

Alexander Search

## PRAYER

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Oh God, if Thou be'st anything  
Hear this frail prayer that I fling  
Like a flame leaping past control  
From out the hell that is my soul:

Oh God, let me not fall insane!  
I know that half-mad I am now;  
I feel behind my youthful brow  
Horrors it sickens to contain,  
Ideas that my sense deride  
And inhibition cast aside;  
I feel each day, every day  
At least in one deep moment's hell  
My consciousness completely stay  
My reason like a vision reel.

Let me not be insane, my God,  
Torture me in all ways beside,  
But let me keep, otherwise trod  
Under the foot of Time, and tried  
In all the horrors that men know,  
A little portion of the sense  
Of things that full is normal men's.  
Seclude me not completely, no,  
From men in an unconscious woe.

I suffer much, yet let me not,  
Though thus I suffered not at all,  
Pass into emptiness of thought,

To madness deep which is a gall  
Filling the soul till bitterness,  
Becoming part of us, doth steep  
The whole soul in unconsciousness.  
A little sense, oh, let me keep!

Pour down on me all woes, all ills  
All else that the strain'd spirit fills.  
With horror and with terror mute;  
But madness, madness absolute,  
Keep from my trembling mind away.  
The pain that withers and that kills,  
The love that tears to shreds the heart,  
The cares that horror and that may  
Give death with an ignoble smart —  
All these may come, but oh, let me  
From madness true keep ever free.

No more — who knows but as I write  
Madness in me is not complete?  
Who knows, who can see things aright?  
Where is the true unerring sight  
Its own deep ills to meet?  
Who knows but I am mad e'en now?  
Oh, torture horrible to know!  
Who knows but when unconscious I  
Or thinking that I dream pass by,  
People say not: «there goes the youth That is a madman» all in truth?

Who tells me that while now I think  
That genius I possess and have,  
That inspiration I do drink  
Of all before, beyond the grave,  
I do not rave, entirely rave?

Who knows, who anything can tell? —  
My brain is reeling as I write

Void am I and anxious of light —  
That I am not in madness quite. . .  
Oh doubt, oh agony, soul-hell!

No more, no more; let me believe  
That I am sane, and, oh God, hear  
Whate'er thou beest, my true prayer  
Shaken from my soul's giant fear. . .

Torture me in all ways that are,  
Let me be scorned and crushed and trod,  
Plunged in full conscious agony,  
Let me become a fear, a care,  
But madness, madness, oh my God,  
Do not let madness come to me!

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