

Young Knowledge.

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 then 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 a steady growth.
And in the orchard where the crab-tree blooms,
Where surpliced tui chants one dirge
Too wild, and shakes his petalled pulpit down,
None plucks unripe, none has a lust for bane
Or thieves across a fence ~~un~~ ungiven sweet.
The labours of the world make road for knowledge,
Handling their time-known tools, the scythe for stooks,
Blue wheel in ruts, the brown and running sacks
Wide-mouthed for ever on the threshing floor.
Proud-nostrilled, chestnut in the sun, shines knowledge,
And singled men will tend her all her days....
Or knowledge is the hour that strikes but once,
Strikes, and demands, and never comes again.

Old wine 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
 Press out each grape-year; now the rosy 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 the song of grapes with savage lips
 Still sensual for the air, ~~xxxxxx~~ the straight-backed vineyards,
 And brown hands thrust among 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 ~~xxxxxxxx~~ 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 latch,)

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.

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 a flower of burning flesh,
 Touch her and laugh, whisper the comfort-things --
 While still the leaden sky is great with child
 And adder flashes dart against the pane.

Knowledge has gardens planted, 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 smile
 Of timid daisies, scared across the lawns
 By that old gardener, whipcord like his boughs.
 Long since the roots of ash-tree learned the gentle
 Contact of fibrous-fed forget-me-not,
 The ~~ivy~~ creeper on the walls grown intimate
 Swarms just so far, and then for its encroachment
 Sees the remonstrance of the garden shears.
 The bellbird half afraid drops down his song
 Into the thin and metal campanile

Of glittering pear-trees, white mirage of mosques.
 Each bee has learned his choo si ng. Here you walk
 By careful paths, no bruising, nor no stumbling,
 And only age and almond be upon you,
 Here in the garden; smooth to tread is knowledge.

Or knowledge was the second while you listened
 Waiting for raindrops, in the little start
 Like claws of birds that patter on the leaves ---
 And dreamed that your two hands had made the rainbo w.

Knowledge is flint-fire crackling in the road,
 The hard impatient message in the breast,
 Big words like bloodhot smoke behind old houses,
 Loud bells like fishwives clattering their news,
 The 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 fai lure,
 Knowledge is blindness confined in a world
 Where every bloom black-clapped with its bees
 Rings out a fragile warning on the wind;
 And none to heed; and all to toss aside
 The stumbling words, the hand upon their sleeve.

Knowledge is all that grasps and breaks and strives,
 The flat tide flowing red between the mangroves,
 The little evil roots that suck i n mud,

The broken faces; all the broken faces
That put together makes the mas k of knowledge.

O fretted minds, bear yet your sheaths a little.
Not on high fields you go, nor i n command,
Not greatly owe to captains of wise mien,
For these were ordered; but your march as rough
As the first jagged ~~xxx~~ troops that flung at Alps.
Like vagabonds and thieves you go by night,
Brandishing childish cudgel s, circling torches,
And for a sudden burning you shall strive,
And at a sudden evil you shall stri ke,
But not for long; and God knows well or ill.
What your hard soles have taught you, and rough hands,
What your wet eyes have dealth with, and tight m ouths,
What your bewilderment gave you, and hot heart,
That only is your knowledge. Take and bear it.

And die at last, like nettle in the ditch,
And burn at last, like gors e 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 rippi ng-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 ripe with early knowledge.
 Soak 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, on the height of every gate.
 The nikau borm in shade plait hard together,
 (One of the sacred four from lost Hawiiki,)

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 their path, dung-dropping in the fern;
 And the young shoots were burned off once a year,
 But food for bellies when the crops were drowned.
 And these I know, and ghosts of dead men's knowledge,
 (And ghosts of young, rebellious, chidden knowledge,
 Dunce at its class and stalking out of school,)