

AUGUSTE RODIN

ROSA MUNDI

H. D. CARR

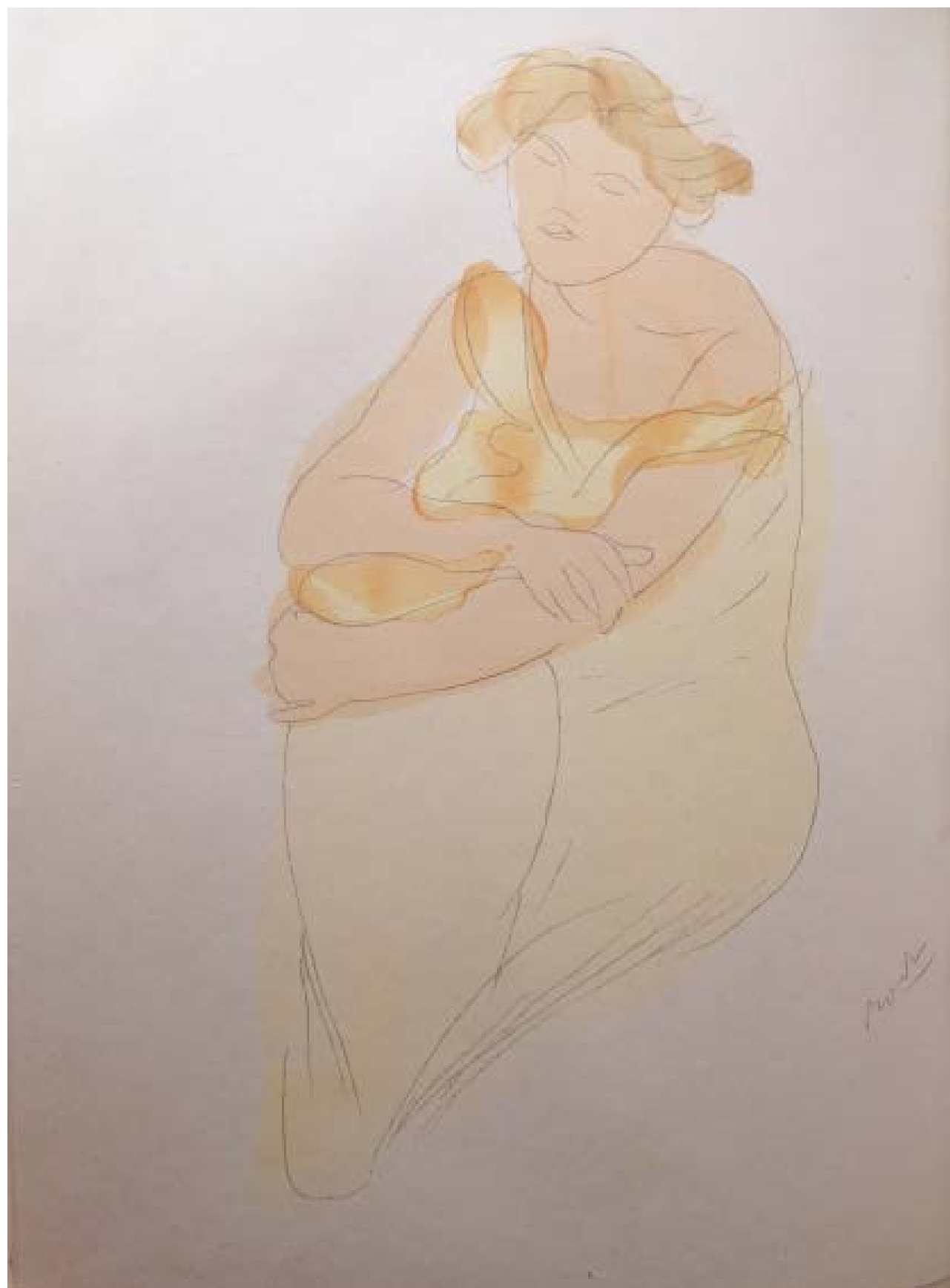
ROSA MUNDI

EDITION

2 Copies on Vellum.

10 Copies on China paper.

488 Copies on handmade paper.



ROSA MUNDI

A POEM

BY

H. D. CARR

WITH AN ORIGINAL COMPOSITION BY

AUGUSTE RODIN

PRIX : VINGT FRANCS

PRICE : SIXTEEN SHILLINGS NET

PARIS — P.H. RENOUARD, 19, RUE DES SAINTS-PÈRES

LONDON — OF H. D. CARR, CARE OF E. DENNES, 22, CHANCERY LANE

AND THROUGH ALL BOOKSELLERS

1905

Rose of the World !
Red glory of the secret heart of Love !
Red flame, rose-red, most subtly curled
Into its own infinite flower, all flowers above !
Its flower in its own perfumed passion,
Its faint sweet passion, folded and furred
In flower fashion ;
And my deep spirit taking its pure part
Of that voluptuous heart
Of hidden happiness !

Arise, strong bow of the young child Eros !
(While the maddening moonlight, the memoried caress
Stolen of the scented rose
Stirs me and bids each racing pulse ache, ache !)
Bend into an agony of art
Whose cry is ever rapture, and whose tears
For their own purity's undivided sake

Are molten dew, as, on the lotus leaves
Sliver-coiled in the Sun
Into green-girdled spheres
Purer than all a maiden's dream enweaves,
Lies the unutterable Beauty of
The waters. Yea, arise, divinest dove
Of the Idalian, on your crimson wings
And soft grey plumes, bear me to yonder shrine
Of that most softly-spoken one,
Mine Aphrodite ! Touch the imperfect strings,
Oh thou, immortal, throned above the moon !
Inspire a holy tune
Lighter and lovelier than flowers and wine
Offered in gracious gardens unto Pan
By any soul of man !

In vain the solemn stars pour their pale dews
Upon my trembling spirit ; their caress
Leaves me moon-rapt in waves of loveliness
All thine, O rose, O wrought of many a muse
In Music, O thou strength of ecstasy
Incarnate in a woman-form, create
Of her own rapture, infinite, ultimate,
Not to be seen, not grasped, not even imaginable,
But known of one, by virtue of that spell
Of thy sweet will toward him : thou, unknown,
Untouched, grave mistress of the sunlight throne
Of thine own nature ; known not even of me,

But of some spark of woven eternity
Immortal in this bosom. Phosphor paled
And in the grey upstarted the dread veiled
Rose light of dawn. Sunshapen shone thy spears
Of love forth darting into myriad spheres,
Which I the poet called this light, that flower,
This knowledge, that illumination, power
This and love that, in vain, in vain, until
Thy beauty dawned, all beauty to distil
Into one drop of utmost dew, one name
Choral as floral, one thin, subtle flame
Fitted to a shaft of love. O bear me far
Up and up yet to where thy sacred star
Burns in its brilliance ! Thence the storm be shed
A passion of great calm about this head,
This head no more a poet's . Ay ! the dream
Of beauty gathered close into a stream
Of tingling light, and, gathering ever force
From thine own love, its unextended source,
Became the magic utterance that makes Me,
Dissolving self into the starless sea
That makes one lake of molten joy, one pond
Steady as light and hard as diamond ;
One drop, one atom of constraint intense,
Of elemental passion scorning sense,
All the centred music that is I.
O ! hear me not ! I die ;
I am borne away in misery of dumb life

That would in words flash forth the holiest heaven
That to the immortal God of Gods is given,
And, tongue-tied, stammers forth — my wife !

I am dumb with rapture of thy loveliness.
All metres match and mingle ; all words tire ;
All lights, all sounds, all perfumes, all gold stress
Of the honey-palate, all soft strokes expire
In abject agony of broken sense
To hymn the emotion tense
Of somewhat higher — O ! how highest ! — than all
Their mystery : fall, O fall,
Ye unavailing eagle-flights of song !
O wife ! these do thee wrong.

Thou knowest how I was blind ;
How for mere minutes thy pure presence
Was nought ; was ill-defined ;
A smudge across the mind,
Drivelling in its brutal essence,
Hog-wallowing in poetry,
Incapable of thee.

Ah ! when the minutes grew to hours,
And yet the beast, the fool, saw flowers
And loved them, watched the moon rise, took delight
In perfumes of the summer night,

Caught in the glamour of the sun,
Thought all the woe well won.
How hours were days, and all the misery
Abode, all mine : O thou ! didst thou regret ?
Wast thou asleep as I ?
Didst thou not love me yet ?
For, know ! the moon is not the moon until
She hath the knowledge to fulfil
Her music, till she know herself the moon.
So thou, so I ! The stone unhewn,
Foursquare, the sphere, of human hands immune,
Was not yet chosen for the corner-piece
And key-stone of the Royal Arch of Sex ;
Unsolved the ultimate x ;
The virginal breeding breeze
Was yet of either unstirred ;
Unspoken the Great Word.

Then on a sudden, we knew. From deep to deep
Reverberating, lightning unto lightning
Across the sundering brightening
Abyss of sorrow's sleep,
There shone the sword of love, and stuck, and clove
The intolerable veil,
The woven chain of mail
Prudence self-called, and folly known to who
May know. Then, O sweet drop of dew,
Thy limpid light rolled over and was lost

In mine, and mine in thine.
Peace, ye who praise ! ye but disturb the shrine !
This voice is evil over against the peace
Here in the West, the holiest. Shaken and crossed
The threads Lachesis wove fell from her hands.
The pale divided strands
Where taken by thy master-hand, Eros !
Her evil thinkings cease,
Thy miracles begin.
Eros ! Eros ! — Be silent ! It is sin
Thus to invoke the oracles of order
Their iron gates to uncloset.
The gross, inhospitable warder
Of Love's green garden of spice is well awake.
Hell hath enough of Her three-headed hound ;
But Love's severer bound
Knows for His watcher a more fearful shape,
A formidable ape
Skilled by black art to mock the Gods profound
In their abyss of under ground.
Beware ! Who hath entered hath no boast to make,
And conscious Eden surelier breeds the snake.
Be silent ! O ! for silence' sake !

That asks the impossible. Smite ! Smite !
Profaned adytum of pure light,
Smite ! but I must sing on.
Nay ! can the orison

Of myriad fools provoke the Crowned-with-Night
Hidden beyond sound and sight
In the mystery of His own high essence ?
Lo, Rose of all the gardens of the world,
Did thy most sacred presence
Not fill the Real, then this voice were whirled
Away in the wind of its own folly, thrown
Into forgotten places and unknown.
So I sing on !

Sister and wife, dear wife,
Light of my love and lady of my life,
Answer if thou canst from the unsullied place,
Unveiling for one star-wink thy bright face !
Did we leave then, once cognisant,
Time for some Fear to implant
His poison ? Did we hesitate ?
Leave but one little chance to Fate ?
For one swift second did we wait ?
There is no need to answer : God is God,
A jealous God and evil ; with His rod
He smiteth fair and foul, and with His sword
Divideth tiniest atoms of intangible time,
That men may know he is the Lord.
Then, with that sharp division,
Did He divide our wit sublime ?
Our knowledge bring to nought ?
We had no need of thought.
We brought His malice in derision.

So thine eternal petals shall enclose
Me, O most wonderful lady of delight,
Immaculate, indivisible circle of night,
Inviolable, invulnerable Rose !

The sound of my own voice carries me on.
I am as a ship whose anchors are all gone,
Whose rudder is held by Love the indomitable —
Purposeful helmsman ! Were his port high Hell,
Who should be fool enough to care ? Suppose
Hell's waters wash the memory of this rose
Out of my mind, what misery matters then ?
Or, if they leave it, all the woes of men
Are as pale shadows in the glory of
That passionate splendour of Love.
Ay ! my own voice, my own thoughts. These, then, must be
The mutiny of some worm's misery,
Some chained despair knotted into my flesh,
Some chance companion, some soul damned afresh
Since my redemption, that is vocal at all ;
For I am wrapt away from light and call
In the sweet heart of the red rose.
My spirit only knows
This woman and no more ; who would know more ?
I, I am concentrate
In the unshakable state
Of constant rapture. Who should pour
His ravings in the air for winds to whirl,

Far from the central pearl
Of all the diadem of the universe ?
Let God take pen, rehearse
Dull nursery tales ; then, not before, O rose,
Red rose ! shall the belov'd of thee,
Infinite rose ! pen puerile poetry
That turns in writing to vile prose.

Were this the quintessential plume of Keats
And Shelley and Swinburne and Verlaine,
Could I outsoar them, all their lyric feats,
Excel their utterance vain
With one convincing rapture, beat them hollow
As an ass's skin ; wert thou, Apollo,
Mere slave to me, not Lord — thy fieriest flight
And stateliest shaft of light
Thyself thyself surpassing : all were dull,
And thou, O rose, sole, sacred, wonderful,
Informing all, in all most beautiful,
Circle and sphere, perfect in every part,
High above hope of Art :
Though, be it said ! thou art nowhere now,
Save in the secret chamber of my heart.
Behind the brass of my anonymous brow.

Ay ! let the coward and slave who writes write on !
He is no more harm to Love than the grey snake
Who lurks in the dusk brake

For the bare-legged village-boy, is to the Sun,
The Sire of Life.
The Lover and the Wife,
Sun-canopied, ignore. The people hear ;
Then, be the people smitten of grey Fear,
It is no odds !

I have seen the eternal Gods
Sit, star-wed, in old Egypt by the Nile ;
The same calm pose, the inscrutable, wan smile,
On every lip alike.
Time hath not had his will to strike
At them ; they abide, they pass through all.
Though their most ancient names may fall,
They stir not nor are weary of
Life, for with them, even as with us, Life is but Love.
They know, we know ; let, then, the writing go !
That, in the very truth, we do not know.

It may be in the centuries of our life
Since we were man and wife
There stirs some incarnation of that love.
Some rosebud in the garden of spices blows,
Some offshoot from the Rose
Of the World, the Rose of all Delight,
The Rose of Dew, the Rose of Love and Night,
The Rose of Silence, covering as with a vesture
The solemn unity of things

Beheld in the mirror of truth,
The Rose indifferent to God's gesture,
The Rose on moonlight wings
That flies to the House of Fire,
The Rose of Honey-in-Youth !
Ah ! No dim mystery of desire
Fathoms this gulph ! No light invades
The mystical musical shades
Of a faith in the future, a dream of the day
When athwart the dim glades
Of the forest a ray
Of sunlight shall flash and the dew die away !

Let there then be obscurity in this !
There is an after rapture in the kiss.
The fire, flesh, perfume, music, that outpaced
All time, fly off ; they are subtle : there abides
A secret and most maiden taste ;
Salt, as of the invisible tides
Of the molten sea of gold
Men may at times behold
In the rayless scarab of the sinking sun ;
And out of that is won
Hardly, with labour and pain that are as pleasure,
The first flower of the garden the stored treasure
That lies at the heart's heart of eternity.
This treasure is for thee.

O ! but shall hope arise in happiness ?
That may not be.
My love is like a golden grape ; the veins
Peep through the ecstasy
Of the essence of ivory and silk,
Pearl, moonlight, mother-milk
That is her skin ;
Its swift caress
Flits like an angel's kiss in a dream ; remains
The healing virtue ; from all sin,
All ill, one touch sets free.
My love is like a star — oh fool ! oh fool !
Is not thy back yet tender from the rod ?
Is there no learning in the poet's school ?
Wilt thou achieve what were too hard for God ?
I call Him to the battle ; ask of me
When the hinds calve ? What of eternity
When he built chaos ? Shall Leviathan
Be drawn out with a hook ? Enough ; I see
This I can answer — or Ernst Haeckel can !
Now, God Almighty, rede this mystery !
What of the love that is the heart of man ?
Take stars and airs, and write it down !
Fill all the interstices of space
With myriad verse — own Thy disgrace !
Diminish Thy renown !
Approve my riddle ! This Thou canst not do.

O living Rose ! O dowered with subtle dew
Of love. The tiny eternities of time,
Caught between flying seconds, are well filled
With these futilities of fragrant rhyme :
In Love's retort distilled,
In sunrays of fierce loathing purified,
In moonrays of pure longing tried,
And gathered after many moons of labour
Into the compass of a single day :
And wrought into continuous tune,
One laughter with one langour for its neighbor,
One thought of winter with one word of June,
Muddled and mixed in mere dismay,
Chiselled with the cunning chisel of despair,
Found wanting, well aware
Of its own fault, even insistent
Thereon ; some fragrance rare
Stolen from my lady's hair
Perchance redeeming now and then the distant
Fugitive tunes ; — Ah ! Love ! the hour is over !
The moon is up, the vigil overpast.

Call me to thee at last,
O Rose, O perfect miracle lover,
Call me ! I hear thee though it be across
The abyss of the whole universe,
Though not a sign escape, delicious loss !
Though hardly a wish rehearse

The imperfection underlying ever
The perfect happiness.
Thou knowest that not in flesh
Lies the fair fresh
Delight of Love ; not in mere lips and eyes
The secret of these bridal ecstasies,
Since thou art everywhere,
Rose of the World, Rose of the Uttermost
Abode of Glory, Rose of the High Host
Of heaven, mystic, rapturous Rose !
The extreme passion glows
Deep in this breast ; thou knowest (and love knows)
How every word awakes its own reward
In a thought akin to thee, a shadow of thee ;
And every tune evokes its musical Lord ;
And every rhyme tingles and shakes in me
The filaments of the great web of Love.

O Rose all roses far above
In the garden of God's roses,
Sorrowless, thornless, passionate Rose, that lies
Full in the flood of its own sympathies
And makes my life one tune that curls and closes
On its own self delight ;
A circle, never a line ! Safe from all wind,
Secure in its own pleasure-house confined,
Sure lord of its own rapture, deaf and blind
To aught but its own mastery of song

And light, shown ever as silence and deep night
Secret as death and final. Let me long
Never again for aught ! This great delight
Involves me, weaves me in its pattern of bliss,
Seals me with its own kiss,
Draws me to thee with every dream that glows,
Poet, each word ; maiden, each burden of snows
Extending beyond sunset, beyond dawn !
O Rose, inviolate, utterly withdrawn
In the truth : — for this is truth : Love knows !
Ah ! Rose of the World ! Rose ! Rose !

PRINTED

BY

PHILIPPE RENOUARD

19, rue des Sains-Pères

PARIS

