Victorian Poetry English IV AP/DC

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

**ULYSSES**

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink

Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd

Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those

That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;

For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known; cities of men

And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

I am a part of all that I have met;

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'

Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades

For ever and forever when I move.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!

As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life

Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains: but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,

A bringer of new things; and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

         This is my son, mine own Telemachus,

To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—

Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil

This labour, by slow prudence to make mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees

Subdue them to the useful and the good.

Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail

In offices of tenderness, and pay

Meet adoration to my household gods,

When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

         There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:

There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

Death closes all: but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,

'T is not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite

The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,

And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

**TITHONUS**

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,

The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,

Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,

And after many a summer dies the swan.

Me only cruel immortality

Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,

Here at the quiet limit of the world,

A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream

The ever-silent spaces of the East,

Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

         Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—

So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,

Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd

To his great heart none other than a God!

I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'

Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,

Like wealthy men, who care not how they give.

But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,

And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,

And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd

To dwell in presence of immortal youth,

Immortal age beside immortal youth,

And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,

Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,

Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,

Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears

To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:

Why should a man desire in any way

To vary from the kindly race of men

Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance

Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

         A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes

A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.

Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals

From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,

And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.

Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,

Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,

Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team

Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,

And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,

And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

         Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful

In silence, then before thine answer given

Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

         Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,

And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,

In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?

'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

         Ay me! ay me! with what another heart

In days far-off, and with what other eyes

I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—

The lucid outline forming round thee; saw

The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;

Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood

Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all

Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,

Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm

With kisses balmier than half-opening buds

Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd

Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,

While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

         Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:

How can my nature longer mix with thine?

Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold

Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet

Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam

Floats up from those dim fields about the homes

Of happy men that have the power to die,

And grassy barrows of the happier dead.

Release me, and restore me to the ground;

Thou seëst all things, thou wilt see my grave:

Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;

I earth in earth forget these empty courts,

And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

**THE HIGHER PANTHEISM**

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,-

Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He, tho' He be not that which He seems?

Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,

Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why,

For is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel "I am I"?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,

Making Him broken gleams and a stifled splendour and gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet-

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O soul, and let us rejoice,

For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some; no God at all, says the fool,

For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;

But if we could see and hear, this Vision-were it not He?

**VASTNESS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Many a planet by many a sun may roll with a dust of a vanish’d race. |  |
|   |  |
| Raving politics, never at rest—as this poor earth’s pale history runs,— |  |
| What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns? |  |
|   |  |
| Lies upon this side, lies upon that side, truthless violence mourn’d by the Wise, | *5* |
| Thousands of voices drowning his own in a popular torrent of lies upon lies; |  |
|   |  |
| Stately purposes, valor in battle, glorious annals of army and fleet, |  |
| Death for the right cause, death for the wrong cause, trumpets of victory, groans of defeat; |  |
|   |  |
| Innocence seeth’d in her mother’s milk, and Charity setting the martyr aflame; |  |
| Thraldom who walks with the banner of Freedom, and recks not to ruin a realm in her name; | *10* |
|   |  |
| Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the gloom of doubts that darken the schools; |  |
| Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her hand, follow’d up by her vassal legion of fools; |  |
|   |  |
| Trade flying over a thousand seas with her spice and her vintage, her silk and her corn; |  |
| Desolate offing, sailorless harbors, famishing populace, wharves forlorn; |  |
|   |  |
| Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise; gloom of the evening, Life at a close; | *15* |
| Pleasure who flaunts on her wide downway with her flying robe and her poison’d rose; |  |
|   |  |
| Pain, that has crawl’d from the corpse of Pleasure, a worm which writhes all day, and at night |  |
| Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper, and stings him back to the curse of the light; |  |
|   |  |
| Wealth with his wines and his wedded harlots; honest Poverty, bare to the bone; |  |
| Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty; Flattery gilding the rift in a throne; | *20* |
|   |  |
| Fame blowing out from her golden trumpet a jubilant challenge to Time and to Fate; |  |
| Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on all the laurell’d graves of the Great; |  |
|   |  |
| Love for the maiden, crown’d with marriage, no regrets for aught that has been, |  |
| Household happiness, gracious children, debtless competence, golden mean; |  |
|   |  |
| National hatreds of whole generations, and pigmy spites of the village spire; | *25* |
| Vows that will last to the last death-ruckle, and vows that are snapp’d in a moment of fire; |  |
|   |  |
| He that has liv’d for the lust of a minute, and died in the doing it, flesh without mind; |  |
| He that has nail’d all flesh to the Cross, till Self died out in the love of his kind; |  |
|   |  |
| Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter, and all these old revolutions of earth; |  |
| All new-old revolutions of Empire—change of the tide—what is all of it worth? | *30* |
|   |  |
| What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy, varying voices of prayer? |  |
| All that is noblest, all that is basest, all that is filthy with all that is fair? |  |
|   |  |
| What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-coffins at last, |  |
| Swallow’d in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown’d in the deeps of a meaningless Past? |  |
|   |  |
| What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment’s anger of bees in their hive?— | *35* |
|   |  |
| Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever: the dead are not dead but alive. |  |
|   |  |

**THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE**

I

Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,

All in the valley of Death

   Rode the six hundred.

“Forward, the Light Brigade!

Charge for the guns!” he said.

Into the valley of Death

   Rode the six hundred.

II

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”

Was there a man dismayed?

Not though the soldier knew

   Someone had blundered.

   Theirs not to make reply,

   Theirs not to reason why,

   Theirs but to do and die.

   Into the valley of Death

   Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,

Cannon in front of them

   Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

Boldly they rode and well,

Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of hell

   Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flashed all their sabres bare,

Flashed as they turned in air

Sabring the gunners there,

Charging an army, while

   All the world wondered.

Plunged in the battery-smoke

Right through the line they broke;

Cossack and Russian

Reeled from the sabre stroke

   Shattered and sundered.

Then they rode back, but not

   Not the six hundred.

 V

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,

Cannon behind them

   Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

While horse and hero fell.

They that had fought so well

Came through the jaws of Death,

Back from the mouth of hell,

All that was left of them,

   Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made!

   All the world wondered.

Honour the charge they made!

Honour the Light Brigade,

   Noble six hundred!

**THE KRAKEN**

Below the thunders of the upper deep,

Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,

His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep

The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee

About his shadowy sides; above him swell

Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;

And far away into the sickly light,

From many a wondrous grot and secret cell

Unnumbered and enormous polypi

Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.

There hath he lain for ages, and will lie

Battening upon huge sea worms in his sleep,

Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;

Then once by man and angels to be seen,

In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

**CROSSING THE BAR**

Sunset and evening star,

      And one clear call for me!

And may there be no moaning of the bar,

      When I put out to sea,

   But such a tide as moving seems asleep,

      Too full for sound and foam,

When that which drew from out the boundless deep

      Turns again home.

   Twilight and evening bell,

      And after that the dark!

And may there be no sadness of farewell,

      When I embark;

   For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place

      The flood may bear me far,

I hope to see my Pilot face to face

      When I have crost the bar.

ROBERT BROWNING

**MY LAST DUCHESS**

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf’s hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said

“Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ’twas not

Her husband’s presence only, called that spot

Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek; perhaps

Fra Pandolf chanced to say, “Her mantle laps

Over my lady’s wrist too much,” or “Paint

Must never hope to reproduce the faint

Half-flush that dies along her throat.” Such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

For calling up that spot of joy. She had

A heart—how shall I say?— too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West,

The bough of cherries some officious fool

Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule

She rode with round the terrace—all and each

Would draw from her alike the approving speech,

Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name

With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame

This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

In speech—which I have not—to make your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say, “Just this

Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,

Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let

Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—

E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose

Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands

As if alive. Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet

The company below, then. I repeat,

The Count your master’s known munificence

Is ample warrant that no just pretense

Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go

Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,

Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

**PORPHYRIA’S LOVER**

The rain set early in tonight

The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me – she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me forever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could tonight's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshiped me: surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

**THE LABORATORY**

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,

May gaze thro’ these faint smokes curling whitely,

As thou pliest thy trade in this devil’s-smithy—

Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

   He is with her, and they know that I know

Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow

While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear

Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

   Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,

Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!

Better sit thus and observe thy strange things,

Than go where men wait me and dance at the King’s.

   That in the mortar—you call it a gum?

Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!

And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,

Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

   Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,

What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!

To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,

A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

   Soon, at the King’s, a mere lozenge to give

And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!

But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head

And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

   Quick—is it finished? The colour’s too grim!

Why not soft like the phial’s, enticing and dim?

Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,

And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

   What a drop! She’s not little, no minion like me—

That’s why she ensnared him: this never will free

The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, “no!”

To that pulse’s magnificent come-and-go.

   For only last night, as they whispered, I brought

My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought

Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,

Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

   Not that I bid you spare her the pain!

Let death be felt and the proof remain;

Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—

He is sure to remember her dying face!

   Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;

It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:

The delicate droplet, my whole fortune’s fee—

If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

   Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,

You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!

But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings

Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King’s!

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

SONNET 43 (How Do I Love Thee?)

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight

For the ends of being and ideal grace.

I love thee to the level of every day’s

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.

I love thee freely, as men strive for right;

I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use

In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose

With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,

Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,

I shall but love thee better after death.

SONNET 24

Let the world's sharpness, like a clasping knife,

Shut in upon itself and do no harm

In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,

And let us hear no sound of human strife

After the click of the shutting. Life to life—

I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,

And feel as safe as guarded by a charm

Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife

Are weak to injure. Very whitely still

The lilies of our lives may reassure

Their blossoms from their roots, accessible

Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer,

Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.

God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

**I.**

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,

    Down in the reeds by the river ?

Spreading ruin and scattering ban,

Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,

And breaking the golden lilies afloat

    With the dragon-fly on the river.

**II.**

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,

    From the deep cool bed of the river :

The limpid water turbidly ran,

And the broken lilies a-dying lay,

And the dragon-fly had fled away,

    Ere he brought it out of the river.

**III.**

High on the shore sate the great god Pan,

    While turbidly flowed the river ;

And hacked and hewed as a great god can,

With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,

Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed

    To prove it fresh from the river.

**IV.**

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,

    (How tall it stood in the river !)

Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,

Steadily from the outside ring,

And notched the poor dry empty thing

    In holes, as he sate by the river.

**V.**

This is the way,' laughed the great god Pan,

    Laughed while he sate by the river,)

The only way, since gods began

To make sweet music, they could succeed.'

Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,

    He blew in power by the river.

**VI.**

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan !

    Piercing sweet by the river !

Blinding sweet, O great god Pan !

The sun on the hill forgot to die,

And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly

    Came back to dream on the river.

**VII.**

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,

    To laugh as he sits by the river,

Making a poet out of a man :

The true gods sigh for the cost and pain, —

For the reed which grows nevermore again

    As a reed with the reeds in the river.

CRY OF THE CHILDREN

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,

      Ere the sorrow comes with years ?

They are leaning their young heads against their mothers, —

      And that cannot stop their tears.

The young lambs are bleating in the meadows ;

   The young birds are chirping in the nest ;

The young fawns are playing with the shadows ;

   The young flowers are blowing toward the west—

But the young, young children, O my brothers,

      They are weeping bitterly !

They are weeping in the playtime of the others,

      In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,

      Why their tears are falling so ?

The old man may weep for his to-morrow

      Which is lost in Long Ago —

The old tree is leafless in the forest —

   The old year is ending in the frost —

The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest —

   The old hope is hardest to be lost :

But the young, young children, O my brothers,

      Do you ask them why they stand

Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,

      In our happy Fatherland ?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,

      And their looks are sad to see,

For the man's grief abhorrent, draws and presses

      Down the cheeks of infancy —

"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary;"

   "Our young feet," they say, "are very weak !"

Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—

   Our grave-rest is very far to seek !

Ask the old why they weep, and not the children,

      For the outside earth is cold —

And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,

      And the graves are for the old !"

"True," say the children, "it may happen

      That we die before our time !

Little Alice died last year her grave is shapen

      Like a snowball, in the rime.

We looked into the pit prepared to take her —

   Was no room for any work in the close clay :

From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,

   Crying, 'Get up, little Alice ! it is day.'

If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,

   With your ear down, little Alice never cries ;

Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,

   For the smile has time for growing in her eyes ,—

And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in

      The shroud, by the kirk-chime !

It is good when it happens," say the children,

      "That we die before our time !"

Alas, the wretched children ! they are seeking

      Death in life, as best to have !

They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,

      With a cerement from the grave.

Go out, children, from the mine and from the city —

   Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do —

Pluck you handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty

   Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !

But they answer, " Are your cowslips of the meadows

      Like our weeds anear the mine ?

Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,

      From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,

      And we cannot run or leap —

If we cared for any meadows, it were merely

      To drop down in them and sleep.

Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping —

   We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;

And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,

   The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.

For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,

      Through the coal-dark, underground —

Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron

      In the factories, round and round.

"For all day, the wheels are droning, turning, —

      Their wind comes in our faces, —

Till our hearts turn, — our heads, with pulses burning,

      And the walls turn in their places

Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling —

   Turns the long light that droppeth down the wall, —

Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling —

   All are turning, all the day, and we with all ! —

And all day, the iron wheels are droning ;

      And sometimes we could pray,

'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)

      'Stop ! be silent for to-day ! ' "

Ay ! be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing

      For a moment, mouth to mouth —

Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing

      Of their tender human youth !

Let them feel that this cold metallic motion

   Is not all the life God fashions or reveals —

Let them prove their inward souls against the notion

   That they live in you, or under you, O wheels ! —

Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,

      As if Fate in each were stark ;

And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,

      Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,

      To look up to Him and pray —

So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,

      Will bless them another day.

They answer, " Who is God that He should hear us,

   While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred ?

When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us

   Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word !

And we hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)

      Strangers speaking at the door :

Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,

      Hears our weeping any more ?

" Two words, indeed, of praying we remember ;

      And at midnight's hour of harm, —

'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,

      We say softly for a charm.

We know no other words, except 'Our Father,'

   And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,

God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,

   And hold both within His right hand which is strong.

'Our Father !' If He heard us, He would surely

      (For they call Him good and mild)

Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,

      'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But, no !" say the children, weeping faster,

      " He is speechless as a stone ;

And they tell us, of His image is the master

      Who commands us to work on.

Go to ! " say the children,—"up in Heaven,

   Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find !

Do not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving —

   We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."

Do ye hear the children weeping and disproving,

      O my brothers, what ye preach ?

For God's possible is taught by His world's loving —

      And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you ;

      They are weary ere they run ;

They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory

      Which is brighter than the sun :

They know the grief of man, without its wisdom ;

   They sink in the despair, without its calm —

Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom, —

   Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm, —

Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly

      No dear remembrance keep,—

Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly :

      Let them weep ! let them weep !

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,

      And their look is dread to see,

For they think you see their angels in their places,

      With eyes meant for Deity ;—

"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,

   Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart, —

Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,

   And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?

Our blood splashes upward, O our tyrants,

      And your purple shews your path ;

But the child's sob curseth deeper in the silence

      Than the strong man in his wrath !"

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE FUTURE

A wanderer is man from his birth.

He was born in a ship

On the breast of the river of Time;

Brimming with wonder and joy

He spreads out his arms to the light,

Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.

Whether he wakes,

Where the snowy mountainous pass,

Echoing the screams of the eagles,

Hems in its gorges the bed

Of the new-born clear-flowing stream;

Whether he first sees light

Where the river in gleaming rings

Sluggishly winds through the plain;

Whether in sound of the swallowing sea—

As is the world on the banks,

So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each, as he glides,

Fable and dream

Of the lands which the river of Time

Had left ere he woke on its breast,

Or shall reach when his eyes have been closed.

Only the tract where he sails

He wots of; only the thoughts,

Raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green earth any more

As she was by the sources of Time?

Who imagines her fields as they lay

In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?

Who thinks as they thought,

The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,

Her vigorous, primitive sons?

What girl

Now reads in her bosom as clear

As Rebekah read, when she sate

At eve by the palm-shaded well?

Who guards in her breast

As deep, as pellucid a spring

Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What bard,

At the height of his vision, can deem

Of God, of the world, of the soul,

With a plainness as near,

As flashing as Moses felt

When he lay in the night by his flock

On the starlit Arabian waste?

Can rise and obey

The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the river of Time

Now flows through with us, is the plain.

Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.

Border'd by cities and hoarse

With a thousand cries is its stream.

And we on its breast, our minds

Are confused as the cries which we hear,

Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

And we say that repose has fled

For ever the course of the river of Time.

That cities will crowd to its edge

In a blacker, incessanter line;

That the din will be more on its banks,

Denser the trade on its stream,

Flatter the plain where it flows,

Fiercer the sun overhead.

That never will those on its breast

See an ennobling sight,

Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,

And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the river of Time

As it grows, as the towns on its marge

Fling their wavering lights

On a wider, statelier stream

May acquire, if not the calm

Of its early mountainous shore,

Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush

Of the grey expanse where he floats,

Freshening its current and spotted with foam

As it draws to the Ocean, may strike

Peace to the soul of the man on its breast

As the pale waste widens around him,

As the banks fade dimmer away,

As the stars come out, and the night-wind

Brings up the stream

Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

TO MARGUERITE, CONTINUED

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,

With echoing straits between us thrown,

Dotting the shoreless watery wild,

We mortal millions live *alone.*

The islands feel the enclasping flow,

And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,

And they are swept by balms of spring,

And in their glens, on starry nights,

The nightingales divinely sing;

And lovely notes, from shore to shore,

Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair

Is to their farthest caverns sent;

For surely once, they feel, we were

Parts of a single continent!

Now round us spreads the watery plain—

Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire

Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?

Who renders vain their deep desire?—

A God, a God their severance ruled!

And bade betwixt their shores to be

The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

A DREAM

Was it a dream? We sail'd, I thought we sail'd,

Martin and I, down the green Alpine stream,

Border'd, each bank, with pines; the morning sun,

On the wet umbrage of their glossy tops,

On the red pinings of their forest-floor,

Drew a warm scent abroad; behind the pines

The mountain-skirts, with all their sylvan change

Of bright-leaf'd chestnuts and moss'd walnut-trees

And the frail scarlet-berried ash, began.

Swiss chalets glitter'd on the dewy slopes,

And from some swarded shelf, high up, there came

Notes of wild pastoral music--over all

Ranged, diamond-bright, the eternal wall of snow.

Upon the mossy rocks at the stream's edge,

Back'd by the pines, a plank-built cottage stood,

Bright in the sun; the climbing gourd-plant's leaves

Muffled its walls, and on the stone-strewn roof

Lay the warm golden gourds; golden, within,

Under the eaves, peer'd rows of Indian corn.

We shot beneath the cottage with the stream.

On the brown, rude-carved balcony, two forms

Came forth--Olivia's, Marguerite! and thine.

Clad were they both in white, flowers in their breast;

Straw hats bedeck'd their heads, with ribbons blue,

Which danced, and on their shoulders, fluttering, play'd.

They saw us, they conferred; their bosoms heaved,

And more than mortal impulse fill'd their eyes.

Their lips moved; their white arms, waved eagerly,

Flash'd once, like falling streams; we rose, we gazed.

One moment, on the rapid's top, our boat

Hung poised--and then the darting river of Life

(Such now, methought, it was), the river of Life,

Loud thundering, bore us by; swift, swift it foam'd,

Black under cliffs it raced, round headlands shone.

Soon the plank'd cottage by the sun-warm'd pines

Faded--the moss--the rocks; us burning plains,

Bristled with cities, us the sea receive

DOVER BEACH

The sea is calm tonight.

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits; on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!

Only, from the long line of spray

Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,

Listen! you hear the grating roar

Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,

At their return, up the high strand,

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,

With tremulous cadence slow, and bring

The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery; we

Find also in the sound a thought,

Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true

To one another! for the world, which seems

To lie before us like a land of dreams,

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

The blessed damozel lean'd out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters still'd at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Her seem'd she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
. . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she lean'd o'er me--her hair
Fell all about my face ....
Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remember'd names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bow'd herself and stoop'd
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she lean'd on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fix'd place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curl'd moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearken'd? When those bells
Possess'd the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.
"Have I not pray'd in Heaven?--on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is cloth'd in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirr'd continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hush'd and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abash'd or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-rang'd unnumber'd heads
Bow'd with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:--
Only to live as once on earth
With Love,--only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he."

She gaz'd and listen'd and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,--
"All this is when he comes." She ceas'd.
The light thrill'd towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes pray'd, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

FAUSTINE

LEAN BACK, and get some minutes’ peace;
Let your head lean
Back to the shoulder with its fleece
Of locks, Faustine.

The shapely silver shoulder stoops,
Weighed over clean
With state of splendid hair that droops
Each side, Faustine.

Let me go over your good gifts
That crown you queen;
A queen whose kingdom ebbs and shifts
Each week, Faustine.

Bright heavy brows well gathered up:
White gloss and sheen;
Carved lips that make my lips a cup
To drink, Faustine,

Wine and rank poison, milk and blood,
Being mixed therein
Since first the devil threw dice with God
For you, Faustine.

Your naked new-born soul, their stake,
Stood blind between;
God said “let him that wins her take
And keep Faustine.”

But this time Satan throve, no doubt:
Long since, I ween,
God’s part in you was battered out;
Long since, Faustine.

The die rang sideways as it fell,
Rang cracked and thin,
Like a man’s laughter heard in hell
Far down, Faustine,

A shadow of laughter like a sigh,
Dead sorrow’s kin;
So rang, thrown down, the devil’s die
That won Faustine.

A suckling of his breed you were,
One hard to wean;
But God, who lost you, left you fair,
We see, Faustine.

You have the face that suits a woman
For her soul’s screen—
The sort of beauty that’s called human
In hell, Faustine.

You could do all things but be good
Or chaste of mien;
And that you would not if you could,
We know, Faustine.

Even he who cast seven devils out
Of Magdalene
Could hardly do as much, I doubt,
For you, Faustine.

Did Satan make you to spite God?
Or did God mean
To scourge with scorpions for a rod
Our sins, Faustine?

I know what queen at first you were,
As though I had seen
Red gold and black imperious hair
Twice crown Faustine.

As if your fed sarcophagus
Spared flesh and skin,
You come back face to face with us,
The same Faustine.

She loved the games men played with death,
Where death must win;
As though the slain man’s blood and breath
Revived Faustine.

Nets caught the pike, pikes tore the net;
Lithe limbs and lean
From drained-out pores dripped thick red sweat
To soothe Faustine.

She drank the steaming drift and dust
Blown off the scene;
Blood could not ease the bitter lust
That galled Faustine.

All round the foul fat furrows reeked,
Where blood sank in;
The circus splashed and seethed and shrieked
All round Faustine.

But these are gone now: years entomb
The dust and din;
Yea, even the bath’s fierce reek and fume
That slew Faustine.

Was life worth living then? and now
Is life worth sin?
Where are the imperial years? and how
Are you Faustine?

Your soul forgot her joys, forgot
Her times of teen;
Yea, this life likewise will you not
Forget, Faustine?

For in the time we know not of
Did fate begin
Weaving the web of days that wove
Your doom, Faustine.

The threads were wet with wine, and all
Were smooth to spin;
They wove you like a Bacchanal,
The first Faustine.

And Bacchus cast your mates and you
Wild grapes to glean;
Your flower-like lips were dashed with dew
From his, Faustine.

Your drenched loose hands were stretched to hold
The vine’s wet green,
Long ere they coined in Roman gold
Your face, Faustine.

Then after change of soaring feather
And winnowing fin,
You woke in weeks of feverish weather,
A new Faustine.

A star upon your birthday burned,
Whose fierce serene
Red pulseless planet never yearned
In heaven, Faustine.

Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew
Through Mitylene
Shook the fierce quivering blood in you
By night, Faustine.

The shameless nameless love that makes
Hell’s iron gin
Shut on you like a trap that breaks
The soul, Faustine.

And when your veins were void and dead,
What ghosts unclean
Swarmed round the straitened barren bed
That hid Faustine?

What sterile growths of sexless root
Or epicene?
What flower of kisses without fruit
Of love, Faustine?

What adders came to shed their coats?
What coiled obscene
Small serpents with soft stretching throats
Caressed Faustine?

But the time came of famished hours,
Maimed loves and mean,
This ghastly thin-faced time of ours,
To spoil Faustine.

You seem a thing that hinges hold,
A love-machine
With clockwork joints of supple gold—
No more, Faustine.

Not godless, for you serve one God,
The Lampsacene,
Who metes the gardens with his rod;
Your lord, Faustine.

If one should love you with real love
(Such things have been,
Things your fair face knows nothing of,
It seems, Faustine);

That clear hair heavily bound back,
The lights wherein
Shift from dead blue to burnt-up black;
Your throat, Faustine,

Strong, heavy, throwing out the face
And hard bright chin
And shameful scornful lips that grace
Their shame, Faustine,

Curled lips, long since half kissed away,
Still sweet and keen;
You’d give him—poison shall we say?
Or what, Faustine?

OSCAR WILDE

THE HARLOT’S HOUSE

We caught the tread of dancing feet,
We loitered down the moonlit street,
And stopped beneath the harlot's house.

Inside, above the din and fray,
We heard the loud musicians play
The *Treues Liebes Herz* of Strauss.

Like strange mechanical grotesques,
Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin,
To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled automatons,
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sidling through the slow quadrille.

Then took each other by the hand,
And danced a stately saraband;
Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clockwork puppet pressed
A phantom lover to her breast,
Sometimes they seemed to try and sing.

Sometimes a horrible marionette
Came out and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then turning to my love I said,
‘The dead are dancing with the dead,’
‘The dust is whirling with the dust.’

But she—she heard the violin,
And left my side, and entered in:
Love passed into the house of lust.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

PIED BEAUTY

Glory be to God for dappled things –

   For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;

      For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;

   Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;

      And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

   Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

      With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

                                Praise him.

CARRION COMFORT

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;

Not untwist — slack they may be — these last strands of man

In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can;

Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me

Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan

With darksome devouring eyes my bruisèd bones? and fan,

O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

   Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.

Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,

Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.

Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fóot tród

Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year

Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

GOD’S GRANDEUR

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

RUDYARD KIPLING

THE WHITE MAN’S BURDEN

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden--
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden--
The savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden--
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper--
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go mark them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden--
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
"Why brought he us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden--
Ye dare not stoop to less--
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloke your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden--
Have done with childish days--
The lightly proferred laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers!

 THOMAS HARDY

THE CLOCK-WINDER

It is dark as a cave,
Or a vault in the nave
When the iron door
Is closed, and the floor
Of the church relaid
With trowel and spade.

But the parish-clerk
Cares not for the dark
As he winds in the tower
At a regular hour
The rheumatic clock,
Whose dilatory knock
You can hear when praying
At the day's decaying,
Or at any lone while
From a pew in the aisle.

Up, up from the ground
Around and around
In the turret stair
He clambers, to where
The wheelwork is,
With its tick, click, whizz,
Reposefully measuring
Each day to its end
That mortal men spend
In sorrowing and pleasuring
Nightly thus does he climb
To the trackway of Time.

Him I followed one night
To this place without light,
And, ere I spoke, heard
Him say, word by word,
At the end of his winding,
The darkness unminding:-

"So I wipe out one more,
My Dear, of the sore
Sad days that still be,
Like a drying Dead Sea,
Between you and me!"

Who she was no man knew:
He had long borne him blind
To all womankind;
And was ever one who
Kept his past out of view.

THE DARKLING THRUSH

I leant upon a coppice gate

      When Frost was spectre-grey,

And Winter's dregs made desolate

      The weakening eye of day.

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky

      Like strings of broken lyres,

And all mankind that haunted nigh

      Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be

      The Century's corpse outleant,

His crypt the cloudy canopy,

      The wind his death-lament.

The ancient pulse of germ and birth

      Was shrunken hard and dry,

And every spirit upon earth

      Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among

      The bleak twigs overhead

In a full-hearted evensong

      Of joy illimited;

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,

      In blast-beruffled plume,

Had chosen thus to fling his soul

      Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings

      Of such ecstatic sound

Was written on terrestrial things

      Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through

      His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

      And I was unaware.

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

I

            In a solitude of the sea

            Deep from human vanity,

And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

            Steel chambers, late the pyres

            Of her salamandrine fires,

Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

            Over the mirrors meant

            To glass the opulent

The sea-worm crawls — grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

            Jewels in joy designed

            To ravish the sensuous mind

Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

            Dim moon-eyed fishes near

            Gaze at the gilded gear

And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" ...

VI

            Well: while was fashioning

            This creature of cleaving wing,

The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

            Prepared a sinister mate

            For her — so gaily great —

A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

            And as the smart ship grew

            In stature, grace, and hue,

In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

            Alien they seemed to be;

            No mortal eye could see

The intimate welding of their later history,

X

            Or sign that they were bent

            By paths coincident

On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI

            Till the Spinner of the Years

            Said "Now!" And each one hears,

And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.