

## THE CITY OF THE END OF THINGS

Beside the pounding cataracts  
Of midnight streams unknown to us  
'Tis builded in the leafless tracts  
And valleys huge of Tartarus.  
Lurid and lofty and vast it seems ;  
It hath no rounded name that rings,  
But I have heard it called in dreams  
The City of the End of Things.

Its roofs and iron towers have grown  
None knoweth how high within the night,

But in its murky streets far down  
A flaming terrible and bright  
Shakes all the stalking shadows there,  
Across the walls, across the floors,  
And shifts upon the upper air  
From out a thousand furnace doors ;  
And all the while an awful sound  
Keeps roaring on continually,  
And crashes in the ceaseless round  
Of a gigantic harmony.  
Through its grim depths re-echoing  
And all its weary height of walls,  
With measured roar and iron ring,  
The inhuman music lifts and falls.  
Where no thing rests and no man is,  
And only fire and night hold sway ;  
The beat, the thunder and the hiss  
Cease not, and change not, night nor day.  
And moving at unheard commands,  
The abysses and vast fires between,  
Flit figures that with clanking hands  
Obey a hideous routine ;  
They are not flesh, they are not bone,  
They see not with the human eye,  
And from their iron lips is blown  
A dreadful and monotonous cry ;  
And whoso of our mortal race  
Should find that city unaware,  
Lean Death would smite him face to face,  
And blanch him with its venom'd air :  
Or caught by the terrific spell,  
Each thread of memory snapt and cut,

His soul would shrivel and its shell  
Go rattling like an empty nut.

It was not always so, but once,  
In days that no man thinks upon,  
Fair voices echoed from its stones,  
The light above it leaped and shone:  
Once there were multitudes of men,  
That built that city in their pride,  
Until its might was made, and then  
They withered age by age and died.  
But now of that prodigious race,  
Three only in an iron tower,  
Set like carved idols face to face,  
Remain the masters of its power;  
And at the city gate a fourth,  
Gigantic and with dreadful eyes,  
Sits looking toward the lightless north,  
Beyond the reach of memories;  
Fast rooted to the lurid floor,  
A bulk that never moves a jot,  
In his pale body dwells no more,  
Or mind or soul,—an idiot!  
But sometime in the end those three  
Shall perish and their hands be still,  
And with the master's touch shall flee  
Their incommunicable skill.  
A stillness absolute as death  
Along the slacking wheels shall lie,  
And, flagging at a single breath,  
The fires that moulder out and die.  
The roar shall vanish at its height,

And over that tremendous town  
The silence of eternal night  
Shall gather close and settle down.  
All its grim grandeur, tower and hall,  
Shall be abandoned utterly,  
And into rust and dust shall fall  
From century to century ;  
Nor ever living thing shall grow,  
Nor trunk of tree, nor blade of grass ;  
No drop shall fall, no wind shall blow,  
Nor sound of any foot shall pass :  
Alone of its accursèd state,  
One thing the hand of Time shall spare,  
For the grim Idiot at the gate  
Is deathless and eternal there.