strong within the parent heart the feeling that it must protect!

No longer can the women bear the terror and suspense; each believes she hears the voice of him dearest, calling her name in his death agony. Reckless of everything save that they are needed; forgetting, women-like, all danger to themselves in this one thought, they come flocking towards the hapless scene of their undoing.

And she who danced so gayly to pick heaven's flowers at the dawn—now bathes her feet in the blood of those who were her friends, and knows it not. She seeks for One. The love between these two was such as few have known. She had no lover, he no sweetheart; each to the other, was the world.

She finds him; tangled among the broken chains, close to the last warrior he has slain; his sword still held in iron grip, though death is veiling his face in grey and the great wounds he does not think of, show his fate is sealed.

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With a wordless cry she flings herself across his breast; kisses him—talks to him—brushes the damp hair from his brow—tears a strip from her garment and strives to bind the hopeless wounds. He lives enough to look at her; and all the love of their young life together, all the fire of his longing to protect, rise to his glazing eyes; to hold back for a moment death's finger-marks.

He whispers:—"Little sister take the sword." But as she stoops nearer to catch his words, a great hand seizes her girdle from behind, another, her gleaming mass of hair; and ruthlessly she is thrown across the saddle-bow of a rider whose face she cannot see, and borne shrieking from her Heart's Companion, along the road, her head hanging low on one side of the galloping horse, her blood-stained feet beating against his sinewy shoulder on the other; each blow but inciting him to greater speed, which racks her poor body as though it must surely break.

Madly she struggles to free herself, even to fling herself upon the road which flies below her head. Each well-known spot seen by her

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inverted eyes becomes a thing of horror, a fresh source of agony and despair. She tries to seize her captor's swinging scabbard and draw herself up, with some half mad idea in her whirling brain that by this means she may use his own weapon upon him. Vain efforts! His iron hand holds her girdle buckle fast and presses her back to her swinging with the horse's stride. And woven in with all these tortures, becoming each moment the keenest of them all, the thought and fear of outrage.

In all her free, clean, innocent existence, no impure thought had crossed her soul or cast a cloud upon the sweetness of her Spring. The tales she'd heard of evil done elsewhere, had filled her with a nameless dread, an aching pity; and now this thing had come to her! She must escape! She knows now why her brother said "the sword"—why had she waited to hear more? Where were the Gods? Could they look on and see their temple desecrated, their poor child tortured?

A patch of blue, a dash of violet—the murmur of the brook sounding softly even

Stray Leaves

through the drumming of her ears—her garden! Hope and Promise! Stretching her arms out toward the flying blossoms she cries aloud: —“Mother, blessed mother Ceres, help me! Let not thy temple be defiled! Help me Mother! Mother—!” And in the agony of her demand she raises herself almost to the level of the saddle. The horse, startled by her sudden cry, makes a mad plunge forward.

Her prayer is answered for, by the force of that great bound, her stiffened form flung sharply back, the slender neck is snapped, and the poor little body lies limp under the cruel hand still holding it.

* * * *

What are the signs of the Spring's fair coming? Who knows the secret hour when the Earth shall wake? What hand is laid upon the hard packed earth, what voice bids it make way for the nestling seeds to sprout and grow, held in her darkened bosom through all the long, grey months of Winter's reign, asleep? What strange, what mag-

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ic current rouses them to a sense that somewhere in their hearts is life?—that somewhere beyond this pressing waste of soil are light, and air, and rain? Can any tell?

By what signs shall we know the waking Soul? May not its darkest hour, its greatest failure, be born as the quiverings within the seed, from the close presence of its dawn?

Dropped on the surface of the sodden spheres, on that chill Autumn when the Gates of Paradise were left behind; it sinks deeper and deeper as do the seeds, and the soil of darkness and illusion packs closer, ever closer round it; until that hour when at last, close to the Mother heart, it wakes to find that its long Winter's past, the dawn of Spring is close at hand. Yet how is this—can any tell?

Truly each waking Soul knows well the secret. It is the same for all. Let but one ray of that which holds within the True, pierce through the packed crust of Earth's dense darkness, bringing with it the sure conviction that purity, that truth, that innocence are of the Law; not passing shadows without substance, as some would claim in these latter

Stray Leaves

days; and however great the pain may be to the bursting husk and feeble, struggling shoot, to pierce beyond the veil of ignorance, creed, false pride, false modesty, false dignity, false hopes, which have so long oppressed it, the Soul must rise at last into those pure, perfect airs where searching becomes finding, where to Be, is to KNOW.

* * * *

REVERIE

We watch the changing seasons come and go; we see the verdure waken, flourish, flower, bear seed and die?—sleep?—feeling that somewhere there is a lesson here, or better still, a lovely tale whose unfoldment, could we but touch the spring, would be more beautiful than any yet enscribed by poet's pen, or sung in snatches by earth's passing seers.

A teacher here and there whose æolian strings of thought are tuned more nearly than the mass, to the great harp o'er which heaven's breezes play, has passed the vibration on of this great song in hint, in metaphor, in parable; and yet our dull ears will not seem to hear, our unstrung hearts refuse to answer.

The humble Nazarine, the patient Buddha, the wise Confucius, and even misguided, war-

Stray Leaves

like Mohammed, have sensed this mystery—this link of gold which holds all phases of development and all the changing lives of spheres and souls within one perfect order, one great fellowship—so that, could we but see and hold the process of the tiny seed's awakening, growth, unfoldment, its sources of inspiration and sustaining, we should have come upon the type of all the working of that Good Law to which great and small, human or divine, are but the steps made, tone by tone, of its universal harmony.

'Tis not alone the waking to a sense of latent life that forces the tiny seed to burst its scaly husk and push its tender shoot up through the surrounding soil. It must have lain for just so long, asleep; it must have suffered from just so much restriction—according to its nature. The melting snows of the northern Winter, or the soaking rains of the tropics' clime must have sunk down to circle and feed it, carrying something of the vital essence of the sun and air whose messengers they are. Nor is this all. These may suckle the little struggling

Sixth Leaf

thing but, without the sun's warm rays to call it forth from above, it would only stir within its prison house and truly die, and rot, and pass away.

But once waken in it this desire to fight its way through all impediments to that it feels divine, although as yet it cannot see and stand to it face to face, it is a tender, fragile, delicately-tissued form that pushes up through the hard earth which had imprisoned the firm seed; not a harsh, stiff, iron point, which battles fiercely and tears its way in sheer self-will and harsh determination.

And after it has met the Spring sun's kiss, what is its life?

A joyous growth, and ecstatic expansion toward the source of inspiration. But its roots lie deep within the loam made up of all its dead and transformed pasts. From these it draws the sustenance of its form and the instinct of its class, while the ideal of its bloom and its perfection, descends upon it from the Lord towards whom it lifts its fluttering hands in gratitude and worship.

Is not this the story of the Soul? Draw-

Stray Leaves

ing nourishment from the loam (experience) made up of fallen leaves of many lives—can any richer soil be found?—its inspiration from the source divine which lifts and gently draws at last, all things to itself.

Storms of wind and rain may come in Spring, in Summer; but the plant need not lose heart for, once its purpose is defined, these only help to increase its strength and dignify its life.

And stopping thus to view the workings of the Law, I see “my Soul and I,” on that harsh day when death saved us from what had been a far more bitter fate, as just two tender shoots growing from one parent root; having all about us the earth of what we’d been; drawing from this store-house the food we long had failed to find and, in ourselves the promise of future growth in that, to us, simplicity, innocence and courage, were our expression of the True.

* * * *

SEVENTH LEAF

“Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of the mind.”

THE SEVEN PORTALS

“True knowledge is the flour, false learning is the husk. If thou would'st eat the bread of Wisdom, thy flour thou hast to knead with Immortality's clear waters. But if thou kneadest husks with Illusion's dew, thou canst create but food for the black doves of death, the birds of birth, decay, and sorrow.”

THE TWO PATHS

Ah Ah My Soul

...! Ah Ah. While are thy feet! ... Ah

Ahi Ahi .. They tread! Ahi Ahi My heart's pain.

ment! Ahi Ah Ah My Soul!

Ah Ah Dance on..

.....! Ah!

SEVENTH LEAF

Ah—— Ah——

My Soul.

Ah—— Ah——

White are thy feet!

Ah——

Ahi—— Ahi——

They tread!

Ahi—— Ahi——

My heart's pavement!

Ahi——

Ah—— Ah——

My Soul.

Ah—— Ah——

Dance on!

Ah——

Stray Leaves

Like snow are the palace's arches; like frost-work their traceries. Polished the marble floors—mirrors for dancing feet—soft are the carpets. Swarthy the lords who sit watching the dancers; sweet is the music.

See how they come—houris, trooping to please, lords of the palaces, lords of the desert, princes from distant lands all here assembled.

Rich are the perfumes; attar of roses, jasmine, sandalwood; flowers in the hair of the enthralling dancers.

“Ah— Ah— My Soul! White are thy feet!”

Keep time musicians, let them dance faster! Where is the queen of all, that the Prince yonder, sitting so silent, unmoved, may be startled?

Here, here she comes! Now nobles, hold your hearts well for she's mine, I have bought her! White as the snow of her far distant mountains, golden her hair as their peaks at the sunrise; blue are her eyes as the flowers of their valleys. Hold your hearts well, lest they break at her coming.

Seventh Leaf

“Ahi— Ahi— Ahi— the poor captive!”

Low sinks the music as breezes through palm trees; sad is the strain the captive must dance to; lowered her white lids, the blue eyes are hidden lest the tears falling should anger her Buyer. Here she sways, there she sways, wildly applauded.

“Ahi— Ahi— Thy feet tread my heart’s pavement!”

Eyes blue as hers fastened upon her; set in a face which though swarthy grows tender.

“Ah— Ah— My Soul! Dance on!”

Blue eyes still gazing upon her enraptured; love light they flash to her, flash through the fringed veil of her lids so downcast; ’til her lids lifting to sudden responding, eye speaks to eye and heart speaks to heart.

Ah, her heart’s captive!

Quick to her cheek flows the warm red of roses, red of the roses that bloom in the Summer, sighs fill her breast ’neath its gossamer mantle; sighs she would stifle, sighs as she dances.

Flushed is the face of the Prince who’d

Stray Leaves

been silent, bright are his eyes though no word is spoken.

Quick to her side, with one bound from reclining; about her his arm flung as he stops her dancing. Strange are his tones as he cries:—"She is mine, she is mine! Nor care I who bought her!"

Fiercely the Lord of the palace arises, fiercely he calls on his friends to stand by him.

"What is this insult you fling on my shelter! What this betrayal of salt you have eaten! Loose your hold—she is mine; I have bought her!"

"Not so," the silent Prince eagerly answers. "Not so," he exclaims, "for I too can purchase. You may not deny to a guest his heart's wishes. Hear me, I'll pay to the half of my kingdom. She is mine before heaven; I have looked and I know her!"

Fierce the dispute which now is arising; jargon of voices, keen weapons flashing.

"You may not refuse him," cry some; others, "Kill the bold stranger!"

Vainly he strives to be heard in the tumult;

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as they press on him springs his sword from its scabbard. "Fools," he cries; "to demur and dispute and not listen. Fools! Follow who can and pay me her ransom!"

Swift as the desert's simoon he has caught her, close to his breast in his strong arms' safe shelter. Out through the arches he passes so quickly, scarcely they know he has gone. Astounded they are at his daring.

Then a wild cry of rage and they all follow after. The white steed that bore him is gone; and only the clatter of hoofs in the distance is left them as farewell or guide for their hunting.

Small use to pursue when their steeds are ready, yet furious they mount and determined to follow press on o'er the road's moonlit surface, on—on!

The clatter of hoofs grow fainter and fainter; the steed knows its master, does it know its mistress? Its great heart beats high, rejoicing to speed o'er the pathways it's traveled a stranger; for it knows that "home" lies at the end of this journey, and the voice that it loves encourages ever while the cries

Stray Leaves

from behind, growing faint in the distance
make it lift its head high with the pride of its
prowess.

Ah, gallant horse, gallant heart! True as
none other save these which it bears to their
far distant haven of peace, love and rest which
they have long sighed for, where all pains
forgotten, joy only shall triumph!

* * * *

O white Dove, my Bride, draw near;
Whisper thy low note to me that I may hear
The music of thy voice, be wrapt in dreams
with thee;
O White Dove, my Bride!
At thy step's light fall I glow, I live, I start
in ecstasy
To greet thee, to hold thee in my arms! To
what shall I liken thee—
How describe thy charms? Nought is there
beneath Ahura Mazda's day
That can be thy counterpart; nay,
All that's lovely in earth, air or sky,
In ocean's blue expanse or hidden caves, has
rendered tribute to thy charms

Seventh Leaf

And must, for aye.

For ah thy Soul, thy Soul is deep, and wide,
and sweet—

My treasure-house, my land, my sea!

There would I dwell leaving life's frenzied
dream

For those realities which thy Soul holds for
me.

Flower of the Pomegranate, come! Darest
thou vie

With lips which know but to speak love's
poetry,

To sigh out heaven's blessings?

Tall lilies swaying by the fountain's brim,
stand ye erect as my Queen goes by.

Tall and fair ye are; but ye are bound to
earth, your perfume spending

Lavishly upon the garden's air while she,

Like Summer breezes o'er the flowers sigh-
ing, leaves benediction

Where e'er her tender feet in passing, press
the smallest thing.

Ah lilies, bow your heads before my Queen!

Rare odors of the forest trees, know ye the
sweetness of her breath,

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The perfume of her hair? Know ye the life
her kisses bring, the wealth they are
To those who may possess them?
Bid her press them upon your rough bark, as
on my lips, my cheeks, my hair,
And know for one short moment what life is,
that she imparts.
Yet fly not far White Dove, my Bride; stay,
stay!
Mine, mine thou art; and I but live when
thou art near—
Must die, if thou depart.

* * * *

“Great Sifter” is the name of the Heart Doctrine.

Let us pause my Soul, let us consider what deeds are great, what promptings true.

Surely the Soul may claim its own? Can any hand in justice stay its meeting? In what lay hidden that subtle flaw which, marring the crystal purity we sought, grew ever greater 'til with sudden snap the Soul was rent again asunder at the very moment when

Seventh Leaf

it seemed united. The tiny pebble which, cast into the placid bosom of the Law's calm sea, caused ripples to widen, widen ever to Its vast verge, that only in returning could find quiet once again.

Truly the Soul may claim its own; it must, indeed, be One again at last. But, can unity be gained through strife? Can true peace be won through blind aggressiveness? Can wilful disregard of others' rights establish ours? Nay! For peace aggressively declared, but surely sows the seed of future wars; self-will, but faster breeds the spawn of selfishness; the disregard of others' claims, slight though they be, but checks them for the time—the while they gather strength to mar the future, to destroy the labors of the past.

Then see my Soul. Had we but paused to hear Truth's voice proclaim the justice due to him who "bought," had we but stayed to pay that debt, there had been no flaw; the blighted seed had not been sown anew, the ripples had not spread, whispering to the Law our thoughtlessness, our reckless disregard of Its decrees.

Stray Leaves

Far have we wandered since, in our ignorance we deemed our journey done. And only now our eyes discern how the impetuous unreason of a moment so frayed the twisted strands of our true unity, as that they parted yet again to flutter aimlessly (?) upon the far-sighing breath of causes for a time.

* * * *

REVERIE

And so the chapter closes of waving palm,
thickets of rose, desert sands, or temple walls.
And now, the scene is changed to lands of
frost and snow; to rock-bound coasts and
dangerous seas; to lands of effort, struggle,
little ease, much longing, seeking—finding?
Ah, what's to be the accomplishment of these?

My Soul, my Soul! our errors hedge us
round. Our virtues—so few as yet—stand
by and wait their opportunity for larger
growth.

Too quickly do the Soul's blossoms bud and
bloom for good and ill where nature's ample
hand gives freely of her treasures to the
frame. Too easily the heart is lead and
swayed by loves born of scented breezes, by
passions rushing across the Soul's desert places
to bury under shifting sand the fair cities she

Stray Leaves

has builded. Buried so deep, they are long forgotten; but, their treasure must some time see light of day again, when, grown older, wiser, by the frost's restriction, we've gathered strength and courage to delve and find our rich stores so long hidden.

'Tis not enough to be a child, living from day to day, loving, hating, happy, angered. Nay, we must grow to man's estate; develop fortitude, patience, courage, DISCERNMENT; and these are only won through lessons learned of cramping hardship prolonged, prolonged until such time as we may find that life is Real, that we are IT and finding, seize our vessel's helm—the vessel of the Heart—with steady hand, to steer it safely to those shores of Truth which are our own.

* * * *

EIGHTH LEAF

“ ‘The cloak of darkness is upon the deep of matter; within its folds I struggle. Beneath my gaze it deepens, Lord; it is dispelled beneath the waving of thy hand. A shadow moveth, creeping like the stretching serpent coils. . . . It grows, swells out, and disappears in darkness.’ ”

“It is the shadow of thyself outside the Path, cast on the darkness of thy sins.”

THE SEVEN PORTALS

EIGHTH LEAF

Ice-bound the fjord; the cliffs stand high
and dark around.

Crackles the ice under the North-King's bitter
breath.

Gleams and glistens the frozen surface beneath
the far sun's cold white rays, which
warm not.

Stark are the pines beneath their snowy
mantles, the forest trees are dead and leaf-
less.

Great Silence broods o'er all the land; so
still that e'en the noiseless moving things are
heard if they but stir. But they are wise—
they sleep.

'Tis man alone who dares tempt sound in
the white spaces. 'Tis man alone who dares
with laugh and shout, to mock the awful calm
that holds the fjord.

Stray Leaves

Is it not his to pleasure on in Summer days?
To battle with and master in the storm? Why
not his play-ground then, when held enslaved
by icy bonds?

True, man alone, seeking his pleasures or
his gains, defies the season's ordered march
and laughs at Nature's lessons of repose.

* * *

Ho there!—son of his father; see the boy
skimming and glancing across the green ice-
beds. Tall and fair; fair as Baldur the beau-
tiful; bold and free; bold as Wotan the
Wanderer. Fearless and daring, true son of
his father; fearless as Thor who laughs, as
his hammer flung far, strikes out lightning
and thunder. Who is the boy? 'Tis Oulf
the young Viking. He shouts with delight
at the mere strength he feels, as the blood
dances through veins blue as Summer skies.

Who is this, that beside him, tries in vain
to keep pace with his tireless skating? Dark
as Hunig; not like him strong, a warrior. No,
he is puny and small; pale-faced and halting

Eighth Leaf

. . . bitter his heart that he may not keep pace with his fellows in sports or in war; deep is the wound at Oulf's careless cry, "Come Foundling be merry. What man should spend all his days in the grove, with the priests, learning secrets? 'Tis better to laugh and to shout and to fight, as do Viking's." Sullen he answers, "I like not fighting, let beasts fight; I like not idle sports, they are for fools."

And so was brought forth in the light of the cold Winter sun, which warms not, the bitterness lurking between these; and the quarrel that morning saw, went on through the years, harsh and cold, bitter, . . . like the fjord's current fast bound neath its wintry mantle.

* * * *

Wind moans and sighs and shrieks about the "House." The fjord is free to work its own wild will. The northern sun throws a ruddy glow across its heaving bosom; but the hurrying clouds hide more and more his face; darken his smile.

Stray Leaves

Oh, but the wind is a fierce woer! . . .
and he is near at hand. His kisses raise a
tempest in the free fjord's depths and he
shouts to her, "Come on, come on to the open
sea. Let us play with the little ships and
make them dance and turn. This is the sport
the fjord and the wind may have together."
And the fjord laughs; it rises to the wind
and dashes in wild joy against the rocky
shore; . . . up, up it leaps and bathes
their set grey faces in sheets of foam.

Night!

Louder howls the wind, higher leaps the
fjord; terror, terror to him who creeps along
the pathway by the cliffs.

Here is a plaything for the storm. The
wind wraps him round; it holds him strug-
gling in its embrace; far down below the
fjord waits dark, eager, to hide him in its
depths.

Fiercely he struggles; but he is puny; the
wind is strong; the fjord is waiting. Ter-
ror, terror!

He calls aloud; dimly he sees the lights of
the "House" glimmer through the dark. He

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shouts . . . but who shall hear; the wind shouts too and hurls him over . . . down . . . to the fjord? He knows not.

Yet was his voice heard. The wind bore it with its wild sweep; flung it in the face of one who could hear; for he loved the storm; loved to battle with it; to laugh with it; to shout with and conquer it. What house could hold him on a night like this?

He heard the shout; and quick he thought, "Tis the Foundling; he has not come in." Then in his heart a tumult rose. "To help? Bah! he is so wise in secrets; let him say some magic word; let him quell the storm. Ha! ha! the puny Foundling! He has said, again and over, his power to conquer is more than mine. I can but fight as Vikings do; he can fight with spells and prayers and fire as do the priests. Let him fight his way; I will not go."

Does the storm sleep? So still, so still. Why?

In the stillness he listens; straining his ears he hears his own heart beat; straining his

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ears for what? A dull foot-fall on the cliff-path. No sound comes. Has he conquered, that other? Nay, was the wind weary; stopping alone to gather strength for this fierce blast which now rocks the "House" to its cellar; beats back the listener; shrieks in his ear,—“He is gone; I have mastered, . . .
. . . the fjord holds him.”

“Not gone, not gone to the fjord while I waited; not gone while I waited to laugh at his learning; poor puny Foundling, a toy of the wind I can master. I will find him.”

Through the darkness he rushes, his heart fierce and eager. Right or wrong? He cares not, he heeds not. Battling on through the storm which hungers to hold him; striving on through the blackness of night, unafraid; his sole guide the sound of the voice he had heard. Foot-sure, as the wolf that speeds to his den; no stop 'till he reaches the spot his keen ear had well fixed. He waits there
. . . and waits. Then, close to the edge he throws himself; he strives to pierce the blackness below, to the fjord, which he hears surging, booming, between the high

Eighth Leaf

cliffs. Keen every sense, alert. . . .
What is his guide? Is it scent like the wolf's?
Is it sight like the cat's which pierces the
dark? Who knows; he does not. He warily
creeps o'er the edge of the cliff and clamber-
ing down feels . . . feels for Some-
thing he knows has been caught on a ledge,
to rest there awhile 'til, waking from swoon it
shall stir, to roll over . . . down—
down! He turns sick at the thought.

He finds him; safely lifts on one arm;
then, slowly climbs back. Stumbling—well
nigh lost—safe again—panting, breathless,
o'er weighted, to the path which leads home.

Where the torches flare in the supper-hall
and the flames dance high from the great log
fire, the Mother waits. Where is her son;
what daring has seized on his heart this wild
night? Well she knows how the tempest calls
his dauntless soul forth, to battle and strive
and to master. She holds her heart steady.

But the other, whom as a babe, left alone,
she had saved from the terrors of war; why
should he tarry? Her heart yearns in pity
o'er the Foundling she had reared.

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Steps in the hall; a gust which all but quenches the torches; pale, tempest-tossed, in his arms the Foundling unconscious, her son stands before her; at her feet lays his burden.

"Mother, you love, I have brought him."

* * * *

At the prow of his good ship he stands, as she speeds o'er the Northern seas; the chant of the oarsmen, bending to their stroke, sounds in his ears. Crisp is the breeze filling the tough sail; the waters sparkle.

With his great hand he shades his eyes; his heart bounds strangely; for the far line of blue that comes nearer with each mighty stroke of the oarsmen, he knows well. On it his keen sight is fixed; he sees it change from blue to grey, from grey to green of trees, to brown of earth, to sandy beach, to cliffs that flank the fjord. The ship sweeps on.

A giant he; great limbs, great shoulders. Under his helm the hair gleams golden. Blue his eyes like the fjord in Summer. Tanned by

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the wind and sun; muscles as tough as oak;
strong as the Northern bear; still in his first
youth.

Now the oarsmen raise the home-chant;
his heart bounds forward, bounds far ahead;
it seeks the shore, it seeks those he loves.

Deep in the vessel's hold much treasure is
hidden. Many a stroke has he dealt to own
it; fiercely has he battled, much blood he has
shed. Rich stuff for the Mother, rare jewels
for "Her" to adorn herself with. "Her!"
His heart softens. Aye the Mother is noble
and strong, of much honor. But She! .

. . she is his life, his heart, his whole
being. Young and tender, gentle of mien.
In her eyes his soul wakes; in her heart he
rests from the fight and fierce striving; in
her soul he finds the gift of immortals. His
wife!

"Hush your song oarsmen, we draw near
the shore! Of our coming they shall know
nought 'til we stand before them. Great will
be the rejoicing; fires will be lighted; my peo-
ple will shout, 'He has come again . . .
our Chief, from beyond the dark waters; he

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has come with much honor, with glory and treasure!' We shall see how the fast-flying news will bring them flocking to hail the brave ones they wait for."

Grates the ship's keel on white sand of the fjord's bed; out springs the Chief, out spring the oarsmen, the warriors. Bidding them draw her up on the sandy beach, he strides landward. Up to their thighs in water the oarsmen, the warriors, seize the good ship with strong hands, to draw her forward. She shivers with joy at the home-coming.

Red, the early sun glows on the stone huts of the fisher-folk; straggles the foot-path over the dunes toward the "House;" its chimneys rise above them.

What is this! The song of the boatmen as they haul the ship ashore brings no stir to the fisher huts. All is still. Doors do not open; none come forward to greet the warriors. Oulf wonders. Then, a pale face looks out from a window; it draws back; the sheep-skin that covers the opening falls again. Oulf is angry.

"What do these fools fear; do they not

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know me? Why do none come to bear my message to those waiting?" He calls to a warrior, "Go rout these curs out; how dare they hang back when I come!"

Before the warrior reaches the hut which is nearest, a fisherman creeps out; he is afraid. Over the dunes from the house, comes One running. Running and stopping he comes; he reels; presses forward. The oarsmen, the warriors, murmur together; they are troubled.

Nearer the runner comes; Oulf knows no fear as he sees him; the warriors murmur together, "'Tis an ill homecoming." Oulf does not hear them; he is watching the runner. He knows him well; he is a house-man, long trusted. Pale is the man, his garments disordered; fear on his face is written; fear and despair. He falls at Oulf's feet; with his hands, clasps them. "Master," he mutters, "Master!" nor dares look up; on the sand he lies face downward. Then in Oulf's heart is born something, something he has never known before. Fear! . . . Fury, anger, rage, seize him. "Up, carl!" He shakes himself free from the man's grasp. "Up, speak—what

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is it?" The man closer creeps; raising his eyes in which horror is written; shuddering, gasping, "Master, kill me—I cannot speak it!—I cannot!" sinks down again.

Furious with dread Oulf cries to him, "Stand up dog, speak!" Kicks him away with his foot; for fierce is this nameless thing clutching his heart. Lifting himself, the man stammers again, "The Mistress—the Mistress—the Mother." He who had never known fear, now knows that it holds him. He speaks; almost a whisper:—"What of the Mother?" . . . "She is dead," the freeman answers.

As a great pine which many storms has weathered, by some fierce northern blast at last is bent, to rise again shuddering to its mighty crest; so Oulf shuddered throughout his great frame; with wide eyes stared at the freeman. Still he stood, and for long spoke no word. Then, "It is enough!"—for great was his love for the Mother. The houseman faltered again, "'Tis not all Master, the Mistress too is—dead."

Scarce had he spoken when Oulf furious,

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sprang forward. With his great hands he seized him; seized his throat; pressed it—pressed it! “You lie, carl! You lie! You lie!” Mad-dened he was with the pain, as a beast plunging from wounds; blind with the horror. He knew not what his hands held. Then his henchman strode forward. Mighty he was too. He struggled with Oulf’s madness; loosened the grip of his great hands; released the trembling servant, who sank half dead, at their feet. Like a man drunk with wine Oulf staggered; reeled backward to where the good ship was standing, leaned against her prow pale and trembling as a woman. Blood-red spots before his eyes were surging; in his ears the sound of the ocean; reason was returning.

Slowly sight came again; again he heard the words through him throbbing. “The Mistress too is dead.” Aye he heard them; but what meaning had they? He looked about for an answer. He saw the fisherfolk huddled together; he saw his oarsmen, his warriors, white-faced and silent; in their eyes he

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read the same message—"The Mistress too is dead."

Long was the silence. Stricken and white the Chief stood, like a gash struck in an oak by Thor's hammer— Then, "How?" he questioned, and waited— His henchman bade the man tell his story.

Heavily sighed the house-man; broken his voice as he took up his story. Silent the fisher-folk, silent the oarsmen, the warriors, who listened. Silent the henchman, deep was his sorrow; silent Oulf waited and listened, his good ship upheld him.

"Woe," said the house-man, "that to me should this task be allotted; woe that my eyes have beheld such a night and such carnage.

"Well you remember, O Oulf, the day you departed; well you remember the charge you laid on the Foundling; little you thought of the treachery lurking within his heart."

Then spoke the henchman:—"Twas the Lady, the Mother, who asked it; she loved him." "Yea," answered the house-man, "but the Mistress feared and distrusted."

Right well Oulf remembered her prayers

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and her tears and her pleading. Much she feared the Foundling, much she dreaded Oulf's going. But the Mother was old, she said she could no longer hold sway as of yore over men, over horses and cattle; over women and children. The Foundling was wise; the people would hear him. To her wishes Oulf yielded.

Well he remembered the day of their parting. The Mother stood stately and tall in the door-way; no age could bend her. The Foundling beside her dark, puny, unloving. Full in the sunlight his wife fair and gentle. Long braids of her golden hair fell o'er her shoulders; red were her eyes from the long night of weeping; gainst the blue of the robe which covered her white breast gleamed the small golden token, shaped like Thor's hammer; Oulf knew not all its meaning. As he strode towards the gate, with his stout warriors following, she ran down the steps for another farewell. She tripped; the Foundling sprang to aid her; quickly she thrust him aside and ran to Oulf's arms. She clung to him sobbing; she raised her great eyes to his;

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she plead with him not to go, not to leave her and the Mother. Almost his heart failed him; how could he leave her. Then fierce rose the pride of the Viking, the warrior. Should a man stop from wars, forsake his ship and the seas, for the tears of a woman? He kissed her and turning strode on fiercely, his men following.

Well Oulf remembered.

"Thou hadst not been long gone, O Oulf," the house-man continued, "when the Foundling much pride showed to us of the house. Long journeys he made 'mongst the people; what he said I know not. Then, when the Mother called for tribute they murmured; we heard it but she did not; she trusted the Foundling. Thou wert long away; he had time and to spare.

"One day he came to the Mother; the house she had given he liked not; he must dwell with us at the Great House. He came; his wife he left behind him; he came and went as he would; he talked with the Mistress; she liked it not; she turned from him; he was angry.

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“He came to the Mother; he said thou wert long gone; the people were grown weary ; they wished for a ruler, they wished for him to protect them. The Mother asked against whom did they seek protection. He did not answer. The Mother said:—‘Long have I ruled this people; ruled for my lord when he was fighting; ruled for my son when a babe, when a man and the seas called him.’ The Mother said:—‘I rule still.’ She turned and left the Foundling. Furious he was; sullen his looks; evil his bearing. We rejoiced that he might not rule; we rejoiced that the Mother had left him. . . . Too soon.

. . . After that much evil he did to the people; a shepherd he tortured that his flock had failed him. This came to the Mother’s ears; angry she was that her people should suffer. She sent for the Foundling. Stern was her bearing, sharp her reproof. ‘I saved you from death; have housed you, fed you, cared for you; you shall not torture my people; you shall not rule in my son’s stead; I rule.’ Again she left him. He said no word; black were his looks as he went out.

Stray Leaves

“Again Winter came with its long, dreary twilights. Heavy were the storms. The Mistress sat apart; she thought of the ship; she thought on her lord far away; greatly she pined for his coming, yet he came not.

“Then came the night of storm and despair.

. . . We were seated at supper; the storm howled without; the fire burned bright on the hearth. Heavily the storm shook the rafters; the torches flickered and flared. At our head sat the Mother; the Mistress beside her pale and silent. Our hearts were heavy for thy coming; we called for the bard; he should sing us a song of courage, a song of daring, a song of the great seas to cheer us. . . . He sang. As he sang came a cry from without, a great cry at the gate. Up we all started; we stood waiting. Into the hall rushed a trembling carl; panting, fearful, he flung himself at the Mother's feet. ‘Save yourselves,’ he cried, ‘they are coming, they are coming!’ Strong the Mother stood, tall, the Ruler. Calm as the fjord in Summer she questioned, ‘Who are coming? What dost thou fear, carl?’ The Mistress

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said nothing; she clasped and unclasped her hands. The carl answered, 'The Foundling has roused the people; he has taught them to hate thy rule; he has taught them the Chief is dead; he has said he is master; he has said he will take his own; the people follow him; they will no longer be ruled by a woman.'

"Fearless the Mother heard him. She had faced war before; fire, slaughter, pillage. Like a warrior she stood; she turned to us; she said, 'Make ready.' Swiftly we obeyed. Then the Mistress spoke. She said, 'What can we do, so few men and we women?' The Mother made answer, 'Go to thy room child, no place for thee is the scene of battle.'

"We seized our weapons; we fortified the house quickly; we stood ready. We had not long to wait; they came; they battered at the door; the voice of the Foundling called without. He would enter. The Mother bade us stand by; she stepped to the door; she threw it wide open; dauntless she stood in the glare of the torches; dauntless, bold, the Ruler; like Brunhild the Valkyr. She called

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to the Foundling; she spoke to the people; she bade them cease the uproar; she bade them return to their homes. Furious they yelled; they would not return; they would not be ruled by women; their Chief had gone over the dark water; they had found a man to lead them; him they would follow.

"Then the Foundling, in a voice soft as a woman's, spoke. 'You see, I but humor the people; they love me, they will follow. Yield and no harm shall come to you; no harm shall come to your house-men; no harm shall befall your women.'

"Furious, the Mother rose to her great height. 'This is my answer,' she said. Full on his dark face with her hand she struck him. 'Take it!' she cried, 'Forward my men, drive them back.'

"Long had we waited for her command; as one man we sprang forward; out through the doorway; rushed upon the Foundling; rushed upon the people; forty warriors well armed, fearless. We were used to arms; the people were not; carls they were, villagers, fisherfolk; dire was the confusion we wrought

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them; furious we sought to drive them back; eagerly we sought the Foundling. The Mother stood to cheer us on, at her side was the Mistress.

"Then from within the house came a shriek, a cry of terror. It made our hearts stand still. Through the great hall the women came flocking. 'We are undone!' they wailed, 'The house is burning, we are undone!'

"Of what followed little do I remember. Great was the bloodshed; terror to the women. The Mother seized a weapon; she fought like a warrior; the Mistress stood beside her white and rigid; she would not leave the Mother. The Foundling drew near; he laughed; with his hand he touched her, he spoke in her ear. As a dove who would save her young from the serpent, she turned; . . . she strove to repulse him. Rage filled my heart. I fought mightily to come near them. Now the house was in flames, lurid was their glow on the pale night. As I fought my way, a carl struck me; I knew no more.

Stray Leaves

“‘Woe is me, woe is me,’ groaned the house-man, ‘How shall I carry the tale, how speak what I saw when at last from my long swoon I wakened!’ ”

No word spoke the fisherfolk; the oarsmen were silent; white and cold Oulf leaned against his ship’s prow; white and cold as the chalk cliffs of the far island. “Go on,” spake the henchman. The house-man took up his tale.

“About me on every side lay the slain; good warriors; strong, fearless, friends of my childhood; fifteen in number. Great had been the slaughter; many carls, fishermen, shepherds; I could not count them. But what of the women, what of the Mother, what of the Mistress? Painfully I raised myself, I crawled from the death-heap; what I saw then, how shall I speak it. At the door of the house cold in death lay the Mother; pierced with many wounds; pierced as was her lord in battle. Her long hair unbound fell like snow-drifts about her. . . . I wept. . . . I gathered up my strength; into the house I brought her; laid her in the

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great hall; covered her with a mantle. All was still; the grave could not be more silent. Where was the Mistress? I sought her.

"No sign there was of anything living, of anything moving. I passed through the great hall; passed doors charred with the fire; up the stone stairway. The fire had ceased burning; the house was strong. On I wandered, seeking. I came to her chamber and thine. I entered. At the door I stumbled on a belt. It was the Foundling's. There, by the window, lay the Mistress. With her long braids she had wrapped her throat; her hand held them in the grip of death. . . . She would not yield; she would not be dishonored. . . . My tale is told."

Then from the oarsmen, the warriors, there burst a groan; a groan of sorrow, of rage. Still Oulf spoke not; he stood erect; red in his eyes glowed the fire of fury; his great hand he raised; he said, "We will repay." "Aye," shouted the warriors, "Death to the Foundling; death to the traitors, death without quarter! Lead on, Oulf, we follow!" Madly they thirsted for battle. Swiftly Oulf strode

Stray Leaves

forward; terrible the purpose on his face written. Drew he his great sword; with its point pierced his left arm; the red blood flowed o'er the blade; high above his head the good blade he lifted; so did the warriors. With it he struck his great shield. The warriors shouted; on their shields beat their weapons; loud was the war-clamor; fierce was the war-song they chanted. Death to the traitors; death without quarter. They would rush onward.

To Oulf's side stepped the henchman; spoke gravely, "Hear me, comrade." He raised his hand to silence the war song. Oulf strode on; he paid no heed. Maddened he was; thirsting for blood. Spoke again the henchman; he touched Oulf, "Hear me, comrade." Furious Oulf turned; raised his hand to slay him; he would brook no words; he would brook no delay. The henchman sprang forward; he turned; he raised his hand; he stood fearless of Oulf's anger; he would not let him go forward. Fearless was the henchman, a warrior tried in many battles, friend of Oulf's father, wise in council. Oulf

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halted. "Hear me," he cried. "We may not go thus, so few in number. They wait for us, they are ready. Fifteen were killed; where are the others; faithful men, mighty warriors; free-men? They will fight with us. We will be wise; we shall conquer."

Oulf laughed. "They were cowards; they fled; they left the Mother; they too shall taste blood; great shall be our vengeance."

"Not so," cried the house-man. "Not so, Oulf, not so, Master; they fled not the brave warriors. I have seen them; they have told me. Long they held the entrance; furious they fought when the Mother fell. The Mistress fled; fled up the stairway; the Foundling pursued her; followed the fierce warriors; followed the carlings, the fisher folk, the shepherds; they had tasted of bloodshed; mad they were for pillage. Desperate the fighting; the warriors held the stair. Some fared on to the chamber; they sought the Foundling; they would have his life-blood.

. . . They found the Mistress dead. Fleet of foot was the Foundling; a coward, a craven; fled he was, they knew not whither.

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Back to the stair they came; shouted the message of death, shouted, 'No quarter for traitors!' Rage filled the warriors. Thor entered their hearts; they fought as a thousand; beat back the carlings, the fisher folk, the shepherds; like sheep they fled before them. The warriors pursued, killing without mercy.

"They returned to the House in the morning; they found me by the Mistress; we counselled together; we said, 'We will hold the House, we will wait Oulf's coming; he will come.' Never did the carls return; fear holds them; for thee have we waited."

Then spoke the henchman. "Let us to the House; let us call together the warriors. Quietly will we go; we will call the people, those that are faithful. At our coming they will fear the Foundling, they will fear our vengeance. To-night we will seek him; heavy shall be his reward; his house we will lay in ashes."

"Thou art wise," Oulf answered, "So be it."

Silent they passed on. Terror filled the

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fisher folk. None sought the Foundling to warn him.

Over the dunes, along the path to the House they passed; at the gateway the housemen met them. No word was spoken.

On the doorsteps were dark stains;—blood. Alone Oulf moved forward; none dared to stay him; at his mien, the hearts of the strong warriors failed them.

He came to the door; he saw the blood stains; he knew their meaning; he turned sick; he reeled in the door-way; he bowed his great head. Tears came to the eyes of strong men, their hearts were melted. . . . No word spoke Oulf. . . . Slowly he turned; as one blind he felt his way through the great hall; felt his way to the stair; groping passed up it; none dared to follow; they held their breath at that sorrow.

He came to the chamber. At the door he waited, he looked in. . . . Great was the disorder. Great was the Mistress' terror as she fled the Foundling. . . . Oulf entered. . . . On a chair lay her blue mantle. Then, with a cry Oulf rent his silence;

Stray Leaves

with shaking hand he clasped the mantle; fell on his knees beside it; in its folds buried his face, swooned.

Long he lay. How long he knew not. He looked up, the "Aged" stood beside him, the priest of Wotan; tall, crowned with leaves, of king-like bearing. Long fell his white beard, white his hair. He spoke to Oulf; he bade him rise, he bade him punish the evil-doer. Stern was his look; upon Oulf's heart his words fell like fire.

The hero of many battles, the king of the dark waters, the beloved of his people rose to his feet. With a mighty effort he shook sorrow from him, he turned his thoughts to war, to the reward of the evil-doer. He said, "I am ready, I will go. The weight of my wrath shall fall upon him."

He went. He joined his warriors. The henchman took his place beside him. Few words were needed; night was falling; they turned their steps toward the village, toward the house of the Foundling. Stout arms they carried, torches to be lighted; lighted to fire the house of the Foundling.

Eighth Leaf

Night fell. Silent, they entered the village. Nought was astir; closed all the dwellings; silence everywhere.

They came to the dark dwelling, the dwelling of evil. The warriors thirsted for blood, they thirsted to deal out the reward. Oulf said, "The quarrel is mine, mine more than any, mine first. He lied to my people, he turned their hearts to bitterness; he turned their hearts against the Mother who had ruled well, whom they had loved. He deceived them with lying words; he led them to slaughter; with his own hand he sought to do that which I cannot speak. Mine is the quarrel above all others. I will call him forth."

With his hand he struck the door of the dwelling; with the hilt of his sword he struck it; he called aloud upon the Foundling to answer. No answer came. They waited. He called again; struck with his sword. He cried aloud, "Come forth—much evil have you done; how much, you know. I come to make good. Come forth!" Then, from within, a voice cried, "Will you make good? Come, do it. None here are your bondsmen;

Stray Leaves

none babes, to come and go at your bidding. Strong men are within, well armed, ready. We dread not marauders. If you fear not, come take us."

Furious, Oulf answered, "My foot shall not pass your threshold; your dark dwelling shall not hold me. Under the stars will I make good; in the free air will I repay. Come forth if ye be so fearless. Come forth, ere we drive you!"

Within, arose a tumult; a sound of men's voices; a sound of women weeping. Furious grew the warriors waiting. They turned to Oulf, they said, "We wait too long; let us drive them forth; let us drive them as beasts from their lair." Oulf said, "Go do it, nor tarry."

Four warriors creep through the shadow; they light their torches; they fire the evil dwelling. The flames spread; the wind fans them; they grow, they lick the sides of the dwelling. The warriors stand apart waiting. From within the dwelling a great cry; shrieks of women. The flames have entered. Then is the door thrown open; out rushes the

Eighth Leaf

Foundling, a score of armed men with him; his wife follows. Dazzled by the light of the fire, they at first see nothing; they seek only safety, safety from the fierce flames. . . . Oulf is ready. . . . Shouting his war-cry he falls upon them; his warriors tarry not. Fierce is the fighting. Oulf seeks one, one only, the Foundling. The Foundling is afraid; he hides behind those fighting. Oulf finds him, strikes him down; raises his war-blade to slay. Shrieking, a woman throws herself between. The Foundling's wife. She strives with Oulf; she prays for the Foundling's life; she stands ever between the war-blade and the home it seeks in the Foundling's breast. The henchman strives to drive her back; madly she struggles; still she pleads. The warriors, fierce with the taste of blood, shout, "Slay her too; slay the whole brood; they cumber the ground; stay not thy hand Oulf." Yet Oulf strikes not.

What stayed his hand? None knew, scarce himself. A look in the woman's eyes, her cry, her pleading. So "she", she he had loved, would have plead for him. He grew giddy;

Stray Leaves

he turned from the carnage; he said, "Take them away, I war not with women and — cowards."

The warriors obey, yet among themselves they murmur. Mercy is not their habit; mercy to evil doers, destroyers of homes. Yet they obey. All, not slain in the onslaught, they seize and bind; the Foundling, his wife, they capture. Silent, sullen, Oulf stands apart. Silent he turns to lead the way homeward. The henchman draws near; he speaks; Oulf answers not. They reach the great House. Oulf raises his hand, "To the dungeons!" Turns on his heel, seeks his room and Hers; bars the door against all. None may enter, to no voice will he answer.

Grieved is the henchman; angry the warriors. Much they question together. What is this weakness? Why stays Oulf his hand? Why spare the evil-doer? Why spare the woman? "She is with child," the henchman answers. He turns from them; he stands apart; much he ponders Oulf's strangeness.

Alone Oulf sits. He notes not the day's passing; he notes not the long twilight; he

Eighth Leaf

notes not the wind moaning; he notes not the rising storm. Over and over his thoughts hammer, "She would have plead for the woman; the woman plead for the Foundling; the woman is with child; I COULD NOT STRIKE—I could not strike."

Three days and nights. Without, the storm is raging; gusts of wind, snow-fall. Oulf looks up. Again the "Aged" stands before him. None could know how he came there. Austere is his bearing; stern his words. Oulf listens dully, half hearing; he answers not. The "Aged" unbars the door, he calls to the henchman. The henchman stands by Oulf's side, lays his hand on his shoulder; speaks to him. "The people grow restless, they cry aloud. They demand full payment for the evil-doer. Arouse thyself, call up thy manhood; come to the hall of judgment. Justice waits."

Oulf goes with them. The warriors gather, shout at his coming. They fill the judgment hall; Oulf sits in the great chair. The Foundling is brought before him. Trembling he falls at Oulf's feet; he pleads for mercy.

Stray Leaves

Like stone is the face of the Viking. The warriors laugh, they jeer at the Foundling; they cry with one voice, "Silence him, Oulf! Deal with him as he would deal with thee. Silence him with his own blood; strike down the craven!"

Terrified, the Foundling crawls to Oulf's feet, clasps his knees, shrieks for pity. With loathing Oulf throws him off, stands, then turns to his people.

"Long have ye known me, aye, from my cradle. Many are the battles where we have stood shoulder to shoulder. Storms have we weathered, weathered we many storms where others have foundered; carnage, great slaughter, slaughter of worthy foes, foes who stood up and faced us. When was Oulf known to raise his sword against women, 'gainst children, 'gainst weaklings. Since the light of the Mistress shown within these dark walls, when has Oulf turned a deaf ear to mercy. Nay, I will fight with a man who will face me, fight to the death; one of us shall conquer. But to strike one who crawls to my feet like a beggar, a craven, a half-man . . . no fit deed for

Eighth Leaf

a warrior. Make him stand up, arm him, let us stand face to face; I will fight to the death. I have said." Turning, he left the hall.

Loudly the hall thundered with cries of rage. Furious were the warriors; they liked not Oulf's justice; roughly they seized the Foundling; would have torn him to pieces. Boldly the henchman stepped forward. "Oulf is right. The sword of a warrior should not taste the blood of a craven. Do as he bid you, arm the Foundling; he shall fight."

Vainly shrieked the Foundling; he knew naught of weapons. Laughing, they bade him learn; said they would teach him; bore him away.

But Oulf, faint with fasting, torn, like a great pine in Winter storms, by thoughts that beset him, called for mead. He would drink, he would forget.

Deep he drank, long he drank. The storm had ceased; white was the land.

Comes the henchman. "Friend, all is ready." "All is ready?" Oulf answers. "Ready for what,—for the hunt? Aye, for the hunt. 'Tis a fine day for hunting; bring

Stray Leaves

spears, bring knives; we will go, I am ready." Vainly they speak of the Foundling; vainly the henchman strives to make Oulf remember. He laughs loud and long. "The trial," he cries. "The trial of strength? Aye, we will try him; he shall have a fair showing; he shall hunt with us. He too shall meet bear in the white spaces." Again he laughs, nor will he heed them. He will brook no denial. Sadly they say, He is stricken. We will not gainsay him. Let us hunt; we will abide his awakening." For deep was their love for the Viking.

Oulf would have the Foundling. This too they yielded. Loudly Oulf rallied him; laughed at his terrors. On they strode o'er the snow-fields, spears in hand, knives at belt.

Then came the bear tracks, the hunt, the bear sighted. "His the first fling, the Foundling's," Oulf shouted; nor would he hear reason. Into the Foundling's hand a spear is thrust; trembling he throws it; strikes the on-coming bear; the bear reels, falls forward. "Well done!" Oulf cries. "Go fetch your killing!" Vainly the henchman repeats laws

Eighth Leaf

of the forest; the beast shall be despatched by the freemen. Oulf grows angry, will not be denied.

The bear only stunned, seizes the Foundling; crushes him in his fierce grip; sets his teeth in his neck, in his shoulder; tears him. Short is the struggle. The warriors murmur, "This is not for sportsmen; this is not for warriors." They turn to Oulf; they would slay the bear. Motionless Oulf stands; to the end he watches. Together, the bear and the Foundling on the snow lie dead.

Strangely Oulf speaks, "Bear them back, the hunt is over."

Silently the warriors gather boughs, weave them together, upon them lay the "hunt"; turn homeward. Deep is the grief of the henchman; he grieves for Oulf's past glory.

They reach the village. No word is spoken. In fear the people watch them pass. At the door of the Foundling's dwelling, his wife stands. She had been taken there with her babe. Little of the dwelling stands save charred ruins. She waits to see her husband pass. She sees him upon the boughs. With a shriek

Stray Leaves

she throws herself upon him. Oulf strides on to the House, nor did they again see his face, 'til the end.

Alone once again, beside the blue cloak. Who shall say what his thoughts were; who can know what his loathing of the deed done, as the fire of the mead abated?

No purpose set, scarce feeling, scarce seeing, the next day early finds him retracing his steps o'er the road he had but just traveled. He carries no spear; no weapon save the knife at his belt. Still unused, forgotten. On he strides to the forest; seeks the bear-trail; follows it. Well he knows the mate should be near to avenge the death of its fellow; nor does he fail to find. Nosing about the spot of the fighting, the great beast mourns its dead mate; sobs over the blood-stains. It is not long to see Oulf. He approaches. The beast stands erect; it threatens him; he keeps onward. They meet, they grapple, battle to the death. Torn and bleeding, scarce resisting, Oulf has stood to the attack. Then, of a sudden, the *man* rises within him. He, the prey of a beast? He, the proud Viking? He

Eighth Leaf

calls up his huge strength; fiercely he struggles; finds the knife, plunges it deep home; the bear falls. He is free.

For a moment he stands. . . . When the mate is gone, even beasts die.

Within him a great longing. Well he knows death is coming. Fast and red flows the blood from his many wounds; his torn shoulder, his bleeding side. But home, home, with the blue cloak clasped close, so to die! He must reach it. On he struggles, marking with blood his trail; growing ever fainter. He can stand no more erect. He falls to his knees; he crawls over the white snow. Fainter, he creeps through the passes. His hand strikes on something; it slides before him. He reaches it . . . a bit of shale. Then, a memory. Words "She" had taught him to form, holding his great fingers in hers as he shaped them. With the point of his knife his mark he makes, and the words, lifts the shale in his teeth, creeps onward.

Night falls. He nears the village. A red glow lights it. He questions. Life is all but gone; still he keeps on. The light? 'Tis the

Stray Leaves

funeral-pyre of the Foundling. He hears the wailing of women. He struggles on. He reaches the square; the pyre is blazing; he draws near to it; close beside. Dying, he lies among his people. The bit of shale falls beside him. One lifts it and reads:—

“OULF, HIS ATONEMENT.”

* * * *

Ah, well; ah, well! The Soul knows its own purpose, seeks its own school. Falteringly it learns its alphabet. With many sighs and almost blindly at first, from day to day, it forms the letters into words.

Words there are, of many sorts, of many meanings; and like a babe, the first its unpracticed tongue can form are those which deal with things near by,—things of touch, things of sense. Then come those of wider meaning and those that speak ideas. Yet still, they savor of desire, the acquirement of that which it calls “good” for Self.

But the awakening, the first impulse to—

Eighth Leaf

wards *selflessness*—how to spell that word; in what school to learn it! The Soul knows.

Does it then seem so great a downfall from the priest, wandering through shady gardens, to this Norseman; erring, confused, driven by unaccustomed impulses, undefined purpose? Yet, in the priest, with all his ardent seeking, with all that he called "devotion," lay the seed of error which brought failure none the less; while in the Norseman, contending with the rough usages of his time, was that finer wisdom latent, which with his kind, he sowed as the seed of a wider devotion, a nobler humanity, where mercy and compassion shall be the words of their Ideal. And though he planted in weakness, torn by his very ignorance from persistence in Compassion's path, shall he not reap in power?

Judge no Soul 'til the end is known.

REVERIE

Out of the dung-heap springs the scented rose.

Out of ignorance, its throes, its bitter pains, its quick retribution, is slowly born knowledge.

From agony of the suffering heart spring, in the end, pity, mercy, justice!

Out of the groping of the Soul in darkness, is born, at last, the young dawn of a new day.

'Tis not enough, 'tis not enough, my Soul, to stand in calm contemplation of the Divine Idea.

'Tis not enough to seek for Self, however eagerly liberation from the errors that beset our kind.

'Tis not enough that we should not fear death or danger. Nay, there must spring from out the mouldering heap of long experience,

Eighth Leaf

the rose of Great Compassion, its perfume spreading, unconscious of its own sweetness, upon the air.

So moves the Good Law to its purposes, the law of the Soul's growth. So will it triumph in the end; e'en though thou and I, my Soul, be cast down again to the depths of ignorance, to learn a lesson we had passed by. Be, like this poor heart, bound with iron fetters of ice and snow; rent, as was he, by the birth of mercy, where ignorance would have cried "revenge," deeming his struggle to realize a new ideal, weakness.

NINTH LEAF

“——— Learn that no effort, not the smallest—whether in right or wrong direction—can vanish from the world of causes. E'en wasted smoke remains not traceless.”

THE TWO PATHS

NINTH LEAF

"Ah, but my heart is weary, weary for the griefs of my country."

Only a lad, yet this is his heart's cry. Bitter is his youth to him that he must feel the yoke of the oppressor upon his shoulders, that he must see honored heads and proud, bowed in subjection to a stranger.

"Ah, but I am weary, I am weary!" So he speaks in sadness; but there are other times, hours of defiance, hours of planning the work he will do when a man. Then will he rise up in the strength of his cause; then shall the tryant feel the sting of his arrows; then shall the hireling soldiers tremble at his battle-cry; then shall the chieftains once more have their own; once more shall the fires on the hills blaze out freedom to the valleys.

That he is but one, that the long-tried cour-

Stray Leaves

age of others has faltered, what matter? One heart awake, can send forth the cry of "Freedom"; one dauntless purpose can rouse a stricken nation!

So he ponders and dreams as he wanders through the heather. So he seeks out the high valleys where in years past the clans assembled and seems already to hear the rallying-cry, echo from hill to hill. So his bearing grows fierce and unyielding, nor will he brook a word from any who willingly wear the badge of service and fealty to the Stranger.

* * * *

Child-dreams, day-dreams. Are they any worth? Some say no. Yet how oft, from these small acorns cast upon a rugged soil, grow up the mighty oaks of a true manhood. From these small seeds dropped by the wayside on a day in Spring, expands the maiden's morning-glory—fragile, white, rosy, heavenly colors, flowers of the dawn.

Child-dreams, day-dreams. Grey-bearded, we look back upon them with an indulgent

Ninth Leaf

smile, and in our "wisdom" refuse to see how large a part they played among the tightened strands through which we've woven, carefully or carelessly, the pattern of our lives.

Child-dreams, day-dreams. Glimpses of our Soul's own possibilities. How often are they thrown aside that we may grasp at cheap possessions near at hand. We tangle our skein and break the smooth threads of our life's warp, where every knot but adds a flaw to that which might have been so fair.

* * * *

The years speed by and his heart grows bitter. Cramped by hard poverty, himself and his kindred are deprived of home and name. Then the noble purpose of the child-dreams slips away and only now and then awakes, to stir within his heart the old emotions, to light the old fire.

Hand in hand with him One goes whose name is his, he having been denied his own.

Once, when the pale sunshine smiled o'er the heathered knolls, a crown he wove for her,

Stray Leaves

of scented purple, and placing it upon her brows with boyish ardor cried, "Some day we shall be great together." He had meant, great of heart; but the years have slipped away and they are still lowly, hunted, oppressed. Now, for a time, has hardship changed him and he seeks the right to bear his name, to live on his own land, to draw together his own people; and in a moment of despair, he yields him to the yoke he scorned in day-dreams, as a boy.

Yet, save now and again, when his free heart rebels, the yoke is not so heavy, the patron not unkind, and she too for a time, bows her proud head in meek submission.

Then comes a day, when one high in the Conqueror's favor, seeing her beauty, craves it for his own. The little home is ravaged, the few possessions blotted out and she, left to wander through the storm unconquered, though alone and despairing. He who had gone forth on a peaceful errand, returned to find his home in ashes and her he loved gone, he knew not whither, woke from his lethargy, never again to sleep and dream of fancied peace, while oppression stalked abroad in

Ninth Leaf

guise of right and the voice of his fellows
cried for his arm to help them 'gainst the com-
mon foe.

* * * *

Having found her and brought her to his
side again, though at times confused, at times
seeing clearly, still together, they strove for
years, not to be great of fame themselves, but
in greatness of heart to build for those who
should come after.

So was nurtured the shoot of comradeship
which, when grown, becomes the vigorous tree
of true humanity. And though they died,
their names still hold a note which calls with
trumpet sound to hearts far down the ages,
that freedom is for all; that freedom means
not exaltation of the one, but the blending of
the one Soul with humanity's great heart.

* * * *

TENTH LEAF

“If thou would'st not be slain by them, then must thou harmless make thy own creations, the children of thy thoughts, unseen, impalpable, that swarm round humankind, the progeny and heirs to man and his terrestrial spoils.

. . . O fearless Aspirant, look deep within the well of thine own heart, and answer. Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows?”

THE SEVEN PORTALS

TENTH LEAF

Primeval forest stretching far over untraveled distances. For ages had its mighty aisles proclaimed the majesty of their upward growth, their stillness broken only by the nature sounds, or here and there, the whine of the hungry wildcat who scents a distant prey; the soft click-clack of the deer bounding toward the pool; the bear's padded footfall; indeed all those still-moving creatures, whose sounds become silence, when once man's growing voice echoes through the wilderness.

For ages man has been there, but man as one of these, moving like them, softly; hunting like them, fierce, governed only by the wild forest laws of "might means right." Far, far has he strayed from the soul of growth and dignity which has formed the mighty trees; the sweet hopefulness and joy of the

Stray Leaves

flower-carpeted forest spaces. Free he wanders. Free? Aye, free; the freedom won by a strong arm, the pressure of hunger, the driving of insatiable, ignorant desire.

But now, to the forest's edge, have come a new people whom all the forest creatures, man and beast alike, fear and hate. Yet they too seek freedom. Few in number they are; stalwart men, brave women, such as find heart to face dangers of a wild and unknown land, the bitter hardships of the pioneer, cold and hunger, an endless struggle with unseen foes, the sudden battle with the untamed possessors of the soil.

Yet stalwart and brave though they are, they are fugitives. Strange is it not, that all the terrors of savage raid, wild beasts, and death by cold and hunger can nothing daunt them as did that thing from which they fled. So it looks upon the surface, for it too, but meant death. Yet within their hearts was a far deeper purpose than the mere withdrawing of themselves from a cruel and bigoted oppression. Within their hearts, impelling by a mighty force, so mighty that it seemed their

Tenth Leaf

own will, was echoing the call from the Good Law, sent out when the hour of change was struck:—"Arise ye men of earth, awake to higher things! Behold my rule, the day of my coming into the kingdom draws on. Arise ye, go, prepare the way!" And, though they knew but that they must find place wherein to lift their hearts unbound, in service such as they craved, to the great Heart of All, perceiving not the wide import of their self-imposed exile, guessing nothing of the future magnitude of the work their labor gave birth to, still with undaunted purpose they sought and found the forest's solitude. There, with patient hand, they felled the mighty trees, raised their humble houses, and strove with the problems of the cry within their hearts, the obstacles which they met on every hand.

A stern people these, merciless to themselves, relentless to their enemies; love, a thing they would not own, even to those nearest and dearest. Frugal, untiring, they strove with bitter earnestness for peace and joy which they stifled and killed, did but their first soft rays seek to illumine the cruel, self-imposed

Stray Leaves

restrictions. And among them One, who, the lessons of the long past still unlearned, strives with his Soul to conquer—what? Its best possibilities, deeming thus to make it strong.

Herein lies the sadness of the Soul. This the weight upon the heart which all sometimes feel. The precious jewel of Truth caught and held for just a moment and let go by hands that seek to grasp a fancied glory, a phantasm born of their own ignorance. And still man strives to have *his* way; to force the Good Law into his small measure, calling love evil; or flying to the extreme and degrading it to passion, lust and shame, ere he can see through the long swing from point to point, that LOVE is the word divine by which himself shall conquer Self and win his lasting immortality.

Know, oh my Soul, this is the rare jewel of great price we seek; this the golden key which can alone unlock the MYSTERY; this the treasure of the heart, which, 'til we find, sadness and twilight will brood o'er all mankind. Pain, grief and death must work their allotted task; life, happiness and joy the re-

Tenth Leaf

ceding gifts we ask. Awake, awake my Soul !
Is it then so hard a task to love, and loving
thus, embrace all past ?

Yet his stern creed could not altogether
still the key-note of his being which he'd
brought from that fair paradise so far be-
hind. Moments of tenderness would come,
moments of ardent aspirations he could not
understand. Strive as he would, the high-
arched forest shades, the velvet moss beneath
his feet, the rustling leaves, at times, would
wake that sweet echo, and with it he walked
a man apart. He could not interpret to him-
self these strange waverings, as they seemed ;
yet in the forest's solitudes he would ponder
long and question—almost receive the heav-
enly dew and benediction ; and then, child of
his people and his time, agonize that he
should be so weak ; stride back to the small
settlement to eagerly lend a hand wherever
he might help, saying to himself that he might
“forget,”—but see, already his dawn was
breaking.

So time swept on and he was counted strong
and true, trusted he was by all. His was the

Stray Leaves

eye most keen to find traces of enemies upon the forest's velvet floor. His the ear that could first detect the distant approach of those other men who, with all the wide land their claim, could not suffer the presence of these few strangers because they knew that theirs was a fibre which soon or late must conquer.

So, one dark night, while in the small homes all slept, he, ever ready, heard a faint sound far in the distance which brought him to his feet. One moment's attention and he knew the danger was fast drawing near. From door to door he passed quickly, giving the alarm and having roused them went to a post where he could stand and watch.

Well for them that he had heard, for they were scarce ready when the savage warriors burst upon them with yell and shout and flying arrows. But, though actuated by hate and fear, they could not easily subdue the stern men who waited, knowing that should they fall, their women would be victims to such horrors as cannot be spoken.

He led the van and whistling arrows and humming bullets filled the air. Shrieks, cries

Tenth Leaf

and groans sounded in the ears of mothers who clasped their children close, of pale girls who, with all their courage, wept.

And he? At the moment of victory he fell at his post, pierced with many wounds. His comrades won the battle with savage man, but he triumphed, in that through all, he had no thought of self.

* * * *

"Dead," you say, "Just as his dawn was breaking?" Sad? Nay, for he shall triumph still. There never was a dawn not followed by the day. Sad? Ah, there is nought so sad to those who watch the journey of the Soul as human pleasure; there is nought so full of hope as human pain.

Is this a strange doctrine? Is it? Nay, for by these two does the Soul grow until it reaches man's estate, and looking with fearless eyes to where wisdom awaits its coming, lays aside these primers of its childhood days and walks FREE, ENLIGHTENED, upon the fair white way of the Good Law.

Stray Leaves

And this stern people of whom he was one, striving for freedom to live and serve as they deemed right, realized not the source of their desire nor that what they dimly felt, should one day be fully known; what they blindly strove for, should one day be fully won. And e'en their ignorance shall not stay at last the coming of the noon-day of their souls.

* * * *

ELEVENTH LEAF

“Hast thou not entered Tau, the ‘Path’
that leads to knowledge—the fourth truth?”

VOICE OF THE SILENCE

ELEVENTH LEAF

A dreary Autumn rain falling persistently with sobbing sound, packing the dead leaves close to the earth's chill breast, hiding away secrets of the Spring which still cannot be forever stayed from coming forth. But rest is good, and surely out of death comes life.

A night so dark that even objects near at hand cannot be seen, and passing over the sodden earth, a footfall makes no sound.

But, keeping on despite the darkness and the gloom, feeling each step before he takes it, knowing nothing of the way, he presses forward, straight and buoyant, crowned with manhood's first young prime.

At last he comes to where the road would seem to end. He can see nothing; yet straight before him a barrier stands, and on each hand he seems to find as cautiously he feels his way,

Stray Leaves

rocks and pitfalls. He ponders deeply. How shall he proceed (for proceed he must, his word being pledged). Then as he is about to turn in that direction which, in the darkness, seems the most secure, to his alert ear comes a voice which whispers, "Surely out of death comes life." He stops and listens, for these the words which he was told should show his guide to him; and turning toward the voice, he whispers back, "Death is but transformation; what shall we fear?" Then close to his side he feels a presence; a hand is laid upon his arm; and more clearly now the voice speaks, "Come with me." He goes.

It is not long before he finds himself passing from the darkness into light, from the sobbing Autumn rain, into a hall where harmonies most sweet float through the air.

All that passed there may not be told; but this the seal he set upon his novitiate:

"I place myself in confidence upon the bosom of the Law; in patience will I meet its just awards, be they life or death."

"With such wisdom as is mine, striving ever for clearer light, I will uphold Its wise

Eleventh Leaf

decrees; seeking only to support the right, not to force my will. Nor will I, knowing that the Law Divine is justice manifest, bear weapons of any sort for self-defense or for revenge."

His promise made, the Wise One to whom he had come, blessed him and sent him forth to meet a stormy world, armed only with his steadfast purpose and his perfect trust. Not trust that nought distressful could befall, but trust that only in fulfilling of the Law is final peace.

Thus set he his feet upon the Path once more. To travel it more surely than of old? We shall see.

* * * *

Light and darkness; how they press upon each other's heels!

Day and night; see how in ordered march they pass through times and times.

Pain and ease; struggle and repose; grief and joy; contrasts, contrasts—life and death!

Is there a purpose? Should there be? What's to learn by these?

Stray Leaves

Behold! We stand between; the contrasts play about us and upon us. We perceive them; we gauge, we weigh, we adjust; we seek for what? For joy? Nay, joy passes; it is not permanent. For pain? Nay, pain passes; it is not permanent. For peace? Aye' tis this we seek. Peace, poise. OURSELVES, wisdom; and how can these be gained save by experience? Experience of contrasts, that we may know that balance, equilibrium, *peace*, stand at the center, witnessing but unaffected by all this play and interplay of transient things.

How long, how long have we been upon the road, my Soul! How long, how long ere we may reach the goal! Yet all these things are needed that the Soul may gaze, all undismayed, upon that peace sublime which holds but terror for those yet unprepared by heat and cold, like tempered metal, all the dross burned out, its final endurance made secure by the transition from furnace heat to cool and running waters.

* * * *

Eleventh Leaf

So he passed from out that great hall's radiance; out from that calm presence which he revered, back to the dark and stormy night, true type of that which the Good Law still held of lessons he must learn.

One glimpse of paradise to give him hope and then, the city, revolution-racked.

Within his heart the song of "Peace to All"; without the howling mob shrieking, "To arms, to arms!"

He must bear no weapon. Why?

Because the New Day must be led on by those who *know* the Law, who *know* their purpose, who know that it is mockery to claim that peace, true peace, can come through shedding blood. And if they fall in serving the great purpose? They do not fall in vain. Their ardent Souls live still; their watchword sounds afar; and one by one those who hear and understand surround the uplifted banner to bear it on.

So he passed from the greeting hands of friends, through heavy prison doors, there to find many whom he loved, waiting, waiting, waiting for the end.

Stray Leaves

Why was he there? Because his purpose though not known was *felt* and feared. So do darkness and ignorance ever strive to overmaster light and wisdom, whatever be the reason they themselves assign as good excuse.

Hour by hour he sat and pondered on the mighty question of his nation's fall, of the means of its salvation. Hour by hour he paced the stony floor, his heart torn with pity for those by whom he was surrounded. Some shrinking in terror at each fresh call for such as must feed the insatiable engine of revolt; or waiting in stony patience; or weeping hopelessly for those they'd left; or striving in low tones to comfort one another until their names should be cried out and they must walk the narrow, thorny way.

Hours, days, nights; he counted not the time. He did his share to strengthen and console, he looked for his own turn to come, yet had no sense of fear; for well he knew that over all this chaos watched that Law Divine which moves to good, and that he, with all these others (poor afflicted souls), was but set to learn something he had missed before.

Eleventh Leaf

A candle, held erect by its own grease poured upon the rough-hewn mantle-shelf, wavered and gutted in the draught blown through a grated window. Its flickering, formed long "shrouds" upon its sides and, as he watched it, thinking almost idly of the old superstition, iron bolts were drawn, and at the door, stood one who called his name, and his alone.

He rose to meet it and a cry went up from those about him; for many were there whom he had loved before, and many had learned to love him for his calm bearing and ever-ready sympathy.

He reached and mounted the three steps leading to the door, and turning, looked upon his friends. Then, upon his shoulder, the guard laid a hand and said, "Citizen, you are free."

No use for him to remonstrate or object. No use for him to plead that he would rather suffer as these others must and die as they must die. The revolution was as inexorable in its decree of life as death. As he stood, these poor fated ones gathered round him;

Stray Leaves

bade him Godspeed, kissed his hand or whispered low, "Never fail our cause." And he answered, "Never!" But the guards hurried him away to life, while others, in his mind more fortunate, were dragged to the engine of a higher liberty than that the revolution strove for.

* * * *

Fearful lest she might already have fallen a victim to the cruel times, unhindered he sought out the home of her who was dearest to him. Had she? Then indeed would life be blank save for his purpose. But he found her, sitting with her father in a room apart, all worn with weeping for him whom she believed she would not see again.

No need to picture their great joy; no need to dwell upon their talk as they, side by side, sat speaking of events of the past days. One in thought and feeling, one in purpose, one in conviction, they knew only they were *one*; as in that night long passed, two had paced back and forth from moon-light to the azalias'

Eleventh Leaf

shade, with the soft tide murmuring on the sands beyond the wall.

Then, into the adjoining room, where in his great chair her father sat reading by the lamp, unannounced, there stepped a man. He was of no great stature, muscular, heavy-jawed, belted with a three colored sash in which two pistols were conspicuously placed. He stepped up to her father and waited. They saw him through the door which stood ajar. Fear filled her eyes, and trembling, she clung to him she loved, whispering, "Our enemy!"

"Perhaps not, dear," he answered, "for I fancy 'twas through him my freedom came; none other could have given it." But she was not convinced.

Then of her father the man asked concerning her and, upon reply said, "Is he here too?" Her father hesitated, and seeing this, he turned sharply round and stepped toward the door.

"Come!" said he she loved, "Courage! Let us meet him half way." And placing his arm about her, they passed into the room.

They passed. A moment's recognition of

Stray Leaves

the white rage upon his face—a sudden impulse to draw her lover back and close the door—all in a moment a flash, a cry—and she fell bleeding, shot through the heart, upon the arm that had encircled her.

Mad with the sudden grief and horror, his hand instinctively sought his weapon to find—*he had none*—and the memory of his vow returned. Holding the dear form in his embrace, he looked in helpless agony upon her slayer; turned his eyes to where the father sat, wondering that he did nothing. Rigid he was in his great chair. The shock had killed him! As he again turned his gaze upon her lifeless form, a fresh report, a strange stinging in his side—a burst of strength which passed as quickly into faintness. The dear form slipped from his relaxing grasp, and slowly he sank to darkness—death.

* * * *

Had he failed or triumphed in leaving un-avenged the death of one so innocent? Had he failed or triumphed we ask again.

Eleventh Leaf

"Failed!" cry the warring crowds who shriek, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!"

"Triumphed!" cries the Soul that seeks the mystery of Peace. Triumphed, in that by such refraining, he made one less to fill the lawless ranks driven on by ignorance and folly. Triumphed, in that he joined the van-guard of those who, in the end, must conquer clamor by silence, hatred by Love. For surely out of Death comes Life!

And he who had wrought all this. Was it pleasure that he found, to slay the one he loved? For what? Because she loved another? To give that other freedom that he might wreak his vengeance for what was not a crime? And done, was he satisfied? Do such deeds as this bring Peace?

* * * *

REVERIE

Life, life! How deep its secrets, how vast its mysteries!

We say, "This one lives," and then again, "he dies." But whither life has fled, or that *life* has truly fled at all—here is a master-knot which few untie. Carve it they do with scalpel, sword and reason; but still 'tis there, the ever-present problem. For, within the tiniest atom, as we know, is life—life that will manifest in some sort, holding some surprise.

"He is dead." Nay, is he? Fled he may be, passed we know not where, perhaps, but in the rotting body life is still bringing forth other forms, changing what had been a commonwealth of atoms into a struggling mass of units. Surely out of death comes life; that which has passed but feeds what is to be; and he who looks with opened

Eleventh Leaf

eyes upon the changing phases Nature takes, sees everywhere the Good Law working toward one great end—growing consciousness, knowledge, exaltation, freedom, wisdom, all uniting to bring final Peace.

But where is "he" who was "He?" Is he *dead*, because his tabernacle no longer manifests his will? Was he his *body*? Can that Man-Mind which held communion with the things of air, which planned and worked and THOUGHT, become a nothing in this fair Universe, where we behold in what we see the ever-present law of progress from that which is below to things on high?

We say no! We would cry it far and near—Listen all ye whose hearts are weighted by the ever-shifting light and shade of grief and joy, of pain and pleasure; know, these are the passing things; yet in your inmost Souls knowing this, ye still strive and fret and chafe. That which lasts is the Soul itself, which may, if it will, seize immortality and ecstasy at any time that it shall waken, fully waken, to the TRUE.

If in the contemplation of a leaf, torn here

Stray Leaves

and there from some Soul's book, the ever-recurring cadence brings with it sadness and a sense of pain prolonged, be not dismayed; for such indeed is the experience of all, would they but take courage to look about and see. The experience of all, so long as they are bound by self-made fetters in their fearful search for pleasure; not having lost altogether the memory of that Paradise they came from at the first, but having for a time tangled the clue which should lead them back.

Truly, the Soul sought pain that it might learn to *love*; sought travail and restriction that it might learn to know the bounties of the Law; and surely, surely to the strong comes strength, nor do such falter at the rugged heights they needs must climb ere, standing on the summit, crowned with Love and Mercy, they perceive that all is ONE, that One is ALL, their labors having served, though they may not have known, to help the many, the weakness of the many having served to enlighten them.

Listen, all ye panting, struggling Souls, to the voice of that "Beloved" which for ages ye

Eleventh Leaf

have sought, that Beloved who, in his own joy, sits ever in the temple of your hearts. Listen and turn from wandering, strife and pain, to rest you there and be refreshed by the benediction of His voice. Thus he calls to you as he has called through all the ages. Ye have but to pause and hear.

“Behold, my children, ’tis *I* who call to you, I the lover of this Universe, this Universe which is myself, my own. Throughout its shimmering veins my love pours in a golden stream, seeking to feed the nations—the nations? ah, the nations are but a small part of that which my love finds; for great and small, dark and light, sin and virtue, peace or war, my love is there, naught doth it scorn but still supplies and still flows on, out to the verge of what ye know, back to the heart of that which you should long to be. Ah, foolish children, ye cry aloud, ‘This is pain and this is joy; I like not that, it is old and ugly; I love this, ’tis fair and young.’ Ah, foolish children, ye will not see me, though I wait in every whitened hair, in every wrinkle on the old man’s face I lie in hiding if ye would but see.

Stray Leaves

Yea, in that thing ye would call dead, I live and plan new beauties. Why will ye look askance and draw aside and cry, 'Unclean!' and wander far to find me in some distant place or time or sphere when there is nought ye touch or hear or see that is not me, myself. See how the serpent's stretching coils lie close upon the warm breast of earth. 'Tis I who move him in those graceful lines and teach him the strange secrets which have made of him the type of mystery. Look, where the eagle soaring high beneath the heavenly arch, his wings spread wide, scarce moving as he sails, a king of air. 'Tis I who lie upon his far-stretched pinions; 'tis I who, glancing through his keen eyes, perceive the earth below and joy in freedom."

Ah, my children, ye speak of contrasts and yet ye cannot go so far nor sink so low nor mount so high but I am there waiting, waiting for that day when in mine arms I may enfold you all as a mother enfolds her children, suckling you at my breast upon the milk of peace. Is it then so hard to come, is it so hard? Nay, rouse yourselves my children,

Eleventh Leaf

lay aside these foolish baubles wherewith ye have played at love so long and give to me the love you have wasted. For truly it must grow and wax strong, for I repay, I repay, I repay!

Yet would I have you love me, not for payment nor even for golden streams of love which I pour through you, but love me because I AM and ye are *myself*.

* * * *

TWELFTH LEAF

To him—"Hast thou the song of Life within
thy heart, and is the marriage
sweet?"

To her—"Hast thou the song of Life within
thy heart, and is the marriage
sweet?"

ANCIENT RITUAL

TWELFTH LEAF

So through the lengthening times we strayed and met, my Soul and I. Through days of darkness, dense, unspeakable. A ray of light, a touch, a glance; apart, united. Ever seeking what? Each other, peace, *true* labor; only to be found when once again together, the pain and struggle of those weary years should prove to be the Holy Sword of Acolade whose final stroke should make of us the "Knight of Service" truly.

Who knows the secret of the Dual Soul? Who has searched its mysteries? Only those who are. Only those who have learned to know.

A great wide land, a busy, hustling city, a quiet room, an unexpected meeting. Yet there we stand once more, close, *close*. We look, we feel, and then, we KNOW.

Stray Leaves

Shall we again forget? No; for this at last is recognition, unspoiled by rush of worldly cares, untouched by any save the one high purpose, to live the knighthood we have won; to serve and serve, and still to serve as *One*; through lives, through times as One within the Temple "Wonderful," not raised by hands, but by the living Word of that Divine whose Knight we are.

Hand in hand will we tread the Path, heart to heart will we seek the light. The Star which is our goal shines ever overhead. The Path is long, the way is hard; yet will we toil on together, helping and strengthening one another in this day's journey as in the one so far behind us. In stronger love and brighter spiritual hope, O Ishwara, Lord of the Light, make us to know thy voice in other hearts as well as in our own; and inform us Thou, throughout the coming, generating cycles!

Hail Holy Light of Truth we bow to Thee.

FINIS.