

“The Future” (excerpt) [p. 219]

To my young friend Lélia D. [Adolphe Duhart]

by L. M. [Lucien Mansion]

translated by Clint Bruce

In this world, you see, whether today or tomorrow,
It seems that all will have their share of sorrow.

You dream, oh poet, and surely do behold
In all your dreams' delights,
The future's secrets, feared though unforeshadowed
In the valley of our plights.

[.]

Now contemplate, in your sweet ecstasy
This joy unparalleled;
For, each morning, crushed by reality,
The illusion is dispelled.

And then you'll understand how poverty
Constrains us here below,
And that this wretched earth holds misery
Which we must someday know.

[.]

Why hide the certain fact that no relief
From the blows of unhappiness
Will come, until that final day when grief
To death delivers us?

“Hope” (excerpt) [p. 103]

by Lélia D——t [Adolphe Duhart]

translated by Clint Bruce

*You dream, oh poet, and surely do behold
In all your dreams' delights,
The future's secrets, feared though unforeshadowed
In the valley of our plights.*

— L. M.

No, I didn't dream! No! It's no fantasy,
Oh child of sleepful rest
Who reveals to my lyre, telling a charming lie,
The dawn of ruby-colored East.

[.]

Hope and believe: Lincoln, a Host renewed,
Among the elected, elevated,
In exile's vale, did have his work transformed:
Like Jesus, he liberated!

[.]

Believe, oh poet, in this symbol divine,
That's carved in every ravaged heart,
In this hope kept hidden within a parable:
“Whoever weeps shall be given comfort!”

“Poetry” (excerpt) [p. 95]

For my friend Lélia D——t

by Yacoub [Joseph Mansion]

translated by Clint Bruce

Poetry, my friend, is the soul's reflection,
The Divinity's mirror casting an image sublime,
The burning kiss that a woman lays upon
Her husband's saddened brow from time to time,

[.]

It's the hardy sailor embarking upon the swell,
Not fearing the torrent's annihilating power;
Oh skillful seafarer, it is your wandering vessel
By the ocean tossed and tumbled ere being devoured.

Oh sweet illusion! Extraordinary vision!
Seductive charm of my heart in sadness immersed,
Melodious concert that blends now and then
With songs that have vanished into the universe.

“Poetry! Vox Dei!” [“Poetry! The Voice of God!”] (excerpt) [p. 96]

For my friend Yacoub [Joseph Mansion]

by Lélia D——t [Adolphe Duhart]

translated by Clint Bruce

For the very first time, your lyre, still trembling,
Produced its sounds, its luscious notes assembling
Amidst our endless tears.

For the very first time, delectable Poetry
Set a star on your brow to guide your artistry
Through harmony's waters!

[.]

Through his songs, the poet casts an angel's reflection,
Dispatched by heaven's will in our direction
To calm our direst woes.

In echoes sad or merry, he holds up his lyre,
Dispensing either God's mercy or his ire,
Either life or death . . . and sorrows! . . .

“Fiat Lux!” [“Let There Be Light!”] [p. 99]

For Armand Lanusse

by Lélia D——t [Adolphe Duhart]

translated by Clint Bruce

For you the bitter waves have known no storm.
Intractable fate pursues its distant course,
Capricious and jealous, while you've remained firm
And never let fade the star in heaven that's yours.

Your existence, inscribed in the registry of feasts
Does not contain the page of fretful sorrows,
And every hour that passes, never to cease,
For you proclaims a song of lovely tomorrows.

And you've wept as well . . . It was a day of rage,
Of sinister harvests, of murder and of carnage,
When brothers' blood upon the pavement splashed.

The sky concealed itself in solemn shadows;
But look over there, beyond where darkness goes . . .
And take up your lute, for the star has risen at last!

“The Star Has Risen!” [p. 101]

For Lélia D——t [Adolphe Duhart]

by Armand Lanusse

translated by Clint Bruce

The star has risen at last, you say; but which star
Has come, my friend, to shine upon your face?
Must it act as a mender of ills, of grief, of disaster,
By chasing the night from our heaven's pallid space?
Although in vain I question the firmament's sphere,
There's nothing new to me that does appear.
To my waning sight, I beg, please make it clear,
Oh Lélia; then my deepest thanks you'll hear . . .

Is it a luminous sign, a fiery meteor,
To say to Sumner and Kelley: “You will be conquerors”?
Is it the coming dawn's golden precursor
To the days of equality promised: “They'll be yours”?
Let us follow ancient Constantine's example
And engrave this holy object upon our labarum:
With its auspicious fires let's illumine the temple
Of those to whom we owe a lively *Te Deum*.

But does it not prove fatal to many a traitor?
A prediction about some man of power and clout
Who o'er a vast country fancied himself master,
And whose vanity will be reduced to nought?
Perhaps it's the lightning that strikes before the thunder:
That thunder that sternly warns any hired swordsmen:
“I now descend in order to crush you to powder,
For you showed no pity — misfortune on every assassin!”

No, in this puzzling case, it's better by far
To believe that your star is really a shining sun
— A glorious symbol, Lélia, of history's chapter
That's soon to produce a Council of great renown.
And since, in our midst, the ills of slavery
Will cease, let's turn the page on yesterday's misery;
Let's honor our martyrs and pardon all injury,
For that is how vengeance is wrought by a people proud and free!