

to his house—he lives in Buxton Avenue, thirty-six.”

He found MacKelly—he could only think of him as that—propped up in bed with a thick wad of dressing taped over his nose. The old taxi-driver stared blearily at him with trembling, bloodshot eyes. “Your bike’s on the taxi—your bike’s on the taxi” he said weakly, but the words merely echoed Koko’s, and he did not seem to know what he was saying. Koko started to make conversation about the previous night, but he stopped short. He saw Kelly looking at him with a puzzled, hostile frown, and he realised suddenly that the man could not recognise him.

He untied his bike and began the journey back to Pola location. He had no wind and he found the going hard. After a few miles he stopped for a rest. The power station was behind him, up on the hill, and he turned round and looked at it. It didn’t look at all pretty now, just grey and dirty and sprawled out. It didn’t remind him of Japan or anything. He got on his bike again and his thoughts turned to to-morrow’s work. For a fleeting moment he saw himself at the steering wheel, driving one of the company’s vans. But there was something sour in the thought, and he put it from his mind.

“A—ah, the hell,” he said and pedalled slowly home.

HOME THOUGHTS

I

Strange rumours gripped Olympus. Apollo’s hand
Paused at its work, set plummet and rule aside;
Then glittering in clean-cut bronze he sped
To rout the brash disturbers of that peace
Which year by year had raised archaic Greece
Nearer his vision of the poised and planned.
O barbarous with drums, with dancing drums,
Amid a snarl of leopards through whose hide
Shimmer disastrous stars; the drunkard comes,
Black Dionysus roaring in his pride!

Ten thousand times they fought, wrestling before
Both gods and men; it seemed the very rocks
Watched those wild bouts among the barley shocks,

The brown vineyards, the dusty threshing floor.
If pressed Apollo side-slipped to the sun,
Striking his rival blind, while he in turn
Would slink instinctive into copses, run
Underground like roots, and hoot weird scorn
From his nocturnal world: but neither could
Conquer the force in which the other stood.

The spectacle gave poets double sight;
Their ears grew keen to catch at brightest noon
Rumours of drums; and dark, ecstatic night
Could wake with shafts not quivered in the moon.
At last, at Delphi, half in love with him,
Apollo gave the drunkard elbow room;
But though his pride of leopards purred, near tamed,
And he himself grew decorous, he might
Still breathe a deep, vibrating gloom
Round anything the Bright One named.

At length, when peasants through his autumn trance
Stirred slow pavannes for summer on soft drums
He cried aloud, (his leopards stretched their limbs):
Kill me, Apollo, or join the tragic dance!
Instead the Bright One watched: the flexing knees,
The raving, rending; heard the ecstatic crying;
But mirrored on his mind's white threshing floor
Dark dancers sighed and swayed like cypress trees
About a man on whose defiant dying
Cracked clouds of knowing never moist before.

II

Why do I hanker homewards, falter?
Because in Arno's flood the stars
Cavort with neon signs, headlights of cars?
The Centaur, snapping its human halter,
Demolishes baroque facades;
The Great Bear runs amok
Among our maps, tugging the Pole awry;
O all things heave and buck
Since Dionysus slipped Apollo's guards
And let his leopards range the earth and sky!

Stupid of me to brood and cry
These barbarous confusions where
Triumphant marble effigies defy
The moody turmoils of the air;
But, as at home, I here discern
The predatory shade;
Asleep all day in ivy or that fern
Which smothers the balustrade
It sniffs the night and pads the cracked parterre
Between dry laurels and the shattered urn.

Man's task is to get such dark things clear.
Old Galileo, that empiricist
Through gothic tombs, antiphonies of psalms
Smuggled a serpent-sharp idea;
Smoother linen cordage looped in his swinging fist
Chilled the ascending stairs;
The sceptre-grasping ikons round the dome
Shook as his ape-like palms
Paid out that system-smashing metronome
Who jazztime spoilt the sweet waltz of the spheres.

Long years drifting through African dark
Bred dreams that I might find, once here
A burning beacon, a gyro-setting mark;—
That cord would ruck and tangle where
The rough stone of a leopard's bark
Ripples the scrub with fear.
What pendulum can trace the mind's unseen
Sharp arcs, its blind man's reach
Round knots of being that have never been
Subdued to slip through flaming hoops of speech?

Never so clearly have I known
That though the sharp mind's eye was made
To sever struggling shape from strangling shade
These shapes and shades can not be mine.
O African creatures across this night
I glimpse in our primitive storm
Of thunder, whirl-wind, mirage-twisted light
A lifted limb or glance
Which I might free, give consciousness and form
Dared I but stare into your furious dance!

III

Old Galileo's heirs can cite
How stubborn atoms may become
Open to change in unimpeded light,
Or round a rod of platinum
May curtsey, open arms and start
Dancing a different dance;
But the catalyst remains itself, apart,
Waits like a hermit there
Through dull khamseens of accident and chance
To set one crystal, get one colour clear.

These images at which I stare
Beneath such slow, myth-burdened stars,
Virgilian forests shedding mortal tears,
Might blind me in my native air.
Unless for some loved principle one strips,
As the desert fathers did,
The soul of gaudy accidents, and grips
A Mosaic serpent or rod
One's deepest cries come from Egyptian lips
Blowing dead bubbles on a Red Sea flood.

IV

I have not found myself on Europe's maps,
A world of things, deep things I know endure
But not the context for my one perhaps.
I must go back with my five simple slaves
To soil still savage, in a sense still pure:
My loveless, shallow land of artless shapes
Where no ghosts glamourise the recent graves
And every thing in Space and Time just is:
What similes can flash across those gaps
Undramatised by sharp antitheses?

I boast no quiet catalytic wand
Nor silently swinging, tell-tale pendulum
To civilize my semi-barbarous land;
A clearer love is all that I bring home:

Little, yet more than enough. Apollo, come!
O cross the tangled scrub, the uncouth ways,
Visit our vital if untamed abysm
Where your old rival in the lustrous gloom
Creates a different dance, a brand new rhythm
To spell this dumb earth's agony and praise.

Perhaps among the shrubs and pebbles of this land
Profiles not worn by centuries of use,
Shapes, textures, new to your subtle hand
Sounds, likely to startle the blasé muse,
Perhaps the old dynamic shade will come,
Nervous, breathless, avoiding your vision's range:
But if, if only you will watch, will wait
You'll kindle in that lightening interchange
When thick clouds crack and to a thunder's drum
Fall crystal words, dancing, articulate.

GUY BUTLER.

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