

Young Know ledge.

Knowledge, I know, is sure, of gradual thought,
A mare in foal, who pastures with dew eyes,
Cropping the grasses of a certitude
By many seasons sweetened for her sake,
Waiting with heart untroubled till it come
That by the straw-beds and the breathing clover
Like frost shall brittle one brief night of pain,
And next her treasure nuzzles at her side.
Knowledge has sunlight sleeked about her limbs,
White-headed reverent trees to partner her
In days of no event but steady growth.
And in the orchard where the pear-tree blooms,
Where surpliced tui chants one orison
Too wild, and shakes his petalled pulpit down,
None plucks unripe, none has a lust for bane,
Or thieves across a fence ungiven sweet.

Or knowledge is the hour that strikes but once,
Strikes, and ~~xxx~~ demands, and never comes again.

Old vine on walls, thick-jointed, stiff with knots,
Knowledge creeps up the mortised centuries;
White grapes from this; but here with darkling pride
Burgundian clusters silk their sides in sun.
A thousand stamping feet across the vats
Treadx out each grape-year. Now the rosyxg foam

Seethes up in hillocks, and the vintner's rods
 Stir the dark coil of potency beneath.
 Awhile the new wine in the barrel hisses
 Singing its song of grapes with savage lips
 Still sensual for the air, the straight-backed vineyards
 And brown hands greedy in the clustering leaves.
 Slowly comes settling, slowly wine forgets,
 Sinks into silence, dreams its sunny rage
 Away in distillate of centuries.

At last when cobwebs thicken sweating wood
 Sure hands draw off the spigot; so much red,
 So much bouquet, just so much bite in crystal.
 Set the dew to your lips, friend, this is knowledge.

Or knowledge is the thin, contemptuous wine
 Of wit from him you met once in a tavern,
 The grudging fellow sprawled across the fire,
 Who for no reason, (smell of sopping cloth,
 Click of the cautious weather fingering latches,)
 Poured out his lees of laughter, crude "I know".
 Once spoke his soul, but next day in the street
 Passed you a stranger, never spoke again.

Knowledge has gardens rooted, so companioned
 The lichen on the cobhouse sees the way
 The flowering damsons in your driveway spill,
 And sets its orange cap to catch the eye

Of timid daisies, scared across the lawn.

Long since the roots of ash-tree learned the gentle

Contact of fibrous-fed forget-me-not,

The bellbird half afraid drops down his note

Into the thin and shining campanile

Of ivory lilies, white mirage of mosques.

Each bee has learned his choosing. Here you walk

By careful paths, no bruising nor no stumbling,

And only age and almond be upon you

Lost in the garden; smooth to tread is knowledge.

Or knowledge was the second while you listened

Waiting for raindrops, in the showery start

Like claws of birds that patter on the leaves.

And knowledge is a thunder in the night,

Huge claps of mirth, a frightened woman flung

Over the bed in oil-lamp's yellow gleam,

One half your soul an awe of burning blue,

One half your life an open flower of flesh,

While adder flashes flicker on the panes.

Knowledge is flint-fire crackling on the road,

The hard impatient message in the breast,

Big words like bloodshot smoke behind old houses,

Loud bells like fishwives chaffering their news,

And loneliness of rocks where ships went down.

Black horse that broke his heart to reach the post,

The fool who fell too soon, or lived for failure,
 A wandering filth in rags, a raging torment.
 Knowledge is silence confined in a world
 Where every bloom, black-clattered with its bee,
 Rings out its fragile warnings on the wind;
 And none to heed; and all to toss aside
 The stumbling words, the hand upon their sleeve.

O fretted minds, bear yet your sheath a little.
 Not on high fields you go, nor in command:
 Not greatly owe to captains of wise mien,
 For these were ordered, but your march as rough
 As the first jagged troops that flung at Alps.
 Like thieves and vagabonds you go by night,
 Brandishing childish cudgels, circling torches,
 And for a sudden burning you shall act,
 And at a sudden evil you shall strike,
 But not for long, and God knows well or ill.
 What your hard soles have taught you, and hard hands,
 What your bewilderment gave you, and hot heart,
 That only is your knowledge. Take and bear it.

And die at last, like nettles in the ditch.
 And burn at last, like gorse across the hills,
 Because you stung the sloth and pricked the proud
 And are a bane to what shall come hereafter.

This also is your knowledge. Take and bear it.

Kauri they split with wedges, when too vast
 The grey trunks rose for any ripping-saw;
 It rounded off in masts that reigned on seas.
 Gum-tree from Sydney makes the keels of boats,
 But tall puriri, cut in six-foot lengths

(After the berry-day that snared the pigeons,)

Rides evenly, and never rots in water,
 And burns at evening with the hottest flame
 For travellers, met rife with early knowledge.

Boak the lithe toro-toro, and best yarn
 Was not so strong for tying up stockades,
 Three pickets for defence, a carved head fixed
 Red-ochred at the height of every gate.

The nikau born in shade plait hard together,
 (One of the sacred four from lost Hawaii,)

Lay over toi-toi, or the raupo, tough
 When used for thatching; but if huts take fire
 They sheaf in yellow flame seen twenty miles.

The mangrove roots were ground for making powder
 At the three secret mills among the Maoris

When the lost war-dance thudded through the north;
 They cut the yellow twisted horoeka

For sticks; the grass springs best where thin-belled cattle
 Trampled a path, dung-dropping in the fern;

And the young shoots were burned off once a year,
 But roots were food for bellies when crops drowned;

They called "Hoi-aa, Toi-daa," along the rivers
 When paddles dashed in sunset-feathered water,
 The chief's taiaha keeping blades in time.

And these I know, and ghosts of dead men's knowledge,

(And ghosts of young, rebellious, chidden knowledge,
 Dunce at its class and striding out of school,)

By bridges slender as the ake ladder

Where Heaphy, climbing, found the Greenstone People,

Saw the wide nets wash out in thundering surf

Too huge for the canoes, drawn in by moonlight;

Watched the brown women drying out inanga

For fod der in the nights of eaten moons

When wind prowls round the thatch with thievish fingers;

Saw the marled greenstone littered on the ground,

And how they fine the edge with whalebone drills --

And turned away at last, and climbed the ladder,

And standing on the clifftops, saw their smokes

Final stream up, blue parting of a dream.

There standing on the clifftops weighed his knowledge --

The thin, precarious weight of early knowledge --

And staring in a sun, half steeled his heart

To tell the cities there was no such world.

Robin Hyde.