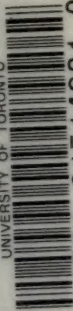


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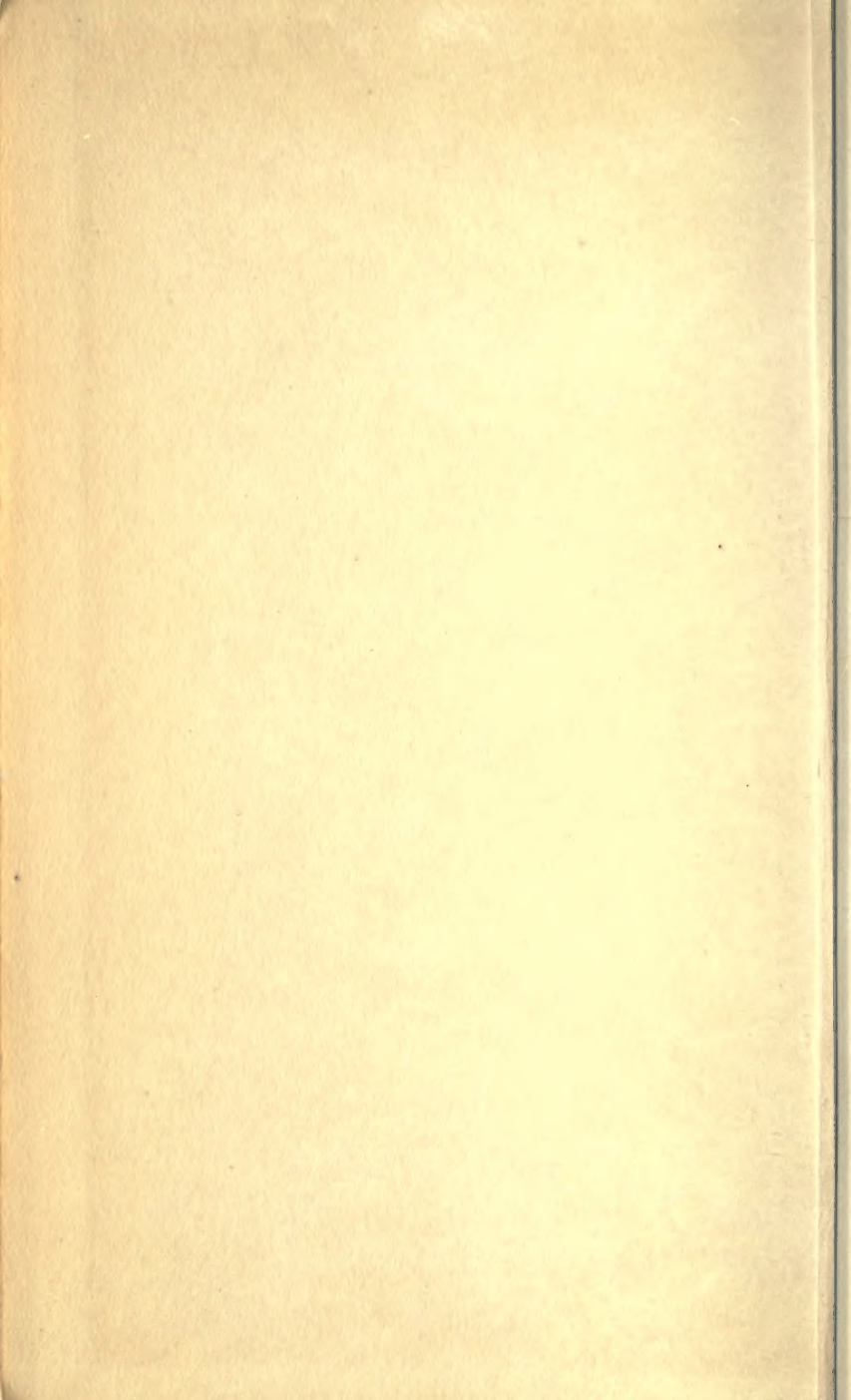


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SONNETS AND LYRICS

SONNETS AND LYRICS

A LITTLE BOOK OF VERSE

ON THE PRESENT WAR

BY

BERTRAM DOBELL

Author of

"ROSEMARY AND PANSIES" "A LOVER'S MOODS"
"A CENTURY OF SONNETS" ETC.

LONDON

P. J. & A. E. DOBELL
77 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

1915

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TO S. BRADBURY.

DEAR MR. BRADBURY

I have benefited so much from your criticisms upon these verses, and your suggestions regarding them have proved so valuable, that I should be ungrateful if I did not in some way acknowledge my obligations. I have much pleasure in dedicating these poems to you, not as an adequate discharge of my indebtedness, but only as a slight token of my sense of the advantages which they have derived from your unfailing critical acumen.

Yours faithfully,

BERTRAM DOBELL.

BERTRAM DOBELL

Died Dec. 14th, 1914

Night! and the morrow very far!
Pregnant to fate, an epoch in her womb,
Night broods above the world, a pall of doom;
The sands in yonder glass mute symbols are
Of dread events—his frail hands threw ajar
A casement to blind skies—upon the gloom
No promise shows, the darkness to illumine,
Of glimmering in the east or morning star!

Night! and the hour before the dawn!
He, with a faith that faltered once, renewed,
 Challenged his weariness and strove to keep
His vigil; to behold, the shadow withdrawn,
 Earth welcoming in solemn gratitude
 Day! and, so waiting, fell on sleep!

S. B.

PRELIMINARY NOTE

IN printing this volume of poems I am fulfilling the express wish of my father. He conceived the idea of it very soon after the outbreak of the war, and at the end of October last put forth the following announcement :

SINCE the beginning of the present ghastly contest, my thoughts have been so much occupied with it that I have scarcely been able to think of anything else. Of course I am aware that this is the case with many thousands besides myself—for who can avoid being disquieted with the thought of the many momentous issues which depend upon the result of the present struggle? I mention it in my own case, because many literary projects which I had in view have had to be abandoned or postponed in consequence of the anxieties of the present situation. Age having disqualified me from taking any active part in the struggle. I have occupied myself with writing verses upon it. I am well aware that much verse has already been written upon the subject, and that much more will hereafter be written; but up to the present (so far as I am able to judge) very little has been produced that is likely to have anything more than an ephemeral existence. Possibly my own verses are no better than the rest; but however that may be, there can be no harm—so far as I can see—in printing them. If they have the stuff of what Rossetti called “fundamental brain-work” in them, they will endure; if not, they will quietly become what Shakespeare’s Ulysses calls “alms for oblivion.”

This indicates very clearly his view of the work he was engaged upon. At the time he had practically completed the Sonnets, and had outlined and partially finished the other pieces, but in the middle of November he was struck down by the illness which proved fatal. He lingered until December 14th, unable, during this time, to do any literary work.

The Lyrics (the word lyrics is used in a general way as sufficiently descriptive, although, strictly, they cannot all be classed as lyrics) were left in a less complete state than the Sonnets, and required some revision, and the finishing touches which he would have given them had he recovered. He had already decided to dedicate the volume to Mr. S. BRADBURY, and had written the prefixed dedication, acknowledging his indebtedness to him. When my father realized that he could not hope to complete the unfinished pieces, he wished Mr. Bradbury to prepare the volume for the press, revising where necessary, and completing the few pieces already outlined but still in a fragmentary state.

I have to thank Mr. Bradbury for willingly undertaking the task, and for the care with which

he has shaped some rough-hewn pieces into the finished poems now presented.

It will be conceded, I think, that these poems well interpret the public feeling of the time; they are couched in vigorous and forcible language, and will not be regarded as a negligible contribution to the literature of the war. He was deeply stirred by the passing events, and could not do otherwise than give full expression to his feelings. We have the outburst of his mind—the full flood of his anger—against the military despotism which would have wrecked civilization.

I hope to publish later two volumes which my father left ready for the press, and which will present him in another and a gentler frame of mind. These are the sonnet-sequence, "A Lover's Moods," and "A Stoic's Philosophy, and other Poems." The few who have been privileged to read "A Lover's Moods" consider it represents his highest achievement in verse, and I feel confident that the issue of the volume will reveal the fact that he possessed powers as an idealistic poet not to be found in any of his hitherto published works.

PERCY J. DOBELL.

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SONNETS

THE SHADOW OF WAR

Threescore and ten and three more years have I;
Some joys and many sorrows have I known;
And now, so near my end, I thought to die
In peace, nor over such vast ruin moan,
Such madness as doth now mankind possess;
I dreamt not that such vileness on this earth
Could be as now, in naked hideousness,
By foulest passions fostered, springs to birth.
Of man I have ever striven to think the best,
Hoping he would at last his nature free
From the base passions that his soul infest;
But now that cheering faith is lost to me—
I think I could have welcomed death that I
Might not this world's calamity descry!

A JUST CAUSE

War I regard as Earth's most bitter curse,
The direst of a nation's miseries,
Nor can I think the worst of Hell's is worse :
For it, save these, I know no valid pleas,—
The right of self-defence against foul wrong ;
The freeman's stand against the tyrant's sword ;
The revolt of the oppressed against the strong ;
The keeping of a nation's plighted word.

If ever cause was just, just is our cause,
For now we see with clear and opened eyes
How, trampling on all human rights and laws,
The Prussian hordes the world would tyrannize :
On them will rest this awful weight of guilt,
And all the seas of blood that must be spilt.

THE DECLARATION OF WAR.

The greatest gamble that the world has seen,
With the world's empire for the victor's prize,
Begins; and War's dread Juggernaut machine
Is ready 'neath its wheels to pulverize
All that adorns and dignifies mankind;
To stamp out every influence for good;
And all that's lovely, gracious and refined
To crush into a pulp of mire and blood.
Stripped naked of all vesture of pretence
We see the beast of prey revealed in man;
The self-same instincts still in evidence
That ruled his actions when the race began.
Nature! are these thy noblest creatures? Then
Sweep from the earth the evil race of men!

AN EXHORTATION

Rise, Britain! to the level of thy task,
And to that task devote thyself alone,
For all thy strength and courage it doth ask,
And every noble quality thou dost own.
The never-ending strife 'twixt good and ill
Hath reached its culminating hour, and naught
But strenuous effort linked to steadfast will
Can save and serve thee till thy task be wrought.
Let not exultant evil daunt thy spirit,
Nor fear that it is destined to prevail
Against the resolute faith thou dost inherit
From those who knew not what it was to fail:
Evil awhile may triumph, but at last
Into the hell it sprung from shall be cast!

ENGLAND'S TASK

This is a thing we cannot choose but do ;
Straight forward we must go nor once look back ;
Our ancient task we must take up anew,
And in the doing see we be not slack.
We are Lords of Peace, not War ; but they who think
The martial spirit of our race is dead
Shall soon before its uproused valour sink
To their just doom, by mad presumption led.
We fight to win—and nothing shall we grudge
Of effort or of cost our end to gain ;
Nor shall we from our dogged purpose budge
One jot until its utmost we attain :
The despot's dupes we pity, and not hate,
For they must share the despot's fall and fate.

THE NATION'S CALL

"These are the times that try men's souls."—THOS. PAINE.

These are the times that try men's hearts and souls,
And sift the cravens from the true men out ;
We call for those alone of courage stout
Whose spirits quicken when the war-drum rolls :
Stand by each weakling and each falterer ; let
The men of action, strong and resolute,
Though slow and brief in speech they be, or mute,
Solve unperturbed the problems for them set.
This is, to us, the very hour of fate,—
The time to show we are still the men we were,
No breed degenerate, as our foes aver,
But born for forceful deeds, not idle prate.
No triflers now ; clear brains and hearts of fire
We need to guide, to hearten, to inspire.

THE GREAT TRAGEDY

Is this the fifth act of the great World-Play,
Or but the Prologue to its acts and scenes?
Who knows what the stupendous Drama means,
For whose performance blood and tears must pay?
Is the War-lust in man so deep implanted
That nothing can pluck out its baneful root?
Must the War-drum for ever still the lute?
The Marseillaise of Peace be never chanted?

Say not that War has elements of good,
And cures the ills bred in an age of Peace;
As well acclaim the burning lava-flood,
And hail its havoc for the earth's increase
Of future richness: what of good there be
Is of the evil but a mockery!

THE DREAM OF TYRANNY

Not with light hearts, nor in a braggart mood,
Do we confront this crisis of our fate ;
Not upon us will rest the guilt of blood ;

We draw the sword in sorrow, not in hate ;
Neither for gain nor glory is it drawn,

But in a cause for which we needs must fight,
Since, should we fail, Earth's darkest day will dawn
Of trampled freedom and tyrannic might.

Could that day dawn Evil would reign supreme

And love and hope and peace exist no more ;

But they whose law is brute force do but dream—

Self-dupes and fools whose hour will soon be o'er,
The phantoms of their frenzied minds dispersed,
And Earth no longer by their menace curst !

THE TRAGEDY OF A NATION

To see a nation with one thought obsessed,—
The thought of naked and unmoral force,
To be used, a purpose shamelessly confessed,
Without a touch of pity or remorse,
A neighbour's land to ravage and enthrall,—
This surely is of tragedies the worst,
Since it doth show that nation's sorry fall
From ideal aims to soullessness accurst.

The sword may conquer, but it cannot hold,
Or hold but for a short and troubled time;
Europe will not be forced into the mould
Of Teuton "culture" by a Teuton crime:
A grander vision other nations see
Than to be bondmen, Attila, to thee!

TO GENERAL LEMAN

THE DEFENDER OF LIÉGE

When the full story of this War is told
It will record no nobler name than thine,
Which in the epic narrative will shine
Brightly as Homer's hero-chiefs of old:
Loyal, undaunted, stout of heart—in thee
The true knight-errants' spirit we behold;
A man of men; cast in the selfsame mould
As Bayard and our Sidney thou must be!

Before the desperate Huns' o'erwhelming flood
A calm and constant courage thou didst show,
And to the end still answered blow for blow,
And their brute force with force of will withstood:
They to their record add but one more crime—
To thine, renown and honour for all time!

THE RETREAT FROM MONS

Retreating still!—but fighting all the time!
Taking their toll in fallen of the foe!
Resisting, with a fortitude sublime,
The host that, like a mighty tide in flow,
Shall, later, ebb as far. Ofttimes is seen
The best in men who face adversity,
Not in success; oft has the honour been
Their meed who fought yet gained no victory.
And these, who dauntlessly the foe withstood,
Their fame shall grow to a tradition hoary;
Still shall their courage stir a Briton's blood
While yet a Briton lives to hear the story;
Nor ever shall a nation's gratitude
Forget the lustre added to her glory!

TO OUR SOLDIERS

Soldiers of Freedom! Champions of the Right!
True offspring of your dauntless sires of old!
How have you kept our fame and honour bright,
And proved you too are of heroic mould!
Who says now that our nation is effete,
Our Empire but a crumbling house of cards?
The purblind victims of their own conceit
Their error learn—hoist with their own petards!
Not in her battleships, her mighty guns
On sea or land—which are but instruments—
Lies Britain's strength, but in her valiant sons—
Should all else fail her strong and sure defence!
On sea or shore her bulwarks she may place—
Her true shield is the spirit of our race!

TO THE BELGIANS

The old heroic spirit is not dead,—
It lives in you as strongly as of yore :
A little handful of brave souls, ye bore
The shock of hosts which, locust-like, o'erspread
And ravaged your fair land, their chosen course
To strike the quicklier at the heart of France ;
Counting you helpless in their arrogance
Against their treachery and brutal force.
Ye have won the guerdon of immortal fame,
And in the freer Europe yet to be
Your right shall be acknowledged when you claim,
Over your late-exultant enemy,
Prestige and place ; and none, for fear or shame,
Shall dare to violate your integrity.

TO FRANCE

France! we are proud to stand beside thee now
In this, for thee and us, the hour of fate;
Thou shalt not to the insolent Teuton bow
Unless, with thine, he ruin too our state;
And that can never be, for no such foe—
Proud, even, of his foul and monstrous guile—
Can bring the spirits of our sons so low
That they can grovel to a thing so vile!
Allies we are and shall be to the end;
In all our aims and policies united;
Two nations—with a common foe or friend—
Though only by a “scrap of paper” plighted:
Our ages of contention now are past,
And we are one in mind and heart at last.

TO RUSSIA

We have been bitter foemen in the past—
Rightly or wrongly now it matters not ;
We are united in one cause at last
With all our ancient enmities forgot.
“Uncivilised” ’tis said thou art—but yet
Thy lack of polished mannerisms shows well
Against the German “culture,” keen to whet
Its sword that it may make of earth a hell.
Thou bearest within thee many a seed of good
Which shall, when time is ripe, produce fair fruit ;
Not thine the dismal creed of iron and blood,
Nor dost thou join the pedant with the brute :
Faults thou mayest have ; but time shall also show
Thou hast the power thy failings to outgrow.

THE DESTRUCTION OF LOUVAIN

Not till this moment did we understand
With what barbaric hordes we had to fight,
Nor could we think Goethe's and Heine's land
Could bring such loathsome creatures to the light.
The fruit of German "culture" we behold
Displayed in lurid hues of blood and flame;
We see its devotees their creed unfold,
The law of Attila anew proclaim.
Unchivalrous—unmerciful—unsparing—
Without a touch of feeling or remorse,
The execration of all nations daring
To prove themselves apostles of brute force:
The modern Huns they have shown themselves indeed,
The worst and foulest of the evil breed!

THE PRUSSIAN ATROCITIES

They are not men who do such shameful deeds,
But bestial creatures in the shape of men ;
One land alone this mongrel progeny breeds—
Kin to the tribes that herd in cave and den.
Prussians! your own foul acts condemn your cause,
And herald the abasement of your pride ;
For they who spurn all kindly human laws
Must the wild justice of revenge abide :
The merciless no mercy shall receive ;
The murderer must meet the murderer's fate ;
No human soul will for your sufferings grieve,
And none lament the ruin of your state ;
For they who war against humanity
Must look for justice, not for clemency.

TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE

Rivals we knew you in the arts of peace,
And sometimes feared your ordered industry,
Which threatened to destroy our ancient lease
Of world-wide commerce threading every sea ;
Yet we desired to be your friend, not foe,
And whilst you grew in wealth and power apace,
Menace nor warning heeded, and were slow
To deem your enmity so deep and base.
But clearly now unmasked, we see your plan
To strike a treacherous blow against our state—
Mad fools! the feud is none that we began,
But confident the issue we await ;
No wile of yours can lay an Empire low
That worthier foes have failed to overthrow.

THE MODERN MACHIAVELLIANS

Prussians! we know you now for what you are,
The would-be Machiavellians of to-day,
Though still your clumsy artifices mar
Your projects, and your shallow plots betray ;
Your land a land of plunderers has been
Since Frederick, your great freebooter's, time,
And still you wait, with vision vulture-keen,
Each chance to profit by some treacherous crime ;
Ever you stand upon the watch to strike
A blow against your neighbours unprepared,
Yet wonder why your state-craft they dislike,
And are not by its webs to be ensnared ;
But they who rule by Might and threaten all
Beneath the mightier force of Right shall fall !

“BLOOD AND IRON”

He made, they said, a nation: so! and now
We see the fruit of that ill-omened deed;
Her trusted spokesmen openly avow
The filibuster's gospel as their creed:
Justice and Right they scoff at: Might alone—
Might in its harshest and most barbarous mould—
As spirit and symbol of her rule they own,
Even as the fierce barbarians of old.

Since in the sword alone she doth confide,
Naught caring for the justice of her cause,
Mercy to her shall be a boon denied,
As she denies it by her ruthless laws,
When at the world's tribunal shall appear
The nation that he made, her doom to hear

A MOCK BISMARCK

We loved him not, but never could despise
The man of blood and iron, whose great task
Accomplished, for its permanence did ask
One, like himself, satanically wise:
But seldom doth it chance that such a man
Leaves a successor that can fill his place
With equal greatness; even so now the case:
Here is no Kaiser of the Bismarck clan.

A flighty, frothy creature, only great
In his colossal vanity and pride
Is he; a marplot, ever occupied
In playing puppet at the hands of fate:
Save us, ye gods! from Bismarcks, great or small—
But save us from Mock-Bismarcks most of all!

GERMANY'S ORACLES

Nietzsche and Treitschke! unmelodious names!
Henceforward names of evil omen too!
Teachers whose doctrines, taught with different aims,
Mankind must, for their consequences, rue!—
'Tis hard that he, who flouted and abhorred
The soulless and mechanic German race,
Should even some shadow of excuse afford
For the foul actions that their arms disgrace;
But Treitschke!—and Bernhardi!—these, I trow,
Fill all, save Turk and Teuton, with disgust;
Extol brute force, and shamelessly avow
That naught expedient is to them unjust:
With such blind guides a nation needs must fall
Beneath the tyrant's heel, become his thrall.

TO AUSTRIA

Austria! thou art now, but wilt be no more
When this great clash of force with right is ended;
Thy reign of evil dominance is o'er,
And thou shalt sink, dishonoured and unfriended.
A host of portents herald thy sure fall,
Too long delayed, too long to justice due;
Vainly for help on Prussia wilt thou call,
And nowhere else for succour canst thou sue.
A long, long reign of infamy was thine,
And thou wert spared a hundred times by fate
Whose long-exhausted patience doth consign
Thee, Austria! to thy fitting low estate.
Her patient tarrying may long endure,
But in the end the blow falls swift and sure.

NEWS OF THE WAR

Day after day the same unvarying news :
“The battle of the millions still progresses,
With alternating set-backs and successes,
And o'er two hundred miles its course pursues—”
We read between the lines: day after day
Death blithely gathers in his monstrous toll
Of lives, even though so vast the garnered whole
He scarce knows where to store his ghastly prey ;
Rapine and Lust, in mad and mocking glee,
Gloat o'er the nameless havoc they have wrought ;
Wanton Destruction in her train hath brought
Famine, disease, and hopeless misery—
“Position satisfactory ; outlook good
Upon the whole” : the official platitude !

SEPTEMBER, 1912

Ah, what a calm and blissful mood is mine!
In what unshadowed peace my soul doth rest!
Within, without, all seems alike divine,
And nothing I behold that is not blest:
The fresh cool air breathes health in every breath,
Even as might a cheerful morn of May;
Gone is all thought of pain, all fear of death;
If ill exist, at least 'tis far away.
Serenely now my life's sad course I view,
And even that grief which seemed to overthrow
All happiness, and bade all hope adieu,
Has grown a dim sweet dream of long ago:
Life's colours their discordant hues transcend,
And into one harmonious pattern blend.

Hadley Woods, Sept. 14th, 1912.

SEPTEMBER, 1914

As lovely is the day as it was then;
All nature with itself at peace doth rest;
No evil omen is within my ken,
And now, as then, all earth and sky seem blest:
Yet, ah! how strangely different my mood!
What boding fears my anxious mind possess!
With what deep pain and sorrow do I brood
Upon the scenes of horror and distress
That over Europe's fairest lands extend,
Making it seem the ante-room of Hell!
How will the monstrous tragic drama end?
Will ever peace again with mortals dwell?
Scarce more of hate and discord could there be
If Satan upon earth held jubilee!

Hadley Woods, Sept. 27th, 1914.

A LOST PARADISE

Ah! how unlovely has the world become!
That world which was, although we knew it not,
A Paradise where 'twas our happy lot
To dwell, is now a Pandemonium!
How has the life that glided smoothly on
By a great tempest suddenly been hurled
Upon the rocks, or from its moorings whirled,
And all that gave it worth or sweetness gone!

By what demoniac influence has mankind
Been plunged into this vast insanity,
This welter of murderous hate and savagery
That hath air, earth and sea incarnadined?
A Paradise lost!—made desolate and profaned!
When will it be a Paradise regained?

MAN THE FRATRICIDE

Old, weary, mournful, only half-alive,—
Perplexed with fears, by gloomy thoughts
I sit here in my loneliness and strive [depressed,
To find some solace for my mind's unrest :
Why did I live to see this overthrow
Of all that sweetens and ennobles life?
Had I not known enough of pain and woe
To escape the vision of this hellish strife?
Anguished I see the hounds of hell let loose,
And man hunt man through water, earth and air,
And every nobler faculty misuse
To prove himself Cain's unregenerate heir :
Man is far worse than any beast of prey ;
He kills from wantonness, from hunger they !

THE BRUTE IN MAN

Man is a fighting animal, 'tis said,
And war an instinct planted in his soul;
Cupidity and lust in him are bred,
And passion that can never brook control:
But is he so irrational a thing?
So mere a brute, so void of sense and thought?
Then, Nature! to an end his story bring,
And let no trace remain of all he wrought!
Let the brute meet the fortune of the brute,
And perish by the hunter's vengeful hand,
If man must still in man seek his pursuit
And prey, and glory in the murderer's brand:
Who knows not how his passions to control
Is brute in nature—with a devil's soul!

SLEEPLESSNESS

Wilt thou not leave awhile, tyrannic Thought,
My brain, and let it from its turmoil rest?
Thou knowest well 'tis outworn and oppressed
With sadness and with anxious fears o'erfraught.
How strange that when the mind, too sorely tried,
Is wearied most, the blessed balm of sleep
So tardily comes, and that oblivion deep
Which most is craved the longer is denied!
No punishment were more unmerciful
Than that which doth sleep's healing power suspend,
For constant thought means madness in the end:
The boon of sleep makes life endurable.
Then let me sleep or die—for life's a curse
That hath not slumber for its faithful nurse!

LYRICS

THE CALL TO ARMS

Britons, bring to mind the story
Of our island's ancient glory—
 You are called to arms once more!
Gather to defend your nation
From disgrace and desolation
 As your fathers did of yore!

Glorious memories we inherit
Soul and courage to inspire
 As we march to meet the foe;
We for right and freedom battle—
Not like witless herded cattle
 But as freeborn men we go!

Freedom is our native charter,
One that we will never barter
 For a soulless tyranny!
With our blood we will defend it;
Freely, gladly shall we spend it,
 For we must, we will be free!

Staunch and resolute and steady,
For all sacrifices ready,
 Fearless, we shall stand our ground ;
Grim our task, but we will never
Falter till our great endeavour
 Be with glorious victory crowned !

MARCHING SONG

We have girded on our arms once more for
Liberty's dear sake,
And of the Prussian feudal lords have sworn the
power to break ;
They thought that we were sleeping, but they found
we were awake

And ready for the fray !

The battle-spirit in our hearts is potent as of yore ;
It thrills through every Briton's veins alike on sea or
shore :

We greet again with sombre joy the cannon's sullen
roar,

Whose summons we obey.

Fondly we hoped the time had come for war's wild
work to cease ;

We sought to live with all mankind in amity and
peace,

And dreamt not that a despot's whim, his vain and
mad caprice—

A world in blood would steep !

The gauntlet we must needs take up—we cannot
stand aside,
And let the blatant Prussian beast roughshod o'er
Europe ride ;
To keep his plighted word to all is still a Briton's
pride,
 And ours we mean to keep !

Free men are we and so obey Freedom's supreme
behest ;
Our cause is just, our courage high, our captains of
the best ;
Already have our hearts been tried and we have stood
the test,
 Nor did, nor shall we, quake ;
But let each coward stay behind—we want no cravens
here ;
We would not have within our ranks even one poor
slave of fear ;
None who dares not to do or die, give what he
holds most dear
 Freely for honour's sake !

Fierce as the Huns of old our foes ; they ravage and
 destroy,
 And mark their course by deeds of shame that fiends
 alone enjoy ;
 They deem that justice is a word, a treaty but a toy ;
 Their laws are brigands' laws ;
 And till the menace of their rage and brutal force
 be o'er
 We stand the brunt, nor shall we to its place our
 sword restore
 Until we feel that from its sheath that sword need
 nevermore
 Be drawn for such a cause.

Great is the price of victory, but we that price will
 pay ;
 Far is the goal that we must gain, and steep and hard
 the way ;
 He is a traitor to our cause who urgeth us to stay,
 Or, starting, faltereth ;
 Never was there a holier cause than that for which
 we fight ;
 Never the crown of victory so gloriously bright ;
 Never were death so fine as death in battling for the
 the right—
 Then Victory—or Death!

BATTLE SONG

Forward, comrades, to the fight!
We are battling for the right;
Firm our faith, our weapons bright;
On to victory!

Feudal tyranny's the foe
We have sworn to overthrow:
Deal it, then, a mortal blow;
Set the nations free!

France, elate in martial pride,
Battles bravely by our side,
Brothers in arms, whate'er betide,
For all time to come!

Kaiser-ridden Germany!
We will set your millions free
From a vile autocracy,
Proud and burdensome!

'Neath the War-Fiend's evil power—

Ogre that doth all devour—

Europe shall no longer cower:

We will strike it down!

Britain's flag shall never wave

O'er the coward or the slave:

'Tis the standard of the brave

Victory yet shall crown!

THE KAISER'S ORDER TO HIS TROOPS

(BOXER EXPEDITION, JULY 27TH, 1900)

Crush the foe whene'er you meet him ;
With shot, shell, and bayonet greet him ;
Take no prisoners, give no quarter,
Women, children, old men slaughter ;
Hold no parley save with guns ;
Prove yourselves the modern Huns ;
Hack your way where'er you go ;
Cause the maximum of woe ;
Let your hearts be hearts of stone,
Clemency a thing unknown.

Burn the shrines of such vile races ;
Desecrate their holy places ;
They profess a creed untrue,
Pagans they and Christians you—
Therefore they are better dead ;
So, the gospel truths to spread
And to do my will, spare none ;
Then, since both these aims are one,
Whatsoever you may do
Our old God will see you through !

CONGRATULATIONS TO ATTLA II.

Our congratulations!—a little o'erdue,
Like other things we, though unwilling, to you
Are still owing—and, first, on the marvellous way
In which you've embroiled all the nations to-day;
On your subtle diplomacy's wondrous success
In getting you into a deuce of a mess;
And the craft of your scheme for unloosing the devil
Which exists in mankind in all evil to revel.

We acknowledge your grasp of the true use of might,
And your brutal contempt for all honour and right;
Of the ruin your visions of conquest have wrought
On your neighbours, and also the suffering you've brought
On your subjects, too dull, or in spirit too poor
To do aught save still your misrule to endure.

Nor must we forget the great victories you've gained
O'er the brave Belgian troops you so highly disdained,
Which allowed you to harry and ravage their land
And make on its people your brigand's demand;
Nor the skill of your Zeppelins, at murder so clever,
Killing children and women, but combatants never!

Nor should we omit to recall your capacity
In getting your God to condone your rapacity ;
And your vile, canting custom of using His name
As if His will and your will were one and the same.

And lastly, we thank you for laying aside
The mask worn so long your ambitions to hide ;
Your cunning, your plots, are less darkly concealed,
Your methods and policy now are revealed ;
No longer the world to your mission is blind—
You stand forth confessed as the scourge of mankind !

THE KAISER'S GOD

The Kaiser has a special God—
A God he patronises
And, day by day, by wireless (made
In Germany) advises.

He never dreamt his God might not
Approve of all that he did,
Or take a different view from him
Of what was right and needed.

His "good old God" he was until
His luck began to alter,
But in His special goodness now
His faith begins to falter.

Since he relied, in all he did,
On God as his assistant,
It now seems strange that his ally
Towards him should be so distant.

Within three weeks he set his heart
On marching into Paris ;
His army, dwindling by degrees,
A long way from it tarries !

He cannot understand why God
Has turned his back on Prussia,
And now bestows his favours on
That barbarous nation, Russia !

Note, too, those infidels, the French,
Who scoff at all devotion,
And have not in their flighty minds
A single pious notion.

Yet these vile sinners are allowed,
In most surprising manner,
To check his own God-fearing troops,
And flout his Christian banner !

A whole life-time he served his God,
Who never failed to aid him
Till now, when he appears resolved
To injure and degrade him.

His schemes have failed, his plans gone wrong,
His luck is most provoking ;
It seems as if his "good old God"
Were with the Kaiser joking.

But who would care to own a God
Who looks so lightly on him,
And when he most requires his aid
Just turns his back upon him?

Poor Kaiser! Take a lesson from
The heathen in his blindness,
Who, if his god thus fickle prove,
Repays him with unkindness.

And should this pointed treatment fail
To prove his god a true one,
He smashes up his deity,
And goes and gets a new one!

THE KAISER: A PEN-PICTURE

In shining uniform, tricked out with gold,
The Emperor, self-appraised and real, behold!

With world-stage strut, with conscious grandeur filled,
Brooking no question, haughty and self-willed,
A being to distortion magnified
Is he; in his invulnerable pride
A demi-god he doth himself conceive,
And not a dog must bark without his leave!

An egotist, he thinks his crony, God,
Over the world would have him ride rough-shod;
Head of the Church, the Army, and the State,
Nothing his lust for wider rule can sate;
Too small, by far, is Germany to confine
His grand ambition, which would still repine
If Europe at his feet lay prostrate; he
O'er the whole earth would wield supremacy!

A vain, unreasoning, impulse-driven elf,
A new Napoleon he believes himself;

With talents scarcely fit to keep a school
The solar system he'd engage to rule,
And with so light a task would still contrive
To be the busiest, fussiest fool alive—
Preacher, musician, painter, poetaster,
Of all the arts and every science master,
A charlatan in all acclaimed degrees,
Statesman *pour rire*—

And Mephistopheles;

Superman and degenerate,—who with cant
Will gloss the basest turpitude, and rant
To an octave-height of blasphemy, proclaim
The Almighty as a partner in his shame,
And vow to achieve, with Heaven's will and grace,
The master-crime against the human race!

Of all mad criminals the chief, the worst,
Behold—the Emperor, William the Accurst!

A NEW CAROL

FOR THE USE OF THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS OF THE KAISER

God save you, merry gentlemen!
List to our roundelay,
And call to mind our Saviour's birth
In Bethlehem far away:
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

'Twas nineteen centuries ago
And fourteen years to-day;
And now for Christ His sake we come
To pillage, burn and slay:
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

They say that He was meek and mild,
And harmless as a dove;
But fierce as tigers starved are we,
And naught but carnage love:
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

Goodwill and peace He brought to men—
Or so His priests have said—
But goodwill now has left the earth,
And peace lies stark and dead :
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

His followers have His doctrines preached
In every age and clime,
And so do we—with fire and sword
And many a flagrant crime :
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

The Prince of Peace they named Him once
In mockery and scorn,
For not to bring peace on the earth
But warfare was He born :
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

'Tis said He gave His blood to save
Mankind from mortal doom ;
But 'tis our purpose now to send
A million to the tomb :
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

Our Kaiser is a godly man,
And full of holy zeal;
He never fights till he hath made
To God a strong appeal:
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

For the godless French his pious soul
Doth much compassion feel,
So them he goeth to convert
With shot and shell and steel:
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

God save you, merry gentlemen,
And be no wit dismayed,
For every crime to mankind known
Shall mark the New Crusade!
And 'tis tidings of comfort and joy.

THE PRUSSIAN GOD

Our dear Prussian friends with a logic quite odd,
Have set up a new-fangled sort of a God,
Whom, far more sincerely than Christ, they adore,
Or the good-natured deities worshipped of yore:
He's the patron of Junkers, Mailed-Fists and Hussars;
In short, he's a new incarnation of Mars;
His apostle's Bernhardi, a fire-eater bold,
Who as vassals to Prussia all nations would hold.

Bernhardi! Bernhardi!
Your plans are all right
If God sees you through
To the end of the fight;
But if He lets you down—
And 'tis likely He may—
Bernhardi! you'll find
There's the devil to pay!

His true name is Force—Force *sans* conscience or truth,
With no bowels of kindness or mercy or ruth ;
He's a God of Destruction, of rapine and greed,
Who cares not how mortals may suffer or bleed ;
Who for honour and justice has nothing but scorn ;
By whom solemn treaties are shamelessly torn
To waste-paper ; whose gospel is carnage and fire
And trampling humanity into the mire !

*Bernhardi ! Bernhardi !
Your plans are all right
If your God's arm keeps strong
To the end of the fight ;
But if He should fail you,
Then think of the day,
Bernhardi, when you'll have
The devil to pay !*

But their God is not new—he's the oldest of all
That ever set out to lay waste and enthrall;
The God of oppression, of pillage and rape,
Part tiger, part venomous serpent, part ape:
This Superman's God, to whom men are but flies,
Is only a re-christened Father of Lies;
No God, but a devil of devilish might,
Whom every true man has no choice but to fight.

Bernhardi! Bernhardi!
Your plans were all right
If God saw you through
To the end of the fight;
But when God lets you down,
And your schemes go astray,
Bernhardi! there'll then be
The devil to pay!

THE GERMAN PROFESSOR

A German Professor—
The mildest of men—
Sat scribbling all day
In a dull stuffy den.

A patriot—huge tankards
Of beer he would drink,
As he shed for his country
His last drop of ink.

But in spite of his rank,
And his learned degree,
No man to his master
Was humbler than he.

Yet this spectacled pedagogue,
Fusty and bland,
Could out-Herod Herod
A pen in his hand.

He conclusively proved
That the great German race
In battle-array
Could the Universe face.

All his faith was in force—
As for conscience or law,
Other nations were welcome
To hold them in awe.

But the Superman's state
Need no treaties respect,
And all scruples of honour
Must promptly reject.

And justice and right
Should be likewise disdained,
With a purpose to serve
And an end to be gained.

To attain it go boldly
And—hack your way through ;
Let those who oppose you
Their insolence rue.

Make "frightful examples"
Wherever you go,
And shed blood as freely
As water can flow.

Burn, ravish, and murder—
No pity display ;
The greater your glory
The more you can slay.

The buccaneers' ethics
Your ethics must be ;
Necessity always
Will serve for your plea.

In short, this mild teacher
Who reasoned so well,
Would make the world German—
Or make it a Hell!

TO HANS BREITMANN

We bore with you, till you began
The Lion's tail to tweak, Hans ;
Even now your clumsy grasp we can
Forgive—but not your cheek, Hans !

You covet, somewhere in the sun,
A place whereon to squat, Hans ;
Right!—but in those that we have won
You'll find it much too hot, Hans !

Big colonies—for dumping there
Your millions overflowing—
You want ; but we have none to spare—
Our people, too, are growing.

You also want a first-class fleet,
Some nation to subdue, Hans ;
Well, that's a challenge *we* must meet,
And try a fall with you, Hans !

Our sea-dominion we shall hold
Against whate'er attack it,
Even though it be your navy bold,
With all your craft to back it!

The Empire our forefathers gained
At cost of blood and treasure,
Shall, at the same price, be maintained,
Nor yielded at your pleasure.

So, Hans, we hate you not, but yet
In arms we needs must meet you;
And, if you like, we'll make a bet
That ten to one we beat you!

“WHATEVER IS IS RIGHT”

Prussia's mad monarch, boastful of his might,
Has with the war-torch set the earth alight,
And sent his legions forth to spoil and slay.
And hack through harried lands their blood-stained way,
With fury blind, defiling and destroying,
And every deed of foul offence enjoying—
But why should acts like these our souls affright,
Since Faith asserts: “Whatever is is right?”

His horde of bullies treat, where'er they go,
Even the simple peasant as a foe;
Strip him of all he has, and leave him naught
Save eyes to weep with and a mind distraught;
Dishonour wife and maid; slay ruthlessly
The grandam and the babe upon her knee—
What then? Of such things we should calmly write,
Since Faith asserts: “Whatever is is right.”

In wicked wantonness, with rage insane,
Rheims they have made a ruin, and Louvain ;
Destroyed their noble monuments of old,
Rich above mines of diamonds and gold—
Yet should not we, like Prussia's ribald hordes,
Her Junkers, Pedants, and her warrior Lords,
Should not we, too, in deeds like these delight,
Since Faith asserts: "Whatever is is right?"

“ALL’S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD”

The Kaiser made war
While his moustache he twirled :
God’s in his heaven—
All’s right with the world !

The banner of blood
And of rapine’s unfurled :
God’s in his heaven—
All’s right with the world !

In the seas mines are sown
And red ruin upswirled :
God’s in his heaven—
All’s right with the world !

From navies above
Are new thunderbolts hurled :
God’s in his heaven—
All’s right with the world !

Vast hosts on the land
To destruction are whirled:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

The devil in man
Is uproused and uncurled:
If God's in his heaven
Why this hell in the world?

TWO SOLILOQUIES

I.

“**D**o not the vile iniquities of men
Corrode your brain and lacerate your heart?”
So asked a great but melancholy man,
The self-tormenting, misanthropic Swift.

If he were here now would he not repeat
His question with redoubled emphasis?
For who—unless endowed with nerves of steel,
And soul that never knew a touch of pity,
In this most monstrous crisis of the world,
When every awful engine of destruction
Man uses to destroy his fellow-man,
Gloating upon the ruin he creates—
Feels not as once the great sad genius felt?

Talk not again of Satan, or of Hell:
Men ever have created their own hells,
And fiends of human breed have made the world,
As one has made it now, a new Inferno!

II.

Ah, what a mad and wicked world is this!
What savages are all men in their hearts!
What evil passions in the noblest dwell!
What want of wisdom do the wisest show,
And how inhuman is humanity!
How crueller than beasts of prey are men,
And more unpitying than a lava-flood!
What names—mere names—are Honour, Virtue, Faith;
Having no power to rule the acts of men,
And serving only to deceive the simple!

Were there a God, would He not sweep away
With one swift gesture all the human race,
Blot out men's shameful record, and resolve
The world into the Chaos whence it came?
Surely this earth must be the Hell whereto
All the vile creatures of the Universe
Are sent to expiate their evil deeds!

AN ANTHEM

How long, how long will this great horror last?
When will this nightmare agony be past?

How long must we this barbarous strife endure,
And to inhuman deeds our souls inure?

What harvest yet has grinning Death to gain?
What hosts of victims must there still be slain?

When will the world a shambles cease to be,
And men recover from their lunacy?

When will this carnival of crime be o'er,
And men grow sane and merciful once more?

Must we our savage parentage still own?
Have we not yet the ancestral brute outgrown?

Must we, like very beasts of prey, still fight,
And in the death of our own kind delight?

When will the seas spawn wanton death no more,
The heavens their infernal havoc cease to pour?

Is all our boasted progress but a dream?
Must evil reign as in the past supreme?

Oh, let there be some opening in the clouds!
Let some star cleave the darkness that enshrouds!

Restore our faith in man, our hopes of good,
And knit the riven ties of brotherhood!

Faint are our hopes, heavy our hearts and sad—
Ah, never as before can we be glad!

Yet will we trust this conflict be the last,
And Peace will reign for aye when it is past!

Still for a world made better will we strive,
And from our hopelessness shall hope revive!

A SONG OF YEARNING.

Our eyes are dim with watching for the dawning of
the day,

That day so long in coming when our woes shall melt
away ;

Oh ! shall we never of that dawn perceive the first faint
ray ?

Are all our yearnings vain ?

Shall the world be ruled for ever by sophistries and lies?
Shall the money-lords for ever filch lean industry's fair
prize ?

Shall kings and priests for ever o'er the nations tyrannise?
Shall wrong for ever reign ?

Must warring interests evermore humanity divide ?
Shall unjust might as in the past defenceless right
o'erride ?

Have all in vain our heroes fought, in vain our martyrs
died ?

Is ours a hopeless quest ?

Oh, never, never will we think that all our hopes are vain ;
Never believe that man was made for naught but care
and pain ;
Firm is our faith, we shall at last a Golden Age attain
Whose every dawn is blest !

Ah, yes! a day is coming with blessings in its train,
When no man to his brother man shall act the part of
Cain,
When none shall seek from others' loss unhallowed
wealth to gain,
And right shall reign supreme !
Then no man's interest apart from that of all shall be ;
Nations no more in battle-shock shall meet on land or
sea ;
And universal Love shall make mankind one family :
Ah! is it but a dream ?

Oh, what a thrill of love and joy would glad our wearied
hearts
Could we but live to see the day when ancient wrong
departs,
When man with man shall strive no more, save in the
peaceful arts,
And none shall be oppressed!
For time will end the rule of wrong, and peace and right
shall reign,
And man, grown wise, shall nevermore the fiends of war
unchain ;
Our dreams shall be fulfilled, and earth the Golden Age
attain,
And every dawn be blest!

[The above poem is reprinted (with some alterations and additions) from my volume of poems, entitled, ROSEMARY AND PANSIES. I have printed it here because it seemed best to end on a somewhat less sombre note than that which characterises most of the foregoing poems. But I must confess—though I do it very reluctantly—that the coming of the better day, which at the beginning of the present century I had some little faith in, now seems to me to be a great deal further off than it did then.]



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Dobell, Bertram,
1842-1914
Sonnets and lyrics,
a little book of verse
on the present war.
P. J. and A. E.
Dobell (1915)

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