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THE SCALP
OF JUSTICE

BY

TOD ROBBINS

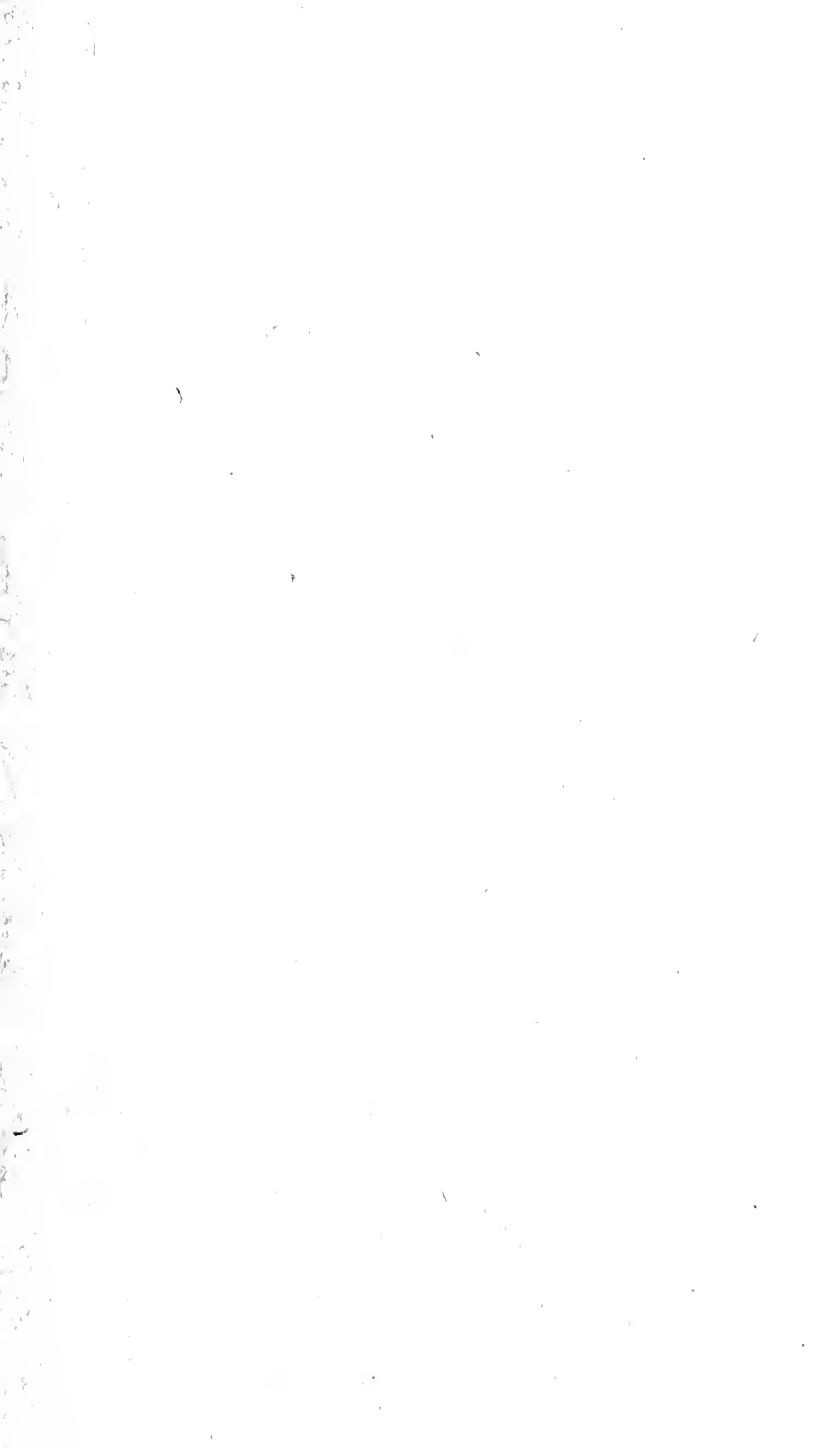


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Robbins, Lawrence J.

The Scales of Justice

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

TOD ROBBINS

Author of Mysterious Martin, The Spirit of the Town, etc.

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To
ALFRED P. McNULTY

WHOSE CRITICAL ADVICE AND UNSWERVING INTEREST HAVE BEEN A GREAT MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL STIMULUS.

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THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

She touched me on the arm one night—

A night of silver sleet.

Her cheeks were thin, her face was white—

White as a winding sheet.

O God! it was an awful sight!

A soul beneath my feet.

“And you are so?” she cried. “And I?”

Look what the years have done!

We’ve lived beneath the same stern sky,

And worshiped Passion’s Sun.

If God is good—then tell me why

He spares not everyone?

“We’ve tasted lust, and sipped Sin’s wine,

Sitting on either side.

Our Host was there to see us dine—

Our slightest want supplied.

He smiled at yours; he smiled at mine—

To me alone he lied.

“Your eye is clear; your head held high;

No weakness in your pace;

THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

Brief Sorrow, passing swiftly by,
Leaves shadowless your face.
The Devil's Bill with me must lie—
I'll say the tardy grace.

“Can this be so? Can this be true?
Good people, look this way:
Can God have judged between us two?
Is this His Judgment Day?
What ghastly gates must I pass through!
Am I a fool to pray?”

I left her in the dreary street—
A shadow of the night,
A night of beating, silver sleet;
Her face was very white—
Ah yes! white as a winding sheet,—
But in her eyes was light.

*Soft Sorrow fits the Lock of Sin,
And I can never enter in;
But she, from out the humble dust,
Has forged a Key of timid trust.
A shadow of the dreary street,—
Her face was like a winding sheet.*

RADIANT DAY

Radiant Day is fading away!

Mark how haggard and hopeless she grows,
See how her blush has turned to the flush
Of devouring fever—and then to cold clay.
Alas—alas—vain Radiant Day!

Radiant Day, once you were gay,
Ah, where are your joys all flown to?
Black Brothers of Night are wrapping you tight
In a funeral pall all studded with light.
Then who will remember—then who will say
“Come back to the earth, My Radiant Day”?

Radiant Day, your hours of play
Have passed like a song, and are over.
On a cloud's black breast, they've laid you to rest,
In jewels and satins, all of the best.
They've honored your sleeping, they've honored
your clay,
My poor—dead—darling, Radiant Day!

WAR

Come fall in line and keep good time,
We'll march to the pulsing battle rhyme,
Great guns are roaring, stray shells are soaring
High in the sky,
Where you and I
Will rest by and by,
Where the warriors dine.

Beneath your feet, the golden wheat
Is stained to a crimson winding sheet.
Now Glory's afield with her spotted shield;
So right or wrong,
Stagger along,
Till the bugle's song
Gives the warrior sleep.

And you must prize the light that lies—
The light that lies in a dead man's eyes.
Wash out black shame in blood and flame,
And pay your toll,
And sell your soul
At the drum's dull roll
In the gate of the skies.

THE NIGHT BIRDS

See! the morning light is coming;
Hail the Conquest of the Sun;
Hear! the tireless streets are humming
With a new day's work begun.
Now the channels of the city
Purgéd are of poison drops,
For the spectres, Sin and Pity,
Are returning to the shops.

*The Night Birds—where are they?
They have vanished quite away.
Hear them crying, hear them sighing,
With their heads upon their breasts,
And they whisper to each other
Of a lover, of a brother,
Of the Land of Rest—Rest—Rest,
The Land of the Everlasting Rest.*

Hear the workmen's feet that hurry,
Passing their forsaken doors;
Hear the women's feet that scurry,
Passing gaily by the scores.

THE NIGHT BIRDS

But there's never one that falters,
And there's never one that stops,
In the tide of human waters
Turning swiftly towards the shops.

*The Night Birds—where are they?
Gone in hiding for the day.
Hear them crying, hear them sighing,
With their heads upon their breasts,
And they whisper to each other
Of a lover, of a brother
Of the Land of Rest—Rest—Rest,
The Land of the Everlasting Rest.*

THE CASTLE OF CONCEIT

The cold wind blew through a forest of cares,
Piercing the dark and hidden lairs
 Of Passion and Lust,
 Changing to dust
In the heart of every man.

In a Castle of Conceit, pompous and bare,
Naked self lay in hiding there.
 A reflecting stone
 Glittered and shone
A face he thought was really his own.

The cold wind came from the world about,
And sighing, blew the lights all out.
 The reflecting stone
 No longer shone
The face the poor fool thought his own.

I LOVE YOU

I love you as the Morning
Loves the eastern sky,
When Feeble Day is dawning
On cloudy castles high.
I'd paint you with my blushes
Until your soft cheek flushes,
And all your passion rushes
Into the heart of mine.

I love you as the swallow
Loves the limpid lake.
I'd take to wing and follow
Where the eddies wake.
Upon your breast is lying
The shadow of my flying,
And the wind, in gently sighing,
Stirs the ripples of your soul.

COME DINE

The night is cold, and dark, and drear;
Come dine, my brother, come dine.
A wanton whiff of Life's good cheer,
A foaming glass, the larder near,
A taste of flesh, a sip of wine;
Come dine, my brother, come dine.

Dark shadows speed across the sea;
Come dine, my brother, come dine.
Soon other guests, than you and me,
Will enter in Life's hostelry
To taste the flesh and sip the wine;
Come dine, my brother, come dine.

Your face is white, like winter snow;
Come dine, my brother, come dine.
The wind, you hear, is sighing low;
Close your eyes, and you'll never know
Your sister's flesh now steeped in wine;
Come dine, my brother, come dine.

COME DINE

The Silver Skull is in the sky;

 Come dine, my brother, come dine—
It drives the charnel coach close by,
For all who sup at last must die
 To pay for flesh and tasted wine;
 Come dine, my brother, come dine.

THE EGOTIST

A withered, crippled man am I,
A Crutch beneath each arm.
I never look below the sky
To a talisman from harm.

What earthly woe can conquer me?
Religion's Crutch I grasp;
The Romance of Humanity
I hold within my clasp.

Religion—can it be a lie
Of lips gone back to dust?
The souls of men may even sigh
For vanished, childlike trust.

The Great Tomorrow may not be;
That Crutch dropped from my hand,
Banished the joys of Eternity—
Without it I can stand.

Fair Romance hold me strong and tight
Above the sordid moles.

THE EGOTIST

The wide world spreads before my sight;
What care I then for souls?

I see a Cup—oh wondrous fair!
Of love's own sweet desires.
With another one I'll gladly share
It's liquid, limpid fires.

How fragrant first it's luscious taste,
That loving hearts demand!
Fair Epicure, we shall not waste
Wine by a trembling hand.

So soon less sweet it starts to grow!
The dregs are reached at last.
The blood no longer seems to flow
Through channels of the past.

The *Last* Crutch fallen from my hold,
I look above the sky.
My birthright there is sold—is sold;
I pray to God to die.

But see! a scintillating light
Awakes my dormant brain;
Resplendent Self, before my sight,
Has shaken off the chain.

THE EGOTIST

Now Ego lights my path to fame—
The Crutch on which I lean—
From Shadow Land at last I came
To truth behind the Screen.

SAILING

Sailing, sailing over the treacherous sea.
Sailing, sailing to the Land of Eternity.
 Over the ever changing waves,
 Above the silent sailor graves,
Sailing, sailing to the Home of our Destiny.

Sailing, sailing through storms that rise in the
 night—
Sailing, sailing in sickness, fever, and fright—
 With bellying sail
 That catches the gale,
And our star for a beacon light.

Sailing, sailing, our danger is over at last.
Sailing, sailing, all our perils are past.
 In the Harbor of Rest
 To the Land of the Blest
We lower the sail on the mast.

THE PERPETUAL MOURNERS

Here the weary winds are sighing,
Tired at last of childish play.
Alas, for them there is no dying,
They forever wend their way.

Hear them through the graveyard weeping!
Lost souls of departed day.
They alone shall mourn the sleeping,
Whisper to those ears of clay.

Tell them of the waving grasses
Nodding gaily over-head,
Whisper of the step that passes
Lightly o'er their earthy bed.

Gay of heart, and little guessing—
Man and maiden stroll along—
What their heedless feet are pressing.
Dust to dust—and they are gone.

Gone—and soon is dried the weeping.
Worms shall be the last to leave,
While the winds their vigil keeping,
Left alone—alone to grieve.

THE BRIDGE

PART I

I stand above the tide
On a bridge that's built by men.
I watch the ships that glide
Beyond my sight—and then?

“Where to, go you, O ships of night
Upon an inky sea?”

“We sail, we sail before the gale,”
Their spirits answered me.

“Our master's hand is on the helm,
He knows the darksome way.
The waters, that would overwhelm,
He chastens in their play.”

“But why?” I cry, “O ships of night
Upon an inky sea.”

“We know not why, but we must fly;
His servants ever we.

THE BRIDGE

“We know not why we’re driven
 Away from the sandy shore.
We know not why he’s striven
 The ocean to explore.

“But might is right,” said these ships of night
 Upon an inky sea,
“And thus we sail before the gale
 And fulfill our destiny.”

PART II

I stand above the street,
 Thronged by a factory crowd.
Hear the faltering feet
 Echoing near and loud!

“Where to, go you, O hunger men
 Upon a pittance bare?”
“We must not shirk, we work, we work
 For daily needed fare.

“Our master’s waiting there within,
 That’s why we hurry so.
Our daily task must soon begin,
 And that is why we go.”

THE BRIDGE

“But why not die, O hunger men,
Upon a pittance bare?”

“We must not die, our loved ones’ tie
Still holds us to despair.

“We know not why we’re driven
Till our faces are white and wan,
We know not why we’ve striven
Till our youth and strength are gone.

“But might is right,” said these hunger men
Upon a pittance bare,
“And thus we slave—a pauper’s grave
Will swallow our meagre fare.”

A PRAYER

I

Like clouds across a silver lake,
The years roll by—are gone—
Upon our hearts reflections make,
And raise again the storm
Of thoughts, of pent up feelings dead.
Comes blowing from the past
A breeze on recollections fed,
When blood ran hot and fast.

II

Those dreams of fair, illusive youth
The world may treat with scorn.
Ideals, celestial fires in truth,
May last but through the morn.
Cruel World, a boon I beg of thee
Before I turn to dust:
To leave me but the memory
Of youth—and hope—and trust.

THE CITY

I look down upon the city
 With its tireless, shrieking streets.
Has the God of money pity
 For the human soul, that beats
Its feeble wings against the bars
 Of cold and glittering gold;
Its teardimmed sight upon the stars,
 Now its liberty is sold?

The feverish flood of sunlight
 Halts, and never enters there.
The evening brings no dream-flight
 From the daily sordid care;
Where soft sorrows have no sweetness,
 And where life's a vacant thing,
For its joys have no completeness
 That the memory can bring.

Now the human threads of pity,
 Interwoven in a heart,
Soon are blasted in the city,
 And the stitches torn apart.

THE CITY

The weary World lies dying,
While there's none to heed her call,
For Humanity is plying
Golden needles on her pall.

There the buildings seem great fingers
Pointing upwards to the sky,
Where the ruddy light still lingers
On the clouds, that passing by
Like a gaudy host from conquest
Of a heaven's stretching blue,
From out their castles in the west
Come a-riding into view.

All decked out in purple raiment,
They look down upon the world.
They have come to get their payment
With their banners all unfurled.
Fair Beauty, Romance, Art, and Life
They seek—to fire again,
But what they find is sordid strife,—
The world's a trading den.

Is it strange they pale with sorrow
And then vanish quite away?
The Wind's weary voice they follow
To the fleeting, groping Day;

THE CITY

And they leave behind the city
 With its pleasure-sodden streets,
While the Moon is pale with pity
 For the place that never sleeps.

YOU WHO KNOW

The wind, that comes,
Where does it go,
You who know, You who know?

Tell me where the dying light,
Fleeing from the earth in fright,
Takes up its abode to-night,
 You who know, You who know.

Stars, that shine up in the sky,
Why do they shine?—tell me, why?
When so soon they fade and die,
 You who know, You who know.

Now I hear You gently sigh.
Where will I go, when I die?
Will I go on by and by,
 You who know, You who know?

When the works no longer run,
Have I stopped or just begun?
By my life what have I won,
 You who know, You who know?

TALES OF THE NIGHT

Oh whispering tales that the night breezes blow!
That sighing, and dying, and echoing low,
From the listening, glistening moon gently flow
 In the dark!

These whispering tales of shadowy night,
Darting and parting to left and to right,
And paling and failing, pursued, and in
 fright—
 Bright Moon Sons!

Oh beautiful things! these Sons of the moon!
All clinging and singing a visible tune,
And bursting and worsting the cavernous gloom
 About me.

Like swords of avenging angels in fight,
Darting and parting the bosom of night,
And winging and bringing along the pale light
 Of the moon.

BRING IN THE DEAD

1

Bring in the dead,
Who lies so cold and stark without.
That senseless head,
Beneath a storm of scorn and doubt,
Will dream no more.
Bring in the dead.

2

Bring in the dead,
And crown that pallid, listless brow;
Its thoughts have fled—
A useless, vacant temple now
Of spirits gone.
Bring in the dead.

3

Bring in the dead.
His visions all have flown before;
His bolt is sped.
Bar not again that worldly door:
His spoils are yours.
Bring in the dead.

BRING IN THE DEAD

4

Bring in the dead.

Fear not—your praises shall not wake
From out his bed

This hero, who, for beauty's sake,
Has given all.
Bring in the dead.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING

Love lives and lasts forever,
 Though youthful years roll by;
And naught on earth can sever
 Our tears—our laugh—our sigh.
Sweet Sorrow, softly creeping,
Finds love is only sleeping,
And wakes it with our weeping,
 As all dear things must wake.

The fire of love seems ashes
 As white as the hair of age;
Beneath it somewhere flashes
 The heat of a lover's rage.
And deathless days of dawning
 Of lovers' magic morning
Now come to old age pawning
 The things that once were his.

Like two gnarled oaks forsaken—
 Spared from the woodman's blow,
Great tree-trunks firm, unshaken
 By any winds they know,

THE GOLDEN WEDDING

Bare branches interlacing
Like lovers' fond embracing,
For fifty years stand facing—
 These two have also stood.

Long live the love of lovers
 That has stood the test of years;
The smile that sometimes hovers
 With the splendor of strange tears;
The laugh and sob that mingle;
The two hearts long made single;
The nerves that still can tingle
 At the touch of a tender hand.

THE DREAMER

PART I

The Dreamer sat beside the sea
On a strip of silver sand,
And watched the white plumed cavalry
Come charging towards the land.

They called him fool in the fishing town.
They mimicked his smile and mocked his frown;
Yes, scattered mud on his learned gown,
But he could understand.

He knew the ways of the bitter sea
Far better than you, better than me,
And the wisdom of eternity
Lay deep in the old man's eyes.

For the dam had never been too strong,
And God and the Years were righting wrong—
All this the Dreamer heard in the song
Of the sea.

THE DREAMER

PART II

The Dreamer sat above the street
In the days of doubt and dread,
And heard the tread of passing feet
In a troop of marching dead.

They called him fool in that foreign town;
They mimicked his smile and mocked his frown;
Yes, scattered mud on his learned gown,
But he could understand.

He knew the ways of the wicked street;
He felt the menace of passing feet—
The scythe was sharpened and now must reap
A harvest manifold.

For the class had never been too strong,
And God and the Years were righting wrong—
All this the Dreamer heard in the song
Of the street.

THE DEATH OF THE MOON

1

High above the stars are shining,
Whispering to one another,
All set in the velvet lining
Of the sky—brother to brother.

2

Weary Wind is gently playing
With the eyelids of the morn,
While the distant hounds are baying
At the Moon, now cold, forlorn.

3

With her face turned o'er her shoulder,
Fleeing swiftly through the sky,
Those black cloud-banks there will hold her—
Poor, pale, ghost about to die.

4

Now she's broken through them, flying
Like a ship before the gale,
While the Wind is gently sighing:
"She must fail, must fail, must fail."

THE DEATH OF THE MOON

5

Fading fast, she's disappearing;
With a ghastly smile she's gone.
From a cloud's black breast she's leering;
She's sought refuge from the morn.

6

The Morning comes with gleaming spear,
Drives her out, and strikes her dead;
While the heaven is her bier,
Stained a vivid crimson red.

THE SEA

Weary, dreary, wintry sea,
Cold, pitiless as destiny,
Breaking on thy shores near me
 To come no more.

How old—how pitifully old!
Hast seen the tale of life unfold
Which ne'er by mortal lips been told.
 Thou knowest it, O King.

Old but young—young but old—
Filled with ages' countless gold.
Calm and meek—rough and bold
 Seizing on its prey.

What sights indeed hast thou not seen!
Princes, kings, of haughty mien,
Before thy deep and dreaded spleen
 Have prayed and died.

But see! the sun sinks down to rest,
Against thy ample bosom pressed,
And there thou welcomest the guest.
 The day is done.

BLACK NIGHT

1

Black Night is sailing o'er the sea;
Hush, Beloved, hush.
His sail shall be our canopy;
He's bringing rest to you and me;
Hush, Beloved, hush.

2

Black Night is coming from the west;
Hush, Beloved, hush.
Jewels of the best are in his chest;
His sable sail is manifest;
Hush, Beloved, hush.

3

Black Night is sailing on our lee;
Hush, Beloved, hush.
His treasures see—of victory,
His anchor bright the moon shall be;
Hush, Beloved, hush.

BLACK NIGHT

4

Black Night has seen the bright Sun die;
Hush, Beloved, hush.
Red footprints lie upon the sky—
Mark the Murderer passing by;
Hush, Beloved, hush.

5

Black Night has cast his Anchor in;
Hush, Beloved, hush—
An anchor thin of silver sin—
To count his 'Treasures he'll begin;
Hush, Beloved, hush.

6

Black Night his chest now opens wide;
Hush, Beloved, hush.
A sable tide his ship doth ride—
Casting jewels on either side;
Hush, Beloved, hush.

7

Black Night has taken from the Sun—
Hush, Beloved, hush—
The dying Sun—everyone,
And now his time of sleep's begun;
Hush, Beloved, hush.

* * * * *

BLACK NIGHT

His Anchor rests within the sea;

Hush, Beloved, Hush;

His Treasures shine eternally;

Hush, Beloved, hush.

For all mankind, for you and me,

Black Night came sailing o'er the sea,

And gave us Gems of iniquity;

Hush, Beloved, hush.

STRENGTH

Far back in the misty shade
Of bygone ages, when the world was made,
The reign of strength began;
Before it bent the will of man.

Age followed age, and through them all,
The weaker one went to the wall,
For Strength obtained—the fight was won.
What matter sword or shield or gun?

Nature's strength is God's,—what more?—
The dashing waves on a rockbound shore;
Or the little drop that falls and falls,
And eats its way through granite walls.

There's strength of will, and strength of arm,
And strength in doing no man harm.
The strongest man is one you see
A prop to the House of Humanity.

STRENGTH

Strength has conquered, and will to the end.
Before its power crowned heads bend.
Until the world goes down to rest,
Men hold strength for all time blest.

FINIS

A fiery kiss of the blood red wine,
A pulse of passionate love divine;
Rest for the leaf and withered vine
Where all things go.

The wind will take you on fearless feet
Far back where the morn and evening meet,
Where summer wears the winding sheet
Of frosty age.

Then what of the laugh and merry song?
Then what of the madly dancing throng?
Will Passion's pageantry be shorn
Of brilliancy?

Are burning kisses cast away
In the night that follows after day?
Will Laughing Love be turned to clay
In gloomy gaols?

Or will they add to the sun's white heat,
And paint the heavens beneath God's feet;
Brighten the tomb where sorrows meet,
That house of death?

* * * * *

FINIS

*My dearest Love, we too shall go.
Hand clasped in hand? I do not know;
Nor robed in green, nor crowned with snow,
But, oh My Heart, I love you so.
The stars our path shall surely show,
For they will know, yes, they will know.*

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