

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 29 (1961)
Heft: 2

Artikel: The dream
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-568250>

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THE DREAM

O youth unknown, prince from another age,
Striding so bravely on our modern page . . .

I think I know those azure Grecian skies
That smiled upon your daily exercise;
The spring suns mounting ever higher and higher
Ripening your lovely body with their fire.

I know the endless hours that you spent
In the palaestra on perfection bent —
Limbs bruised and aching, but your stubborn heart
Impassioned by the tricky wrestler's art.

I see your father sitting, grave and grey,
Among his fellows on the last great day;
In all his converse little can he hide,
However stately and polite, his pride.

I see your trainer, gruff and surly yet,
Holding his thumbs for you and for his bet;
And catch that last delicious boyish grin
You keep for him alone as you go in.

You pause, slim, naked, oiled, erect and proud,
Hushing a while the clamour of the crowd
As they drink in the beauty they adore —
A boy, a youth, a man, a god, all four.

And then the contest — the wild, killing joy
That spurs you on to smash the other boy.
Two glorious bodies tangled thigh to thigh
Soon fouled with sweat and dirt, yet in your eye
There burns undimmed the light of battle still.
Your scissor legs, strong in their well learnt skill,
Twist once again, too quick for us to see:
The master throw — and yours the victory.

I see the crown of laurel leaves you wear
Green on the dark brown lustre of your hair.
I help them bear you homeward shoulder-high,
Our shouts of triumph filling the blue sky.

I sit at table with you while you dine,
And toast you in the rough red Samian wine,
And sing the songs and join the rowdy play
Your friends devise to end the happy day.

Then late, alone, you toss your sleepy head,
Stretched in your youthful splendour on the bed;
With ready parted lips and eyes that burn,
Naked once more, for love to me you turn.

. . . This is my dream — and with you standing there
Majestic ancient glories haunt the air.

by O. F. Simpson