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BY JOHN JAY CHAPMAN

THE earth is damp: in everything
I taste the bitter breath of pallid spring.
Hark! In the air a fanning sound,
Like distant beehives. — Ah, the woods awake;
And finding they are naked, cast around
A mist, like that which trembles on the lake.
    The forest murmurs, shudders, sings
    On pipes and strings,
    With harp and flute;
    And then turns coy,
    As if ashamed to show its joy,
And in a flush of happiness grows mute.

Alas, the spring! Ah, liquid light,
Your vistas of transparent green
Fall on my spirit like a blight.
The tapestries you hang on high
Are like a pageant to a sick man's eye,
    Or sights in fever seen.
Behind your bowers and your blooms
Volcanic desolation looms;
    Your life doth death express;
Each leaf proclaims a blackened waste,
Each tree, some paradise defaced,
    Each bud, a wilderness.
And all your lisping notes are drowned
By one deep murmur underground
    That tells us joy is fled,
    Love, innocence, the heart's desire,
    The flashing of Apollo's lyre, —
    Beauty herself is dead.

In all the valleys of the earth, —
Save for the dead, — no wreath is hung.
Long, long ago the sounds of mirth
Died on man's tongue.
Love is an interrupted song,
And life a broken lute;
The huddling moments press along,
And into days are whirled
Untimed, as in a dream of pain.
Chaos has wrecked the outer world,
Chaos invades the brain.
The sounds, the sights, the scents of spring
Awake that sullen suffering
Which opium soothes in vain, —
Like the sad dawn of dread relief
That tells the greatness of his grief
To him that is insane.

Would I had perished with the past!
Would I had shared the fate
Of those who heard the trumpet-call
And rode upon the blast, —
Who stopped not to debate,
Nor strove to save,
But giving life, gave all,
Casting their manhood as a man might cast
A rose upon a grave.
Would that like them beneath the sod I lay,
Beneath the glistening grass,
Beneath the flood of things that come and pass,
Beckon, and shine and fade away.

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