


# The River of Dreams

BY Henry Van Dyke


The river of dreams runs quietly down  
From its hidden home in the forest of sleep,  
With a measureless motion calm and deep;  
And my boat slips out on the current brown,  
In a tranquil bay where the trees incline  
Far over the waves, and creepers twine  
Far over the boughs, as if to steep  
Their drowsy bloom in the tide that goes  
By a secret way that no man knows,  
Under the branches bending,  
Under the shadows blending,  
And the body rests, and the passive soul  
Is drifted along to an unseen goal,  
While the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs gently down,  
With a leisurely flow that bears my bark




Out of the visionless woods of dark,  
Into a glory that seems to crown  
Valley and hill with light from far,  
Clearer than sun or moon or star,  
Luminous, wonderful, weird, oh, mark  
How the radiance pulses everywhere,  
In the shadowless vault of lucid air!  
Over the mountains shimmering,  
Up from the fountains glimmering, —  
'Tis the mystical glow of the inner light,  
That shines in the very noon of night,  
While the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs murmuring down,  
Through the fairest garden that ever grew;  
And now, as my boat goes drifting through,  
A hundred voices arise to drown  
The river's whisper, and charm my ear  
With a sound I have often longed to hear, —  
A magical music, strange and new,  
The wild-rose ballad, the lilac-song,




The virginal chant of the lilies' throng,  
Blue-bells silverly ringing,  
Pansies merrily singing, —  
For all the flowers have found their voice;  
And I feel no wonder, but only rejoice,  
While the river of dreams runs down.


The river of dreams runs broadening down,  
Away from the peaceful garden-shore,  
With a current that deepens more and more,  
By the league-long walls of a mighty town;  
And I see the hurrying crowds of men  
Gather like clouds and dissolve again;  
But never a face I have seen before.  
They come and go, they shift and change,  
Their ways and looks are wild and strange, —  
This is a city haunted,  
A multitude enchanted!  
At the sight of the throng I am dumb with fear,  
And never a sound from their lips I hear,  
While the river of dreams runs down.



The river of dreams runs darkly down  
Into the heart of a desolate land,  
With ruined temples half-buried in sand,  
And riven hills, whose black brows frown  
Over the shuddering, lonely wave.  
The air grows dim with the dust of the grave;  
No sign of life on the dreary strand;  
No ray of light on the mountain's crest;  
And a weary wind that cannot rest  
Comes down the valley creeping,  
Lamenting, wailing, weeping, —  
I strive to cry out, but my fluttering breath  
Is choked with the clinging fog of death,  
While the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs trembling down,  
Out of the valley of nameless fear,  
Into a country calm and clear,  
With a mystical name of high renown, —  
A name that I know, but may not tell, —






And there the friends that I loved so well,  
Old companions forever dear,  
Come beckoning down to the river shore,  
And hail my boat with the voice of yore.

Fair and sweet are the places  
Where I see their unchanged faces!  
And I feel in my heart with a secret thrill,  
That the loved and lost are living still,  
While the river of dreams runs down.

The river of dreams runs dimly down  
By a secret way that no man knows;  
But the soul lives on while the river flows  
Through the gardens bright and the forests brown;  
And I often think that our whole life seems  
To be more than half made up of dreams.

The changing sights and the passing shows,  
The morning hopes and the midnight fears,  
Are left behind with the vanished years;  
Onward, with ceaseless motion,  
The life-stream flows to the ocean,



While we follow the tide, awake or asleep,  
Till we see the dawn on Love's great deep,  
And the shadows melt, and the soul is free, —  
The river of dreams has reached the sea.

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