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The Confession of Bishop Golias

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6.

I have distracted time.
 In a full day your face
 Has only its own place.
 Tired from irrelevance
 I sleep, and dream by chance,
 Till passion can exact
 No faith, and fails in act,
 Till timelessness recedes
 Beneath the apparent needs
 Of a distracted time.

7.

The scholar of theology and science
 Who falls in love must in good faith affianced
 Love and his trades; must prove the commonplace
 Of his divine research, *Love goes by grace,*
Never by merit; judge by divination
 Supernal from infernal visitation;
 And risk his faith. As scientist he tries
 By the inductive leap, immense surmise,
 To force the future to confirm his guess—
 Though predisposed toward ill or good success,
 Pledged to the issue. So he may discover
 As scholar truth, sincerity as lover.

THE CONFESSION OF BISHOP GOLIATH

*Written originally in Latin by the Archpoet toward the end
 of the twelfth century.*

Inwardly fired with vehement wrath,
 In bitterness I will speak my mind:
 Made of material light as lath,
 I am like a leaf tossed by the wind.

Though it were just for the wise and brave
 To place their seat on the rock of will,
 Fool, I am like the flowing wave
 That under one sky is ever unstill.

I am borne on as a pilotless ship,
As a vagrant bird through the cloudy haze;
Ungoverned by reins, ungoverned by whip,
I gad with my kind, I follow their ways.

I walk the broad path in the fashion of youth,
Forgetful of virtue, entangled with sin;
Avid of pleasure more than of truth
I die in soul but take care of my skin.

Most worthy prelate, your pardon I pray,
I die a good death, swing on a sweet rope,
At sight of the ladies I still get gay;
Whom I cannot by touch, I sin with in hope.

Who placed on a pyre will not burn in the fire?
Or dallying at Pavia can keep himself chaste?
Where Venus goes hunting young men for hire,
Drooping her eyelids and fixing her face.

Hippolytus placed in Pavia today
Would not be Hippolytus "when the dawn came";
To the bedroom of Venus still runs the broad way,
Nor in all those towers is the tower of shame.

Again, I'm charged with playing strip poker:
When play casts me out in my naked skin,
Shivering, I sweat while my mind plays stoker,
And I write better verse than I did within.

The tavern, thirdly, I note in this summing
Up of the life I will ever have led
Till I hear the holy angels coming,
Singing rest eternal unto the dead.

For I propose in the tavern to die
That wine may be near when the throat grows hard,
And the chorus of angels may joyfully cry,
"O Lord, be kindly to this drunkard."

The lamp of the soul is lighted by wine,
 Sotted with nectar it flies to the sky;
 Wine of the tavern is far more divine
 Than watery wine that the priest raises high.

They say a poet should flee public places
 And choose his seat in a quiet retreat:
 He sweats, presses on, stays awake, and erases,
 Yet comes back with scarcely one clear conceit.

The chorus of poets should fast and abstain,
 Avoid public quarrels and brawls with their neighbors:
 That they may compose what will ever remain,
 They die in a cell, overcome by their labors.

Nature to such gives a suitable crown:
 I never could write on an empty purse;
 Myself when fasting a boy could knock down;
 Thirsting and hunger I hate like a hearse.

Never's the spirit of poetry given
 Except when the belly is fat and sleek;
 While Bacchus is lord of my cerebral heaven,
 Apollo moves through me and marvels I speak.

Behold, of my vice I was that informer
 By whom your henchmen indicted me;
 No one of them is his own accuser,
 Though he hopes to sport through eternity.

So I stand before the blessed prelate
 Urging that precept of our Lord, wherein
 He casts the first stone, nor spares the poet,
 Whose heart is wholly devoid of sin.

I've charged myself with whatever I knew
 And vomited up my long cherished dole;
 The old life passes, gives way to the new;
 Man notes appearance, Jove sees the soul.

Primate of Cologne, grant me your blessing,
Absolve the sinner who begs your grace;
Impose due penance on him confessing;
Whatever you bid I'll gladly embrace.

J. V. CUNNINGHAM

SUMMER RAIN

The rain falls like mist.
The clouds move
hardly at all:
like sleep,
somnolent, like sheep.
The sky is rose, mauve,
amethyst.

The rain falls like mist.
The wind, a young girl's hair,
blows odorous and fair.

"What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?"
A south wind blows,
the leaves stir,
the trees are gently shaken.
Time, a wheel,
revolves.
The clairvoyant air
shimmers with the fabulous and rare.

"Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altars, O mysterious priest!"

The visible world dissolves.
All myths are true, all shadows real.
The gods awaken.

GUSTAV DAVIDSON