

Frequency of Lexical Collocational Patterns in Gibrans' "*The Prophet*"

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Abstract

Literary writers, novelists, dramatists and poets often use different linguistic tools to attain various communicative functions (or more specifically to get at certain artistic, aesthetic and poetic ends). For a variety of style, they regularly manipulate various ways of using of lexical items. One way of utilizing lexical items is through a sequence of habitually occurring words (collocations). Gibran uses different types of lexical collocations with different frequencies in his *The Prophet* (a book containing prose poems concerning social topics), to achieve various functions. Thus, this paper intends to identify the use of the different patterns of lexical collocations used in *The Prophet*, to detect their frequencies and to assign functions behind the use of these patterns.

Applying a model comprised of a union of both Benson, Benson, and Ilson(1986) and Moehkardi's (2002) categories of lexical collocation, the data which involve six prose poems entitled *Friendship, Love, Marriage, and Children, Religion and Death* have been analyzed in terms of identifying the types and frequencies and functions of lexical collocations found in these poems. The study concludes that Gibran richly uses lexical collocational patterns in his prose poems, but with different frequencies and different percentages and purposes. He attempts to enhance the most natural way of presenting ideas and transferring messages to readers.

Further, the most frequent type of lexical collocational pattern used is *Verb plus Noun*. Gibran makes use of this type to convey the most important information (through poetic lines) more obviously and more informatively. The second frequent type is *Noun plus Noun* by which Gibran can communicate his unique and powerful voice through his written verses. Other types (*Noun plus Verb, Verb plus Adverb* and *Adjective plus Noun*), though less used, are also manipulated to accomplish certain artistic and poetic purposes. He exploits all these types of collocational patterns

to make his expression more fruitful and more meaningful, and this consequently offers a better understanding of his poems to his readers.

Key Words : Collocation, Gibran, *The Prophet* , lexical items

1.1 Introduction

Fixed expressions such as collocations, Idioms and proverbs are often common in numerous aspects of everyday conversations, as they are manipulated in different situations (i.e. of politics, college, sports, business life and the arts). They are striking and expressive expressions which cannot habitually be perceived by the words forming them. And an awareness of these expressions will importantly improve learners' words and expressions. In addition, they supplement their interpretation skills. Particularly, collocations play a vital role in learning English language. In effect, the employment of collocations is so prevalent that an awareness of these expressions is indispensable to fruitful communication (spoken or written).

Collocations are abundant in literary works, among which is *The Prophet*, a prose poem written by Gibran Khalil Gibran. Four prose poems (entitled *Friendship, Love, Marriage, Children, Religion* and *Death*) are selected to be the data for the analysis of lexical collocation in these four poems. The analysis of these poems involves the identification of lexical collocations focusing on their types with the aim of drawing the function behind the frequency of these types. As a starting point, it is important to give some general remarks concerning the term collocation as found in the literature available.

1.2 Collocation Defined

It is a well-known fact that language is seen formulaic in nature and that the use of formulaic expressions is an indication of fluent, competent, and natural language use. One of these expressions that are often found in spoken and written media is collocation. Collocation is the common occurrence of two or more words, and this

indicates that one word may occur several or even many words in the sentence or the whole text, for example, '*elephant*' co-occurs with '*egg*' and '*bacon*' in '*Elephant enjoys eggs and bacons*'. In other words, collocation is defined as the appropriate organization of lexical items in phrases or sentences according to certain semantic considerations of co-occurrence of these items (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 284).

In fact, it was J.R. Firth in the 1950s who first introduced the term "collocation" to refer to a group of lexical items which are often used together in order to form a natural- sounding word accompaniment (Spence, 1969: 503). Etymologically, the concept *collocation* comes from the verb *collocate* meaning 'to go together' (Finch, 2005: 15). Or as Halliday and Hasan (1976: 284) note, collocation refers to the proper arrangement of lexical items in phrases or sentences according to semantic considerations of co-occurrence of these items. Elaborately, collocation is manipulated to refer to the habitual co-occurrence of lexical items at the syntagmatic level. For example, in the sentence '*It was a very auspicious*', a small group of lexical items can be used with *auspicious* such as *occasion* or *event* (Crystal, 2003: 194). For this reason, Firth (cited in Crystal, *ibid*), giving reference to the characteristic feature of collocation, affirms that '*You shall Know a word by the company it keeps*'.

Concerning the nature of co-occurrence, McIntosh and Halliday (1966: 20) suggest that lexical items can be divided into two categories according to the relation between them and the other lexical items. Thus, '*train*', '*car*', '*taxi*', '*plane*' and '*bike*' can be classified under the set of words which co-occur with a set like '*drive*', '*passenger*' and '*travel*'. However, there is no impossible collocation, but there is habitual (more convenient) collocation. Thus, '*warm*' is commonly used with '*weather*', but figuratively with '*war*' (Sinclair, 1966: 41). Furthermore, Palmer (1981: 77) expounds that collocations are not limited to co-occurrence of associated words, but they extend to involve special forms of co-occurrence which are unique patterns of certain writers or speakers. Thus, to guess the meaning of certain collocations through their signal items is not always accurate. In other words, "collocation is not a

matter of association ideas", although *milk* is *white*, it should not often say *white milk* but *white paint* is more common (ibid:76) .

It is strikingly important to emphasize here (as Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 286 remark) that collocation is not always easy to analyze "because items said to collocate involve neither repetition, synonymy, superordination, nor mention of general items". And what is important is that the items said to collocate "share the same lexical environment". They give the following examples to illustrate this point;

- On a *camping trip* with their parents, teenagers willingly do the household chores that they resist at home.
- They gather *wood for a fire*, help put up the tent, and carry water from a creek or lake.

In both examples above, the italicized items are said to be collocated on the basis of sharing the same settings, perhaps in a different setting they might not be collocated.

In short, a lot of definitions have been proposed by various linguists to account for what collocation means, yet they all agree that collocation, as Larson (1984:141) remarks, is "concerned with how words go together, i.e. which words may occur in constructions with which other words". Put it another way, Baker (1992:47) expounds that collocation is a "tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language".

1.3 Importance of Collocation

Collocation is a universal linguistic phenomenon and native writers of English often have tendency towards using formulaic expressions and phrases such as collocations since they find no difficulty when dealing with them; these chunks are simply stored in his mental lexicon. For most writers, collocations are preferred as they constitute "the most powerful force in the creation and comprehension of all naturally occurring texts" (Lewis, 2000:49). That is, they "create communicative efficiency, fluency, and smoothness" (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992).

In this respect, Nation (2001:318) emphasizes the importance of correct use of collocation in writing as this achieves fluency. Moreover, "all fluent and appropriate language use requires collocational knowledge", as it is considered as one of the prerequisites for proficient language use (Cowie, 1981; Sinclair, 1991; Wray, 2002). That is, knowledge of collocations is vital for using language competently as this creates native-like written productions.

Furthermore, Wray (2002:143) clarifies that collocation has the same importance as grammar, as it is often employed to produce and understand an unlimited number of grammatical utterances in English language. As they are 'ready-made chunks', collocations are commonly in natives' written productions which even non-native writers require. Lewis (2000) supports this idea by illustrating that "when writers produce an academic article full of odd expressions, this oddness is related to collocations". Poets, novelists and literary writers often resort to collocations as they convey something effectively and successfully to the readers.

McCarthy and O'Dell (2008: 6) relate the advantages of the use of collocations to the following points:

1. Collocations are mostly stored as chunks (fixed expressions) rather than single words in the brain; they are easily remembered and retrieved.
2. They can make a language more natural and more easily understood.
3. They are effective, colorful and more precise alternatives and can express richer ways of expressing oneself.
4. *They can enhance the style in writing, instead of saying a big meal we can say substantial meal.*

Likewise, Biber, Conrad and Cortes (2004:372) ascribe the importance of collocations to the fact that these units are often manipulated as the "basic building blocks of discourse ensuring cohesion and coherence of speech and writing".

1.4 Classification of Collocation

On the basis of the various types of relations lexical items can enter, Newmark (1988:114) recognizes two types of collocations: paradigmatic (vertical) and syntagmatic (linear)

Paradigmatically, collocations may be realized on the basis of well-established hierarchies such as :

-kinship

-colours

-Scientific taxonomies

-Institutional taxonomies

On the other hand, syntagmatic collocation is categorized into two classes (Benson, Benson and Ilson ,1986): grammatical and lexical. The former is a phrase made up of a central word (verb, noun or adjective) followed by "a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or a clause", for instance, "*decide on*" but not "*decide at*": "*accused him of* " not "*accused him on*". Typically, grammatical patterns consist of a verb plus "bare infinitive, infinitive or -ing form". (Moehkardi, 2002: 54). Lexical collocation consists of focal words such as "verbs, adjectives, nouns and adverbs in different possible combinations" (ibid: 59). Therefore, it can be classified into the following seven subclasses:

1- N + N (e.g. *a pride of lions* , *a surge of anger*)

2- Adj + N (e.g. *crushing defeat*, *tall man*)

3- V + N (or verbal noun) (e.g. *inflect a wound*, *commit suicide*).

4- N +V (e.g. *blizzards rage*, *dog barks*)

5- Adv + Adj (e.g. *deeply absorbed*, *completely satisfied*)

6- V + Adv(or preposition) (e.g. *appreciate sincerely*, *wave frantically*)

7- Adv+ V (e.g. *entirely disagree*, *warmly receive*)

1.5 Methodology

This section is devoted to presenting the main components of the methodology involved in the data and results analysis of the use collocations in Gibran's *The Prophet* which includes: Method, Data, and Model.

1.5.1 Method

The researcher uses a descriptive quantitative method in her research to describe and analyze the data. Utilizing Benson, Benson, and Ilson(1986) and Moehkardi's (2002) classifications of lexical collocation, the researcher identifies the use of each category of collocations in the data, focusing the frequency and percentage of each category with the aim of finding justification for this use and frequency. Finally, the results are elicited in order to show the significance of the use of lexical collocations in writing prose poems, particularly of Gibran's *The Prophet*.

1.5.2 Data

The data of this paper consist of four prose poems, namely *friendship*, *love*, *marriage*, and *children* taken from *The Prophet*, a prose poem written by Gibran Khalil Gibran. *The Prophet* is a book of twenty six "prose poetry fables written in English by the Lebanese-American artist, philosopher and writer Kahlil Gibran. It was originally published in 1923 by Alfred A. Knopf. It is Gibran's best known work" (Amiani and Hegarty, 2012).

Gibran Kahlil was born in Lebanon but" he came to the United States of America when he was 12. He quickly got acquainted to "American culture, but

retained his love for his homeland, second only to love for a spiritual, transcendent view of mankind. He wrote in both English and Arabic". Most of his works display "elements of many religious faiths and great understanding of their commonalities"(Bushrui, 2012: xi). Although *The Prophet* (1923) has been "criticized by American critics and historians of art and of literature for its popular sentimental perspectives" (as it reflects the unaccustomed "characteristics of immigrant writing"), it is his most notable book written in English as Gibran attempts to reflect "his earnest didactic romanticism" (ibid: xii).

1.5.3 Model

As mentioned above, the model proposed for the analysis of the employment of lexical collocations in Girban's *The Prophet* involves an amalgamation of both Benson, Benson, and Ilson(1986) and Moehkardi's (2002) categories of lexical collocation.

1.6 Lexical Collocations in *The Prophet*

The investigation of the six chosen prose poems (of *The Prophet*) in terms of the use of the categories of lexical collocation reveals that Gibran has manipulated only six the seven types of these collocations. These types are unequally distributed, constituting various percentages.

The most used lexical collocational pattern is *Verb plus Noun*. Gibran utilizes this pattern in the selected data to achieve various functions associated with the themes of the poems. In most his prose poems, he intends to provide his readers with the messages conveyed in a more eloquent and persuasive manner, as this use of collocations seems to be more associated with the aesthetic and poetic taste. Consider the following examples containing illustrative (*Verb plus Noun*) lexical collocations:

1. For love that *seeks aught* but the disclosure of its own mystery is not love but a net cast forth: and only the unprofitable is caught.

[Friendship , Line:14]

2. For even as *love crowns* you so shall he crucify you. [Love, Line: 10]

3. *Fill each other's cup* but *drink* not from *one cup*. [Marriage, Line:10]

The lexical collocational pattern of *Noun plus Noun* is also abundantly employed in the selected data. With the use of this pattern , Gibran attempts to approach the native like style of expressing his feelings and attitudes. In other words, he wants conceptualize his views and emotions in a more persuasive manner through this pattern in correlation with the themes involved in the six poems. Consider the following examples:

4. They are the *sons and daughters* of Life's longing for itself. [Children, Line:4]

5. Your *fear of death* is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honour. [Death, Line: 13]

6. If he must know *the ebb of your tide*, let him know its flood also. [Friendship, Line : 17]

The lexical collocational pattern of *Noun plus Verb* is also exploited in Gibran's prose poems to assert, clarify and shows his points of view concerning the themes contained in the poems as shown in the following examples:

7. And when he is silent your *heart ceases* not to listen to his heart. [Friendship, Line:8]

8. And when his *wings enfold* you yield to him. [Love, Line:6]

9. For their *souls dwell* in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. [Children, Line: 10]

The lexical collocational patterns *Adjective plus Noun* and *Verb plus Adverb* are less used in comparison with the aforementioned patterns. Gibran resorts to these patterns to emphasize certain meaning associated with the themes of his poems and thus make available a variety of style. In the first three examples, Gibran wants to

highlight the attributes of the nouns attached with the adjectives, whereas, in the second three examples, he intends to modify (or to give more attribute to) the verb cited. The following are illustrative instances:

10. Into the *seasonless world* where you shall laugh, but not all of your laughter.
[Love, Line: 26]

11. Aye, you shall be together even in the *silent memory* of God.
[Marriage, Line:5]

12. And what is it to cease breathing but to free the breath from its *restless tides*, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered? [Death, Line:14]

13. So shall he *descend to your roots* and shake them in their *clinging to the earth*.
[Love, Line: 11]

14. For in adoration you cannot *fly higher* than their hopes nor humble yourself lower than their despair. [Marriage, Line 22]

15. For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to *melt into the sun*?
[Death, Line:14]

The only example of the lexical collocational pattern *Adverb plus Verb* is found in the prose poem *Death* . Gibran here wants to modify the action of dancing as a real one, as shown in the last line of this poem:

16. And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you *truly dance*.
[Death, line 18]

The following table displays the number of the frequency of each type of lexical collocation used in the data and its percentage.

Table 1: Lexical Collocations in *The Prophet*

Lexical Collocation	Frequency	Percentage
Verb + Noun	31	31%
Noun + Noun	26	26%
Noun + Verb	16	16%
Adjective + Noun	14	14%
Verb + Adverb	12	12%
Adverb + Verb	1	1%
Adverb + Adjective	0	0%
Total	100	100%

1.7 Results

This table above reveals that the most frequent category of lexical collocation in six chosen prose poems of Gibran's *The Prophet* is *Verb plus Noun* as it has the frequency of 31 times with a percentage of 31%. The reason behind this rate of recurrence may be due to the fact that Gibran resorts to verbal-structured collocation because this structure enables him to express a "vast group of any natural lexis". Put simply the verb is the entity which constitutes the "nucleus of utterance, it is the organizer of the text structure" (Gelbukh 2013:61). Another reason for the frequent occurrence of *Verb plus Noun* collocations is given by Altenberg (1993: 227) who affirms that this verbal construction is often employed to "form the communicative core of utterances where the most important information is placed".

The second frequent category of lexical collocation is *Noun plus Noun*, representing 26% with a number of occurrences of 26 times. Girbran resorts to this

category as it helps him to conceptualize his perception and sensitivity of the concerned themes of friendship, love, marriage, and children, and to express his views and opinions to his readers more efficiently and more influentially.

The categories *Noun plus Verb*, *Adjective plus Noun* and *Verb plus Adverb* are less utilized in *The Prophet*. They have frequency of occurrences of 16, 14, and 12 times respectively, representing percentages of 16% , 14% and 12% respectively. Gibran makes use of these collocational patterns to express his ideas and attitudes more persuasively and more elegantly. Interestingly, only one example *Adverb plus Verb* occurs in *Death* poem, and no example of the collocational patterns of the pattern *Adverb plus Adjective* has been recorded in the data.

It seems that Gibran has exploited most of the lexical collocational patterns in his *The Prophet* to linguistically enrich the messages conveyed through the poetic lines. It is apparent that he has been greatly influenced by American culture and particularly by English language. And this motivates him to make his language of writing more natural and more acceptable through the utilization of naturally co-occurring expressions, i.e. collocational patterns.

1.8 Conclusion

The analysis of the use of lexical collocations in Gibran's *The Prophet* (particularly the six prose poems: *Friendship*, *Love*, *Marriage*, *Children*, *Religion* and *Death*) proves that Gibran has resorted to most lexical collocational patterns to attain certain literary and aesthetic purposes. Living in New York and Boston (and undoubtedly being affected by American culture implying the use of English language) may influence his style and his way of expressing his own ideas and attitudes through his poetic lines. This, in return, motivates him to have a tendency towards naturalize the language used in his poems, via the utilization of fixed and common expressions and phrases (such as collocations, idioms, proverbs, etc.) rather than creative ones.

The analysis also shows that lexical collocational patterns are abundantly used in the selected prose poems, but with different frequencies and different percentages. This is owing to the functions that these patterns intend to convey in these poems. In other words, these lexical patterns are utilized to enhance the most natural way of presenting ideas and transferring messages to readers.

The most common type of lexical collocational pattern used in *The Prophet* is *Verb plus Noun*; Gibran utilizes this type to convey the most important information. The use of this pattern helps Gibran to convey his messages (through poetic lines) more obviously and more informatively. In addition, the use of the lexical collocational pattern of *Noun plus Noun* makes Gibran transmit his unique and powerful voice through his writing. Additionally, other lexical patterns (*Noun plus Verb*, *Verb plus Adverb* and *Adjective plus Noun*), though are less used, are also manipulated to achieve certain artistic and poetic purposes.

In conclusion, the main reason behind Gibran's use of these lexical collocational patterns is to make his expression more fruitful and more meaningful, and this consequently offers a better understanding of his poems to his readers. Furthermore, the use of these lexical collocations can help Gibran to exhibit a variety of style and a diversity of lexical items. That is, this use of these collocational patterns gives a reference to the fact that Gibran attempts through the manipulation of these language chunks to approach a native-like style and manner of expressing ideas through writing poetry.

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Appendix

Friendship

And a youth said, "Speak to us of Friendship."
Your friend is your needs answered.
He is your field which you sow with love and reap with **thanksgiving**.
And he is your **board and your fireside**.
For you come to him with your hunger, and you **seek** him for **peace**.
When your friend **speaks his mind** you fear not the "nay" in your own mind,
nor do you withhold the "ay."
And when he is silent your **heart ceases** not to **listen to his heart**;
For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all **expectations are**
born and shared, with joy that is unacclaimed.
When you part from your friend, you grieve not;
For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the
mountain to the **climber** is clearer from the plain.
And let there be no **purpose in friendship** save **the deepening of the spirit**.
For love that **seeks aught** but the disclosure of its own mystery is not love but
a **net cast forth**: and only the unprofitable is caught.
And let your best be for your friend.
If he must know the **ebb of your tide**, let him know its flood also.
For what is your friend that you should seek him with **hours to kill**?
Seek him always with hours to live.
For it is his to **fill your need**, but not your emptiness.
And in the **sweetness of friendship** let there be laughter, and **sharing of**
pleasures.
For in the dew of little things the **heart finds** its morning and is refreshed.

Love

Then said Almitra, "Speak to us of Love."

And he **raised his head** and looked upon the people, and there **fell a stillness** upon them. And with a **great voice** he said:
When **love beckons** to you follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his **wings enfold** you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his **pinions may wound** you.
And when he speaks to you believe in him,
Though his voice may **shatter your dreams** as the north wind lays waste the garden.
For even as **love crowns** you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.
Even as he ascends to your height and **caresses your tenderest branches** that quiver in the sun,
So shall he **descend to your roots** and shake them in their **clinging to the earth**.
Like **sheaves of corn** he gathers you unto himself.
He threshes you to make you naked.
He sifts you to free you from your husks.
He grinds you to whiteness.
He kneads you until you are pliant;
And then he assigns you to his **sacred fire**, that you may become **sacred bread** for God's **sacred feast**.
All these things shall love do unto you that you may **know the secrets** of your heart, and in that knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart.
But if in your fear you would seek only love's peace and love's pleasure,
Then it is better for you that you **cover your nakedness** and pass out of love's **threshing-floor**,
Into the **seasonless world** where you shall laugh, but not all of your laughter, and **weep**, but not all of your **tears**.
Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;
For love is sufficient unto love.
When you love you should not say, "God is in my heart," but rather, I am in the heart of God."

And think not you can **direct the course** of love, if it finds you worthy, directs
your course.

Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself.

But if you love and must needs have desires, let these be your desires:

To melt and be like a **running brook** that **sings its melody** to the night.

To know the pain of too much tenderness.

To be wounded by your own understanding of love;

And to **bleed willingly** and joyfully.

To **wake at dawn** with a **winged heart** and **give thanks** for another day of
loving;

To rest at the noon hour and meditate **love's ecstasy**;

To **return home** at eventide with gratitude;

And then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in your heart and **a song of
praise** upon your lips.

Marriage

Then Almitra spoke again and said, "And what of Marriage, master?"

And he answered saying:

You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.

You shall be together when white wings of **death scatter** your days.

Aye, you shall be together even in the **silent memory** of God.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness,

And let the winds of the **heavens dance** between you.

Love one another but make not a **bond of love**:

Let it rather be a **moving sea** between the **shores of your souls**.

Fill each other's cup but **drink** not from **one cup**.

Give one another of your **bread but eat** not from the same loaf.

Sing and **dance together** and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,

Even as the **strings of a lute** are alone though they quiver with the same
music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.

For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.

And stand together, yet not too near together:

For the **pillars of the temple** stand apart,

And the **oak tree** and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

Children

And a woman who **held a babe** against her bosom said, "Speak to us of Children."

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the **sons and daughters** of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.

For they have their own thoughts.

You may **house their bodies** but not their souls,

For their **souls dwell** in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life **goes not backward** nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as **living arrows** are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with

His might that His arrows may **go swift** and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as he loves the **arrow that flies**, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

Religion

AND an old priest said, "Speak to us of Religion."

And he said:

Have I spoken this day of aught else?

Is not religion all deeds and all reflection,

And that which is neither deed nor reflection, but **a wonder and a surprise** ever **springing in the soul**, even while the hands hew the stone or tend the loom?

Who can separate his faith from his actions, or his belief from his occupations?

Who can **spread his hours** before him, saying,

"This for God and this for myself;

"This for my soul and this other for my body"?

All your hours are wings that beat through space from self to self.

He who wears his morality but as his best garment were better naked.

The wind and the sun will tear no holes in his skin.

And he who defines his conduct by ethics imprisons his song-bird in a cage.

The freest song comes not through bars and wires.

And he to whom worshipping is a window, to open but also to shut, has not yet visited the house of his soul whose windows are from dawn to dawn.

Your daily life is your temple and your religion.

Whenever you enter into it take with you your all.

Take the slough and the forge and the mallet and the lute,

The things you have fashioned in necessity or for delight.

For in reverie you cannot rise above your achievements nor fall lower than your failures.

And take with you all men:

For in adoration you cannot fly higher than their hopes nor humble yourself lower than their despair.

And if you would know God, be not therefore a solver of riddles.

Rather look about you and you shall see Him playing with your children.

And look into space; you shall see Him walking in the cloud, outstretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain.

You shall see Him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving His hands in trees.

Death

THEN Almitra spoke, saying, "We would ask now of Death."

And he said:

You would know the secret of death.

But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?

The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

IN the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring.

Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.

Your **fear of death** is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honour.

Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall wear the mark of the king?

Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling?

For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to **melt into the sun**?

And what is it to **cease breathing** but to free the breath from its **restless tides**, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.

And when you have **reached the mountain top**, then you shall begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you **truly dance**.