

Confession

By George Sylvester Viereck

I know of an odorous palm-forest
Filled with mysterious murmurings,
Where in the glow of the crimson west
A brilliant song-bird sobs and sings.
There is that in the note of the strange bright bird
Makes heavy the heart within the breast;
And whoso this evil song has heard
Forever forfeits his peace and rest.

But I know too of a wood in the north
With a heavenly perfume all its own,
Where the nightingales long ere dawn pour forth
A ravishing flood of the purest tone.
The wanderer breathes once more and smiles
As he comes in its soothing shade to sit—
For the air that blows through its cool green aisles
Is no fierce blast from the stifling pit.

A ripe fruit hangs in the sultry place,
For whose savour a man counts all but loss,
Forgetting even his mother's face
And the bleeding Head upon the cross.
In the cool green moss of the northern wood
There blooms a flower of marvellous hue
That speaks to the soul of naught but good,
And tells of a world where all is new.

A witch-woman dwells in the palm-grove's heat
That is pale as the ghastly face of Death,
But a red robe wraps her from head to feet,
And through red, red lips comes her fevered breath.
Her kisses burn where they close and cling
Like pain of longing or fire of hell,
And he that thrills with their adder-sting
For them is ready his soul to sell.

In the northern wood stands a slender maid
With eyes that are blue as God's own sky—
Nor is she in scarlet robe arrayed,
But wrapped in her virginal purity.
"I have no part in the fires of sin,"

So runs her song, "for my name is Love!"
Yet he who looks in her eyes shall win
A glimpse of the height of heaven above.

But I have walked where the sorceress dwells,
Where poisoned blooms make the senses reel,
And I have yielded me to her spells,
And lost forever my soul's true weal.
For me no flower of good shall grow
In the ruined garden where hope lies dead—
And I need but look in your eyes to know
The bliss my sin has forfeited!