

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BOOKSTORE

BY H. H. MANCHESTER

PART II. IN MEDIÆVAL AND EARLY MODERN TIMES

THE INFLUENCE OF THE METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION UPON LITERATURE

THE establishment of the Eastern Empire at Constantinople did much to reduce the importance of Rome as the book centre of the world, and the retreat to the East was turned into a flight when Rome was finally taken by the barbarians.

From the viewpoint of books, conditions in the Middle Ages were the combined result of the breaking up of the Roman Empire, and the establishment of the Christian Church. The dissolution of the Empire made intercommunication difficult, compelling each community to exist principally on its own resources, while, at the same time, the ability to read was acquired but slowly by the invaders. As a consequence, in the West, the knowledge of the old literature died, and the books were lost or destroyed.

Not considering the Church, conditions in the early Middle Ages were, from a literary point of view, somewhat analogous to the situation in the Greek world at the beginning of its history. There were many tribes, more or less independent chiefs, and a people which had to be reached, if at all, through the spoken and not the written word. The result, as might almost have been foretold, was another production and distribution of literature by bards and minstrels. The epic of *Beowulf*, the *Sagas*, the *Eddas*, the *Kalevala*, and the *Niebelungen Lied*, were all composed to be recited or

chanted, just as were the *Iliad* and other Greek epics.

The minstrel travelled from chieftain's hall to chieftain's hall, and woe to him who had not a thrilling tale to tell. Because of this, all the best of these sagas are still interesting. In fact, judging from Greek and mediæval results, a distribution through minstrels is the surest way to evolve a great epic, and it is very doubtful whether any really stirring one has been produced through any other means.

The one great modifier of these conditions in the Middle Ages was the Christian Church. It had a common interest in all lands, and kept up the intercommunication of even the most distant churches and monasteries with Rome. In an analogous way, it also kept in touch with Latin, and to a lesser extent with Greek, because of its interest in the Church Fathers and the Scriptures. It was probably on this account that the conquest of the northern tribes did not entirely put a stop to literary activity and bookselling at Rome, or even in Paris and some of the other larger cities. In the sixth century we find the sale of books in France mentioned by Cæsarius of Arles. There was even a provision in the laws of the Visigoths that a book should be sold for six sols.

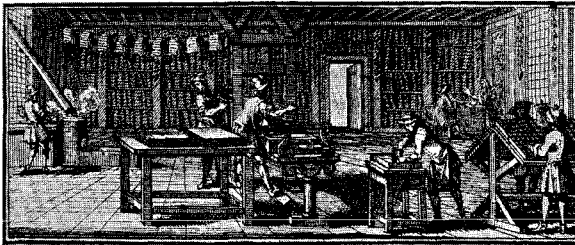
In the seventh century we hear of a manuscript of Osorius being prepared by a scribe in the Statio Ma-



LYDGATE PRESENTING HIS BOOK TO THE KING. ONE GREAT ESSENTIAL OF MEDIEVAL AUTHORSHIP WAS TO FIND A PATRON

gestri Viliarie Antiquarii. In 658 Gertrud ordered books from Rome, and Abbot Benedict, according to Beda, brought back a number of scholarly works from Rome in 671, 678, and 681. In the next century Archbishop Albert of York, between 766 and 780, sought for books not only at Rome but "elsewhere," which proves that there were bookstores outside of the Eternal City.

The monasteries not only kept alive an interest in books, but soon took up the publication of books, though, of course, in manuscript form. The most useful religious books, as well as the works of the Church Fathers, were copied, decorated, illustrated, and bound in all styles from the simplest to the most gorgeous. Sometimes one monastery borrowed a book from another for



A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PRINTERY AND BOOK SHOP, FROM LA CAILLE



STRADANUS'S ENGRAVING OF A MARKET-PLACE ABOUT 1560, WITH WHAT IS PROBABLY A STATIONER'S SHOP AT THE RIGHT

the purpose of copying it, in which case it was customary to leave an equally desirable book as a pledge. Occasionally, instead of borrowing the book, a scribe was sent to another monastery to copy it. The monasteries copied manuscripts not only for themselves, but for their patrons,—in other words, they themselves acted as publishers and booksellers.

While the small devotional manuscripts were easily copied and sold cheaply, the more elaborate works, which required genuine ability and infinite patience, brought amounts comparable with the value of such rare books to-day. It is not surprising that while Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, in 1386 paid to Martin L'Huiller only sixteen francs for binding eight books, the Countess of Anjou paid for an elaborately illuminated book two hundred sheep, a hogshead each of wheat, rye, and millet, and a bundle of marten skins.

The writing in the monastery was done either in a general scriptorium,

or in smaller stalls where one monk worked alone. The copying was commonly assigned to one scribe, the illustrating to another, and often the illuminating to a third. The binding was likewise done by specialists. In the early Middle Ages the principal book material was parchment, as papyrus could no longer be imported from Egypt, and paper was not introduced into western Europe until the eleventh century.

While the distribution of books through the monasteries did much to preserve religious and learned works of more or less importance, the actual original literature to which it gave rise was almost negligible. Sundry religious discourses, various scholastic dissertations, a few pious tales, and occasional historically important, but literarily worthless annals, almost exhaust the list. The monk had no audience or reading public to hold him up to the mark, and could expect few honours save for doctrinal or moral writings.



A SCRIPTORIUM IN A MONASTERY IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

The distribution of books through the universities, which began in the twelfth century, was even more sterile in literary results. The University of Bologna was started in 1116, that of Paris about 1150, and the first beginnings were made at Oxford in 1167. With the early Renaissance the colleges became numerous. Almost as soon as a university was established, it was found necessary to set up bookstores where the works recommended to the students could be purchased. Such shops were officially connected with the universities and the stationers who kept them were humble members of the university staff.

Although there still remained independent booksellers in western Europe, the universities almost from the very beginning began to reach for control over the book trade, at least in their own vicinity. This was particularly the case in France. In 1275 the sale of books in Paris, except at certain fairs and by pedlars, was restricted to licensed bookstores, and the university specified the stock the stationer should carry and the

prices he should ask. Many of the students rented their books for the quarter instead of buying them. If manuscripts were put on sale on commission, the dealer himself was prohibited from purchasing until after a certain period, and the price and purchaser had to be recorded on the manuscript. Various other restrictions were added in 1300. In 1323 there were twenty-nine book shops in Paris, two of which were managed by women. In return for restrictions under which they laboured, the booksellers were free from taxes and personal service. In 1340 control by the university was extended over the pedlars, and various other provisions enacted.

Among the early booksellers of Paris, we find mention of Herneis le Romanceur in the first half of the thirteenth century, of Hugichio le Lombard in 1274, of Guillaume Herneis in 1292, and at the same date of Agnien in the Rue de la Boucherie.

In England we hear of Robert the stationer at Oxford in 1308, and of John Hardy in a similar position at Cambridge in 1350. The social po-



THE BIBLIOMANIAC, 1494, FROM SEBASTIAN
BRANT

sition of the stationer may be imagined from the fact that in 1411 Oxford University directed that the graduating students should give their old clothes to the stationer.

All this university activity in book selling, however, produced practically nothing in literature. Whether it actually retarded it or not, is too broad a question to be considered here.

As a sort of combined result of feudalism and the Church, came the crusades. These offered an amazing field for the distribution of literature through the bard and story-teller, and gave rise to at least three different types. Their chivalrous spirit was the centre of many knightly tales, including such epics as the *Song of Roland*, and the *Cid*. Their romantic atmosphere made popular the mediæval romances of Alexander, Charlemagne, and King Arthur. The invasions into the East by the cru-

saders produced accounts of strange travels and adventures. Probably all of this literature was first recited or narrated among the crusaders and travellers, and not written down until later.

The spirit of adventure and romance was maintained in the early Renaissance. Marco Polo told of his travels, Dante described experiences in Hades, and Petrarch sang of love. Whether the production was first recited or written, it was at least put into such form as to fit it for oral repetition. Boccaccio's stories were supposed to be told by a group of refugees from the plague, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* narrated on a pilgrimage. Chaucer even states expressly in his prologue to *Troilus and Cressida*, about 1380, that it was meant to be read "or elles sung." Altogether, in comparison with the writings at the monasteries and universities, the literature designed for general distribution by word of mouth seems to have attained to far higher results.

The popularity of the new litera-



A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BOOKBINDER AND
BOOK SHOP, BY JAN LUIKEN

ture certainly led to the establishment of booksellers who were at once scribes and publishers, and not directly dependent upon the monasteries and universities. The very name of Herneis le Romanceur, the Parisian stationer of about 1225, implies that he wrote or at least copied romances.

Independent book shops probably existed in Italy throughout the entire Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century we hear of *librarii* as distinct from *stationarii*, the latter probably being connected with the university. Joannes Aurispa is noted as being a manuscript dealer in Venice as early as the fourteenth century. In Florence, Arretinus, about 1375, sold manuscripts and sent scribes to copy them in the monasteries and universities. Leonardo Bruno in 1416 wrote that he had "hunted through all the book shops" of Florence.

In England Richard de Bury about 1345 stated that by making advance payments to the *stationarii*

and *librarii*, not only native but French, German, and Italian, he had procured books from great distances over the sea. The London scriveners were organised as a guild in 1357, and the limners in 1403, though as yet they had no exclusive privileges.

But the manuscript shops, in spite of their development, could offer as yet practically no method by which an author could receive a reasonable compensation for his work. As a result, the authors of the Middle Ages, outside of the unknown minstrels and a few monks, were either nobles or were compelled to seek the patronage of the nobility. Dante during his long exile found a pleasant refuge with Can Grande della Scala of Verona and other Ghibelline nobles. Petrarch was honoured with the laurel crown by King Robert of Naples. Boccaccio found favour with Giovanna, Queen of Naples. Chaucer was under the patronage of Lionel and later John of Gaunt, two sons of Edward III. Froissart, who



A BOOKSTALL IN AN ENGRAVING BY BOSSE, ABOUT 1650

reported the Middle Ages as Herodotus did the Greek, had various royal and noble patrons, both in France and England, who probably enjoyed his narratives as much as he did their favour. There are many pictures in the works of the Middle Ages showing the author presenting his book to his patron, and the rule seems to have been, no patron no publisher. But the system of patronage was far more productive than no system of rewards at all, for had not authorship led to patronage, there would probably have been few authors.

The invention of printing, toward the middle of the fifteenth century, by Coster or Gutenberg—I believe this controversy is still undecided,—produced in the beginning fewer changes in books themselves than it did in bookselling. The earliest printed books were close imitations of manuscripts. The type was designed after the different kinds of writing used respectively in religious works, charters, ordinary manuscripts, and letters. The illustrations and illumina-

tions were of the same style as before, and were often filled in by hand. The lines were still of uneven length, and there were various other resemblances familiar to the collector of incunabula.

It soon became noticeable, however, even with the small editions of two hundred or three hundred copies put forth by the early publishers, that printing was greatly increasing the supply of books. Fust had to travel to Paris to sell part of his output. There is an interesting legend, probably false, that as he kept offering duplicate books at decreasing prices, he was charged with being a sorcerer and arrested by the authorities, whereupon he was compelled to disclose the secret of printing. Whether this tradition is true or not, it apparently embodies several facts of the situation at that time. It suggests the similarity between books and manuscripts, the sale of the first books as actual manuscripts, the increase in the supply, the reduction of price, and the control by the universities.

Fust was probably the first pirate



THE MARKET-PLACE AT BOLOGNE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, AT THE LEFT A BOOK SHOP



CHARLEMAGNE DICTATING TO HIS SCRIBES, ACCORDING TO A MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPT. NOTE THE METHOD OF PRODUCTION, BOOK FORMS AND CASE

printer, for in 1466 he reprinted a volume published the year before by Mentel of Strasburg, changing merely the imprint. In this, of course, he was only following out the usage of manuscript copyists.

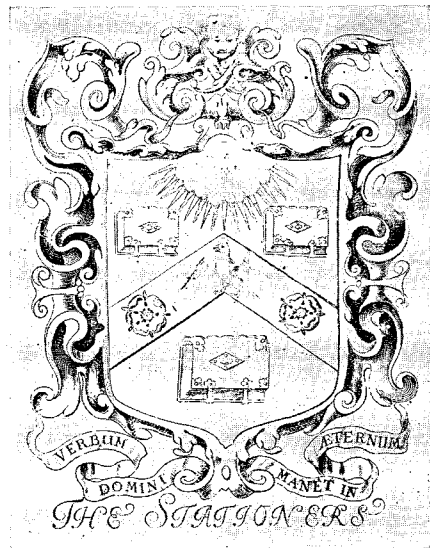
The reduction in the price of books through printing seems to have been about eighty per cent. Bishop John of Aleria, in 1467, wrote to Pope Paul II that books which had formerly been one hundred gulden gold were then twenty gulden, and that those which had been twenty gulden could be bought for only four.

The increase in the number of bookstores kept pace with the rapidity with which printing spread over Europe. By 1477, when Caxton set up the first printing press in England, it had been introduced into twenty or more places on the Conti-

nent. Every printer was necessarily a bookseller, and in many cases sent out agents and maintained agencies in other places. Thus Schoeffer had a representative at Luebeck and another at Frankfort, before he removed to the latter place himself.

Many books were also sold at fairs. For several centuries the greatest book fair in the world was at Frankfort, and books were brought there from every city. In a way it acted as a place of exchange, to which printers from all over Europe carried their surplus stock. This they either sold for cash or traded for other books which they thought could be disposed of at home.

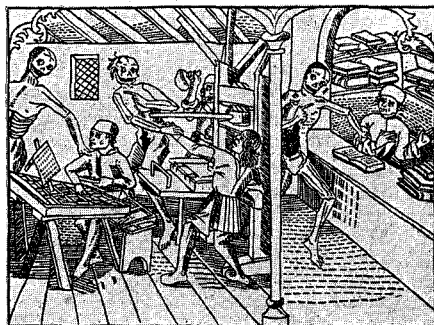
One of the first printers to sell other publications along with his own was Schoeffer. In accordance with the old custom of recording the sale of a book on one of its fly leaves, there is in a volume of Johannes Scotus printed by Koberger in 1474, a receipt by Schoeffer as follows: "I, Peter Schoeffer, the printer of May-



ence, acknowledge having received from the worthy magistrate Johannes Henrici of Pisa, 3 scuta as the price of this book."

The increase in the supply of books in proportion to the number of readers at that period threatened for a time to flood the market. There were more than twenty thousand known editions published before 1500, and although the editions numbered only a few hundred each, this output must have multiplied the world's available supply of books by many times. In 1472 we find a petition to the Pope for help from Sweynheim and Pannartz, printers at Rome, stating that they were in danger of being ruined through heavy loss of unsold remainders amounting to twelve thousand four hundred and seventy-five volumes. Another commentary on the state of business is that Pannartz soon afterward took up engraving. In a somewhat similar way early printers in Paris appealed for assistance to the university.

Such petitions to the Church and universities were based partly upon the fact that both the Church and universities still maintained a control



THE EARLIEST KNOWN PICTURE OF A PRINTED-BOOK SHOP AND PRINTING PRESS. FROM "LA GRAT DANSE MACABRE," PRINTED AT LYONS, 1499

of book publishing and selling within their jurisdictions. They both favoured cheap books and often gave permits for publication on condition that at least one edition should be published at a low price.

Many of the early printers also depended largely upon patrons. The Aldus shop was greatly assisted by the nobles of Paris, and Caxton printed several works under the patronage of Edward IV and Richard III of England. On the other hand, Fust and Schoeffer, who first made a commercial success of printing, seem to have had no patrons,



A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BOOK SHOP, FROM MUEHLBRECHT

and to have depended upon their ability to undersell manuscript copies.

It might be supposed that the new distribution of literature through printed books would have had a revolutionary effect upon literature itself, but in the beginning this was not true. Out of the more than twenty thousand incunabula, probably eighty per cent. were religious or scholastic, which was much the same proportion as before the discovery of printing. The influence of the Church and universities may have had something to do with these percentages. In fact, where these influences were not so strong, we find Caxton republishing Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Thomas Mallory, and in general a larger proportion of "joyous and pleyaunt romaunces."

On the Continent there were also the rediscovered classics to be brought out in available form, and altogether the early printer seems to have had enough to do to catch up with the past, without acting as a medium for the development of new literature. At any rate, the period from 1450 to 1500 was singularly barren of literary results. Eventually, however, printing greatly multiplied the number of readers, and this in turn increased the field for literature.

The oldest known picture of a printed book shop appears in *The Great Dance of Death*, which was published at Lyons, February 18, 1499, and illustrates the ravages of death among all sorts and degrees of people. The same picture also includes what seems to be the earliest extant representation of a printing press. The print shop, where Death may be seen seizing the compositor

and pressman, is very interesting as illustrating the press stiffened by supports to the ceiling, the coarse wooden screw, the ink balls, type case, and the compositor's stick. At the right of the picture, Death is laying hold of the bookseller in his stall. The shopman is at a counter in an arched opening, where customers might look over the books. On shelves in the background may be seen several other volumes which have been completed and are ready for inspection.

Probably the second oldest picture of a print shop represents that of Jodocus Badius Ascensius about 1507, but it does not include his bookstore. Since the bookselling at the time was done by the stationers, we are reproducing an engraving by Stradanus of about 1560, which includes what is probably a stationer's stall. At the left of the same print, Stradanus depicts a spectacle store, and in the centre a shoemaker's shop. The open counters and wooden awnings are typical of the shops of the period, but we are surprised to see what apparently represents a closely fitted pavement between the stalls. The stationer is perhaps recording the purchase of a book, while a customer is glancing over one of the volumes on sale.

At about this period we find the beginning of a new idea in the book world which, while in part due to printing, has had an even greater influence toward the development of literature than printing itself. This was the conception of exclusive rights in books and book sales.

It first appeared in the form of special licenses for printing. In 1491 the Republic of Venice gave to the jurist, Peter of Ravenna, the exclu-

sive privilege of printing and selling his work *Phoenix*. No time limit was fixed in this case, but thereafter Italian privileges were usually given for a period of fourteen years or less. In 1501 Konrad Celtes received an exclusive license for an edition of the dramas of Hroswitha of Gandersheim, and from this date on a number of imperial patents were given for publishing and bookselling. In France, after 1503, it became customary to get letters patent for the same purpose, the terms depending upon the nature of the book and the whim of the minister. The first privilege of the sort in England seems to have been issued to Richard Pynson, the king's printer in 1518, and similar exclusive privileges were given to an author in 1530.

The prohibition of the free importation of books into England in 1534 was another great protection to the English printers and booksellers.

Upon the chartering of the Stationer's Company in 1556, exclusive privileges were extended to all its members for the publication and sale of any work which they registered upon the records of the company. All London dealers in books, except those especially licensed by the crown, were compelled to come under the jurisdiction of this company, which was itself under the supervision of the government. The company had searchers which traced the source of illegal or unlicensed books, and heavy fines and confiscation were imposed in various cases. An apprenticeship of from seven to eleven years was required before a boy could become a printer, but was not necessary in order to become a publisher or bookseller.

At this period the majority of the book shops in London were clustered

around Saint Paul's Cathedral. The first bookseller on London Bridge was William Pickering in 1557. All evidences point to the increase in the numbers and influence of the craft.

Whereas it had been practically impossible, and in fact had never been attempted, to prevent the promiscuous copying of manuscripts, printing required sufficient paraphernalia to make supervision possible, and exclusive privileges enforceable. This new development opened a more profitable field for both booksellers and writers. It made an author's work of commercial value, not only for the moment, but as long as the sale and exclusive privileges were maintained. It enabled him, for the first time, without the intervention of a patron, to make literature pay not only in honours, but in money. Because of this, more men attempted to write, and out of the increase in numbers arose a greater chance of developing an author of talent or even a genius.

Another source which added to the possibilities of authorship was afforded by the rise of the theatre, which might be considered a new field for the distribution of literature. The miracle plays of the Middle Ages had been gradually developing into interludes, moralities, masques and pageants. The interludes, moralities, and masques were often enacted at court, and the pageants given in celebration of some great event or of a royal visit. About 1550 marks the date of *Ralph Roister Doister*, the first important English comedy, and 1562 of *Gorboduc*, the first notable English tragedy. The increasing popularity of the theatre gave an opportunity for writers to make a precarious living constructing plays, and almost immediately sprang up the group of

bohemian authors who were the first English dramatists.

A more substantial success might be reached by combining the old system of patronage with the new one of direct pay for literary work, or by obtaining an adequate share in the receipts of the theatre. Thus Ben Jonson not only received direct payment for his plays, but was also patronised by Lord Aubigny, and, in return for his masques enacted at the court, was eventually pensioned by Charles I in 1616 and by James I in 1631. Shakespeare, on the other hand, rose from being an actor in Jonson's plays, to first a writer of plays, and then a partner in the profits of the company.

Most of the Shakespearean plays were first printed by pirates, who had them taken down in shorthand, but this was merely because the theatre considered it better business to make the public come to hear the play than to publish it.

Still another product for the bookseller and field for the disposal of literary work was furnished by the rise of pamphlet and periodical literature, which took place about this time. The first of the dated news sheets in western Europe was apparently printed in 1498. One of the same series describes the discovery of America. A semi-yearly chronicle called the *Mercurius Gallobelgicus*, was published at Cologne between 1594 and 1635. In England we find a news letter of 1603, and a short

series of intelligence letters beginning in 1619. Archer and Bourne published a pamphlet,—*A Currant of Generall News*,—in 1622, and kept it up weekly, but under different titles, for some time. The *Mercurius Britannicus* was issued in 1625 in imitation of the *Mercurius Gallobelgicus*. Such printed sheets were subject to censor, but could be registered and protected.

Not long after this began the religious and political troubles which led not only to the Puritan civil war, but to a myriad of pamphlets and news letters on religious, political, and martial subjects. What may be considered the first genuine English newspaper, *The Public Intelligencer*, was started in 1663, while the long-published *Oxford Gazette* dated from 1665.

All of these pamphlets and news sheets, ephemeral though most of them were, furnished both booksellers and writers with a chance to turn an occasional necessary penny, and many an afterward famous author got his start at such hack work.

While it is too much to claim that the new methods for the distribution of literature were the secret of the tremendous literary activity of the era from Elizabeth to Charles I, there is no doubt that the wider market and improved methods of sale offered both to booksellers and authors developed a class that made writing a profession, from which came most of the great literary results of that and subsequent periods.

The third of Mr. Manchester's articles will discuss the Modern Period. The first article, appearing in the May BOOKMAN, described Bookselling and Bookmaking in Ancient Times.

THE ADVANCE OF ENGLISH POETRY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

PART IX

Fannie Stearns Davis—her thoughtfulness.—Carl Sandburg—his career—his defects.—Harriet Monroe—her services and her original work.—Alice Corbin—her philosophy.—T. S. Eliot.—Sarah N. Cleghorn—poet of the country village.—Sara Teasdale—her poems of love—her finished art.—Margaret Widdemer—her indictment of society.—John C. Underwood—a city poet.—Witter Bynner—a country poet.—Herman Hagedorn.—Percy Mackaye—his theories—his possibilities.—John G. Neihardt—his love poems.—Charles W. Stork—"Contemporary Verse."—M. L. Fisher—"The Sonnet."—Scudder Middleton.—J. P. Bishop.—W. A. Bradley—his nature poems.—William Griffith—"City Pastorals."—Theodosia Garrison—her war poem.—Meredith Nicholson—his left hand.—J. G. Fletcher—monotony of free verse.—Alan Seeger—an Elizabethan—a true poet.—W. A. Percy—a masterpiece—the best poem of 1917.

THE verse of Fannie Stearns Davis (Mrs. Gifford) has deservedly attracted critical attention. She is young; and the quality of her mind as displayed in her two books indicates high possibilities of development. She was born at Cleveland, March 6, 1884, is a graduate of Smith College, was a teacher in Wisconsin, and has made many contributions to various magazines. Her first book of poems, *Myself and I*, appeared in 1913; two years later came the volume called *Crack o' Dawn*. She is not much given to metrical adventure, although one of her most original poems, *As I Drank Tea Today*, has an irregular rime-scheme. For the most part, she follows both in subject and style the poetic tradition. She has the gift of song—not indeed in the superlative degree—but nevertheless unmistakable; and she has a full mind. She is neither optimist nor pessi-

mist; I should call her a sympathetic observer. The following poem sums up fairly well her accumulated wisdom:

I have looked into all men's hearts.
Like houses at night unshuttered they stand,
And I walk in the street, in the dark, and
on either hand
There are hollow houses, men's hearts.

They think that the curtains are drawn.
Yet I see their shadows suddenly kneel
To pray, or laughing and reckless as drunk-
ards reel
Into dead sleep till dawn.

And I see an immortal child
With its quaint high dreams and wondering
eyes
Sleeping beneath the hard worn body that
lies
Like a mummy-case defiled.

And I hear an immortal cry
Of splendour strain through the sodden
words,
Like a flight of brave-winged heaven-desir-
ous birds
From a swamp where poisons lie,