

# THE DOLL

BY AMY LOWELL

You know, my Dear, I have a way, each Summer  
When leaves have changed from ecstasies in green  
To something like a crowd with raised umbrellas  
Pushing for places at a theatre door,  
Whenever there's a reasonable wind—  
And when there isn't, why I think it's worse,  
They droop so underneath the copper sun  
Sitting upon them like a metal cover;  
I think the trees look positively tired  
Holding the mass of them up all the time.  
Well, as I say, when every breeze is smothered  
By heavy, lagging leaves on dusty trees,  
And all I smell is asphalt and hot tar,  
And motor horns destroy the moonlight nights,  
I pack myself, and some stray sheets of music,  
Into a train and hie me to South Norton.  
I came from there, and little drowsy town  
Although it is, I still go back (or used to)  
And find it with a narrow odd contentment  
As grey and glistening as it always was,  
Some of it painted, some a silver shimmer  
Of weathered clapboards melting to decay.  
There always is a blaze of Summer flowers  
Cramming the dooryards, stocks and portulaca,  
And golden glow above the first floor windows,  
And China asters mixed with marigolds.  
White paint looks very well indeed behind them  
And green blinds, always down, you understand,  
South Norton people will not risk the daylight  
Upon their best room furniture, and really  
When you possess an inlaid teak-wood table,  
With mother-of-pearl and ebony in squares,  
And on it, set precisely in their order,  
Stand ivory chess-men, red and white, the queens  
A pair of ancient Maharanies copied

To every quaintness of their grand attire  
And not a button or embroidery  
Skimped by the Hindu carver; when your chairs  
Are waxed as never chair is waxed to-day,  
And there are corners lit by golden silks,  
And mandarin fruit-dishes in high glass cupboards,  
Perhaps you may at least be half forgiven  
For only opening the room for weddings  
Or when some guest from Boston comes to call.  
I have called often in such drawing-rooms,  
Confused at first by coming from the dazzle  
Of a white August sea, and almost groping  
To find my hostess in the green-blind dusk,  
While all the time my nose was being grateful  
For the great puffs of pot-pourri and cloves,  
The gusts of myrrh, and sandal-wood, and ginger  
Invisibly progressing up and down.  
These scented rooms are just a paraphrase  
Of something penetrant, but never clear,  
Never completely taken nor rejected,  
Unrealized flotsam of the tides of trade;  
And these frail, ancient ladies are like tea-dust  
Left in the bottom of a painted chest,  
Poor fluttering souls, surrounded by their "things,"  
Oblivious of the sea which brought them here.  
My Dear, I prose, you really must not let me,  
For after all I have something to say.  
I never make these duty calls until  
My music lessons are a week away  
And each day's mail is stuffed with pupils' letters  
Asking for dates and prices, then I go  
The rounds and drink a dish of tea with each  
Old fragile chrysalis and so come home.  
For many years I've always ended up  
With the two Misses Perkins. They were a whiff  
Of eighteen-forty, and I rather liked  
To talk to them and then come back and play  
Debussy, and thank God I had read Freud;  
The contrast was as genial as curry.  
I only wish that I could make you see them,  
Their garden path with spice-bushes and lilacs,  
The scraper by the door, the polished knocker,  
And then the hall with the model of a clipper  
Upon a table in a square glass case.

She is a replica of the *Flying Dolphin*  
And Captain Perkins made her on a voyage  
Of eighteen months to China and Ceylon.  
Miss Julia just remembers when he brought  
The model home and put it where it stands.  
I always laid my gloves upon the table  
Just by the clipper's stern, and stood my sunshade  
Against the corner, and tiptoed up the stairs.  
Miss Perkins was an invalid, for years  
She had not left her bed, so I was summoned  
Up slippery stairs and over cool, long matting  
Into her room, and there in a great four-poster  
The little lady would greet me with effusion.  
"Clara, Dear, how good of you to come!  
Julia and I were wondering if you would.  
You'll have a cake and a small glass of sherry.  
Hannah will bring them in directly. Now,  
How is the music getting on? To think  
You play at concerts! Julia and I read  
About your triumphs in the newspapers."  
And all the time, behind the house, the sea  
Was moving—moving—with a long slow sound.  
I could not hear it, but I clung to it,  
For naturally this room looked on the street.  
It was a pretty room with bright glazed chintz,  
And Naples bay in staring blue gouache,  
Flanked by Vesuvius at night, both pictures framed  
In peeling gold. Upon the mantelpiece  
Were silhouettes: the Captain and his wife,  
Miss Perkins and Miss Julia in pantalettes,  
A china bear for matches, and a clock  
Suspended between alabaster pillars.  
But what I never could keep long from seeing  
Was a large wax doll, dressed in the Paris fashion  
Of sixty years ago, with a lace tippet  
And much flounced skirt over a crinoline,  
Upright in a winged arm-chair by the bed.  
She sat and gazed with an uncanny ardor  
Straight at the andiron, her hands palms upward,  
Her feet in heelless slippers wide apart.  
She fascinated me. Those blue glass eyes  
Had an unearthly meaning, staring straight  
Before her in her faded finery.  
I had to draw a chair up from the wall,

For never did Miss Perkins or Miss Julia  
Suggest that I should sit in the winged chair.  
I found my mind all drawn upon a focus,  
I thought wax doll and very nearly said so,  
And I am very much afraid I missed the point  
Of one or two quite artless little sallies.  
They never said a word, and I with rigor  
Suppressed my curiosity and merely listened  
With sometimes half a mind and sometimes none.  
I drank the sherry and I eat the cake,  
I kissed Miss Perkins when I came to go,  
Bending over the bed, my skirt just touching  
The doll, I think, and then the call was over.  
Of course at first the thing made no impression.  
I thought they had been clearing out the attic  
And come upon the doll; but when each year  
She was still sitting there, I grew to dread  
Encountering her, she seemed so full of tales,  
Tell-tales of maiden ladies left alone  
With still things on the walls and mantelpieces  
And nothing moving round them but the sea  
Kept out of reach beyond the matted entry.  
One year, in early April, coming in  
All flushed with having played Moussorgski's "Pictures"  
To an enthusiastic audience,  
I found a black-edged letter on my table,  
Miss Julia writing that "Dear Sister Jane  
Had passed away, she wanted me to know."  
The words were quaintly quiet and resigned,  
The slim and pointed writing very calm,  
But still there seemed a wistful hint of dread.  
I knew, in fact, Miss Julia was alone.  
I wrote—oh, what one always writes, the things  
One does not think, and does not want to think.  
I sent the letter, and the answer came  
As slim, and pointed, and reticent as ever.  
And that was all until I reached South Norton.  
Of course I went at once to see Miss Julia.  
She greeted me beside the clipper-ship,  
And there was something grim about that vessel  
Placidly sailing on its painted waves  
With coffins passing through the door beside it,  
From time to time, while nothing ever came.

I wondered what would be its fate; some junk-shop  
Probably, when Miss Julia too had gone.  
Poor soul, she seemed to flicker with excitement  
And sorrow all in one. The great importance  
Of doing something which was not commanded  
Appeared in vague authoritative gestures,  
Which seemed but half controlled and faded off  
Into a quiver of movement so pathetic  
It made me want to cry. She begged me  
To go upstairs. "I cannot bear to be  
In any other room but Jane's," she told me.  
"I've sat there so much with her, quite ten years  
It was she did not leave it." So we mounted  
The broad old stairs, and softly trod the matting  
Walking gently as in a house of mourning.  
I was resentful, it was four full months  
Since I had got that lonely little letter.  
Was this a mausoleum? Was Miss Julia  
To find her only company with ghosts?  
The gaudy paper of the narrow hallway,  
Flashing its minarets to a sapphire Heaven  
Seemed to be mocking us with Eastern splendor,  
With Eastern customs and an Eastern languor.  
The conch shells roared a siren song of oceans,  
Flanking the newel posts, as we passed by them.  
Miss Jane's room was a lovely blaze of sunlight,  
The empty bed was orderly and sane,  
The Bay of Naples gladdened without hurting.  
I shook myself free of the swarming stillness  
And saw with satisfaction that the chair,  
The doll chair, had been moved, it stood beside  
The window with its back toward the room.  
Why did I walk up to it? I don't know.  
Some feeling that the usualness of streets  
Comes kindly over a long spent emotion  
Perhaps. At any rate, I did so, saying  
How bright and gay the portulacas were,  
Or something of the sort. And then I started  
To sit down in the chair and saw the doll  
With palms stretched out and little slippered feet  
Pointing before her. There she sat, her eyes  
Fixed glassily upon the window-pane.  
I may have jumped, at any rate Miss Julia  
Flushing a painful pink said steadily:

“It was so dull for her after Jane died,  
I moved her here where she could see the street.  
It’s very comforting to watch the passing,  
I think. I always find it so.” That’s all.  
I don’t know how the visit went, nor what  
I said, nor where I sat. I only know  
I took the train that evening back to town  
And stayed up half the night playing Stravinski.  
I dreamt wax doll for three weeks afterwards,  
And I shall go to London this vacation.

## CARL SPITTELER, POET-CITIZEN

BY F. V. KEYS

A TALL figure, of dignified bearing; a noble head; a physiognomy in which humor and irony have traced their lines, but which is first and last that of the thinker and which only now, after seventy years of living, has achieved its distinctive beauty: such was Carl Spitteler, as he rose to acknowledge the tributes paid him at the banquet given in his honor at Geneva in the autumn of 1915. Striking as he was to the eye, the individual confronting so quietly the tumultuous plaudits impressed one mainly by his personality, one that coupled strength with sensibility, in which fortitude and gentleness had grown into the benignant humanity of a slow-maturing nature, whose roots had struck deep.

The applause endured; it would not end. It was a unique gathering, at once intimate and brilliant, where the genius of a nation was met to do homage to the greatest among them. Hodler and Jaques-Dalcroze were there, and other returned sons from over the French border. The note of a spiritual homecoming was in the air, the deep throb with which grown men recur to old currents of feeling, to those first things which are also last things. From the frescoed walls of the hall of the Arquebuse old heroes of the people, and their eternal allies, the Great Mountains, seemed to share in the stirring of all that was most excellent and strong in the *pietas* of Switzerland, "venerable Mother and incorruptible Guardian of the freedom of nations," as the phrase ran in the tribute from the French League of the Rights of Man. For throughout the evening, letters and telegrams were coming in, from the simple message of a group of Swiss privates on guard at their mountain post on the frontier, to the eloquent homage of great universities, of poets and philosophers, from the French Academy, from the Sorbonne and the College de France, from Boutroux and Bergson, from Rostand, Maeterlinck, Verhaeren: all united in their tribute to the "high