

Last things, Aldous Huxley

LAST THINGS

THERE have been visions, dark in the minds of men, death and corruption dancing across the secular abyss that separates eternity from time to where sits the ineluctable judge, waiting, waiting through the ages, and ponders all his predestinated decrees. There will be judgment, and each, in an agony of shame, reluctant yet compelled, will turn his own accuser. For

Tunc tua gesta noxia

Secreta quoque turpia

Videbunt mille millia

Virorum circumstantia.

There under the unwinking gaze of all the legions of just men made perfect, the poor prisoner will uncover each dirty secret of his heart, will act over again each shameful scene of his life. And those eyes of saints and angels will shine impassively down upon his beastliness, and to him, as he looks at their steady brilliance, they will seem a million of little blazing loopholes slotted in the walls of hell.

Hildebert, this was your vision as you brooded over death and judgment, hell and heaven, in your cloister, a thousand years ago. Do you not envy us our peace of mind who know not four ultimates, but only one? For whom the first of the Last Things is also the last—us, whom death annihilates with all our shame and all our folly, leaving no trace behind.

The end