THE PRAISE OF LIFE

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The Praise of Life by Laurence Binyon

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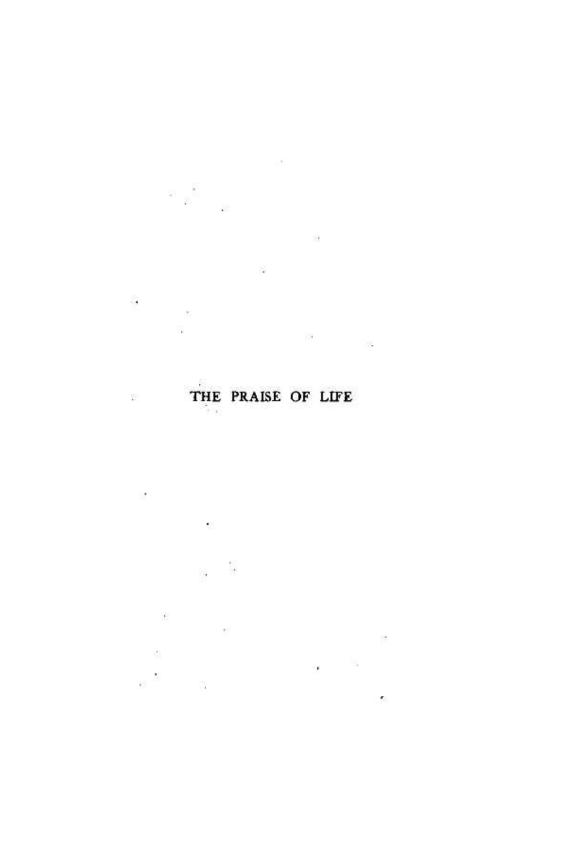
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LAURENCE BINYON

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MONTENEGRO

Colled in shadow, the serpent seas Engirdle perilous hills sublime: By tortuous, steep degrees Toward the morn I climb.

Before me the mountain soaring vast Secludes the bright east; cold the air Descends from ridges, massed In peaks, snowily fair.

But pale in the northern distance blushes On sparkling ranges a light austere; Tingeing the shade, it flushes Edge and barrier sheer.

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Cattaro roofs and Cattaro quay Grow faint and delicate; ships that ride On the dense blue slumbering sea Dwindle; on either side

From mirroring gulfs the mountains bare Are mapped to the heaven, strange as a dream The Adriatic afar Trembles, a molten gleam:

Till the sun salutes me, met with him On the naked summit; closed behind, That vision of countries dim Pales and fades from the mind.

Now drinking the eager lofty air, The spirit leaps, as the eyes behold Valleys severely fair, Freedom's fortress of old.

Young, stern soldiers in rich attire, Haughtily moving with silent pace And eyes of a tranquil fire; Sons of a tameless race;

Aged mothers, bowed with toil, Old men, bearded and gray, are here: Plants of a stubborn soil That knows not the seed of fear. O Mountain, mother of men, that bearest Heroes; foster-mother of fame! I hail thee; well thou wearest Thy dark, invincible name.

Thou plantest the footstep firm, and the heart In the breast strengthenest, hardy to try Peril, and play its part With full, unwavering eye.

At mighty breasts of the ancient hills Nourished, thy sons in their veins yet keep The force that feeds and fills Torrents, to dance and leap.

Trees that with clenched root possess Their rocky beds, oak and pine, Alone thou endurest; nor less Permittest in children of thine.

O small and remote the loud affairs Of cities appear: the dusty strife, Choking with envious care The caged glory of life,

Recedes: from the market of wrangling cries, Like a falcon, the spirit expands her wings; For the mountains, the mountains rise, And the heart, answering, sings. And clearer, with each step climbing higher, The wide horizon dilates within; Keener the keen desire Freedom complete to win:

Till now with imperious joy I taste The eternal fountain: Life supreme, That of old in order placed The spheres of her starry dream;

That moulded this blanching sea of stone, In silence raging, motionless hurled, Thrills me, myself to own, And cast the cloak of the world.

For now no longer a slave, yoked ill With marching Destiny, marches here, His hours alert to fill, Man, of the mountain a peer.

As the tamer of horses matches his stride To his vehement, proudly pacing steed, He goes, strong Fate beside, Fearless, a master, freed,