English Poems, Volume 01 (of 2)

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2) \*\*\*

ENGLISH

POEMS

BY

FERNANDO PESSOA

I.--ANTINOUS

II.--INSCRIPTIONS

LISBON

«OLISIPO», APARTADO 145

1921

\_An early and very imperfect draft of\_ Antinous \_was published in 1918.

The present one is meant to annul and supersede that, from which it is

essentially different.\_--Inscriptions \_is now first published.\_

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I.--ANTINOUS

II.--INSCRIPTIONS

I

ANTINOUS

The rain outside was cold in Hadrian's soul.

The boy lay dead

On the low couch, on whose denuded whole,

To Hadrian's eyes, whose sorrow was a dread,

The shadowy light of Death's eclipse was shed.

The boy lay dead, and the day seemed a night

Outside. The rain fell like a sick affright

Of Nature at her work in killing him.

Memory of what he was gave no delight,

Delight at what he was dead and dim.

O hands that once had clasped Hadrian's warm hands,

Whose cold now found them cold!

O hair bound erstwhile with the pressing bands!

O eyes half-diffidently bold!

O bare female male-body such

As a god's likeness to humanity!

O lips whose opening redness erst could touch

Lust's seats with a live art's variety!

O fingers skilled in things not to be told!

O tongue which, counter-tongued, made the blood bold!

O complete regency of lust throned on

Raged consciousness's spilled suspension!

These things are things that now must be no more.

The rain is silent, and the Emperor

Sinks by the couch. His grief is like a rage,

For the gods take away the life they give

And spoil the beauty they made live.

He weeps and knows that every future age

Is looking on him out of the to-be;

His love is on a universal stage;

A thousand unborn eyes weep with his misery.

Antinous is dead, is dead for ever,

Is dead for ever and all loves lament.

Venus herself, that was Adonis' lover,

Seeing him, that newly lived, now dead again,

Lends her old griefs renewal to be blent

With Hadrian's pain.

Now is Apollo sad because the stealer

Of his white body is for ever cold.

No careful kisses on that nippled point

Covering his heart-beats' silent place restore

His life again to ope his eyes and feel her

Presence along his veins Love's fortress hold.

No warmth of his another's warmth demands.

Now will his hands behind his head no more

Linked, in that posture giving all but hands,

On the projected body hands implore.

The rain falls, and he lies like one who hath

Forgotten all the gestures of his love

And lies awake waiting their hot return.

But all his arts and toys are now with Death.

This human ice no way of heat can move;

These ashes of a fire no flame can burn.

O Hadrian, what will now thy cold life be?

What boots it to be lord of men and might?

His absence o'er thy visible empery

Comes like a night,

Nor is there morn in hopes of new delight.

Now are thy nights widowed of love and kisses;

Now are thy days robbed of the night's awaiting;

Now have thy lips no purpose for thy blisses,

Left but to speak the name that Death is mating

With solitude and sorrow and affright.

Thy vague hands grope, as if they had dropped joy.

To hear that the rain ceases lift thy head,

And thy raised glance take to the lovely boy.

Naked he lies upon that memoried bed;

By thine own hand he lies uncovered.

There was he wont thy dangling sense to cloy,

And uncloy with more cloying, and annoy

With newer uncloying till thy senses bled.

His hand and mouth knew games to reinstal

Desire that thy worn spine was hurt to follow.

Sometimes it seemed to thee that all was hollow

In sense in each new straining of sucked lust.

Then still new turns of toying would he call

To thy nerves' flesh, and thou wouldst tremble and fall

Back on thy cushions with thy mind's sense hushed.

«Beautiful was my love, yet melancholy.

He had that art, that makes love captive wholly,

Of being slowly sad among lust's rages.

Now the Nile gave him up, the eternal Nile.

Under his wet locks Death's blue paleness wages

Now war upon our wishing with sad smile.»

Even as he thinks, the lust that is no more

Than a memory of lust revives and takes

His senses by the hand, his felt flesh wakes,

And all becomes again what 'twas before.

The dead body on the bed starts up and lives

And comes to lie with him, close, closer, and

A creeping love-wise and invisible hand

At every body-entrance to his lust

Whispers caresses which flit off yet just

Remain enough to bleed his last nerve's strand,

O sweet and cruel Parthian fugitives!

So he half rises, looking on his lover,

That now can love nothing but what none know.

Vaguely, half-seeing what he doth behold,

He runs his cold lips all the body over.

And so ice-senseless are his lips that, lo!,

He scarce tastes death from the dead body's cold,

But it seems both are dead or living both

And love is still the presence and the mover.

Then his lips cease on the other lips' cold sloth.

Ah, there the wanting breath reminds his lips

That from beyond the gods hath moved a mist

Between him and this boy. His finger-tips,

Still idly searching o'er the body, list

For some flesh-response to their waking mood.

But their love-question is not understood:

The god is dead whose cult was to be kissed!

He lifts his hand up to where heaven should be

And cries on the mute gods to know his pain.

Let your calm faces turn aside to his plea,

O granting powers! He will yield up his reign.

In the still deserts he will parched live,

In the far barbarous roads beggar or slave,

But to his arms again the warm boy give!

Forego that space ye meant to be his grave!

Take all the female loveliness of earth

And in one mound of death its remnant spill!

But, by sweet Ganymede, that Jove found worth

And above Hebe did elect to fill

His cup at his high feasting, and instil

The friendlier love that fills the other's dearth,

The clod of female embraces resolve

To dust, O father of the gods, but spare

This boy and his white body and golden hair!

Maybe thy better Ganymede thou feel'st

That he should be, and out of jealous care

From Hadrian's arms to thine his beauty steal'st.

He was a kitten playing with lust, playing

With his own and with Hadrian's, sometimes one

And sometimes two, now linking, now undone;

Now leaving lust, now lust's high lusts delaying;

Now eyeing lust not wide, but from askance

Jumping round on lust's half-unexpectance;

Now softly gripping, then with fury holding,

Now playfully playing, now seriously, now lying

By th' side of lust looking at it, now spying

Which way to take lust in his lust's withholding.

Thus did the hours slide from their tangled hands

And from their mixed limbs the moments slip.

Now were his arms dead leaves, now iron bands;

Now were his lips cups, now the things that sip;

Now were his eyes too closed and now too looking;

Now were his uncontinuings frenzy working;

Now were his arts a feather and now a whip.

That love they lived as a religion

Offered to gods that come themselves to men.

Sometimes he was adorned or made to don

Half-vestures, then in statued nudity

Did imitate some god that seems to be

By marble's accurate virtue men's again.

Now was he Venus, white out of the seas;

And now was he Apollo, young and golden;

Now as Jove sate he in mock judgment over

The presence at his feet of his slaved lover;

Now was he an acted rite, by one beholden,

In ever-repositioned mysteries.

Now he is something anyone can be.

O stark negation of the thing it is!

O golden-haired moon-cold loveliness!

Too cold! too cold! and love as cold as he!

Love through the memories of his love doth roam

As through a labyrinth, in sad madness glad,

And now calls on his name and bids him come,

And now is smiling at his imaged coming

That is i'th' heart like faces in the gloaming--

Mere shining shadows of the forms they had.

The rain again like a vague pain arose

And put the sense of wetness in the air.

Suddenly did the Emperor suppose

He saw this room and all in it from far.

He saw the couch, the boy, and his own frame

Cast down against the couch, and he became

A clearer presence to himself, and said

These words unuttered, save to his soul's dread:

«I shall build thee a statue that will be

To the continued future evidence

Of my love and thy beauty and the sense

That beauty giveth of divinity.

Though death with subtle uncovering hands remove

The apparel of life and empire from our love,

Yet its nude statue, that thou dost inspirit,

All future times, whether they will't or not,

Shall, like a gift a forcing god hath brought,

Inevitably inherit.

«Ay, this thy statue shall I build, and set

Upon the pinnacle of being thine, that Time

By its subtle dim crime

Will fear to eat it from life, or to fret

With war's or envy's rage from bulk and stone.

Fate cannot be that! Gods themselves, that make

Things change, Fate's own hand, that doth overtake

The gods themselves with darkness, will draw back

From marring thus thy statue and my boon,

Leaving the wide world hollow with thy lack.

«This picture of our love will bridge the ages.

It will loom white out of the past and be

Eternal, like a Roman victory,

In every heart the future will give rages

Of not being our love's contemporary.

«Yet oh that this were needed not, and thou

Wert the red flower perfuming my life,

The garland on the brows of my delight,

The living flame on altars of my soul!

Would all this were a thing thou mightest now

Smile at from under thy death-mocking lids

And wonder that I should so put a strife

Twixt me and gods for thy lost presence bright;

Were there nought in this but my empty dole

And thy awakening smile half to condole

With what my dreaming pain to hope forbids.»

Thus went he, like a lover who is waiting,

From place to place in his dim doubting mind.

Now was his hope a great intention fating

Its wish to being, now felt he was blind

In some point of his seen wish undefined.

When love meets death we know not what to feel.

When death foils love we know not what to know.

Now did his doubt hope, now did his hope doubt;

Now what his wish dreamed the dream's sense did flout

And to a sullen emptiness congeal.

Then again the gods fanned love's darkening glow.

«Thy death has given me a higher lust--

A flesh-lust raging for eternity.

On mine imperial fate I set my trust

That the high gods, that made me emperor be,

Will not annul from a more real life

My wish that thou should'st live for e'er and stand

A fleshly presence on their better land,

More lovely yet not lovelier, for there

No things impossible our wishes mar

Nor pain our hearts with change and time and strife.

«Love, love, my love! thou art already a god.

This thought of mine, which I a wish believe,

Is no wish, but a sight, to me allowed

By the great gods, that love and can give

To mortal hearts, under the shape of wishes--

Of wishes having undiscovered reaches--,

A vision of the real things beyond

Our life-imprisoned life, our sense-bound sense.

Ay, what I wish thee to be thou art now

Already. Already on Olympic ground

Thou walkest and art perfect, yet art thou,

For thou needst no excess of thee to don

Perfect to be, being perfection.

«My heart is singing like a morning bird.

A great hope from the gods comes down to me

And bids my heart to subtler sense be stirred

And think not that strange evil of thee

That to think thee mortal would be.

«My love, my love, my god-love! Let me kiss

On thy cold lips thy hot lips now immortal,

Greeting thee at Death's portal's happiness,

For to the gods Death's portal is Life's portal.

«Were no Olympus yet for thee, my love

Would make thee one, where thou sole god mightst prove,

And I thy sole adorer, glad to be

Thy sole adorer through infinity.

That were a universe divine enough

For love and me and what to me thou art.

To have thee is a thing made of gods' stuff

And to look on thee eternity's best part.

«But this is true and mine own art: the god

Thou art now is a body made by me,

For, if thou art now flesh reality

Beyond where men age and night cometh still,

'Tis to my love's great making power thou owest

That life thou on thy memory bestowest

And mak'st it carnal. Had my love not held

An empire of my mighty legioned will,

Thou to gods' consort hadst not been compelled.

«My love that found thee, when it found thee did

But find its own true body and exact look.

Therefore when now thy memory I bid

Become a god where gods are, I but move

To death's high column's top the shape it took

And set it there for vision of all love.

«O love, my love, put up with my strong will

Of loving to Olympus, be thou there

The latest god, whose honey-coloured hair

Takes divine eyes! As thou wert on earth, still

In heaven bodifully be and roam,

A prisoner of that happiness of home,

With elder gods, while I on earth do make

A statue for thy deathlessness' seen sake.

«Yet thy true deathless statue I shall build

Will be no stone thing, but that same regret

By which our love's eternity is willed.

One side of that is thou, as gods see thee

Now, and the other, here, thy memory.

My sorrow will make that men's god, and set

Thy naked memory on the parapet

That looks upon the seas of future times.

Some will say all our love was but our crimes;

Others against our names the knives will whet

Of their glad hate of beauty's beauty, and make

Our names a base of heap whereon to rake

The names of all our brothers with quick scorn.

Yet will our presence, like eternal Morn,

Ever return at Beauty's hour, and shine

Out of the East of Love, in light to enshrine

New gods to come, the lacking world to adorn.

«All that thou art now is thyself and I.

Our dual presence has its unity

In that perfection of body which my love,

By loving it, became, and did from life

Raise into godness, calm above the strife

Of times, and changing passions far above.

«But since men see more with the eyes than soul,

Still I in stone shall utter this great dole;

Still, eager that men hunger by thy presence,

I shall to marble carry this regret

That in my heart like a great star is set.

Thus, even in stone, our love shall stand so great

In thy statue of us, like a god's fate,

Our love's incarnate and discarnate essence,

That, like a trumpet reaching over seas

And going from continent to continent,

Our love shall speak its joy and woe, death-blent,

Over infinities and eternities.

«And here, memory or statue, we shall stand,

Still the same one, as we were hand in hand

Nor felt each other's hand for feeling.

Men still will see me when thy sense they take.

The entire gods might pass, in the vast wheeling

Of the globed ages. If but for thy sake,

That, being theirs, hadst gone with their gone band,

They would return, as they had slept to wake.

«Then the end of days when Jove were born again

And Ganymede again pour at his feast

Would see our dual soul from death released

And recreated unto joy, fear, pain--

All that love doth contain;

Life--all the beauty that doth make a lust

Of love's own true love, at the spell amazed;

And, if our very memory wore to dust,

By some gods' race of the end of ages must

Our dual unity again be raised.»

It rained still. But slow-treading night came in,

Closing the weary eyelids of each sense.

The very consciousness of self and soul

Grew, like a landscape through dim raining, dim.

The Emperor lay still, so still that now

He half forgot where now he lay, or whence

The sorrow that was still salt on his lips.

All had been something very far, a scroll

Rolled up. The things he felt were like the rim

That haloes round the moon when the night weeps.

His head was bowed into his arms, and they

On the low couch, foreign to his sense, lay.

His closed eyes seemed open to him, and seeing

The naked floor, dark, cold, sad and unmeaning.

His hurting breath was all his sense could know.

Out of the falling darkness the wind rose

And fell; a voice swooned in the courts below;

And the Emperor slept.

The gods came now

And bore something away, no sense knows how,

On unseen arms of power and repose.

LISBON, 1915.

II

INSCRIPTIONS

I

We pass and dream. Earth smiles. Virtue is rare.

Age, duty, gods weigh on our conscious bliss.

Hope for the best and for the worst prepare.

That sum of purposed wisdom speaks in this.

II

Me, Chloe, a maid, the mighty fates have given,

Who was nought to them, to the peopled shades.

Thus the gods will. My years were but twice seven.

I am forgotten in my distant glades.

III

From my villa on the hill I long looked down

Upon the muttering town;

Then one day drew (life sight-sick, dull hope shed)

My toga o'er my head

(The simplest gesture being the greatest thing)

Like a raised wing.

IV

Not Cecrops kept my bees. My olives bore

Oil like the sun. My several herd lowed far.

The breathing traveller rested by my door.

The wet earth smells still; dead ray nostrils are.

V

I conquered. Far barbarians hear my name.

Men were dice in my game,

But to my throw myself did lesser come:

I threw dice, Fate the sum.

VI

Some were as loved, some as prizes prized.

A natural wife to the fed man my mate,

I was sufficient to whom I sufficed.

I moved, slept, bore and aged without a fate.

VII

I put by pleasure like an alien bowl.

Stern, separate, mine, I looked towards where gods seem.

From behind me the common shadow stole.

Dreaming that I slept not, I slept my dream.

VIII

Scarce five years passed ere I passed too.

Death came and took the child he found.

No god spared, or fate smiled at, so

Small hands, clutching so little round.

IX

There is a silence where the town was old.

Grass grows where not a memory lies below.

We that dined loud are sand. The tale is told.

The far hoofs hush. The inn's last light doth go.

X

We, that both lie here, loved. This denies us.

My lost hand crumbles where her breasts' lack is.

Love's known, each lover is anonymous.

We both felt fair. Kiss, for that was our kiss.

XI

I for my city's want fought far and fell.

I could not tell

What she did want, that knew she wanted me.

Her walls be free,

Her speech keep such as I spoke, and men die,

That she die not, as I.

XII

Life lived us, not we life. We, as bees sip,

Looked, talked and had. Trees grow as we did last.

We loved the gods but as we see a ship.

Never aware of being aware, we passed.

XIII

The work is done. The hammer is laid down.

The artisans, that built the slow-grown town,

Have been succeeded by those who still built.

All this is something lack-of-something screening.

The thought whole has no meaning

But lies by Time's wall like a pitcher spilt.

XIV

This covers me, that erst had the blue sky.

This soil treads me, that once I trod. My hand

Put these inscriptions here, half knowing why;

Last, and hence seeing all, of the passing band.

LISBON, 1920.