

## THE SELF

BY CHARLES EUGENE BANKS

Out of the cosmic cell I came,  
Out of the voiceless deep:  
Kept alive by a mystic flame,  
Fighting endless sleep:  
Groping upward, dumb and blind;  
Trackless the way before:  
Mystery shrouding all behind  
Whispering "Nevermore"!

Fish and serpent, soaring bird  
Sweeping the azure dome;  
Lion, leopard, caveman, Kurd,  
Each gave me a home.  
Field or forest, man or beast,  
Weapon of claw or stone,  
Always slaughter on flesh to feast,  
Always the sun-bleached bone.

Stark barbarian, pirate bold  
Sailing the wine-dark sea:  
Miner braving the Arctic cold,  
These I came to be.  
Always the eager endless quest,  
Always the inward fire,  
Always the better out of the best,  
Always the heart's desire.

Urged by greed I rose to power,  
I soared on eagle wings,  
I fought for glory, had my hour  
In company of kings ;  
Then down again to dreamless dark,  
Close sealed in royal tomb,  
With never a stroke of time to mark  
The years of my golden gloom.

I woke to Beauty ; my senses thrilled  
With odors of evening cool ;  
A night bird sang, the pale moon spilled  
Silver in dusky pool.  
Winds roared, trees moaned ; on shoreward seas  
Plumed horsemen madly strove ;  
Flowers blushed in the amorous breeze  
And I stood at the door of Love.

Calm-eyed Justice, crimson gowned,  
Miser counting his gains ;  
Martyr deep in dungeon bound  
Straining against his chains ;  
Yoeman, Noble, Hero, Seer,  
Japheth or Shem or Ham,—  
All I know of the past is here,  
All I have been I am.

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS**  
5750 ELLIS AVE. . . . CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

*Publishers:* DAVID NUTT, London—G. E. STECHERT CO., New York—FELIX ALCAN,  
Paris—Akad. Verlagsgesellschaft, Leipzig—NICOLA ZANICHELLI, Bologna—  
RUIZ HERMANOS, Madrid—LIVRARIA MACHADO,  
Porto—THE MARUZEN COMPANY, Tokyo.

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*Published at the beginning of JANUARY, APRIL, JULY, OCTOBER*

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