

Alexander Search

## TO A HAND

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Give me thy hand. With my wounded eyes  
I would see what this hand contains:  
Ah, what a world of hopes here lies!  
What a world of feelings and doubts and pains!  
Oh to think that this hand in itself contains  
The mystery of mysteries.

This hand has a meaning thou dost not know,  
A meaning deeper than human fears;  
This hand perchance in times long ago  
Wiped off strange and unnatural tears;  
Perhaps its gesture was full of sneers  
Perchance its clenching was full of woe.

There is that in thy hand my soul doth dream  
And the shades that haunt my mind;  
The howl of the wind and the flow of the stream,  
The flow of the stream and the howl of the wind,  
All that is horrible and undefined  
Of the things that are in the things that seem.

As I look at thy hand my mind is rife  
Of thoughts and memories deeper than rhyme;  
Thy hand is a part of my soul's deep life,  
And I knew thy hand ere the birth of time,  
And in ages past it led me to crime,  
.....

A world of woes and of fears and sighs

And love that better had been hate,  
And crimes and wars and victories,  
And the painful fall of many a state —  
All these and more that the heart abate  
My raving soul in thy hand describes.

No painter mad, not a fetichist  
O'er thy hand would be thus held blind.  
At mere blank thought of its being kissed  
But my lips I thrill with a fear none find  
In the waking thoughts of a human mind  
Save when reason by its own self is missed.

Thy hand has a meaning thou dost not know,  
A meaning deeper than human fears;  
It has aught of the sea and of the sun's glow  
And the seasons too and the months and years,  
And the colour hidden in human tears  
And the form and number in human woe.

Thy hand was a lofty and empty home,  
A collar of pearls and a castle keep;  
Thy hand knows well all the thoughts that roam,  
Thy hand is the music eternal and deep  
That long ere birth held my soul asleep  
In a palace quaint with a curious dome.

How finely made is this hand of thine  
With its fingers tapering and white.  
Soft and palely warm and fine;  
There is something in it of day and night.  
Ah, dearest child, could I read aright  
The text before me deep and divine.

There's a kind of Fact that persists and hangs  
O'er thy hand, as on a scratched scroll:  
'Tis as if some thought had buried its fangs

In a unknown part of my soul.  
In a land far in me a bell doth toll,  
And my heart aches wild as it shrinks or clangs.

There is aught of new and wild and unreal  
In thy hand where my look is pained:  
'Tis as if thy hand in itself could see all  
Horrible thought, where fear is gained  
By a drollness mad and dimly sustained  
As of some wide hint out of the Ideal.

There is aught of Personal, of It, of Such  
In thy hand and o'er me there steals  
A sense of dread like a murderer's clutch;  
I know not how, my hand in thine feels  
An eternal thing and my mad brain reels  
As if eternity we could touch.

I see that hand not a hand, but whence  
This horrible Fact that creeps in me!  
Ah, I have of thy hand the seeing intense  
But aught more than hand in that place I see  
That abrupt [elision?] did make to be  
Between thought of things and what we call sense.

My thought doth look at thy hand direct  
Without eyes or sense or aught of this,  
And my reason at such a thing is wrecked  
Into such a fear that both pain and bliss  
Are plunged in conscious unconsciousness  
For that is no hand that my dreams detect.

And I gaze yet more and I shake from me  
The dream of time and the dream of space,  
And as a drowner who sinks in the sea  
I dream of the wonders of all we trace  
In everything and I plunge full-face

In the sense of what more than seems to be.

There is aught of lovely, wild and unbrute  
In thy hand, and I love it well;

In fearing more than pain thoughts of hell  
By a sudden portal in the Visible  
I have a glimpse of the Absolute.

The sight of thy hand of a horrible heaven  
The portals mute throws open again

Thy hand is like music, in it I gain  
Passing a wild fear and a bitter pain  
Weird things more weird than the sense of Seven.

All things stare mystery at my mind,  
But thy hand most, to oblivion conn'd  
Thrilled with a mute life not all defined,

What is thy hand in itself beyond  
The scope of sense where the heart is fond,  
The realm of thought where the soul is blind?

Where is the soul that thy hand reveals  
In its own *there-self* till its thought affrights?  
What bells are those that say HAND in peals  
That traverse impossible infinities?  
What fills with lightnings of hands the nights  
Where the sense of dread into thoughts congeals?

Take thy hand away; for I now shall dream  
Of strange and grotesque and unnatural lands  
Watered by many a painful stream  
Whose waves are hands, whose banks of hands  
Of gardens with trees whose leaves are hands  
And a white stiff hand covering the sun's gleam.

Then, on horror worst, they begin to live  
With a vital life, and to grasp and clutch,  
And to twitch and squirm till my thoughts unweave,  
And like worms and snails that my throat should touch  
My soul qualms and retches at horror such  
At fear's transcendent superlative.

And what more doth follow I cannot say,  
But it seems that madly I traverse, lone,  
Tracts of hells where a hand doth stay  
In such a manner that if a groan  
Of a madman could in its soul be known  
It would be to it as to night is day.

And my thoughts drag on in their weary strain;  
Wild and grotesque, or quick or slow,  
Uncouth and unseemly they reel in my brain,  
Startingly mad as they go,  
As a sudden laugh in the midst of woe  
Or a clown in a funeral train.

1-1906

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