

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00629200 7











THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF GILBERT FRANKAU

VOLUME II





THE  
POETICAL WORKS  
*of*  
GILBERT FRANKAU

VOLUME TWO

1916—1920

LONDON  
CHATTO & WINDUS  
1923

PRINTED IN ENGLAND  
ALL RIGHTS  
RESERVED

F  
60  
21  
1965



1138050

# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
HOW RIFLEMAN BROWN CAME TO VAL- HALLA : <i>Neuwe Église, June 1916</i>	3
THE INN OF A THOUSAND DREAMS : <i>Neuwe Église, June 1916</i>	11
AIMÉE : <i>Flanders, 1916</i>	17
THE OTHER SIDE : <i>The Barn, October 31st, 1917</i>	31
THE JUDGEMENT OF VALHALLA : <i>The Barn, December 6th, 1917</i>	39
ONE OF THEM : <i>Originally published as a weekly serial between February and October 1918</i>	57
POEMS OF WAR AND PEACE : 1918—1920	
Eight-Eight-Eighteen	187
Justice	190
Retribution	192
The Beasts in Gray	194
The Reason	196
Anglo-Saxondom	199
Armistice	202
The Answer	203
Together	206
Poison	210
Only an Officer	212
Russia	213
Unknown	215
On a Wayside Cross	218



HOW RIFLEMAN BROWN  
CAME TO VALHALLA

*Neuve Église, June 1916*



HOW RIFLEMAN BROWN CAME TO  
VALHALLA

**T**O the lower Hall of Valhalla, to the heroes of no  
renown,  
Relieved from his spell at the listening-post,  
came Rifleman Joseph Brown.  
With never a rent in his khaki nor smear of blood on his  
face,  
He flung his pack from his shoulders, and made for an  
empty place.

The Killer-men of Valhalla looked up from the banquet-  
board  
At the unfouled breach of his rifle, at the unfleshed point  
of his sword ;  
And the unsung dead of the trenches, the kings who have  
never a crown,  
Demanded his pass to Valhalla from Rifleman Joseph  
Brown.

“ *Who comes, unhit, to the party ?* ” A one-legged Corporal  
spoke,  
And the gashed heads nodded approval through the rings  
of the Endless Smoke :  
“ *Who comes for the beer and the Woodbines of the never-  
closed Canteen,  
With the barrack-shine on his bayonet and a full-charged  
magazine ?* ”

Then Rifleman Brown looked round him at the nameless  
 men of the Line—  
 At the wounds of the shell and the bullet, at the burns of  
 the bomb and the mine ;  
 At the tunics, virgin of medals but crimson-clotted with  
 blood ;  
 At the ankle-boots and the puttees, caked stiff with the  
 Flanders mud ;  
 At the myriad short Lee-Enfields that crowded the rifle-  
 rack,  
 Each with its blade to the sword-boss brown, and its  
 muzzle powder-black :

And Rifleman Brown said never a word ; yet he felt in  
 the soul of his soul  
 His right to the beer of the lower Hall, though he came  
 to drink of it, whole ;  
 His right to the fags of the free Canteen, to a seat at the  
 banquet-board,  
 Though he came to the men who had killed their man,  
 with never a man to his sword.

*“ Who speaks for the stranger Rifleman, O boys of the free  
 Canteen ?*

*Who passes the chap with the unmaimed limbs and the kit  
 that is far too clean ? ”*

The gashed heads eyed him above their beers, the gashed  
 lips sucked at their smoke :  
 There were three at the board of his own platoon, but  
 not a man of them spoke.

His mouth was mad for the tankard froth and the biting  
 whiff of a fag,  
 But he knew that he might not speak for himself to the  
 dead men who do not brag.



A gun-butt crashed on the gateway, a man came staggering in ;  
His head was cleft with a great red wound from the temple-  
bone to the chin,  
His blade was dyed to the bayonet-boss with the clots  
that were scarcely dry ;  
And he cried to the men who had killed their man :  
  “ Who passes the Rifleman ? I !  
By the four I slew, by the shell I stopped, if my feet be  
not too late,  
I speak the word for Rifleman Brown that a chap may  
speak for his mate.”

The dead of lower Valhalla, the heroes of dumb renown,  
They pricked their ears to a tale of the earth as they set  
their tankards down.

“ My mate was on sentry this evening when the General  
happened along  
And asked what he'd do in a gas-attack. Joe told him :  
‘ Beat on the gong.’  
‘ What else ? ’  
‘ Open fire, Sir,’ Joe answered.  
‘ Good God, man,’ our General said,  
‘ By the time you'd beaten that bloodstained gong the  
chances are you'd be dead.  
Just think, lad.’ ‘ Gas helmet, of course, Sir.’ ‘ Yes, damn  
it, and *gas helmet first.*’  
So Joe stood dumb to attention, and wondered why he'd  
been cursed.”

The gashed heads turned to the Rifleman, and now it  
seemed that they knew  
Why the face that had never a smear of blood was stained  
to the jawbones, blue.

“ He was posted again at midnight.” The scarred heads  
craned to the voice,

As the man with the blood-red bayonet spoke up for the  
mate of his choice.

“ You know what it’s like in a listening-post, the Very  
candles aflare,

Their bullets smacking the sand-bags, our Vickers comb-  
ing your hair,

How your ears and your eyes get jumpy, till each known  
tuft that you scan

Moves and crawls in the shadows till you’d almost swear  
it was man ;

You know how you peer and snuff at the night when the  
North-East gas-winds blow.”

“ *By the One who made us and maimed us* ” quoth lower  
Valhalla “ *we know !* ”

“ Sudden, out of the blackness, sudden as Hell, there  
came

Roar and rattle of rifles, spurts of machine-gun flame ;  
And Joe stood up in the forward sap to try and get on to  
the game.

Sudden, their shells come screaming ; sudden, his nostrils  
sniff

The sickening reek of the rotten pears, the death that  
kills with a whiff.

Death ! and he knows it certain, as he bangs on his cart-  
ridge-case,

With the gas-cloud’s claws at his windpipe and the gas  
cloud’s wings on his face. . . .

We heard his gong in our dug-out, he only whacked on  
it twice,

We whipped our gas-bags over our heads, and manned  
the step in a trice—

For the cloud would have caught us as sure as Fate if  
he’d taken the Staff’s advice.”

His head was cleft with a great red wound from the chin  
to the temple-bone,  
But his voice was as clear as a sounding gong, " I'll be  
damned if I'll drink alone,  
Not even in lower Valhalla ! Is he free of your free  
Canteen,  
My mate who comes with the unfleshed point and the  
full-charged magazine ? "

The gashed heads rose at the Rifleman o'er the rings of  
the Endless Smoke,  
And loud as the roar of a thousand guns Valhalla's answer  
broke,  
And loud as the crash of a thousand shells their tankards  
clashed on the board :

*" He is free of the mess of the Killer-men, your mate of the  
unfleshed sword ;  
For we know the worth of his deed on earth ; as we know  
the speed of the death  
Which catches its man by the back of the throat and gives  
him water for breath ;  
As we know how the hand at the helmet-cloth may tarry  
seconds too long,  
When the very life of the front-line trench is staked on the  
beat of a gong.  
By the four you slew, by the case he smote, by the gray gas-  
cloud and the green,  
We pass your mate for the Endless Smoke and the beer of  
the free Canteen."*

In the lower hall of Valhalla, with the heroes of no  
renown,  
With our nameless dead of the Marne and the Aisne, of  
Mons, and of Wipers town,  
With the men who killed ere they died for us, sits Rifle-  
man Joseph Brown.



THE INN OF A  
THOUSAND DREAMS

*Neuve Église, June 1916*



## THE INN OF A THOUSAND DREAMS

*Where the road climbs free from the marsh and the sea  
To the last rose sunset-gleams,  
Twixt a fold and a fold of the Kentish wold  
Stands the Inn of a Thousand Dreams.*

**N**O man may ride with map for guide  
And win that tavern-door ;  
As none shall come by rule of thumb  
To our blue-bells' dancing-floor :  
For no path leads through Churchyard Meads  
And the fringes of Daffodil Wood,  
To the heart of the glade where the flower-folk played  
In the days when the gods were good.

Who hastes our wold with naught but gold,  
Who seeks but food and wine,  
The wood-folk wise shall blind his eyes  
To the creaking tavern-sign ;  
He shall know the goad of the folk of the road,  
And his led wheels shall not find  
The gabled beams that sheltered our dreams  
In the nights when the gods were kind.

*We had never a chart save our own sure heart  
And the summoning sunset-gleams,  
When you rode with me from the marsh and the sea  
To the Inn of a Thousand Dreams.*

No sign-post showed the curved hill-road  
 Our purring engines clomb,  
 From where dead forts of dying ports  
 Loomed gray against gray foam :  
 We had never a book for the way we took,  
 But the oast-house chimney-vanes  
 Stretched beckoning hands o'er the lambing-lands  
 To point us their Kentish lanes.

As certain-true our track we flew,  
 As nesting swiftsures flit ;  
 By stream and down and county-town,  
 And orchards blossom-lit :  
 For Pan's own heels were guiding our wheels,  
 And Pan's self checked our speed  
 In the spire-crowned street where the byways meet,  
 For a sign of the place decreed.

*Rose-impearled o'er a wonder-world  
 Glowed the last of the sunset-gleams ;  
 And we knew that fate had led to the gate  
 Of the Inn of our Thousand Dreams.*

Who needs must pique with kitchen-freak  
 His jaded appetite,  
 He shall not know our set cloth's snow,  
 Our primrose candle-light :  
 We had never a need of the waiter-breed  
 Or an alien bandsman's blare,  
 When we pledged a toast to our landlord host  
 As he served us his goodwife's fare.



In right of guest, they gave their best :  
 No hireling hands outspread  
 White bridal-dress from linen-press,  
 To drape our marriage bed :  
 They had never a thought for the price we brought,  
 The simple folk and the fine,  
 Who made us free of their hostelry  
 In the nights when all dreams were mine.

*When the trench-lights rise to the storm-dark skies  
 Where the gun-flash flickers and gleams,  
 My soul flies free o'er an English sea  
 To the Inn of a Thousand Dreams.*

Once more we flit, hands passion-knit,  
 By marsh and murmuring shore,  
 By Tenterden and Bennenden,  
 To our own tavern-door ;  
 And again we go, where the sunsets glow  
 On the beech-tree's silvern plinth,  
 Down woodpaths set with violet  
 And Spring's wild hyacinth.

Once more we pass, by roads of grass,  
 To find for our delight  
 Trim garden-plots, and shepherds' cots—  
 Half-timbered, black-and-white . . .  
 There is never one gash of a shrapnel splash  
 On the walls of the street we roam,  
 Where the forge-irons ring for our welcoming  
 As the twilight calls us home.

*Till the trench-lights pale on the gray dawn-veil  
 Of the first wan sunrise-gleams,  
 My soul would bide with its spirit-bride  
 At the Inn of a Thousand Dreams.*

Once more I press, in tenderness,  
 (Dear God, that dreams were true !)  
 Your finger-tips against these lips  
 Your own red-rose lips knew,  
 In the middle night when your throat gleamed white  
 On your dark hairs' pillowed sheen,  
 And your eyes were the pools that a moonbeam cools  
 For the feet of a faëry queen.

Woman o' mine, heart's anodyne  
 Against unkindly fate,  
 Love's aureole about my soul,  
 Wife, mistress, comrade, mate !  
 I stretch ghost-hands from the stricken lands  
 Where my earth-bound body lies,  
 To touch your fair smooth brow, your hair,  
 Your lips, your sleeping eyes :

*You are living-warm in the crook of my arm,  
 You are pearl in the firelight-gleams . . .  
 Till the blind night rocks with the cannon-shocks  
 That shatter a thousand dreams.*

AIMÉE

*Flanders, 1916*



## WIFE AND COUNTRY

**D**EAR, let me thank you for this :  
That you made me remember, in fight,  
England—all mine at your kiss,  
At the touch of your hands in the night :  
England—your giving's delight.

## MOTHER AND MATE

LIGHTLY she slept, that splendid mother mine  
 Who faced death, undismayed, two hopeless  
 years . . .

("Think of me sometimes, son, but not with tears  
 Lest my soul grieve," she writes. Oh, this divine  
 Unselfishness!) . . .

Her favourite print smiled down—  
 The stippled Cupid, Bartolozzi-brown—  
 Upon my sorrow. Fire-gleams, fitful, played  
 Among her playthings—Toby mugs and jade. . . .

And then I dreamed that—suddenly, strangely clear—  
 A voice I knew not, faltered at my ear :

"Courage!" . . . Your own dear voice, loved since, and  
 known!

And now that she sleeps well, come times *her* voice  
 Whispers in day-dreams : "Courage, son! Rejoice  
 That, leaving you, I left you not alone."

## MEETING

**I** CAME from the City of Fear,  
 From the scarred brown land of pain,  
 Back into life again . . .  
 And I thought, as the leave-boat rolled  
 Under the veering stars—  
 Wind a-shriek in her spars—  
 Shivering there, and cold,  
 Of music, of warmth, and of wine—  
 To be mine  
 For a whole short week . . .  
 And I thought, adrowse in the train,  
 Of London, suddenly near ;  
 And of how—small doubt—I should find  
 There, as of old,  
 Some woman—foolishly kind :  
 Fingers to hold,  
 A cheek,  
 A mouth to kiss—and forget,  
 Forget in a little while,  
 Forget  
 When I came again  
 To the scarred brown land of pain,  
 To the sodden things and the vile,  
 And the tedious battle-fret.

My dear,  
 I cannot forget !  
 Not even here  
 In this City of Fear.

I remember the poise of your head,  
 And your look, and the words you said  
 When we met,  
 And the waxen bloom at your breast,  
 And the sable fur that caressed  
 Your smooth white wrists, and your hands . . .  
 Remember them yet,  
 Here  
 In the desolate lands ;  
 Remember your shy  
 Strange air,  
 And growing aware—  
 I,  
 Who had reckoned love  
 Man's toy for an hour—  
 Of love's hidden power :  
 A thrill  
 That moved me to touch and adore  
 Some intimate thing that you wore—  
 A glove,  
 Or the flower  
 A-glow at your breast,  
 The frill  
 Of fur that circled your wrist . . .  
 These, had my hands caressed ;  
 These, not you, had I kissed—  
 I,  
 Who had thought love's fires  
 Only desires.

Dear,  
 That hidden power  
 Thrills in me yet.  
 There is never one hour—  
 Not even here  
 In this City of Fear—  
 When I quite forget.



## MUSIC AND WINE

**W**HEN the ink has dried on the pen,  
 When the sword returns to its sheath ;  
 When the world of women and men,  
 And the waters around and beneath,  
 Char and shrivel and burn—  
 What will God give in return ? . . .  
 Has He better to offer in heaven above  
 Than wine and music, laughter and love ?

Laughter, music and wine,  
 The promise of love in your eyes . . .  
 Sleeping, I dream them mine ;  
 Waking, my spirit cries—  
 Here, in the mud and the rain—  
 “ God, give me London again !  
 I would lose all earth and the heavens above  
 For just one banquet of laughter and love.”

When my flesh returns to its earth,  
 When my pen is dust as my sword ;  
 If one thing I wrought find worth  
 In the eyes of our kindly Lord,  
 I will only ask of His grace  
 That He grant us a lowly place  
 Where His warriors toast Him, in heaven above,  
 With wine and music, laughter and love.

## THE GAMBLE

**I**F man backs horses, plays cards or dice,  
 Or bets on an ivory ball,  
 He knows the rules, and he reckons the price—  
 Be it one half-crown, or his all.  
 (And it isn't sense, and it isn't pluck,  
 To double the stakes when you're out of luck !)

If he plays—with his life for a limit—here,  
 It's an even-money game :  
 He can lay on the Red—which is Conquered Fear,  
 Or the Black—which is Utter Shame.  
 (And there isn't much choice between Reds and Blacks,  
 For Death throws " zero " whichever he backs.)

So that whether man plays for the red gold's wealth  
 Where the little ball clicks and spins,  
 Or hazards his life in the black night's stealth  
 When machine-gun fire begins—  
 It's a limited gamble ; and each of us knows  
 What he stands to lose ere the tables close.

But woman's gamble—(there's only one :  
 And it takes some pluck to play,  
 When the rules are broke ere the game's begun ;  
 When, lose *or* win, you must pay !)—  
 Is a double wager on human kind,  
 A limitless risk—and she goes it blind.

For she stakes, at love, on a single throw,  
Pride, Honour, Scruples and Fears,  
And dreams no lover can hope to know,  
And the gold of the after-years.  
(And all for a man ; and there's no man lives  
Who is worth the odds that a woman gives.)

So that since you hazarded this for me  
On the day love's die was cast,  
I'll love you—gambler !—while “ fours ” beat three ;  
And I'll lay on our love to last,  
So long as a man will wager a price  
On a horse or a card or the ball or the dice.

## NINON AND ROSES

**H**ERE, in a land where hardly a rose is,  
 Silkiest blossoms of broidered flowers  
 Brush my cheek as each tired eye closes,  
 Haunt my sleep through the desolate hours.

Roses never of nature's making,  
 Roses loved for a rose-red night,  
 Roses visioned at dawn-light's breaking  
 Veiling a bosom as roses white,

Why does the ghost of you linger and stay with me—  
 Ghost of the rose-buds that perfumed our bed,  
 Ghost of a rose-girl who blossomed to play with me—  
 Here in a land where the roses are dead ?

Day-time and night-time the death-flower blazes,  
 Saffron at gun-lip and orange and red,  
 Here where June's rose-tree lies shattered as May's is,  
 Here where I dream of the nights that are dead—

Nights that were sweet with the scent and the touch of  
 you,  
 Rose-girl in ninon with buds at your breast,  
 Rose-girl who promised and granted so much of you,  
 All that was tender and all that was best.

Growl of the guns cannot shatter the dream of you,  
Banish the thought of one exquisite hour,  
Or the scent of your hair in the dawn, or the gleam of you  
White as white roses through roses a-flower.

## PARTING

**T**IMES more than once, all ways about the world,  
 Have I clasped hands ; waved sorrowful good-  
 bye ;  
 Watched far cliffs fading, till my sea-wake swirled  
 To mingle blue with a landless sky :  
 Then—even as the sea-drowned cliffs behind—  
 Felt sorrow drowning into memory ;  
 And heard, in every thrill of every wind,  
 New voices welcoming across the sea.

Until, it seemed, nor land nor love had power  
 To hold my heart in any firm duress :  
 Grieving, I sorrowed but a little hour ;  
 Loving, I knew desire's sure faithlessness ;  
 Until, by many a love dissatisfied,  
 Of each mistrustful and to each untrue,  
 I found—as one who, having long denied,  
 Finds Faith at last—this greater Love, in you.

Parting ? We are not parted, woman mine !  
 Though hands have clasped, though lips have kissed  
 good-bye ;  
 Though towns glide past, and fields, and fields of brine—  
 My body takes the warrior way, not I.  
 I am still with you ; you, with me ; one heart ;  
 One equal union, soul to certain soul :  
 Time cannot sever us, nor sorrow part,  
 Nor any sea, who keep our vision whole.

How can I grieve, who know your spirit near ;

Who watch with newly understanding eyes

This England of your giving, newly dear,

Sink where my sea-wake swirls to darkling skies ?

Lilac, her cliffs have faded into mist . . .

Yet still I hold them white in memory,

Feeling, against these lips your lips have kissed,

The home-wind thrilling down an English sea.





THE OTHER SIDE

*The Barn, October 31st, 1917*



## THE OTHER SIDE

*Being a letter from Major Average of the Royal Field Artillery in Flanders, acknowledging a presentation copy of a book of war-verse, written by a former subaltern of his battery—now in England.*

**J**UST got your letter and the poems. Thanks.  
 You always were a brainy sort of chap :  
 Though pretty useless as a subaltern—  
 Too much imagination, not enough  
 Of that rare quality, sound common-sense.  
 And so you've managed to get on the Staff :  
 Influence, I suppose : a Captain, too !  
 How do tabs suit you ? Are they blue or green ?

About your book. I've read it carefully,  
 So has Macfaddyen ; (you remember him,  
 The light-haired chap who joined us after Loos ?) ;  
 And candidly, we don't think much of it.  
 The piece about the horses isn't bad ;  
 But all the rest, excuse the word, are tripe—  
 The same old tripe we've read a thousand times.

My grief, but we're fed up to the back teeth  
 With war-books, war-verse, all the eye-wash stuff  
 That seems to please the idiots at home.  
 You know the kind of thing, or used to know :

" Heroes who laugh while Fritz is strafing them "—  
 (I don't remember that *you* found it fun,  
 The day they shelled us out of Blauwport Farm !)  
 " After the fight. Our cheery wounded. Note  
 The smile of victory : it won't come off "—  
 (Of course they smile ; so'd you, if you'd escaped,  
 And saw three months of hospital ahead. . . .  
 They don't smile, much, when they're shipped back to  
 France !)  
 " Out for the Great Adventure "—(twenty-five  
 Fat, smirking wasters in some O.T.C.,  
 Who just avoided the Conscription Act !)  
 " A strenuous woman-worker for the Cause "—  
 (Miss Trixie Toogood of the Gaiety,  
 Who helped to pauperise a few Beligues  
 In the great cause of self-advertisement !) . . .

Lord knows, the newspapers are bad enough ;  
 But they've got some excuse—the censorship—  
 Helping to keep their readers spirits up—  
 Giving the public what it wants : (besides,  
 One mustn't blame the press, the press has done  
 More than its share to help us win this war—  
 More than some other people I could name) :  
 But what's the good of war-books, if they fail  
 To give civilian-readers an idea  
 Of what life *is* like in the firing-line. . . .

You might have done that much ; from you, at least,  
 I thought we'd get an inkling of the truth.  
 But no ; you rant and rattle, beat your drum,  
 And blow your two-penny trumpet like the rest :  
 " Red battle's glory," " Honour's utmost task,"  
 " Gay jesting faces of undaunted boys," . . .  
 The same old Boy's-Own-Paper balderdash !

Mind you, I don't deny that they exist,  
 These abstract virtues that you gas about—  
 (*We shouldn't stop out here long, otherwise!*)—  
 Honour and humour, and that sort of thing ;  
 (Though heaven knows where you found the glory touch,  
 Unless you picked it up at G.H.Q.) ;  
 But if you'd common-sense, you'd understand  
 That humour's just the Saxon cloak for fear,  
 Our English substitute for "*Vive la France!*"  
 Or else a trick to keep the folk at home  
 From being scared to death—as we are scared ;  
 That honour . . . damn it, honour's the one thing  
 No soldier yaps about, except of course  
 A soldier-*poet*—three-and-sixpence net.

Honest to God, it makes me sick and tired  
 To think that you, who lived a year with us,  
 Should be content to write such tommy-rot.  
 I feel as though I'd sent a runner back  
 With news that we were being strafed like Hell . . .  
 And he'd reported : " Everything O.K."  
 Something's the matter : either you can't *see*,  
 Or else you see, and cannot write. That's worse.

Hang it, you can't have clean forgotten things  
 You went to bed with, woke with, smelt and felt,  
 All those long months of boredom streaked with fear :  
 Mud, cold, fatigue, sweat, nerve-strain, sleeplessness,  
 And men's excreta viscid in the rain,  
 And stiff-legged horses lying by the road,  
 Their bloated bellies shimmering, green with flies. . . .

*Have* you forgotten ? you who dine to-night  
 In comfort at the Carlton or Savoy.  
 (Lord, but I'd like a dart at that myself—

Oysters, *crème* something, sole *vin blanc*, a bird,  
 And one cold bottle of the very best—  
 A girl to share it : afterwards, a show—  
 Lee White and Alfred Lester, Nelson Keys ;  
 Supper to follow.

. . . Our Brigade's in rest—  
 The usual farm. I've got the only bed.  
 The men are fairly comfy—three good barns.  
 Thank God, they didn't have to bivouac  
 After this last month in the Salient.) . . .

You *have* forgotten ; or you couldn't write  
 This sort of stuff—all cant, no guts in it,  
 Hardly a single picture true to life.

Well, here's a picture for you : Montauban—  
 Last year—the flattened village on our left—  
 On our right flank, the razed Briqueterie,  
 Their five-nines pounding bits to dustier bits—  
 Behind, a cratered slope, with batteries  
 Crashing and flashing, violet in the dusk,  
 And prematuring every now and then—  
 In front, the ragged Bois de Bernafay,  
 Boche whizz-bangs bursting white among its trees.  
 You had been doing F.O.O. that day ;  
 (The Staff knows why we had an F.O.O. :  
 One couldn't flag-wag through Trônes Wood ; the wires  
 Went down as fast as one could put them up ;  
 And messages by runner took three hours.)  
 I'd got the wind up rather : you were late,  
 And they'd been shelling like the very deuce.  
 However, back you came. I see you now,  
 Staggering into " mess "—a broken trench,  
 Two chalk-walls roofed with corrugated iron,

And, round the traverse, Driver Noakes's stove  
 Stinking and smoking while we ate our grub.  
 Your face was blue-white, streaked with dirt ; your eyes  
 Had shrunk into your head, as though afraid  
 To watch more horrors ; you were sodden-wet  
 With greasy coal-black mud—and other things.  
 Sweating and shivering, speechless, there you stood.  
 I gave you whisky, made you talk. You said :  
 " Major, another signaller's been killed."  
 " Who ? "

" Gunner Andrews, blast them. O my Christ !  
 His head—split open—when his brains oozed out,  
 They looked like bloody sweetbreads, in the muck."

And you're the chap who writes this clap-trap verse !

Lord, if I'd half *your* brains, I'd write a book :  
 None of your sentimental platitudes,  
 But something real, vital ; that should strip  
 The glamour from this outrage we call war,  
 Showing it naked, hideous, stupid, vile—  
 One vast abomination. So that they  
 Who, coming after, till the ransomed fields  
 Where our lean corpses rotted in the ooze,  
 Reading my written words, should understand  
 This stark stupendous horror, visualise  
 The unutterable foulness of it all. . . .  
 I'd show them, not your glamorous " glorious game,"  
 Which men play " jesting " " for their honour's sake "—  
 (A kind of Military Tournament,  
 With just a hint of danger—bound in cloth !)—  
 But War,—as war is now, and always was :  
 A dirty, loathsome, servile murder-job :—  
 Men, lousy, sleepless, ulcerous, afraid,  
 Toiling their hearts out in the pulling slime  
 That wrenches gum-boot down from bleeding heel  
 And cakes in itching arm-pits, navel, ears :

Men stunned to brainlessness, and gibbering :  
 Men driving men to death and worse than death :  
 Men maimed and blinded : men against machines—  
 Flesh versus iron, concrete, flame and wire :  
 Men choking out their souls in poison-gas :  
 Men squelched into the slime by trampling feet :  
 Men, disembowelled by guns five miles away,  
 Cursing, with their last breath, the living God  
 Because He made them, in His image, men. . . .  
 So—were your talent mine—I'd write of war  
 For those who, coming after, know it not.

And if posterity should ask of me  
 What high, what base emotions keyed weak flesh  
 To face such torments, I would answer : “*You !*  
 Not for themselves, O daughters, grandsons, sons,  
 Your tortured forebears wrought this miracle ;  
 Not for themselves, *accomplished utterly*  
 This loathliest task of murderous servitude ;  
 But just because they realised that thus,  
*And only thus*, by sacrifice, might they  
 Secure a world worth living in—*for you.*” . . .

Good-night, my soldier-poet. *Dormez bien !*



THE JUDGEMENT OF VALHALLA

*The Barn, December 6th, 1917*



## THE DESERTER

“ I ’M sorry I done it, Major.”  
We bandaged the livid face ;  
And led him out, ere the wan sun rose,  
To die his death of disgrace.

The bolt-heads locked to the cartridge ;  
The rifles steadied to rest,  
As cold stock nestled at colder cheek  
And foresight lined on the breast.

“ *Fire !* ” called the Sergeant-Major.  
The muzzles flamed as he spoke :  
And the shameless soul of a nameless man  
Went up in the cordite-smoke.

## THE EYE AND THE TRUTH

UP from the fret of the earth-world, through the  
Seven Circles of Flame,  
With the seven holes in Its tunic for sign of the  
death-in-shame,  
To the little gate of Valhalla the coward-spirit came.

Cold, It couched in the man-strong wind that sweeps  
Valhalla's floor ;  
Weak, It pawed and scratched on the wood ; and howled,  
like a dog, at the Door  
Which is shut to the souls who are sped in shame, for  
ever and evermore :

For it snuffed the Meat of the Banquet-Boards where the  
Threefold Killers sit,  
Where the Free Beer foams to the tankard-rim, and the  
Endless Smokes are lit. . . .  
And It saw the Naked Eye come out above the lintel-slit.

And now It quailed at Naked Eye which judges the naked  
dead ;  
And now It snarled at Naked Truth that broodeth over-  
head ;  
And now It looked to the earth below where the gun-  
flames flickered red.

It muttered words It had learned on earth, the words of a  
black-coat priest  
Who had bade It pray to a pulpit god—but ever Eye's  
Wrath increased ;  
And It knew that Its words were empty words, and It  
whined like a homeless beast :

Till, black above the lintel-slit, the Naked Eye went out ;  
Till, loud across the Killer-Feasts, It heard the Killer-  
Shout—  
The three-fold song of them that slew, and died . . . and  
had no doubt.

## THE SONG OF THE RED-EDGED STEEL

*Below your black priest's heaven,  
Above his tinselled hell,  
Beyond the Circles Seven,  
The Red-Steel Killers dwell—*

*The men who drave, to blade-ring home, behind the marching  
shell.*

**W**E knew not good nor evil,  
Save only right of blade ;  
Yet neither god nor devil  
Could hold us from our trade,  
When once we watched the barrage lift, and splendidly  
afraid

Came scrambling out of cover,  
And staggered up the hill. . . .  
The bullets whistled over ;  
Our sudden dead lay still ;  
And the mad machine-gun chatter drove us fighting-wild  
to kill.

Then the death-light lit our faces,  
And the death-mist floated red  
O'er the crimsoned cratered places  
Where his outposts crouched in dread . . .  
And we stabbed or clubbed them as they crouched ; and  
shot them as they fled ;

And floundered, torn and bleeding,  
Over trenches, through the wire,  
With the shrapnel-barrage leading  
To the prey of our desire—  
To the men who rose to meet us from the blood-soaked  
battle-mire ;

Met them ; gave and asked no quarter ;  
But, where we saw the Gray,  
Plunged the edged steel of slaughter,  
Stabbed home, and wrenched away . . .  
Till red wrists tired of killing-work, and none were left  
to slay.

Now—while his fresh battalions  
Moved up to the attack—  
Screaming like angry stallions,  
His shells came charging back,  
And stamped the ground with thunder-hoofs and pawed  
it spouting-black,

And breathed down poison-stenches  
Upon us, leaping past. . . .  
Panting, we turned his trenches ;  
And heard—each time we cast  
From parapet to parados—the scything bullet-blast.

Till the whistle told his coming ;  
Till we flung away the pick,  
Heard our Lewis guns' crazed drumming,  
Grabbed our rifles, sighted quick,  
Fired . . . and watched his wounded writhing back from  
where his dead lay thick.

So we laboured—while we lasted :

Soaked in rain or parched in sun ;

Bullet-riddled ; fire-blasted ;

Poisoned ; fodder for the gun :

So we perished, and our bodies rotted in the ground they  
won.



**I**T heard the song of the First of the Dead, as It  
    couched by the lintel-post ;  
And the coward-soul would have given Its soul to be  
    back with the Red-Steel host . . .  
But Eye peered down ; and It quailed at the Eye ; and  
    Naked Truth said : “ Lost.”

And Eye went out. But It might not move ; for, droned  
    in the dark, It heard  
The Second Song of the Killer-Men—word upon awful  
    word  
Cleaving the void with a shrill keen sound like the wings  
    of a pouncing bird.

## THE SONG OF THE CRASHING WING

*Higher than tinselled heaven,  
Lower than angels dare,  
Loop to the fray, swoop on their prey,  
The Killers of the Air.*

**W**E scorned the Galilean,  
We mocked at Kingdom-Come :  
The old gods knew our pæan—  
Our dawn-loud engine-hum :

The old red gods of slaughter,  
The gods before the Jew !  
We heard their cruel laughter,  
Shrill round us, as we flew :

When, deaf to earth and pity,  
Blind to the guns beneath,  
We loosed upon the city  
Our downward-plunging death.

The Sun-God watched our fighting ;  
No christian priest could tame  
Our deathly stuttered fighting :—  
The whirled drum, spitting flame ;

The roar of blades behind her ;  
The banking plane up-tossed ;  
The swerve that sought to blind her ;  
Masked faces, glimpsed and lost ;

The joy-stick wrenched to guide her ;  
The swift and saving zoom,  
What time the shape beside her  
Went spinning to its doom.

No angel-wings might follow  
Where, poised behind the fray,  
We spied our Lord Apollo  
Stoop down to mark his prey—

The hidden counter-forces,  
The guns upon the road ;  
The tethered transport-horses,  
Stampeding, as we showed—

Dun hawks of death, loud-roaring—  
A moment to their eyes :  
And slew ; and passed far-soaring ;  
And dwindled up the skies.

But e'en Apollo's pinions  
Had faltered where we ran,  
Low through his veiled dominions,  
To lead the charging van !

The tree-tops slathered under ;  
The Red-Steel Killers knew,  
Hard overhead, the thunder  
And backwash of her screw ;

The blurred clouds raced above her ;  
The blurred fields streaked below,  
Where waited, crouched to cover,  
The foremost of our foe . . .

Banking, we saw his furrows  
Leap at us, open wide :  
Hell-raked the man-packed burrows ;  
And crashed—and crashing, died.

**I**T heard the song of the Dead in Air, as It huddled  
 against the gate ;  
 And once again the Eye peered down—red-rimmed  
 with scorn and hate  
 For the shameless soul of the nameless one who had  
 neither foe nor mate.

And Eye was shut. But Naked Truth bent down to mock  
 the Thing :—  
 “ Thou hast heard the Song of the Red-edged Steel, and  
 the Song of the Crashing Wing :  
 Shall the word of a black-coat priest avail at Valhalla’s  
 harvesting ?

Shalt *thou* pass free to the Seven Halls—whose life in  
 shame was sped ? ”  
 And Truth was dumb. But the brooding word still  
 echoed overhead,  
 As roaring down the void outburst the last loud song of  
 the dead.

## THE SONG OF THE GUNNER-DEAD

*In Thor's own red Valhalla,  
Which priest may not unbar ;  
But only Naked Truth and Eye,  
Last arbiters of War ;  
Feast, by stark right of courage,  
The Killers from Afar.*

**W**E put no trust in heaven,  
We had no fear of hell ;  
But lined, and ranged, and timed to clock,  
Our barrage-curtains fell,  
When guns gave tongue and breech-blocks swung  
And palms rammed home the shell.

The Red-Steel ranks edged forward,  
And vanished in our smoke ;  
Back from his churning craters,  
The Gray Man reeled and broke ;  
While, fast as sweat could lay and set,  
Our rocking muzzles spoke.

We blew him from the village ;  
We chased him through the wood :  
Till, tiny on the crest-line  
Where once his trenches stood,  
We watched the wag of sending flag  
That told our work was good :

Till, red behind the branches,  
The death-sun sank to blood ;  
And the Red-Steel Killers rested. . . .  
But we, by swamp and flood,  
Through mirk and night—his shells for light—  
Blaspheming, choked with mud,

Roped to the tilting axles,  
Man-handled up the crest ;  
And wrenched our plunging gun-teams  
Foam-flecked from jowl to breast,  
Downwards, and on, where trench-lights shone—  
For *we*, we might not rest !

Shell-deafened ; soaked and sleepless ;  
Short-handed ; under fire ;  
Days upon nights unending,  
We wrought, and dared not tire—  
With whip and bit from dump to pit,  
From pit to trench with wire.

The Killers in the Open,  
The Killers down the Wind,  
They saw the Gray Man eye to eye—  
But *we*, we fought him blind,  
Nor knew whence came the screaming flame  
That killed us, miles behind.

Yet, when the triple rockets  
Flew skyward, blazed and paled,  
For sign the lines were broken ;  
When the Red Steel naught availed ;  
When, through the smoke, on shield and spoke  
His rifle-bullets hailed ;

When we waited, dazed and hopeless,  
Till the layer's eye could trace  
Helmets, bobbing just above us  
Like mad jockeys in a race . . .  
Then—loaded, laid, and unafraid,  
We met him face to face ;

Jerked the trigger ; felt the trunnions  
Rock and quiver ; saw the flail  
Of our zero-fuses blast him ;  
Saw his gapping ranks turn tail ;  
Heard the charging-cheer behind us . . .  
And dropped dead across the trail.



## VALHALLA'S VERDICT

**I**T heard the Song of the Gunner-Dead die out to a sullen roar :  
But Naked Truth said never a word ; and Eye peered down no more.  
For Eye had seen ; and Truth had judged . . . and It might not pass the Door !

And now, like a dog in the dark, It shrank from the voice of a man It knew :—  
“ There are empty seats at the Banquet-Board, but there's never a seat for you ;  
For they will not drink with a coward soul, the stark red men who slew.

There's meat and to spare, at the Killer-Feasts where Thor's swung hammer twirls ;  
There's beer and enough, in the Free Canteen where the Endless Smoke upcurls ;  
There are lips and lips, for the Killer-Men, in the Hall of the Dancing-Girls.

There's a place for any that passes clean—but for you there's never a place :  
The Endless Smoke would blacken your lips, and the Girls would spit in your face,  
And the Beer and the Meat go sour on your guts—for you died the death of disgrace.

We were pals on earth : but by God's brave Son and the  
bomb that I reached too late,  
I damn the day and I blast the hour when first I called  
you mate ;  
And I'd sell my soul for one of my feet, to hack you from  
the gate—

To hack you hence to the lukewarm hells that the priest-  
made ovens heat,  
Or the faked-pearl heaven of pulpit gods, where the  
sheep-faced angels bleat  
And the halo's rim is as hard to the head as the gilded  
floor to the feet.”

It heard the stumps of Its one-time mate go waddling  
back to the Feast,  
And, once and again, It whined for the Meat ; ere It  
slunk, like a tongue-lashed beast,  
To the tinselled heaven of pulpit gods and the tinselled  
hell of their priest.

ONE OF THEM

*Originally published as a weekly serial  
between February and October 1918*



## CANTO I

*Wherein the bard—released from War's confusions—  
Preludes with egotistical allusions.*

SIX years ago—or is it six-and-twenty ?  
 (How vast the gulf from those ecstatic days !)—  
 When the whole earth snored on in slothful plenty  
 (Tho' poets cashed small pittance for their lays) ;  
 When war appeared less real than G. A. Henty,  
 And Oxo's snaky signs were yet ablaze ;  
 When all seemed peaceful as the press of Cadbury,  
 And no one dreamed of bombs, or bet a Bradbury ;

Or e'er stern Mars had roped us in his tether,  
 Ere Headlam lost his cannons at Le Cateau :  
 We fitted out—my Muse and I together—  
 And launched adown the galley-slips of Chatto  
 A barque of verse, full-rigged for halcyon weather,  
 Which many a critic judged to take the *gâteau*.  
 (Though some there were, high pundits of disparity,  
 Who wept at our unscholarly vulgarity).

We have sailed far since then ; crossed our horizon ;  
 Published our loves and travels in a novel  
 (A tale, men say, that Peckham's flapper cries on,  
 So that both Boots' and Smith's before us grovel) ;  
 And eaten ration bully-beef—with flies on ;  
 And sheltered gratefully in many a hovel,  
 What time we sang of guns and gore and trenches,  
 Instead of oysters, tango-teas and wenches.

For times have changed since we wrote " One of Us " :

*Et nos mutamus*—more or less—*in illis*.

Muse finds herself *in urbe* somewhat *rus* ;

And I—if I disport with Amaryllis—

Where once my motor flashed, prefer a bus ;

And shuddering note how vast the dinner-bill is ;

And signing, sigh in secret for the calm,

Chaste, cheap seclusion of my Chiltern farm.

Yes, Muse and I are tired, and super-serious :

Her damask cheek is lined a bit, and wrinkled.

We are grown old, and London's late nights weary us :

While the gold wine that erst in ice-pail tinkled,

Her doctor finds extremely deleterious ;

And mine forbids me red lips, passion-crinkled :

So now we cultivate domestic habits

Amongst our pigs, our poultry, and our rabbits.

Yet sometimes, as we trench our stubborn soil,

Or feed our sows, or strow the peat-moss litter,

Or set the morrow's chicken-mash to boil,

Or wander out where our young turkeys twitter,

Or read by mellow candle-light—since oil

Is dear and scarce ; or talk—a little bitter

Because we find that Food Control Committees

Are all composed of men brought up in cities ;

Sometimes, in this five-acre paradise

Whither my nerve-racked spirit fled the battle

(Deferring to friend Horder's sound advice—

A silver badge its only martial chattel),

I hear a voice, loud as the market price

That butchers bid for Rhondda's missing cattle,

Voice of my Muse, still vibrant with old passion,

Telling how poetry is now the fashion.

“ Look you,” she cries, “ the Wheels are turning, turning.  
 Though Pegasus long since wore out his pinions,  
 Somehow his shod hooves keep the bread-mills churning.  
 Shrill, night and day, sing Marsh’s Georgian minions :  
 Each sinking sun sets some new Noyes a-yearning,  
 Each rising moon reveals fresh hordes of Binyons ;  
 Who batten fat on unsuspecting editors,  
 And—unlike you—contrive to pay their creditors.

“ Poet, forsooth ! You agricultural brute !  
 Have you no soul above the weight of porkers ?  
 Was it for this I hearkened to your suit,  
 Gave you my metres and my rhymes—some, corkers ?  
 Up, Gilbert ! rummage out your rusty lute :  
 Polish it blacker than your black Minorcas :  
 And let its notes once more, in refluent stanzas,  
 Dower the Income-tax with glad Bonanzas.”

So she ; and—since I loathe to disappoint  
 The least illusion of the equal sex—  
 Let Byron’s oil once more these locks anoint,  
 Once more let honour meet these Cox-drawn cheques . . .  
 Though well I know that times are spare of joint,  
 And satire’s song less like to please than vex ;  
 Now small beer, Smallwood, raids and strikes and rations,  
 Have near eclipsed the gaiety of nations :

Still, let me sing. Yet not as once I sung :  
 Love, fear, and death have chastened, sobered, saddened,  
 One who knew life’s full burden-time too young ;  
 Whom never youth’s unhampered freedom gladdened,  
 But only envy and ambition stung,  
 And fickle passions—in love’s semblance—maddened ;  
 So that he needs must tumble now, poor clown,  
 On this Pindaric stage for half-a-crown :

Yet one who, 'spite a past that shocked St. Tony  
And paid recording angels overtime,  
Still holds his own at sonnet or *canzone*,  
As some shall know who follow this my rhyme—  
Some few : for gladly would I lay a pony,  
Or larger sum, against a ten-cent dime,  
That most of those who read this metred tract'll  
Not know a spondee from a pterodactyl.



## CANTO II

*Explains—a task few modern penmen shirk—  
The sociology of this great work.*

**G**OD bless Democracy, George Bernard Shaw,  
And William Dunn, our sanest, saintliest hatter:  
God bless that great anomaly, the Law;  
Aye may Corelli on her hoards wax fatter:  
God bless Sir Arthur Yapp's unfailing jaw,  
Lord Lansdowne's pen, and brave Horatio's chatter:  
And—lest in England Bolos quite prevail—  
God bless King Northcliffe and his "Daily Mail"!

Long live the old Press—"Times," "D. T.," "Spectator"!  
Long live the New—"Age," "Europe," "Statesman,"  
Long live each *acti temporis laudator*! ["Witness"!  
Long live Lloyd George in unmolested Pittness!  
Long live "The Nation," facile demonstrator  
Of everybody's—save its own—unfitness!  
Long live Valera, Carson, Devlin, Plunkett!  
Long live the lads who fight, the cads who funk it!

Long live our German banks, *sub duce* Plender!  
Long may our railways rule our bounding sea!  
Long may impatient Cuthberts paw their fender,  
What time their patient Phyllis pours their tea!  
Long life to each investor and each spender!  
Long live the Staff! Long live the A.S.E.!  
So long as England's in the melting-pot,  
A prudent bard must sing, "Long live the lot!"

For who shall say—at close of Armageddon,  
 When the world's finished beggaring its neighbour,  
 When the last shell's been fired, the last pig fed on—  
 If we'll be ruled by Capital or Labour :  
 If a Welsh harp shall twang part-songs of Seddon,  
 While Simon pipes a compromising tabor :  
 Or whether every stalwart War-Loan-lender's son  
 Will find his Empire dividends signed " Henderson " ?

Not I : not all the better men who fought  
 While dilutees preserved their precious skin :  
 Not those great early dead, whose single thought  
 Ran—" England : Germany : we've got to *win*."  
 Poor simple souls, of H. G. Wells untaught,  
 They never realised their next-of-kin  
 Would read how they had died to make life cheerier  
 For the dear blacks in Britlingised Nigeria.

Public, forgive your fool, if now and then—  
 Dark bubbles on the verse's stream—appear  
 Thoughts of our worn, unlettered fighting-men ;  
 If sometimes, through the grease-paint's gay veneer,  
 Truth shows—a wrinkled hag. The traitor pen  
 Forgets how blood is cheap and paper dear :  
 And I'm no more the blithe, nut-loving squirrel  
 Who frisked in the pro-consulship of Birrell.

Which is, perchance, the reason why my mind  
 Turns oft to those dear days, now dead as mutton,  
 When Haldane's soul with Bethmann-Hollweg dined ;  
 And no one ploughed up golf-greens, sown by Sutton,  
 To bed the humble tuber's sprouting rind ;  
 Or dashed off shorthand *billets-doux* in Dutton,  
 Or changed a blear-eyed pauper to a swell man  
 In six short weeks of Grub-Street-lauded Pelman :

Why now—sad minstrel in un-Sandoned sackcloth—  
 I sing the twilight of the times I knew.  
 No more our glaring footlights blurr a back-cloth  
 Woven of misery and hung askew ;  
 For Time, stern judge of Us, has donned his black cloth,  
 And to the Mob delivered up the Few. . . .  
 Unless, of course, the Mob's but swapped its Peers  
 For a worse dynasty—of profiteers.

God knows, *we* had our faults—greed, blindness, pride.  
 God also knows we had a dashed good time.  
 Were they the worse for that—our boys who died,  
 By earth and air and sea in boyhood's prime ?  
 God knows ! But if ghost-feet still strut and side  
 About their clubs, if ghost-eyes read this rhyme,  
 I think they'd like their vanished epoch's swan-song  
 To be a merry tune, and not a wan song.

So clear the stage, and ring the curtain up !  
 Once more—ere Empires yield to Leagues of Nations,  
 And bayonets to Socialistic gup—  
 Let Beauty, in diaphanous creations,  
 Ogle the stalls, and subsequently sup  
 Off iced champagne and ortolan collations. . . .  
 Whereafter, if my pen won't bring me pelf,  
 Damned if I don't turn Socialist myself !

## CANTO III

*Sets forth, despite the Law's dull interference,  
A lady's birth, age, family, and appearance.*

**A** RMS have I sung full oft, both steel and white  
ones ;  
Guns have I sung till I can sing no more ;  
Men have I sung, both common and polite ones :  
Yet never sang *one* heroine before. [ones,  
Come then, my ghost-girls, dark, fair, plump, and slight  
Come in the finest, flimsiest frocks ye wore. . . .  
Alas, not one of you quite fills the bill—  
A life-size model for my lady Jill.

Pardon then, Magda, Gladys, Nancy, Florence,  
Doris, Patricia, Mollie, Celandine,  
Nor hold your erstwhile suitor in abhorrence  
Because, from one, he takes eyes subtly green ;  
From other, hands a Sargent or a Lawrence  
Had envied for his canvas ; here, the sheen  
Of gold hair, auburn-shot, in whose abundance, [dance ;  
What time Jill dreamed, young Cupids watched the sun

There a smooth throat, an arched attractive ankle,  
Soft cheek, curved back in bloom to close-set ear,  
Red mouth full-lipped, a voice whose love-tones rankle  
Still in this heart of mine,—a voice so dear  
That. . . . But no more ! In fear this rhyming prank'll  
Offend some damosel whom I revere,  
I state : Jill's just an ordinary blonde,  
Fair, frail, flirtatious, rather fast than fond.

You know the type—aristo-plutocratic,  
 Out of blue blood by hard North Country cash ;  
 A self-assertive sire ; a dam, lymphatic  
 (Since rarely strawberry leaves and sovereigns clash) ;  
 Their sole son, daring in the diplomatic  
 (Thumping his Underwood while kingdoms crash) ;  
 Their daughter. . . . Is there man alive can swear  
 Exactly what she did or did not dare ?

For Jill was one of those astounding females,  
 Born in a chaster, pre-Edwardian day ;  
 When lone Lucindas dared nor dine nor tea males  
 For dread lest scandal dub them “ *coryphée* ” ;  
 When none drank deep of D’Abernonian dream-ales,  
 But quietly our Empire went its way,  
 Nor realised that subalterns on horses  
 Monopolised the brain-power of its Forces :

One who was yet a span from flapperhood,  
 Still puzzling o’er the simplest of equations ;  
 What time in robe of saffron Phœbus stood,  
 And all our Lanes were gay with green carnations,  
 And private hansoms sought the Johnian Wood,  
 And the shrill cycle-bell’s first tintillations  
 Resounded from the dawning to the dark  
 In a Rolls-Royceless, Peter Pan-less Park :

One who attained the pig-tail’s ribboned dowry  
 And helped to pass a Kipling tambourine,  
 When first from lands of wattle, maple, Maori,  
 Men came at summons of a dying Queen :  
 One who, at Auteuil, Dresden, and Rathgowrie,  
 Acquired that polish reft of which, I ween,  
 It is not possible for our Dianas  
 To emulate a modern *grande dame*’s manners :

One on whose head the ostrich-feathers nodded  
 In Alexandrine courts—and *chez* Bassano ;  
 In whose young ears, song's angels disembodied,  
 Rang the last notes of Melbourne's own soprano ;  
 Whose lithe feet, Moykopf-shod, the grouse-moors plod-  
 Or danced the new Machiché Brasiliano, [ded,  
 In times before, unchaperoned of skinny ma,  
 Suburbia's daughters sought the darkling kinema :

To put the matter briefly—One of Them.  
 Bear witness, Muses Nine, how most unworthy  
 Is my gold nib to touch their garments' hem.  
 Say, Byron (for as bard I still prefer thee  
 To all whose pallid minor stars be-gem  
 These Gotha nights), would not such task deter thee  
 From the rhymed octave—sometime known as Whistle-  
 In which, poor ass, I ply this weekly thistle-craft. [craft—

Oἷμοι! that I can never be a poet  
 Modelled on spoon-fed college Adonäises,  
 Whose metres reek of Porson, Jebb, and Jowett,  
 Whose very thoughts derive from donnish daises.  
 Alas ! for us who, writing life, must know it—  
 Its gold, its dross, its ladies and its Läises.  
 Alas ! for my refusal to disseminate—  
 Even in verse—the scholarly-effeminate.

And oh ! ten thousand times alas, should Jill  
 Be recognised in these Parnassian pages.  
 Woe for the libel action, and the bill  
 Which he must face who in the law engages.  
 And ah ! thank Heaven for a metric skill  
 That shields this head from Justice Darling's rages. . . .  
 Safeguarded by thy last experience, G. Moore,  
 I maiden-name my lady—Lewis-Seymour.

## CANTO IV

*In which the author, contrary to custom,  
Goes for the gloves—as Sohrab went for Rostum.*

I HAVE discovered, after much perusal  
Of Cannan, George, Mackenzie, Walpole, Bennett,  
A Law whose discipline brooks no refusal,  
A neo-rheo-literary tenet  
Which runs : “ In art, forbear to pick and choose. All  
That happens, happens. Wherefore, up and pen it.  
Let the scribe’s tale be casual and cursory ;  
End where you like—but start us in the nursery.”

And so I fain had traced, through many a canto,  
My heroine : all dimples in her cot ;  
Bored with her lessons ; laughing at the panto. ;  
Immersed in “ Fauntleroy ” or Walter Scott :  
But, since green herbs from memory’s *campo santo*  
Provide no flavouring for satire’s pot,  
For seething, bubbling cauldron such as this is,  
I’ll cut the cackle and commence the kisses.

’Tis such a night as only London knew  
In the full seasons of our heart’s content,  
When, like some fairy pageant in review,  
Love, Pleasure, Luxury together blent,  
Made life not all too boring for the Few ;  
And Unemployment, fix’t at ten per cent.,  
Furnished—by means of charity bazaars—  
Right many a dame with perquisites and “ pars.”

London, in London's June ! Above, the star-shine :  
 Below, against the rails of Berkeley Square,  
 The patient lights of brougham or rarer car shine,  
 Waiting stiff-shirted squires and ladies fair :  
 Music, from high French windows that afar shine,  
 Thrills, till a dancer well might curse and swear,  
 And call himself a " dashed unlucky fella "   
 To miss the Lewis-Seymours' Cinderella.

Within those halls, where plush-breeched flunkeys stand,  
 What sounds, what scents, what visions of delight !  
 How—to the bluest Blue Hungarian band—  
 Youth whirls away the unreturning night !  
 How—perfumed as the blooms of Samarcand—  
 The dying flow'rets whisper, " Carlton White " !  
 But, oh ! to weary war-time ration-hunters,  
 How like a dream, this stand-up supper—Gunter's.

For here, in reach of every slender hand which is  
 Scarce languidly outstretched to porcelain plate  
 Are dainties drawn from each vale, stream, or strand which  
 Most famed for fruit or fish or fowl or cate : [is  
 Creamed strawberries ; thin, lavish-buttered sandwiches  
 Of livered geese (that now squawk Hymns of Hate),  
 Of priceless hams and tongues and caviar ; ices ;  
 And sugared sweets in myriad strange devices. . . .

Yet sweeter far than all these sweet things, Jill is :  
 Queen of my verse and this " Young People's Dance " :  
 Fairer than fairest of Mayfairly fillies :  
 Sweet, is the smile that lights a countenance  
 Bright as moon-dappled, pink-tipped lotus-lilies ;  
 Sweet, are her jade-green eyes that gleam and glance,  
 And give no hint of yester-tea-time's flare-up  
 When stern mamma forbade her bind her hair up.



Jill's hair ! How beautiful it is ; the tresses  
 Warm-golden, soft as cygnet's earliest downing.  
 Jill's foot ! How slim the arch the flounce caresses.  
 Jill's lips ! How red a cup for love's endrowning.  
 (My Muse ! How easily the jade impresses  
 On this base coin a stamp of pseudo-Browning.)  
 Jill's youth ! Jill's dreams ! These luxuries that lap her ! . . .  
 Don't they present a most alluring flapper ?

So thinks, at least, this lad in evening raiment—  
 Shoes, shirt-front, collar, waistcoat-buttons glowing ;  
 This sub. of other days, when soldier's payment  
 Scarcely sufficed each monthly mess-bill's owing,  
 And triple stars full fifteen years' delay meant ;  
 He, who presents the goblet, overflowing  
 With icy rubies to its crinkled brim,  
 And asks if Jill won't " sit this out " with him. . . .

And there it hangs, word-carven, my last image.  
 (Browning again ! now Keats !) O hapless pair,  
 Loth lover and bold maiden of a dim age,  
 Lost to us now, and dead, but still most fair.  
 O Attic shapes ! Arcadian girlhood's slim age,  
 And silken youth with brilliantined hair !  
 What climaxes must I not sacrifice,  
 Who write this epic at a weekly price ?

For—as long melodies are sweet, but sweeter  
 Poems in short instalments, such as mine—  
 Seven full days, teased puppet of this metre,  
 Must thy parched tongue await that roseate wine ;  
 Seven full nights, fond boy, must thou entreat her ;  
 Whilst mantle to her cheeks, incarnadine,  
 Youth's beauty, beauty's youth—and readers vex't  
 Know, need know, nothing more till Tuesday next.

## CANTO V

*Brings life to week-old statues ; makes them prance  
To love's light tune—and ends the Seymours' dance.*

**P**ALE shapes I locked in memory's studio,  
Your draperies stir. From vein to marble vein  
The life-blood leaps. Eyes gleam, and pulses glow.  
Once more my octaves rap their old refrain  
To re-create the weekly puppet-show.  
Fond boy, to work ! My Jill's herself again,  
And answers your entreaty, sideways glancing,  
" Perhaps I will. It's jolly hot for dancing."

So they twain pass—smart sub. and flapper stately—  
From the high halls of Gunter's prank't refection,  
And out across the waxéd boards, where lately  
Twirled the swift waltz to *La Poupée's* " Selection."  
And on, past couples gossiping sedately ;  
And on, past couples screened against detection ;  
To a dim-shaded, fairy-lighted alcove,  
Fit haunt for languorous maiden and her tall cove :—

Such as—in land of Taj Mahal and mugger,  
Where girls book weeks ahead their supper-dances—  
Screens some pale flirt, some lad who yearns to hug her,  
From the brown *khitmatghar's* averted glances.  
(Who knows thy secrets, darkling *kala-juggah* :  
The orbs down-cast, the fingers' coy advances,  
The swiftly stifled sob that hooks the stripling—  
Save I, Victoria Cross, and Rudyard Kipling ?)

And there, beneath the new-sponged potted palm-tree,  
 That mid-day brought and morning shall remove—  
 Mayfair's own wind-unruffled, ever-calm tree,  
 Whose drooping branches shield Mayfairies' love—  
 She lisps of Waller parts, and thy dead charm, Tree  
 (Twin stars now shining in the "flies" above);  
 While he admits he has or hasn't seen them . . .  
 Till a shy sudden silence falls between them,

A cloud across the sun of lightling banter.

O Jill, my gold-spoon cake-and-Möet miss,  
 Hast thou not dreamed, since thy first tam-o'-shanter,  
 Of soldier boy, of dance-night such as this?  
 Faintly they catch the polka's throb, the canter  
 Of homing hansom-cab where lovers kiss: [too!"]  
 And "Oh," thinks he, "what eyes, what lips, what hair,  
 And "Oh," thinks she, "the ninny doesn't dare to."

Voiceless, they sit: but now her eyes, up-turning,  
 Seek his: and now, beneath the lashes' veil,  
 Leaps a quick flame to set youth's pulses burning:  
 And now she feels her resolution fail:  
 And now gains strength anew the curious yearning  
 For first adventure: now, her fingers frail  
 Tighten about the kerchief's lacy tissue:  
 And now, at last, he says, "Jill, I *must* kiss you."

"Bobbie, you mustn't." "Jill—just one." Her shoulder  
 Stiffens; resists the half-encircling arm.  
 Hands fend away the hand that seeks to hold her.  
 Lips murmur. Lashes flutter in alarm.  
 "No, Bobbie. No." My foolish boy, be bolder;  
 The moment's fear is half the moment's charm. . . .  
 Alas! His missed and amateurish peck  
 Grazes the ear-lobe; lands upon the neck.

Readers, both kissed and kissless, chide not ; pity  
 These withered weeds from Jill's dead seas of dreaming.  
 Think—or in France, or in this barraged city,  
 How many a dear one owes his brass hat's gleaming,  
 How many a husband thanks his safe Committee,  
 To some fond woman's sound strategic scheming !  
 Ponder—can crafts which men from want to plenty ship,  
 Be steered without an arduous apprenticeship ?

Ponder ! Nor blame my Jill if she disguises  
 Love's disappointment in disapprobation,  
 If, Artemis in judgment now, she rises,  
 The outraged goddess, armed for flagellation ;  
 And, with a voice whose every note comprises  
 Disgust, revolt, pain, virtue, indignation,  
 Drives from her father's chaste, offended portals  
 The meekest of apologising mortals.

And blame not me, her bard—whose verses weave her  
 This coronal of memory's budding-hours,  
 Who loved her long ago, yet now must leave her  
 Lorn 'mid the dance's *débris*, and the flowers  
 Which wilt as day-dreams of that first deceiver—  
 Because, while yet War ravens and devours,  
 While still the blind guns thunder out in Flanders,  
 I sing the type which cozens and philanders.

For, young as Spring and old as Cleopatra,  
 Certain as Nature's self, this type endureth :  
 On Skindles' lawn, in jungles of Sumatra,  
 She blooms—a wax-white weed that no rake cureth :  
 From Westminster to *wats* of Pura Chatra,  
 Her false lips smile, her gladsome optic lureth :  
 WAACs may be WRENs ; wars, peace ; to-day's full  
 To-morrow's clerk . . . but Jill is sempiternal. [Colonel,

## CANTO VI

*Continues—symptomatically terse—  
The world's first serial in doggerel verse.*

**O** JILL, my peerless, perfumed, powdered darling ;  
 Quintessence of all fairies I've adored  
 In London's lanes, by Devon Budleigh's far ling,  
 At Berkeley's, Kettner's, Ritz's, Carlton's board ;  
 Jill, whose white hands ne'er knew rough house-work's  
 gnarling ;  
 Whose clothes not twenty Coxes could afford :  
 How shall man sing the seasoned cee-sprung carriage  
 In which you rolled from that first kiss to marriage ?

What days they were ! What noon-times and what  
 twilights !

The whole wide earth seemed fashioned for your pleas-  
 Its very heavens, gold-and-crystal skylights [ure ;  
 Whereunder you picked orchid-blooms at leisure.  
 For others, shadowed gloom ; for you, the high lights—  
 The pomp, the pride, the dance's twanging measure. . . .  
 And if one begged: "Take coin," you'd say, "and toss it her.  
 Poor thing ! That skirt was never cut by Rossiter."

Dear, *rotten* days ! And yet, a Jack grows wistful  
 At thoughts of all the Jills whom he remembers,  
 In times when he had fivers by the fist-full  
 And fires of youth—where now are only embers.  
 Jack's Jills ! Why, Muse possesses quite a list full,  
 May's Jill, and June's Jill, August's, and September's. . . .  
 Yet dares no more than skim each light adventure  
 Which followed on flirtationship's indenture.

For there's a tide in the affairs of flappers,  
 Of those, at least, that West End mothers breed—  
 (Your Wapping matron's more inclined to slap *hers* :  
     A vulgar trick—yet one which serves some need :)  
 A spring-time blood-tide, mounting to young nappers,  
     Heady as wine, a mischief-making mead,  
 Which—though a man find every known excuse for 'em—  
 To put it mildly, does the very deuce for 'em.

And shall my sweetest Muse, than whom none chaster  
     E'er fluttered to console the middle-age-time  
 Of any neurasthenic poetaster,  
     Ope her full throat to sing Jill's 'prentice rage-time ?  
 The unnerving doubts, the certainties which braced her,  
     The follied moments and the ensuing sage time,  
 The major and the minor bards who sung to her,  
 The men who knelt, the " little friends " who clung to her ;

The last strange morning-dreams, the tea-tray's rattle,  
     The letters—opened, skimmed and tossed aside ;  
 The leisured getting-up, the breakfast-prattle,  
     The summoning 'phone-bell and the mid-day ride ;  
 The lunch ; the afternoons of tittle-tattle—  
     Town's latest scandal, dance, divorce or bride ;  
 The " dear boys," climbers, *partis*, portion-stalkers ;  
 The furtive teas at Charbonnel and Walker's ;

The Morny-scented bath before the dinner ;  
     The deft maid's fingers in the unruly hair ;  
 The *risqué* talk of some sweet social sinner,  
     Half-heard across the table's candle-glare ;  
 The Bridge, so much too high for a beginner ;  
     The Ball ; the moment's whisper on the stair ;  
 The thousand faces, phases, thoughts, books, travellings,  
 Which whirl youth's silk cocoon in its unravellings.

Ah no ! not ours with huckstering pen to retail  
 How slumb'rous beauties wake from girl-time's dozing.  
 Let Hubert Wales and D. H. Lawrence detail  
 The purpled passion-blossom's slow unclosing.  
 No Rainbow's purple e'er shall tinge our she-tale,  
 No censor's Yoke restrain its swift composing.  
 Moreover—quite apart from Muse's purity—  
 There's nothing half so dull as immaturity.

So please imagine—(though I know it's risky  
 To trust in Britons for imagination,  
 Save those rare few whom peace-time's hoarded whisky  
 Still fires to spiritual exaltation,  
 Or such as stand, when questioning House grows frisky,  
 Pat on their first inspired asseveration)—  
 Jill as she was in times of sugared plenty :  
 The Bond Street goddess, *ætat* three-and-twenty.

Goddess, indeed ! These meagre days that skimp us,  
 Poor mortals, bullied, badged, and bombed and  
 rationed,  
 Scarce know that breed which once on high Olympus  
 Flaunted in radiant raiment, Poiret-fashioned.  
 Goddess indeed ! A self-sure, jade-eyed, slim puss,  
 Of life's each latest luxury impassioned ;  
 Sleek ; mateless ; restless ; rampant ; supple-sinewed ;  
 Sharp-clawed ; capricious ; and . . . *to be continued.*

## CANTO VII

*Our author—having sung his prolegomenon—  
Shows Jill in love : a most unique phenomenon.*

**O** GREAT Asquiffian age, when Britain's poor *res*  
Was half destroyed by visionary Catos  
And waiting seers. *O tempora ! O mores*  
Of Epicurus—finer far than Plato's !  
O Bacchic swards : O gardens of Dolores,  
Splendid with rose-blooms, sterile of potatoes :  
O work-rights bartered for imported pottages :  
O happy Few : O happy week-end " cottages " !

Which last—the Lewis-Seymours'—now I sing. . . .  
Here, as the gold sun seeks his cloudy pillow,  
While, black on emerald river-lawns of spring,  
Lengthen the shades of privet-hedge and willow,  
Sits Alastair : one white hand pencilling  
The ever-mounting score which he and Jill owe ;  
What time their two opponents, rising, bless  
The coming-off of that last deep finesse ;

And all about the card-flecked baize foregather  
The brilliant members of the Seymour party :  
Sir Thomas Sope, J.P., the King of Lather,  
With Lady Sope, broad-beamed, benignant, hearty ;  
Hubert Fitzturf, well up in racing blather ;  
Miss Corinth Tose—whose latest dance, "Astarte,"  
Revealed, a short week since, to gasping London  
How all save Art, for Art, must be left undone.



Mr. and Mrs. Cromwell-Rhode—nonentities ;  
 That peer for whom both maiden low and high sighs,  
 Lord Reggie Strar—of marrying propensities  
 Which ever veer 'twixt absolutes and nisis ;  
 Jill's sire—unsure of all his guests' identities ;  
 Jill's mother—busy twining mental splice-eyes,  
 Fearful lest one whose feet might tread a palace stair,  
 Should haply wed “ that impecunious Alastair.”

Yet when—since first a nameless bard did proffer  
 To Cretan tribes Europa's Zeus-bred ox-myth—  
 Has he who fills the Courts and bares the coffer,  
 Who laughs at Bok, Divorce Reform, and locksmith ;  
 Young Cupid, mad-cap mischief-making scoffer,  
 Careless alike to please Brown-Jones or shock Smith ;  
 Ta'en thought if those at whose fond hearts he shoots  
 Can heal them with gold-beater's skin *chez* Coutts' ?

Lang syne have vintage ports and hot-house peaches  
 Passed, in the butler's solemn arms, away.  
 Now, silver o'er the mirrored river-reaches,  
 Sable 'neath banks with rush and iris gay,  
 Broods the mooned night. Now, closer far than leeches,  
 Stick the high bridgers to their auction-play.  
 Yet two there are who waste nor time nor cash on  
 That lesser game which erst was all their passion.

Theirs is the sheer Greek magic of the night ;  
 The crescent silvern splendour of the moon ;  
 The sleeping rose-buds, yellow, red, and white ;  
 The daisy-elves that dance with silent shoon  
 On velvet lawns for fairy queens' delight.  
 Theirs is sweet Nature's every priceless boon,  
 For which, in England's war-less, wheat-less soils,  
 Year in, year out, the rich man's gardener moils.

And there's a strange new softness in Jill's eyes ;

And in Jill's weary soul strange thoughts are thronging,  
Like little stars new-lit in darkling skies :

Just to be with *him* always : just a longing  
To leave this world of scandal, bridge, and lies,

And foolish clothes, and constant meal-times' gong-  
For Love, as servant girls, in this our nation [ing. . . .  
Ever desires a change of situation.

Her soul is *his*. Her hand is on his cheek.

He knows the perfumed glory of her hair,

Her willing lips, scarce breathing as they speak

His name, " My own ! My darling ! Alastair ! "

Her slim young arms, her throbbing heart, her sleek

Warm throat. And, all a younger son may dare  
For dear love's sake, he vows . . . and so forgets  
All his expensive tastes and half his debts.

" Yours—yours for ever, Alastair." Her voice

Thrills low as music heard o'er waves afar.

" My Jill ! My sweetheart ! Woman of my choice ! "

" Man of all dreams ! My new soul's guiding-star ! "

And, once again, her clinging lips rejoice ;

Her brimmed eyes mirror passion's avatar :

And, once again, the hot blood throbs like wine

Through nestling form his eager arms entwine. . . .

Ah leave them, leave them, lonely by the river,

Their world, their whisky, and their bridge forgot !

Morn shall bring headaches, heart-aches, tears, and liver,

Morn shall unloose night's matrimonial knot :

For though Dan Cupid of the silver quiver

Has arrows both for mansion and for cot,

Ten bull's-eyes with the former hardly matter

As much as one poor " outer " with the latter.

## CANTO VIII

*Wherein Jill's torn heart wondereth if that rent  
Be worse than dowdy clothes and unpaid flat-rent.*

**A**LREADY Dawn, that rosy-fingered hussy,  
Had laced his marching-boots on Brother Day;  
Already maids were up, and bees were buzzy,  
And morning teas a-rattle on the tray;  
When Jill awoke—her dear head yet all muzzy  
With passion's dreams; and pondered, as she lay  
In Coty'd warmth among her lace-edged pillows,  
On last night's happenings beneath the willows.

How fine he was, her promised! How her whole  
Rapt being thrilled at thought of his embraces!  
How—soul once linked for aye with linkéd soul  
In one of Town's exclusive mating-places—  
They would fare forth to seek love's shining goal  
With Starry eyes and Daily-Mirrored faces!  
“Let all our world,” she cried, “with scorn and malice  
I'll wed none other than my darling Alastair.” [stare,

But then, as freckles on the fairest skin come  
(Though these, claims George, oft lure a blooming  
lover);  
Or as swift skaters who round Prince's rink hum,  
Missing their edge, lose balance and crash over;  
Came other thoughts: his debts, tastes, mortgaged in-  
Till, sudden, that dream-journeying to Dover, [come.  
For which her waking mind had booked its ticket,  
Seemed thirdest class. And: “I, we, couldn't stick it,

The narrow life of poverty," she cried :

" A tiny house in Half Moon or in Green Street—  
Three servants (four, at most)—one horse to ride—

Hired cars—a month at Monte quite a queen's treat—  
Cheap hats (last season's feathers ' cleaned and dyed ')—

Frocks from a ' little woman ' in some mean street—  
No baccarat, no racing, and no Ritzing—  
And poor old Alastair for ever gritsing. . . .

Ah no ! it cannot be." Yet still soft heart

Played traitor to cash-calculating brain.

Must they, who loved as never lovers, part ?

Their troth, their trust, their trifling—all be vain ?

Poor Jill ! E'en Smart Set's love-wounds sometimes smart.

Poor Jill—who wept ; and wished, and wished again,  
She were some Kaffir maid—her dress, a cowrie :  
Or, failing that, possessed a Leiter dowry.

But what—the reader asks (the Lord knows wherefore

Readers should put imaginary queries)—

What of young Alastair ? Does he still care for

This wickedest of Mayfair's fallen peris ?

Does he not know she'd rather preen in vair for

Some boodled noble, rich in Rands or Eries ?

Does he not guess, as valet warms his shirt,

That Jill's a soulless, Glyn-eyed, green-eyed flirt ?

Fond reader—(Lord knows why we bards reply to

Questions unasked, or why a reader's " fond ")—

Come, let us take Pegasian wings, and fly to

Alastair's chamber. See ! the shirt is donned ;

The collar pinned ; and tied the priceless tie, too.

And hark ! he speaks : " I've always liked 'em blonde ;  
An' Jill's a ripper ; an' of course we're pally.  
But marriage . . . Best forget about it, Ally."

Ah, sad hearts severed by the curse of Mammon !  
 Never I ween—since first I learned the fling  
 Of metric fly that hooks the rhyme's fat salmon—  
 Was spied so piteous a breakfasting.  
 Ne'er, from the Dresden plate she cut her ham on,  
 Jill raised her eyes : nor e'er went capon's wing,  
 Though devilled to a turn and bacon-basted,  
 As Alastair's, so utterly untasted.

And as the food-fain guests came wandering down  
 To dally with the matutinal platter,  
 Plainly to each appeared—from Ally's frown  
 And Jill's wan smile—that "something was the mat-  
 Yet vainly Hubert wagered half-a-crown [ter."  
 To buy Jill's thoughts ; and vain was all the chatter  
 With which Miss Tose confided to Lord Reggie  
 That, "Alastair looked most uncommon edgy."

For these were lovers of the bull-dog breed,  
 True Humphrey-Ward-cum-Kipling Anglo-Saxons ;  
 Not such as mouth the high heart's mating-need,  
 Or blare the soul's untimely hurt through Klaxons ;  
 But single-purposed, steadfast to the creed :  
 As it were, sentimental Stonewall Jacksons.  
 Wherefore must I—since "Art's elimination"—  
 Betray no detail of that separation.

Nay ! Not for all the brains Whitehall has wasted,  
 Nor all the brass that decks its swollen head,  
 Nor all the paper brave Sir Hedley pasted,  
 Nor all the swords of Morgan, wordy-red,  
 Would I decant the bitter wine these tasted—  
 The much they spoke, the more they left unsaid ;  
 Or show Jill sobbing out, with crumpled hanky,  
 "And now you'll marry some rich *horrid* Yankee."

Nay : by the Gods of Literature (illusions ?)—  
Nay : by the Seven U-Boat-haunted Seas—  
Nay : by the twin Magnificent Contusions  
(Pemberton-Billing's gore and Archer-Shee's) !  
My merry muselet of the glad effusions  
Shuns high-falutin' tragedies like these ;  
And leaves the final love-scenes of such star clay  
To bead a rosary for Florrie Barclay.

## CANTO IX

*When fractured hearts wax over-sentimental,  
Naught helps so much as travel—Continental.*

**A**LAS for Love! When once that cross-eyed babe—  
The stunting air-boy with acute myopia,  
Whose loops nor sextant tracks nor astrolabe—  
Has poured us poison from his cornucopia,  
No patent drug from land of Lincoln (Abe)  
Avails to heal the spirit's misanthropia ;  
No scalpel'd knight, no Harley-Streeted pill-*vir*  
Can guarantee to cure our souls for silver.

So some seek solace in divorce ; and some  
By the spate-bubbling salmon-streams of Norrøway ;  
Some quaff th' embittered cocktail, or the rum  
Whose swizzled headaches heavy on to-morrow weigh :  
But most, Dame Fortune's dreamed and distant drum  
Lures with its thump along that parterred borrow-way,  
Where, ever sequent 'midst the Eternal Zeros,  
Queux finds his spies ; the Williamsons, their heroes.

O fairer far than Kosciusko's ranges,  
Than Denmark's Hill, than Ootie or Darjeeling :  
Sweet mount, whose *râteau* soon or late estranges  
Each spieler from the bullion of his spieling :  
Monte ! where yester's *mille* to-day's small change is ;  
Where aye the painted circle, slowly wheeling,  
Lures deftly to that one unwagered socket  
The ivory ball which devastates our pocket :

Dear fane, above whose pillared portals nestle  
 Unnumbered myriads of unmurdered blue-rocks :  
 Dear votaries, who throng the baizéd trestle  
 Where fortune's rescued barque aye strikes on new rocks :  
 Dear *voisins*, frequent maximumed of Jessel :  
 Dear—and now haply cleansed-of-Berlin-Jew rocks :  
 How far more potent than a touting Tank  
 The premiumed magnet of your golden Bank !

How oft, in some wild Western whizz-banged dug-out,  
 Where guttered to all draughts my rationed taper,  
 (Tho' nary a window let my Woodbine's fug out),  
 Has my soul flown from Staff-emitted paper  
 To the glad days, when from my purse I'd lug out  
 That last fat stake—and watch the white sphere caper—  
 And plank my *plaques*—and hear the *croupier* say :  
 “ *Tout va, Monsieur.*” . . . and lose, and turn away :

How oft, what time my gas-wise nostrils shook  
 At thought of death ingloriously smelly,  
 Have I exclaimed : “ Ah, bed me not with Brooke,  
 With Brother Byron, Sister Keats, or Shelley :  
 But speed my hapless corse—per Messrs. Cook—  
 Safe to the bar of Princess Aubanellie ;  
 And let one Anglo-Saxon poet's ashes—  
 Just for the change—lie lightly where some cash is ! ”

'Twas a chill afternoon of earliest year :  
 (Who sings the *tropic* Riviera—lies) :  
 Fine snow-flakes flecked the garden-walks ; and drear  
*La Turbie* spired it to the lowering skies.  
 The pigeons shivered. Came no wight to cheer,  
 With over-trusting purse, the shopman's eyes.  
 The “ *Galerie* ” was empty. Not a Jewess  
 Had bought one hat since *déjeuner* from Lewis.



From her high window at the "Hermitage,"  
 Looked forth my Jill on white, deserted square ;  
 On dripping rooves of *pension* or *garage* ;  
 On café tables, marble-topped and bare ;  
 O'er snow-capped kiosk, to the rock-bound *plage*  
 Where only suicides take *bains de mer* :  
 And sighed ; and thought, " Midst such funereal glooms,  
 There's nothing for it but those stuffy ' Rooms. ' "

Yet lingered still by that lace-curtained window  
 Lost in some wild-rose maiden reverie—  
 A finer, a more exquisitely-skinned doe  
 Than all who, in these darkling nights and free,  
 To Boots' creams or powders Valaze-tinned owe  
 Their Cuthbert-kissed complexion's purity. . . .  
*Fine fleur* of Albion's stateliest orchid-houses,  
 She dreamed—like shop-girls—*louis d'or* and spouses.

For never, since that too, too happy May-day  
 By the smooth reaches of the upper Thame,  
 When first she knew requited passion's hey-day  
 With Alastair, had life been " quite the same. "  
 " Always "—but mostly after quarter's pay-day,  
 Or at the finish of a long, dull game—  
 Her soul was conscious of a " something missing " :  
 Something that neither clothes could give, nor kissing,

Nor e'en a five-fold-passing hand at " chemmy " :  
 Something girls lose who *won't* when we beseech 'em ;  
 Be they of Jill's great world, or of the semi :  
 Something that only marriage seems to teach 'em ;  
 That haunts patrician coiffures, diamond-gemmy,  
 In the ten-guinea'd opera box of Beecham,  
 And sits—a feathered bird of evil bode—  
 On Sally's noddle in the Walworth Road.

And so Jill thought of married love, thrice holy,  
And the moon tracing shadows on the lawn,  
Of why the long months ebbed away so slowly,  
And why she never slept a wink till dawn,  
And why she'd funk'd that thousand-franc paroli,  
And why her dress-account was over-drawn . . .  
Till—as some squire who brings proud knight his spurs—  
Parker appeared with hat, gloves, purse, and furs.

## CANTO X

*Displays—a scene of horrid impropriety—  
High play, as ever, rampant in Society.*

**S**HALL Fashion's goddess, earthward-stooping,  
scramble  
For mortal seats in commonplace Casino ?  
Herd with the crowd, where broken tipsters shamble  
And the sleek *rasta* reeks of maraschino ?  
Shall Jill's white fingers, Cartier-circled, gamble  
With such as ne'er one single Bond Street bean owe ?  
Ah no ! Those angel wings shall only rub  
Patrician shoulders at the " Sporting Club."

Thither her secret way the maiden wended,  
Down tube-like passages electric-lit.  
Safely she passed those slopes, and unattended ;  
For there alway do watchful guardians sit,  
Lest evil hap. And passing, much perpended  
If to locked money-box's warden slit  
Few hard-won coins should find their meagre way,  
Or if—" for just this once "—she'd really *play*.

But when, in fee for cloak-room-tendered sables,  
Her gloved hand grasped the gleaming disc which showed  
That last best number of the hazard-tables—  
*Trente-six* : then, sudden, hope unreasoned glowed  
In gambler's breast : and, as snow slips from gables  
Or tyre unstudded skids on greasy road,  
So slipped and skidded, powerless to restrain,  
Each cog of caution in the gambler's brain.

Swift as young wife when first she goes a-pawning  
 Some wedding-trinket from her lord and master ;  
 So swift trod Jill—the slow lift's welcome scorning—  
 Up those rugged stairs of gilt and alabaster.  
 Heedless of gorgeous flunkeys duly fawning ;  
 Heedless if triumph waited or disaster ;  
 Heedless of all save that clasped cloak-room token  
 She crossed the threshold of the Bank Unbroken.

Gods, what a scene was there ! My poor Onoto  
 Self-fills with shudders at its own ambition.  
 Not Homer's self could hope to name *in toto*,  
 Not e'en the " New York Herald's " French edition,  
 That crowd magnificent : those dames whose photo  
 Had graced our " Tatler's " frontispiece position,  
 Those languid lords of Art, Heart, Steel and Steal,  
 Who thronged the Temple of the Spinning Wheel.

For here a Duchess edged her five-franc stake on,  
 Eyed of some scornful Gaby, plaques in paw :  
 Yonder an Illinoisy queen of bacon  
 Wailed at her loss : and there pleased clients saw  
 An unmoved *croupier* ply profaning rake on  
 The fattest counsel-fees of Albion's law :  
 Here played Bass-Freebody, M.P., whose main power  
 Lay rather in his money-bags than brain-power ;

There, by smooth scion of the clan MacStubbs,  
 Famed for Free Trade and Mutual Protection,  
 Counted his gains the artist Druzzler-Grubs,  
 Whose colouring ne'er touched his wife's complexion :  
 While yonder Sydney Strop—whom nineteen clubs  
 Had pilled each time he came up for election—  
 Borrowed with much *sang froid* from Moses Goatheim  
 A *mille* which his *chère amie* lost in no time. . .

But what cared Jill for Grand Dukes, *Principini*,  
 For ladies slow, fast, brazen-faced or shy ;  
 Or the great Balkan tenor, *Salvarsini*,  
 Who sang high notes but played them yet more high ;  
 For Russ, Yank, Dago, Teuton, Gaul, or Sheeny,  
 Or e'en her father's not-too-watchful eye ?  
 Baizewards she strode—and ere the ball could tarry,  
 Announced three *louis* on the *dernier carré*.

“ *Trente-six, rouge, pair et passe!* ” . . . Judge ye who know  
 The flatling years that yeasty luck-runs leaven,  
 If there be moment on our earth below  
 More like a plunger's tinselled dream of heaven  
 Than this of Jill's, who sees three *louis* grow  
 As by a miracle to twenty-seven ;  
 And round the left *mise* plastering coins two score, . . .  
 Hears the ball click, the table gasp : “ *Encore.* ”

“ *À vous le plein, Madame.* ” Keen brains unravel  
 The riddled sum. “ *Deux louis—soizante-dix.* ”  
 Rake-slid across the baize, the piled coins travel.  
 “ *Neuf louis à cheval, trente-cinq—trente-six :*  
*Payés.* ” Like gold-dust from Pactolian gravel,  
 Pours out the lidded *caisse* each stake's increase.  
 “ *Carrés.* ” “ *Transversale simple.* ” “ *Et pleine.* ” Jill's knees  
 Shake as she dares it : “ *Doublez toutes les mises ;*

*Et maximum en plein . . .* ” Now, high heart thudding,  
 Breathless, she waits. “ *Messieurs, vos jeux.* ” The ball  
 Back-flipped from finger, hums, a white streak scudding  
 Round the grooved circle; slows. . . She knows the call,  
 “ *Plus rien* ” ; sees crazed ivory leap the studding—  
 Bound on the brass—hang—slither—poise and fall ;  
 Peers ; doubts ; makes certain ; tingles fortune-struck :  
 Hears in five tongues, “ *Three times. My God, what luck.* ”

And there—her stakes still ordered in their places,  
On the marked baize clean-raked of losers' gold—  
While yet, slow-circling in the wheel's embraces,  
The resting ball its magic number told—  
Her face, 'midst all those gaping, gasping faces,  
Calm as the *chef de parti's*, and as cold—  
Her winnings raining Danæ-like around her—  
*Her love-wounds cured*—Jill's envious father found her.

## CANTO XI

*Changes the scene to lands of Raphael, Dante,  
Caruso, Borgia, Gnocchi and Chianti.*

**I**N that glad age when Muse and I blued capital—  
 (And whence we now draw not-too-dusty dividends;  
 Finding that, since the War God sought to scrap it all  
 And turn the peaceullest crank to serve his livid ends,  
 If we poor bloodless milk, our readers lap it all  
 From Passion's prologue down to True Love's vivid  
 Our busied pleasure-class could only spare a [ends)—  
 Brief six weeks' sojourn on the Riviera.

So memory's glass reveals departure's morning—  
 Time somewhere round eleven o' the clock—  
 And Lewis-Seymours, travel-garbed, adorning  
 Monte's clean platform, walled of sea and rock ;  
*Père ; mère ;* Jill's self, white-veiled and sunshade-scorning,  
 Peerless in *Reboux* hat and *Callot* frock ;  
 Miss Parker, rug and jewel-case beladen ;  
 The valet, sad for loved, lost chamber-maiden.

And now the bell announces train's arrival ;  
 And now she fusses, puffing, into view.  
 Now may safe winner bless won gold's survival ;  
 Now must broke loser face hard world anew :  
 Now comes the *concierge* with last contrival—  
 The baggage-check—to double *pourboire's* due,  
 What time from out their halted Pullmans steele  
 Fresh pilgrims to the Mecca of the Wheel. . . .

Sweet muselet mine ! whom tax-collectors harry,  
 On whose belaurelled brow full many a rate weighs,  
 How gladly would thy weary pinions tarry,  
 Just one more canto, 'neath those gilded gateways  
 Where the plump pigeons labour not, nor carry,  
 Nor any Gotha hums its futile hate-ways :  
 But we, alas ! have many a verse to dree more,  
 And so must travel Rome-wards with Jill Seymour.

Gloved quiet hands on uncut novel rested,  
 Listless she watched the seascape glinting by ;  
 The terraced landward slopes ; the hamlets, nested  
 Saffron where crag-line cuts the depth of sky ;  
 Cap Martin ; Menton, Kensington-infested ;  
 Barred Ventimiglia, whose *douaniers* ply,  
 Couple by couple and with *scusi's* plenty,  
 The chalk that never doubts our drawled "*Niente.*"

Listless she sat through lunch, and introspective ;  
 Heard the wheels droning under her, the clatter  
 Of dish near-spilled, her father's terse invective,  
 Her mother's wifty social chitter-chatter ;  
 And thought : " Is this then life's entire objective—  
 Enjoyment ? Aren't there other things that matter,  
 Such as . . ." But here imagination's steed  
 Pecked at the fence of introspection's need ;

And stumbled—like a Georgian poet's verse  
 Whose stresses fail to hold the pace that kills.  
 " For, after all," urged brain, " things might be worse.  
 You've won enough to settle half your bills ;  
 Bought hats galore, three frocks, that new gold purse . . .  
 Jill Seymour grousing ! Why, compared with Jill's,  
 Most women's lives are absolutely rotten. . . .  
 Moreover, *l'affaire* Alastair's forgotten."



Whereat—alas, my heroine ! shallow-hearted  
 As the frail fair who pack Nevada's Reno—  
 Swifter than Doan cures backs which long have smarted;  
 Swifter than asthma flies thy lightnings, Veno ;  
 Depression struck its bell-tents and departed. . .  
 And on, past many a green-embowered *villino*,  
 Past many a bougainvillea'd seaside station,  
 Curved *train-de-luxe* towards its destination.

Dreamy 'midst golden mandarines and roses,  
 High Bordighera queened it o'er the bay :  
 Sunlit where coast-line fold on fold uncloses,  
 Ospedaletti and San Remo lay—  
 Loved of Lurati, loved of her who poses  
 Sad by the sea-waves of some movie-play.  
 And now, beyond Savona sea-fog-hazy,  
 Gleams the lit harbour of the Genovesi.

Here, too, Muse mine, were paper only cheaper,  
 Chancely we'd find material for a canto :  
 Since well that rail-climbed cliff's *albergo*-keeper  
 Knows us, and well that tram-sought *campo santo*.  
 But duty calls—thee to connubial sleeper ;  
 Me to make certain lest thy cane portmanteau,  
 Purpose-mishandled of untipped *facchini*,  
 Here find its rest eternal—like Mazzini. . . .

"Tis safe ! And now, sweet child, at speed undress thee.  
 These brazen hooks shall guard the silks of Worth,  
 This little net the Lentheric " slides " that tress thee ;  
 This mirror show the daintiest face on earth  
 To thy fond lover, as he murmurs " Bless thee "   
 From the discomfort of his upper berth. . .

" What, fast asleep already ! Poor inspirer,  
 Strange how these metric honeymoonings tire her ! "

## CANTO XII

*Presents to Anglo-Saxondom's democracy  
A picture of the Italian aristocracy.*

**F**RIENDS, Roman friends, who erstwhile lent polite  
 eyes  
 To our faked films of gun and mine and tank—  
 (Though you, as we, preferred Borelli's bright eyes  
 Or Suzanne d'Armelle's five-reel-photoed prank)—  
 What time, with manifold salutes and right eyes,  
 White-gloved, field-booted, girt of sword and swank,  
 Green-tabbed, tri-lingual, glorious, we trod,  
 A mighty movie-king before the Rodd :

Friends, whose sweet vermouths soothed this *capitano*  
 When Foreign Office cables drove him dotty,  
 Whose fingers poured him golden teas *chez Strano*,  
 And thrilled him as he kissed them *buona notte* :  
 Can we repay those sweets *lontan' lontano*,  
 Those midnight cocktails of your flowered *salotti*,  
 With bitter dishes, burnt in satire's kitchens,  
 And poison-fruitful vine-juices of Hichens ?

Avaunt the thought ! Far rather will we kneel—  
 Muselet and I—'midst ever-ruffled greenery,  
 Before the altar of the Great Un-reel ;  
 And pray its clicking goddess of machinery  
 She grant us, from her fane of fireproof steel,  
 One fanlike ray to show—in Roman scenery—  
 How walked, talked, tangoed, gambled, shopped and flirted  
 Jill Seymour, Juno of the Hobble-Skirted.

So darken house ! Let photo-fiction reign !

Tinkles anew the *maestro's* indicator.

Loudly the carbons sizzle and complain.

Now, peering down, espies the operator,  
Head steal to head, and hand clasp hand again.

Now thrown beam dazzles entering spectator ;  
Now the band blares, and screenward eyes discover :  
" Scene XII. In Rome. Jill meets another lover."

And there they stand, on Trinitá dei Monti,—

Jill and her latest " flirt," dark Giulio,  
Last of a long, broke line of papal *Conti*.

The City of the Hills lies spread below :  
Domes ; flat-roofed houses ; river ; plashing *fonti* ;  
Piazza di Spagna—flower-booths aglow ;  
Via Condotti—cutting straight as arrow  
Through crowded town its canyon deep and narrow ;

Beyond, crests pine-crowned 'gainst a blue horizon . . .

" Here, where the waning centuries have set  
As fair a jewel as wanderer casts eyes on,  
Morn after happy morn, the lovers met " . . .  
So reads the rune, and vanishes. Film flies on ;

Scene follows scene, more swift than those which fret  
Through mental lenses of a writer's brain  
When memory calls the past to life again :—

The Pincio's shaded track. . . " They rode together " ;  
The garden lake . . . " and walked in the Borghese " :  
" A tango-tea " . . . Jill dancing light as feather,  
Her glances driving Giulio nearly crazy :  
" The tennis club " . . . in blowiest movie weather :  
" A motor-drive to visit the Marchese " . . .  
" Hunting in the Campagna " . . . " Bridge " . . . " Frascati " . . .  
" Latour's " . . . " A Porta Pia dinner-party " . . .

So flit the pictures. Here their Fiat crawls  
 At twilight-hour adown the twinkling Corso ;  
 There, in the Campidoglio's freezing halls,  
 Chance-met (?) they stand before some sculptured torso ;  
 Or, secret, seek those quaintly frescoed walls,  
 Where flirted much as Jill (or rather more so)  
 Whene'er Augustus visited her villa,  
 That perfect lady, Livia Drusilla. . . .

O halcyon Hunless days ! How vain the trope  
 Which strives to limn each trivial employment,  
 Each pleasure-task that helped your children cope  
 With their one dreaded bogie—Unenjoyment :  
 What save the punched celluloid can hope  
 Explain how much each newly-purchased toy meant  
 To baby-folk, sleep-rocked in peace-time cradles,  
 Whose turtle soup was served from golden ladles ?

Who save some flickering Balzac of the screen  
 Could show that cosmopolitan " Society,"  
 Could write that epic of the epicene,  
 (Its loves, mere jests ; its lusts, mere impropriety),  
 Where courtier Giulio sighed for Jill the queen,  
 And Rumour feasted Scandal to satiety,  
 Wagging its thousand tongues at thousand *pranzi*  
 If she but bowed to him in the " Costanzi " ?

O Rome, Augustan Rome, whose bones ghost-haunted  
 Professor Boni's delving spade unsmothers !  
 In pagan times, when Vestal virgins flaunted,  
 And Emperors made mincemeat of their mothers,  
 When the Gaul died while blood-mad circus taunted,  
 Your sins *were* sins—not scenes for Pathé Brothers :  
 You who now need not Gibbon's pen, but Gibson  
 To draw those angels—good-as-gold, with bibs on—

Contessa, Principessa, Marchesina,

Who hinted as they sipped Excelsior cocktails,  
With many a “ *Com’ é bella !* ” “ *Che divina !* ”

How, were their lips not sealed, they could unlock tales  
Anent friend Giulio and his *biondina* . . .

Some evidence for which unuttered shock-tales  
My learned Muse, continuing her story,  
Will now proceed to lay before the jury.

## CANTO XIII

*Teaches our female readers—an they need it—  
How harder 'tis to quench love's fire than feed it.*

PALE Cynthia, whose beams alike can tickle  
 Young poets into amatory rabies,  
 Or light from lands of Prussian *pumpnickel*  
 The *Helden* bombers of defenceless babies,  
 How super-silvern shone that night thy sickle :  
 How stared the crowds of uninvited gabies  
 At glittering guests who poured like stream in spate  
 To win La Cassaforti's palace-gate.

For hither came, in costliest cars and carriages,  
 Be-starred, be-jewelled in Solomonic glory,  
 All that gay world our sterner time disparages :—  
 Dark diplomats and politicians hoary ;  
 Old titles, money-propped on dowered marriages ;  
 Young fortunes, new-veneered "*commendatore*" ;  
 Ichor unsullied since the days of Dante ;  
 Blue blood whose grandad kept a *ristorante* ;

Subservient courtiers of the Quirinale ;  
 Stolid supporters of the Vaticano ;  
 Idlers from Europe's every *capitale*,  
 Subjects of *presidente* or *sovrano* ;  
 Soft beauty, squired by sabred *uffiziale* ;  
 Back-biting British beldames, from the Arno ;  
 Strange *outré* Slavs, Teutonic stereotypes,  
 And dollared exiles from the Stars and Stripes. . . .

But stranger far than eke her strangest guest,  
 La Cassaforti queened it ; pantherine ;  
 A Dionysian Mænad, Poiret-dressed  
 In gold-shot purples of the ripened vine ;  
 Lean as a flame. 'Neath pearl-brow, sable-tressed,  
 Glowed her great gorgeous eyes, fire-opaline—  
 Eyes that might well drive saints to pray the devil  
 Bless the black mass of her nocturnal revel :

(And *had*, said some. Though I beg leave to doubt them.  
 For they that put Dame Rumour to the touch,  
 Oft find that gossip's easiest conquests flout them,  
 While famous prudes—do not behave as such.  
 So, since we can't know very much about them  
 Until they're ours—and then not very much ;  
 And since, once ours, we daren't betray their tryst ;  
 Who slanders woman, owns himself unkissed) . . .

A pagan queen in her high Bakstian hall,  
 White lights from thousand lustres round her beating,  
 Milady stood—the cynosure of all :  
 Here gave a careless hand ; there bowed a greeting.  
 And ne'er, I ween, since Ate's golden ball  
 Was beauty's prize, saw lover such a meeting  
 As Giulio watched, when Mayfair's maid most haughty  
 Returned the welcoming peck of Cassaforti.

What simile shall serve contrast that deevy  
 Dark Southern temptress and blonde Northland fairy?  
 'Twas as though Lilith (Adam's first) met Evie  
 Or e'er man came to grief through little Mary ;  
 'Twas as though Lady Di. kissed Ethel Levey ;  
 'Twas as though night pecked day ; or crow, canary :  
 'Twas . . . But enough of similes ! The picture  
 Near boiled my Giulio's blood to cardiac stricture.

Breathless he flew to Jill ; and breathless lifted  
 White glove to eager lip. All breathless drew  
 Through the bright crowd that hither thither drifted,  
 To where—safe hidden from the public view—  
 An arrased chamber was. (For, e'er love shifted,  
 Right well the secrets of that house he knew,  
 And almost all its alcoves had he sat in—  
 Being, in that respect, a thorough Latin.)

One artful moment, passion-dumb, he stood . . .  
 And something in his eyes—perchance the flicker  
 Which warns a woman, howsoever good,  
 That her appeal has made our heart beat quicker—  
 Took Jill's mind back to far-off flapperhood,  
 And Bobbie's eyes, and her first kissing-dicker . . .  
 Till burning love-words of a different breed  
 Recalled her errant soul to caution's need.

For now, as bursts a dam long barricaded,  
 Burst Giulio's frenzy—Southern tongue to vent it ;  
 Raved ; stammered ; begged ; cajoled ; implored ; upbraided ;  
 Swore if she'd but be his she'd ne'er repent it ;  
 Now charged flirtation's trench, now enfiladed ;  
 Now called her " cold," now swore he never meant it ;  
 Now caught her hands ; now flung them down in pique ;  
 Now, kneeling, pressed furred ball-dress to his cheek.

And then : and then . . . Ah praise that imp who gave  
 The shield of mirth to ward love's last ambition !  
*Jill laughed.* And sudden, Giulio ceased to rave ;  
 And rising, kissed her hand ; and swore contrition ;  
 And vowed himself eternally her slave ;  
 And vowed that, tho' he loved her to perdition,  
 If she'd but pardon, nevermore he'd lapse.  
 So, smiling, Jill forgave ; and thought, " Perhaps."



And out they passed to mingle with the throng  
That burbled Scandal, Politics, or Art,  
That danced, or bridged, or chattered through a song—  
And talked awhile, and drifted soon apart. . . .  
But late next morn lay Jill ; and communed long  
Of this and that with her inquiring heart :  
And thus her maiden meditation ran,  
“ My first encounter with a married man.”

## CANTO XIV

*Which part—our last of Continental travel—  
Weaves tangled skeins for moralists to unravel.*

**O** VENICE, Venice where d'Annunzio's loge is :  
 Bright nonsense Temple of blood-thirsty Thurs-  
 O horseless base of monitors and Doges : [ton :  
 O arched Rialto, Shylock erstwhile curst on :  
 O rarest colours—madders, blues, gamboges—  
 Of canvases art-students did their worst on :  
 O squares that know not Austrian nor Hun drum !  
 O *Durchbruch's* still insoluble conundrum !

I sing thee as thou wert in merrier times,  
 When tourists flocked—vest-kodaks in their hand-  
 To feed the pigeons 'neath thy giants' chimes ; [bags—  
 And gondoliers, in gaudiest scarves and grand bags,  
 Reaped the rich honeymooner's frequent dimes :  
 Not as I saw thee last, all swathed in sandbags,  
 A desert darkling city—where the tight  
 Might well bless him who edged thy *rivas* white.

'Tis the last night of Easter's carnival.

Song's in the air, and mandolines are tinkling.  
 'Tis lovers' night ! Adown the Grand Canal  
 Where myriad lights go bobbing, sliding, twinkling,  
 Floats Jill : while Beppo, pleasure's seneschal,  
 Stands deaf to oar, as tho' he ne'er had inkling  
 Why *both* his fares were so intent to choose a  
*Barco di lusso colla felse chiusa*. . . .

Float, happy pair ! Nor fear we shall disclose  
 To Mrs. Gossip and her rambling fellow,  
 If your fond lips knew rapture or repose  
 On waterways where gondoled erst Othello.  
 Float ! None save *stai*-shouting Beppo knows  
 The secret of your cabin's warm prunello.  
 Float ! Safer e'en than they who fast with shuvver fare  
 Down England's lanes on some clandestine love-affair.

Float, happy pair, in undisturbed leisure.  
 Scarce rocks your cradle to the dripping oar.  
 The gemmed night veils, drawn curtains screen your pleas-  
 As waters gurgle 'neath your silvern prore. [ure,  
 Float ! While Muse chants an echo of that measure  
 She heard long since beside Rapallo's shore,  
 When—like that other poet—her *signore*  
 Loved *canti, rose, forza, e amore*.

*Moon, moon mine, up the starred skies creeping,  
 Guard my lover-boy. Kiss him sleeping.  
 Bring him safe from the wind and the billow,  
 Safe to his lover-girl's lonely pillow.*

*Moon, moon mine, on the far town beaming,  
 Guard my lover-girl. Kiss her dreaming.  
 Grant her peace till the red dawn's breaking,  
 Rouse her eyes to a lonely waking.*

Jill, *cara* Jill, when recollecting ears  
 Hark to that tune from London's hurdy-gurdy,  
 What pictures rise to mind ? What truth appears ? . . .  
 Dark Giulio, now clad in *grigio verde*,  
 If sing that song thy snow-shoed mountaineers—  
 To whom th' Hungarian drops as game to Purdey—  
 Do you recall, unsatisfied, your long quest ?  
 Or dream, in battle, peace-time's easier conquest ?

*Moon, moon mine, down the paled skies creeping,  
Hold him, fold him in thy safe-keeping.  
Rock, rock safe on a windless billow  
Barque where he dreams with his nets for pillow.*

*Moon, moon mine, o'er the far town setting,  
Hold her, fold her in dream's forgetting.  
Guard her sleeping, and guard her waking  
Safe till the dawn-light's golden breaking.*

Enough, enough, my Beppo ! By the pence  
Which once I gave thee in Kiralfy's Court,  
I pray thee bend thy back, and oar me hence  
This dubious craft with double meanings fraught. . . .  
The far song dies to silences, immense  
As Northcliffe's brain or Alighieri's thought,  
Dim as the reputation of that pen is,  
Which fails to sing false sentiment in Venice.

Song dies ; blade dips ; boat, Beppo, lovers, fade  
Into that past of petticoats and pastry  
When ne'er our *direttissimo* delayed  
Its hurrying wheels to force us change at Mestre.  
And none shall say if stealth and serenade  
Plucked ripest fruit that grew on Seymour's chaste tree ;  
Or whether Giulio might only fondle a  
Cool hand of friendship in that vanished gondola.

The puppets pass : but still their riddle stands.  
Tigress or lady ? Paramour or minx ?  
What happiest chance thus loosed convention's bands—  
Rheumatic motherhood ? Paternal drinks ?  
What went before ? What after ? Ask the Sands  
(Who can't keep riddles) ; ask it of the Sphinx,  
" John Bull," " The Referee," " The Evening News " :  
But ask it not of England's modern Muse.

For she—that wench Elizabethans knew—

Has got her to some convent, where Miss de la Mare  
Brews the weak tea-leaves of a “ Times ” review :

And at a *real* kiss, she'd run and tell her ma.

So that no passion-scene, however true,

Now dares the page of metrical best-seller mar :

And where it fain had rioted, my festive

Quill must content itself with the suggestive.

## CANTO XV

*What fill to-day would not give hat, coat, skirt—e'en  
Her high-legged boots—to put clock back to 'thirteen?*

**N**OW listen every true-eyed, blue-eyed maiden  
 (Type super-sloppiest of fiction's purity),  
 Whose golden tresses, nightly backward braiden,  
 Rest care-free in Hinde's hair-bind's puffed security ;  
 Whose white hands daily minister, chit-laden,  
 To the *fine fleur* of Albion's maturity,  
 What time with restless Remington it keeps  
 Safe watch and ward o'er our inviolate deeps :

Listen all ye whom Peckham's Rye disgorges :  
 Suburbia's proudest ; warrior damosels ;  
 Pin-money bureaucrats, whose tea-time orgies  
 Shame the poor past, in commandeered hotels  
 Where pseudo-Geddases and mock Lloyd Georges  
 Ride the high horse of indispensables :  
 All ye whom Stagg and Mantle clothe, whose clammy souls  
 Hanker for Venn's anacreontic camisoles.

I sing the London that ye never knew,  
 That nevermore your Lotus feet shall enter  
 (Poor feet who tread our grape-skins' residue) :  
 Old London, Empire's coruscating centre,  
 Mart of the World ; where flaunted German Jew  
 His peaceful diamond's free-trading *schlenter*,  
 And Asquith played the prophet in the beams of it,  
 While Haldane spoke his soul out—reams on reams of it.

'Twas a strange place that London long ago :  
 Cream in all teas, and facts in several papers :  
 There never patriots, row on premiumed row,  
 Dashed to buy war-bonds at the linen-drapers' ;  
 There never growled the taxi-driver, " No " ;  
 There never Simpson's mutton cut its capers ;  
 And Chesterton might breakfast off a Porterhouse  
 Nor cause a panic in one Smithfield slaughterhouse .

So bright it was, that e'en its East End drab bits  
 Shone till a sneak-thief needed pull his cap low  
 To 'scape the cop's investigating habits, [low—  
 Where toiled—nor thought its sweated wage a scrap  
 The pogromed horde, and multiplied like rabbits,  
 And never bought first seasons Aldgate—Taplow,  
 Nor fared, with purse whose soiled silk packed pelf ridges,  
 To buy the fish of Friday's night at Selfridge's :

A wet town, and a merry : Bass and Allsopp  
 Unceasing flowed from those white-handled engines  
 Whence now scarce wrenches out one watered small sop  
 She who disdaineth all save *marrying* men's gins :  
 Blithely mote then, in night-clubs' dancing-halls, hop  
 That bird whose curfewed feet our half-past-ten gins ;  
 Unspied mote lovers seek those darkling walks  
 Where, Argus-eyed, our Bobby-woman stalks :

A free town, and undisciplined : no brass-hat,  
*Embusqué*, doled its matches out in driblets ;  
 No Zeus-like Coal-King, thundering afar, sat  
 In couponed majesty above its giblets ;  
 No flag-time flapper dared its streets—to pass hat  
 For *Congo* refugees : in all its criblets  
 Was never babe—of e'en most sceptic ilk—  
 That trusted not its uncombined milk.

London, dead London, Citadel of Freedom !  
 Where never nuttiest præ-bellum nipper  
 Of Murray's Moab or the Empire's Edom  
 Feared for Athlumney's castigating slipper ;  
 Where never rivalled rich Munitioneedom  
 The Cræcian splendours of a war-freight shipper ;  
 Sublime Metropolis of Snobbery,  
 Back o'er the years my soul goes out to thee.

For I, I loved thee : all of thee ; thy docksides ;  
 Thy secret dens of Chinaman and Lascar ;  
 Thy marts of baccy, rubber, silvern fox-hides ;  
 Thy rents—such rents as ne'er "made envious Casca" ;  
 Thy merchant-princes, whose week-end peroxides  
 Hastened, safe-screened in many a Triplex-glass car,  
 To charm gold's worries from each finance-laden head  
 On Sunday morns at Brighton or at Maidenhead :

I loved thy daughters, daintiest as dowdiest ;  
 Cadby's tea'd Halls as Fuller's soda-fountain ;  
 Bloomsbury's quiet squares as Leicester's rowdiest ;  
 Thy Johnian woodglades as thy Primrose mountain :  
 Oft wandered where thy pea-soup fog clung crowdiest ;  
 Oft at thy Wonderland observed the count ta'en :  
 Yet most—like butcher prizes fleeced neck's best end—  
 London, I prized thy palpitating West End.

For there—as flash the dragon-flies on scummy stream  
 When sun of May succeeds to April's rains,  
 Or as to midday temples of the tummy stream  
 Those radiant hats that hide official brains—  
 New-hatched each morn on Round-Pond Fashion's  
 rummy stream,  
 Glittered the caddis-wings' ephemeral veins : [flies,  
 While round them circled hawk-moths, bees, wasps, gutter-  
 Humming-birds, praying mantises, and butterflies—



Tortoishell, peacock, admiral, black swallow-tail  
(Voted the best by schoolboys, till they find  
Its wriggling pupa breeds a Front Bench hollow tale),  
Camberwell Beauty (rarest of its kind) . . .  
Which now, to colour atmosphered Apollo tale,  
Free'd from the killing-bottle of my mind,  
Shall flutter reckless round Jill Seymour's candle  
And singe their wings in quite a pretty scandal.

## CANTO XVI

*How Hazeline Tredither (chaste though comely)  
Took tea with the great author, Garforth Chumleigh.*

**M**USE, though thy sale eclipses "Bees in Amber,"  
Though prized thy voice as Ella's passion-lilt,  
Still must thy little feet in reverence clamber  
These storied stairs—which Brothers Adam built,  
When first arose on pier-propped archway's camber  
Adelphi Terrace from the river-silt,  
And those brick vaults wherein our bluest blood banks  
Replaced old Durham House's coal-black mud-banks.

For here, where once—who knows?—at tea-time  
thundered  
A broad-side from his high scholastic sponson,  
While simpered Mrs. Thrale and Boswell wondered,  
That brainy bigot, Dr. Samuel Johnson ;  
Where chancely Goldsmith pondered ere he plundered  
Just one more royalty from Jacob Tonson ;  
Where Garrick's table feasted all the town ;  
Lives He whose light outshines e'en our renown.

Who knows not Garforth Chumleigh ? Can the dearth  
Of strawboard or the rise of minder's wages  
Restrain his output ? Could the war-worn earth  
Revolve without those thrice three hundred pages  
To which his Jovian brain gives yearly birth—  
Nor even so its writing-itch assuages,  
But needs must breed, such travail to appease,  
A ceaseless thought-swarm, daily journalesé ?

Garforth, sublimest of our Empire's thinkers  
 (And each fresh thought paid cash upon the nail) ;  
 Garforth, most sure of literary tinkers,  
 Dearer to England than lost Teddy Tail ;  
 Who pairest Sex with Deity (in blinkers)  
 To haul thy nine-bob chariot : all hail !  
 Long may the critics round thy treacle-tub lick,  
 Long may thy deft nib comfort grateful public !

Dost thou remember, brother, the beginning  
 Of this true tale on which—'tis said—you based  
 Your epic novel, " One Short Season's Sinning :  
 A Drama of Society," that raced  
 Through twenty eagle-wayed editions, winning  
 E'en the approval of the straitest-laced,  
 Who pardoned all " Jane's " errors when you capped her  
 With orange-blossoms in that final chapter ?

Well, brother, here's the scene, lest you forget. . . .

'Twas a gray Spring-time afternoon ; the rain  
 Turned to a " miracle of shining wet "  
 The pictured London of your window-pane,  
 Blurred the Tower Bridge's dim-seen silhouette,  
 The whisky'd Scotchman and St. Paul's domed fane,  
 Spurred from hasting tram-wheels, sleeked each horse  
 That trotted doleful way to Charing Cross.

A dismal background ! But, within, the kettle  
 Sang cheerily at hob ; the fire-light glinted  
 On desk and chair and Dictaphone's bright metal,  
 On silver tea-things and on cakes unstinted.  
 While there, cross-legged in your low oaken settle,  
 Hat thrown aside from tresses sable-tinted,  
 Cat-like a-purr, sprawled Stageland's chastest queen,  
 The ever-virgin widow, Hazeline.

Author and actress—hard it were to state

Which of ye twain took fame's most sugared biscuit.  
 For she was loved from Notting's mountain-gate  
 To the far lands of Grape-nuts, gum and Triscuit ;  
 And whether she played " character " or " straight,"  
 Or deigned awhile in pantomime to frisk it,  
 Parts could not change nor repetition wither  
 That one whined note of Hazeline Tredither.

Moreover, she was pure ! In vain had faint

As fondest lover pressed his ardent suit  
 To her rich hand. Not once had scandal's taint  
 Sullied that baby-brow's milk-white repute.  
 Pure, did I say ? Nay, more than that—a saint,  
 A martyr, married early to a brute  
 Who living loved her not, and dying left  
 Her youth of all save innocence bereft.

Wherefore—despite her stage's own convention,

Which, finding heroine in hero's flat,  
 Ne'er fails impute the very worst intention—  
 Unchaperoned, uncompromised, she sat  
 To pour your tea ; and, pouring, chanced to mention  
 (From what small tits Fates fledge their vastiest tat !)  
 Jill Seymour, newly met and found " too sweet,"  
 And next week's lunch at Upside-downing Street.

And, " Garforth, you *must* take me there," she pouted,  
 " You simply can't refuse *their* invitations."

(For sometimes you played Fabian, and scouted  
 Even the most exalted art-collations.)

" Please, Garforth *dear*," she lisped ; and, lisping, routed  
 Your rearguard of perfunctory negotiations ;  
 And laughing, " Don't you fall in love with Jill,"  
 Sped off to top Stoll-Moss's early bill. . . .

How the three crones must laugh as they entwine  
Cat's-cradle-wise our mortal threadball's tangle.  
Jill Seymour ! Little recked you, Garforth mine,  
As one by one you watched the peace-lights spangle  
River and river-bank—ere, dressed to dine,  
You sought the Carlton's palm-embowered quad-  
What cups of happiness, what cups of rue, [rangle—  
Fate's butler meant to mix for her and you.

## CANTO XVII

*Shows fill en reine where Art and Empire meet  
At reason's feast in Upside-downing Street.*

WHAT art thou, most mysterious human function  
Which Albion's puppets miscall "Government"?  
Art time and wisdom's ultimate conjunction?  
Or but a hotch-potch makeshift, somehow blent  
Of money-bags, intrigue and social unction—  
A compromise to which we all assent  
Because we're too absorbed in our own labours  
To bother very much about our neighbour's?

What art thou, Westminster? A caucused lobby?  
An oratorical-acrobatic stadium  
Where greasy lawyers wrestle for a hobby?  
Or art indeed the Common Weal's palladium—  
Sure shield of liberty, all bossed and knobby,  
Steel tempered with Northcliffian vanadium?  
Coat of chain Mail? Safe ulster, proofed by Carson?  
Or leaking broolly of exempted parson?

God and the Irish know! *I* sing the past,  
The ballot-glories of pacific Plancus;  
When, in the cannon's place, the vote we cast,  
Polished the mace, but left unsharped the ankus;  
Trusted to cobblers our Imperial last;  
And kissed the alien paws that itched to spank us:  
Those spacious days with silk and money blest,  
For which two million sportsmen have gone West.

Swiftly and cloying-sweet as saccharine  
 In Governmental tea, a week had melted. . . .  
 Now, Paris-hatted, radiant in the sheen  
 Of Lucille lunch-frock—clinging-cut, low-belted—  
 Lisped at her host the Lady Hazeline ;  
 Till quivered on her slim throat ermine-pelted,  
 The necklace, diamond-clasped but Tecla-pearled,  
 Which proved her virtue to a trusting world.

Muse, could a witness of that regal luncheon  
 Doubt for one instant Albion's stability ?  
 Here Beauty smiled while Wisdom broached its puncheon ;  
 Here Virtue shared her cutlet with Virility ;  
 Here wielded Scholarship its classic truncheon ;  
 Here Art plus Politics defied Futility ;  
 Here Education, Repartee and Gravy  
 Insured our Army, guaranteed our Navy.

Here, with MacStubbs the elder, Corinth Tose,  
 Resplendent in a forty-guinea chiton,  
 Discoursed Greek learning : there, Harmodius Chose—  
 Protection's bane, Free Trade's Aristogiton—  
 Unbent a leisured hour to furbelows ;  
 While yonder, Lady Lastditch of East Brighton  
 Strove valiantly with "*Ich bin*" and with "*Du bist*"  
 To entertain a dumb Hungarian Cubist.

But soon, in vain were Wit and Wisdom squandering  
 On one fair guest their wealth of social skill :  
 For ever Hazeline's sharp look went wandering  
 To where sat Garforth, communing with Jill ;  
 And ever Hazeline's sharp soul kept pondering  
 That saw, which testifies how sillier still  
 Than handkerchief-mislaying Desdemona  
 Is she who finds her pal a second donah.

Now recollection heard those words, jest-spoken,  
 "Don't fall in love with her." Now eyes askance  
 Marked in each attitude, in their unbroken  
 Ripple of converse ; marked in Chumleigh's glance  
 And Jill's too-answering smile—suspicion's token.  
 Yet neither lisping voice, nor countenance  
 Wreathed in attention, to keen host betrayed  
 The stab of jealousy's jade-handled blade.

And never inkling of that green-eyed dragon  
 Troubled my green-eyed Jill. Enthralled, she sat  
 (Though conscious that she'd Poiret's gladsomest rag on  
 And Lewis' most Monte-Carlist hat),  
 While—triple-fired of beauty, food and flagon  
 To prove unprofitable, stale and flat,  
 Kings, Churches, Nations, Marriage and Divorce—  
 Her partner prattled on from course to course.

Too swift for her the long-drawn meal-time sped.  
 Host, hostess, butler, guests—to pigmies dwindled  
 At a mere nod of that Homeric head.  
 Pale in the fire of those orbs genius-kindled,  
 Scarce green seemed *crème-de-menthe*, and port scarce red.  
 And : "All through life," she thought, "my soul's been  
 swindled.  
 Here is the Light of Lights—whose beam outsells  
 Caines, Bennetts, Goulds, Cross, Garvices and Dells."

Poor Hazeline ! 'Spite minor poets' puny verse  
 And sampler-sentiments of Smiles belauded,  
 Not always in our ultra-modern universe  
 Goes virgin virtue safely self-rewarded.  
 So since in this my play you spout no spoony verse,  
 But stalk, a secret Fury, vengeance-sworded,  
 Let hatred black your brows, and envy streak  
 With Leichner's jaundiced paint your damask cheek :



And, just for once, play part as author planned ;  
His cues observe ; to gag or cut forbear !  
Watch but that parting. Mark them, how they stand  
Stage-loverlike apart—Jill's casual air  
Belied by down-drooped gaze, and lingering hand,  
And murmured, " Tea with us in Berkeley Square."

Now, Miss Tredither, *sotto voce*, hiss :  
" By Heaven, both of you shall pay for this."

## CANTO XVIII

*Muse—hitherto immune from all New-writis—  
Suffers a short attack of Chumleigh-itis.*

SAD fact it is, that we who woo to-morrow  
With classic metres and Parnassian diction  
Must needs or soon or late, to Muse's sorrow,  
Acknowledge "form" a damnable restriction :  
Wherefore your pardon, Garforth, an I borrow  
The style you've made so popular in fiction—  
That specious mixture of the confidential,  
The guessed, the read of, and the non-essential :

Your *dulce-est-desipere-in-loco*

Combined with magisterial severity,  
Half of it yellow-back, half full Morocco ;  
(One eye on truth and t'other on prosperity) :—  
To rear, in rock embellished with rococo,  
A small suburban temple for posterity,  
With altars both to God and Punch-and-Judy,  
And booths for Bumpus, Hatchards, Smith and Mudie :

A kind of Ilford-Bromley Shwé-Dagon,

Within whose tinselled shrines some future pundit  
May tell his literary beads and drone,

"How vast *their* age; how huge the lights which sunned  
Then, turning to his worshippers, intone : [it " ;

"Gold was the spent past, present can't refund it . . .  
Except, of course, my nephew, Robert Rhymes,  
Whose verse I praised so much in last week's 'Times.' "

How I digress ! And yet, God bless digression  
 Which helps so much to camouflage banality,  
 Is, as it were, the path of self-expression  
 That leads direct to sales and immortality.  
 But now my soul's fed-up with this confession,  
 Itches, in fact, to chuck aside formality,  
 To take you to its bosom, female reader,  
 And show how Garforth fared with Fashion's leader.

For which it seems to me we must dissect,  
 Probe, so to speak, his temperamental core.  
 First as to Hazeline. Did he detect  
 That she was—shall we say a little *sore* ?  
 He must have. Then there's Jill. Don't you suspect  
 It wasn't so much *sex* with him, but more  
 The fact that he felt just a trifle—flattered,  
 At being taken up by one who—*mattered* ?

Although, of course, there *was*—no use denying it,  
 One sees *that* from his photograph, by Hoppé,  
 The steadfast forehead, roving eye belying it,  
 The mouth clean-cut, but the moustaches floppy—  
 Apart from Jill's attractiveness, outvieing it,  
 Her *newness* : authorhood in search of " copy,"  
 Ready to take advantage of the *whim*  
 Her ladyship displayed regarding him.

So much for Garforth. Now for Jill. Consider  
 The kind she was, as skilful in attack  
 As in defence ; essentially a—*kidder*.  
 To use a simile : no Hyde Park hack  
 Sold at the Season's close to highest bidder,  
 But one who'd bucked more jockeys from her back  
 And sent them limping home with soiled and sandy cap,  
 Than any filly in the Maiden Handicap.

Then why ? Adventure ? Difficult to tell.

No doubt she *was* impressed by notoriety,  
Which, as we know, will sometimes prove the spell

To tempt a girl from pathways of propriety ;  
Perhaps a little curious ; bored as well

With the eternal treadmill of " Society,"  
And later—this I'm sure of—fairly zealous  
To make " that cat Tredither " still more jealous.

And there, in best Garforthian, you've the three of them . . . .

I like to think of him, the little fellow,  
Trousers by Scholte (creases down each knee of them),  
Scott-hatted, gloves sulphureously yellow,  
Two girls in mind and wondering which he'll see of them :  
A sort of twentieth-century Sordello  
Singing, " I'm gay, and life's a fearful lark,"  
On jolly peace-time mornings in the Park.

I like to think of Jill : Kingfisher flashing  
Electrically through that London season,  
Now to the play, now to the races dashing,  
Always fresh dinners, suppers, lunches, teas on ;  
Money and fizz like water round her splashing,  
Spending like mad, week-ending without reason ;  
And ever—cock-bird preening in the hen-dance—  
Garforth, to rag-time, hopping his attendance.

Also, I like to think of the Tredither,  
Victim of admiration grown capricious,  
The wee'st might surprised, her baby-blither  
A note or so *too* high, a bit—malicious ;  
Now taxi-driven hither and now thither  
To spread her tale, half truth and half fictitious :  
Reluctant gossip, the saintly highbrow  
With deprecating hands and lifted eyebrow. . . .

But most of all it bucks me up to think  
That when my spirit shineth as a star forth  
In realms where—bluer-black than Stephen's Ink—  
Satan drives wailing bards from Pluto's bar forth,  
Pundits on earth will rack their brains to link  
Some long-dead modern novelist with "Garforth,"  
And, racking, fail, as pundits do, to spot  
If Chumleigh be one modern—or the lot.

## CANTO XIX

*Resumes in shrillest Frankauesque—con brio—  
The Jill—Tredither—Garforth-Chumleigh trio.*

**L**ORD of the Northern Sea ! Elusive merman,  
 Not Vanoc's self can blow to oil and glory :  
 Magnate of gold-trusts never dreamed by, Sher-  
 Splendour of Liberal and pride of Tory : [man :  
 All Highest and most Natural Anglo-German :  
 Quaintest of characters in Albion's story :  
 Proteus more variform than pickled Heinz :  
 May Harris guard thine house, Sir Samuel Mainz !

Splendid it gleamed that night—a blazing palace  
 Of all that wealth can contribute to pleasure ;  
 A very Wonderland, where many an Alice  
 Gasp'd as she eyed each Duveen-invoiced treasure.  
 Crimson, the orchids flaunted ; gold, the chalice  
 Bubbled with Pommery's unstinted measure :  
 Loud, shrieked each colour-scheme's expensive chromo ;  
 Loudly announced each guest, the Major Domo.

Constant, they came : half London : here a court dress ;  
 Kensington there, in middle-aged tiaras ;  
 Art in trailed silks, and stage in latest short dress ;  
 Brief season-folk from county Connemaras ;  
 Hack Fleet Street, anxious only to report dress ;  
 Tostis unsung and embyro de Laras :—  
 For never money-bee yet gave " Reception " [shone.  
 But straightway thousand drone-wings round the skep

High-poised where florist Solomon had made—  
 Wreathing in arum-blooms and maidenhair  
 Gilt colonettes of onyx balustrade—  
 A screened gazebo for flirtatious fair ;  
 Pensive in cloth-of-gold, my Jill surveyed  
 The jostling pageantry of hall and stair :  
 To whom appeared, fresh-crowned with legal laurels,  
 That arbiter of matrimonial morals,

Lord Reggie Strar. In happiest mood he came,  
 New-steered of Poole to absolute's fair haven ;  
 Once more released to lavish wealth and name  
 On head or blonde or sorrel-top or raven,  
 Which best might please ; rose, red as Hymen's flame,  
 Blazing at button-hole ; of Douglas shaven ;  
 Silk-socked ; bright-monocled ; gallant ; no trace  
 Of Bluebeard wrinkle on his handsome face.

Friends had they been, these twain, since first they cantered  
 Together, Shetland-horsed, the Ladies' Mile ;  
 Long ere her pinless curls were tam-o'-shantered,  
 Long ere his first petition graced the file.  
 And still as friend she met him—lips that bantered,  
 Cheeks dimpled, hand-clasp steady, eyes a-smile ;  
 Intrigued to probe that heart ; alike perplexed  
 To name its last or prophesy its next.

Careless they greeted ; careless watched the throng  
 That swirled and whirled and bunched and broke below :  
 Talking the while. " Some picnic. Been here long ? "  
 " Isn't it *awful* ? Half-an-hour or so. [strong,  
 How's marriage, Reg. ? " . . . " How's authors ? Going  
 I hear." . . . " Who told you ? " . . . " Bothered if I  
 Who put the tale about, or where I struck it, [know  
 But take my tip, old thing—you'd better chuck it."

“But why?” laughed Jill. Though something in his tone,  
Some note beneath that jocular inflection,  
Seemed real warning. “Reasons of my own.

There’s one.” His hand, half-pointing, gave direction  
To where stood Hazeline—sweet bud scarce-blown,  
Grease-paint fresh-creamed from her divine com-  
plexion. [dither.”

“What? That!” Jill laughed once more. “The poor Tre-  
“No,” came the answer, “but the chap who’s with her.”

Downwards peered Jill ; and saw the sleek dark napper,  
Shirt-front black-pearled, winged waistcoat, braided  
trousers,

(Perfect each detail, yet the whole *too* dapper),

Of him who weekly chronicles which spouse errs  
And whether lone hub. frisketh with some flapper

Where Grafton’s bachelors defy the wowsers—  
Of that stern press-man, Montmorency Brown,  
Whose “Gossip Mail” records the sins of Town. . . .

Ah me ! Had you but hearkened then, my Jill girl,

Renounced your goddess-right to flirt with mortals,  
Fled the galled ink-drops of that gutter quill, girl,

Lightened no more those Anglo-German portals,—  
Never had gaping shop-boy, frolic mill-girl

Leered at your photograph ; nor Clubland’s chortles,  
Bitter as dry Martinis, linked your name  
With those who played the Saturnalian game !

Had you but guessed. . . . But Fate, she sits apart,

Veiled from the eyes of us her actions tutor.

And yours was aye a democratic heart,

Reckless that gold-spoon may not stoop to pewter,  
Seymours to Mainzs, fashion-plates to Art,

Blue-blooded miss to literary suitor.

“Chuck it,” urged Reggie, “that chap’s dangerous,  
And Haze Tredither’s hardly one of us.”



But you, you only tossed capricious head,  
And turned to quiz a newly-entered dress  
Of artiest green, key-scrolled with artiest red :  
“ Caution,” you called it, “ signalling distress.”  
“ An omen, Jill ? ” he answered. Then you said :  
“ Calm yourself, Reggie, *Garforth's on the press.*” . . .  
And loud above Sir Samuel Mainz's revels,  
Guffawed a million mocking printer's devils.

## CANTO XX

*Thickens the plot—and, thickening, discovers  
A garden rendezvous for London lovers.*

SWEET Viscount Bryce, and Ye, most noble Peers,  
Shoguns self-doomed to splendid dissolution,  
Who erstwhile set Welsh war-dogs by the ears—  
Stirring to wrath the founts of elocution  
Of thousand hustings, where electioneers  
Howled you a danger to the Constitution—  
Stern mitred prelates ; Law-lords ; backwoods Samurais  
Who flung to Consequence a scornful “ Damn your eyes ” :

One boon your bardling craves ! When rises gleaming,  
Rebuilt from topmost tile to lowest sewer,  
That Second Chamber of your Lordships’ dreaming,  
Where—freed from party-pledge and boodled brewer,  
Free-conferenced for Albion’s redeeming,—  
Financeless rule the Few-elected Fewer ;  
Let never builders’ rubble desecrate  
Those river-gardens of your ancient state.

For there—ah me, my Lords, how long ago,  
“ Ten years of years ” it seems—a Garforth waited  
The favourite of his seraglio,  
His lady so beloved and so belated ;  
There anxious watched ; and, pacing to and fro,  
Much with his too inquiring mind debated :  
Pinning to setting board of dull psychology  
The wiftiest wings of Fashion’s entomology.

And thus he thought : “ This place of her suggesting :  
 This afternoon appointment, so romantic :  
 That letter, half command and half requesting :  
 What do they signify ? Caprice ? An antic ?  
 Or something deeper ? Doth her coy protesting  
 Denote anæmic heart or passion-frantic ?  
 Have I, in fact, *a chance* ? ” . . . Here closed debate,  
 As fussed Jill’s taxi to the entrance-gate.

Jar of a brake. Pen-hand at stubborn catch.  
 Bang of closed door. A swift deliberation :  
 Then, “ Wait.” Lace-frocked ; spread parasol to match ;  
 Straw toque, tip-tilted, trimmed with one carnation ;  
 ’Twixt tea and tea the Goddess stooped to snatch  
 Her little hour of clandestine flirtation.  
 “ Poor man ! I’m late. As usual.” But he :  
 “ Tell me, dear lady, why this secrecy ? ”

“ Because, *cher maître*, we never meet alone.”  
 That look, I ween, jade-eyed and roguish-comely,  
 That tilted toque, that quavered semitone  
 Which ravished all the soul of Garforth Chumleigh,  
 Had melted e’en the heart of triple stone  
 In him who eyed his meter’s face so glumly,  
 Pondering tuppences, the while they came  
 Down gravelled pathways to the bankéd Thame.

Elbows on balustrade ; below, the tideway,  
 Endless as Life, unhurried, eddying past ;  
 Westward and east the river’s sunlit wide way ;  
 Southward, gray skies with smoke-pall overcast ;  
 Behind them, Mrs. Grundy’s tiresome tried way ;  
 In front, the path of Love-that-may-not-last ;  
 Children the years had treated all too kindly,  
 Whither the bored God led, they followed blindly.

Where never gorse-bush tears a lady's kirtles,  
 Where poets' hats are broadest-brimmed and floppy,  
 Where the fount "Sentiment" perennial spurtles  
 On weedless turf its dewdrops sweetly-soppy ;  
 Master and maid, they sought among love's myrtles—  
 She for sex only, he for sex and "copy"—  
 A tiny summer-house of mixed morality  
 To screen them from the scorching sun, Reality.

Whence looking forth, they visioned, florist-splendid,  
 One great glad miracle of hot-house weather,  
 The park-lawns of that Season almost ended ;  
 Bosky with arbours where they'd sat together ;  
 Bright with all costliest blossoms, smilax-blended,  
 With tuberose and palm-tree's tufted feather ;  
 Gay with a thousand supper-boards, whose drink  
 Was poured to rag-time tunes by Herman Finck. . . .

And there, what time they lingered, memorising  
 Each bygone beauty of that London landscape ;  
 What time his fingers, newly enterprising,  
 Found and ne'er let her unresisting hand scape ;  
 Jill broached the rendezvous of her devising—  
 No Brighton-roaded dangerously-planned scape,  
 But just a hint that Garforth, "as things stood," would  
 Be asked to stay with "Sammy Mainz" for Goodwood.

Only a hint ! Small nymphs vouchsafe to men  
 More than such inkling of their love-plea's fate.  
 Only a hint ! And ah, when booming Ben  
 Warned it was time and time to separate ;  
 When, lonely by the river once again,  
 Garforth with anxious Garforth held debate ;  
 How puzzled pen-and-ink psychologist  
 To solve the portent of that racing-tryst.

But who shall sound with Venus-led line

The heart of Jill—those passion-dangered shallows,  
Here concrete hard as bed of Serpentine,

There softer sand than Barbellion marsh-mallows ?  
Who dares, with rod of Waterman, divine

If gushed her thoughts to bride-ring and All Hallows,  
Or whether five-bob tip to taxi-cabby  
Presaged the sorting-bells of Hell Fire Abbey ?

## CANTO XXI

*Now on each moaning breast let Georgette stitches stir  
In sorrow for lost Godinwood-by-Chichester.*

**W**EEP for the King of Sports, the Sport of Kings ;  
Weep for the Douglasses that owe no more !  
Fallen are all the gods of Certain Things,  
Beaten the dead-sure favourites of yore,  
Silent the golden and the silver rings,  
Silent the tic-tac's tell-tale semaphore :  
On thousand tracks, unriden, desolate,  
Hay waves from winning-post to starting-gate.

Aye ! on the very turf of our old gods  
(Weep for a shrunken Ruff, a tipler's tout),  
Where once ten thousand bookies brayed their odds  
And myriad pencils plied 'twixt shout and shout,  
Mournful the scarlet-runner droops its pods,  
Mournful and slow up-spires the Belgian sprout,  
While at these rails which Archer hugged, and Loates,  
Stand but the ears of Protheronian oats.

The gods, the gods are smitten. Scarce remains  
Of million worshippers their altars knew,  
Of all who thronged their grassy paddock-fanes,  
A vouchered and a melancholious few,  
Where—screened from Stanley's vision—wait the trains. . . .  
O gallant band, O faithful pilgrim-crew,  
To whom Newmarket's lunch-room only caters  
Lest gun-teams fail for lack of selling-platers :

Altruists all ! Let war-mad press-gangs mutter :  
 Let Hannen Swaffer toss three-column cabers,  
 Heed not the strictures his Dispatches utter :  
 An Army Council sanctifies your labours,  
 And future subs., on chargers fat as butter,  
 Shall bless you when they draw parade-blunt sabres,  
 Because you braved the calumnies of cant  
 For Ladbroke's lady and no-limit Gant.

And when, come Michaelmas, you pass from Tat's  
 To Pluto-Proserpine's Cimmerian " tote,"  
 Nor Rapiér's ghost, nor Coe's, nor ghoulish Nat's  
 Shall pluck you by the Zeiss-glassed morning-coat ;  
 But Hastings' self, all glorious with spats,  
 Punt you in Charon's special ferry-boat  
 By many a Stygian fizz-and-oyster cove  
 To some sub-terrane Goodwood's Birdless Grove. . . .

Thrice-glorious Goodwood : though thy star has set  
 Till Mayfair's war-brides sue for peace divorces,  
 Can Garforth Chumleigh, can his Jill forget  
 Thine upland paradise of garden-courses ?  
 Dream of a dream, its memory haunts them yet :  
 Green swards, dark trees, white rails and flashing  
 The Trundle's cone a-shimmer in the sun ;      [horses ;  
 Lord Annandale at twenty-five to one ;

Stands, motors, tents, a-flower with silks and laces  
 Of careful saint or newly-whitewashed sinner ;  
 The Royal box ; the friendly racing-faces—  
 Bibulous peer and hook-nosed money-spinner ;  
 Groomed fliers showing off their paddock-paces ;  
 Black Jester striding home an easy winner :—  
 The last best loving-cup our Season brims  
 For sleek Yahoos and sleeker Houyhnhnms.

That was their day of days, their *béguin's* prime :  
 Phœbus with Fashion, Luck with Love combining—  
 As octave's metre matches octave's rhyme,  
 Or Valenciennes its *charmeuse* under-lining—  
 Beneath blue sky-vaults of midsummer-time,  
 For one too-gorgeous afternoon's enshrining.  
 And strange it is to think love's piping played  
 So gay to mistress and so sad to maid.

For scarce a score of Rolls-Royced miles away,  
 Where Castle Mainz looks westwards to the Mardens,  
 Where Mainz's German-silver fountains spray  
 The lake that hides his submarine cigar-dens,  
 Where Mainz's henchmen labour night and day  
 To prink, perfume, and manicure his gardens—  
 Miss Parker sat : and never cell seemed darker  
 To "Dora's" prey, than Castle Mainz to Parker.

Silent as suburbs in Selfridgian rest-room,  
 Dumb as the glass she watched her homely face in,  
 Not all the splendours of The Turret's best room,  
 Not e'en the silver-mounted onyx basin  
 Which Willett had decreed for every guest-room  
 ("Handy" her-seemed "for washing gloves or lace in"),  
 Nor Mapled bed nor bath of marbled pride,  
 Solaced her soul for "social suicide." . . .

Garforth's, that phrasing—but the thought her own.  
 No more, no less, she deemed her lady's visit  
 To halls where dollars for Debrett atone,  
 And gold-foiled bottles never-ending fizz it.  
 "No place for *us* to stay at—not *alone*—  
 Is it?" she sniffed. And Echo sniffed back "Is it?"  
 As Clara Parker, shaking thoughtful head,  
 Laid Lucille's latest dance-frock on the bed.



“ Too good by half for such a place as this is,”

She reckoned the ‘ creation,’ nouveau-arty,  
Of that barred citadel whose mincing misses

Persuade the chaste to emulate the tarty  
In satins temperamental as a kiss is.

And, “ What a house ! ” she thought ; and “ What  
a party ! ”

When up the drive she heard the homing hum of it,  
“ I don’t believe that any good will come of it.”

## CANTO XXII

*On with the dance—we've cocktailed, dined and wined—  
Let rag-time reign and joy be unrefined.*

**T**O-NIGHT'S the night! To-night the Castle blazes  
Lamp-lit from purse-proud lake to flaunting flag-  
To-night the tom-tom's syncopation crazes, [staff.  
And Dionysus waves his gladdest rag staff.  
Lulu is here to lead the Maxixe mazes :  
Lulu is here, and so is Nikko Wagstaff.  
(One hundred pounds, the fee for which they come :  
Clink the triangle, pound the big bass drum !)

Blithely but lithely, swinging, swaying, scurrying,  
Fool-like yet cool-like, up the room and down again,  
Proudly, while loudly 'cellos squeaky worrying  
Yelps at the brass—the brass the loud drums drown  
Hopping unstopping, hurrying unflurrying, [again,  
(Ten fivers each when once they get to town again),  
Gloved hand at waistband, gloveless hand at shoulder,  
Bold as their limbs are, looks are even bolder.

Never mind your curls, girls, quit your seats and follow  
them.

Lift, lift the skirt (tho' Heaven knows it's short enough).  
Cling, cling with fingerling, bend your backs and hollow  
them,

Nothing matters much if shoulder-straps are taut enough.  
Quit smoke you men-folk, come and grip each doll o' them,  
You've drunk Martinis, Pommery and port enough.  
Thump, thump, the tune goes : never Greek was grander  
(Who cares for Greeks ?) than Jazz-time Alexander.

What's the use of metres, dactyls and iambs !

Damn, damn the Muses ! Dam the fount Parnassian !

Sing, sing, O bardling, dotty dithyrambics,

Sing to us of Ciro's silliest Circassian

Nibbling, twixt tangoes, macaroons and jam bics.

She's the true Venus, fizz-foam-born, thalassian.

Paddington to Maidenhead is far enough for Odysseys.

Great are our Dianas of the low-neck bodices.

Octave's feet outstripping, faster still and faster,

Trot now the pairs on Sammy's topping dance-floors ;

Stiff collars wilt 'neath arms of alabaster,

Silk stockings hole as twinkling tootsies prance floors ;

Hard is the Maxixe, hard its hop to master,

Some simply one-step, some the stumble's chance floors :

But still unwearied, dancing for their fortunes,

Lulu and Nikko urge the band to more tunes. . . .

Muse mine, a truce to rags ! The hour approaches,

Heavy with Fate, on leaden feet and drear,

Black as craped mutes that ride on mourning-coaches,

Bitter as dregs of D'Abernonian beer.

Already Scandal, bungward-bending, broaches

A fearful cask for Garforth's golden feere :

Soon shall Jill Seymour rue those icéd pints

She drained so gleefully in Castle Mainz.

'Tis midnight's hour, and past. Sir Samuel stands,

Lone by a rose-enwreathéd marble pillar—

Diamonds agleam on both his pudgy hands ;

Between thick lips, an unlit Villar-Villar.

Not for his feet, those ramping sarabands,

Those steps of Monkman and of Gertrude Millar :

Not for the careworn soul whose cheque-book pays,

Those super-syncopated roundelays.

Lonely, he stands—a host from guests apart.

Though Banks are his, and Boats, and Bonds of  
 Treasures of Waring's and of Gillow's art, [Morgan,  
 And brass beyond all brasseys forged by Forgan ;  
 Ambition beaks that Anglo-German heart,  
 Gnaws like a vulture at his psychic organ—  
 For who, midst all these spongers on his bounty,  
 Save only Jill, is absolutely " county " ?

Courage, most noble Samuel ! Even now

That Hidden Hand which guards true British Germans,  
 That Hand before whose Thumb the Cave-men bow,  
 Whose oiled Palm guides the submarining mermans,  
 Whose Fingers, Potsdam-tentacled, allow [manns,  
 No barby fence to scratch West Hampstead's Herr-  
 That Hand which grabs Meats, Sweets, and Margarine,  
 Brings you a duchess in a bust machine.

Falters, e'en now, the Stuttgart-built Mercédès ;

Trembles and fails the traitor Bosch magneto ;  
 E'en now your Eastward lodge-bell rings like Hades . . .  
 And, gay as a flapper drawn by Fish or Peto,  
 Chance brings that haughtiest of neighbour-ladies,  
 She to whom Council kids their latest treat owe :  
 Her Grace of Saville,—daring social barrage  
 To claim the succour of your pitted garage.

And with her comes—(now thank the god, Technique,

His priestess Unger and his priest Pinero,  
 By whose decree—tho' thin pit wail in pique  
 And Keith Prowse bookings dwindle down to zero—  
 Of Jay released, our villainess must seek  
 These halls where revel heroine and hero)—  
 Cloaked for the part, red motor-veil on black tress,  
 Britain's most chaste and charitable actress.

Up then and meet them, Samuel. Banish care :  
Let livered pies no longer Strassburg-boxed rot :  
For these, and sturgeon's roe, and vintage rare,  
Bid footman's calves and butler's silken socks trot :  
And while your myrmidons the feast prepare—  
Lest shock their Graces Lulu's legful fox-trot—  
Lead on, MacMainz, to Castle Mainz's glory,  
Your famed subaqueous conservatory !

## CANTO XXIII

*Here twangs romance her best Garforthian harp,  
Where duck with drake disports—and carp with carp.*

**S**ATIRIC Love, half angel and half devil,  
Divine Week-ENDER of the unstopped car,  
Whose sycophants hold amatory revel  
At sunset-hour across the groaning bar,  
Whose henna tints, whose pallid hands dishevel  
The maiden's tress from Cork to Shalimar !  
Say Love (if Love thou art) was e'er thy kiss  
Printed in place as curious as this ?

Full fathom deep below the misty lake,  
A concrete miracle, the smoke-room lies.  
Coils as its weedy base the water-snake ;  
Over its roof the rudder-beetle plies,  
Lazes the golden carp, or feeds the drake  
Wagging his scornful stern at Mainzian skies ;  
Green-refluent above its glazen gables  
The water-lily twines her anchor-cables.

Secret it lies, a very wizard-cave ;  
To which, as in a trance, the charmed foot passes  
By sunken lawn, by soap-stone architrave  
Screened of shaped yews and tufty pampas-grasses,  
Down crystal corridors, a-slant the wave,  
Into vague depths that blur the lead-light glasses :  
A cave of water-silence, dim-illumed,  
Sprayed of cool fountlets, odorous-perfumed.

Here, on rich praying-mats from Turkestan,  
 Are Burman shrines of teak and tinsel-gold ;  
 Here woos to dreaming many a deep divan,  
 Chiselled from Jordan cedars, pearl-inscrolled  
 With runéd wisdom of Mahmoud's Koran ;  
 Here are strange tortured fir-trees, dwarfed and old ;  
 With Buddhas, manufactured in Osaka,  
 To please the *clientèle* of Yamanaka :

Here stand all-mannered bowls of flawless glaze—  
 Flame-yellows, turkiss-blues, and emerald-greens ;  
 And scarlets, cloisonné with cherry-sprays ;  
 Here 'twixt glass-pictured Pekin palace-scenes  
 Hang lamps of silvern filigree, whose rays  
 Refract from Canton's ebon-lacquered screens  
 Whereon the stork outstretches aureate bill . . .  
 And here, of course, is Chumleigh with his Jill.

Pillowed on purple silks that but enhance  
 The bosom's satin-white, the cheeks' faint roses,  
 And gold of hair disordered from the dance ;  
 Draped in some gauziest *crépe* whose sheen discloses  
 Each wanton curve's scarce-veiled significance ;  
 Couched at slim length, the languid fair reposes :  
 While (blush that I should write it !) Garforth sips  
 The honeyed fragrance from those parted lips.

And, " Dear," he murmurs, " dearest ! How can I,  
 I so unworthy, thank your love aright.  
 Words—what are human words ! Until it die  
 My *soul* shall keep the memory of to-night."  
 And, " O my dear, my dear," her lips reply . . .  
 And once again the world fades from their sight ;  
 Once more bold glance meets love-look over-tender,  
 Till pale head droops in passionate surrender. . . .

But hark, what sound was that ! Who dares invade  
 With impious pump these realms to Cupid sacred ?  
 What careless reveller, what roystering maid  
 Comes where nor cherry stains the Gunter cake red,  
 Nor cocktails are, nor even lemonade ? . . .  
 " Garforth ! " gasps Jill ; and blushes crimson-lake red,  
 As clicks a distant switch, as clangs a sorry door,  
 As echo voices down the crystal corridor.

Time, and just time, to break from close caresses :  
 Time, and scarce time, to cant the tie in fear !  
 Time, hardly time, to pat *décoiffé* tresses :  
 Time—is there time ?—to straighten sofa-gear,  
 To smooth that daintiest of dancing-dresses . . .  
 Time, and no more : the enemy is here !  
 Now, at their dug-out's mouth, they hear the blither  
 " How exquisite " of—Hazeline Tredither ;

(" *Hazeline ! Here !!* " pants Garforth's quivering heart) ;  
 And Sammy Mainz's guttural voice explaining  
 The auction-wiles of Bond-street bodhisât,  
 The cost of concrete and Artesian draining :  
 While now the peacock curtains swish apart ;  
 And now—like schoolboys prescient of caning—  
 Rises my guilty lover-pair to face  
 The levelled lorgnette of her quizzing Grace. . . .

Alas, this England and its ducal manners !  
 Alas, these prisoners in iron masks,  
 Steel-faced, lock-bolted with convention's spanners !  
 Alas, a truthful poet's thankless tasks !  
 Alas, my satire's hooded gauntlet-lanners ;  
 These sacrifices Realism asks !  
 Alas, a Muse that chops with blunted rhyme-axe  
 In tangled forests of an anti-climax !



For here, though Mistress Melodrama woos  
With outstretched arms to anapæstic ructions,  
Truth sees no more than hand-clasped how-de-dooos  
And social smiles and easy introductions. . . .  
Yet 'ware, sweet maid, Tredither's bills and coos,  
'Ware that false mouth's effusive parting-suctions :  
Blacker than Austrian Kohinoor's plumbago  
Is the black heart of that demure virago !

## CANTO XXIV

*For woman—as for politician—scorned,  
Finest of weapons is a Press suborned.*

**A**T Castle Mainz the xylophone is dumb :  
In empty halls no more the dance-tune dizzies.  
No nigger thumps an Alexandrine drum  
Where, lone at butler's lip, the Clicquot fizzes.  
For vanished guests, or motors Aix-ward thrum,  
Or straight to butt the driven grouse-bird whizzes,  
Or sparkles summer sun 'gainst clipper-bows  
That cut the waves of Kiel-infested Cowes.

In Garforth's garden by the bounding sea,  
Mournful the dawn-breeze through the darkling pine  
Sadly the slow day breaks to misery [hums.  
On withered hollyhocks and antirrhinums.  
"Jill!" cries a lover's heart, "come back to me" . . .  
Till stern resolve that heart's despairing cry numbs,  
And once again to publisher's scenario  
Bows his Homeric head a lorn Lothario.

For passions pass ; religions, Empires fade,  
Faster than flowers whence honey-bees drain free cups ;  
Oblivion rusts the breech-block as the blade ;  
The nettle seeds where Attila had hiccups :  
But still the penman plies his endless trade,  
Still brew the storms in literary tea-cups ;  
Time's vengeful scythe is impotent to slaughter  
Heads doomed immortal by a clement Shorter.

And still revenge is jocund to the jilted. . . .

In Berkeley Square no Seymour flunkeys strut ;  
 Drawn are those blinds, those window-boxes wilted ;  
 And—where the trims maids nibbled undercut—  
 In bombazine and bustle Belcher-tilted,  
 Banquets on bloaters some care-taking slut.  
 Then why, ah why, my Montmorency Brown  
 Is Haze Tredither still in London Town ?

Why sit ye twain in yon Gambrinus-cloister,  
 Where spying Teutons tippie Pilsen toddy  
 Till beards wax moist and eyes wax even moister ?  
 What bodes this midnight *sauerkraut* of Oddy ?  
 What secret-scoopéd pearl of Fleet Street oyster  
 Traffics her Slyness with your Busy-body ?  
 What plotted vengeance sets her eyes aglow ? . . .  
 Soon, and too soon, shall press-ruled England know !

Isaacs and Inkpots ! Hobhouse, Hell and Headlines !  
 Who in all Albion on that fateful day  
 Bit not at “ Gossip Mail’s ” be-postered headlines,  
 Left not his office-work, his tennis-play,  
 To read black Montmorency’s slander-red lines ?  
 What clerk from Golder’s Green to Mary’s Cray  
 Voiced not his envious and his awe-struck “ Damne ”  
 At “ Little Birds and Saturnalia Sammy ” ?

Bookstalls and Brimstone ! Bigmany, Blood and Billing !  
 What page dare print that article of articles ?  
 Shall Tatler take the party-stockinged shilling  
 To pelt pure souls with sloppy cocoa-particles ?  
 Shall Muses condescend to gutter-trilling ;  
 Or Pegasus, whose tail the strap-hitched star tickles,  
 Feed like a cow-hocked yellow Rosinante  
 In Grecian mangers of a Vigilante ?

Ah no ! Ah no ! Ah, no by God and Garvin !  
 Torture us an ye will, reviewer-hosts :  
 Leave us nor pot to dip, nor cot to starve in :  
 Burn us to death at Repingtonian posts ;  
 Exile our souls to some cheap Jugo-Slav inn  
 Where Wellsian Angells rule the bloodless roasts :  
 Let criticism's greenest empyema  
 Attack the lungs of our *ottava rima* :—

And still we will not speak ! Not C.M.G.s  
 That flit—like will-o'-wisps o'er eddying Marshes—  
 Before the eyes of mess-proud A.D.C.s ;  
 Not Drughorn's millions ; not the spoils of Tarshish,  
 Not indiscreetest soldiering M.P.s,  
 Shall tempt through barrier of our moustaches  
 More than a bowdlerised two-stanza summary  
 Of that eight-columned contumacious flummery.

Barefaced it was : a Machiavellian medley  
 Of truth and fiction : mischievous as Maurice ;  
 Bitter as Georgic penned by patriot Hedley ;  
 Terser than Wullie stellenbosching 'Orace :  
 A satire, disingenuous as deadly,  
 Wherein while " Sammy bunny-hugged with Doris "  
 " A famous novelist slunk off to spend  
 Some blissful moments with his lady friend."

And : " Wouldn't Sammy's pals in Angel Court,  
 For whom he keeps the special grocer-whisky,  
 Have liked to taste that '57-port ? "  
 And : " Didn't Sammy think it pretty risky "  
 To be a " bull " of dancing-skirts as " short "  
 As those disported by the " frail and frisky "  
 Who loved their " little Stock Exchange adviser "  
 About as much as " Deutschland loves its Kaiser." . . .

Libels and Lewis ! Damage, Death and Darling !  
Help for an outraged German millionaire !  
Muzzles, me lud, to stop this hell-dog's snarling !  
Vengeance, ye twelve most absolutely fair !  
Devils to work ! Smoke on ye pipes of Barling,  
What time your puffers plea on plea prepare !  
From bench to box clear England's Bar for action—  
A plutocrat seeks legal satisfaction !

## CANTO XXV

*Muse imitates her novelistic betters  
By filling up an awkward gap with letters.*

**H**ELP for a stranded literary skipper,  
 Help for a starveling crew of puppet souls !  
 Off Libel Bank, beloved by legal kipper,  
 A cable's length from Boredom's unread shoals,  
 Becalmed she lies—my strawboard pirate-clipper.  
 Slackly her canvas droops from crowded poles ;  
 Where naught save flats of Doldrum-tedium shine  
 Sticky as treacle round her plotless Line.

Saleless and local-colourless, the deep  
 Prisons her hull. Inaction's fell sargasso  
 Mats the wide wastes whereon reviewers sleep,  
 Claws at her royalties with greedy lasso.  
 No dialogue can mark the pace we creep ;  
 No compass bright with psychologic Brasso  
 Avails to point the dull green-mirrored track,  
 (Duller than Walpole's) that our bow must tack.

Vain on these waves might Masfield's fish-fag lemans  
 Labour with bloodstained hands the bloodstained oar,  
 And shock with bloodstained oaths the ghost of Hemans,  
 Yet draw no nearer to the bloodstained shore ;  
 Here neither Touchstone's Muse nor suburb Seaman's  
 Can salve a cargo from the dreaded bore :  
 One breeze and one alone for which pens whistle  
 Can help us now—the novelist's Epistle !

Come then, thou barmiest blast of postal pence,  
 Subtle as Blackwood, tenuous as skilly :  
 Unnatural zephyr, blowing Wells-knows-whence,  
 Wafting us Dell-knows-whither, willy-nilly :  
 Wind of High Art, unchilled by common sense :  
 Rosemary Wind of Telegraphic Billy :  
 Come on the catspaws of thy parted passion,  
 Puff me mine epic to the current fashion !

*Garforth to Lady Jill. At daybreak-gleam.*

*Mossmelrose Cottage. Twenty-first September.*

“ Sweet layde mine, How far away they seem,  
 Those days your lover scarcely dares remember,  
 Those days when you and I . . . Ah ! foolish dream :  
 Youth’s flame too bright for my poor senile ember :  
 Ah ! roses of all dead loves, falsely-true,  
 Reborn to perfect roseleafhood in you.

“ ‘ Forget,’ you write, ‘ forget. *La vie est vaine,*  
*Un peu d’amour et puis*—you know the rest.’  
 Forget ! Would God, dear Ladye of Disdain,  
 I *could* forget those hands these hands have pressed,  
 Our too brief rapture, this too-endless pain ;  
 Forget the love your love-lips once confessed  
 And all the glory of your tender eyes. . . .  
 Alas, alas that passion’s rose-bud dies !

“ And are there roses in your Deauville too ?  
 Great scarlet roses, salt-kissed of the sea ?  
 Does the same day break red for me and you,  
 The same sun set in gold for you and me ?  
 Wonderful, truly ! Wonderfully true !  
 Yet ah ! my rose, my rueful Rosemary.” . . .  
 But here, alas, veracious Muse discloses  
 Jill murmured, “ Silly rotter with his roses ” ;

And yawned ; and skipped a dozen priceless pages  
 Of best Garforthian amatory patter—  
 Yearnings, remorse, sentimental rages  
 All tangled up with egoistic chatter ;  
 And thought, “ Poor G. I wonder what his age is ” :  
 And turned, and found upon the bedside platter,  
 Propped between chocolate-pot and buttered toast,  
 Lord Reggie’s contribution to her post.

*Strar Castle, Strarton, Strarshire. Thursday Night.*

“ Dear Jill, About this rotten ‘ Gossip Mail.’  
 From what one hears, it seems Brown means to fight,  
 Says he’s got evidence to prove his tale.  
 Of course he’ll lose. And serve him damn well right.  
 Confound the chap. Why isn’t he in gaol ?  
 Did you see last week’s number, ‘ Social Jinks :  
 Or, Forty-seven Manx Cats and a Minx ’ ?

“ I must admit it made me laugh like sin. . . .  
 Old girl, I wish you’d taken my advice.  
 Still, Poole assures me Brown can’t drag *you* in,  
 The Judge won’t let him, not at any price.  
 He thinks Brown’s bluffing, hasn’t got the tin  
 To pay his counsel-fees : I’ve seen him twice—  
 Friend Poole, I mean, not Brown—about some bally money  
 Poor Sophie swears I owe her on the alimony.

“ I kicked like steam, but paid up in the end.  
 She’s in the wrong—but what’s the use of squabbling ?  
 And what’s the use of cash, except to spend ?  
 Though goodness knows, with *three* of ’em all gobbling,  
 And Daimler’s cutting down their dividend,  
 The family fortune’s positively wabbling.  
 However, dad’s still got a tidy bit.  
 Ta-ta, old thing. Don’t worry, and keep fit.”



Breeze of all breezes, breeze of all my eye,  
A poet's thanks for this divine assistance !  
Once more, from flying-jib to mizzen-sky  
Our toggled canvas bellies down the distance ;  
And as Muse kneels with ink-stained palms raised high,  
Her white knees bent to thee in suppliant's kiss-stance,  
Bright o'er the ploughed flats of the Long Vacation,  
Beckons the Temple bar of litigation.

## CANTO XXVI

*Let her who thinks law's process dry as dust is,  
Mark well these cantos of poetic justice.*

**K**ING'S Bench Division. Justice Agag's Court.  
Mainz *versus* Monty Brown and "Gossip Mail."  
Plaintiff alleges actionable tort—  
Viz., that defendants did expose for sale,  
Sell, try to sell, and offer to be bought,  
Publish to wit, a certain slanderous tale,  
By, from, and on account of which, and whence,  
Plaintiff has suffered pain and loss of pence.

Whereto defendants plead in their defences :  
There was no publication. We deny it.  
And if there was, no reader in his senses  
Believed the plaintiff was referred to by it.  
But if he was, and if his loss in pence is  
As claimed by him ; we've cause to justify it ;  
In that, said tale by plaintiff's deed and act  
Is, and was, true in substance and in fact.

How brief, how drab those words. Yet, oh ! how gay  
The gallant company they brought together.  
Never I ween, since that most fatal day  
When first Justinian wove our legal tether,  
Saw usher's eyes so gorgeous an array  
Of *charmeuse* velvet and of ostrich feather ;  
Never since Halsbury first drew judge's salary,  
Was such a run on places in the gallery.

And in the well, what jostling of K.C.s,  
 Witnesses, public, jurymen, solicitors !  
 What notebooks, what Exhibits A's and B's,  
 What musty calf-bound volumes piled in dizzy tors !  
 What hum of bigwig-whispered mysteries !  
 What comings and what goings of what visitors !  
 What atmosphere—as Reggie said to Jill,  
 “ Enough to make a bally polecat ill.”

Gay dog, yet never dog in Cupid's manger ;  
 In friendship true, though false to marriage-vow ;  
 Pal in smooth waters, more than pal in danger ;  
 Cautioner once, concerned companion now ;  
 Watching, he thought : “ Time doesn't seem to change  
 Nervous ? Not she ! Jill always loved a row. [her.  
 Wish that I hadn't brought her. Wish to God,  
 This Court could send the bounders both to quod.”

But here hushed silence broke on Reggie's musing.  
 Rustled each silk ; arose each costly wig.  
 Red-robed, refreshed from “ Daily Mail's ” perusing,  
 Dry-witted as the desiccated fig,  
 Entered to try this case of his own choosing,  
 He, the pastmaster of the legal “ dig,”  
 Whose jokes surpass e'en Georgie Graves in gay gag—  
 His frolic Lordship, Justice Bluebook Agag :

Entered and sat. . . . Now help me, Lord Apollo,  
 While sinks yon shaven chin on ermine tippet,  
 While chants the clerk that oath the twelve must follow,  
 And each reporter meditates his snippet,  
 To sing the flashing eye, the cheekbones hollow,  
 The jaw, thin-lipped, keen-pouncing as a whippet,  
 The Roman nostrils and the Belfast brogue  
 Of plaintiff's counsel, Donovan O'Rogue.

A proper man despite his wig and gown !

And when at length he rose, lean fingers jingling  
Full many a trouser-pocketed half-crown,

No female breast but felt a faint fond tingling ;  
And e'en the brazen heart of Monty Brown

Knew craven fear with apprehension mingling,  
As, eye on bench (but t'other eye on jury),  
O'Rogue K.C. told Sammy Mainz's story.

“ Sir Samuel Moinz—me cloient, jintlemen—

Knoighted last year for princely jinerosity,  
A naturaloised, a British citizen,

Moved boi no lust for gain, no animosity,  
But driven disperate boi a gutter-pen

Unroivalled in its loibellous jocosity,

Asks you for simple English justice . . . ” (Judge

Here entered in his notes : “ O.'s opening—Fudge.”) . . .

“ Me cloient gave a party last Juloy . . .

Me cloient's a most hoshpitable man ;

And whin he entertains, like you or Oi,

He gives his friends the very best he can—

Good food, good woine, a bottle of the bhoy . . . ”

(Here a hushed titter round the Court-room ran) . . .

“ In fact, if hoshpitality's a croime,

Sir Samuel shtands convicted ivery toime.

“ This party, as ye'll hear in ividence

From well-known folk who actually were there,

Was—Oi'll submit to ye—in ivery sense

A most refoined and iligant affair . . .

Fwhat happens ? . . . Tin days later, the defence

Publish an article in which they dare

To shtigmatoize this foine conviviality

As drunken and loicentious bestiality.

“ Jintlemen, when Oi use those words, Oi mane ’em :  
 And when ye’ve read this rag, ye’ll say Oi’m roight.  
 Because he’s friends and loikes to entertain ’em,  
 They shlander him, this honourable knight.  
 And then . . . Do they withdraw ? . . . No ! *Cave canem.*  
 They say : ‘ Our story’s true. We mane to foight.  
 We’ll prove he treats his friends to grocer-whisky,  
 And bunny-hugs with females frail and frisky.

“ ‘ We’ll prove these Saturnalia,’ they say—  
 ‘ These midnight orrgies of intoxication.’  
 Well, let them prove their tale in Court to-day ;  
 Me cloient’s here for cross-examination . . .  
 But, do they shtop at shlandering us ? Not they !  
 They’re not content with *proivate* defamation.  
 It isn’t just ‘ the Stock-Exchange adviser ’  
 They ridicule—but, jintlemen, The Koiser !

“ Mark that ! A royal and friendly potentate  
 Exposed to insult by this ‘ Gossip Mail ’ . . . ”

But here, lest smirch a patriot advocate  
 The realism of our bygone tale,  
 Muse lets Imagination perorate,  
 Secret Diplomacy once more prevail ;  
 And—deftly sheathing her satiric truncheon—  
 Adjourns the awe-struck puppet-court for luncheon.

## CANTO XXVII

*Take up the tale in style press-orthodox.*

MAINZ *versus* BROWN. SIR SAMUEL IN THE BOX.

**J**UDGE'S REMARK. SIR D. O'ROGUE'S RETORT.  
AUTHOR BREAKS DOWN IN CROSS-EXAMINATION.

On the resumption of the case, the court  
Was crowded to the point of suffocation.  
Outside, men pushed and struggled ; women fought.  
The doors were closed to howls of execration.  
Plaintiff (who's claiming damages for libel)  
Then took the oath, and having kissed the Bible,

Confirmed in full his counsel's opening story.

He owned, among his other country-places,  
Mainz Castle, famed for its conservatory.

(Defendant : " And for clandestine embraces."  
*Sensation.*) Plaintiff, turning to the jury :

" I gave this party for the Goodwood races."

His Lordship : " And of course they backed Black Jester."

Sir Donovan : " Me lud beats Alfred Lester."

(*Some laughter.*) Judge : " Sir Donovan, withdraw  
That doleful imputation on my wheezes."

(*More laughter.*) Judge : " I hope I know the law."

The plaintiff's counsel : " As your ludship pleases."

A voice : " Why don't you call him Bernard Shaw ? "

(The Muse : " How fortunate these legal breezes,  
Wafting to weary slaves from us who buy 'em  
Refreshers of a hundred pounds *per diem.*")

*Continued.* Order having been restored,

Plaintiff was asked : " You gave a dance, I think." . . .  
 " I did." . . . " And were your guests amused, or bored!" . . .

" Amused." The Judge : " You gave them lots to drink."  
 Plaintiff : " The usual quantity, my Lord."

(Defendant, *sotto voce* : " Strike me pink !").

Counsel, producing paper : " Does this article  
 Contain one grain of truth ?" . . . " No. Not one particle."

Defendant (who's conducting his own case)

Now rose to cross-examine : " My suggestion  
 Is that the whole affair was a disgrace."

His Lordship : " You must put that as a question."

Defendant : " And I tell you to your face

The law's an ass. A fine point to be testy on  
 When . . ." Judge : " If you defend this case in person,  
 You are the ass." Defendant : " Billy Merson !"

(*Uproar.*) Defendant : " With the Judge's leave  
 I beg to tender a sincere apology"—

(His Lordship : " Granted.")—" and to say I grieve  
 That ignorance of legal phraseology . . ."

His Lordship : " That's a fault you might retrieve  
 By studying *Blake Odgers on Tautology.*"

Brown : " Right you are, me lud." To witness : " You  
 Maintain I've told a lie in print ?" . . . " I do."

" And that this dance was absolutely proper ?" . . .

" Yes." . . . " Did you drink champagne or whisky ?"  
 . . . " Both."

" You danced ?" . . . " Just once." . . . " And came  
 a fearful cropper ?" . . .

Witness, in rising tones : " No, on my oath."

Defendant, to the jury : " That's a whopper.

Now, sir, believe me, I am more than loath  
 To put this question : Do you know Miss Lulu ?"  
 His Lordship, puzzled : " Did he kiss a Zulu ?"

(*Titters.*) Sir Samuel, answering the query,  
 Admitted that he did. "And was she there?" . . .  
 "Where?" . . . "At the dance." . . . "She was." . . .  
 "And pretty cheery?" . . .  
 "She always is." . . . "She danced the Grizzly Bear?" . . .  
 "She may have." . . . "Did you call her 'Lulu dearie'?" . . .  
 "Never." . . . "At any rate, you paid her fare?"  
 Witness, with heat: "Of course. It's her profession."  
 Brown: "Thanks, Sir Samuel, for that true expression.

"I've nothing more to ask." . . . Sir D. O'Rogue  
 Rising to re-examine: "Is this lady  
 A Maxixe dancer, very much in vogue?" . . .  
 "She is." . . . "And is her fox-trot, Yip-i-yady,  
 Approved by Father Vaughan, by Cardinal Logue,  
 John Burns, Tod Sloan and Dickylegs Calmady?" . . .  
 "It is." . . . "You paid, to give your guests this treat,  
 A largish sum." . . . "Too much. Here's her receipt."

Plaintiff, who'd been throughout most self-possessed,  
 Then left the box, his evidence concluded.  
 Counsel called Garforth Chumleigh, plaintiff's guest  
 (The well-known author of "What Very Few Did").  
 Witness had seen no "brows Bacchante-tressed,"  
 No "warm white forms indecently denuded."  
 He thought Brown over-wrote. This "Saturnalia"  
 Seemed, to his judgment, an artistic failure.

Defendant: "Is that judgment based on pique?" . . .  
 "By no means. You've a style that's most unpleasant,  
 No form, a split-infinitive technique,  
 The crude construction of a Celtic peasant." . . .  
 "Quite so. Now, at this dance of which you speak,  
 What other famous novelists were present?" . . .  
 "None." . . . "Then, admitting *you* slunk off to spend  
 Those blissful moments: *Who's your lady-friend?*"



O'Rogue, K.C. : " Your lordship, I object.

The question is an outrage." . . . Mr. Brown :

" If you don't answer, what must we suspect ?

I ask you : ' Who's this woman of the town ? ' " . . .

Chumleigh : " My lord, I beg you to protect "—

But here the witness utterly broke down,  
And sobbing out, " That harridan grease-painted  
Has blown the gaff," incontinently fainted.

All which, and more, Lord Reggie read and re-read—

(Including evidence by Jimmy Glover,

" Rag-time is Art " ; the butler's view when *he* read

The article, and what he told the shuvver)—

And thought : " My grief, it makes one fairly see red—

All London knows that bounder was her lover—

Fainted !—the fool ! —that absolutely tore it.

Reggie my boy, I wonder how you bore it—

" Though good old Jill, she never turned a hair—

When everyone in court was looking at her." . . .

But, far away, wing-screened from foot-light's glare,

Waiting to follow T. E. Dunville's patter,

" Ha-ha ! Ha-ha ! Let Mistress Jill beware,"

Hissed Hazeline. " Ten thousand devils drat her :

Come Hate, come Hope, come Scandal, Shame and Sorrow,

Wait till I'm in that witness box to-morrow."

## CANTO XXVIII

*Silence in Court ! Here rants her stagiest scene,  
Our sweetly-chaste, our childlike Hazeline.*

ONCE more Judge Agag bids the tourney join.  
Once more bright eyes gaze down upon the fray.  
Now Brown the Quillman tilts at Knight of Coin  
With marshalled facts in eloquent array ;  
While brief in hand, crushed silk at girded loin,  
Horsehair on brow, proud Ulster sits to bay.  
And twelve stout paladins of common-sense  
Drink open-eared the speech for the defence.

Curt is that speech : as when John Bull's Horatio,  
Steel helmet nodding, tips the wink to Douglas ;  
Or as when P. B.'s *sæva indignatio*  
Reveals, dim-dark behind convention's smug glass,  
The mysteries of some Albanian patio,  
Where hidden-handed lurks a tiger-rug lass,  
Inscribing on her tablets black as pitch  
The names of all our wild and woolly rich.

“ Fair comment,” “ Freedom of our English Press,”  
“ No disrespect to plaintiff's nationality,”—  
(O careful Brown ! O poet-recklessness !—  
O substance risked for shadows of reality !)—  
“ Gilded corruption,” “ Vice in evening-dress,”  
“ The common decencies,” “ Defied morality,”  
“ Sanctity of our homes,” “ This curse of rag-time ” . . .  
Faster than fastest flappers flirt in flag-time,

Those phrases flit athwart his lordship's drowsing,  
 Trouble him restless in his high-backed stall.  
 " Dances debauched, caresses and carousing,  
 Out with them, root and branch, for good and all !  
 Such, gentlemen, the cause of my espousing.  
 Such the bare facts ; in proof whereof I call,  
 One who, thank God, is here to justify  
 My journal's boast : ' It never tells a lie.' "

He speaks no more ; but Echo, trumpet-loud,  
 Repeats aloft that last shrill shibboleth ;  
 Till falls a spell-bound hush upon the crowd ;  
 Till even Fleet Street holds reporting breath,  
 As up those steps of fate—more palely proud  
 Than ever Martin Harvey stalked to death—  
 Robed in Jay's soberest of mourning frocks,  
 Mounts Haze Tredither to the witness-box.

Poor little, pure little, virgin-widow Miss !  
 Surely no motive save the best intent  
 Drags her white youth to such a case as this ?  
 So frail, she looks ; so girlish-innocent,  
 It seems her dear lips scarce know how to kiss  
 The pages of the Holy Testament.  
 Yet who shall say what poison-thoughts distil  
 Behind that look she darts at Reg. and Jill ?

And now her voice, so childlike in its clarity,  
 Lisps forth its tale : Of how she was invited  
 By Saville's Duchess for a village charity ;  
 And how, about the maypole fairy-lighted,  
 The simple rustics danced in chaste hilarity ;  
 And how she played for them, and how recited ;  
 And how the car broke down, and how Her Grace  
 Suggested shelter at Sir Samuel's place. . . .

Ah me, how different from the Morris-dances  
 Fiddled by honest gaffers on the green,  
 That nigger band, those drinks, those Maxixe-prances.  
 Hardly the modest head of Hazeline  
 Dares to the Judge's seat its bashful glances,  
 As prompter's voice recalls that shocking scene.  
 "And after that," she falters to the jury,  
 "He asked us into his conservatory—

The famous one, that's underneath the lake" . . .  
 Sudden, the well-known whine : "O need I tell . . .  
 Surely it's all some terrible mistake . . .  
 And yet, and yet, *I saw them* . . . Terribel . . .  
 Ah no, not that, not that ! For pity's sake,  
 No names . . . Poor Duchess . . . Poor Sir Samuel." . . .  
 Sobs choke the whine . . . Raised fingers flutter dumbly . . .  
 "*Poor Lady Jill ! Poor Mister Garforth Chumleigh !*"

Now by the Cat-faced One and Cow-horned Isis,  
 By Tum and Gorgeous Nut, by Set the Shabby  
 And Ra the slaughterer of cockatrices,  
 The Bag of Thoth hath loosed some scandal-tabby !  
 Now test, Anubis, on thy Scales of Crisis  
 This soul of Jill—if feather-brained and flabby,  
 Its nerves unbalanced tremble to disaster,  
 Or whether Pluck rise up Misfortune's Master.

Look ! Doth it flinch before those judging eyes ?  
 Doth quivering look betray, or finger's clutch,  
 The swift heart's pit-a-pat, the blood that dries  
 On lips accused of kissing overmuch ?  
 Look well, and pass the soul. No carmine dyes  
 That face Suspicion puts to quizzing-touch.  
 Calm as Earl Curzon, cool as gherkins are,  
 My lady sits beside Lord Reggie Strar.

"Hypocrite," say you? Who then, in our land,  
 From Loch Doon's bonny banks to those of Plender,  
 Shall be the first to raise the unoiled hand  
 And heave his half-brick at my sweet pretender?  
 Which gallant hero of the Home Command,  
 Which Ramsay Stockholm-tarred, which Lansdowne-  
 Which Whitehall tester of the Madsen gun, [Ender,  
 Shall not rejoice that law-clocks point to one?

For hark, 'tis Agag's voice. With what discernment  
 For comic Muse's ragtime counterpoint,  
 His frolic lordship orders the adjournment.  
 Trip down, Tredither! Jury-wights, aroint,  
 Blithe as Von Plessens, from your boxed internment!  
 Clerk of the Court, begone to veg. and joint!  
 Loud crows the "Cock": "Ye rump-fed legal ronyons,  
 The witching hour has struck. To steak-and-onions!"

Out of my sight, starved puppets. Off ye pop.  
 Public, K.C.s and juniors: away!  
 But thou, O'Rogue, we do enjoin thee: Stop:  
 List while Lord Reggie hath his whispered say!  
 Hast heard? 'Tis well. Now, when yon dolly-mop  
 Returns, full-gorged, tight-corsletted for fray,  
 Zounds, 'sdeath and 'sblood, she'll need a toughish stamina  
 To break the lance on which thou'lt cross-examine her.

## CANTO XXIX

*Its sure foundations riddled with perhapses,  
The edifice of Brown's defence collapses.*

' **T**IS the great moment of the Ragtime Case.  
Thick as, on Blackpool's strand, Lancastrian  
trippers  
Flock pikelet-satiate to the concert-place,  
Or dare the briny with their shrieking nippers ;  
Tight-packed as, face to tail and tail to face,  
Bristle in Watson's tins the silvery " Skippers " ;  
Jostle the West End " fans " of tittle-tattle  
To hear O'Rogue and Hazeline pitch battle.

Actress and advocate : as cute a pair  
As ever matched their pretty wits in mummery :  
She with her virginal, disingenuous air—  
A dream of innocence in lace-edged flummery :  
That other, smiling, courteous, over-fair—  
Yet Doubt itself's embodiment and summary :  
Their glances meet in measuring surmise,  
As brogue suggests and lisp to brogue replies.

Polished and keen their edged words ring and slither,—  
Parry that baffles, lunge that scrapes the mask.  
How too polite that opening, " Miss Tredither,  
Ye'll understand that moine's a thankless task." . . .  
(How ready, how demure that answering blither,  
" Mine too, Sir Donovan ") . . . " but Oi must ask  
If, as an actress, one who's all the rage,  
Ye're paid as much as others on the stage ? . . .

“ ‘Ye are.’ . . . And ‘rather more.’ . . . That’s foine.  
That’s noice.

Then Oi’ll assume ye wouldn’t loi for money ? . . .  
‘Of course ye wouldn’t’ . . . Shplendid.” . . . (Oh,  
that voice

Turning to wormwood answers sweet as honey) . . .  
“ Shtill, Oi expect, loike most folk, ye’ve your proice ? . . .  
‘Ye haven’t ; and ye think me question’s funny ? . . .  
Well, well. . . . Now tell us whoi ye came to court ? . . .  
‘To shpake the truth.’ . . . Exactly what Oi thought.

“ Who asked ye, though, to give this evidence ? . . .  
‘Monty ? ’ Ye mane defendant, Mister Brown.  
Is he a friend of yours ? . . . ‘Oh, in a sense.’ . . .  
What sense ? ‘Ye’ve met him once or twice in town.’  
‘Ye sympathoised with him in his defence.’  
‘Ye think this rag-time ought to be put down.’  
Better and better ! Oi can take it then,  
That *ye’re* the power behoidn this gutter-pen ? . . .

“ ‘*What do Oi mane ?* ’ ” . . . One hungry finger taps  
The opened pages of the “ Gossip Mail.”  
“ The question’s aisy. Oi’m not setting traps.  
Oi want to know who first inshpoired this tale—  
This loing tale. Now was it you ? . . . ‘*Perhaps.*’ . . .  
Perhaps the pair of ye will end in gaol.  
It *was* you, Miss Tredither. Then admit it . . . ”  
(O fly well-flung ! O foolish trout that bit it !)

“Ye did this thing. And whoi ? . . . ‘Ye thought it roight ?’  
‘Ye thought it was yer duty ?’ . . . Well Oi never. . .  
Oi put it to ye, this was done for shpoite ? . . .  
‘It wasn’t.’ . . . But ye made it yer endeavour,  
Boi ivery manes, to bring about this foight :  
Ye daren’t denoi that. . . . Now then : Were ye ever  
A friend of Mister Chumleigh’s ? Koindly tell us  
The truth this toime. . . . ‘Ye were.’ . . . And ye were jealous.

“ *Jealous!* Because ye found him sitting-out  
 With someone else! Is that it? Am Oi wrong? . . .  
 Answer me, plaze. . . ‘ Oi am.’ . . . Ye needn’t shout.  
 The jury heard.”

But why, sweet Muse, prolong  
 This agony? Why overply the knout?  
 Already victim quivers to the thong:  
 Already have our knowing readers spotted  
 How Reggie foiled the plot Tredither plotted.

Shall we then whelm that head Vedrenne-adored,  
 That neck begemmed by Cockie’s hugest salary,  
 With maledictions of the vulgar horde,  
 Boos from the pit and cat-calls from the gallery?  
 Make spurt in eyes that Collins can’t afford  
 The boiling tears of satire’s meanest calorie?  
 Tweezer from virgin lips above suspicion,  
 Tooth after tooth of painfullest admission?

Stage the whole scene?—the victim, writhing, whining,  
 Lashed with cross-questions, racked to recantation:  
 Brown on abortive feet: O’Rogue maligning:  
 The jury stolid in disapprobation:  
 Judge Agag, puns with precedents combining:  
 Sir Samuel’s oleaginous elation:  
 My Lord of Strar’s unfathomable attitude:  
 Jill, nonchalant—but prey to secret gratitude?

Sweet Muse, *je pense que non*. Though steel thy hands,  
 Brazen thy voice and tungsten-hard thy clear eye;  
 Though thou abhorrest those be-Binyoned Strands  
 Where nod Tradition’s flapperesque Homeri;  
 Bow thee this once to Sentiment’s demands,  
 Grant but three stanzas of *suppressio veri*;  
 And I will pay to thee for this thy loyalty  
 A golden guerdon from my Café-Royalty.



Presto ! Behold the Goddess Compromise  
 In floods of whitewash hovering to settle.  
 Thee, Monty Brown, she bids apologise  
 ("Tis time and time to grasp that costly nettle) ;  
 Thee, Mainz, ordains forego the damage-prize  
 Thy pot had fain extracted from his kettle.  
 Contend no more : since Darling diagnoses  
 Society's pet scandals as " neuroses."

Then up, defendant, and withdraw thy pleas :  
 Get thee from Dunn's most conscientious hattery  
 Their softest remnant Homburg-Tyrolese,  
 To cap Sir Samuel's head with full-size flattery.  
 Then down, O'Rogue, and beg on bended knees  
 Thy pardon from the queen of Stageland's cattery ;  
*Quo facto*, in mellifluous doxology,  
 Accept that unconditional apology.

The case is closed. Endorse the brief, me lud ;  
 Exempt the jurors and dismiss the parties.  
 " Here lie two mutts whose names are writ in mud."  
*Fiat justitia*, my legal hearties !  
 Though Monte fall ; though Solly sell his stud ;  
 And Duggie's altar perish like Astarte's ;  
 Though poker pass, and bridge, and " little horses "—  
 So fools pay fees, the law shall take its courses.

## CANTO XXX

*The Muse—to prosiest English condescending—  
Sums up her tale and presages its ending.*

**A**LMIGHTY public, ye whose pence we prize,  
Above all praise of petulant reviewers  
Who damn Gene Stratton Porter's starry eyes  
And serve up Hall Caine's heart on paper skewers :  
Friends finis-faithful unto tale's demise :  
Renewers of our cash, and re-renewers :  
Though Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Sidney Colvin sneer,  
The time has come to make our moral clear.

*Imprimis* then, (forgive one classic tag  
With which we woo the heart of Girton's top Sis.,  
And flaunt a revolutionary rag  
At College Windows dark with ampelopsis :)  
Lest patience fail as memory's tight-rope sag,  
Deign to peruse our epic in synopsis ;  
Nor deem presumptuous that " One of Them " airs  
The serial graces of a Ruby M. Ayres.

Our heroine, a girl you're sure to like,  
(Unless, demanding much reduced verbosity,  
Readers—like all good patriots—are on strike,)  
LADY JILL LEWIS-SEYMOUR, whose velocity  
Still stirs some dust on fashion's gilded pike,  
Has now been steered from amorous precocity  
Up to that point when publisher's requirement  
Suggests she's earned her vellum-bound retirement.

We've sung her lineage, her first affair  
 (Her last—some unborn genius shall sing),  
 Her budding-time, her love for ALASTAIR—  
 A rosy rapture *sans* engagement-ring ;  
 Broken her heart, and put it in repair—  
 Where to, all said and sung, the coin's the thing ;  
 And told—as Morning Post its morning menace—  
 The truth about that episode in Venice.

All which, a period of strenuous delving  
 Among the craggy tomes of those best-sellers  
 Whose first editions grace our study-shelving,  
 Plus some small knowledge of old storytellers,  
 Proved vital—as, to satire's axe, its helving ;  
 Collars to Churchills ; whips to Tony Wellers ;  
 Spurs to the Staff, and vacuums to canners ;—  
 For this our comedy of Mayfair Manners.

Thereafter, lest our story lacked for plot,  
 We introduced the reader, seriatim,  
 To GARFORTH CHUMLEIGH, from whose inky pot  
 Both Joan and Peter plagiarise verbatim ;  
 To HAZE TREDITHER, pure as babe in cot  
 Till—Garforth loving Jill—she learned to hate him ;  
 And SAMUEL MAINZ, the staunchest British Teuton  
 Who ever separated Cave from Newton.

At Mainz's London house, LORD REGGIE STRAR  
 Jill's oldest friend—a rich misogynist  
 Well-known at Horridge's Divorce Court Bar—  
 Warns Jill of MONTY BROWN, that journalist  
 Who blasts our reputations with a par.  
 But Jill, who's flighty, won't give up her tryst  
 With Garforth Chumleigh. Haze Tredither's dander  
 Involves all parties in a case for slander.

That RAGTIME CASE—its titters, its applauses,  
 Its ending compromised and circumspect,  
 Pleadings, sensations, posters, luncheon-pauses—  
 Muse trusts her faithful ones to recollect ;  
 And passes, mindful of the kissing-causes,  
 To brief philosophy on their effect ;  
 Since nowadays no scribe, however modest,  
 But closes on his *demonstrandum quod est* :

And this Great War—(as clearly understood  
 By those great souls who fight with breath and ink . . .  
 One didn't notice it in Railway Wood,  
 But how should soldiers find the time to *think* ?)—  
 Has done us all a powerful lot of good ;  
 Raised our morality ; put down the drink ;  
 And turned our thoughts to God instead of pelf—  
 Honest ! my grocer told me so himself.

Wherefrom it follows as a consequence :  
 That if poor Muse desires to hold her head up  
 At that last literary Audience,  
 When George Moore raises the poetic dead up  
 And Herbert Jenkins stamps with Peter's pence  
 Those chits on which reviewers get so fed-up,  
 Her last four cantos must compose a quorum  
 Of Ethics, Truth, Religion and Decorum ;

Morality must veil her brazen cheek,  
 And Conscience drape with Nonconformist skirts  
 Those wanton limbs that never knew the breech ;  
 Smart bosom itch in horsehair tunic-shirts ;  
 Till dogma'd cant and reason's pure critique  
 Have given all her puppets their deserts,  
 Till Evil cease ; and Virtue, vindicated,  
 Follow the track tradition-indicated.

So read all ye who doubt that Right prevails,  
Who reckless tread the Chutney Terrace path  
Where each man's latchkey fits his neighbours' Yales  
And Lais smokes de Reszkes in her bath,  
How Care still perches on blood-horses' tails,  
How Scandal yet exacts her aftermath,  
How Albion's moral code is Albion's still  
Nor swerves one jot for any Jack or Jill.

## CANTO XXXI

*By powder, bath, maid, unguents, brush, and comb—  
To dress for dinner, there's no place like home.*

**I**T chanced upon a night in *mi-carême*—  
A peace-time night when all the arcs were shining  
On the wet streets of London-*sur-le-Thame*—  
About that time when Bromley thinks of “dining,”  
And Brixton “sups” on Blackwell’s “potted game,”  
And Chelsea dons the “kim.” of Bakst’s designing,  
In Jill’s high robing-room at Berkeley Square  
Miss Parker waited for her bathing fair.

A chamber fit for Dian : maiden-white ;  
With cunning *tiroirs* wrought for camisoles ;  
And mirrors set to catch each needed light ;  
And dust-proof cupboards where the furry stoles—  
Sables and silver-foxes ermine-dight,  
Skunks and chinchillas—hung ; nor feared the holes  
Of summer’s moth, nor knew the Polish tinter  
Who bids us send him ours before the winter.

Tall-boys, there were : and hangers, tipped with pearl,  
Sliding on cedarn grooves to deep recesses  
Which hid, faint-perfumed, swirl on folded swirl,  
A silken treasury of evening-dresses ;  
Table and brushing-stool, and tongs to curl  
The wanton gold of hat-disordered tresses ;  
And tortoise knick-knacks stiff with ruby mountings,  
And jars of Coty scent beyond all countings.

Full strange it seemed to see, in such a room,  
 Britannia's trident and the silver casque  
 White-circletted of nodding ostrich-plume :  
 And well indeed might Mistress Parker ask—  
 Like some Cassandra boding blight and gloom  
 On all who frisked it at the coming masque—  
 Why people couldn't go to "proper balls"  
 Instead of "kicking-up at Albert Halls."

So Parker gloomed : till rose, all sweet-dishevelled,  
 From waters creamed with many a fragrant simple  
 Where overlong her Naiad form had revelled,  
 My Lady Jill ; and doffed her bathing-wimple ;  
 And at the vaporous mirrors crystal-bevelled,  
 Towelled smooth limbs, and powdered shoulder-  
 And drew o'er glimmering bosoms white as milk [dimple,  
 A russet-golden gown of wadded silk. . . .

Then laid the wench her lesser tasks away ;  
 And set the brushing-stool in place ; and bent,  
 Deft as *Saint Georges* himself on waving-day,  
 Above those tresses ripple-redolent.  
 Right many a word Miss Parker found to say,  
 As down and up the steady bristles went,  
 As sped the careful comb, as tongs were tried. . . .  
 But scarce a word her Ladyship replied.

For this was dreaming-time ; this simple bower  
 Jill's refuge from the complex calls of 'charity,'  
 From all those duties, filling every hour,  
 Which leave small leisuring for mental clarity  
 To such as Lallie Charles or Langfier dower  
 With their great gifts of photo-popularity—  
 Among whose dizzy ranks, the Ragtime Case  
 Had won my heroine her pride of place.

Scarce less adored than Albion's Hazeline,  
 Throned and twice-throned on Mrs. Gossip's pars.,  
 Patroness of all Arts, unrivalled Queen  
 Of Beecham boxes, Empress of Bazaars,  
 She ruled it now at many a flashlight scene,—  
*Stella stellarum*, Star among the stars :  
 A pure and radiant vision, Bond-Street-lent  
 To brighten London's smoky firmament.

And yet, Jill dreamed ! And thus her dreaming ran :  
 " Strar Castle, Strarshire ! Not a bad address  
 For Countess—Bluebeard. Who'll play Sister Ann ?  
 ' Here comes your husband—on the Scotch Express.  
 Fee-fi-fo-fum, he'll catch you if he can.' . . .  
 Jill, you're a little hypocrite. Confess,  
 You don't care *that* for Reggie's murky past,  
 Or who his first loves were—if you're the *last*.

" That's hardly likely either. . . . Lord, who cares ? . . .  
*Et toi, Madame ?* And what about *your* closet ?  
 There's Chumleigh's scalp—and Giulio's—Alastair's.  
 And there's *my* first. . . . I wonder now, whose *was* it ?  
 Oh yes, poor Bobbie's. . . . ' Lady Jill's affairs '—  
 A little box in Cupid's safe-deposit. . . .  
 Will he ? . . . Or won't he ? . . . If he does, I shall. . . .  
 Twenty wants lovers : twenty-eight—a pal."

But now both hair and dreaming-time were done.  
 Now Parker brought—*pour épater* the Grundies  
 Whom conscience racks with thoughts of plays that run  
 Month after month of censor-scorning Sundays—  
*Corset, cache-corset*, stockings silken-spun  
 To match the shoes, and those lace-broidered undies  
 Which drive more husbands to the money-lenders  
 Than ever they made Kings pick up—suspenders.



All these the maiden donned. Then Parker passed  
O'er head and arms Britannia's sea-blue trappings ;  
Drew girdle tight ; made crimson tunic fast ;  
Pressed home each studlet of the shoulder-strappings.  
Then, over all, an ermine cloak she cast,  
Smoothing its folds ; and took from tissue-wrappings  
Gloves of white kid ; and from the jewel-cases  
Pearls, and great emeralds, and chrysoprases.

Then rose Britannia ; while Parker stood,  
Helmet on arm, the trident in her hand :  
(Steel was the trident, but the helmet—wood.  
Who reads the poet's rune, shall understand) ;  
And saw herself ; and saw that she looked good ;  
And knew how wise she'd been to countermand  
Breastplate and shield which, though they looked entranc-  
Would both have been a bore for tango-dancing. [ing,

And out she passed ; and Parker held the door for her ;  
And down she passed, Britannia and none other,—  
Wondering what the future held in store for her ;  
If Reggie merely liked her as a brother,  
Or whether love indeed was what he bore for her ;  
And found her father waiting, and her mother ;  
And murmured, kissing both parental cheeks,  
“ I'll dine at home. We haven't met for weeks.”

## CANTO XXXII

*God and our Cash ! Britannia rules the waves !  
Convention's yoke was only meant for slaves.*

**K** NOW'ST thou the Taj-Mahal of Cockney-Town,  
The glorious temple our Victorians builded  
When good Lord Alfred barded for the Crown  
And Gladstone blessed the deeds that Granfer Will did ?  
Know'st thou that fane whose orioles look down  
On storied spires, be-beasted and be-gilded ;  
That huge, harmonious, Kensingtonious dome  
Whose " frozen music " calls the English home ?

Chappell eternal ! Butt of all the ages !

How wondrous shine its rooves when Phœbus flings—  
Red-gold as Rogan in his baton-rages—

A noose of light to catch their turretings !  
How beauteously the fog of eve umbrages

Tree-bole and rails and face of her who sings !  
Yet e'en more wondrous 'twas upon that night  
When Jill and Reggie led the revels' height.

Them-seemed they danced in some Mongolian *dvor*,

Hewn from the Lenin-rock by supermenski

In days long pastovitch—when crowed *Coq d'or*,

And Georgeoff crowned King Judastein Kerensky.

Them-seemed they trotskied on a palace floor,

'Neath czarry skies, all brussiloff-goldenski :—

Or, possibly, in halls of fuchsine mists  
Scrabbled by old vermilion Vorticists.

*They* only knew such beauty made them glad :  
*They* only felt it very good to bound :  
 Britannia, she ; and he, Sir Galahad,  
 The saintliest lance of Arthur's Table Round,  
 In Morris Angel's whitest armour clad :  
 And many a Cup their thirsting lips had found,—  
 So that all sights of that enchanted grotto  
 Seemed like a dream, most roseately *blotteau*.

Though, e'en to sober eyes, it was a frolic  
 Beyond the reach of our subdued Terpsichore,  
 Whom "Dora" drives to drinks non-alcoholic  
 And curfew-cups of saccharine-and-chicory :  
 A peace-time pageant, gorgeously symbolic,  
 Where never clock ticked hickory nor dickory,  
 While Albion's nymphs, on twinkling feet and fawn-light,  
 Revelled with Albion's rulers till the dawn-light.

O Empire thrice and four times blessed by Fate,  
 Safe-butressed on ten thousand O.B.E.s !  
 O strenuous hands that launched our ship of state  
 Down greasy slipways to Gallipolis !  
 How shall a dazzled poet designate  
 Those friskers at your bygone mysteries ?  
 How, naming Capulets, could we refuse  
 Their meed of fame to Samuel-Montagus ?

Nay, name no names, sweet pen ! All, all, were there—  
 The whole gold scroll of Honours' party-list ;  
 Knights of the Soap, the Hop, the Stock, the Share,  
 High priests by boodle's sacred Eucharist.  
 Gay beat the hearts in bosoms Vestal-bare ;  
 Shrill rang the mirth from rouged mouths Clicquot-  
 Faster and ever faster, Greed with Henna [kissed ;  
 Footed it in the death-waltz of Vienna.

But little cared Britannia ! Cloak and casque  
 Long since aside her gloveless hands had flung ;  
 Useless accoutrement for tango-task,  
 Her blunted trident in the cloak-room hung.  
 And gay with Galahad she led the masque,  
 And round and round and round again they swung :  
 The maddest, merriest, blindest, wiftiest lovers  
 Four thousand years of history discovers.

Hardly they recognised amid the blither  
 Of flute, bassoon and drumsticks' rat-a-tat,  
 The whisking form of Hazeline Tredither  
 Draped as the Lily Maid of Astolat ;  
 Hardly they knew that One who bostoned with her,  
 He of the flowing skirts and scarlet hat,  
 That Caporetto Vatican-divine  
 To whom Haze whispered, " Montmorency mine ! "

Scarcely they saw that copy-hunting head,  
 High-boxed and brooding o'er the mazy scuffles—  
 Our Garforth Chumleigh, Shakespere-panoplied  
 In Clarkson bearding and Comelli ruffles :  
 Yea ! scarce perceived that sea-dog, Devon-bred,  
 Breezy with Bollinger and flushed with truffles,  
 Sir Samuel Mainz—attired, for England's sake,  
 By Messrs. Nathan, as Sir Francis Drake.

Reg. and his Jill ! (for intuition told her  
 That she *was* his, his latest loveliest trophy,  
 That soon her head would nestle at that shoulder  
 Where Pat had nestled erst, and Madge, and Sophie),  
 Mindful of beat but careless of beholder,  
 Slow through the strophe, swift in antistrophe,  
 Head touching head, and hand with hand extending,  
 They trod love's chorus till the last bar's ending.

And now they were alone. No curious eye  
 Might penetrate to their enchanted shrine,  
 Save his who came, fore-tipped and slinking-sly,  
 Wooden of face, plush-breeched, incarnadine,  
 Bearing sweet bivalves opened but to die,  
 Grapes and bloomed nectarines and aureate wine ;  
 Came and departed, swift as Ganymede  
 When Jove approves the *tête-à-tête* decreed.

Alone ! And suddenly it was as though  
 The years, the empty years, had never been ;  
 As if, one flashing instant, hearts might know  
 The thrill of twenty-one for seventeen,  
 That first fine foolishness of long ago  
 When life seemed good to them, and clean, and keen . . .  
 And then it was as though they understood  
 How dull the world would be if *all* were good.

And " Jill," he laughs, " you're rising twenty-eight.  
 Or is it nine ? Time's toddling on, old thing.  
 Now why not settle down, an' take a mate ?  
 Strar Castle's vacant, if you're marrying."  
 And " Reg.," smiles Jill, " you'll ruin the estate,  
 It can't afford a fourth engagement-ring."  
 And " Rot ! " says Reggie. " Will you be my wife ? "  
 And " Yes," she blushes, " *if the job's for life.*"

## CANTO XXXIII

*Hail and farewell, fourth, flightiest, loveliest far  
Among the brides of young Lord Reggie Strar.*

**H**ÉLAS! Hélas! Hélas! Sweet, subtle mistress!  
 Eight little months—and now we bid farewell.  
 Eight months to hold you close, kiss lips and kiss  
 To love you (*vide* Swinnerton) “like Hell”; [tress;  
 To calculate that rhyme for you, or this stress;  
 To know you fair—and wonder how you’d sell;  
 Eight months to hear in tram, train, tube or bus,  
 “It isn’t half as good as ‘One of Us.’”

Oh! surely this is hardest of all bread  
 Won from the stubborn word by stanza-tillers:  
 Hard as that loaf, unrationed, bounty-fed,  
 Baked from burnt Bradburys by money-Spillers,  
 Who crown with ninepences each votive head,  
 And bless—with millions forty-three—the millers:  
 Hard as the lot of those great Hats who labour  
 Where each man writeth chits unto his neighbour.

And yet, and yet, the dourest task of all,  
 Lost mistress Jill, is that which now my pen tackles.  
 For somehow you have made it so your thrall,  
 Twined round its feathered shaft such cunning tentacles,  
 That scarcely can I bear to let it fall—  
 Poor goosey wand with crossing nib and spent hackles,  
 Worn in your service; scarce indite a rhyme  
 To launch you, married, down the streams of time.

Aye, married—and to Reggie. His to kiss ;  
 His by the registrar's accurséd benisons.  
 O Patmore, priest of matrimonial bliss :  
 O Locksley Halls : O horsehair-sofa Tennysons :  
 Help me to bear this cross. O Artemis,  
 Malthusian One who never yet bore any sons,  
 Restrain imagination, lest I skid  
 Adown the primrose path of *tertium quid*.

Veil from these eyes their last too vivid canto :—  
 Those Ritzian chambers on the Place Vendôme ;  
 That Parker stooping o'er the oped portmanteau,  
 Among the nighties frail as Clicquot-foam ;  
 And Reggie's valet, occupied *pro tanto*  
 With Hodgkinson-pyjamas, polychrome,  
 Pinker than petals of the garden-clove,  
 With just a dash of Hymeneal mauve :

Screen me, ah, screen in Cytherean gloom,  
 From my sub-conscious Freudian profanity,  
 That rose-embowered private sitting-room,  
 Where all is light and Ripolin and vanity ;  
 Those egg-shell coffee-cups ; yon peach's bloom ;  
 My lady's blushes and my lord's inanity ;  
 Screen them, I say—true love's apotheosis  
 Is not for one who suffers from neurosis !

Deaden these ears too keen, nor let them eavesdrop :—  
 Mute me yon ticking face of *Or Molu* ;  
 Let me not hear Grand Marnier's last reprieves drop  
 Gurgling from yonder flask of orange hue,  
 As one by one the wilted rose's leaves drop,  
 White on the Persian carpet's turquoise-blue ;  
 Nor snap of door, nor passing feet of waiter,  
 Nor bridegroom's " Well, old thing, I'll see you later."

Bromide this too imaginative brain,  
 Which pictures, clear as scenery by Harker,  
 That sanctum of cool scents and porcelain ;  
 Those final offices of Clara Parker ;  
 The gold head nestling 'twixt its pillows twain ;  
 Yon fatal switches clicking bedroom darker,  
 Till but two pinkly-shaded gleams abide  
 Where Maple swansdown mattresses the bride.

Still me this pulse : 'tis not for me they wait,  
 The rounded arms, the linen bridal-pillows ;  
*I shall not waken when the dawn grows late*  
 In Coty'd fragrance of those tumbled billows,  
 Nor woo with morning's kiss my drowsy mate  
 To dream-remembrance of sweet peccadilloes ;  
*I shall not feel those soft limbs thrill to mine,*  
 As lip locks lip, and hands with hands entwine. . . .

Ah, cruel, cruel mistress ! Not for me—  
 Who made you perfect, made you but to lose you—  
 Desire's full-throated sanctioned ecstasy,  
 The matrimonial warmths that now suffuse you.  
 I may but hold you close in memory,  
 But let these eyes peruse and re-peruse you,  
 But lavish their meticulous affections  
 On erring typists and cold proof-corrections.

Who cares ? Not we ! The game's played out between us—  
 Good luck or bad. *Nitchevo*, Lady Jill.  
 We loved : we part. Let never tears demean us.  
 Laughing we sinned ; and laughing, foot the bill.  
 You change the pose of Artemis for Venus ;  
 While I—I merely take another quill.  
 Since Muse has better fish than you to fry  
 In her postscriptum : Lady Strar, good-bye.



## EPILOGUE

*Peace, perfect Peace ! Who wouldn't do his duty  
For English letters, Aliens and Beauty ?*

**W**HAT bodes this throng ? Why cheer these  
Cockney voices ?  
*Peal out, wild bells ! Blow, organ-bellows, blow !*  
Why neigh the Creams ? Why thutter the Rolls-Royces ?  
*Nod your tall heads, ye lily-buds arow !*  
What glads our Town till even Inge rejoices ?  
*Don, choir-kids, don the surplice white as snow !*  
Why ride the Tins in full review-array ?  
*'Tis Hazeline Tredither's wedding-day !*

Who wifes the queen ? *Snap, Kodak-shutters, snap !*  
Which charming Prince, which luckiest of Lords,  
Has won this pearl to grace his Garter-strap,  
Leads to his bed the virgin of our boards ?  
*Wave, kerchiefs, wave ! Tap, kettle-drumsticks, tap !*  
Eyes front, the Tins ! Draw swords and carry swords !  
He comes. He comes. The proudest cove in Town :  
*Tredither's consort, Montmorency Brown !*

But surely they . . . *Avaunt, thou lying tongue !*  
That case, I mean . . . *Case me no cases here !*  
When she . . . *Wouldst smirch, with mud by hirelings flung,*  
*That little head the suburbs hold so dear ?*  
Her second spouse . . . ? *Forfend it, Brigham Young :*  
*A rumour started by some pamphleteer.*  
False witnesses. . . . *Ho, constables ! a stave*  
*To crack the sconce of this malicious knave.*

To church! To church! The Thespian bridesmaids wait.  
 Flaunt your green banners, azure Suffragettes!  
 Look up, pure eyes to Hymen consecrate!  
 Stand forth, incumbent of St. Margaret's!  
*Scandal? Who cares for scandal out of date?*  
*God's in his heaven, and the Press forgets.*  
 Breathe, Eden-voice, that lifts the curse of Adam  
 From every Eve who swops her "Miss" for "Madam."

O day of days, which in one flat unites  
 Our Gossip-Mailer and his footlight-queen!  
 O Brown, Brown, Brown, most fortunate of wights:  
 O happy, happy, happy Hazeline!  
 O *Albion, paradise of parasites:*  
*O wondrous whitewash making all men clean!*  
 Who gives away this maid so chastely comely?  
 'Tis *Bedford Street's* anointed, *Garforth Chumleigh!*

Peer, eyeballs, peer! 'Tis Garforth's very self,  
 Sex's high priest, our modern Machiavelli  
 Who purged the cluttered late-Victorian shelf  
 Of Braddon, Humphry Ward and Miss Corelli.  
*Sneer, Grub Street, sneer. The pot a-boil for pelf*  
*Disdains the carking of your hungry belly.*  
 Kneel, readers, kneel: and learn how your relations  
 Died for the League of his Hallucinations!

Who stands him sponsor to the Consort-King?  
*See, see, my Lord of Squiff in yonder pew!*  
 Who hands our noble groom his wedding-ring?  
*Cobden for blindfold Britain, Cadbury-true!*  
 Whose palm shall fee the priest at vestrying?  
*Angels of Empire, guard this German Jew!*  
 Hoch! Hoch! Und dreimal Hoch! Und nochmal eins!  
 'Tis *Privy Councillor Sir Samuel Mainz.*

Rejoice ! Rejoice ! The nuptial knot is tied.

Sign, sign the book. Blow, bellows. Boys, intone.

*While Hamburg's free, while bridegroom seeks his bride,*

*Shall Merrie England lack for Mendel's sohn ?*

Turn, Pathé, turn ! Press close, O crowd outside.

Rain, rain, most fertile seedlets Patna-grown. . . .

They're in. They're off. Shoes for the limousine

Which bears from sight our peerless Hazeline !

But wait ! But wait ! Not yet the pageant closes.

The guests, the guests ! All Mayfair-clad they come :

Belgravia's teeth and Stageland's powdered noses :

Fleet Street patricians and Whitehall scum :

Her Grace of Quoi, with friend, in Tatler-poses :

Miss Pense-que-non (who makes "No ! Auntie" hum):

To coach, to car ! while raucous nippers cry,

"Brah'n's Gossiper ! It never tells a lie !"

Disperse the crowd. Show's done. No motors more.

Files right, the Tins. *Walk march.* And if one say :

"Why turned ye out, most honourable corps,

To prank a scandal-monger's wedding-day ?"

Answer them, ghosts : "*Thus England did, and more,*

*To us who served for honour's beggar-pay,*

*To us the unanswered salvoes rent and mangled*

*While politicians lied and lawyers wrangled.*

"*Thus England did—and does. We rot unshriven.*

*The shrapnel whistles, and the gas-fumes reek,*

*Over our tombs—wood crosses, bullet-riven.*

*The foul slime chokes our mouths that may not speak.*

*But these our murderers : they sit forgiven,*

*At ease among your councils, tongue-in-cheek.*

*These who, when Roberts warned, made party-game of it—*

*On you and them, God's curse be, and the shame of it."*



POEMS OF WAR AND PEACE

1918—1920



## EIGHT-EIGHT-EIGHTEEN

*(August 1918)*

(On August 8th 1918, the British Army resumed the offensive.—Official History.)

*The soul of a dead field gunner speaks :—*

“SERGEANT, wake up !  
 There ain't no sergeants 'ere,  
 No mates, no non-coms., no one. Since that day  
 Be'ind Saint Quentin when the 'Uns broke through,  
 I've been alone. Gawd, 'ow I miss my mates !

It's dark 'ere, dark as 'Ell. I wish I knowed  
 The map-square of this place . . .

If there's a Gawd—

(Our padre used to preach there *was* a Gawd,  
 An' 'Eaven, an' 'Ell, an' Paradise. But 'ere  
 A chap can't tell, because there ain't no light,  
 Only a dark, an' voices in the dark)—  
 If there's a Gawd, I say, why don't 'E fire  
 'Is star-shells out of 'Eaven, an' light up  
 This No Man's Land we come to when we die ?

This place is full o' dead like me. And yet,  
 Sometimes, I think we ain't dead—only sleeping ;  
 Sometimes, I think I 'ear our Major's voice ;  
 And then, sometimes, I think I'm seein' ghosts—

Ghosts of my dead mates in 'Beer' Battery. . . .  
 Poor old 'Beer' Battery ! We got it 'ot,  
 That day the 'Uns came over. Did they save  
 The guns ? I 'ope we saved old ' Number Five.'  
 'Er shield was smashed, but she was firin' still ;  
 Firin' fuze zero over open sights,  
 Doin' 'er best to cover the retreat. . . .  
 I knows, because I jerked 'er off, an' saw  
 The burst at muzzle—just as I went West.

Dyin's dead easy. It's the lonesomeness  
 Of after-death that 'urts. What 'urts me most—  
 More than the lonesomeness—is not to know  
 Whether there is a Gawd in 'Eaven or not.

'Ow can there be a Gawd if we got beat ?  
 'Ow can there be a 'Eaven if the 'Uns  
 Made all earth 'Ell ? . . .

I 'ope there is a Gawd.

O Christ ! (was there a Christ ?) I could 'ave died  
 So 'appy if I'd only lived to 'ear  
 The voice of fifty thousand British guns  
 Proclaim 'Im Lord ; if I'd 'ave lived, and seen  
 Pillars of fire—our barrage—marchin' on  
 Beyond Saint Quentin to 'Is victory.

Gawd ! What was that ? I could 'ave sworn I 'eard  
 A 'uman voice—our Major's. 'Ark ! 'E called,  
 ' Stand to your guns, lads.' 'Ark ! 'Is voice again ;  
 An' battery wagons jinglin' in the dark ;  
 An' sounds of men, my mates, my gunner-mates ;  
 An' clink of brass against the open breech ;  
 An' breech-blocks snappin' 'ome ; an' aiming-lights. . . .  
 Gawd ! Am I dreamin' ? Did we really save  
 My gun, old Number Five ? I'd swear that's 'er—



Down there, below me . . .

Christ in 'Eaven, it's true !

There's the 'ole battery. I see 'em clear.

They've got 'em set, an' ready. Guns ! Our guns !

There's fifty thousand of 'em, wheel to wheel,

A battery line from Amiens to the sea. . . .

Sergeant, wake up, wake up ! The Major's calling.

This place ain't full of dead—it's full of men ;

Men like myself, men of the after-death.

Sergeant's awake. My mates are waking, too.

Mates, non-coms., officers—we're all awake,

An' waiting—waiting. When the 'Uns broke through,

We went to sleep ; but now, we sleep no more . . .

Why don't Gawd give the signal to begin ?

Look, chaps ! 'Is star-shell, silver through the dark ;

And there, below us—look !—the flash of guns ;

And there, below us—'ark !—the crash of guns ;

And there, below us—'ark !—the scream of shell ;

And there—and there—and there, the burst of shell—

Our shell—the shell from fifty thousand guns :

Pillars of fire, Gawd's barrage, marchin' on

Towards Saint Quentin and 'Is victory !

Sergeant ! can't us go down and lend a hand ? ”

## JUSTICE

*(8th October 1918)*

**N**OW when his hands are lifted  
 Black from the smoking gun—  
*Dead, our dead, round the pill-box—*  
 'Ware ye the Peace of the Hun !

Westward his trench-line crumbles :  
 Eastward his lines are broke :  
 Now, in the hour of judgment,  
 'Ware ye the talker-folk !  
 Princes—turned *Demokraten* ;  
 Priestlings—Bernhardi-taught ;  
 'Ware them, avenging Peoples,  
 Lest they bring your justice to naught.

Now, when the Bulgar cringes ;  
 Now, when his Moslems run—  
*Dead, our dead, in the desert—*  
 'Ware ye the Word of the Hun !

Eastward his lines lie shattered :  
 Westward, he reels to the stroke :  
 Now, in the hour of vengeance,  
 'Ware ye the puppet-folk !

Socialists—paid by princes ;  
Democrats—Kaiser-wrought ;  
'Ware them, Peoples in Judgment,  
Lest they bring your justice to naught.

Now, lest your children's children  
Shriek to the lash of the Hun—  
*Women, our murdered women—*  
Answer the Word with the Gun !

## RETRIBUTION

(15th October 1918)

*WHO breaks the Truce of the Peoples,  
Is guilty of Peoples' Harm :  
Hear now the Voice of the Peoples,  
Man with the Palsied Arm.*

You have broken the Laws of the Earth ;  
You have broken the Law of the Seas ;  
You have butchered the babe in its mother's womb,  
As the babe at its mother's knees :  
You have ravaged our homes, and defiled  
The beds where our women lay ;  
Our daughters have carried the child  
That was spawned by your Beasts in Gray :  
And the cry goes up, from our seething towns  
To our loneliest outpost-farm :—  
“ *A seven-foot drop and a hangman's rope  
For the Man with the Palsied Arm.*”

Our brothers' corpses rot in the mud ;  
Our husbands rot in the seas ;  
Our starving sons have suffered the lash  
And the nameless infamies.  
You have loosed on earth, in the name of God,  
The four white horses of Hell ;

You have plighted troth, in the place Christ trod,  
With the Turk and the Infidel :  
And the word goes up from the Peoples' mouth,  
Pitiless, deadly calm :—

*“ The gallows-tree and the hangman's noose  
For the Man with the Palsied Arm.”*

Our dead cry out from the Flanders slime ;  
Our dead cry out from the seas ;  
Our outraged women moan in the house :—  
And *your* life is forfeit for these.  
By the law of the Sword that you loosed on earth,  
By the law of a life for a life,  
Or ever the new world blossom to birth  
Or the Peoples cease from their strife,  
There comes a Voice from the Peoples' mouth,  
From city and sea and farm :—

*“ He has broken the Laws of Earth and the Seas ;  
He is guilty of Peoples' Harm :  
A noose, and a beam, and a felon's death  
For the Man with the Palsied Arm !”*

## THE BEASTS IN GRAY

*(1st November 1918)*

**W**HETHER it last for the Seven Years,  
 Or whether it end in a day,  
 Peoples of Earth, let us swear an oath :  
 " No truce with the Beasts in Gray ! "

They do not feel as we feel,  
 Or speak the speech that we speak ;  
 Their god is the naked Steel,  
 Their law is " Death to the weak."  
 All that our Peoples cherish  
 They mock, blaspheming the Lord. . . .  
 " Who draws the sword, he shall perish,"  
 Saith God, " by the sword."

Wherefore, O free-born Peoples—  
 Though it last for a year and a day—  
 This let us vow in the name of our God :  
 " No truce with the Beasts in Gray ! "

They have neither honour nor ruth ;  
 They mock, in the name of Might,  
 At justice, mercy and truth,  
 At pity and tears and Right.  
 There is never a bestial vision  
 Conceivéd of madman's brain  
 That they have not wrought with precision  
 Into some engine of pain.

Wherefore, Peoples Unflinching,  
Whatever their puppets say,  
Hold to the bond for your children's sake :  
“ No truce with the Beasts in Gray ! ”

When they fawn, when they whine, when they howl—  
Remember the desolate lands,  
And the shameless deeds and the foul :  
The stumps that were children's hands ;  
The things in the seas—your brothers,  
Murdered, and murdered again ;  
The gutted things that were mothers,  
The tortured things that were men.

Remembering these, Free Peoples,  
By the God of your Fathers, slay !  
Let the sword decide what the sword began :  
“ No truce with the Beasts in Gray ! ”

## THE REASON

(2nd November 1918)

**Y**OU ask me why I loathe these German beasts  
 So much that I have dedicated self—  
 Brains, heart, and soul—to one black creed of hate,  
 Now and hereafter, both in war and peace.  
 You say I had a sense of humour once,  
 And kindness, and Christian charity. . . .  
 Perhaps I had—*before my pal came back*.  
 To-night he sleeps (thank God for morphia !)  
 And I shan't wake to hear him screaming out,  
 " Don't ! I *will* work. Don't tie me up again.  
 Gilbert, for Christ's sake, keep these fiends away."

I don't know *all* the things they did to him.  
 I only know that when I saw him last—  
 Helping a wounded Boche in Guillemont,  
 The day the Ulstermen took Lousy Wood—  
 He was a husky, cheerful, six-foot man,  
 (One of those glorious fools who didn't wait  
 To get commissions ; but just joined the ranks) ;  
 That now, he's like some tortured starveling cat,  
 Who crawls about my house on twisted limbs,  
 Looking at me with *one* lack-lustre eye,  
 (His *wound* was in the knee-cap, not the head),  
 'Twitching and tongue-tied ; nothing like a man.



I don't know *half* the things they did to him.  
But I have listened to his screams ; and learned  
Too much for man to know this side of Hell.

You see, *he wouldn't work*—the glorious fool :  
Although their surgeons cut the bullet out—  
(" Chloroform ? *Dummes Luder !* Strap him down.  
I don't waste chloroform on English pigs.")—  
And did their Prussian best to patch him up  
For service in munitions or the mines. . . .  
He wouldn't make munitions ; said he knew  
The Hague Convention, International Law. . . .  
They triced him by the thumbs for that—eight hours,  
Hands to the roof-beam, toes just off the ground ;  
And when they cut him down, he couldn't speak.  
So—as he lay—they kicked him in the face. . . .  
I think that's how he lost his other eye.

I don't know where to find them on the map,  
Those mines he sees o' nights. But there is snow,  
Snow and black fir-trees. If a chap can't work—  
(Remember, first he said he *wouldn't* work ;  
But Hunger and the Horsewhip soon cured that !)—  
They make him take his clothes off ; tie him up  
Close to the red-hot stove, until the sweat  
Pours off his body ; then they hack him out,  
Naked and bleeding. It is very cold  
Up there among the fir-trees and the snow. . . .

Sometimes I wish they hadn't sent him back,  
Sometimes I feel he would be happier dead—  
Cold-butchered by some *Unteroffizier*  
In those latrines which they call prison-camps.  
But he's come back ; and I've learnt how to hate.

Hate ! Not an individual loathing felt  
For this one gaoler or that *Kommandant*  
(With pardon and trade orders for the rest)  
But absolute revulsion, merciless,  
Inexorable, reasoned, and approved—  
A plain man's hatred of the Unclean Folk.

Poor Jack—he's moaning—I must go to him.

## ANGLO-SAXONDOM

(November 1918)

**A**S we have stood together, man by man,  
Woman by woman, through the dreadful years :  
One People ; One in Purpose, One in Speech ;  
One People, welded indissoluble,  
Forged in War's furnace, tempered of the Sea—  
As we have wrought together, race with race,  
(One People, many races) round the world,  
God's bulwarkings against the Beasts in Gray—  
So let us stand together, man by man,  
Woman by Woman, through the Years to Be.

And these shall be no easy, idle years :  
For only by the toil of stubborn men,  
Of women toiling stubbornly with men,  
Shall Earth attain her heritage of dreams !

As we have fought, together, each with each :  
Hearing amid the chattering battle-smoke,  
Hearing across the booming battle-din,  
Hearing adown the throbbing battle-wires,  
Hearing from earth and under-earth, from air,  
From seas and under-seas, One stern Command,  
One forthright cry of Anglo-Saxon speech :  
“ To Hell with Fritz ! Through Hell and out—*Go on !* ”

As we have walked together, man with man,  
Through Hell and out (such Hell as you at home  
Shall never guess of, even in your dreams)—  
So let us walk the Heaven we have won.

And this shall be no Heaven of cheap things,  
Of hierarchies and of social castes,  
Of tinselled gew-gaws, paper ornaments,  
And “poets” whimpering for their crocuses ;  
But week-day Heaven, won by simple men ;  
A Heaven of clean toil, and common-right  
For all who labour in the common cause :  
A Heaven with no seats for idle ones !

As we have held together, folk by folk,  
(One Folk, but many nations) since that Day  
When first the People of the Seas outsteered  
To guard the waters all about the world,  
And our Great Handful flung themselves on death,  
Doing God’s battle with the Hosts of Sin—  
As we have drawn to us, by Might of Right,  
Aye, by the very splendour of our cause,  
Our last and mightiest kinsfolk over-seas—  
So, Anglo-Saxons, let the Bond endure !

And this shall be no fetter upon Earth,  
But a stout shield of Freedom and the Sea,  
Whereunder all may live and live secure,  
Accomplishing their several destinies—  
Even as we accomplish, each with each,  
(Yet each in his own house at liberty,)  
The destinies of Anglo-Saxondom.

Let us swear friendship—now, while yet the Guns  
Growl in their sullen sleep, remembering  
The wakeful nights they shall not know again—  
With all in whose defence we loosed the Guns,  
With all we aided, all who aided us :  
A friendship sealed and ratified with blood,  
Which shall not perish, but endure so long  
As men remember how we battled down  
The certain legions of the Beasts in Gray.

While as for these who wrought the Crime of Crimes :  
E'en though they plotted forty years and four,  
Rulers and people, one in dastardy :  
E'en though they fouled the earth with infamies,  
Making their name, so long as earth endures,  
Stink in the nostrils of the Cleanly Folk :  
Yet even these,—our justice satisfied  
By blood of few—we will allow to live.

They shall hew wood, draw water for the world :  
A people ostracised—yet still secure :  
Till after many years their children's sons,  
Come to us purged of shame by suffering,  
Having atoned their fathers' fathers' sins.

But We, we have no shame to purge us of :  
Our hands are clean : our world is still to make :  
And we can make our grandest dreams come true,  
If we but hold together, each by each,  
One Folk, One People, Anglo-Saxons All.

## ARMISTICE

(11th November 1918)

**W**E have dumbed our guns of their flaming speech ;  
 For this is the Law that our mercies teach.  
 Let the breech-block twirl to an empty breech ;  
 Let the foe return whence he came—  
 His hatred, his shame.  
 Broken, and utterly broken,  
 Let him learn how these guns have but spoken,  
 Year upon year, for a token—  
 A token of flame,  
 Of flame which had Earth for its crater—  
 That hatred recoils on the hater,  
 And that Man, in just anger, is greater  
 Than all who would tame  
 The soul of mankind to their yoke. . . .  
 By the Word which these dumb muzzles spoke ;  
 By the Sign, which is flame-spangled smoke  
 Over cities and countrysides riven ;  
 May Earth learn how—our dead being shriven—  
 Our living have spared :  
 May this Truth be declared,  
 This Message, by gun-speech made plain :  
 “ *Let all tyrants refrain !*  
*Lest the cannon, the cannon we silenced,*  
*Thunder again.* ”

## THE ANSWER

(26th February 1919)

**M**Y sister writes to me from Girton, thus :—  
“ Brother ; by every tie of sisterhood ;  
By every bond of mutual flesh and thought ;  
By her who bore us, suffered for us both ;  
I do implore you cease this work of hate,  
I beg you let this vengeful spirit die. . . .

“ Peace dawns at last, a splendour round the world,  
And I would have you sing to us of Peace,  
Of Love, not Hatred ; some enduring Song  
To reconcile the heart of all the world,  
Healing all wounds : some Message, all of Love,  
For all the peoples all about the earth :—  
Not these Northcliffian Kipling-jingo rhymes,  
With which you fan the flame of ignorance  
And keep the blind sparks of revenge alight. . . .

“ Brother, you are not one of those who preached  
From agéd safety that the young should die !  
You have known all that horror men call War ;  
And watched men die intolerable deaths,  
Cursing, with their last breath, the living God  
Because He made them, in His image, men :  
And yet, and yet, you will not realise  
That Earth shall never know enduring Peace,  
The while you foster this undying hate  
Against the peoples of all Germany. . . .

“ Gilbert, you write of Christ ! Would He approve  
 This bitter creed of yours ? Eye for an eye ?  
 Tooth for a tooth ? Unchristian revenge ?  
 Ah, surely not : your law of sword and rope  
 Is that old law which Christ abominates.  
 ‘ Forgive,’ He said, ‘ they know not what they do.’  
 So would I have you, brother mine, forgive  
 Those German folk who knew not what they did ;  
 And, purged of hatred, sing the Song of Peace,  
 The Reconciliation of the World. . . .”

Thus writes my sister. Thus I answer her.

“ Sister ; by every tie of brotherhood ;  
 By her who bore us ; and by him who died  
 At Gaza, battling with the infidel—  
 Our brother of the splendid wooden cross—  
 Beware lest, in your innocence you fall  
 A prey to those who wish our Country ill,  
 The secret enemies within her gates !

“ These prate of ‘ peace,’ ‘ the brotherhood of man,’  
 And ‘ reconciliation of the world ’ ;  
 These dirty hounds who, while we fought for them,  
 Had gladly dragged our Empire in the dust.  
 Who won the peace of which they prate ? Not they :  
 But simple men inspired to godlike deeds  
 By love of country ! . . . Men they label now  
 ‘ Northcliffians,’ ‘ Jingoës,’ ‘ Kiplingites,’—these rats  
 Our bodies saved from Prussian slavery. . . .

“ Sister, ’tis easy thus to sneer at men  
 Who loved their country better than their life :  
 But did *they* save the world—your red macaws  
 Who squawked in parrot-cages at the Hague ?



You say : ' Because these eyes have looked on War '—  
Who made this war, I ask you. Was it We ?—  
And seen that naked horror which war is :  
That I should put aside my righteous hate,  
Lest—from that hatred—War be born again.  
I answer : ' Earth shall know enduring Peace  
So long as We, the English-speaking Folk,  
Keep bright against the Beast that sword of God  
Whose brand is graven, ' Anglo-Saxondom.' . . .

“ Sister, doth Christ approve ? Who knows His mind ?  
I would not arrogate to my poor self  
The certain judgments of Divinity.  
Yet if He be that Christ who said ' Repent ! '—  
Methinks He will not punish overmuch  
One who has voiced this hatred, which We feel  
For those who crucified our million dead—  
Aye ! and our million maimed and living men. . . .

“ For these have not repented. Still they boast  
Of their ' unbeaten field-grays.' Still they lie,  
And plot with gold, and plot with cunning words  
To void the justice which Our Dead demand. . . .

“ Sister, beware lest in your innocence  
You help to rob our brother of his Due.”

## TOGETHER

*(1st March 1919)*

**W**HO thinks to-day for self and self alone :  
 Who thinks to-day for self and not for England :  
 Who—be he prince, priest, penman, orator,  
 Captain of Industry, Trade Unionist,  
 Labourer with his hands or with his brain,  
 Richest or poorest in this land of ours—  
 Doth preach dissensions, class-wars ; seeks to set  
 The good of one above the common weal ;  
 Brands himself traitor to this land of ours  
 And to our million dumb heroic dead.

Look you ! this is no time for bickerings.  
 We have flung down in Honour's gaping scale,  
 Grudging no price till Honour's self was won,  
 The hoarded produce of the easy years,  
 Treasure in heaps—clean gold, the blood of men,  
 Fruit of our loins, the harvests of our toil  
 And of the toil our fathers wrought for us :  
 We are full spent of all save Honour's coin  
 And that clean gold which is our Working-Power.  
 Wherefore, who works not for the common weal,  
 Brands himself void of Honour, traitorous  
 To this our land and our heroic dead.

This is no time for phraseologies,  
Class-labels, caste-rights, outworn shibboleths :  
“ Employers and Employed,” “ The Middle Class,”  
“ Nobility and Gentry,” “ Working-folk.”  
Save that all men be *working* men to-day—  
Aye ! and all women *working* women, too ;  
Save that “ employer ” and “ employed ” be one  
In high gentility of noble toil ;  
Save that *all* work ; and, working, work for all  
In mutual labour disciplined by love ;  
We shall be spent of Honour’s self, and void  
The heritage our dead have won for us.

This is no time for paltry profiteers,  
Self-seekers, agitators, parasites,  
And politicians of the baser sort.  
This is no time for barren Compromise—  
Wages begrudged and service sourly given.  
This is no time for sullen-browed mistrust,  
For angry word and hot-head selfishness.  
Not thus was England made ; not thus men wrought,  
Steel-helméd men, what time we drave the Beast  
Across the bitter plains of Picardy :  
Not thus shall living Englishmen make true  
The better England of our dreaming dead.

Look you ! we have such work to do this day  
As doth demand from every one of us  
His utmost patience and his utmost strength,  
His utmost ounce of sinew, soul and brain.  
Look you ! this better England of our dreams  
Shall not arise at wave of fairy’s wand ;  
Shall not be blown, like smoke-rings, from slack mouths ;  
Shall be but dream, unless each one of us  
Set willing hands, thews, sinews, soul and brain  
To make his dream-thing a reality.

This better England ! think not it shall be  
 An idler's England—week-end paradise  
 For inefficients, slacksters, aliens,  
 Reactionaries, visionary cranks  
 And morris-dancing reconstructioneers.  
 We have already paid too high a price  
 For wordy theories, for prejudice,  
 For idleness and inefficiency :  
 Reality is stubborn granite-stuff  
 Which only stubborn men may hew to shape.

And this is our reality to-day :  
*That we must work together, man with man ;  
 Woman with woman ; aye ! and girl with girl ;  
 Each class with each in mutual trust combined :  
 Else, all we won and all we hope to win  
 Goes down into the dust of Anarchy !*

Look you ! these are the tasks our dead have set us :—  
 There must not be in this new land of ours  
 One worker slave to grasping indolence,  
 One woman's home unlovely or unclean,  
 One child a-cold, unfed, or ignorant.  
 There must not be one fruitful field untilled,  
 One enterprise unventured, one resource  
 Of Empire prostitute to aliens.  
 For all must there be justice, education,  
 Work and fair wage and leisure after work. . . .  
 Think you we shall accomplish tasks like these  
 By pen-strokes scribbled hasty overnight,  
 By smoothly speeches of unwitting folk,  
 By muck-rake delving in the bitter past,  
 Recriminations, hatreds, bickerings ?

A truce to bickerings ! a truce to hate—  
Save that clean splendid hatred which we owe  
To those who maimed our living and our dead.  
A truce to all dissensions, all mistrusts,  
Recriminations, class-feuds, selfishness !  
Let there be light in England. Let no wrong  
Wax putrid in the dark. Let fair debate,  
And fair deeds following on fair debate,  
Apportion each to each his share of toil,  
And, for the toil, his ungrudged recompense.  
Then, and then only,—princes, penmen, priests,  
Captains of Industry, Trade Unionists,  
Labourers with our hands or with our brains—  
Can we take up this task our dead have set,  
And hew the granite of reality  
Into such shape that when our dead look down  
From Heaven's gold parapet, each one may say :  
“ *Who died for England, did not die in vain.*”

## POISON

*(21st April 1919)*

(At Ypres, on April the 21st, 1915, the Huns made their first gas-attack.)

**F**ORGET, and forgive them—you say :  
     War's bitterness passes ;  
     Wild rose wreaths the gun-pit to day,  
     Where the trench was, young grass is ;  
     Forget and forgive :  
     Let them live.

Forgive them—you say—and forget ;  
     Since struggle is finished,  
 Shake hands, be at peace, square the debt,  
     Let old hates be diminished ;  
     Abandon blockade :  
     Let them trade.

Fools ! Shall the pard change his skin  
     Or cleanse one spot from it ?  
 As the lecher returns to his sin  
     So the cur to its vomit.  
 Fools ! Hath the Hun  
     Earned place in the sun ?

You who accuse that I fan  
    War's spark from hate's ember,  
Forgive and forget if you can ;  
    But I, I remember  
    Men who faced death,  
    Choking for breath,

Four years back to a day—  
    Men who fought cleanly.  
Killed, say you ? Murdered, *I* say,  
    Murdered most meanly,  
    Poisoned ! . . . And yet,  
    You can forget.

## ONLY AN OFFICER

(24th July 1919)

ONLY an officer ! Only a chap  
 Who carried on till the final scrap,  
 Only a fellow who didn't shirk—  
*Homeless, penniless, out of work,*  
 Asking only a start in life,  
 A job that will keep himself and his wife,  
 " And thank the Lord that we haven't a kid."  
*Thus men pay for the deeds men did !*

Only an officer ! Only a chap  
 Wounded and gassed in a bit of a scrap,  
 Only a fellow who didn't skirk—  
*Shaky and maimed and unfit for work,*  
 Asking only enough in life  
 To keep a home for himself and his wife,  
 " And she'll work if she can, but, of course, there's the kid."  
*Thus men pay for the deeds men did !*

Only our officers ! Only the chaps  
 That war-time uses and peace-time scraps,  
 Only the fellows a bit too proud  
 To beg a dole from the charity-crowd,  
 Carrying on in civilian life,  
 Carrying on—with a smile for the wife,  
 " But it's breaking his heart because of the kid !"  
*Thus men starve for the deeds men did !*



## RUSSIA

(26th July 1919)

**Y**OU who heard when Belgium called, who foiled the  
Beasts in Gray,  
Won't you hearken to another cry?  
You we saved one pang of Hell : all Hell is ours to-day.  
Come over, now, and help us—or we die !

You, who know but freedom : you, who boast your  
million dead—  
“ Happy dead who died for freedom ”—think you that  
your dead can sleep,  
Knowing all they died for dying, in one land for which  
Christ bled,  
This land of ours—where only strong men weep.

For they cannot weep—our women : thirst and hunger  
dry the tear.  
They are crouching by the cradles, where the shrunken  
kiddies lie—  
And the creaking doors swing open—and the Red Guards  
peep and leer—  
And our women are so glad their kiddies die.

These know truth—our Russian women—who have seen  
 their strong men pray,  
 Pray with tears, and pray to Christ, for Chinese offal in  
 the street.

These know truth of Russia's "freedom," know how  
 Russia stands to-day,  
 Gyves of gold, *Hun gold*, on neck and hands and feet.

Can't you hear our Russia moaning, "Freedom! Free-  
 dom!" ; hear the growl  
 Of the yellow dogs, Hun-hounded, as they drag their  
 victims down—  
 Yellow dogs that tear the dead babes in the stricken fields,  
 and howl  
 For the dying in the cholera-stricken town ?

Have your ears grown deaf to freedom ? Have your hearts  
 grown hard to truth ?  
 Has the gold, *Hun gold*, bought bondage for your weary  
 war-worn eyes ?  
 Is there none in far-off England dares to tell English men  
 the truth :—  
 That your dead have died in vain, if Russia dies.

*You who fought through Hell for truth against the Beasts  
 in Gray,  
 Will you hearken to a Lenin's lie ?  
 All that Hell you battled down is Russia's Hell to-day.  
 By the blood of Christ, come over—or we die.*

## UNKNOWN

*(November 1920)*

**H**ERE, where our Kings are crowned ;  
Here, where the brasses keep  
Scroll of the names that resound,  
Let one brass nameless be found,  
One unknown Englishman sleep.  
Here, where we cherish in stone  
Those who or ruled us or led—  
Statesmen and poets known—  
Carve we a tomb and a throne  
“ To One of our Warrior-Dead.”

Needless to carve us his name :  
Needless to know if he died  
By Yser, by Tigris, or Thame,  
Of the steel or the gas or the flame,  
At hazard of sky or of tide !  
Since he died for us and our Race  
And the Fine undying Things,  
Of his right (and not by their grace)  
He has earned him his resting-place  
With our poets, our priests, and our Kings.

And even though his be the least  
Of all whose spirits went West  
From the fight we fought with the Beast,  
Yet neither a King nor a priest  
Shall grudge him his honoured rest ;

But an Empire stand at his grave,  
And an Emperor-King bare head,  
When we tomb with our lords of the waste and the wave,  
In the heart of a Nation he died to save,  
One Man of our Million Dead.

Here let him sleep ; for a sign  
Of high deeds wrought to an end  
By the lowly folk and the fine  
Whose lives were outspilled like wine  
For England—England, their friend.  
Here let us cherish in stone,  
Not one man's worth, nor his name,  
But a million heroes . . . Unknown ?  
Nay ! their fame is as trumpets blown,  
Their fame is all England's fame.

And this England they saved shall endure,  
She shall neither dwindle nor pass,  
Her feet shall be virile and sure ;  
She shall stamp on the creed impure—  
The creed of class-against-class.  
Neither in haste nor in hate,  
Neither with tumult nor guns,  
But duly in quiet debate  
Shall she deal with the fate of her State,  
Shall she order the claims of her sons.

Wherefore, if any to-day  
Plot treason to ruin this land,  
Here—by our unknown clay—  
Let him kneel ; and, kneeling, pray ;  
And, praying, understand

The Cause for which one man died—  
The Cause which is neither Bread  
Nor Gold nor Conquest nor Creed nor Pride ;  
But the Cause of all Englishmen side-by-side,  
The Cause of our Warrior-Dead.

## ON A WAYSIDE CROSS

(Erected by my friend, Major Edric Weldon, 8th Hussars, to the memory of his brother, Captain Geoffrey Weldon, Royal Field Artillery—also my friend.)

**B**ROTHER, take heart! God's world is clean and  
wide for you.  
Regret not one whose pride is that he died for you.  
He would not have you weep nor idly pray for him  
Who gave his life while yet young life was gay for him,  
That you and yours might sturdily possess  
This land he served in utter faithfulness.





THE WESTMINSTER PRESS  
HARROW ROAD  
LONDON







PR                    Frankau, Gilbert  
6011                  Poetical works  
R26A17  
1923  
v.2

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

---

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

---

