

The Ballad of Nun and Knight

By George Sylvester Viereck

She speaks:

I dreamed a dream of how the red sun fell,
And on the plain beyond the city spread
A joyous crowd, by Love and Laughter led;
When sudden came, but faintly audible,
A leper's voice, and then the warning bell:
Then passion paled—seized with a speechless dread,
They tarried not to spit at him, but fled,
As if that beggar were a thing from hell.

And so if once our love were known, O sweet!
The veriest harlot, roaming through the street,
Would rather make the gutter her abode,
And share the leper's bed without a sigh,
Than touch our hand, but praying thank her God
That she is not even as thou and I.

He speaks.

Full well I know that with its craggy rim
The cup of wrath awaits us and the Doom,
O Bride of Christ, thou for the love of whom
To all hell's torches these mine eyes were dim:
Is He not Lord of all the Seraphim?
His all the gardens and all fruit the womb
Of earth shall bear?—I took one little bloom.
Faithful to me, thou brokest faith with Him.

Yet though all saints turn from us, and hell's gin
Close fast upon us, and the red flames dwell
On your gold hair, and where your mouth has been,
Lovers shall know and sing of us, and tell
How that our love was greater than our sin,
And tears of pity reach the heart of hell.