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CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE

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CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

Nube solet pulsa candidus ire dies.

O. TRIST.

—————O qui me gelidis in vallibus Hæmi
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!
Felix, pui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes, et inexorabile fatum avari
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque acherontis.

VIRGIL.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

A POEM

BY

JOHN CAMERON.



Arch Bodl B.
III. 18.

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED

TO THE

REV. C. T. ARNOLD,

OF RUGBY SCHOOL.

TO THE REV. C. T. ARNOLD.

We roam the world—alas, how many roam !
For civilization has her nomads too
Who roam the world unhoused, a various crew,
Nor, like the Tartar, call the world their home—
I, of the Nomads one,—what time Fate drew
My wandering footsteps to thy neighbourhood,
I found in thee the bountiful and good,
And hospitable courtesies ever new,—
Beyond the emphatic word without a flaw
Of FORSTER* he whose life it is to do
As that Samaritan who taught the Jew
That love is the fulfilling of the law—
Ah ! were the many like the noble few !
Our world would be what prophecy foresaw.

* W. E. FORSTER, ESQ., of Bradford.

TO ALL WHOM IT CONCERNS.

JUDGE NOT the Thinker thou—remember, God
Is angry with the *righteous* every day—
Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way
That leads to verity—put down the rod—
Think of the Pharisee—the Publican,—
Then may thy soul compunctuous sorrow know,
The frozen springs of pity then may flow,
Thy tears may flow for the erratic man.
He thought his thought, and spake it boldly forth,
Had his conviction, gave it to mankind,
Shewed to the world what he in vision saw,
Gave, he believed, a gift of priceless worth—
Gave, as he thought, true guidance to the blind,
Love, and religion, and the highest law.



P R E F A C E .

The following little poem was written in the Isle of Man, whither the author went from Manchester, the grand capital of manufacturing industry—the town in which of all others one best sees the good and evil of the “modern system.” The poem is a brief exposition of the twofold agitation wrought in the soul by questions “too high for us,” and the spectacle of the evils that are done under the sun that shines over the region of the new industrialism—All things are full of change ; and though the beginnings of the transformation are not yet visible ; it would be doing injustice to certain excellent chiefs of industry to say that nothing for the bettering of the condition of the workers has been done or meditated by the masters.—There are, doubtless, among them “good men and true” who have the will, could they but see the way. And yet, willing to believe all things of the employers, I have often dared to body forth to the mind’s eye a world of industry in which the mill-owners were the Fishermen of Galilee, or men filled with their devoted love to God and man. I see this moment the manufacturing world as it might be,

were men what they ought to be. And could the masters but persuade themselves to fight against GREED, the old Dragon of industry, the Satan of their system, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive them no more, they would soon see such beneficent results of their disinterested prowess that they would account as time thrown away, the time in which they toiled and spun without once thinking it to be their duty to "resist the Devil."

And now worthy Master Leather-lug forgive me if I say that it is weak in you to affect a musical ear, and deliver judgments on poetical modulation, for you know very well that you cannot distinguish between hexameters and pentameters, except by a laborious process of arithmetical calculation!—But you Friend Fine-ear, just one word with you on behalf of the author—He anticipates your objection, and, having no poetical pretensions, he agrees with you that his poem is rather rhymed meditation than thought and emotion passing into music, in "linked sweetness long drawn out." He agrees with you in believing that one notable characteristic of all poetry rightly so called, is that the thought and language roll together like commingled waters, as we see them in the songs of the "mighty orbs of song"—the men of old who were men of renown; or, in our own time, in Coleridge and Tennyson, *lucida sidera*, "for ever *singing* as they shine"—the Castor and Pollux of our poetical firmament, thick-sown with stars.

Woodbine Cottage, Lee, Kent,
9th November, 1851.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

I.

Wearied of cities saddened by the sight
Of the wild growth inveterate of ill,
And human suffering baffling human skill,
And far divergence from the true and right ;

Wearied of cities, flying for a while
Devouring evil alienate from good,
Seizing, like fire, on every side its food—
With eager haste I sought this lonely isle ;

Holy heart-hallowing Mona—it is meet
That I should love thee with full-hearted love,
For thou canst lift my heart life's ills above—
Let me embrace and kiss thy blessed feet.

Isle of dark mountains ! I would clasp thee round
 As the sea clasps thee in her large embrace,
 And gaze upon thee as on one dear face,
 After long hope, in some blest moment, found.

Where man is *there* is evil, and thou hast
 Of ill a portion in thy happy lot ;
 A vapour to the clouding ills that blot
 The social aspect of our cities vast.

What though they be of grace the fountain head,
 The natal clime of Beauty's golden grove ;
 The jungles they where shapes of terror rove,
 And deadly upas spreads its darkest shade—

Where is the power to tear up by the root
 The ineradicable ? cut a way
 The growth perennial, growing night and day ?
 And plant the tree that yields life-giving fruit ?

The life we live is with itself at war,
 A chaos wild, nor can the longing eye
 Find Hope's star gleaming in our stormy sky,—
 Of saddest places, cities saddest are.

II.

Would that I now could see with boyhood's eyes,
Would that I now could be as I have been,
Would that I could forget what I have seen,
To see again on earth a Paradise,

Know for an hour again the mood of mirth,
See by the precious light of early joy
What God beheld—a world without annoy,
When first he blessed his new created earth;

Bright from his hand the wondrous planet shone,
Pure from his hand was man his holy child,
Lord of a world by sorrow undefiled,
That yearned not yet for the Redeeming One.

Not in the shivering savage state began
Humanity to run its wondrous race;
To a celestial origin we trace
The ancestral savage of the modern man.

From speculative as inspiréd lips
 The life-exalting lesson all may learn—
 In the degraded savage to discern
 The primal Adam laboring in eclipse.

Who knows the anguish of the thoughtful soul,
 At sight of evils heapéd mountain-high,
 When burthened by the weight of, *whence?* and *why?*
 It turns habitual to the final goal,

And marvelling at the government supreme,
 In all the sorrows men are born to bear,
 Hails from afar the certain sepulchre,
 And the deep sleep that ends life's troubled dream.

III.

The boy can see around him but the good,
 The man must wrestle with the Maker's plan,
 Must find the good of evil, if he can,
 From ages antecedent to the flood,

Must break himself upon the wheel of thought,
Must try to answer questions deep and high,
Must search the abysses with a daring eye,
Must fight the battle which the best have fought ;

Fight and be overcome and stagger on
Groping his darkling way, or haply fight
Victoriously his upward way to light,
And climb the mountain till the summit won,

He stands triumphant on a glorious height,
Uplift above the region of the storm,
Where melancholy mists no more deform
The blesséd sunshine of untroubled light.

Would ! that my thought had kept her early state,
Nor pushed the window of her ark aside,
To scour away wild-wheeling far and wide
Over a flood that never can abate.

The Dove returned, but Thought can ne'er again
Flee to the covert of her sheltering ark ;
The Raven's fate is her's, through storm and dark,
To sweep the dread immeasurable main ;

For her, no rest upon the rolling wave,
 For her, where'er she flee, no sheltering bourne,
 No shallowing of the deluge, no return ;
 For her, no welcoming hand stretched forth to save.

Say to what ark of refuge *can* she flee ?
 Where is the Noah who has braved the wrath
 Of world-submerging thought, and "kept the faith ?"
 To save her fleeing from the stormy sea ?

IV.

Great thought, aspiring to subdue the world,
 Began her conquering march when time was born ;
 Her trumpet startled the primeval morn,
 Creation's dawn beheld her flag unfurled.

The past ne'er dies—our aim and tendency,
 Our thought and action are the flower and fruit
 Of eldest thought and act,—the living root
 Of life's wide-spreading ever-sprouting tree.

The prediluvial world—the primal power,
The fount of the far-flowing stream of good,
The Patriarch saved from the remorseless flood,
To work creative to the present hour.

He thinketh not who thinks the men of old
Ne'er thought a thought to see a future day,
That Noah but such fodder stowed away,
As fed the cattle in his bellowing hold.

The inspiration of the heroic force
Of generations, and their demigods,
Comes streaming to us from their bright abodes,
As cloud-born rivers from their skyey source :

Trace we the stream wide-rolling, deep and wide,
Through slumbering forests dim to mountain rills;
To fountains in the depth of distant hills,
The waters wide that swell his mighty tide.

We sail by star, by compass, and by chart—
It lives and works—whate'er in thought was true,
Or brave in act, in Roman, Greek, or Jew,—
Their life-blood floods the channels of our heart.

The perished yesterday is in to day—
The quickening freightage of the vanished year,
The life-breath of the centuries is here—
The living spirit cannot pass away.

V.

Self-tasking thought must search afar and near
Such saving potency of law to trace,
In the historic movement of our race,
As whirls the planets round the solar sphere.

Oh effort vain! no Newton or Laplace,
Has felt to the heart of life—the central law,
Whence keen-eyed science all the past may draw,
Or shew the ages what must come to pass.

The revolution of the lunar sphere,
The gracious equipoise of day and night,
The planets in their regulated flight,
The inevitable measure of the year,



The cosmic life-pulse felt from sun to sun,
 The mighty undulation of the sea ;
 All, all proclaim in nature fealty—
 And, is there in the life of nations none ?

No large obedience, as their course they run,
 To the stretched sceptre of a royal law,
 Potent as *that* omnipotent to draw,
 The rolling orbs around their central sun ?

In the wild strife of wills, no will supreme,
 Subduing all volitions to its sway,
 As tributary streams are borne away
 In all its windings by the mightier stream ?

VI.

Long have we stood expectant of the good,
 The better world by generations sought,
 Descried afar by rapt prophetic thought
 In the tranced vision of her loftiest mood :

Are they beyond the ken of reason's eye,
 The better states of being yet to be?
 Through her authentic tube may we not see,
 New worlds dim-gleaming in our future sky?

From their far orbits touching to the soul
 Our world with stellar potency—they curb
 The erratic motion of the rolling orb,
 And draw it onward to the destined goal.

In seven or seventy thousand years—what then?
 What throes of parturition? what the birth?
 The best, the last? who then shall walk the earth?
 Men like ourselves? or Gods and god-like men?

What of the old that is shall then be new?
 What of the new that is shall then be old?
 What of the true that is its place shall hold?
 What of the false that is shall then be true?

What new conditions of the evergrowing?
 What pure enfranchisement from thought effete?
 To what new thinking, what new bondage sweet?
 What new direction to the everflowing?

The visionary eye will still be seeing
A glorious future, living not in seeming ;
The heart in joy and sorrow will be dreaming
Of higher still and higher modes of being,

And re-attainment of the primal state,
Where first our wonderful career began,
When Angels communed with their fellow Man ;
The last created heavenly Potentate.

VII.

And so I hoped till hope became a dream,
And shaped all objects to her dream divine,
The boulders rounded by the dashing brine,
And pebbles polished by the mountain stream.

The wind-blown sand-hills, and the billowy bar
Fashioned by roaring flood, or plangent wave ;
By these I sought the precious hope to save
That life would yet be radiant as a star,

Delivered from the sway of doubt and fear,
 Blind barren turmoil and destructive strife;
 A glorious apotheosis of life,
 A chaos rounded to the perfect sphere.

And near and far I sought analogies
 To give adventurous thought unfettered scope;
 And thought came freighted to the feet of hope
 With treasures, gathered from far-distant seas,

And from vague cycles out of memory
 In the grey dawn of time, when nature rent
 Our quelling island from the continent,
 And poured her floods between, that she might be

The imperial mistress of the fateful sea,
 The dread of Tyrants, Peopler of the isles,
 From arctic climes to where the tropic smiles,
 The genetrix of nations of the free.

And if, said I, the God in nature wrought
 To mould an isle to be the planet's soul;
 Sweeps not the planet to some glorious goal
 Beyond the farthest flight of daring thought?

The geologic cycles! they proclaim
Indefinite progression for the race,
Higher and higher metamorphoses,
And states of being yet without a name.

VIII.

But thought *will* startle at the signs of strife,
The world-old conflict of the good and ill;
Here, indications of a gracious will,
There, of a power inimical to life;

As if the world were but a theatre
For Ormuzd and Ahrimanés to flame,
And men spectators of their dreadful game,
Or the blind victims of their deadly war.

Does the fierce-flooded stream? the lightning spare?
The heaving earth, before she spout her fire,
Check her volcanic thunders to enquire
If here Pompeii? or if Lisbon there?

Does the tornado, ere it wreck the skies,
 Wrestle against its nature as to save?
 Swift it o'erwhelms the seaman in the wave,
 It has no ear to hear his children's cries.

What is your "best of possible worlds" to her,
 The desolate in heart who *cannot* pray?
 On the wreck-strown shore of life, a castaway—
 Philosophy! thou poor interpreter!

With the historic telescope I sweep
 The horizon of the deep of time and lo!
 The drifting nations rolling to and fro,
 Crashing like icebergs on the polar deep,

When roused to fury by the tempest's stress!
 And can it be the kingdom-tossing storms
 Shall work the life of man to nobler forms?
 And round the nations into perfectness?

The rolling earth is the sarcophagus
 Of buried and forgotten nations,—they
 Are blent for ever with earth's common clay;
 The fate the future holds awaiting us.—

IX.

As sought the Iberian bold, unknowing fear,
The fabled fountain of eternal youth,
So sought I the life-giving streams of truth
Remote, in their shy fountains welling clear.

I followed hard, where'er they led the way,
The potentates of problematic thought,
But devious ever from the goal I sought,
Truth unalloyed, authentic as the day.

Scouring the desert with these Tartars keen,
I swept through blinding clouds of stifling sand,
With soul intent on palm-and-fountain land,
Some little sheltering isle of living green,

And fountain gushing in the verdant gloom —
There phantom-pillars reared their terrors high
O'er the grim desert to the startled sky,
And breathed with deadly breath the dread simoom,

Parching the soul—and when the eager eye
Raged round the desolation spread afar,
The mocking mirage glimmered like a star
'Tween tawny wilderness, and scorching sky.

We roamed around and round—distraught we flew
Over the shadowy steppe to the barrier
That parts the dreary land of doubt and fear
From the celestial soil where truth is true.

On like a flood we swept to bear away—
'Till reeling refluxed from the quelling shock,
As bursts the billow on the sea-beat rock,
The billow of our purpose broke in spray.—

X.

His folly is capacious as the sea,
Who seeks firm footing on the rolling wave;—
Who has “the spot to stand upon” is brave,
The world-uplifting Archimedes, he.

His resolute purpose serves no varying mood,—
 What cares he for the coward "have a care,"
 Intent with every faculty to dare,
 And rush to action with his soul on flood.

While moping speculation idling stands,
 Mumbling with toothless gums her mouldy thought,
 He is on fire to do the thing he ought,
 He lets no purpose perish in his hands.

Who can on "peradventure" firmly stand?
 Who from the swallowing slough can lightly leap
 To the far-seeing hill-top? who can keep
 His foot from sliding on the sliding sand?—

Better is impulse with her sudden bound,
 The spur of headlong instinct, any power
 Quick to create or seize the pregnant hour,
 Than barren thinking spinning round and round.

The best for us is not to ask and ask
 Questions that gender questions without end;
 But with heroic joy our powers to bend,
 To the achievement of some fruitful task—

The "peradventure," and the "aye and no,"
Can ne'er create in man great character ;
The life must be unprofitable stir,
Where thought is full of tossing to and fro.

The men of full persuasion are the strong ;
With brawny strength they climb the steepest hill ;
Theirs is the genuine manhood of the will ;
Their every sinew is an iron thong.

Faithful endeavour strengthens evermore
By fresh accessions of supernal power ;
Believing Paul does more in one short hour
Than doubting Thomas in the twenty-four.

XI.

Who in conviction has firm footing found,
Believing humbly and content to wait,
He is in genuine height more elevate
Than if he stood upon the topmost round

Of speculation's ladder, mounted high,
 Struggling a doubtful footing to maintain,
 With palpitating heart and whirling brain,
 And giddy terror in the staring eye.

Her glimmering light can shew us but our bars,
 Or regions vague that misty vapours shroud,
 Not the clear sunny peaks that pierce the cloud,
 And hold communion with the eternal stars.

Can she embreathe pure hope and courage high,
 For great occasion, or the daily strife?
 Say, can she feed with lofty thoughts the life?
 Thoughts that best teach us how to live and die.

The dauntless sons of Rome, the Titan brood,
 The homely wisdom of the household hearth
 Raised to the summit of heroic worth,
 And there sustained them in the lofty mood.

The mighty Benefactress! by her codes,
 She tamed the peoples gathered by her glave;
 Her gifts were many, but the best she gave
 Was the calm grandeur of her Demigods.

XII.

Know they the paths of wisdom who explore
Blind sterile regions between day and night ?
Who climb and climb the bleak and barren height ?
Who sail a dreary sea without a shore ?

What boots it to have spent the soul's life-breath,
Searching the abysses with the sounding chord ?
I turn for ever from the depths abhorred,
To fan the embers of the fires of faith ;

Embers and ashes of the fires that glowed
On the heart's altar when my life was new,
Before the blast of speculation blew,
And sent me blindly groping after God :

God of the heart too potent to dethrone
For brief usurping idols—calf or clod,
Some hocus-pocus transcendental God,
Some bubble peradventure fully blown.

Where is the friend my spirit yearns to know ?
 Who with divine reanimating voice
 Where knowledge ceases bids the heart rejoice,
 Faith, the best counsellor of man below.

The friend who takes the wanderer by the hand,
 And leads to heights that hail the distant day,
 The mount of vision, shewing far away
 The sunlit summits of the happy land :

'Tis she who indicates the ennobling end
 That vindicates the rigors of the strife,
 Embreathes pure courage for the nobler life,
 Believing where she cannot comprehend.

XIII.

The trembling equipoise of argument—
 Can that adjust the heart ? I will believe—
 I cannot carry water in a sieve,
 Nor stand on nature's show of kind intent.

Canst mete the depths of the eternal thought ?
Canst climb to heights above the starry sky ?
Better forget the inexorable—*why* ?
In the glad doing of the thing we ought.

The Maker's plan we cannot understand,
Nor what we are, nor what we are to be ;
As well endeavour to contain the sea
Within the rounded hollow of the hand.

In vain has speculation tried to pierce
The impenetrable mystery to the core,
To sail across a sea without a shore,
To solve the riddle of the universe,

The riddle of the world, the little part
In this or that condition—mine or thine ;
To vindicate the government divine,
To the authentic yearnings of the heart.

Vainly she strives with show of subtle skill
To find sure answers to her questions deep ;
She ne'er can lull the troubled thought to sleep,
Nor from the heart uplift the weight of ill,

Nor plant an ineradicable faith,
Nor with high hopes enrich the poor forlorn,
Nor staunch the bleeding wounds of those who mourn,
Nor wake to life the dead in moral death,

Nor to the trembling heart authenticate
Its yearnings for a world to counterpoise
The inscrutable world we live in, or rejoice
The evils of our transitory state,

Nor give the heart the Parent which it craves
To rule the flood of time and circumstance,
Whose power unfelt, man is the sport of chance,
Light wreckage floating on the eddying waves ;

Sport of the play of powers without an aim,
Of wayward chances, dark contingencies,
Unruddered and adrift in unknown seas,
Guessing his "whitherward," and "whence he came ;"

Now on the crest of the fierce-rolling wave,
Clutching at nought, now in the swallowing gurge
Wrestling in vain with the remorseless surge
That bears the boldest swimmer to the grave.

XIV.

As the scared child flies to its mother's arms,
I, mother nature, to thy breast will run
From sight of evils wrought beneath the sun,
And thou shalt shield me from the touch of harms :

And when I feel the weight of sympathy,
And when the rush of trying thought is strong
At sight of suffering worth, triumphant wrong,
Then, gracious nature, will I turn to thee :

I'll lay my head on thy peace-giving breast,
With no weak passion passing into pain,
No love tumultuous, transitory, vain,
But the beatitude of tranced rest—

Heart-stilling Mother, better teacher thou
Than speculation when she teaches best ;
She gives a momentary troubled rest,
But peace looks down upon me from thy brow,

Thou lofty Snafell*—when the early sun
 Purples the heather on thy steepy slope,
 In the quick transport of swift-soaring hope,
 I feel as Paradise could yet be won.

Thou rocky Greeba* and thou dark Barrule!*
 Glad thoughts descend like angels from each hill,
 Bearing the tranquil message "Peace, be still,"
 The gracious wisdom taught in Nature's school.

XV.

Long have I lived from Nature far apart,
 But the old love can never know decay,
 Even while I gaze, the black clouds break away;
 I see the blue heaven of the early heart.

If in my spirit still the billows roll,
 'Tis but the heaving of the glossy wave,
 Calm-rolling when the storm has ceased to rave,
 And peace, the halcyon, settles on my soul.

* Names of Mountains in the Isle of Man.

Into my heart the skyey glories flow,
 Subduing to meek tenderness and love,
 And a prophetic sense of joy, above
 The best we know of happiness below.

The morning's holy light, its breathing balm,
 Embreathe into my spirit peace sincere,
 Safe from the anxious touch of hope and fear,
 Meek resignation, beatific calm.

Ye streams, ye vallies, and ye mountains hoar,
 In your great presence I can realise
 For one brief hour, the Boy's lost Paradise,
 The thing that has been, and can be no more.

The joy your grandeurs to the spirit bring,
 The thought-tossed thinker here may find, the peace ;
 And if the stress of thinking ne'er should cease,
 Make o'er his soul one sovran thought the king—

A king to reign with a right royal sway,
 The insurrectionary surge to quell
 Of thoughts that storm life's trembling citadel,
 And chase the leaguering host of doubts away.

Ye vallies lone, and you, ye mountains, ye
 Enthroned this faith supremest in my breast,
 That the inscrutable is for the best,
 That evil but for good could never be.

And when I see what frights the ear and eye,
 Of sin and sorrow in the city vast,
 This faith I'll firmly hold by to the last—
 My anchor when the tempest rages high ;

That seeming contradictions to the good,
 Which goad the spirit with the "*whence*" and "*why?*"
 Too deeply sink the heart, uplift too high,
 Are muddy currents in a limped flood,

Defiling with a transitory stain
 Its depths pellucid, as it rolls away
 Toward the region of the new-born day,
 To fall translucent in the glittering main.*

Dear mother Nature, thus from thee I part
 With proclamation all inadequate
 Of what I owe thee—who would know my debt
 Will find it, if he has a thinking heart.

THE WORSHIPPER OF NATURE.

She loves the glimmering hour of twilight grey
When the bat flutters o'er the dusky lawn ;
And she will watch for hours the silent dawn
Opening the golden portals of the day ;
And when the setting sun with purple ray
Reddens the deep calm-heaving—where the strand
Resounds with measured thunder, she will stand
As if her heart had travelled far away.
She, in the mood of that most holy time,
Holds high communion with the sounding sea,
And soul-exalting sympathy sublime ;
Borne on the wings of that grand harmony
To Pisgah heights, whence she beholds the clime
Ineffable, where blesséd spirits be.



9/8



