

THE WILD KNIGHT

The wasting thistle whitens on my crest, The barren grasses blow upon my spear, A green, pale pennon: blazon of wild faith And love of fruitless things: yea, of my love, Among the golden loves of all the knights, Alone: most hopeless, sweet, and blasphemous, The love of God: I hear the crumbling creeds Like cliffs washed down by water, change, and pass; I hear a noise of words, age after age, A new cold wind that blows across the plains, And all the shrines stand empty; and to me All these are nothing: priests and schools may doubt Who never have believed; but I have loved. Ah friends, I know it passing well, the love Wherewith I love; it shall not bring to me Return or hire or any pleasant thing-- Ay, I have tried it: Ay, I know its roots. Earthquake and plague have burst on it in vain And rolled back shattered-- Babbling neophytes! Blind, startled fools--think you I know it not? Think you to teach me? Know I not His ways? Strange-visaged blunders, mystic cruelties. All! all! I know Him, for I love Him. Go!

So, with the wan waste grasses on my spear, I ride for ever, seeking after God. My hair grows whiter than my thistle plume, And all my limbs are loose; but in my eyes The star of an unconquerable praise: For in my soul one hope for ever sings, That at the next white corner of a road My eyes may look on Him.... Hush--I shall know The place when it is found: a twisted path Under a twisted pear-tree--this I saw In the first dream I had ere I was born, Wherein He spoke.... But the grey clouds come down In hail upon the icy plains: I ride, Burning for ever in consuming fire.