



1918







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BY JOHN DAVIDSON

PLAYS

BALLADS AND SONGS

NEW BALLADS

FLEET STREET ECLOGUES

GODFRIDA

THE LAST BALLAD AND OTHER POEMS

A ROSARY

HOLIDAY AND OTHER POEMS

SELECTED POEMS

A RANDOM ITINERARY

SELF'S THE MAN

THE KNIGHT OF THE MAYPOLE

THE TESTAMENT OF A VIVISECTOR

THE TESTAMENT OF A MAN FORBID

THE TESTAMENT OF AN EMPIRE BUILDER

THE THEATROCRAT

MAMMON AND HIS MESSAGE

THE TRIUMPH OF MAMMON

# FLEET STREET

*and other poems*

*By*

JOHN DAVIDSON



NEW YORK  
MITCHELL KENNERLEY  
LONDON: GRANT RICHARDS  
1909

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THE time has come to make an end. There are several motives. I find my pension is not enough; I have therefore still to turn aside and attempt things for which people will pay. My health also counts. Asthma and other annoyances I have tolerated for years; but I cannot put up with cancer.

I thought this might be my last book, and intended five poems, "Cain," "Judas," "Cæsar Borgia," "Calvin," and "Cromwell" under the general title, "When God Meant God," to be the principal contents. "Cain" is the only one of these poems which I have written. I should have concluded the volume with a second Testament in my own person, insisting that men should no longer degrade themselves under such appellations as Christian, Mohammedan, Agnostic, Monist, etc. Men are the Universe become conscious: the simplest man should consider himself too great to be called after any name.

J. D.



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## FLEET STREET

WISPS and rags of cloud in a withered sky,  
A strip of pallid azure, at either end,  
Above the Ludgate obelisk, above  
The Temple griffin, widening with the width  
Below, and parallel with the street that counts  
Seven hundred paces of tessellated road  
From Ludgate Circus west to Chancery Lane:  
By concrete pavement flanked and precipice  
Of windowed fronts on this side and on that,  
A thoroughfare of everything that hastes,  
The sullen tavern-loafers notwithstanding  
And hawkers in the channel hunger-bit.

Interfluent night and day the tides of trade,  
Labour and pleasure, law and crime, are sucked  
From every urban quarter: through this strait  
All business London pours. Amidst the boom  
And thud of wheel and hoof the myriad feet  
Are silent save to him who stands a while  
And hearkens till his passive ear, attuned  
To new discernment like an erudite  
Musician's, which can follow note by note  
The part of any player even in the din

And thrashing fury of the noisiest close  
Orchestral, hears chromatic footsteps throb  
And tense susurrant speech of multitudes  
That stride in pairs discussing ways and means,  
Or reason with themselves, in single file  
Advancing hardily on ruinous  
Events; and should he listen long there comes  
A second-hearing like the second-sight  
Diviners knew, or as the runner gains  
His second-breath; then phantom footsteps fall,  
And muffled voices travel out of time:  
Alsations pass and Templars; stareabouts  
For the new motion of Nineveh; morose  
Or jolly tipplers at the Bolt-in-Tun,  
The Devil Tavern; Johnson's heavy tread  
And rolling laughter; Drayton trampling out  
The thunder of Agincourt as up and down  
He paces by St. Dunstan's; Chaucer, wroth,  
Beating the friar that traduced the State;  
And more remote, from centuries unknown,  
Rumour of battle, noises of the swamp,  
The gride of glacial rock, the rush of wings,  
The roar of beasts that breathed a fiery air  
Where fog envelops now electric light,  
The music of the spheres, the humming speed  
Centrifugal of molten planets loosed  
From pregnant suns to find their orbits out,  
The whirling spindles of the nebulæ,

The rapture of ethereal darkness strung  
Illimitable in eternal space.

Fleet Street was once a silence in the ether.  
The carbon, iron, copper, silicon,  
Zinc, aluminium vapours, metalloids,  
Constituents of the skeleton and shell  
Of Fleet Street—of the woodwork, metalwork,  
Brickwork, electric apparatus, drains  
And printing-presses, conduits, pavement, road—  
Were at the first unelemented space,  
Imponderable tension in the dark  
Consummate matter of eternity.  
And so the flesh and blood of Fleet Street, nerve  
And brain infusing life and soul, the men,  
The women, woven, built and kneaded up  
Of hydrogen, of azote, oxygen,  
Of carbon, phosphorus, chlorine, sulphur, iron,  
Of calcium, kalium, natrum, manganese,  
The warm humanities that day and night  
Inhabit and employ it and inspire,  
Were in the ether mingled with it, there  
Distinguished nothing from the road, the shops,  
The drainpipes, sewage, sweepings of the street:  
Matter of infinite beauty and delight  
Atoning offal, filth and all offence  
With soul and intellect, with love and thought;  
Matter whereof the furthest stars consist,

And every interstellar wilderness  
From galaxy to galaxy, the thin  
Imponderable ether, matter's ghost,  
But matter still, substance demonstrable  
Being the icy vehicle of light.

Flung off in teardrops spirally, or cast  
In annular fission forth like Saturn's hoops,  
Earth and the planets girdled solar space,  
The offspring and the suburbs of the sun.  
In rings or drops—the learned are unresolved  
How planets and their satellites arrive;  
But vision, vouching both, is more obsessed  
By Saturn's way of circles here at hand.  
Saturn has uttered many moons; his rings  
May be the last abortive birth of powers  
Luniparous unmatched in heaven; or else  
These still-born undeveloped satellites  
Denote an overweening confidence  
Determined, risking all, on something new.  
Having outstreated spirally and well  
A brilliant series of customary moons,  
The hazardous and genial orb began  
A segregation annular instead,  
Attempting boldly the impossible,  
Thus to become the wonder of the skies  
For ever hampered with the rings we see  
Stupendous error still eclipses net



Achievement; as in art the Sistine roof  
Sublimely figured, or hardihood in war  
That wastes a troop for glory, or as earth  
In sheer terrestrial wantonness flung up  
The Maripesan Vale, so in the skies  
The most enchanting vision of the night,  
Our belted Saturn shines, extravagance  
Celestial jewelled with its dazzling fault.

Now, in the ether with all the universe,  
And in the nebula of our solar scheme,  
Fleet Street and Saturn's rings were interfused,  
One mass of molecules being set apart  
For the high theme of wonder and the butt  
Of speculation, and the other doomed,  
Although the most renowned throughout the  
world,  
To be a little noisy London street.  
How think we then? The metal, stone and lime,  
Brick, asphalt, wood, the matter that renews  
The shell of Fleet Street, does it still begrudge  
The luminous zones with which it once was blent  
Their lofty glory? Or must the carapace  
Of Fleet Street, welded of the self-same stuff  
As man, be utterly oblivious? Thought  
And passion, envy, joy—are these unfelt  
By carbon, iron, azote, oxygen,  
And other liberal substances that know,

Rejoice and suffer in mankind, when power  
Selective turns them into street? Things wrought  
By us, are they, too, psychophysical?  
Do these piled storeys and purlieus quaint of square  
And alley envy Saturn's belts—a brief,  
Not outwardly distinguished urban street  
Upon a planet only remarkable  
Among the spheres for insignificance,  
And they so lovely and unparagoned  
A thousand million of mundane miles away?  
Are able editors, leader-writers, apt  
Telegraphists and printers, the only soul  
In Fleet Street, they, its only consciousness?  
Perhaps the bricks remember. Who can tell  
When filthy fog comes down and lights are out,  
Machinery still, and traffic at the ebb,  
If idle streets with time to meditate  
Resent enforced passivity? I think  
The admirable patience of the bricks  
May fail them of a Sunday. Imagine it:  
To be for ages unalterable brick,  
Sans speech or motion, nameless in a wall  
Among a million bricks alike unknown!

I think the splendid patience of the bricks  
Gives out in darkness and foul weather, even  
To the length of envying the wonderful  
Exalted destiny of Saturn's belts;

And then I long to tell them, if I could,  
How much more happy their condition is  
Than that of rubbish revolving endlessly  
In agonies of impotent remorse  
About the planet it deserted. Thus  
Should I exhort them:—"Bricks, beloved bricks,  
My brethren of the self-same ether bred,  
I hold it very beautiful of you  
To think so handsomely of Saturn's rings,  
Your old companions in the nebula;  
But I can tell you and I'll make you know,  
Your fate is no inferior to theirs.  
These seeming jewelled zones that shine so bright  
Are the mere wreck of matter, broken bits,  
Detached and grinding beaches of barren rock  
Hung up there as a menace and a sign;  
Circular strips of chaos unredeemed,  
Whirling in madness of oppugnant powers.  
Whether his rings are Saturn's own attempt,  
Abnormal and abortive, a brilliant ninth  
Consummate moon to utter, or likelier still,  
A leash of runaway material tides  
That mutinously left their native orb  
In molten youth to show all other stars  
The real and only way to shine, and failed  
Inevitably, being immature,  
They are, beyond all doubt, unhappy zones,  
Forlorn, remorseful, useless and ashamed.

Most beautiful, I grant you; beautiful  
And useless, like all art: their fate it is  
To be an agony of beauty, art  
Inutile, unavailing, misconceived.  
But you, most genial, intellectual bricks,  
Most dutiful and most important, you  
Are indispensable, an integral  
Component of the world's most famous street.  
Within your wholesome and convenient bield  
The truest miracle is daily done.

“ Never forget that men have tamed and taught  
The lightning; clad it in a livery known  
As news; and that without your constant aid  
Our modern, actual magic, black and white,  
Momentous mystery of telegraphy,  
Resounding press, accomplished intellects  
And pens expert would be impossible.  
Take down the walls your myrmidons compose,  
And Fleet Street, soul and body, ceases—fog  
Unoccupied, wind, city sunshine sparse  
And pallid claiming all the room that now,  
Enclosed, accoutred, functioned, named and known,  
Serves as the Dionysius' ear of the world.  
Honour and excellence and praise are yours;  
Be satisfied; be glad.”

But all the bricks,

O'erburdened and begrimed, in chorus sighed,  
 And as one brick, "Upon my cubical  
 Content, and by our common mother, I  
 Had rather shine, a shard of chaos, set  
 In Saturn's glistering rings, the exquisite  
 Enigma of the night, than be the unnamed,  
 Unthought-of copestone or foundation-stone  
 Of any merely world-distinguished street."

Applauding the ambition of the bricks,  
 I felt, I also, I would rather share  
 Dazzling perdition with material wreck  
 Suspended in majestic agony  
 About the withered loins of some undone  
 Wide-circling planet for the universe  
 To see, than live the dull life of a baked  
 Oblength of tempered clay, year in year out  
 Unnoticed in a murky, mundane street;  
 But recollecting that the bricks were bricks  
 And not a planetary wonder, what  
 Event soe'er awaits the world and time,  
 I reassured them: "Gallant souls," I cried,  
 "Noble and faithful bricks, be not dismayed!  
 I hear the shapeless fragments that make up  
 Æsthetic marvel in Saturn's girdles sigh  
 Disconsolately, as they chafe and grind  
 Each other,—*Such an enviable fate*  
*As that of any single solid brick*

*In Fleet Street, London, well and truly laid,  
 A moulded, tempered, necessary brick  
 In that most famous faubourg of the world,  
 Exceeds our merits! Could we but attain  
 The crude integrity of commonplace  
 Cohesion even in the most exhausted, most  
 Decrepit, ruinous, forgotten orb  
 In some back alley of the Milky Way  
 How happy we should be! Remember, bricks,  
 Neither success nor failure envy spares:  
 Use envies art; art envies use. These moods  
 Will come, but regular bricks like you transcend  
 Them always. Be courageous; be yourselves,  
 Be proud of your telluric destiny."*

With that the bricks took heart: "Why, so we are,"  
 They said, "the ear of England! Let us be  
 Old England's ear!" And revolution beat  
 In smothered cries and muffled fusillades  
 Upon the trembling tympanal; empires  
 At war thriddled the sounding labyrinth  
 With cannon; loyal peoples through the sea  
 And through the air by auditory nerves  
 Electric from the quarters of the earth  
 And from a hundred isles, their homage sent  
 With whispered news of aspirations, deeds,  
 Achievements to the Mother of Nations, she  
 Whose ever vigilant, clairaudient ear  
 Is Fleet Street.

## SONG

CLOSES and courts and lanes,  
Devious, clustered thick,  
The thoroughfare, mains and drains,  
People and mortar and brick,  
Wood, metal, machinery, brains,  
Pen and composing stick:  
Fleet Street, but exquisite flame  
In the nebula once ere day and night  
Began their travail, or earth became,  
And all was passionate light.

Networks of wire overland,  
Conduits under the sea,  
Aerial message from strand to strand  
By lightning that travels free,  
Hither in haste to hand  
Tidings of destiny  
These tingling nerves of the world's affairs  
Deliver remorseless, rendering still  
The fall of empires, the price of shares,  
The record of good and ill.

Tidal the traffic goes  
Citywards out of the town;

Townwards the evening ebb o'erflows  
This highway of old renown,  
When the fog-woven curtains close,  
And the urban night comes down,  
Where souls are spilt and intellects spent  
O'er news vociferant near and far,  
From Hesperus hard to the Orient,  
From dawn to the evening star.

This is the royal refrain  
That burdens the boom and the thud  
Of omnibus, mobus, wain,  
And the hoofs on the beaten mud,  
From the Griffin at Chancery Lane  
To the portal of old King Lud—  
Fleet Street, diligent night and day,  
Of news the mart and the burnished hearth,  
Seven hundred paces of narrow way,  
A notable bit of the earth.



## THE CRYSTAL PALACE

CONTRAPTION,—that's the bizarre, proper slang,  
Eclectic word, for this portentous toy,  
The flying-machine, that gyrates stiffly, arms  
A-kimbo, so to say, and baskets slung  
From every elbow, skating in the air.  
Irreverent, we; but Tartars from Thibet  
May deem Sir Hiram the Grandest Lama, deem  
His volatile machinery best, and most  
Magnific, rotatory engine, meant  
For penitence and prayer combined, whereby  
Petitioner as well as orison  
Are spun about in space: a solemn rite  
Before the portal of that fane unique,  
Victorian temple of commercialism,  
Our very own eighth wonder of the world,  
The Crystal Palace.

So sublime! Like some  
Immense crustacean's gannoid skeleton,  
Unearthed, and cleansed, and polished! Were it so  
Our paleontological respect  
Would shield it from derision: but when a shed,  
Intended for a palace, looks as like  
The fossil of a giant myriapod! . . . .

'Twas Isabey—sarcastic wretch!—who told  
 A young aspirant, studying tandem art  
 And medicine, that he certainly was born  
 To be a surgeon: “When you try,” he said,  
 “To paint a boat you paint a tumour.”

No

Idea of its purpose, and no word  
 Can make your glass and iron beautiful.  
 Colossal ugliness may fascinate  
 If something be expressed; and time adopts  
 Ungainliest stone and brick and ruins them  
 To beauty; but a building lacking life,  
 A house that must not mellow or decay?—  
 'Tis nature's outcast. Moss and lichen? Stains  
 Of weather? From the first Nature said “No!  
 Shine there unblessed, a witness of my scorn!  
 I love the ashlar and the well-baked clay:  
 My seasons can adorn them sumptuously:  
 But you shall stand rebuked till men ashamed,  
 Abhor you, and destroy you and repent!”

But come: here's crowd; here's mob; a gala day!  
 The walks are black with people: no one hastes;  
 They all pursue their purpose business-like—  
 The polo-ground, the cycle track; but most  
 Invade the palace glumly once again.  
 It is “again”; you feel it in the air—  
 Resigned habitués on every hand:

And yet agog; abandoned, yet concerned!  
They can't tell why they come; they only know  
They must shove through the holiday somehow.

In the main floor the fretful multitude  
Circulates from the north nave to the south  
Across the central transept—swish and tread  
And murmur, like a seaboard's mingled sound.  
About the sideshows eddies swirl and swing:  
Distorting mirrors; waltzing-tops—wherein  
Couples are wildly spun contrariwise  
To your revolving platform; biographs,  
Or rifle-ranges; panoramas: choose!

As stupid as it was last holiday?  
They think so,—every whit! Outside, perhaps?  
A spice of danger in the flying-machine?  
A few who passed that whirligig, their hopes  
On higher things, return disconsolate  
To try the Tartar's volant oratory.  
Others again, no more anticipant  
Of any active business in their own  
Diversion, joining stalwart folk who sought  
At once the polo-ground, the cycle-track,  
Accept the ineludible; while some  
(Insidious anti-climax here) frequent  
The water-entertainments—shallops, chutes  
And rivers subterrene:—thus, passive, all,

Like savages bewitched, submit at last  
To be the dupes of pleasure, sadly gay—  
Victims, and not companions, of delight.

Not all! The garden-terrace:—hark, behold,  
Music and dancing! People by themselves  
Attempting happiness! A box of reeds—  
Accordion, concertina, seraphine—  
And practised fingers charm advertent feet!  
The girls can dance, but, O their heavy-shod  
Unwieldy swains!—No matter:—hatless heads,  
With hair undone, eyes shut and cheeks aglow  
On blissful shoulders lie:—such solemn youths  
Sustaining ravished donahs! Round they swing,  
In time or out, but unashamed and all  
Enchanted with the glory of the world.  
And look!—Among the laurels on the lawns  
Torn coats and ragged skirts, starved faces flushed  
With passion and with wonder!—hid away  
Avowedly; but seen—and yet not seen!  
None laugh; none point; none notice: multitude  
Remembers and forgives; unwisest love  
Is sacrosanct upon a holiday.  
Out of the slums, into the open air  
Let loose for once, their scant economies  
Already spent, what was there left to do?  
O sweetly, tenderly, devoutly think,  
Shepherd and Shepherdess in Arcady!

A heavy shower; the Palace fills; begins  
The business and the office of the day,  
The eating and the drinking—only real  
Enjoyment to be had, they tell you straight  
Now that the shifty weather fails them too.  
But what's the pother here, the blank dismay?  
Money has lost its value at the bars:  
Like tavern-tokens when the Boar's Head rang  
With laughter and the Mermaid swam in wine,  
Tickets are now the only currency.  
Before the buffets, metal tables packed  
As closely as mosaic, with peopled chairs  
Cementing them, where damsels in and out  
Attend with food, like disembodied things  
That traverse rock as easily as air—  
These are the havens, these the happy isles!  
A dozen people fight for every seat—  
Without a quarrel, unturbulently: O,  
A peaceable, a tame, a timorous crowd!  
And yet relentless: this they know they need;  
Here have they money's worth—some food, some  
    drink;  
And so alone, in couples, families, groups,  
Consuming and consumed—for as they munch  
Their victuals all their vitals ennui gnaws—  
They sit and sit, and fain would sit it out  
In tedious gormandize till firework-time.  
But business beats them: those who sit must eat.

Tickets are purchased at besieged kiosks,  
And when their value's spent—with such a  
grudge!—

They rise to buy again, and lose their seats;  
For this is Mob, unhappy locust-swarm,  
Instinctive, apathetic, ravenous.

Beyond a doubt a most unhappy crowd!  
Some scores of thousands searching up and down  
The north nave and the south nave hungrily  
For space to sit and rest to eat and drink;  
Or captives in a labyrinth, or herds  
Imprisoned in a vast arena; here  
A moment clustered; there entangled; now  
In reaches sped and now in whirlpools spun  
With noises like the wind and like the sea,  
But silent vocally: they hate to speak:  
Crowd: Mob: a blur of faces featureless,  
Of forms inane; a stranded shoal of folk.

Astounding in the midst of this to meet  
Voltaire, the man who worshipped first, who made  
Indeed, the only god men reverence now,  
Public Opinion. There he sits alert—  
A cast of Houdon's smiling philosophy.  
Old lion-fox, old tiger-ape—what names  
They gave him!—better characterized by one  
Who was his heir: "The amiable and gay."

So said the pessimist who called life sour  
And drank it to the dregs. Enough: Voltaire—  
About to speak: hands of a mummy clutch  
The fauteuil's arms; he listens to the last  
Before reply; one foot advanced; a new  
Idea radiant in his wrinkled face.

Lunch in the grill-room for the well-to-do,  
The spendthrifts and the connoisseurs of food—  
Gourmet, gourmand, bezonian, epicure.  
Reserved seats at the window?—Surely; you  
And I must have the best place everywhere.  
A deluge smudges out the landscape. Watch  
The waiters since the scenery's not on view.  
A harvest-day with them, our Switzers—knights  
Of the napkin! How they balance loaded trays,  
And, though they push each other, spill no drop!  
And how they glare at lazy lunchers, snatch  
Unfinished plates sans "by your leave," and fling  
The next dish down, before the dazzled lout  
(The Switzer knows his man) has time to con  
The menu, every tip precisely gaged,  
Precisely earned, no service thrown away.  
Sign of an extra douceur, reprimand  
Is welcomed, and the valetudinous  
Voluptuary served devoutly: he  
With cauteries on his cranium; dyed moustache;  
Teeth like a sea-wolf's, each a work of art

Numbered and valued singly; copper skin;  
 And nether eyelids pouched:—why he alone  
 Is worth a half-day's wage! Waiters for him  
 Are pensioners of indigestion, paid  
 As secret criminals disburse blackmail,  
 As Attic gluttons sacrificed a cock  
 To Æsculapius to propitiate  
 Hygeia—if the classic flourish serves!

“Grilled soles?”—for us:—Kidneys to follow.—

Now,

Your sole, sir; eat it with profound respect.  
 A little salt with one side:—scarce a pinch!  
 The other side with lemon:—tenderly!  
 Don't crush the starred bisection:—count the drops!  
 Those who begin with lemon miss the true  
 Aroma: quicken sense with salt, and then  
 The subtle, poignant, critic savour tunes  
 The delicate texture of the foam-white fish,  
 Evolving palatable harmony  
 That music might by happy chance express.  
 A crust of bread—(eat slowly: thirty chews,  
 Gladstonian rumination)—to change the key.  
 And now the wine—a well-decanted, choice  
 Château, *bon per*; a decade old; not more.  
 A velvet claret, piously unchilled.  
 A boiled potato with the kidney . . . No!  
 Barbarian! Vandal! Sauce? 'Twould ruin all!



The kidney's the potato's sauce. Perpend:  
 You taste the esoteric attribute  
 In food; and know that all necessity  
 Is beauty's essence. Fill your glass: salute  
 The memory of the happy neolith  
 Who had the luck to hit on roast and boiled.  
 Finish the claret.—Now the rain has gone  
 The clouds are winnowed by the sighing south,  
 And hidden sunbeams through a silver woof  
 A warp of pallid bronze in secret ply.

Cigars and coffee in the billiard-room.  
 No soul here save the marker, eating chops;  
 The waiter and the damsel at the bar,  
 In listless talk. A most uncanny thing,  
 To enter suddenly a desolate cave  
 Upon the margent of the sounding Mob!  
 A hundred thousand people, class and mass,  
 In and about the palace, and not a pair  
 To play a hundred up! The billiard-room's  
 The smoking-room; and spacious too, like all  
 The apartments of the Palace:—why  
 Unused on holidays? The marker: aged;  
 Short, broad, but of a presence; reticent  
 And self-respecting; not at all the type:—  
 "O well," says he; "the business of the room  
 Fluctuates very little, year in, year out.  
 My customers are seasons mostly." One

On the instant enters: a curate, very much  
At ease in Zion—and in Sydenham.  
He tells too funny stories—not of the room:  
And talks about the stage. "In London now,"  
He thinks, "the play's the thing." He undertakes  
To entertain and not to preach: you see,  
It's with the theatre and the music-hall,  
Actor and artiste, the parson must compete.  
Every bank-holiday and special day  
The Crystal Palace sees him. Yes; he feels  
His hand's upon the public pulse on such  
Occasions. O, a sanguine clergyman!

Heard in the billiard-room the sound of Mob,  
Occult and ominous, besets the mind:  
Something gigantic, something terrible  
Passes without; repasses; lingers; goes;  
Returns and on the threshold pants in doubt  
Whether to knock and enter, or burst the door  
In hope of treasure and a living prey.  
The vainest fantasy! Rejoin the crowd:  
At once the sound depreciates. Up and down  
The north nave and the south nave hastily  
Some tens of thousands walk, silent and sad,  
A most unhappy people.—Hereabout  
Cellini's Perseus ought to be. Not that;  
That's stucco—and Canova's: a stupid thing:  
The face and posture of a governess—

A nursery governess who's had the nerve  
To pick a dead mouse up. It used to stand  
Beside the billiard-room, against the wall,  
A cast of Benvenuto's masterpiece—  
That came out lame, as he pretold, despite  
His dinner dishes in the foundry flung.

They shift their sculpture here haphazard.—That?  
King Francis—by Clesinger:—on a horse.  
Absurd: most mounted statues are.—And this?  
Verrochio's Coleone. Not absurd:  
Grotesque and strong, the battle-harlot rides  
A stallion: fore and aft, his saddle, peaked  
Like a mitre, grips him as in a vice.  
In heavy armour mailed; his lifted helm  
Reveals his dreadful look; his brows are drawn;  
Four wrinkles deeply trench his muscular face;  
His left arm half-extended, and the reins  
Held carelessly, although the gesture's tense;  
His right hand wields a sword invisible;  
Remorseless pressure of his lips protrudes  
His mouth; he would decapitate the world.

The light is artificial now; the place  
Phantasmal like a beach in hell where souls  
Are ground together by an unseen sea.  
A dense throng in the central transept, wedged  
So tightly they can neither clap nor stamp,

Shouting applause at something, goad themselves  
In sheer despair to think it rather fine:  
“We came here to enjoy ourselves. Bravo,  
Then! Are we not?” Courageous folk beneath  
The brows of Michael Angelo’s Moses dance  
A cakewalk in the dim Renaissance Court.  
Three people in the silent reading-room  
Regard us darkly as we enter: three  
Come in with us, stare vacantly about,  
Look from a window and withdraw at once.  
A drama; a balloon; a Beauty Show:—  
People have seen them doubtless; but none of those  
Deluded myriads walking up and down  
The north nave and the south nave anxiously—  
And aimlessly, so silent and so sad.

The day wears; twilight ends; the night comes  
down.

A ruddy targelike moon in a purple sky,  
And the crowd waiting on the fireworks. Come:  
Enough of Mob for one while. This way out—  
Past Linacre and Chatham, the second Charles,  
Venus and Victory—and Sir William Jones  
In placid contemplation of a State!—  
Down the long corridor to the district train.

## RAILWAY STATIONS

### I

#### LONDON BRIDGE

MUCH tolerance and genial strength of mind  
Unbiased, witnesses who wish to find  
This railway-station possible at all  
Must cheerfully expend. Artistical  
Ideas wither here: a magic power  
Alone can pardon and in pity dower  
With fictive charm a structure so immane.  
How then may fancy, to begin with, feign  
An origin for such a roundabout  
Approach—so intricate, yet so without  
Intention, and so spanned by tenebrous  
And thundering viaducts? Grotesquely, thus:—  
One night the disposition of the ward  
Was shifted; for the streets with one accord,  
Enfranchised by a landslip, danced the hay  
And innocently jumbled up the way.  
And so we enter. Here, without perhaps,  
Except the automatic money-traps,  
Inside the station, everything so old,  
So inconvenient, of such manifold

Perplexity, and, as a mole might see,  
So strictly what a station shouldn't be,  
That no idea minifies its crude  
And yet elaborate ineptitude,  
But some such fancied cataclysmal birth:—  
Out of the noubles of the martyred earth  
This old, unhappy terminus was hurled  
Back from a day of small things when the world  
At twenty miles an hour still stood aghast,  
And thought the penny post mutation vast  
As change itself. Before the Atlantic race  
Developed turbinéd speed; before life's pace  
Was set by automobilism; before  
The furthest stars came thundering at the door  
To claim close kindred with the sons of men;  
Before the lettered keys outsped the pen;  
Ere poverty was deemed the only crime  
Or wireless news annihilated time,  
Divulged now by an earthquake in the night,  
This ancient terminus first saw the light.

A natural magic having gravely made  
This desperate station possible, delayed  
No longer by its character uncouth,  
The innocent adventurer, seeking truth  
Imaginative, if it may be, plays  
His vision, penetrant as chemic rays,

Upon the delta wide of platforms, whence  
Discharges into London's sea, immense  
And turbulent, a brimming human flood,  
A river inexhaustible of blood  
That turns the wheels, and by a secret, old  
As labour, changes heart-beats into gold  
For those that toil not: all the gutters run,  
Houses are daubed, with it; and moon and sun  
Splashed as they spin. And yet this human tide,  
As callous as the glaciers that glide  
A foot a day, but as a torrent swift,  
Sweeps unobservant save of time—for thrift  
Or dread disposes clockwards every glance—  
Right through a station which a seismic dance  
Chimerical alone can harmonize  
Even in imagination's friendly eyes.

Clearly a brimming tide of mind as well  
As blood, whose ebb and flow is buy and sell,  
Engulfed by London's storm and stress of trade  
Before it reached the civic sea, and made  
Oblivious, knowing nought terrestrial  
Except that time is money, and money all.

Or when a portly dealer, well-to-do,  
Chances to see it as he passes through,  
Or boy or girl not yet entirely swamped  
In ways and means and business of accompt,

About the many-platformed embouchure  
And utterance of suburban life obscure  
A liberal œillade tosses, with a note  
Chromatic, crimson van and crimson coat,  
The parcel-post, and many a crimson shrine  
Of merchandise mechanical combine  
To reassure them as a point of war  
Inspires the soldier; for the cannon's roar,  
The trumpet's blast, the thunder of the drum,  
Are crimson motives; and the city's hum,  
The noise of battle, and a ruddy sky  
May echo in the selfsame harmony.

Save when the glance of age whose brisk affairs  
Look up on 'Change, of youth untouched by care's  
Inhibitory wand that palsies thought,  
No other gracious sign appears, nor aught  
Distinctly personal, innate or earned,  
In the dull, rapid passage of concerned  
Expression from the station to the street,  
Until a dire resemblance of defeat  
In one set visage hides the common face:  
Such a premonstrant shadow of disgrace,  
Such grey alarm, such sickening for despair  
Is only seen in urban crowds, for there  
The broken broker feels himself alone,  
Exempt from scrutiny, even of his own



Protean introspection, and as free  
As genius, or as fallen spirit, to be  
The very image of the thing he is—  
A figure on the brink of the abyss,  
The failure and the scapegoat of the mart,  
The loser in the game, the tragic part  
Wherein some novice mastered by the play  
Without rehearsal triumphs every day.

## II

### LIVERPOOL STREET

THROUGH crystal roofs the sunlight fell,  
And pencilled beams the gloss renewed  
On iron rafters balanced well  
On iron struts; though dimly hued,  
With smoke o'erlaid, with dust endued,  
The walls and beams like beryl shone;  
And dappled light the platforms strewed  
With yellow foliage of the dawn  
That withered by the porch of day's divan.

The fragrant, suave, autumnal air  
A dulcet Indian summer breathed,  
Able to reach the inmost lair  
Unclean of London's interwreathed  
And labyrinthine railways, sheathed  
In annual increments of soot:  
Memories of regions parked and heathed,  
Of orchards lit with golden fruit  
Attuned October's subterranean lute.

But orchards lit with golden lamps,  
Or purple moor, or nutbrown stream,

Or mountains where the morn encamps  
Frequent no station-loafer's dream:  
A breed of folk forlorn that seem  
The heirs of disappointment, cast  
By fate to be the preacher's theme,  
To hunger daily and to fast,  
And sink to helpless indigence at last.

From early morn they hang about  
The book-stall, the refreshment-room;  
They pause and think, as if in doubt  
Which train to go by; now assume  
A jaunty air, and now in gloom  
They take the platform for a stage  
And pace it, meditating doom—  
Their own, the world's; in baffled rage  
Condemning still the imperceptive age.

Like aromatic wine that does  
As wine will do with living clay,  
The wonderful anachronous,  
Autumnal-summertidal day  
Seduced a laboured soul to play  
The idler:—(one who could rehearse  
Unheard-of things; whose thoughts were grey  
With travail, and whose reason scarce  
Escaped the onslaught of the universe:

Yet one who waged an equal strife,  
 And, unsubdued, beyond the sad  
 Horizon of terrestrial life  
 In noisome cloud and thunder clad,  
 And death-cries of the past that bade  
 Repent, above the galaxy  
 Enthroned himself; and, sane or mad,  
 Magnanimously claimed to be  
 The soul and substance of eternity).

He, then, to whom all things were great  
 By virtue of his native power,  
 Applauded autumn's sumptuous state,  
 And meant to share her golden hour—  
 Her kiss that moved the faded flower  
 To blush again, the haunting time  
 And witchcraft of her inmost bower,  
 Restoring for an afternoon  
 The bosom and the fragrant skirts of June.

He booked to Epping Street. The train  
 Drew out, and clanking idly, strayed  
 Along the line with dull refrain  
 That mocked the exigence of trade.  
 At Woodford milkmen long delayed  
 The journey; and at Snaresbrook noise  
 Broke out, and passengers inveighed  
 Against the line: such bitter joys  
 Two-faced occasion brings. At Theydon Bois.

At Chigwell Lane and Loughton, all  
Complacent forest hamlets, folk,  
Since chance itself might not forestall  
Their sylvan leisure, tarrying, spoke  
On footboards poised; and this one's joke,  
And that one's parting comment, wound  
A strand of laughter through the smoke  
And pulsing steam, whose rhythmic sound  
With pliant wheels a thundrous music ground.

From Epping Street, where half a score  
Inviting hostels lie between  
The upper forest and the lower,  
The bounds and metes of that demesne  
That once from Waltham surged in green  
Luxuriance to the northern tide,  
The lover of the fall's serene  
Miraculous renaissance hied  
By turnpike, woodland path and forest-ride.

A purple haze that scarce could keep  
Diaphanous consistence spread  
Above the ridged perspective deep  
Of Epping Forest; overhead,  
With arabesque of shining thread  
As manifold as jewelled dyes,  
In varied beauty interwed  
A snowy vapour damaskwise  
Endued the tenderest of turquoise skies.

Ripples of cloud like silver strands  
Escaloped by continual surge,  
The seaboard of fantastic lands,  
Defined the welkin's orient verge:  
He heard afar the airy dirge  
Of breaking billows, saw the foam  
In heaven mantle, spindrift scourge  
The zenith, and their shadows roam  
Across the woods like coveys flying home.

A herd of clouds with fleeces rent  
Flocked in the west; an aigret plumed  
The low-hung northern firmament;  
But in the south a shadow loomed  
Like chaos out of eld exhumed  
To re-engulf the world long lost  
In time; and yet the darkness bloomed  
With sprays of bronze like briars tossed,  
With hidden flower and fruit of flame embossed.

He heard the woodman's fateful strokes  
In Epping Thicket, blow on blow,  
Where spaciously the loftiest oaks  
In all the forest precincts grow.  
The rose, the bramble and the sloe  
Muffled the holly, hid the thorn;  
And berries blushed with diverse glow  
Of gradual colour like the morn,  
Whose changing hues the ravished east adorn.

In many a dome of russet green,  
 Without a centre shaft to draw  
 The branches round it, might be seen,  
 Once more with tender-hearted awe,  
 The burning bush religion saw—  
 The nightshade's coral hanging free,  
 The scarlet hip, the crimson haw,  
 The swarthy bramble lovingly  
 Enwreathed as in a myriad-minded tree.

The bramble leaves, with iron mould  
 Distained, like metal foliage glanced;  
 The fluted beech, in ruddy gold  
 Accoutred bravely, countenanced  
 The yellow thorn, whose hue enhanced  
 In turn the heather's rusty ore;  
 The bracken, faded all, advanced  
 Along the forest's pillared floor—  
 A tawny tide upon an emerald shore.

But eager frosts that braise and brand  
 Autumnal foliage still delayed;  
 Green was the forest, green the land,  
 A fibrous sward, a toothsome blade:  
 The cow-bells rang in every glade  
 Their quaint memorial refrain,  
 A ghostly sound by change unlaid;  
 The year stood still; and summer fain  
 As in her prime, usurped the world again.

The chrysosperm in sunbeams pent  
 A largesse squandered. Rich as light  
 Of rainbow brede, the forest-scent;  
 And subtler, keener than the white  
 Aroma of the stars at night  
 That maddens lovers wandering late  
 Betrothed in destiny's despite;  
 As searching as the importunate  
 And supersensuous ether uncreate.

A doe stepped forth and pried about  
 With wondering look and watchful ear,  
 Then vanished. Venturous birds burst out,  
 As in the heyday of the year,  
 With summer song in snatches, clear  
 As water dropping in a well;  
 Harmonious from a turret near  
 Replied a silvery vesper-bell;  
 The braided light grew golden; evening fell.

In Highbeach Holt, a place alone,  
 A wonder of the world, antique  
 Protected beeches straightly grown,  
 Or pollarded of yore and meek  
 Transmuters of the shapeless freak  
 The iron wrought throughout the years  
 To symmetry, that all things seek  
 Forever, they, the verderer's  
 Most cherished vert in all his marks and meres.



Upon a forest fabric stood  
Three-piles of leaves and fruitful mast,  
That carpeted the upland wood  
And crypts and bowers, obscure and vast  
In the close twilight waning fast:  
Some scumbled moss, with here and there  
A stroke of scanty herbage, cast  
A chord of green, remarked and rare  
Among the russet spreading everywhere.

All still and stately ancient trees,  
With stem erect and ample bole,  
Maintained their native majesties  
In leafy robe and verdant stole  
Invested, green from fork to poll;  
Old, gnarled and thundersmitten, some  
Uncouthly grew, the sylvan soul  
By brutal accident became  
A tortured wraith in hideous anguish dumb.

The saplings flourished straight and tall  
Like living palisades a-row,  
Their lance-like stems in vertical  
And rhythmic parallels below;  
Above like crayon lines that flow  
Obliquely through each other, swart  
Immingled boughs in writhen throe  
A cross-hatched canopy athwart  
The precinct flung and roofed and arboured court.

A silence like the dead of night  
 The ebon-pillared emerald walls  
 Immured; a dusky latticed light  
 Fulfilled the high-groined cloisters, halls,  
 Occult recesses, wildwood stalls  
 In glimmering chancel-aisles arrayed;  
 And violet beams at intervals  
 — Illumined the forest-girdled glade  
 Through rents and loopholes in the beechen shade.

With hue and form so diverse stored,  
 Beauty and wonder, vaulted space  
 By fantasy alone explored,  
 The solitude and rich embrace  
 Soul-clasping of that silent place  
 So sphered his vision, steeped his brain  
 In dreams, that he beheld no trace  
 Of mundane things, nor hint nor stain  
 Of twilight or of night, until again

He reached the city. Then and there  
 A potent urban spell subdued  
 The forest's, for the sorcerer  
 Of sorcerers is multitude.  
 Three railway-stations closely brood  
 Together by the Bishop's Gate,  
 That ancient, famous neighbourhood;  
 And nowhere more profoundly, late  
 Or early, can the nameless sense of fate

In numbers immanent be felt  
Than in these eastern haunts at night,  
Where eddying tumults surge and melt  
Like clouds beneath remorseless light  
In streets and garnished windows, bright  
As for some celebration nigh,  
While tides of transit at the height  
In rival modes of passage vie,  
And wheel and hoof and automobile ply.

Barbaric shouts and shrieks he heard,  
Like cries of wrath or cries of ruth;  
But no one laughed or spoke a word;  
Master and man, and age and youth  
In purposeless, intense, uncouth  
Commotion seemed for ever lost,  
Save those that wooed in saddest sooth  
A hope forlorn, in all things crossed,  
And yet resolved to live at any cost.

The gutter-merchants. At the kerb  
Fifty and five, a ghastly row,  
With faces hell could not perturb  
So rigid were they in their woe,  
Self-centred stood. Life's undertow  
Had dragged them down: a few were old,  
A few were young, though fallen so low;  
But most were in their prime: they sold  
Unnecessary trifles manifold.

A while he watched them wonderstruck;  
And scornfully they watched again.  
Not these the undistinguished ruck  
And ordinary run of men!  
Their mystery seemed beyond his ken:  
What brought such mortals there, so strong,  
So resolute? How, where and when  
Had fortune thrust them forth among  
The sufferers unsalvable of wrong?

Their eyes on fire, their wrinkles changed  
To shadowed sculpture in the brute  
Efulgence of the windows, ranged  
Together closely, foot by foot,  
Like giant marionettes, as mute,  
As quick and as mechanical,  
Fronting the shops, they made their suit  
By signs alone; and each and all  
Unhuman seemed, austere, asexual.

And yet in faces drawn and starved  
The tale of many a lingering fight  
With circumstance was deeply carved;  
Of hazardous attempts to smite  
A passage through the solid night  
The outcast beats his head against;  
To enter, maugre might and rights  
A huckstering world, alike incensed  
By challengers and suppliant, and fenced

About with adamantine hearts.  
He thought, "As well would it behove  
The morning to invade the marts;  
Or that the dawn should live and move  
Within an iceberg! Nought can prove  
More terrible than toil for hire,  
Or toil at all, to these; the groove,  
The settled habit men desire—

They find it torture and the nether fire.

"On every lip, on every brow  
I see their dreadful secret lurk:  
All work to them is thralldom now;  
They hate to work, they cannot work.  
This last expedient still they shirk,  
And every day resolve to fly  
From hell:—*No hope, no fear, no quirk  
Of conscience, in the public eye*

*Shall stand us there again who dare to die!*

"But all have made it up with fate  
Sincerely by the evening! Soon,  
Or when the irksome night is late  
And in the west the wintry moon  
Disdains the city, or at noon  
When the huge welter of the day  
Goes thundering past them to a tune  
They cannot sing, the old dismay  
Victorious seems and death the only way.

" Diurnally recurrent strife!  
 Some carry poison; always there  
 The silent river flows; now life,  
 Now death, the makeweight of despair  
 Determines; but the end is ne'er  
 In doubt:—*In utter obloquy,*  
*In utter woe, we greatly dare*  
*To live, since those alone are free*  
*Who keep the power to be or not to be.*

" Such is their dread, their awful lot—  
 To live with palsied souls and numb  
 Affections! Higher courage not  
 With sound of prayer or sound of drum  
 In battle or in martyrdom  
 Was ever shown by saint or knight!  
 They stand at gaze through wearisome  
 Eternities, by ruthless light  
 Betrayed and scorned and shuddered at, invite

" The passers-by to spend the pence  
 That keeps them tortured in the pit  
 Wherein their supersubtle sense  
 Entrapped them, and the fire their wit  
 Prepared, their pride and passion lit!  
 Only the miracle, mankind,  
 Can face this hell of the unfit—  
 Only the universe enshrined  
 In lordly flesh and blood and lordly mind."

## IN THE CITY

Is it heaven and its city-porch  
Or a ceiling high-hung of old  
With lacquer fumed and scrolled  
Of many a festal torch?

High heaven it is, and the day  
With its London doom of smoke  
No storm can quite revoke,  
No deluge wash away.

When their march and song grow mute  
In the city's labyrinth trapped,  
The storms themselves are wrapped  
In draggled shrouds of soot.

Whirlwinds by lightnings paced  
To run their wild career,  
With ragged gossamere  
Of fine-spun carbon laced.

As soon as they quit the shires  
Are lost beyond all hail:  
The mightiest tempests quail  
In the midst of a million fires.

But the heavens are clear to-day  
Though their London doom of smoke,  
No storm can quite revoke,  
No deluge wash away.



## CAIN

My sons and daughters; children's children; Cain's  
Posterity:—God, what a multitude  
From one man's seed—hiding the sun!  
They stop the air, and make this cave a tomb  
Already! . . . What? I bade them? If I  
did,  
'Twas not to stifle me. Stand from the door!  
Let in the light, let in the breath, of heaven!

Now I remember why I made them come.  
Carry me out among them. All the air  
That mantles earth invisibly, and fills  
The bosom of the world, would scarce suffice  
To word with power the thing I have to tell.

My sight grows keen again: I see them,—these  
The offspring of my loins:—Enoch and Irad,  
Sons and companions; generations; boys  
That promise to be great—Jabal and Jubal,  
And my namesake, Tubalcain. My lusty men,  
My breeding women and my little ones,  
My maidens beautiful, my young men chaste,  
My blessing and God's curse be with you all.

Lie down about me, stretched at length; behind  
There, sit or kneel; and let the standers ring  
Us closely round, that every one may hear.

My children, I am dying. Very old  
Am I. A thousand storms have shaken all  
My members; and the moments, like a rain  
That never lessens, falling day and night  
Throughout the steadfast centuries, have cleansed  
My memory of the chances that befell:—  
Our sojourns and our warfare and our work,  
Our triumphs, travels, happinesses, pains,  
My own especial charge and vigilance  
For us and ours, as well as intimate  
Affection, privy thoughts and single life,  
From my remembrance like a landslip fall,  
Leaving the naked rock of that event  
Whereon our fate is founded. Many times  
I thought to tell you, many times put off.  
It may be said when I have made it known—  
Often I told myself so:—*Had he kept  
His secret to himself, our folk, unswayed  
By knowledge, might have overborne divine  
Intention, and the tribal fate decreed.*  
But I say, No. I fought God's will, and built  
A city east of Eden. Void it stands,—  
It, and the city, Enoch, which I named  
After my eldest born,—silent and void

Except for beasts and birds:—you would not live  
In houses, rooted, impotent as trees.  
Why had God loosed you from the cumbering earth  
And given you pliant limbs if not to roam  
From place to place? Caves in the wilderness,  
And in the desert camps for sons of mine!  
God had ordained it; deftly given us limbs  
That he might curse us:—did we grow like trees  
Where had his fugitives and wanderers been?  
God cannot be escaped: He means that I  
Should tell you. Fables, whispered closely, hum  
About the watchfires; and a lie believed  
May sow a tribal fate more terrible  
Than errantry like ours. This too, I know,  
My children,—that I dare not, cannot, die  
Until I tell you:—and I wish to die,  
Being forewearied of the world and time.

I had a brother, Abel, whom I loved  
As no man shall be loved by man again.  
Companions were we when the world was young,  
And only us of our nativity  
To love the other for the other's sake:  
Our gentle mates were second in our hearts.  
Younger than I, he was the hardier;  
And I in everything gave way, well pleased  
That he should still excel,—and with his pride  
In excellence well pleased. Our thoughts of God

Alone divided us, as such thoughts will—  
Father from son, kindred from kindred, folk  
From folk, until the world or God shall cease.

I dug and planted; studied nature's way;  
And out of meagre grasses fostered grain,  
Enhanced the zest, augmented and refined  
The substances of fruits and roots and herbs.  
My brother idled, angry in the sun  
And sullen in the shade. At times he gazed  
On Eden half a day in ecstasy;  
Or dark with sin hereditary, wrath  
And sorrow intermingled, frowned on heaven  
Until he fell down pulseless, breathless, dead  
It seemed, by fighting passions hacked and slain.  
In rarer moods he wrought with me, perturbed  
By mystery of the blossoms that unveiled  
Such tender beauty, and with fragrance bore  
The seed the earth enwombed: it maddened him  
To watch how nature did, to know the thing  
Achieved and not to understand:—" Shall folk,  
The human fruit of blossoms that unite,  
Be in the earth enwombed and live again?"  
" Not as the plants are we," I answered still  
His obdurate demand. " Released from earth,  
Our birth, our growth, our life are in the air,  
Though when we die the soil reclaims us: God  
Appointed it. But in our seed we live

As blossoms do:”—an all-atoning truth  
That only tortured him. He knew no ease  
In life, no respite found from doubt and dread  
Except in force expended, powers employed.  
Loving the heats and dangers of the chase,  
Deep-bosomed, swift of foot, he overtook  
The leopard flying for life; the lion feared  
To meet him; from their bloody dens he dragged  
The fiercest beasts and killed them weaponless.

At dawn upon an altar built of turf  
And grafted in the earth, I daily spread  
For God a grateful table, fruit and corn  
In season. But my brother worshipped not  
With me:—“I serve the Lord by killing things,”  
He told me when I asked him how he praised  
The maker of the world. “God’s will it is,”  
He said, “that all his creatures should destroy  
Each other: hoofed-and-horned devour the herb  
Fattening themselves for fanged-and-clawed; the  
night  
Devours the day; the day, the night; I kill  
All things that are—beasts, fishes, birds, grain,  
fruit;  
Darkness itself with fire I can dismember.  
God’s will is light and darkness, life and death:  
Two utmost joys, to kill and to beget,  
I share with God, creator and destroyer.”

“But God is love,” I said. “Seek not for God  
In bloodshed. In the rapture of desire,  
In busy peace of heart by day, in dreams  
By night that sweeten sleep with paradise  
Discover God.”

“No; God is strength,” he said.  
“Hunger and carnage, lust and strife are God  
Inspiring all His creatures, strong or weak,  
In their divine degree.”

“Save man!” I cried,  
“Although with skins of slaughtered beasts we veil  
Our nakedness, against the weather pitch  
Pavilions in the desert, we devour  
No flesh, nor stain our lips with blood; the earth’s  
Benignant bosom feeds us tenderly.”

“Like sheep and kine—big-bellied things, the prey  
Of lean ferocity! Since we can kill” . . .  
He looked at me askance, a splintered fire  
Burst from his eyes athwart the dawning thought;  
Unwonted laughter shimmered in his face,  
Like heat that vibrates from the sun-soaked earth  
And makes a presence of the throbbing air.

“Since we can kill?” I echoed, knowing well  
His dreadful meaning. “What you dare not speak  
You will not do!”

"The thoughts that teem with deeds  
 Fulfil themselves unspoken. God delights  
 To rend and tear, to lap the smoking blood.  
 God's a voracious God; the uddered things  
 And haunched, the sagging entrails are his prey  
 Assigned; the tiger and the lion, His fangs,  
 His appetite and maw. Were we to dip  
 Our mouths in blood, like those beloved beasts,  
 It would rejoice the hungry heart of God.  
 And for our own behoof,—if flesh of fruit,  
 The blood of berries, mellow sap of pulse  
 And marrow of the grain can nourish strength  
 Like ours, what keener zest, what ampler might  
 A more compact, a more essential fare  
 Might goad our palates with and prime our nerves!  
 The loins of timid things that chew the cud  
 Mature the pasturage we cannot eat  
 For our superior nurture. I shall flesh  
 My appetite—God's appetite in me."

"Not God's!" I cried in wrath. "The God of  
 man  
 Lions and tigers in his similitude  
 Would never frame."

"In whose resemblance, then?  
 Brother, God shaped his wanton, ravening beasts  
 In likeness of his cruelty—the mark,

The very soul and character of God.  
So sure am I that God designed His men  
To feed on flesh and blood as lions do  
That I shall challenge it. You offer God  
The sweetness and the ripeness of the earth  
Upon your turfen table, and salute  
The dawn. To-morrow at your side  
I shall upon an altar built of stone—  
The monument of what must there befall—  
A living victim sacrifice, while both  
Entreat a sign from heaven, nor cease to pray  
Until God's will and pleasure are made known.  
How say you? Dare you put God to the test?"

"In His great name!" I cried, assured that now  
The man I loved would know the heart of God,  
So human, so divine—as I believed.

Wet with the vapour that involved the earth,  
A sheaf of corn across my shoulders slung,  
With apples in a basket in my right,  
And in my other hand a bunch of grapes,  
I climbed the hill before the dawn, and laid  
My offering on my altar, sure of heaven.  
My brother followed, leading in a withe,  
A white bull, whiter than the rolling fog  
That wreathed its horns. He spoke not; nor did I.  
But when the touch of morning lit the crests



Of Havilah o'erhanging Eden, doubt  
Assailed me suddenly. I crushed the grapes  
In eager hands, staining the golden corn,  
The ruddy fruit—a rite then first observed  
Unwittingly, for all my being shook  
With abject fear of God, unknown before,  
But soon about to overcast the world—  
Though not on us the woeful shadow lies:  
Accursed of God we earnestly disclaim  
The cowardice that hallows vengeful wrath  
And terror of the inconceivable.

It was in ignorance I crushed the grapes,  
Inspired by God against my conscious will  
To pour out blood before Him. Yet I spoke  
My prayer—our prayer:—together children, pray  
Once more with me—with Cain before he dies:—  
“O God of men, we thank Thee for the earth,  
For life and death, for labour and for rest,  
For day and night, for seasons, times and tides;  
Empower our souls with faith; direct our steps  
In ways of pleasantness and paths of peace;  
And thine shall be the praise for ever more,  
Creator of the world, the just, the true,  
The merciful, the gracious God of men.”

I made my invocation, unaware  
How insolent it was; and on my knees

Implored a token of acceptance. Through  
The valley rolled the mist; a pearly smoke  
O'ercanopied the guarded bowers, and depths  
Profound of sylvan shadow, that the day,  
Unveiling, deepened; Sundered mountain-tops,  
Pellucid in the crimson gorge of dawn,  
Above the earth like pendent meteors burned;  
The Pishon wound among the woods below,  
The mirror of the morning streaming blood,  
With amber and with beryl-stone enchased.  
But God was silent and allowed no sign.  
Then as the sun surmounted Havilah,  
My brother, kneeling strongly on the bull's  
Ascendant shoulder, bore the creature down:  
His left hand gripped its under jaw, and bent  
Its tossing head backward and stretched its throat;  
His right implanted in its curded neck  
The ivory blade, that out he drew again  
Ensanguined all its length, swiftly and smooth  
As though the spouting blood had thrust it forth.  
His grip upon its muzzle choked the bull's  
Affrighted roar, his puissance overcame  
Its agony, and held it till it died,  
Upon the dripping altar offered up,  
Its milkwhite dewlap and its milkwhite flank  
With bloody foliage strown and flowers of death.

Mastering his bosom as a rough-wrought sea

Recovers tidal measure when the storm  
Desists, my brother tarried, vigilant  
To repossess himself; then stepping slow  
With majesty and grace unseen on earth  
Before that morn of world-transforming chance,  
He left the altar, and flung his looks aloft  
Where sumptuously the vintage of the east  
Empurpled all the peaks of Havilah,  
And westward where belated orbs of night,  
So limpid was the heaven-spanned firmament,  
Between Assyrian summits darkling swung  
Their crystal lamps. The beauty of the world  
Rebuked him for a moment—or I thought  
It did: the pause, the doubt, if doubt or pause  
Began, was seen by me, not felt by him,  
And died upon its birth.

“Almighty God,”  
With hardihood devout he said, “accept  
This blood that steams new-spilt, and this, Thy  
brute,  
New-slain to please Thee; and bestow a sign  
Of Thy acceptance that Thy men may know  
How strenuous, how absolute Thou art,  
A God alive, an active God, a God  
Delighting in a bloody sacrifice,  
As Thy ferocious creatures take delight  
In slaughter and the flesh of rams and bulls.”

Forthwith while yet the coil of breath, that bore  
His supplicative arrogance, aspired  
Unseen in the unseen, the cloudless top  
And tented blue of heaven, disparting, showed  
As in a fruit that bursts, the sanguine seed  
And crimson heart of glory, lucid shapes  
Celestial and pavilions thronged with life,—  
A transient revelation, but beheld  
In vision still, as obvious as the sun,  
By my surviving eyes that wait on death.

Heaven opened and heaven closed: adown the  
gulf

Unmeasured and aerial steep of space  
A saffron flame, in figure like a frond  
The wind inwraps and tapers skywards, fell  
Directly on my brother's altar, lapped  
The hissing blood as with a hundred tongues,  
And, fawning o'er the carcass, burnt it up.  
Transfigured by acceptance of the blood  
He spilt, my brother laughed aloud, and called  
Exultantly on God. "Divine destroyer,  
Reveller in life and death, let me partake  
With Thee!" he cried. Dropping the ivory  
blade

That broached the creature's life, before the fire  
Had licked the flesh from all the blackened ribs,  
He grasped a smouldering handful and scorched his  
mouth

With God's accepted sacrifice. Appalled  
To see a man, my brother, taste the food  
Of savage brutes, my senses failed, my heart  
Stood still a space; then thundering in my ears  
A tide of passion swept me from myself,  
A thousand judgments like a gathered storm  
Burst in my mind:—"If God," I thought, and  
seized

My brother's blade, "delights in blood of beasts,  
The blood of men should fill the cup divine  
With happiness ineffable." Straightway  
I flung an arm about my brother's neck,  
And drove the bloodstained ivory through his heart.  
He fell without a murmur: the breath of life  
Escaped his grinding teeth, his parted lips;  
The wonder in his eyes dismays me still,—  
And overwhelmed then. But when I looked  
To see the vaulted base of paradise  
Re-open, and a sheaf of fire descend,  
No fissure, chink or crevice, broke the blue  
Immensity that hid the infinite.

Thus God refused my brother's blood—the man  
I loved, and killed that he might live divine  
Eternally, a part of God; for that,  
Within the madness of the murder, sang  
Like music in a tempest. God preferred  
A bull's blood to my brother's:—still I think,

Old, dying as I am, something went wrong  
In heaven. Howbeit when I saw him dead  
And unaccepted, not the saltest tear  
Assuaged the fiery horror of myself  
That melted all my strength: in thunder drops  
The sweat splashed from my brow; a core of pain  
Without remission rising in my gorge,  
Hot, hard and noisome sickened me; I beat  
My breast; I fell; I rose; I fled, and plunged  
In wooded darkness where the thicket wove  
A thorny canopy. My fate, my doom!—  
God had me there alone, unhelped by light,  
By power and beauty of the widespread world.  
Immediately the still and awful voice,  
Whose accents are omnipotence, besieged  
My soul and said, “Thy brother, where is he?”  
I answered, as men answer God, at once,  
“I know not, I. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

“What hast thou done?” God said. “Thy  
brother’s blood,  
That crieth from the ground, hath cursed the  
ground  
For thee. When thou shalt till the ground that  
oped  
Her mouth to drink thy brother’s blood, poured by  
thy hand,  
Henceforth it shall not yield thee of her strength.

A fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be  
Upon the earth!"

I answered in the rapt  
Despair the presence and the ire of God  
Begot, "I know that my iniquity  
Can never be forgiven. Behold, since Thou  
Hast reft from me the favour of the ground  
And turned Thy countenance away, and I  
Shall be a wanderer, it shall come to pass  
That whosoever findeth me shall slay me."

"Therefore," said God, "whoever slayeth Cain  
On him a sevenfold vengeance shall be taken."  
With that God set His mark upon my brow,  
Which none behold unawed or look on twice.

I have told the truth; no more remains to tell:  
God's curse is on us; and we make it do.  
Our errant life is not unhappy; fear,  
That harrows others, is to us unknown,  
Being close to God by reason of His curse.  
Sometimes I think that God Himself is cursed,  
For all His things go wrong. We cannot guess;  
He is very God of God, not God of men:  
We feel His power, His inhumanity;  
Yet, being men, we fain would think Him good.  
Since in imagination we conceive

A merciful, a gracious God of men,  
It may be that our prayer and innocent life  
Will shame Him into goodness in the end.  
Meantime His vengeance is upon us; so,  
My blessing and God's curse be with you all.



## ECLOGUES

THE FEAST OF ST. HILARY

*Bertram. Lionel. Sandy. Cyril. Vivian.*

*Bertram*

YOUR evolution, still so crude  
In civic life, prefers to sit  
In murky air of muslin stewed  
With soot and sulphur of the pit.

*Lionel*

Why, this is only London's own  
Appurtenance in Janiveer  
And winter months—a want of tone,  
A jaundice of the atmosphere.

*Vivian*

And every winter cheerful folk,  
Six millions powerless to escape,  
Upon this clammy muslin choke  
This filthy air of sodden crape.

*Bertram*

Expecting no imperial cure  
From any corporate King Log

They undergo it, *forte et dure*,  
The torture of the London fog.

And though habitual croakers croak,  
A metaphysical desire  
Not to consume our proper smoke,  
Save when the chimney goes on fire,

Through urban and suburban deeps  
Sub-conscious in the minds of all,  
Explains the tolerance that keeps  
Our fog a hardy annual.

*Lionel*

I love the fog: in every street  
Shrill muffled cries and shapes forlorn,  
The frosted hoof with stealthy beat,  
The hollow sounding motor-horn:

A fog that lasts till, gently wrung  
By Pythian pangs, we realise  
That Doomsday somewhere dawns among  
The systems and the galaxies.

And ruin at the swiftest rate  
The chartered destinies pursue;  
While as for us, our final fate  
Already fixed with small ado,

Spills on our heads no wrathful cup,  
Nor wrecks us on a fiery shore,  
But leaves us simply swallowed up  
In London fog for evermore.

*Cyril*

The admirable errantry  
Of London's climate who can sing?  
From fogs of filthy muslin free,  
Elastic as a morn of Spring.

The weather, like a dazzling bride,  
Undid the lonely winter, threw  
The casemate of the orient wide  
And made the enchanted world anew.

But yesterday, so quick and so  
Chromatic is the climate here—  
From russet mud to silver snow,  
From radiant suns to fogs austere.

*Lionel*

I watched the morning yesterday  
Where from the ample stair you look  
Across the Park beneath the grey  
Ungainly column of the Duke:

You see him like a stylite true  
Impaled upon his pillar stand:—

It seems to pierce him through and through,  
The rod that braves the levin-brand.

Sunlit the other column glowed  
Intensely, lifting to the skies  
The admiral who swept the road  
Of empire clear for centuries.

Entangled on the Surrey-side  
The eager day a moment hung,  
Then struck in hate his ardent stride  
And round the southern chimneys swung.

A silvery weft of finest lawn,  
So thin, so phantom-like, became  
Ethereal mystery scarcely drawn  
Athwart the morning's saffron flame.

The Palace and the Abbey lost  
Their character of masonry,  
Transformed to glittering shadows tossed  
And buoyant on a magic sea.

And park and lake and precincts old  
Of Westminster were all arrayed  
In spectral weeds of pearl and gold  
And airy drifts of amber braid.

*Bertram*

Ghastly and foul, as Hecate's ban  
Pernicious are our fogs; but sweet  
And wonderful the mists that can  
Imparadise a London street.

The fabrics winnowed sunbeams work  
Of urban dew and smoky air;  
The opalescences that lurk  
In many a court and sombre square.

The tissued dawn that gems encrust,  
The violet wreaths of noon, the haze  
Of emerald and topaz dust  
That shrouds the evening distances;  
And gloom in baths of light annealed. . . .

ENTER SANDY

*Lionel*

From top to toe one travel-stain  
You come? And whence?

*Sandy*

An outland weald  
I come from, and a dateless reign  
That modes and periods never touch.

*Bertram*

From Epping Forest, I'll be sworn,  
The wilderness you haunt so much!

*Sandy*

No; from a less familiar bourne:  
 A Sussex chace renowned of old  
 Where withering innovation halts;  
 A tract of mingled wood and wold,  
 Of ragged heaths and ferny vaults.

*Lionel*

St. Leonard's Forest by your shoes  
 Over the latchet daubed with earth!  
 I know it well: the Mole, the Ouse,  
 Arun and Adur have their birth

Among its silting springs; and there  
 The nightingale has never sung,  
 They say, so humid is the air,  
 So dank the woods with ivy hung.

In summer-time you lightly tread  
 On moss as green as emerald,  
 And soft as silken velvet spread  
 Along the forest chancel, stalled

With bowers of thorn and laurel-tree;  
 And roomier and loftier  
 Than forest aisles are wont to be,  
 The green groined roof of beach and fir

Admits a dulcet twilight filled  
    With golden motes and beryl hues,  
That through the darkling thickets gild  
    Arun and Adur, Mole and Ouse.

*Sandy*

When I went out from Horsham town  
    A Northern blast of winter's breath  
Blew low across the open down  
    As hard as hate, as cold as death.

Close to the land the firmament  
    Like a camp-ceiling clung; and nigh  
The eaves of the horizon, bent  
    Like frowning brows, the ashen sky

Through ruined loop-holes scattered wide  
    A pallid gleam; but as the path,  
Leaving the highway leapt aside  
    To gain the forest, winter's wrath,

By sheltering hedgerows doubly balked,  
    Became a legendary thing,  
And for a while beside me walked  
    The very presence of the spring.

A bridge that spans a pebbled burn  
    The threshold of the forest is;  
And there like some dædalian urn,  
    Or sangreal of fragrances.

A deeply sunk, a vaulted dell  
    Possessed the summer's inmost soul—  
A captive, like the roseal smell  
    That haunts a seeming-empty bowl.

Though all the roses, plucked and rent,  
    Are squandered, yet our essence knows  
And greets the pure material scent,  
    Which is the spirit of the rose.

Within the forest-chancel, stalled  
    With bowers of evergreen and laid  
With lustrous living emerald,  
    As rich a moss as spring displayed,

No green groined roof of fir and beach  
    Reflected bronze and beryl hues,  
That could through darkling thickets reach  
    Arun and Adur, Mole and Ouse.

Unthatched, instead of summer's leaves,  
    A roof, with ebon rafters bare,  
Allowed the light in frosted sheaves  
    To silver all the wintry air.

With clapping wings doves wheeled about  
    Between the pine-tops and the skies;  
And blackbirds flitted in and out  
    The underwood with guttural cries.



A throstle had begun to build  
    Though still untimed; but loud and long  
The eager storm-cock sang and filled  
    The forest with his splendid song;

While spring, in winter's bosom warm,  
    Prologued in bough and bole and root  
The pregnant trance of trees that form  
    The summer's foliage, flower and fruit.

*Bertram*

Harvest in Winter's bosom sleeps,  
While time his patient vigil keeps.

II

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

*Ernest. Julian.*

*Julian*

VIRGINIA lives in a square;  
I harbour at hand in a street:  
And Spring has begun over there;  
So love like a pestilence sweet  
Envenoms the neighbouring air.

*Ernest*

No pestilence, Julian! Greet  
The coming of Spring with delight.  
Have done with your modish display!  
The cynic's intelligent spite  
Arrives by the miriest way:  
The ferment that works in the night  
Of a prodigal, desolate day,  
A morbid, acidulent scorn,  
Inhabits the vinegared lees  
In bosoms condignly forlorn—

*Julian*

In bosoms philosophy frees  
From the burden to which we are born!

*Ernest*

In bosoms that nothing can please,  
Being empty of pleasure and sunk  
In themselves; being wizened and frail  
Like vats when the wine has been drunk—  
Being warped and unspeakably stale  
Like vats in desuetude shrunk.  
Let the season and nature prevail;  
Let the winepress of youth over-run;—

*Julian*

If the valves be corroded with rust,  
And the power and gearing undone!

*Ernest*

Empurpled with stains of the must  
My fancy, forestalling the sun—

*Julian*

In the city we take him on trust!

*Ernest*

Disheartened the fog with a glance,  
And tintured with opulent dyes  
Of the lily, the rose and the paunce  
The sombre, the tenebrous skies—  
With the tricoloured blazon of France,  
And the light of a paramour's eyes!

For this is St. Valentine's day,  
And my sweetheart came into the lane:  
As I went by the speediest way,  
Being late for the morning train,  
Diana, in sweet disarray,  
The wonder of women, was fain  
To see and be seen of me first!

*Julian*

How happy to love and be loved!  
How wretched is he, how accursed,  
Whom Destiny handles ungloved!

*Ernest*

The highest encounter the worst;  
For they must be sifted and proved,  
While the rabble are shaken with ease  
Through a wide-meshed riddle of Fate.

*Julian*

O spare your proverbial pleas  
And the wisdom that wiseacres prate!

*Ernest*

You said that philosophy frees—

*Julian*

From a passion I would not abate  
For the wealth of the world all told?  
From the exquisite alchemy pain,  
That tortures the dross into gold?  
I spoke in a negligent vein,  
For I love like the lovers of old,  
Adoring a woman's disdain,  
That crushes the doughtiest hope.

*Ernest*

You speak like a vassal of words,  
The indolent slave of a trope!  
Exalt your irresolute thirds  
Into fifths and their jubilant scope;  
And learn of St. Valentine's birds  
That love is the herald of joy.

*Julian*

The pursuivant rather of care!

*Ernest*

You must brood on her beauty and cloy  
 Your fancy, extinguish despair  
 With obdurate visions; destroy  
 Yourself in her excellence rare;  
 Be buried in dreams of her worth!

*Julian*

My heart with her excellence bleeds;  
 My dreams of her people the earth.  
 And the curse is, there's nothing she needs;  
 She is rich and a woman of birth,  
 While I am the son of my deeds.

*Ernest*

Achieve then a sire of renown;  
 Perform to the height and be great.  
 You have fought——

*Julian*

And defeat was my crown!  
 When, naked, I wrestled with Fate,  
 The Destinies trampled me down:—  
 I fought in the van and was great,  
 And I won, though I wore no crown,  
 In the lists of the world; for Fate  
 And the Destinies trampled me down—  
 The myrmidons trampled me down.

## SNOW

### I

“WHO affirms that crystals are alive?”  
I affirm it, let who will deny:—  
Crystals are engendered, wax and thrive,  
Wane and wither; I have seen them die.

Trust me, masters, crystals have their day,  
Eager to attain the perfect norm,  
Lit with purpose, potent to display  
Facet, angle, colour, beauty, form.

### II

Water-crystals need for flower and root  
Sixty clear degrees, no less, no more;  
Snow, so fickle, still in this acute  
Angle thinks, and learns no other lore.

Such its life, and such its pleasure is,  
Such its art and traffic, such its gain,  
Evermore in new conjunctions this  
Admirable angle to maintain.

Crystal craft in every flower and flake  
    Snow exhibits, of the welkin free:  
Crystalline are crystals for the sake,  
    All and singular, of crystalry.

Yet does every crystal of the snow  
    Individualise, a seedling sown  
Broadcast, but instinct with power to grow  
    Beautiful in beauty of its own.

Every flake with all its prongs and dints  
    Burns ecstatic as a new-lit star:  
Men are not more diverse, finger-prints  
    More dissimilar than snow-flakes are.

Worlds of men and snow endure, increase,  
    Woven of power and passion to defy  
Time and travail: only races cease,  
    Individual men and crystals die.

### III

Jewelled shapes of snow whose feathery showers,  
    Fallen or falling wither at a breath,  
All afraid are they, and loth as flowers,  
    Beasts and men to tread the way to death.

Once I saw upon an object-glass,  
    Martyred underneath a microscope,  
One elaborate snow-flake slowly pass,  
    Dying hard, beyond the reach of hope.



Still from shape to shape the crystal changed,  
Writhing in its agony; and still,  
Less and less elaborate, arranged  
Potently the angle of its will.

Tortured to a simple final form,  
Angles six and six divergent beams,  
Lo, in death it touched the perfect norm,  
Verifying all its crystal dreams!

## IV

Such the noble tragedy of one  
Martyred snow-flake. Who can tell the fate  
Heinous and uncouth of showers undone,  
Fallen in cities!—Showers that expiate

Errant lives from polar worlds adrift  
Where the great millennial snows abide;  
Castaways from mountain-chains that lift  
Snowy summits in perennial pride;

Nomad snows, or snows in evil day  
Born to urban ruin, to be tossed,  
Trampled, shovelled, ploughed and swept away  
Down the seething sewers: all the frost

Flowers of heaven melted up with lees,  
Offal, recrement, but every flake  
Showing to the last in fixed degrees  
Perfect crystals for the crystal's sake.

## v

Usefulness of snow is but a chance

Here in temperate climes with winter sent,  
Sheltering earth's prolonged hibernal trance:

All utility is accident.

Sixty clear degrees the joyful snow,

Practising economy of means,

Fashions endless beauty in, and so

Glorifies the universe with scenes

Arctic and antarctic: stainless shrouds,

Ermine woven in silvery frost, attire

Peaks in every land among the clouds

Crowned with snows to catch the morning's  
fire.

THE TESTAMENT OF SIR SIMON SIM-  
PLEX CONCERNING AUTOMO-  
BILISM

THAT railways are inadequate appears  
Indubitable now. For sixty years  
Their comfort grew until the *train de luxe*  
Arrived, arousing in conducted Cook's,  
And other wholesale tourists, an envious smart,  
For here they recognised the perfect art  
And science of land-travel. Now we sing  
A greater era, hail a happier Spring.  
The motor-car reveals ineptitude  
In railway-trains; and travellers conclude  
The railway is archaic: strictly true,  
Although the reason sounds as false as new:—  
Railways are democratic, vulgar, laic;  
And who can doubt Democracy's archaic?

The railway was the herald and the sign,  
And powerful agent in the swift decline  
Of Europe and the West. The future sage  
Will blame sententiously the railway age,  
Preachers upon its obvious vices pounce,  
And poets, wits and journalists pronounce

The nineteenth century in prose and rhyme  
The most unhappy period of time.  
That nations towering once in pomp and pride  
Of monarchs, rank and breeding, should subside  
To one dead undistinguishable horde  
Sans sceptre, mitre, coronet and sword,  
Reverting to a pithecoidal state  
May be the purpose of recurrent fate;  
But that such folks should to themselves appear  
Progressing toward a great millennial year  
Is just the bitter-sweet, the chilly-hot,  
The subtle metaphysic of the plot.

The last age saw the last stage of the fit  
That pestered, when the Roman Empire split,  
The catalytic centuries: the strange  
Insanity that fed on secular change;  
The general paralysis of men  
That ended in the railway and the wen  
Called London: from the Tiber to the Thames,  
From dreaming empire to delirious aims  
That move the laughter of the careless fates  
And effervesce in socialistic pates.

But convalescence with the car begins  
And petrol expiates our railway sins.  
Before we know we shall with joy behold  
A world as sane as any world of old;

From labour and electoral problems free,  
A world the fibre of whose health shall be,  
No Will to be the Mob, but mastering all,  
A Will to be the Individual;  
For every Mob exhales a poisonous breath,  
And Socialism is decadence, is death:  
The Mob expropriates, degrades, destroys;  
The Individual conquers, makes, enjoys.  
Not till the motor was the contrast plain,  
Because the separate classes of the train  
Deceived us with a choice of company;  
And, when he liked, the tame celebrity,  
The genius, man of wealth, aristocrat,  
By means of tips through any journey sat  
In cornered state; or, with sufficient pelf,  
Could purchase a compartment for himself.  
He rather would have deemed himself a snob  
Than that the train could turn him into Mob,  
Till automotion's privacy and pride  
Exposed the grossness of the railway ride;  
For 'twas the freedom of the motor-car  
That showed how tyrannous the railways are.

To go by train from one place to another  
You have to brave the station's smoke and smother:  
The train derides you there; 'twill never come  
To pick you up, nor turn, to see you home,  
A single wheel: the getting under way,

The true vexation of a holiday,  
The stolid train permits you to deplore;  
But with your automobile at the door—  
Why, there you are, nor need you stir a foot,  
Man and portmanteau instantly *en route!*  
You buy a ticket if you go by train  
At some offensive loophole, which you gain  
After prolonged attendance in a queue—  
Whatever class you take, a motley crew:  
And to await one's turn, like patient Job,  
Unites one with a vengeance to the Mob.  
Then you may miss the train; but *you* must wait  
*Its* advent and departure prompt or late.  
The motor soothes, the railway racks your nerves;  
The train commands, the automobile serves.  
The automobile nurses all caprice,  
And gives the longest life a second lease;  
Indulges indolence, and even in me  
Increases individuality.

I thought, and many my opinion shared,  
That the deceased politic who declared  
That all were Socialists, had told, perhaps,  
A fib exploited in a studied lapse  
Of platform declamation as a sop  
To catch erratic voters on the hop,  
The strained politeness of a caustic mind,  
A dead-lift effort to say something kind.

'Twas more than that: not only had we learned  
To suffer Socialism; our souls discerned  
A something fine about it; egoists even  
Perceived therein at last a mundane heaven.

“Life is a railway journey,” genius thought—  
(The erring genius very cheaply bought  
With gilded apples of Asphaltites)—  
“Thieves bearing swag, and poets sprouting bays,  
The ring, the cabinet, scortatory dames,  
Bishops, sectarians of a myriad names,  
Bankers and brokers, merchants, mendicants,  
Booked in the same train like a swarm of ants;  
First, second, third class, mass and mob expressed  
Together to the Islands of the Blest—  
Each passenger provided with a groat  
To pass the Stygian stile for Charon's boat.  
Or broad or narrow as the gauge may run,  
None leaves the track without disaster; none  
Escapes a single stoppage on the way;  
And none arrives before his neighbour may.  
In the guard's van my sacred luggage knocks  
Against the tourist's traps, the bagman's box;  
And people with inferior aims to mine  
Partake the rapid transit of the line.  
But this is culture of the social school,  
And teaches me to lead my life by rule  
Empirical, of positive descent

And altruistic self-embezzlement.  
Life is a railway journey: I rejoice  
That folk whose purpose, visage, clothes and voice  
Offend me will continue to offend  
In the same train until the journey's end."

So spoke the genius in pathetic rage.  
The socialistic and the railway age  
Were certainly coeval; machinery too  
Equated communism; and every new  
Development of electricity  
Was welcomed by the Mob with three times three,  
Convinced the world at last was through the wood—  
Right through to Universal Brotherhood!  
Conceive it:—Universal Brotherhood,  
With everybody feeble, kind and good!  
I, even I, Sir Simon Simplex, know  
The world would end to-day if that were so.  
What spur does man require, what stinging zest  
To do still better than his level best?  
Why, enemies; and if he has them not  
He must unearth and beat them till they're hot;  
For only enmity can train and trounce  
The cortex and the muscle to an ounce.  
Let Socialists deny, mistaking peace,  
That only with the world will warfare cease;  
When *we* behold the battle-flags unfurled  
We know the fates phlebotomise the world,



And alternate with peace's patent pill,  
The old heroic cure for every ill.

Life was a railway journey; foe and friend,  
Infected with nostalgia of the end,  
Awaited patiently the crack of doom;  
But thank the powers that be, the motor boom,  
Predestined to postpone the judgment-day,  
Arrived in time to show a better way.  
And when the Automobile came, we found  
Our incorrupt opinion safe and sound,  
Inoculated only by the schism,  
For ever proof against all Socialism.

The motor stops the decadence: not all  
Are in the same train with the prodigal,  
The Christian scientist, the *souteneur*,  
The Gothamite, the man from anywhere,  
Domestic Gill and idiomatic Jack,  
The wheedling knave, the sneak, the hectoring  
quack;

The man of broader mind and farther goal  
Is not entrained with Lubin Littlesoul;  
Your gentleman by birth and quickened sense,  
Refined requirements and abundant pence,  
And men of faculty and swelling aim  
Who conquer riches, power, position, fame,  
Are not entrained with loafers, quibblers, cranks,

Nor with the Mob who never leave the ranks,  
With plodding dullness, unambitious ease,  
And discontented incapacities.

Goodwill is in the blood, in you and me,  
And most in men of wealth and pedigree;  
So rich and poor, men, women, age and youth  
Imagined some ingredient of truth  
In Socialistic faith that there could be  
A common basis of equality.

But now we know and by the motor swear  
The prepossession was as false as fair;  
Men are not equal; no two intellects  
Are of a calibre; desires, defects,  
Powers, aptitudes, are never on a par,  
No more than fingerprints and noses are.  
And on my soul and conscience, I maintain  
Political equality's as vain  
As personal: for instance, I would place  
The franchise on a principle of race,  
And give the Saxon's forward reach a felt  
Prepotence o'er the backward-glancing Celt;  
And if his chauffeur counts as one, why then  
Sir Simon Simplex should be reckoned ten.

I call Democracy archaic, just  
As manhood suffrage is atavic lust  
For folknotes of the prime, whose analogue

In travel was the train, a passing vogue:  
The automobile put an end to that,  
And left Democracy as fallen and flat  
As railway-stock. Wealth and the crafty hand  
That gathers wealth had always at command  
Horse-carriages for private travel, but  
The pace had got beyond that leisured rut;  
Class, mass and mob for fifty years and more  
Had all to travel in the jangling roar  
Of railways, the nomadic caravan  
That stifled individual mind in man,  
Till automobilism arose at last!  
Now with the splendid periods of the past  
Our youthful century is proudly linked;  
And things that Socialism supposed extinct,  
Degree, nobility and noble strife,  
A form, a style, a privacy in life  
Will reappear; and, crowning Nature's plan,  
The individual and the gentleman  
In England reassume his lawful place  
And vindicate the greatness of the race.

## THE CAKE OF MITHRIDATES

QUENCHED is the fire on autumn's hearth,  
The ingle vacant, hushed the song;  
But the resolved, consistent earth,  
And Nature, tolerant and strong,

Serenely wait the ordered change  
Of times and tides. Ten thousand years  
Of day and night, the scope and range  
Of liberal seasons; smiles and tears

Of June and April; brumal storm  
Autumnal calm, and flower and fruit:  
These are the rich content, the form  
Of Nature's mind; these constitute

The academe and discipline,  
The joust and knightly exercise,  
The culture of the earth wherein  
The earth's profound composure lies.

The wisdom of the earth excels  
The craft and skill of every age.  
Witness the tale the Persian tells  
Of Mithridates, King and mage.

The whole divan extolled his powers:  
They said the soil revered him so,  
That, if he planted sawdust, flowers  
Of every hue would promptly grow.

“So be it!” quoth the King of Kings:  
“Bring hither sweepings of the street,  
Chaff, sawdust, money, jewels, rings,  
And fifty grains of summer wheat.”

He sowed them in a fertile bed,  
And set a guard about the plot  
Both day and night: “Although,” he said,  
“The earth is honest, men are not.”

The wheat betimes began to grow.  
In shame as in a mordant steeped,  
The viziers, sulking in a row,  
Beheld at length the harvest reaped.

Said then the King, “A sheaf! Proceed:  
Thresh, winnow, grind it, bolt and bake,  
And bring with all convenient speed  
Of leavened bread a goodly cake.

“For you, my worthy viziers—come!  
The marvellous crops you promised me?”  
The whole perturbed divan, as dumb  
As oysters, felt indeed at sea.

“Ha!” cried the King, “when shall we laugh  
At prodigies great nature grants  
Almighty monarchs? Fruit of chaff,  
Where is it? Where, my sawdust-plants?”

“The vine and vintage of my gold?  
My silver-bushes, where are they?  
My coin should yield a hundred-fold  
By nature’s lavish usury!”

“My fragrant banks of posied rings  
Where diamonds blossom, show me; show  
In arbours where the bulbul sings  
A branch of budding rubies glow.

“My jewel-orchards, money-shrubs?  
Perhaps they’re sprouting underground?  
My cash, at least, among the grubs—  
My cash and gems! Let them be found!”

“Dig, viziers, dig!” The viziers dug:  
Among the deep roots of the grain,  
With here an earthworm, there a slug  
They found the treasure, sowed in vain.

And all the sweepings of the streets,  
The chaff, the rubbish? Like a jest  
Forgiven, forgotten! So discreet  
Is nature’s kindly alkahest.

Then every vizier lost his nerve,  
Expecting death, a prompt despatch.  
But Mithridates said, "Observe  
How great the soil is: bulbuls hatch

"The cuckoo's eggs, whereas the earth  
Ignores the costliest stone to feed  
With chosen fare and bring to birth  
The soul of any honest seed.

"The earth is true and harbours not  
Imposture: all your flattering lies  
Are buried in this garden-plot;  
Be genuine if you would be wise."

With that the baker, breathing spice,  
Produced the cake hot from the fire,  
And every vizier ate a slice  
Resolving to be less a liar.

## THE LUTANIST

THE harvests of purple and gold  
Are garnered and trodden; dead leaves  
To-morrow will carpet the wold;  
And the arbours and sylvan eaves  
Dismantled, no welcome extend;  
The bowers and sheltering eaves  
Will witness to-morrow the end  
Of their stained, of their sumptuous leaves,  
While tempests apparel the wold  
In their cast-off crimson and gold.

But I of abundance to be  
Think only, the corn and the wine,  
The manifold wealth of the sea  
And the harvest-home of the mine.  
Decay and the fall of leaf,  
Lost lives in the tenebrous mine,  
Disaster, disconsolate grief  
Molest not the corn and the wine,  
The infinite wealth of the sea  
And the bountiful harvests to be.

For beneath are the heavens and above,  
And time is a silken yoke;



My lute is my friend; and I love  
A beautiful maid of my folk—  
A marvel to see and adore,  
Astounding her foes and her folk  
With silence and exquisite lore  
Of youth and its delicate yoke,  
With wonderful wisdom in love,  
And the music beneath and above.

I think how her beauty would kill  
A lover less ardent than I,  
I faint and my heart stands still  
In the street when she passes by;  
My lute, I bid it be dumb:—  
“Hush, for my love goes by!  
O hush, or she may not come!”  
A lover less ardent than I  
Her beauty might palsy, might kill!  
Lute-strings, heart-strings, be still!

But when she has passed, a spell  
Delivers my voice and my lute;  
My songs and my melodies well  
Like fountains; like clusters of fruit  
My fantasy ripens; my rhymes,  
With savour of wayside fruit  
And sweet as aerial chimes  
Of flower-bells, ring to my lute;

Like fountains my melodies well  
When the thought of her works like a spell.

She walks and the emerald lawn  
Is jewelled at every tread ;  
Like the burning tresses of dawn  
The virgin gold of her head  
Illumines the land and the sea ;  
From her glittering feet to her head  
Is the essence of being—is she  
Who walks with a magical tread  
As she dazzles the eyes of dawn  
And jewels the grass-green lawn.

Though the harvests of purple and gold  
Are garnered, and fallen leaves  
To-morrow will carpet the wold,  
I think how the sylvan eaves  
A welcome in summer extend,  
How the bowers and the sheltering eaves  
Will mantle in summer and bend  
With their bloom and their burden of leaves,  
And autumn apparel the wold  
In harvests of purple and gold.

## ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT

ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT, the tidal isle,  
In May with daffodils and lilies  
Is kirtled gorgeously a while  
As ne'er another English hill is:  
About the precipices cling  
The rich renascence robes of Spring.

Her gold and silver, nature's gifts,  
The prodigal with both hands showers:  
O not in patches, not in drifts  
But round and round a mount of flowers—  
Of lilies and of daffodils,  
The envy of all other hills.

And on the lofty summit looms  
The castle: None could build or plan it.  
The four-square foliage springs and blooms,  
The piled elaborate flower of granite,  
That not the sun can wither; no,  
Nor any tempest overthrow.

## TWO DOGS

Two dogs on Bournemouth beach: a mongrel, one,  
With spaniel plainest on the palimpsest,  
The blur of muddled stock; the other, bred,  
With tapering muzzle, rising brow, strong jaw—  
A terrier to the tail's expressive tip,  
Magnetic, nimble, endlessly alert.

The mongrel, wet and shivering, at my feet  
Deposited a wedge of half-inch board,  
A foot in length and splintered at the butt;  
Withdrew a yard and crouched in act to spring,  
While to and fro between his wedge and me  
The glancing shuttle of his eager look  
A purpose wove. The terrier, ears a-cock,  
And neck one curve of sheer intelligence,  
Stood sentinel: no sound, no movement, save  
The mongrel's telegraphic eyes, bespoke  
The object of the canine pantomime.

I stooped to grasp the wedge, knowing the game;  
But like a thing uncoiled the mongrel snapped  
It off, and promptly set it out again,  
The terrier at his quarters, every nerve  
Waltzing inside his lithe rigidity.

“ More complex than I thought ! ” Again I made  
To seize the wedge ; again the mongrel won,  
Whipped off the Jack, relaid it, crouched and  
watched,

The terrier at attention all the time.

I won the third bout : ere the mongrel snapped  
His toy, I stayed my hand : he halted, half  
Across the neutral ground, and in the pause  
Of doubt I seized the prize. A vanquished yelp  
From both ; and then intensest vigilance.

Together, when I tossed the wedge, they plunged  
Before it reached the sea. The mongrel, out  
Among the waves, and standing to them, meant  
Heroic business ; but the terrier dodged  
Behind, adroitly scouting in the surf,  
And seized the wedge, rebutted by the tide,  
In shallow water, while the mongrel searched  
The English Channel on his hind-legs poised.  
The terrier laid the trophy at my feet :  
And neither dog protested when I took  
The wedge : the overture of their marine  
Diversion had been played out once for all.

A second match the reckless mongrel won,  
Vanishing twice under the heavy surf,  
Before he found and brought the prize to land.  
Then for an hour the aquatic sport went on,

And still the mongrel took the heroic rôle,  
The terrier hanging deftly in the rear.  
Sometimes the terrier when the mongrel found  
Betrayed a jealous scorn, as who should say,  
“Your hero’s always a vulgarian! Pah!”  
But when the mongrel missed, after a fight  
With such a sea of troubles, and saw the prize  
Grabbed by the terrier in an inch of surf,  
He seemed entirely satisfied, and watched  
With more pathetic vigilance the cast  
That followed.

“Once a passion, mongrel, this  
Retrieving of a stick,” I told the brute,  
“Has now become a vice with you. Go home!  
Wet to the marrow and palsied with the cold,  
You won’t give in, and, good or bad, you’ve earned  
My admiration. Go home now and get warm,  
And the best bone in the pantry.” As I talked  
I stripped the water from his hybrid coat,  
Laughed and made much of him—which mortified  
The finking terrier.

“I’m despised, it seems!”  
The terrier thought. “My cleverness (my feet  
Are barely wet!) beside the mongrel’s zeal  
Appears timidity. This biped’s mad

To pet the stupid brute. Yap! Yah!" He  
seized

The wedge and went; and at his heels at once,  
Without a thought of me, the mongrel trudged.

Along the beach, smokers of cigarettes,  
All sixpenny-novel-readers to a man,  
Attracted Master Terrier. Again the wedge,  
Passed to the loyal mongrel, was teed with care;  
Again the fateful overture began.

Upon the fourth attempt, and not before,  
And by a feint at that, the challenged youth  
(Most equable, be sure, of all the group:  
Allow the veriest dog to measure men!)  
Secured the soaked and splintered scrap of deal.

Thereafter, as with me, the game progressed,  
The breathless, shivering mongrel, rushing out  
Into the heavy surf, there to be tossed  
And tumbled like a floating bunch of kelp,  
While gingerly the terrier picked his steps  
Strategic in the rear, and snapped the prize  
Oftener than his more adventurous, more  
Romantic, more devoted rival did.  
The uncomfortable moral glares at one!  
And, further, in the mongrel's wistful mind  
A primitive idea darkly wrought:

Having once lost the prize in the overture  
With his bipedal rival, he felt himself  
In honour and in conscience bound to plunge  
For ever after it at the winner's will.  
But the smart terrier was an Overdog,  
And knew a trick worth two of that. He  
thought—

If canine cerebation works like ours,  
And I interpret the canine mind aright—  
“Let men and mongrels worry and wet their coats!  
I use my brains and choose the better part.  
Quick-witted ease and self-approval lift  
Me miles above this anxious cur, absorbed,  
Body and soul, in playing a game I win  
Without an effort. And yet the mongrel seems  
The happier dog. How's that? Belike, the old  
Compensatory principle again.  
I have pre-eminence and conscious worth;  
And he has power to fling himself away  
For anything or nothing. Men and dogs,  
What an unfathomable world it is!”



## THE WASP

ONCE as I went by rail to Epping Street,  
Both windows being open, a wasp flew in;  
Through the compartment swung and almost out,  
Scarce seen, scarce heard; but dead against the  
pane

Entitled "Smoking," did the train's career  
Arrest her passage. Such a wonderful  
Impervious transparency, before  
That palpitating moment, had never yet  
Her airy voyage thwarted. Undismayed,  
With diligence incomparable, she sought  
An exit, till the letters like a snare  
Entangled her; or else the frosted glass  
And signature indelible appeared  
The key to all the mystery: there she groped,  
And flirted petulant wings, and fiercely sang  
A counter-spell against the sorcery,  
The sheer enchantment that inhibited  
Her access to the world—her birthright there!  
So visible, and so beyond her reach!  
Baffled and raging like a tragic queen,  
She left at last the stencilled tablet; roamed  
The pane a while to cool her regal ire,  
Then tentatively touched the window-frame:

Sure footing still, though rougher than the glass;  
Dissimilar in texture, and so obscure!

Perplexed now by opacity, with foot and wing  
She coasted up and down the wood and worked  
Her wrath to passion-point again. Then from the  
frame

She slipped by chance into the open space  
Left by the lowered sash:—the world once more  
In sight! She paused; she closed her wings, and  
felt

The air with learned antennæ for the smooth  
Resistance that she knew now must belong  
To such mysterious transparences.  
No foothold? Down she fell—six inches down!—  
Hovered a second, dazed and dubious still;  
Then soared away, a captive queen set free.

## THE THAMES EMBANKMENT

As grey and dank as dust and ashes slaked  
With wash of urban tides the morning lowered;  
But over Chelsea Bridge the sagging sky  
Had colour in it—blots of faintest bronze,  
The stains of daybreak. Westward slabs of light  
From vapour-disentangled, sparsely glazed  
The panelled firmament; but vapour held  
The morning captive in the smoky east.  
At lowest ebb the tide on either bank  
Laid bare the fat mud of the Thames, all pinched  
And scalloped thick with dwarfish surges. Cranes,  
Derricks and chimney-stalks of the Surrey-side,  
Inverted shadows, in the motionless,  
Dull, leaden mirror of the channel hung:  
Black flags of smoke broke out, and in the dead  
Sheen of the water hovered underneath,  
As in the upper region, listlessly,  
Across the viaduct, trailing plumes of steam,  
The trains clanked in and out.

Slowly the sun  
Undid the homespun swathing of the clouds,  
And splashed his image on the northern shore—  
A thing extravagantly beautiful:

The glistening, close-grained canvas of the mud  
Like hammered copper shone, and all about  
The burning centre of the mirror'd orb's  
Illimitable depth of silver fire  
Harmonious beams, the overtones of light,  
Suffused the emboss'd, metallic river bank.  
Woven of rainbows a dewdrop can dissolve  
And packed with power a simple lens can wield,  
The perfect, only source of beauty, light  
Reforms uncouthest shapelessness and turns  
Decoloured refuse into ornament;  
The leafless trees that lined the vacant street  
Had all their stems picked out in golden scales,  
Their branches carved in ebony; and shed  
Around them by the sanction of the morn  
In lieu of leaves each wore an aureole.

Barges at anchor, barges stranded, hulks  
Ungainly, in the unshorn beams and rich  
Replenished planet of a winter sun,  
Appeared ethereal, and about to glide  
On high adventure chartered, swift away  
For regions undiscovered.

Huddled wharfs

A while, and then once more a reach of Thames  
Visibly flowing where the sun and wind  
Together caught the current. Quays and piers

To Vauxhall Bridge, and there the Baltic Wharf  
Exhibited its wonders: figureheads  
Of the old wooden walls on gate and post—  
Colossal torsos, bulky bosoms thrown  
Against the storm, sublime uplifted eyes  
Telling the stars. As white as ghosts  
They overhung the way, usurping time  
With carved memorials of the past. Forlorn  
Elysium of the might of England!

### Gulls

Riparian scavengers, arose and wheeled  
About my head, for morsels begging loud  
With savage cries that piercingly reverbed  
The tempest's dissonance. Birds in themselves  
Unmusical and uninventive ape  
Impressive things with mocking undesigned:  
The eagle's bark mimics the crashing noise  
That shakes his eyry when the thunder roars;  
And chanticler's imperious trumpet-call  
Re-echoes round the world his ancestor's  
Barbaric high-wrought challenge to the dawn;  
But birds of homely feather and tuneful throat,  
With music in themselves and masterdom,  
To beauty turn obsessive sight and sounds:  
The mounting larks, compact of joyful fire,  
Render the coloured sunlight into song;  
Adventurous and impassioned nightingales

Transmute the stormy equinox they breast  
With courage high, for hawthorn thickets bound  
When spring arrives, into the melody  
That floods the forest aisles; the robin draws  
Miraculously from the rippling brook  
The red wine of his lay; blackbird and thrush,  
Prime-artists of the woodland, proudly take  
All things sonorous for their province, weave  
The gold-veined thunder and the crystal showers,  
The winds, the rivers and the choir of birds  
In the rich strains of their chromatic score.

By magic mechanism the weltering clouds  
Re-grouped themselves in continents and isles  
That diapered the azure firmament;  
And sombre chains of cumulus, outlined  
In ruddy shade along the house-tops loomed,  
Phantasmal Alp on Alp. The sunbeams span  
Chaotic vapour into cosmic forms,  
And juggled in the sky, with hoods of cloud  
As jesters twirl on sticks their booby-caps—  
The potent sunbeams, that had fished the whole  
Enormous mass of moisture from the sea,  
Kneaded, divided and divided, wrought  
And turned it to a thousand fantasies  
Upon the ancient potter's wheel, the earth.

## THE ARISTOCRAT OF THE ROAD

MORE than one way of walking? Verily;  
But, for the art of walking, only one.  
Beginners in the ambulative art,  
As in all art, are immethodical:  
Your want of method, rightly understood,  
Is faculty, and not its absence; style  
Adventurous of genius; say, a gift;  
Immethod, necessary handicap  
Upon originality, that loses  
Matches many on time or weight, but beats  
The winner virtually. The crammer's wiles,  
And royal roads to knowledge, short-cuts, keys,  
And time-and-labour-saving mechanism  
Beset the ambulative acolyte;  
But true originality in art  
Would not at first, even if it could, possess  
Impeccable technique; and your foredoomed  
Pedestrian errs designedly (if one  
Whose privilege it is to deviate  
Can ever be arraigned for trespass) bent  
On quitting, jeopardy or none, the old  
Immediately seductive methods blazed  
By trained precursors in pedestrian art.

At first then the prospective walker, rash  
As any hero, dedicates himself  
To chance. A vagabond upon the earth,  
He leads a life uncertain: art and craft  
Pedalian suffer secret chrysalid  
Probations and adventures ere they gain  
The ultimate imago of complete  
Pedestrianism. Through gross suburban miles  
And over leagues of undistinguished ground  
He plods, he tramps. Utilitarian thoughts  
Of exercise and health extenuate  
The dullness of the duty; he persuades  
Himself he likes it; finds, where none exist,  
Amazing qualities; and tires his limbs,  
His thought, his fancy, o'er and o'er again.  
But in the dismal watches of the night  
He knows it all delusion; beauty none,  
Nor pleasure in it; ennui only—eased  
By speculation on the wayside-inn,  
Or country-town hotel where lunch permits  
An hour's oblivion of his self-imposed,  
His thriftless drudgery. Despair!—And life?  
Worth picking from the gutter? No; not worth  
The stooping for! Natheless, a walker born,  
He takes the road next day; steps out once more,  
As if the world were just begun, and he,  
Sole monarch; plods the suburb, tramps the waste—  
Again returning baffled and dismayed.



He tries a comrade. Worse and worse!—for that,  
 In high pedestrianism, turns out to be  
 A double misery, a manacled  
 Contingence with vexation. Walking-tours?  
 Belletrists crack them up. He takes one:—lo,  
 A sheer atrocity! A man may like  
 To drink, but who would quench next morning's  
     drouth,  
 Unholy though it be, with torture *forte*  
*Et dure* in gallon draughts when by his bed  
 A hair gleams of the dog that bit him! Tours  
 Pedestrious? Madness, like the poet's who thought  
 To write a thousand sonnets at the rate  
 Of three a day! And this the tale of years!

Forth from his travail and despair at last,  
 Crash through his plodding apparatus, breaks  
 The dawn of art. He recollects a mile,  
 Or half a mile that pleased him; a furlong here,  
 And there a hundred yards; or an hour's march  
 Over some curve of the world when everything  
 Above him and about him from the zenith  
 To the sky-edge, and radiant from his feet  
 Toward every cardinal point, put off the veil,  
 Becoming evident as guilt or love, as things  
 That cannot hide:—becoming him,  
 And he becoming them; and all his past  
 And all his future wholly what they are,

The very form and meaning of the earth  
 Itself. And at these times he recollects,  
 And in these places, how his thoughts were clear  
 As crystal, deeper than the sea, as swift  
 As light—the pulse, the bosom and the zone  
 Of beauty infinite. And then and there  
 Whatever he imagined took at once  
 A bodily shape; and nought conceived or done  
 Since life began appeared irrational,  
 Wanton or needless. Since, the world and fate,  
 Material functions of each other, apt  
 As syllables of power and magic mind  
 In some self-reading riddle, as fracted bits  
 In self-adjusting instruments that play  
 Unheard ethereal music of the spheres,  
 Assumed their places equably; all things  
 Fell duly into line and dressed their ranks.

Thus art begins, as sudden as a star  
 In some unconstellated tract of space,  
 Where two extinct long-wandering orbs collide  
 And smite into each other and become  
 A lamp of glory, no crepuscular  
 Uncertainty, no interval between  
 The old misfortune and the new delight.  
 And thus at once the plodder of the waste  
 Attains utility and finds himself  
 Aristocrat and patron of the road;

The artizan, an artist—aristocrat  
And artist being ever synonyms.  
All vagabondage, all bohemianism,  
All errantry, the unlicked, chrysalid  
Condition of aristocracy and art,  
Cut off for ever, the proud pedestrian free  
Of the world, walks only now in picked resorts,  
And can without a chart, without a guide,  
Discover lands richer than El Dorado,  
Sweeter than Beulah, and with ease  
Ascend secluded mountains more delectable  
Than heights in ancient pilgrimages famed,  
Or myth-clad hills, or summits of romance.  
Old traversed roads he traverses again,  
Untroubled; nothing new he sees  
Except the stretch of pleasure-ground, like one  
Who turns the leaves o'er of a tedious book,  
Careless of verbiage to reperuse  
The single page inspired; in regions new  
He goes directly to his own like beasts  
That never miss the way; and having marked  
A province with the beauties of his choice,  
In them alone he walks, lord of the world.

## ROAD AND RAIL

MARCH MANY-WEATHERS, bluff and affable,  
The usher and the pursuivant of Spring,  
Had sent his North wind blaring through the  
world—

A mundane wind that held the earth, and puffed  
The smoke of urban fire and furnace far  
Afield. An ashen canopy of cloud,  
The dense immobled sky, high-pitched above  
The wind's terrestrial office, overhung  
The city when the morning train drew out.  
Leaping along the land from town to town,  
Its iron lungs respired its breath of steam,  
Its resonant flanges, and its vertebral  
Loose-jointed carcase of a centipede  
Gigantic, hugged and ground the parallel  
Adjusted metals of its destined way  
With apathetic fatalism, the mark  
Of all machinery.—From Paddington  
To Basingstoke the world seemed standing still:  
Nothing astir between the firmaments  
Except the aimless tumult of the wind,  
And clanging travail of the ponderous train  
In labour with its journey on the smooth,  
The ineludible, the shining rails.

But prompt at Basingstoke an interlude  
Began: a reckless youth, possessed with seven  
Innocuous devils of self-consciousness  
Primeval, bouncing in irruptively,  
Lusty-Juventus-wise, annexed the whole  
Compartment—as a pendant to the earth,  
Already his! Wind-shaven, ruddy; hunched  
And big; all knees and knuckles; with a mouth  
That opened like a portal; fleshy chops  
And turned-up nose widespread, the signature  
Of jollity; a shapeless, elvish skull;  
His little pig's eyes in their sockets soused  
But simmering merrily; just twenty years;  
One radiation of nervous energy;  
A limber tongue and most unquenchable,  
Complacent blaze of indiscretion, soft  
As a night-light in a nursery. "Where away?"  
Quoth he; and "Hang the weather! I've seen  
worse,  
In my time, for the season." Then: Did we  
think  
The train was doing thirty or forty miles  
An hour? Sometimes, by instinct, he could tell  
To a mile the rate at which a train went.  
This morning, for a wonder, he couldn't trust  
His judgment in the matter;—annoying!—Still  
A man's form varied, and we must excuse  
His inability to gauge our speed.

Good golf about here,—very! Did we play?  
And, by the bye, talking of golf, he did  
A brilliant thing just now:—missing the train  
At Farnham on the other line, instead  
Of waiting for the next, he tramped across  
To Basingstoke,—some decent tale of miles;  
His destination being Winchester,  
Either line suited,—see? The weather,—yes,  
The weather;—healthy, of course;—your moist  
cold kills;  
Your dry cold cures;—to-day it seemed as cold,—  
But that must be the wind; in sheltered roads  
It smelt like Spring;—to-morrow,—who could tell  
To-morrow's weather?—a funny climate, ours!  
Was that a cow there, or a—Yes, a cow.  
He didn't know how we regarded it,  
But he, for his part, took it that the hand  
That rocked the cradle ruled the world: to drop  
A signature into a ballot-box  
Would make no earthly! (Slang, elliptical.)  
Although we must remember, all of us,  
This rocking of the cradle was out of date;  
But that he wouldn't canvass;—we were to mind  
There must be no mistake: women were women  
All the world to nothing; and—mark him—if  
They *had* political enfranchisement,  
No one could say—no one at all!—what might  
And mightn't happen: not a doubt of that.

Getting along more quickly; forty miles,  
He thought; or less, perhaps. He meant to lunch  
At Winchester; then hire a trap and drive . . .  
"Instanter to the devil," someone sighed.

All this, and further, an infinitude  
Of dislocated prattle, with a smile  
Indelible, and such a negligent  
Absorbition\* in self that no appeal,  
Except a sheer affront, abuse, or blow,  
Could have revealed remotely any gleam  
Or shade, to him apparent, of his own  
Insidid and grotesque enormity!  
When time, distemper or disaster sap  
Such individuals, and they see themselves,  
In facets of disrupted character,  
As others see them, stupid and absurd,  
How bad the quarter of an hour must be!  
Natheless there are extant a hearty breed,  
Incorrigibly cheerful, who behold  
Themselves for ever in the best of lights.  
And by the pipe and bowl of Old King Cole  
They have the best of it! To see ourselves

\* This word has fallen out of use; but having it we might employ it. Its doublet, "absorption," could be relegated to physics, etc., and "absorbition" kept for mental engrossment. The dictionaries lay the stress on the penultimate; but in restoring "absorbition" to the language, I place the main accent on the second syllable.

As others see us may be good enough;  
 But to love others in their vanities,  
 And to portray the glorious counterfeit—  
 In sympathetic ink that sympathy  
 Alone can read aright,—why that's a gift  
 Vouchsafed to genius of the rarest strain!

At Lyndhurst-road the coach for Lyndhurst  
 took

The turnpike at its best commercial pace.  
 And there the sun burst out with moted beams  
 In handfuls, clenched like sheaves of thunderbolts.  
 The riven clouds, of homespun slashed and gored,  
 Displayed through unhemmed slits the turquoise  
 sky,—

As tender as a damsel's bosom-thoughts.  
 Across the forest's swarthy-purple ridge  
 A sparse shower twinkled; but the broken bulk  
 Of vapour, by the sunbeams bundled up,  
 Slipped o'er the sky-edge and was no more seen.  
 Like a lithe weapon by gigantic hands  
 In pastance wielded, keen the brandished wind  
 Whistled about us all the uphill way  
 To Lyndhurst, where a lofty church o'erlooks  
 The forest's metes and bounds, its modish spire  
 A landmark far and wide. But in the glebes  
 And garden-closes ancient houses—thatched,  
 Of post-and-panel, and with arching eaves



About their high and deep-set windows—peer  
Occultly out of many centuries.  
An old-world use and wont, the neighbourhood  
And venue of the place are everywhere  
Presumptive,—in the High Street, new and raw,  
As in the sylvan faubourgs; for a gust  
Of burning log and faggot importunes  
The passer-by—the forest's bitter-sweet  
Aroma, as it turns to genial warmth  
And toothsome savour for the villager.

SONG FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH OF  
MAY

I

THE character and strength of us  
Who conquer everywhere,  
We sing the English of it thus,  
And bid the world beware;  
We bid the world beware  
The perfect heart and will,  
That dare the utmost men may dare  
And follow freedom still.

Sea-room, land-room, ours, my masters, ours,  
Hand in hand with destiny, and first among  
the Powers!

Our boasted Ocean Empire, sirs, we boast of  
it again,

Our Monarch, and our Rulers, and our  
Women, and our Men!

II

The pillars of our Empire stand  
In unforgotten graves;  
We built dominion on the land,  
And greatness on the waves;

Our Empire on the waves,  
 Established firm and sure,  
 And founded deep in ocean's caves  
 While honour shall endure.  
 Sea-room, land-room, honourably ours,  
 Hand in hand with destiny, and first among  
 the Powers!  
 Our boasted Ocean Empire, sirs, we boast of  
 it again,  
 Our ancient Isles, our Lands afar, and all  
 our loyal Men!

## III

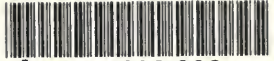
Our flag, on every wind unfurled,  
 Proclaims from sea to sea  
 A future and a nobler world  
 Where men and thoughts are free;  
 Our men, our thoughts are free;  
 Our wars are waged for peace;  
 We stand in arms for liberty  
 Till bonds and bondage cease.  
 Sea-room, land-room, ours, appointed ours,  
 Conscious of our calling and the first among  
 the Powers!  
 Our boasted Ocean Sovereignty, again and  
 yet again!  
 Our Counsel, and our Conduct, and our Arm-  
 aments and Men!







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