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St. Barbara

By

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TO F. C. IN MEMORIAM PALESTINE, '19

Do you remember one immortal Lost moment out of time and space,
What time we thought, who passed the portal Of that divine disastrous place
Where Life was slain and Truth was slandered On that one holier hill than
Rome, How far abroad our bodies wandered That evening when our souls
came home?

The mystic city many-gated, With monstrous columns, was your own:
Herodian stones fell down and waited Two thousand years to be your throne.
In the grey rocks the burning blossom Glowed terrible as the sacred blood: It
was no stranger to your bosom Than bluebells of an English wood.

Do you remember a road that follows The way of unforgotten feet, Where
from the waste of rocks and hollows Climb up the crawling crooked street
The stages of one towering drama Always ahead and out of sight ... Do you
remember Aceldama And the jackal barking in the night?

Life is not void or stuff for scorers: We have laughed loud and kept our
love, We have heard singers in tavern corners And not forgotten the birds
above: We have known smiters and sons of thunder And not unworthily
walked with them, We have grown wiser and lost not wonder; And we have
seen Jerusalem.

THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA

(St. Barbara is the patron saint of artillery and of those in danger of sudden death.)

When the long grey lines came flooding upon Paris in the plain, We stood
and drank of the last free air we never could taste again: They had led us back
from the lost battle, to halt we knew not where And stilled us; and our gaping
guns were dumb with our despair. The grey tribes flowed for ever from the
infinite lifeless lands And a Norman to a Breton spoke, his chin upon his
hands.

“There was an end to Ilium; and an end came to Rome; And a man plays on
a painted stage in the land that he calls home; Arch after arch of triumph, but
floor beyond falling floor, That lead to a low door at last; and beyond there is
no door.”

And the Breton to the Norman spoke, like a small child spoke he, And his
sea-blue eyes were empty as his home beside the sea: “There are more
windows in one house than there are eyes to see, There are more doors in a
man’s house, but God has hid the key: Ruin is a builder of windows; her
legend witnesseth Barbara, the saint of gunners, and a stay in sudden death.”

It seemed the wheel of the world stood still an instant in its turning, More
than the kings of the earth that turned with the turning of Valmy mill:
While trickled the idle tale and the sea-blue eyes were burning, Still as the
heart of a whirlwind the heart of the world stood still.

“Barbara the beautiful Had praise of lute and pen: Her hair was
like a summer night Dark and desired of men.

Her feet like birds from far away That linger and light in doubt;
And her face was like a window Where a man’s first love looked out.

Her sire was master of many slaves A hard man of his hands;
They built a tower about her In the desolate golden lands,

Sealed as the tyrants sealed their tombs, Planned with an ancient plan,
And set two windows in the tower Like the two eyes of a man.”

Our guns were set toward the foe; we had no word, for firing. Grey in the

gateway of St. Gond the Guard of the tyrant shone; Dark with the fate of a
falling star, retiring and retiring, The Breton line went backward and the
Breton tale went on.

“Her father had sailed across the sea From the harbour of Africa
When all the slaves took up their tools For the bidding of Barbara.

She smote the bare wall with her hand And bad them smite again;
She poured them wealth of wine and meat To stay them in their pain.

And cried through the lifted thunder Of thronging hammer and hod
‘Throw open the third window In the third name of God.’

Then the hearts failed and the tools fell, And far towards the foam,
Men saw a shadow on the sands And her father coming home.”

Speak low and low, along the line the whispered word is flying Before the
touch, before the time, we may not loose a breath: Their guns must mash us to
the mire and there be no replying, Till the hand is raised to fling us for the final
dice to death.

“There were two windows in your tower, Barbara, Barbara, For all
between the sun and moon In the lands of Africa.

Hath a man three eyes, Barbara, A bird three wings, That you
have riven roof and wall To look upon vain things?”

Her voice was like a wandering thing That falters yet is free,
Whose soul has drunk in a distant land Of the rivers of liberty.

“There are more wings than the wind knows Or eyes than see the sun
In the light of the lost window And the wind of the doors undone.

For out of the first lattice Are the red lands that break And out of
the second lattice Sea like a green snake,

But out of the third lattice Under low eaves like wings Is a new
corner of the sky And the other side of things.”

It opened in the inmost place an instant beyond uttering, A casement and a
chasm and a thunder of doors undone, A seraph’s strong wing shaken out the
shock of its unshuttering, That split the shattered sunlight from a light behind
the sun.

“Then he drew sword and drave her Where the judges sat and said
‘Caesar sits above the gods, Barbara the maid.

Caesar hath made a treaty With the moon and with the sun, All
the gods that men can praise Praise him every one.

There is peace with the anointed Of the scarlet oils of Bel, With
the Fish God, where the whirlpool Is a winding stair to hell,

With the pathless pyramids of slime, Where the mitred negro lifts
To his black cherub in the cloud Abominable gifts,

With the leprous silver cities Where the dumb priests dance and nod,
But not with the three windows And the last name of God.”

They are firing, we are falling, and the red skies rend and shiver us,
Barbara, Barbara, we may not loose a breath— Be at the bursting doors of
doom, and in the dark deliver us, Who loosen the last window on the sun of
sudden death.

“Barbara the beautiful Stood up as queen set free, Whose mouth
is set to a terrible cup And the trumpet of liberty.

I have looked forth from a window That no man now shall bar,
Caesar’s toppling battle-towers Shall never stretch so far.

The slaves are dancing in their chains, The child laughs at the rod,
Because of the bird of the three wings, And the third face of God.’

The sword upon his shoulder Shifted and shone and fell, And
Barbara lay very small And crumpled like a shell.”

What wall upon what hinges turned stands open like a door? Too simple for
the sight of faith, too huge for human eyes, What light upon what ancient way
shines to a far-off floor, The line of the lost land of France or the plains of
Paradise?

“Caesar smiled above the gods, His lip of stone was curled, His
iron armies wound like chains Round and round the world,

And the strong slayer of his own That cut down flesh for grass,
Smiled too, and went to his own tower Like a walking tower of brass,

And the songs ceased and the slaves were dumb; And far towards the
foam Men saw a shadow on the sands; And her father coming home....

Blood of his blood upon the sword Stood red but never dry. He
wiped it slowly, till the blade Was blue as the blue sky.

But the blue sky split with a thunder-crack, Spat down a blinding
brand, And all of him lay back and flat As his shadow on the sand.”

The touch and the tornado; all our guns give tongue together St. Barbara for
the gunnery and God defend the right, They are stopped and gapped and
battered as we blast away the weather. Building window upon window to our
lady of the light. For the light is come on Liberty, her foes are falling, falling,
They are reeling, they are running, as the shameful years have run, She is
risen for all the humble, she has heard the conquered calling, St. Barbara of
the Gunners, with her hand upon the gun. They are burst asunder in the
midst that eat of their own flatteries, Whose lip is curled to order as its
barbered hair is curled.... Blast of the beauty of sudden death, St. Barbara of
the batteries! That blow the new white window in the wall of all the world.

For the hand is raised behind us, and the bolt smites hard Through the
rending of the doorways, through the death-gap of the Guard, For the cry
of the Three Colours is in Condé and beyond And the Guard is flung for carrion
in the graveyard of St. Gond, Through Mondemont and out of it, through Morin
marsh and on With earthquake of salutation the impossible thing is gone,
Gaul, charioted and charging, great Gaul upon a gun, Tip-toe on all her
thousand years and trumpeting to the sun: As day returns, as death returns,
swung backwards and swung home, Back on the barbarous reign returns the
battering-ram of Rome. While that that the east held hard and hot like pincers
in a forge, Came like the west wind roaring up the cannon of St. George,
Where the hunt is up and racing over stream and swamp and tarn And their
batteries, black with battle, hold the bridgeheads of the Marne And across
the carnage of the Guard, by Paris in the plain, The Normans to the Bretons
cried and the Bretons cheered again.... But he that told the tale went home to
his house beside the sea And burned before St. Barbara, the light of the
windows three, Three candles for an unknown thing, never to come again,
That opened like the eye of God on Paris in the plain.

ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The men that worked for England They have their graves at home: And
bees and birds of England About the cross can roam.

But they that fought for England, Following a falling star, Alas, alas for
England They have their graves afar.

And they that rule in England, In stately conclave met, Alas, alas for
England They have no graves as yet.

THE SWORD OF SURPRISE

Sunder me from my bones, O sword of God, Till they stand stark and
strange as do the trees; That I whose heart goes up with the soaring woods
May marvel as much at these.

Sunder me from my blood that in the dark I hear that red ancestral river
run, Like branching buried floods that find the sea But never see the sun.

Give me miraculous eyes to see my eyes, Those rolling mirrors made alive in
me, Terrible crystal more incredible Than all the things they see.

Sunder me from my soul, that I may see The sins like streaming wounds,
the life's brave beat; Till I shall save myself, as I would save A stranger in the
street.

A WEDDING IN WAR-TIME

Our God who made two lovers in a garden, And smote them separate and
set them free, Their four eyes wild for wonder and wrath and pardon And
their kiss thunder as lips of land and sea: Each rapt unendingly beyond the
other, Two starry worlds of unknown gods at war, Wife and not mate, a man
and not a brother, We thank thee thou hast made us what we are.

Make not the grey slime of infinity To swamp these flowers thou madest one
by one; Let not the night that was thine enemy Mix a mad twilight of the
moon and sun; Waken again to thunderclap and clamour The wonder of our
sundering and the song, Or break our hearts with thine hell-shattering
hammer But leave a shade between us all day long.

Shade of high shame and honourable blindness When youth, in storm of
dizzy and distant things, Finds the wild windfall of a little kindness And
shakes to think that all the world has wings. When the one head that turns the
heavens in turning Moves yet as lightly as a lingering bird, And red and
random, blown astray but burning, Like a lost spark goes by the glorious word.

Make not this sex, this other side of things, A thing less distant than the
world's desire; What colour to the end of evening clings And what far cry of
frontiers and what fire Fallen too far beyond the sun for seeking, Let it
divide us though our kingdom come; With a far signal in our secret speaking
To hang the proud horizon in our home.

Once we were one, a shapeless cloud that lingers Loading the seas and
shutting out the skies, One with the woods, a monster of myriad fingers,
You laid on me no finger of surprise. One with the stars, a god with myriad
eyes, I saw you nowhere and was blind for scorn: One till the world was
riven and the rise Of the white days when you and I were born.

Darkens the world: the world-old fetters rattle; And these that have no hope
behind the sun May feed like bondmen and may breed like cattle, One in the
darkness as the dead are one; Us if the rended grave give up its glory
Trumpets shall summon asunder and face to face: We will be strangers in so
strange a story And wonder, meeting in so wild a place.

Ah, not in vain or utterly for loss Come even the black flag and the battle-
hordes, If these grey devils flee the sign of the cross Even in the symbol of
the crossing swords. Nor shall death doubt Who made our souls alive

Swords meeting and not stakes set side by side, Bade us in the sunburst and
the thunder thrive Earthquake and Dawn; the bridegroom and the bride.

Death and not dreams or doubt of things undying, Of whose the holy hearth
or whose the sword; Though sacred spirits dissever in strong crying Into Thy
hands, but Thy two hands, O Lord, Though not in Earth as once in Eden
standing So plain again we see Thee what thou art, As in this blaze, the
blasting and the branding Of this wild wedding where we meet and part.

THE MYSTERY

If sunset clouds could grow on trees It would but match the may in flower;
And skies be underneath the seas No topsyturvier than a shower.

If mountains rose on wings to wander They were no wilder than a cloud;
Yet all my praise is mean as slander, Mean as these mean words spoken aloud.

And never more than now I know That man's first heaven is far behind;
Unless the blazing seraph's blow Has left him in the garden blind.

Witness, O Sun that blinds our eyes, Unthinkable and unthankable King,
That though all other wonder dies I wonder at not wondering.

“THE MYTH OF ARTHUR”

O learned man who never learned to learn, Save to deduce, by timid steps
and small, From towering smoke that fire can never burn And from tall tales
that men were never tall. Say, have you thought what manner of man it is
Of whom men say “He could strike giants down”? Or what strong memories
over time’s abyss Bore up the pomp of Camelot and the crown. And why one
banner all the background fills, Beyond the pageants of so many spears,
And by what witchery in the western hills A throne stands empty for a
thousand years. Who hold, unheeding this immense impact, Immortal story
for a mortal sin; Lest human fable touch historic fact, Chase myths like
moths, and fight them with a pin. Take comfort; rest—there needs not this ado.
You shall not be a myth, I promise you.

THE OLD SONG

(On the Embankment in stormy weather.)

A livid sky on London And like iron steeds that rear A shock of engines halted,
And I knew the end was near: And something said that far away,
over the hills and far away, There came a crawling thunder and the end of all things here.
For London Bridge is broken down, broken down, broken down,
As digging lets the daylight on the sunken streets of yore, The lightning looked on London town,
the broken bridge of London town, The ending of a broken road where men shall go no more.

I saw the kings of London town, The kings that buy and sell, That built it up with penny loaves
And penny lies as well: And where the streets were paved with gold,
the shrivelled paper shone for gold, The scorching light of promises that pave the streets of hell.
For penny loaves will melt away, melt away, melt away,
Mock the mean that haggled in the grain they did not grow;
With hungry faces in the gate, a hundred thousand in the gate, A thunder-flash on London and the finding of the foe.

I heard the hundred pin-makers Slow down their racking din, Till in the stillness men could hear
The dropping of the pin: And somewhere men without the wall,
beneath the wood, without the wall, Had found the place where London ends and England can begin.
For pins and needles bend and break, bend and break, bend and break,
Faster than the breaking spears or the bending of the bow
Of pageants pale in thunder-light, 'twixt thunder-load and thunder-light,
The Hundreds marching on the hills in the wars of long ago.

I saw great Cobbett riding, The horseman of the shires; And his face was red with judgment
And a light of Luddite fires: And south to Sussex and the sea the lights leapt up for liberty,
The trumpet of the yeomanry, the hammer of the squires;
For bars of iron rust away, rust away, rust away, Rend before the hammer and the horseman riding in,
Crying that all men at the last, and at the worst and at the last,
Have found the place where England ends and England can begin.

His horse-hoofs go before you, Far beyond your bursting tyres; And time is bridged behind him
And our sons are with our sires. A trailing meteor on the Downs he rides above the rotting towns,
The Horseman of Apocalypse, the Rider of the Shires. For London Bridge is broken down, broken down, broken

down; Blow the horn of Huntingdon from Scotland to the sea— ... Only a
flash of thunder-light, a flying dream of thunder-light, Had shown under the
shattered sky a people that were free.

THE TRINKETS

A wandering world of rivers, A wavering world of trees, If the world grow
dim and dizzy With all changes and degrees, It is but Our Lady's mirror
Hung dreaming in its place, Shining with only shadows Till she wakes it
with her face.

The standing whirlpool of the stars, The wheel of all the world, Is a ring
on Our Lady's finger With the suns and moons empearled With stars for
stones to please her Who sits playing with her rings With the great heart
that a woman has And the love of little things.

Wings of the whirlwind of the world From here to Ispahan, Spurning the
flying forests Are light as Our Lady's fan: For all things violent here and vain
Lie open and all at ease Where God has girded heaven to guard Her holy
vanities.

THE PHILANTHROPIST

(With apologies to a beautiful poem.)

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe decrease By cautious birth-control and die
in peace) Mellow with learning lightly took the word That marked him not
with them that love the Lord, And told the angel of the book and pen “Write
me as one that loves his fellow-men: For them alone I labour; to reclaim The
ragged roaming Bedouin and to tame To ordered service; to uproot their vine
Who mock the Prophet, being mad with wine, Let daylight through their tents
and through their lives, Number their camels, even count their wives, Plot
out the desert into streets and squares; And count it a more fruitful work than
theirs Who lift a vain and visionary love To your vague Allah in the skies
above.”

Gently replied the angel of the pen: “Labour in peace and love your fellow-
men: And love not God, since men alone are dear, Only fear God; for you
have cause to fear.”

ON THE DOWNS

When you came over the top of the world In the great day on the Downs,
The air was crisp and the clouds were curled, When you came over the top of
the world, And under your feet were spire and street And seven English
towns.

And I could not think that the pride was perished As you came over the
down; Liberty, chivalry, all we cherished, Lost in a rattle of pelf and
perished; Or the land we love that you walked above Withering town by
town.

For you came out on the dome of the earth Like a vision of victory, Out on
the great green dome of the earth As the great blue dome of the sky for girth,
And under your feet the shires could meet And your eyes went out to sea.

Under your feet the towns were seven, Alive and alone on high, Your back
to the broad white wall of heaven; You were one and the towns were seven,
Single and one as the soaring sun And your head upheld the sky.

And I thought of a thundering flag unfurled And the roar of the burghers'
bell: Beacons crackled and bolts were hurled As you came over the top of
the world; And under your feet were chance and cheat And the slime of the
slopes of hell.

It has not been as the great wind spoke On the great green down that day:
We have seen, wherever the wide wind spoke, Slavery slaying the English folk:
The robbers of land we have seen command The rulers of land obey.

We have seen the gigantic golden worms In the garden of paradise: We
have seen the great and the wise make terms With the peace of snakes and the
pride of worms, and them that plant make covenant With the locust and the
lice.

And the wind blows and the world goes on And the world can say that we,
Who stood on the cliffs where the quarries shone, Stood upon clouds that the
sun shone on: And the clouds dissunder and drown in thunder The news
that will never be.

Lady of all that have loved the people, Light over roads astray, Maze of
steading and street and steeple, Great as a heart that has loved the people:

Stand on the crown of the soaring down, Lift up your arms and pray.

Only you I have not forgotten For wreck of the world's renown, Rending
and ending of things gone rotten, Only the face of you unforgotten: And your
head upthrown in the skies alone As you came over the down.

THE RED SEA

Our souls shall be Leviathans In purple seas of wine When drunkenness
is dead with death, And drink is all divine; Learning in those immortal vats
What mortal vineyards mean; For only in heaven we shall know How happy
we have been.

Like clouds that wallow in the wind Be free to drift and drink; Tower
without insolence when we rise, Without surrender sink: Dreams dizzy and
crazy we shall know And have no need to write Our blameless blasphemies
of praise, Our nightmares of delight.

For so in such misshapen shape The vision came to me, Where such
titanian dolphins dark Roll in a sunset sea: Dark with dense colours,
strange and strong As terrible true love, Haloed like fish in phospher light
The holy monsters move.

Measure is here and law, to learn, When honour rules it so, To lift the
glass and lay it down Or break the glass and go. But when the world's New
Deluge boils From the New Noah's vine, Our souls shall be Leviathans In
sanguine seas of wine.

FOR A WAR MEMORIAL

(Suggested Inscription probably not selected by the Committee.)

The hucksters haggle in the mart The cars and carts go by; Senates and
schools go droning on; For dead things cannot die.

A storm stooped on the place of tombs With bolts to blast and rive; But
these be names of many men The lightning found alive.

If usurers rule and rights decay And visions view once more Great
Carthage like a golden shell Gape hollow on the shore,

Still to the last of crumbling time Upon this stone be read How many men
of England died To prove they were not dead.

MEMORY

If I ever go back to Baltimore, The city of Maryland, I shall miss again as
I missed before A thousand things of the world in store, The story standing
in every door That beckons with every hand.

I shall not know where the bonds were riven And a hundred faiths set free,
Where a wandering cavalier had given Her hundredth name to the Queen of
Heaven, And made oblation of feuds forgiven To Our Lady of Liberty.

I shall not travel the tracks of fame Where the war was not to the strong;
When Lee the last of the heroes came With the Men of the South and a flag like
flame, And called the land by its lovely name In the unforgotten song.

If ever I cross the sea and stray To the city of Maryland, I will sit on a
stone and watch or pray For a stranger's child that was there one day: And
the child will never come back to play, And no-one will understand.

THE ENGLISH GRAVES

Were I that wandering citizen whose city is the world, I would not weep for all that fell before the flags were furled; I would not let one murmur mar the trumpets volleying forth How God grew weary of the kings, and the cold hell in the north. But we whose hearts are homing birds have heavier thoughts of home, Though the great eagles burn with gold on Paris or on Rome, Who stand beside our dead and stare, like seers at an eclipse, At the riddle of the island tale and the twilight of the ships.

For these were simple men that loved with hands and feet and eyes, Whose souls were humbled to the hills and narrowed to the skies, The hundred little lands within one little land that lie, Where Severn seeks the sunset isles or Sussex scales the sky.

And what is theirs, though banners blow on Warsaw risen again, Or ancient laughter walks in gold through the vineyards of Lorraine, Their dead are marked on English stones, their loves on English trees, How little is the prize they win, how mean a coin for these— How small a shrivelled laurel-leaf lies crumpled here and curled: They died to save their country and they only saved the world.

NIGHTMARE

The silver and violet leopard of the night Spotted with stars and smooth
with silence sprang; And though three doors stood open, the end of light
Closed like a trap; and stillness was a clang.

Under the leopard sky of lurid stars I strove with evil sleep the hot night
long, Dreams dumb and swollen of triumphs without wars, Of tongueless
trumpet and unanswering gong.

I saw a pale imperial pomp go by, Helmet and hornèd mitre and heavy
wreath; Their high strange ensigns hung upon the sky And their great
shields were like the doors of death.

Their mitres were as moving pyramids And all their crowns as marching
towers were tall; Their eyes were cold under their carven lids And the same
carven smile was on them all.

Over a paven plain that seemed unending They passed unfaltering till it
found an end In one long shallow step; and these descending Fared forth
anew as long away to wend.

I thought they travelled for a thousand years; And at the end was nothing
for them all, For all that splendour of sceptres and of spears, But a new
step, another easy fall.

The smile of stone seemed but a little less, The load of silver but a little
more: And ever was that terraced wilderness And falling plain paved like a
palace floor.

Rust red as gore crawled on their arms of might And on their faces wrinkles
and not scars: Till the dream suddenly ended; noise and light Loosened the
tyranny of the tropic stars.

But over them like a subterranean sun I saw the sign of all the fiends that
fell; And a wild voice cried "Hasten and be done, Is there no steepness in the
stairs of hell?"

He that returns, He that remains the same, Turned the round real world,
His iron vice; Down the grey garden paths a bird called twice, And through

three doors mysterious daylight came.

A SECOND CHILDHOOD

When all my days are ending And I have no song to sing, I think I shall
not be too old To stare at everything; As I stared once at a nursery door
Or a tall tree and a swing.

Wherein God's ponderous mercy hangs On all my sins and me, Because
He does not take away The terror from the tree And stones still shine along
the road That are and cannot be.

Men grow too old for love, my love, Men grow too old for wine, But I shall
not grow too old to see Unearthly daylight shine, Changing my chamber's
dust to snow Till I doubt if it be mine.

Behold, the crowning mercies melt, The first surprises stay; And in my
dross is dropped a gift For which I dare not pray: That a man grow used to
grief and joy But not to night and day.

Men grow too old for love, my love, Men grow too old for lies; But I shall
not grow too old to see Enormous night arise, A cloud that is larger than the
world And a monster made of eyes.

Nor am I worthy to unloose The latchet of my shoe; Or shake the dust
from off my feet Or the staff that bears me through On ground that is too
good to last, Too solid to be true.

Men grow too old to woo, my love, Men grow too old to wed: But I shall
not grow too old to see Hung crazily overhead Incredible rafters when I wake
And find I am not dead.

A thrill of thunder in my hair: Though blackening clouds be plain, Still I
am stung and startled By the first drop of the rain: Romance and pride and
passion pass And these are what remain.

Strange crawling carpets of the grass, Wide windows of the sky: So in this
perilous grace of God With all my sins go I: And things grow new though I
grow old, Though I grow old and die.

“MEDIÆVALISM”

If men should rise and return to the noise and time of the tourney, The
name and fame of the tabard, the tangle of gules and gold, Would these things
stand and suffice for the bourne of a backward journey, A light on our days
returning, as it was in the days of old?

Nay, there is none rides back to pick up a glove or a feather, Though the
gauntlet rang with honour or the plume was more than a crown: And
hushed is the holy trumpet that called the nations together And under the
Horns of Hattin the hope of the world went down.

Ah, not in remembrance stored, but out of oblivion starting, Because you
have sought new homes and all that you sought is so, Because you had
trodden the fire and barred the door in departing, Returns in your chosen exile
the glory of long ago.

Not then when you barred the door, not then when you trod the embers, But
now, at your new road's end, you have seen the face of a fate, That not as a
child looks back, and not as a fool remembers, All that men took too lightly
and all that they love too late.

It is you that have made no rubric for saints, no raiment for lovers, Your
caps that cry for a feather, your roofs that sigh for a spire: Is it a dream from
the dead if your own decay discovers Alive in your rotting graveyard the worm
of the world's desire?

Therefore the old trees tower, that the green trees grow and are stunted:
Therefore these dead men mock you, that you the living are dead: Since ever
you battered the saints and the tools of your crafts were blunted, Or
shattered the glass in its glory and loaded yourselves with the lead.

When the usurer hunts the squire as the squire has hunted the peasant, As
sheep that are eaten of worms where men were eaten of sheep: Now is the
judgment of earth, and the weighing of past and present, Who scorn to weep
over ruins, behold your ruin and weep.

Have ye not known, ye fools, that have made the present a prison, That
thirst can remember water and hunger remember bread? We went not
gathering ghosts; but the shriek of your shame is arisen Out of your own black
Babel too loud; and it woke the dead.

POLAND

Augurs that watched archaic birds Such plumèd prodigies might read,
The eagles that were double-faced, The eagle that was black indeed; And
when the battle-birds went down And in their track the vultures come, We
know what pardon and what peace Will keep our little masters dumb.

The men that sell what others make, As vultures eat what others slay,
Will prove in matching plume with plume That naught is black and all is grey;
Grey as those dingy doves that once, By money-changers palmed and priced,
Amid the crash of tables flapped And huddled from the wrath of Christ.

But raised for ever for a sign Since God made anger glorious, Where
eagles black and vultures grey Flocked back about the heroic house, Where
war is holier than peace, Where hate is holier than love, Shone terrible as
the Holy Ghost An eagle whiter than a dove.

THE HUNTING OF THE DRAGON

When we went hunting the Dragon In the days when we were young, We
tossed the bright world over our shoulder As bugle and baldrick slung;
Never was world so wild and fair As what went by on the wind, Never such
fields of paradise As the fields we left behind: For this is the best of a rest
for men That men should rise and ride Making a flying fairyland Of
market and country-side, Wings on the cottage, wings on the wood, Wings
upon pot and pan, For the hunting of the Dragon That is the life of a
man.

For men grow weary of fairyland When the Dragon is a dream, And tire of
the talking bird in the tree, The singing fish in the stream; And the
wandering stars grow stale, grow stale, And the wonder is stiff with scorn;
For this is the honour of fairyland And the following of the horn;

Beauty on beauty called us back When we could rise and ride, And a
woman looked out of every window As wonderful as a bride: And the
tavern-sign as a tabard blazed, And the children cheered and ran, For the
love of the hate of the Dragon That is the pride of a man.

The sages called him a shadow And the light went out of the sun: And the
wise men told us that all was well And all was weary and one: And then, and
then, in the quiet garden, With never a weed to kill, We knew that his
shining tail had shone In the white road over the hill: We knew that the
clouds were flakes of flame, We knew that the sunset fire Was red with the
blood of the Dragon Whose death is the world's desire.

For the horn was blown in the heart of the night That men should rise
and ride, Keeping the tryst of a terrible jest Never for long untried;
Drinking a dreadful blood for wine, Never in cup or can, The death of a
deathless Dragon, That is the life of a man.

SONNET

High on the wall that holds Jerusalem I saw one stand under the stars like
stone. And when I perish it shall not be known Whether he lived, some
strolling son of Shem, Or was some great ghost wearing the diadem Of
Solomon or Saladin on a throne: I only know, the features being unshown, I
did not dare draw near and look on them.

Did ye not guess ... the diadem might be Plaited in stranger style by hands
of hate ... But when I looked, the wall was desolate And the grey starlight
powdered tower and tree: And vast and vague beyond the Golden Gate
Heaved Moab of the mountains like a sea.

FANTASIA

The happy men that lose their heads They find their heads in heaven, As
cherub heads with cherub wings, And cherub haloes even: Out of the
infinite evening lands Along the sunset sea, Leaving the purple fields
behind, The cherub wings beat down the wind Back to the groping body and
blind As the bird back to the tree.

Whether the plumes be passion-red For him that truly dies By
headsmen's blade or battle-axe, Or blue like butterflies, For him that lost it
in a lane In April's fits and starts, His folly is forgiven then: But higher,
and far beyond our ken, Is the healing of the unhappy men, The men that
lost their hearts.

Is there not pardon for the brave And broad release above, Who lost their
heads for liberty Or lost their hearts for love? Or is the wise man wise indeed
Whom larger thoughts keep whole? Who sees life equal like a chart, Made
strong to play the saner part, And keep his head and keep his heart, And
only lose his soul.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

(The Chief Constable has issued a statement declaring that carol singing in the streets by children is illegal, and morally and physically injurious. He appeals to the public to discourage the practice.—Daily Paper.)

God rest you merry gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay; The Herald
Angels cannot sing, The cops arrest them on the wing, And warn them of the
docketing Of anything they say.

God rest you merry gentlemen, May nothing you dismay: On your
reposeful cities lie Deep silence, broken only by The motor horn's melodious
cry, The hooter's happy bray.

So, when the song of children ceased And Herod was obeyed, In his high
hall Corinthian With purple and with peacock fan, Rested that merry
gentleman; And nothing him dismayed.

TO CAPTAIN FRYATT

Trampled yet red is the last of the embers, Red the last cloud of a sun that
has set; What of your sleeping though Flanders remembers, What of your
waking, if England forget?

Why should you share in the hearts that we harden, In the shame of our
nature, who see it and live? How more than the godly the greedy can pardon,
How well and how quickly the hungry forgive.

Ah, well if the soil of the stranger had wrapped you, While the lords that you
served and the friends that you knew Hawk in the marts of the tyrants that
trapped you, Tout in the shops of the butchers that slew.

Why should you wake for a realm that is rotten, Stuffed with their bribes
and as dead to their debts? Sleep and forget us, as we have forgotten; For
Flanders remembers and England forgets.

FOR FOUR GUILDS:

I. THE GLASS-STAINERS

To every Man his Mystery, A trade and only one: The masons make the
hives of men, The domes of grey or dun, But we have wrought in rose and
gold The houses of the sun.

The shipwrights build the houses high, Whose green foundations sway
Alive with fish like little flames, When the wind goes out to slay. But we
abide with painted sails The cyclone of the day.

The weavers make the clothes of men And coats for everyone; They walk
the streets like sunset clouds; But we have woven and spun In scarlet or in
golden-green The gay coats of the sun.

You whom the usurers and the lords With insolent liveries trod, Deep in
dark church behold, above Their lance-lengths by a rod, Where we have
blazed the tabard Of the trumpeter of God.

II. THE BRIDGE-BUILDERS

In the world's whitest morning As hoary with hope, The Builder of Bridges
Was priest and was pope: And the mitre of mystery And the canopy his,
Who darkened the chasms And domed the abyss.

To eastward and westward Spread wings at his word The arch with the
key-stone That stoops like a bird; That rides the wild air And the daylight
cast under; The highway of danger, The gateway of wonder.

Of his throne were the thunders That rivet and fix Wild weddings of
strangers That meet and not mix; The town and the cornland; The bride
and the groom: In the breaking of bridges Is treason and doom.

But he bade us, who fashion The road that can fly, That we build not too
heavy And build not too high: Seeing alway that under The dark arch's
bend Shine death and white daylight Unchanged to the end.

Who walk on his mercy Walk light, as he saith, Seeing that our life Is a
bridge above death; And the world and its gardens And hills, as ye heard,
Are born above space On the wings of a bird.

Not high and not heavy Is building of his: When ye seal up the flood
And forget the abyss, When your towers are uplifted, Your banners unfurled,
In the breaking of bridges Is the end of the world.

III. THE STONE-MASONS

We have graven the mountain of God with hands, As our hands were graven
of God, they say, Where the seraphs burn in the sun like brands And the
devils carry the rains away; Making a thrift of the throats of hell, Our
gargoyles gather the roaring rain, Whose yawn is more than a frozen yell
And their very vomiting not in vain.

Wilder than all that a tongue can utter, Wiser than all that is told in words,
The wings of stone of the soaring gutter Fly out and follow the flight of the
birds; The rush and rout of the angel wars Stand out above the astounded
street, Where we flung our gutters against the stars For a sign that the first
and the last shall meet.

We have graven the forest of heaven with hands, Being great with a mirth
too gross for pride, In the stone that battered him Stephen stands And Peter
himself is petrified: Such hands as have grubbed in the glebe for bread Have
bidden the blank rock blossom and thrive, Such hands as have stricken a live
man dead Have struck, and stricken the dead alive.

Fold your hands before heaven in praying, Lift up your hands into heaven
and cry; But look where our dizziest spires are saying What the hands of a
man did up in the sky: Drenched before you have heard the thunder, White
before you have felt the snow; For the giants lift up their hands to wonder
How high the hands of a man could go.

IV. THE BELL-RINGERS

The angels are singing like birds in a tree In the organ of good St. Cecily:
And the parson reads with his hand upon The graven eagle of great St. John:
But never the fluted pipes shall go Like the fifes of an army all a-row, Merrily
marching down the street To the marts where the busy and idle meet; And
never the brazen bird shall fly Out of the window and into the sky, Till men
in cities and shires and ships Look up at the living Apocalypse.

But all can hark at the dark of even The bells that bay like the hounds of
heaven, Tolling and telling that over and under, In the ways of the air like a
wandering thunder, The hunt is up over hills untrod: For the wind is the
way of the dogs of God: From the tyrant's tower to the outlaw's den Hunting
the souls of the sons of men. Ruler and robber and pedlar and peer, Who
will not harken and yet will hear; Filling men's heads with the hurry and hum
Making them welcome before they come.

And we poor men stand under the steeple Drawing the cords that can draw
the people, And in our leash like the leaping dogs Are God's most deafening
demagogues: And we are but little, like dwarfs underground, While hang up
in heaven the houses of sound, Moving like mountains that faith sets free,
Yawning like caverns that roar with the sea, As awfully loaded, as airily
buoyed, Armoured archangels that trample the void: Wild as with dancing
and weighty with dooms, Heavy as their panoply, light as their plumes.

Neither preacher nor priest are we: Each man mount to his own degree:
Only remember that just such a cord Tosses in heaven the trumpet and sword;
Souls on their terraces, saints on their towers, Rise up in arms at alarum like
ours: Glow like great watchfires that redden the skies Titans whose wings
are a glory of eyes, Crowned constellations by twelves and by sevens, Domed
dominations more old than the heavens, Virtues that thunder and thrones that
endure Sway like a bell to the prayers of the poor.

THE CONVERT

After one moment when I bowed my head And the whole world turned over
and came upright, And I came out where the old road shone white, I walked
the ways and heard what all men said, Forests of tongues, like autumn leaves
unshed, Being not unlovable but strange and light; Old riddles and new
creeds, not in despite But softly, as men smile about the dead.

The sages have a hundred maps to give That trace their crawling cosmos
like a tree, They rattle reason out through many a sieve That stores the sand
and lets the gold go free: And all these things are less than dust to me
Because my name is Lazarus and I live.

SONGS OF EDUCATION:

I. HISTORY

Form 991785, Sub-Section D

The Roman threw us a road, a road, And sighed and strolled away: The Saxon gave us a raid, a raid, A raid that came to stay; The Dane went west, but the Dane confessed That he went a bit too far; And we all became, by another name, The Imperial race we are.

Chorus

The Imperial race, the inscrutable race, The invincible race we are.

Though Sussex hills are bare, are bare, And Sussex weald is wide, From Chichester to Chester Men saw the Norman ride; He threw his sword in the air and sang To a sort of a light guitar; It was all the same, for we all became The identical nobs we are.

Chorus

The identical nobs, individual nobs Unmistakable nobs we are.

The people lived on the land, the land, They potted about and prayed; They built a cathedral here and there Or went on a small crusade: Till the bones of Becket were bundled out For the fun of a fat White Czar, And we all became, in spoil and flame, The intelligent lot we are.

Chorus

The intelligent lot, the intuitive lot, The infallible lot we are.

O Warwick woods are green, are green, But Warwick trees can fall: And Birmingham grew so big, so big, And Stratford stayed so small. Till the hooter howled to the morning lark That sang to the morning star; And we all became, in freedom's name, The fortunate chaps we are.

Chorus

The fortunate chaps, felicitous chaps, The fairy-like chaps we are.

The people they left the land, the land, But they went on working hard;
And the village green that had got mislaid Turned up in the squire's back-yard:
But twenty men of us all got work On a bit of his motor car; And we all
became, with the world's acclaim, The marvellous mugs we are:

Chorus

The marvellous mugs, miraculous mugs, The mystical mugs we are.

SONGS OF EDUCATION:

II. GEOGRAPHY

Form 17955301, Sub-Section Z

The earth is a place on which England is found, And you find it however you twirl the globe round; For the spots are all red and the rest is all grey, And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

Gibraltar's a rock that you see very plain, And attached to its base is the district of Spain. And the island of Malta is marked further on, Where some natives were known as the Knights of St. John. Then Cyprus, and east to the Suez Canal, That was conquered by Dizzy and Rothschild his pal With the Sword of the Lord in the old English way; And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

Our principal imports come far as Cape Horn; For necessities, cocoa; for luxuries, corn; Thus Brahmins are born for the rice-field, and thus, The Gods made the Greeks to grow currants for us; Tobacco and petrol and Jazzing and Jews: The Jazzing will pass but the Jews they will stay; And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

Our principal exports, all labelled and packed, At the ends of the earth are delivered intact: Our soap or our salmon can travel in tins Between the two poles and as like as two pins; So that Lancashire merchants whenever they like Can water the beer of a man in Klondike Or poison the meat of a man in Bombay; And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

The day of St. George is a musty affair Which Russians and Greeks are permitted to share; The day of Trafalgar is Spanish in name And the Spaniards refuse to pronounce it the same; But the Day of the Empire from Canada came With Morden and Borden and Beaverbrook's fame And saintly seraphical souls such as they: And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

III. FOR THE CRËCHE

Form 8277059, Sub-Section K

I remember my mother, the day that we met, A thing I shall never entirely forget;
And I toy with the fancy that, young as I am, I should know her again if we met in a tram.
But mother is happy in turning a crank That increases the balance at somebody's bank;
And I feel satisfaction that mother is free From the sinister task of attending to me.

They have brightened our room, that is spacious and cool, With diagrams used in the Idiot School,
And Books for the Blind that will teach us to see;
But mother is happy, for mother is free. For mother is dancing up forty-eight floors,
For love of the Leeds International Stores, And the flame of that faith might perhaps have grown cold,
With the care of a baby of seven weeks old.

For mother is happy in greasing a wheel For somebody else, who is cornering Steel;
And though our one meeting was not very long, She took the occasion to sing me this song:
"O, hush thee, my baby, the time soon will come When thy sleep will be broken with hooting and hum;
There are handles want turning and turning all day, And knobs to be pressed in the usual way;

O, hush thee, my baby, take rest while I croon, For Progress comes early, and Freedom too soon."

IV. CITIZENSHIP

Form 8889512, Sub-Section Q

How slowly learns the child at school The names of all the nobbs that rule
From Ponsonby to Pennant; Ere his bewildered mind find rest, Knowing his
host can be a Guest, His landlord is a Tennant.

He knew not, at the age of three, What Lord St. Leger next will be Or what
he was before; A Primrose in the social swim A Mr. Primrose is to him,
And he is nothing more.

But soon, about the age of ten, He finds he is a Citizen, And knows his
way about; Can pause within, or just beyond, The line 'twixt Mond and
Demi-Mond, 'Twixt Getting On—or Out.

The Citizen will take his share (In every sense) as bull and bear; Nor need
this oral ditty Invoke the philologic pen To show you that a Citizen Means
Something in the City.

Thus gains he, with the virile gown, The fasces and the civic crown, The
forum of the free; Not more to Rome's high law allied Is Devonport in all his
pride Or Lipton's self than he.

For he will learn, if he will try, The deep interior truths whereby We rule
the Commonwealth; What is the Food-Controller's fee And whether the
Health Ministry Are in it for their health.

V. THE HIGHER MATHEMATICS

Form 339125, Sub-Section M

Twice one is two, Twice two is four, But twice two is ninety-six
if you know the way to score. Half of two is one, Half of four is
two, But half of four is forty per cent. if your name is Montagu: For
everything else is on the square If done by the best quadratics; And
nothing is low in High Finance Or the Higher Mathematics.

A straight line is straight And a square mile is flat: But you
learn in trigonometrics a trick worth two of that. Two straight lines
Can't enclose a Space, But they can enclose a Corner to support the Chosen
Race: For you never know what Dynamics do With the lower truths of
Statics; And half of two is a touring car In the Higher Mathematics.

There is a place apart Beyond the solar ray, Where parallel
straight lines can meet in an unofficial way. There is a room that holds
The examiner or his clerks, Where you can square the circle or the man that
gives the marks. Where you hide in the cellar and then look down On the
poets that live in the attics; For the whole of the house is upside down In
the Higher Mathematics.

VI. HYGIENE

Form 394411102, Sub-Section X

“All practical Eugenists are agreed on the importance of sleep.”—The Eugenic Congress.

When Science taught mankind to breathe A little while ago, Only a wise
and thoughtful few Were really in the know: Nor could the Youth his
features wreath, Puffing from all the lungs beneath: When Duty whispered
softly “Breathe!” The Youth would answer “Blow!”

When Science proved with lucid care The need of Exercise, Our
thoughtless Youth was climbing trees Or lightly blacking eyes: To reckless
idlers breaking bounds For football or for hare-and-hounds, Or fighting hard
for fourteen rounds, It came as a surprise.

But when she boldly counsels Sleep To persons when in bed, Then, then
indeed men blush to see The daybreak blushing red: The early risers whom
we term Healthy, grow sickly and infirm; The Early Bird who caught the
Worm Will catch the Germ instead.

For this at least be Science praised If all the rest be rot, That now she
snubs the priggish child That quits too soon his cot: The pharisaic
pachyderm Of spiritual pride shall squirm: The Early Bird catches the
worm, The Worm that dieth not. www.freeclassicebooks.com