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THE COLLECTED POEMS  
OF G. K. CHESTERTON



THE COLLECTED  
POEMS OF  
G. K. CHESTERTON

1

LONDON  
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD.





## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*The Publisher's grateful thanks are due to Messrs. Burns, Gates & Washbourne, Ltd., and Messrs. J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., for their courteous and generous co-operation in the publication of the present Collected Edition of Mr. Chesterton's Poems.*



# CONTENTS

|                                                                                     | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| BOOK ONE                                                                            |      |
| N E W POEMS . . . . .<br>(1932)                                                     | 3    |
| BOOK TWO                                                                            |      |
| THE BALI-AD OF ST. BARBAHA . . . . .<br>(1022)                                      | 55   |
| BOOK THREE                                                                          |      |
| POEMS . . . . .<br>(Collected 1915)                                                 | 109  |
| BOOK FOUR                                                                           |      |
| WINE, WATER AND SONG . . . . .<br>(First published in <i>The Flying Inn</i> , 1914) | 199  |
| BOOK FIVE                                                                           |      |
| THE BALI-AD OF THE WHITE HORSE . . . . .<br>(First published 1911)                  | 221  |
| BOOK SIX                                                                            |      |
| T H E WILD KNIGHT . . . . .<br>(First published 1900)                               | 319  |



BOOK ONE  
NEW POEMS  
1932



## THE JUDGMENT OF ENGLAND

' ILL fares the land, to hastening ills a prey  
Where Wealth accumulates and Men decay."  
So rang of old the noble voice in vain  
O'er the Last Peasants wandering on the plain,  
Doom has reversed the riddle and the rhyme,  
While sinks the commerce reared upon that crime,  
The thriftless towns litter with lives undone,  
To whom our madness left no joy but one ;  
And irony that glares like Judgment Day  
Sees Men accumulate and Wealth decay.

## THE MONSTER

" THE DEGENERATE GREEK INTELLECT WASTED  
ITSELF IN FUTILE DEBATES ABOUT THE DUAL  
NATURE OF CHRIST."—*Magazine Article*

ONE with the golden eagle of the morning,  
Flat and flung wide above the spinning plains,  
It seemed my spirit sprang and wheeled and flew.  
The world went under us like a river of light,  
An ecstasy of order, where each life,  
Rejoicing in its law, rushed to its end :  
To break itself and breed ; the embattled vines,  
Grassland and grainland waved their thousand  
spears

In one wild rhythm as they swept along,  
A map of marching armies, all one way ;  
And ploughmen on their uplands ribbed with gold,  
Went forward happy, with {their backs to heaven.

Only the sacred eagle up the stream  
Strove back to his beginnings; left behind  
The white archaic dawns on herbless hills,  
The first cold hues of chaos ; like a stair  
Mounted the soundless cataracts of the sun,  
Seeking the sun of suns; till suddenly  
The last heavens opened ; for one flash I saw  
Something too large and calm for sight or reason,  
The Urns of Evil and Good, vast as two worlds,  
And over them a larger face than Fate's  
Of that first Will that is when all was not.  
But that unblinded burning eagle soared  
And perched upon His thunderous right hand.  
I cowered, and heard a cry torn out of me  
In an unknown tongue older than all my race,  
" O Father of Gods and Men"; and saw no  
more.

The vulture from his dark and hairy nest  
Far down the low-browed cliffs of the abyss  
Stood black against the sun; a shape of shame:  
A plumed eclipse ; and all the ways of men  
Were paved with upturned faces; masks of  
hate :  
For that hooked head was like a horrible tool,  
An instrument of torture made alive  
With creaking pinions ; for what end they knew:  
The vulture of the vengeance of the gods.



For a red under-light on all that land,  
A hell that is the underside of heaven,  
Glowed from men's ftruggling fires: and as I  
followed

That evil bird over lost battle-fields,  
Where panoplied and like fallen palaces  
The great and foolish kings who warred with doom  
Lay sunken with their star; I saw far off,  
Misshapen, against the dark red dome of sky,  
A mountain on a mountain. As I gazed  
The shape seemed changed: the upper mountain  
moved.

It heaved vast flanks ribbed like the red-ribbed hills,  
Thrust down an uprooted forest with one heel  
And stretched a Titan's arm to touch the sky.

" You slay for ever, but you slay too late;

A stolen secret turns not home again.

While I lie lifted high against your wrath,  
Hanged on this gibbet of rock, far down below  
The fire is spreading on the earth's dark plains  
And my red stars come forth like flowers of night  
And my red sun burns when your white sun dies.

See where man's watchfire dances and derides,

The sickly servile sunset crawling away :

Lo; my red banner thrashes through the air,

Nor dare your vulture peck it if he pass."

The vulture passed, a shadow on the fire,  
And the dark hills were loud with dreadful cries.  
;

I woke, the skies were empty of the eagle,  
And empty of the vulture all the abyss :  
And something in the yawning silence cried  
Giants and gods were dying in new dawns:

Daylight itself had deepened ; there opened in it  
New depths or new dimensions; stone and tree  
In that strange light grew -solid; as does a  
statue

Or many-sided monument set beside  
The flattened fables on a bas-relief.  
Only in dark thin lines against the dawn  
The last and lingering monsters limped away,  
The boys with crooked legs and cries of goats  
Ran as from one pursuing; amid the weeds  
Wailed the strange women, neither fish nor flesh  
And from the hoary splendours of the sea  
Rose Triton with the limbs that curled like whirl-  
pools,  
Stonily staring at some sign afar.

For a new light in a new silence shone  
From some new nameless quarter of the sky  
Behind us on the road; and all strange things  
Looked back to something stranger than them-  
selves

And, towering still and trampling, the Last Centaur  
Cried in a roar that shook the shuddering trees,  
" We rode our bodies without bridle at will,  
We hurled our high breasts forward on flying  
hooves:

But these two bodies are a simple thing  
Beside that Fear that comes upon the world.  
A Monster walks behind," I dared not turn;  
A shape lay like a shadow on the road.  
I saw not but I heard; a sound more awful,  
Then from the blackest cypress-close the call  
Of some dark Janus shouting with two mouths:

" I am Prometheus. I am Jupiter.  
In ravening obedience down from heaven,  
Hailed of my hand and by this sign alone,  
My eagle comes to tear me. Touch me not."

I lay there as one dead. But since I woke  
This single world is double till I die.

## THE MODERN MANICHEE

HE sayeth there is no sin, and all his sin  
Swells round him into a world made merciless;  
The midnight of his universe of shame  
Is the vast shadow of his shamelcssness.  
He blames all that begat him, gods or brutes,  
And sires not sons he chides as with a rod.  
The sins of the children visited on the fathers  
Through all generations, back to a jealous Cod.

The fields that heal the humble, the happy forests  
That sing to men confessed and men consoled,  
To him are jungles only, greedy and groping,  
Heartlessly new, unvenerably old.  
Beyond the pride of his own cold compassion  
Is only cruelty and imputed pain :  
Matched with that mood, a boy's sport in the forest  
Makes comrades of the slayer and the slain.

The innocent lust of the unfallen creatures  
Moves him to hidden horror but no mirth;  
Misplaced morality rots in the roots unconscious,  
His stifled conscience stinks through the green  
earth.

## 8 THE PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY

The green things thrust like horrible huge snails,  
Horns green and gross, each lifting a leering eye  
He scarce can call a flower; it lolls obscene,  
Its organs gaping to the sneering sky.

Dark with that dusk the old red god of gardens,  
Still pagan but not merry any more,  
Stirs up the dull adulteries of the dust,  
Blind, frustrate, hopeless, hollow at the core;  
The plants are brutes tied with green rope and  
    roaring

Their terrible dark loves from tree to tree:  
He shrinks as from a shaft, if by him singing,  
A gilded pimp and pandar, goes the bee.

He sayeth, " I have no sin ; I cast the stone,"  
And throws his little pebble at the shrine,  
Casts sin and stone away against the house  
Whose health has turned earth's waters into wine.  
The venom of that repudiated guilt  
Poisons the sea and every natural flood  
As once a wavering tyrant washed his hands,  
And touching, turned the water black with blood.

## THE PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY

MR. BEN TILLET is REPORTED TO HAVE ONCE  
PRAYED IN PUBLIC FOR THE DEATH OF LORD DEVON-  
PORT.—*Daily Paper*

WE whom great mercy holds in fear,  
Boast not the claim to cry,  
Stricken of any mortal wrong,  
"Lord, let this live man die I "

But not incuriously we ask,  
Pondering on life and death,  
What name befits that round of years,  
What name that span of breath.

That perfect dullness counting hands  
That have no man or woman,  
That fullness of the commonplace  
That can despise the common.

That startling smallness that can stop  
The breath like an abyss,  
As, staring at rows of noughts, we cry,  
" And men grow old for this I "

The thing that sniggers when it sneers,  
That never can forget,  
The billycock outshines the cap,  
And then—the coronet I

O mighty to arise and smite,  
O mightier to forgive,  
Sunburst that blasted Lazarus,  
Lord, let this dead man live I

## BY A REACTIONARY

SMOKE rolls in stinking, suffocating wrack  
On Shakespeare's land, turning the green one black ;  
The crowds that once to harvest home would come  
Hope for no harvest and possess no home,  
While poor old tramps that liked a little ale,  
In natural procession pass to gaol;

## 10 THE BATTLE OF THE STORIES

Because the world must, like the tramp, move on,  
There does not seem much else that can be done.  
As Lord Vangelst said in the House of Peers:  
"None of us want Reaction." (Tory cheers.)

So doubtful doctors punch and prod and prick  
A man thought dead ; and when there's not a kick  
Left in the corpse, no twitch or faint contraction,  
The doctors say : " See . . . there is no Reaction."

### A BROAD-MINDED BISHOP REBUKES THE VERMINOUS ST. FRANCIS

IF Brother Francis pardoned Brother Flea,  
There still seems need of such strange charity,  
Seeing he is, for all his gay goodwill,  
Bitten by funny little creatures still.

### THE BATTLE OF THE STORIES (1915) *In the Caucasus*

THEY came uncounted like the stars that circle 01  
are set,  
They circled and they caught us as in a sparkling  
casting-net  
We burst it in the mountain gate where all the  
guns began,  
When the snow stood up at Christmas on the hills  
of Ardahan.  
The guns—and not a bell to tell that God was made  
a man—  
But we did all remember, though all the world  
forget.

*Before Paris*

The kings came over the olden Rhine to break an  
 ancient debt, ,  
 We took their rush at the river of death in the  
 fields where first we met,  
 But we marked their millions swaying; then we  
 marked a standard fall;  
 And far beyond them, like a bird, Maunoury's bugle  
 call:  
 And there were not kings or debts or doubts or  
 anything at all  
 But the People that remembers and the peoples  
 that forget.

*In Flanders*

Empty above your bleating hordes his throne abides  
 the threat,  
 Who drew the sword of his despair to front your  
 butcher's bet:  
 You shall scan the empty scabbard ; you shall search  
 the empty seat.  
 While he along the ruined skies rides royal with  
 retreat,  
 In the judgment and the silence and the grass upon  
 the street.  
 And the oath the heavens remember and you would  
 fain forget.

*In Poland*

A cloud was on the face of God when three kings  
 met,  
 What hour the worst of men were made the sun  
 hath suffered yet.  
 We knew them in their nibbling peace or ever they  
 went to war.

## 12 THE BATTLE OF THE STORIES

In petty school and pilfered field we know them  
what they are.  
And we drank the cup of anguish to the pardon  
of the Czar,  
To the nations that remember and the empires that  
forget.

### *In the Dardanelles*

To the horned mount of the high Mahound of moon  
and of minaret  
Labouring go the sieging trains whose tracks are  
blood and sweat.  
The ships break in a sanguine sea; and far to the  
front a boy  
Fallen, and his face flung back to shout with the  
Son of God for joy.  
And the long land under the lifted smoke; and a  
great light on Troy,  
And all that men remember and madmen can  
forget.

### *In the Balkans*

They thrice on crags of death were dry and thrice  
in Danube wet  
To prove an old man's empty heart was empty of  
regret,  
For the Turks have taken his city's soul: his spurs  
of gold are dross,  
And the Crescent hangs upon him while we hang  
upon the Cross.  
But we heave our tower of pride upon Kossovo of  
the loss,  
For a proof that we remember and the infidels  
forget.



*In the Alps*

Master of Arts and mastery of arms, master of all  
 things yet,  
 For the musket as for the mandolin the master  
 fingersfret;  
 The news to the noise of the mandolin that all the  
 world comes home,  
 And the young are young and the years return and  
 the days of the kingdom come.  
 When the wars wearied, and the tribes turned : and  
 the sun rose on Rome,  
 And all that Rome remembers when all her realms  
 forget.

*In the North Sea*

Though the seas were sown with the new dragons  
 that knew not what they ate,  
 We broke St. George's banner out to the black wind  
 and the wet,  
 He hath broken all the bridges we could fling, the  
 world and we,  
 But the bridge of death in heaven that His people  
 might be free,  
 That we straddled for the saddle of the riders of  
 the sea.  
 For St. George that shall remember if the Dragon  
 shall forget.

*All the Voices*

Behold, we are men of many lands, in motley  
 seasons set,  
 From Riga to the rock of Spain, from Orkney to  
 Olivet,  
 Who stand up in the council in the turning of the  
 year,

## 14 TO THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

And, standing, give the judgment on the evil house  
of fear;  
Knowing the End shall write again what we have  
written here,  
On the day when God remembers and no man can  
forget.

### TO THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

You whom the kings saluted ; who refused not  
The one great gesture of ignoble days,  
Fame without name and glory without gossip,  
Whom no biographer befouls with praise.

Who said of you " Defeated " ? In the darkness  
The dug-out where the limelight never comes,  
Nor the big drum of Barnum's Show can shatter  
That vibrant stillness after all the drums.

Though the time come when every Yankee circus  
Can use our soldiers for its sandwich-men,  
When those that pay the piper call the tune,  
You will not dance. You will not move again.

You will not march for Fatty Arbuckle,  
Though he have yet a favourable press,  
Tender as San Francisco to St. Francis,  
Or all the Angels of Los Angeles.

They shall not storm the last unfallen fortress,  
The lonely castle where uncowed and free  
Dwells the unknown and undefeated warrior  
That did alone defeat Publicity.

## TO A LADY

LIGHT of the young, before you have grown old  
The world will have grown weary of its youth,  
All its cheap charity and loose-lipped truth,  
And passion that goes naked—and grows cold.

Tire of a pity so akin to hate,  
Turn on a truth that is so near to treason,  
When Time, the god of traitors, in their season  
Marks down for dated all the up-to-date.

Then shall men know by the great grace you are,  
How something better than blind fear or blunder  
Bade us stand back, where we could watch with  
wonder,  
Ladies like landscapes, very fair and far.

A crowd shall call your high estranged face,  
A mask of blind reaction and resistance,  
Because you have made large the world with  
distance,  
As God made large the universe with space.

Yet beautiful your feet upon the mountains,  
Moving in soundless music shall return,  
And they that look into your eyes shall learn—  
Having forced up the secret sea in fountains.

And having vulgarised infinity,  
And splashed their brains against the starry steep,  
In what unfathomable inward deeps  
Dwells the last mystery men call Liberty.

When they shall say we scorned and held in thrall  
Spirits like yours ; the mother of the tribe  
Slandered, a slave, a butt for "slur and gibe,  
You shall confound the one great slur of all.

The one great slander answered long ago  
By. Her that hid all things within her heart,  
One speaking when the veil was rent apart,  
" Women alone can keep a secret so."

### THE WORLD STATE

On, how I love Humanity,  
With love so pure and pringlish,  
And how I hate the horrid French,  
Who never will be English!

The International Idea,  
The largest and the clearest,  
Is welding all the nations now,  
Except the one that's nearest.

This compromise has long been known,  
This scheme of partial pardons,  
In ethical societies  
And small suburban gardens—

The villas and the chapels where  
I learned with little labour  
The way to love my fellow-man  
And hate my next-door neighbour.

## THE OLD GENTLEMAN IN THE PARK

BEYOND the trees like iron trees,  
The painted lamp-posts stand.  
The old red road runs like the rust  
Upon this iron land.

Cars flat as fish and fleet as birds,  
Low-bodied and high speeded,  
Go on their belly like the Snake,  
And eat the dust as he did.

But down the red dust never more  
Her happy horse-hoofs go.  
O, what a road of rust indeed I  
O, what a Rotten Row I

## THE BURIED CITY

You that go forth upon the buried cities,  
Whose witchcraft holds the withered kings  
together,  
Seals up the very air of ancient seasons,  
Like secret skies walled up from the world's  
weather.

You that dig up dead towns—arise and strive:  
Strike through the slums and save the towns alive !

Dig London out of London; pierce the cavern  
Where Manchester lies lost in Manchester.  
You that re-chart the choked-up squares and  
markets,  
Retrace the plan our blindness made a blur:  
Until a name no more, but wide and tall,  
Arise and shine the shield of London Wall.

Strike you the stones of those most desert places,  
Huge warehouses the lonely watchmen tread,  
Where ringed in noise the hol(pw heart of London  
Lies all night long a city of the dead.  
Or does One watch high o'er this maze that sprawls,  
High on the vanished spire of Old St. Paul's ?

Lift up your heads, ye gates of our remembrance,  
Be lifted up, ye everlasting walls,  
The gates revolve upon their giant hinges,  
The guilds return unto their ancient halls.  
Tell Bishopsgate a Bishop rides to town,  
Not only come to pull the churches down.

You that let light into the sunken cities,  
Let life into the void where light is vain  
Ere vandals wreck the temples, porch and pillar,  
Bring back the people to the porch again,  
Who find in tombs strange flowers, flattened and  
dried,  
Quicken the incredible seed of London Pride.

If our vain haste has smothered home in houses  
As our vain creeds have smothered man in men,  
Though in that rock tomb sleeps the King less deeply  
Than in this brick-tomb sleeps the Citizen,  
What will not God achieve if Man awake,  
Since a rock-tomb was rended for our sake ?

## NAMESAKE

MARY of Holyrood may smile indeed,  
Knowing what grim historic shade it shocks  
To see wit, laughter and the Popish creed,  
Cluster and sparkle in the name of Knox.

OUTLINE OF HISTORY

A FISHBONE pattern of flint arrows flattened

A fossil vision of the Age of Stone—

And sages in war-weary empires quarrel

With those quaint quarrels and forget their own.

What riddle is of the elf-darts or the elves

But the strange stony riddle of ourselves ?

As by long worms the hills are pierced with holes,  
Where long day's journeyings without light of  
day

Lead to a painted cave, a buried sky,

Whose clouds are creatures sprawling in coloured  
clay ;

And men ask how and why such things were done  
Darkly, with dyes that never saw the sun.

I have seen a statue in a London square.

One whose long-winded lies are long forgot

Gleams with the rain above the twinkling bushes,

And birds perch on him in that unroofed plot.

Unriddle that dark image; and I will show

The secret of your pictured rocks below.

As green volcanic skies bury dark sunsets,

Green rust like snakes crawled, and their work  
concealed

The men who were red shadows in copper mirrors,  
When groaned the golden and the brazen shield.

And the slaves worked the copper for their lords,  
Stiff swarthy kings holding their yellow ^swords.

20      ON A PROHIBITIONIST POEM

We have written the names of hucksters on the  
    heavens

    And tied our pigmy slaves to giant tools,  
And chosen our nobles from the mart; and never  
    Stank to the sky the praise of prouder fools.  
And 'mid the blare, the doctors and the dons,  
In the Age of Brass brood on the Age of Bronze.

We clothe the dead in their theatric raiment  
    To hide their nakedness of normality;  
Disguise by gilded mask or horned mitre  
    The accusing faces of such men as we:  
Till the last brotherhood of men brings down  
Us with the troglodytes in their twilight town.

ON A PROHIBITIONIST POEM

THOUGH Shakespeare's Mermaid, ocean's mightiest  
    daughter,  
With vintage could the seas incarnadine:  
And Keats's name that was not writ in water  
    Was often writ in wine.

Though wine that seeks the loftiest habitation  
Went to the heads of Villon and Verlaine,  
Yet Hiram Hopper needs no inspiration  
    But water on the brain.



## THE MODERN MAGIC

PRESTER JOHN on his lands looked down  
He bore in one mastery mitre and crown,  
And the scaly webs of the strange attire  
Stripped from the dragon that feeds on fire,  
And high over luminous rocks and trees  
And the purple fish of his secret seas  
And the whole sprawled map of the magical place,  
A crystal mirror before his face  
For ever stood ; in whose circle shone  
The world and all that is done thereon.

And the Seven Kings by his throne that stand  
Cried, " Tell us the news from the Holy Land."

" Richard the King, of the scarlet ships,  
Sweeps over Acre, but swerves and slips  
From Godfrey's gate and from God's own crown,  
And is shot in the ditch of a small French town.  
Such is the news of the world," he said;  
" But the signs of the world will never be read  
In a glass darkly, by anyone ;  
We must wait for the sunrise," said Prester John.

Nigh on a thousand years were past:  
To the strange priest's paradise pierced at last,  
The men of the west, with the wondrous things  
Of western wizards and western kings,  
And high on their staggering engines borne  
A marvel of marvels, the mighty Horn  
Within whose cave, like a giant's ear,  
Might all men speak and might all men hear  
The noise of a battle, the noise of a bird,  
Even all the sounds of the earth were heard.

22      LINES TO AN OLD PRO-BOER

And the Seven Kings said \*' It is ended then,  
The demon of distance, rending men,  
Deafness of deserts and random deeds,  
When everyone knows what everyone needs,  
Seeing that words like winds can come,  
All will be Bethlehem, all will be Rome,  
And all men answer and understand,  
Tell us the news from the Holy Land."

" No battle-noise and no battle-news,  
But shaking of shekels and laughter of Jews,  
And a rattle of golden balls they toss  
High o'er the ruin of Crescent and Cross,  
And a usurer's voice in cold command,  
These are the sounds from the Holy Land.

O, horns may call us from far away,  
But men hear only what men can say,  
And words may go as the wide wind blows,  
But what everyone wants is what nobody knows:  
And the Horn will not tell it to anyone,  
We must wait for the Trumpet," said Prester John.

LINES TO AN OLD PRO-BOER WHO  
ASKED FOR A CONTRIBUTION TO A  
PEACE PERIODICAL

You cannot think my heart so tough  
To shrieks that ring or shards that rend;  
You cannot think me bad enough  
Nor good enough for tortures, friend.

Nor do I lightly talk of tears  
Through some vague pageant of the past;  
The shriek of shjafts, the shock of spears.  
The bursting of 'the arbelast.

Do you recall in that base fight,  
When men were crushed with clubs of gold,  
The meek and murderous flag of white  
Of which our English lies were told,

Till white had washed away the red  
And a calmed country found release?  
Look forth to-day, and count the dead  
Under your leprous flag of peace.

Rather than peace's pearl to pray,  
When cast before us by such swine,  
I would again your friends and mine  
Were riding to Pretoria.

THE APOLOGY OF BOTTOM THE WEAVER

ONCE when an honest weaver slept,  
And Puck passed by, a kindly traitor,  
And on his shoulders set the head  
Of a Shakespearean commentator,

The man had walked proverbial ways,  
Fair Science frowned not on his birth,  
Nor lost in long and tangled dreams,  
The mother-wit of mother-earth.

## 24 APOLOGY OF BOTTOM THE WEAVER

Elaborate surgeons had not found  
The cobweb made the cure too brief,  
Nor vegetarians taught the rule  
Of eating mustard without beef.

Only in that green night of growth  
Came to him, splendid, without scorn,  
The lady of the dreams of men;  
The rival of all women born.

And he, for all his after weaving,  
Drew up from that abysmal dream  
Immortal art, that proves by seeming  
All things more real than they seem.

The dancing moth was in his shuttle,  
The pea's pink blossom in his woof,  
Your driving schools, your dying hamlets,  
Go through them all and find the proof—

That you, where'er the old crafts linger,  
Draw in their webs like nets of gold,  
Hang up like banners for a pattern,  
The leavings of the looms of old.

And even as this home-made rhyme  
Drags but the speech of Shakespeare down,  
These home-made patterns but repeat  
The traceries of an ancient clown.

And while the modern fashions fade,  
And while the ancient standards stream,  
No psycho-analyst has knocked  
The bottom out of Bottom's dream.

## THE NEW OMAR

A BOOK of verses underneath the bough,  
 Provided that the verses do not scan,  
 A loaf of bread, a jug of wine and Thou,  
 Short-haired, all angles, looking like a man.

But let the wine be unfermented, pale,  
 Of chemicals compounded, God knows how—  
 This were indeed the Prophet's Paradise,  
 O Paradise were Wilderness enow.

## AMERICANISATION

BRITANNIA needs no Boulevards,  
 No spaces wide and gay :  
 Her march was through the crooked streets  
 Along the narrow way.  
 Nor looks she where, New York's seduction,  
 The Broadway leadeth to destruction.

Britannia needs no Cafés :  
 If Coffee needs must be,  
 Its place should be the Coffee-house  
 Where Johnson growled for Tea ;  
 But who can hear that human mountain  
 Growl for an ice-cream soda-fountain ?

She needs no Russian Theatre,  
 Where Father strangles Mother,  
 In scenes where all the characters  
 And colours kill each other :  
 Her boast is freedom had by halves,  
 And Britons never shall be Slavs.

But if not hers the Dance of Death,  
 Great Dostoievsky's dance,  
 And if the things most finely French  
 Are better done in France—  
 Might not Americanisation  
 Be best applied to its own nation ?

Ere every shop shall be a store  
 And every Trade a Trust . . .  
 Lo, many men in many lands  
 Know when their cause is just.  
 There will be quite a large attendance  
 When we Declare our Independence.

## ALLITERATIVISM (1914)

## (THE LATEST SCHOOL)

(FRENCH AIRMEN HAVE BEEN FLYING OVER  
 BADEN AND BAVARIA, VIOLATING BELGIAN NEU-  
 TRALITY.—*Stated on German authority in the " West-  
 minster Gazette "*)

SEE the flying French depart  
 Like the bees of Bonaparte,  
 Swarming up with a most venomous vitality.  
 Over Baden and Bavaria,  
 And Brighton and Bulgaria,  
 Thus violating Belgian neutrality.

And the injured Prussian may  
 Not unreasonably say  
 " Why, it cannot be so small a nationality I  
 Since Brixton and Batavia,  
 Bolivia and Belgravia,  
 Are bursting with the Belgian neutrality.

By pure Alliteration  
 You may trace this curious nation,  
 And respect this somewhat scattered principality;  
 When you see a B in Both  
 You may take your Bible oath  
 You are violating Belgian neutrality.

## RACE-MEMORY

(By A DAZED DARWINIAN)

I REMEMBER, I remember,  
 Long before I was born,  
 The tree-tops where my racial self  
 Went dancing round at morn.

Green wavering archipelagos,  
 Great gusty bursts of blue,  
 In my race-memory I recall  
 'Or I am told I do).

In that green-turreted Monkeyville  
 (So I have often heard)  
 It seemed as if a Blue Baboon  
 Might soar like a Blue Bird.

Low crawling Fundamentalists  
 Glared up through the green mist,  
 I hung upon my tail in heaven  
 A Firmamentalist.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am too fat to climb a tree,  
 There are no trees to climb;  
 Instead, the factory chimneys rise,  
 Unscaleable, sublime.

The past was bestial ignorance :  
But I feel a little funky,  
To think I'm further olj from heaven  
Than when I was a monkey.

## A PATRIOTIC SONG

THE Golden Hind went bowling  
Nor'westward of the Main,  
And Drake drank deep of Spanish wine  
And spat the lees at Spain.  
Till northward on the colder coasts  
The savages came out  
To hail the ship with tossing spear  
And tomahawk and shout:  
For the red gods and the witch-doctors  
Had cursed the golden grape  
Bidding him yield up Malvoisie  
And wine in every shape.

And need I say that Drake complied  
And poured the wine over the side,  
Invited all the Reds inside  
And let them ransack far and wide  
The ship that was his sinful pride  
For anything his men might hide,  
That so he might escape.

The top-sails of the Victory  
Turned westward on a day  
Great Nelson saw his sunrise land  
Like a sunset fade away.  
And pledged immortal beauty  
And the isle beyond the foam



In the dark wine of Oporto  
That his father drank at home.  
His hand and glass were lifted  
When they reached the rebel shore  
And Hiram Hugginburg came forth  
And bade him drink no more.

And naturally Nelson ran  
To do his bidding and began  
To empty every cup and can  
And snatch the rum from every man  
Who (ignorant of Hiram's ban)  
Had broken with him the battle-van  
From the Nile to Elsinore.

Lo, of that leaping pennant learn,  
Of those world-wandering graves,  
In what more modest modern style  
Britannia rules the waves.

If, loyal to some foreign cause,  
We still are careful, clause by clause,  
Obeying other countries' laws.  
We never shall be slaves.

## SOME WISHES AT XMAS

MINCE-PIES grant Wishes: let each name his  
Prize,

But as for us, we wish for more Mince-Pies.

## MR. EPSTEIN

WHAT wish has Epstein's art portrayed ?

Toward what does Rima rise ?

Those little hands were never made

To tear out eagles' eyes :

She for Green Mansions yearns; but not

So green a mansion as she got.

## DEAN INGE

WHAT deep desires inspire the Gloomy Dean,

While Rima chants The Wearing of the Green ?

Does he have childlike hopes at Christmas time

And sing a carol or a nursery rhyme ?

Does he hang up a stocking—or a gaiter—

Or ask for gifts from any Alma Mater ?

(Tell me, do Matthew, Mark, and Luke and John

Bless beds the Higher Critics lie upon ?

Or if, while the Fourth Gospel is re-read,

" Synoptists " sleep on a three-cornered bed.)

Or, like the Deutero-Job, who far away

On his interpolated ash-heap lay,

Damns he the day whereon his body and soul

Escaped the vigilance of Birth-Control ?

Or, softened while the herald angel sings,

Does he more mildly wish for lesser things

That warning cracks, marking the house that falls,

Should decorate St. Peter's, not St. Paul's;

Or wish in all good faith to friends held dear

A Gloomy Christmas and a Glum New Year ?

A Merry Christmas to a Merrier Dean!  
 Whatever he may want, whatever mean,  
 He won't be happy till he gets it; when  
 He does, perhaps he won't be happy then.

A LADY M.P.

SHE wants a new England, more bright and more  
clean,  
Where foul tap-room revelries never are seen.  
And after the quarter-staff flies the quart-pot,  
For she wants a new England where these things  
are not,  
And our love of old England is vain in her sight,  
As the noise of blind drunkards that strive in the  
night,  
As if our old England like fable could fade,  
And a Puritan purge through the ages had made  
A Shaker of Shakespeare, a grave man of Gay,  
And a Pussyfoot Johnson with Bos well to play.  
For she wants a new England, where censors and  
prigs  
Can browbeat our jokes and can bridle our jigs.  
The title is apt, and the tale is soon told,  
She wants a New England, three hundred years old.

## THE COMMUNISTS

THERE are two normal nuisances  
That stir us late or soon :  
One is the man who wants the earth,  
The other wants the moon.  
Choosing between these last and Jix,  
We much prefer the lunatics.

## Jix

SINCE Christmas time brings charity  
 For Jix and for the Kaiser,  
 We wish that they were wise enough  
 To wish that they were wiser.

## COMMERCIAL CANDOUR

(ON THE OUTSIDE OF A SENSATIONAL NOVEL is  
**PRINTED THE STATEMENT : " THE BACK OF THE  
 COVER WILL TELL YOU THE PLOT "**)

OUR fathers to creed and tradition were tied,  
 They opened a book to see what was inside,  
 And of various methods they deemed not the worst  
 Was to find the first chapter and look at it first.  
 And so from the first to the second they passed,  
 Till in servile routine they arrived at the last.  
 But a literate age, unbenighted by creed,  
 Can find on two boards all it wishes to read;  
 For the front of the cover shows somebody shot  
 And the back of the cover will tell you the plot.

Between, that the book may be handily padded,  
 Some pages of mere printed matter are added,  
 Expanding the theme, which in case of great need  
 The curious reader might very well read  
 With the zest that is lent to a game worth the  
     winning,  
 By knowing the end when you start the beginning ;  
 While our barbarous sires, who would read every  
     word  
 With a morbid desire to find out what occurred  
 Went drearily drudging through Dickens and Scott.  
 But the back of the cover will tell you the plot.

The wild village folk in earth's earliest prime  
Could often sit still for an hour at a time  
And hear a blind beggar, nor did the tale pall  
Because Hector must fight before Hector could fall:  
Nor was Scheherazade required, at the worst,  
To tell her tales backwards and finish them first;  
And the minstrels who sang about battle and  
banners

Found the rude camp-fire crowd had some notion  
of manners.

Till Forster (who pelted the people like crooks,  
The Irish with buckshot, the English with books),  
Established the great educational scheme  
Of compulsory schooling, that glorious theme.  
Some learnt how to read, and the others forgot,  
And the back of the cover will tell you the plot.

O Genius of Business! O marvellous brain,  
Come in place of the priests and the warriors to  
reign!

O Will to Get On that makes everything go—  
O Hustle ! O Pep ! O Publicity ! O !  
Shall I spend threc-and-sixpence to purchase the  
book,  
Which we all can pick up on the bookstall and  
look?

Well, it may appear strange, but I think I shall not,  
For the back of the cover will tell you the plot.

## HUMAN NATURE : on MARCONI MEMORIES

(FROM OUR " SIMPLIFIED PSYCHOLOGY FOR STATES-  
MEN " SERIES)

HUMAN nature is a bird  
Whose complaint is often heard,  
And will make demands of any legislature;  
And you need not claim to be  
Giving seven pence for three ;  
It exceeds the wildest hopes of Human Nature.

Human Nature is a thing  
It is difficult to sing,  
And very much more difficult to deal with:  
But you need not call it " function "—  
You can own without compunction  
That your brother is a man you take a meal  
with.

Human Nature it prefers  
To be told of what occurs  
Without suppressing any vital feature;  
And when statesmen hold their peace  
Until searched by the police,  
It rasps the finer edge of Human Nature.

Human Nature, it is said,  
Thinks investment should be made  
By someone who has cash enough to pay it;  
And that one who pouched the pay,  
And had nothing more to say,  
Need not go to South America to say it.

Human Nature is not keen  
On the words " corrupt " or " clean "  
Or any other shades of nomenclature;  
But, when what the Party cost  
Is discovered when it's lost,  
A shade of doubt is merely Human Nature.

Human Nature it is prone  
To be soft about the Throne,  
And even make the Peerage paramounter;  
But it startles it to drop  
Into Mr. Pearson's shop,  
And find a Scottish Lord behind the counter.

So till all men learn the truth  
(And not only Handel Booth)  
And the Gospel has been preached to every creature,  
Even rotten things may fail,  
Even thieves may go to gaol,  
And all through not observing Human Nature.

### THE PEACE OF PETROL

(To BE SUNG TO THE AIR OF " KABUL RIVER " ON  
THE CONCLUSION OF AN ENGLISH PEACE BROUGHT  
ABOUT BY AMERICAN INTERVENTION)

HE has many a car and chuffer  
(Still the bugle, sheathe the sword),  
So I left my mates to suffer  
All because of Mr. Ford.  
Ford, Ford, Ford of many millions,  
Ford of many motors in the Park;  
And our lord will laugh like thunder at the Good  
Cause going under  
When we stab it, to oblige him, in the dark.

We'll give up the blasted place  
    (Drop the bugle, break the sword)  
For one smile upon his face,  
    O, the shiny face of Ford !  
Ford, Ford, Ford; the French are falling,  
    And the Serbians on the mountains lying stark,  
All their eyes on us, disdaining, and it ain't no  
    use explaining  
    That a millionaire has bought us for a lark.

O the motors he can make t  
    (Sell the bugle, pawn the sword)  
We'll be humbled for his sake,  
    Break our faith and keep our Ford.  
Ford, Ford, Ford—till death remove him  
    To a place on which it's needless to remark,  
And the rich whose minds are muddy, who consider  
    honour bloody,  
    Go down to their damnation in the dark.

### TO A HOLY ROLLER

(Tim SECT OF THE HOLY ROLLERS DEMONSTRATED  
    AGAINST EVOLUTION AT DAYTON)

" ROLL ON," said Gilbert to the earth:  
    " Roll on," said Byron to the sea :  
Accepting natural features thus,  
    Freely I say " Roll on " to thee.

Time like an ever rolling stream  
    Bears his most rolling sons away  
Bryanite saint, Darwinian sage,  
    And even Dayton has its day.



Earth changes; sings another bard,  
" There rolls the deep where grew the tree "  
Convulsions viewed with equal calm  
By Tennyson and Tennessee.

But ere you roll down history's slope,  
A moment you may set us thinking  
How Prohibition suits their mood,  
Who get so drunk by never drinking.

What rows of bottles, blends of liquor,  
We need to reach in one wild leap  
Those reels and rolls you get for nothing,  
Great Bacchic Maenads on the cheap !

I blame you not that, writhing prone,  
You flout the grave Darwinian's view,  
Of his extremely Missing Link,  
For he is quite amusing too.

Marking the human ape evolve  
(He puts his rolling into Latin),  
Through epochs barely large enough  
To swing an old Egyptian cat in.

Since you believe Man truly tilled  
The Garden for the great Controller,  
You back your Garden party up,  
Like a consistent Garden Roller.

We, too, may deem on Adam's birth  
Some more mysterious splendour shone,  
Than prigs can pick off monkey's bones,  
, Never you mind 1 Roll on 1 Roll on 1

Grovel and gambol on all fours  
 Till you have proved beyond dispute  
 That human dignity is freed  
 From all connection with the brute.

### THE NEW FICTION

(" LEAVE THEM ALONE," WE SEEM TO HEAR MR.  
 GALSWORTHY SAY OF ins YOUNG PEOPLE.—*From*  
*a review by Mr. Bettany*)

LITTLE Blue-Fits has lost his wits,  
 And doesn't know where to find them;  
 Leave them alone and they'll come home,  
 And leave their tales behind them.

The remarkable tales, with remarkable sales,  
 And Bonnets and Bees in disorder;  
 For the Bonnets we view are exceedingly Blue,  
 And decidedly over the Border.

### ANSWERS TO THE POETS

#### THE SKYLARK REPLIES TO WORDSWORTH

*(As it might have appeared to Byron)*

EPHEMERAL minstrel, staring at the sky,  
 Dost thou despise the earth where wrongs abound,  
 Or, eyeing me, hast thou the other eye  
 Still on the Court, with pay-day coming round,  
 That pension that could bring thee down at will  
 Those rebel wings composed, that protest still ?

Past the last trace of meaning and beyond

Mount, daring babbler, that pay-prompted strain  
 'Twixt thee and Kings a never-failing bond

Swells not the less their carnage o'er the plain.  
 Type of the wise, who drill but never fight,  
 True to the kindred points of Might and Right.

\* \* \* \*

### THE SEA REPLIES TO BYRON

*(As it might have appeared to Wordsworth)*

Stroll on, thou dark not deep "blue" dandy, stroll,

Ten thousand duns call after thee in vain.

Thy tailor's marked with ruin; his control

Stops with my shore; beyond he doth retain  
 No shadow of a chance of what's his own,  
 But sinks above his bills with bubbling groan,  
 "Absconded; gone abroad; address unknown."

Thy songs are speeches, void of all save Thee,

Childc Harold, Lara, Manfred, what care I?

My water washed them down—you got it free,

And many a wine-cup since when you were dry,  
 Till nature blows the man-hater sky-high,  
 Howling against his gods in stark D.T.,

And dashes him against the Truth. There let  
 him *lie*.

\* \* \* \*

### THE FAT WHITE WOMAN SPEAKS

Why do you rush through the field in trains,  
 Guessing so much and so much.

Why do you flash through the flowery meads,  
 Fat-head poet that nobody reads;

And why do you know such a frightful lot  
 About people in gloves as such?

And how the devil can you be sure,  
 Guessing so much and so much,  
 How do you know but what someone who loves  
 Always to see me in nice white gloves  
 At the end of the field you are rushing by,  
 Is waiting for his Old Dutch ?

\* \* \* \* \*

### LucASTA REPLIES TO LOVELACE

Tell me not, friend, you are unkind,  
 If ink and books laid by,  
 You turn up in a uniform  
 Looking all smart and spry.

I thought your ink one horrid smudge,  
 Your books one pile of trash,  
 And with less fear of smear embrace  
 A sword, a belt, a sash.

Yet this inconstancy forgive,  
 Though gold lace I adore,  
 I could not love the lace so much  
 Loved I not Lovelace more.

\* \* \* \* \*

### BY A CAPTAIN, OB PERHAPS A COLONEL, OB POSSIBLY A KNIGHT-AT-ARMS

Poet or pamphleteer, or what you please,  
 Who chance behind this space of wall to dwell,  
 Upon my soul I cannot very well  
 Correct my fire for arguments like these,  
 The great Emathian conqueror be blowed I

I have not got a spear or you a bower.  
 London is packed with poets ; temple and tower  
 Swarm with them ; where the devil should we be  
 Storming a town, if the repeated plea  
 Of Puritanic poets had the power  
 To stop a piece of ordnance with an ode ?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### FROM THE SPANISH CLOISTER

Grrrr—what's that ? A dog ? A poet ?  
 Uttering his damnations thus—  
 If hate killed things, Brother Browning,  
 God's Word, would not hate kill us ?

If we ever meet together,  
*Salve tibi !* I might hear  
 How you know poor monks are really  
 So much worse than they appear.

There's a great text in Corinthians  
 Hinting that our faith entails  
 Something else, that never faileth,  
 Yet in you, perhaps, it fails.

But if *plena gratia* chokes you,  
 You at least can teach us how  
 To converse in wordless noises,  
 Hy, zi; hullo !—Grrrr—Bow-wow !

\* \* \* \* \*

## DOLORES REPLIES TO SWINBURNE

Cold passions, and perfectly cruel,  
Long odes that go on for an hour,  
With a most economical jewel  
And a quite metaphorical flower.  
I implore you to stop it and stow it,  
I adjure you, relent and refrain,  
Oh, pagan Priapcan poet,  
You give me a pain.

I am sorry, old dear, if I hurt you,  
No doubt it is all very nice  
With the lilies and languors of virtue  
And the raptures and roses of vice.  
But the notion impels me to anger,  
That vice is all rapture for me,  
And if you think virtue is languor  
Just try it and see.

We shall know when the critics discover  
If your poems were shallow or deep;  
Who read you from cover to cover,  
Will know if they sleep not or sleep.  
But you say I've endured through the ages  
(Which is rude) as Our Lady of Pain,  
You have said it for several pages,  
So say it again.



## To A MODERN POET

Well,  
What            ,  
about it ?

am sorry  
if you have  
a green pain  
gnawing your brain away.  
I suppose  
quite a lot of it is  
gnawed away  
by this time.

I did not give you  
a green pain  
or even  
a grey powder.  
It is rather you, so winged, so vortical,  
Who give me a pain.  
When I have a pain  
I never notice  
the colour.

But I am very unobservant.  
I cannot say  
I ever noticed that the pillar-box  
was like a baby  
skinned alive and screaming.  
I have not  
a Poet's  
Eye  
which can see Beauty  
everywhere.

Now you mention it,  
Of course, the sky  
is like a large mouth  
shown to a dentist,  
and I never noticed  
a little thing  
like that\*

But I can't help wishing  
You got more fun out of it;  
you seem to have taken  
quite a dislike  
to things  
They seem to make you jump  
And double up unexpectedly—

And when you write  
like other poets,  
on subjects  
not entirely  
novel,  
such as, for instance,  
the Sea,  
it is mostly about  
Sea-sickness.  
As you say—  
It is the New Movement,  
The Emetic Ecstasy.



## POST-RECESSIONAL

God of your fathers, known of old,  
For patience with man's swaggering line,  
He did not answer you when told  
About you and your palm and pine,  
Though you deployed your far-flung host  
And boasted that you did not boast.

Though drunk with sight of power and blind,  
Even as you bowed your head in awe,  
You kicked up both your heels behind  
At lesser breeds without the law ;  
Lest they forget, lest they forget,  
That yours was the exclusive set.

We fancied heaven preferring much,  
Your rowdiest song, your slangiest sentence,  
Your honest banjo banged, to such  
Very recessionary repentance ;  
Now if your native land be dear,  
Whisper (or shout) and we shall hear.

Cut down, our navies melt away.  
From ode and war-song fades the fire,  
We are a jolly sight to-day  
Too near to Sidon and to Tyre  
To make it sound so very nice  
To offer ancient sacrifice.

Rise up and bid the trumpets blow  
When it is gallant to be gay,  
Tell the wide world it shall not know  
Our face until we turn to bay.  
Bless you, you shall be blameless yet,  
For God forgives and men forget.

## VARIATIONS OF AN AIR:

COMPOSED ON HAVING TO APPEAR IN A PAGEANT  
AS OLD KING COLE.

OLD KING COLE was a merry old soul,  
And a merry old soul was he;  
He called for his pipe,  
He called for his bowl,  
And he called for his Tiddlers three.

*After Lord Tennyson*

Cole, that unwearied prince of Colchester,  
(irowing more gay with age and with long days  
Deeper in laughter and desire of life,  
As that Virginian climber on our walls  
Flames scarlet with the fading of the year;  
Called for his wassail and that other weed  
Virginian also, from the western woods  
Where English Raleigh checked the boast of Spain,  
And lighting joy with joy, and piling up  
Pleasure as crown for pleasure, bade men bring  
Those three, the minstrels whose emblazoned coats  
Shone with the oyster-shells of Colchester;  
And these three played, and playing grew more fain  
Of mirth and music ; till the heathen came,  
And the King slept beside the northern sea.

*After W. B. Yeats*

Of an old King in a story  
From the grey sea-folk I have heard,  
Whose heart was no more broken  
Than the wings of a bird.

As soon as the moon was silver  
And the thin stars began,  
He took his pipe and his tankard,  
Like an old peasant man.

And three tall shadows were with him  
And came at his command;  
And played before him for ever  
The fiddles of fairyland.

And he died in the young summer  
Of the world's desire ;  
Before our hearts were broken  
Like sticks in a fire.

*After Robert Browning*

Who smoke-snorts toasts o' My Lady Nicotine,  
Kicks stuffing out of Pussyfoot, bids his trio  
Stick up their Stradivarii (that's the plural)  
Or near enough, my fatheads; *nimum*  
*Vicina Cremonoz*; that's a bit too near).  
Is there some stockfish fails to understand ?  
Catch hold o' the notion, bellow and blurt back  
" Cole " ?  
Must I bawl lessons from a horn-book, howl,  
Cat-call the cut-gut " fiddles " ? Fiddlesticks I

*After Walt Whitman*

Me clairvoyant,  
Me conscious of you, old camarado,  
Needing no telescope, lorgnette, field-glass, opera-  
glass, myopic pince-nez,

Me piercing two thousand years with eye naked  
and not ashamed ;  
The crown cannot hide you from me ;  
Musty old feudal-heraldic trappings cannot hide you  
from me,  
I perceive that you drink.  
(I am drinking with you. I am as drunk as you  
are.)  
I see you are inhaling tobacco, puffing, smoking,  
spitting  
(I do not object to your spitting),  
You prophetic of American largeness,  
You anticipating the broad masculine manners of  
these States ;  
I see in you also there are movements, tremors,  
tears, desire for the melodious,  
I salute your three violinists, endlessly making  
vibrations,  
Rigid, relentless, capable of going on for ever;  
They play my accompaniment; but I shall take no  
notice of any accompaniment;  
I myself am a complete orchestra.  
So long.

*After Swinburne*

In the time of old sin without sadness  
And golden with wastage of gold  
Like the gods that grow old in their gladness  
Was the king that was glad, growing old;  
And with sound of loud lyres from his palace  
The voice of his oracles spoke,  
And the lips that were red from his chalice  
Were splendid with smoke.

When the weed was as flame for a token  
 And the wine was as blood for a sign;  
 And upheld in his hands and unbroken  
 The fountains of fire and of wine.  
 And a song without speech, without singer,  
 Stung the soul of a thousand in three  
 As the flesh of the earth has to sting her,  
 The soul of the sea.

## A BALLAD OF ABBREVIATIONS

THE American's a hustler, for he says so,  
 And surely the American must know.  
 He will prove to you with figures why it pays so  
 Beginning with his boyhood long ago.  
 When the slow-maturing anecdote is ripest,  
 He'll dictate it like a Board of Trade Report,  
 And because he has no time to call a typist,  
 He calls her a Stenographer for short.

He is never known to loiter or malingering,  
 He rushes, for he knows he has "a date";  
 He is always on the spot and full of ginger,  
 Which is why he is invariably late.  
 When he guesses that it's getting even later,  
 His vocabulary's vehement and swift,  
 And he yells for what he calls the Elevator,  
 A slang abbreviation for a lift.

Then nothing can be nattier or nicer  
<sup>1</sup> For those who like a light and rapid style.  
 Than to trifle with a work of Mr. Dreiser  
 As it comes along in waggons by the mile

He has taught us what a swift selective art meant  
By description of his dinners and all that,  
And his dwelling, which he says is an Apartment,  
Because he cannot stop to say a flat.

We may whisper of his wild precipitation,  
That it's speed is rather longer than a span,  
But there really is a definite occasion  
When he does not use the longest word he can.  
When he substitutes, I freely make admission,  
One shorter and much easier to spell;  
If you ask him what he thinks of Prohibition,  
He may tell you quite succinctly it is Hell.

## JEALOUSY

"THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS NEVER FORGIVEN US FOR CONVERTING SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE FROM HIS AGNOSTICISM ; AND WHEN MEN LIKE MR. DENNIS BRADLEY CAN NO LONGER BE CONTENT WITH THE OLD FAITH, A SPIRIT OF JEALOUSY is NATURALLY ROUSED."—A *Spiritualist Paper*.

She sat upon her Seven Hills  
She rent the scarlet robes about her,  
Nor yet in her two thousand years  
Had ever grieved that men should doubt her;  
But what new horror shakes the mind  
Making her moan and mutter madly;  
Lo ! Rome's high heart is broken at last  
Her foes have borrowed Dennis Bradley.

If she must lean on lesser props  
Of earthly fame or ancient art,  
Make shift with Raphael and Racine  
Put up with Dante and Descartes,  
Not wholly can she mask her grief  
But touch the wound and murmur sadly,  
"These lesser things are theirs to love  
Who lose the love of Mr. Bradley."

She saw great Origen depart  
And Photius rend the world asunder,  
Her cry to all the East rolled back  
In Islam its ironic thunder,  
She lost Jerusalem and the North  
Accepting these arrangements gladly  
Until it came to be a case  
Of Conan Doyle u. Dennis Bradley.

O fond and foolish hopes that still  
In broken hearts unbroken burn,  
What if, grown weary of new ways,  
The precious wanderer should return  
The Trumpet whose uncertain sound  
Has just been cracking rather badly  
May yet within her courts remain  
His Trumpet—blown by Dennis Bradley!

His and her Trumpet blown before  
The battle where the good cause wins  
Louder than all the Irish harps  
Or the Italian violins;  
When armed and mounted like St. Joan  
She meets the mad world riding madly  
Under the Onflamme of old  
Crying, "Mont-joie St. Dennis Bradley!"

But in this hour she sorrows still,  
    Though all anew the generations  
Rise up and call her blessed, claim  
    Her name upon the new born Nations  
But still she mourns the only thing  
    She ever really wanted badly;  
The sympathy of Conan Doyle  
    The patronage of Dennis Bradley.



BOOK TWO  
THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA  
1922



PREFACE TO  
THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA.

To F.C.

IN MEMORIAM PALESTINE, 1019.

Do you remember one immortal  
Lost moment out of time and space,  
What time we thought, who passed the portal  
Of that divine disastrous place  
Where Life was slain and Truth was slandered  
On that one holier hill than Rome,  
How far abroad our bodies wandered  
That evening when our souls came home ?

The mystic city many-gated,  
With monstrous columns, was your own:  
Herodian stones fell down and waited  
Two thousand years to be your throne.  
In the grey rocks the burning blossom  
Glowed terrible as the sacred blood :  
It was no stranger to your bosom  
Than bluebells of an English wood.

Do you remember a road that follows  
The way of unforgotten feet,  
Where from the waste of rocks and hollows  
Climb up the crawling crooked street

## 56 THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA

The stages of one towering drama  
Always ahead and out of sight. . . .  
Do you remember Aceldama  
And the jackal barking in the night ?

Life is not void or stuff for scorners :  
We have laughed loud and kept our love,  
We have heard singers in tavern corners  
And not forgotten the birds above :  
We have known smiters and sons of thunder  
And not unworthily walked with them,  
We have grown wiser and lost not wonder;  
And we have seen Jerusalem.

### THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA

(ST. BARBARA is THE PATRON SAINT OF ARTILLERY  
AND OF THOSE IN DANGER OF SUDDEN DEATH)

WHEN the long grey lines came flooding upon Paris  
in the plain,  
We stood and drank of the last free air we never  
could taste again :  
They had led us back from the lost battle, to halt  
we knew not where  
And stilled us; and our gaping guns were dumb  
with our despair.  
The grey tribes flowed for ever from the infinite  
lifeless lands  
And a Norman to a Breton spoke, his chin upon  
his hands.

" There was an end of Ilium ; and an end came to  
 Rome ;  
 And a man plays on a painted stage in the land  
 that he calls home ;  
 Arch after arch of triumph, but floor beyond falling  
 floor,  
 That lead to a low door at last; and beyond there  
 is no door."

And the Breton to the Norman spoke, like a small  
 child spoke he,  
 And his sea-blue eyes were empty as his home  
 beside the sea :  
 " There are more windows in one house than there  
 are eyes to see,  
 There are more doors in a man's house, but God  
 has hid the key :  
 Ruin is a builder of windows ; her legend witnesseth  
 Barbara, the saint of gunners, and a stay in sudden  
 death."

It seemed the wheel of the world stood still an  
 instant in its turning,  
 More than the kings of the earth that turned with  
 the turning of Valmy mill:  
 While trickled the idle tale and the sea-blue eyes  
 were burning,  
 Still as the heart of a whirlwind the heart of the  
 world stood still.

" Barbara the beautiful  
 Had praise of lute and pen :  
 Her hair was like a summer night  
 Dark and desired of men.

58 THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA

Her feet like birds from far away  
That linger and light in doubt;  
And her face was like a window  
Where a man's first love looked out.

Her sire was master of many slaves  
A hard man of his hands ;  
They built a tower about her  
In the desolate golden lands,

Sealed as the tyrants sealed their tombs,  
Planned with an ancient plan,  
And set two windows in the tower,  
Like the two eyes of a man."

Our guns were set toward the foe ; we had no word,  
for firing.  
Grey in the gateway of St. Gond the Guard of the  
tyrant shone ;  
Dark with the fate of a falling star, retiring and  
retiring,  
The Breton line went backward and the Breton  
tale went on.

" Her father had sailed across the sea  
From the harbour of Africa  
When all the slaves took up their tools  
For the bidding of Barbara.

She smote the bare wall with her hand  
And bade them smite again;  
She poured them wealth of wine and meat  
To stay them in their pain.

And cried through the lifted thunder  
 Of thronging hammer and hod  
 \* Throw open the third window  
 In the third name of God.'

Then the hearts failed and the tools fell,  
 And far towards the foam,  
 Men saw a shadow on the sands  
 And her father coming home."

Speak low and low, along the line the whispered  
 word is flying  
 Before the touch, before the time, we may not loose  
 a breath :  
 Their guns must mash us to the mire and there be  
 no replying,  
 Till the hand is raised to fling us for the final dice  
 to death.

" ' There were two windows in your tower,  
 Barbara, Barbara,  
 For all between the sun and moon  
 In the lands of Africa.

Hath a man three eyes, Barbara,  
 A bird three wings,  
 That you have riven roof and wall  
 To look upon vain things ? '

Her voice was like a wandering thing  
 That falters yet is free,  
 Whose soul has drunk in a distant land  
 Of the rivers of liberty.

60 THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA

"There are more wings than the wind know  
Or eyes than see the sun  
In the light of the lost window  
And the wind of the doors undone.

For out of the first lattice  
Are the red lands that break  
And out of the second lattice  
Sea like a green snake,

But out of the third lattice  
Under low eaves like wings  
Is a new corner of the sky  
And the other side of things."

It opened in the inmost place an instant beyond  
uttering,  
A casement and a chasm and a thunder of doors  
undone,  
A seraph's strong wing shaken out the shock of its  
unshuttering,  
That split the shattered sunlight from a light beyond  
the sun.

" Then he drew sword and drave her  
Where the judges sat and said  
' Caesar sits above the gods,  
Barbara the maid.

Caesar hath made a treaty  
With the moon and with the sun,  
All the gods that men can praise  
Praise him every one.



There is peace with the anointed  
Of the scarlet oils of Bel,  
With the Fish God where the whirlpool  
Is a winding stair to hell,

With the pathless pyramids of slime,  
Where the mitred negro lifts  
To his black cherub in the cloud  
Abominable gifts,

With the leprous silver cities  
Where the dumb priests dance and nod,  
But not with the three windows  
And the last name of God.' "

They are firing, we are falling, and the red skies  
rend and shiver us,

Barbara, Barbara, we may not loose a breath—  
Be at the bursting doors of doom, and in the dark  
deliver us,

Who loosen the last window on the sun of sudden  
death.

" Barbara the beautiful  
Stood up as queen set free,  
Whose mouth is set to a terrible cup  
And the trumpet of liberty.

' I have looked forth from a window  
That no man now shall bar,  
Caesar's toppling battle-towers  
Shall never stretch so far.

The slaves are dancing in their chains,  
The child laughs at the rod,  
Because of the bird of the three wings,  
And the third face of God.'

62 THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA

The sword upon his shoulder  
Shifted and shone and fell,  
And Barbara lay very small  
And crumpled like a shell."

What wall upon what hinges turned stands open  
like a door ?  
Too simple for the sight of faith, too huge for  
human eyes,  
What light upon what ancient way shines to a  
far-off floor,  
The line of the lost land of France or the plains of  
Paradise ?

" Caesar smiled above the gods  
His lip of stone was curled,  
His iron armies wound like chains  
Round and round the world,

And the strong slayer of his own  
That cut down flesh for grass,  
Smiled too, and went to his own tower  
Like a walking tower of brass,

And the songs ceased and the slaves were dumb  
And far towards the foam  
Men saw a shadow on the sands;  
And her father coming home. . . .

Blood of his blood upon the sword  
Stood red but never dry.  
He wiped it slowly, till the blade  
Was blue as the blue sky.

But the blue sky split with a thunder-crack,  
 Spat down a blinding brand,  
 And all of him layjback and flat  
 As his shadow on the sand."

The touch and the tornado ; all our guns give tongue  
 together

St. Barbara for the gunnery and God defend the right,  
 They are stopped and gapped and battered as we  
 blast away the weather.

Building window upon window to our lady of the  
 light.

For the light is come on Liberty, her foes are falling,  
 falling,

They are reeling, they are running, as the shameful  
 years have run,

She is risen for all the humble, she has heard the  
 conquered calling,

St. Barbara of the Gunners, with her hand upon  
 the gun.

They are burst asunder in the midst that eat of  
 their own flatteries,

Whose lip is curled to order as its barbered hair  
 is curled. . . .

Blast of the beauty of sudden death, St. Barbara  
 of the batteries !

That blow the new white window in the wall of all  
 the world.

For the hand is raised behind us, and the bolt  
 smites hard

Through the rending of the doorways, through the  
 death-gap of the Guard,

For the cry of the Three Colours is in Conde\* and  
 beyond

64 THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA

And the Guard is flung for carrion in the graveyard  
of St. Gond,  
Through Mondemont and out of it, through Morin  
marsh and on  
With earthquake of salutation the impossible thing  
is gone,  
Gaul, charioted and charging, great Gaul upon a gun,  
  
Tiptoe on all her thousand years and trumpeting  
to the sun :  
As day returns, as death returns, swung backwards  
and swung home,  
Back on the barbarous reign returns the battering-  
ram of Rome ;  
While that that the east held hard and hot like  
pincers in a forge,  
Came like the west wind roaring up the cannon of  
St. George,  
Where the hunt is up and racing over stream and  
swamp and tarn  
And their batteries, black with battle, hold the  
bridgeheads of the Marne,  
And across the carnage of the Guard, by Paris in  
the plain,  
The Normans to the Bretons cried and the Bretons  
cheered again. . . .  
But he that told the tale went home to his house  
beside the sea  
And burned before St. Barbara, the light of the  
windows three,  
Three candles for an unknown thing, never to come  
again,  
That opened like the eye of God on Paris in the  
plain.

## ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

THE men theft worked for England  
They have their graves at home:  
And bees and birds of England  
About the cross can roam.

But they that fought for England,  
Following a falling star,  
Alas, alas for England  
They have their graves afar.

And they that rule in England,  
In stately conclave met,  
Alas, alas for England  
They have no graves as yet.

## THE SWORD OF SURPRISE

SUNDER me from my bones, O sword of God,  
Till they stand stark and strange as do the trees;  
That I whose heart goes up with the soaring woods  
May marvel as much at these.

Sunder me from my blood that in the dark  
I hear that red ancestral river run,  
Like branching buried <sup>^</sup>floods that find the sea  
But never see the sun.

Give me miraculous eyes to see my eyes,  
Those rolling mirrors made alive in me,  
Terrible crystal more incredible  
Than all the things they see.

CO            A WEDDING IN WAR-TIME

Sunder me from my soul, that I may see  
The sins like streaming wounds, the life's brave beat:  
Till I shall save myself, as ,1 would save  
A stranger in the street.

A WEDDING IN WAR-TIME

OUR God who made two lovers in a garden,  
And smote them separate and set them free,  
Their four eyes wild for wonder and wrath and  
    pardon  
And their kiss thunder as lips of land and sea:  
Each rapt unendingly beyond the other,  
Two starry worlds of unknown gods at war,  
Wife and not mate, a man and not a brother,  
We thank thee thou hast made us what we are.

Make not the grey slime of infinity  
To swamp these flowers thou madest one by one ;  
Let not the night that was thine enemy  
Mix a mad twilight of the moon and sun ;  
Waken again to thunderclap and clamour  
The wonder of our sundering and the song,  
Or break our hearts with thine hell-shattering  
    hammer  
But leave a shade between us all day long.

Shade of high shame and honourable blindness  
When youth, in storm of dizzy and distant things,  
Finds the wild windfall of a little kindness  
And shakes to think that all the world has wings.  
When the one head that turns the heavens in turning  
Moves yet as lightly as a lingering bird,  
And red and random, blown astray but burning,  
Like a lost spark goes by the glorious word.

Make not this sex, this other side of things,  
A thing less distant than the world's desire ;  
What colour to the end of evening clings  
And what far cry of frontiers and what fire  
Fallen too far beyond the sun for seeking,  
Let it divide us though our kingdom come ;  
With a far signal in our secret speaking  
To hang the proud horizon in our home.

Once we were one, a shapeless cloud that lingers  
Loading the seas and shutting out the skies,  
One with the woods, a monster of myriad fingers,  
You laid on me no finger of surprise.  
One with the stars, a god with myriad eyes,  
I saw you nowhere and was blind for scorn:  
One till the world was riven and the rise  
Of the white days when you and I were born.

Darkens the world : the world-old fetters rattle ;  
And these that have no hope behind the sun  
May feed like bondmen and may breed like cattle,  
One in the darkness as the dead are one ;  
Us if the rended grave give up its glory  
Trumpets shall summon asunder and face to face :  
We will be strangers in so strange a story  
And wonder, meeting in so wild a place.

Ah, not in vain or utterly for loss  
Come even the black (lag and the battle-hordes,  
If these grey devils flee the sign of the cross  
Even in the symbol of the crossing swords.  
Nor shall death doubt Who made our souls alive  
Swords meeting and not stakes set side by side,  
Bade us in the sunburst and the thunder thrive  
Earthquake and Dawn; the bridegroom and the bride.

Death and not dreams or doubt of things undying,  
Of whose the holy hearth or whose the sword;  
Though sacred spirits dissever in strong crying  
Into Thy hands, but Thy two hands, O Lord,  
Though not in Earth as once in Eden standing,  
So plain again we see Thee what thou art,  
As in this blaze, the blasting and the branding  
Of this wild wedding where we meet and part.

## THE MYSTERY

IF sunset clouds could grow on trees  
It would but match the may in flower;  
And skies be underneath the seas  
No topsyturvier than a shower.

If mountains rose on wings to wander  
They were no wilder than a cloud;  
Yet all my praise is mean as slander,  
Mean as these mean words spoken aloud.

And never more than now I know  
That man's first heaven is far behind;  
Unless the blazing seraph's blow  
Has left him in the garden blind.

Witness, O Sun that blinds our eyes,  
Unthinkable and unthankable King,  
That though all other wonder dies  
I wonder at not wondering.



## "TPIE MYTH OF ARTHUR"

O LEARNED man who never learned to learn,  
Save to deduce, by timid steps and small,  
From towering smoke that fire can never burn  
And from tall tales that men were never tall.  
Say, have you thought what manner of man it is  
Of whom men say " He could strike giants down " ?  
Or what strong memories over time's abyss  
Bore up the pomp of Camelot and the crown.  
And why one banner all the background fills,  
Beyond the pageants of so many spears,  
And by what witchery in the western hills  
A throne stands empty for a thousand years.  
Who hold, unheeding this immense impact,  
Immortal story for a mortal sin;  
Lest human fable touch historic fact,  
Chase myths like moths, and fight them with a pin.  
Take comfort; rest—there needs not this ado.  
You shall not be a myth, I promise you.

## THE OLD SONG

(On the Embankment in Stormy Weather)

A LIVID sky on London  
And like the iron steeds that rear  
A shock of engines halted,  
And I knew the end was near:  
And something said that far away, over the hills  
and far away,  
There came a crawling thunder and the end of all  
things here.

For London Bridge is broken down, broken down,  
broken down,  
As digging lets the daylight on the sunken streets  
of yore,  
The lightning looked on London town, the broken  
bridge of London town.  
The ending of a broken road where men shall go  
no more.

I saw the kings of London town,  
The kings that buy and sell,  
That built it up with penny loaves  
And penny lies as well:

And where the streets were paved with gold the  
shrivelled paper shone for gold,  
The scorching light of promises that pave the  
streets of hell.  
For penny loaves will melt away, melt away, melt  
away,  
Mock the mean that haggled in the grain they did  
not grow;  
With hungry faces in the gate, a hundred thousand  
in the gate,  
A thunder-flash on London and the rinding of the  
foe.

I heard the hundred pin-makers  
Slow down their racking din,  
Till in the stillness men could hear  
The dropping of the pin :  
And somewhere men without the wall, beneath the  
wood, without the wall,

Had found the place where London ends and  
England can begin.  
For pins and needles bend and break, bend and  
break, bend and break,  
Faster than the breaking spears or the bending of  
the bow,  
Of pageants pale in thunder-light, 'twixt thunder-  
load and thunder-light,  
The Hundreds marching on the hills in the wars of  
long ago.

I saw great Cobbett riding,  
The horseman of the shires;  
And his face was red with judgment  
And a light of Luddite fires :  
And south to Sussex and the sea the lights leapt  
up for liberty,  
The trumpet of the yeomanry, the hammer of the  
squires ;  
For bars of iron rust away, rust away, rust  
away,  
Rend before the hammer and the horseman  
riding in,  
Crying that all men at the last, and at the worst  
and at the last,  
Have found the place where England ends and  
England can begin.

His horse-hoofs go before you,  
Far beyond your bursting tyres;  
And time is bridged behind him  
And our sons are with our sires.

A trailing meteor on the Downs he rides above the  
rotting towns,  
The Horseman of Apocalypse, the Rider of the  
Shires.  
For London Bridge is broken down, broken down,  
broken down;  
Blow the horn of Huntingdon from Scotland to the  
sea—  
. . . Only a flash of thunder-light, a flying dream  
of thunder-light,  
Had shown under the shattered sky a people that  
were free.

## THE TRINKETS

A WANDERING world of rivers,  
A wavering world of trees,  
If the world grow dim and dizzy  
With all changes and degrees,  
It is but Our Lady's mirror  
Hung dreaming in its place,  
Shining with only shadows  
Till she wakes it with her face.

The standing whirlpool of the stars,  
The wheel of all the world,  
Is a ring on Our Lady's finger  
With the suns and moons empearled  
With stars for stones to please her  
Who sits playing with her rings  
With the great heart that a woman has  
And the love of little things.

Wings of the whirlwind of the world  
From here to Ispahan,  
Spurning the flying forests,  
Are light as Our Lady's fan :  
For all things violent here and vain  
Lie open and all at ease  
Where God has girded heaven to guard  
Her holy vanities.

## THE PHILANTHROPIST

*(With Apologies to a Beautiful Poem)*

ABOU BEN ADHEM (may his tribe decrease  
By cautious birth-control and die in peace)  
Mellow with learning lightly took the word  
That marked him not with them that love the Lord,  
And told the angel of the book and pen  
" Write me as one that loves his fellow-men :  
For them alone I labour; to reclaim  
The ragged roaming Bedouin and to tame  
To ordered service ; to uproot their vine  
Who mock the Prophet, being mad with wine,  
Let daylight through their tents and through their  
lives,  
Number their camels, even count their wives;  
Plot out the desert into streets and squares,  
And count it a more fruitful work than theirs  
Who lift a vain and visionary love  
To your vague Allah in the skies above."

Gently replied the angel of the pen :  
" Labour in peace and love your fellow-men :  
And love not God, since men alone are dear,  
Only fear God ; for you have cause to fear."

## 74      ON      THE      DOWNS

### ON THE DOWNS

WHEN you came over the top of the world  
In the great day on the Downs,  
The air was crisp and the clouds were curled,  
When you came over the top of the world,  
And under your feet were spire and street  
And seven English towns.

And I could not think that the pride was perished  
As you came over the down ;  
Liberty, chivalry, all we cherished,  
Lost in a rattle of pelf and perished;  
Or the land we love that you walked above  
Withering town by town.

For you came out on the dome of the earth  
Like a vision of victory,  
Out on the great green dome of the earth  
As the great blue dome of the sky for girth,  
And under your feet the shires could meet  
And your eyes went out to sea.

Under your feet the towns were seven,  
Alive and alone on high,  
Your back to the broad white wall of heaven;  
You were one and the towns were seven,  
Single and one as the soaring sun  
And your head upheld the sky.

And I thought of a thundering flag unfurled  
And the roar of the burghers' bell:  
Beacons crackled and bolts were hurled  
As you came over the top of the world;  
And under your feet were chance and cheat  
And the slime of the slopes of hell.

It has not been as the great wind spoke  
On the great green down that day :  
We have seen, wherever the wide wind spoke,  
Slavery slaying the English folk :  
The robbers of land we have seen command;  
The rulers of land obey.

We have seen the gigantic golden worms  
In the garden of paradise :  
We have seen the great and the wise make terms  
With the peace of snakes and the pride of worms,  
And them that plant make covenant  
With the locust and the lice.

And the wind blows and the world goes on  
And the world can say that we,  
Who stood on the cliffs where the quarries shone,  
Stood upon clouds that the sun shone on :  
And the clouds dissunder and drown in thunder  
The news that will never be.

Lady of all that have loved the people,  
Light over roads astray,  
Maze of steading and street and steeple,  
Great as a heart that has loved the people:  
Stand on the crown of the soaring down,  
Lift up your arms and pray.

Only you I have not forgotten  
For wreck of the world's renown,  
Rending and ending of things gone rotten,  
Only the face of you unforgotten :  
And your head upthrown in the skies alone  
As you came over the down.

## THE RED SEA

OUR souls shall be Leviathans  
In purple seas of wine  
When drunkenness is dead with death,  
And drink is all divine ;  
Learning in those immortal vats  
What mortal vineyards mean;  
For only in heaven we shall know  
How happy we have been.

Like clouds that wallow in the wind  
Be free to drift and drink ;  
Tower without insolence when we rise,  
Without surrender sink:  
Dreams dizzy and crazy we shall know  
And have no need to write  
Our blameless blasphemies of praise,  
Our nightmares of delight.

For so in such misshapen shape  
The vision came to me,  
Where such titanic dolphins dark  
Roll in a sunset sea:  
Dark with dense colours, strange and strong  
As terrible true love,  
Haloed like fish in phosphor light  
The holy monsters move.

Measure is here and law, to learn,  
When honour rules it so,  
To lift the glass and lay it down  
Or break the glass and go.



But when the world's New Deluge boils  
From the New Noah's vine,  
Our souls shall be Leviathans  
In sanguine seas of wine.

## FOR A WAR MEMORIAL

*(Suggested Inscription probably not selected by the  
Committee)*

THE hucksters haggle in the mart,  
The cars and carts go by;  
Senates and schools go droning on;  
For dead things cannot die.

A storm stooped on the place of tombs  
With bolts to blast and rive;  
But these be names of many men  
The lightning found alive.

If usurers rule and rights decay  
And visions view once more  
Great Carthage like a golden shell  
Gape hollow on the shore,

Still to the last of crumbling time  
Upon this stone be read  
How many men of England died  
To prove they were not dead.

## MEMORY

IF I ever go back to Baltimore,  
The City of Maryland,  
I shall miss again as I missed before  
A thousand things of the world in store,  
The story standing in every door  
That beckons on every hand.

I shall not know where the bonds were riven,  
And a hundred faiths set free,  
Where a wandering cavalier had given  
Her hundredth name to the Queen of Heaven,  
And made oblation of feuds forgiven  
To Our Lady of Liberty.

I shall not travel the tracks of fame  
Where the war was not to the strong;  
Where Lee the last of the heroes came  
With the Men of the South and a flag like flame,  
And called the land by its lovely name  
In the unforgotten song.

If ever I cross the sea and stray  
To the City of Maryland,  
I will sit on a stone and watch or pray  
For a stranger's child that was there one day:  
And the child will never come back to play,  
And no one will understand.

## THE ENGLISH GRAVES

WERE I that wandering citizen whose city is the  
world,  
I would not weep for all that fell before the flags  
were furled;  
I would not let one murmur mar the trumpets  
volleying forth  
How God grew weary of the kings, and the cold  
hell in the north.  
But we whose hearts are homing birds have heavier  
thoughts of home,  
Though the great eagles burn with gold on Paris  
or on Rome,  
Who stand beside our dead and stare, like seers at  
an eclipse,  
At the riddle of the island tale and the twilight of  
the ships.

For these were simple men that loved with hands  
and feet and eyes,  
Whose souls were humbled to the hills and narrowed  
to the skies,  
The hundred little lands within one little land that  
lie,  
Where Severn seeks the sunset isles or Sussex scales  
the sky.

And what is theirs, though banners blow on Warsaw  
risen again,  
Or ancient laughter walks in gold through the  
vineyards of Lorraine,  
: Their dead are marked on English stones, their  
loves on English trees,

How little is the prize they win, how mean a coin  
for these—  
How small a shrivelled laurel-leaf lies crumpled here  
and curled :  
They died to save their country and they only saved  
the world.

## NIGHTMARE

THE silver and violet leopard of the night  
Spotted with stars and smooth with silence sprang;  
And though three doors stood open, the end of light  
Closed like a trap; and stillness was a clang.

Under the leopard sky of lurid stars  
I strove with evil sleep the hot night long,  
Dreams dumb and swollen of triumphs without wars,  
Of tongueless trumpet and unanswering gong.

I saw a pale imperial pomp go by,  
Helmet and horned mitre and heavy wreath;  
Their high strange ensigns hung upon the sky  
And their great shields were like the doors of death

Their mitres were as moving pyramids  
And all their crowns as marching towers were tall;  
Their eyes were cold under their carven lids  
And the same carven smile was on them all.

Over a paven plain that seemed unending  
They passed unfaltering till it found an end  
In one long shallow step ; and these descending  
Fared forth anew as long away to wend.

I thought they travelled for a thousand years;  
And at the end was nothing for them all,  
For all that splendour; of sceptres and of spears,  
But a new step, another easy fall.

The smile of stone seemed but a little less,  
The load of silver but a little more :  
And ever was that terraced wilderness  
And falling plain paved like a palace floor.

Rust red as gore crawled on their arms of might  
And on their faces wrinkles and not scars:  
Till the dream suddenly ended ; noise and light  
Loosened the tyranny of the tropic stars.

But over them like a subterranean sun  
I saw the sign of all the fiends that fell;  
And a wild voice cried " Hasten and be done,  
Is there no steepness in the stairs of hell ? "

He that returns, He that remains the same,  
Turned the round real world, His iron vice ;  
Down the grey garden paths a bird called twice,  
And through three doors mysterious daylight came.

## A SECOND CHILDHOOD

WHEN all my days are ending  
And I have no song to sing,  
I think I shall not be too old  
To stare at everything;  
As I stared once at a nursery door  
Or a tall tree and a swing.

Wherein God's ponderous mercy hangs  
On all my sins and me,  
Because He does not take away  
The terror from the tree  
And stones still shine along the road  
That are and cannot be.

Men grow too old for love, my love,  
Men grow too old for wine,  
But I shall not grow too old to see  
Unearthly daylight shine,  
Changing my chamber's dust to snow  
Till I doubt if it be mine.

Behold, the crowning mercies melt,  
The first surprises stay;  
And in my dross is dropped a gift  
For which I dare not pray :  
That a man grow used to grief and joy  
But not to night and day.

Men grow too old for love, my love,  
Men grow too old for lies ;  
But I shall not grow too old to see  
Enormous night arise,  
A cloud that is larger than the world  
And a monster made of eyes.

Nor am I worthy to unloose  
The latchet of my shoe ;  
Or shake the dust from off my feet  
Or the staff that bears me through  
On ground that is too good to last,  
Too solid to be true.

Men grow too old to woo, my love,  
Men grow too old to wed :  
But I shall not grow too old to see  
Hung crazily overhead  
Incredible rafters when I wake  
And find I am not dead.

A thrill of thunder in my hair:  
Though blackening clouds be plain,  
Still I am stung and startled  
By the first drop of the rain:  
Romance and pride and passion pass  
And these are what remain.

Strange crawling carpets of the grass,  
Wide windows of the sky:  
So in this perilous grace of God  
With all my sins go I:  
And things grow new though I grow old,  
Though I grow old and die.

" MEDIEVALISM "

IF men should rise and return to the noise and time  
of the tourney,  
The name and fame of the tabard, the tangle of  
gules and gold,  
Would these things stand and suffice for the bourne  
— of a backward journey,  
A light on our days returning, as it was in the  
days of old ?

Nay, there is none rides back to pick up a glove  
or a feather,  
Though the gauntlet rang with honour or the plume  
was more than a crown :  
And hushed is the holy trumpet that called the  
nations together  
And under the Horns of Hattin the hope of the  
world went down.

Ah, not in remembrance stored, but out of oblivion  
starting,  
Because you have sought new homes and all that  
you sought is so,  
Because you had trodden the fire and barred the  
door in departing,  
Returns in your chosen exile the glory of long ago.

Not then when you barred the door, not then when  
you trod the embers,  
But now, at your new road's end, you have seen the  
face of a fate,  
That not as a child looks back, and not as a fool  
remembers,  
All that men took too lightly and all that they love  
too late.

It is you that have made no rubric for saints, no  
raiment for lovers,  
Your caps that cry for a feather, your roofs that  
sigh for a spire :  
Is it a dream from the dead if your own decay  
discovers  
Alive in your rotting graveyard the worm of the  
world's desire ?



Therefore the old trees tower, that the green trees  
grow and are stunted :

Therefore these dead men mock you, that you the  
living are dead :

Since ever you battered the saints and the tools of  
your crafts were blunted,

Or shattered the glass in its glory and loaded your-  
selves with the lead.

When the usurer hunts the squire as the squire has  
hunted the peasant,

As sheep that are eaten of worms where men were  
eaten of sheep :

Now is the judgment of earth, and the weighing of  
past and present,

Who scorn to weep over ruins, behold your ruin  
and weep.

Have ye not known, ye fools, that have made the  
present a prison,

That thirst can remember water and hunger remem-  
ber bread ?

We went not gathering ghosts; but the shriek of  
your shame is arisen

Out of your own black Babel too loud; and it  
woke the dead.

## POLAND

AUGURS that watched archaic birds  
Such plumed prodigies might read,  
The eagles that were double-faced,  
The eagle that was black indeed;

## 86 THE HUNTING OF THE DRAGON

And when the battle-birds went down  
And in their track the vultures come,  
We know what pardon and what peace  
Will keep our little masters dumb.

The men that sell what others make,  
As vultures eat what others slay,  
Will prove in matching plume with plume  
That naught is black and all is grey;  
Grey as those dingy doves that once,  
By money-changers palmed and priced,  
Amid the crash of tables flapped  
And huddled from the wrath of Christ.

But raised for ever for a sign  
Since God made anger glorious,  
Where eagles black and vultures grey  
Flocked back about the heroic house,  
Where war is holier than peace,  
Where hate is holier than love,  
Shone terrible as the Holy Ghost  
An eagle whiter than a dove.

## THE HUNTING OF THE DRAGON

WHEN we went hunting the Dragon  
In the days when we were young,  
We tossed the bright world over our shoulder  
As bugle and baldrick slung;  
Never was world so wild and fair  
As what went by on the wind,  
Never such fields of paradise  
As the fields we left behind :

For this is the best of a rest for men  
 That men should rise and ride  
 Making a flying fairyland  
 Of market and country-side,  
 Wings on the cottage, wings on the wood,  
 Wings upon pot and pan,  
 For the hunting of the Dragon  
 That is the life of a man.

For men grow weary of fairyland  
 When the Dragon is a dream,  
 And tire of the talking bird in the tree,  
 The singing fish in the stream ;  
 And the wandering stars grow stale, grow stale,  
 And the wonder is stiff with scorn ;  
 For this is the honour of fairyland  
 And the following of the horn ;

Beauty on beauty called us back  
 When we could rise and ride,  
 And a woman looked out of every window  
 As wonderful as a bride :  
 And the tavern-sign as a tabard blazed,  
 And the children cheered and ran,  
 For the love of the hate of the Dragon  
 That is the pride of a man.

The sages called him a shadow  
 And the light went out of the sun :  
 And the wise men told us that all was well  
 And all was weary and one :  
 And then, and then, in the quiet garden,  
 With never a weed to kill,

We knew that his shining tail had shone  
In the white road over the hill:  
We knew that the clouds were flakes of flame,  
We knew that the sunset fire  
Was red with the blood of the Dragon  
Whose death is the world's desire.

For the horn was blown in the heart of the night  
That men should rise and ride,  
Keeping the tryst of a terrible jest  
Never for long untried;  
Drinking a dreadful blood for wine,  
Never in cup or can,  
The death of a deathless Dragon,  
That is the life of a man.

## SONNET

HIGH on the wall that holds Jerusalem  
I saw one stand under the stars like stone.  
And when I perish it shall not be known  
Whether he lived, some strolling son of Shein,  
Or was some great ghost wearing the diadem  
Of Solomon or Saladin on a throne :  
I only know, the features being unshown,  
I did not dare draw near and look on them.

Did ye not guess . . . the diadem might be  
Plaited in stranger style by hands of hate . . . ,  
But when I looked, the wall was desolate  
And the grey starlight powdered tower and tree  
And vast and vague beyond the Golden Gate  
Heaved Moab of the mountains like a sea.

## FANTASIA

THE happy men that lose their heads  
They find their heads in heaven  
As cherub heads with cherub wings,  
And cherub haloes even :  
Out of the infinite evening lands  
Along the sunset sea,  
Leaving the purple fields behind,  
The cherub wings beat down the wind  
Back to the groping body and blind  
As the bird back to the tree.

Whether the plumes be passion-red  
For him that truly dies  
By headsman's blade or battle-axe,  
Or blue like butterflies,  
For him that lost it in a lane  
In April's fits and starts,  
His folly is forgiven then :  
But higher, and far beyond our ken,  
Is the healing of the unhappy men,  
The men that lost their hearts.

Is there not pardon for the brave  
And broad release above,  
Who lost their heads for liberty  
Or lost their hearts for love ?  
Or is the wise man wise indeed  
Whom larger thoughts keep whole ?  
Who sees life equal like a chart,  
Made strong to play the saner part,  
And keep his head and keep his heart,  
And only lose his soul.

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

(THE CHIEF CONSTABLE HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT DECLARING THAT CAROL SINGING IN THE STREETS BY CHILDREN is ILLEGAL, AND MORALLY AND PHYSICALLY INJURIOUS. HE APPEALS TO THE PUBLIC TO DISCOURAGE THE PRACTICE.—*Daily Paper.*)

GOD rest you merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay;  
The Herald Angels cannot sing,  
The cops arrest them on the wing,  
And warn them of the docketing  
Of anything they say.

God rest you merry gentlemen,  
May nothing you dismay:  
On your reposeful cities lie  
Deep silence, broken only by  
The motor horn's melodious cry,  
The hooter's happy bray.

So, when the song of children ceased  
And Herod was obeyed,  
In his high hall Corinthian  
With purple and with peacock fan,  
Rested that merry gentleman;  
And nothing him dismayed.

## TO CAPTAIN FRYATT

TRAMPLED yet red is the last of the embers,  
Red the last cloud of a sun that has set;  
What of your sleeping though Flanders remembers,  
What of your waking, if England forget ?

Why should you share in the hearts that we harden,  
In the shame of our nature, who see it and live ?  
How more than the godly the greedy can pardon,  
How well and how quickly the hungry forgive.

Ah, well if the soil of the stranger had wrapped you,  
While the lords that you served and the friends  
that you knew  
Hawk in the marts of the tyrants that trapped you,  
Tout in the shops of the butchers that slew.

Why should you wake for a realm that is rotten,  
Stuffed with their bribes and as dead to their debts ?  
Sleep and forget us, as we have forgotten;  
For Flanders remembers and England forgets.

## FOR FIVE GUILDS:

## I. THE GLASS-STAINERS

To every Man his Mystery,  
A trade and only one :  
The masons make the hives of men,  
The domes of grey or dun,  
But we have wrought in rose and gold  
The houses of the sun.

The shipwrights build the houses high,  
Whose green foundations sway  
Alive with fish like little flames,  
When the wind goes out to slay.  
But we abide with painted sails  
The cyclone of the day.

The weavers make the clothes of men  
And coats for everyone;  
They walk the streets like sunset clouds;  
But we have woven and spun  
In scarlet or in golden-green  
The gay coats of the sun.

You whom the usurers and the lords  
With insolent liveries trod,  
Deep in dark church behold, above  
Their lance-lengths by a rod,  
Where we have blazed the tabard  
Of the trumpeter of God.

## II. THE BRIDGE-BUILDERS

IN the world's whitest morning  
As hoary with hope,  
The Builder of Bridges  
Was priest and was pope:  
And the mitre of mystery  
And the canopy his,  
Who darkened the chasms  
And domed the abyss.



To eastward and westward  
Spread wings at his word  
The arch with the key-stone  
That stoops like a bird ;  
That rides the wild air  
And the daylight cast under ;  
The highway of danger,  
The gateway of wonder.

Of his throne were the thunders  
That rivet and fix  
Wild weddings of strangers,  
That meet and not mix ;  
The town and the cornland ;  
The bride and the groom ;  
In the breaking of bridges  
Is treason and doom.

But he bade us, who fashion  
The road that can fly,  
That we build not too heavy  
And build not too high :  
Seeing alway that under  
The dark arch's bend  
Shine death and white daylight  
Unchanged to the end.

Who walk on his mercy  
Walk light, as he saith,  
Seeing that our life  
Is a bridge above death;  
And the world and its gardens  
And hills, as ye heard,  
Are born above space  
On the wings of a bird.

Not high and not heavy  
Is building of his :  
When ye seal up the flood  
And forget the abyss,  
When your towers are uplifted,  
Your banners unfurled,  
In the breaking of bridges  
Is the end of the world.

### III. THE STONE-MASONS

WE have graven the mountain of God with hands,  
As our hands were graven of God, they say,  
Where the seraphs burn in the sun like brands  
And the devils carry the rains away;  
Making a thrift of the throats of hell,  
Our gargoyles gather the roaring rain,  
Whose yawn is more than a frozen yell  
And their very vomiting not in vain.

Wilder than all that a tongue can utter,  
Wiser than all that is told in words,  
The wings of stone of the soaring gutter  
Fly out and follow the flight of the birds;  
The rush and rout of the angel wars  
Stand out above the astounded street,  
Where we flung our gutters against the stars  
For a sign that the first and the last shall meet.

We have graven the forest of heaven with hands,  
Being great with a mirth too gross for pride,  
In the stone that battered him Stephen stands  
And Peter himself is petrified:

Such hands as have grubbed in the glebe for bread  
Have bidden the blank rock blossom and thrive,  
Such hands as have stricken a live man dead  
Have struck, and stricken the dead alive.

Fold your hands before heaven in praying,  
Lift up your hands into heaven and cry;  
But look where our dizziest spires are saying  
What the hands of a man did up in the sky :  
Drenched before you have heard the thunder,  
White before you have felt the snow;  
For the giants lift up their hands to wonder  
How high the hands of a man could go.

#### IV. THE BELL-RINGERS

THE angels are singing like birds in a tree  
In the organ of good St. Cecily:  
And the parson reads with his hand upon  
The graven eagle of great St. John :  
But never the fluted pipes shall go  
Like the fifes of an army all a-row,  
Merrily marching down the street  
To the marts where the busy and idle meet;  
And never the brazen bird shall fly  
Out of the window and into the sky,  
Till men in cities and shires and ships  
Look up at the living Apocalypse.

But all can hark at the dark of even  
The bells that bay like the hounds of heaven,  
Tolling and telling that over and under,  
In the ways of the air like a wandering thunder,

The hunt is up over hills untrod :  
For the wind is the way of the dogs of God:  
From the tyrant's tower to the outlaw's den  
Hunting the souls of the sons of men.  
Ruler and robber and pedlar and peer,  
Who will not hearken and yet will hear;  
Filling men's heads with the hurry and hum  
Making them welcome before they come.

And we poor men stand under the steeple  
Drawing the cords that can draw the people,  
And in our leash like the leaping dogs  
Are God's most deafening demagogues :  
And we are but little, like dwarfs underground,  
While hang up in heaven the houses of sound,  
Moving like mountains that faith sets free,  
Yawning like caverns that roar with the sea,  
As awfully loaded, as airily buoyed,  
Armoured archangels that trample the void:  
Wild as with dancing and weighty with dooms,  
Heavy as their panoply, light as their plumes.

Neither preacher nor priest are we :  
Each man mount to his own degree :  
Only remember that just such a cord  
Tosses in heaven the trumpet and sword;  
Souls on their terraces, saints on their towers,  
Rise up in arms at alarum like ours :  
Glow like great watchfires that redden the skies  
Titans whose wings are a glory of eyes,  
Crowned constellations by twelves and by sevens,  
Domed dominations more old than the heavens,  
Virtues that thunder and thrones that endure  
Sway like a bell to the prayers of the poor.

## V. THE SHIPWRIGHTS.

The sea that is above the sky  
Low on it like a load did lie,  
The skies grew green and black and nigh  
And broke : and the Flood came.  
But through the inky violet sea  
A candle-lighted ship went she  
Whose master made our Mystery  
With Noah for his name.

The high impossible horns and hair  
The beards of bestial kings were there.  
Birds of the East, red-gold and rare,  
Crowded the mast for crown.  
Grey giant birds stood gaunt and strong  
But over them sang all day long  
The little lark that makes a song  
A mile from London town.

Hard as the world God nailed with stars  
That ship that on its decks and spars  
Carried the world and all its wars  
Troy and eternal Rome.  
Hard were old Noah's timbers found,  
And those we smite as hard and sound  
That shall have girt the green world round  
When all our ships come home.

Redeem we from that world undone  
Huge stones that shall outshine the sun  
And crowns and bones of gods, o'errun  
With leprosies of foam.  
For God regathers his ancient rights  
And heaven itself has newer sights,  
Happier in all its harbour-lights  
When all our ships come home.

## SONGS OF EDUCATION:

## I. HISTORY

*Form 991785, Sub-Section D*

The Roman threw us a road, a road,  
And sighed and strolled away:  
The Saxon gave us a raid, a raid,  
A raid that came to stay;  
The Dane went west, but the Dane confessed  
That he went a bit too far;  
And we all became, by another name,  
The Imperial race we are.

*Chorus*

The Imperial race, the inscrutable race,  
The invincible race we are.

Though Sussex hills are bare, are bare,  
And Sussex weald is wide,  
From Chichester to Chester  
Men saw the Norman ride;  
He threw his sword in the air and sang  
To a sort of a light guitar;  
It was all the same, for we all became  
The identical nobs we are.

*Chorus*

The identical nobs, individual nobs  
Unmistakable nobs we are.

The people lived on the land, the land,  
They potted about and prayed;  
They built a cathedral here and there  
Or went on a small crusade:

Till the bones of Becket were bundled out  
For the fun of a fat White Czar,  
And we all became, in spoil and flame,  
The intelligent lot we are.

*Chorus*

The intelligent lot, the intuitive lot,  
The infallible lot we are.

O Warwick woods are green, are green,  
But Warwick trees can fall:  
And Birmingham grew so big, so big,  
And Stratford stayed so small.  
Till the hooter howled to the morning lark  
That sang to the morning star ;  
And we all became, in freedom's name,  
The fortunate chaps we are.

*Chorus*

The fortunate chaps, felicitous chaps,  
The fairy-like chaps we are.

The people they left the land, the land,  
But they went on working hard;  
And the village green that had got mislaid  
Turned up in the squire's back-yard :  
But twenty men of us all got work  
On a bit of his motor car;  
And we all became, with the world's acclaim,  
The marvellous mugs we are :

*Chorus*

The marvellous mugs, miraculous mugs,  
The mystical mugs we are.

## SONGS OF EDUCATION:

## II. GEOGRAPHY

*Form 17055301, Sub-Section Z*

THE earth is a place on which England is found,  
And you find it however you twirl the globe round ;  
For the spots are all red and the rest is all grey,  
And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

Gibraltar's a rock that you see very plain,  
And attached to its base is the district of Spain.  
And the island of Malta is marked further on,  
Where some natives were known as the Knights of  
St. John.

Then Cyprus, and east to the Suez Canal,  
That was conquered by Dizzy and Rothschild his  
pal  
With the Sword of the Lord in the old English way ;  
And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

Our principal imports come far as Cape Horn;  
For necessities, cocoa; for luxuries, corn ;  
Thus Brahmins are born for the rice-field, and thus,  
The Gods made the Greeks to grow currants for us ;  
Of earth's other tributes are plenty to choose,  
Tobacco and petrol and Jazzing and Jews:  
The Jazzing will pass but the Jews they will stay;  
And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

Our principal exports, all labelled and packed,  
At the ends of the earth are delivered intact:  
Our soap or our salmon can travel in tins  
Between the two poles and as like as two pins;



So that Lancashire merchants whenever they like  
Can water the beer of a man in Klondike  
Or poison the meat of a man in Bombay;  
And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

The day of St. George is a musty affair  
Which Russians and Greeks are permitted to share ;  
The day of Trafalgar is Spanish in name  
And the Spaniards refuse to pronounce it the same ;  
But the day of the Empire from Canada came  
With Morden and Borden and Beaverbrook's fame  
And saintly seraphical souls such as they:  
And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

## SONGS OF EDUCATION:

### III. FOB THE CRÊCHE

*Form 8277059, Sub-Section K*

I REMEMBER my mother, the day that we met,  
A thing I shall never entirely forget;  
And I toy with the fancy that, young as I am,  
I should know her again if we met in a tram.  
But mother is happy in turning a crank  
That increases the balance at somebody's bank;  
And I feel satisfaction that mother is free  
From the sinister task of attending to me.

They have brightened our room, that is spacious  
and cool,  
With diagrams used in the Idiot School,  
And Books for the Blind that will teach us to see;  
But mother is happy, for mother is free.

For mother is dancing up forty-eight floors,  
 For love of the Leeds International Stores,  
 And the flame of that faith might perhaps have  
     grown cold,  
 With the care of a baby of seven weeks old.

For mother is happy in greasing a wheel  
 For somebody else, who is cornering Steel;  
 And though our one meeting was not very long,  
 She took the occasion to sing me this song:

" O, hush thee, my baby, the time will soon come  
 When thy sleep will be broken with hooting and  
     hum;

There are handles want turning and turning all day,  
 And knobs to be pressed in the usual way;

O, hush thee, my baby, take rest while I croon,  
 For Progress comes early, and Freedom too soon."

## SONGS OF EDUCATION

### IV. CITIZENSHIP

#### *Form 8889512, Sub-Section Q*

How slowly learns the child at school  
 The names of all the nobs that rule  
 From Ponsonby to Pennant;  
 Ere his bewildered mind find rest,  
 Knowing his host can be a Guest,  
 His landlord is a Tennant.

He knew not, at the age of three,  
 What Lord St. Leger next will be  
 Or what he was before ;  
 A Primrose in the social swim  
 A Mr. Primrose is to him,  
 And he is nothing more.

But soon, about the age of ten,  
He finds he is a Citizen,  
And knows his way about;  
Can pause within, or just beyond,  
The line 'twixt Mond and Demi-Mond,  
'Twixt Getting On—or Out.

The Citizen will take his share  
(In every sense) as bull and bear;  
Nor need this oral ditty  
Invoke the philologic pen  
To show you that a Citizen  
Means Something in the City.

Thus gains he, with the virile gown,  
The fasces and the civic crown,  
The forum of the free;  
Not more to Rome's high law allied  
Is Devonport in all his pride  
Or Lipton's self than he.

For he will learn, if he will try,  
The deep interior truths whereby  
We rule the Commonwealth;  
What is the Food-Controller's fee  
And whether the Health Ministry  
Are in it for their health.

## SONGS OF EDUCATION:

## V. THE HIGHER MATHEMATICS

*Form 339125, Sub-Section M*

TWICE one is two,  
Twice two is four,  
But twice two is ninety-six if you know  
the way to score.

Half of two is one,  
Half of four is two,  
But half of four is forty per cent, if your name is  
Montagu:  
For everything else is on the square  
If done by the best quadratics;  
And nothing is low in High Finance  
Or the Higher Mathematics.

A straight line is straight  
And a square mile is fiat:  
But you learn in trigonometries a trick worth two  
of that.  
Two straight lines  
Can't enclose a Space,  
But they can enclose a Corner to support the  
Chosen Race:  
For you never know what Dynamics do  
With the lower truths of Statics;  
And half of two is a touring car  
la the Higher Mathematics.

There is a place apart  
Beyond the solar ray,  
Where parallel straight lines can meet in an un-  
official way.  
There is a room that holds  
The examiner or his clerks,  
Where you can square the circle or the man that  
gives the marks.  
Where you hide in the cellar and then look down  
On the poets that live in the attics;  
For the whole of the house is upside down  
In the Higher Mathematics.

## SONGS OF EDUCATION:

## VI. HYGIENE

*Form 394411102, Sub-Section X*

" ALL PRACTICAL EUGENISTS ARE AGREED ON THE  
IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP."—*The Eugenic Congress.*

WHEN Science taught mankind to breathe  
A little while ago,  
Only a wise and thoughtful few  
Were really in the know :  
Nor could the Youth his features wreath,  
Puffing from all the lungs beneath :  
When Duty whispered softly " Breathe 1 "  
The Youth would answer " Blow ! "

When Science proved with lucid care  
The need of Exercise,  
Our thoughtless Youth was climbing trees  
Or lightly blacking eyes:

To reckless idlers breaking bounds  
For football or for hare-and-hounds,  
Or fighting hard for fourteen rounds,  
It came as a surprise.

But when she boldly counsels Sleep  
To persons when in bed,  
Then, then indeed men blush to see  
The daybreak blushing red:  
The early risers whom we term  
Healthy, grow sickly and infirm ;  
The Early Bird who caught the Worm  
Will catch the Germ instead.

For this at least be Science praised  
If all the rest be rot,  
That now she snubs the priggish child  
That quits too soon his cot:  
The pharisaic pachyderm  
Of spiritual pride shall squirm :  
The Early Bird catches the worm,  
The Worm that dieth not.

BOOK THREE

POEMS

(COLLECTED, 1915)

## PREFATORY NOTE

This collection was made a long time ago and includes items written a very long time before that: things that are indeed merely juvenile. But I have decided that it is very difficult to disentangle the threads in a patchwork which may already be thought threadbare : and I have let these schoolboy verses remain side by side with some that I wrote at least in maturer years and on more momentous occasions.

G. K. C.



TO EDMUND CLERIHEW BENTLEY  
THE DEDICATION OF THE MAN WHO WAS  
THUKSDAY.

A CLOUD was on the mind of men, and wailing went  
the weather,  
Yea, a sick cloud upon the soul when we were boys  
together.  
Science announced nonentity and art admired  
decay;  
The world was old and ended : but you and I were  
gay-  
Round us in antic order their crippled vices  
came—  
Lust that had lost its laughter, fear that had lost  
its shame.  
Like the white lock of Whistler, that lit our aimless  
gloom,  
Men showed their own white feather as proudly as  
a plume.  
Life was a fly that faded, and death a drone that  
stung;  
The world was very old indeed when you and I  
were young.  
They twisted even decent sin to shapes not to be  
named :  
Men were ashamed of honour; but we were not  
ashamed.

110 TO EDMUND CLERIHEW BENTLEY

Weak if we were and foolish, not thus we failed,  
not thus;

When that black Baal blocked the heavens he had  
no hymns from us.

Children we were—our forts of sand were even as  
weak as we,

High as they went we piled them up to break that  
bitter sea.

Fools as we were in motley, all jangling and absurd,  
When all church bells were silent our cap and bells  
were heard.

Not all unhelped we held the fort, our tiny flags  
unfurled;

Some giants laboured in that cloud to lift it from  
the world.

I find again the book we found, I feel the hour  
that flings

Far out of fish-shaped Paumanok some cry of  
cleaner things ;

And the Green Carnation withered, as in forest fires  
that pass,

Roared in the wind of all the world ten million  
leaves of grass;

Or sane and sweet and sudden as a bird sings in  
the rain—

Truth out of Tusitala spoke and pleasure out of  
pain.

Yea, cool and clear and sudden as a bird sings in  
the grey,

Dunedin to Samoa spoke, and darkness unto day.  
But we were young; we lived to see God break  
their bitter charms,

God and the good Republic come riding back in  
arms:

**We** have seen the city of Mansoul, even as it rocked,  
relieved—  
Blessed are they who did not see, but being blind,  
believed.

This is a tale of those old fears, even of those emptied  
hells,  
And none but you shall understand the true thing  
that it tells—  
Of what colossal gods of shame could cow men and  
yet crash,  
Of what huge devils hid the stars, yet fell at a pistol  
flash.  
The doubts that were so plain to chase, so dreadful  
to withstand—  
Oh, who shall understand but you; yea, who shall  
understand ?  
The doubts that drove us through the night as we  
two talked amain,  
And day had broken on the streets e'er it broke  
upon the brain.  
Between us, by the peace of God, such truth can  
now be told ;  
Yea, there is strength in striking root, and good in  
growing old.  
We have found common things at last, and marriage  
and a creed,  
And I may safely write it now, and you may safely  
read.

## TO HILAIRE BELLOC

THE DEDICATION OF "*The Napoleon of Notting Hill.*"

FOR every tiny town or place  
God made the stars especially;  
Babies look up with owlsh face  
And see them tangled in a tree ?  
You saw a moon from Sussex Downs,  
A Sussex moon, untravelled still,  
I saw a moon that was the town's,  
The largest lamp on Campden Hill.

Yea, Heaven is everywhere at home,  
The big blue cap that always fits,  
And so it is (be calm; they come  
To goal at last, my wandering wits),  
So is it with the heroic thing;  
This shall not end for the world's end,  
And though the sullen engines swing,  
Be you not much afraid, my friend.

This did not end by Nelson's urn  
Where an immortal England sits—•  
Nor where our tall young men in turn  
Drank death like wine at Austerlitz.  
And when the pedants bade us mark  
What cold mechanic happenings  
Must come; our souls said in the dark,  
" Belike ; but there are likelier things."

Likelier across these flats afar,  
These sulky levels smooth and free,  
The drums shall crash a waltz of war  
And Death shall dance with Liberty;  
Likelier the barricades shall blare  
Slaughter below and smoke above,  
And death and hate and hell declare  
That men have found a thing to love.

Far from your sunny uplands set  
I saw the dream; the streets I trod,  
The lit straight streets shot out and met  
The starry streets that point to God ;  
The legend of an epic hour  
A child I dreamed, and dream it still,  
Under the great grey water tower  
That strikes the stars on Campden Hill.

## TO M.E.W.

WORDS, for alas my trade is words, a barren burst  
of rhymes,  
Rubbed by a hundred rhymesters, battered a  
thousand times,  
Take them, you, that smile on strings, those nobler  
sounds than mine,  
The words that never lie, or brag, or flatter, or  
malign.

I give a hand to my lady, another to my friend,  
To whom you too have given a hand ; and so  
, before the end  
We four may pray, for all the years, whatever suns  
be set,  
The sole two prayers worth praying—to live and  
not forget.

The pale leaf falls in pallor, but the green leaf turns  
to gold;

We that have found it good to be young shall  
find it good to be old ;

Life that bringeth the marriage bell, the cradle and  
the grave,

Life that is mean to the mean of heart, and only  
brave to the brave.

In the calm of the last white winter, when all the  
past is ours,

Old tears are frozen as jewels, old storms frosted  
as flowers.

Dear Lady, may we meet again, stand up again, we  
four,

Beneath the burden of the years, and praise the  
earth once more.

## LEPANTO

WHITE founts falling in the courts of the sun,  
And the Soldan of Byzantium is smiling as they  
run;

There is laughter like the fountains in that face of  
all men feared,

It stirs the forest darkness, the darkness of his beard,  
It curls the blood-red crescent, the crescent of his  
lips,

For the inmost sea of all the earth is shaken with  
his ships.

They have dared the white republics up the capes  
of Italy,

They have dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of  
the Sea,

And the Pope has cast his arms abroad for agony  
and loss,  
And called the kings of Christendom for swords  
about the Cross,  
The cold queen of England is looking in the  
glass;  
The shadow of the Valois is yawning at the  
Mass;  
From evening isles fantastical rings faint the Spanish  
gun,  
And the Lord upon the Golden Horn is laughing in  
the sun.

Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,  
Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince  
has stirred,  
Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half-attainted  
stall,  
The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the  
wall,  
The last and lingering troubadour to whom the bird  
has sung,  
That once went singing southward when all the  
world was young,  
In that enormous silence, tiny and unafraid,  
Comes up along a winding road the noise of the  
Crusade.  
Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,  
Don John of Austria is going to the war,  
Stiff flags straining in the night-blasts cold  
In the gloom black-purple, in the glint old-gold,  
Torchlight crimson on the copper kettle-drums,  
Then the tuckets, then the trumpets, then the  
cannon, and he comes.

Don John laughing in the brave beard curled,  
Spurning of his stirrups like the thrones of all the  
world,  
Holding his head up for a flag of all the free.  
Love-light of Spain—hurrah !  
Death-light of Africa !  
Don John of Austria  
Is riding to the sea.

Mahound is in his paradise above the evening star,  
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war.*)  
He moves a mighty turban on the timeless houri's  
knees,  
His turban that is woven of the sunset and the seas.  
He shakes the peacock gardens as he rises from his  
ease,  
And he strides among the tree-tops and is taller than  
the trees,  
And his voice through all the garden is a thunder  
sent to bring  
Black Azrael and Ariel and Ammon on the wing.  
Giants and the Genii,  
Multiplex of wing and eye,  
Whose strong obedience broke the sky  
When Solomon was king.

They rush in red and purple from the red clouds of  
the morn,  
From temples where the yellow gods shut up their  
eyes in scorn;  
They rise in green robes roaring from the green  
hells of the sea  
Where fallen skies and evil hues and eyeless creatures  
be;



On them the sea-valves cluster and the grey sea-  
forests curl,  
Splashed with a splendid sickness, the sickness of  
the pearl;  
They swell in sapphire smoke out of the blue cracks  
of the ground,—  
They gather and they wonder and give worship to  
Mahound.  
And he saith, " Break up the mountains where the  
hermit-folk may hide,  
And sift the red and silver sands lest bone of saint  
abide,  
And chase the Giaours flying night and day, not  
giving rest,  
For that which was our trouble comes again out of  
the west.  
We have set the seal of Solomon on all things under  
sun,  
Of knowledge and of sorrow and endurance of things  
done,  
But a noise is in the mountains, in the mountains,  
and I know  
The voice that shook our palaces—four hundred  
years ago :  
It is he that saith not ' Kismet'; it is he that  
knows not Fate;  
It is Richard, it is Raymond, it is Godfrey in the  
gate I  
It is he whose loss is laughter when he counts the  
wager worth,  
Put down your feet upon him, that our peace be on  
the earth."  
For he heard drums groaning and he heard guns jar,  
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war.*)

Sudden and still—hurrah !  
Bolt from Iberia!  
Don John of Austria  
Is gone by Alcalar.

St. Michael's on his Mountain in the sea-roads of  
the north  
(*Don John of Austria is girt and going forth.*)  
Where the grey seas glitter and the sharp tides  
shift  
And the sea folk labour and the red sails lift.  
He shakes his lance of iron and he claps his wings of  
stone;  
The noise is gone through Normandy; the noise is  
gone alone;  
The North is full of tangled things and texts and  
aching eyes  
And dead is all the innocence of anger and sur-  
prise,  
And Christian killeth Christian in a narrow dusty  
room,  
And Christian dreadeth Christ that hath a newer  
face of doom,  
And Christian hateth Mary that God kissed in  
Galilee,  
But Don John of Austria is riding to the sea.  
Don John calling through the blast and the  
eclipse  
Crying with the trumpet, with the trumpet of his  
lips,  
Trumpet that sayeth ha I  
*Domino gloria!*  
Don John of Austria  
Is shouting to the ships.

King Philip's in his closet with the Fleece about his neck

*(Don John of Austria is armed upon the deck.)*

The walls are hung with velvet that is black and soft as sin,

And little dwarfs creep out of it and little dwarfs creep in.

He holds a crystal phial that has colours like the moon,

He touches, and it tingles, and he trembles very soon,

And his face is as a fungus of a leprous white and grey

Like plants in the high houses that are shuttered from the day,

And death is in the phial, and the end of noble work,

But Don John of Austria has fired upon the Turk.

Don John's hunting, and his hounds have bayed—  
Booms away past Italy the rumour of his raid.

Gun upon gun, ha ! ha !

Gun upon gun, hurrah I

Don John of Austria

Has loosed the cannonade.

The Pope was in his chapel before day or battle broke,

*(Don John of Austria is hidden in the smoke.)*

The hidden room in a man's house where God sits all the year,

The secret window whence the world looks small and very dear.

He sees as in a mirror on the monstrous twilight sea

The crescent of his cruel ships whose name is mystery;

They fling great shadows foe-wards, making Cross  
and Castle dark,  
They veil the plumed lions on the galleys of St.  
Mark;  
And above the ships are palaces of brown, black-  
bearded chiefs,  
And below the ships are prisons, where with multi-  
tudinous griefs,  
Christian captives sick and sunless, all a labouring  
race repines  
Like a race in sunken cities, like a nation in the  
mines.  
They are lost like slaves that swat, and in the skies  
of morning hung  
The stairways of the tallest gods when tyranny was  
young.  
They are countless, voiceless, hopeless as those fallen  
or fleeing on  
Before the high Kings' horses in the granite of  
Babylon.  
And many a one grows witless in his quiet room in  
hell  
Where a yellow face looks inward through the  
lattice of his cell,  
And he finds his God forgotten, and he seeks no  
more a sign—  
*(But Don John of Austria has burst the battle-line!)*  
Don John pounding from the slaughter-painted poop,  
Purpling all the ocean like a bloody pirate's sloop,  
Scarlet running over on the silvers and the golds,  
Breaking of the hatches up and bursting of the holds,  
Thronging of the thousands up that labour under sea  
White for bliss and blind for sun and stunned for  
liberty.

MARCH OF THE BLACK MOUNTAIN 121

*Vivat Hispania !*

*Domino Gloria !*

Don John of Austria

Has set his people free!

Cervantes on his galley sets the sword back in the  
sheath

*(Don John of Austria rides homeward with a wreath.)*

And he sees across a weary land a straggling road  
in Spain,

Up which a lean and foolish knight forever rides in  
vain,

And he smiles, but not as Sultans smile, and settles  
back the blade. . . .

*(But Don John of Austria rides home from the  
Crusade.)*

MARCH OF THE BLACK MOUNTAIN

1913

WHAT will there be to remember

Of us in the days to be ?

Whose faith was a trodden ember

And even our doubts not free;

Parliaments built of paper,

And the soft swords of gold

That twist like a waxen taper

In the weak aggressor's hold;

A hush around Hunger, slaying

A city of serfs unfed;

What shall we leave for a saying

To praise us when we are dead ?

But men shall remember the Mountain

That broke its forest chains,

## 122 MARCH OF THE BLACK MOUNTAIN

And men shall remember the Mountain  
When it arches against the plains :  
And christen their children from it  
And season and ship and street,  
When the Mountain came to Mahomet  
And looked small before his feet.

His head was as high as the crescent  
Of the moon that seemed his crown,  
And on glory of past and present  
The light of his eyes looked down;  
One hand went out to the morning  
Over Brahmin and Buddhist slain,  
And one to the west in scorning  
To point at the scars of Spain :  
One foot on the hills for warden  
By the little Mountain trod;  
And one was in a garden  
And stood on the grave of God.  
But men shall remember the Mountain,  
Though it fall down like a tree,  
They shall see the sign of the Mountain  
Faith cast into the sea;  
Though the crooked swords overcome it  
And the Crooked Moon ride free,  
When the Mountain comes to Mahomet  
It has more life than he.

But what will there be to remember  
Or what will there be to see—  
Though our towns through a long November  
Abide to the end and be ?  
Strength of slave and mechanic  
Whose iron is ruled by gold,

Peace of immortal panic,

Love that is hate grown cold—

Are these a bribe or a warning

That we turn not to the sun,

Nor look on the lands of morning

Where deeds at last are done ?

Where men shall remember the Mountain

When truth forgets the plain—

And walk in the way of the Mountain

That did not fail in vain ;

Death and eclipse and comet,

Thunder and seals that rend :

When the Mountain came to Mahomet;

Because it was the end.

# BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

OF old with a divided heart

I saw my people's pride expand,

Since a man's soul is torn apart

By mother earth and fatherland.

I knew, through many a tangled tale.

Glory and truth not one but two :

King, Constable, and Amirail

Took me like trumpets : but I knew

A blacker thing than blood's own dye

Weighed down great Hawkins on the sea;

And Nelson turned his blindest eye

On Naples and on liberty.

Therefore to you my thanks, O throne,

O thousandfold and frozen folk ;

For whose cold frenzies all your own

The Battle of the Rivers broke ;

Who have no faith a man could mourn,  
Nor freedom any man desires ;  
But in a new clean light of scorn  
Close up my quarrel with my sires;

Who bring my English heart to me,  
Who mend me like a broken toy  
Till I can see you fight and flee,  
And laugh as if I were a boy.

## THE WIFE OF FLANDERS

Low and brown barns thatched and repatched and  
tattered

Where I had seven sons until to-day,  
A little hill of hay your spur has scattered. . . .  
This is not Paris. You have lost the way.

You, staring at your sword to find it brittle,  
Surprised at the surprise that was your plan,  
Who shaking and breaking barriers not a little  
Find never more the death-door of Sedan.

Must I for more than carnage call you claimant,  
Paying you a penny for each son you slay ?  
Man, the whole globe in gold were no repayment  
For what *you* have lost. And how shall I repay ?

What is the price of that red spark that caught me  
From a kind farm that never had a name ?  
What is the price of that dead man they brought  
me?  
For other dead men do not look the same.



How should I pay for one poor graven steeple  
 Whereon you shattered what you shall not know.  
 How should I pay you, miserable people ?  
 How should I pay you everything you owe ?

Unhappy, can I give you back your honour ?  
 Though I forgave would any man forget ?  
 While all the great green land has trampled on her  
 The treason and terror of the night we met.

Not any more in vengeance or in pardon  
 An old wife bargains for a bean that's hers.  
 You have no word to break: no heart to harden.  
 Ride on and prosper. You have lost your spurs.

# THE CRUSADER RETURNS FROM CAPTIVITY

I HAVE come forth alive from the land of purple  
 and poison and glamour,  
 Where the charm is strong as the torture, being  
 chosen to change the mind;  
 Torture of wordless dance and wineless feast with-  
 out clamour,  
 Palace hidden in palace, garden with garden  
 behind;

Women veiled in the sun, or bare as brass in the  
 shadows,  
 And the endless eyeless patterns where each thing  
 seems an eye. . . .  
 And my stride is on Caesar's sand where it slides to  
 the English meadows,  
 To the last low woods of Sussex and the road that  
 goes to Rye.

In the cool and careless woods the eyes of the  
eunuchs burned not,  
But the wild hawk went before me, being free  
to return or roam,  
The hills had broad unconscious backs; and the  
tree-tops turned not,  
And the huts were heedless of me; and I knew I  
was at home.

And I saw my lady afar and her holy freedom upon  
her,  
A head, without veil, averted, and not to be  
turned with charms,  
And I heard above bannerets blown the intolerant  
trumpets of honour,  
That usher with iron laughter the coming of  
Christian arms.

My shield hangs stainless still; but I shall not go  
where they praise it,  
A sword is still at my side, but I shall not ride  
with the King.  
Only to walk and to walk and to stun my soul and  
amaze it,  
A day with the stone and the sparrow and every  
marvellous thing.

I have trod the curves of the Crescent, in the maze  
of them that adore it,  
Curved around doorless chambers and unbeholden  
abodes,  
But I walk in the maze no more; on the sign of  
the cross I swore it,  
The wild white cross of freedom, the sign of the  
white cross-roads.

And the land shall leave me or take, and the  
 Woman take me or leave me,  
 There shall be no more night, or nightmares seen  
 in a glass;  
 But Life shall hold me alive, and Death shall never  
 deceive me  
 As long as I walk in England in the lanes that let  
 me pass.

GLENCOE

THE star-crowned cliffs seem hinged upon the sky,  
 The clouds are floating rags across them curled,  
 They open to us like the gates of God  
 Cloven in the last great wall of all the world.

I looked, and saw the valley of my soul  
 Where naked crests fight to achieve the skies,  
 Where no grain grows nor wine, no fruitful thing,  
 Only big words and starry blasphemies.

But you have clothed with mercy like a moss  
 The barren violence of its primal wars,  
 Sterile although they be and void of rule,  
 You know my shapeless crags have loved the stars.

How shall I thank you, O courageous heart,  
 That of this wasteful world you had no fear;  
 But bade it blossom in clear faith and sent  
 Your fair flower-feeding rivers: even as here

The peat burns brimming from their cups of stone  
 Glow brown and blood-red down the vast decline  
 As if Christ stood on yonder clouded peak  
 And turned its thousand waters into wine.

## LOVE'S TRAPPIST

THERE is a place where lute and lyre are broken,  
Where scrolls are torn and on a wild wind go  
Where tablets stand wiped naked for a token,  
Where laurels wither and the daisies grow.

Lo: I too join the brotherhood of silence,  
I am Love's trappist and you ask in vain,  
For man through Love's gate, even as through  
    Death's gate,  
Goeth alone and comes not back again.

Yet here I pause, look back across the threshold,  
Cry to my brethren, though the world be old,  
Prophets and sages, questioners and doubters,  
O world, old world, the best hath ne'er been told !

## CONFESSIONAL

Now that I kneel at the throne, O Queen,  
Pity and pardon me.  
Much have I striven to sing the same,  
Brother of beast and tree ;  
Yet when the stars catch me alone  
Never a linnet sings—  
And the blood of a man is a bitter voice  
And cries for foolish things.

Not for me be the vaunt of woe;  
Was not I from a boy  
Vowed with the helmet and spear and spur  
To the blood-red banner of joy ?  
A man may sing his psalms to a stone,  
Pour his blood for a weed,  
But the tears of a man are a sudden thing,  
And come not of his creed.

Nay, but the earth is kind to me,  
Though I cry for a star,  
Leaves and grasses, feather and flower,  
Cover the foolish scar,  
Prophets and saints and seraphim  
Lighten the load with song,  
And the heart of a man is a heavy load  
For a man to bear along.

## MUSIC

SOUNDING brass and tinkling cymbal,  
He that made me sealed my ears,  
And the pomp of gorgeous noises,  
Waves of triumph, waves of tears,

Thundered empty round and past me,  
Shattered, lost for evermore,  
Ancient gold of pride and passion,  
Wrecked like treasure on a shore.

But I saw her cheek and forehead  
Change, as at a spoken word,  
And I saw her head uplifted  
Like a lily to the Lord.

Nought is lost, but all transmuted,  
Ears are sealed, yet eyes have seen ;  
Saw her smiles (O soul be worthy !),  
Saw her tears (O heart be clean !).

## THE DELUGE,

THOUGH giant rains put out the sun,  
Here stand I for a sign.  
Though Earth be filled with waters dark,  
My cup is filled with wine.  
Tell to the trembling priests that here  
Under the deluge rod,  
One nameless, tattered, broken man  
Stood up and drank to God.

Sun has been where the rain is now,  
Bees in the heat to hum,  
Haply a humming maiden came,  
Now let the deluge come:  
Brown of aureole, green of garb,  
Straight as a golden rod,  
Drink to the throne of thunder now !  
Drink to the wrath of God.

High in the wreck I held the cup,  
I clutched my rusty sword,  
I cocked my tattered feather  
To the glory of the Lord.  
Not undone were the heaven and earth,  
This hollow world thrown up,  
Before one man had stood up straight,  
And drained it like a cup.

## THE STRANGE MUSIC

OTHER loves may sink and settle, other loves may  
loose and slack,  
But I wander like a minstrel with a harp upon  
his back,  
Though the harp be on my bosom, though I finger  
and I fret,  
Still, my hope is all before me : for I cannot play it  
yet.

In your strings is hid a music that no hand hath e'er  
let fall,  
In your soul is scaled a pleasure that you have not  
known at all;  
Pleasure subtle as your spirit, strange and slender as  
your frame,  
Fiercer than the pain that folds you, softer than  
your sorrow's name.

Not as mine, my soul's anointed, not as mine the  
rude and light  
Easy mirth of many faces, swaggering pride of song  
and fight;  
Something stranger, something sweeter, something  
waiting you afar,  
Secret as your stricken senses, magic as your sorrows  
are.

But on this, God's harp supernal, stretched but to  
be stricken once,  
Hoary time is a beginner, Life a bungler, Death a  
dunce.

But I will not fear to match them—no, by God, I  
will not fear,  
I will learn you, I will play you and the stars stand  
still to hear.

## THE GREAT MINIMUM

IT is something to have wept as we have wept,  
It is something to have done as we have done,  
It is something to have watched when all men slept,  
And seen the stars which never see the sun.

It is something to have smelt the mystic rose,  
Although it break and leave the thorny rods,  
It is something to have hungered once as those  
Must hunger who have ate the bread of gods.

To have seen you and your unforgotten face,  
Brave as a blast of trumpets for the fray,  
Pure as white lilies in a watery space,  
It were something, though you went from me to-day.

To have known the things that from the weak are  
furred,  
Perilous ancient passions, strange and high;  
It is something to be wiser than the world,  
It is something to be older than the sky.

In a time of sceptic moths and cynic rusts,  
And fatted lives that of their sweetness tire,  
In a world of flying loves and fading lusts,  
It is something to be sure of a desire.



Lo, blessed are our ears for they have heard;  
Yea, blessed are our eyes for they have seen :  
Let thunder break on man and beast and bird  
And the lightning. It is something to have been.

## THE MORTAL ANSWERS

. . . . . COME AWAY—  
WITH THE FAIRIES, HAND IN HAND,  
FOR THE WORLD IS MORE FULL OF WEeping  
THAN YOU CAN UNDERSTAND.

*W. B. Yeats.*

FROM the Wood of the Old Wives' Fables  
They glittered out of the grey,  
And with all the armies of Elf-land  
I strove like a beast at bay;

With only a right arm wearied,  
Only a red sword worn,  
And the pride of the house of Adam  
That holdeth the stars in scorn.

For they came with chains of flowers  
And lilies' lances free,  
There in the quiet greenwood  
To take my grief from me.

And I said, " Now all is shaken  
When heavily hangs the brow,  
When the hope of the years is taken,  
The last star sunken. Now—

\*\* Hear, you chattering cricket,  
Hear, you spawn of the sod,  
The strange strong cry in the darkness  
Of one man praising God,

" That out of the night and nothing  
With travail of birth he came  
To stand one hour in the sunlight  
Only to say her name.

" Falls through her hair the sunshine  
In showers ; it touches, see,  
Her high bright cheeks in turning;  
Ah, Elfin Company.

" The world is hot and cruel,  
We are weary of heart and hand,  
But the world is more full of glory  
Than you can understand."

### A MARRIAGE SONG

WHY should we reck of hours that rend  
While we two ride together ?  
The heavens rent from end to end  
Would be but windy weather,  
The strong stars shaken down in spate  
Would be a shower of spring,  
And we should list the trump of fate  
And hear a linnet sing.

We break the line with stroke and luck,  
The arrows run like rain,  
If you be struck, or I be struck,  
There's one to strike again.  
If you befriend, or I befriend,  
The strength is in us twain,  
And good things end and bad things end,  
And you and I remain.

Why should we reck of ill or well  
While we two ride together ?  
The fires that over Sodom fell  
Would be but sultry weather.  
Beyond all ends to all men given  
Our race is far and fell,  
We shall but wash our feet in heaven,  
And warm our hands in hell.

Battles unborn and vast shall view  
Our faltered standards stream,  
New friends shall come and frenzies new,  
New troubles toil and teem ;  
New friends shall pass and still renew  
One truth that does not seem,  
That I am I, and you are you,  
And Death a morning dream.

Why should we reck of scorn or praise  
While we two ride together ?  
The icy air of godless days  
Shall be but wintry weather.  
If hell were highest, if the heaven  
Were blue with devils blue,  
I should have guessed that all was even,  
If I had dreamed of you.

Little I reck of empty prides,  
Of creeds more cold than clay;  
To nobler ends and longer rides,  
My lady rides to-day.  
To swing our swords and take our sides  
In that all-ending fray  
When stars fall down and darkness hides,  
When God shall turn to bay.

Why should we reck of grin and groan  
While we two ride together ?  
The triple thunders of the throne  
Would be but stormy weather.  
For us the last great fight shall roar,  
Upon the ultimate plains,  
And we shall turn and tell once more  
Our love in English lanes.

## BAY COMBE

WITH leaves below and leaves above,  
And groping under tree and tree,  
I found the home of my true love,  
Who is a wandering home for me.

Who, lost in ruined worlds aloof,  
Bore the dread dove wings like a roof;  
Who, past the last lost stars of space,  
Carried the fire-light on her face.

Who, passing as in idle hours,  
Tamed the wild weeds to garden flowers;  
Stroked the strange whirlwind's whirring wings,  
And made the comets homely things.

Where she went by upon her way  
The dark was dearer than the day;  
Where she paused in heaven or hell,  
The whole world's tale had ended well,

*With leaves below and leaves above,  
And groping under tree and tree,  
I found the home of my true love,  
Who is a wandering home for me.*

Where she was flung, above, beneath,  
By the rude dance of life and death,  
Grow she at Gotham—die at Rome,  
Between the pine trees is her home.

In some strange town, some silver morn,  
She may have wandered to be born ;  
Stopped at some motley crowd impressed,  
And called them kinsfolk for a jest.

If we again in goodness thrive,  
And the dead saints become alive,  
Then pedants bald and parchments brown  
May claim her blood for London town.

*But leaves below and leaves above,  
And groping under tree and tree,  
I found the home of my true love,  
Who is a wandering home for me.*

The great gravestone she may pass by,  
And without noticing, may die ;  
The streets of silver Heaven may tread,  
With her grey awful eyes unfed.

The city of great peace in pain  
May pass, until she find again  
This little house of holm and fir  
God built before the stars for her.

Here hi the fallen leaves is furled  
Her secret centre of the world.  
We sit and feel in dusk and dun  
The stars swing round us like a sun.

*For leaves below and leaves above,  
And groping under tree and tree,  
I found the home of my true love,  
Who is a wandering home for me.*

### THE WISE MEN

STEP softly, under snow or rain,  
To find the place where men can pray;  
The way is all so very plain  
That we may lose the way.

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore  
On tortured puzzles from our youth,  
We know all labyrinthine lore,  
We are the three wise men of yore,  
And we know all things but the truth.

We have gone round and round the hill  
And lost the wood among the trees,  
And learnt long names for every ill,  
And served the mad gods, naming still  
The furies the Eumenides.

The gods of violence took the veil  
Of vision and philosophy,  
The Serpent that brought all men bale,  
He bites his own accursed tail,  
And calls himself Eternity.

Go humbly ... it has hailed and snowed . . .  
With voices low and lanterns lit;  
So very simple is the road,  
That we may stray from it.

The world grows terrible and white,  
And blinding white the breaking day;  
We walk bewildered in the light,  
For something is too large for sight,  
And something much too plain to say.

The Child that was ere worlds begun  
(. . . We need but walk a little way,  
We need but see a latch undone . . .)  
The Child that played with moon and sun  
Is playing with a little hay.

The house from which the heavens are fed,  
The old strange house that is our own,  
Where tricks of words are never said,  
And Mercy is as plain as bread,  
And Honour is as hard as stone.

Go humbly, humble are the skies,  
And low and large and fierce the Star;  
So very near the Manger lies  
That we may travel far.

Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes  
 To roar to the resounding plain,  
 And the whole heaven shouts and shakes,  
 For God Himself is born again,  
 And we are little children walking  
 Through the snow and rain.

## THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS

THERE fared a mother driven forth  
 Out of an inn to roam;  
 In the place where she was homeless  
 All men are at home.  
 The crazy stable close at hand,  
 With shaking timber and shifting sand,  
 Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand  
 Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,  
 And strangers under the sun,  
 And they lay their heads in a foreign land  
 Whenever the day is done.  
 Here we have battle and blazing eyes,  
 And chance and honour and high surprise,  
 But our homes are under miraculous skies  
 Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,  
 Where the beasts feed and foam;  
 Only where He was homeless  
 Are you and I at home ;  
 We have hands that fashion and heads that know,  
 But our hearts we lost—how long ago I  
 In a place no chart nor ship can show  
 Under the sky's dome.



This world is wild as an old wives' tale,  
 And strange the plain things are,  
 The earth is enough and the air is enough  
 For our wonder and our war;  
 But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings  
 And our peace is put in impossible things  
 Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings  
 Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening  
 Home shall men come,  
 To an older place than Eden  
 And a taller town than Rome.  
 To the end of the way of the wandering star,  
 To the things that cannot be and that are,  
 To the place where God was homeless  
 And all men are at home.

## A SONG OF GIFTS TO GOD

WHEN the first Christmas presents came, the straw  
 where Christ was rolled  
 Smelt sweeter than their frankincense, burnt brighter  
 than their gold,  
 And a wise man said, " We will not give ; the thanks  
 would be but cold."

" Nay," said the next. " To all new gifts, to this  
 gift or another,  
 Bends the high gratitude of God ; even as He now,  
 my brother,  
 Who had a Father for all time, yet thanks Him for  
 a Mother.

"Yet scarce for Him this yellow stone or prickly  
    smells and sparse,  
Who holds the gold heart of the sun that fed these  
    timber bars,  
Nor any scentless lily lives for One that smells the  
    stars.'

Then spake the third of the Wise Men, the wisest  
    of the three :

" We may not with the widest lives enlarge His  
    liberty,  
Whose wings are wider than the world. It is not  
    He, but we.

"We say He has more to gain, but we have less  
    to lose.

Less gold shall go astray, we say, less gold, if thus  
    we choose,  
Go to make harlots of the Greeks and hucksters of  
    the Jews.

"Less clouds before colossal feet redden in the  
    underlight,

To the blind gods from Babylon less incense burn  
    to-night,  
To the high beasts of Babylon, whose mouths make  
    mock of right."

Babe of the thousand birthdays, we that are young  
    yet grey,

White with the centuries, still can find no better  
    thing to say,

We that with sects and whims and wars have wasted  
    Christmas Day.

## HYMN FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT 143

Light Thou Thy censer to Thyself, for all our fires  
are dim,  
Stamp Thou Thine image on our coins, for Caesar's  
face grows grim,  
And a dumb devil of pride and greed has taken hold  
of him.

We bring Thee back great Christendom, churches  
and towns and towers,  
And if our hands are glad, O God, to cast them  
down like flowers,  
'Tis not that they enrich Thine hands, but they are  
saved from ours.

## A HYMN FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT

GREAT God, that bowest sky and star,  
Bow down our towering thoughts to thee,  
And grant us in a faltering war  
The firm feet of humility.

Lord, we that snatch the swords of flame,  
Lord, we that cry about Thy car,  
We too are weak with pride and shame,  
We too are as our foemen are.

Yea, we are mad as they are mad,  
Yea, we are blind as they are blind,  
Yea, we are very sick and sad  
Who bring good news to all mankind.

The dreadful joy Thy Son has sent  
Is heavier than any care;  
We find, as Cain his punishment,  
Our pardon more than we can bear.

Lord, when we cry Thee far and near  
And thunder through all lands unknown  
The gospel into every ear,  
Lord, let us not forget our own.

Cleanse us from ire of creed or class,  
The anger of the idle kings ;  
Sow in our souls, like living grass,  
The laughter of all lowly things.

## FRAGMENT FROM DANTE

THEN Bernard smiled at me, that I should gaze  
But I had gazed already; caught the view,  
Faced the unfathomable ray of rays  
Which to itself and by itself is true.

Then was my vision mightier than man's speech;  
Speech snapt before it like a flying spell;  
And memory and all that time can teach  
Before that splendid outrage failed and fell.

As when one dreameth and remembereth not  
Waking, what were his pleasures or his pains,  
With every feature of the dream forgot,  
The printed passion of the dream remains:—

Even such am I; within whose thoughts resides  
 No picture of that sight nor any part,  
 Nor any memory : in whom abides  
 Only a happiness within the heart,

A secret happiness that soaks the heart  
 As hills are soaked by slow unsealing snow,  
 Or secret as that wind without a chart  
 Whereon did the wild leaves of Sibyl go.

O light uplifted from all mortal knowing,  
 Send back a little of that glimpse of thee,  
 That of its glory I may kindle glowing  
 One tiny spark for all men yet to be.

## THE TRUCE OF CHRISTMAS

PASSIONATE peace is in the sky—  
 And in the snow in silver sealed  
 The beasts are perfect in the field,  
 And men seem men so suddenly—  
 (But take ten swords and ten times ten  
 And blow the bugle in praising men;  
 For we are for all men under the sun;  
 And they are against us every one;  
 And misers haggle and madmen clutch,  
 And there is peril in praising much,  
 And we have the terrible tongues uncurled  
 That praise the world to the sons of the world.)

The idle humble hill and wood  
Are bowed upon the sacred birth,  
And for one little hour the earth  
Is lazy with the love of good—  
    (But ready are you, and ready am I,  
    If the battle blow and the guns go by;  
    For we are for all men under the sun,  
    And they are against us every one ;  
    And the men that hate herd all together,  
    To pride and gold, and the great white feather,  
    And the thing is graven in star and stone  
    That the men who love are all alone.)

Hunger is hard and time is tough,  
But bless the beggars and kiss the kings;  
For hope has broken the heart of things,  
And nothing was ever praised enough.  
    (But hold the shield for a sudden swing  
    And point the sword when you praise a thing,  
    For we are for all men under the sun,  
    And they are against us every one ;  
    And mime and merchant, thane and thrall  
    Hate us because we love them all;  
    Only till Christmastide go by  
    Passionate peace is in the sky.)

## A HYMN

O GOD of earth and altar,  
    Bow down and hear our cry,  
Our earthly rulers falter,  
    Our people drift and die ;  
The walls of gold entomb us,  
    The swords of scorn divide,  
Take not thy thunder from us,  
    But take away our pride.

From all that terror teaches,  
From lies of tongue and pen,  
From all the easy speeches  
That comfort cruel men,  
From sale and profanation  
Of honour and the sword,  
From sleep and from damnation,  
Deliver us, good Lord.

Tie in a living tether  
The prince and priest and thrall,  
Bind all our lives together,  
Smite us and save us all;  
In ire and exultation  
Aflame with faith, and free,  
Lift up a living nation,  
A single sword to thee.

A CHRISTMAS SONG FOR THREE  
GUILDS

TO BE SUNG A LONG TIME AGO—OR HENCE.

*The Carpenters*

ST. JOSEPH to the Carpenters said on a Christmas  
Day:

" The master shall have patience and the 'prentice  
shall obey;

And your word unto your women shall be nowise  
hard or wild :

For the sake of me, your master, who have wor-  
shipped Wife and Child.

But softly you shall frame the fence, and softly  
carve the door,

And softly plane the table—as to spread it for the  
poor,  
And all your thoughts be soft and white as the wood  
of the white tree.  
But if they tear the Charter, let the toscin speak  
for me!  
Let the wooden sign above your shop be prouder to  
be scarred  
Than the lion-shield of Lancelot that hung at  
Joyous Garde."

*The Shoemakers*

St. Crispin to the shoemakers said on a Christ-  
mastide :  
" Who fashions at another's feet will get no good  
of pride.  
They were bleeding on the Mountain, the feet that  
brought good news,  
The latchet of whose shoes we were not worthy to  
unloose.  
See that your feet offend not, nor lightly lift your  
head,  
Tread softly on the sunlit roads the bright dust of  
the dead.  
Let your own feet be shod with peace ; be lowly all  
your lives.  
But if they touch the Charter, ye shall nail it with  
your knives.  
And the bill-blades of the commons drive in all as  
dense array  
As once a crash of arrows came, upon St. Crispin's  
Day."



*The Painters*

St. Luke unto the painters on Christmas Day he said :  
" See that the robes are white you dare to dip in  
gold and red ;  
For only gold the kings can give, and only blood  
the saints.  
And his high task grows perilous that mixes them  
in paints  
Keep you the ancient order; follow the men that  
knew  
The labyrinth of black and white, the maze of green  
and blue ;  
Paint mighty things, paint paltry things, paint silly  
things or sweet,  
But if men break the Charter, you may slay them  
in the street.  
And if you paint one post for them, then . . . but  
you know it well,  
You paint a harlot's face to drag all heroes down  
to hell."

*All together*

Almighty God to all mankind on Christmas Day  
said he :  
" I rent you from the old red hills and, rending,  
made you free.  
There was charter, there was challenge; in a blast  
of breath I gave;  
You can be all things other; you cannot be a slave.  
You shall be tired and tolerant of fancies as they fade,  
But if men doubt the Charter, ye shall call on the  
Crusade—  
Trumpet and torch and catapult, cannon and bow  
and blade,  
Because it was My challenge to all the things I made."

## THE NATIVITY

THE thatch on the roof was as golden,  
Though dusty the straw was and old,  
The wind had a peal as of trumpets,  
Though blowing and barren and cold,  
The mother's hair was a glory  
Though loosened and torn,  
For under the eaves in the gloaming  
A child was born.

Have a myriad children been quickened,  
Have a myriad children grown old,  
Grown gross and unloved and embittered,  
Grown cunning and savage and cold ?  
God abides in a terrible patience,  
Unangered, unworn,  
And again for the child that was squandered  
A child is born.

What know we of aeons behind us,  
Dim dynasties lost long ago,  
Huge empires, like dreams unremembered,  
Huge cities for ages laid low ?  
This at least—that with blight and with blessing,  
With flower and with thorn,  
Love was there, and his cry was among them,  
" A child is born."

Though the darkness be noisy with systems,  
Dark fancies that fret and disprove,  
Still the plumes stir around us, above us  
The wings of the shadow of love :  
Oh! princes and priests, have ye seen it  
Grow pale through your scorn;  
Huge dawns sleep before us, deep changes,  
A child is born.

And the rafters of toil still are gilded  
With the dawn of the stars of the heart,  
And the wise men draw near in the twilight,  
Who are weary of learning and art,  
And the face of the tyrant is darkened,  
His spirit is torn,  
For a new king is enthroned; yea, the sternest,  
A child is born.

And the mother still joys for the whispered  
First stir of unspeakable things,  
Still feels that high moment unfurling  
Red glory of Gabriel's wings.  
Still the babe of an hour is a master  
Whom angels adorn,  
Emmanuel, prophet, anointed,  
A child is born.

And thou, that art still in thy cradle,  
The sun being crown for thy brow,  
Make answer, our flesh, make an answer,  
Say, whence art thou come—who art thou?  
Art thou come back on earth for our teaching  
To train or to warn—?  
Hush—how may we know?—knowing only  
A child is born.

## A CHILD OF THE SNOWS

THERE is heard a hymn when the panes are dim,  
And never before or again,  
When the nights are strong with a darkness long,  
And the dark is alive with rain.

Never we know but in sleet and in snow,  
The place where the great fires are,  
That the midst of the earth is a raging mirth  
And the heart of the earth a star.

And at night we win to the ancient inn  
Where the child in the frost is furl'd,  
We follow the feet where all souls meet  
At the inn at the end of the world.

The gods lie dead where the leaves lie red,  
For the flame of the sun is flown,  
The gods lie cold where the leaves lie gold,  
And a Child comes forth alone.

ANTICHRIST, OR THE REUNION OF  
CHRISTENDOM: AN ODE

"A BILL WHICH HAS SHOCKED THE CONSCIENCE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN EUROPE."—*Mr. F. E. Smith, on the Welsh Disestablishment Bill.*

ARE they clinging to their crosses,  
F. E. Smith,  
Where the Breton boat-fleet tosses,  
Are they, Smith?  
Do they, fasting, trembling, bleeding,  
Wait the news from this our city  
Groaning " That's the Second Reading  
Hissing " There is still Committee  
If the voice of Cecil falters,  
If McKenna's point has pith,  
Do they tremble for their altars ?  
Do they, Smith ?

Russian peasants round their pope  
Huddled, Smith,  
Hear about it all, I hope,  
Don't they, Smith?  
In the mountain hamlets clothing  
Peaks beyond Caucasian pales,  
Where Establishment means nothing  
And they never heard of Wales,  
Do they read it all in Hansard  
With a crib to read it with—  
"Welsh Tithes : Dr. Clifford Answered."  
Really, Smith?

In the lands where Christians were,  
F. E. Smith,  
In the little lands laid bare,  
Smith, O Smith I  
Where the Turkish bands are busy,  
And the Tory name is blessed  
Since they hailed the Cross of Dizzy  
On the banners from the West I  
Men don't think it half so hard if  
Islam burns their kin and kith,  
Since a curate lives in Cardiff  
Saved by Smith.

It would greatly, I must own,  
Soothe me, Smith I  
If you left this theme alone,  
Holy Smith !  
For your legal cause or civil  
You fight well and get your fee;

For your God or dream or devil  
You will answer, not to me.  
Talk about the pews and steeples  
And the Cash that goes therewith!  
But the souls of Christian peoples . . .  
Chuck it, Smith !

THE REVOLUTIONIST : OR LINES TO  
A STATESMAN

" I WAS NEVER STANDING BY WHILE A REVOLUTION  
WAS GOING ON."—*Speech by the Rt. Hon. Walter  
Long.*

WHEN Death was on thy drums, Democracy,  
And with one rush of slaves the world was free,  
In that high dawn that Kings shall not forget,  
A void there was and Walter was not yet.  
Through sacked Versailles, at Valmy in the fray,  
They did without him in some kind of way;  
Red Christendom all Walterless they cross,  
And in their fury hardly feel their loss . . .  
Fades the Republic; faint as Roland's horn,  
Her trumpets taunt us with a sacred scorn . . .  
Then silence fell: and Mr. Long was born.

From his first hours in his expensive cot  
He never saw the tiniest viscount shot.  
In deference to his wealthy parents' whim  
The mildest massacres were kept from him.  
The wars that dyed Pall Mall and Brompton red  
Passed harmless o'er that one unconscious head:  
For all that little Long could understand  
The rich might still be rulers of the land,

Vain are the pious arts of parenthood,  
Foiled Revolution bubbled in his blood;  
Until one day (the babe unborn shall rue it)  
The Constitution bored him and he slew it.

If I were wise and good and rich and strong—  
Fond, impious thought, if I were Walter Long—  
If I could water sell like molten gold,  
And make grown people do as they were told,  
If over private fields and wastes as wide  
As a Greek city for which heroes died,  
I owned the houses and the men inside—  
If all this hung on one thin thread of habit  
I would not revolutionize a rabbit.

I would sit tight with all my gifts and glories,  
And even preach to unconverted Tories,  
That the fixed system that our land inherits,  
Viewed from a certain standpoint, has its merits.  
I'd guard the laws like any Radical,  
And keep each precedent, however small,  
However subtle, misty, dusty, dreamy,  
Lest man by chance should look at me and see me ;  
Lest men should ask what madman made me lord  
Of English ploughshares and the English sword;  
Lest men should mark how sleepy is the nod  
That drills the dreadful images of God I

Walter, be wise ! avoid the wild and new!  
The Constitution is the game for you.  
Walter, beware ! scorn not the gathering throng,  
It suffers, yet it may not suffer wrong,  
It suffers, yet it cannot suffer Long.

And if you goad it these grey rules to break,  
 For a few pence, see that you do not wake  
 Death and the splendour of the scarlet cap,  
 Boston and Valmy, Yorktown and Jemmappes,  
 Freedom in arms, the riding and the routing,  
 The thunder of the captains and the shouting,  
 All that lost riot that you did not share—  
 And when that riot comes—you *will* be there.

### THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL

LORD LILAC thought it rather rotten  
 That Shakespeare should be quite forgotten,  
 And therefore got on a Committee  
 With several chaps out of the City,  
 And Shorter and Sir Herbert Tree,  
 Lord Rothschild and Lord Roscbery,  
 And F.C.G. and Comyns Carr,  
 Two dukes and a dramatic star,  
 Also a clergyman now dead;  
 And while the vain world careless sped  
 Unheeding the heroic name—  
 The souls most fed with Shakespeare's flame  
 Still sat unconquerd in a ring,  
 Remembering him like anything.

Lord Lilac did not long remain,  
 Lord Lilac did not come again.  
 He softly lit a cigarette  
 And sought some other social set  
 Where, in some other knots or rings,  
 People were doing cultured things,



—Miss Zwilt's Humane Vivarium  
 —The little men that paint on gum  
 —The exquisite Gorilla Girl. . . .  
 He sometimes, in this giddy whirl  
 (Not being really bad at heart),  
 Remembered Shakespeare with a start—  
 But not with that grand constancy  
 Of Clement Shorter, Herbert Tree,  
 Lord Rosebery and Comyns Carr  
 And all the other names there are;  
 Who stuck like limpets to the spot,  
 Lest they forgot, lest they forgot.

Lord Lilac was of slighter stuff;  
 Lord Lilac had had quite enough.

## THE HORRIBLE HISTORY OF JONES

JONES had a dog; it had a chain;  
 Not often worn, not causing pain;  
 But, as the I.K.L. had passed  
 Their "Unleashed Cousins Act" at last,  
 Inspectors took the chain away;  
 Whereat the canine barked "hurray!"  
 At which, of course, the S.P.U.  
 (Whose Nervous Motorists' Bill was through)  
 Were forced to give the dog in charge  
 For being Audibly at Large.  
 None, you will say, were now annoyed,  
 Save haply Jones—the yard was void.  
 But something being in the lease  
 About "alarms to aid police,"

The U.S.U. annexed the yard  
 For having no sufficient guard;  
 Now if there's one condition  
 The C.C.P. are strong upon  
 It is that every house one buys  
 Must have a yard for exercise ;  
 So Jones, as tenant, was unfit,  
 His state of health was proof of it.  
 Two doctors of the T.T.U.'s  
 Told him his legs, from long disuse,  
 Were atrophied ; and saying " So  
 From step to higher step we go  
 Till everything is New and True."  
 They cut his legs off and withdrew.  
 You know the E.T.S.T.'s views  
 Are stronger than the T.T.U.'s :  
 And soon (as one may say) took wing  
 The Arms, though not the Man, I sing.  
 To see him sitting limbless there  
 Was more than the **K.K.** could bear.  
 " In mercy silence with all speed  
 That mouth there are no hands to feed;  
 What cruel sentimentalist,  
 O Jones, would doom thee to exist—  
 Clinging to selfish Selfhood yet ?  
 Weak one ! Such reasoning might upset  
 The Pump Act, and the accumulation  
 Of all constructive legislation ;  
 Let us construct you up a bit—"

The head fell off when it was hit:  
 Then words did rise and honest doubt,  
 And four Commissioners sat about  
 Whether the slash that left him dead  
 Cut off his body or his head.

An author in the Isle of Wight  
Observed with unconcealed delight  
A land of old and just renown  
Where Freedom slowly broadened down  
From Precedent to Precedent . . .  
And this, I think, was what he meant.

## THE NEW FREETHINKER

JOHN GRUBBY, who was short and stout  
And troubled with religious doubt,  
Refused about the age of three  
To sit upon the curate's knee ;  
(For so the eternal strife must rage  
Between the spirit of the age  
And Dogma, which, as is well known,  
Does simply hate to be outgrown).  
Grubby, the young idea that shoots,  
Outgrew the ages like old boots ;  
While still, to all appearance, small.  
Would have no Miracles at all;  
And just before the age of ten  
Firmly refused Free Will to men.  
The altars reeled, the heavens shook,  
Just as he read of in the book ;  
Flung from his house went forth the youth  
Alone with tempests and the Truth,  
Up to the distant city and dim  
Where his papa had bought for him  
A partnership in Chepe and Deer  
Worth, say, twelve hundred pounds a year.  
But he was resolute. Lord Brute  
Had found him useful ; and Lord Loot,

With whom few other men would act,  
Valued his promptitude and tact;  
Never did even philanthropy  
Enrich a man more rapidly :  
'Twas he that stopped the Strike in Coal,  
For hungry children racked his soul;  
To end their misery there and then  
He filled the mines with Chinamen  
Sat in that House that broke the Kings,  
And voted for all sorts of things—  
And rose from Under-Sec, to Sec.  
With scarce a murmur or a check.  
Some grumbled. Growlers who gave less  
Than generous worship to success,  
The little printers in Dundee,  
Who got ten years for blasphemy,  
(Although he let them off with seven)  
Respect him rather less than heaven.  
No matter. This can still be said :  
Never to supernatural dread,  
Never to unseen deity,  
Did Sir John Grubby bend the knee;  
Never did dream of hell or wrath  
Turn Viscount Grubby from his path;  
Nor was he bribed by fabled bliss  
To kneel to any world but this.  
The curate lives in Camden Town,  
His lap still empty of renown,  
And still across the waste of years  
John Grubby, in the House of Peers,  
Faces that curate, proud and free,  
And never sits upon his knee.

## IN MEMORIAM P.O.

NICE, JANUARY 30, 1914

IF any in an island cradle curled  
Of comfort, may make offering to you,  
Who in the day of all denial blew  
A bugle through the blackness of the world.

An English hand would touch your shroud, in trust  
That truth again be told in English speech,  
And we too yet may practice what we preach,  
Though it were practising the bayonet thrust,

Cutting that giant neck from sand to sand,  
From sea to sea; it was a little thing  
Beside your sudden shout and sabre swing  
That cut the throat of thieves in every land.

Heed not if half-wits mock your broken blade :  
Mammon our master doeth all things ill.  
You are the Fool that charged a windmill. Still,  
The Miller is a knave; and was afraid.

Lay down your sword. Ruin will know her own.  
Let each small statesman sow his weak wild oat.  
Or turn his coat to decorate his coat,  
Or take the throne and perish by the throne.

Lay down your sword. And let the White Flag  
fade  
To grey; and let the Red Flag fade to pink,  
For these that climb and climb; and cannot sink  
So deep as death and honour, Dérroulede.

SONNET WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF  
THE SEASON

TO A POPULAR LEADER MUCH TO BE CONGRATULATED  
ON THE AVOIDANCE OF A STRIKE AT CHRISTMAS.

I KNOW you. You will hail the huge release,  
Saying the sheathing of a thousand swords,  
In silence and injustice, well accords  
With Christmas bells. And you will gild with  
grease

The papers, the employers, the police,  
And vomit up the void your windy words  
To your New Christ; who bears no whip of cords  
For them that traffic in the doves of peace.

The feast of friends, the candle-fruited tree,  
I have not failed to honour. And I say  
It would be better for such men as we,  
And we be nearer Bethlehem, if we lay  
Shot dead on scarlet snows for liberty,  
Dead in the daylight upon Christmas Day.

## A SONG OF SWORDS

" A DROVE OF CATTLE CAME INTO A VILLAGE CALLED  
SWORDS, AND WAS STOPPED BY THE RIOTERS."—

*Daily Paper*

IN the place called Swords on the Irish road  
It is told for a new renown  
How we held the horns of the cattle, and how  
We will hold the horns of the devil now  
Ere the lord of hell, with the horn on his brow,  
Is crowned in Dublin town.

Light in the East and light in the West,  
And light on the cruel lords,  
On the souls that suddenly all men knew,  
And the green flag flew and the red flag flew,  
And many a wheel of the world stopped too,  
    When the cattle were stopped at Swords.

Be they sinners or less than saints  
That smite in the street for rage,  
We know where the shame shines bright; we know  
You that they smite at, you their foe,  
Lords of the lawless wage and low,  
    This is your lawful wage.

You pinched a child to a torture price  
That you dared not name in words;  
So black a jest was the silver bit  
That your own speech shook for the shame of it,  
And the coward was plain as a cow they hit  
    When the cattle have strayed at Swords.

The wheel of the torment of wives went round  
To break men's brotherhood ;  
You gave the good Irish blood to grease  
The clubs of your country's enemies;  
You saw the brave man beat to the knees:  
    And you saw that it was good.

The rope of the rich is long and long—  
The longest of hangmen's cords;  
But the kings and crowds are holding their breath,  
In a giant shadow o'er all beneath  
Where God stands holding the scales of Death  
    Between the cattle and Swords.

Haply the lords that hire and lend,  
The lowest of all men's lords,  
Who sell their kind like kine at a fair,  
Will find no head of their cattle there;  
But faces of men where cattle were :  
    Faces of men—and Swords.

And the name shining and terrible,  
The sternest of all man's words,  
Still marks that place to seek or shun,  
In the streets where the struggling cattle run—  
Grass and a silence of judgment done  
    In the place that is called Swords.

## A SONG OF DEFEAT

THE line breaks and the guns go under,  
    The lords and the lackeys ride the plain;  
I draw deep breaths of the dawn and thunder,  
    And the whole of my heart grows young again.  
For our chiefs said " Done," and I did not deem it;  
    Our seers said " Peace," and it was not peace;  
Earth will grow worse till men redeem it,  
    And wars more evil, ere all wars cease.  
But the old flags reel and the old drums rattle,  
    As once in my life they throbbed and reeled;  
I have found my youth in the lost battle,  
    I have found my heart on the battlefield.  
    For we that fight till the world is free,  
    We are not easy in victory :  
    We have known each other too long, my brother,  
    And fought each other, the world and we.



And I dream of the days when work was scrappy,  
And rare in our pockets the mark of the mint,  
When we were angry and poor and happy,  
And proud of seeing our names in print.  
For so they conquered and so we scattered,  
When the Devil rode and his dogs smelt gold,  
And the peace of a harmless folk was shattered;  
When I was twenty and odd years old.  
When the mongrel men that the market classes  
Had slimy hands upon England's rod,  
And sword in hand upon Afric's passes  
Her last Republic cried to God.  
For the men no lords can buy or sell,  
They sit not easy when all goes well,  
They have said to each other what naught can  
smother,  
They have seen each other, our souls and hell.

It is all as of old; the empty clangour,  
The Nothing scrawled on a five-foot page,  
The huckster who, mocking holy anger,  
Painfully paints his face with rage.  
And the faith of the poor is faint and partial,  
And the pride of the rich is all for sale,  
And the chosen heralds of England's Marshal  
Are the sandwich-men of the *Daily Mail*.  
And the niggards that dare not give are glutted,  
And the feeble that dare not fail are strong,  
So while the City of Toil is gutted,  
I sit in the saddle and sing my song.  
For we that fight till the world is free,  
We have no comfort in victory;  
We have read each other as Cain his brother,  
We know each other, these slaves and we.

## SONNET

ON HEARING A LANDLORD ACCUSED (FALSELY, FOR ALL THE BARD CAN SAY) OF NEGLECTING ONE OF THE NUMEROUS WHITE HORSES THAT WERE OR WERE NOT CONNECTED WITH ALFRED THE GREAT.

IF you have picked your lawn of leaves and snails,  
 If you have told your valet, even with oaths,  
 Once a week or so, to brush your clothes,  
 If you have dared to clean your teeth, or nails,  
 While the Horse upon the holy mountain fails—  
 Then God that Alfred to his earth betrothes  
 Send on you screaming all that honour loathes,  
 Horsewhipping, Houndsditch, debts, and *Daily*  
*Mails.*

Can you not even conserve? For if indeed  
 The White Horse fades; then closer creeps the fight  
 When we shall scour the face of England white,  
 Plucking such men as you up like a weed,  
 And fling them far beyond a shaft shot right  
 When Wessex went to battle for the Creed.

## AFRICA

A SLEEPY people, without priests or kings,  
 Dreamed here, men say, to drive us to the sea :  
 O let us drive ourselves! For it is free  
 And smells of honour and of English things.  
 How came we brawling by these bitter springs,  
 We of the North?—two kindly nations—we?  
 Though the dice rattles and the clear coin rings,  
 Here is no place for living men to be.

Leave them the gold that worked and whined for it,  
Let them that have no nation anywhere  
Be native here, and fat and full of bread ;  
But we, whose sins were human, we will quit  
The land of blood, and leave these vultures there,  
Noiselessly happy, feeding on the dead.

## THE DEAD HERO

WE never saw you like our sires  
For whom your face was Freedom's face,  
Nor know what office-tapes and wires  
With such strong cords may interlace;  
We know not if the statesmen then  
Were fashioned as the sort we see,  
We know that not under your ken  
Did England laugh at Liberty.

Yea, this one thing is known of you,  
We know that not till you were dumb,  
Not till your course was thundered through,  
Did Mammon see his kingdom come.  
The songs of theft, the swords of hire,  
The clerks that raved, the troops that ran,  
The empire of the world's desire,  
The dance of all the dirt began.

The happy jewelled alien men  
Worked then but as a little leaven;  
From some more modest palace then  
The Soul of Dives stank to Heaven.  
But when they planned with lisp and leer  
Their careful war upon the weak,  
They smote your body on its bier,  
For surety that you could not speak.

A hero in the desert died;  
Men cried that saints should bury him,  
And round the grave should guard and ride,  
A chivalry of Cherubim.  
God said : " There is a better place,  
A nobler trophy and more tall;  
The beasts that fled before his face  
Shall come to make his funeral.

" The mighty vermin of the void  
That hid them from his bended bow,  
Shall crawl from caverns overjoyed,  
Jackal and snake and carrion crow.  
And perched above the vulture's eggs,  
Reversed upon its hideous head,  
A blue-faced ape shall wave its legs  
To tell the world that he is dead."

## AN ELECTION ECHO

1906

THIS is their trumpet ripe and rounded,  
They have burnt the wheat and gathered the chaff,  
And we that have fought them, we that have  
watched them,  
Have we at least not cause to laugh ?

Never so low at least we stumbled—  
Dead we have been but not so dead  
As these that live on the life they squandered,  
As these that drink of the blood they shed.

**We** never boasted the thing we blundered,  
We never flaunted the thing that fails,  
We never quailed from the living laughter,  
To howl to the dead who tell no tales.

'Twas another finger at least that pointed  
Our wasted men or our emptied bags,  
It was not we that sounded the trumpet  
In front of the triumph of wrecks and rags.

Fear not these, they have made their bargain,  
They have counted the cost of the last of raids,  
They have staked their lives on the things that live  
not,  
They have burnt their house for a fire that fades.

Five years ago and we might have feared them,  
Been drubbed by the coward and taught by the  
dunce;  
Truth may endure and be told and re-echoed,  
But a lie can never be young but once.

Five years ago and we might have feared them ;  
Now, when they lift the laurelled brow,  
There shall naught go up from our hosts assembled  
But a laugh like thunder. We know them now.

THE SONG OF THE WHEELS

WRITTEN DURING A FRIDAY AND SATURDAY IN  
AUGUST, 1911.

KING DIVES he was walking in his garden all alone,  
Where his flowers are made of iron and his trees  
    are made of stone,  
And his hives are full of thunder and the lightning  
    leaps and kills,  
For the mills of God grind slowly; and he works  
    with other mills.  
Dives found a mighty silence; and he missed the  
    throb and leap,  
The noise of all the sleepless creatures singing him  
    to sleep.  
And he said : " A screw has fallen—or a bolt has  
    slipped aside—  
Some little thing has shifted " : and the little things  
    replied :

" Call upon the wheels, master, call upon the wheels ;  
We are taking rest, master, finding how it feels,  
Strict the law of thine and mine : theft we ever  
    shun—

All the wheels are thine, master—tell the wheels to  
    run !

Yea, the Wheels are mighty gods—set them going  
    then!

We are only men, master, have you heard of men ?

" O, they live on earth like fishes, and a gasp is all  
    their breath.

God for empty honours only gave them death and  
    scorn of death,

And you walk the worms for carpet and you tread  
a stone that squeals

Only, God that made them worms did not make  
them wheels.

Man shall shut his heart against you and you shall  
not find the spring.

Man who wills the thing he wants not, the intoler-  
able thing—

Once he likes his empty belly better than your empty  
head

Earth and heaven are dumb before him : he is  
stronger than the dead.

" Call upon the wheels, master, call upon the wheels,  
Steel is beneath your hand, stone beneath your heels,  
Steel will never laugh aloud, hearing what we heard,  
Stone will never break its heart, mad with hope  
deferred—

Men of tact that arbitrate, slow reform that heals—  
Save the stinking grease, master, save it for the  
wheels.

" King Dives in the garden, we have naught to give  
or hold—

(Even while the baby came alive the rotten sticks  
were sold.)

The savage knows a cavern and the peasants keep  
a plot,

Of all the things that men have had—lo ! we have  
them not.

Not a scrap of earth where ants could lay their  
eggs—

Only this poor lump of earth that walks about on  
legs—

172      THE SONG OF THE WHEELS

Only this poor wandering mansion, only these two  
    walking trees,  
Only hands and hearts and stomachs—what have  
    you to do with these ?  
You have engines big and burnished, tall beyond  
    our fathers' ken,  
Why should you make peace and traffic with such  
    feeble folk as men ?

" Call upon the wheels, master, call upon the  
    wheels,  
They are deaf to demagogues, deaf to crude appeals ;  
Are our hands our own, master ?—how the doctors  
    doubt!  
Are our legs our own, master ? wheels can run  
    without—  
Prove the points are delicate—they will understand.  
All the wheels are loyal; see how still they stand ! "

King Dives he was walking in his garden in the sun,  
He shook his hand at heaven, and he called the  
    wheels to run,  
And the eyes of him were hateful eyes, the lips of  
    him were curled,  
And he called upon his father that is lord below the  
    world,  
Sitting in the Gate of Treason, in the gate of broken  
    seals,  
" Bend and bind them, bend and bind them, bend  
    and bind them into wheels,  
Then once more in all my garden there may swing  
    and sound and sweep—  
The noise of all the sleepless things that sing the  
    soul to sleep."



*Call upon the wheels, mastery call upon the wheels,  
Weary grow the holidays when you miss the meals,  
Through the Gate of Treason, through the gate within,  
Cometh fear and greed of fame, cometh deadly sin ;  
If a man grow faint, master, take him ere he kneels.  
Take him, break him, rend him, end him, roll him,  
crush him with the wheels.*

## THE SECRET PEOPLE

SMILE at us, pay us, pass us ; but do not quite forget;  
For we are the people of England, that never have  
spoken yet.

There is many a fat farmer that drinks less cheer-  
fully,

There is many a free French peasant who is richer  
and sadder than we.

There are no folk in the whole world so helpless or  
so wise.

There is hunger in our bellies, there is laughter in  
our eyes;

You laugh at us and love us, both mugs and eyes  
are wet:

Only you do not know us. For we have not spoken  
yet.

The fine French kings came over in a flutter of flags  
and dames.

We liked their smiles and battles, but we never could  
say their names.

The blood ran red to Bosworth and the high French  
lords went down ;

There was naught but a naked people under a naked  
crown.

And the eyes of the King's Servants turned terribly  
every way,  
And the gold of the King's Servants rose higher  
every day.  
They burnt the homes of the shaven men, that had  
been quaint and kind,  
Till there was no bed in a monk's house, nor food  
that man could find.  
The inns of God where no man paid, that were the  
wall of the weak,  
The King's Servants ate them all. And still we did  
not speak.

And the face of the King's Servants grew greater  
than the King:  
He tricked them, and they trapped him, and stood  
round him in a ring.  
The new grave lords closed round him, that had  
eaten the abbey's fruits,  
And the men of the new religion, with their bibles  
in their boots,  
We saw their shoulders moving, to menace or  
discuss,  
And some were pure and some were vile ; but none  
took heed of us.  
We saw the King as they killed him, and his face  
was proud and pale;  
And a few men talked of freedom, while England  
talked of ale.

A war that we understood not came over the world  
and woke  
Americans, Frenchmen, Irish ; but we knew not the  
things they spoke.

They talked about rights and nature and peace and  
the people's reign :

And the squires, our masters, bade us fight; and  
scorned us never again.

Weak if we be for ever, could none condemn us then;  
Men called us serfs and drudges; men knew that  
we were men.

In foam and flame at Trafalgar, on Albuera plains,  
We did and died like lions, to keep ourselves in  
chains

We lay in living ruins; firing and fearing not  
The strange fierce face of the Frenchmen who knew  
for what they fought,

And the man who seemed to be more than man we  
strained against and broke ;

And we broke our own rights with him. And still  
we never spoke.

Our patch of glory ended; we never heard guns  
again.

But the squire seemed struck in the saddle ; he was  
foolish, as if in pain.

He leaned on a staggering lawyer, he clutched a  
cringing Jew,

He was stricken ; it may be, after all, he was stricken  
at Waterloo.

Or perhaps the shades of the shaven men, whose  
spoil is in his house,

Come back in shining shapes at last to spoil his last  
carouse:

We only know the last sad squires ride slowly  
towards the sea,

And a new people takes the land: and still it is  
not we.

They have given us into the hand of new unhappy  
lords,  
Lords without anger and honour, who dare not carry  
their swords.  
They fight by shuffling papers; they have bright  
dead alien eyes;  
They look at our labour and laughter as a tired man  
looks at flies.  
And the load of their loveless pity is worse than the  
ancient wrongs,  
Their doors are shut in the evening; and they know  
no songs.

We hear men speaking for us of new laws strong  
and sweet,  
Yet is there no man speaketh as we speak in the  
street.  
It may be we shall rise the last as Frenchmen rose  
the first,  
Our wrath come after Russia's wrath and our wrath  
be the worst.  
It may be we are meant to mark with our riot and  
our rest  
God's scorn for all men governing. It may be beer  
is best.  
But we are the people of England; and we have  
not spoken yet.  
Smile at us, pay us, pass us. But do not quite  
forget.

## LOST

So you have gained the golden crowns, so you have  
    piled together  
    The laurels and the jewels, the pearls out of the  
    blue,  
But I will beat the bounding drum and I will fly  
    the feather  
    For all the glory I have lost, the good I never  
    knew.

I saw the light of morning pale on princely human  
    faces,  
    In tales irrevocably gone, in final night enfurled,  
I saw the tail of flying fights, a glimpse of burning  
    blisses,  
    And laughed to think what I had lost—the wealth  
    of all the world.

Yea, ruined in a royal game I was before my cradle ;  
    Was ever gambler hurling gold who lost such  
    things as I ?  
The purple moth that died an hour ere I was born  
    of woman,  
    That great green sunset God shall make three  
    days after I die.

When all the lights are lost and done, when all the  
    skies are broken,  
    Above the ruin of the stars my soul shall sit in  
    state,  
With a brain made rich, with the irrevocable sunsets.  
    And a closed heart happy in the fulness of a fate.

So you have gained the golden crowns and grasped  
the golden weather,  
The kingdoms and the hemispheres that all men  
buy and sell,  
But I will lash the leaping drum and swing the  
flaring feather,  
For the light of seven heavens that are lost to me  
like hell.

## BALLAD OF THE SUN

O WELL for him that loves the sun,  
That sees the heaven-race ridden or run,  
The splashing seas of sunset won,  
And shouts of victory.

God made the sun to crown his head,  
And when death's dart at last is sped,  
At least it will not find him dead,  
And pass the carrion by,

O ill for him that loves the sun;  
Shall the sun stoop for anyone?  
Shall the sun weep for hearts undone  
Or heavy souls that pray?

Not less for us and everyone  
Was that white web of splendour spun;  
O well for him who loves the sun  
Although the sun should slay.

## TRANSLATION FROM DU BELLAY

HAPPY, who like Ulysses or that lord  
 Who raped the fleece, returning full and sage,  
 With usage and the world's wide reason stored,  
 With his own kin can taste the end of age.  
 When shall I see, when shall I see, God knows!  
 My little village smoke; or pass the door,  
 The old dear door of that unhappy house  
 Which is to me a kingdom and much more ?  
 Mightier to me the house my fathers made  
 Than your audacious heads, O Halls of Rome !  
 More than immortal marbles undecayed,  
 The thin sad slates that cover up my home;  
 More than your Tiber is my Loire to me,  
 Than Palatine my little Lyre" there ;  
 And more than all the winds of all the sea  
 The quiet kindness of the Angevin air.

## THE HIGHER UNITY

" THE REV. ISAIAH BUNTER HAS DISAPPEARED INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS, AND IT IS FEARED THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN DEVoured BY THE NATIVES, AS THERE HAS BEEN A CONSIDERABLE REVIVAL OF RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS AMONG THE POLYNESIANS."—*A real paragraph from a real Paper; only the names altered.*

IT was Isaiah Bunter  
 Who sailed to the world's end,  
 And spread religion in a way  
**That he did not intend.**

He gave, if not the gospel-feast,  
At least a ritual meal;  
And in a highly painful sense  
He was devoured with zeal.

And who are we (as Henson says)  
That we should close the door ?  
And should not Evangelicals  
All jump at shedding Gore ?

And many a man will melt in man,  
Becoming one, not two,  
When smacks across the startled earth  
The Kiss of Kikuyu.

When Man is the Turk, and the Atheist,  
Essene, Erastian Whig,  
And the Thug and the Druse and the Catholic  
And the crew of the Captain's gig.

### THE NEGLECTED CHILD

(DEDICATED, IN A GLOW OF CHRISTMAS CHARITY, to  
A PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY)

THE Teachers in the Temple  
They did not lift their eyes  
For the blazing star on Bethlehem  
Or the Wise Men grown wise.

They heeded jot and tittle,  
They heeded not a jot  
The rending voice of Ramah  
And the children that were not.



Or how the panic of the poor  
Choked all the field with flight,  
Or how the red sword of the rich  
Ran ravening through the night.

They made their notes ; while naked  
And monstrous and obscene  
A tyrant bathed in all the blood  
Of men that might have been.

But they did chide Our Lady  
And tax her for this thing,  
That she had lost Him for a time  
And sought Him sorrowing.

## TO A TURK

WARRIOR by warriors smitten,  
Gambler whose luck has turned,  
Read not the small words written,  
Who know what love you earned :  
You know, and none shall tell you,  
What and how long and how  
They did endure in silence  
That smite in silence now.

A Liberal may belabour  
With rods your reckless dead,  
As the Tory licked your sabre  
For the blood he dared not shed ;  
Since from the creedless chapel  
And the cushioned prize-ring came  
The men that feared your glory  
And they that praised your shame.

With us too rage against the rood  
Your devils and your swine;  
A colder scorn of womanhood,  
A baser fear of wine.  
And lust without the harem,  
And Doom without the God.  
Go. It is not this rabble,  
Sayeth to you " Ichabod."

Because our sorrow has sufficed  
And what we know we know;  
And because you were great, Lord Antichrist,  
In the name of Christ you go ;  
But you shall not turn your turban  
For the little dogs that yell,  
When a man rides out of a city:  
In the name of God; farewell.

### THE ARISTOCRAT

THE Devil is a gentleman, and asks you down to  
stay  
At his little place at What'sitsname (it isn't far  
away).  
They say the sport is splendid; there is always  
something new,  
And fairy scenes, and fearful feats that none but  
he can do;  
He can shoot the feathered cherubs if they fly on  
the estate,  
Or fish for Father Neptune with the mermaids for  
a bait;

He scaled amid the staggering stars that precipice,  
the sky,  
And blew his trumpet above heaven, and got by  
mastery  
The starry crown of God Himself, and shoved it on  
the shelf;  
But the Devil is a gentleman, and doesn't brag  
himself.

O blind your eyes and break your heart and hack  
your hand away,  
And lose your love and shave your head; but do  
not go to stay  
At the little place in What'sitsname where folks are  
rich and clever;  
The golden and the goodly house, where things grow  
worse for ever;  
There are things you need not know of, though you  
live and die in vain,  
There are souls more sick of pleasure than you are  
sick of pain;  
There is a game of April Fool that's played behind  
its door,  
Where the fool remains for ever and the April comes  
no more,  
Where the splendour of the daylight grows drearier  
than the dark,  
And life droops like a vulture that once was such  
a lark:  
And that is the Blue Devil that once was the Blue  
Bird;  
For the Devil is a gentleman, and doesn't keep his  
word.

## ON RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

WHEN Adam went from Paradise  
    He saw the sword and ran;  
The dreadful shape, the new device,  
The pointed end of Paradise,  
And saw what Peril is and Price,  
    And knew he was a man.

When Adam went from Paradise,  
    He turned him back and cried  
For a little flower from Paradise;  
There came no flower from Paradise;  
The woods were dark in Paradise,  
    And not a bird replied.

For only comfort or contempt,  
    For jest or great reward,  
Over the walls of Paradise,  
The flamcless gates of Paradise,  
The dumb shut doors of Paradise,  
    God flung the flaming sword.

It burns the hand that holds it  
    More than the skull it scars;  
It doubles like a snake and stings,  
Yet he in whose hand it swings  
He is the most masterful of things,  
    A scorner of the stars.

## WHEN I CAME BACK TO FLEET STREET

WHEN I came back to Fleet Street,  
Through a sunset nook at night.  
And saw the old Green Dragon  
With the windows all alight,  
And hailed the old Green Dragon  
And the Cock I used to know,  
Where all good fellows were my friends  
A little while ago ;

I had been long in meadows,  
And the trees took hold of me,  
And the still towns in the beech-woods,  
Where men were meant to be.  
But old things held; the laughter,  
The long unnatural night,  
And all the truth they talk in hell,  
And all the lies they write.

For I came back to Fleet Street,  
And not in peace I came ;  
A cloven pride was in my heart,  
And half my love was shame.  
I came to fight in fairy tale,  
Whose end shall no man know—  
To fight the old Green Dragon  
Until the Cock shall crow!

Under the broad bright windows  
Of men I serve no more,  
The groaning of the old great wheels  
Thickened to a throttled roar :  
All buried things broke upward;  
And peered from its retreat,  
Ugly and silent, like an elf,  
The secret of the street.

They did not break the padlocks,  
Or clear the wall away.  
The men in debt that drank of old  
Still drink in debt to-day ;  
Chained to the rich by ruin,  
Cheerful in chains, as then  
When old unbroken Pickwick walked  
Among the broken men.

Still he that dreams and rambles  
Through his own elfin air,  
Knows that the street's a prison,  
Knows that the gates are there :  
Still he that scorns or struggles  
Sees, frightful and afar,  
All that they leave of rebels  
Rot high on Temple Bar.

All that I loved and hated,  
All that I shunned and knew,  
Clears in broad battle lightning,  
Where they, and I, and you,  
Run high the barricade that breaks  
The barriers of the street,  
And shout to them that shrink within,  
The Prisoners of the Fleet.

## A CIDER SONG

*To J. S. M.*

EXTRACT FROM A ROMANCE WHICH is NOT YET  
WRITTEN AND PROBABLY NEVER WILL BE.

THE wine they drink in Paradise  
They make in Haute Lorraine;  
God brought it burning from the sod  
To be a sign and signal rod  
That they that drink the blood of God  
Shall never thirst again.

The wine they praise in Paradise  
They make in Ponterey,  
The purple wine of Paradise,  
But we have better at the price;  
It's wine they praise in Paradise,  
It's cider that they pray.

The wine they want in Paradise  
They find in Plodder's End,  
The apple wine of Hereford,  
Of Hafod Hill and Hereford,  
Where woods went down to Hereford,  
And there I had a friend.

The soft feet of the blessed go  
In the soft western vales,  
The road the silent saints accord,  
The road from heaven to Hereford,  
Where the apple wood of Hereford  
Goes all the way to Wales.

## THE LAST HERO

THE wind blew out from Bergen from the dawning  
to the day,

There was a wreck of trees and fall of towers a  
score of miles away,

And drifted like a livid leaf I go before its tide,  
Spewed out of house and stable, beggared of flag  
and bride.

The heavens are bowed about my head, shouting  
like seraph wars,

With rains that might put out the sun and clean  
the sky of stars,

Rains like the fall of ruined seas from secret worlds  
above,

The roaring of the rains of God none but the lonely  
love.

Feast in my hall, O foemen, and eat and drink and  
drain,

You never loved the sun in heaven as I have loved  
the rain.

The chance of battle changes—so may all battle  
be;

I stole my lady bride from them, they stole her back  
from me.

I rent her from her red-roofed hall, I rode and saw  
arise

More lovely than the living flowers the hatred in her  
eyes.

She never loved me, never bent, never was less  
divine;

The sunset never loved me; the wind was never  
mine.



Was it all nothing that she stood imperial in  
duresse ?

Silence itself made softer with the sweeping of her  
dress.

O you who drain the cup of life, O you who wear  
the crown,

You never loved a woman's smile as I have loved  
her frown.

The wind blew out from Bergen from the dawning  
to the day,

They ride and run with fifty spears to break and bar  
my way,

I shall not die alone, alone, but kin to all the  
powers,

As merry as the ancient sun and fighting like the  
flowers.

How white their steel, how bright their eyes ! I love  
each laughing knave,

Cry high and bid him welcome to the banquet of the  
brave.

Yea, I will bless them as they bend and love them  
where they lie,

When on their skulls the sword I swing falls shatter-  
ing from the sky.

The hour when death is like a light and blood is  
like a rose,—

You never loved your friends, my friends, as I shall  
love my foes.

Know you what earth shall lose to-night, what rich  
uncounted loans,

What heavy gold of tales untold you bury with my  
bones ?

190 BALLADE D'UNE GRANDE DAME

My loves in deep dim meadows, my ships that rode  
at ease,  
Ruffling the purple plumage of strange and secret  
seas.  
To see this fair earth as it is to me alone was given,  
The blow that breaks my brow to-night shall break  
the dome of heaven.  
The skies I saw, the trees I saw after no eyes shall see.  
To-night I die the death of God : the stars shall  
die with me :  
One sound shall sunder all the spears and break the  
trumpet's breath :  
You never laughed in all your life as I shall laugh in  
death.

BALLADE D'UNE GRANDE DAME

HEAVEN shall forgive you Bridge at dawn,  
The clothes you wear—or do not wear—  
And Ladies' Leap-frog on the lawn  
And dyes and drugs and *pelits verres*.  
Your vicious things shall melt in air . . . ,  
. . . But for the Virtuous Things you do,  
The Righteous Work, the Public Care,  
It shall not be forgiven you.

Because you could not even yawn  
When your Committees would prepare  
To have the teeth of paupers drawn,  
Or strip the slums of Human Hair;  
Because a Doctor Otto Maehr  
Spoke of " a segregated few "—  
And you sat smiling in your chair—  
It shall not be forgiven you.

Though your sins cried to—Father Vaughan,  
 These desperate you could not spare  
 Who steal, with nothing left to pawn;  
 You caged a man up like a bear  
 For ever in a jailer's care  
 Because his sins were more than two . . .  
 ... I know a house in Hoxton where  
 It shall not be forgiven you.

ENVOI

Princess, you trapped a guileless Mayor  
 To meet some people that you knew . . .  
 When the last trumpet rends the air  
 It shall not be forgiven you.

A BALLADE OF AN ANTI-PURITAN

THEY spoke of Progress spiring round,  
 Of Light and Mrs. Humphrey Ward—  
 It is not true to say I frowned,  
 Or ran about the room and roared;  
 I might have simply sat and snored—  
 I rose politely in the club  
 And said, " I feel a little bored ;  
 Will someone take me to a pub ? "

The new world's wisest did surround  
 Me ; and it pains me to record  
 I did not think their views profound,  
 Or their conclusions well assured ;  
 The simple life I can't afford,  
 Besides, I do not like the grub—  
 I want a mash and sausage, " scored "—  
 Will someone take me to a pub ?

## 102 A BALLADE OF A BOOK-REVIEWER

I know where Men can still be found,  
Anger and clamorous accord,  
And virtues growing from the ground,  
And fellowship of beer and board,  
And song, that is a sturdy cord,  
And hope, that is a hardy shrub,  
And goodness, that is God's last word—  
Will someone take me to a pub ?

### ENVOI

Prince, Bayard would have smashed his sword  
To see the sort of knights you dub—  
Is that the last of them—O Lord !  
Will someone take me to a pub ?

## A BALLADE OF A BOOK-REVIEWER

I HAVE not read a rotten page  
Of " Sex-Hate " or " The Social Test,"  
And here comes " Husks " and " Heritage " . . .  
O Moses, give us all a rest!  
" Ethics of Empire ! " . . . ! protest  
I will not even cut the strings,  
I'll read " Jack Redskin on the Quest"  
And feed my brain with better things.

Somebody wants a Wiser Age  
(He also wants me to invest);  
Somebody likes the Finnish Stage  
Because the Jesters do not jest;  
And grey with dust is Dante's crest  
The bell of Rabelais soundless swings;  
And the winds come out of the west  
And feed my brain with better things.

Lord of our laughter and our rage,  
Look on us with our sins oppressed!  
I, too, have trodden mine heritage,  
Wickedly wearying of the best.  
Burn from my brain and from my breast  
Sloth, and the cowardice that clings,  
And stiffness and the soul's arrest:  
And feed my brain with better things.

## ENVOI

Prince, you are host and I am guest,  
Therefore I shrink from cavillings . . .  
But I should have that fizz suppressed  
And feed my brain with better things.

## A BALLADE OF SUICIDE

THE gallows in my garden, people say,  
Is new and neat and adequately tall.  
I tie the noose on in a knowing way  
As one that knots his necktie for a ball;  
But just as all the neighbours—on the wall—  
Are drawing a long breath to shout " Hurray ! "  
The strangest whim has seized me. . . . After all  
I think I will not hang myself to-day.

To-morrow is the time I get my pay—  
My uncle's sword is hanging in the hall—  
I see a little cloud all pink and grey—  
Perhaps the Rector's mother will *not* call—  
I fancy that I heard from Mr. Gall  
That mushrooms could be cooked another way—  
I never read the works of Juvenal—  
I think I will not hang myself to-day.

## 194 A BALLADE OF THE FIRST RAIN

The world will have another washing day;  
The decadents decay; the pedants pall;  
And H. G. Wells has found that children play,  
And Bernard Shaw discovered that they squall;  
Rationalists are growing rational—  
And through thick woods one finds a stream astray,  
So secret that the very sky seems small—  
I think I will not hang myself to-day.

### ENVOI

Prince, I can hear the trumpet of Germinal,  
The tumbrils toiling up the terrible way;  
Even to-day your royal head may fall—  
I think I will not hang myself to-day.

## A BALLADE OF THE FIRST RAIN

THE sky is blue with summer and the sun,  
The woods are brown as autumn with the tan,  
It might as well be Tropics and be done,  
I might as well be born a copper Khan;  
I fashion me an oriental fan  
Made of the wholly unreceipted bills  
Brought by the ice-man, sleeping in his van  
(A storm is coming on the Chiltern Hills).

I read the Young Philosophers for fun  
—Fresh as our sorrow for the late Queen Anne—  
The Dionysians whom a pint would stun,  
The Pantheists who never heard of Pan.  
—But through my hair electric needles ran,  
And on my book a gout of water spills,  
And on the skirts of heaven the guns began  
(A storm is coming on the Chiltern Hills).

O fields of England, cracked and dry and dun,  
 O soul of England, sick of words, and wan !—  
 The clouds grow dark;—the down-rush has begun.  
 —It comes, it comes, as holy darkness can,  
 Black as with banners, ban and arriere-ban;  
 A falling laughter all the valley fills,  
 Deep as God's thunder and the thirst of man:  
 (A storm is coming on the Chiltern Hills).

ENVOI

Prince, Prince-Elective on the modern plan,  
 Fulfilling such a lot of People's Wills,  
 You take the Chiltern Hundreds while you can—  
 A storm is coming on the Chiltern Hills.





## **BOOK FOUR**

### **WINE, WATER AND SONG**

(FIRST PUBLISHED IN "THE FLYING INN,"  
1914)



## THE ENGLISHMAN

ST. GEORGE he was for England,  
And before he killed the dragon  
He drank a pint of English ale  
Out of an English flagon.  
For though he fast right readily  
In hair-shirt or in mail,  
It isn't safe to give him cakes  
Unless you give him ale.

St. George he was for England,  
And right gallantly set free  
The lady left for dragon's meat  
And tied up to a tree ;  
But since he stood for England  
And knew what England means,  
Unless you give him bacon  
You mustn't give him beans.

St. George he is for England,  
And shall wear the shield he wore  
When we go out in armour  
With the battle-cross before.  
But though he is jolly company  
And very pleased to dine,  
It isn't safe to give him nuts  
Unless you give him wine.

## WINE AND WATER

OLD Noah he had an ostrich farm and fowls on  
the largest scale,  
He ate his egg with a ladle in an egg-cup big as  
a pail,  
And the soup he took was Elephant Soup and the  
fish he took was Whale,  
But they all were small to the cellar he took when  
he set out to sail,  
And Noah he often said to his wife when he sat  
down to dine,  
" I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get  
into the wine."

The cataract of the cliff of heaven fell blinding off  
the brink  
As if it would wash the stars away as suds go down  
a sink,  
The seven heavens came roaring down for the throats  
of hell to drink,  
And Noah he cocked his eye and said, " It looks  
like rain, I think,  
The water has drowned the Matterhorn as deep as  
a Mendip mine,  
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't  
get into the wine."

But Noah he sinned, and we have sinned ; on tipsy  
feet we trod,  
Till a great big black teetotaller was sent to us for  
a rod,  
And you can't get wine at a P.S.A., or chapel, or  
Eisteddfod,

THE SONG AGAINST GROCERS 201

For the Curse of Water has come again because of  
the wrath of God,  
And water is on the Bishop's board and the Higher  
Thinker's shrine,  
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't  
get into the wine.

THE SONG AGAINST GROCERS

GOD made the wicked Grocer  
For a mystery and a sign,  
That men might shun the awful shops  
And go to inns to dine ;  
Where the bacon's on the rafter  
And the wine is in the wood,  
And God that made good laughter  
Has seen that they are good.

The evil-hearted Grocer  
Would call his mother " Ma'am,"  
And bow at her and bob at her,  
Her aged soul to damn,  
And rub his horrid hands and ask  
What article was next,  
Though *mortis in articulo*  
Should be her proper text.

His props are not his children,  
But pert lads underpaid,  
Who call out " Cash!" and bang about  
To work his wicked trade;  
He keeps a lady in a cage  
Most cruelly all day,  
And makes her count and calls her " Miss "  
Until she fades away.

The righteous minds of innkeepers  
 Induce them now and then  
 To crack a bottle with a friend  
 Or treat unmoneyed men,  
 But who hath seen the Grocer  
 Treat housemaids to his teas  
 Or crack a bottle of fish sauce  
 Or stand a man a cheese ?

He sells us sands of Araby  
 As sugar for cash down;  
 He sweeps his shop and sells the dust  
 The purest salt in town,  
 He crams with cans of poisoned meat  
 Poor subjects of the King,  
 And when they die by thousands  
 Why, he laughs like anything.

The wicked Grocer groces  
 In spirits and in wine,  
 Not frankly and in fellowship  
 As men in inns do dine ;  
 But packed with soap and sardines  
 And carried off by grooms,  
 For to be snatched by Duchesses  
 And drunk in dressing-rooms.

The hell-instructed Grocer  
 Has a temple made of tin,  
 And the ruin of good innkeepers  
 Is loudly urged therein;  
 But now the sands are running out  
 From sugar of a sort,  
 The Grocer trembles; for his time,  
 Just like his weight, is short.

THE ROLLING ENGLISH ROAD

BEFORE the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn  
 strode,  
 The rolling English drunkard made the rolling  
 English road.  
 A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round  
 the shire,  
 And after him the parson ran, the sexton and the  
 squire ;  
 A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did  
 tread  
 The night we went to Birmingham by way of  
 Bcachy Head.

I knew no harm of Bonaparte and plenty of the  
 Squire,  
 And for to fight the Frenchman I did not much  
 desire;  
 But I did bash their baggonets because they came  
 arrayed  
 To straighten out the crooked road an English  
 drunkard made,  
 Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs  
 in our hands,  
 The night we went to Glastonbury by way of  
 Goodwin Sands.

His sins they were forgiven him ; or why do flowers  
 run  
 Behind him; and the hedges all strengthening in  
 the sun ?

The wild thing went from left to right and knew  
not which was which,  
But the wild rose was above him when they found  
him in the ditch.  
God pardon us, nor harden us; we did not see so  
clear  
The night we went to Bannockburn by way of  
Brighton Pier.

My friends, we will not go again or ape an ancient  
rage,  
Or stretch the folly of our youth to be the shame  
of age,  
But walk with clearer eyes and ears this path that  
wandereth,  
And see undrugged in evening light the decent inn  
of death;  
For there is good news yet to hear and fine things  
to be seen,  
Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.

## THE SONG OF QUOODLE

THEY haven't got no noses,  
The fallen sons of Eve;  
Even the smell of roses  
Is not what they supposes;  
But more than mind discloses  
And more than men believe.

They haven't got no noses,  
They cannot even tell  
When door and darkness closes



The park a Jew encloses,  
Where even the law of Moses  
Will let you steal a smell.

The brilliant smell of water,  
The brave smell of a stone,  
The smell of dew and thunder,  
The old bones buried under,  
Are things in which they blunder  
And err, if left alone.

The wind from winter forests,  
The scent of scentless flowers,  
The breath of brides' adorning,  
The smell of snare and warning,  
The smell of Sunday morning,  
God gave to us for ours.

•        \*        .        •        •

And Quoodle here discloses  
All things that Quoodle can,  
They haven't got no noses,  
They haven't got no noses,  
And goodness only knowses  
The Noselessness of Man.

## PIONEERS, O PIONEERS

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the King of the Jews  
Suffered from new and original views,  
He crawled on his hands and knees, it's said,  
With grass in his mouth and a crown on his head  
With a wowtyiddly, etc.

Those in traditional paths that trod  
Thought the thing was a curse from God,  
But a Pioneer men always abuse  
Like Nebuchadnezzar the King of the Jews.

Black Lord Foulon the Frenchmen slew  
Thought it a Futurist thing to do.  
He offered them grass instead of bread;  
So they stuffed him with grass when they cut off  
his head.

With a wowtyiddly, etc.

For the pride of his soul he perished then—  
But of course it is always of Pride that men,  
A Man in Advance of his Age accuse,  
Like Nebuchadnezzar the King of the Jews.

Simeon Scudder of Styx, in Maine,  
Thought of the thing and was at it again.  
He gave good grass and water in pails  
To a thousand Irishmen hammering rails.

With a wowtyiddly, etc.

Appetites differ; and tied to a stake  
He was tarred and feathered for Conscience<sup>1</sup> Sake.  
But stoning the prophets is ancient news,  
Like Nebuchadnezzar the King of the Jews,

## THE LOGICAL VEGETARIAN

" WHY SHOULDN'T I HAVE A PURELY VEGETARIAN  
 DRINK ? WHY SHOULDN'T I TAKE VEGETABLES IN  
 THEIR HIGHEST FORM, SO TO SPEAK ? THE MODEST  
 VEGETARIANS OUGHT OBVIOUSLY TO STICK TO WINE  
 OR BEER, PLAIN VEGETARIAN DRINKS, INSTEAD OF  
 FILLING THEIR GOBLETs WITH THE BLOOD OF BULLS  
 AND ELEPHANTS, AS ALL CONVENTIONAL MEAT-EATERS  
 DO, I SUPPOSE."—*Dalroy*.

You will find me drinking rum,  
 Like a sailor in a slum,  
 You will find me drinking beer like a Bavarian.  
 You will find me drinking gin  
 In the lowest kind of inn,  
 Because I am a rigid Vegetarian.

So I cleared the inn of wine,  
 And I tried to climb the sign,  
 And I tried to hail the constable as " Marion."  
 But he said I couldn't speak,  
 And he bowled me to the Beak  
 Because I was a Happy Vegetarian.

Oh, I knew a Doctor Gluck,  
 And his nose it had a hook,  
 And his attitudes were anything but Aryan:  
 So I gave him all the pork  
 That I had, upon a fork  
 Because I am myself a Vegetarian.

I am silent in the Club,  
 I am silent in the pub.,  
 I am silent on a bally peak in Darien;  
 For I stuff away for life  
 Shoving peas in with a knife,  
 Because I am at heart a Vegetarian.

No more the milk of cows  
 Shall pollute my private house  
 Than the milk of the wild mares of the Barbarian  
 I will stick to port and sherry,  
 For they are so very, very,  
 So very, very, very Vegetarian.

### "THE SARACEN'S HEAD"

"THE Saracen's Head" looks down the lane,  
 Where we shall never drink wine again,  
 For the wicked old women who feel well-bred  
 Have turned to a tea-shop "The Saracen's Head,"

"The Saracen's Head" out of Araby came,  
 King Richard riding in arms like flame,  
 And where he established his folks to be fed  
 He set up a spear—and the Saracen's Head.

But the "Saracen's Head" outlived the Kings,  
 It thought and it thought of most horrible things,  
 Of Health and of Soap and of Standard Bread,  
 And of Saracen drinks at the "Saracen's Head."

So the "Saracen's Head" fulfils its name,  
 They drink no wine—a ridiculous game—  
 And I shall wonder until I'm dead,  
 How it ever came into the Saracen's Head.

## THE GOOD RICH MAN

MR. MANDRAGON, the Millionaire, he wouldn't have  
wine or wife,  
He couldn't endure complexity ; he lived the simple  
life.  
He ordered his lunch by megaphone in manly,  
simple tones,  
And used all his motors for canvassing voters, and  
twenty telephones ;  
Besides a dandy little machine,  
Cunning and neat as ever was seen  
With a hundred pulleys and cranks between,  
Made of metal and kept quite clean,  
To hoist him out of his healthful bed on every day  
of his life,  
And wash him and brush him, and shave him and  
dress him to live the Simple Life.

Mr. Mandragon was most refined and quietly, neatly  
dressed,  
Say all the American newspapers that know refine-  
ment best;  
Neat and quiet the hair and hat, and the coat quiet  
and neat.  
A trouser worn upon either leg, while boots adorn  
the feet;  
And not, as any one might expect,  
A Tiger Skin, all striped and flecked,  
And a Peacock Hat with the tail erect,  
A scarlet tunic with sunflowers decked,  
—That might have had a more marked effect,

210      THE SONG AGAINST SONGS

And pleased the pride of a weaker man that yearned  
for wine or wife;

But fame and the flagon, for Mr. Mandragon  
obscured the Simple Life.

Mr. Mandragon the Millionaire, I am happy to say,  
is dead;

He enjoyed a quiet funeral in a crematorium shed,  
And he lies there fluffy and soft and grey, and  
certainly quite refined,

When he might have rotted to flowers and fruit with  
Adam and all mankind,

Or been eaten by wolves athirst for blood,

Or burnt on a big tall pyre of wood,

In a towering flame, as a heathen should,

Or even sat with us here at food,

Merrily taking twopenny ale and cheese with a  
pocket-knife;

But these were luxuries not for him who went for  
the Simple Life.

THE SONG AGAINST SONGS

THE song of the sorrow of Melisande is a weary  
song and a dreary song,

The glory of Mariana's grange had got into great  
decay,

The song of the Raven Never More has never been  
called a cheery song,

And the brightest things in Baudelaire are anything  
else but gay.

But who will write us a riding song  
Or a hunting song or a drinking song,  
Fit for them that arose and rode

When day and the wine were red ?  
But bring me a quart of claret out,  
And I will write you a clinking song,  
A song of war and a song of wine  
And a song to wake the dead.

The song of the fury of Fragolette is a florid song  
and a torrid song,  
The song of the sorrow of Tara is sung to a harp  
unstrung,  
The song of the cheerful Shropshire Lad I consider  
a perfectly horrid song,  
And the song of the happy Futurist is a song that  
can't be sung.

But who will write us a riding song  
Or a fighting song or a drinking song,  
Fit for the fathers of you and me,  
That know how to think and thrive ?  
But the song of Beauty and Art and Love  
Is simply an utterly stinking song,  
To double you up and drag you down  
And damn your soul alive.

## ME HEART

I COME from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on me  
sleeve,  
And any sword or pistol boy can hit it with me  
leave,  
It shines there for an epaulette, as golden as a  
flame,  
And naked as me ancestors, as noble as me name.

For I come from Castlepatrick and me heart is on  
me sleeve,  
But a lady stole it from me on St. Gallowglass's  
Eve.

The folk that live in Liverpool, their heart is in their  
boots;  
They go to hell like lambs, they do, because the  
hooter hoots.  
Where men may not be dancin', though the wheels  
may dance all day;  
And men may not be smokin'; but only chimneys  
may.  
But I come from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on  
me sleeve,  
But a lady stole it from me on St. Poleander's  
Eve.

The folk that live in black Belfast, their heart is  
in their mouth,  
They see us making murders in the meadows of the  
South;  
They think a plough's a rack, they do, and cattle-  
calls are creeds,  
And they think we're burnin' witches when we're  
only burnin' weeds;  
But I come from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on  
me sleeve,  
But a lady stole it from me on St. Barnabas's  
Eve.



## THE SONG OF THE OAK

THE Druids waved their golden knives  
And danced around the Oak  
When they had sacrificed a man ;  
But though the learned search and scan  
No single modern person can  
Entirely see the joke.  
But though they cut the throats of men  
They cut not down the tree,  
And from the blood the saplings sprang  
Of oak-woods yet to be.

But Ivywood, Lord Ivywood,  
He rots the tree as ivy would,  
He clings and crawls as ivy would  
About the sacred tree.

King Charles he fled from Worcester fight  
And hid him in the Oak ;  
In convent schools no man of tact  
Would trace and praise his every act  
Or argue that he was in fact  
A strict and sainted bloke.  
But not by him the sacred woods  
Have lost their fancies free,  
And though he was extremely big  
He did not break the tree.

But Ivywood, Lord Ivywood,  
He breaks the tree as ivy would,  
And eats the woods as ivy would  
Between us and the sea.

Great Collingwood walked down the glade  
 And flung the acorns free,  
 That oaks might still be in the grove  
 As oaken as the beams above,  
 When the great Lover sailors love  
 Was kissed by Death at sea.  
 But though for him the oak-trees fell  
 To-build the oaken ships,  
 The woodman worshipped what he smote  
 And honoured even the chips.

But Ivywood, Lord Ivywood,  
 He hates the tree as ivy would,  
 As the dragon of the ivy would  
 That has us in his grips.

## THE ROAD TO ROUNDABOUT

SOME say that Guy of Warwick,  
 The man that killed the Cow,  
 And brake the mighty Boar alive  
 Beyond the bridge at Slough;  
 Went up against a Loathly Worm  
 That wasted all the Downs,  
 And so the roads they twist and squirm  
 (If I may be allowed the term)  
 From the writhing of the stricken Worm  
 That died in seven towns.

I see no scientific proof  
 That this idea is sound,  
 And I should say they wound about  
 To find the town of Roundabout,  
 The merry town of Roundabout,  
 That makes the world go round.

Some say that Robin Goodfellow,  
 Whose lantern lights the meads  
 (To steal a phrase Sir Walter Scott  
 In heaven no longer needs),  
 Such dance around the trysting-place  
 The moonstruck lover leads;  
 Which superstition I should scout  
 There is more faith in honest doubt  
 (as Tennyson has pointed out)  
 Than in those nasty creeds.

But peace and righteousness (St. John)  
 In Roundabout can kiss,  
 And since that's all that's found about  
 The pleasant town of Roundabout,  
 The roads they simply bound about  
 To find out where it is.

Some say that when Sir Lancelot  
 Went forth to find the Grail,  
 Grey Merlin wrinkled up the roads  
 For hope that he should fail;  
 All roads lead back to Lyonesse  
 And Camelot in the Vale,  
 I cannot yield assent to this  
 Extravagant hypothesis,  
 The plain, shrewd Briton will dismiss  
 Such rumours (*Daily Mail*).

But in the streets of Roundabout  
 Are no such factions found,  
 Or theories to expound about,  
 Or roll upon the ground about,  
 In the happy town of Roundabout,  
 That makes the world go round.

THE SONG OF THE STRANGE ASCETIC

IF I had been a Heathen,  
 I'd have praised the purple vine,  
 My slaves would dig the vineyards,  
 And I would drink the wine  
 But Higgins is a Heathen,  
 And his slaves grow lean and grey,  
 That he may drink some tepid milk  
 Exactly twice a day.

If I had been a Heathen,  
 I'd have crowned Neaera's curls,  
 And filled my life with love affairs,  
 My house with dancing girls;  
 But Higgins is a Heathen,  
 And to lecture rooms is forced,  
 Where his aunts, who arc not married,  
 Demand to be divorced.

If I had been a Heathen,  
 I'd have sent my armies forth,  
 And dragged behind my chariots  
 The Chieftains of the North.  
 But Higgins is a Heathen,  
 And he drives the dreary quill,  
 To lend the poor that funny cash  
 That makes them poorer still.

If I had been a Heathen,  
 I'd have piled my pyre on high,  
 And in a great red whirlwind  
 Gone roaring to the sky.

## SONG OF RIGHT AND WRONG 217

But Higgins is a Heathen,  
And a richer man than I;  
And they put him in an oven,  
Just as if he were a pie.

Now who that runs can read it,  
The riddle that I write,  
Of why this poor old sinner,  
Should sin without delight—  
But I, I cannot read it  
(Although I run and run),  
Of them that do not have the faith,  
And will not have the fun.

## THE SONG OF RIGHT AND WRONG

FEAST on wine or fast on water  
And your honour shall stand sure,  
God Almighty's son and daughter  
He the valiant, she the pure;  
If an angel out of heaven  
Brings you other things to drink,  
Thank him for his kind attentions,  
Go and pour them down the sink.

Tea is like the East he grows in,  
A great yellow Mandarin  
With urbanity of manner  
And unconsciousness of sin;  
All the women, like a harem,  
At his pig-tail troop along ;  
And, like all the East he grows in,  
He is Poison when he's strong.

Tea, although an Oriental,  
 Is a gentleman at least;  
 Cocoa is a cad and coward,  
 Cocoa is a vulgar beast,  
 Cocoa is a dull, disloyal,  
 Lying, crawling cad and clown,  
 And may very well be grateful  
 To the fool that takes him down.

As for all the windy waters,  
 They were rained like tempests down  
 When good drink had been dishonoured  
 By the tipplers of the town;  
 When red wine had brought red ruin  
 And the death-dance of our times,  
 Heaven sent us Soda Water  
 As a torment for our crimes.

### WHO GOES HOME?

IN the city set upon slime and loam  
 They cry in their parliament " Who goes home ? "  
 And there comes no answer in arch or dome,  
 For none in the city of graves goes home.  
 Yet these shall perish and understand,  
 For God has pity on this great land.

Men that are men again; who goes home ?  
 Tocsin and trumpeter ! Who goes home ?  
 For there's blood on the field and blood on the foam  
 And blood on the body when Man goes home.  
 And a voice valedictory. . . . Who is for Victory ?  
 Who is for Liberty ? Who goes home ?

BOOK FIVE  
THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE  
(1911)





## DEDICATION

OF great limbs gone to chaos,  
A great face turned to night—  
Why bend above a shapeless shroud  
Seeking in such archaic cloud  
Sight of strong lords and light ?

Where seven sunken Englands  
Lie buried one by one,  
Why should one idle spade, I wonder,  
Shake up the dust of thanes like thunder  
To smoke and choke the sun ?

In cloud of clay so cast to heaven  
What shape shall man discern ?  
These lords may light the mystery  
Of mastery or victory,  
And these ride high in history,  
But these shall not return.

Gored on the Norman gonfalon  
The Golden Dragon died :  
We shall not wake with ballad strings  
The good time of the smaller things,  
We shall not see the holy kings  
Ride down by Severn side.

Stiff, strange, and quaintly coloured  
As the broidery of Bayeux  
The England of that dawn remains,  
And this of Alfred and the Danes  
Seems like the tales a whole tribe feigns  
Too English to be true.

Of a good king on an island  
That ruled once on a time ;  
And as he walked by an apple tree  
There came green devils out of the sea  
With sea-plants trailing heavily  
And tracks of opal slime.

Yet Alfred is no fairy tale;  
His days as our days ran,  
He also looked forth for an hour  
On peopled plains and skies that lower,  
From those few windows in the tower  
That is the head of a man.

But who shall look from Alfred's hood  
Or breathe his breath alive ?  
His century like a small dark cloud  
Drifts far; it is an eyeless crowd,  
Where the tortured trumpets scream aloud  
And the dense arrows drive.

Lady, by one light only  
We look from Alfred's eyes,  
We know he saw athwart the wreck  
The sign that hangs about your neck,  
Where One more than Melchizedek  
Is dead and never dies.

Therefore I bring these rhymes to you.

Who brought the cross to me,  
Since on you flaming without flaw  
I saw the sign that Guthrum saw  
When he let break his ships of awe,  
And laid peace on the sea.

Do you remember when we went  
Under a dragon moon,  
And 'mid volcanic tints of night  
Walked where they fought the unknown fight  
And saw black trees on the battle-height,  
Black thorn on Ethandune ?

And I thought, " I will go with you,  
As man with God has gone,  
And wander with a wandering star,  
The wandering heart of things that are,  
The fiery cross of love and war  
That like yourself, goes on."

O go you onward ; where you are  
Shall honour and laughter be,  
Past purpled forest and pearled foam,  
God's winged pavilion free to roam,  
Your face, that is a wandering home,  
A flying home for me.

Ride through the silent earthquake lands,  
Wide as a waste is wide,  
Across these days like deserts, when  
Pride and a little scratching pen  
Have dried and split the hearts of men,  
Heart of the heroes, ride.

## 224 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Up through an empty house of stars,  
Being what heart you are,  
Up the inhuman steeps of space  
As on a staircase go in grace,  
Carrying the firelight on your face  
Beyond the loneliest star.

Take these ; in memory of the hour  
We strayed a space from home  
And saw the smoke-hued hamlets, quaint  
With Westland king and Westland saint,  
And watched the western glory faint  
Along the road to Frome.

### BOOK I

#### THE VISION OF THE KING

BEFORE the gods that made the gods  
Had seen their sunrise pass,  
The White Horse of the White Horse Vale  
Was cut out of the grass.

Before the gods that made the gods  
Had drunk at dawn their fill,  
The White Horse of the White Horse Vale  
Was hoary on the hill.

Age beyond age on British land,  
Æons on æons gone,  
Was peace and war in western hills,  
And the White Horse looked on.

For the White Horse knew England  
When there was none to know;  
He saw the first oar break or bend,  
He saw heaven fall and the world end,  
O God, how long ago.

For the end of the world was long ago—  
And all we dwell to-day  
As children of some second birth,  
Like a strange people left on earth  
After a judgment day.

For the end of the world was long ago,  
When the ends of the world waxed free,  
When Rome was sunk in a waste of slaves,  
And the sun drowned in the sea.

When Caesar's sun fell out of the sky  
And whoso hearkened right  
Could only hear the plunging  
Of the nations in the night.

When the ends of the earth came marching in  
To torch and cresset gleam.  
And the roads of the world that lead to Rome  
Were filled with faces that moved like foam,  
Like faces in a dream.

And men rode out of the eastern lands,  
Broad river and burning plain;  
Trees that are Titan flowers to see,  
And tiger skies, striped horribly,  
With tints of tropic rain.

## 226 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Where Ind's enamelled peaks arise  
Around that inmost one,  
Where ancient eagles on its brink,  
Vast as archangels, gather and drink  
The sacrament of the sun.

And men brake out of the northern lands,  
Enormous lands alone,  
Where a spell is laid upon life and lust  
And the rain is changed to a silver dust  
And the sea to a great green stone.

And a Shape that moveth murkily  
In mirrors of ice and night,  
Hath blanched with fear all beasts and birds,  
As death and a shock of evil words  
Blast a man's hair with white.

And the cry of the palms and the purple moons,  
Or the cry of the frost and foam,  
Swept ever around an inmost place,  
And the din of distant race on race  
Cried and replied round Rome.

And there was death on the Emperor  
And night upon the Pope :  
And Alfred, hiding in deep grass,  
Hardened his heart with hope.

A sea-folk blinder than the sea  
Broke all about his land,  
But Alfred up against them bare  
And gripped the ground and grasped the air,  
Staggered, and strove to stand.

He bent them back with spear and spade,  
With desperate dyke and wall,  
With foemen leaning on his shield  
And roaring on him when he reeled;  
And no help came at all.

He broke them with a broken sword  
A little towards the sea,  
And for one hour of panting peace,  
Ringed with a roar that would not cease,  
With golden crown and girded fleece  
Made laws under a tree.

. . . . .  
The Northmen came about our land  
A Christless chivalry :  
Who knew not of the arch or pen,  
Great, beautiful half-witted men  
From the sunrise and the sea.

Misshapen ships stood on the deep  
Full of strange gold and fire,  
And hairy men, as huge as sin  
With horned heads, came wading in  
Through the long, low sea-mire.

Our towns were shaken of tall kings  
With scarlet beards like blood :  
The world turned empty where they trod,  
They took the kindly cross of God  
And cut it up for wood.

Their souls were drifting as the sea,  
And all good towns and lands  
They only saw with heavy eyes,  
And broke with heavy hands.

228 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Their gods were sadder than the sea,  
Gods of a wandering will,  
Who cried for blood like beasts at night,  
Sadly, from hill to hill.

They seemed as trees walking the earth,  
As witless and as tall,  
Yet they took hold upon the heavens  
And no help came at all.

They bred like birds in English woods,  
They rooted like the rose,  
When Alfred came to Athelney  
To hide him from their bows

There was not English armour left,  
Nor any English thing,  
When Alfred came to Athelney  
To be an English king.

For earthquake swallowing earthquake  
Uprent the Wessex tree ;  
The whirlpool of the pagan sway  
Had swirled his sires as sticks away  
When a flood smites the sea.

And the great kings of Wessex  
Wearied and sank in gore,  
And even their ghosts in that great stress  
Grew greyer and greyer, less and less,  
With the lords that died in Lyonesse  
And the king that comes no more.



And the God of the Golden Dragon  
Was dumb upon his throne,  
And the lord of the Golden Dragon  
Ran in the woods alone.

And if ever he climbed the crest of luck  
And set the flag before,  
Returning as a wheel returns,  
Came ruin and the rain that burns.  
And all began once more.

And naught was left King Alfred  
But shameful tears of rage,  
In the island in the river  
In the end of all his age.

In the island in the river  
He was broken to his knee :  
And he read, writ with an iron pen,  
That God had wearied of Wessex men  
And given their country, field and fen,  
To the devils of the sea.

And he saw in a little picture,  
Tiny and far away,  
His mother sitting in Egbert's hall,  
And a book she showed him, very small,  
Where a sapphire Mary sat in stall  
With a golden Christ at play.

It was wrought in the monk's slow manner,  
From silver and sanguine shell,  
Where the scenes are little and terrible,  
Keyholes of heaven and hell.

## 230 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

In the river island of Athelney,  
With the river running past,  
In colours of such simple creed  
All things sprang at him, sun and weed,  
Till the grass grew to be grass indeed  
And the tree was a tree at last.

Fearfully plain the flowers grew,  
Like the child's book to read,  
Or like a friend's face seen in a glass ;  
He looked ; and there Our Lady was,  
She stood and stroked the tall live grass  
As a man strokes his steed.

Her face was like an open word  
When brave men speak and choose,  
The very colours of her coat  
Were better than good news.

She spoke not, nor turned not,  
Nor any sign she cast,  
Only she stood up straight and free,  
Between the flowers in Athelney,  
And the river running past.

One dim ancestral jewel hung  
On his ruined armour grey,  
He rent and cast it at her feet:  
Where, after centuries, with slow feet,  
Men came from hall and school and street  
And found it where it lay.

" Mother of God," the wanderer said,  
"I am but a common king,  
Nor will I ask what saints may ask,  
To see a secret thing.

" The gates of heaven are fearful gates  
Worse than the gates of hell;  
Not I would break the splendours barred  
Or seek to know the thing they guard,  
Which is too good to tell.

<sup>44</sup> But for this earth most pitiful,  
This little land I know,  
If that which is for ever is,  
Or if our hearts shall break with bliss,  
Seeing the stranger go ?

" When our last bow is broken, Queen,  
And our last javelin cast,  
Under some sad, green evening sky,  
Holding a ruined cross on high,  
Under warm westland grass to lie,  
Shall we come home at last ? "

And a voice came human but high up,  
Like a cottage climbed among  
The clouds; or a serf of hut and croft  
That sits by his hovel fire as oft,  
But hears on his old bare roof aloft  
A belfry burst in song.

" The gates of heaven are lightly locked,  
We do not guard our gain,  
The heaviest hind may easily  
Come silently and suddenly  
Upon me in a lane.

232 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" And any little maid that walks  
In good thoughts apart,  
May break the guard of the Three Kings  
And see the dear and dreadful things  
I hid within my heart.

" The meanest man in grey fields gone  
Behind the set of sun,  
Heareth between star and other star,  
Through the door of the darkness fallen ajar.,  
The council, eldest of things that are,  
The talk of the Three in One.

" The gates of heaven are lightly locked,  
We do not guard our gold,  
Men may uproot where worlds begin,  
Or read the name of the nameless sin;  
But if he fail or if he win  
To no good man is told.

" The men of the East may spell the stars,  
And times and triumphs mark,  
But the men signed of the cross of Christ  
Go gaily in the dark.

" The men of the East may search the scrolls  
For sure fates and fame,  
But the men that drink the blood of God  
Go singing to their shame.

" The wise men know what wicked things  
Are written on the sky,  
They trim sad lamps, they touch sad strings,  
Hearing the heavy purple wings,  
Where the forgotten seraph kings  
Still plot how God shall die.

" The wise men know all evil things  
Under the twisted trees,  
Where the perverse in pleasure pine  
And men are weary of green wine  
And sick of crimson seas.

" But you and all the kind of Christ  
Are ignorant and brave,  
And you have wars you hardly win  
And souls you hardly save.

"I tell you naught for your comfort,  
Yea, naught for your desire,  
Save that the sky grows darker yet  
And the sea rises higher.

" Night shall be thrice night over you,  
And heaven an iron cope.  
Do you have joy without a cause,  
Yea, faith without a hope ? "

Even as she spoke she was not,  
Nor any word said he,  
He only heard, still as he stood  
Under the old night's nodding hood,  
The sea-folk breaking down the wood  
Like a high tide from sea.

He only heard the heathen men,  
Whose eyes are blue and bleak,  
Singing about some cruel thing  
Done by a great and smiling king  
In daylight on a deck.

He only heard the heathen men,  
Whose eyes are blue and blind,  
Singing what shameful things are done  
Between the sunlit sea and the sun  
When the land is left behind.

## BOOK II

## THE GATHERING OF THE CHIEFS

UP across windy wastes and up  
Went Alfred over the shaws,  
Shaken of the joy of giants,  
The joy without a cause.

In the slopes away to the western bays,  
Where blows not ever a tree,  
He washed his soul in the west wind  
And his body in the sea.

And he set to rhyme his ale-measures,  
And he sang aloud his laws,  
Because of the joy of the giants,  
The joy without a cause.

For the King went gathering Wessex men,  
As grain out of the chaff  
The few that were alive to die,  
Laughing, as littered skulls that lie  
After lost battles turn to the sky  
An everlasting laugh.

The King went gathering Christian men,  
 As wheat out of the husk;  
 Eldred, the Franklin by the sea,  
 And Mark, the man from Italy,  
 And Colan of the Sacred Tree,  
 From the old tribe on Usk.

The rook croaked homeward heavily,  
 The west was clear and warm,  
 The smoke of evening food and ease  
 Rose like a blue tree in the trees  
 When he came to Eldred's farm.

But Eldred's farm was fallen awry,  
 Like an old cripple's bones,  
 And Eldred's tools were red with rust,  
 And on his well was a green crust,  
 And purple thistles upward thrust,  
 Between the kitchen stones.

But smoke of some good feasting  
 Went upwards evermore,  
 And Eldred's doors stood wide apart  
 For loitering foot or labouring cart,  
 And Eldred's great and foolish heart  
 Stood open like his door.

A mighty man was Eldred,  
 A bulk for casks to fill,  
 His face a dreaming furnace,  
 His body a walking hill.

In the old wars of Wessex  
His sword had sunken deep,  
But all his friends, he sighed and said,  
Were broken about Ethelred;  
And between the deep drink and the dead  
He had fallen upon sleep.

" Come not to me, King Alfred,  
Save always for the ale :  
Why should my harmless hinds be slain  
Because the chiefs cry once again,  
As in all fights, that we shall gain,  
And in all fights we fail ?

" Your scalds still thunder and prophesy  
That crown that never comes;  
Friend, I will watch the certain things,  
Swine, and slow moons like silver rings,  
And the ripening of the plums."

And Alfred answered, drinking,  
And gravely, without blame,  
" Nor bear I boast of scald or king,  
The thing I bear is a lesser thing,  
But comes in a better name.

" Out of the mouth of the Mother of God,  
More than the doors of doom,  
I call the muster of Wessex men  
From grassy hamlet or ditch or den,  
To break and be broken, God knows when,  
But I have seen for whom.



" Out of the mouth of the Mother of God  
 Like a little word come I;  
 For I go gathering Christian men  
 From sunken paving and ford and fen,  
 To die in a battle, God knows when,  
 By God, but I know why.

" And this is the word of Mary,  
 The word of the world's desire :  
 \* No more of comfort shall ye get,  
 Save that the sky grows darker yet  
 And the sea rises higher.' "

Then silence sank. And slowly  
 Arose the sea-land lord,  
 Like some vast beast for mystery,  
 He filled the room and porch and sky,  
 And from a cobwebbed nail on high  
 Unhooked his heavy sword.

Up on the shrill sea-downs and up  
 Went Alfred all alone,  
 Turning but once e'er the door was shut,  
 Shouting to Eldred over his butt,  
 That he bring all spears to the woodman's hut  
 Hewn under Egbert's Stone.

And he turned his back and broke the fern,  
 And fought the moths of dusk,  
 And went on his way for other friends,  
 Friends fallen of all the wide world's ends,  
 From Rome that wrath and pardon sends  
 And the grey tribes on Usk.

He saw gigantic tracks of death  
And many a shape of doom,  
Good steadings to grey ashes gone  
And a monk's house white like a skeleton  
In the green crypt of the combe.

And in many a Roman villa  
Earth and her ivies eat,  
Saw coloured pavements sink and fade  
In flowers, and the windy colonnade  
Like the spectre of a street.

But the cold stars clustered  
Among the cold pines  
Ere he was half on his pilgrimage  
Over the western lines.

And the white dawn widened  
Ere he came to the last pine,  
Where Mark, the man from Italy,  
Still made the Christian sign.

The long farm lay on the large hill-side,  
Flat like a painted plan,  
And by the side the low white house,  
Where dwelt the southland man.

A bronzed man, with a bird's bright eye,  
And a strong bird's beak and brow,  
His skin was brown like buried gold,  
And of certain of his sires was told  
That they came in the shining ship of old,  
With Caesar in the prow.

His fruit trees stood like soldiers  
    Drilled in a straight line,  
His strange, stiff olives did not fail,  
And all the kings of the earth drank ale,  
    But he drank wine.

Wide over wasted British plains  
    Stood never an arch or dome,  
Only the trees to toss and reel,  
The tribes to bicker, the beasts to squeal;  
But the eyes in his head were strong like steel,  
    And his soul remembered Rome.

Then Alfred of the lonely spear  
    Lifted his lion head;  
And fronted with the Italian's eye,  
Asking him of his whence and why,  
    King Alfred stood and said:

" I am that oft-defeated King  
    Whose failure fills the land,  
Who fled before the Danes of old,  
Who chattered with the Danes with gold,  
Who now upon the Wessex wold  
    Hardly has feet to stand.

" But out of the mouth of the Mother of God  
    I have seen the truth like fire,  
This—that the sky grows darker yet  
    And the sea rises higher."

240 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Long looked the Roman on the land;  
The trees as golden crowns  
Blazed, drenched with dawn and dew-empearled  
While faintlier coloured, freshlier curled,  
The clouds from underneath the world  
Stood up over the downs.

" These vines be ropes that drag me hard,"  
He said. " I go not far ;  
Where would you meet ? For you must hold  
Half Wiltshire and the White Horse wold,  
And the Thames bank to Owsenfold,  
If Wessex goes to war.

" Guthrum sits strong on either bank  
And you must press his lines  
Inwards, and eastward drive him down;  
I doubt if you shall take the crown  
Till you have taken London town.  
For me, I have the vines."

" If each man on the Judgment Day  
Meet God on a plain alone,"  
Said Alfred, " I will speak for you  
As for myself, and call it true  
That you brought all fighting folk you knew  
Lined under Egbert's Stone.

" Though I be in the dust ere then,  
I know where you will be."  
And shouldering suddenly his spear  
He faded like some elfin fear,  
Where the tall pines ran up, tier on tier,  
Tree overtoppling tree.

He shouldered his spear at morning  
 And laughed to lay it on,  
 But he leaned on his spear as on a staff,  
 With might and little mood to laugh,  
 Or ever he sighted chick or calf  
 Of Colan of Caerleon.

For the man dwelt in a lost land  
 Of boulders and broken men,  
 In a great grey cave far off to the south  
 Where a thick green forest stopped the mouth,  
 Giving darkness in his den.

And the man was come like a shadow,  
 From the shadow of Druid trees,  
 Where Usk, with mighty murmurings,  
 Past Caerleon of the fallen kings,  
 Goes out to ghostly seas.

Last of a race in ruin—  
 He spoke the speech of the Gaels;  
 His kin were in holy Ireland,  
 Or up in the crags of Wales.

But his soul stood with his mother's folk,  
 That were of the rain-wrapped isle,  
 Where Patrick and Brandan westerly  
 Looked out at last on a landless sea  
 And the sun's last smile.

His harp was carved and cunning,  
 As the Celtic craftsman makes,  
 Graven all over with twisting shapes  
 Like many headless snakes.

242 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

His harp was carved and cunning,  
His sword prompt and sharp,  
And he was gay when he held the sword,  
Sad when he held the harp.

For the great Gaels of Ireland  
Are the men that God made mad,  
For all their wars are merry,  
And all their songs are sad.

He kept the Roman order,  
He made the Christian sign;  
But his eyes grew often blind and bright,  
And the sea that rose in the rocks at night  
Rose to his head like wine.

He made the sign of the cross of God,  
He knew the Roman prayer,  
But he had unreason in his heart  
Because of the gods that were.

Even they that walked on the high cliffs,  
High as the clouds were then,  
Gods of unbearable beauty,  
That broke the hearts of men.

And whether in seat or saddle,  
Whether with frown or smile,  
Whether at feast or fight was he,  
He heard the noise of a nameless sea  
On an undiscovered isle.

Lifting the great green ivy  
 And the great spear lowering,  
 One said, " I am Alfred of Wessex,  
 And I am a conquered king."

And the man of the cave made answer,  
 And his eyes were stars of scorn,  
 " And better kings were conquered  
 Or ever your sires were born.

" What goddess was your mother,  
 What fay your breed begot,  
 That you should not die with Uther  
 And Arthur and Lancelot ?

" But when you win you brag and blow,  
 And when you lose you rail,  
 Army of eastland yokels  
 Not strong enough to fail."

" I bring not boast or railing,"  
 Spake Alfred not in ire,  
 " I bring of Our Lady a lesson set,  
 This—that the sky grows darker yet  
 And the sea rises higher."

Then Colan of the Sacred Tree  
 Tossed his black mane on high,  
 And cried, as rigidly he rose,  
 " And if the sea and sky be foes,  
 We will tame the sea and sky."

Smiled Alfred, " Seek ye a fable  
 More dizzy and more dread  
 Than all your mad barbarian tales  
 Where the sky stands on its head ?

## 244 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" A tale where a man looks down on the sky  
That has long looked down on him;  
A tale where a man can swallow a sea  
That might swallow the seraphim.

" Bring to the hut by Egbert's Stone  
All bills and bows ye have."  
And Alfred strode off rapidly,  
And Colan of the Sacred Tree  
Went slowly to his cave.

### BOOK III

#### THE HARP OF ALFRED

IN a tree that yawned and twisted  
The King's few goods were flung,  
A mass-book mildewed, line by line,  
And weapons and a skin of wine,  
And an old harp unstrung.

By the yawning tree in the twilight  
The King unbound his sword,  
Severed the harp of all his goods,  
And there in the cool and soundless woods  
Sounded a single chord.

Then laughed ; and watched the finches flash,  
The sullen flies in swarm,  
And went unarmed over the hills,  
With the harp upon his arm,



Until he came to the White Horse Vale  
And saw across the plains,  
In the twilight high and far and fell,  
Like the fiery terraces of hell,  
The camp fires of the Danes—

The fires of the Great Army  
That was made of iron men,  
Whose lights of sacrilege and scorn  
Ran around England red as morn,  
Fires over Glastonbury Thorn—  
Fires out on Ely Fen.

And as he went by White Horse Vale  
He saw lie wan and wide  
The old horse graven, God knows when,  
By gods or beasts or what things then  
Walked a new world instead of men  
And scrawled on the hill-side.

And when he came to White Horse Down  
The great White Horse was grey,  
For it was ill scoured of the weed,  
And lichen and thorn could crawl and feed,  
Since the foes of settled house and creed  
Had swept old works away.

King Alfred gazed all sorrowful  
At thistle and mosses grey,  
Till a rally of Danes with shield and bill  
Rolled drunk over the dome of the hill,  
And, hearing of his harp and skill,  
They dragged him to their play.

## 246 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

And as they went through the high green grass  
They roared like the great green sea;  
But when they came to the red camp fire  
They were silent suddenly.

And as they went up the wastes away  
They went reeling to and fro;  
But when they came to the red camp fire  
They stood all in a row.

For golden in the firelight,  
With a smile carved on his lips,  
And a beard curled right cunningly,  
Was Guthrum of the Northern Sea,  
The emperor of the ships—

With three great earls King Guthrum  
Went the rounds from fire to fire,  
With Harold, nephew of the King,  
And Ogier of the Stone and Sling,  
And Elf, whose gold lute had a string  
That sighed like all desire.

The Earls of the Great Army  
That no men born could tire,  
Whose flames anear him or aloof  
Took hold of towers or walls of proof,  
Fire over Glastonbury roof  
And out on Ely, fire.

And Guthrum heard the soldiers' tale  
And bade the stranger play;  
Not harshly, but as one on high,  
On a marble pillar in the sky,  
Who sees all folk that live and die—  
Pigmy and far away.

And Alfred, King of Wessex,  
Looked on his conqueror—  
And his hands hardened; but he played,  
And leaving all later hates unsaid,  
He sang of some old British raid  
On the wild west march of yore.

He sang of war in the warm wet shires,  
Where rain nor fruitage fails,  
Where England of the motley states  
Deepens like a garden to the gates  
In the purple walls of Wales.

He sang of the seas of savage heads  
And the seas and seas of spears,  
Boiling all over Offa's Dyke,  
What time a Wessex club could strike  
The kings of the mountaineers.

Till Harold laughed and snatched the harp,  
The kinsman of the King,  
A big youth, beardless like a child,  
Whom the new wine of war sent wild,  
Smote, and began to sing—

And he cried of the ships as eagles  
That circle fiercely and fly,  
And sweep the seas and strike the towns  
From Cyprus round to Skye.

How swiftly and with peril  
They gather all good things,  
The high horns of the forest beasts,  
Or the secret stones of kings.

## 248 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" For Rome was given to rule the world,  
And gat of it little joy—  
But we, but we shall enjoy the world,  
The whole huge world a toy.

" Great wine like blood from Burgundy,  
Cloaks like the clouds from Tyre,  
And marble like solid moonlight,  
And gold like frozen fire.

" Smells that a man might swill in a cup,  
Stones that a man might eat,  
And the great smooth women like ivory  
That the Turks sell in the street."

He sang the song of the thief of the world,  
And the gods that love the thief;  
And he yelled aloud at the cloister-yards,  
Where men go gathering grief.

" Well have you sung, O stranger,  
Of death on the dyke in Wales,  
Your chief was a bracelet-giver;  
But the red unbroken river  
Of a race runs not for ever,  
But suddenly it fails.

" Doubtless your sires were sword-swingers  
When they waded fresh from foam,  
Before they were turned to women  
By the god of the nails from Rome;

" But since you bent to the shaven men,  
Who neither lust nor smite,  
Thunder of Thor, we hunt you  
A hare on the mountain height."

King Guthrum smiled a little,  
And said, " It is enough,  
Nephew, let Elf retune the string;  
A boy must needs like bellowing,  
But the old ears of a careful king  
Are glad of songs less rough."

Blue-eyed was Elf the minstrel,  
With womanish hair and ring,  
Yet heavy was his hand on sword,  
Though light upon the string.

And as he stirred the strings of the harp  
To notes but four or five,  
The heart of each man moved in him  
Like a babe buried alive.

And they felt the land of the folk-songs  
Spread southward of the Dane,  
And they heard the good Rhine flowing  
In the heart of all Allemagne.

They felt the land of the folk-songs,  
Where the gifts hang on the tree,  
Where the girls give ale at morning  
And the tears come easily.

The mighty people, womanlike,  
That have pleasure in their pain  
As he sang of Balder beautiful,  
Whom the heavens loved in vain.

As he sang of Balder beautiful,  
Whom the heavens could not save,  
Till the world was like a sea of tears  
And every soul a wave.

250 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" There is always a thing forgotten  
When all the world goes well;  
A thing forgotten, as long ago,  
When the gods forgot the mistletoe,  
And soundless as an arrow of snow  
The arrow of anguish fell.

" The thing on the blind side of the heart,  
On the wrong side of the door,  
The green plant groweth, menacing  
Almighty lovers in the spring;  
There is always a forgotten thing,  
And love is not secure."

And all that sat by the fire were sad,  
Save Ogier, who was stern,  
And his eyes hardened, even to stones,  
As he took the harp in turn ;

Earl Ogier of the Stone and Sling  
Was odd to ear and sight,  
Old he was, but his locks were red,  
And jests were all the words he said,  
Yet he was sad at board and bed  
And savage in the fight.

" You sing of the young gods easily  
In the days when you are young;  
But I go smelling yew and sods,  
And I know there are gods behind the gods,  
Gods that are best unsung.

" And a man grows ugly for women,  
And a man grows dull with ale,  
Well if he find in his soul at last  
Fury, that does not fail.

" The wrath of the gods behind the gods  
Who would rend all gods and men,  
Well if the old man's heart hath still  
Wheels sped of rage and roaring will,  
Like cataracts to break down and kill,  
Well for the old man then—

" While there is one tall shrine to shake,  
Or one live man to rend ;  
For the wrath of the gods behind the gods  
Who are weary to make an end.

" There lives one moment for a man  
When the door at his shoulder shakes,  
When the taut rope parts under the pull,  
And the barest branch is beautiful  
One moment, while it breaks.

" So rides my soul upon the sea  
That drinks the howling ships,  
Though in black jest it bows and nods  
Under the moons with silver rods,  
I know it is roaring at the gods,  
Waiting the last eclipse.

" And in the last eclipse the sea  
Shall stand up like a tower,  
Above all moons made dark and riven,  
Hold up its foaming head in heaven,  
And laugh, knowing its hour.

252 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

\*' And the high ones in the happy town  
Propped of the planets seven,  
Shall know a new light in the mind,  
A noise about them and behind,  
Shall hear an awful voice, and find  
Foam in the courts of heaven.

" And you that sit by the fire are young,  
And true love waits for you;  
But the king and I grow old, grow old,  
And hate alone is true."

And Guthrum shook his head but smiled,  
For he was a mighty clerk,  
And had read lines in the Latin books  
When all the north was dark.

He said, " I am older than you, Ogier;  
Not all things would I rend,  
For whether life be bad or good  
It is best to abide the end."

He took the great harp wearily,  
Even Guthrum of the Danes,  
With wide eyes bright as the one long day  
On the long polar plains.

For he sang of a wheel returning,  
And the mire trod back to mire,  
And how red hells and golden heavens  
Are castles in the fire.



\*' It is good to sit where the good tales go,  
To sit as our fathers sat;  
But the hour shall come after his youth,  
When a man shall know not tales but truth,  
And his heart fail thereat.

" When he shall read what is written  
So plain in clouds and clods,  
When he shall hunger without hope  
Even for evil gods.

" For this is a heavy matter,  
And the truth is cold to tell;  
Do we not know, have we not heard,  
The soul is like a lost bird,  
The body a broken shell.

" And a man hopes, being ignorant,  
Till in white woods apart  
He finds at last the lost bird dead :  
And a man may still lift up his head  
But never more his heart.

" There comes no noise but weeping  
Out of the ancient sky,  
And a tear is in the tiniest flower  
Because the gods must die.

" The little brooks are very sweet,  
Like a girl's ribbons curled,  
But the great sea is bitter  
That washes all the world.

" Strong are the Roman roses,  
 Or the free flowers of the heath,  
 But every flower, like a flower of the sea,  
 Smelleth with the salt of death.

" And the heart of the locked battle  
 Is the happiest place for men;  
 When shrieking souls as shafts go by  
 And many have died and all may die;  
 Though this word be a mystery,  
 Death is most distant then.

" Death blazes bright above the cup,  
 And clear above the crown;  
 But in that dream of battle  
 We seem to tread it down.

" Wherefore I am a great king,  
 And waste the world in vain,  
 Because man hath not other power,  
 Save that in dealing death for dower,  
 He may forget it for an hour  
 To remember it again."

And slowly his hands and thoughtfully  
 Fell from the lifted lyre,  
 And the owls moaned from the mighty trees  
 Till Alfred caught it to his knees  
 And smote it as in ire.

He heaved the head of the harp on high  
 And swept the framework barred,  
 And his stroke had all the rattle and spark  
 Of horses flying hard.

" When God put man in a garden  
He girt him with a sword,  
And sent him forth a free knight  
That might betray his lord;

" He brake Him and betrayed Him,  
And fast and far he fell,  
Till you and I may stretch our necks  
And burn our beards in hell.

" But though I lie on the floor of the world,  
With the seven sins for rods,  
I would rather fall with Adam  
Than rise with all your gods.

" What have the strong gods given ?  
Where have the glad gods led ?  
When Guthrum sits on a hero's throne  
And asks if he is dead ?

" Sirs, I am but a nameless man,  
A rhymester without home,  
Yet since I come of the Wessex clay  
And carry the cross of Rome,

" I will even answer the mighty earl  
That asked of Wessex men  
Why they be meek and monkish folk,  
And bow to the White Lord's broken yoke ;  
What sign have we save blood and smoke ?  
Here is my answer then,

## 256 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" That on you is fallen the shadow,  
And not upon the Name ;  
That though we scatter and though we fly,  
And you hang over us like the sky,  
You are more tired of victory,  
Than we are tired of shame.

" That though you hunt the Christian man  
Like a hare on the hill-side,  
The hare has still more heart to run  
Than you have heart to ride.

" That though all lances split on you,  
All swords be heaved in vain,  
We have more lust again to lose  
Than you to win again.

" Your lord sits high in the saddle,  
A broken-hearted king,  
But our king Alfred, lost from fame,  
Fallen among foes or bonds of shame,  
In I know not what mean trade or name,  
Has still some song to sing;

" Our monks go robed in rain and snow,  
But the heart of flame therein,  
But you go clothed in feasts and flames,  
When all is ice within;

" Nor shall all iron dooms make dumb  
Men wondering ceaselessly,  
If it be not better to fast for joy  
Than feast for misery.

" Nor monkish order only  
Slides down, as field to fen,  
All things achieved and chosen pass,  
As the White Horse fades in the grass.  
No work of Christian men.

" Ere the sad gods that made your gods  
Saw their sad sunrise pass,  
The White Horse of the White Horse Vale,  
That you have left to darken and fail,  
Was cut out of the grass.

" Therefore your end is on you,  
Is on you and your kings,  
Not for a fire in Ely fen,  
Not that your gods are nine or ten,  
But because it is only Christian men  
Guard even heathen things.

" For our God hath blessed creation,  
Calling it good. I know  
What spirit with whom you blindly band  
Hath blessed destruction with his hand;  
Yet by God's death the stars shall stand  
And the small apples grow."

And the King, with harp on shoulder,  
Stood up and ceased his song;  
And the owls moaned from the mighty trees,  
And the Danes laughed loud and long.

## BOOK IV

## THE WOMAN IN THE FOREST

THICK thunder of the snorting swine,  
Enormous in the gloam,  
Rending among all roots that cling,  
And the wild horses whinnying,  
Were the night's noises when the King  
Shouldering his harp, went home.

With eyes of owl and feet of fox,  
Full of all thoughts he went;  
He marked the tilt of the pagan camp,  
The paling of pine, the sentries' tramp,  
And the one great stolen altar-lamp  
Over Guthrum in his tent.

By scrub and thorn in Ethandune  
That night the foe had lain ;  
Whence ran across the heather grey  
The old stones of a Roman way;  
And in a wood not far away  
The pale road split in twain.

He marked the wood and the cloven ways  
With an old captain's eyes,  
And he thought how many a time had he  
Sought to see Doom he could not see;  
How ruin had come and victory,  
And both were a surprise.

Even so he had watched and wondered  
Under Ashdown from the plains;  
With Ethelred praying in his tent,  
Till the white hawthorn swung and bent,  
As Alfred rushed his spears and rent  
The shield-wall of the Danes.

Even so he had watched and wondered,  
Knowing neither less nor more,  
Till all his lords lay dying,  
And axes on axes plying,  
Flung him, and drove him flying  
Like a pirate to the shore.

Wise he had been before defeat,  
And wise before success;  
Wise in both hours and ignorant,  
Knowing neither more nor less.

As he went down to the river-hut  
He knew a night-shade scent,  
Owls did as evil cherubs rise,  
With little wings and lantern eyes,  
As though he sank through the under-skies;  
But down and down he went.

As he went down to the river-hut  
He went as one that fell;  
Seeing the high forest domes and spars.  
Dim green or torn with golden scars,  
As the proud look up at the evil stars,  
In the red heavens of hell.

For he must meet by the river-hut

Them he had bidden to arm,  
Mark from the towers of Italy,  
And Colan of the Sacred Tree,  
And Eldred who beside the sea  
Held heavily his farm.

The roof leaned gaping to the grass,

As a monstrous mushroom lies ;  
Echoing and empty seemed the place ;  
But opened in a little space  
A great grey woman with scarred face  
And strong and humbled eyes.

King Alfred was but a meagre man,

Bright eyed, but lean and pale :  
And swordless, with his harp and rags,  
He seemed a beggar, such as lags  
Looking for crusts and ale.

And the woman, with a woman's eyes

Of pity at once and ire,  
Said, when that she had glared a span,  
" There is a cake for any man  
If he will watch the fire."

And Alfred, bowing heavily,

Sat down the fire to stir,  
And even as the woman pitied him  
So did he pity her.



Saying, " O great heart in the night,  
O best cast forth for worst,  
Twilight shall melt and morning stir,  
And no kind thing shall come to her,  
Till God shall turn the world over  
And all the last are first.

" And well may God with the serving-folk  
Cast in His dreadful lot;  
Is not He too a servant,  
And is not He forgot ?

" For was not God my gardener  
And silent like a slave;  
That opened oaks on the uplands  
Or thicket in graveyard gave ?

" And was not God my armourer,  
All patient and unpaid,  
That sealed my skull as a helmet,  
And ribs for hauberk made ?

" Did not a great grey servant  
Of all my sires and me,  
Build this pavilion of the pines,  
And herd the fowls and fill the vines,  
And labour and pass and leave no signs  
Save mercy and mystery ?

" For God is a great servant,  
And rose before the day,  
From some primordial slumber torn;  
But all we living later born  
Sleep on, and rise after the morn,  
And the Lord has gone away.

" On things half sprung from sleeping,  
All sleepy suns have shone,  
They stretch stiff arms, the yawning trees,  
The beasts blink upon hands and knees,  
Man is awake and does and sees—  
But Heaven has done and gone.

" For who shall guess the good riddle  
Or speak of the Holiest,  
Save in faint figures and failing words,  
Who loves, yet laughs among the swords,  
Labours, and is at rest ?

" But some see God like Guthrum,  
Crowned, with a great beard curled,  
But I see God like a good giant,  
That, labouring, lifts the world.

" Wherefore was God in Golgotha,  
Slain as a serf is slain;  
And hate He had of prince and peer,  
And love He had and made good cheer,  
Of them that, like this woman here,  
Go powerfully in pain.

" But in this grey morn of man's life,  
Cometh sometime to the mind  
A little light that leaps and flies,  
Like a star blown on the wind.

" A star of nowhere, a nameless star,  
A light that spins and swirls,  
And cries that even in hedge and hill,  
Even on earth, it may go ill  
At last with the evil earls.

" A dancing sparkle, a doubtful star,  
 On the, waste wind whirled and driven;  
 But it seems to sing of a wilder worth,  
 A time discrowned of doom and birth,  
 And the kingdom of the poor on earth  
 Come, as it is in heaven.

" But even though such days endure,  
 How shall it profit her ?  
 Who shall go groaning to the grave,  
 With many a meek and mighty slave,  
 Field-breaker and fisher on the wave,  
 And woodman and waggoner.

" Bake ye the big world all again  
 A cake with kinder leaven;  
 Yet these are sorry evermore—  
 Unless there be a little door,  
 A little door in heaven."

And as he wept for the woman  
 He let her business be,  
 And like his royal oath and rash  
 The good food fell upon the ash  
 And blackened instantly.

Screaming, the woman caught a cake  
 Yet burning from the bar,  
 And struck him suddenly on the face,  
 Leaving a scarlet scar.

King Alfred stood up wordless,  
 A man dead with surprise,  
 And torture stood and the evil things  
 That are in the childish hearts of kings  
 An instant in his eyes.

264 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

And even as he stood and stared  
Drew round him in the dusk  
Those friends creeping from far-off farms,  
Marcus with all his slaves in arms,  
And the strange spears hung with ancient charms  
Of Colan of the Usk.

With one whole farm marching afoot  
The trampled road resounds,  
Farm-hands and farm-beasts blundering by  
And jars of mead and stores of rye,  
Where Eldred strode above his high  
And thunder-throated hounds.

And grey cattle and silver lowed  
Against the unlifted morn,  
And straw clung to the spear-shafts tall.  
And a boy went before them all  
Blowing a ram's horn.

As mocking such rude revelry,  
The dim clan of the Gael  
Came like a bad king's burial-end,  
With dismal robes that drop and rend  
And demon pipes that wail—

In long, outlandish garments,  
Torn, though of antique worth,  
With Druid beards and Druid spears,  
As a resurrected race appears  
Out of an elder earth.

And though the King had called them forth  
 And knew them for his own,  
 So still each eye stood like a gem,  
 So spectral hung each broidered hem,  
 Grey carven men he fancied them,  
 Hewn in an age of stone.

And the two wild peoples of the north  
 Stood fronting in the gloam,  
 And heard and knew each in its mind  
 The third great thunder on the wind,  
 The living walls that hedge mankind,  
 The walking walls of Rome.

Mark's were the mixed tribes of the west,  
 Of many a hue and strain,  
 Gurth, with rank hair like yellow grass,  
 And the Cornish fisher, Gorlias,  
 And Halmer, come from his first mass,  
 Lately baptized, a Dane.

But like one man in armour  
 Those hundreds trod the field,  
 From red Arabia to the Tyne  
 The earth had heard that marching-line,  
 Since the cry on the hill Capitoline,  
 And the fall of the golden shield.

And the earth shook and the King stood still  
 Under the greenwood bough,  
 And the smoking cake lay at his feet  
 And the blow was on his brow.

266 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Then Alfred laughed out suddenly,  
Like thunder in the spring,  
Till shook aloud the lintel-beams,  
And the squirrels stirred in dusty dreams,  
And the startled birds went up in streams,  
For the laughter of the King.

And the beasts of the earth and the birds looked  
down,  
In a wild solemnity,  
On a stranger sight than a sylph or elf,  
On one man laughing at himself  
Under the greenwood tree—

The giant laughter of Christian men  
That roars through a thousand tales,  
Where greed is an ape and pride is an ass,  
And Jack's away with his master's lass,  
And the miser is banged with all his brass,  
The farmer with all his flails;

Tales that tumble and tales that trick,  
Yet end not all in scorning—  
Of kings and clowns in a merry plight,  
And the clock gone wrong and the world gone right,  
That the mummers sing upon Christmas night  
And Christmas Day in the morning.

" Now here is a good warrant,"  
Cried Alfred, " by my sword ;  
For he that is struck for an ill servant  
Should be a kind lord.

" He that has been a servant  
Knows more than priests and kings,  
But he that has been an ill servant,  
He knows all earthly things.

" Pride flings frail palaces at the sky,  
As a man flings up sand,  
But the firm feet of humility  
Take hold of heavy land.

" Pride juggles with her toppling towers,  
They strike the sun and cease,  
But the firm feet of humility  
They grip the ground like trees.

" He that hath failed in a little thing  
Hath a sign upon the brow;  
And the Earls of the Great Army  
Have no such seal to show.

" The red print on my forehead,  
Small flame for a red star,  
In the van of the violent marching, then  
When the sky is torn of the trumpets ten,  
And the hands of the happy howling men  
Fling wide the gates of war.

" This blow that I return not  
Ten times will I return  
On kings and earls of all degree,  
And armies wide as empires be  
Shall slide like landslips to the sea  
If the red star burn.

## 268 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" One man shall drive a hundred,  
, As the dead kings drave;  
Before me rocking hosts be riven,  
And battering cohorts backwards driven,  
For I am the first king known of Heaven  
That has been struck like a slave.

" Up on the old white road, brothers,  
Up on the Roman walls ! •  
For this is the night of the drawing of swords,  
And the tainted tower of the heathen hordes  
Leans to our hammers, fires and cords,  
Leans a little and falls.

" Follow the star that lives and leaps,  
Follow the sword that sings,  
For we go gathering heathen men,  
A terrible harvest, ten by ten,  
As the wrath of the last red autumn—then  
When Christ reaps down the kings.

" Follow a light that leaps and spins,  
Follow the fire unfurled!  
For riseth up against realm and rod,  
A thing forgotten, a thing downtrod,  
The last lost giant, even God,  
Is risen against the world."

Roaring they went o'er the Roman wall,  
And roaring up the lane,  
Their torches tossed, a ladder of fire,  
Higher their hymn was heard and higher,  
More sweet for hate and for heart's desire,  
And up in the northern scrub and brier,  
They fell upon the Dane.



BOOK V

ETHANDUNE: THE FIRST STROKE

KING GUTHRUM was a dread king,  
Like death out of the north;  
Shrines without name or number  
He rent and rolled as lumber,  
From Chester to the Humber  
He drove his foemen forth.

The Roman villas heard him  
In the valley of the Thames,  
Come over the hills roaring  
Above their roofs, and pouring  
On spire and stair and flooring  
Brimstone and pitch and flames.

Sheer o'er the great chalk uplands  
And the hill of the Horse went he,  
Till high on Hampshire beacons  
He saw the southern sea.

High on the heights of Wessex  
He saw the southern brine,  
And turned him to a conquered land,  
And where the northern thornwoods stand,  
And the road parts on either hand,  
There came to him a sign.

King Guthrum was a war-chief,  
A wise man in the field,  
And though he prospered well, and knew  
How Alfred's folk were sad and few,  
Not less with weighty care he drew  
Long lines for pike and shield.

## 270 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

King Guthrum lay on the upper land,  
On a single road at gaze,  
And his foe must come with lean array,  
Up the left arm of the cloven way,  
To the meeting of the ways.

And long ere the noise of armour,  
An hour ere the break of light,  
The woods awoke with crash and cry,  
And the birds sprang clamouring harsh and high,  
And the rabbits ran like an elves' army  
Ere Alfred came in sight.

The live wood came at Guthrum,  
On foot and claw and wing,  
The nests were noisy overhead,  
For Alfred and the star of red,  
All life went forth, and the forest fled  
Before the face of the King.

But halted in the woodways  
Christ's few were grim and grey,  
And each with a small, far, bird-like sight  
Saw the high folly of the fight;  
And though strange joys had grown in the night,  
Despair grew with the day.

And when white dawn crawled through the wood,  
Like cold foam of a flood,  
Then weakened every warrior's mood,  
In hope, though not in hardihood;  
And each man sorrowed as he stood  
In the fashion of his blood.

For the Saxon Franklin sorrowed  
 For the things that had been fair;  
 For the dear dead woman, crimson-clad,  
 And the great feasts and the friends he had;  
 But the Celtic prince's soul was sad  
 For the things that never were.

In the eyes Italian all things  
 But a black laughter died;  
 And Alfred flung his shield to earth  
 And smote his breast and cried—

" I wronged a man to his slaying,  
 And a woman to her shame,  
 And once I looked on a sworn maid  
 That was wed to the Holy Name.

" And once I took my neighbour's wife,  
 That was bound to an eastland man,  
 In the starkness of my evil youth,  
 Before my griefs began.

" People, if you have any prayers,  
 Say prayers for me :  
 And lay me under a Christian stone  
 In that lost land I thought my own,  
 To wait till the holy horn is blown,  
 And all poor men are free."

Then Eldred of the idle farm  
 Leaned on his ancient sword,  
 As fell his heavy words and few;  
 And his eyes were of such alien blue  
 As gleams where the Northman saileth new  
 Into an unknown fiord.

" I was a fool and wasted ale—  
 My slaves found it sweet;  
 I was a fool and wasted bread,  
 And the birds had bread to eat.

" The kings go up and the kings go down.  
 And who knows who shall rule ;  
 Next night a king may starve or sleep,  
 But men and birds and beasts shall weep  
 At the burial of a fool.

"O, drunkards in my cellar,  
 Boys in my apple tree,  
 The world grows stern and strange and new,  
 And wise men shall govern you,  
 And you shall weep for me.

" But yoke me my own oxen,  
 Down to my own farm ;  
 My own dog will whine for me,  
 My own friends will bend the knee,  
 And the foes I slew openly  
 Have never wished me harm."

And all were moved a little,  
 But Colan stood apart,  
 Having first pity, and after  
 Hearing, like rat in rafter,  
 That little worm of laughter  
 That eats the Irish heart.

And his grey-green eyes were cruel,  
 And the smile of his mouth waxed hard,  
 And he said, " And when did Britain  
 Become your burying-yard ?

" Before the Romans lit the land,  
 When schools and monks were none,  
 We reared such stones to the sun-god  
 As might put out the sun.

" The tall trees of Britain  
 We worshipped and were wise,  
 But you shall raid the whole land through  
 And never a tree shall talk to you,  
 Though every leaf is a tongue taught true  
 And the forest is full of eyes.

" On one round hill to the seaward  
 The trees grow tall and grey  
 And the trees talk together  
 When all men are away.

" O'er a few round hills forgotten  
 The trees grow tall in rings,  
 And the trees talk together  
 Of many pagan things.

" Yet I could lie and listen  
 With a cross upon my clay,  
 And hear unhurt for ever  
 What the trees of Britain say."

A proud man was the Roman,  
 His speech a single one,  
 But his eyes were like an eagle's eyes  
 That is staring at the sun.

" Dig for me where I die," he said,  
 " If first or last I fall-  
 Dead on the fell at the first charge,  
 Or dead by Wantage wall;

274 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" Lift not my head from bloody ground,  
Bear not my body home,  
For all the earth is Roman earth  
And I shall die in Rome."

Then Alfred, King of England,  
Bade blow the horns of war,  
And fling the Golden Dragon out,  
With crackle and acclaim and shout,  
Scrolled and aflame and far.

And under the Golden Dragon  
Went Wessex all along,  
Past the sharp point of the cloven ways,  
Out from the black wood into the blaze  
Of sun and steel and song.

And when they came to the open land  
They wheeled, deployed, and stood ;  
Midmost were Marcus and the King,  
And Eldred on the right-hand wing,  
And leftwards Colan darkling,  
In the last shade of the wood.

But the Earls of the Great Army  
Lay like a long half moon,  
Ten poles before their palisades,  
With wide-winged helms and runic blades  
Red giants of an age of raids,  
In the thornland of Ethandune.

Midmost the saddles rose and swayed,  
 And a stir of horses' manes,  
 Where Guthrum and a few rode high  
 On horses seized in victory ;  
 But Ogier went on foot to die,  
 In the old way of the Danes.

Far to the King's left Elf the bard  
 Led on the eastern wing  
 With songs and spells that change the blood;  
 And on the King's right Harold stood,  
 The kinsman of the King.

Young Harold, coarse, with colours gay,  
 Smoking with oil and musk,  
 And the pleasant violence of the young,  
 Pushed through his people, giving tongue  
 Foewards, where, grey as cobwebs hung,  
 The banners of the Usk.

But as he came before his line  
 A little space along,  
 His beardless face broke into mirth,  
 And he cried: " What broken bits of earth  
 Are here ? For what their clothes are worth  
 I would sell them for a song."

For Colan was hung with raiment  
 Tattered like autumn leaves,  
 And his men were all as thin as saints,  
 And all as poor as thieves.

## 276 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

No bows nor slings nor bolts they bore,  
But bills and pikes ill-made ;  
And none but Colan bore a sword,  
And rusty was its blade.

And Colan's eyes with mystery  
And iron laughter stirred,  
And he spoke aloud, but lightly  
Not labouring to be heard.

" Oh, truly we be broken hearts,  
For that cause, it is said,  
We light our candles to that Lord  
That broke Himself for bread.

"But though we hold but bitterly  
What land the Saxon leaves,  
Though Ireland be but a land of saints,  
And Wales a land of thieves,

" I say you yet shall weary  
Of the working of your word,  
That stricken spirits never strike  
Nor lean hands hold a sword.

" And if ever ye ride in Ireland,  
The jest may yet be said,  
There is the land of broken hearts,  
And the land of broken heads."

Not less barbarian laughter  
Choked Harold like a flood,  
" And shall I fight with scarecrows  
That am of Guthrum's blood ?



" Meeting may be of war-men,  
Where the best war-man wins;  
But all this carrion a man shoots  
Before the fight begins."

And stopping in his onward strides,  
He snatched a bow in scorn  
From some mean slave, and bent it on  
Golan, whose doom grew dark; and shone  
Stars evil over Caerleon,  
In the place where he was born.

For Golan had not bow nor sling,  
On a lonely sword leaned he,  
Like Arthur on Excalibur  
In the battle by the sea.

To his great gold ear-ring Harold  
Tugged back the feathered tail,  
And swift had sprung the arrow,  
But swifter sprang the Gael.

Whirling the one sword round his head,  
A great wheel in the sun,  
He sent it splendid through the sky,  
Flying before the shaft could fly—  
It smote Earl Harold over the eye,  
And blood began to run.

Golan stood bare and weaponless,  
Earl Harold, as in pain,  
Strove for a smile, put hand to head,  
Stumbled and suddenly fell dead ;  
And the small white daisies all waxed red  
With blood out of his brain.

278 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

And all at that marvel of the sword,  
Cast like a stone to slay,  
Cried out. Said Alfred : " Who would see  
Signs, must give all things. Verily  
Man shall not taste of victory  
Till he throws his sword away."

Then Alfred, prince of England,  
And all the Christian earls,  
Unhooked their swords and held them up,  
Each offered to Colan, like a cup  
Of chrysolite and pearls.

And the King said, " Do thou take my sword  
Who have done this deed of fire,  
For this is the manner of Christian men,  
Whether of steel or priestly pen,  
That they cast their hearts out of their ken  
To get their heart's desire.

" And whether ye swear a hive of monks,  
Or one fair wife to friend,  
This is the manner of Christian men,  
That their oath endures the end.

" For love, our Lord, at the end of the world,  
Sits a red horse like a throne,  
With a brazen helm and an iron bow,  
But one arrow alone.

" Love with the shield of the Broken Heart  
Ever his bow doth bend,  
With a single shaft for a single prize,  
And the ultimate bolt that parts and flies  
Comes with a thunder of split skies,  
And a sound of souls that rend.

" So shall you earn a king's sword,  
 Who cast your sword away."  
 And the King took, with a random eye,  
 A rude axe from a hind hard by  
 And turned him to the fray.

For the swords of the Earls of Daneland  
 Flamed round the fallen lord.  
 The first blood woke the trumpet-tune,  
 As in monk's rhyme or wizard's rune,  
 Beginneth the battle of Ethandune  
 With the throwing of the sword.

## BOOK VI

### ETHANDUNE: THE SLAYING OF THE CHIEFS

As the sea flooding the flat sands  
 Flew on the sea-born horde,  
 The two hosts shocked with dust and din,  
 Left of the Latian paladin,  
 Clanged all Prince Harold's howling kin  
 On Colan and the sword.

Crashed in the midst on Marcus,  
 Ogier with Guthrum by,  
 And eastward of such central stir,  
 Far to the right and faintlier,  
 The house of Elf the harp-player  
 Struck Eldred's with a cry.

## 280 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

The centre swat for weariness,  
Stemming the screaming horde,  
And wearily went Colan's hands  
That swung King Alfred's sword.

But like a cloud of morning  
To eastward easily,  
Tall Eldred broke the sea of spears  
As a tall ship breaks the sea.

His face like a sanguine sunset,  
His shoulder a Wessex down,  
His hand like a windy hammer-stroke ;  
Men could not count the crests he broke,  
So fast the crests went down.

As the tall white devil of the Plague  
Moves out of Asian skies,  
With his foot on a waste of cities  
And his head in a cloud of flics;

Or purple and peacock skies grow dark  
With a moving locust-tower;  
Or tawny sand-winds tall and dry,  
Like hell's red banners beat and fly,  
When death comes out of Araby,  
Was Eldred in his hour.

But while he moved like a massacre  
He murmured as in sleep,  
And his words were all of low hedges  
And little fields and sheep.

Even as he strode like a pestilence,  
 That strides from Rhine to Rome,  
 He thought how tall his beans might be  
 If ever he went home.

Spoke some stiff piece of childish prayer,  
 Dull as the distant chimes, '  
 That thanked our God for good eating  
 And corn and quiet times—

Till on the helm of a high chief  
 Fell shatteringly his brand,  
 And the helm broke and the bone broke  
 And the sword broke in his hand.

Then from the yelling Northmen  
 Driven splintering on him ran  
 Full seven spears, and the seventh  
 Was never made by man.

Seven spears, and the seventh  
 Was wrought as the faerie blades,  
 And given to Elf the minstrel  
 By the monstrous water-maids;

By them that dwell where luridly  
 Lost waters of the Rhine  
 Move among roots of nations,  
 Being sunken for a sign.

Under all graves they murmur,  
 They murmur and rebel,  
 Down to the buried kingdoms creep,  
 And like a lost rain roar and weep  
 O'er the red heavens of hell.

## 282 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Thrice drowned was Elf the minstrel,  
And washed as dead on sand;  
And the third time men found him  
The spear was in his hand.

Seven spears went about Eldred,  
Like stays about a mast;  
But there was sorrow by the sea  
For the driving of the last.

Six spears thrust upon Eldred  
Were splintered while he laughed;  
One spear thrust into Eldred,  
Three feet of blade and shaft.

And from the great heart grievously  
Came forth the shaft and blade,  
And he stood with the face of a dead man,  
Stood a little, and swayed—

Then fell, as falls a battle-tower,  
On smashed and struggling spears.  
Cast down from some unconquered town  
That, rushing earthward, carries down  
Loads of live men of all renown—  
Archers and engineers.

And a great clamour of Christian men  
Went up in agony,  
Crying, " Fallen is the tower of Wessex  
That stood beside the sea."

Centre and right the Wessex guard  
 Grew pale for doubt and fear,  
 And the flank failed at the advance,  
 For the death-light on the wizard lance—  
 The star of the evil spear.

" Stand like an oak," cried Marcus,  
 " Stand like a Roman wall I  
 Eldred the Good is fallen—  
 Are you too good to fall ?

" When we were wan and bloodless  
 He gave you ale enow;  
 The pirates deal with him as dung,  
 God ! are you bloodless now ? "

" Grip, Wulf and Gorlias, grip the ash !  
 Slaves, and I make you free !  
 Stamp, Hildred hard in English land,  
 Stand Gurth, stand Gorlias, Gawen stand !  
 Hold, Halfgar, with the other hand,  
 Halmer, hold up on knee !

" The lamps are dying in your homes,  
 The fruits upon your bough ;  
 Even now your old thatch smoulders, Gurth,  
 Now is the judgment of the earth,  
 Now is the death-grip, now ! "

For thunder of the captain,  
 Not less the Wessex line,  
 Leaned back and reeled a space to rear  
 As Elf charged with the Rhine maids' spear,  
 And roaring like the Rhine.

For the men were borne by the waving walls  
Of woods and clouds that pass,  
By dizzy plains and drifting sea,  
And they mixed God with glamoury,  
God with the gods of the burning tree  
And the wizard's tower and glass.

But Mark was come of the glittering towns  
Where hot white details show,  
Where men can number and expound,  
And his faith grew in a hard ground  
Of doubt and reason and falsehood found,  
Where no faith else could grow.

Belief that grew of all beliefs  
One moment back was blown  
And belief that stood on unbelief  
Stood up iron and alone.

The Wessex crescent backwards  
Crushed, as with bloody spear  
Went Elf roaring and routing,  
And Mark against Elf yet shouting,  
Shocked, in his mid-career.

Right on the Roman shield and sword  
Did spear of the Rhine maids run;  
But the shield shifted never,  
The sword rang down to sever,  
The great Rhine sang for ever,  
And the songs of Elf were done.



And a great thunder of Christian men  
 Went up against the sky,  
 Saying, " God hath broken the evil spear  
 Ere the good man's blood was dry."

" Spears at the charge ! " yelled Mark amain,  
 " Death on the gods of death!  
 Over the thrones of doom and blood  
 Goeth God that is a craftsman good,  
 And gold and iron, earth and wood,  
 Loveth and laboureth.

" The fruits leap up in all your farms,  
 The lamps in each abode;  
 God of all good things done on earth,  
 All wheels or webs of any worth,  
 The God that makes the roof, Gurth,  
 The God that makes the road.

" The God that heweth kings in oak  
 Writeth songs on vellum,  
 God of gold and flaming glass,  
 Confregit potentias  
 Arcuum, scutum, Gorlias,  
 Gladium et bellum."

Steel and lightning broke about him,  
 Battle-bays and palm,  
 All the sea-kings swayed among  
 Woods of the Wessex arms upflung,  
 The trumpet of the Roman tongue,  
 The thunder of the psalm.

And midmost of that rolling field  
Ran Ogier ragingly,  
Lashing at Mark, who turned his blow,  
And brake the helm about his brow,  
And broke him to his knee.

Then Ogier heaved over his head  
His huge round shield of proof;  
But Mark set one foot on the shield,  
One on some sundered rock upheeled,  
And towered above the tossing field,  
A statue on a roof.

Dealing far blows about the fight,  
Like thunder-bolts a-roam,  
Like birds about the battle-field,  
While Ogier writhed under his shield  
Like a tortoise in his dome.

But hate in the buried Ogier  
Was strong as pain in hell,  
With bare brute hand from the inside  
He burst the shield of brass and hide,  
And a death-stroke to the Roman's side  
Sent suddenly and well.

Then the great statue on the shield  
Looked his last look around  
With level and imperial eye ;  
And Mark, the man from Italy,  
Fell in the sea of agony,  
And died without a sound.

And Ogier, leaping up alive,  
 Hurled his huge shield away  
 Flying, as when a juggler flings  
 A whizzing plate in play.

And held two arms up rigidly,  
 And roared to all the Danes :  
 " Fallen is Rome, yea, fallen  
 The city of the plains !

" Shall no man born remember,  
 That breaketh wood or weald,  
 How long she stood on the roof of the world  
 As he stood on my shield.

" The new wild world forgetteth her  
 As foam fades on the sea,  
 How long she stood with her foot on Man  
 As he with his foot on me.

" No more shall the brown men of the south  
 Move like the ants in lines,  
 To quiet men with olives  
 Or madden men with vines.

" No more shall the white towns of the south,  
 Where Tiber and Nilus run,  
 Sitting around a secret sea  
 Worship a secret sun.

" The blind gods roar for Rome fallen,  
 And forum and garland gone,  
 For the ice of the north is broken,  
 And the sea of the north comes on.

## 288 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" The blind gods roar and rave and dream  
Of all cities under the sea,  
For the heart of the north is broken,  
And the blood of the north is free.

" Down from the dome of the world we come,  
Rivers on rivers down,  
Under us swirl the sects and hordes  
And the high dooms we drown.

" Down from the dome of the world and down,  
Struck flying as a skiff  
On a river in spate is spun and swirled  
Until we come to the end of the world  
That breaks short, like a cliff.

" And when we come to the end of the world  
For me, I count it fit  
To take the leap like a good river,  
Shot shrieking over it.

" But whatso hap at the end of the world,  
Where Nothing is struck and sounds,  
It is not, by Thor, these monkish men  
These humbled Wessex hounds—

" Not this pale line of Christian hinds,  
This one white string of men,  
Shall keep us back from the end of the world,  
And the things that happen then.

" It is not Alfred's dwarfish sword,  
Nor Egbert's pigmy crown,  
Shall stay us now that descend in thunder,  
Rending the realms and the realms thereunder,  
Down through the world and down."

There was that in the wild men back of him,  
There was that in his own wild song,  
A dizzy throbbing, a drunkard smoke,  
That dazed to death all Wessex folk,  
And swept their spears along.

Vainly the sword of Colan  
And the axe of Alfred plied—  
The Danes poured in like a brainless plague,  
And knew not when they died.

Prince Colan slew a score of them,  
And was stricken to his knee;  
King Alfred slew a score and seven  
And was borne back on a tree.

Back to the black gate of the woods,  
Back up the single way,  
Back by the place of the parting ways  
Christ's knights were whirled away.

And when they came to the parting ways  
Doom's heaviest hammer fell,  
For the King was beaten, blind, at bay,  
Down the right lane with his array,  
But Colan swept the other way,  
Where he smote great strokes and fell.

The thorn-woods over Ethandune  
Stand sharp and thick as spears,  
By night and furze and forest-harms  
Far sundered were the friends in arms;  
The loud lost blows, the last alarms,  
Came not to Alfred's ears.

## 290 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

The thorn-woods over Ethandune  
Stand stiff as spikes in mail;  
As to the Haut King came at morn  
Dead Roland on a doubtful horn,  
Seemed unto Alfred lightly borne  
The last cry of the Gael.

### BOOK VII

#### ETHANDUNE : THE LAST CHARGE

AWAY in the waste of White Horse Down  
An idle child alone  
Played some small game through hours that pass,  
And patiently would pluck the grass,  
Patiently push the stone.

On the lean, green edge for ever,  
Where the blank chalk touched the turf,  
The child played on, alone, divine,  
As a child plays on the last line  
That sunders sand and surf.

For he dwelleth in high divisions  
Too simple to understand,  
Seeing on what morn of mystery  
The Uncreated rent the sea  
With roarings, from the land.

Through the long infant hours like days  
He built one tower in vain—  
Piled up small stones to make a town,  
And evermore the stones fell down,  
And he piled them up again.

And crimson kings on battle-towers,  
And saints on Gothic spires,  
And hermits on their peaks of snow,  
And heroes on their pyres,

And patriots riding royally,  
That rush the rocking town,  
Stretch hands, and hunger and aspire,  
Seeking to mount where high and higher,  
The child whom Time can never tire,  
Sings over White Horse Down.

And this was the might of Alfred,  
At the ending of the way;  
That of such smiters, wise or wild,  
He was least distant from the child,  
Piling the stones all day.

For Eldred fought like a frank hunter  
That killeth and goeth home ;  
And Mark had fought because all arms  
Rang like the name of Rome.

And Colan fought with a double mind,  
Moody and madly gay;  
But Alfred fought as gravely  
As a good child at play.

He saw wheels break and work run back  
And all things as they were;  
And his heart was orbéd like victory  
And simple like despair.

292 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Therefore is Mark forgotten,  
That was wise with his tongue and brave;  
And the cairn over Colan crumbled,  
And the cross on Eldred's grave.

Their great souls went on a wind away,  
And they have not tale or tomb;  
And Alfred born in Wantage  
Rules England till the doom.

Because in the forest of all fears  
Like a strange fresh gust from sea,  
Struck him that ancient innocence  
That is more than mastery.

And as a child whose bricks fall down  
Re-piles them o'er and o'er,  
Came ruin and the rain that burns,  
Returning as a wheel returns,  
And crouching in the furze and ferns  
He began his life once more.

He took his ivory horn unslung  
And smiled, but not in scorn :  
" Endeth the Battle of Ethandune  
With the blowing of a horn."

On a dark horse at the double way  
He saw great Guthrum ride,  
Heard roar of brass and ring of steel,  
The laughter and the trumpet peal,  
The pagan in his pride.



And Ogier's red and hated head  
 Moved in some talk or task; .  
 But the men seemed scattered in the brier,  
 And some of them had lit a fire,  
 And one had broached a cask.

And waggons one or two stood up,  
 Like tall ships in sight,  
 As if an outpost were encamped  
 At the cloven ways for night.

And joyous of the sudden stay  
 Of Alfred's routed few,  
 Sat one upon a stone to sigh,  
 And some slipped up the road to fly,  
 Till Alfred in the fern hard by  
 Set horn to mouth and blew.

And they all abode like statues—  
 One sitting on the stone,  
 One half-way through the thorn hedge tall,  
 One with a leg across a wall,  
 And one looked backwards, very small,  
 Far up the road, alone.

Grey twilight and a yellow star  
 Hung over thorn and hill;  
 Two spears and a cloven war-shield lay  
 Loose on the road as cast away,  
 The horn died faint in the forest grey,  
 . And the fleeing men stood still.

" Brothers at arms," said Alfred,  
 " On this side lies the foe;  
 Are slavery and starvation flowers,  
 That you should pluck them so ?

" For whether is it better

To be prodded with Danish poles,  
Having hewn a chamber in a ditch,  
And hounded like a howling witch,  
Or smoked to death in holes ?

" Or that before the red cock crow

All we, a thousand strong,  
Go down the dark road to God's house,  
Singing a Wessex song ?

" To sweat a slave to a race of slaves,

To drink up infamy ?  
No, brothers, by your leave, I think  
Death is a better ale to drink,  
And by all the stars of Christ that sink,  
The Danes shall drink with me.

" To grow old cowed in a conquered land.

With the sun itself discrowned,  
To see trees crouch and cattle slink—•>  
Death is a better ale to drink,  
And by high Death on the fell brink,  
That flagon shall go round.

" Though dead are all the paladins

Whom glory had in ken,  
Though all your thunder-sworded thanes  
With proud hearts died among the Danes,  
While a man remains, great war remains:  
Now is a war of men.

" The men that tear the furrows,  
 The men that fell the trees,  
 When all their lords be lost and dead  
 The bondsmen of the earth shall tread  
 The tyrants of the seas.

" The wheel of the roaring stillness  
 Of all labours under the sun,  
 Speed the wild work as well at least  
 As the whole world's work is done.

" Let Hildred hack the shield-wall  
 Clean as he hacks the hedge;  
 Let Gurth the fowler stand as cool  
 As he stands on the chasm's edge;

" Let Gorlias ride the sea-kings  
 As Gorlias rides the sea,  
 Then let all hell and Denmark drive,  
 Yelling to all its fiends alive,  
 And not a rag care we."

When Alfred's word was ended  
 Stood firm that feeble line,  
 Each in his place with club or spear.  
 And fury deeper than deep fear,  
 And smiles as sour as brine.

And the King held up the horn and said,  
 " See ye my father's horn,  
 That Egbert blew in his empery,  
 Once, when he rode out commonly,  
 Twice when he rode for venery,  
 And thrice on the battle-morn.

" But heavier fates have fallen  
The horn of the Wessex kings,  
And I blew once, the riding sign,  
To call you to the fighting line  
And glory and all good things.

" And now two blasts, the hunting sign,  
Because we turn to bay;  
But I will not blow the three blasts,  
Till we be lost or they.

" And now *I* blow the hunting sign,  
Charge some by rule and rod;  
But when I blow the battle sign,  
Charge all and go to God."

Wild stared the Danes at the double ways  
Where they loitered, all at large,  
As that dark line for the last time  
Doubled the knee to charge—

And caught their weapons clumsily,  
And marvelled how and why—  
In such degree, by rule and rod,  
The people of the peace of God  
Went roaring down to die.

And when the last arrow  
Was fitted and was flown,  
When the broken shield hung on the breast,  
And the hopeless lance was laid in rest,  
And the hopeless horn blown,

The King looked up, and what he saw  
Was a great light like death,  
For Our Lady stood on the standards rent,  
As lonely and as innocent  
As when between white walls she went  
And the lilies of Nazareth.

One instant in a still light  
He saw Our Lady then,  
Her dress was soft as western sky,  
And she was a queen most womanly—  
But she was a queen of men.

Over the iron forest  
He saw Our Lady stand,  
Her eyes were sad withouten art,  
And seven swords were in her heart—  
But one was in her hand.

Then the last charge went blindly,  
And all too lost for fear :  
The Danes closed round, a roaring ring,  
And twenty clubs rose o'er the King,  
Four Danes hewed at him, halloing,  
And Ogier of the Stone and Sling  
Drove at him with a spear.

But the Danes were wild with laughter,  
And the great spear swung wide,  
The point stuck to a straggling tree,  
And either host cried suddenly,  
As Alfred leapt aside.

## 298 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Short time had shaggy Ogier  
To pull his lance in line—  
He knew King Alfred's axe on high,  
He heard it rushing through the sky,

He cowered beneath it with a cry—  
It split him to the spine :  
And Alfred sprang over him dead,  
And blew the battle sign.

Then bursting all and blasting  
Came Christendom like death,  
Kicked of such catapults of will,  
The staves shiver, the barrels spill,  
The waggons waver and crash and kill  
The waggoners beneath.

Barriers go backwards, banners rend,  
Great shields groan like a gong—  
Horses like horns of nightmare  
Neigh horribly and long.

Horses ramp high and rock and boil  
And break their golden reins,  
And slide on carnage clamorously,  
Down where the bitter blood doth lie,  
Where Ogier went on foot to die,  
In the old way of the Danes.

" The high tide ! " King Alfred cried.  
" The high tide and the turn !  
As a tide turns on the tall grey seas,  
See how they waver in the trees,  
How stray their spears, how knock their knees,  
How wild their watchfires burn !

" The Mother of God goes over them,  
 Walking on wind and flame,  
 And the storm-cloud drifts from city and dale,  
 And the White Horse stamps in the White Horse  
 Vale,  
 And we all shall yet drink Christian ale  
 In the village of our name.

" The Mother of God goes over them,  
 On dreadful cherubs borne;  
 And the psalm is roaring above the rune,  
 And the Cross goes over the sun and moon,  
 Endeth the battle of Ethandune  
 With the blowing of a horn."

For back indeed disorderly  
 The Danes went clamouring,  
 Too worn to take anew the tale,  
 Or dazed with insolence and ale,  
 Or stunned of heaven, or stricken pale  
 Before the face of the King.

For dire was Alfred in his hour  
 The pale scribe witnesseth,  
 More mighty in defeat was he  
 Than all men else in victory,  
 And behind, his men came murderously,  
 Dry-throated, drinking death.

And Edgar of the Golden Ship  
 He slew with his own hand,  
 Took Ludwig from his lady's bower,  
 And smote down Harmar in his hour,  
 And vain and lonely stood the tower—  
 The tower in Guelderland.

## 300 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

And Ton out of his tiny boat,  
Whose eyes beheld the Nile,  
Wulf with his war-cry on his lips,  
And Harco born in the eclipse,  
Who blocked the Seine with battleships  
Round Paris on the Isle.

And Hacon of the Harvest-Song,  
And Dirck from the Elbo he slew,  
And Cnut that melted Durham bell  
And Fulk and fiery Oscar fell,  
And Goderic and Sigael,  
And Uriel of the Yew.

And highest sang the slaughter,  
And fastest fell the slain,  
When from the wood-road's blackening throat  
A crowning and crashing wonder smote  
The rear-guard of the Dane.

For the dregs of Colan's company—•  
Lost down the other road—  
Had gathered and grown and heard the din,  
And with wild yells came pouring in,  
Naked as their old British kin,  
And bright with blood for woad.

And bare and bloody and aloft  
They bore before their band  
The body of their mighty lord,  
Colan of Caerleon and its horde,  
That bore King Alfred's battle-sword  
Broken in his left hand.



## ETHANDUNE: THE LAST CHARGE 301

And a strange music went with him,  
Loud and yet strangely far;  
The wild pipes of the western land,  
Too keen for the ear to understand,  
Sang high and deathly on each hand  
When the dead man went to war.

Blocked between ghost and buccaneer,  
Brave men have dropped and died;  
And the wild sea-lords well might quail  
As the ghastly war-pipes of the Gael  
Called to the horns of White Horse Vale,  
And all the horns replied.

And Hildred the poor hedger  
Cut down four captains dead,  
And Halmar laid three others low,  
And the great earls wavered to and fro  
For the living and the dead.

And Gorlias grasped the great flag,  
The Raven of Odin, torn ;  
And the eyes of Guthrum altered,  
For the first time since morn.

As a turn of the wheel of tempest  
Tilts up the whole sky tall,  
And cliffs of wan cloud luminous  
Lean out like great walls over us,  
As if the heavens might fall.

As such a tall and tilted sky  
Sends certain snow or light,  
So did the eyes of Guthrum change,  
And the turn was more certain and more strange  
Than a thousand men in flight.

## 302 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

For not till the floor of the skies is split,  
And hell-fire shines through the sea,  
Or the stars look up through the rent earth's knees,  
Cometh such rending of certainties,  
As when one wise man truly sees  
What is more wise than he.

He set his horse in the battle-breech  
Even Guthrum of the Dane,  
And as ever had fallen fell his brand,  
A falling tower o'er many a land,  
But Gurth the fowler laid one hand  
Upon this bridle rein.

King Guthrum was a great lord,  
And higher than his gods—  
He put the popes to laughter,  
He chid the saints with rods,

He took this hollow world of ours  
For a cup to hold his wine ;  
In the parting of the woodways  
There came to him a sign.

In Wessex in the forest,  
In the breaking of the spears,  
We set a sign on Guthrum  
To blaze a thousand years.

Where the high saddles jostle  
And the horse-tails toss,  
There rose to the birds flying  
A roar of dead and dying;  
In deafness and strong crying  
We signed him with the cross.

Far out to the winding river  
The blood ran down for days,  
When we put the cross on Guthrum  
In the parting of the ways.

## BOOK VIII

## THE SCOURING OF THE HORSE

IN the years of the peace of Wessex,  
When the good King sat at home ;  
Years following on that bloody boon  
When she that stands above the moon  
Stood above death at Ethandune  
And saw his kingdom come—

When the pagan people of the sea  
Fled to their palisades,  
Nailed there with javelins to cling  
And wonder smote the pirate king,  
And brought him to his christening  
And the end of all his raids.

(For not till the night's blue slate is wiped  
Of its last star utterly,  
And fierce new signs writ there to read,  
Shall eyes with such amazement heed,  
As when a great man knows indeed  
A greater thing than he.)

304 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

And there came to his chrism-loosing  
Lords of all lands afar,  
And a line was drawn north-westerly  
That set King Egbert's empire free,  
Giving all lands by the northern sea  
To the sons of the northern star.

In the days of the rest of Alfred,  
When all these things were done,  
And Wessex lay in a patch of peace,  
Like a dog in a patch of sun—

The King sat in his orchard,  
Among apples green and red,  
With the little book in his bosom  
And the sunshine on his head.

And he gathered the songs of simple men  
That swing with helm and hod,  
And the alms he gave as a Christian  
Like a river alive with fishes ran ;  
And he made gifts to a beggar man  
As to a wandering god.

And he gat good laws of the ancient kings,  
Like treasure out of the tombs;  
And many a thief in thorny nook,  
Or noble in sea-stained turret shook,  
For the opening of his iron book,  
And the gathering of the dooms.

Then men would come from the ends of the earth,  
Whom the King sat welcoming,  
And men would go to the ends of the earth  
Because of the word of the King.

For folk came in to Alfred's face  
Whose javelins had been hurled  
On monsters that make boil the sea,  
Crakens and coils of mystery.  
Or thrust in ancient snows that be  
The white hair of the world.

And some had knocked at the northern gates  
Of the ultimate icy floor,  
Where the fish freeze and the foam turns black,  
And the wide world narrows to a track,  
And the other sea at the world's back  
Cries through a closed door.

And men went forth from Alfred's face,  
Even great gift-bearing lords,  
Not to Rome only, but more bold,  
Out to the high hot courts of old,  
Of negroes clad in cloth of gold,  
Silence, and crooked swords,

Scrawled screens and secret gardens  
And insect-laden skies—  
Where fiery plains stretch on and on  
To the purple country of Prcster John  
And the walls of Paradise.

And he knew the might of the Terre Majeure,  
Where kings began to reign;  
Where in a night-rout, without name,  
Of gloomy Goths and Gauls there came  
White, above candles all aflame,  
Like a vision, Charlemagne.

## 306 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

And men, seeing such embassies,  
Spake with the King and said :  
" The steel that sang so sweet a tune  
On Ashdown and on Ethandune,  
Why hangs it scabbarded so soon,  
All heavily like lead ?

"Why dwell the Danes in North England,  
And up to the river ride ?  
Three more such marches like thine own  
Would end them; and the Pict should own  
Our sway; and our feet climb the throne  
In the mountains of Strathclyde."

And Alfred in the orchard,  
Among apples green and red,  
With the little book in his bosom,  
Looked at green leaves and said :

" When all philosophies shall fail,  
This word alone shall fit;  
That a sage feels too small for life,  
And a fool too large for it.

" Asia and all imperial plains  
Are too little for a fool;  
But for one man whose eyes can see  
The little island of Athelney  
Is too large a land to rule.

" Haply it had been better  
When I built my fortress there,  
Out in the reedy waters wide,  
I had stood on my mud wall and cried:  
' Take England all, from tide to tide-  
Be Athelney my share.'

" Those madmen of the throne-scramble—

Oppressors and oppressed—  
 Had lined the banks by Athelney,  
 And waved and wailed unceasingly,  
 Where the river turned to the broad sea,  
 By an island of the blest.

" An island like a little book

Full of a hundred tales,  
 Like the gilt page the good monks pen,  
 That is all smaller than a wren,  
 Yet hath high towns, meteors, and men,  
 And suns and spouting whales;

" A land having a light on it

In the river dark and fast,  
 An isle with utter clearness lit,  
 Because a saint had stood in it;  
 Where flowers are flowers indeed and fit,  
 And trees are trees at last.

" So were the island of a saint;

But I am a common king,  
 And I will make my fences tough  
 From Wantage Town to Plymouth Bluff,  
 Because I am not wise enough  
 To rule so small a thing."

And it fell in the days of Alfred,

In the days of his repose,  
 That as old customs in his sight  
 Were a straight road and a steady light,  
 He bade them keep the White Horse white  
 As the first plume of the snows.

And right to the red torchlight,  
 From the trouble of morning grey,  
 They stripped the White Horse of the grass  
 As they strip it to this day.

And under the red torchlight  
 He went dreaming as though dull,  
 Of his old companions slain like kings,  
 And the rich irrevocable things  
 Of a heart that hath not openings,  
 But is shut fast, being full.

And the torchlight touched the pale hair  
 Where silver clouded gold,  
 And tho frame of his face was made of cords,  
 And a young lord turned among the lords  
 And said : " The King is old."

And even as he said it  
 A post ran in amain,  
 Crying: " Arm, Lord King, the hamlets arm,  
 In the horror and the shade of harm,  
 They have burnt Brand of Aynger's farm—  
 The Danes are come again !

" Danes drive the white East Angles  
 In six fights on the plains,  
 Danes waste the world about the Thames,  
 Danes to the eastward—Danes ! "

And as he stumbled on one knee,  
 The thanes broke out in ire,  
 Crying: "III the watchmen watch, and ill  
 The sheriffs keep the shire."



But the young earl said : "III the saints,  
 The saints of England, guard  
 The land wherein we pledge them gold;  
 The dykes decay, the King grows old,  
 And surely this is hard,

" That we be never quit of them;  
 That when his head is hoar  
 He cannot say to them he smote,  
 And spared with a hand hard at the throat,  
 ' Go, and return no more.' "

Then Alfred smiled. And the smile of him  
 Was like the sun for power.  
 But he only pointed : bade them heed  
 Those peasants of the Berkshire breed,  
 Who plucked the old Horse of the weed  
 As they pluck it to this hour.

" Will ye part with the weeds for ever ?  
 Or show daisies to the door ?  
 Or will you bid the bold grass  
 Go, and return no more ?

" So ceaseless and so secret  
 Thrive terror and theft set free;  
 Treason and shame shall come to pass  
 While one weed flowers in a morass;  
 And like the stillness of stiff grass  
 The stillness of tyranny.

" Over our white souls also  
 Wild heresies and high  
 Wave prouder than the plumes of grass,  
 And sadder than their sigh.

" And I go riding against the raid,  
 And ye know not where I am;  
 But ye shall know in a day or year,  
 When one green star of grass grows here ;  
 Chaos has charged you, charger and spear,  
 Battle-axe and battering-ram.

<sup>44</sup> And though skies alter and empires melt,  
 This word shall still be true :  
 If we would have the horse of old,  
 Scour ye the horse anew.

" One time I followed a dancing star  
 That seemed to sing and nod,  
 And ring upon earth all evil's knell;  
 But now I wot if ye scour not well  
 Red rust shall grow on God's great bell  
 And grass in the streets of God."

Ceased Alfred ; and above his head  
 The grand green domes, the Downs,  
 Showed the first legions of the press,  
 Marching in haste and bitterness  
 For Christ's sake and the crown's.

Beyond the cavern of Colan,  
 Past Eldred's by the sea,  
 Rose men that owned King Alfred's rod,  
 From the windy wastes of Exe untrod,  
 Or where the thorn of the grave of God  
 Burns over Glastonbury.

## THE: SCOURING OF THE HORSE 311

Far northward and far westward  
The distant tribes drew nigh,  
Plains beyond plains, fell beyond fell,  
That a man at sunset sees so well,  
And the tiny coloured towns that dwell  
In the corners of the sky.

But dark and thick as thronged the host,  
With drum and torch and blade,  
The still-eyed King sat pondering,  
As one that watches a live thing,  
The scoured chalk; and he said,

" Though I give this land to Our Lady,  
That helped me in Athclney,  
Though lordlier trees and lustier sod  
And happier hills hath no flesh trod  
Than the garden of the Mother of God  
Between Thames side and the sea,

"I know that weeds shall grow in it  
Faster than men can burn ;  
And though they scatter now and go,  
In some far century, sad and slow,  
I have a vision, and I know  
The heathen shall return.

" They shall not come with warships,  
They shall not waste with brands,  
But books be all their eating,  
And ink be on their hands.

312 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

" Not with the humour of hunters  
Or savage skill in war,  
But ordering all things with dead words,  
Strings shall they make of beasts and birds,  
And wheels of wind and star.

" They shall come mild as monkish clerks,  
With many a scroll and pen;  
And backward shall ye turn and gaze,  
Desiring one of Alfred's days,  
When pagans still were men.

" The dear sun dwarfed of dreadful suns,  
Like fiercer flowers on stalk,  
Earth lost and little like a pea  
In high heaven's towering forestry,  
—These be the small weeds ye shall see  
Crawl, covering the chalk.

" But though they bridge St. Mary's sea,  
Or steal St. Michael's wing—  
Though they rear marvels over us,  
Greater than great Vergilius  
Wrought for the Roman king;

" By this sign you shall know them,  
The breaking of the sword,  
And man no more a free knight,  
That loves or hates his lord.

" Yea, this shall be the sign of them,  
The sign of the dying fire ;  
And Man made like a half-wit,  
That knows not of his sire.

" What though they come with scroll and pen,  
And grave as a shaven clerk,  
By this sign you shall know them,  
That they ruin and make dark;

" By all men bond to Nothing,  
Being slaves without a lord,  
By one blind idiot world obeyed,  
Too blind to be abhorred;

" By terror and the cruel tales  
Of curse in bone and kin,  
By weird and weakness winning,  
Accursed from the beginning,  
By detail of the sinning,  
And denial of the sin;

" By thought a crawling ruin,  
By life a leaping mire,  
By a broken heart in the breast of the world,  
And the end of the world's desire;

" By God and man dishonoured,  
By death and life made vain,  
Know ye the old barbarian,  
The barbarian come again—

" When is great talk of trend and tide,  
And wisdom and destiny,  
Hail that undying heathen  
That is sadder than the sea.

" In what wise men shall smite him,  
Or the Cross stand up again,  
Or charity or chivalry,  
My vision saith not; and I see  
No more ; but now ride doubtfully  
To the battle of the plain."

And the grass-edge of the great down  
Was cut clean as a lawn,  
While the levies thronged from near and far,  
From the warm woods of the western star,  
And the King went out to his last war  
On a tall grey horse at dawn.

And news of his far-off fighting  
Came slowly and brokenly  
From the land of the East Saxons,  
From the sunrise and the sea.

From the plains of the white sunrise,  
And sad St. Edmund's crown,  
Where the pools of Essex pale and gleam  
Out beyond London Town—

In mighty and doubtful fragments,  
Like faint or fabled wars,  
Climbed the old hills of his renown,  
Where the bald brow of White Horse Down  
Is close to the cold stars.

But away in the eastern places  
The wind of death walked high,  
And a raid was driven athwart the raid,  
The sky reddened and the smoke swayed,  
And the tall grey horse went by.

The gates of the great river  
Were breached as with a barge,  
The walls sank crowded, say the scribes,  
And high towers populous with tribes  
Seemed leaning from the charge.

Smoke like rebellious heavens rolled  
Curled over coloured flames,  
Mirrored in monstrous purple dreams  
In the mighty pools of Thames.

Loud was the war on London wall,  
And loud in London gates,  
And loud the sea-kings in the cloud  
Broke through their dreaming gods, and loud  
Cried on their dreadful Fates.

And all the while on White Horse Hill  
The horse lay long and wan,  
The turf crawled and the fungus crept,  
And the little sorrel, while all men slept,  
Unwrought the work of man.

With velvet finger, velvet foot,  
The fierce soft mosses then  
Crept on the large white commonweal  
All folk had striven to strip and peel,  
And the grass, like a great green witch's wheel,  
Unwound the toils of men.

And clover and silent thistle throve,  
And buds burst silently,  
With little care for the Thames Valley  
Or what things there might be—

316 BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

That away on the widening river,  
In the eastern plains for crown  
Stood up in the pale purple sky  
One turret of smoke like ivory;  
And the smoke changed and the wind went by,  
And the King took London Town,



**BOOK SIX**  
**THE WILD KNIGHT**  
(FIRST PUBLISHED 1900)

## NOTE TO SECOND EDITION OF " THE WILD KNIGHT "

I leave these verses as they stand, although they contain innumerable examples of what I now see to be errors of literature, and one or two examples of what I have come to think errors of opinion. But they never had any great merit beyond genuineness, and I do not wish to spoil that by mixing up two periods of my life. It will be seen that the philosophy is not wholly that of my later years, though perhaps a foundation for it. On two special points embodied in verse I have altered my opinion ; and if I mention what they are I really do not mean it for egoism, but only for honesty.

In the matter of the " Anglo-American Alliance,"<sup>1</sup> I have come to see that our hopes of brotherhood with America are the same in kind as our hopes of brotherhood with any other of the great independent nations of Christendom. And a very small study of history was sufficient to show me that the American nation, which is a hundred years old, is at least fifty years older than the Anglo-Saxon race.

And in the matter of the Dreyfus<sup>2</sup> case, while not having been able to reach my final conclusion about the proper verdict on the individual, I have come largely to attribute the difficulty of doing so to the acrid and irrational unanimity of the English Press. My position may be roughly stated thus : There may have been a fog of injustice in the French courts ; I know that there was a fog of injustice in the English newspapers. For the rest, there are verses which I cannot take so seriously as to alter them. The man who wrote them was honest; and he had the same basic views as myself. Besides, nobody need read the book : I certainly beg to be excused.

G. K. C.

BATTERSEA, 1905.

1 " An Alliance."

2 " To A Certain Nation."

## AN APOLOGY.

ANOTHER tattered rhymster in the ring,  
With but the old plea to the sneering schools,  
That on him too, some secret night in spring,  
Came the old frenzy of a hundred fools

To make some thing; the old want dark and deep,  
The thirst of men, the hunger of the stars,  
Since first it tinged even the Eternal's sleep,  
With monstrous dreams of trees and towns and wars.

When all He made for the first time He saw,  
Scattering stars as misers shake their pelf.  
Then in the last strange wrath broke his own law,  
And made a graven image of Himself.

## BY THE BABE UNBORN

IF trees were tall and grasses short,  
As in some crazy tale,  
If here and there a sea were blue  
Beyond the breaking pale,

If a fixed fire hung in the air  
To warm me one day through,  
If deep green hair grew on great hills,  
I know what I should do.

In dark I lie: dreaming that there  
Are great eyes cold or kind,  
And twisted streets and silent doors,  
And living men behind.

Let storm-clouds come : better an hour,  
And leave to weep and fight,  
Than all the ages I have ruled  
The empires of the night.

I think that if they gave me leave  
Within the world to stand,  
I would be good through all the day  
I spent in fairyland.

They should not hear a word from me  
Of selfishness or scorn,  
If only I could find the door,  
If only I were born.

### THE WORLD'S LOVER

MY eyes are full of lonely mirth :  
Reeling with want and worn with scars,  
For pride of every stone on earth,  
I shake my spear at all the stars.

A live bat beats my crest above,  
Lean foxes nose where I have trod,  
And on my naked face the love  
Which is the loneliness of God.

Outlawed : since that great day gone by—  
When before prince and pope and queen  
I stood and spoke a blasphemy—  
" Behold the summer leaves are green."

They cursed me : what was that to me  
Who in that summer darkness furl'd,  
With but an owl and snail to see,  
Had blessed and conquered all the world?

They bound me to the scourging-stake,  
They laid their whips of thorn on me ;  
I wept to see the green rods break,  
Though blood be beautiful to see.

Beneath the gallows' foot abhorred  
The crowds cry " Crucify ! " and " Kill! "  
Higher the priests sing, " Praise the Lord,  
The warlock dies " ; and higher still

Shall heaven and earth hear one cry sent  
Even from the hideous gibbet height,  
" Praise to the Lord Omnipotent,  
The vultures have a feast to-night."

## THE SKELETON

CHATTERING finch and water-fly  
Are not merrier than I;  
Here among the flowers I lie  
Laughing everlastingly.  
No : I may not tell the best;  
Surely, friends, I might have guessed  
Death was but the good King's jest,  
It was hid so carefully.

## A CHORD OF COLOUR

MY Lady clad herself in grey,  
That caught and clung about her throat;  
Then all the long grey winter day  
On me a living splendour smote ;  
And why grey palmers holy are,  
And why grey minsters great in story,  
And grey skies ring the morning star,  
And grey hairs are a crown of glory.

My Lady clad herself in green,  
Like meadows where the wind-waves pass;  
Then round my spirit spread, I ween,  
A splendour of forgotten grass.  
Then all that dropped of stem or sod,  
Hoarded as emeralds might be,  
I bowed to every bush, and trod  
Amid the live grass fearfully.

My Lady clad herself in blue,  
Then on me, like the seer long gone,  
The likeness of a sapphire grew,  
The throne of him that sat thereon.  
Then knew I why the Fashioner  
Splashed reckless blue on sky and sea;  
And ere 'twas good enough for her,  
He tried it on Eternity.

Beneath the gnarled old Knowledge-tree  
Sat, like an owl, the evil sage :  
" The World's a bubble," solemnly  
He read, and turned a second page.  
" A bubble, then, old crow," I cried,  
" God keep you in your weary wit I  
A bubble—have you ever spied  
The colours I have seen on it ? "

## THE HAPPY MAN

To teach the grey earth like a child,  
To bid the heavens repent,  
I only ask from Fate the gift  
Of one man well content.

Him will I find : though when in vain  
I search the feast and mart,  
The fading flowers of liberty,  
The painted masks of art.

I only find him at the last,  
On one old hill where nod  
Golgotha's ghastly trinity—  
Three persons and one god.

## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

I DO not cry, beloved, neither curse.  
Silence and strength, these two at least are good.  
He gave me sun and stars and aught He could,  
But not a woman's love; for that is hers.

He sealed her heart from sage and questioner—  
Yea, with seven seals, as he has sealed the grave.  
And if she give it to a drunken slave,  
The Day of Judgment shall not challenge her.

Only this much: if one, deserving well,  
Touching your thin young hands and making suit,  
Feel not himself a crawling thing, a brute,  
Buried and bricked in a forgotten hell.

Prophet and poet be he over sod,  
Prince among angels in the highest place,  
God help me, I will smite him on the face,  
Before the glory of the face of God.

## A NOVELTY

WHY should I care for the Ages  
Because they are old and grey ?  
To me, like sudden laughter,  
The stars are fresh and gay ;  
The world is a daring fancy,  
And finished yesterday.

Why should I bow to the Ages  
Because they were drear and dry ?  
Slow trees and ripening meadows  
For me go roaring by,  
A living charge, a struggle  
To escalate the sky.

The eternal suns and systems,  
Solid and silent all,  
To me are stars of an instant,  
Only the fires that fall  
From God's good rocket, rising  
On this night of carnival.

## ULTIMATE

THE vision of a haloed host  
That weep around an empty throne;  
And, aureoles dark and angels dead,  
Man with his own life stands alone.

"I am," he says his bankrupt creed;  
"I am," and is again a clod :  
The sparrow starts, the grasses stir,  
For he has said the name of God,



## THE DONKEY

WHEN fishes flew and forests walked  
And figs grew upon thorn,  
Some moment when the moon was blood  
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry  
And ears like errant wings,  
The devil's walking parody  
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,  
Of ancient crooked will;  
Starve, scourge, deride me : I am dumb,  
I keep my secret still.

Fools ! For I also had my hour;  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet.

## THE BEATIFIC VISION

THROUGH what fierce incarnations furled  
In fire and darkness, did I go,  
Ere I was worthy in the world  
To see a dandelion grow ?

Well, if in any woes or wars  
I bought my naked right to be,  
Grew worthy of the grass, nor gave  
The wren, my brother, shame for me.

But what shall God not ask of him  
In the last time when all is told,  
Who saw her stand beside the hearth,  
The firelight garbing her in gold ?

### THE HOPE OF THE STREETS

THE still sweet meadows shimmered : and I stood  
And cursed them, bloom of hedge and bird of tree,  
And bright and high beyond the hunch-backed wood  
The thunder and the splendour of the sea.

Give back the Babylon where I was born,  
The lips that gape give back, the hands that grope,  
The noise and blood and suffocating scorn  
An eddy of fierce faces—and a hope

That 'mid those myriad heads one head find place,  
With brown hair curled like breakers of the sea,  
And two eyes set so strangely in the face  
That all things else are nothing suddenly.

### ECCLESIASTES

THERE is one sin : to call a green leaf grey,  
Whereat the sun in heaven shuddereth.  
There is one blasphemy : for death to pray,  
For God alone knoweth the praise of death.

There is one creed : 'neath no world-terror's wing  
Apples forget to grow on apple-trees.  
There is one thing is needful—everything—  
The rest is vanity of vanities.

## THE SONG OF THE CHILDREN

THE world is ours till sunset,  
Holly and fire and snow ;  
And the name of our dead brother  
Who loved us long ago.

The grown folk mighty and cunning,  
They write his name in gold ;  
But we can tell a little  
Of the million tales he told.

He taught them laws and watchwords,  
To preach and struggle and pray ;  
But he taught us deep in the hayfield  
The games that the angels play.

Had he stayed here for ever,  
Their world would be wise as ours—  
And the king be cutting capers,  
And the priest be picking flowers.

But the dark day came : they gathered :  
On their faces we could see  
They had taken and slain our brother,  
And hanged him on a tree.

## THE FISH

DARK the sea was : but I saw him,  
One great head with goggle eyes,  
Like a diabolic cherub  
Flying in those fallen skies.

I have heard the hoarse deniers,  
I have known the wordy wars ;  
I have seen a man, by shouting,  
Seek to orphan all the stars.

I have seen a fool half-fashioned  
Borrow from the heavens a tongue,  
So to curse them more at leisure—  
—And I trod him not as dung.

For I saw that finny goblin  
Hidden in the abyss untrod ;  
And I knew there can be laughter  
On the secret face of God.

Blow the trumpets, crown the sages,  
Bring the age by reason fed !  
(" He that sitteth in the heavens,  
He shall laugh "—the prophet said.)

## GOLD LEAVES

Lo ! I am come to autumn,  
When all the leaves are gold;  
Grey hairs and golden leaves cry out  
The year and I are old.

In youth I sought the prince of men,  
Captain in cosmic wars,  
Our Titan, even the weeds would show  
Defiant, to the stars\*

But now a great thing in the street  
Seems any human nod,  
Where shift in strange democracy  
The million masks of God.

In youth I sought the golden flower  
Hidden in wood or wold,  
But I am come to autumn,  
When all the leaves are gold.

## THOU SHALT NOT KILL

I HAD grown weary of him; of his breath  
And hands and features I was sick to death.  
Each day I heard the same dull voice and tread ;  
I did not hate him : but I wished him dead.  
And he must with his blank face fill my life—  
Then my brain blackened, and I snatched a knife.

But ere I struck, my soul's grey deserts through  
A voice cried, " Know at least what thing you do.  
This is a common man : knowest thou, O soul,  
What this thing is ? somewhere where seasons roll  
There is some living thing for whom this man  
Is as seven heavens girt into a span,  
For some one soul you take the world away—  
Now know you well your deed and purpose.  
Slay ! "

Then I cast down the knife upon the ground  
And saw that mean man for one moment crowned.  
I turned and laughed: for there was no one by—  
The man that I had sought to slay was I.

## A CERTAIN EVENING

THAT night the whole world mingled,  
The souls were babes at play,  
And angel danced with devil,  
And God cried, " Holiday ! "

The sea had climbed the mountain peaks  
And shouted to the stars  
To come to play : and down they came  
Splashing in happy wars.

The pine grew apples for a whim,  
The cart-horse built a nest;  
The oxen flew, the flowers sang,  
The sun rose in the west.

And 'neath the load of many worlds,  
The lowest life God made  
Lifted his huge and heavy limbs  
And into heaven strayed.

To where the highest life God made  
Before His presence stands;  
But God Himself cried, " Holiday ! "  
And she gave me both her hands.

## A MAN AND HIS IMAGE

ALL day the nations climb and crawl and pray  
In one long pilgrimage to one white shrine,  
Where sleeps a saint whose pardon, like his peace,  
Is wide as death, as common, as divine.

His statue in an aureole fills the shrine,  
The reckless nightingale, the roaming fawn,  
Share the broad blessing of his lifted hands,  
Under the canopy, above the lawn.

But one strange night, a night of gale and flood,  
A sound came louder than the wild wind's tone;  
The grave-gates shook and opened : and one stood  
Blue in the moonlight, rotten to the bone.

Then on the statue, graven with holy smiles,  
There came another smile—tremendous—one  
Of an Egyptian god. " Why should you rise ?  
Do I not guard your secret from the sun ?

" The nations come ; they kneel among the flowers  
Sprung from your blood, blossoms of May and  
June  
Which do not poison them—is it not strange ?  
Speak! " And the dead man shuddered in the  
moon.

" Shall I not cry the truth ? "—the dead man  
cowered—  
" Is it not sad, with life so tame and cold,  
That earth should fade into the sun's white fires  
With the best jest in all its tales untold ?

" If I should cry that in this shrine lie hid  
Stories that Satan from his mouth would spew;  
Wild talcs that men in hell tell hoarsely—speak !  
Saint and Deliverer I Should I slander you ? "

Slowly the cowering corse reared up its head,

"Nay, I am vile . . . but when for all to see,  
You stand there, pure and painless—death of life !

Let the stars fall—I say you slander me I

"You make me perfect, public, colourless;

You make my virtues sit at ease—you lie !  
For mine were never easy—lost or saved,  
I had a soul—I was. And where am I ?

"Where is my good ? the little real hoard,

The secret tears, the sudden chivalries;  
The tragic love, the futile triumph—where ?  
Thief, dog, and son of devils—where are these ?

"I will lift up my head : in leprous loves

Lost, and the soul's dishonourable scars—  
By God, I was a better man than This  
That stands and slanders me to all the stars.

"Come down ! " And with an awful cry, the corse  
Sprang on the sacred tomb of many talcs,  
And stone and bone, locked in a loathsome strife,  
Swayed to the singing of the nightingales.

Then one was thrown : and where the statue stood  
Under the canopy, above the lawn,  
The corse stood; grey and lean, with lifted hands  
Raised in tremendous welcome to the dawn.

"Now let all nations climb and crawl and pray  
Though I be basest of my old red clan,  
They shall not scale, with cries or sacrifice,  
The stature of the spirit of a man."



## THE MARINER

THE violet scent is sacred  
Like dreams of angels bright;  
The hawthorn smells of passion  
Told in a moonless night.

But the smell is in my nostrils,  
Through blossoms red or gold,  
Of my own green flower unfading,  
A bitter smell and bold.

The lily smells of pardon,  
The rose of mirth; but mine  
Smells shrewd of death and honour,  
And the doom of Adam's line.

The heavy scent of wine-shops  
Floats as I pass them by,  
But never a cup I quaff from,  
And never a house have I.

Till dropped down forty fathoms,  
I lie eternally;  
And drink from God's own goblet  
The green wine of the sea.

## THE TRIUMPH OF MAN

I PLOD and peer amid mean sounds and shapes,  
I hunt for dusty gain and dreary praise,  
And slowly pass the dismal grinning days,  
Monkeying each other like a line of apes.

What care ? There was one hour amid all these  
When I had stripped off like a tawdry glove  
My starriest hopes and wants, for very love  
Of time and desolate eternities.

Yea, for one great hour's triumph, not in me  
Nor any hope of mine did I rejoice,  
But in a meadow game of girls and boys  
Some sunset in the centuries to be.

## CYCLOPEAN

A MOUNTAINOUS and mystic brute  
No rein can curb, no arrow shoot,  
Upon whose doomed deformed back  
I sweep the planets' scorching track.

Old is the elf, and wise, men say,  
His hair grows green as ours grows grey;  
He mocks the stars with myriad hands,  
High as that swinging forest stands.

But though in pigmy wanderings dull  
I scour the deserts of his skull,  
I never find the face, eyes, teeth,  
Lowering or laughing underneath.

I met my foe in an empty dell,  
His face in the sun was naked hell.  
I thought, " One silent, bloody blow,  
No priest would curse, no crowd would know."

Then cowered : a daisy, half concealed,  
Watched for the fame of that poor field;  
And in that flower and suddenly  
Earth opened its one eye on me.

## JOSEPH

IF the stars fell; night's nameless dreams  
Of bliss and blasphemy came true,  
If skies were green and snow were gold,  
And you loved me as I love you ;

O long light hands and curled brown hair,  
And eyes where sits a naked soul;  
Dare I even then draw near and burn  
My fingers in the aureole ?

Yes, in the one wise foolish hour  
God gives this strange strength to a man.  
He can demand, though not deserve,  
Where ask he cannot, seize he can.

But once the blood's wild wedding o'er,  
Were not dread his, half dark desire,  
To see the Christ-child in the cot,  
The Virgin Mary by the fire ?

## MODERN ELFLAND

I CUT a staff in a churchyard copse,  
I clad myself in ragged things,  
I set a feather in my cap  
That fell out of an angel's wings.

I filled my wallet with white stones,  
I took three foxgloves in my hand,  
I slung my shoes across my back,  
And so I went to fairyland.

But lo, within that ancient place  
Science had reared her iron crown,  
And the great cloud of steam went up  
That telleth where she takes a town.

But cowed with smoke and starred with lamps,  
That strange land's light was still its own ;  
The word that witched the woods and hills  
Spoke in the iron and the stone.

Not Nature's hand had ever curved  
That mute unearthly porter's spine.  
Like sleeping dragon's sudden eyes  
The signals leered along the line.

The chimneys thronging crooked or straight  
Were fingers signalling the sky;  
The dog that strayed across the street  
Seemed four-legged by monstrosity.

" In vain," I cried, \*' though you too touch  
The new time's desecrating hand.  
Through all the noises of a town  
I hear the heart of fairyland."

I read the name above a door,  
Then through my spirit pealed and passed :  
" This is the town of thine own home,  
And thou hast looked on it at last."

## ETERNITIES

I CANNOT count the pebbles in the brook.  
Well hath He spoken : " Swear not by thy head,  
Thou knowest not the hairs," though He, we read,  
Writes that wild number in His own strange book.

I cannot count the sands or search the seas,  
Death cometh, and I leave so much untrod.  
Grant my immortal aureole, O my God,  
And I will name the leaves upon the trees,

In heaven I shall stand on gold and glass,  
Still brooding earth's arithmetic to spell;  
Or see the fading of the fires of hell  
Ere I have thanked my God for all the grass.

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

THE Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,  
His hair was like a light.  
(O weary, weary were the world,  
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,  
His hair was like a star.  
(O stern and cunning are the kings,  
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,  
His hair was like a fire.  
(O weary, weary is the world,  
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,  
His hair was like a crown,  
And all the flowers looked up at Him,  
And all the stars looked down.

## ALONE

BLESSINGS there are of cradle and of clan,  
Blessings that fall of priests' and princes' hands ;  
But never blessing full of lives and lands,  
Broad as the blessing of a lonely man.

Though that old king fell from his primal throne,  
And ate among the cattle, yet this pride  
Had found him in the deepest grass, and cried  
An " Ecce Homo " with the trumpets blown.

And no mad tyrant, with almighty ban,  
Who in strong madness dreams himself divine,  
But hears through fumes of flattery and of wine  
The thunder of this blessing name him man.

Let all earth rot past saints' and seraphs' plea,  
Yet shall a Voice cry through its last lost war,  
" This is the world, this red wreck of a star,  
That a man blessed beneath an alder-tree."

## KING'S CROSS STATION

THIS circled cosmos whereof man is god  
Has suns and stars of green and gold and red,  
And cloudlands of great smoke, that range o'er range  
Far floating, hide its iron heavens overhead.

God! shall we ever honour what we are,  
And see one moment ere the age expire,  
The vision of man shouting and erect,  
Whirled by the shrieking steeds of flood and fire ?

Or must Fate act the same grey farce again,  
And wait, till one, amid Time's wrecks and scars,  
Speaks to a ruin here, " What poet-race  
Shot such cyclopean arches at the stars ? "

## THE HUMAN TREE

MANY have Earth's lovers been  
Tried in seas and wars, I ween;  
Yet the mightiest have I seen  
Yea, the best saw I.  
One that in a field alone  
Stood up stiller than a stone  
Lest a moth should fly.

Birds had nested in his hair,  
On his shoon were mosses rare,  
Insect empires flourished there,  
Worms in ancient wars;  
But his eyes burn like a glass,  
Hearing a great sea of grass  
Roar towards the stars.

From them to the human tree  
Rose a cry continually,  
" Thou art still, our Father, we  
Fain would have thee nod.  
Make the skies as blood below thee,  
Though thou slay us, we shall know thee.  
Answer us, O God I

" Show thine ancient fame and thunder,  
Split the stillness once asunder,  
Lest we whisper, lest we wonder  
Art thou there at all ? "  
But I saw him there alone,  
Standing stiller than a stone  
Lest a moth should fall.

## TO THEM THAT MOURN

(W. E. G., 1898)

LIFT up your heads : in life, in death,  
God knoweth his head was high.  
Quit we the coward's broken breath  
Who watched a strong man die.

If we must say, " No more his peer  
Cometh ; the flag is furled."  
Stand not too near him, lest he hear  
That slander on the world.

The good green earth he loved and trod  
Is still, with many a scar,  
Writ in the chronicles of God,  
A giant-bearing star.

He fell: but Britain's banner swings  
Above his sunken crown.  
Black death shall have his toll of kings  
Before that cross goes down.

Once more shall move with mighty things  
His house of ancient tale,  
Where kings whose hands were kissed of kings  
Went in : and came out pale.



O young ones of a darker day,  
In art's wan colours clad,  
Whose very love and hate are grey—  
Whose very sin is sad,

Pass on : one agony long-drawn  
Was merrier than your mirth,  
When hand-in-hand came death and dawn,  
And spring was on the earth.

## THE OUTLAW

PRIEST, is any song-bird stricken  
Is one leaf less on the tree ?  
Is this wine less red and royal  
That the hangman waits for me ?

He upon your cross that hangeth,  
It is writ of priestly pen,  
On the night they built His gibbet,  
Drank red wine among His men.

Quaff, like a brave man, as He did,  
Wine and death as heaven pours—  
This is my fate : O ye rulers,  
O ye pontiffs, what is yours ?

To wait trembling, lest yon loathly  
Gallows-shape whereon I die,  
In strange temples yet unbuilded,  
Blaze upon an altar high.

## BEHIND

I SAW an old man like a child,  
His blue eyes bright, his white hair wild,  
Who turned for ever, and might not stop,  
Round and round like an urchin's top.

" Fool," I cried, " while you spin round,  
Others grow wise, are praised, are crowned."  
Ever the same round road he trod,  
" This is better: I seek for God."

" We see the whole world, left and right,  
Yet at the blind back hides from sight  
The unseen Master that drives us forth  
To East and West, to South and North.

" Over my shoulder for eighty years  
I have looked for the gleam of the sphere of spheres."  
" In all your turning, what have you found ? "  
" At least, I know why the world goes round."

## THE END OF FEAR

THOUGH the whole heaven be one-eyed with the  
moon,

Though the dead landscape seem a thing possessed,  
Yet I go singing through that land oppressed  
As one that singeth through the flowers of June.

No more, with forest-fingers crawling free  
O'er dark flint wall that seems a wall of eyes,  
Shall evil break my soul with mysteries  
Of some world-poison maddening bush and tree.

No more shall leering ghosts of pimp and king  
With bloody secrets veiled before me stand.  
Last night I held all evil in my hand  
Closed; and behold it was a little thing.

I broke the infernal gates and looked on him  
Who fronts the strong creation with a curse;  
Even the gods of a lost universe,  
Smiling above his hideous cherubim.

And pierced far down in his soul's crypt unriven  
The last black crooked sympathy and shame,  
And hailed him with that ringing rainbow name  
Erased upon the oldest book in heaven.

Like emptied idiot masks, sin's loves and wars  
Stare at me now : for in the night I broke  
The bubble of a great world's jest, and woke  
Laughing with laughter such as shakes the stars.

## THE HOLY OF HOLIES

" ELDER father, though thine eyes  
Shine with hoary mysteries,  
Canst thou tell me what in the heart  
Of a cowslip blossom lies ?

" Smaller than all lives that be,  
Secret as the deepest sea,  
Stands a little house of seeds,  
Like an elfin's granary.

" Speller of the stones and weeds,  
 Skilled in Nature's crafts and creeds,  
 Tell me what is in the heart  
 Of the smallest of the seeds."

" God Almighty, and with Him  
 Cherubim and Seraphim,  
 Filling all eternity—  
 Adonai Elohim."

### THE MIRROR OF MADMEN

I DREAMED a dream of heaven, white as frost,  
 The splendid stillness of a living host;  
 Vast choirs of upturned faces, line o'er line.  
 Then my blood froze ; for every face was mine.

Spirits with sunset plumage throng and pass,  
 Glassed darkly in the sea of gold and glass.  
 But still on every side, in every spot,  
 I saw a million selves, who saw me not.

I fled to quiet wastes, where on a stone,  
 Perchance, I found a saint, who sat alone ;  
 I came behind : he turned with slow, sweet grace,  
 And faced me with my happy, hateful face.

I cowered like one that in a tower doth bide,  
 Shut in by mirrors upon every side;  
 Then I saw, islanded in skies alone  
 And silent, one that sat upon a throne.

His robe was bordered with rich rose and gold,  
Green, purple, silver out of sunsets old ;  
But o'er his face a great cloud edged with fire,  
Because it covereth a world's desire.

But as I gazed, a silent worshipper,  
Methought the cloud began to faintly stir;  
Then I fell flat, and screamed with grovelling head,  
" If thou hast any lightning, strike me dead !

"But spare a brow where the clean sunlight fell,  
The crown of a new sin that sickens hell.  
Let me not look aloft and see mine own  
Feature and form upon the Judgment-throne."

Then my dream snapped: and with a heart that  
leapt  
I saw across the tavern where I slept,  
The sight of all my life most full of grace,  
A gin-damned drunkard's wan half-witted face.

## E. C. B.

BEFORE the grass grew over me,  
I knew one good man through and through  
And knew a soul and body joined  
Are stronger than the heavens are blue.

A wisdom worthy of thy joy,  
O great heart, read I as I ran;  
Now, though men smite me on the face,  
I cannot curse the face of man.  
23

I loved the man I saw yestreen  
Hanged with his babe's blood on his palms.  
I loved the man I saw to-day  
Who knocked not when he came with alms.

Hush!—for thy sake I even faced  
The knowledge that is worse than hell;  
And loved the man I saw but now  
Hanging head downwards in the well.

## THE DESECRATERS

WITNESS all: that unrepenting,  
Feathers flying, music high,  
I go down to death unshaken  
By your mean philosophy.

.

For your wages, take my body,  
That at least to you I leave;  
Set the sulky plumes upon it,  
Bid the grinning mummers grieve.

Stand in silence, steep your raiment  
In the night that hath no star;  
Don the mortal dress of devils,  
Blacker than their spirits are.

Since ye may not, of your mercy,  
Ere I lie on such a hearse,  
Hurl me to the living jackals  
God hath built for sepulchres.

## AN ALLIANCE

THIS is the weird of a world-old folk,  
That not till the last link breaks,  
Not till the night is blackest,  
The blood of Hengist wakes.  
When the sun is black in heaven,  
The moon as blood above,  
And the earth is full of hatred,  
This people tells its love.

In change, eclipse, and peril,  
Under the whole world's scorn,  
By blood and death and darkness  
The Saxon peace is sworn ;  
That all our fruit be gathered  
And all our race take hands,  
And the sea be a Saxon river  
That runs through Saxon lands.

Lo I not in vain we bore him ;  
Behold it I not in vain,  
Four centuries' doom of torture  
Choked in the throat of Spain,  
Ere priest or tyrant triumph—  
We know how well—we know—  
Bone of that bone can whiten,  
Blood of that blood can flow.

Deep grows the hate of kindred,  
Its roots take hold on hell ;  
No peace or praise can heal it,  
But a stranger heals it well.

Seas shall be red as sunsets,  
And kings' bones float as foam,  
And heaven be dark with vultures,  
The night our son comes home.

## THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

A CHILD sits in a sunny place,  
Too happy for a smile,  
And plays through one long holiday  
With balls to roll and pile;  
A painted wind-mill by his side,  
Runs like a merry tune,  
But the sails are the four great winds of heaven,  
And the balls are the sun and moon.

A staring doll's-house shows to him  
Green floors and starry rafter,  
And many-coloured graven dolls  
Live for his lonely laughter.  
The dolls have crowns and aureoles.  
Helmets and horns and wings.  
For they are the saints and seraphim,  
The prophets and the kings.

## THE LAST MASQUERADE

A WAN new garment of young green,  
Touched, as you turned your soft brown hair;  
And in me surged the strangest prayer  
Ever in lover's heart hath been.



That I who saw your youth's bright page,  
A rainbow change from robe to robe,  
Might see you on this earthly globe,  
Crowned with the silver crown of age.

Your dear hair powdered in strange guise,  
Your dear face touched with colours pale,  
And gazing through the mask and veil  
The mirth of your immortal eyes.

## THE EARTH'S SHAME

NAME not his deed : in shuddering and in haste  
We dragged him darkly o'er the windy fell:  
That night there was a gibbet in the waste,  
And a new sin in hell.

Be his deed hid from commonwealths and kings,  
By all men born be one true tale forgot;  
But three things, braver than all earthly things,  
Faced him and feared him not.

Above his head and sunken secret face  
Nested the sparrow's young and dropped not  
dead.  
From the red blood and slime of that lost place  
Grew daisies white, not red.

And from high heaven looking upon him,  
Slowly upon the face of God did come  
A smile the cherubim and seraphim  
Hid all their faces from.

## VANITY

A WAN sky greener than the lawn,  
A wan lawn paler than the sky.  
She gave a flower into my hand,  
And all the hours of eve went by.

Who knows what round the corner waits  
To smite ? If shipwreck, snare, or slur  
Shall leave me with a head to lift,  
Worthy of him that spoke with her.

A wan sky greener than the lawn,  
A wan lawn paler than the sky.  
She gave a flower into my hand,  
And all the days of life went by.

Live ill or well, this thing is mine,  
From all I guard it, ill or well.  
One tawdry, tattered, faded flower  
To show the jealous kings in hell.

## THE LAMP POST

LAUGH your best, O blazoned forests,  
Me you shall not shift or shame  
With your beauty : here among you  
Man hath set his spear of flame.

Lamp to lamp we send the signal,  
For our lord goes forth to war;  
Since a voice, ere stars were builded,  
Bade him colonise a star.

Laugh ye, cruel as the morning,  
Deck your heads with fruit and flower,  
Though our souls be sick with pity,  
Yet our hands are hard with power.

We have read your evil stories,  
We have heard the tiny yell  
Through the voiceless conflagration  
Of your green and shining hell.

And when men, with fires and shouting,  
Break your old tyrannic pales ;  
And where ruled a single spider  
Laugh and weep a million tales.

This shall be your best of boasting:  
That some poet, poor of spine,  
Full and sated with our wisdom,  
Full and fiery with our wine,

Shall steal out and make a treaty  
With the grasses and the showers,  
Rail against the grey town-mother,  
Fawn upon the scornful flowers;

Rest his head among the roses,  
Where a quiet song-bird sounds,  
And no sword made sharp for traitors,  
Hack him into meat for hounds.

## THE PESSIMIST

You that have snarled through the ages, take your  
answer and go—

I know your hoary question, the riddle that all  
men know.

You have weighed the stars in the balance, and  
grasped the skies in a span :

Take, if you must have answer, the word of a  
common man.

Deep in my life lies buried one love unhealed,  
unshriven,

One hunger still shall haunt me—yea, in the streets  
of heaven ;

This is the burden, babblers, this is the curse shall  
cling,

This is the thing I bring you; this is the pleasant  
thing.

'Gainst you and all your sages, no joy of mine shall  
strive,

This one dead self shall shatter the men you call  
alive.

My grief I send to smite you, no pleasure, no belief,  
Lord of the battered grievance, what do you know  
of grief ?

I only know the praises to heaven that one man gave,  
That he came on earth for an instant, to stand beside  
a grave,

The peace of a field of battle, where flowers are born  
of blood.

I only know one evil that makes the whole world  
good.

Beneath this single sorrow the globe of moon and  
sphere  
Turns to a single jewel, so bright and brittle and  
dear  
That I dread lest God should drop it, to be dashed  
into stars below.

. . . . .  
You that have snarled through the ages, take your  
answer and go.

## A FAIRY TALE

ALL things grew upwards, foul and fair:  
The great trees fought and beat the air  
With monstrous wings that would have flown;  
But the old earth clung to her own,  
Holding them back from heavenly wars,  
Though every flower sprang at the stars.

But he broke free : while all things ceased,  
Some hour increasing, he increased.  
The town beneath him seemed a map,  
Above the church he cocked his cap,  
Above the cross his feather flew,  
Above the birds : and still he grew.

The trees turned grass; the clouds were riven;  
His feet were mountains lost in heaven;  
Through strange new skies he rose alone,  
The earth fell from him like a stone,  
And his own limbs beneath him far  
Seemed tapering down to touch a star.

He reared his head, shaggy and grim,  
Staring among the cherubim ;  
The seven celestial floors he rent,  
One crystal dome still o'er him bent:  
Above his head, more clear than hope,  
All heaven was a microscope.

## A PORTRAIT

FAIR faces crowd on Christmas night  
Like seven suns a-row,  
But all beyond is the wolfish wind  
And the crafty feet of the snow.

But through the rout one figure goes  
With quick and quiet tread ;  
Her robe is plain, her form is frail—  
Wait if she turn her head.

I say no word of line or hue,  
But if that face you see,  
Your soul shall know the smile of faith's  
Awful frivolity.

Know that in this grotesque old masque  
Too loud we cannot sing,  
Or dance too wild, or speak too wide  
To praise a hidden thing.

That though the jest be old as night,  
Still shaketh sun and sphere  
An everlasting laughter  
Too loud for us to hear.

## FEMINA CONTRA MUNDUM

THE sun was black with judgment, and the moon  
Blood : but between  
I saw a man stand, saying, " To me at least  
The grass is green.

" There was no star that I forgot to fear  
With love and wonder.  
The birds have loved me " ; but no answer came—  
Only the thunder.

Once more the man stood, saying, " A cottage door,  
Wherethrough I gazed  
That instant as I turned—yea, I am vile;  
Yet my eyes blazed.

" For I had weighed the mountains in a balance,  
And the skies in a scale,  
I come to sell the stars—old lamps for new—  
Old stars for sale."

Then a calm voice fell all the thunder through,  
A tone less rough:  
" Thou hast begun to love one of my works  
Almost enough."

## TO A CERTAIN NATION

WE will not let thee be, for thou art ours.  
We thank thee still, though thou forget these  
things,  
For that hour's sake when thou didst wake all  
powers  
With a great cry that God was sick of kings.

Leave thee there grovelling at their rusted greaves,  
These hulking cowards on a painted stage,  
Who, with imperial pomp and laurel leaves,  
Show their Marcngo—one man in a cage.

These, for whom stands no type or title given  
In all the squalid tales of gore and pelf;  
Though cowed by crashing thunders from all  
heaven,  
Cain never said, " My brother slew himself."

Tear you the truth out of your drivelling spy,  
The maniac whom you set to swing death's scythe.  
Nay ; torture not the torturer—let him lie :  
What need of racks to teach a worm to writhe ?

Bear with us, O our sister, not in pride,  
Nor any scorn we see thee spoiled of knaves,  
But only shame to hear, where Danton died,  
Thy foul dead kings all laughing in their graves.

Thou hast a right to rule thyself; to be  
The thing thou wilt; to grin, to fawn, to creep ;  
To crown these clumsy liars; ay, and we  
Who knew thee once, we have a right to weep.

## THE PRAISE OF DUST

" WHAT of vile dust ? " the preacher said.  
Methought the whole world woke,  
The dead stone lived beneath my foot,  
And my whole body spoke.



" You, that play tyrant to the dust,  
And stamp its wrinkled face,  
This patient star that flings you not  
Far into homeless space.

" Come down out of your dusty shrine  
The living dust to see,  
The flowers that at your sermon's end  
Stand blazing silently.

" Rich white and blood-red blossom; stones,  
Lichens like fire encrust;  
A gleam of blue, a glare of gold,  
The vision of the dust.

" Pass them all by : till, as you come  
Where, at the city's edge,  
Under a tree—I know it well—  
Under a lattice ledge,

" The sunshine falls on one brown head.  
You, too, O cold of clay,  
Eater of stones, may haply hear  
The trumpets of that day.

" When God to all his paladins  
By his own splendour swore  
To make a fairer face than heaven,  
Of dust and nothing more."

THE BALLAD OF THE BATTLE OF  
GIBEON

FIVE kings ruled o'er the Amorite,  
Mighty as fear and old as night;  
Swathed with unguent and gold and jewel,  
Waxed they merry and fat and cruel.  
Zedek of Salem, a terror and glory,  
Whose face was hid while his robes were gory;  
And Hoham of Hebron, whose loathly face is  
Heavy and dark o'er the ruin of races;  
And Piram of Jarmuth, drunk with strange wine,  
Who dreamed he had fashioned all stars that shine ;  
And Debir of Eglon wild, without pity,  
Who raged like a plague in the midst of his city;  
And Japhia of Lachish, a fire that flameth,  
Who did in the daylight what no man nameth.

These five kings said one to another,  
" King unto king o'er the world is brother,  
Seeing that now, for a sign and a wonder,  
A red eclipse and a tongue of thunder,  
A shape and a finger of desolation,  
Is come against us a kingless nation.  
Gibeon hath failed us: it were not good  
That a man remember where Gibeon stood."  
Then Gibeon sent to our captain, crying,  
" Son of Nun, let a shaft be flying,  
For unclean birds are gathering greedily;  
Slack not thy hand, but come thou speedily.  
Yea, we are lost save thou maintain'st us,  
For the kings of the mountains are gathered against  
us."

Then to our people spake the Deliverer,  
" Gibeon is high, yet a host may shiver her;  
Gibeon hath sent to me crying for pity,  
For the lords of the cities encompass the city  
With chariot and banner and bowman and lancer,  
And I swear by the living God I will answer.  
Gird you, O Israel, quiver and javelin,  
Shield and sword for the road we travel in;  
Verily, as I have promised, pay I  
Life unto Gibeon, death unto Ai."

Sudden and still as a bolt shot right  
Up on the city we went by night.  
Never a bird of the air could say,  
" This was the children of Israel's way."  
Only the hosts sprang up from sleeping,  
Saw from the heights a dark stream sweeping;  
Sprang up straight as a great shout stung them  
And heard the Deliverer's war-cry among them,  
Heard under cupola, turret, and steeple  
The awful cry of the kingless people.

Started the weak of them, shouted the strong of  
them,  
Crashed we a thunderbolt into the throng of them,  
Blindly with heads bent, and shields forced before  
us,  
We heard the dense roar of the strife closing o'er  
us.  
And drunk with the crash of the song that it sung  
them,  
We drove the great spear-blade in God's name among  
them.

Redder and redder the sword-flash fell,  
Our eyes and our nostrils were hotter than hell;  
Till full all the crest of the spear-surge shocking us  
Hoham of Hebron cried out mocking us,  
" Nay, what need of the war-sword's plying,  
Out of the desert the dust comes flying.  
A little red dust, if the wind be blowing—  
Who shall reckon of its coming or going ? "  
Back the Deliverer spake as a clarion,  
" Mock at thy slaves, thou eater of carrion !  
Laughest thou at us, in thy kingly clowning,  
We, that laughed upon Ramcses frowning,  
We that stood up, proud, unpardoncd,  
When his face was dark, and his heart was  
hardened ?

Pharaoh we knew and his steeds, not faster  
Than the word of the Lord in thine ear, O master."  
Sheer through the turban his wantons wove him,  
Clean to the skull the Deliverer clove him;  
And the two hosts reeled at the sign appalling,  
As the great king fell like a great house falling.

Loudly we shouted, and living, and dying,  
Bore them all backward with strength and strong  
crying;

And Caleb struck Zedck hard at the throat,  
And Japhia of Lachish Zebulon smote.  
The war-swords and axes were clashing and groaning,  
The fallen were fighting and foaming and moaning,  
The war spears were breaking, the war-horns were  
braying,

Ere the hands of the slayers were sated with slaying  
And deep in the grasses grown gory and sodden  
The treaders of all men were trampled and trodden .

And over them, routed and reeled like cattle,  
High over the turn of the tide of the battle,  
High over noises that deafen and cover us,  
Rang the Deliverer's voice out over us.

" Stand thou still, thou sun upon Gibeon,  
Stand thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon I  
Shout thou, people, a cry like thunder,  
For the kings of the earth are broken asunder.  
Now we have said as the thunder says it,  
Something is stronger than strength and slays it.  
Now we have written for all time later,  
Five kings are great, yet a law is greater.  
Stare, O sun ! in thine own great glory,  
This is the turn of the whole world's story.  
Stand thou still, thou sun upon Gibeon,  
Stand thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon !

" Smite ! amid spear-blades blazing and breaking,  
More than we know of is rising and making.  
Stab with the javelin, crash with the car !  
Cry! for we know not the thing that we are.  
Stand, O sun ! that in horrible patience  
Smiled on the smoke and the slaughter of nations.  
Thou shalt grow sad for a little crying,  
Thou shalt be darkened for one man's dying—  
Stand thou still, thou sun upon Gibeon,  
Stand thou, moon, in the valley of Ajaion !"

After the battle was broken and spent  
Up to the hill the Deliverer went,  
Flung up his arms to the storm-clouds flying,  
And cried unto Israel, mightily crying,

" Come up, O warriors ! come up, O brothers !  
Tribesmen and herdsmen, maidens and mothers;  
The bondman's son and the bondman's daughter,  
The hewer of wood and the drawer of water,  
He that carries and he that brings,  
And set your foot on the neck of kings."

This is the story of Gibeon fight—  
Where we smote the lords of the Amorite;  
Where the banners of princes with slaughter were  
sodden,  
And the beards of seers in the rank grass trodden;  
Where the trees were wrecked by the wreck of cars,  
And the reek of the red field blotted the stars;  
Where the dead heads dropped from the swords  
that sever,  
Because His mercy endureth for ever.

" VULGARISED "

ALL round they murmur, " O profane,  
Keep thy heart's secret hid as gold " ;  
But I, by God, would sooner be  
Some knight in shattering wars of old,

In brown outlandish arms to ride,  
And shout my love to every star  
With lungs to make a poor maid's name  
Deafen the iron ears of war.

Here, where these subtle cowards crowd,  
To stand and so to speak of love,  
That the four corners of the world  
Should hear it and take heed thereof.

That to this shrine obscure there be  
 One witness before all men given,  
 As naked as the hanging Christ,  
 As shameless as the sun in heaven.

These whimperers—have they spared to us  
 One dripping woe, one reeking sin ?  
 These thieves that shatter their own graves  
 To prove the soul is dead within.

They talk ; by God, is it not time  
 Some of Love's chosen broke the girth,  
 And told the good all men have known  
 Since the first morning of the earth ?

### THE BALLAD OF GOD-MAKERS

A BIRD flew out at the break of day  
 From the nest where it had curled,  
 And ere the eve the bird had set  
 Fear on the kings of the world.

The first tree it lit upon  
 Was green with leaves unshed;  
 The second tree it lit upon  
 Was red with apples red;

The third tree it lit upon  
 Was barren and was brown,  
 Save for a dead man nailed thereon  
 On a hill above a town.

864 THE BALLAD OF GOD-MAKERS

That night the kings of the earth were gay  
And filled the cup and can;  
Last night the kings of the earth were chill  
For dread of a naked man.

" If he speak two more words," they said,  
" The slave is more than the free;  
If he speak three more words," they said,  
" The stars are under the sea."

Said the King of the East to the King of the West,  
I wot his frown was set,  
" Lo, let us slay him and make him as dung,  
It is well that the world forget."

Said the King of the West to the King of the East,  
I wot his smile was dread,  
" Nay, let us slay him and make him a god,  
It is well that our god be dead."

They set the young man on a hill,  
They nailed him to a rod;  
And there in darkness and in blood  
They made themselves a god.

And the mightiest word was left unsaid.  
And the world had never a mark,  
And the strongest man of the sons of men  
Went dumb into the dark.

Then hymns and harps of praise they brought,  
Incense and gold and myrrh,  
And they throned above the seraphim,  
The poor dead carpenter.



" Thou art the prince of all," they sang,  
" Ocean and earth and air."

Then the bird flew on to the cruel cross,  
And hid in the dead man's hair.

" Thou art the sun of the world," they cried,  
" Speak if our prayers be heard."

And the brown bird stirred in the dead man's hair,  
And it seemed that the dead man stirred.

Then a shriek went up like the world's last cry  
From all nations under heaven,  
And a master fell before a slave  
And begged to be forgiven.

They cowered, for dread in his wakened eyes  
The ancient wrath to see ;  
And a bird flew out of the dead Christ's hair,  
And lit on a lemon-tree.

### AT NIGHT

How many million stars there be,  
That only God hath numbered;  
But this one only chosen for me  
In time before her face was fled.  
Shall not one mortal man alive  
Hold up his head ?

### THE WOOD-CUTTER

WE came behind him by the wall,  
My brethren drew their brands,  
And they had strength to strike him down—  
And I to bind his hands.

Only once, to a lantern gleam,  
He turned his face from the wall,  
And it was as the accusing angel's face  
On the day when the stars shall fall,

I grasped the axe with shaking hands,  
I stared at the grass I trod ;  
For I feared to see the whole bare heavens  
Filled with the face of God.

I struck : the serpentine slow blood  
In four arms soaked the moss—  
Before me, by the living Christ,  
The blood ran in a cross.

Therefore I toil in forests here  
And pile the wood in stacks,  
And take no fee from the shivering folk  
Till I have cleansed the axe.

But for a curse God cleared my sight,  
And where each tree doth grow  
I see a life with awful eyes,  
And I must lay it low.

## ART COLOURS

ON must we go : we search dead leaves,  
We chase the sunset's saddest flames,  
The nameless hues that o'er and o'er  
In lawless weddings lost their names.

God of the daybreak ! Better be  
Black savages; and grin to gird  
Our limbs in gaudy rags of red,  
The laughing-stock of brute and bird.

And feel again the fierce old feast,  
Blue for seven heavens that had sufficed,  
A gold like shining hoards, a red  
Like roses from the blood of Christ.

## THE TWO WOMEN

Lo ! very fair is she who knows the ways  
Of joy: in pleasure's mocking wisdom old,  
The eyes that might be cold to flattery, kind ;  
The hair that might be grey with knowledge, gold.

But thou art more than these things, O my queen,  
For thou art clad in ancient wars and tears.  
And looking forth, framed in the crown of thorns,  
I saw the youngest face in all the spheres.

## THE WILD KNIGHT

THE wasting thistle whitens on my crest,  
The barren grasses blow upon my spear,  
A green, pale pennon : blazon of wild faith  
And love of fruitless things: yea, of my love,  
Among the golden loves of all the knights,  
Alone: most hopeless, sweet, and blasphemous,  
The love of God :

I hear the crumbling creeds  
Like cliffs washed down by water, change, and  
pass;

I hear a noise of words, age after age,  
A new cold wind that blows across the plains,  
And all the shrines stand empty; and to me  
All these are nothing : priests and schools may doubt  
Who never have believed ; but I have loved.  
Ah friends, I know it passing well, the love  
Wherewith I love; it shall not bring to me  
Return or hire or any pleasant thing—  
Ay, I have tried it: Ay, I know its roots.  
Earthquake and plague have burst on it in vain  
And rolled back shattered—

Babbling neophytes !

Blind, startled fools—think you I know it not ?  
Think you to teach me ? Know I not His ways ?  
Strange-visaged blunders, mystic cruelties.  
All! all ! I know Him, for I love Him. Go!

So, with the wan waste grasses on my spear,  
I ride for ever, seeking after God,  
My hair grows whiter than my thistle plume,  
And all my limbs are loose; but in my eyes  
The star of an unconquerable praise:

For in my soul one hope for ever sings,  
That at the next white corner of a road  
My eyes may look on Him. . . .

Hush—I shall know  
The place when it is found : a twisted path  
Under a twisted pear-tree—this I saw  
In the first dream I had ere I was born,  
Wherein He spoke. . . .

But the grey clouds come down  
In hail upon the icy plains : I ride,  
Burning for ever in consuming fire.

*A dark manor-house shuttered and unlighted, outlined  
against a pale sunset: in front a large, but neglected,  
garden. To the right, in the foreground, the porch  
of a chapel, with coloured windows lighted. Hymns  
within.*

*Above the porch a grotesque carved bracket, supporting  
a lantern. Astride of it sits CAPTAIN REDFEATHER,  
a flagon in his hand.*

#### REDFEATHER

I have drunk to all I know of,  
To every leaf on the tree,  
To the highest bird of the heavens,  
To the lowest fish of the sea.  
What toast, what toast remaineth,  
Drunk down in the same good wine,  
By the tippler's cup in the tavern,  
And the priest's cup at the shrine ?

*[A Priest comes out, stick in hand and looks  
right and left.]*

## VOICES WITHIN

The brawler . . .

PRIEST

He has vanished

REDFEATHER

To the stars.

*[The Priest looks up.]*

PRIEST *[angrily]*

What would you there, sir ?

REDFEATHER

Give you all a toast.

*[Lifts his flagon. More priests come out.]*

I see my life behind me : bad enough—

Drink, duels, madness, beggary, and pride,

The life of the unfit: yet ere I drop

On Nature's rubbish heap, I weigh it all,

And give you all a toast—

*[Reels to his feet and stands.]*

The health of God !

*[They all recoil from him.]*

Let's give the Devil of the Heavens His due !

He that made grass so green, and wine so red,

Is not so black as you have painted Him.

*[Drinks.]*

PRIEST

Blaspheming profligate !

REDFEATHER *[hurls the flagon among them.]*

Howl I ye dumb dogs,

I named your king—let me have one great shout,

Flutter the seraphim like startled birds;

Make God recall the good days of His youth  
Ere saints had saddened Him : when He came back  
Conqueror of Chaos in a six days' war,  
With all the sons of God shouting for joy . . .

PRIEST

And you—what is your right, and who are you,  
To praise God ?

REDFEATHER

A lost soul. In earth or heaven  
What has a better right ?

PRIEST

Go, pagan, go !  
Drink, dice, and dance : take no more thought than  
blind  
Beasts of the field. . • .

REDFEATHER

Or ... lilies of the field,  
To quote a pagan sage. I go my way.

PRIEST *[solemnly]*

And when Death comes . . .

REDFEATHER

He shall not find me dead.  
*[Puts on his plumed hat. The priests go out.]*

REDFEATHER

These frozen fools . . .  
*[The Lady Olive comes out of the chapel. He sees her.]*

Oh, they were right enough,  
Where shall I hide my carrion from the sun ?  
*[Buries his face. His hat drops to the ground.]*

OLIVE [*looking up*]

Captain, are you from church? I saw you not.

REDFEATHER

No, I am here.

[*Lays his hand on a gargoyle.*]

I, too, am a grotesque,

And dance with all the devils on the roof.

OLIVE [*with a strange smile*]

For Satan, also, I have often prayed.

REDFEATHER [*roughly*]

Satan may worry women if he will,

For he was but an angel ere he fell,

But I—before I fell—I was a man.

OLIVE

He, too, my Master, was a man: too strong

To fear a strong man's sins: 'tis written He

Descended into hell.

REDFEATHER

Write, then, that I

[*Leaps to the ground before her.*]

Descended into heaven . . .

You are ill?

OLIVE

No, well . . .

REDFEATHER

You speak the truth—you are the Truth—

Lady, say once again then, "I am well."

OLIVE

I—ah I God give me grace—I am nigh dead

REDFEATHER [*quietly*]

Lord Orm?



OLIVE

Yes—yes.

REDFEATHIER

Is in your father's house—  
Having the title-deeds—would drive you forth,  
Homeless, and with your father sick to death,  
Into this winter, save on a condition  
Named . . .

OLIVE

And unnameable. Even so ; Lord Orm—  
Ah ! do you know him ?

REDFEATHIER

Ay, I saw him once.  
The sun shone on his face, that smiled and smiled  
A sight not wholesome to the eyes of man.

OLIVE

Captain, I tell you God once fell asleep,  
And in that hour the world went as it would ;  
Dogs brought forth cats, and poison grew in grapes,  
And Orm was born . . .

REDFEATHER

Why, curse him! can he not  
Be kicked or paid ?

OLIVE *[feverishly]*

Hush I He is just behind  
There in the house—see how the great house glares,  
Glares like an ogre's mask—the whole dead house  
Possessed with bestial meaning. . . .

*[Screams]*

Ah I the face !

The whole great grinning house—his face I his face I  
His face !

REDFEATHER *[in a voice of thunder, pointing away  
from the house]*

Look there—look there !

OLIVE

What is it ? What ?

REDFEATHIER

I think it was a bird.

OLIVE

What thought you, truly ?

REDFEATHIER

I think a mighty thought is drawing near.

*[Enter THE WILD KNIGHT.]*

THE WILD KNIGHT

That house . . .

*[Points.]*

OLIVE

Ah Christ! *[Shudders.]* I had forgotten it.

THE WILD KNIGHT *[still pointing]*

That house ! the house at last, the house of God,  
Wherein God makes an evening feast for me.

The house at last: I know the twisted path

Under the twisted pear-tree : this I saw

In the first dream I had ere I was born.

It is the house of God. He welcomes me.

*[Strides forward.]*

REDFEATHER

That house. God's blood I

OLIVE *[hysterically]*

Is not this hells own wit ?

## THE WILD KNIGHT

God grows impatient, and His wine is poured,  
His bread is broken.

*[Rushes forward.]*

REDFEATHER *[leaps between]*

Stand away, great fool,  
There is a devil there !

THE WILD KNIGHT *[draws his sword, and waves it  
as he rushes]*

God's house !—God's house I

REDFEATHER *[plucks out his own sword]*

Better my hand than his.

*[The blades clash.]*

God alone knows

What That within might do to you, poor fool  
I can but kill you.

*[They fight. OLIVE tries to part them.]*

REDFEATHER

Olive, stand away !

OLIVE

I will not stand away!

*[Steps between the swords.]*

Stranger, a word,

Yes—you are right—God is within that house.

REDFEATHER

Olive !

OLIVE

But He is all too beautiful  
For us who only know of stars and flowers  
The thing within is all too pure and fair,

*[Shudders.]*

Too awful in its ancient innocence,  
For men to lock upon it and not die;  
Ourselves would fade into those still white fires  
Of peace and mercy.

*[Struggles with her voice.]*

There . . . enough . . . the law—  
No flesh shall look upon the Lord and live.

REDFEATHER *[sticking his sword in the ground]*  
You are the bravest lady in the world.

THE WILD KNIGHT *[dazed]*  
May I not go within ?

REDFEATHER  
Keep you the law—  
No flesh shall look upon the Lord and live.

THE WILD KNIGHT *[sadly]*  
Then I will go and lay me in the flowers,  
For He may haply, as in ancient time,  
Walk in the garden in the cool of day.  
*[He goes out.]*  
*[OLIVE reels. REDFEATHER catches her.]*

REDFEATHER  
You are the strongest woman upon earth.  
The weakest woman than the strongest man  
Is stronger in her hour : this is the law.  
When the hour passes—then may we be strong.

OLIVE *[wildly]*  
The House . . . the Face.

REDFEATHER *[fiercely]*  
I love you. Look at me !

OLIVE [*turns her face to him*]  
I hear six birds sing in that little tree.  
Say, is the old earth laughing at my fears?  
I think I love you also . . .

REDFEATHEB

What I am  
You know. But I will never curse a man,  
Even in a mirror.

OLIVE [*smiling at him*]  
And the Devil's dance?

REDFEATHER  
The Devil plotted since the world was young  
With alchemies of fire and witches' oil  
And magic. But he never made a man.

OLIVE  
No, not a man.

REDFEATHEB  
Not even my Lord Orm  
Look at the house now—  
*[She starts and looks.]*  
Honest brick and tiles.

OLIVE  
You have a strange strength in this hour.

REDFEATHER  
This hour  
I see with mortal eyes as in one flash  
The whole divine democracy of things,  
And dare the stars to scorn a scavenge-heap.  
Olive, I tell you every soul is great.  
Weave we green crowns—how noble and how high;

Fling we white flowers—how radiant and how pure  
Is he, whoe'er he be, who next shall cross  
This scrap of grass . .

[Enter LORD ORM.]

OLIVE [*screams*]  
Ah!

REDFEATHER [*pointing to the chapel*]  
Olive, go and pray  
For a man soon to die. Good day, my Lord.  
[*She goes in.*]

LORD ORM  
Good day.

REDFEATHER  
I am a friend to Lady Olive.

LORD ORM  
Sir, you are fortunate.

REDFEATHER  
Most fortunate  
In finding, sword on thigh and ready, one  
Who is a villain and a gentleman.

LORD ORM [*picks up the flagon*]  
Empty, I see.

REDFEATHER  
Oh sir, you never drink  
You dread to lose yourself before the stars—  
Do you not dread to sleep ?

LORD ORM [*violently*]  
What would you here ?

REDFEATHER

Receive from you the title-deeds you hold.

LORD ORM

You entertain me.

REDFEATHER

With a bout at foils ?

LORD ORM

I will not fight.

REDFEATHER

I know you better, then.

I have seen men grow mangier than the beasts,  
Eat bread with blood upon their fingers, grin  
While women burned : but one last law they served.  
When I say " Coward," is the law awake ?

LORD ORM

Hear me, then too : I have seen robbers rule,  
And thieves go clad in gold—age after age—  
Because, though sordid, ragged, rude, and mean,  
They saw, like gods, no law above their heads.  
But when they fell—then for this cause they fell,  
This last mean cobweb of the fairy tales  
Of good and ill: that they must stand and fight  
When a man bade, though they had chose to stand  
And fight not, I am stronger than the world.

*[Folds his arms.]*

REDFEATHER *[lifts his hand]*

If in your body be the blood of a man,

*[Strikes him.]*

Now let it rush to the face—

God I Have you sunk

Lower than anger ?

LORD OEM

How *I* triumph now.REDFEATHEE [*stamps wildly*]

Damned, whimpering dog! vile, snivelling sick  
poltroon !

Are you alive ?

LORD ORM

Evil, be thou my good;  
Let the sun blacken and the moon be blood:  
I have said the words.

REDFEATHER [*studying him*]

And if I struck you dead,  
You would turn to daisies !

LORD ORM

And you do not strike.

REDFEATHER [*dreamily*]

Indeed, poor soul, such magic would be kind  
And full of pity as a fairy-tale :  
One touch of this bright wand [*Lifts his sword*] and  
down would drop  
The dark abortive blunder that is you,  
And you would change, forgiven, into flowers.

LORD ORM

And yet—and yet you do not strike me dead.  
I do not draw : the sword is in your hand—  
Drive the blade through me where I stand.



REDFEATHER

Lord Orm,

You asked the Lady Olive (I can speak  
As to a toad to you, my lord)—you asked  
Olive to be your paramour: and she—

LORD ORM

Refused.

REDFEATHER

And yet her father was at stake,  
And she is soft and kind. Now look at me,  
Ragged and ruined, soaked in bestial sins :  
My lord, I too have my virginity—  
Turn the thing round, my lord, and topside down,  
You cannot spell it. Be the fact enough,  
I use no sword upon a swordless man.

LORD ORM

For her ?

REDFEATHER

I too have my virginity.

LORD ORM

Now look on me : I am the lord of earth,  
For I have broken the last bond of man.  
I stand erect, crowned with the stars—and why ?  
Because I stand a coward—because you  
Have mercy—on a coward. Do I win ?

REDFEATHER

Though there you stand with moving mouth and  
eyes,  
I think, my lord, you are not possible—  
God keep you from my dreams.

*[Goes out.]*

LORD ORM

Alone and free.

Since first in flowery meads a child I ran,  
My one long thirst—to be alone and free.  
Free of all laws, creeds, codes, and common tests,  
Shameless, anarchic, infinite.

Why, then,

I might have done in that dark liberty—  
If I should say "a good deed," men would laugh,  
But here are none to laugh.

The godless world

Be thanked there is no God to spy on me,  
Catch me and crown me with a vulgar crown  
For what I do : if I should once believe  
The horror of that ancient Eavesdropper  
Behind the starry arras of the skies,  
I should—well, well, enough of menaces—  
I should not do the thing I come to do.  
What do I come to do ? Let me but try  
To spell it to my soul.

Suppose a man

Perfectly free and utterly alone,  
Free of all love of law, equally free  
Of all the love of mutiny it breeds,  
Free of the love of heaven, and also free  
Of all the love of hell it drives us to;  
Not merely void of rules, unconscious of them;  
So strong that naught alive could do him hurt,  
So wise that he knew all things, and so great  
That none knew what he was or what he did—  
A lawless giant. [*A pause : then in a low voice.*]

Would he not be good ?

Hate is the weakness of a thwarted thing,  
Pride is the weakness of a thing unpraised.

But he, this man . . .

He would be like a child  
Girt with the tomes of some vast library,  
Who reads romance after romance, and smiles  
When every tale ends well: impersonal  
As God he grows—melted in suns and stars;  
So would this boundless man, whom none could spy,  
Taunt him with virtue, censure him with vice,  
Rejoice in all men's joys; with golden pen  
Write all the live romances of the earth  
To a triumphant close . . .

Alone and free—  
In this grey, cool, clean garden, washed with winds,  
What do I come to do among the grass,  
The daisies, and the dews? An awful thing,  
To prove I am that man.

That while these saints  
Taunt me with trembling, dare me to revenge,  
I breathe an upper air of ancient good  
And strong eternal laughter; send my sun  
And rain upon the evil and the just,  
Turn my left cheek unto the smiter. He  
That told me, sword in hand, that I had fallen  
Lower than anger, knew not I had risen  
Higher than pride . . .

Enough the deeds are mine.

*[Takes out the title-deeds.]*

I come to write the end of a romance.  
A good romance: the characters—Lord Orm,  
Type of the starved heart and stored brain,  
Who strives to hate and cannot; fronting him—  
Redfeather, rake in process of reform,  
At root a poet: I have hopes of him:  
He can Jove virtue, for he still loves vice.

He is not all burnt out. He beats me there  
 (How I beat him in owning it !); in love  
 He is still young, and has the joy of shame.  
 And for the Lady Olive—who shall speak ?  
 A man may weigh the courage of a man,  
 But if there be a bottomless abyss  
 It is a woman's valour: such as I  
 Can only bow the knee and hide the face  
 (Thank God there is no God to spy on me  
 And bring his cursed crowns).

No, there is none :

The old incurable hunger of the world  
 Surges in wolfish wars, age after age.  
 There was no God before me : none sees where  
 Between the brute-womb and the deaf, dead grave.  
 Unhoping, unrecorded, unrepaid,  
 I make with smoke, fire, and burnt-offering  
 This sacrifice to Chaos. [*Lights the paper.*] None  
 behold

Me write in fire the end of the romance.  
 Burn! I am God, and crown myself with stars  
 Upon creation day: before was night  
 And chaos of a blind and cruel world.  
 I am the first God; I will trample hell,  
 Fight, conquer, make the story of the stars,  
 Like this poor story, end like a romance:

[*The paper burns.*]

Before was brainless night: but I am God  
 In this black world I rend. Let there be light!  
 [*The paper blazes up, illuminating the garden.*]  
 I, God . . .

THE WILD KNIGHT [*rushes forward*]

God's Light I God's voice; yes it is He  
 Walking in Eden in the cool of the day!

LORD OEM *[screams]*

Tricked! Caught!

Damned screeching rat in a hole!

*[Stabs him again and again with his sword; stamps on his face.]*

THE WILD KNIGHT *[faintly]*

Earth grows too beautiful around me: shapes

And colours fearfully wax fair and clear,

For I have heard, as thro' a door ajar,

Scraps of the huge soliloquy of God

That moveth as a mask the lips of man,

If man be very silent: they were right,

No flesh shall look upon the Lord and live.

*[Dies.]*

LORD ORM *[staggers back laughing]*

Saved, saved, my secret.

REDFEATHER *[rushing in, sword in hand]*

The drawn sword at last I

Guard, son of hell!

*[They fight. ORM falls. OLIVE comes in.]*

He too can die. Keep back!

Olive, keep back from him! I did not fear

Him living, and he fell before my sword;

But dead I fear him. All is ended now;

A man's whole life tied in a bundle there,

And no good deed. I fear him. Come away.

## GOOD NEWS

BETWEEN a meadow and a cloud that sped  
In rain and twilight, in desire and fear,  
I heard a secret—hearken in your ear,  
" Behold the daisy has a ring of red."

That hour, with half of blessing, half of ban,  
A great voice went through heaven and earth and  
hell,  
Crying, " We are tricked, my great ones, is it well ?  
Now is the secret stolen by a man."

Then waxed I like the wind because of this,  
And ran, like gospel and apocalypse,  
From door to door, with new anarchic lips,  
Crying the very blasphemy of bliss.

In the last wreck of Nature, dark and dread,  
Shall in eclipse's hideous hieroglyph,  
One wild form reel on the last rocking cliff,  
And shout, " The daisy has a ring of red."

THE CONVERT  
(1922)

AFTER one moment when I bowed my head  
And the whole world turned over and came upright,  
And I came out where the old road shone white,  
I walked the ways and heard what all men said,  
Forests of tongues, like autumn leaves unshed,  
Being not unlovable but strange and light;  
Old riddles and new creeds, not in despite  
But softly, as men smile about the dead.

The sages have a hundred maps to give  
That trace their crawling cosmos like a tree,  
They rattle reason out through many a sieve  
That stores the sand and lets the gold go free:  
And all these things are less than dust to me  
Because my name is Lazarus and I live.





## INDEX OF TITLES

|                                                     | PAGE       |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Africa . . . . .                                    | 166        |
| Alliance, A n . . . . .                             | 847        |
| Alliterativism (1914) . . . . .                     | 26         |
| <b>Alone</b> . . . . .                              | <b>338</b> |
| Americanization . . . . .                           | 25         |
| Ancient of Days, The. . . . .                       | 348        |
| Answers to the Poets . . . . .                      | 38         |
| Antichrist, or the Reunion of Christendom . . . . . | 152        |
| Apology, A n . . . . .                              | 319        |
| Apology of Bottom the Weaver, The . . . . .         | 23         |
| Aristocrat, T h e . . . . .                         | 182        |
| A r t Colours . . . . .                             | 306        |
| At Night . . . . .                                  | 365        |
| <br>Ballad of Abbreviations, A . . . . .            | <br>49     |
| Ballad of God-Makers, The . . . . .                 | 363        |
| Ballad of St. Barbara, The . . . . .                | 56         |
| Ballad of the Battle of Gibeon, The . . . . .       | 358        |
| Ballad of the Sun. . . . .                          | 178        |
| Ballad of the White Horse, The :                    |            |
| I. The Vision of the King . . . . .                 | 225        |
| II. The Gathering of the Chiefs . . . . .           | 234        |
| <b>III. The Harp of Alfred</b> . . . . .            | <b>244</b> |
| IV. The Woman in the Forest . . . . .               | 258        |
| V. Ethandune : The First Stroke . . . . .           | 269        |
| VI. Ethandune : The Slaying of the Chiefs . . . . . | 279        |
| VII. Ethandune: The Last Charge . . . . .           | 290        |
| VIII. The Scouring of the Horse . . . . .           | 303        |
| Balladé d'Une Grande Dame . . . . .                 | 190        |
| Ballade of a Book-Reviewer, A . . . . .             | 192        |

|                                                                | PAGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Ballade of an Anti-Puritan, A . . . . .                        | 191  |
| Ballade of the First Rain, A . . . . .                         | 194  |
| Ballade of Suicide, A . . . . .                                | 193  |
| Battle of the Stories (1915), The . . . . .                    | 10   |
| B a y Combe . . . . .                                          | 136  |
| Beatific Vision, The . . . . .                                 | 325  |
| Behind . . . . .                                               | 342  |
| Blessed Are the Peacemakers . . . . .                          | 123  |
| Broad-minded Bishop Rebukes Verminous St.<br>Francis . . . . . | 10   |
| Buried City, The . . . . .                                     | 17   |
| B y t h e Babe Unborn . . . . .                                | 319  |
| B y a Reactionary . . . . .                                    | 9    |
| Certain Evening, A . . . . .                                   | 330  |
| Child of the Snows, A . . . . .                                | 151  |
| Chord of Colour, A . . . . .                                   | 322  |
| Christmas Carol, A . . . . .                                   | 90   |
| Christmas Carol, A . . . . .                                   | 337  |
| Christmas Song for Three Guilds, A . . . . .                   | 147  |
| Cider Song, A . . . . .                                        | 187  |
| Commercial Candour . . . . .                                   | 32   |
| Confessional . . . . .                                         | 128  |
| Convert, The . . . . .                                         | 887  |
| Crusader Returns from Captivity . . . . .                      | 125  |
| Cyclopean . . . . .                                            | 334  |
| Dead Hero, The . . . . .                                       | 167  |
| Dedication . . . . .                                           | 221  |
| Deluge, The . . . . .                                          | 130  |
| Desecraters, The . . . . .                                     | 346  |
| Donkey, The . . . . .                                          | 325  |
| Earth's Shame, The . . . . .                                   | 349  |
| E. C. B. . . . .                                               | 345  |
| Ecclesiastes . . . . .                                         | 326  |
| Election Echo, A n . . . . .                                   | 168  |
| Elegy in a Country Churchyard . . . . .                        | 65   |
| End of Fear, The . . . . .                                     | 842  |
| English Graves, T h e . . . . .                                | 79   |

# INDEX OF TITLES

391

|                                    | PAGE |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Englishman, The                    | 199  |
| Eternities                         | 837  |
| Fairy Tale, A                      | 353  |
| Fantasia                           | 89   |
| <b>Femina Contra Mundum</b>        | 355  |
| Fish, The                          | 327  |
| For a War Memorial                 | 77   |
| For Four Guilds :                  |      |
| I. The Glass-Stainers              | 91   |
| II. The Bridge-Builders            | 92   |
| III. The Stone-Masons              | 94   |
| IV. The Bell-Ringers               | 95   |
| V. The Shipwrights                 | 97   |
| Fragment from Dante                | 144  |
| Glencoe                            | 127  |
| Gold Leaves                        | 328  |
| Good News                          | 386  |
| Good Rich Man, The                 | 209  |
| Great Minimum                      | 132  |
| Happy Man, The                     | 323  |
| Higher Unity, The                  | 179  |
| Holy of Holies, The                | 843  |
| Hope of the Streets, The           | 326  |
| Horrible History of Jones, The     | 157  |
| House of Christmas, The            | 140  |
| Human Nature : or Marconi Memories | 34   |
| Human Tree, The                    | 339  |
| <b>Hunting of the Dragon, The</b>  | 86   |
| <b>Hymn, A</b>                     | 146  |
| Hymn for the Church Militant       | 148  |
| In Memoriam, P. D.                 | 161  |
| Jealousy                           | 50   |
| Joseph                             | 335  |
| Judgment of England, The           | 8    |

|                                      | PAGE |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| King's Cross Station. . . . .        | 838  |
| Lamp Post, The. . . . .              | 350  |
| Last Hero, The. . . . .              | 188  |
| Last Masquerade, The. . . . .        | 348  |
| Lepanto. . . . .                     | 114  |
| Lines to an Old Pro-Boer. . . . .    | 22   |
| Logical Vegetarian, The. . . . .     | 207  |
| Lost. . . . .                        | 177  |
| Love's Trappist. . . . .             | 128  |
| Man and His Image, A. . . . .        | 330  |
| March of the Black Mountain. . . . . | 121  |
| Mariner, The. . . . .                | 333  |
| Marriage Song, A. . . . .            | 134  |
| " Mediaevalism ". . . . .            | 83   |
| Me Heart. . . . .                    | 211  |
| Memory. . . . .                      | 78   |
| Mirror of Madmen, The. . . . .       | 344  |
| Modern Elfland. . . . .              | 335  |
| Modern Magic, The. . . . .           | 21   |
| Modern Manichee, The. . . . .        | 7    |
| Monster, The. . . . .                | 3    |
| Mortal Answers, The. . . . .         | 133  |
| Music. . . . .                       | 129  |
| Mystery, The. . . . .                | 68   |
| " Myth of Arthur, The ". . . . .     | 69   |
| Namesake. . . . .                    | 18   |
| Nativity, The. . . . .               | 150  |
| Neglected Child, The. . . . .        | 180  |
| New Fiction, The. . . . .            | 38   |
| New Freethinker, The. . . . .        | 159  |
| New Omar, The. . . . .               | 25   |
| Nightmare. . . . .                   | 80   |
| Novelty, A. . . . .                  | 324  |
| Old Gentleman in the Park. . . . .   | 17   |
| Old Song, The. . . . .               | 69   |
| On a Prohibitionist Poem. . . . .    | 20   |

|                                         | PAGE |
|-----------------------------------------|------|
| On the Downs ..                         | 74   |
| On Righteous Indignation . . . . .      | 184  |
| Outlaw, The . . . . .                   | 341  |
| Outline of History. . . . .             | 19   |
| <br>                                    |      |
| Patriotic Song, A . . . . .             | 28   |
| Peace of Petrol, The . . . . .          | 35   |
| Pessimist, T h e . . . . .              | 352  |
| Philanthropist, The . . . . .           | 73   |
| Pioneers, O Pioneers . . . . .          | 205  |
| Poland. . . . .                         | 85   |
| Port of London Authority, The . . . . . | 8    |
| Portrait, A . . . . .                   | 354  |
| Praise o f Dust, T h e . . . . .        | 356  |
| Preface to F. C . . . . .               | 55   |
| <br>                                    |      |
| Race-Memory . . . . .                   | 27   |
| Red Sea, The . . . . .                  | 76   |
| Revolutionist, The . . . . .            | 154  |
| Road to Roundabout, The . . . . .       | 214  |
| Rolling English Road, The . . . . .     | 203  |
| <br>                                    |      |
| " Saracen's Head, The " . . . . .       | 208  |
| Second Childhood, A . . . . .           | 81   |
| Secret People, The . . . . .            | 173  |
| Shakespeare Memorial, The. . . . .      | 156  |
| Skeleton, The . . . . .                 | 321  |
| Some Wishes at Christmas . . . . .      | 30   |
| Song Against Grocers, The . . . . .     | 201  |
| Song Against Songs, The . . . . .       | 210  |
| Song of the Children, The . . . . .     | 327  |
| Song o f Defeat, A . . . . .            | 164  |
| Song of Gifts to God, A . . . . .       | 141  |
| Song of the Oak, The . . . . .          | 213  |
| Song of Quoodle, The . . . . .          | 204  |
| Song of Right and Wrong, The . . . . .  | 217  |
| Song of the Strange Ascetic . . . . .   | 216  |
| Song o f Swords, A . . . . .            | 162  |
| Song of the Wheels, The . . . . .       | 170  |

|                                                      | PAGE |
|------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Songs of Education:                                  |      |
| I . History . . . . .                                | 98   |
| II. Geography. . . . .                               | 100  |
| III. For the Creche . . . . .                        | 101  |
| IV. Citizenship. . . . .                             | 102  |
| V. The Higher Mathematics . . . . .                  | 104  |
| VI . Hygiene . . . . .                               | 105  |
| Sonnet . . . . .                                     | 88   |
| Sonnet . . . . .                                     | 166  |
| Sonnet: With the Compliments of the Season . . . . . | 162  |
| Strange Music, T h e . . . . .                       | 131  |
| Sword of Surprise, The . . . . .                     | 65   |
| Thou Shalt Not Kill. . . . .                         | 329  |
| To Captain Fryatt . . . . .                          | 91   |
| To a Certain Nation . . . . .                        | 355  |
| To Edmund Clerihew Bentley . . . . .                 | 109  |
| To Hilaire Belloc . . . . .                          | 112  |
| To a Holy Roller. . . . .                            | 36   |
| To a Lady. . . . .                                   | 15   |
| To a Turk. . . . .                                   | 181  |
| To M. E. W. . . . .                                  | 113  |
| To the Unknown Warrior . . . . .                     | 14   |
| To Them that Mourn. . . . .                          | 340  |
| Translation from Du Bellay . . . . .                 | 179  |
| Trinkets, The . . . . .                              | 72   |
| Triumph of Man, The . . . . .                        | 333  |
| Truce of Christmas, The . . . . .                    | 145  |
| Two Women, The . . . . .                             | 367  |
| Ultimate . . . . .                                   | 324  |
| Unpardonable Sin, The . . . . .                      | 323  |
| Vanity . . . . .                                     | 850  |
| Variations on a n A i r . . . . .                    | 46   |
| " Vulgarised " . . . . .                             | 362  |
| Wedding in War-Time, A . . . . .                     | 66   |
| When I came back to Fleet Street . . . . .           | 185  |
| Who Goes Home ? . . . . .                            | 218  |

# INDEX OF TITLES

395

|                                 | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Wife of Flanders, The . . . . . | 124  |
| Wild Knight, The . . . . .      | 368  |
| Wine and Water. . . . .         | 200  |
| Wise Men, The . . . . .         | 138  |
| Wood-Cutter, T h e . . . . .    | 365  |
| World State, The . . . . .      | 16   |
| World's Lover, The . . . . .    | 320  |





## INDEX OF FIRST LINES

|                                                                           | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| A bird flew out at the break of day . . .                                 | 303  |
| A book of verses underneath the bough . . .                               | 25   |
| A child sits in a sunny place . . .                                       | 348  |
| A cloud was on the mind of men and wailing went<br>t h e weather. . . . . | 109  |
| A fishbone pattern of Hint arrows flattened . . .                         | 19   |
| A livid sky on London . . . . .                                           | 69   |
| A mountainous and mystic brute . . . . .                                  | 334  |
| A sleepy people, without priests or kings . . .                           | 166  |
| A wan new garment of young green . . . . .                                | 345  |
| A wan sky greener than the lawn . . . . .                                 | 350  |
| A wandering world of rivers . . . . .                                     | 72   |
| Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe decrease . . .)                             | 73   |
| After one moment when I bowed my head . . .                               | 387  |
| All day the nations climb and crawl and<br>pray. . . . .                  | 330  |
| All round they murmur, " O profane . . . . .                              | 362  |
| All things grew upwards, foul and fair . . .                              | 353  |
| Another tattered rhymster in the ring. . . . .                            | 319  |
| Are they clinging to their crosses, F. E. Smith . .                       | 152  |
| As the sea flooding the flat sands . . . . .                              | 279  |
| Augurs that watched archaic birds . . . . .                               | 85   |
| Away in the waste of White Horse Down . . .                               | 290  |
|                                                                           |      |
| Before the gods that made the gods . . . . .                              | 224  |
| Before the grass grew over me . . . . .                                   | 345  |
| Before the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn<br>strode . . . . .         | 203  |
| Between a meadow and a cloud that sped . . .                              | 386  |
| Beyond the trees like iron trees . . . . .                                | 17   |

|                                                                    | PAGE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Blessings there are of cradle and of clan . . . .                  | 338  |
| Britannia needs no Boulevards . . . .                              | 25   |
| Chattering f i n c h and water-fly . . . .                         | 821  |
| Cold passions, and perfectly cruel . . . .                         | 42   |
| Dark the sea was : but I saw him . . . .                           | 827  |
| Do you remember one i m m o r t a l . . . .                        | 55   |
| Elder father, though thine eyes . . . .                            | 343  |
| Ephemeral minstrel, staring at the sky . . .                       | 38   |
| Fair faces crowd on Christmas night . . . .                        | 354  |
| Feast on wine or fast on water . . . .                             | 217  |
| Five Kings ruled o'er the Amorite . . . .                          | 358  |
| For every tiny town or place . . . .                               | 112  |
| From the Wood of the Old Wives' Fables . . .                       | 133  |
| God made the wicked Grocer . . . .                                 | 201  |
| God of your fathers, known of old . . . .                          | 45   |
| God rest you merry gentlemen . . . .                               | 90   |
| Great God, that bowest sky and star . . . .                        | 143  |
| Grr—what's that ? A dog ? A poet ? . . . .                         | 41   |
| Happy, who like Ulysses or that lord . . . .                       | 179  |
| He has many a car and chuffer . . . .                              | 85   |
| He sayeth there is no sin, and all his sin . . .                   | 7    |
| Heaven shall forgive you Bridge at dawn . . .                      | 190  |
| High on the wall that holds Jerusalem . . .                        | 88   |
| How many million stars there be . . . .                            | 865  |
| How slowly learns the child at school. . . .                       | 102  |
| Human nature is a bird . . . .                                     | 34   |
| !! cannot count the pebbles in the brook . . .                     | 337  |
| I come from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on me<br>sleeve . . . . | 211  |
| I cut a staff in a churchyard copse . . . .                        | 335  |
| I do not cry, beloved, neither curse . . . .                       | 323  |
| I dreamed a dream of heaven, white as frost . .                    | 344  |
| I had grown weary of him; of his breath . . .                      | 829  |

|                                                                                     | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| I have come forth alive from the land of purple and<br>poison and glamour . . . . . | 125  |
| I have not read a rotten page . . . . .                                             | 192  |
| I know you. You will hail the huge release . . . . .                                | 162  |
| I plod and peer amid mean sounds and shapes . . . . .                               | 333  |
| I remember, I remember . . . . .                                                    | 27   |
| I remember my mother, the day that we met . . . . .                                 | 101  |
| I saw an old man like a child . . . . .                                             | 342  |
| If any in an island cradle curled . . . . .                                         | 161  |
| If Brother Francis pardoned Brother Flea . . . . .                                  | 10   |
| If I ever go back to Baltimore . . . . .                                            | 78   |
| If I had been a Heathen . . . . .                                                   | 216  |
| If men should arise and return to the noise and time<br>of the tourney . . . . .    | 83   |
| If sunset clouds could grow on trees . . . . .                                      | 68   |
| If the stars fell; night's nameless dreams . . . . .                                | 335  |
| If trees were tall and grasses short . . . . .                                      | 319  |
| If you have picked your lawn of leaves and snails . . . . .                         | 166  |
| " III fares the land to hastening woes a prey . . . . .                             | 3    |
| In a tree that yawned and twisted . . . . .                                         | 244  |
| In the city set upon slime and loam . . . . .                                       | 218  |
| In the place called Swords on the Irish road . . . . .                              | 162  |
| In the world's whitest morning . . . . .                                            | 92   |
| In the years of the peace of Wessex . . . . .                                       | 303  |
| It is something to have wept as we have wept . . . . .                              | 132  |
| It was Isaiah Bunter . . . . .                                                      | 179  |
| John Grubby, who was short and stout . . . . .                                      | 159  |
| Jones had a dog; it had a chain . . . . .                                           | 157  |
| King Dives he was walking in his garden all alone . . . . .                         | 170  |
| King Guthrum was a dread king . . . . .                                             | 269  |
| Laugh your best, O blazoned forests . . . . .                                       | 350  |
| Lift up your heads; in life, in death . . . . .                                     | 340  |
| Light of the young, before you have grown old . . . . .                             | 15   |
| Little Blue-Fits has lost his wits . . . . .                                        | 38   |
| Lo ! I am come to autumn . . . . .                                                  | 328  |
| Lo I very fair is she who knows the ways . . . . .                                  | 367  |
| Lord Lilac thought it rather rotten . . . . .                                       | 156  |

|                                                                                 | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Low and brown barns thatched and repatched and<br>tattered . . . . .            | 124  |
| Many have Earth's lovers been . . . . .                                         | 339  |
| Mary of Holyrood may smile indeed . . . . .                                     | 18   |
| Mince-Pies grant Wishes : let each name his Prize .                             | 30   |
| Mr. Mandragon, the Millionaire, he wouldn't have<br>wine o r wife . . . . .     | 209  |
| My eyes are full of lonely mirth. . . . .                                       | 320  |
| My Lady clad herself in grey . . . . .                                          | 322  |
| Name not his deed: in shuddering and in haste .                                 | 349  |
| Nebuchadnezzar the King of the Jews . . . . .                                   | 205  |
| Now that I kneel at the throne, O Queen . . . . .                               | 128  |
| O God of earth and altar . . . . .                                              | 146  |
| O learned man who never learned to learn . . . . .                              | 69   |
| O well for him that loves the sun . . . . .                                     | 178  |
| Of great limbs gone to chaos . . . . .                                          | 221  |
| Of old with a divided heart . . . . .                                           | 123  |
| Oh, how I love Humanity . . . . .                                               | 16   |
| Old King Cole was a merry old soul . . . . .                                    | 46   |
| Old Noah he had an ostrich farm and fowls on the<br>largest scale . . . . .     | 200  |
| On must we go ; we search dead leaves . . . . .                                 | 366  |
| Once when an honest weaver slept . . . . .                                      | 23   |
| One with the golden eagle of the morning . . . . .                              | 3    |
| Other loves may sink and settle, other loves may<br>loose a n d slack . . . . . | 131  |
| Our fathers to creed and tradition were tied . . . . .                          | 32   |
| Our God who made two lovers in a garden . . . . .                               | 66   |
| Our souls shall be Leviathans . . . . .                                         | 76   |
| Passionate peace is in the sky . . . . .                                        | 145  |
| Poet or pamphleteer, or what you please . . . . .                               | 40   |
| Prester John on his lands looked down . . . . .                                 | 21   |
| Priest, is any song-bird stricken . . . . .                                     | 341  |
| " Roll on," said Gilbert to the earth . . . . .                                 | 86   |

|                                                                                  | PAGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| St. George he was for England . . . .                                            | 199  |
| St. Joseph to the Carpenters said on a Christmas Day                             | 147  |
| See the flying French depart . . . .                                             | 26   |
| She sat upon her seven hills . . . .                                             | 50   |
| She wants a new England, more bright and more<br>clean . . . .                   | 31   |
| Since Christmas time brings charity . . . .                                      | 32   |
| Smile at us, pay us, pass us ; but do not quite forget                           | 173  |
| Smoke rolls in stinking, suffocating wrack . . .                                 | 9    |
| So you have gained the golden crowns, so you have<br>piled together . . . .      | 177  |
| Some say that Guy of Warwick . . . .                                             | 214  |
| Sounding brass and tinkling cymbal . . . .                                       | 129  |
| Step softly, under snow or rain . . . .                                          | 138  |
| Stroll on, thou dark not deep " blue " dandy, stroll                             | 39   |
| Sunder me from my bones, O sword of God . .                                      | 65   |
| <br>Tell me not, friend, you are unkind . . . .                                  | 40   |
| That night the whole world mingled . . . .                                       | 330  |
| The American's a hustler, for he says so . . .                                   | 49   |
| The angels are singing like birds in a tree . .                                  | 95   |
| The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap . . . .                                       | 337  |
| The Devil is a gentleman, and asks you down to stay                              | 182  |
| The Druids waved their golden knives . . . .                                     | 213  |
| The earth is a place on which England is found .                                 | 100  |
| The gallows in my garden, people say . . . .                                     | 193  |
| The Golden Hind went bowling . . . .                                             | 28   |
| The happy men that lose their heads . . . .                                      | 89   |
| The hucksters haggle in the mart . . . .                                         | 77   |
| The line breaks and the guns go under . . . .                                    | 164  |
| The men that worked for England . . . .                                          | 65   |
| The Roman threw us a road, a road . . . .                                        | 98   |
| " The Saracen's Head " looks down the lane .                                     | 208  |
| The sea that is above the sky . . . .                                            | 97   |
| The silver and violet leopard of the night . .                                   | 80   |
| The sky is blue with summer and the sun . . .                                    | 194  |
| The song of the sorrow of Melisande is a weary<br>song and a dreary song . . . . | 210  |
| The star-crowned cliffs seem hinged upon the sky                                 | 127  |
| The still sweet meadows shimmered; and I stood                                   | 326  |

|                                                                       | PAGE |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| The sun was black with judgment; and the moon                         | 355  |
| The Teachers in the Temple . . . .                                    | 180  |
| The thatch on the roof was as golden . . .                            | 150  |
| The violet scent is sacred . . . .                                    | 333  |
| The vision of a haloed host . . . .                                   | 324  |
| The wasting thistle whitens on my crest . .                           | 363  |
| The wind blew out from Bergen from the dawning<br>to the day . . . .  | 188  |
| The wine they drink in Paradise . . . .                               | 187  |
| The world is ours till sunset . . . .                                 | 327  |
| Then Bernard smiled at me, that I should gaze .                       | 144  |
| There are two normal nuisances . . . .                                | 31   |
| There fared a mother driven forth . . . .                             | 140  |
| There is a place where lute and lyre are broken .                     | 128  |
| There is heard a hymn when the panes are dim .                        | 151  |
| There is one sin : to call a green leaf grey. .                       | 326  |
| They came uncouncted like the stars that circle or<br>are set . . . . | 10   |
| They haven't got no noses . . . .                                     | 204  |
| They spoke of Progress spiring round . . .                            | 191  |
| Thick thunder of the snorting swine . . .                             | 258  |
| This circled cosmos whereof man is god . . .                          | 338  |
| This is the weird of a world-old folk . . .                           | 347  |
| This is their trumpet ripe and rounded . . .                          | 168  |
| Though giant rains put out the sun . . . .                            | 130  |
| Though Shakespeare's Mermaid, ocean's mightiest<br>daughter . . . .   | 20   |
| Though the whole heaven be one-eyed with the moon                     | 342  |
| Through what fierce incarnations furled . . .                         | 325  |
| To every Man his Mystery . . . .                                      | 91   |
| To teach the grey earth like a child . . . .                          | 323  |
| Trampled yet red is the last of the embers. .                         | 91   |
| Twice one is two . . . .                                              | 104  |
| Up across windy wastes and up . . . .                                 | 234  |
| Warrior by warriors smitten . . . .                                   | 181  |
| We came behind him by the wall . . . .                                | 365  |
| We have graven the mountain of God with hands .                       | 94   |
| We never saw you, like our sires . . . .                              | 107  |

|                                                                                        | PAGE   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| We whom great mercy holds in fear . . . .                                              | 8      |
| We will not let thee be, for thou art ours . . .                                       | 355    |
| Well, . . . . .                                                                        | 43     |
| Were I that wandering citizen whose city is the world                                  | 79     |
| What deep desires inspire the Gloomy Dean . .                                          | 30     |
| " What of vile dust ? " the preacher said . . .                                        | 356    |
| What will there be to remember . . . . .                                               | 121    |
| What wish has Epstein's art portrayed ? . . .                                          | 30     |
| When Adam went from Paradise . . . . .                                                 | 184    |
| When all my days are ending . . . . .                                                  | 81     |
| When Death was on thy drums, Democracy . .                                             | 154    |
| When fishes flew and forests walked . . . . .                                          | 325    |
| When I came back to Fleet Street . . . . .                                             | 185    |
| When Science taught mankind to breathe . . .                                           | 105    |
| When the first Christmas presents came, the straw<br>where Christ was rolled . . . . . | 141    |
| When the long grey lines came flooding upon Paris<br>in the plain . . . . .            | 56     |
| When you came over the top of the world . . .                                          | 74     |
| When we went hunting the Dragon . . . . .                                              | 86     |
| White founts falling in the courts of the sun . .                                      | 114    |
| Why do you rush through the field in trains . .                                        | 39     |
| Why should I care for the Ages. . . . .                                                | 324    |
| Why should we reck of hours that rend . . . .                                          | 134    |
| With leaves below and leaves above . . . . .                                           | 136    |
| Witness all: that unrepenting . . . . .                                                | 346    |
| Words, for alas my trade is words, a barren burst<br>of rhymes . . . . .               | 113    |
| <br>You cannot think my heart so tough. . . . .                                        | <br>22 |
| You that go forth upon the buried cities . . .                                         | 17     |
| You that have snarled through the gates, take<br>your answer and go. . . . .           | 352    |
| You whom the kings saluted; who refused not . .                                        | 14     |
| You will find me drinking rum . . . . .                                                | 207    |

Printed in Great Britain by  
Butler & Tanner Ltd.,  
Frome and London







