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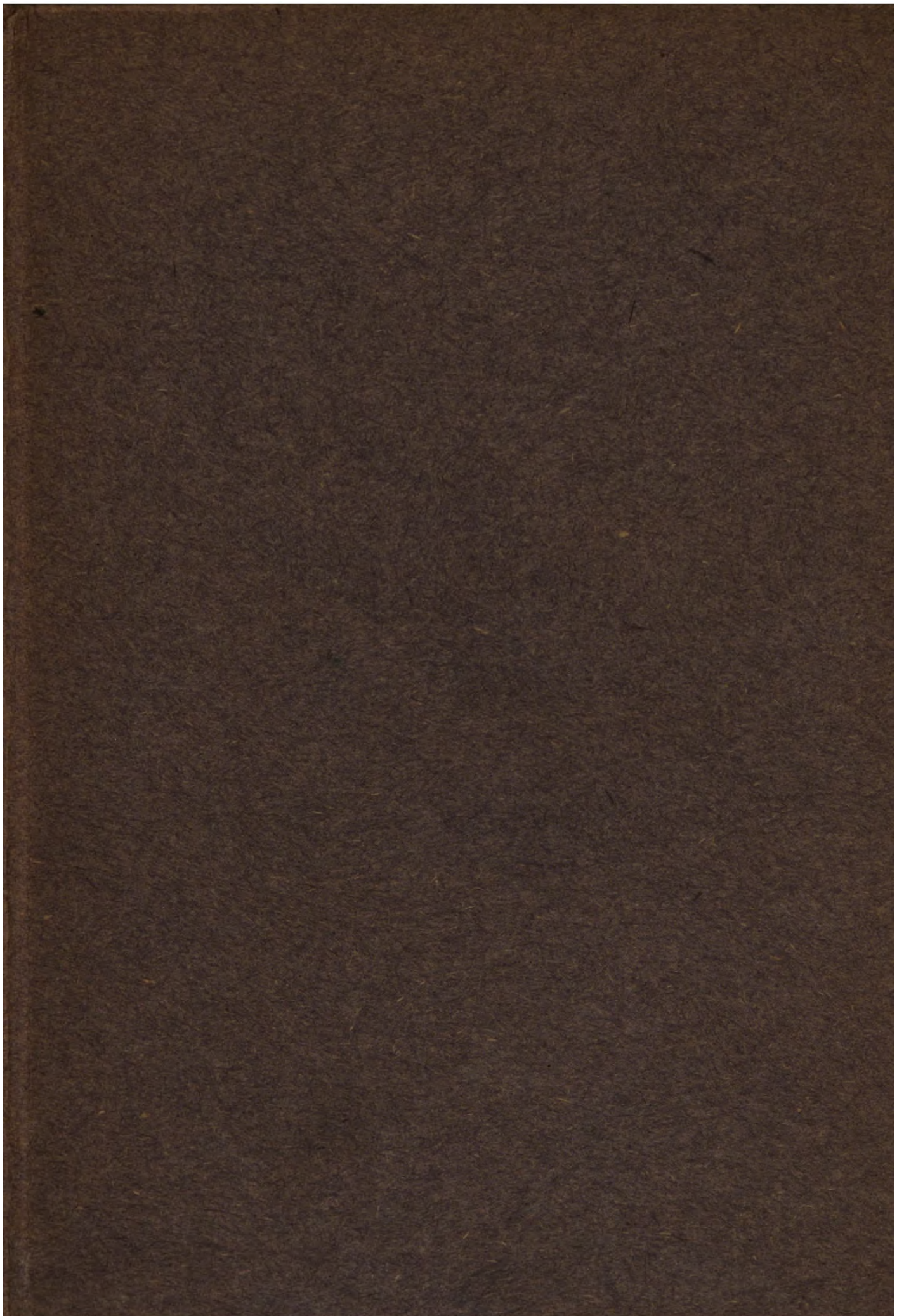
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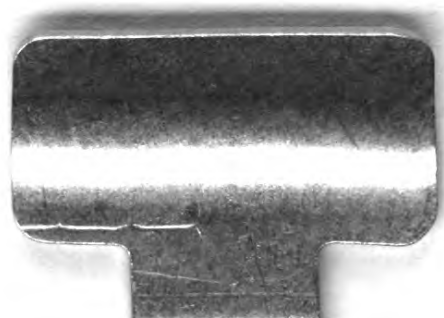


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DIOGENES AT ATHENS

By the same Writer

—:o:—

IDYLLS OF SPAIN (Mathews)

A WOMAN OF EMOTIONS and other
Poems (Allen)

MONT ST. MICHEL and other Poems
(Allen)

LETTERS FROM CATALONIA
(Hutchinson)

THE CLASH OF EMPIRES (Heinemann)

*DER ZUSAMMENPRALL DER WELT-
MÄCHTE (Curtius, Berlin)

*KAISER WILHELM II. (Curtius, Berlin)

A WORD FOR THE EMPIRE
(Sherratt & Hughes)

MY DOG BLANCO and other Poems
(Erskine MacDonald)

POLYCLITUS and other Poems (Mathews)

*Translations of "The Clash of Empires"

Diogenes at Athens

and other Poems

By

ROWLAND THIRLMERE

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NOTE

"A Dream on Blackdown" was first published by the Lady Eva Wemyss, in her "Wemyss Magazine" (September, 1910), and shortly afterwards the piece was somewhat amplified.

"Spain's Welcome" was included in "An Account of the Marriage of H.M. Alfonso XIII., of Spain, and H.R.H. Princess Victoria Eugénie of Battenberg," privately printed by the Phoenix Press, Taunton, 1906.

"Jimmy Doane" appeared in the "Poetry Review," and was written before the United States declared war against Germany. These verses have been re-printed in "A Treasury of War Poetry," issued by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., in America.

All the other poems are new.



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TO

ÉTIENNE DUPONT,

Lauréat de l'Académie Française.

INTRODUCTION

At Chaeronea, in Boeotia, Philip of Macedon defeated the allied armies of the Thebans and Athenians in August, B.C. 338.

Philip's attack on the liberties of the Greek republics had been prepared by wars and quarrels, which he fomented. Twenty years earlier, when he was besieging Amphipolis, his duplicity prevented the Athenians from assisting the city ; and after its fall the rich gold-mines near Mount Pangaeus enabled him to prosecute his plans with still greater vigour. At this time, three important Athenians, Phokion, Philokrates and Eubulus, made themselves the leaders of a peace party, which opposed its narrow views to the instinctive but ineffective opinion of the majority that Philip's strokes ought to be countered by armed intervention.

Meanwhile, Philip made himself master of Thessaly, and advancing southward, defeated the Phokians ; but at Thermopylae (352 B.C.) Athens arrested his progress. In the North, however, between 350 and the early part of 347 B.C., the Macedonian King took and destroyed no less than thirty-two free Greek cities. Of these, Olynthus, having sought help from Athens, was aided only half-heartedly, and barbarously treated by Philip. A shameful peace was concluded with the Athenian Senate, in which the Phokians, their former

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friends, were completely betrayed. This disastrous settlement left Philip free to pursue his aims in other quarters, at a time when sagacious statesmanship in Athens could have brought about some alliance of states that might have mastered Macedonia. The orator Demosthenes—nicknamed Batalus—in this period did his best to fight against the unpatriotic influence of the “pacifists.” Unfortunately Philip had succeeded in suborning Aeschines, a rival orator, who outbid Demosthenes for the confidence of the Athenian public.

The Phokians, hearing of the treason of Athens, and finding themselves unable to hold Thermopylae without help from their neighbours, gave up this vital point to Philip. All the towns of Phokis were destroyed and most of their able-bodied men were massacred. It was only then that Athens really awoke to her danger. She concluded an alliance with Thebes, and her “Theoric fund,”—originally a State-endowment for religious purposes, which Demosthenes had long sought to apply to purposes of aggressive defence,—was diverted from the too-frequent festivals to the armament of her citizens. Between them, Thebes and Athens managed to reconstitute Phokis and, for a short while, something was done to stem the advancing tide of Macedonian tyranny. But their plans were hastily formed and blunderingly executed; and though the military methods of Philip were well known—his invincible phalanxes were the talk of the Hellenic world—when the inevitable and crucial battle came to be fought, he was opposed by men badly equipped and fighting under the handicap of obsolete traditions.

At Chaeronea, where Philip is said to have danced in drunken glee upon the bodies of the slain, the Athenians

INTRODUCTION

and Thebans were utterly routed. Demosthenes fought in this battle and escaped, but many other leading Athenians were taken prisoners, among them the time-server Demades, an ignorant sailor who had become an influential orator. While Chaerondas, the governor of Athens, was feverishly busy in putting the city in a state of defence, Demades was being won over by Philip, who quickly induced him to recognize the King as chief of the Hellenic world. The disgraceful peace thus made destroyed the last chance of the recovery of Athens, which never afterwards regained her ancient prestige. Her power and authority disappeared on the great pyre upon which Philip burnt the bodies of her dead soldiers, whose defeat gave him the coveted hegemony in Greece.

At this time the cynic Diogenes was in the habit of begging at the doors of public buildings in certain Greek cities, and it is at the portal of the Temple of Athena Niké, on the Acropolis, that he greets his acquaintance Ion, one morning after the terrible news of the battle had reached Athens.

The rights of dramatization are reserved •

DIOGENES AT ATHENS

DIOGENES

(accosting ION, and holding out his hand) :

Alms for your friend in Niké's portico !

(ION gives him a few silver coins.)

What is the woe
That presses on you ?

ION

(pushing him aside) :

This is nor time nor place

For jests—

DIO.

*(interrupting him and holding out a small wallet
containing food) :*

Your face

Vexes me much. My palace and my scrip
In fellowship
I offer ; so, if hungry, eat with me.

ION.

Poor charity !
Have you no soothing words for sorrowing men ?

DIO.

I spake them when
I offered a share of this my meat and drink.

ION.

I come to think
In quiet. To the temple I would pass :
The hippocras
Of silence I now seek ;—the world knows why.

DIO.

But what know I—?

ION.

Surely you must have slept two days and nights ?

DIO.

I see all sights
Sleeping or waking, and I hear each sound.

ION.

Somewhat profound
Is your dog-sleep if you have never heard—

DIO.

Athena's bird
Dismally hooting ?

ION.

No : the blood-red news !

DIO.

Does it amuse ?—

ION.

So often have you hugged cold statuary,
'Tis plain to see
Your inwards have been frost-bound many a year.

DIO.

But not with fear !

ION

(with some heat) :

Gods ! We are stricken and left desolate,
And a strong state
Trembles like a house that in an earthquake rocks.

DIO.

Mighty the shocks !

ION.

Not even the shadows of our sons we find
To-day. Half-blind
We stand among our broken-pinioned dreams ;
We drink at streams
Poisoned with sorrow, and our eyes let fall
Tears full of gall :
We have no quiet and our frozen souls
Become as coals
Red-hot with anger, as in horrible hours
Despair devours
Our hopefulness. We mourn our happy boys,
Dead as their joys :
Our hearts are trampled even as was the clay
On that black day
When striplings, brave as wolves, but unprepared
For battle, dared,
The phalanxed Macedonians, and our brave—

DIO.

Heaven would not save !
The gods decree that those who best perform
Life's tasks should swarm
On earth, and those who shape life evilly
Should cease to be.

ION.

An ordinance evaded now and then
By crafty men.
Beggars should mute their voices when they see
Such agony
As troubles the hearts of our too-generous folk.

DIO.

Now do not choke,
Though grief be acid.

ION.

Shew at least some ruth
For perished youth !

DIO.

Verities are sharpening your friendly tongue !

ION.

What heart's unwrung
But yours ? A mourner shivers 'neath each roof.

DIO.

I'm ague-proof.
Often I sniff Death's chillness in the wind,—
I, too, have sinned.

(A VEILED WOMAN *walks past them, audibly weeping.*)

ION.

These are drear days for Athens. Jest no more,
I do implore !
You, who have felt the scourge of Nemesis,
Answer me this :—
Why are the gardens of our hopes laid waste ?
Why do we taste
Such bitterness in air so summer-sweet ?
Why do we meet
Our friends and find all faces dark with woe,
And come and go
Weeping the deaths of heroes in their spring ?
Why do we wring
Our hands at the memory of departed love,
And look above
And around us, dismally, for its lost fire ?

DIO.

Do you desire
An answer? I will hurt you if I speak—

ION.

Am I so weak?
Courage and candour most good men esteem.

DIO.

Athenians scream
When touched to the quick—
(THREE OLD SENATORS *emerge from the temple and pass
with bowed heads.*)

Ask those and they will tell—

ION

(*grimly*):

Why heroes fell
In multitudes? Heaven has forgotten us!
Most ominous
These tidings:

DIO.

And there may be grislier tales!

ION.

My spirit fails!
The embers of our energy have flown
On the wind: they're blown
Into the scorched grass and there is none to rake
Them up and wake
The fire again. So few return—so few
Of those who flew
Radiantly to Boeotia? Men there are
Whose vinegar
Of scorn foment our seething miseries;

Unjustly these
Reproach our sons of weakness. 'Tis profane
To accuse the slain—
The fearless, patient, uncomplaining hosts,
Whose saddened ghosts
Are silent—

DIO.

While the heavenly scrutineers,
Watching red years
Ripen their bitter fruits, record her shame
Beside the name
Of Athens.

ION.

But the indestructible scrolls—
Which Zeus unrolls
Often at his own chosen hour, that he
Of earth and sea,
Of enmity and friendship, supreme lord,
May deal award—
Are not inscribed with unforgivable sins.

DIO.

Vain manikins,
(He points in the direction of the Agora.)
Down in the market there's a manual
Medicinal ;
And kitchen-treatises for the middle-class,—
Good pans and glass !
*(PAUSE, in which the loud cries of the market hucksters
are heard.)*

ION.

What have we done to earn your idle scorn ?

DIO.

You have not borne
Your burdens : you were lazy and treacherous.

ION.
Not all of us !
DIO.
The sin of the many is the sin of each.

ION.
God, how you screech !
Our trouble is the doing of the state—
The aggregate !

DIO.
I came for the feast of Zeus Polieus—heard
Each foolish word
At the mad inquest : then, as no one knew
Who 'twas that slew
The bull, they accused the axe. Thus, with the same
Logic, you blame
The state for the murder of your liberty.
The world can see
The fault is yours.

ION.
Nay—some of us have raised
Against the crazed
Greed of the rich and blindness of the poor
Loud protest—

DIO.
Sure
That none would listen : you were occupied
With suicide,
In the time-wasting schools of sophistry.

ION.
Hearken to me !
Often have thunderclouds foreshadowed night
Athwart delight,
Glooming the glittering ease, when flowing wine
Drowsed our supine
Elders, and secret aliens sapped the power
They would deflower,—

DIO.

But few took heed, though many a blinding flash
Presaged the crash
Of broken liberties :—

ION.

When flattery's haze

Obscured the gaze
Of those who were our trusted sentinels.
Because the spells
Of stolen gold turned freeborn men to thralls
In judgment halls,
In council-chambers and senates—glazed their eyes
With vain surmise :
Because we exalted those who talked and dreamed
When peril seemed
Upon us ;—who on calmly-ordered thought
Needlessly brought
Disorder : who insufferably abused
Their wit and used
Great things unprofitably ; who feared to say
On the right day
The strong and righteous word—because of these
And their disease
Of stiff-necked selfishness, our sons have died
In their young pride.

*(VOICES are heard in the street by the Odeum :
WOMEN are wailing.)*

VOICES.

Alas ! Alas !

ION.

These loud laments must shake
Such men and make
An endless trouble for them.

DIO.

I avow

My friend, that now
A little sense comes glimmering in your speech :
Go on—impeach
The villains ! Once an advocate amused
Me much. He accused
A fellow advocate. The crime was theft :
Nothing was left,—
When he had done,—for the impeached to say.
“ *Away, away*
With him ! ” cried angry judge and citizen :
Yet both these men
Were guilty. One had robbed an advocate,
Whose lucky fate
Was to have lost no thing that was his own.

(*A pause.*)

Come, do not groan !
Be strong and answer back !

ION.

There is no end

To your folly, friend !
A coiner of false money knew his trade
So well he made
Too large a repute : and then the rascal learned
New tricks, and turned
Maker of false parables. These he amassed
And readily passed
One at odd times in exchange for figs and meal.

DIO.

Good ! Good ! I feel
Now there's a man in this poor woman-land
Who can upstand
Against me.

ION

(*touching him on the shoulder*) :

I have been a shade unjust.

DIO.

There is no dust
Raised in me by your words ; but mighty clouds
Fell when the crowds
Of Philip's bravoës took Thermopylae :
These you could see
Even from Athens, surely ? But, in storms,
Hares seek their forms ;
The timid partridge disappears in sedge ;—
His privilege
It is to hide at times.

ION.

Come, jest no more :

My soul is sore !
The Phokians *were* most murderously betrayed !

DIO.

And here you stayed
When down Parnassian cliffs their youths were cast !
With them your last
Strong bulwark vanished.

ION.

Traitorous Aeschines

And Phrynon—these—
With sour Philocrates should be put to death.
They spent their breath
Praising the bloody, crafty conquerors.

DIO.

To the governors,
Your timid friends—excluding Ctesiphon,
Not Phokion—
Gods, what a name for him whom Phokians know
As their worst foe!—
And to Eubulus, you must now erect
Statues, well-decked
With chaplets—but three thousand drachmas each
The cost! Thus teach
Your growing lads to be virtuous.

ION.

My wise friend
Phokion, who with proud scorn refused the gold
Of Thrace, is old,
Maybe too prudent. He besought the state
With all his weight
Of wisdom to move warily.

DIO.

Great gods!

A wise man prods
All sluggards with the sharpest swords of speech,
When he would teach
Duty; and if he holds a little power
Then, grim and sour,
He drives to duty with a bloody sword
The indolent horde!

ION.

Ah! Phokion dared not strike one stroke betimes!
His are the crimes
Of carefulness and high sagaciousness.

DIO.

They look no less
To-day midst ruin. Usurers, sycophants
And disputants
Filled his assemblies ; these he dared not rule.

ION.

He learned at school
To be over-cautious.

DIO.

A too prudent man

Makes the worst plan :
Smiling sagaciousness for ever meets
With great defeats.
He's like a mathematician, with his eyes
Fixed on the skies,
Gloomed in a dusk of needless reckonings ;
O'erlooking things
Incalculably perilous on the ground,
Whose whispers sound
Beneath his greatness.

ION.

True, he did not hear

The foe draw near :
He might have hearkened to Demosthenes,
Whose feeble knees
Bore him—our Batalus—from the dreadful field ;—

DIO.

When he revealed
Your urgent wants ? I hear still echoing—
Zeus ! how they ring
Through Athens !—his philippics ; yet your need
You would not heed.

You did not fight at Chaeronea, so
You cannot know
How Batalus ran. Perhaps to save your wife
He saved his life.

(An OLD PRIEST staggers past them, beating his breast and shouting at the top of his voice.)

PRIEST.

Hoplites ! Hoplites ! In thousands let them come :
Zeus send us some !

(DIOGENES looks meaningly at ION and points to the PRIEST.)

DIO.

Hearken, Zeus Soter ! Here has come your chance,
Good Ion : advance :
Give him some tidings of the men he seeks
And stop his shrieks.
Tell him that soon a new Leonidas
Will clear the pass,
Having swept Boeotia clean.

PRIEST

(in the distance and faintly) :

Heaven's wrath thus damns
The tricksters' shams !

ION.

We could not conjure hoplites.

DIO.

Gibberish !

You did not wish
To conjure, and you never said the word !
I, too, averred
That you would come to this. The gods have sent
Just punishment !

Good Batalus I met in an eating-house :
With lowering brows—
Being shamed to see my face—he would have fled ;
To him I said :
*“ Your masters, the workers, dine here every day.
Haste not away.
Orators are servants to the sweaty crowd,
Be not too proud :
Your presence here makes you more popular :
Where masters are
All servants should be pleased to be.”*—But no ;
He needs must go !

ION.

And now you wonder why he failed to thrill
Folk to his will ?
He would not eat with you ? Too haughty, eh ?
But that's his way !

DIO.

The crafty man sits down with humble folk
And makes his joke.
He should have worked with cunning and by stealth ;
Setting up wealth
As bait for those who were too shy of swords,
Cursing the hoards
Of Philip, and the mob might then have armed
Willingly—charmed
By chance of money gotten at a blow :
But, as you know,
Giving good counsel to the dissolute
Seems less astute
Than washing an Aethiop to make him white.

ION.

How old dogs bite !

DIO.

*(breaking a crust and quickly putting a morsel in
his mouth) :*

You are the dog that watches as I eat
This bread and meat.

ION.

Clever ! You beat our crafty orator !—

DIO.

Who saw this war
Coming, and with a throat unspoilt by wine
Urged the supine
To work.

ION.

His father's trade was making arms :
Hence his alarms
Were unheeded. He was scoffed at.

DIO.

Yes, by whom ?

He spied your doom
Dawning, and thus was crafty ; yet you gave—
As yields a slave
His will, and sleepily,—your suffrages
To triflers. This
Because you feared—

ION.

One striving for a power
Too great for the hour.
He is ambitious, your Demosthenes.

DIO.

He did not please
Your ears like bawlers who have cheated trust ;—

ION.

Ah ! Those brought dust
And darkness round us. Vain incompetence
And proud pretence
Visibly grew in them. Their talk inflamed
The poor and shamed
The steady-minded : temperate men they stirred
To act and word
Beyond the bourne of wisdom.

*(Several VEILED WOMEN rush past them
into the temple, all sobbing.)*

DIO.

(pointing towards them) :

Foolish speech

Has longest reach !

*(ION is overcome, staggers to a marble step and sits down
in the shade, coughing. DIOGENES goes to the
fountain and returns with a cup of water which he
offers him. ION drinks.)*

ION.

Thanks : thanks.

DIO.

Rest here awhile. These summer heats
Are worse in the streets.
Your strength comes back ?

ION.

Yes, I am all but well.

DIO.

You nearly fell !

*(More SENATORS pass out of the temple.
DIOGENES points to them.)*

ION

(putting his hand to his brow) :

Their wheezy voices shaped no clear command
In the vexed land :
So we adventured with imperfect means
To build up screens
Against implacable greed. And now heaven asks
Why Titan tasks
Were thus attempted with such slender care.

DIO.

You were aware
That gibbering elders deemed your ancient blood
Had run to mud !

ION.

They spake with much reflection.

DIO.

Yet made laws

But for applause :

ION.

In little things that touched the senate's weal
They were bold to deal,
Acting with shew of courage in their acts :
When broken pacts
Cried out for instant exercise of wrath,
Force was a lath
In their hands, and they must shrink in sight of wrong
Who seemed so strong.

DIO.

Ah ! so you knew this ? You were not a friend
Of fools ! Pretend
To wisdom and be safe, you middle-class !

ION.

Thin wit, alas !

(TWO more SENATORS stagger out of the temple.
They approach.)

FIRST SENATOR

(to DIO. after saluting ION) :

Art thou for Corinth ? We, too, would away !

DIO.

(*sardonically*) :

No, not to-day.

SECOND SENATOR.

Is the Piraeus closed ?

ION.

To every one.

SECOND SENATOR.

Then we're undone !

DIO.

Yes, yes ! You are undone.

FIRST SENATOR

(*wildly*) :

Where's Phokion now ?

DIO.

Mopping his brow !

It's a dry summer : in the dwindling stream

The flabby bream

Shyly take refuge in the little pools !

(*The TWO SENATORS move off distractedly.*)

Cowards and fools !

Phokion ! You hear ?

ION.

His faults I needs must see :

Eubulus—he
Kept ships and docks and arsenals in trim.

DIO.

(snapping his fingers) :

That much for him—
The vain time-server !

ION.

Much to him we owe.

DIO.

Who fights a foe,
Like yours with only triremes ? How can whales
Crush with their tails
The ribs of elephants ?

ION.

Our trierarchs tell

That they did well
In the Euboean waters.

DIO.

Phokion there

For once laid bare
His arm, and battled ; afterwards, the sneer
Of his austere
And cynical face froze all your wits.

ION.

The worst

Of him, he cursed
The plans of wiser heads ;—but a power of folk
Constantly spoke
Against them ;—

DIO.

Fearing taxes and the stress

Of readiness !

Batalus, in one finger, has more sense

And prescience

Than we may find in all your muddled pates,

You out-of-dates !

And this I say who love him not, for he

Would tread on me.

ION.

Have I not heard you praise the senators ?

DIO.

Their paramours

I praised.

ION.

You called them wise.

DIO.

Could I abuse

The acts and views

Of those who made bright times of festival

Perpetual ?

ION.

You extolled their foresight.

DIO.

For they made me rich !

Zeus, how folk pitch

Their coppers about on sunny holidays !

ION.

I've heard you praise
These men, and now—when we are thus brought low
By a keen foe
Who speeds a sudden and determined shaft,—
With infinite craft
They search the corners of their souls,—where light
Makes nothing bright,—
Search vainly for the strength that they assume,
Yet still presume
To hold an authority too vast for them—

DIO.

(interrupting him) :

By stratagem !
Phokion is very cunning when he blinks
His eyes, and thinks
Leisurely.

ION.

Yes, but in hot conflicts, none
Has ever won
His way to triumph urged by folk behind
Whose hopes were blind.

DIO.

The wise have a right to all things—in your eyes
He seemed most wise.

ION.

Thus once he seemed to one who is not unjust :
Now I distrust
And despise him, for he had no purposes.
Those eyes of his
Saw little.

DIO.

What each quail had in its crop
This would-be prop
Of Athens should have known—each traitorous scheme :
He was supreme !
(THREE CHILDREN, *weeping bitterly, emerge from the
temple with ALCIPPE, their mother, who has gone mad.*)

ALCIPPE

(*pausing beside them*) :

I have prayed to the goddess all the morning.

DIO.

Ah !

ALCIPPE.

Anathema
On all Athenians ! I was loved by one.
Let the bright sun
Fall, and give victory to the great and strong !

DIO.

They did you wrong
Those clever grasshoppers ?

ALCIPPE.

Ay, ay ! He fell !

Can no one tell
When I shall see him ? Where is Demades,—
Demosthenes ?

(*She hurries away, repeating these two names.*)

DIO.

She would be safe.

ION.

Poor wretch

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DIO.

She seeks an ass.

ION.

Alas ! Alas !

DIO.

And one to drive him, if he will be driven !

ION.

Craft has been given
To Demades—

DIO.

But who has given him sense ?

He's all pretence !
Philip will slip some gold into his hand
And then he'll stand
As spokesman for him.

ION.

He's a low-born man.

DIO.

A charlatan
And thus corruptible ! What has he done
Of old—this son
Of a harlot ?

ION.

With the archons he'd a name
For work, and fame
For thoroughness. Large promises they made.

DIO.

The leaden blade,
Which Macedon struck with a far mightier brand
From the weak hand
Of Athens, stood for promises.

ION

(*trying to rise, but again sitting down*) :

'Tis true.

DIO.

How sad for you !
When they were shooting, hard beside the mark—
Quiet and stark—
I sat, and was more than safe. They pulled the string
And it said "*Ping!*"
I looked for the arrow, but I vainly looked ;
And then they brooked
My laughter, being cowards. Had you put
A weighty foot
To kick a better marksmanship in each—

ION.

Gods, how you preach !

DIO.

Lions are not slaves unto their keepers, friend—
Though they be penned—
Keepers are slaves to the lions, which they fear.

ION.

But is it clear,
That we were afraid of ours ?

DIO.

What made you shirk
The needful work
Of spurring the fools ?

ION.

The tales of Aeschines—

DIO.

But splendid fees
He drew from Philip for his lies, my son !

ION.

Philip has won
Through Aeschines, whose opiate falsehoods dulled
Our wit and lulled
Each keen misgiving.

DIO.

Trust not whom you doubt !

Such men as shout
Praises of open foes are suspect.

ION.

Faugh !

Long I foresaw
The evil coming in that careless time
Of flaunted crime
When every local archon spent his days

DIO.

To heaven's amaze,
In drunkenness and cock-fighting !

ION.

When loud

Bellowed the crowd
As rival demagogues strove mightily
The which should be
Master. I spake my thoughts, but none gave heed—
Not one indeed !

DIO.

The gods are kind to the wise.

ION.
I misconstrue
Their grace.

DIO.
Pooh ! Pooh !

ION.
My son is killed and destiny has driven
My faith in heaven
Clean out of my heart. On Chaeronea's pyre,
Slow-burning fire
Consumes my love of the gods.—

DIO.
Stop, stop ! perpend
These words, my friend—
Weak fools with sighs submit to destiny :
Strong men decree
Their fate themselves, and make it.

ION.
I'm afraid
That you have made
For yourself a poor one. Has a barrel filled
With you yet thrilled
One man with amaze at your craft ?

DIO.
Well said, well said,
Good dunderhead !
From drivellers I elect to dwell apart,
Such life my heart
Approves ; and can your ruin emulate
My happy state ?

ION.

Your brains are dead. Your judgments never were
The half of fair !
Your vaunted knowledge is a sorry sham :
No epigram
Mouthed here, or by the Pompeum, can change
My judgment,—strange,
Acrid old man ! You blame the innocent.
Malevolent
Aeschines brought on us our scarlet woe !—

DIO.

Partly—

ION.

And so
Let all the torments of the flesh be his,
And may he miss
No torture when in death his tongue is stilled ;
For he has killed
My son, and all my hopes and all my dreams.

DIO.

Not small, meseems,
This grievance.

*(An elderly, corpulent PERSON of the tradesman class
is seen coming out of the temple. He is pale and
distraught.)*

But here's Molo ; much afraid
That money, made
In peace-time and with grossest selfishness,
Will now grow less,
Than the honour of the state—if that could be !
(He makes signs to MOLO, who approaches.)

Come here to me
Good chariot-maker ! You are soldier now—
Or, anyhow,
Pike-bearer. So is our gentle Ion. Glad
Am I to have had
The joy of greeting you.

MOLO.

And pleased am I

To be the ally
Of learned Ion.

*(He makes a reverence to ION,—who has bowed to him,—
then mops his forehead.)*

Ah ! A cruel week !

ION

(shaking his head dismally) :

In woe, unique,
By Heaven !

DIO.

(touching MOLO) :

Give ear. I seek a valiant man,
So, if you can,
Help me to find him. I have heard brave boys
Making much noise
In Lacedaemon, but in these choked streets
One seldom meets
Heroes. Moreover, we two seek to know
The cause of this woe.
But then a man who to his usury sticks
Hates politics.

MOLO

(glancing at ION and then at DIOGENES) :

Our sorrows do not daunt your spite, my friend ?

(he smiles frostily.)

ION.

We must defend
Our Athens—alien, slave, and senator—
And often war
Turns peaceful men to heroes.

MOLO
(to DIOGENES) :

On such day
Why not away
To Sparta or to Corinth ? Why remain—

DIO.

I like the pain
Felt at the sight of you.

MOLO.
Why such affront !

DIO.

I must be blunt
Speaking with one whose avarice seems guilt,
Now blood is spilt
Uselessly.

MOLO.
How ? Make clear to me your speech.

DIO.

Nay, who could teach
A miser, or make plain the obvious thing
To him.

MOLO.
You fling
Your words about in prodigal wise indeed.
But is there need
For such extravagance ? You snarl and hiss—
But what's amiss ?

Dio.

Man's greed ! You saved for—O so many years !
Your hopes and fears
Were all of money : you could not afford
To touch your hoard
To help the state. Your betters, being lax,
Made every tax
Too light. They lived in dread of you, and now
They are in the slough !

MOLO.

We were at peace, you fool. Wise men must save
In peace-time.

Dio.

Slave

Of gold you are, and you have ever been
Slave. In serene
Ineptitude you lived, although you saw,
With wide-mouthed awe,
How, at Perinthus, Philip's terrible powers
Of movable towers
And rams and great projectiles overthrew
All things. You knew
How the strong bulls—his front-rank pikemen—wield
Their weapons. Healed
Of all your fright, you lapsed in greed again.

MOLO.

Gods ! is it sane
Or seemly thus to accuse me ? What could I
Do to defy
The bloody beast that longs to eat the world ?
Batalus hurled
Speech after speech upon the lazy crowd,

And long and loud
Called for swift preparations ; but the great
Heads of the state
Were silent. Could a chariot-maker stand
Alone in the land,
Offering his savings as a sacrifice,
When men more wise
Said naught of danger ? Further,—you forget
I was beset
By those who wanted chariots for the games—
Men with big names—
I could not fail them.

DIO.

Yet your duty lay

In giving away
Your gold. You knew, it seems, what peril brewed
And yet you chewed
Your cud like a cow. Wake up ! As demiurge
You might emerge
Above the souls of the great.

MOLO.

I cannot sense

Your meaning. Dense
Your talk indeed. Vain men who rhetorize
Plain folk despise.

DIO.

Despicable those whom Philip's pikes have reached
Whose pride is breached
Like the Olynthian walls. They would not shake
Themselves, nor make
Their weapons longer, though their crazy talk
Increased to baulk
Each windy effort of Demosthenes.
In ruinous ease
They battened always ?

ION.

Stay, let me be heard—

Just one small word—

MOLO.

Maybe these things he'll croak in Corinth, thus
Maligning us.
To set the Craneum laughing, and the wits
Making their skits.

DIO.

But Corinth has no laughter left in her :
Her folk confer
To-day and curse you, chariot-maker ;—yes,
Your laziness
And greed they curse. When Batalus touched your heart,
Did you take part
In his effort, dolt—give praise or stir a hand
To save this land ?
Your duty was chariot-building ! You forgot
The rust and rot
In the wheels of the state. But all men keep in mind
Lost gold, I find,
Good Molo ! When one loses things one loves,
Memory improves.

ION

*(rising and restraining MOLO, who looks savagely
at DIOGENES) :*

Suffer me now to speak and say no more.
We all deplore
The unreadiness. Heavy taxes I'd have paid,
Quite undismayed,
Had they been called for.

(He holds out a small leather purse.)

Here's my slender purse ;—

Am I averse
From opening it ? Come, answer, man, you know
How much you owe
To me.

DIO.

Am I the state ? In my small tub
I'm but a grub—
A chrysalis. The poor man's only wealth
Is hungry health
And popularity.

ION

(sitting down again wearily) :

You beg—I give
That you may live.

DIO.

And I have spun you sense in fair exchange
For alms. 'Tis strange
That you learned naught. 'Tis plain my talk has been
No discipline.

(Turning to MOLO) :

But chariot-makers, what of them ? They spend
Little and lend
Less, and give nothing.

MOLO.

Am I richly gilt
Who've always built
Cars at small profit ?

DIO.

Your fat paunch declares
Your gains : it wears
A profitable look.

MOLO.

Good beggar, go and weep

Your large and deep
Dishonour.

DIO.

Think of the Pangaeian gold—
Filched while the old
And timid trafficked !

MOLO.

What a foolish tongue

Is yours !

DIO.

You strung
Your citharas when Amphipolis was lost ;
You weighed the cost
Of strength and safety when Olynthus called ;
And when the walled
Strong cities of Chalkidike fell, you sent—
To circumvent
Their foes—a few worn mercenaries, too late :
It seems your fate
Always to be tardy.

MOLO.

Imbecility

It were for me
To touch a cithara, having no poet's tricks :
Those lunatics
Are capable of aught. Ah, you may smirk !
It's honest work
I do. I pay men what I owe.

ION.

Alert

And most expert
Is Molo in cleanly trading.

MOLO

(to ION) :

That is sense.

My recompense
Is little.

(To DIOGENES) :

But, by all the gods in heaven,
Why are you driven
To father this most dread calamity
On me—on me ?

DIO.

Because you symbol Athens. Now just think :
Did you not shrink
From Philip, like a timid pugilist
With lowered fist,
Waiting for him to plant a stinging blow ?
He struck, and lo !
Up went your hands but failed to avert the stroke,
Which cleverly broke
Your jaw-bone ?

MOLO

(to ION and pointing at DIO) :

What a miracle it is

Those jaws of his
Should still be unbroken.

ION.

Friend, speak quietly

MOLO.

Do you not see
That Athens needed peace : for this she braved
Much scorn—

DIO.

And saved
Much money !

ION.

Man ! The whole world coveted
The life we led—

MOLO.

The beautiful, free life of traders—

ION.

Hence

Our affluence
Tempted the robber.

DIO.

No ! From out your veins
All that sustains
Heroism was sucked by pleasure and by greed :
Now, in your need,
You know not what to do. The divinities roared
And angrily poured
Warnings into the heavens in blood and fire ;
But your desire
Was ever for the joy of festivals—
For rose-decked halls
Merry with voices of symposiasts.
You heard the blasts
Of bitter storms around you—saw great wrongs—
But still your songs
Were bright.

MOLO.

I must away. This man is mad
And wholly bad.

DIO.

I will not keep you, valiant pikeman. Learn
Your lesson. Stern
Is your present teacher. Dauntless Batalus,
Most valorous
At all times—quick to see these big events
And chastisements
In their small and dim beginnings—vainly tried
To teach you—cried
Till he was dumb, but all his words were waste—
They had the taste
Of asafetida.

ION

(to DIO.) :

Have done !—

(To MOLO) :

Be cool !

MOLO.

The dirty fool—
Thus to traduce the folk who give him bread !

(To DIO.) :

Shame on your head !

(To ION) :

I have no time to waste, for I must go,
Having to show
A chariot to Eubulus—

DIO.

Buy and sell,

And all is well !

(MOLO bows to ION and—restraining himself—
hurries away, much ruffled.)

ION.

He is an honest and most upright man ?

DIO.

Yet him I ban
And all his fellows.

ION.

I deplore your scorn,

So patiently borne
By Molo.

DIO.

Yes, but where are your regrets
For foolish bets,
And swinish banquets ? Gold was thrown away
Each holiday—
O those processions !

ION.

Some men gamed too much,

And did but touch
The things they should have gripped.

DIO.

Life was too fine !

Each lusty vine
Invisibly midst the fruitage that she shapes
Bears three large grapes :
Pleasure is one, another drunkenness ;
Last, but not less
Than these, is sour repentance ! You, sad-faced
Athenians, taste
The bitter grape, having gorged the sweeter fruit.

ION.

All vines take root
In rottenness. I grieve for heartless folk
Who take this stroke
As you do.

DIO.

Truth is in no wise unkind !

ION.

A fevered mind
Is yours, and an ice-cold breast : but now
You should allow
Mourners to pass without offending them
With cynic phlegm :
Reverence is due unto the valiant dead
Who vainly bled.

DIO.

Make unto heaven a long, heart-easing moan !

ION.

Powers, that have blown
To puff-ball smoke usurped authorities
And infamies,
Shall judge our elders, and the eagle-eyed
Gods, who have spied
Their sins, shall scourge them.

DIO.

May they be well scourged,
And Athens purged
Of madmen ! Thus is faith in Zeus, your lord,
Meetly restored !

ION.

He has pressed woe on me, the evil-starred ;
Let him be hard
Likewise on traitors : let all men ask to-day,
This, when they pray.
My only child was he who is destroyed :
His mother joyed
So much in the shining gift we gave our land !

(He covers his face.)

DIO.
Be not unmanned.

ION.
He was a virtuous lad—and innocent ;
His merriment
Made us all joyful.

*(A great tumult is heard in the city below, and CLEONUS,
an old and lame man, is seen approaching them.
ION rises unsteadily.)*

DIO.
Hush ! What uproar now ?
That *is* a row !
Lo, one draws nigh o'erweighted with some news :
Look at his thews
Failing him. Hail, Cleonus, can you cheer
Good Ion ? Here,
Lamenting the bright days of the past, he moans.

CLEO.
*(makes a reverence to ION and looks contemptuously
at DIO.) :*
To stand on stones
Noon-hot with you is cause for discontent :
I would lament
My lot were I so placed.

(To ION) :
Black tidings, sir.

ION.
Causing the stir
Below there ?

CLEO.
Yes,—the slaughter does not cease ;
No hints of peace
Come southward. Thebes will soon be quite destroyed.

Philip, devoid
Of shame or pity, danced upon our dead,
Flowers on his head,
Drunkenly screaming words that Batalus
Once spake to us
Of him.

ION.

The cruel beast !

CLEO.

We'll make manure

Of Philip—sure !

DIO.

Ay ! Ay !

CLEO.

We will !

(To ION) :

Your servants told me where

You take the air.

I've come to ask what sort of clasp you need

On your cloak ?

ION.

Indeed ?

I ordered the cloak three weeks ago.

CLEO.

Ah yes !

I had a press

Of work : it was delayed : but now my time

Is yours.

DIO.

Sublime !

That's the right way to talk ! You're full of bounce !

Do not renounce

Your needle. 'Tis a weapon small and sharp.

What fool would carp
At you. Not I. *You're* armed. But will there be
A cloak for me ?

CLEO.

You need one surely !

DIO.

But a larger one

You need, my son.
You likewise begged the bramble to grow figs,
And hoped that pigs
Might turn to leopards.

CLEO.

You, being overbold,

Ask us for gold
And we but yield you copper.

DIO.

That is fair !

You gave but air
To naked Athens, though she needed clothes.
A tailor loathes
Taxes.

ION

(*shortly*) :

Cleonus, make such woollen cloak
As mourner-folk
May wear ; and now good-day.

CLEO.

(*bowing*) :

My thanks : farewell
(*He hurries away.*)

ION.

We shall repel
This Macedonian wolf, I have no fear,
Though you may sneer.

DIO.

(laughing) :

With needles, yes, and Zeus will laugh to-night
When feasting. Fright
Is a word unknown to tailors ! They provide
Cloaks, but you'll hide
No sins with them.

CLEO.

(returning) :

O, I quite forgot,—
On a little plot
Of grass, down there, the exhausted courier lies.
Poor soul. He dies
Ere sunset.

DIO.

Lucky youth !

(ION scowls. CLEONUS bows and hurriedly retreats.)

ION

(angrily) :

More sneers ! More quips !

DIO.

Your restless lips
Shew you begin to feel the upper hand.

ION.

Great Zeus, I stand
Here, rooted, listening to you like the trees—

DIO.

And heaven decrees
That you should hearken.

ION.

You might be a snake—

DIO.

Being awake
To duty?—

ION.

—I a glamoured finch!

DIO.

Perhaps

Your will's collapse
Is good for you? I hold you at my will
But to fulfil
My task.

ION.

And I might haply send you hence
With violence,
Had I the strength in my limbs. Make haste away!

DIO.

I'll say my say—

ION.

Be off!

*(He sighs and sits down again, putting one hand to his
side as he coughs. DIOGENES remains beside him.)*

O damned existence! Misery
Has blighted me!

DIO.

Life is not evil; 'tis the evil life
That's vile!

ION

(*angrily*) :

A knife

Indeed, and not a tongue, is in your mouth.

DIO.

And a rare drouth !

The words of the wise are for the lettered few ;

For such as you—

You and your kind, the lukewarm and the weak

Idlers, who shriek

Like winded hares that take their pursuers' fangs —

Who feel more pangs

Than felt the soldiers whom you sent to death.

ION.

Come, spare your breath.

In the avenger of the Delphian god

An enemy shod

And helmed with very devilry they met :

They were beset

By fiends in ponderous phalanxes, alas !

DIO.

The state's cuirass

Was rotten.

ION.

Our youth faced triply-armoured hordes—

DIO.

With edgeless swords

And mouldered bucklers. Why did you exalt

Those who default

In duty ? Good Demosthenes foretold

This new and bold

Warfare of phalanxes.

ION.

We lacked such mind

As yours.

DIO.

Purblind

You were and deaf ; and Thebes, that was your foe,
More wit could show.

One well-trained hoplite's worth a score untrained,
You muddy-brained !

ION.

But our too slender host was more than brave ;
It took and gave
Death-dealing blows. From earth now blackening
With ash, shall spring
Such marvellous flowers that folk who see their blaze
Will, in amaze,
Cry,—“ These are symbols of courageous men ! ”

(He turns and looks away.)

DIO.

Go on again—

ION

(mastering his emotion) :

Folk will make journeys to that dreadful field
Of death and yield
Homage to our brave sons.

DIO.

And men will come

Hither, and some
Will say, belike, that Athens is no more
The shining core
Of the world. One small mistake in any plan
May make a man
Poor ; but a score of errors bring a state
An eviller fate.

(TWO LADS, accompanied by TWO GIRLS, pass them,
laughing loudly. DIOGENES shrugs his shoulders.)

Summer is voiceful in the hum of flies,
Though honour dies.

ION

(*looking at them with horror*) :

At Chaeronea, honour was not lost.

DIO.

Sheep that have crossed
The path of a wolf-pack die, but still retain
Their honour.

ION.

Vain

Are your sharp words—they do not hurt me much.

DIO.

Yet still they touch
The truth in you and stir it.

ION

(*who appears dazed*) :

That rich ground

Shall be renowned
For ever.

DIO.

What a fame! Go on—hold forth!

ION.

From south and north,
From east and west, to the sad place shall go
Those who would know
How youth was cheated; how 'twas meanly prized
And sacrificed.

DIO.

It marks in language that all men may read
The frustrate deed,
Faith broken and good energy misused,
Proud strength diffused
With an unsoldierly skill.—By Hermes, see
Who comes to me !

*(He moves away a step or two to accost DAMO,
a hetaira, who is approaching the temple) :*

Pretty hetaira, there is happy news.

(DAMO smiles and stops to listen to him.)

Do not refuse
Your friend a daric. Here, and in my cask,
I always ask
One of fair prodigals, but from men like this—
Who never miss
Odd minae,—I but beg an obolus.
Come near to us.

DAMO

*(stepping up to ION, puts her hand on his arm.
DIOGENES places himself so that ION cannot rise) :*

This is the man I am seeking—as for thee,
Thou makest three !
Go beg of statues !

DIO.

They reject my prayers,
But not one dares
To curse me. Yes: they accustom me to take
Denials. Shake
Your little head again, and scent this place.
I love your face !

ION

(trying to disengage himself) :

I must away : too long have I been here.

DIO.

(pointing to her sandals) :

The pretty dear,
She is like poisoned mead—most subtly sweet :
Look at her feet !

DAMO

(still clinging to ION) :

Smooth language is a honied halter !

DIO.

(holding out his hand to DAMO) :

Give

Alms, friend, and live
Happily henceforth. A good measure of meal
You will not feel :
Two pieces of copper, at least. Much have you given
To others and thriven,
So give a little unto me, I pray.

DAMO.

Away ! Away !
What hast thou said of women, knowing none,
Thou shameless one !

DIO.

Contempt of pleasure gives me joy not less
Than sensuousness.

(DAMO looks witheringly at DIOGENES and smirks at ION.)

DAMO.

Hearken !

DIO.

Ere Lais took into her grave
My joy, she gave
Herself to me : to me—this beggar—ay,
To gratify
Her yearnings.

DAMO.

The Lais who was foully killed
By vixens filled
With jealousy in Love's temple ?

DIO.

No, no, no !

You come and go
In turn, you beauties.

DAMO.

It was Axiné, then,
Who left good men
For thee ?

DIO.

The same, O scoffer ! She who lies
With hollow eyes,
At peace in the Craneum's cypress-shade.

ION.

The drunken jade !

DIO.

Speak low and little of all drunkards here,
Or else I fear
The first man passing may offend your head.
Lais is dead ;
The feeding lioness lies upon her tomb.
She, in her bloom,
Loved me.

DAMO.

O Zeus !

DIO.

(to DAMO) :

And that fair woman shone

Like the bright sun
Above all others. When the world runs mad
For you, then glad
My heart will be indeed ; but, having known,
And had for my own
Such Lais, I seek no lesser light of love.

DAMO.

Enough, enough !
Thou liest ! Would such Lais condescend
To thee, my friend ?

ION.

Who knows ? The daintiest butterfly will dip
To carrion—sip
Its rottenness as if 'twere nectar.

DIO.

True,—

As such as you
Know well. My Lais loved the noblest and the best
And suffered the rest.

ION.

Eubotas was her fancy—him she loved.

DIO.

'Twas I who proved
The depth of her love.

DAMO.

In all sincerity.

What like was she ?

DIO.

Lovelier even than you, my dainty wench :—
Now, do not blench !—
She scorned poor Myron, though he dyed his hair.

DAMO.

And couldst thou dare
To offer thyself where that fine sculptor failed ?

DIO.

Why not ? He wailed
And wept, and strove to mould her maddening limbs :
His heart sang hymns
So lustily he could not shape the clay :
She sent him away
Unsatisfied. My body still is warm
With her rich charm.
She lay in my bosom here, and she forsook,
At my first look,
Her affluent lovers. Then again, my sweet,
Without conceit,
I claim that the newer Lais favoured me ;
In Corinth, we
Often foregathered.

DAMO.

Thou, at thy ripe age,

Might well engage
Her interest !

DIO.

Ah ! I said harsh things, and these
Not seldom please
A woman more than honey.

DAMO.

Well, well, well,—

What tales to tell !

ION.

If every Lais in the world has lain
With him—in pain—
And likewise all the Phrynes, why should I
Have him so nigh ?
Unhand me, child, I've had enough of this !

DAMO.

I would not miss
My chance for ten thousand drachmas. That's the
price—
To be precise—
One Lais asked when Batalus sought her bed.

DIO.

(laughing) :

Yes ! Yes !

DAMO

(laughing loudly) :

He said

“ I will not buy repentance with such sum ! ”

DIO.

(to ION) :

He's frolicsome,
Your Batalus.

DAMO.

Hush ! With Ion I would plead ;
His help I need.

ION.

Who are you ? Answer !

DAMO.

I'm called Damo, Sir.

DIO.

Thus we infer
That you are virgin still ?

DAMO.

The world will joke
At hapless folk.

DIO.

Chaste namesake of Pythagoras's child,
We are beguiled
By your grace. You guard deep secrets : keep them close
From the jocose.

ION

(again trying to disengage her hand from his chiton) :
Loosen your hold, I pray you.

DAMO.

Wait a while.

I am not vile !
One secret I'll divulge : from it you'll learn
Things that concern
Your family.

ION.

What ?

DIO.

Speak truth to him and tell
How his deeds spell
Tragedy for you : acquaint him how you came
To a life of shame.

ION.

What can you know of my sad family,
Or eke of me ?

DAMO

(with some emotion) :

I was of Olynthus.

DIO.

Yes, and that *I* knew !

DAMO.

And very few
Now live to tell of it, but I was saved,—
And then enslaved—

ION.

But not by my family :—I'll hear no more !

DIO.

She has a store
Of tales that might enhearten us.

ION

(giving her a couple of drachmas) :

Go, go !

DAMO.

But you shall know—

DIO.

That whatsoever she may *be*, the sin
Is yours. Within
Her heart are accusations yet unheard.
My pretty bird,
Come warble again. Tell this good citizen
How selfish men
Sacrifice girls to politics.

DAMO.
They slew
My brothers—threw
My father on a midden—cracked his skull—
Made me a trull—
Likewise my sisters—

DIO.
Athens looking on !

ION.
Have done, have done !

DAMO.
But Athens set me free at last, in sooth.

DIO.
One of its youth
Took you to bed, girl, eh ?

DAMO
(*blushing*) :
But what was I
To do, then ?—Die ?

DIO.
No ! None would scorn thee, child, for going to bed,
When all is said.

DAMO.
Now good Diogenes, make haste away :
I've things to say
In private to this gentleman.

ION
(*to* DIOGENES) :
Be off !
(*He has a fit of coughing.*)

DIO.

She'll make you cough !
I know what she would say. With his sharp ears,
A beggar hears
Most things. Now, listen,—Nestocles, your son,
Was even the one
Who favoured her.

ION.

You lie !

DAMO.

No ! It is true !—

You never knew—
He kept me—housed me well—I did not want—

ION

(angrily, and attempting to free himself from the two) :
And here you plant
Yourself in my path and—

DAMO.

Seeing your kindly face—

ION.

Now, of your grace,
Be off. He was new-married. Such expense !
Where was his sense ?

DIO.

(to ION) :

You, who condoned the state's extravagance,
Should look askance
On this.

DAMO.

I loved him. He was very kind !

DIO.

How blind ! how blind !

DAMO

(eagerly to ION) :

Help me, O help me ! I am not at heart
A trull. We part
With virtue—we women—most unwillingly.
Be kind to me.
Give me a daric, at least. In times like this
Truly we miss
Our money. All my generous friends are slain :
Can I maintain
My household on two drachmas ? I adored
My slender lord,
Your son, who prized me more than the cross wife
Who spoilt his life.

ION

(scornfully and struggling a little) :

Away with you ! My heart has a heavy grudge
Against you.

DIO.

Fudge !

She has a grudge indeed. Befriend her, quick,—
You lunatic !

DAMO

*(to DIOGENES. She holds ION firmly. DIO. still
stands before him) :*

Verily thou art too hasty. Let *me* speak—

ION.

Go—go—and seek
Others to ruin.

DIO.

(to ION, and pointing towards the street) :

Those are just the words
The suffering herds
Of victims might, most meetly, use to you.
She's not a shrew—
She's decent—seemly—have some pity, man !

ION.

No courtesan
Who traps a new-wed boy should aught receive
Of me.

DIO.

(to DAMO) :

Don't grieve,
Have courage ! Spider Philip,—who has won
Great fights, and spun
A web round Hellas,—is expected here,
My pretty dear.
He is a lusty man, if folk speak truth :
That handsome youth
His bantling, too, is famous with all girls.
Arrange your curls
And person, for they come. I have no need
To bid you speed.
You will prepare and ready *you* will be
For the enemy.

DAMO

(releasing ION, whom DIO. seizes and holds) :

Let go ! Let go, old man ! He's like his son !

ION.

Begone ! Have done !

DAMO.

I worshipped Nestocles, and, for his sake,
I carry an ache
Unappeasable. You, so like him in the face,
Truly abase
His blood. I saw you—hoped, by being sincere,
To gain your ear ;
But now I would not have you for a friend !
*(She throws the two drachmas at ION'S feet, begins to
weep, and staggers into the temple.)*

DIO.

(releases ION ; picks up the coins and pouches them) :
Thus the gods send
Women to upbraid you. As such folk must live,
Could you not give
The pretty wench a mina ? Follow her.
Does nothing stir
Your heart ? You callous fish !

ION

*(rises, goes to a wall and hides his face in his hands.
DIOGENES follows him) :*

O Nestocles !

DIO.

What vanities
Of grief. His light is out ; but to lose breath
For ever in death
Surely can never be a mischievous thing ;
Such darkening
Of sunshine and passion men nor see nor feel
When it comes. Go kneel
And tell the goddess your sins.

ION

(*turning on* DIOGENES) :

Hence, heartless cur !

DIO.

You whimperer !
Damo was doubly victim of your breed :
She's in dire need !

ION.

Patient am I to dally thus with you
Who spread untrue
Tales. They are defamations ! But still my heart
Pities you. Start
Another life. Be truthful, or the mob
May haply rob
Hellas of her strangest ornament. Be warned !

DIO.

My heart has scorned
The mob too long to fear its wretched spites,—
And this dog bites.

ION.

You snap at all things—even at stricken men.
Get to your den !
But first, go wash yourself, for your grimed face
Is our disgrace.
It is not needful—not on any plea—
That one should be
Thus dirty to uphold a name for wit.

DIO.

How exquisite
The prickly rose that springs from clay and dung !

(PAUSE.)

My words have stung !
Sidon, ashamed of her King, and much assailed
By Persia, quailed
At the thought of dishonour. She destroyed herself,
With all her pelf,
Rather than Ochus should know her. Thus go burn
Your fleet, and turn
The keys of your houses : shut yourselves therein
With all your sin.

ION.

You must have gloated when great Sidon blazed !
Doubtless you praised
Tennes, her traitor king, and mourned that he—
Whose infamy
Was well-requited—met such grievous fate ?
You venerate
The opposites of all good things. Who lauds
Wantons and bawds ?
The murderous brute who sits in Babylon
Is just the one
For you.

DIO.

Ochus acted for the gods indeed.

ION.

Take heed, take heed !

DIO.

Go, and with laurel and with bay-crowned brows,
Set fire to each house !
Elateia's conqueror once made you lose
On your fine shoes
Much urine. Now he's burning all the slain
To Phokion's pain,—
Who always wished that Athens' folk should lie
And putrefy
In their own sepulchres. Go start such fire
And thus acquire
A name for courage at last.

(PAUSE.)

Why, you are dumb—

Come, Ion, come !
Utter at least one other stabbing phrase.

ION.

In all my days
Never have I beheld such a devil-man—
Such veteran
Apostate !

DIO.

Ah, I must not throw more dirt
On your black shirt ?
When you began with me this small debate,
Did you not prate
Of "*wise friend Phokion ?*" But, at some queer whim,
You slandered him
In the next breath you took.

ION.

Each filthy gibe

Of your diatribe
Is venomous as an agèd falcon's claws.
Naught overawes
Your scoffing spirit.

DIO.

(seizing him by the shoulder) :

Truth must fester where

Your big despair
Is hot. Go make to Zeus an offering : haste !
I cannot waste
My time on you. Your melancholy gets stale
Thus aired. Go wail
At the altar. Quick, there is so much to do
For such as you !
Fell your fine trees ; rob sepulchres of stones—
Heed not the bones
Of strenuous sires—strip temples of arms, and build
Works, to be filled
With fighters. Let your fortifications be,
Like usury,
Invincible. Old Chaerondas,—the unshamed,—
Must not be blamed
For Phokion's countless follies. Free your slaves,
And go to the graves
Of the great and call to them for help. Perhaps
Your vast mishaps
May move them. Turn to labouring animals
Such criminals
As are convicted. Work ! For naught's well done
Beneath the sun
Without much exercise—so histories tell.
I wish you well.

The ignorant rich are sheep with golden wool :
Philip will pull
Your fleeces off you, ay, and he will teach
Duty to each—
Even to Leokrates, who got away
But yesterday.

ION.

Miserable dog, go roll yourself in sand.

DIO.

Here is my hand.

(Holding out his hand.)

ION.

Nay, it would foul me. Hence you snarling beast !

DIO.

Now I have ceased
My yappings, having said what the gods refrain
From saying. Pain
They give, but in silence they dispense it. Lo !
More fools I know !

*(He hurries away to accost TWO CITIZENS, who are
approaching.)*

*(ION, pale and trembling with anger, is about to enter the
temple : a BOY meets him.)*

BOY

(sobbing) :

I seek my father ; tell me where he is ?

ION

(pushing him aside) :

Get out of this !

*(ION passes into the temple and the BOY walks away in
the sunlight, weeping.)*

SUPPER AT EPHEBUS.

B.C. 505

(The Caravansary of the Five Nations.)

I

How the old vessel rocked ! Am I still green
In the chaps ? Right glad I was to hear the rope
Rattling beside a quay of Ephesus !
In all our critical days one seems to walk
On the keen edge of some great knife, that lies
Between the past and the future. Thank the gods
There yawns no visible abyss before me,
Or I were lost, so drunken is my head !
But what a city of palaces, upiled
On sunset-smitten hills ; what riot of tongues
Differing in all degrees of ugliness :
What fantasies of unexpected colour !—
A moving rainbow floods the narrow streets :
How wonderful it seems—this eastern land !
Ephesus has repute for luxury,
But let us look for comfort : come, press on,
Watchful for thieves and vicious camels.

II

Ah !

This is a spacious caravansary,
And busy, as befits such spacious name :
Zeus, what a throng of fly-tormented beasts,
And hot, impatient travellers ! With luck,
We shall be well-lodged here, my good Pisander.

Praise be to Hermes, supper's on the spit !—
 Two kids,—a score of quail to follow. See,
 That big-faced cook-man wields his basting-spoon
 As if it were a sceptre. As I live,
 He wears our Prytaneum uniform,
 And with what right ?—Just mark his bland assurance !
 By Hestia, I have seen his face before—
 He is the young pupil of Hermeias : yes,
 The Persian pupil, twice his former size !
 Be wary, friend,—go not too close to him ;
 He'll know us for Athenians, if he used
 His eyes in Athens, therefore turn your head.
 Lo ! Persia in Hellenic trappings ! There,—
 Behold a symbol somewhat perilous !

III

We must look round.

Who is it owns the house ?

That Mede who greeted us so radiantly
 We might have been his sons ? How fat and sleek
 He is, the wretch,—how more than prosperous !
 By Herakles, he's as beautifully groomed
 As a successful merchant. Watch him, now
 Appraising us ! Already he has sounded
 Our servants, yes, and learnt a score of things
 About us—all they wanted him to know !—
 Our standing at Argos,—yes, at Argos—Zeus !
 Good youth, remember whence we come at least !—
 You are Pisander ; I am Sphodrias,—
 Two Argive travellers inexperienced,
 Eager to do a little trading here ;—
 O surely this is easy to remember ?

Verily some men are born to plague their friends
Throughout their tiresome lives ; because they live
Always in blank forgetfulness ; and some
Are born into the world as questioners,
Demanding, with their earliest breath, the why
And wherefore of all things ; and of these last
Our host is one, he being an innkeeper.
His variable smirks are sure to mask
Deep subtlety. A foeman's smiles are sharp
As daggers, and, somehow, his have wounded me ;
But the sore is a hidden one, and now and then
I'll give him good exchange for lightning stabs.
And you ! Do not be sweet as Attic honey
In any traffic with him : you must wear
Lordlier looks if you would have us gain
Some knowledge here, or pass through Ephesus
Unwatched and unsuspected. Ape *my* mien—
Affect the lofty airs of insolent folk
Stupidly purse-proud, who have condescended
To let themselves be robbed. Now, shake yourself ;
Forget your most becoming modesty ;
Be subtle and cautious ; for an ounce of craft
Is worth a pound of courage in a soldier
Made the emissary of his countrymen,
Whether he talk or fight.—So get to work :
Strut like a cockerel ; wear your brightest cloak ;
Bellow commands, and do not fear to search
Imperiously our good host's eyes : consume
With haughtiness his sly disparagement.



IV

Zeus, how these tavern-keepers think themselves
Endowed with a monopoly of wit !
Ever in secret they despise their guests—
Even the richest.—They are most like men
Who have secured some little jurisdiction
In a city, and regard the taxpayer
As one who lacks all judgment.

By the beard

Of Homer, this fellow has the gift of tongues !
Sidonian traders do not equal him :
First Syriac speech, then Babylonian—
Greek with the Attic accent—Median now !
Soon we may hear the Hyrcanian dialect.
Surely a paragon ? Let slip no word
To hint we speak aught else but Dorian Greek.
Narrowly we'll mark him while we sojourn here
And sow some wild delusions profitably ;
For he's a dangerous bird.

Our retinue

Is seldom idle : every man is keen
With equal readiness in gathering truths
And planting falsehoods ; being good Hellenes,
They'll fill this fellow to the mouth with lies.
Already they've told him whence we come, and why ;
The number of our farms ; our count of years—
And whispered the scandals in our history.
Pacify your mind, for all is going well.

To-morrow, we'll view the temple.

Yes, it stands

Too low, indeed : they should have set it where
The splendours of day and night could magnify
Its marvellous beauty—on that noble hill
To wit—but Artemis has long possessed
Those meadows that uphold her twice-built fane,
And the many-breasted mother will not move
From the house she loves as much as you and I
Love our old family dwellings.

V

Curse that ship !

My limbs are stiff as ancient prejudice.
But you feel active ? Fortunate youth ! My bed
Would please me better than a Carian girl,
Though she were Aphrodite. This our work
Offers large scope for your activity :
But keep from the harlots : they would find you out,
Or drunk or sober, and no laying hen
Cackles so loud as a woman when she worms
A young man's secret from him. So be chaste.
Run not afield : the youth who roams around
Makes the least headway in the bustling world.
Impulses build the fabric of our fate,
Therefore envisage these well and see they fit
The measure of needs and not of mere desires.
Observe our host : take care, be not observed—
Not even in one sly glance : he's watching us !
By the winged sandals of our guardian god,
He is a very lord of innkeepers !

In subtlety, perhaps, we equal him,
But not in all things. Lo, two other guests !
More salutations and mock friendship. Yes,
He bows too much, but not with mean abasement :
Manners make money and they unmake states,
And he has got a double share of them.
There's gentle blood behind his courtliness.
Menial he never was,—Speak low : speak low !—
Truly it *is* a massive signet-ring,
But by such gauds you must not shape your judgments ;
Look at folks' nails and little niceties.
The sudden anger as he snatched away
The Samian bowls that eunuch set for us,—
Putting those silver beakers in their place—
Was a good token of his delicacy.
Let us prove worthy of them, when the wine
Blends with the water.

Zeus, I have a thirst !

What will he bring ? Red Lycaonian,
Or liquid fire from the Olympian slopes ?

Do you remember our old Thracian slave,
Erana ? Well, to-night I say with her—
“ *After my little Hermes, a good wine
Is my salvation !* ” May it soon appear !

VI

And so, good youth, you do not comprehend
Craving for dominance ? Should you grow rich,
Maybe such folly will transform your nature,
And make you wish to see all men your slaves.
Large power is like a secret malady
Of burning lust ; unquenchably it grows
Until it slays the victim—or ruins him,
Burying his honour in a mire of shame.

If you were Persia's king, and had your gaze
Hungriily fixed on lands that hurt your pride,
And you felt mighty and desired to make
A double highway for your charioteers
From far Persepolis to some big bridge
Over the Bosphorus by Byzantium,—
And thence through Thracia and Thessalia
Even to Athens—if such scheme were yours,
Then you would likewise set, as tavern lords,
Notable fellows on the seaward roads.
If you had been a satrap loved by heaven,
With wit in such propitious plenitude
As the strong slayer of Smerdis,—with the skill
To overcome the hundred brazen gates
Of mighty Babylon, and take the city,
Easily as a cook a scullion-maid—
You, too, would make such men your instruments.
Murderous intentions move on well-worn highways,
Old as bad thoughts—wide tracks that lead to death.
These highways change not ; they are like the roads
That stretch from state to state, from sea to sea,
Persistent and unalterable : they last
Though monarchs perish and great cities, reared
On and about them, lapse from splendid pride
To dismal ruin, and fair monuments
That cast their shadows on the traveller,
Become but hovels for the vagrant folk.
Despots may raise the choking summer dust
On these ancient paths of pride : they may flash across
Vast provinces in a swollen magnificence,
Whitening the millennial trees ; but still
These roads outwear ambition : they outlive
Swift-moving chariots, pomp of glittering spears,
And all the glories of great conquerors.

VII

Be silent now, Pisander. Here he comes,
Subservient yet in dignity ; the wine
Will hold, methinks, his estimate of us.
If it be good, we'll praise it ; ay, and stir
The vanity in him ; afterwards, my friend,
We must extol Darius stealthily,
Breathing respect, but never adulation,—
Remembering Babylon's brickwork, that once shone
Bright with enamel, shattered now to grit.

VIII

Admirable ! This is most heartening wine—
A good Coenonian vintage, ripe and old,
With a rich odour !

Did he hear and note
The expression of our content ? He's listening :
Beware—he passes, shadow-like, behind.
Now scan the curtain in the vestibule,
But do not seem to watch. An emissary
Of the designing king he surely is !
No matter. Our cleverness can foil his wit,
Indubitably, and spy is matched with spy.
Season your talk with loud and pungent speech—
A rich man's chatter, who seeks to impress
His worth on the listening caravansary :
Revile the Pisistratidae ; discourse
On Phrygian hills, and prate of flocks and herds ;

Discuss the doings of the Archigallus—
Who, for the sake of Artemis, has blessed
Uncounted youths with happy impotence—
(Beware, lest he get hold of you, Pisander,
And make you sapless with his famous blade !)
Slander your wife's mother, or make me your sport,
But do not smile in silence like a bust !
Babble, man, babble, as the indolent do,
And set agog the listening company
With something that dull brains may comprehend :
For fools we're taken, let us talk like fools !

IX

Gods ! There, behind the curtain,—but half-hid—
I saw a Mede—a courier—present
A tablet to some man, and as he thrust
The missive into a pair of trembling hands,
With his wet brow three times he touched the floor !
Now, by the goddess of Athens, I suspect
Our host to be a prince in low disguise,
Established at this gateway of the east
Where he may doubly profit. He is royal
In every movement. He's no tavern man.
Here is our work ! We bide in Ephesus !
Sitting before their savoury meat and wine,
Travellers must gossip : thus the wise may learn
Things of much import, such as merchants know
Of Athens and the foolish towns of Hellas.

X

Wily Darius ! Bright and keen the tools
Thou usest, but they'll strike unyielding stone !
Brave as a leopard thou art, and full of craft
But we of Hellas are much craftier.
Thou seest but an unsettled populace
In Attica—a little mob of brawlers—
Prating of liberty and libraries ;
Yet, if thou ventur'est towards them, thy black beard
Shall be well pulled, and burnt by these weak folk.

The Scythian snows nor daunted him, nor quenched
The fire of his ambition. He toils on
Unweariedly in secret, like a rat
Gnawing a door. He works in darkness ; ay,
And truly his schemes are working. Some great plan,
Half visible in the eyes of our sly host,
Brightens that falcon face with jeopardy !

We no more fear his coming than the flowers
Fear lightning flash, nor dread the sound of his voice
Than rocks dread thunder. Nay, at the thought of him
We feel a revelry of spirit and wait
His onset, laughing at his foolishness.
One day perhaps, if heaven be kind to us,
Hellas may seek him out, and strike him down,
Covering him and his minions with dust—
Such dust as is the only fit apparel
For hopes too full of overweening pride.

XI

Pisander, see, our cups are newly-filled,
But barely touched with water ! If all men
Drink here so richly, then, indeed, Darius
Must gain large knowledge of the coveted lands !
Although I dread him not, indeed I fear
This petulant flesh, the first of tyrannies.

THE BIRTH OF A MYTH

O HIPPIAS, friend of friends,
I'm wild with a wonder
That grows too big for my heart
As the seed of a seed-pod.

I was out last night on the hill—
A yearling had wandered—
'Twas dark ; I could see the lights
Of the fishers' vessels :

Phara's hollow was red
With lamps and lanterns
That made me lonely and sad
And set me athinking.

I thought of the lovers who kissed
In their secret places :
I burned ; an unbearable wish
Drove me to shouting.

I called to Eros again
As often at owl-time
My heart has cried to the god
In desperate longing.

“ Eros,” I called, “ do thou
Lead me to a maiden :
I am man and ready to mate
As my goats have mated ! ”

The cold, indifferent stars
Made banter in silence ;
Nothing gave answer to me
But a chuckling rillet.

Then, as I fixed mine eyes
On the blazing Dog-star,
A darkness moved on the grass
And became a woman.

The young wind troubled her robe
And her face was hidden ;
Tall she was and her form
Seemed that of a goddess.

“ Stranger,” she whispered, “ thy friend,
Kind Eros, has heard thee ;
And Himeros grants thee the boon
That thou art asking.”

She spake with the voice of a wind
Light-blown through the myrtles ;
Her sighs were as little gusts
That stir in the pine-trees.

When I bent over her face
To drink at the fountain
Of love, I drew from her breath
Delicious madness.

Her bosom was far more sweet
Than a blossoming orchard—
Sweeter than lavender leaves
Or leaves of the bay-tree.

Her mouth was as rich to taste
As the woodland berries :
Her lips fulfilled me with love
And made me her master.

For an hour I struggled to find
The silver reflections
Of the chill stars in her eyes,
But never beheld them.

Secret still are her eyes,
But the curves of her body
I know, and this seemed to be built
Of honey and apples.

The peplus over her face
Forbade me to read it :
She guarded her face with teeth
As sharp as a puppy's.

Light-footed as mist she came,
And she softly departed
Hushed like a cloud, when she took
My soul in a halter.

Could Kypris come in such shape
When the nacre chariot
Of Artemis hides in the hush
Behind the mountains ?

Was it herself who came,
The passionate Kypris—
With glory like some rare dawn's
Not ever repeated ?

“ No more in thy life,” said she,
“ Thine eyes shall behold me ! ”
Now am I blest or curst ?
O Hippias, answer !

A DREAM ON BLACKDOWN

(August 9th, 1908)

I

A spirit took me by the hand,
Bidding me leave my joys behind ;
Swiftly he led me through the land,
Lending new vision to my mind.

*" Behold," he cried, " each lovely rood !—
Proud England, slumbering in the sun,
On whose calm sleep few dreams obtrude
Of deeds that might be greatly done.*

*" Contented with the splendid fame
Of miracles effected, she
Allows upon her shining name
The spreading rust of lethargy.*

*" Even unto her utmost bourne
Her orchard fruit is firm and whole ;
Ay, and her fields are rich with corn,
But not with wheat that feeds the soul.*

*" Behold her, garbed with purple moor
And yellowing plain and emerald slope—
England, the sea's fair paramour,
With glory in her horoscope !*

*“ Happy she seems, in quiet pride
Asleep behind a great array
Of iron ships, where every tide
Brings her new affluence night and day.*

*“ Reproach her, idler,—break her sleep,
If thou canst stir her sluggish blood ;
Bid her seek treasure across the deep
That moves not with a tidal flood ! ”*

He spake with anger of such folk
As loitered through the gracious hour,
And of the brawling swarm that broke
Against the doors of wealth and power.

Too few we saw who asked their hearts :
*“ What can we do for England now—
We, we ourselves—how play our parts
To win new chaplets for her brow ? ”*

And fewer still we found who thought
That strength is ever safelier based
On vision, than on opulence brought
From orient sea and northern waste.

II

Yet here and there, we heard this call—
*“ Ye symbol greatness with a keel !
Now add to this a sword, that all
May honour, for the commonweal !*

*“ True mightiness is the power that hides
Diffident, yet serenely bold,
Until some evil force derides
The heaven-appointed laws of old :—*

*“ Then, then it strikes with arm and mind,
And swiftly. Therefore be prepared
To do those things for humankind
The which to do your fathers dared.”*

Wise men spake thus, but, in their scorn
The self-sufficient felt no need
Of counsel ; truth was overborne
By narrow pride and indolent greed.

From palm to palm bright money fell,
Wild laughter ran from mouth to mouth,
While we discerned the clouds of hell
Appearing to the East and South.

III

Alone upon that wine-dark heath,
Astonished, long I lay and heard
Strange things—a sword’s voice in its sheath
The shriekings of an evil bird ;

Sobs of dead men in ancient graves,—
Who muttered of perils ;—shouts of seers
Against a luxury that depraves ;—
Wild oaths of bleeding cannoneers.

Thin voices from forgotten tombs
Shrilled through the world, and then a sound
Of moaning came from ocean glooms
Where, in the silences profound,

Grey bones in indignation moved
Responsive to the languid drawl
Of such as to themselves have proved
That they are wisest of us all !

IV

My cheek impressed on scented grass,
Men I beheld of kindred race
Scanning the future's mystic glass,
And whispering in a secret place.

They sat in council and debate,
With three-score millions looking on,
Seething with frank or furtive hate
Of England, mistress of the sun.

As from the earth a savage learns
The tidings of some distant fray,
I heard them shaping monstrous urns
For tribute they would have us pay.

The clang of labour then became
Louder : I saw their forgemen stand
By giant furnaces, whose flame
Shook the foundations of the land.

And one whose furious frankness gains
The hearts of fools, gazed in his dark
Mirror, envisaging honour's fanes
Ruined by a new hierarch.

With this, meseemed, a halcyon age
Ended ; and, swirling o'er the seas,
Whirlwinds of envy roared their rage
In war's terrific vortices.

V

Waking, I found my eyelids wet,
A sob still struggling in my breast ;
England the envied, dreaming yet,
Lay basking in her foolish rest :

I saw the spreading August wheat
Still yellower in the evening light :
The sated oxen lay in sweet
Slumber ; the swifts in screaming flight

Quested below me, and I turned
Once more unto the printed speech
Of those whose words have often burned
My heart,—who know not what they preach !

BROKEN SLEEP

The tongues of the guns are silent
Over thy fields, Eleonte :
The grasshoppers' ancient song
Sounds in the thickets.

Noon is an azure vision
Built on a sea of azure :
Peace has come back to the land
For a bright moment.

Here where our picks have shattered
Quiet of two millenniums,
The searching eye of the day
Falls on this coffin :

Open it lies, and the dreamers,
Who slept together and sweetly,—
So long that they crumbled to dust—
Stir in the noonlight :

They feel the warmth and the breathings
Of the beloved Ægean ;
They rise on a puff of wind
And leave their chamber.

Man and wife, they were lovers
In death, and they lay together—
Side by side—in a room
Lit by their visions ;

Dreaming of life's fulfilment
Here, where their names are carven
Deep in the stone of a tomb
Made by their children.

We've broken the age-long slumber
That sealed the lips of these lovers
Yet they are still content ;
They do not heed us.

Lost like the songs of Erinna
Were they, but at last they have risen
Into new beauty of life,
Led by the Moerae.

When the deep thunders of Ares
Cease, and a lovelier April
Covers these horrors of Death,
Men's eyes may see them

Haply, in delicate blossoms,
Blowing beside this hollow,
Thankfully taking the sun
In exquisite silence.

EPIGRAPH

This is the tomb of a soldier. Let him rest.
Of all the intrepid he was first and best :
Not of his hurts he died, as some men tell—
He heard youths laughing when their city fell !

WISTARIAS

I

For those to whom the night brought tragedy—
Who, in the morning, rose in sleepless grief,
Here are the boons of peace. The hands of spring
Offer a gift more bright than flower or leaf :—
Find, then, your solace on each happy tree
Robed in new hope's divine apparelling.

II

Around the pillars of your house of pain
Soothingly now the blue wistarias wind
Their arms : they seek you and they touch the eaves
With soft admonishment of tender leaves ;
They break like day about each close-drawn blind
And hang hope's light upon the weather-vane.

III

They do not grieve for fallen flowers ; so now
Be wise like them. Admit the heartening leaven
Of sunshine and sweet wind : no more exclude
This ready easement ; for its joy of heaven
Brings new illumination for your brow,
And that which changes doubt to certitude.

RICHMOND PARK

The thorns were blooming red and white,
The blue air throbbed with May's delight ;
To live was joy. Loud sang the lark
Of peace and love in Richmond Park.

Our crippled soldiers took the sun,
Glad that their bloody work was done ;
Being free to feel the morning's charm,
They grudged no loss of leg or arm.

The yaffles dipped from glade to glade—
Quick gleams of gold and green. I made
A song in my heart. Each hour inspires
Lit by the rhododendron fires.

The cuckoo called : his ancient note
Stirred the world's soul ; and mine it smote
With pain. He quested in sad trees
Whose dead limbs shewed their tragedies.

Yet something of a happier time—
When oaks could flourish in the prime
Of spring—came back to all who heard
The morning voiceful in that bird.

Suddenly boomed a gun. Less bright
The landscape grew : a droning flight
Of man-birds scared a singing lark,
And a yaffle laughed in Richmond Park.

AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

(1916)

It was not his great wound of which he died :
Your blank, impassive faces killed his pride.
For slaying friendship and youth's confidence
There is no weapon like indifference !

THE LAST OF HIS LINE

You were full of laughter ;
Very warm with friendship ;
Yes, and bright with wisdom
When you gaily left us.

In the dusty battle
Swift you were and eager,
Radiant with the courage
Of most valorous forebears.

Painless was your ending,
For a noble anger
Is itself the appeaser
Of the trickling death-wound.

If the crystal curtain
Of the wind were lifted,
Maybe we should see you
Standing near us, happy ;

And behind you, grandsires
Sad, but smiling proudly
On the last and bravest
Of their honoured lineage.

MOTHERS

(1915)

Where are you now, who made us bright with courage ?
On what new pathways are you wandering,
Belovèd sons, who could not keep your promise
To clasp our hands as conquerors in the spring ?

You cannot clasp our hands, but you have conquered,
Singing, as thrushes sing in storms of March,
Beneath black skies fulfilled with fiery tempests,
Where all sweet mouths of lovingkindness parch.

Until we see your signals in death's darkness,
And hear again a mirth that naught destroys,
We seek you always, nor abandon seeking
Until we overtake our fugitive joys.

Surely at whiles you move in sombre places
That once were lit by you,—though free to roam
Transfigured in the blissful ways. Light footsteps
Fall soundless as the sunrays in each home.

Your footprints on the wind are hidden from us,
But you have freedom in the mystery
Immanent about us : morn and noon and midnight
We feel the presence of those we may not see.

Nothing that dies on earth is lost for ever :
This truth makes glad and luminous our minds
Shadowed by death. Your powers can never perish—
They are eternal as the unquellable winds.

Over wide seas we commune with the living,
And know not yet the subtle force we use ;
But none may span the awful chasms of silence
In which life's secret lords their strength diffuse.

At times when almost blinded by our weeping
We feel our souls are calling not in vain ;—
To the heart's cote returns the homing pigeon
Murmuring such love as never can be slain.

Often from out some unexpected sunset,
When thickly-woven clouds are rent apart
Suddenly, you ride to us on wings of splendour
And with the torch of beauty warm the heart.

When thinking of you in our quiet gardens,
Listening to the faint, sweet songs of flowers,
We feel you near and almost catch some message
That is too subtle for our present powers.

Come constantly with rich and secret comfort ;
Let your invisible lips be often pressed
On ours ; for you who live and move in visions
May still see heaven upon a mother's breast.

Fired by the fervour of your valiant spirits,
And by a glory that no fate shall gloom,
Our hearts are full of love and courage, deathless
As you who flowered and perished in your bloom

THE THIRD YEAR OF IT

“Cursed be this war !” Not seldom he declares
But his relations ask, from time to time,
Wherefore his economic basis should be shares
In armament firms, if war indeed be crime.

JIMMY DOANE

(1916)

Often I think of you, Jimmy Doane,—
You who, light-heartedly, came to my house
Three autumns, to shoot and to eat a grouse !

As I sat apart in this quiet room,
My mind was full of the horror of war
And not with the hope of a visitor.

I had dined on food that had lost its taste ;
My soul was cold and I wished you were here,—
When, all in a moment, I knew you were near.

Placing that chair where you used to sit,
I looked at my book :—Three years to-day
Since you laughed in that seat and I heard you say

“ My country is with you, whatever befall :
America—Britain—these two are akin
In courage and honour ; they underpin

The rights of Mankind ! ” Then you grasped my hand
With a brotherly grip, and you made me feel
Something that Time would surely reveal.

You were comely and tall ; you had corded arms,
And sympathy’s grace with your strength was blent ;
You were generous, clever and confident.

There was that in your hopes which uncountable lives
Have perished to make ; your heart was fulfilled
With the breath of God that can never be stilled.

A living symbol of power, you talked
Of the work to do in the world to make
Life beautiful : yes, and my heartstrings ache

To think how you, at the stroke of War,
Chose that your steadfast soul should fly
With the eagles of France as their proud ally.

You were America’s self, dear lad—
The first swift son of your bright, free land
To heed the call of the Inner Command—

To image its spirit in such rare deeds
As braced the valour of France, who knows
That the heart of America thrills with her woes.

For a little leaven leavens the whole !
Mostly we find, when we trouble to seek
The soul of a people, that some unique,

Brave man is its flower and symbol, who
Makes bold to utter the words that choke
The throats of feebler, timider folk.

You flew for the western eagle—and fell
Doing great things for your country's pride :
For the beauty and peace of life you died.

Britain and France have shrined in their souls
Your memory ; yes, and for ever you share
Their love with their perished lords of the air.

Invisible now, in that empty seat
You sit, who came through the clouds to me,
Swift as a message from over the sea.

My house is always open to you :
Dear spirit, come often and you will find
Welcome, where mind can foregather with mind !

And may we sit together one day
Quietly here, when a word is said
To bring new gladness unto our dead,

Knowing your dream is a dream no more ;
And seeing on some momentous pact
Your vision upbuilt as a deathless fact.

A MAKE-BELIEVE

*As the Odeum they left
And walked into sunlight,
Thus unto Sophocles spake
The merry Cratinus.*

- “ We must endure him an hour—
This talkative critic,
Who comes over-weighted with store
Of nondescript knowledge.
- “ Friend, you will see when he speaks,
A fat throttle throbbing
Like the pouched neck of a frog
That swells to his croaking.
- “ A glint in his eyeballs declares
That the wisdom of Thales,
Compared with his learning, appears
Most feeble and stunted,
- “ His arrogance shrivels respect—
It flames in his stories :
He boasts as a trafficker boasts
Of swift-gotten riches.
- “ Lately he blew into fame
A flatterer poet,
Praising an ode till our friends
Ran to cut laurels.

“ Then when symposiasts mouthed
The lines in large moments,
A slave hissed these words in my ear—
‘ All that is in Homer ! ’

“ No bliss is enkindled by talk
With the crackling brilliance
Of thorns, blazing up on a hearth
Where the pot is unheated.

“ Such unreliable loons
Who sputter and sparkle,
Take freely the gifts of our thoughts,
Returning us nothing.”

*So spake Cratinus, whose face
Was scarlet and scornful.*

“ Your slave was more right than he knew,”
Said Sophocles, laughing.

DOÑA ISABEL

Such rare loveliness is hers
That most things are idolaters ;
The cistus in her presence stirs
Visibly, even on windless days,
And drops a flower : the orioles call
More sweetly where her footsteps fall ;
The woodland creatures, one and all,
Watch her with eyes that flash their praise.

Her dogs would lie from morn till night—
Yes, till another dawn grew bright—
Beside her glove, and find delight
In vigil. Shepherd men will go
Homeward by longer paths to meet
Her saintlike face, whose smiles entreat
Babies to crawl and clasp her feet,
Craving the kiss her lips bestow.

Her voice is like some heavenly flute ;
But, when I meet her, I am mute :
Listening, I stand irresolute
And dazed ; too beautiful she seems
For love of mine, that dares not speak
Its yearnings : I become as meek
And silent as a child, and sneak
Away, ashamed of foolish dreams.

LOVE'S CROCUS

(Spanish Song)

Secretly that crocus came,
In its predestined hour :
Pasture, scorched by last year's flame,
Stirred in a sudden shower,
And a shining arrow flew
From the moon and brake in new
Brightness ; then to morning's blue
Aspired a burning flower.

Thus one night there came to him
The boon for which he pined ;
His hopes were parched, his eyes were dim,
When her bright soul inclined
Towards his, with tears like timely rain ;
Till rusted hopes grew green again
And the flower of love awoke to strain
To the sunlight of her mind.

DOUBLE CHERRY-BLOSSOM

(*May, 1913*)

These branches, heavily swathed in whitest cloud,
Bear flowers predestined to sterility :
This seeming bliss of blossom is a crowd
Of imperfections, hungering to be
Mothers of miracles like their mother-tree.

Never for them the brief transforming kiss
Of honey-gatherers, whose momentous feet
Carry new life from bloom to bloom : they miss
The joy that makes the hopes of flowers complete,
And Time breathes words to them of bright deceit.

Under their shade the glad forget-me-not
Has her small visitants, and we can hear
A happy drone upon the perfumed plot
Loved by the butterflies—but none comes near
This snowy sorrow, splendidly austere.

These clustered branches yield no honied scent :
The virgin boughs, so meetly clad in white,
Are but with maiden beauty opulent ;
For this, our little garden's loveliest sight,
Offers the bee no banquet of delight.

It minds me of a woman with a face
Fair as the grief thus palely blossoming,
Who wastes her beauty in her dwelling-place,
And sets upon the altar of her spring
A hopeless yet most radiant offering.

THE OASIS

As in a wilderness there may be spread
An emerald bliss around some secret well,
Each dusty life whence love and hope seem fled
Hides its oasis bright with asphodel.

For each and all at least one day is lit
Immutably ; whose hours—like ruthless eyes
Shimmering with sudden love—the gleams emit
Which memory hastens to immortalize.

My hopes were stricken by an evil wind ;
Griefs came in families I could not count,
Then I discovered your soul, and it was kind—
That moment of my fate is paramount !

For me, existence is a sea of sand
With one cool isle beneath the burning arch :
I fear no mirage now ! The wastes expand—
But, touched by yours, these lips can never parch

BINDWEED

Time having flowered in a morning that gladdens the sun,
This bindweed, though free of the hedge, thrusts out of
its home

Tendrils that shoot towards the sky in an effort to reach
Some vision it knows in the depths of that luminous
blue :

And here, in a silence of summer unspoilt by our
speech,—

Where all the rich hours of existence seem crowded
in one,—

We dream over lessons which beautiful silences teach ;
Our souls stretching out invisible hands to the foam
Of slow-moving clouds and a Light that is never in view.

LABORARE ET ORARE

“ Where is your mother, child ? ”—The rector asked,
While on the sunlit lawn he lay and basked ;—

“ Perhaps in the oak-wood, listening to the doves ? ”

“ No,” said the youngest of his brood of ten ;

“ Mother has been working in the study,
Cleaning the carpet, which was very muddy :
She washed your brushes and your yellow gloves,
And now she’s mending Freddy’s coat again.”

A FROZEN FOUNTAIN

My friend was like the fountain on her terrace
That takes the sheen of south and east and west :
Her sweetness never failed : new hope was welling
Always from the shy spirit in her breast.

Suddenly one night the silver-flowing fountain
Froze, and pale silence tried to hold the spring ;
Yet under the rigid curtain of the water
I heard an eternal hope still whispering.

WOODS OF DELAMERE

I

These birchen copses paved with blue,
That, later, flush with eglantine,
Were part of the bright heaven she knew
Who made earth heaven for me and mine.

When in the marshy hollows came
The vivid marigold of May,
Uplifted, and with eyes aflame,
My love with me kept holiday.

For her the forest depths, serene
As prayer, brake out in silver-white
Laughter : for her the beechen sheen
Increased its loveliest Eden-light.

Through happy landscapes, where the lakes
Of spirit-stirring bluebells lie,
We walked and watched the emerald brakes
Thieving the beauty of the sky :

Each azure and empurpled wave
That, rippling, spake the joy of spring
Some yet diviner transport gave
To her when she was wayfaring.

There, from the fountain of her breast,
Sprang rainbow-songs that lit and stirred
My heart with glory unexpressed
By any voice of mated bird.

I tasted then in shining hours
The honey of Youth's apple-bloom ;
Hearing the hopes of opening flowers
And secrets of the pinewood gloom.

II

My Bird of Joy has flown away,
Alas ! Are all the unfolding buds
Aware of her blue eyes to-day,
Beside these moving, azure floods ?

O, passionate Bird, the glades of Love
Where you at springtime sang to me,
Are hushed, but still my visions move
To lyrics sweet in memory.

Your songs are such as blossoms make
In the blue love-time of the year,—
I hear them when my heartstrings ache
As now in flowery Delamere.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER

“Folk have two natures. We had wandered where
The hawthorns bloomed. His eyes were almost wet,
And his lips moved with something like a prayer ;
Then, with a laugh, he lit a cigarette.”

THE WHITE HORSE

Immobile in the sun the gelding stands
On chrysoprase, above the umbered plain,
Moonwhite and exquisite from hoof to mane.
Free from the chafings of impetuous hands,
Merciless whips and petulant commands,
He breathes in a field oft visioned in the wain—
A horse's heaven, unspoilt by bit or rein,
Where his contentment placidly expands.

But now he stirs and frets : hearing a mare
Whinnying far-off, although emasculate,
He answers ; unrelinquished instincts dare
To hope,—then, angered at his impotent state,
This lonely creature that can have no mate,
To the kind earth returns in his despair.

AN INVITATION

I cannot go to-day : I am not free,
Having an appointment with a flowering tree—
Delphine, a blossoming lilac. My good friend,
Aunt Jane, is cheerful all the year, and she
Heartens me more than does her rank, cold tea ;
But, in a week, I know the rust will come
Upon Delphine, and she will then be dumb
And dismal,—all her beauty at an end.

I must be in time to hear this lilac say
In perfume words that to my mind convey
Hints of inexplicable secrets. Yes,
She has more than beauty : is she not mid-way
Between the known and unknown worlds ? To-day
The unknowable in her holds out to us
Wonders that make the soul idolatrous :
I would not miss her eloquent loveliness.

THE CORK-TREE

Where the frail roses of the cistus blow,
Behold the cork-tree's bole of timeworn grey
Is ringed with wounds ! Its sea-green leaves betray
No grief, but lightly on the sky's fierce glow
Still shape their moving trceries ; yet, below
The hideous stripes, where bark was torn away
Violently by the woodmen yesterday,
There stirs the tumult of a voiceless woe.

Such quiet anguish minds me of a maid
Gnarled in the soul, who in devotion gives
Her life to those unworthy of her aid :
Who pallidly all visions of love outlives,—
Her spirit, half-saintly and half-renegade,
Lamenting hopes that now are fugitives !

BLUEBELLS NEAR THE CITY

Behold these glades that are flecked with blue—
Thrilled and filled with a happier hue
Than any but azure of children's eyes !
Hyacinths bright in a maze of light !
Surely our hopes may end their flight
In these long vistas of Paradise ?

What are the words of the flowers to-day ?
Fair and rare are the words they say :—
“ *After the primrose, here we bring
Joy to the wild,—for the city child
Tortured and shamed in a home defiled,—
For the vision of Eden famishing.*

“ *And knowing not whence comes happiness,—
Sad or glad as their sorrows press—
The children see us and help implore :
What is our spell we may not tell—
Hither they come from the heart of hell
And find the way to a heavenly door !* ”

SPAIN'S WELCOME

Wiser than those who doubted, she had seen
The promise that in ripe affection lies ;
Therefore, at sight of sweet Victoria's eyes,
Spain, once imperial—whose imperial mien
Survives all desolations that have been—
Took to her heart her lord's supremest prize,
Placed in her hands the royal destinies
And with rapt, wistful gaze, proclaimed her queen.

The orient of two souls burns red and gold
As the bright banner that may one day wave
Over a new, great nation, strong and bold,—
Led by a prince whose knightly deeds could save
Kingdoms in greater peril than this old,
Fair realm, whose heart is young and wise and brave.

A SPINNER OF COTTON

(Osaka Study)

Our restless engine utters dreary wails ;
The straps protest ; the frames,
Heavy with spindles, hum and clash, while vales
Are bright with silver flames
And birds ; and these in dust my soul acclaim
Lovingly with salutations of sweet names,—
Imagining what it hails.

But how I sicken as my visions die
In this grey place, where youth
Is choked, and hopes are broken-winged and I
Am but a slave in sooth !
Clouds call, and cog-wheels answer ; every tooth
Of these afflicts me, for they have no ruth
When spring, with songs, goes by.

My master's god is honourable and kind
Maybe ; but mine is one
Whose gifts are sea-waves and the mountain-wind
And fire from the white sun :
He shaped my spirit, making it like to none ;
And gave me, when his curious work was done,
This hapless, mutinous mind.

THE SILK-WEAVER

(Osaka Study)

Crickets awake, the leaves are warm, and youth is
bright in the grass ;
Merry the wind ! Ye butterflies, come, rise in a moon-
white throng !
Generous lord of the lovely hours, let only blue moments
pass
Over my love, who is to spring as an echo is to a song !
My thoughts of her are many as motes that spin in the
beams of light
Piercing the dusk where weavers dream—that enter as
keen, gold spears
To stab my heart ; and lyrics of her, half-shaped, that
I never may write,
Are crooned in shades where wheels intone, that have
neither hopes nor fears.
Joy ! Joy ! My love is touched to-day by beautiful,
opening leaves ;
Upon her head now falls the soft, thin snow of the
cherry bloom :
Clamour of spring is shrill and sweet about her : my
spirit weaves
Visions of her in this long web, whose flowers are lamps
in the gloom.

NEW DESIRE

(Japanese Study)

Lo, the valley is veiled in mist
Of new desire, that blows
In music, where the south wind kissed
The frost flowers and the snows :
Spring, the magic enamellist,
Has come ; her new creation glows
Like Fuji's never-dying rose.

In my heart is a new desire
Fine as a silkworm's thread,
Bright as a peony's ruby fire,
Sharp as an arrow-head :
Even as a god I now respire,
For thoughts that lay on me like lead
Are lifted and mine ills are dead.

My love is like a jonquil, shaped
From earth's most joyous dreams ;
Or like a golden lantern draped
In cedarn shade, that seems
The spirit of Night : my soul, escaped
From nets of doubt, takes on the gleams
Of Beauty in its fair extremes.

We shall sit in the glow of noon
Where lilacs break in flower ;
Doves on a plum-tree bough shall croon
And linnets seek our bower :
Hushed we shall be in such sweet swoon
As comes to lilies when a shower
Stripes the flame of a summer hour.

SOLACE

(Japanese Study)

Slide back the paper door—
Let the rich sunshine pour
Into the house to melt your frozen mind !
Then, standing on the threshold of new bliss,
See that you miss
Nor cheer nor counsel of the cheerful wind.

Behold the polished grass,
O'er which Life's shadows pass !
Implore the gods for help to read its word ;
Allow your spiritual desert to be filled
With bloom, and thrilled
By the sweet stories of some happy bird.

In morning's hopeful blue,
Search for some secret clue
To guide you to resolves and deathless deeds :
Exist no longer with your deeps unmoved
But be approved
By the benevolent warmth that fills all needs.

When, by such loyal aid,
Light comes where now is shade,
Speak to the quiet leaf before it goes ;
Greet the white wonders in the darkening green
And intervene
Where lilies argue with the drowsy rose.

Wise gods will then fulfil
Your tensely quiet will
With secret strength, that issues from the sun :
Quick, open your heart and let escape its woe ;
Let the wind blow
Thereout all webs the grubs of grief have spun !

DREAM OF LOVE

(Japanese Study)

As when a bell is cast, a little silver lends
A sweeter resonance to its clangour, here
The soul may gain—if it have viewless friends—
That which shall make its voice more passionate and
clear.

As when an open doorway sucks delicious wind
Swiftly into a stagnant chamber, we
Draw breaths of beauty, rare and undefined,
From the deep sky that hangs over this frothing tree :

And as its bloom is mirrored in the happy stream,
So do our minds reflect invisible flowers
That shape themselves in raptures of this dream
Of love, in which we feel that more than earth is ours.

SONG OF DELIVERANCE

(Japanese Study)

From my trance
I woke : a glance
Roused me—made my soul advance
To hers that beckoned—and its fire
Clothed the world in new attire,
Flooding misery's expanse
With a sudden radiance
That raised bright thoughts like flowers from out the
mire.

Hope soars higher,
When such desire
Makes a pauper soul aspire
To a great inheritance !
I have found deliverance
From evil, and an unseen choir
Chants in my heart to a mysterious lyre.

Time and chance
And circumstance
Have not looked at me askance :
Now, at last, the beautifier,
Love, has touched Life's dismal brier
With the blossom of Romance,
Shedding on my countenance,
Light of a secret heaven which now seems nigher.

JOY'S DUTY

(Japanese Study)

Let us not forget, in Love's blossoming time,
Those whose shrivelled leaves of grief refuse to fall ;
Nor be blind to souls with torturer thoughts, that rack
Memory and distil a secret-burning gall—
Hungry souls whose feet move in mournful rhyme,
Bleeding ; whose desires are raimented in black !

We must share the bliss that is bubbling now
In our hearts,—therewith ease some bitter drouth,—
And quickly, too, ere life's brightest moments pass !
Let us, full of love, make some trembling mouth
Still, and with warm light quietly endow
Sterile wastes of mind with flowers and shining grass.





