

Rice Cale Young

Nirvana Days



Cale Rice
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Содержание

FOREWORD	4
INVOCATION	5
THE FAIRIES OF GOD	6
A SONG OF THE OLD VENETIANS	8
NIRVANA DAYS	10
THE YOUNG TO THE OLD	20
OFF THE IRISH COAST	22
A VISION OF VENUS AND ADONIS	23
SOMNAMBULISM	25
SERENATA MAGICA	27
O-SHICHI AND MOTO	29
AS OF OLD	37
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	38

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FOREWORD

A few of the poems of this volume are retained from two of the author's earlier volumes which are now out of print. The rest are new.

INVOCATION

(From a High Cliff)

Sweep unrest
Out of my blood,
Winds of the sea! Sweep the fog
Out of my brain
For I am one
Who has told Life he will be free.
Who will not doubt of work that's done,
Who will not fear the work to do.
Who will hold peaks Promethean
Better than all Jove's honey-dew.
Who when the Vulture tears his breast
Will smile into the Terror's Eyes.
Who for the World has this Bequest —
Hope, that eternally is wise.

THE FAIRIES OF GOD

Last night I slipt from the banks of dream
And swam in the currents of God,
On a tide where His fairies were at play,
Catching salt tears in their little white hands,
For human hearts;
And dancing dancing, in gala bands,
On the currents of God;
And singing, singing: —
*There is no wind blows here or spray —
Wind upon us!
Only the waters ripple away
Under our feet as we gather tears.
God has made mortals for the years,
Us for alway!
God has made mortals full of fears,
Fears for the night and fears for the day.
If they would free them from grief that sears,
If they would keep all that love endears,
If they would lay no more lilies on biers —
Let them say!
For we are swift to enchant and tire
Time's will!
Our feet are wiser than all desire,
Our song is better than faith or fame;*

*To whom it is given no ill e'er came,
Who has it not grows chill!
Who has it not grows laggard and lame,
Nor knows that the world is a Minstrel's lyre,
Smitten and never still!..*
Last night on the currents of God.

A SONG OF THE OLD VENETIANS

The seven fleets of Venice
Set sail across the sea
For Cyprus and for Trebizond
Ayoub and Araby.
Their gonfalons are floating far,
St. Mark's has heard the mass,
And to the noon the salt lagoon
Lies white, like burning glass.

The seven fleets of Venice —
And each its way to go,
Led by a Falier or Tron,
Zorzi or Dandolo.
The Patriarch has blessed them all,
The Doge has waved the word,
And in their wings the murmurings
Of waiting winds are heard.

The seven fleets of Venice —
And what shall be their fate?
One shall return with porphyry
And pearl and fair agate.
One shall return with spice and spoil
And silk of Samarcand.

But nevermore shall *one* win o'er
The sea, to any land.

*Oh, they shall bring the East back,
And they shall bring the West,
The seven fleets our Venice sets
A-sail upon her quest.
But some shall bring despair back
And some shall leave their keels
Deeper than wind or wave frets,
Or sun ever steals.*

NIRVANA DAYS

I

If I were in Japan today,
In little Japan today,
I'd watch the sampan-rowers ride
On Yokohama bay.
I'd watch the little flower-folk
Pass on the Bund, where play
Of "foreign" music fills their ears
With wonder new alway.

Or in a kuruma I'd step
And "Noge-yama!" cry,
And bare brown feet should wheel me fast
Where Noge-yama, high
Above the city and sea's vast
Uprises, with the sigh
Of pines about its festal fanes
Built free to sun and sky.

And there till dusk I'd sit and think
Of Shaka Muni, lord
Of Buddhas; or of Fudo's fire

And rope and lifted sword.
And, ere I left, a surging shade
Of clouds, a distant horde,
Should break and Fugi's cone stand clear —
With sutras overscored.

Sutras of ice and rock and snow,
Written by hands of heat
And thaw upon it, till 'twould seem
Meant for the final seat
Of the lord Buddha and his bliss —
If ever he repeat
This life where millions still are bound
Within Illusion's cheat.

II

Or were I in Japan today —
Perchance at Kyoto —
Down Tera-machi I would search
For charm or curio.
Up narrow stairs in sandals pure
Of soil or dust I'd go
Into a room of magic shapes —
Gods, dragons, dread Nio.

And seated on the silent mats,
With many a treasure near —
Of ivory the gods have dreamt,
And satsuma as dear,
Of bronzes whose mysterious mint
Seems not of now or here —
I'd buy and dream and dream and buy,
Lost far in Mâyâ's sphere.

Then gathering up my gains at last,
Mid "sayonaras" soft
And bows and gentle courtesies
Repeated oft and oft,
My host and I should part – "O please
The skies much weal to waft
His years," I'd think, then cross San-jo
To fair Chion-in aloft.

For set aloft and set apart,
Beyond the city's din,
Under the shade of ancient heights
Lies templed calm Chion-in.
And there the great bell's booming fills
Its gates all day, and thin
Low beating on mokugyo, by
Priests passioning for sin.

And there the sun upon its courts
And carvings, gods and graves,

Rests as no light of earth-lands known,
Like to Nirvana laves
And washes with sweet under-flow
Into the soul's far caves.
And no more shall this life seem real
To one who feels its waves.

"No more!" I'd say, then wander on
To Kiyomizu-shrine,
Which is so old antiquity's
Far self cannot divine
Its birth, but knows that Kwannon, she
Of mercy's might benign,
Has reached her thousand hands always
From it to Nippon's line.

And She should hear my many prayers,
And have my freest gifts.
And many days beside her should
I watch the crystal rifts
Of Ottawa's clear waters earn
Their way, o'er rocks and drifts,
Beside the trestled temple down —
Like murmurs of sweet shrifts.

Then, when the city wearied me,
To Katsura I'd wend —
A garden hid across green miles
Of rice-lands quaintly penned.

And, by the stork-bestridden lake,
I'd walk or musing mend
My soul with lotus-memories
And hopes – without an end.

III

Or were I in Japan today,
Hiroshima should call
My heart – Hiroshima built round
Her ancient castle wall.
By the low flowering moat where sun
And silence ever fall
Into a swoon, I'd build again
Old days of Daimyo thrall.

Of charge and bloody countercharge,
When many a samurai
Fierce-panoplied fell at its pale,
Suppressing groan or cry;
Suppressing all but silent hates
That swept from eye to eye,
While lips smiled decorously on,
Or mocked urbane goodbye.

Then to the river I would pass

And drift upon its tide
By many a tea-house hung in bloom
Above its mirrored side.
And geisha fluttering gay before
Their guests should pause in pied
Kimono, then with laughter bright
Behind the shoji hide.

Unto an isle of Ugina's
Low port my craft should swing,
Or scarce an island seems it now
To my fair fancying,
But a shrined jut of earth up thro
The sea from which to sing
Unto the evening star of all
Night's incarnations bring.

Then backward thro the darkened streets
I'd walk: long lanterns writ
With ghostly characters should dance
Beside each door, or flit,
Thin paper spirits, to and fro
And mow the wind, when it
Demanded of them reverence
And passed with twirl or twit.

What music, too, of samisen
And koto I should hear!
Tinkle on weirder tinkle thro

The strangely wistful ear
What shadows on the shoji-door
Of my dim soul should veer
All night in sleep, and haunt the light
Of many a coming year!

IV

Or were I in Japan today,
From Ujina I'd sail
For mountain-isled Migajima
Upon the distance, frail
As the mirage, to Amida,
Of this world's transient tale,
Where he sits clothed in boundless light
And sees it vainly ail.

Up to the great sea-torii,
Its temple-gate, I'd wind,
There furl my sail beneath its beam;
And soon my soul should find
What it shall never, tho it sift
The world elsewhere, and blind
Itself at last with sight of all
Earth's blisses to mankind.

"Migajima! Migajima!"

How would enchantment chant

The syllables within me, till

Desire should cease and pant

Of passion press no more my will —

But let charmed peace supplant

All thought of birth and death and birth —

Yea, karma turn askant.

For on Migajima none may

Give birth and none may die —

Since birth and death are equal sins

Unto the wise. So I

Should muse all day where the sea spills

Its murmur softly by

The still stone lanterns all arow

Under the deathless sky.

And under cryptomeria-tree

And camphor-tree and pine,

And tall pagoda, rising roof

On roof into the shine

Of the pure air – red roof on roof,

With memories in each line

Of far Confucian China where

They first were held divine.

And o'er Migajima the moon

Should rise for me again.

So magical its glow, I dare
Think of it only when
My heart is strong to shun the snare
Of witcheries that men
May lose their souls in evermore,
Nor, after, care nor ken.

V

Yes, were I in Japan today
These things I'd do, and more.
For Ise gleams in royal groves,
And Nara with its lore,
And Nikko hid in mountains – where
The Shogun, great of yore,
Built timeless tombs whose glory glooms
Funereally o'er.

These things I'd do! But last of all,
On Kamakura's lea,
I'd seek Daibutsu's face of calm
And still the final sea
Of all the West within me – from
Its fret and fever free
My spirit – into patience, peace,
And passion's mastery.

THE YOUNG TO THE OLD

You who are old —
And have fought the fight —
And have won or lost or left the field —
Weigh us not down
With fears of the world, as we run!
With the wisdom that is too right,
The warning to which we cannot yield,
The shadow that follows the sun,
Follows forever!
And with all that desire must leave undone,
Though as a god it endeavor;
Weigh, weigh us not down!

But gird our hope to believe —
That all that is done
Is done by dream and daring —
Bid us dream on!
That Earth was not born
Or Heaven built of bewareing —
Yield us the dawn!
You dreamt your hour – and dared, but we
Would dream till all you despaired of *be*;
Would dare – till the world,
Won to a new wayfaring,

Be thence forever easier upward drawn!

OFF THE IRISH COAST

Gulls on the wind,
Crying! crying!
Are you the ghosts
Of Erin's dead?
Of the forlorn
Whose days went sighing
Ever for Beauty
That ever fled?

Ever for Light
That never kindled?
Ever for Song
No lips have sung?
Ever for Joy
That ever dwindled?
Ever for Love that stung?

A VISION OF VENUS AND ADONIS

I know not where it was I saw them sit,
For in my dreams I had outwandered far
That endless wanderer men call the sea —
Whose winds like incantations wrap the world
And help the moon in her high mysteries.
I know not how it was that I was led
Unto their tryst; or what dim infinite
Of perfect and imperishable night
Hung round, a radiance ineffable;
For I was too intoxicate and tranced
With beauty that I knew was very love.
So when divinity from her had stolen
Into his spirit, as, from fields of myrrh
Or forests of red sandal by the sea,
Steal slaking airs, and he began to speak,
I could but gather these few fleeting words:
"Your glance sends fragrance sweeter than the lily,
Your hands are visible bodiments of song
You are the voice that April light has lost,
Her silence that was music of glad birds.
The wind's heart have you, and its mystery,
When poet Spring comes piping o'er the hills
To make of Tartarus forgotten fear.
Yea all the generations of the world,

Whose whence and whither but the gods shall know.
Are vassal to your vows forevermore."
And she, I knew, made answer, for her words
Fell warm as womanhood with wordless things,
But I had drifted on within my dream,
To that pale space which is oblivion.

SOMNAMBULISM

I

Night is above me,
And Night is above the night.
The sea is beside me sougning, or is still.
The earth as a somnambulist moves on
In a strange sleep ...
A sea-bird cries.
And the cry wakes in me
Dim, dead sea-folk, my sires —
Who more than myself are me.
Who sat on their beach long nights ago and saw
The sea in its silence;
And cursed it or implored:
Or with the Cross defied;
Then on the morrow in their boats went down.

II

Night is above me ...

And Night is above the night.
Rocks are about me, and, beyond, the sand ...
And the low reluctant tide,
That rushes back to ebb a last farewell
To the flotsam borne so long upon its breast.
Rocks... But the tide is out,
And the slime lies naked, like a thing ashamed
That has no hiding-place.
And the sea-bird hushes —
The bird and all far cries within my blood —
And earth as a somnambulist moves on.

SERENATA MAGICA

(Venetian)

My gondola is a black sea-swan,
And glides beneath the moon.
Dark palaces beside me pass,
Like visions in a beryl-glass
Of what shall never be, alas,
Or what has been too soon.
Like what shall never be, but in
The breathing of a swoon.

My gondola is a black sea-swan,
And makes her mystic way
From door to phantom water-door,
While carven balconies hang o'er
And casements framed for love say more
Than love can ever say.
Say more than any voice but voice
Of silent magic may.

My gondola is a black sea-swan —
Rialto lies behind.
And by me the Salute swings,

A loveliness that must take wings
And vanish, as imaginings
Within an Afrit's mind;
As vague and vast imaginings
That can no substance find.

My gondola is a black sea-swan:
San Marco and the shaft
Of the slim Campanile steal
Into my trance and leave a seal
Upon my senses, like the feel
Of long enchantment quaffed:
Of long enchantments such as songs
Of sage Al Raschid waft.

My gondola is a black sea-swan
And gains to the lagoon,
Where samphire and sea-lavender
Around me float or softly stir,
While far-off Venice still lifts her
Fair witchery to the moon
And all that wonder e'er gave birth
Seems out of beauty hewn.

O-SHICHI AND MOTO

I

O-Shichi, all my heart today
Is dreaming of your fate;
And of your little house that stood
Beside the temple gate;
Of its plum-garden hid away
Behind white paper doors;
And of the young boy-priest who read too late with you love-
lores.

II

O-Shichi dwelt in Yedo – where
A thousand wonders dwell.
Gods, golden palaces and shrines
That like a charm enspell.
O-Shichi dwelt among them there,
More wondrous, she, than all —
A flower some forgetful god had from his hand let fall.

III

And all her days were as the dream
On flowers in the sun.
And all her ways were as the waves
That by Shin-bashi run.
And in her gaze there was the gleam
Of stars that cannot wait
Too long for love and so fare forth from heaven to find a mate.

IV

O-Shichi dwelt so, till one night
When all the city slept,
When not a paper lantern swung,
When only fire-flies swept
Soft cipherings of spirit-light
Across the temple's gloom —
Sudden a cry was heard – the cry that should O-Shichi doom.

V

For following the cry came flame,
A Chaya's roof a-blaze.
And quickly was the street a stream
Of stricken folk, whose gaze
Knew well that when the morning came
Their homes would be but smoke
Vanished upon the winds: now had O-Shichi's fate awoke.

VI

And waited. For at morning priests
In pity of her years
And desolation led her back
Behind the great god's spheres;
The great god Buddha, who of beasts
And men all mindful was.
O Buddha, in thy very courts O-Shichi learned love's laws!

VII

Love of the body and the soul,
Not of Nirvana's state!
Love that beyond itself can see
No beauty wise or great.
O-Shichi for a moon – a whole
Moon happy there beheld
The young boy-priest whose yearning e'er into his eyes
upwelled.

VIII

So all too soon for her was found
Elsewhere a kindly thatch.
And all too soon O-Shichi heard
Behind her close love's latch.
They led her from the temple's ground
Into untrusting days.
And all too soon that happy moon was hid in sorrow's haze.

IX

For now at dawn she rose to dress
With blooms some honored vase,
Or to embroider or brew tea's
Sweet ceremonial grace.
Or she at dusk, in sick distress,
Before the butsudān,
Must to ancestral tablets pray – not to her Moto-San!

X

Not unto him, her love, who sways
Her breast, as moon the tide,
Whose breath is incense – Ah, again
To see him softly glide
Before the grave god-idol's gaze
Of inward ecstasy,
To watch the great bell boom for him its mystic sutra-plea.

XI

But weeks grew into weariness,
And weariness to pain,
And pain to lonely wildness, which
Set fire unto her brain.
And, "I will see my love!" distress
Made fair O-Shichi cry,
"Tho for ten lives away from him I then must live and die."

XII

Yet – no! She dared not go to him,
To her he could not come.
Then, sudden a thought her being swept
And struck her loud heart dumb.
Till in her rose confusion dim,
Fear fighting with Desire —
Which to O-Shichi took the shape of Fudo, god of fire.

XIII

And Fudo won her: for that night
Did fond O-Shichi dare
To set aflame her father's house,
Hoping again to share
The temple with her acolyte,
Her lover-priest, who, spent
With speechless passion for her face, in vain strove to repent.

XIV

But ah! what destiny can do
Is not for folly's hand.
The flames O-Shichi kindled were
From sea to Shiba fanned.
And it was learned a love-sick girl
Had charred a thousand homes.
Then were the fury-smitten folk like to a sea that foams.

XV

And so they seized her: but not in
The temple – O not there
Had she been led again by priests
In pity – led to share
Her lover's eyes; no, but her sin
Brought not one dear delight
To poor O-Shichi – who was now to look on her last rite.

XVI

For to the stake they bound her – fire
They lit – to be her fate...
O-Shichi, have I dreamt it all?
Your face, the temple gate,
The fair boy-priest shut from desire
In Buddhahood to-be?
Then let me dream and ever dream, O flower by Yedo's sea.

AS OF OLD

The fishermen bade their wives farewell,
(The sun floated merry up the morning)
They sang, to the rhythm of the low-swung swell,
"O come, lads, scorning
The highlands high,
There's no warning
In the blue south sky,
There's no warning,
O come, lads, free,
We'll cross the harbor bar and put to sea!"

The fisherwives prayed, the sails blew fast,
(O home it is happy where there's hoping)

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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