POEMS OF TRUTH

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Some may feel that the classical forms of verse are scarcely the right medium for themes of Higher Philosophy. If so, this little book must stand or fall on its own merits — the merits of the verses themselves, each supplemented, as it is, by a brief prose counterpart. The truths the verses try to convey are present in the world in various expositions of esoteric knowledge, old and new. In a number of the poems an attempt has been made to reproduce some of the basic ideas in the teachings of Gurdjieff, which some may consider a presumption, while others may find them a help in their search for something above and beyond the daily round of life. No two people approach a subject in exactly the same way, and what attracts and enlightens one may repel and confuse another; but so long as there are spiritual truths in the world, and as long as Materialism smothers them with her grossness, so long has every avenue to be explored for these truths by all who seek to know what is the purpose of Life and of their own lives.

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I

SONNET ON A SLEEPING WORLD

Awake and yet asleep! The whole world lies
Unconscious of its own unconscious state;
Destructive of itself and blind to fate,
Ignoring all the warnings of the wise.
For here and there a man may waken, rise,
Shake off the shackles ere it be too late,
His mind to master, anger, greed and hate
Drive out and penetrate the veiled guise
Of man mechanical — his nature true —
Which he perceives, his helplessness he knows;
All others cling to dreams that they can do
Whate'er they will — themselves mere puppet shows,
Their strings worked by events, nor do they heed
The call to rouse as slaves from fetters freed.

II

WONDER

'Wonder is the beginning of Wisdom'. So runs the ancient proverb. Wonder is the essence of a child's reaction to the world. It is only you, adults, who, immersed in the artificial things of materialism, have lost the capacity for wonder and, with it, the ability to appreciate at their proper value those products that are of Divine creation. In their place you put the products of man's creation. How perverse is your sense of values! To cultivate again your faculty for wonder is to become once more as little children, and the Kingdom of Heaven is closed to all but these. Wonder gives you a sense of your true proportion in the Universe, a Universe such as man could never create in the whole extent of time. You have not far to seek, for all around you are sights at which to wonder. Nature has been lavish with her mysteries. Remember always, then: 'Wonder is the beginning of Wisdom'.

1

God made Himself a small, white flower
And gave it life and beauty, seeds and scent;
Man built himself a lofty tower,
Seeking to seize the sacred power,
And in his pride to his destruction went.

2

Still pass we by the small, white flower
And wonder not at beauty, seeds or scent;
Still lust to build a lofty tower,
Still seek to seize the sacred power,
Till God looks down on man — in Wonderment.

III

FORGETFULNESS

Forgetfulness is a vice to be conquered; it is also a virtue to be cultivated. To be forgetful of what we have to do is to be unreliable and defective in conscientiousness. To be forgetful of those benefits we have received from others is to be ungrateful. To be forgetful of all injuries and insults, abuse and unkindness, is to have a proper sense of values. Our personal feelings are of no importance whatever except in as far as, constructive or destructive, they abide unto eternity. Brood not, therefore, destructively. Moreover it is foolish to think we can forgive but not forget, or that we can forget but not forgive. That which is truly forgiven is forgotten; if it is not forgotten the account still stands and our words are false. If it is forgotten the account is automatically expunged and, hence, all must be forgiven. Let us, then, search out in our own lives those events that are to be forgotten and perceive how unimportant they are; and those not to be forgotten and realise how important they are; and thus shall we stand in better relationship to our fellow men and to God who can only forgive in another what we forgive in Him, or forgive in ourselves what is forgiven in us by others — that which we would most wish to be forgiven and forgotten.

1

That helping hand, that kindly word of cheer,
The smile that comforted, that eased our fear,
That loan that came from one we hardly knew,
The friend who in our troubles stayed so true —
Do we remember now that hand, that smile,
that word of cheer,
Or hear we still the mocking laugh and feel again our fear?

2

Have we forgotten all our darkest days,
Or do we brood on others' unkind ways,
Loath to forgive, unable to forget,
Resentful feelings gnawing at us yet?
Then had we best remember others have their darkest days,
They, too, are unforgiving — of our own inhuman ways!

IV

HAPPINESS

What is unhappiness but the frustration of an unfulfilled desire? What then is Happiness? Is it the fulfilment of the desire? Nay, for no desire is final and one desire fulfilled doth but beget another. What then is Happiness? It is the absence of all desire. And the absence of desire means the absence of all attachment to things material. When the mind has rid itself of all attachment it has the power to remain calm, imperturbable, unaffected by any prize or buffet that Life can offer. Then and only then can it judge rightly of all matters, great and small, personal and impersonal. This is the goal for which man must strive; all else is an illusion; for Happiness cannot be sought as an end in itself; it comes only when the mind is at peace, at one with itself and the Universal Mind. Go! Seek pleasure and avoid pain and you will never find Happiness; cease to care for pleasure and pain, and Happiness will be yours. For those who try to grasp it, Happiness hovers ever out of reach: turn your back on it and lo! it is in you . . .

E'en as the butterfly upon a twig
Forestalls the hunter's net and flits away,
Alighting on a leaf beyond his grasp,
Until the hunter, scratched and labouring, climbs,
The net once more aloft and ready to descend —
Too late again, the butterfly is gone!
So man pursues what he deems Happiness,
Elusive, hov'ring, always out of reach,
A wisp of light that acts as a decoy
To lure men to the fens of discontent
Which suck them down in unfulfilled desires,
The lust for luxury and ease of life
Which they mistake for happiness of mind.
Yet in the world this lesson has been taught
Through all the years by those whom Heaven sent:
Desires breed desires, when from them free
Man only then becomes what Man should be.

V
AT-ONEMENT

. . . then proceed to the next stage of spiritual development in which this Happiness can grow into that more perfect form that comes from setting the feet finally upon the way of Truth. The desires from which you have become detached then fall into their proper perspective and are overwhelmed and merged into the only true Desire: that of attaining at-onement with the Absolute. When the mind, already freed, can fearlessly set out on this quest, then, throughout its course, true Happiness is hers, a Happiness that is not of this world nor dependent on this world. This is Divine Happiness and it is At-onement, and the At-onement is the Happiness. When this is fully attained, Man has reached his appointed goal.

Not for the faint of heart the search for Truth,
Not for the weak of will or dull intent;
Beset with troubles from the very start,
Pulled back by shackles, torn apart by doubts,
Until from perseverance, from the dark
A tiny ray of light shines down the Way,
To show a single step ahead — no more.
And if the eyes by then are not too blind,
By lengthy struggle with the written word;
And if the ears at last are not too deaf,
From listening to the sounds of argument;
And if the teeming brain is not too dulled
To grasp the Truth, so long and hardly sought;
Then all materialism falls in place,
A true perspective of the world is grasped,
Where earthly lusts and wants no longer count
For more than they are worth, in proper place;
All merged together in the true Desire
Which rises over all and with it brings
The sense of Happiness, because the feet
Are set upon the rightful Way to God,
To reach At-onement with the Trinity
Of Beauty, Truth and Love eternally.

VI

ADVERSITY

Who can look on Life's adversities with a kindly eye? Who can welcome the buffets he receives? Only he whose understanding is such that he can grasp the truth that they are the sole means towards his emancipation from a state of slavery, the slavery of his own mechanical response to them. Who can stop that biting repartee? Who can prevent that welling up of self-pity and check his resentment? Only he who uses these adversities for his own ends, who converts them to his own advantage and fights against his immediate reactions. He it is who will thank the man who affronts him for having given him the opportunity to struggle with himself, for without such opportunities he has no hope of becoming his own Master. He who passes all his days in comfort, knowing naught of injustices, naught of ill-feeling and abuse — where can be found a more unfortunate man? Life is of no use to him for it cannot teach him anything. But he who understands that it is not the adverse event, but his own reaction to it, that is hurtful to him, who uses every adversity as a means of practising restraint of feeling and who, therefore, no longer needs to justify his anger by reference to the event, he it is who has learned to rise above all ills and who will remain firm and unshakeable in peace of mind, however great a calamity befalls him. He is indeed a Man.

Look in, not out! So seek we not to blame
Another for our anger, grief or shame.
It matters not how much we have been tried,
By no event can we be justified.
While we may feel some cause for what we do,
We have a Right NOT to be wrathful, too.
This Right is one that few can realise
And fewer still will try to exercise.
How strange it is we like to feel abused,
In pity of ourselves so hardly used!
A pleasure false which cunningly deludes
And chance of real happiness precludes;
Were we but willing just to pay the price
And this, our suffering, to sacrifice,
No longer like to feel mistreated so,
Immeasurably in stature we would grow:
No brooding on our wrongs, no inner strife,
We would be Masters of ourselves — and Life.

VII

UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION

Understanding and Compassion are the highest of man's ordinary faculties and as such are to be developed to the uttermost. Understanding is the seeing of ourselves in other people. Compassion is the feeling of ourselves in other people. With Understanding there is no place for blame; even as we find excuses for ourselves, so Understanding provides excuses for others. With Compassion there is no time for self-pity or self-commiseration; the sufferings of our fellow men, exceeding in quality and quantity our own, completely smother them. Understanding and Compassion project the Self outwards into the world; intolerance and negative emotion draw the world into the Self. On the one hand there is the expansion of the Self, on the other there is contraction. Understanding and Compassion fully developed spell Love, and the presence of Love means God in Man.

1

Deep black the night save when the lightning flashed,
Which showed the foaming crests and spray flung high;
Sheer walls of water rearing to the sky,
As waves on waves against each other crashed.
No rest, the struggle raging
As when a war is waging,
The sea against itself — against its will,
When suddenly a gentle Voice was heard,
Fraught with compassion came the needful word :
' Peace !' Then the storm was stayed and all was still.

2

Tossed this way and that, a soul in torment,
Thoughts recurring o'er and o'er again,
Long, wakeful nights and days of mental strain,
Love strove with jealousy and hate till spent.
No rest, the struggle raging,
As when a war is waging,
A man against himself — against his will.
He took his life for lack of friendly hand,
For want of one to say : ' I understand.'
This time no peace was there, though all was still.

VIII

KNOWING AND BEING

Truth may be likened to a ladder that stretches from Heaven to earth. Its rungs are the rungs of Being, its sides are the sides of Knowledge, and the act of climbing it is Understanding. Even as a ladder is no longer a ladder if sides or rungs are removed, and even as we are unable to climb it unless our hands grip the sides and our feet are planted firmly on the rungs, so also there is no Knowledge obtainable without improvement in the level of Being, nor can any such improvement come without access to further Knowledge. If we think we can grasp the secret Mysteries without preparing ourselves to receive them, we have as yet set no foot upon the ladder. Nay, rather let us take warning! For we are hanging by our hands over an abyss which is yawning to our destruction. But if our feet are firmly set on each rung and if our hands never loosen their grip except to reach higher, our Understanding will expand with each step taken and only then can we hope to comprehend in time the Truth so far above us now. But the first rung of all may prove unsurmountable, for it is the rung of understanding that Knowledge cannot be obtained without self-conquest and that there is no other approach to Truth.

1

This is the word that was spoken
Since ever the world began :
' I planted the seeds of Knowledge,
' I gave of My Truth to Man.

2

' Not on the leaves of a book
' Open for all to discern,
' Wrote I My solemnest secrets,
' Easy for sluggards to learn.

3

' Only a few can achieve them,
' Those who are firm of resolve :
' First let the seeker for Knowledge
' Learn what the search will involve.

4

' Solely by single devotion,
' By conquest of body and mind
' Shall he perceive of My secrets,
' Truth and the Way to Me find.

5

' Not by himself can he learn it,
' Taught by a Teacher must he
' Come to a knowledge of Self
' Ere he reaches a knowledge of Me.

6

' This is the Law and I made it,
' This is the sting of the rod :
' The wisdom of Man in his pride
' Is foolishness seen by his God.'

IX

FAITHFULNESS

Thinkest thou to do great deeds? Thinkest thou to be entrusted with Higher Knowledge? First must thou be proved faithful in trivial tasks. First must thou learn what the world has to teach thee. Nothing is counted of value that has not cost dear to obtain, and the greater the value the greater the cost. Try thyself, therefore, to discover whether thou art worthy to be given a Higher task. Dost thou fulfil thine undertakings carefully? Dost thou do thy work thoroughly and conscientiously? Art thou utterly reliable? If thou canst not assert unhesitatingly that in all these things thou art as near to perfection as man can attain, presume not to teach thy fellows. Neither be so swollen up as to imagine that thou art of use to Higher Circles. He who is faithful in small things will be faithful in great also, but he who cannot keep faith over trivialities cannot be relied on in matters of importance. Be thou faithful, therefore, and when thy good faith has been tried in the fire, take up thy place as servant of the Most Highest.

1

Not the little things,
Not the daily chores
Do you think to concern yourselves with.
No ! You seek for the highest of posts,
Knowledge and Teaching,
Writing and Preaching,
These things only you think are befitting.

2

Fools of little worth !
Swollen up with pride !
Straighten out your ideas of yourselves :
Show if you can be trusted to work.
Sweeping and sewing,
Scrubbing and hoeing,
Faithful in these you may rise to the others.

X

'I'

How lightly is the word 'I' used in common parlance, and how frequently! How many times a day is it hurled forth as being representative of an individuality, of a unity, of a Man! Yet how many different faces does one man show to different people? How many diverse and contrary opinions do others hold of him? How happy and kind he is at one moment and how violent the next! Can anyone think that there is a single 'I' that is himself? Is he rather not governed by a multiplicity of 'I's', a veritable army of them, all warring with each other, all seeking for predominance and rising and falling in rapid succession? When 'I' becomes a unity, then indeed has a man progressed to a level above anything he can now conceive. He who has a single 'I', who is a single 'I', governs himself and cannot be moved by any event; though his body may be destroyed he, himself, will abide to eternity, freed from the wheel of this worldly life. He is not Man but Superman.

1

So diligent in search, no stone unturned,
He strove to find the Truth for which he yearned;
And when at last a Teacher he descried :
' I want to know ' . . . ' I have long sought ' . . . he cried,
' I heard some say ' . . . ' I read somewhere of this . . .'
' I long to find the path to perfect bliss . . .'
Amid the clamour loud the Teacher gave a sigh,
Then quietly he asked the question : ' Who is I ?'

2

The speaker stopped and gaped a moment, then
He thumped his chest and raised his voice again :
' I am Aloysius Smith, from far I come,
' I left my family and friends and home,
' I search for Truth; this pearl of price I seek,
' If you can help I beg you now to speak.'
He paused and in the hush there came a second sigh,
Again he heard the quiet question : ' Who is I ? '

3

His parted lips this time no sound came through,
At last his teeming brain had caught the clue;
He dropped his eyes before the Teacher's gaze,
His hands hung limp, no longer could he raise
His head, but sank upon one knee, bowed low,
As one who had received a stunning blow.
His pride was pierced, he gave a heartfelt sigh
And, softly speaking, said : ' Sir, show me, who is I ?'

XI

SUPERIORITY

How important it is for us that we should have someone to whom we can feel superior! Be he weaker physically than ourselves, or more stupid, or ill-begotten or of darker skin, all these things give us a false feeling of superiority. It is in this that we show the frailty and worthlessness of our natures, for it is only due to a fundamental uncertainty about our own true worth that we need to cosset our self-respect by finding in someone else that on which we can look down with contempt. Is it not an easy way to assure ourselves that we are superior beings by refusing to associate with a fellow man because of some feature in him which we presume to condemn? Nay, but it is our own condemnation we utter, for the lower we are on the human scale, the more petty-minded we are, the more we need this form of self-expression — an expression that is, indeed, of the self. The man who is truly superior is he who can see his own weaknesses revealed in others and who can assess with exactitude his own value in the Universe. He it is who will never condemn another while there is yet anything to condemn in himself. He alone is capable of evolution.

1

In youth the world was rich and fair
When safely o'er its stormy birth,
With grace and beauty everywhere
And seeds of life sown in the earth;
And man was made to man a brother —
Till men looked down on one another.

2

Now the world is growing older,
Its childish innocence is past,
The heart of man grows ever colder,
Self-love comes first, his brother last.
Man's inhumanity of manner,
Frustrating thus the sacred Planner.

XII

SUFFERING

How often does it happen that a man or woman, stricken by some calamity or enduring an incurable disease, rails against the Creator because He permits pain to exist in His creation? But pain is a preservative; if we felt no pain we would never withdraw our limbs from danger; life could not be maintained without it. Moreover, of all the suffering there is on earth, what a small part of it is due to Nature and what an enormous part is deliberately caused by man, whose victims are of the whole extent of the animal world. Think! Is the pain suffered by a cancer-stricken patient, bad though it is, comparable to that of a man whose flesh is being torn off strip by strip with red-hot pincers held in the hands of a fellow man? How then can Man rail against God? Rather is it not for God to rail against Man? If it were possible to put an end to all natural pain, would the world as a whole really notice so infinitesimal a decrease in her total suffering?

1

The golden light of sunset filtered through the trees,
The leveret nibbled at the waving, grassy blades,
Its silken fur was dappled by the dancing of the shades,
And ruffled gently in the intermittent breeze.
Startled it froze — a thud, a crack and limply hung
Its head; the fox took back the food to feed its young.

2

Outstretched upon the rack, a bleeding, tortured man,
Unconscious almost of the pain inflicted still,
For having sought the Truth against the Church's will
He had endured far more than human body can.
'Recant!' they cried again, in fear lest he be dead,
No sound could pass his lips, the victim moved his head.

3

Upon the muddy kerb the blind match-seller stood,
In tattered pocket half a dozen coppers lay,
A gang of youths in passing knocked him down in play
And in the rain-swilled gutter strewed his livelihood.
They kicked him twice then, laughing, wandered on again;
The blind match-seller, groping, sobbed despair and pain.

Life must be lost that Life may be. 'Tis man alone
Inflicts insensate cruelty upon his own.

XIII

THOUGHT

Too few of us are aware of the vast potentiality of Thought, of our thoughts, which go to swell the Force of Light or Darkness, to save or to destroy mankind. Thought created the Universe, the Thought of the Creator. Thought perpetuates the Universe. We, ourselves, spring from Thought and with every evil thought we sever one more strand with that which created and perpetuates us. Each one of us is responsible for his own thoughts, so each one of us is responsible for tilting the scales towards the Light or the Darkness. And every such thought remains for all time to accuse or to defend us, here and hereafter. Guard, therefore, your thoughts lest you assist in bringing destruction upon mankind. Observe and see whether they are constructive or destructive, for on your watchfulness and guardianship may depend the fate of the world in your generation.

1

Was it a beam of light that flashed
Across the ocean just a moment gone,
When you were thinking of your friend,
And was it love that in that moment shone?

2

Was it a beam of light that flashed
And struck some man a blow as with a sword,
So full of hatred was your heart
That emptied out its evil so long stored?

3

Thought is an entity that lives
With power to alter all the shape of things;
Thought can create and can destroy,
Healing and hope, despair and hate it brings.

4

All thought that flashes out attracts
Like thoughts which dwell in other planes of life,
Good is increased by good for good,
Evil accumulates with evil rife.

5

All thought which flashes out rebounds,
Enveloping the thinker once again;
His love returns with interest,
His hatred deeper dyes its deadly stain.

6

Thought is an entity that lives,
With power far beyond the power of kings;
Once formed it bides eternally,
Poised, ready to return on outstretched wings.

XIV

THE IDEAL AND THE REAL

How hardly do we tolerate criticism from others! How readily do we rise in arms to justify our conduct with arguments that appear undeniably true and fair, forgetting that excuse is self-accusation. How misunderstood do we feel ourselves to be and how much we pity ourselves for it! Then let each one of us stop and consider: If I were to meet myself one day face to face in the street, in the office, or the drawing-room, would I recognise myself? It is an awe-inspiring thought, for how little do we really know ourselves. But the situation can be remedied if we do but resolve steadfastly to listen in future to home truths and criticisms in silence and to ponder over them later in the quietness of our own abode, for they show inevitably how we appear to others, surprising though it may seem to us. Only by this means can we learn something of our natures, for our own view of ourselves is too biased and gilded over to be trusted in the smallest degree.

1

How beautiful the picture drawn,
Those penetrating eyes how kind,
The face with loving care so worn,
The smile that showed a generous mind!
The whole portrayed a noble soul,
A man who for a friend would die,
Sincere, forbearing, single, whole,
I knew that person — it was I!

2

Beside, another picture hung,
The portrait of a *little* man,
With glinting eyes and biting tongue,
Self-righteously the world to scan;
Some honesty was there, obscured,
Some virtue, one could not deny,
But critical and self-assured;
My friends — poor fools — said this was I!

XV

OLD WINESKINS

Was not the warning uttered long ago that for new wine new wineskins must be bought? How little has that warning been heeded, even from the time when it was uttered to the present day! How have all truths, nay, how has all Truth, been distorted by being made to fit into a previously accepted pattern! That which will not fit is hashed and trimmed and moulded until its identity is lost. How certain is it that those great Teachers of the past, were they to hear their teachings today, would scarce recognise them! Is it beyond the capacity of man to fling off his traditions and prejudices, to put an end to his accustomed ways of thinking and to leave himself open to receive instruction from those sources which demand no more than an untrammelled mind and a adventurous spirit?

How hard it is for narrow-visioned man
To break away from long-held, fond ideas,
To overthrow the teachings of his youth,
To burst asunder Personality
And launch himself upon the Sea of Truth,
And walk upon the waters, free of fears,
Aware this is the only way he can
Make any progress in the realm of Thought,
Or open up the channels of the mind,
At present blocked by so much worldly lore,
By prejudice, convention and the rest
That education and example store
In him with precepts, all which make him blind
And hide from him the fact of knowing naught.

XVI

GOD

'In the beginning was the Concept and the Concept was with God and the Concept was God.'

— S. John I : i.

How small the mind of man to comprehend the great,
The Good, the Infinite, the Mind of God;
With what impetuosity he rushes in
To tell how God does this, thinks that, feels so,
All based upon his own mentality so trite :
He separates the acts of God from God Himself,
As he distinguishes the thinker from the object thought;
Nor does he understand this single basic law :
When God conceives, then God the Concept is,
And when He thinks, the Thinking, Thought and God are one;
When God creates, then God Creation is,
The Will, the Thought, the Act, each one is God Himself;
No time is there when they existed not,
Just as no time is there when God Himself was not,
No time He will not be, for God is Time,
And yet in Him no Time exists, for God is Timelessness.

XVII

CHAOS

'Chaos, cosmos, cosmos, chaos! Who can tell how all will end?
'Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their wisdom
for your friend.'
— Tennyson

Man is rent asunder at this time,
The turmoils of the nations,
Of the family,
Of the mind
Rise up and swirl around the world;
The very Universe
About the Earth
And Sun
Is caught up in this turmoil, refting
And splitting apart, confusing that
To which fair order once was given :
Cosmos out of chaos,
Becoming once again
Chaos — out of cosmos.
And the mind of man as microcosm,
Immersed in this chaotic state,
Seeks here and there,
Grasps this and that,
Holds false values
Unaware that they are false.
Lost, bewildered and unstable
As the tortured atoms are
After an explosion.
And all the Forces of the Darkness
Converge upon these minds in turmoil,
And show themselves in wars,
Uprisings and revolts,

Crimes of violence,
Senseless strikes,
Until a vicious circle is set up
And men are immeshed,
Imprisoned,
Unable to break away,
Victims of a Force they feed.
Unless the individual here and there,
Who sees the light and knows himself and stands
Unmoved, a rock set in a maelstrom,
'Gainst whom the Force of Evil beats its wings
In vain and in frustration weaker grows —
Unless there are enough of such to form
A bulwark that will check the mighty swirl,
Then Man, bereft of his senses
Will destroy himself
And Night will
Fall.

XVIII

FREE WILL

Could we have done otherwise? If we can answer this question in the affirmative then we think that we are free. But it is not so, for our decision is the sum total of our past decisions; we decide the way we do because of what we are, and there is no escape from this. There is no freedom in our choice, there is only the illusion of such a freedom. When an act is performed with the whole of our Being, so that there is no part of us, not even the smallest voice dissenting against our decision, then we could not have done otherwise, and when we could not have done otherwise, then, and then only, we acted freely. But to attain this freedom of the will requires a long and weary struggle against the multiplicity of 'I's' that go to make us up. Such freedom only comes with the integrating of the Personality.

1

Before each one the choice of this or that,
And, free to choose, we think we freely choose,
When we decide to take a certain course,
From duty, fear, desire, loyalty
Or any other motive, bad or good,
We could do otherwise — or think we could!

2

How little do we understand the truth!
How scarcely know ourselves for what we are!
If we can think that motives leave us free,
By which a part of us directs the rest,
A minute 'I', a product of our past
Is holding fast the whole, itself held fast.

3

When we are free we act with all our selves;
No one small part or motive makes the choice;
The whole combines with singleness of aim,
Regret then has no place, for all is one.
When I can do naught else, then I am free,
An Integrated Personality.

XIX

KARMA

This life is meaningless viewed as a two-dimensional picture fitted into a frame of birth, growth and death. If, on the other hand, it is regarded merely as the only visible part of an invisible whole and if, through it, runs the shaft of Karma, manufactured by ourselves who are free to choose at any time between good and evil, then our pasts lie in our present and our present lies in our future; so that the past lies before us as surely as it does behind us. Our life, then, takes on a three-dimensional aspect, filled out by the obtrusion of long forgotten history, of errors and successes, of lapses and improvements, of choices rightly and wrongly made, all tending towards a goal; but whether that goal lies above or below us is in our own hands. This three-dimensional view of life gives a meaning, otherwise absent, to our present situations. We must think of the present in terms of the past and of the past in terms of the future. Then shall we have strength to struggle with circumstances that seem harsh and unjust. Then shall we know whether our feet are on the right road, however weak they may be. Then shall we know there is only one conquest to make : that of ourselves.

1

Flat as a picture on a printed page,
So look we at this life of ours today,
Nor think we of some distant, bygone age
When, with wandering feet, we went astray,
And locked ourselves within a gilded cage,
For, free to choose, we chose the Evil way.

2

The distant age our present life transcends,
The cause of much distress, of strife and cares,
For, from forgotten times, a shaft descends,
The history of our own misdeeds that spares
Not those who will not learn to make amends —
The picture now a third dimension wears.

XX

SONNET ON REINCARNATION

Can any think this is the end of all,
That this one life determines each his fate,
That deeds of violence, thoughts so full of hate
And all the wickedness that from the Fall
Of Man hath filled the world with bitter gall,
With pain and suffering — the common state
Throughout mankind which years cannot abate
One whit — that from such depths is no recall,
No chance that by experience each may learn
And live again to test himself anew,
Correct mistakes, or fail to discern
The error of his ways or lusts subdue?
Must life on life not come ere we can win
To Perfect Good, or sink beneath our Sin?

Michael Dillon