

ARROWS IN THE GALE  
ARTURO GIOVANNITTI

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intro. by  
Helen Keller

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## ARROWS IN THE GALE



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# ARROWS IN THE GALE

BY

ARTURO GIOVANNITTI

*Introduction by*

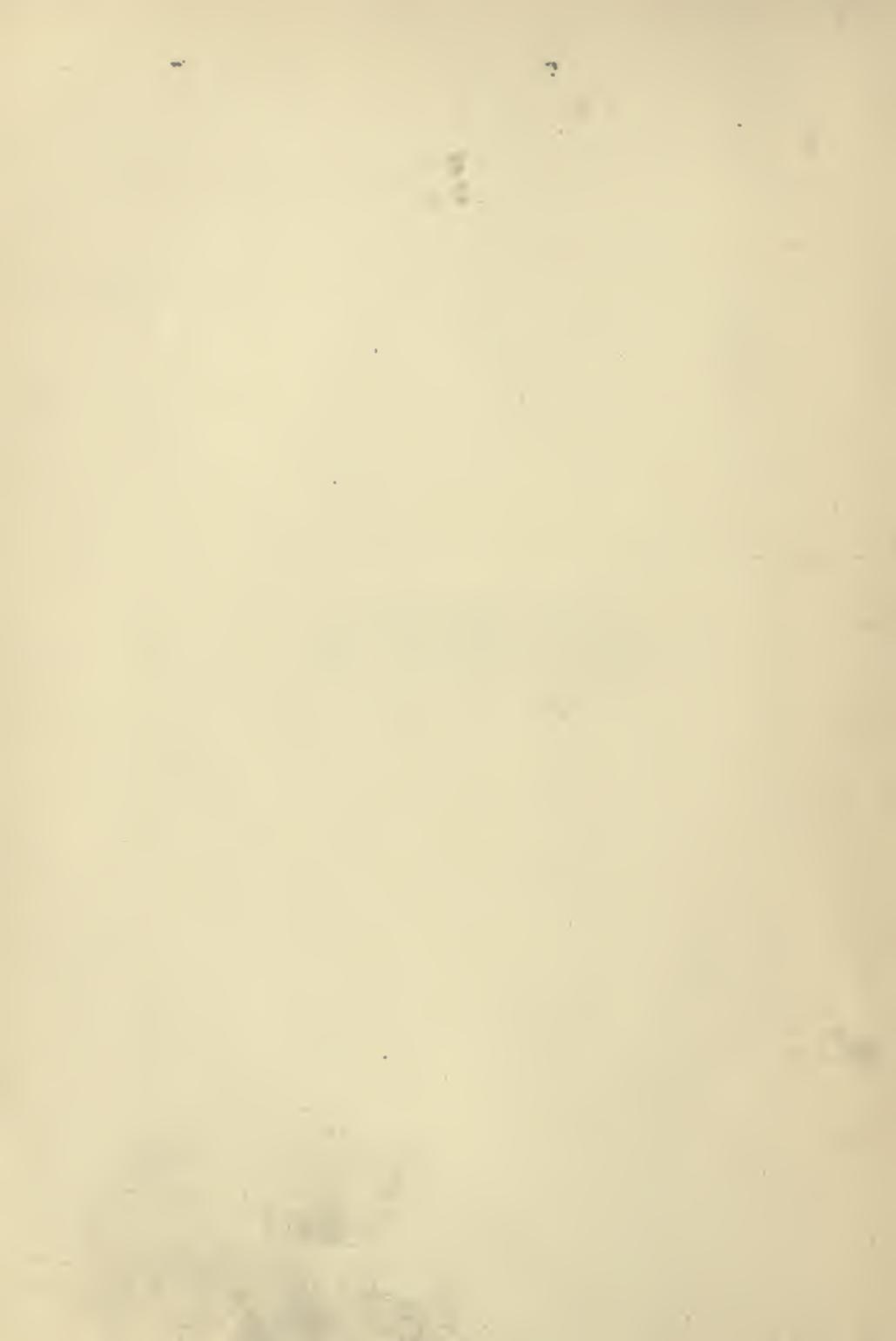
HELEN KELLER



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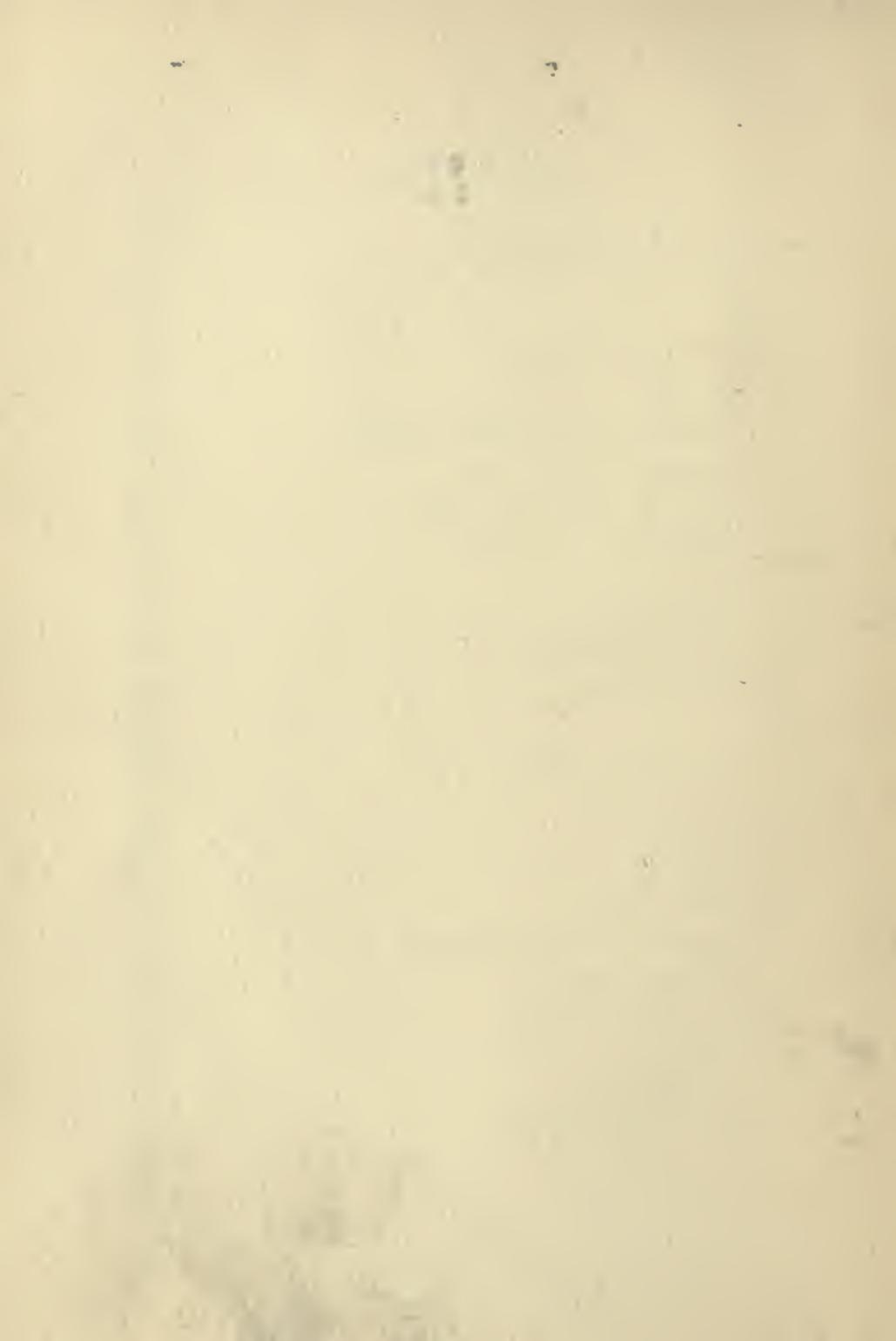
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TO CAROLINA



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## INTRODUCTION

I am glad of this opportunity to commend to the public the poems of my dear friend and comrade, Arturo Giovannitti.

No one who loves poetry can fail to recognize the greatness of Giovannitti's expression or to be glad of any force that has produced such noble verse. He has tried to render his ideas of the world he lives in. As a poet he is to be judged by his success in rendering these ideas in verse, and not by his relations to Syndicalism or Socialism or any other movement in which he happens to be active. The laws of poetic beauty and power, not one's beliefs about the economic world, determine the excellence of his work.

Giovannitti's poetry has been called "rashly materialistic." So is Homer. So is Virgil. So is Dante. So is Shakespeare. So is Shelley. So are allegories and parables. So are the prophecies of Isaiah. So is the description of the New Jerusalem descending out of Heaven, at once most spirit-illumined and most closely linked with the natural needs, the sensuous pleasures and desires of man! When a poet speaks he covers the bare facts of life with a shimmering cloth of gold. He spiritualizes all that men see, feel, think, suffer, learn of life's heights and depths. Giovannitti's poetry is the spiritualization of a lofty dream that he seeks to realize—the establish-

ment of love and brotherhood and social justice for every man and woman upon earth. If you insist on finding in his glorious imaginings something definite, something translatable into prose, it is there; it is the struggle of a new world against the old world, of ideas against customs blindly obeyed, of young truth against the antiquity of outworn creeds and musty traditions. Giovannitti is, like Shelley, a poet of revolt against the cruelty, the poverty, the ignorance which too many of us accept in blind content. His is the poetry of humane humanity, of exultation in everything new, vigorous, wholesome, manly, and of uncompromising hatred of what is bestial, mean, sordid and degrading. It is an outgrowth of noble ideals, aspirations and hopes for a true democracy that are being proclaimed from one end of the world to the other. Rashly materialistic, indeed!

Behind Arturo Giovannitti stand the poets, prophets, wise men and patriots of Italy. Into him have been poured the fire and courage of a proud, energetic people.

He was born January 7, 1884, at Ripabottoni in Southern Italy. He was educated at the lyc e in Campobasso. At the age of seventeen he came to America, which he had been taught to regard as a better, freer country than his own. As he said in his address before the jury in Salem, he had "learned upon the knees of his mother and his father to reverence with tears in his eyes the name of a republic." His first years in America were years of disillusion and failure. He worked in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, where he saw the misery and degradation of many of the foreigners who come here, animated by the same

love for democracy and hope for opportunity that had filled his heart. He studied for a while in several theological schools. Then he took up journalistic work in New York. About nine years ago he joined the Socialist movement and later became the editor of the Italian revolutionary journal, *Il Proletario*. Pent in by cold and poverty and still colder tradition, he caught the glow of the radiance of a redeemed humanity; he bulwarked himself in his enthusiasm and in the determination that all men shall have their share in the bounty of the earth, shall know the splendors and ecstasies of life.

His poetry is inspired by this consecration to a glorious cause. It is "only living aloud his work, a singing with his hand." Many readers of it will find themselves face to face with a baffling personality, with a poet quite unlike any other. His subjects will puzzle them, and they cannot be fully understood without some knowledge of the forces which have given rise to it. Giovannitti's main theme is the class war, the immediate battleground of which is what we call labor troubles, the strike, the lock-out, the visible clash between employer and employed. That battlefield has recently produced a new type of militant workman, the revolutionary unionist, the Syndicalist as he is called in most countries, the member of the Industrial Workers of the World as we have come to know him in America. Their business to-day is to help the workers to win strikes, that is, to force one and another concession from the masters. Their aim to-morrow is that of the Socialists, to overthrow the master class completely and win for all men the heritage of the earth. They are crusaders, preachers of a

new morality whose cardinal virtue is Solidarity, a word scarcely comprehended by those who have no intimate knowledge of the militant proletariat. Among the heralds who bear the banner with this strange new device, Solidarity, is Arturo Giovannitti.

He is a poet, a better poet than has come out of the privileged classes of America in our day. He is also a practical strike-leader and organizer. For his activities during the Lawrence strike he spent several months in jail. The crime with which he was charged was, of course, a legal fiction devised by the mill owners and their agents. Giovannitti's real crime was helping the strikers in their assault on the pocketbooks of the owners. Of that crime Giovannitti and all Syndicalists, Industrial Workers and militant Socialists are proudly guilty. For it they will be punished, and they expect to be punished, until the day when they are stronger than the powers that administer the punishment. They ask no quarter and they give none. They respect the law only as a soldier respects an enemy. In the presence of any law they ask only whether it is expedient—good tactics—to obey it or break it. They know that the laws are for the most part made by and for the possessing classes, and that in a contest with the workers the bosses do not respect the laws, but quite shamelessly break them. When workers go on strike for better conditions, the police disperse their meetings, club and imprison them and even drive the leaders out of town. It is natural that they should do this, for a strike is not a legal game; it is a war, and both sides use any weapon that they can lay their hands on. The difference is that the

employers keep up the hypocritical fiction of law and order; while the revolutionary unionists, who are either more honest or more clear-sighted, point out that law and order do not exist in a world which is at war. From every platform and in every pamphlet they boldly declare that capitalist morality is hostile to the interests of the workers and is therefore from the worker's point of view immoral. They preach a new morality according to which the basest crime is "scabbing," and that, as we know, is regarded as a virtue by the upper classes. They make their own laws in accordance with the needs of their class, just as throughout history other classes have done; and they treat statutes, ordinances and injunctions as so many orders from the enemy.

No one has ever given me a good reason why we should obey unjust laws. But the reason why we should resist them is obvious. Our resistance proves our manhood and our womanhood. The dignity of human nature compels us to resist what we believe to be wrong and a stumbling-block to our fellowmen. When a government puts forth its strength on the side of injustice it is foredoomed to fail. When it depends for "law and order" upon the militia and the police, its mission in the world is nearly finished. We believe, at least we hope, that our capitalist government is near its end; we wish to hasten its end; the only question is how. The various answers to that question constitute the differences between the several types or groups of socialists. The capitalist press is anxious to prove how insignificant is this group of agitators—a handful of discontents, mostly ignorant foreigners.

A handful of discontents? When in the history of the world has the vanguard been in the majority? Never. People who are ready to devote their lives to the oppressed, hoping for no return but a good conscience, are never found in large numbers at a given time and place. Most men have other affairs to attend to than their fellowmen's prosperity and happiness. It is not a question of numbers at first, but the spirit which animates the "handful." But why so persistently dodge the truth? Why not at least face the fact that a million of the people of the United States would like to see the present government changed? Why not admit frankly that the creed of Socialism is held by thirty million people in the civilized world, and is preached and written in sixty languages? The foe—if so you regard the emancipation of man from cruel conditions—is in your midst. Scarcely a hamlet, nay, even a house, will be found where he does not lurk. Socialism is here to stay. That is, the idea is here; socialist society has not yet arrived. Let anyone who will take the trouble to investigate, and he will find that this idea is a very vigorous plant, rooted securely in the hearts of men, where it does not depend upon the press for watering and cultivating. Ideas so planted will bear fruit inevitably. At this very hour the seeds are being scattered far and wide, and the power does not exist in the world which can prevent their germination. It is a plant which it has taken ages to bring to flower. To its nourishment have gone the best, the finest, the noblest aspirations of humanity.

Such is the wonderful world movement out of which Arturo Giovannitti is flashing his message

of hope to the human race. It is a movement great in its material and spiritual possibilities. It is great, very great in the diversity and sweep of its issues. It is supremely great in the sympathy, mutual helpfulness and limitless energy of those who are pushing it forward. It is appealing, it is beautiful in the whole-hearted efforts to redeem to light, hope, strength and joy the millions upon whom all the world's burden of anguish and toil has fallen so pitilessly through the centuries.

Giovannitti's poetry is an effort to express a multitude of men who are lost in an immensity of silence, swallowed up in meaningless darkness. With burning words he makes us feel the presence of the toilers hidden behind tenement walls, behind the machinery they guide. He turns the full light of his intense, vivid intelligence upon the worn face of the workers who put every breath and nerve into the struggle for existence, who give every hour and exhaust every faculty that others may live. He finds voice for his message in the sighs, the dumb loves and hopes, the agonies and thwartings of men who are bowed beneath burdens and broken by the monster hands of machines, men who spin and weave and cause the earth to yield its glad increase, men from whose unheeded stroke up-roll domes and spires, till the eyes of men and angels behold among the clouds the work of their patient hands! But the sense of divine things to be goes thrilling through all his verses. It is as unmistakable as the smell of spring in April air, and just as pervasive, just as elemental. He welcomes the combat—not a combat that shall rend the world apart, but one which shall bring

it together in a universal sunshine of peace. "The battle has gone up on to higher ground and into higher light; the battle is above the clouds." In the irregular lines of such poems as "The Cage" there is the tramp of a vast, onrushing host. It is the high-tide of the Revolution. Onward it sweeps through the rent temples of the past, flooding the courts of dethroned state, thundering through the market-place where men buy and sell the lives and souls of their fellow men. Face the wreckage, you who can, and behold upon the tumultuous waves a new ship of state. Fast through the night of our ignorance and our fear it speeds on to the calm, sunlit shores of the desired land.

I am sure this book will go on its way thrilling to new courage those who fight for freedom. It will set human hearts beating for something better. It will move some to think and keep them glad that they thought. Its echoes caught from a noble life, a noble fight will

"roll from soul to soul  
And grow forever and forever."

HELEN KELLER.

## EX VOTO

Hail, full of grace, with Thee my love abides!  
For thy faith which in me doth live and rest,  
Blest be thy name forevermore and blest  
Be Thou amongst the maidens and the brides.

Athwart the chasm that hope and fear divides  
'Twas Thou, the dream unseen, that I caressed,  
Farther than Thee I have no goal to quest  
But what thy will for thine own joy provides.

Bid me, then, gather in thy whispered name,  
As in a conjured charm, all my war cries  
And slay the monster that our pinions grips.

Nobler than on my brow the wreath of fame,  
Holier than heaven's radiance in mine eyes  
Is thy young kiss of love upon my lips.

## PROEM

These are but songs—they're not a creed  
They are not meant to lift or save,  
They won't appeal or intercede  
For any fool or any knave;  
They hold no covenant or pledge  
For him who dares no foe assail:  
They are the blows of my own sledge  
Against the walls of my own jail.

I stand a watch at the van post  
Of my own war I'm captain of;  
No holy fire of pentecost  
Can force on me a Saviour's love.  
I fight alone and win or sink,  
I need no one to make me free,  
I want no Jesus Christ to think  
That he could ever die for me.

If what I have I give, you can  
Be sure I lay no heavenly store,  
And what I take from any man  
I have no thankful feeling for.  
All that you worship, fear and trust  
I kick into the sewer's maw  
And fling my shaft and my disgust  
Against your gospel and your law.

Oh, yes, I know the firing line  
Outstretches far beyond my arms,  
I know this muffled song of mine  
Is but one shout of many alarms;  
But though along the battle range  
I press with many in one pursuit,  
I have my personal revenge,  
My private enemy to shoot.

To them, the hosts of every land,  
The nameless army of the strong  
Who make Humanity's last stand  
Against the battlements of wrong,  
No worthy anthem can attune  
My raucous buccina. Let him,  
The greater bard that shall come soon,  
Sing through the cannon mouth their  
hymn.

To them, for theirs and for my sake,  
He'll speak the words I never spoke,  
And if he speak them, let him take  
The laurel wreath, the crown of oak.  
For what they win is theirs alone,  
Of their reward I ask no part,  
I only claim three things my own:  
My dream, my death and my sweetheart.

But if they want my song—'tis theirs.  
For though it may not stir their souls,  
Though feebler than their bugle blares,  
Their drum taps and their tocsin tolls,  
Still may my song, before the sun's  
Reveille, speed the hours that tire,  
While they are cleaning up their guns  
Around the cheery bivouac fire.

## THE PRISONER'S BENCH

Through here all wrecks of the tempestuous  
    mains

Of life have washed away the tides of time.  
Tatters of flesh and souls, furies and pains,  
    Horrors and passions awful or sublime,  
All passed here to their doom. Nothing remains  
    Of all the tasteless dregs of sin and crime  
But stains of tears, and stains of blood and stains  
    Of the inn's vomit and the brothel's grime.

And now we, too, must sit here, Joe. Don't dust  
These boards on which our wretched brothers fell,  
They are clean, there's no reason for disgust.  
For the fat millionaire's revolting stench  
Is not here, nor the preacher's saintly smell,  
And the judge never sat upon this bench.

## THE WALKER

I HEAR footsteps over my head all night.  
They come and they go. Again they come and  
they go all night.

They come one eternity in four paces and they  
go one eternity in four paces, and between the  
coming and the going there is Silence and  
the Night and the Infinite.

For infinite are the nine feet of a prison cell, and  
endless is the march of him who walks be-  
tween the yellow brick wall and the red iron  
gate, thinking things that cannot be chained  
and cannot be locked, but that wander far  
away in the sunlit world, each in a wild pil-  
grimage after a destined goal.

\* \* \*

Throughout the restless night I hear the foot-  
steps over my head.

Who walks? I know not. It is the phantom of  
the jail, the sleepless brain, a man, the man,  
the Walker.

One-two-three-four: four paces and the wall.

One-two-three-four: four paces and the iron gate.

He has measured his space, he has measured it  
accurately, scrupulously, minutely, as the  
hangman measures the rope and the grave-  
digger the coffin—so many feet, so many  
inches, so many fractions of an inch for each  
of the four paces.

One-two-three-four. Each step sounds heavy and hollow over my head, and the echo of each step sounds hollow within my head as I count them in suspense and in dread that once, perhaps, in the endless walk, there may be five steps instead of four between the yellow brick wall and the red iron gate.

But he has measured the space so accurately, so scrupulously, so minutely that nothing breaks the grave rhythm of the slow, fantastic march.

\* \* \*

When all are asleep (and who knows but I when all sleep?) three things are still awake in the night: the Walker, my heart and the old clock which has the soul of a fiend—for never, since a coarse hand with red hair on its fingers swung for the first time the pendulum in the jail, has the old clock tick-tocked a full hour of joy.

Yet the old clock which marks everything, and records everything, and to everything tolls the death knell, the wise old clock that knows everything, does not know the number of the footsteps of the Walker, nor the throbs of my heart.

For not for the Walker, nor for my heart is there a second, a minute, an hour or anything that is in the old clock—there is nothing but the night, the sleepless night, the watchful, wistful night, and footsteps that go, and footsteps that come and the wild, tumultuous beatings that trail after them forever.

\* \* \*

All the sounds of the living beings and inani-

mate things, and all the voices and all the noises of the night I have heard in my wistful vigil.

I have heard the moans of him who bewails a thing that is dead and the sighs of him who tries to smother a thing that will not die;

I have heard the stifled sobs of the one who weeps with his head under the coarse blanket, and the whisperings of the one who prays with his forehead on the hard, cold stone of the floor;

I have heard him who laughs the shrill, sinister laugh of folly at the horror rampant on the yellow wall and at the red eyes of the nightmare glaring through the iron bars;

I have heard in the sudden icy silence him who coughs a dry, ringing cough, and wished madly that his throat would not rattle so and that he would not spit on the floor, for no sound was more atrocious than that of his sputum upon the floor;

I have heard him who swears fearsome oaths which I listen to in reverence and awe, for they are holier than the virgin's prayer;

And I have heard, most terrible of all, the silence of two hundred brains all possessed by one single, relentless, unforgiving, desperate thought.

All this have I heard in the watchful night,  
And the murmur of the wind beyond the  
walls,

And the tolls of a distant bell,

And the woeful dirge of the rain,

And the remotest echoes of the sorrowful city

And the terrible beatings, wild beatings, mad

beatings of the One Heart which is nearest to my heart.

All this have I heard in the still night;  
But nothing is louder, harder, drearier, mightier,  
more awful than the footsteps I hear over  
my head all night.

\* \* \*

Yet fearsome and terrible are all the footsteps of men upon the earth, for they either descend or climb.

Thy descend from little mounds and high peaks and lofty altitudes, through wide roads and narrow paths, down noble marble stairs and creaky stairs of wood—and some go down to the cellar, and some to the grave, and some down to the pits of shame and infamy, and still some to the glory of an unfathomable abyss where there is nothing but the staring white, stony eyeballs of Destiny.

And again other footsteps climb. They climb to life and to love, to fame, to power, to vanity, to truth, to glory and to the scaffold—to everything but Freedom and the Ideal.

And they all climb the same roads and the same stairs others go down; for never, since man began to think how to overcome and overpass man, have other roads and other stairs been found.

They descend and they climb, the fearful footsteps of men, and some limp, some drag, some speed, some trot, some run—they are quiet, slow, noisy, brisk, quick, feverish, mad, and most awful is their cadence to the ears of the one who stands still.

But of all the footsteps of men that either de-

scend or climb, no footsteps are so fearsome and terrible as those that go straight on the dead level of a prison floor, from a yellow stone wall to a red iron gate.

\* \* \*

All through the night he walks and he thinks. Is it more frightful because he walks and his footsteps sound hollow over my head, or because he thinks and speaks not his thoughts?

But does he think? Why should he think? Do I think? I only hear the footsteps and count them. Four steps and the wall. Four steps and the gate. But beyond? Beyond? Where goes he beyond the gate and the wall?

He goes not beyond. His thought breaks there on the iron gate. Perhaps it breaks like a wave of rage, perhaps like a sudden flow of hope, but it always returns to beat the wall like a billow of helplessness and despair.

He walks to and fro within the narrow whirlpit of this ever storming and furious thought. Only one thought—constant, fixed, immovable, sinister, without power and without voice.

A thought of madness, frenzy, agony and despair, a hell-brewed thought, for it is a natural thought. All things natural are things impossible while there are jails in the world—bread, work, happiness, peace, love.

But he thinks not of this. As he walks he thinks of the most superhuman, the most unattainable, the most impossible thing in the world: He thinks of a small brass key that turns just

half around and throws open the red iron gate.

\* \* \*

That is all the Walker thinks, as he walks throughout the night.

And that is what two hundred minds drowned in the darkness and the silence of the night think, and that is also what I think.

Wonderful is the supreme wisdom of the jail that makes all think the same thought. Marvelous is the providence of the law that equalizes all, even in mind and sentiment. Fallen is the last barrier of privilege, the aristocracy of the intellect. The democracy of reason has leveled all the two hundred minds to the common surface of the same thought.

I, who have never killed, think like the murderer;

I, who have never stolen, reason like the thief;

I think, reason, wish, hope, doubt, wait like the hired assassin, the embezzler, the forger, the counterfeiter, the incestuous, the raper, the drunkard, the prostitute, the pimp, I, I who used to think of love and life and flowers and song and beauty and the ideal.

A little key, a little key as little as my little finger, a little key of shining brass.

All my ideas, my thoughts, my dreams are congealed in a little key of shiny brass.

All my brain, all my soul, all the suddenly surging latent powers of my deepest life are in the pocket of a white-haired man dressed in blue.

He is great, powerful, formidable, the man with the white hair, for he has in his pocket the mighty talisman which makes one man cry, and one man pray, and one laugh, and one

cough, and one walk, and all keep awake and listen and think the same maddening thought. Greater than all men is the man with the white hair and the small brass key, for no other man in the world could compel two hundred men to think for so long the same thought. Surely when the light breaks I will write a hymn unto him which shall hail him greater than Mohammed and Arbues and Torquemada and Mesmer, and all the other masters of other men's thoughts. I shall call him Almighty, for he holds everything of all and of me in a little brass key in his pocket.

Everything of me he holds but the branding iron of contempt and the claymore of hatred for the monstrous cabala that can make the apostle and the murderer, the poet and the procurer, think of the same gate, the same key and the same exit on the different sunlit highways of life.

\* \* \*

My brother, do not walk any more.

It is wrong to walk on a grave. It is a sacrilege to walk four steps from the headstone to the foot and four steps from the foot to the headstone.

If you stop walking, my brother, no longer will this be a grave, for you will give me back my mind that is chained to your feet and the right to think my own thoughts.

I implore you, my brother, for I am weary of the long vigil, weary of counting your steps, and heavy with sleep.

Stop, rest, sleep, my brother, for the dawn is well nigh and it is not the key alone that can throw open the gate.

## THE THINKER—*On Rodin's Statue*

Aye, think! Since time and life began,  
Your mind has only feared and slept;  
Of all the beasts they called you man  
Only because you toiled and wept.

On all the ages firmly set,  
Lone pillar of the world you stood;  
Beyond your hunger and your sweat  
You never knew, nor understood—

Till now, when deep into your soul,  
Where it lay buried and concealed,  
At last your destined end and goal  
Shall stand emblazoned and revealed.

Think, think—unburden, liberate  
Your mind from all its waste and loss,  
Throw down from it the age-long weight  
Of few men's feet and one man's cross.

Behind your mighty frame, in fright  
To stay you, moan the dark, dead years.  
Heed not the voices of the night,  
Heed not the echoes of your tears.

However dear, your sorrows rest  
Upon you, like a burial stone.  
Upturn it! Rise! Their grave's unblest,  
The terrors of the past have flown.

Its memories in you must die,  
Its shadows must depart from you,  
Your doubts, your fears are all a lie,  
Only this wondrous thought is true.

Think! If your brain will but extend  
As far as what your hands have done,  
If but your reason will descend  
As deep as where your feet have gone—

The walls of ignorance will fall  
That stood between you and your world,  
And from its bloody pedestal  
The last god, Terror, shall be hurled.

Aye, think! While breaks in you the dawn,  
Crouched at your feet, the world lies still—  
It has no power but your brawn,  
It knows no wisdom but your will.

Behind your flesh, and mind and blood  
Nothing there is to live and do,  
There is no man, there is no god,  
There is not anything but you.

Think, think! What every age and land  
Thought an eternal mystery,  
What seers could never understand  
And saints and sages could not see,

From you, the chained, reviled outcast,  
From you the brute inert and dumb,  
Shall, through your wakened thought at last,  
The message of to-morrow come.

'Twill come, a dazzling shaft of light,  
Of truth, to save and to redeem,  
And—whether Love or Dynamite—  
Shall blaze the pathway to your dream.

## THE STRANGER AT THE GATE

THE STRANGER whose sandals were white with the dust of many roads approached the guardian of the gate on his way out of the mighty city, whose towers are loftier than the pillars of smoke and the mountain peaks in the sky.

"Peace and plenty be with thee forever, keeper of the gate," said he, touching with two fingers of his right hand his bowed forehead.

"God walk before thy feet forevermore, stranger," answered the keeper of the gate. "Whither goest thou?"

"Wherever men are and the highroads lead. For the wisdom I seek does not remain in one place. It beckons and I follow, keeper of the gate."

"Hast thou found any wisdom in our city, stranger?"

"Aye, much wisdom have I found and great knowledge for the wayfarer who seeks a home to rest in his old age. My home is farther on the road, keeper of the gate."

"Who told thee that thy home is not in our city, stranger?"

"The man ye crucified yesterday. He cried not, nor did he weep nor curse as such men do, but he smiled and he smiled and he looked at me strangely, oh, so strangely!"

“And what said he that thou leavest a great city because of the words of a criminal?”

“Nay, he said naught, but I said unto myself, instead, that the city where crucified wrongdoers cry not, nor weep, nor curse, but smile and look so strangely at people, is no place for the stranger who has seen many lands and knows many roads, keeper of the gate.”

“He smiled to hurt and infuriate us, stranger, for we are used to shrieks and curses. He was the worst offender of all, as thou mayest judge by his ungodly behavior. Not even death appeased or terrified him.”

“Aye, so methought, in sooth. But prithee, keeper of the gate, why did ye crucify him?”

“Knowest thou not the laws of this land which is the wealthiest and mightiest under the sun? He deserved death.”

“Aye, any dead man deserved death, but I know not for what reason.”

“He did offend against the sovereignty of the people and the godliness of our supreme law, stranger.”

“Verily, it is so, keeper of the gate. But was it, perchance, because, as I heard, he pitied the poor and the lowly?”

“Nay, 'twas not for that. We also pity them. Indeed we have many great institutions that shelter the worthy poor.”

“Was it, then, because he mingled with the rabble and flattered it with strange and obscure words such as right, justice and the like?”

“Not for that, indeed, for we do the same. How else could we get the recruits for the legions, the votes to elect the Sanhedrim and the pop-

ulace to cheer the Tetrarch and the Proconsul?"

"In faith, then it was because he believed in a new religion, contrary to the established church?"

"Say not that again, stranger, or I shall think that thou hast not gathered much knowledge in thy many journeys. Thou shouldst know, forsooth, that we are very tolerant in religious matters and that our Pantheon hath a niche for every god. The more religions we have the better, so says the Praetor."

"Upon my head, thou hast spoken the truth, keeper of the gate. Then I gather that it was because he forgave the adulterous woman."

"Not so, stranger. We had good divorce laws ere he came, and many unmarried men in the land who would rather wed a repudiated woman than a maiden."

"By my rod, so it is, keeper of the gate. So I infer that it was because he pardoned the harlot of yonder city I passed last week."

"Nay, nay, thou speakest not wisely, stranger. Harlotry is a necessary evil, as many wise men have often declared, but thou hast surely heard of late that we have appointed councils of rich and powerful men to abate it and redeem the fallen women."

"Indeed, I heard of it and it is a most worthy and honorable enterprise, keeper of the gate. But now I know it truly: it was, no doubt, because he said that these rich men could not enter the kingdoms of the blessed hereafter."

"Nay, not for that, stranger. Everybody says that, even the high priests of the temples. It is by saying that, that the rich men are kept

- on this earth, as I heard a Pharisee tell a wealthy publican."
- "Then my knowledge goes not farther, keeper of the gate. I beg of thee to tell me outright why ye crucified him, if thou wouldst teach a poor wayfarer who is seeking after wisdom."
- "Aye, I will tell thee, stranger, though thy curiosity is great for a walker of Caesar's roads. It was not because of any of these things, but because of all these things, because he said and did them all at once and because he talked too much and was beginning to be heard and because . . . But whither art thou going, stranger?"
- "Where the highroad leads, keeper of the gate."

TO  
A BENCH IN MULBERRY PARK

Well, after many a year,  
I see thou art still here,  
Old bench, old haven of my roaming days;  
And like a canopy  
On royal beds, on thee  
Its green pavilion still the maple sprays.

They were not sweet, indeed,  
Those dreary days of need  
When I, each night, would wonder here alone  
Whether the dawn would hail  
Another thief in jail  
Or at the morgue another corpse unknown.

They were, indeed, so crude,  
Those days of solitude  
When hunger grinned at madness' stony stare.—  
Recall not that again,  
For love has come since then  
And youth has won the battle with despair.

Those songs instead evoke  
That sobs and tears did choke,  
And that young faith no tempest could destroy;  
Recall the tunes I knew,  
The dreams each morning slew,  
And those that since fulfilled their task of joy.

When every roar and sound  
The heartless city drowned.  
Into the surging ocean of the night,  
To me alone would drift,  
A rich and kingly gift,  
The flotsam of its song for my delight.

From all these windows purred  
The slumbers, and I heard,  
Now and again, a cradling mother croon,  
While from the roofs afar  
Dropped from an old guitar  
The sighs of some young lover to the moon.

Watching the clouds' odd race  
In my ecstatic maze  
Meseemed that thou into their sea didst soar,  
And I went sailing by,  
Young Orpheus of the sky,  
Like a doge in a gorgeous bucentaur.

I dreamed and dreamed all night,  
Young dreams, and frail and bright,  
Like little buds that never grow to bloom,  
Like silver clouds that pass,  
Like crickets in the grass,  
Like yellow fireflies twinkling in the gloom.

Yea, I was hungry—yet  
Sometimes one can forget  
And hungry stomachs often find a dole,  
But the young days are fleet  
When one can fill with sweet  
And moonlit dreams the hunger of the soul.

Ah me! they're gone, those days,

And love for me now lays  
A pillow full of lullabies to sleep;  
But it is hard, alack!  
That memories come back  
Of days that were so sad when one can't weep.

Yet in my deepest heart  
I feel a sudden smart  
That I won't tell my love and she won't see—  
Old bench, if some new wretch  
His limbs on thee should stretch,  
Be kind to him as thou hast been to me.

## OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

Milady was sitting at the table under the pink wax-light, alone in the resplendent hall.

I looked in from the street and knew not what resplended the most, whether the young, blue-clad sweetness of milady or the chaste sheen of the tablecloth, or the luster of the candelabra, the silver, the gold, the crystal, or, mayhap, the lucid head of the severe and solemn waiter.

But I knew that the waiter was there because of milady and not milady because of the waiter, as some may think.

Milady was there only because of the little, fragile, shivering bitch she held in her arms, and the little bitch had her little paws on the white tablecloth while milady fed to her, delicately and amorously, the soul and the brain of the waiter diluted with a little spoon of gold in a creamy fluid, in a noble silver bowl.

Alone milady sat in the great hall under the pink wax-light as I watched her through the frost-embroidered window, and methought she was Hebe ministering the nectar to the last god.

Outside, the great black carriage awaited under the nimble-limbed portico of alabaster, and the little newsboy who stood by me devoured with his eyes, perhaps the uncarnal beauty

of milady, perhaps the heavenly gruel of the shivering bitch.

I looked at him and deeply I looked into his ravenous eyes, and then I asked: "Of what are you thinking, my little friend?"

Said he: "I have sold six papers in four hours and the papers are now wet and old, for they age and die in few hours, the papers."

Said he: "My mother is dead, my father is in jail, my sister is in the saloon and I have sold only six papers in four hours."

Said he again: "I wish I was that dog."

Again I looked at him, and his eyes were full of tears, the child tears that only the women understand, the young tears that make men smile.

And I said: "Yea, boy, for if you were that dog you would be sure to eat and to be petted to-night.

"And also, if you can kiss no more your mother, at least you could lap the hand of your mistress, for she is very dear and very sweet. Is it not so?"

He raised his eyes to me, his big blue eyes, his placid eyes full of tears and he glared at me and answered through his clenched teeth:

"No, damn you, no, I would tear her nose off."

And he darted away in the raging blizzard.

But I saw the sun, the sun, the great sun, the luminous warm sun, right in the front of him.

## THE BUM

The dust of thousand roads, the grease  
And grime of slums, were on his face;  
The fangs of hunger and disease  
Upon his throat had left their trace;  
The smell of death was in his breath,  
But in his eye no resting place.

Along the gutters, shapeless, fagged,  
With drooping head and bleeding feet,  
Throughout the Christmas night he dragged  
His care, his woe, and his defeat;  
Till gasping hard with face downward  
He fell upon the trafficked street.

The midnight revelry aloud  
Cried out its glut of wine and lust;  
The happy, clean, indifferent crowd  
Passed him in anger and disgust;  
For—fit or rum—he was a bum,  
And if he died 'twas nothing lost.

The tramp, the thief, the drunk, the brute,  
The beggar, each withdrew his eye;  
E'en she, the bartered prostitute,  
Held close her skirts and passed him by;  
For, drunk or dead, the street's the bed  
Where dogs and bums must sleep and die.

So all went on to their debauch,  
Parade of ghosts in weird array.  
Only a tramp dog did approach  
That mass of horror and decay—  
It sniffed him out with its black snout  
Then turned about and limped away.

And there he lay, a thing of dread,  
A loathsome thing for man and beast;  
None put a stone beneath his head,  
Or wet his lips, or rubbed his wrist,  
And none drew near to help or cheer—  
Save a policeman and a priest.

Yet neither heard his piteous wail,  
And neither knelt by where he fell.  
The man in blue spoke of the jail,  
Until he heard his rattle tell,  
And hearing that, he motioned at  
The man in black to speak of hell.

To speak of hell, lest he should hope  
For peace, for rest untroubled, deep,  
Where he no more need roam and grope  
Through dark, foul lanes to beg and weep,  
Where in the vast warm earth at last  
He'd find a resting place to sleep.

To sleep—not standing tired and sick .  
By grimy walls and cold lamp poles,  
Nor crouched in fear of the night stick,  
To beat his sore and swollen soles,  
Nor see the flares of green nightmares  
And ghastly dawns through black rat holes;

To sleep beneath the green, warm earth  
As in a sacred mother's womb,  
And wait the call of a new birth,  
When his dead life again shall bloom—  
For it shall pass into the grass;  
The lamb will graze upon his tomb.

Not he, not he shall think of this,  
Not he the wretched, the down trod;  
Beyond the club of the police  
Shall reach the ruthless hand of God,  
For like a ghou! the rich man's rule  
Will seek him out beneath the sod.

He must know hell, lest he should guess  
That all his weary tramp is o'er—  
A hell of hunger and distress  
Where he, cold, naked and footsore,  
Alone and ill, must wander still  
Through endless roads forevermore.

Nay, nay, my brother, 'tis a lie!  
Just like their Christ, their love, their law!  
They brewed a wolfish fiend on high,  
Just like their hearts perverse and raw,  
To damn or save the dying slave,  
So those who live should serve in awe.

So that in trembling fear they'd hold  
Upon their neck their masters' sway,  
So that they'd guard their masters' gold  
And starve and freeze and still obey,  
So when for greed they toil and bleed,  
Instead of rising they should pray.

That's why they come to huts and slums!  
'Tis not to soothe or to console,  
But just to stay the hungry bums  
With this black terror of the soul,  
And bend and blight with chains of fright  
What chains of steel could not control.

And yet, and yet the thunderbolt  
Shall fall some day they fear the least,  
When flesh and sinews shall revolt  
And she, the mob, the fiend, the beast,  
Unchained, awake, shall turn and break  
The bloody tables of their feast.

But you, my brother, will be dead,  
And none will think of you for aye!  
Still by your spirit I'll be led,  
If like their cattle you'll not die,  
If you'll but show before you go  
That mine can be your battle cry!

Aye, brother, death all woes relieves—  
Yet this low world that well you knew,  
This Christian world of sainted thieves  
And fat apostles of virtue,  
This world of brutes and prostitutes,  
Must see its end revealed by you!

Rise then! Your rags, your bleeding shirt,  
Tear from your crushed and trampled chest,  
Fling in its face its own vile dirt,  
Your scorn and hate to manifest,  
And in its gray cold eyes of prey  
Spit out your life and your protest!

Salem Jail, Nov. 20, 1912.

## THE MAGDALENE

The service over, the silk-hatted pastor,  
Smooth-shaven, jovial, fat and debonair,  
A merry joke on his ascetic master,  
Met in the empty church a woman's stare.

He paused, his hands on his rotund abdomen  
Piously laid, and quoth with solemn mien:  
"What can I do for you, my worthy woman?"  
She rose and said: "I am the Magdalene.

"You said that I believed and was forgiven,  
That faith alone can save and purify,  
And from the stews I came, whence I was driven,  
To seal upon your lips the monstrous lie.

"For though I have believed and not denied Him,  
Though with my bitter tears I washed His feet,  
The harpy clutch of greed that crucified Him  
Has dragged me back into the sunless street.

"From pit to pit it dragged me down, a mourner  
Of His great shattered dream, with blows and  
sneers,  
And you have seen me stand around the corner,  
A traded strumpet for two thousand years.

"You saw them with their hands of fiendish  
malice,

From this, my withered, soulless flesh of pain,  
Wring out the gold with which they bought the  
chalice

Where now you gulp his precious blood again.

“All this you saw, and still to them that Jesus  
Drove from his house, aye, from this very place,  
You sell his heav’n for thirty silver pieces,  
And for a mess of potage my disgrace.

“You call on them his blessing while I wander  
On all the ways of hell where I was thrust,  
And while you soothe their gluttled souls, you  
pander  
To my eternal shame and to their lust.

“And yet I know, in all my desolation,  
The Saviour shall soon come to my release,  
No more a doleful voice of resignation,  
No more a God-sent messenger of peace,

“But a red-winged archangel of the devil  
Who shall disperse for aye the ravenous brood,  
Your lies hush in the offals of their revel,  
And give me back my soul and womanhood.”

## THE PRAISE OF SPRING

I have hated thee, O Spring.

With all the furies of my inextinguishable blood,  
with all the aches of my unappeasable flesh  
I have hated thee,  
And despised thee,  
And cursed thee, O Spring.

I have hated thee for the stupidity of thy flowers  
that smelled the carrion of the covered graves,  
For the acquiescent foolishness of thy ever nod-  
ding trees,

For the frigid chastity of thy skies,  
For the garrulity of thy silly cackling waters  
And for the petulance of thy eternal reappearing,  
O thou idiotic, unoriginal repentance of the de-  
crepit earth.

I have hated thee because thou wert an atonement,  
not a rebellion; thou wert a returning child-  
hood, not a reconquered virility, O Spring.

No storms, no tempests, no hurricanes,  
No spasms of long-nursed follies,  
No violences of coveted passions,  
No brazen display of warm desires and unclad  
sins,

No exaltation of fecund motherhood,  
Nothing but the recurrence of an old fashion, the  
re-wearing of the discarded, ignoble dress of  
green, a new coat of perfumed rouge over the

wrinkles of the same old yellow face of the world.

\* \* \*

I have hated thee, O Spring. With all the impetuosity of my living being I have hated thee.

I have hated thee for the evil filter of thy air, that abominable potion that has nothing but the effervescence of its bubbles,

That tasteless broth of malignity which does not inebriate like a generous wine,

Which does not kill like a magnificent poison,

Which is neither a bitter medicine that heals the heart-fevers of youth, nor a sweet narcotic that gives sleep.

That wert a painted and tinselled masquerade, O Spring, a stimulant for old age, not a cordial for battling manhood, and no life was in thee save the fermentation of dead things.

The life that grew not out of the creating labors of love, but out of the stillness of corpses, so that the warrior Winter again might have ought to destroy.

The purveyor of Death, not the handmaid of Life thou wert, for no nurslings that the grave could not claim were ever to sleep in the warmth of thy breasts.

\* \* \*

But why, even for that and because of that, did I hate thee, O Spring?

Was it the overpowering onrush of manhood that was invading my soul and sweeping away from it the dreams, the follies, the chimeras of my silent, wide-eyed, ghost-like youth?

Was it because, in spite of thy breath, laden with

all the unknowable maladies of the invisible life, my heart wounds, my soul wounds whose crusts I had been tearing with my sharp nails, were healing and no longer I loved to torment their pain?

Or was it the pale light of a vision I had kindled with the first spark of my childhood and fed with the shreds of my years, that suddenly blazed forth like a terrible pyre for the conflagration of the world thou camest back to refresh and regreen?

Whoever will know and tell? Whoever cares to know?

Not I, not I, O Spring.

I was alone, I who was alive in myself, was alone in thy dead splendor a thousandfold resurrected and a thousandfold annihilated, And I who could be killed but once and nevermore be arisen,

I who carried the burden of but one single life, the burden I never tried to lighten but ever tried to increase with my greedy, far-reaching, all-apprehending hands,

I sneered the contempt of my glorious mortality unto thee that art not immovable and eternal and yet art not forever to die.

For it is engraved on the vaults of the unassailable firmaments and it is burned in the dark of the unfathomable profundities that they alone who are to meet death are the master and the commanders of life.

\* \* \*

There was I alone with my challenge against thee and thy mother, O Spring.

And thy wiles and thy lures that made thee the easy-yielding courtesan of all creatures had

no power and no charm over me, the rebellious child of sin.

And for this I hated thee, because there was no chastity in thee, because thou wert the common mistress of all and I was waiting for the Virgin-Bride of the Ideal.

And my glory grew as great as my strength, and my strength as great as my desire, because of my solitude.

There was in my beating temples the panting of the only reality of life,

All the onslaught of time was ramming and breaking against my bare and villous chest.

All the red-maned steeds of destruction, trembling with the furious lust of the race were leashed to my fist;

And I who had breathed the warm wind of the battle-field,

And the raging soul of the storm,

And the ashes of the galloping fire,

And the dust of the things destroyed,

I, who shed tears only when I looked open-eyed at the noon sun,

I heard in the echo of my steps in thy woods the footfalls of the bronze-shod Vandal through the columns of the burned and pillaged temple where all the tripods blazed with the Greek fire and the face of the stone gods was ground under the ironed hoof of the stallions.

For this I hated thee, O Spring, because I was a destroyer and not a worshipper of silent things.

And because I was waiting for the scarlet-robed, flame-winged, storm-haired Bride of the Future for whose nuptials a greater altar fire shall be built than that of the volcanoes,

I flung into the face of that old mother of yours,  
Nature, whose obscene nakedness, polluted by  
the vile caresses of all the distorted fingers  
of greed thou wert recovering with thy  
tawdry mantle of green, not my staff, O  
Spring, not my javelin, not my broken spur,  
but just one word, just one word, O Spring.

## II

And now thou hast returned again.

Again thou hast returned with thy green and  
thy blue and thy gold and thy breezes, but lo!  
thou art so strangely and so wildly different  
unto my eyes and into the mirror where my  
eyes cannot look, O Spring.

For the day I saw the first dandelion and the  
first daisy and I heard the first strident voice  
of the cricket, the little messengers that an-  
nounced thee, that day I was alone no more.

Another one was by my side, and she was young,  
and she was fair, and she was lost like me in  
the gateless labyrinth of life.

Like me she had nursed her youth with the di-  
vine nectar of the tempests,

Like me she was cruel with many angers and sad  
with many cares,

Like me she understood the lofty virtues of  
hatred and the endless march onward to the  
gate that does not exist, with no other com-  
pass to guide our feet but our will to go.

Yet was she not like me, for on her forehead  
there were not the scars of the fierce affrays,

On her lips there were not the bitter wrinkles  
furrowed by the long, unerasable sneers,

Nor on her wrists the marks of torn and broken  
fetters and chains,

Nor the shadows of crossed darknesses had remained in her limpid eyes.

She was not like me, yet much that was in me was in her, and because her destiny, like mine, compelled her to go and never to look behind, I paused with her and in her I forgot all thy malevolence and all my hatred of thee, O Spring.

And there were two alive in the old world-cemetery of corpses, she and I in the immense crypt of the universe, O Spring.

\* \* \*

Why dost thou bid me remember that day, by all thy days, O Despot?

What does it matter now that I hate thee no more?

I know not what new spell was heaved about me by the mighty mouth that breathes all the fearful gales of life,

But this I do remember, that my soul became a cage full of nightingales and her hand opened the door and they flew away in the azure of thy heavens in a long thrill of song.

And this also I do remember, that my heart in which every scythe had reaped till it was nothing but a barren desolation, bloomed up suddenly in all thy apple blossoms, in all thy almond trees, in all the flowers of thy orchards and of thy gardens, O Spring.

And I could not throw out of it its myriad flowers, for she had laid her hand on my heart and I dared not break open the gentle gate of her fingers.

And so those flowers remained in me and left in me their fragrance and their pollen, and I

grew happy and wiser and older in the eternity of that moment.

I grew wiser that she might keep her illusions, and I grew older that I might see more of her youth, but I was happy, for I held her quivering spirit in my trembling hands, like a frail crystal bowl for the priceless, divine offering of my first tear.

And lo! something broke within me, in the untrodden and unexplored recesses of me (was it a chain, was it a wall?) and I was free, and I was free from myself,

Free to give me to a new dungeon, free to sell me to a new bondage, I who until then had had about me only the fetters of my pride.

But what do I care, O Spring, and what dost thou care now that I hate thee no more?

\* \* \*

Again the flame I had tried to smother blazed forth from the inmost hearths of my being and my spirit grew lighter,

Every bird, every butterfly that flew away carried forth one of my unbound thoughts.

And I broke the spell of the abyss and my soul rose with the vapors of thy waters and the breath of thy mountains and the fogs of thy valleys and the fragrance of thy flowers towards the Dream that is hidden by the dazzling light of the sun.

There must have been in me, in the silence and darkness of me, a stranded god of old that had fallen asleep in the first spring of the world. And she awoke him with a kiss.

Why, why? Was it because it was spring and spring was different to her, or because we were both two pilgrims journeying together

to the same shrine, I to burn the last offerings  
of my fading youth and she to depose the first  
garland of hers?

What does it matter, O Spring, now that I hate  
thee no more?

She kissed me and I awoke; again I awoke in the  
old land of beauty and song I had dwelled in  
since the day I knew the first word I spoke,  
and again my lips were unsealed by the un-  
crushable swelling of the rising paean to thee,  
O thou who art greater than life.

And again I became all-knowing and all-power-  
ful,

The maker of wonders, the weaver of wreaths,  
the giver of treasures and kingdoms, the  
killer of dragons and the builder of temples  
and dreams,

And I spun with my nimble fingers the rays of  
the setting sun to make an aureole for her  
dark hair,

And I embroidered into the green foliage the  
chaste languor of the blue sky and there I set  
her head and contemplated in adoration the  
first masterpiece of my new handiwork.

And I said unto her: Lo, of all her flowers,  
Spring has given the rose to Love and the  
myrtle to the one that is greater, but unto  
thee that art between both and vowed and  
fated to both, I shall give the flower that  
grows unsown in the wilderness and was  
never plucked, was never laid on the altars  
and the tombs and the cradles, I shall give  
thee the thistle, sharp and pungent and bris-  
tling like a flame of raised swords.

\* \* \*

And so it was that the lure of spring came again

upon me, and I understood it and loved it  
and made amend and repentance for my  
hatred.

For she, this new Spring of mine and of the  
world that is to be mine was not false and  
decayed,

She was not vanity and decoy,

She was not proffering to ignoble lovers the wiles  
of her lust,

But she was offering to all the children of life  
and all the warriors of the world the abundant  
milk of her overflowing motherly breasts and  
the balsam of her love.

\* \* \*

But shall I sing of love now, I who could only  
sing to the tune of the clarions of war?

And shall I forget for a woman my black froth-  
ing horse that neighs after the twanging ar-  
rows in the wind?

And shall I not lose my strength when her arms  
shall encircle me where thou hast girt me with  
the sword, O Gea, my mother immortal?

“SING ME TO SLEEP . . . .”

When in my night like gaunt, gray phantoms rise  
The wild-eyed hours of brooding reverie,  
If in my heart a sudden anguish cries  
That thou also hast passed away from me,

If I but think that one regretful sigh  
Thy joyless love has breathèd unaware,  
I know not what a barren will to die  
Dissolves my strength into a mute despair.

Oh, if upon thy breast I could then lay  
My weary head and hear thee sing again  
That sad, sweet song, and as it dies away  
Exhale my spirit in its last refrain!

## UTOPIA

'Tis writ, and I believe with all my power,  
That a great day shall come, O Master, when,  
Even as from a putrid clod a flower,  
So in thy heart shall bloom the love of men,—

A day when sweet and noble tasks shall hallow  
These charnels where thy slaves now drudge  
and plod,  
And thou no more a groveling swine shalt wallow  
Amid the puddles of their sweat and blood,—

A day when shall thy soldiers cease their slaugh-  
ters,  
No more thy name shall widows execrate,  
When shall grow chaste thy meretricious daugh-  
ters  
And thy abandoned sons regenerate,

When thy grandchildren shall not know what  
lust is,  
Nor shall thy festering sins corrode their youth,  
When thy lawmakers shall believe in justice,  
Yea, and thy priests shall seek and preach the  
truth,—

A day when thy old parents from the gutter  
Shall beg no more thine alms as they do now,

And thou, withal, shalt earn thy bread and butter  
By thine own labor's sweat upon thy brow;—

A day shall come when gold shall not enthrall  
thee,

When theft and murder cease to be thy rule;  
So I, who call thee now a friend, shall call thee,  
Forsooth, a true and upright man,

“Thou fool!”

## THE WELL OF THE GODS

### I

I know a well engraved with mystic runes  
    Within a clump of poplars in a dale,  
Where sweetest are the shadows of the noons  
    And from the hills winds down the shepherd's  
    trail.

The fount that gurgles in its limpid pool,  
    Not thousand years nor thousands have dis-  
    persed,  
And is so clear its water, and so cool,  
    That all who look in it become athirst.

I love its quaint, round mirror at twilight,  
    And as in it for my own face I search,  
Methinks I see instead an anchorite  
    In some old fresco of a Roman church.

And as along its walls like lizards creep  
    The quivering arabesques of green and gold,  
I hear a flute-like voice from out the deep,  
    As of a strayed and lonely faun of old,  
Who, when the gods migrated, lay in his hold  
    asleep.

### II

Only the rain doth in its depths descend,  
    A jagged shred of sky and few tree tops;

But if Scirocco peradventure rend  
The palisaded rampart of the copse,

All of the mountain's breath, the gorge's boom,  
The crash of riven trees the tempest tore,  
Would then be cast into the startled gloom  
And fill it all with echoes and uproar.

But when into its lap of velvet throws  
A group of stars the eventide of June,  
And brighter in its magic mirror glows  
The silver sickle of the crescent moon,

When to the sleepy lark that faintly sings  
The clear, full-throated nightingale responds,  
The blent accord of light and music rings  
Like bounding pearls into a bowl of bronze.  
Love, in the well then flutter my garlands and  
thy wings.

### III

Chalice and urn of all the gods of yore,  
Is in thy bosom such a wizardry.  
That he inherits all thy ancient lore  
Who drinks the nectar they forgot in thee.

Thus I, who come a pilgrim from the hill,  
Ere I ascend unto a loftier goal,  
Do drink of thee with avid lips, to fill  
Out of thy plenitude of songs my soul.

And lo! meseems that in the golden sheen  
Centaur's and Satyr's gambol in the grove,  
And Nymphs and Naiads on thy border lean  
To sing the strains of a forgotten love.

And though into the heavens of pure sapphire  
Only the shepherd's lay soars high and clear,  
With wistful ears of rapture and desire  
Breathless with wonder I can almost hear  
Attuning their eclogue the laureled Virgil's lyre.

## THE LAST NICKEL

### I

COLD and silent and myriad-eyed with the chills of dead things, with the silence of the things that are eternal and with the tremulous palpitation of the stars was the night, the holy night of my awakening and my despair.

I stood before the blazing windows of Tiffany. Frozen tears of shame and pain and wrath, frozen clots of murder blood, frozen drops of poison were the pearls, the rubies, the emeralds that glittered and winked, malevolent as the first hoar-frost upon a bed of flowers, as the grin of a mortal enemy, as the leer of lustful eyes that glare into eyes that are full of tears.

I had just kissed Her for the first time, perhaps the eternal troth, perhaps the everlasting farewell, so I looked not into the mirage of the hell-lit window, for I was thinking.

I was thinking of her eyes, wide open, frightened and full of promises, retreating slowly like the phosphorescent haze of dreams into the blackness of the tenement hallway;

I was thinking of the gasping windows gulping the thin breath of the dying trees through the stuffed fire escapes;

I was thinking of the room where She now stood, wonder-eyed, loosening her hair, and of the

poor virginal bed by the strangled airshaft  
where She would lie awake all night thinking  
of me.

I was thinking of all She would hear through the  
endless night;

The incessant wailing of the sick child above,  
and the maddening rhythm of the cradle  
rocked by a nerveless, unstrung hand,

The heavy snoring of the man below, frightful  
like a death rattle,

The stealthy, cautious steps of the belated girl  
and the grumbling curses and the muffled  
weeping,

The foul-worded, blow-crashing quarrel of the  
drunken couple that would tear through the  
partition wall,

And the faint echo of my faltering good-by, and  
the startling sound of her own sighs.

And I was thinking also of the red ribbon She  
had worn for so many weeks, ever since I  
knew Her, and of the broken-lipped step of  
her doorway, and of my last nickel, which was  
dearer to me than all the gems in that de-  
moniacal window and which I was about to  
throw away, an immense and unknown sacri-  
fice, for the love of Her.

## II

But even as I was about to cast it solemnly and  
religiously away, with the rite of the priest  
who drops the offering into the fire and the  
vast gesture of the sower who scatters the  
seeds of the bread, two men approached me,  
two shadows of the light of the gems.

Said one: "For two whole days I have not eaten.  
No one believes me, and if you also do not,  
I shall die. Give me a nickel in the name of

Jesus and of the One you love and I will pray God for your happiness and your salvation.”

I looked at him and in his eyes, where the pupils had been, I saw the yellow prints of the bony finger tips of hunger.

Said the other: “I know that I am drunk, but I need more. Give me the nickel and I will drink it to your health and joy.”

I looked at him also and in his eyes, where the sunlight had been, I saw the smothering embers of his soul.

But neither in the eyes of the one, nor in the eyes of the other, saw I reflected the fierce glow of the jewels in the nearby window. They both wanted my nickel, my only nickel, my last nickel, my cheap, finger-worn nickel—a loaf of bread—a glass of whisky—no more!

### III

Chuckled aloud in my ears the fiend that lurked in the scintillating window, the fiend that kindles all the evil fires of the world, and said: “Behold, thou who hast only a nickel art now become a dispenser of life and death and an arbiter of destinies. But thou canst satisfy but one man, and thou hast not the wisdom of a Solomon. Whichever man thou givest it to, not knowing whether the one be truly hungry or the other really need it more, thy gift shall accrue to the injustice of the world. Throw it away, then, for her sake, as thou desirest, build with it a little mound of thine own happiness, and not a mountain of thy conceit.”

I thought of the sweatshop where She was going to work again the next day . . .

Then the angel in me spoke: "Nay, give it to the hungry one. If She were here by thee, thou knowest that thou wouldst give it to him. What greater deed canst thou do for the love of Her to-night? Give it to him, he will live because he shall eat and the other will not die, because he will not drink the last goblet of poison. Thou shalt thus save two men."

Then said the devil in me: "Remember what was said of old: 'We asked for bread and ye gave us a stone.' They understood not the symbol then, nor would they understand it now. They know not what to do with a stone, a good heavy stone, a fine hard stone that would go as far as their hunger, their thirst and their manhood. Preach, then, no more idle sermons and give it to the drunken one. He will die of delirium and the other of hunger. Thou shalt thus kill two brutes."

I saw the malevolent glitter, the leer and the sneer of the diamonds, the pearls, the rubies, the emeralds in the hell-lit window, and I saw in the eyes of the two men nothing but the greed and the fever for my nickel, my last nickel, for my cheap, finger-worn nickel . . .

And I gave it to one of them.

## THE REPUBLIC

The king had said: "By right divine  
As old as God's own laws are old,  
All that you have, all that you hold,  
All that you think and do is mine.

"I own forever and control  
Your house, your field, your ox, your wife,  
So, I shall rule your mortal life  
And my good liege, the pope, your soul.

"Obey, then, both; do not rebel,  
For, should you rise against our will,  
You'll have, in this world, my Bastille,  
And in the other world his hell."

So said the king. And then there came,  
Aglow with anger and with steel,  
A goddess of the common weal,  
With eyes of fire and hair of flame.

Not hers the wisdom which decrees  
That time alone must wrongs allay,  
Not hers the craven heart to pray  
And barter liberty for peace;

Not hers the fear to hesitate  
When shame and misery cry out—  
Love has no patience, truth no doubt,  
And right and justice cannot wait.

So, loud into the midnight air  
She rang the tocsin's weird alarm,  
She called, and as by potent charm  
From its mysterious haunt and lair,

The Mob, the mightiest judge of all,  
To hear the rights of Man came out,  
And every word became a shout,  
And every shout a musket ball.

Against the castle walls the picks  
She raised and planted there her flags,  
Against the ermine hurled the rags,  
The torch against the crucifix,

The guillotine against the rope,  
And ere the eastern sky grew red,  
Behold she flung the king's proud head  
Upon the altars of the pope.

And when upon the great sunrise  
Flew her disheveled victories  
To all the lands, on all the seas,  
Like angry eagles in the skies,

To ring the call of brotherhood  
And hail mankind from shore to shore,  
Wrapt in her splendid tricolor  
The People's virgin bride she stood.

\* \* \*

This was the dawn. But when the day  
Wore out with all its festive songs,  
And all the hearts, and all the tongues  
Were stilled in wonder and dismay,—

When night with velvet-sandaled feet  
Stole in her chamber's solitude,  
Behold! she lay there naked, lewd,  
A drunken harlot of the street,

With withered breasts and shaggy hair  
Soiled by each wanton, frothy kiss,  
Between a sergeant of police  
And a decrepit millionaire.

## THE FUNERAL

I saw a funeral go by this morning, a black hearse driven by one black horse climbing slowly the silent street, the street unsouled and grief-stricken by the gray omens of the coming first snow.

No carriages followed the black hearse, no mourners walked behind it, no flowers were on the coffin, and my heart, my mad heart that divines everything, told me that no one was weeping in the great city.

I followed it with my unseeing eyes and then I turned to my love who stood by me at the window (always with me, always by me shall be my love) and I wanted to kiss her to dispel the anguish of the gray morning and of the silent street and of the black hearse.

But my love held me away with her hand and said: "Nay, kiss me not now and speak not of our love, but let us go and follow that hearse, and throw some earth into the grave, for that is our forgotten brother that died yesterday."

And I said to my love: "Aye, my love, let us go and mourn for him, our unknown brother, so that some day someone shall also walk behind our biers. At least one, at least one . . ."

But my love answered again: "Nay, what will it

matter to us then? We shall be two in the coffin. Let us go and mourn for him, just for him, only for the sake of him, only for the sake of sorrow and death and tears.

“For we have cursed and fought and hated enough, my love, and it will do us good to weep.”

And we followed the lonely hearse up the silent street, the street unsouled and grief-stricken by the gray omens of the coming first snow, And we looked not at each other, and we did not speak.

## TO JOSEPH J. ETTOR

*On his 27th Birthday*

Well, Joe, my good friend, though we cannot pretend

That we're happy we still can regale,  
We can laugh and be merry, though claret and sherry

Are so scarce to us, even in jail;  
But although our good wine is the prison's foul brine

And the hangman's our welcoming host,  
Let us think it Chianti and quaff it a-plenty  
While for you I revise my old toast.

Let us drink a new toast to the dear Woolen trust,  
To the legions of "Country and God,"  
To the great Christian cause and the wise, noble laws,

And to all who cry out for our blood;  
Let us drink to the health of the old Commonwealth,

To the Bible and code in one breath,  
And let's so propitiate both the church and the state

That they'll grant us a cheerful, quick death.

For altho' you are brave, you'll admit that the grave

Has much better surroundings than these,

As we'll hear there no more the hard slam of the  
door

And the clank of the terrible keys;  
Even as I, though I'm game, must admit just  
the same,

When I think of my love and my home,  
That my heart is oppressed and my soul is dis-  
tressed

By the thought of the years yet to come.

And I cannot conceive all the years we must  
grieve

For the dream that no hope can revive,  
And my heart seems to sink when I tremblingly  
think

Of the One who will mourn me alive;  
For when last I did gaze on her sweet, saint-like  
face,

That forever from me would be barred,  
Well, the only good way I could keep looking gay  
Was to think of a nice big graveyard.

Yes, I know it is good, in some soul-stirring  
mood

To drive out all these sullen complaints,  
And I know it feels great to believe that our fate  
Will be that of the martyrs and saints.

But what joy is in truth if our passionate youth  
Like an underground runnel must flow  
That no thirst ever slakes, but just feeds the gray  
lakes

Of the kingdoms of silence and woe?

Nay, 'tis all silly fuss, there's no wisdom in us  
To renounce to the brunt of the strife;

We were wrought on the fire and to love and  
desire

And to fight and to sing is our life.

So, should we many a year be immured alive here,

Now that you're twenty-seven, old mate,

The best wish I can make for your own and my  
sake

Is that never you be twenty-eight.

And so, here's to the hope for the trap and the  
rope

As the best for us sure is the worst,

And because I am older and you are the bolder,

Here's a health that they hang me the first;

For, should justice be shunned, both on earth and  
beyond,

After bidding to you my farewell,

I would fain as your scout be the first to find out

And the first to receive you in hell.

# THE SERMON ON THE COMMON

THEN it came to pass that the people, having heard that he had come, assembled on the Common to listen unto his words.

And they came from all the parts of the earth, the Syrians and the Armenians, the Thracians and the Tartars, the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans, the Iberians and the Gauls and the Angles and Huns and the Hibernians and Scythians, even from the deserts of sands to the deserts of ice, they came to listen unto his words.

And he, seeing the multitudes, opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Blessed are the strong in freedom's spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of the earth.

Blessed are they that mourn their martyred dead: for they shall avenge them upon their murderers and be comforted.

Blessed are the rebels: for they shall reconquer the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after equality: for they shall eat the fruit of their labor.

Blessed are the strong: for they shall not taste the bitterness of pity.

Blessed are the sincere in heart: for they shall see truth.

Blessed are they that do battle against wrong: for they shall be called the children of Liberty.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for equality's sake: for theirs is the glory of the brotherhood of man.

Blessed are ye when the scribes of the press shall revile you, and the doctors of the law, politicians, policemen, judges and priests shall call you criminals, thieves and murderers and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for the sake of Justice.

Rejoice, then, and be exceedingly glad; for so they persecuted, reviled, cursed, chained, jailed, poisoned, hanged, crucified, burned, beheaded and shot all the seers, the apostles and the warriors of humanity that were before you, for the sake of freedom.

Ye are the power of the earth, the foundations of society, the thinkers and the doers of all things good and all things fair and useful, the makers and dispensers of all the bounties and the joys and the happiness of the world, and if ye fold your mighty arms, all the life of the world stands still and death hovers on the darkened abodes of man.

Ye are the light of the world. There was darkness in all the ages when the torch of your will did not blaze forth, and the past and the future are full of the radiance that cometh from your eyes.

Ye are eternal, even as your father, labor, is eternal, and no power of time and dissolution can prevail against you.

Agnes have come and gone, kingdoms and powers

and dynasties have risen and fallen, old glories and ancient wisdoms have been turned into dust, heroes and sages have been forgotten and many a mighty and fearsome god has been hurled into the lightless chasms of oblivion.

But ye, Plebs, Populace, People, Rabble, Mob, Proletariat, live and abide forever.

\* \* \*

Think not that I am come to destroy the law: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil through you what the prophets of mankind have pre-saged from the beginning.

For verily I say unto you, While man lives and labors, nothing can destroy the eternal law of progress which after each advancing step bids him further.

Therefore, say not unto yourselves, even as the priests and scribes and doctors of the law and fools and hypocrites say, This is the goal which was destined unto us and no further shall we go.

For even if there be before you the uplifted arms of terror and the smoking altars of murder enshrined in a gaunt temple of gibbets and fierce with shrieks of curses, ye must pass beyond.

For your feet are like the unrolling of the endless scrolls of time,—not even night and silence and death can stop their march forward and upward, ever to a farther and loftier goal.

And, lo, ye shall never arrive because never shall ye cease going.

Whosoever, therefore, shall break one jot or one tittle of this law shall be called the least in

the kingdom of man, but whosoever shall do and teach it, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of man.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of all times who toil not but do live of your toil, Thou shalt not rebel against thy master.

But I say unto you that whosoever soweth the seeds of patience the same shall reap the harvest of shame.

They said unto you, Question not the right of your masters to reign over you and command you. They shall have your sweat and your tears, aye, and even your blood and your life, and ye shall serve them in reverence and awe, for their power upon you is of God.

And again they said unto you, Give your masters the labor of your hands and the worship of your hearts, give them the fruits of your orchards, the grains of your fields, the flowers of your gardens and all things made by the labor of your hands and by the thought of your brain, and withhold not aught from your masters, lest your masters' law and the curse of your masters' God be upon you.

And again they said unto you, Bend your knees and worship your chains, kiss the whip that lashes you, bless the heel that crushes you, revere the yoke that weighs upon your neck, bury your forehead in the dirt whence ye came and whither ye shall return.

Do not cry, do not complain do not grumble, do not think, do not hope,

Be humble, resigned, patient, submissive, lowly and prone even as a beast of burden, lest ye have the gaol in this life and gehenna in the life to come.

And again they said unto you, Resist not evil, for all spirit of disobedience and unsubmission issueth from the enemy of peace. Therefore if your masters, or your masters' servants smite you on the right cheek, turn unto them the other also, and if they take away from you the heritage of your fathers, give unto them also the birthright of your children.

All this and more than this they said unto you before I came, but now that I am come, a new evangel shall be proclaimed unto you, that your souls may be renovating and purified in the fire of the new salvation which is not peace but war.

Therefore I say unto you, Banish fear from your hearts, dispel the mists of ignorance from your minds, arm your yearning with your strength, your vision with your will, and open your eyes and behold.

Do not moan, do not submit, do not kneel, do not pray, do not wait.

Think, dare, do, rebel, fight—ARISE!

It is not true that ye are condemned to serve and suffer in shame forever;

It is not true that injustice, iniquity, hunger, misery, abjection, depravity, hatred, theft, murder and fratricide are eternal;

There is no destiny that the will of man cannot break;

There are no chains of iron that other iron cannot destroy;

There is nothing that the power of your arms, lighted by the power of your mind, cannot transform and reconstruct and remake.

Arise, then, ye men of the plough and the ham-

mer, the helm and the lever, and send forth to the four winds of the earth your new proclamation of freedom which shall be the last and shall abide forevermore.

Through you, through your united, almighty strength, order shall become equity, law shall become liberty, duty shall become love and religion shall become truth.

Through you the man-beast shall die and the man be born;

Through you the dark, bloody chronicles of the brute shall cease and the story of man shall begin.

Through you, by the power of your brain and hand,

All the predictions of the prophets,

All the wisdom of the sages,

All the dreams of the poets,

All the hopes of the heroes,

All the visions of the martyrs,

All the prayers of the saints,

All the crushed, tortured, strangled, maimed and murdered ideals of the ages, and all the glorious destinies of mankind shall become a triumphant and everlasting reality in the name of labor and bread and love, the great three-fold truth forever.

And lo and behold, my brothers, this shall be called the revolution.

\* \* \*

Thus spake the man to the assembled multitude that had come from all the lands, over all the waters of the earth, and they listened unto him and received his words, and the dawn began to rise in their hearts, and they praised the announcer with the cheers of their mouths

and they blessed him with the tears of their eyes.

But when the multitude dispersed to return to their labors and to their strifes, the dark figures that make darker the shadows of the night held council against the truth-bearer for the words that he had spoken.

And the scribe said, Verily, he is a law-breaker.

And the money changer said, Aye, and he is a fool.

And the judge said, He is a wrong-doer.

And the sage said, He is possessed of a devil.

And the chronicler said, He is a primitive sinner.

And the wise man said, He is a profligate.

And the priest said, He is a blasphemer.

And they all croaked in chorus, He is an enemy of society, of civilization, of religion and mankind. Law and order must be upheld and our sacred institutions must be preserved. We must do away with him.

And they did away with him. But nobody knows to this day whether they sent him to prison or to Parliament.

## THE PEACEFUL HOUR

THIS IS THE HOUR OF PEACE, the hour  
of all the things I love.

The things I love are the things that are my own  
forever, the things that shall never be taken  
away from me.

They are not the things that I have made, for  
nothing have I made to myself,

They are not the things I fashioned with my  
many-tooled hands,

Not the things I have brought forth out of the  
smoke of my pipe, in the gathering dusk of  
my half-closed eyelids,

Not the things I saw far away and brought  
nearer, for no burden-bearer and no messen-  
ger am I to myself,

Not the things I revived, for nothing of mine ever  
died,

But the things that were given to me, the things  
I wanted not and did not ask and did not  
covet, but were simply given to me unearned  
and undeserved because I needed them and  
knew it not.

For they alone are forever my own, not because  
I must fight to keep them, but because the  
givers will never take them back from me.

I love the black bread the wayfarer shared with  
me at the fountain and which I ate not for  
hunger but for the joy of him,

I love the wine the stranger offered me at the  
tavern by the roadside,  
And the tune of the old hand-organ under my  
window,  
And the kiss of the two child-lips while I was  
sleeping,  
And the song of my sweetheart who is sewing in  
the warm sunlight,  
And the loud cries of my baby that wants to be  
fed,  
Yea, and that man who is passing by on the side-  
walk yonder, whoever, whatever he be and  
wherever he goes in this hour of peace.

## SAMNITE CRADLE SONG

Lullaby, baby, mamma's own child!  
Who sang the evil dirge about thee?  
Thou camest in March time, wee as the tart  
Berries of hedge thorns, pale as the wild  
Roses that have a wasp in their heart.  
Who has to thee the witchy words spoken?  
Who read to thee the malevolent star?  
Who cast on thee the spell of the dead?  
A hunchbacked wizard thy cradle has broken,  
A lame old fairy embittered my teat,  
And the blind priest with unblessed water wet  
At the font thy poor, innocent head.  
Thou art so sleepy, but numb are my arms;  
Thou art so cold, but chilled is my breath;  
Thou art so hungry, but dry is my breast.  
Lullaby, hush-a-by, baby mine, rest,  
Sleep for thy mother, who is tired unto death.

Lullaby, baby! The corn was so full,  
The vines were so heavy, the season so pleasant,  
And happy, so happy, the heart of the peasant,  
Who was preparing and sweeping the bin  
For the new wheat that was bristling so fine,  
While his nude youngster was laughing within  
The casks he was scrubbing to fill with new wine.  
But God dislikes them whose heart is content,  
God loves only them who starve and bewail;  
And so he sent us the wind and the hail.

All has been carried away by landslides ;  
All has been buried beneath the brown mire ;  
All has been ruined by storms and by tides,  
Nor vineyards nor orchards the water did leave.  
The mice now dance in the empty meal keeve ;  
The ashes are cold of the last cauldron fire ;  
The dams and the flood-traps the torrent has  
torn ;

And poor we ! the mill that once ground our corn  
Now grinds away the last hope of the land.  
Lullaby, baby, the morning is nigh.  
Hush-a-by, baby, thou must understand,  
The tale of my woe is as long as thy cry.

Lullaby, baby, thy grandfather plowed  
And thy father mowed the grain,  
And thy mother winnowed the chaff,  
And at evening many a spool  
Spinned with spindle and distaff,  
Threads of hemp and threads of wool.  
But granddaddy was broken and bowed,  
The land was hard, the winters were cold ;  
But thy father was twenty years old,  
So they took him away and sent him to war.  
One was old and one was young,  
One was weak and one was strong,  
One was too tired to till the sod,  
One was fresh in the heart of spring.  
So thy grandpa was killed by God,  
And thy daddy by the king.

Lullaby, hush-a-by, baby mine, sleep,  
Lullaby, softer than thine is their bed !  
Mother will sing thee, mother'll not weep,  
Mother'll not mourn for the dead.

Lullaby, baby, grow strong and brave!  
They are no longer hungry now;  
Only us two the bad luck smote.  
The gravedigger took away the goat,  
For digging an eight-foot grave;  
The curate has taken the sow,  
For saying mass by the biers;  
And the Government for its toll  
Has taken the earrings from mine ears.  
Lullaby, baby, they took our all,  
The walnut chest, the iron bed,  
The silver brooch, the marriage ring,  
The black fichu in which I was wed;  
I have not even a scarf to mourn  
And honor my young love forlorn  
And the faith I swore to him.  
I have only the sack of straw,  
The bident with the broken horn,  
And the medal which the law  
Has sent to thee, an iron thing,  
Which in his honor bears the trace  
Of his young blood upon one face,  
And on the other side the grace  
Of God about our gracious king.

Lullaby, hush-a-by, baby mine, sleep,  
Lullaby, softer than thine is their bed!  
Mother will sing thee, mother'll not weep,  
Mother'll not mourn for the dead.

Lullaby, baby, the winter is near,  
The mountains put on their clean hood of snow.  
What shall I do? Where shall I go?  
In the sieve there is no more flour;  
In the bin there is no more coal;  
In the jug there is no more oil.

What shall I do, my desperate soul?  
Am I to die of hunger and cold,  
Or beg for bread from door to door,  
Or be a wanton about the inns?  
Ah, what do I care what I shall be,  
What do I care, so you do not die?  
My grief shall stop where your joy begins  
And our good day shall surely come by.  
And when it comes, and I am in my grave  
Or past the age of thy pride or blame,  
If I keep true to all that aid me,  
Give back a hundred for one they gave,  
But if I rear thee with sweets and with shame,  
Lullaby, hush-a-by, harken, my life,  
For every dollar of silver they paid me,  
Give back a stab with your father's keen knife.

Lullaby, hush-a-by, baby mine, sleep,  
Lullaby, softer than thine is their bed!  
Mother will sing thee, mother'll not weep,  
Mother'll not mourn for the dead.

Lullaby, baby, the rope is so frayed  
That down the well soon the bucket will dart;  
The whip is broken, the yoke torn in twain;  
But see, how sharp is the hatchet's blade!  
The ass has broken away from the cart,  
The hound has shaken and slipped from the chain,  
And I am singing away my fierce heart  
Just for the rage of the song, not the pain.  
Behold, the dawn fingers the shadows dispel,  
Soon will the sun peep at thee from the hill;  
The cocks are crowing, the starlings grow shrill.  
Wait, and my song with the matin's glad bell  
Shall fill the morning with omens of glee.  
For now no longer I sing unto thee,

Mamma's own wolffet, the tale of my woe,  
But now that the sun is near, my man-boy,  
The night is gone, and my sorrows will go;  
List to my prophecy, vengeance and joy.

Lullaby, baby, look! Our great king  
With all his princes and barons and sons,  
Goes to the church to pray to the Lord.  
Ring all the bells! Fire all the guns!  
For all the chapter is wearing the cope,  
And the bishop himself will sing the high mass.  
How came this vision to me, my wild hope?  
How came this wonderful fortune to pass?  
Behold, the bishop lifts up the grail;  
The king is kneeling upon the gray stone;  
The trumpets hush, the organ heaves deep:  
“*Te Deum laudamus* . . . We praise thee, O  
Lord . . .

For all thy mercies, Lord, hail! all hail!”  
Hush-a-by, lullaby, listen! Don't sleep!  
Lullaby, hush-a-by, mark well my word!  
Thou shalt grow big. Don't tremble! Don't fail!  
The holy wafer is but kneaded dough;  
The king is but flesh like the man with the hoe;  
The axe is of iron, the same as the sword;  
This I do tell thee and this I do sing.  
And if thou livest with sweat and with woe,  
Grow like a man, not a saint, nor a knave;  
Do not be good, but be strong and be brave,  
With the fangs of a wolf and the faith of a dog.  
Die not the death of a soldier or slave,  
Like thy grandfather who died in a bog,  
Like thy poor father who rots in the rain.  
But for this womb that has borne thee in pain,  
For these dry breasts thou hast tortured so long,  
For the despair of my life, my lost hope,

And for this song of the dawn that I sing  
Die like a man by the ax or the rope,  
Spit on their God and stab our good king.

Sleep no more, sleep no more! Show me you  
know,

Show me you listen, answer my sob!

Drink my blood, drain my heart! Just one  
sign . . . so!

Bite my breast, bite it harder, mother's tiger  
cub!

## THE CAGE

IN THE MIDDLE of the great greenish room stood the green iron cage.

All was old, and cold and mournful, ancient with the double antiquity of heart and brain in the great greenish room.

Old and hoary was the man who sat upon the faldstool, upon the fireless and godless altar, Old were the tomes that mouldered behind him on the dusty shelves,

Old was the painting of an old man that hung above him;

Old the man upon his left who awoke with his cracked voice the dead echoes of dead centuries, old the man upon his right who wielded a wand; and old all those who spoke to him and listened to him before and around the green iron cage.

Old were the words they spoke, and their faces were drawn and white and lifeless, without expression or solemnity; like the ikons of old cathedrals.

For of naught they knew, but of what was written in the old, yellow books. And all the joys and the pains and the loves and hatreds and furies and labors and strifes of man, all the fierce and divine passions that battle and rage in the heart of man, never entered into the

great greenish room but to sit in the green iron cage.

Senility, dullness and dissolution were all around the green iron cage, and nothing was new and young and alive in the great room, except the three men who were in the cage.

\* \* \*

Throbbled and thundered and clamored and roared outside of the great greenish room the terrible whirl of life, and most pleasant was the hymn of its mighty polyphony to the listening ears of the gods.

Whirred the wheels of the puissant machines, rattled and clanked the chains of the giant cranes, crashed the falling rocks, the riveters crepitated and glad and sonorous was the rhythm of the bouncing hammers upon the loud-throated anvils.

Like the chests of wrathfully toiling Titans, heaved and sniffed and panted the sweaty boilers, like the hissing of dragons sibilated the jets of steam, and the sirens of the workshops shrieked like angry hawks flapping above the crags of a dark and fathomless chasm.

The files screeched and the trains thundered, the wires hummed, the dynamos buzzed, the fires crackled; and like a thunderclap from the cyclopean forge roared the blasts of the mines.

Wonderful and fierce was the mighty symphony of the world, as the terrible voices of metal and fire and water cried out into the listening ears of the gods the furious song of human toil.

Out of the chaos of sound, welded in the unison  
of one will to sing, rose clear and nimble the  
divine accord of the hymn.

Out of the cañons of the mountains,  
Out of the whirlpools of the lakes,  
Out of the entrails of the earth,  
Out of the yawning gorges of hell,  
From the land and the sea and the sky  
And from whatever comes bread and  
wealth and joy,

And from the peaceful abodes of men rose ma-  
jestic and fierce, louder than the roar of the  
volcano and the bellow of the typhoon, the  
anthem of human labor to the fatherly justice  
of the Sun.

But in the great greenish room there was nothing  
but the silence of dead centuries and of ears  
that listen no more; and none heard the  
mighty call of life that roared outside, save  
the three men who were in the cage.

\* \* \*

All the good smells, the wholesome smells, the  
healthy smells of life and labor were outside  
the great room.

The smell of rain upon the grass and of the flow-  
ers consumed by their love for the stars;

The heavy smell of smoke that coiled out of myr-  
iads of chimneys of ships and factories and  
homes,

The dry smell of sawdust and the salty smell of  
the iron filings;

The odor of magazines and granaries and ware-  
houses, the kingly smell of argosies and the  
rich scent of market places, so dear to the  
women of the race;

The smell of new cloth and new linen, the smell

of soap and water, and the smell of newly printed paper,

The smell of grains and hay and the smell of stables, the warm smell of cattle and sheep that Virgil loved;

The smell of milk and wine and plants and metals,

And all the good odors of the earth and of the sea and of the sky, and the fragrance of fresh bread, sweetest aroma of the world, and the smell of human sweat, most holy incense to the divine nostrils of the gods, and all the Olympian perfumes of the heart and the brain and the passions of men were outside of the great greenish room.

But within the old room there was nothing but the smell of old books and the dust of things decayed, and the suffocated exhalations of old graves, and the ashen odor of dissolution and death.

Yet all the sweetness of all the wholesome odors of the world outside was redolent in the breath of the three men in the cage.

\* \* \*

Like crippled eagles fallen were the three men in the cage, and like little children who look into a well to behold the sky were the men that looked down upon them.

No more would they rise to their lofty eyries, no more would they soar above the snow-capped mountains—yet, tho' their pinions were broken, nothing could dim the fierce glow of their eyes that knew all the altitudes of heaven.

Strange it was to behold the men in the cage while life clamored outside, and strange it

seemed to them that they should be there because of what dead men had written in old books.

So of naught did they think but of the old books and the green cage.

Thought they: "All things are born, grow, decay, die and are forgotten. Surely all that is in this room will pass away. But what will endure the longer, the folly that was written into the old books or the madness that was beaten into the bands of this cage?"

"Which of these two powers has enthralled us, the thought of the dead men who wrote the old books, or the labor of living men who have wrought this cage?"

Long and intently they thought, but they found no answer.

\* \* \*

But one of the men in the cage, whose soul was tormented by the fiercest fire of hell, which is the yearning after the Supreme Truth, spoke and said unto his comrades:

"Aye, brothers, all things die and pass away, yet nothing is truly and forever dead until each one of the living has thrown a regretless handful of soil into its grave.

"Many a book has been written since these old books were written, and many a proverb of the sage has become the jest of the fool, yet this cage still stands as it stood for numberless ages.

"What is it, then, that made it of metal more enduring than the printed word?"

"Which is its power to hold us here?"

"Brothers, it is the things we love that enslave us,

“Brothers, it is the things we yearn for that subdue us.

“Brothers, it is not hatred for the things that are, but love for the things that are to be that make us slaves.

“And what man is more apt to become a thrall, brothers, and to be locked in a green iron cage, than he who yearns the most for the Supreme of the things that are to be—he who most craves for Freedom?

“And what subtle and malignant power, save this love of loves, could be in the metal of this cage that it is so mad to imprison us?”

So spoke one of the men to the other two, and then, out of the silence of the aeons spoke into his tormented soul the metallic soul of the cage.

\* \* \*

“Iron, the twin brother of fire, the first born out of the matrix of the earth, the witness everlasting to the glory of thy labor am I, O Man!

“Nor for this was I meant, O Man! Not to imprison thee, but to set thee free and sustain thee in thy strife and in thy toil.

“I was to lift the pillars of the Temple higher than the mountains;

“I was to break down and bore through all the barriers of the world to open the way to thy triumphant chariot.

“All the treasures and all the bounties of the earth was I to give as an offering into thy hands, and all its forces and powers to bring chained like crouching dogs at thy feet.

“Hadst thou not sinned against the nobility of my nature and my destiny, hadst thou not humiliated me, an almighty warrior, to be-

come the lackey of gold, I would have never risen against thee and enslaved thee, O Man!  
“While I was hoe and ploughshare and sword and axe and scythe and hammer, I was the first artificer of thy happiness; but the day I was beaten into the first lock and the first key, I became fetters and chains to thy hands and thy feet, O Man!

“My curse is thy curse, O Man, and even if thou shouldst pass out of the wicket of this cage, never shalt thou be free until thou returnest me to the joy of labor.

“O Man, bring me back into the old smithy, purify me again with the holy fire of the forge, lay me again on the mother breast of the anvil, beat me again with the old honest hammer—O Man, remould me with thy wonderful hands into an instrument of thy toil,

Remake of me the sword of thy justice,  
Remake of me the tripod of thy worship,  
Remake of me the sickle for thy grain,  
Remake of me the oven for thy bread,  
And the andirons for thy peaceful hearth,  
O Man!

And the trestles for the bed of thy love,  
O Man!

And the frame of thy joyous lyre, O Man!”

\* \* \*

Thus spake to one of the three men, out of the silence of centuries, the metallic soul of the cage.

And he listened unto its voice, and while it was still ringing in his soul—which was tormented by the fiercest fire of hell, which is the yearning after the supreme truth (Is it Death? Is it Love?)—there arose one man in the silent

assembly of old men that were around the iron cage.

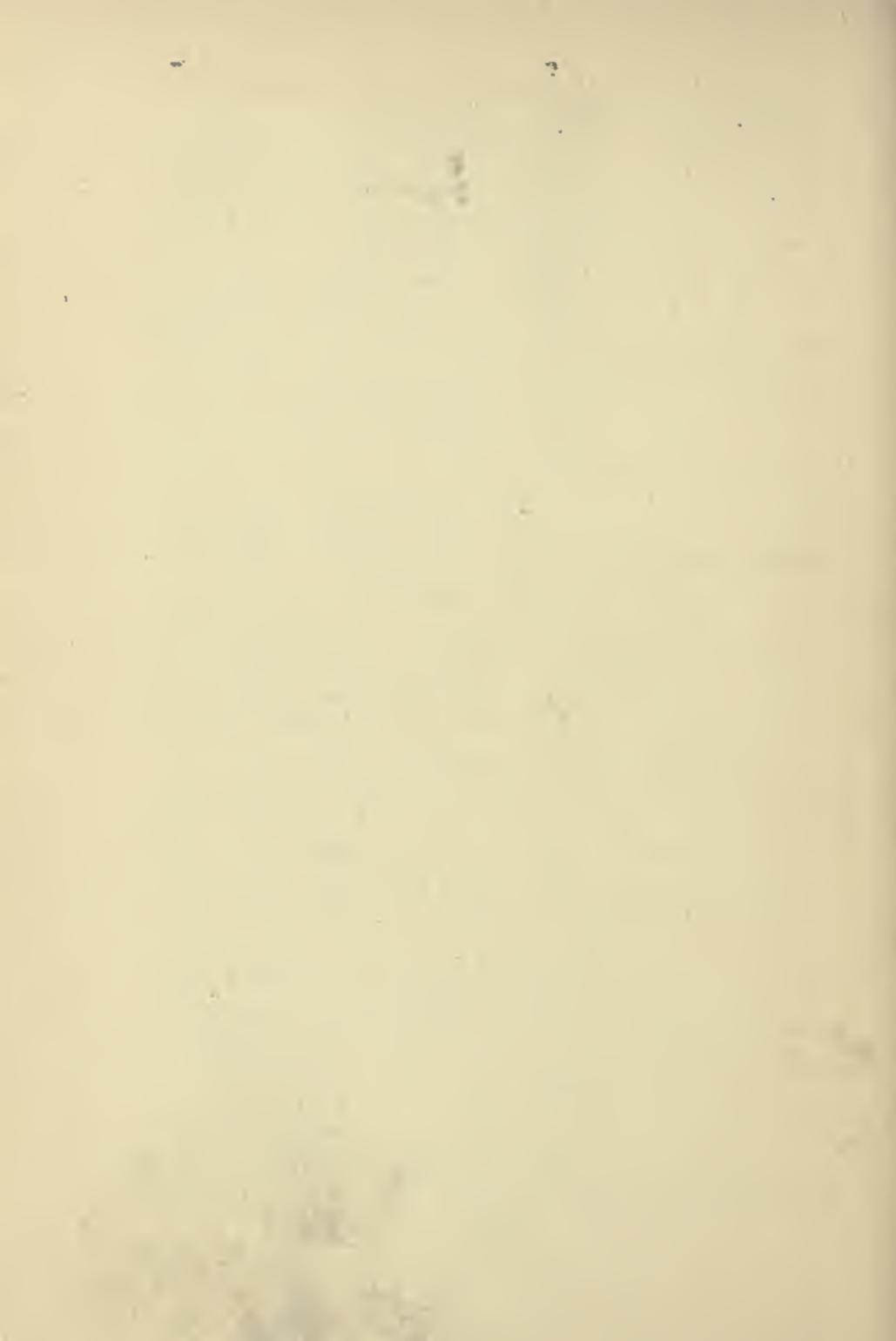
And that man was the most hoary of all, and most bent and worn and crushed was he under the heavy weight of the great burden he bore without pride and without joy.

He arose and addressing himself—I know not whether to the old man that sat on the black throne, or to the old books that were mouldering behind him, or to the picture that hung above him—he said (and dreary as a wind that moans through the crosses of an old graveyard was his voice):

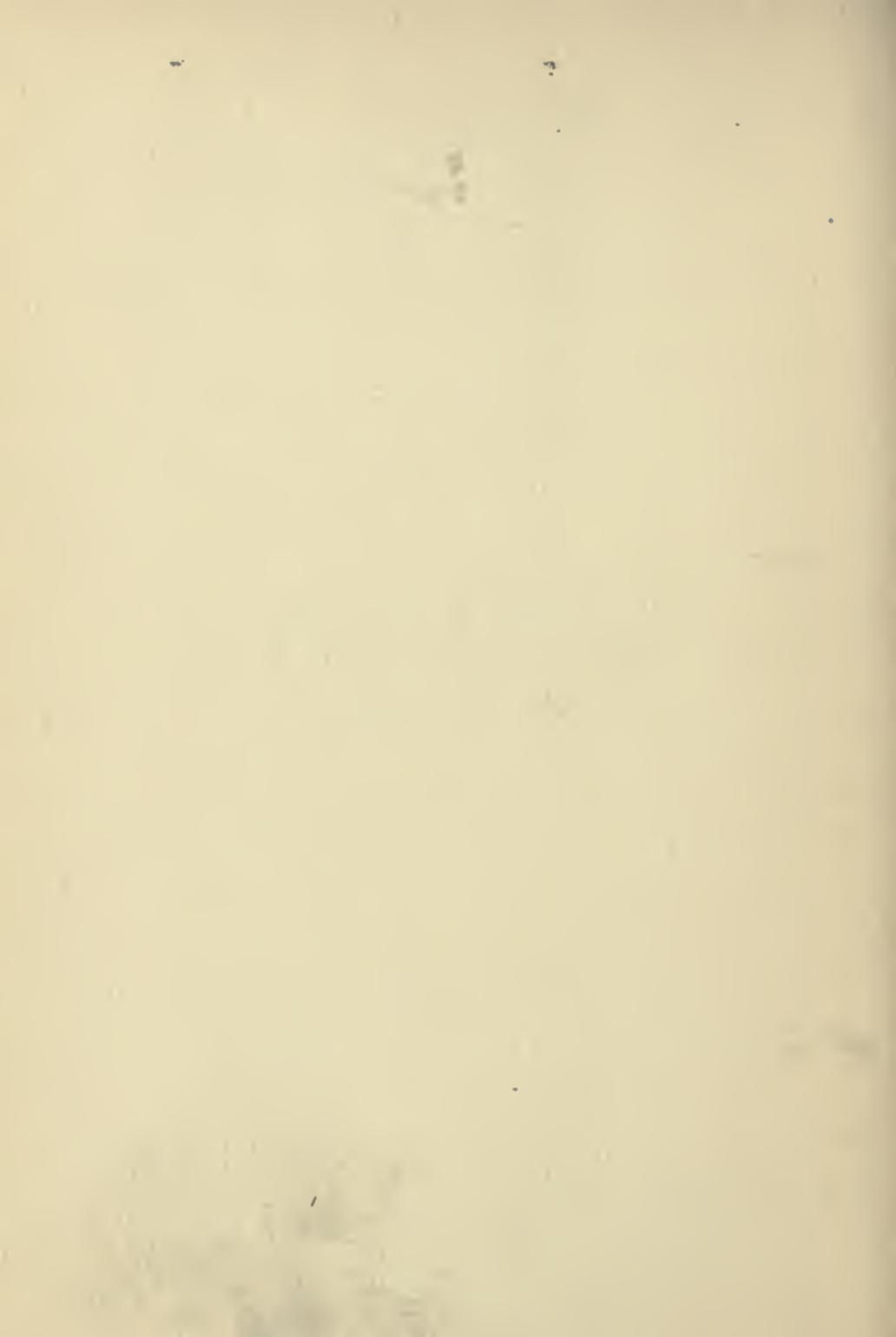
“I will prove to you that these three men in the cage are criminals and murderers and that they ought to be put to death.”

Love, it was then that I heard for the first time the creak of the moth that was eating the old painting and the old books, and the worm that was gnawing the old bench, and it was then that I saw that all the old men around the great greenish room were dead.

They were dead like the old man in the painting, save that they still read the old books he could read no more, and still spoke and heard the old words he could speak and hear no more, and still passed the judgment of the dead, which he no more could pass, upon the mighty life of the world outside that throbbed and thundered and clamored and roared the wonderful anthem of human labor to the fatherly justice of the Sun.



THE LAST ORACLE  
TO ANNE SULLIVAN MACY  
*Teacher of Helen Keller*



## THE LAST ORACLE

### I

Teacher, I who have sought in my fierce youth  
In many an ancient scroll of obscure lore  
The key-word to the dark, Medusean door  
Behind which, on the grave of fear, stands truth ;

And in my restless quest and desolate  
The chariots of my warrior heart I drove,  
Hurling in vain the rams of faith and love  
Against the terrors of the mighty gate,

I knew not that the wisdom of this age  
Had even now the fearful shrine unlocked,  
Until, wayfarer of the world, I knocked  
At thy remote and peaceful hermitage.

'Twas not the house of Silence, though no sound  
Heard I within the lofty colonnade,  
And yet meseemed that somewhere in the shade,  
Something did stir, indefinite, profound ;

Something that shook and tore the deepest  
strings  
Of my stout heart—a Voice that only says  
And does not speak, above the world's byways,  
Dolorous like the beat of broken wings.

'Twas not the house of Darkness, yet, though  
faint,  
No worldly light I saw, but what did seem  
The haze that lights at night the placid dream  
Of children and the vision of the saint.

Therein stood I as he whose trembling lips  
The last deep message of his prayer has said,  
And fearfully awaits with drooping head  
The blare of the supreme apocalypse.

Yet asked I not to see for the wan wraith  
Of my wild youth that all the roads had tried,  
Not for the sorrows of the Crucified,  
Nor for the works of my all-suffering faith ;

But for the One who waits earth-bound in chains  
The greater flame of his first conquered spark,  
To gain back, if he leap from out the dark,  
The crown that heaven has stolen from his do-  
mains ;

For Him I asked whose rebel soul was hurled  
Into the deepest pit of burning fire,  
Yet never ceased to battle and conspire  
To render back to cheated Man his world ;

And for the One upon whose back the yoke  
And the feast tables of old Croesus stand,  
And by the power of whose almighty hand,  
Teacher, the seals that sealed the gate you broke.

## II

I felt not sad, nor yet did I rejoice.  
My life retreated to its last recess,  
And then, from out the unfathomed nothingness  
I heard the answer of the loneliest Voice.

The Voice that thou hast moulded with thy deft  
And learnèd hands of love and firmly struck  
Not in ignoble clay, but in the rock  
That tides and bolts has braved, unmoved, un-  
cleft.

The Voice thou didst reclaim from out the still  
Empire whose gate no one before thee shook,  
The Voice that has belied the crafty book,  
Man's destinies to sing and to fulfill.

Said She: "My world is wider than the strength  
Of thy sharp eyes can girdle and surround,  
For in my night in which I see no bound,  
I cannot walk the fulness of its length.

"But thou who canst behold and dost respond  
Often unto the lures that guile thy soul,  
No farther than thy gaze shalt make thy goal  
And pitch thy tent where started I beyond.

"For I no greater obstacles can meet  
Than this, the voiceless dark which I explore,  
And yet, how loud, like the sea's surging roar,  
I hear the sunward march of countless feet.

"They go with me and I with them. But where,  
They know not nor I cannot signify,  
Oh, if I could but find the voice to cry  
For me, the eyes to see, the ears to hear.

"If I could find the one to sally forth,  
My vision and his strength their foes would rout,  
And clear the way for them and lead them out  
Of bondage to the gardens of the earth.

“Whom shall I send? My heart has grown un-  
steady  
In its long quest.”—I bowed my head in pain...  
Then in its battle armor leaped again  
My warrior heart and answered: “Send me,  
Lady!”

### III

Send me! Whatever in thy watchful night  
Thou blessest, I shall blazon in the morn,  
And what thou cursest with thy withering scorn  
Into the conquered ditches I shall smite.

Send me, send me! Thy words shall sear and  
cleave  
Like trails of mighty armies through the land,  
For thou alone canst see and understand  
The destiny we only can achieve.

For though we had the truth, the tool, the word  
To pit against our foemen's lies and gold,  
No sacred name had we to stand and hold  
Against the One whose cross has shaped their  
sword;

The One who sanctified their holocaust,  
Whose words of peace our holy war have cursed,  
Whose blood our red ensigns has not aspersed  
But filled the goblets of their drunken lust.

Aye, we were stronger, we whose soul is wrought  
Upon the fire and made with flame and ash,  
Yet by the power of that One name the clash  
They stayed of our invincible onslaught.

But now thy lightless eyes that overpass  
The girdle of our vaster battle-field,  
Shall break the charm of their enchanted shield  
And pierce the strongest steel of their cuirass.

Henceforth thy word into the cannon bronze  
We cast, our new commandments to proclaim;  
Thou art the Vestal of the greatest flame,  
Thou art the Sybil of the last response.

And when their Christ they conjure to condone  
Their deeds of blood, our sins of love by thee  
Shall be dispersed—a higher Calvary  
Thou didst ascend to suffer and atone.

#### IV

And lo! as thou hast seen it, it shall be.  
One day we shall relight our bivouac fires  
Upon the embattled streets of our grandsires  
And swear once more to die or to be free.

One day our bleeding, ever plodding feet,  
Lit by the torch of love, shall stop before  
The House of Greed, and hard upon the door,  
Clenched in our fist the scythe of Time shall beat.

Two messengers that day shall pass the gate,  
One, white-clad, who shall bear the salt and bread  
Of peace, and One who cloaked in gory red  
Shall bring the everlasting doom of hate.

Thou shalt be first, and say (for thou shalt live  
Till then, thou who hast known no mortal sin):  
“Your brother stands without, let him come in  
And all your great misdeeds he will forgive.

"Your brother whom you cast away to roam  
In misery and shame and toilsome woe,  
Comes back in arms, and yet not like a foe,  
But like a guest he will re-enter home.

"Open your door, receive him at your hearth,  
Break bread with him and he shall break his  
sword,

And from this day the kingdom of the Lord  
Be evermore established on the earth."

Thus shalt thou say. But if his heart of guilt  
Be hardened, then the Somber One whose brow  
Is seared by all the fires and ne'er did bow  
Shall come forth, both his hands upon the hilt.

'Twill not be I, but one in whom my breath  
Will pass before I die; for to my Dream  
I ask no guerdon but this gift supreme,  
The beauty of the battle and of death.

"Harken!" he'll say. "In vain we begged your  
dole,

For mercy, for the common bond of blood,  
For love of man, for fear of your own god,  
For the salvation of your deathless soul.

"We served you, fed you, housed you, cheered  
or wept

When you were glad or sad; when sick we nursed  
You back to health; your foes we fought and  
cursed,

We watched your gold, we labored while you  
slept.

“We mourned your dead, we blessed your children’s name,

We gave to you our sweat, our tears, our lives,  
The virtue of our daughters and our wives,  
Our share of heav’n, our hoary mothers’ shame.

“Always unfelt, unseen, ununderstood,  
Our love for you all suffered and forgave.  
When you did strike us, we acclaimed you brave;  
When you despised our lives, we hailed you good.

“Nothing we claimed and little did we beg;  
Bereft of all, in famine, old, diseased,  
After your dogs were filled, and when you  
pleased,  
We asked to have the offal and the dreg.

“We only asked enough to live—not this,  
Your life, but just to toil and not to die:  
A loaf, a bed, a rag, a sheltered sty,  
Your god to worship and your hand to kiss.

“No more we asked. But, lo, you heard us not,  
You drove us from your kennels and you grinned  
When in the cold, the snow, the rain, the wind,  
You damned our souls to hell, our flesh to rot.

“You drove our babes to starve, the strong to  
drink,  
The weak to beg, our famished girls to fill  
The charnels of your stews, our sons to kill  
For bread and work . . . and all of us to think!

“And so we thought. Behold the morning hour,  
Your last, the crimson dawn that drives the fogs.  
We have come back, not like a pack of dogs  
That to new bones and an old whip will cower,

“Not like a drove of cattle which the knife  
Can silence and the rope can yoke and bind,  
But like the first vanguard of humankind  
That comes into its heritage of life.

“We ask no more for work, for love, for bread.  
We are the stronger now, we bring no peace.  
Monster, your hour is struck, get on your knees,  
We come not for your gold—we want your  
head!”

## TO THE ONE WHO WAITS

No! Whether a sob or a song,  
While love shall life's battles endure,  
While you in my will shall be strong  
And I in your faith shall be pure,

While both have to weep, but our soul  
Knows not what is doubt or despair,  
While happiness be not our goal,  
But simply the way to get there;

While after each loss we are trying  
Again, though we never achieve,  
And, mocked at and wounded and dying,  
We still shall persist and believe,

While after each stormy nightfall  
More radiant each sunrise will seem,  
And while, after having lost all,  
Remain you and I and the Dream—

Even though all the world shall adverse us,  
Though all our destruction acclaim,  
And priests in God's name shall accurse us,  
And fools in humanity's name;

Though all our old comrades we lose,  
And each of our friends turn a knave,  
And some pull the hangman's red noose,  
And all help to dig us a grave,

Still this unto you will I tell,  
That no man, no scaffold, no jail,  
No powers of heaven and hell  
Against you and me shall prevail!



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