

THE HASHISH-EATER;
or, THE APOCALYPSE OF EVIL

BY
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Bow down: I am the emperor of dreams;
I crown me with the million-coloured sun
Of secret worlds incredible, and take
Their trailing skies for vestment, when I soar,
Throned on the mounting zenith, and illumine
The spaceward-flown horizons infinite.
Like rampant monsters roaring for their glut,
The fiery-crested oceans rise and rise,
By jealous moons maleficiently urged
To follow me forever; mountains horned
With peaks of sharpest adamant, and mawed
With sulphur-lit volcanoes lava-langued,
Usurp the skies with thunder, but in vain;
And continents of serpent-shapen trees,
With slimy trunks that lengthen league by league,
Pursue my flight through ages spurned to fire
By that supreme ascendance. Sorcerers,
And evil kings predominantly armed
With scrolls of fulvous dragon-skin, whereon
Are worm-like runes of ever-twisting flame,
Would stay me; and the sirens of the stars,
With foam-light songs from silver fragrance wrought,
Would lure me to their crystal reefs; and moons
Where viper-eyed, senescent devils dwell,
With antic gnomes abominably wise,
Heave up their icy horns across my way:
But naught deters me from the goal ordained
By suns, and aeons, and immortal wars,
And sung by moons and motes; the goal whose name
Is all the secret of forgotten glyphs,
By sinful gods in torrid rubies writ
For ending of a brazen book; the goal
Whereat my soaring ecstacy may stand,

In amplest heavens multiplied to hold
 My hordes of thunder-vested avatars,
 And Promethèan armies of my thought,
 That brandish claspèd levins. There I call
 My memories, intolerably clad
 In light the peaks of paradise may wear,
 And lead the Armageddon of my dreams,
 Whose instant shout of triumph is become
 Immensity's own music: For their feet
 Are founded on innumerable worlds,
 Remote in alien epochs, and their arms
 Upraised, are columns potent to exalt
 With ease ineffable the countless thrones
 Of all the gods that are and gods to be,
 Or bear the seats of Asmadai and Set
 Above the seventh paradise.

Supreme

In culminant omniscience manifold,
 And served by senses multitudinous,
 Far-posted on the shifting walls of time,
 With eyes that roam the star-unwinnowed fields
 Of utter night and chaos, I convoke
 The Babel of their visions, and attend
 At once their myriad witness: I behold,
 In Ombos, where the fallen Titans dwell,
 With mountain-built walls, and gulfs for moat,
 The secret cleft that cunning dwarves have dug
 Beneath an alp-like buttress; and I list,
 Too late, the clang of adamantine gongs,
 Dinned by their drowsy guardians, whose feet
 Have felt the wasp-like sting of little knives,
 Embrued with slobber of the basilisk,
 Or juice of wounded upas. And I see,
 In gardens of a crimson-litten world
 The sacred flow'r with lips of purple flesh,
 And silver-lashed, vermilion-lidded eyes
 Of torpid azure; whom his furtive priests
 At moonless eve in terror seek to slay,

With bubbling grails of sacrificial blood
 That hide a hueless poison. And I read,
 Upon the tongue of a forgotten sphinx,
 The annulling word a spiteful demon wrote
 With gall of slain chimeras; and I know
 What pentacles the lunar wizards use,
 That once allured the gulf-returning roc,
 With ten great wings of furlèd storm, to pause
 Midmost an alabaster mount; and there,
 With boulder-weighted webs of dragons'-gut,
 Uplift by cranes a captive giant built,
 They wound the monstrous, moonquake-throbbing bird,
 And plucked, from off his sabre-taloned feet,
 Uranian sapphires fast in frozen blood,
 With amethysts from Mars. I lean to read,
 With slant-lipped mages, in an evil star,
 The monstrous archives of a war that ran
 Through wasted aeons, and the prophecy
 Of wars renewed, that shall commemorate
 Some enmity of wivern-headed kings,
 Even to the brink of time. I know the blooms
 Of bluish fungus, freaked with mercury,
 That bloat within the craters of the moon,
 And in one still, selenic hour have shrunk
 To pools of slime and fetor; and I know
 What clammy blossoms, blanched and cavern-grown,
 Are proffered in Uranus to their gods
 By mole-eyed peoples; and the livid seed
 Of some black fruit a king in Saturn ate,
 Which, cast upon his tinkling palace-floor,
 Took root between the burnished flags, and now
 Hath mounted, and become a hellish tree,
 Whose lithe and hairy branches, lined with mouths,
 Net like a hundred ropes his lurching throne,
 And strain at starting pillars. I behold
 The slowly-thronging corals, that usurp
 Some harbour of a million-masted sea,
 And sun them on the league-long wharves of gold—

Bulks of enormous crimson, kraken-limbed
 And kraken-headed, lifting up as crowns
 The octiremes of perished emperors,
 And galleys fraught with royal gems, that sailed
 From a sea-deserted haven.

Swifter grow

The visions: Now a mighty city looms,
 Hewn from a hill of purest cinnabar,
 To domes and turrets like a sunrise thronged
 With tier on tier of captive moons, half-drowned
 In shifting erubescence. But whose hands
 Were sculptors of its doors, and columns wrought
 To semblance of prodigious blooms of old,
 No eremite hath lingered there to say,
 And no man comes to learn: For long ago
 A prophet came, warning its timid king
 Against the plague of lichens that had crept
 Across subverted empires, and the sand
 Of wastes that Cyclopean mountains ward;
 Which, slow and ineluctable, would come,
 To take his fiery bastions and his fanes,
 And quench his domes with greenish tetter. Now
 I see a host of naked giants, armed
 With horns of behemoth and unicorn,
 Who wander, blinded by the clinging spells
 Of hostile wizardry, and stagger on
 To forests where the very leaves have eyes,
 And ebonies like wrathful dragons roar
 To teaks a-chuckle in the loathly gloom;
 Where coiled lianas lean, with serried fangs,
 From writhing palms with swollen boles that moan;
 Where leeches of a scarlet moss have sucked
 The eyes of some dead monster, and have crawled
 To bask upon his azure-spotted spine;
 Where hydra-throated blossoms hiss and sing,
 Or yawn with mouths that drip a sluggish dew,
 Whose touch is death and slow corrosion. Then,
 I watch a war of pigmies, met by night,
 With pitter of their drums of parrot's hide,

On plains with no horizon, where a god
 Might lose his way for centuries; and there,
 In wreathèd light, and fulgors all convolved,
 A rout of green, enormous moons ascend,
 With rays that like a shivering venom run
 On inch-long swords of lizard-fang.

Surveyed

From this my throne, as from a central sun,
 The pageantries of worlds and cycles pass;
 Forgotten splendours, dream by dream unfold,
 Like tapestry, and vanish; violet suns,
 Or suns of changeful iridescence, bring
 Their rays about me, like the coloured lights
 Imploring priests might lift to glorify
 The face of some averted god; the songs
 Of mystic poets in a purple world,
 Ascend to me in music that is made
 From unconceivèd perfumes, and the pulse
 Of love ineffable; the lute-players
 Whose lutes are strung with gold of the utmost moon,
 Call forth delicious languors, never known
 Save to their golden kings; the sorcerers
 Of hooded stars inscrutable to God,
 Surrender me their demon-wrested scrolls,
 Inscribed with lore of monstrous alchemies,
 And awful transformations.***If I will,
 I am at once the vision and the seer,
 And mingle with my ever-streaming poms,
 And still abide their suzerain: I am
 The neophyte who serves a nameless god,
 Within whose fane the fanes of Hecatompilos
 Were arks the Titan worshippers might bear,
 Or flags to pave the threshold; or I am
 The god himself, who calls the fleeing clouds
 Into the nave where suns might congregate,
 And veils the darkling mountain of his face
 With fold on solemn fold; for whom the priests
 Amass their monthly hecatomb of gems—
 Opals that are a camel-cumbering load,

And monstrous alabraundines, won from war
 With realms of hostile serpents; which arise,
 Combustible, in vapours many-hued,
 And myrrh-excelling perfumes. It is I,
 The king, who holds with scepter-dropping hand
 The helm of some great barge of chrysolite,
 Sailing upon an amethystine sea
 To isles of timeless summer: For the snows
 Of hyperborean winter, and their winds,
 Sleep in his jewel-built capital,
 Nor any charm of flame-wrought wizardry,
 Nor conjured suns may rout them; so he flees,
 With captive kings to urge his serried oars,
 Hopeful of dales where amaranthine dawn
 Hath never left the faintly sighing lote
 And fields of lispig moly. Or I fare,
 Impanoplied with azure diamond,
 As hero of a quest Achernar lights,
 To deserts filled with ever-wandering flames,
 That feed upon the sullen marl, and soar
 To wrap the slopes of mountains, and to leap,
 With tongues intolerably lengthening,
 That lick the blenchèd heavens. But there lives
 (Secure as in a garden walled from wind)
 A lonely flower by a placid well,
 Midmost the flaring tumult of the flames,
 That roar as roars the storm-possessèd sea,
 Impacable forever: And within
 That simple grail the blossom lifts, there lies
 One drop of an incomparable dew,
 Which heals the parchèd weariness of kings,
 And cures the wound of wisdom. I am page
 To an emperor who reigns ten thousand years,
 And through his labyrinthine palace-rooms,
 Through courts and colonnades and balconies
 Wherein immensity itself is mazed,
 I seek the golden gorget he hath lost,
 On which the names of his conniving stars

Are writ in little sapphires; and I roam
 For centuries, and hear the brazen clocks
 Innumerably clang with such a sound
 As brazen hammers make, by devils dinned
 On tombs of all the dead; and nevermore
 I find the gorget, but at length I find
 A sealèd room whose nameless prisoner
 Moans with a nameless torture, and would turn
 To hell's red rack as to a liliated couch
 From that whereon they stretched him; and I find,
 Prostrate upon a lotus-painted floor,
 The loveliest of all beloved slaves
 My emperor hath, and from her pulseless side
 A serpent rises, whiter than the root
 Of some venefic bloom in darkness grown,
 And gazes up with green-lit eyes that seem
 Like drops of cold, congealing poison.***

Hark!

What word was whispered in a tongue unknown,
 In crypts of some impenetrable world?
 Whose is the dark, dethroning secrecy
 I cannot share, though I am king of suns
 And king therewith of strong eternity,
 Whose gnomons with their swords of shadow guard
 My gates, and slay the intruder? Silence loads
 The wind of ether, and the worlds are still
 To hear the word that flees me. All my dreams
 Fall like a rack of fuming vapours raised
 To semblance by a necromant, and leave
 Spirit and sense unthinkable alone,
 Above a universe of shrouded stars,
 And suns that wander, cowled with sullen gloom,
 Like witches to a Sabbath.***Fear is born
 In crypts below the nadir, and hath crawled
 Reaching the floor of space and waits for wings
 To lift it upward, like a hellish worm
 Fain for the flesh of seraphs. Eyes that gleam,
 But are not eyes of suns or galaxies,

Gather and throng to the base of darkness ; flame
 Behind some black, abysmal curtain burns,
 Implacable, and fanned to whitest wrath
 By raised wings that flail the whiffled gloom,
 And make a brief and broken wind that moans,
 As one who rides a throbbing rack. There is
 A Thing that crouches, worlds and years remote,
 Whose horns a demon sharpens, rasping forth
 A note to shatter the donjon-keeps of time,
 And crack the sphere of crystal.***All is dark
 For ages, and my tolling heart suspends
 Its clamour, as within the clutch of death,
 Tightening with tense, hermetic rigours. Then,
 In one enormous, million-flashing flame,
 The stars unveil, the suns remove their cowls,
 And beam to their responding planets ; time
 Is mine once more, and armies of its dreams
 Rally to that insuperable throne,
 Firmed on the central zenith.

Now I seek

The meads of shining moly I had found
 In some remoter vision, by a stream
 No cloud hath ever tarnished ; where the sun,
 A gold Narcissus, loiters evermore
 Above his golden image : But I find
 A corpse the ebbing water will not keep,
 With eyes like sapphires that have lain in hell,
 And felt the hissing embers ; and the flow'rs
 About me turn to hooded serpents, swayed
 By flutes of devils in a hellish dance,
 Meet for the nod of Satan, when he reigns
 Above the raging Sabbath, and is wooed
 By sarabands of witches. But I turn
 To mountains guarding with their horns of snow
 The source of that befoulèd rill, and seek
 A pinnacle where none but eagles climb,
 And they with failing pennons. But in vain

I flee, for on that pylon of the sky,
 Some curse hath turned the unprinted snow to flame—
 Red fires that curl and cluster to my tread,
 Trying the summit's narrow cirque. And now,
 I see a silver python far beneath—
 Vast as a river that a fiend hath witchèd,
 And forced to flow remèant in its course
 To fountains whence it issued. Rapidly
 It winds from slope to crumbling slope, and fills
 Ravines and chasmal gorges, till the crags
 Totter with coil on coil incumbent. Soon
 It hath entwined the pinnacle I keep,
 And gapes with a fanged, unfathomable maw,
 Wherein great Typhon, and Enceladus,
 Were orts of daily glut. But I am gone,
 For at my call a hippogriff hath come,
 And firm between his thunder-beating wings,
 I mount the sheer cerulean walls of noon,
 And see the earth, a spurnèd pebble, fall
 Lost in the fields of nether stars—and seek
 A planet where the outwearied wings of time
 Might pause and furl for respite, or the plumes
 Of death be stayed, and loiter in reprieve
 Above some deathless lily: For therein,
 Beauty hath found an avatar of flow'rs—
 Blossoms that clothe it as a coloured flame,
 From peak to peak, from pole to sullen pole,
 And turn the skies to perfume. There I find
 A lonely castle, calm and unbeset,
 Save by the purple spears of amaranth,
 And tender-sworded iris. Walls upbuilt
 Of flushèd marble, wonderful with rose,
 And domes like golden bubbles, and minarets
 That take the clouds as coronal—these are mine,
 For voiceless looms the peaceful barbican,
 And the heavy-teethed portcullis hangs aloft
 As if to smile a welcome. So I leave
 My hippogriff to crop the magic meads,

And pass into a court the lilies hold,
 And tread them to a fragrance that pursues
 To win the portico, whose columns, carved
 Of lazuli and amber, mock the palms
 Of bright, Aidennic forests—capitalled
 With fronds of stone fretted to airy lace,
 Enfolding drupes that seem as tawny clusters
 Of breasts of unknown houris; and convolved
 With vines of shut and shadowy-leaved flow'rs,
 Like the dropt lids of women that endure
 Some loin-dissolving rapture. Through a door
 Enlaid with lilies twined luxuriously,
 I enter, dazed and blinded with the sun,
 And hear, in gloom that changing colours cloud,
 A chuckle sharp as crepitating ice,
 Upheaved and cloven by shoulders of the damned
 Who strive in Antenora. When my eyes
 Undazzle, and the cloud of colour fades,
 I find me in a monster-guarded room,
 Where marble apes with wings of griffins crowd
 On walls an evil sculptor wrought, and beasts
 Wherein the sloth and vampire-bat unite,
 Pendulous by their toes of tarnished bronze,
 Usurp the shadowy interval of lamps
 That hang from ebon arches. Like a ripple,
 Borne by the wind from pool to sluggish pool
 In fields where wide Cocytus flows his bound,
 A crackling smile around that circle runs,
 And all the stone-wrought gibbons stare at me
 With eyes that turn to glowing coals. A fear
 That found no name in Babel, flings me on,
 Breathless and faint with horror, to a hall
 Within whose weary, self-reverting round,
 The languid curtains, heavier than palls,
 Unnumerably depict a weary king,
 Who fain would cool his jewel-cruled hands
 In lakes of emerald evening, or the fields
 Of dreamless poppies pure with rain. I flee
 Onward, and all the shadowy curtains shake

With tremors of a silken-sighing mirth,
 And whispers of the innumerable king,
 Breathing a tale of ancient pestilence,
 Whose very words are vile contagion. Then
 I reach a room where caryatides,
 Carved in the form of tall, voluptuous Titan women,
 Surround a throne of flowering ebony
 Where creeps a vine of crystal. On the throne,
 There lolls a wan, enormous Worm, whose bulk,
 Tumid with all the rottenness of kings,
 O'erflows its arms with fold on creasèd fold
 Of fat obscenely bloating. Open-mouthed
 He leans, and from his throat a score of tongues,
 Depending like to wreaths of torpid vipers,
 Drivel with phosphorescent slime, that runs
 Down all his length of soft and monstrous folds,
 And creeping among the flow'rs of ebony,
 Lends them the life of tiny serpents. Now,
 Ere the Horror ope those red and lashless slits
 Of eyes that draw the gnat and midge, I turn,
 And follow down a dusty hall, whose gloom,
 Lined by the statues with their mighty limbs,
 Ends in a golden-roofed balcony
 Sphering the flowered horizon.

Ere my heart

Hath hushed the panic tumult of its pulses,
 I listen, from beyond the horizon's rim,
 A mutter faint as when the far simoon,
 Mounting from unknown deserts, opens forth,
 Wide as the waste, those wings of torrid night
 That fling the doom of cities from their folds,
 And musters in its van a thousand winds,
 That with disrooted palms for besoms, rise
 And sweep the sands to fury. As the storm,
 Approaching, mounts and loudens to the ears
 Of them that toil in fields of sesame,
 So grows the mutter, and a shadow creeps
 Above the gold horizon, like a dawn

Of darkness climbing sunward. Now they come,
 A Sabbath of abominable shapes,
 Led by the fiends and lamiae of worlds
 That owned my sway aforetime! Cockatrice,
 Python, tragelaphus, leviathan,
 Chimera, martichoras, behemoth,
 Geryon and sphinx, and hydra, on my ken
 Arise as might some Afrite-built city,
 Consummate in the lifting of a lash,
 With thundrous domes and sounding obelisks,
 And towers of night and fire alternate! Wings
 Of white-hot stone along the hissing wind,
 Bear up the huge and furnace-hearted beasts
 Of hells beyond Rutilicus; and things
 Whose lightless length would meet the gyre of moons—
 Born from the caverns of a dying sun,
 Uncoil to the very zenith, half disclosed
 From gulfs below the horizon; octopi
 Like blazing moons with countless arms of fire,
 Climb from the seas of ever-surging flame
 That roll and roar through planets unconsumed,
 Beating on coasts of unknown metals; beasts
 That range the mighty worlds of Alioth, rise,
 Aforesting the heavens with multitudinous horns,
 Within whose maze the winds are lost; and borne
 On cliff-like brows of plunging scolopendras,
 The shell-wrought tow'rs of ocean-witches loom,
 And griffin-mounted gods, and demons throned
 On sable dragons, and the cockodrills
 That bear the spleenful pygmies on their backs;
 And blue-faced wizards from the worlds of Saiph,
 On whom Titanic scorpions fawn; and armies
 That move with fronts reverted from the foe,
 And strike athwart their shoulders at the shapes
 Their shields reflect in crystal; and eidola
 Fashioned within unfathomable caves
 By hands of eyeless peoples; and the blind
 And worm-shaped monsters of a sunless world,
 With krakens from the ultimate abyss,

mete /

And Demogorgons of the outer dark,
 Arising, shout with multitudinous thunders,
 And threatening me with dooms ineffable
 In words whereat the heavens leap to flame,
 Advance on the magic palace! Thrown before,
 For league on league, their blasting shadows blight
 And eat like fire the amaranthine meads,
 Leaving an ashen desert! In the palace,
 I hear the apes of marble shriek and howl.
 And all the women-shapen columns moan,
 Babbling with unknown terror. In my fear,
 A monstrous dread unnamed in any hell,
 I rise, and flee with the fleeing wind for wings,
 And in a trice the magic palace reels,
 And spiring to a single tow'r of flame,
 Goes out, and leaves nor shard nor ember! Flown
 Beyond the world, ~~beyond~~ that fleeing wind, *upon*
 I reach the gulf's irrespirable verge,
 Where fails the strongest storm for breath and fall,
 Supportless, through the nadir-plungèd gloom,
 Beyond the scope and vision of the sun,
 To other skies and systems. In a world
 Deep-wooded with the multi-coloured fungi,
 That soar to semblance of fantastic palms,
 I fall as falls the meteor-stone, and break
 A score of trunks to powder. All unhurt,
 I rise, and through the illimitable woods,
 Among the trees of flimsy opal, roam,
 And see their tops that clamber, hour by hour,
 To touch the suns of iris. Things unseen,
 Whose charnel breath informs the tideless air
 With spreading pools of fetor, follow me
 Elusive past the ever-changing palms;
 And pittering moths, with wide and ashen wings,
 Flit on before, and insects ember-hued,
 Descending, hurtle through the gorgeous gloom,
 And quench themselves in crumbling thickets. Heard
 Far-off, the gong-like roar of beasts unknown
 Resounds at measured intervals of time,

Shaking the riper trees to dust, that falls
 In clouds of acrid perfume, stifling me
 Beneath a pall of iris.

Now the palms
 Grow far apart and lessen momentarily
 To shrubs a dwarf might topple. Over them
 I see an empty desert, all ablaze
 With amethysts and rubies, and the dust
 Of garnets or carnelians. On I roam,
 Treading the gorgeous grit, that dazzles me
 With leaping waves of endless rutilance,
 Whereby the air is turned to a crimson gloom,
 Through which I wander, blind as any Kobold;
 Till underfoot the griding sands give place
 To stone or metal, with a massive ring
 More welcome to mine ears than golden bells,
 Or tinkle of silver fountains. When the gloom
 Of crimson lifts, I stand upon the edge
 Of a broad black plain of adamant, that reaches,
 Level as a windless water, to the verge
 Of all the world; and through the sable plain,
 A hundred streams of shattered marble run,
 And streams of broken steel, and streams of bronze,
 Like to the ruin of all the wars of time,
 To plunge, with clangour of timeless cataracts,
 Adown the gulfs eternal.

So I follow,
 Between a river of steel and a river of bronze,
 With ripples loud and tuneless as the clash
 Of a million lutes; and come to the precipice
 From which they fall, and make the mighty sound
 Of a million swords that meet a million shields,
 Or din of spears and armour in the wars
 Of all the worlds and aeons: Far beneath,
 They fall, through gulfs and cycles of the void,
 And vanish like a stream of broken stars,
 Into the nether darkness; nor the gods
 Of any sun, nor demons of the gulf,
 Will dare to know what everlasting sea

Is fed thereby, and mounts forevermore
With mighty tides unebbing.

Lo, what cloud,
Or night of sudden and supreme eclipse,
Is on the suns of opal? At my side,
The rivers run with a wan and ghostly gleam,
Through darkness falling as the night that falls
From mighty spheres extinguished! Turning now.
I see, betwixt the desert and the suns,
The poisèd wings of all the dragon-rout,
Far-flown in black occlusion thousand-fold
Through stars, and deeps, and devastated worlds,
Upon my trail of terror! Griffins, rocs,
And sluggish, dark chimeras, heavy-winged
After the ravin of dispeopled lands,
With harpies, and the vulture-birds of hell—
Hot from abominable feasts and fain
To cool their beaks and talons in my blood—
All, all have gathered, and the wingless rear,
With rank on rank of foul, colossal Worms,
Like pillars of embattled night and flame,
Looms on the wide horizon! From the van,
I hear the shriek of wyvers, loud and shrill
As tempests in a broken fane, and roar
Of sphinxes, like the unrelenting toll
Of bells from tow'rs infernal. Cloud on cloud,
They arch the zenith, and a dreadful wind
Falls from them like the wind before the storm.
And in the wind my cloven garment streams,
And flutters in the face of all the void,
Even as flows a flapping spirit, lost
On the Pit's undying tempest! Louder grows
The thunder of the streams of stone and bronze.—
Redoubled with the roar of torrent wings,
Inseparably mingled. Scarce I keep
My footing, in the gulfward winds of fear,
And mighty thunders, beating to the void
In sea-like waves incessant; and would flee
With them, and prove the nadir-founded night

THE HASHISH-EATER

Where fall the streams of ruin ; but when I reach
The verge, and seek through sun-defeating gloom,
To measure with my gaze the dread descent,
I see a tiny star within the depths—
A light that stays me, while the wings of doom
Convene their thickening thousands: For the star
Increases, taking to its hueless orb,
With all the speed of horror-changèd dreams
The light as of a million million moons;
And floating up through gulfs and glooms eclipsed,
It grows and grows, a huge white eyeless Face,
That fills the void and fills the universe,
And bloats against the limits of the world
With lips of flame that open.***