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In the Cathedral

By A. MERRITT

(Easter 1930)

Enshrined she stands within the candle's glow
A lily petalled by a golden flame,
A lotus rising through a golden mist,
Gazing with sweet, mysterious eyes while round
Her glide with cadenced steps the chanting priests;
There where the childless woman prays she looks,
There where the mother holds on high her babe,
There on the lovers kneeling side by side;
And ghostly, purple-tendriled incense creeps
And clasps her feet, her knees,
Or clings with eager fingertips to breast,
Or touches lips—
As though 'twere suppliant souls that prayed for birth;
And in the tremulous obeisance of the flames
The Child within her arms nestles and smiles
And seems to leap to life.

Isis thou wert beneath the pyramids,
Mother they named thee in a myriad fanes;
Thy temples girdled all the fecund Nile
And swart browed maidens kneeling at thy shrines
Lifted on high the Lotus Cur;
Beloved of the Sun!
O Pulse of life!

Since the first surge of Life beat up and broke
Against the Infinite, in many lands,
By many ways we have sought thy breast,
Have rested there and worshipped:
Ishtar thou wert, and Aestre of the Druids;
Countless the altars to thee raised whose dust
The Wind of Time has whirled adown the Ages' Path
To Nothingness;



Countless the names by which we called on Thee
But vanished now like voices in a dream;
For Thee
Fane upon fane from crumbled fane has risen
And yet in each Thou dwell
Immortal.

As in the House of Life the Spring
Leaps from its ashes and reincarnate
Pours tide of life through bud and tree,
Through man and bird and beast,
So 'Thou Great Mother!

Madonna!

Bid them not clothe Thee then in thought or word of woe,
Nor irk with dirge nor greet with dolor,
Nor name Thee—Mother of Sorrows;
Bid them no more make Life a cell
Sinking through vistas gray into a grave,
And crouching in the shadow of a cross
Sad worshippers of a tomb and pain,
Women and men stretching shamed hands out to a pallid
glow;

But bid them come into the day
And stand clean limbed, clear eyed, erect,
Wind swept upon some mountain top
Looking with fearless faces on the Sun.

And Thou—

Come Thou to us as Freya clad like the rose,
As Ceres deep bosomed, tender armed,
As Venus palpitant!

For Thine is the pulse that thrills the world with joy.
That sends the tremor through the sleeping woods
Till from each gaunt and naked bough a host
Of gentle green clad worshippers awake
And bow to Thee and bend and interlade
Whispering Thy secret name;

Thine is the hand that garbs the fields in grain,
Whose touch makes every clod athrob with gladness till
Its nascience glows with living beauty;
Thine is the call of life to life.

And when at last

We rest our heads upon Thy breast and sleep,
Then from the ashes of our hearts new hearts shall rise
And in them all as in Thine ancient fanes
Thou rulest!

Heart of the World!

O Mother Eternal!

