

Classic Poetry Series

Henri Cazalis
- poems -

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Henri Cazalis(1840-1909)

Henri Cazalis (1840–1909) was a French physician who was a symbolist poet and man of letters and wrote under the pseudonyms of Jean Caselli and Jean Lahor. He was born at Corneilles-en-Parisis (Seine-et-Oise).

A Spring Morning

The crimson morning dazzled me mine eyes,
This, and the swarming sun-gold on the sea,
The sea that made me languish with its sighs
As of a woman rolling under me.
And the waves glittered even as tender eyes;
And swarms of white birds uttered joyous cries,
Wheeled, and plunged madly down, their plumes to soak
In waves that laughed with long foam as they broke.
The face of all things quivered with a smile;
It was a landscape vast of earth and sky;
And near upon the azure sea an isle,
Still swathed in mist, slept peacefully the while,
A flower in a vase of lapis lazuli.
And, lilies huge upon the heavens piled,
Beyond the cities and the azure plains,
Stretched in the distance giant mountain chains,
Whose summits, on a sky as satin mild,
Mingled their virgin whiteness with the hour's;
And peach-trees pricked the blue with rosy flowers.
Enchanted by the beauty of the scene,
I walked beyond the town, when lo! a child,
Filthy and thin, with holes where eyes had been,
With scanty rags his chilblained body clad,
Stretched out his hand, and raised his face half-mad.
His mother ill, and father he had none,
Never his pain was soothed by a caress,
The sun alone kissed his foul ugliness,
And passers-by were hard to no man's son.
Then I began to muse on Heaven's ways,
On Evil's vulture always eating at
The entrails of the universe, and that
Background of sorrow mute which not betrays
By tears its presence, beings who are bred
By chance, of children for their forbears' sins
Punished, of Life's iniquities, snares, gins,
Horrors and chastisements unmerited.
And near this child with empty orbits, I
Could gaze no more upon the glorious sky
Above earth's blossoming garden, fearing lest

God in His justice meant them for a jest.

Henri Cazalis

Always

All is a lie: love and mind not;
Dream while desires are sobbing;
Offer to wounds thou canst bind not
Thy heart that stays not its throbbing.

Swift burns love to the ember:
Give all thy heart to thy dreaming,
Desiring, and loving; remember,
Life is vain and a seeming.

Be proud with a pride beyond taming;
If sadness thou have, do not show it;
Love, like a king, purples flaming;
And, being not God, be a poet.

Love life's weariness leavens;
Naught beside it is real;
Life is the flash in black heavens;
We see but in dreams the ideal.

Passion alone the abysses
Lights, while we grope up the rifted
Slopes; our spirits it kisses,
Ere into the deeps we are drifted.

Let the light that is wrapped in thee flare then:
Torches are warm from their burning;
Remember the coffin where men
All must to dust be returning.

The hole still beside us is gaping:
Ere its dizziness steams up and takes thee,
Let flames be thy spirit's draping,
And with love, dream, and longing slake thee.

Henri Cazalis

Shudders Of Flowers

In summer eves the flowers have languors of
Women, and suffer as do souls with love;
Imploring hymens they shall die of soon,
They dream and tremble underneath the moon;
Yea, flowers have looks like women's great moist eyes,
They are as full of love and coy surprise.
And roses, white as the immaculate globes
That peep from under dark half-opened robes,
Roses amid the darkness green, while sings
The nightingale her moon-imaginings
And dies with passion for their bodies pale,
Roses forth bursting from their odorous veil,
Taken with sudden folly, bow their white
Breasts to the stars that kiss them all the night.

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