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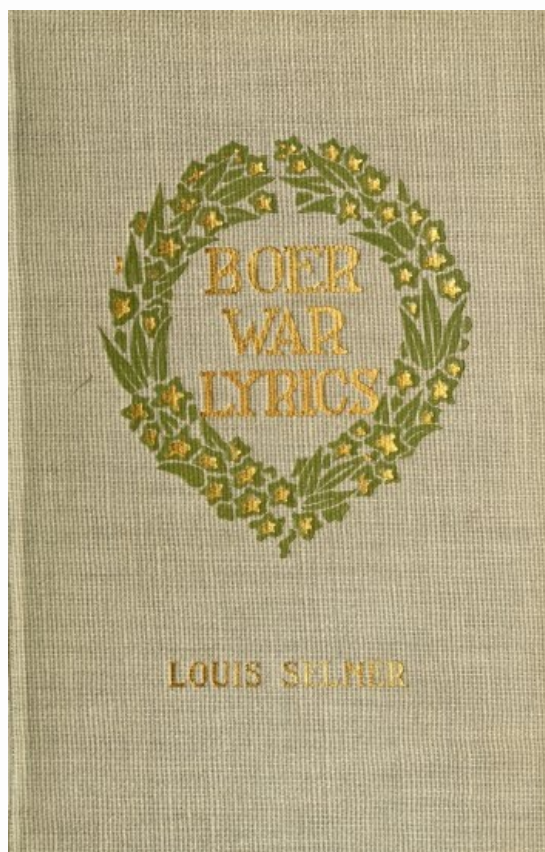
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BOER WAR LYRICS ***



**BOER WAR
LYRICS**

**BY
LOUIS SELMER**

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PREFACE.

MOST of the verses in this little volume were conceived and written, if not quite finished, at the time of Cronje's surrender at Paardeberg.

A certain doubt, however, as to any message of theirs, though modestly set off by a belief in their polemic and literary value, has, I think now, unduly delayed their advent into the crowded world of print; and, though the present juncture of a heralded, but, by no means, perfected peace, be perhaps not a very opportune moment for their publication, I have yet thought well to give them forth; the more, since what so be the outcome of the negotiations pending, and whichever be the motive of the stronger party thereto—whether a bitter, though slowly realized necessity, or, a trick of pure heart, or, say, tardy insight and charity, both—be this as it may—the long, though fruitless attempt on England's part to compel a surrender by the South African republics of their political existence, illustrating and upholding, as no modern exhibition of this kind has done, how rampant is still in Man, and collective Man especially, a tacit faith in the bigger fist, or, euphemistically speaking, the predatory law of nature—this, I repeat it, can never, it seems to me, be sufficiently reprehended; and a hearty condemnation of it may, therefore, fitly form the theme of conscientious, if necessarily, censorious verse: with which contention the following pieces are frankly submitted, even at this late day of a stupendous struggle of moral Right—whatsoever its intellectual grounds and equipment—against an aggressive and overweening Might, whose partial defence allowed, rests, after all, and as already maintained, its wider base on purely material force, on that callous and objective expediency, which History, in her account of human odds, evermore reveals, and, far too often, glaringly condones.

NEW YORK, May, 1902.

Since the above was set down, Peace has at last gone forth, and of a pace with the better drift and traditions of England; but even so, there seems no valid ground why these Lyrics should not be heard, as an exponent in brief—inadequate, if you like, yet human no less—of a, for a long time, not to be forgotten broil, if, indeed, the sad imp of Contention has had his last say about it.

November, 1902.

PRELUDE.

Out of rare heart-deeps flowing,
Primer than thought-spring founts,
Upward, 'gainst vaster knowing,
Lightsome the Song-word mounts.

And athrob with some faith etern,
From Being's deep-violed strings,
Draweth, to heaves that burn,
The advent and sooth of things.

Invokes unto Song, where the still Hopes go,
The Spirit's immutable law.

BOER WAR LYRICS.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE LION.

(History in Verse.)

INTRODUCTION.

Somewhere to the Moonward, or Sunward, so to speak;
A span or two to Eastward, then Southward by a streak,
Was heard to blare of tomtom a shameless epic wail,
At fancy of some Lion who had whisked his blooming tail
Plumb thro' a nest of hornets, nor never dreamt the hive
Had such a trick to mind him how were that tail alive.
And it seems the skies were blathering while every wind-god swore
The Pities would have curdled to hear the Beastie roar.
All offered salve and comfort, said never done was Wrong,
But some requiting Themis should venge it to her song;
Should smite the pesting dwarfies and heal the giant's bruise,
See paw and toothie peak not for lack of worthy use.
And, O, the strain fell whopping to thunder—drip of sooth,
A lamb-like lyric slopping its pace with bleary ruth;
Nay, in sober last, an epic, outworking thro' the fact,
Through blaze of hostile numbers, its own and bitter act.
And it shook us to the Westward—a touch of kin and near—
We banged our shopy hatches: we had a right to hear.

ARGUMENT.

And this—yes, this, was the song of the Sorrowful True,
Which Father Wicked, the Old, for his child, the New,
He, and that cherub of rowdy fist,
Who'll blithely shake it where erst he kissed—
That covered Holy, the unctuous Wrong—
With his blushing bouncer, St. Meek, the Strong;
Set jointly down (while in crafty doubt
A wilful Muse turned it inside out,
Bared hide and heart of the stalking lore,
Its bluff and cant to their dismal core—)
Set down, I say, to mock-halcyon cheers,
As, with knife at throat of the suckling years,
They bled the weans, lest with peaceful bear,
Or, for other virtues in hiding there,
The gods, who winnow all mortal stock,
Should nurse the goats while they weed the flock—
Let for lack of pasture the true herd pine:
And all for what? For a humping quibble on Mine and Thine!
Nay, lest Rue, the babbler, with saucy dare,
Should sit in judgment twixt Foul and Fair;
Should slaver worse, if she came of age,
With inglorious snivel wise Clio's page:
Lest all of this, with what sousing tact
They niced her the diverse of whim and fact;
How glowed their zeal as they raked the Rue,
Broke font and tablet and put her through
Such drench of penance and convert-course,
Such Christian baptism from Truth, the Source:
Sure text nor ritual made never doubt,
Nor seasoned clerks, as with wary snout,
Each subtle wealsman stood sly at bay:
For leet or laurel—let wise Time say.

Well—this was the Song of the Sorrowful True:
A rip of a Muse—but it gives her view.
Curt and clear tho', did the touches fall,
Such pithy halves as outspoke the Whole:
Are you with me still? Can you check a flout?
Then stretch a will to hear it out?

VIDELICET:

(Hour before Dawn—The Muse brooding.)

O, what hangs so leaden on the brow of Night,
As if grim Darkness 'pon herself had bred,
To make a second and a direr gloom?
What wrestles so the advent of the Light,
Whence from yon paths the white stars tread
Should visioned peer its orient bloom?

What thrills, withal, do baffled heave,
Then urge anew against the serried Dark,
At such beseech, their silent suit?
What muttered rolls half-halting cleave
These omened airs that still hang stark,
As hie with what they dare not bruit?

(*Faint Dawn.*)

But yet it lifts, thro' huddling blurs,
The eager Light. Lo, Day saddles the white Dawn,
At heel his troop, close-wheeling, spurs,
Unto his banner world-wide thrown,
Each waft, his way. Close Night unhoods;
No more beneath her grim gaze shrinks,
But featured fair, in tribute ruds
Each nether thing, and lifesome drinks.

(*Full Dawn.*)

But, O, scene-painting Light, what stage is yon?
Dim-figured tho', what grim play breeds?
Troy's second act? Where Hector stout, some Thetis' son,
The deadly phalanx girds and leads?

What fatal Beauty bears in hand
With strumpet's lure this sore divide?
For lo, her brow, to venal brand,
Reads fierce with lust of worldly pride!

Why wears true Grace so blanched a cheek?
What things o' Night do rouse for prey,
Confound with grim and loathsome reek
The balmy breath of youngling Day?

What lists be those? What dirges wail?
Why drags white Peace yon gory pall?
I see great Mars in flame-knit mail,
I hear the fierce god's buglers call.

And gleamy steel from scabbard flies,
War's every hound is red at mouth,
No belching throat but havoc cries,
Would drench in blood the Summer's drought.

Out, Sense! some trick is here of phrenzied Night;
These clamors wind no human breath,
But ghostly haunt yon winsome light
The phantom shades of legioned Death.

And yet yon orb is surely Day's:
The Land re-speaks him, and his glass, the sea;
All tongues at one, no witness stays,
But owns his line observantly.

Nay, flung wide is now the portaled East;
Behind, before, Light's lofty welcome burns,
Whose cheer wide-spread for Most and Least,
Repledged, alone, his host-call earns.

But O, what mates come here to feed!
They spill the sweet and lifesome wine;
They fool the sense with sightless greed,
The knife their law twixt yours and mine.

And these, for sure, are Afric's strands,
And those have rid the hurly sea,
Whence towering fair great Albion stands,
His brow writ broad with Liberty;

With her, whose cheer is general joy—
The gracious board whose never mess
Lets these to pine, so those may cloy
And glut his maw, the Hog, Excess—

But these no more are kindred shores:
Here may her buckler rusting hang,
Where, still at beat, thro' throbbing yores,
Oppression's slave-blows dying rang.

Here, all thro' fear and nothing love,
As if each patient light stood mute,
May ripping talons deal the Dove
This branding scan—a prostitute!

Thy pardon, god of lofty song,
Whose fires feed the Piaeian Spring,
If Truth for right to scoff at Wrong,
In thy fair flame a gall-nut fling!

Yes, yon, for sure, are Afric's strands,
But where is the banneret of the Free?

what rouling touch or narpy nands
Has smirched his shield and panoply?

What spouse is this, my valiant Son?
What gross embrace for Freedom's kiss:
These are the sheets of Abbadon,
The bastard clasp high Furies hiss!

O, John, was not thy bed as goodly broad
As Phœbus spans twixt East and West?
His, not the haunts thy fortune trode,
Right burly tho', an honored guest?

But thou must grudge the meaner cot—
The plainer house thy Brother built—
This text deem, foolish, out of shot:
"That Have, for greed, shall sure be spilt?"

Would have 'gainst Worse this wisdom bear:
"Who dons the Might, but leaves her crown,
Shall stand her dupe; nay, all his wear
Shall never hide the thievish clown."

O, John, I knew thy stomach hale and round,
With mortal sense for needful prog;
But this?—here any scab had led the hound,
Had smelt foul fare the noseless hog!

Oh yes; thy friends did this—those nothing-loaths:
Their bosom's rank with self-sick stuff—
The Devil's shufflers when he goads
And packs with Nice the Ne'er Enough—

The Devil, Self, and all his Swill,
Who knows how deep sits sordid lust;
How near all power lies to will,
Our wills to the damned Unjust.

Ah, yes—thy friends—each wily Dick,
Or under-helmsman to that crew
Who at no faith-breach blush to stick,
So but their grist come safely through;

Who, with the rough youth, Glory, ape apace,
Quite out of mind his Elder's lease,
And for a brief from fame-fee'd days,
Would wash his hands in bleeding peace.

And he—no neuter he—he whoops so hard,
The brazen, roystering, gingo-sheet,
Who serves his vomit tricked with nard,
Thro' flattering brag, the bloodfiend's heat.

Who weeps to think the Lion dupe
To tearing wolves in shepherd's cowls,
Then to his sore heart lays this stupe—
That there were innings to the howls—

And all for Empire: scape-goat-thing!
Look down, proud pile, at thine own feet!
Do not, thro' knell, the ages sing
How tainted base, the top-strong seat

Shall, tumbling, empty all their sham,
And blaze this line on Story's page—
That Fill thro' Foul may never dam,
Or check the course her Vengers wage.

How Rule unbuilt each day anew,
With tempered glow each brutish fire,
Shall lack of pith to fame the True,
Unlaureled stand before the Sire.

Nay, to unbred ages hand the bill
For bounden due and bitter scan;
The compt and trust he shrank to fill,
To bate the sum of answering Man.

O, John, thy file of friends runs fast and queer!
Be sick awhile with honest doubt!
Best heart still doffs to wholesome Fear:
Revise thy list—leave spongers out!

Oh yes, I know what thou would'st say:
"Thou bits't a stiff and rough-back mare,
Unblest, unbroke to right obey,
Lest as she catch the trumpet's flare."

But there again thy false friends spoke—
Each fisty Brave that wearies Time,
Who 'ld headlong rush the brazen yoke,
Than share a pace, so all may climb.

More apt to speed with reckless spur
Thy nicer o'er thy nobler star
Than bring to eye what tho' it blur,
Yet, warning, sheens the misty Far.

Oh, yes, I know, as world-walks shift,
There is sore push for forward seats:
We quake at taunts from ride-hard Thrift,
Then late her pace with churlish heats—

And wear this mask before our hearts,
This paltry shift of truckling breed,
That veering Trade or waning marts—
All drift that swerves with human need—

May tide with looks the franker Light,
With crafty lead, its artless youth,
While Just, a bawd to brazen Right,
New bastards bear the groaning Truth.

Suppose we take a backward look,
Past years as yet scarce out o' moulds:
You, from your near-illuminated Book,
I—whence no home-trick holds.

In damning truth, a proper pry,
Since at its head War whets his sword,
While Justice puts her ægis by,
And eats his brag and bully's word—

A look as far as when befell,
What glamored fierce the bridging sea,
Each flary crest at push to tell
How the white stones shone in Kimberley—

And dimmed your faith and glossed the pledge,
And juggled Right with wheedling Wrong;
Gave Cant new stand—this privilege:
To rest all cause on proof of Strong.

Your pious grab, the half-heart rue,
The hush you paid to still a twinge,
All snugged within this lofty view—
"He steers the moke who holds the cinch."

But in your big Book that's fable now,
Might sleep, kept not this line awake—
"That meddling pasts, ne'er done, somehow,
Assess for quits all present stake."

Since just as deft his story wove
The yellow Devil in the Rand,
As Dame Empire, O, so high suave,
Took bleary Mammon by the hand—

And there was nudge and jobbing kiss,
And scan o' map and leer of eye:
"How came our wits so wide of this—
It lay so near and tempting by?"

While in at gate flowed pick and raff,
For catch is life to brotherhood;
Each tribesman bent, thro' clean or draff,
To swing his carp from out the mud.

And every hoist and tackle told,
As sure it ought, where sleek and trim,
At scoop and dive for wriggling gold,
The big Mouths join and steer the Swim.

While coy, thro' fill of common eye,
As fadged with tooth of safer breed,
Smug Power yet found crumbs to fry,
While sampling Chefs gave dainty heed.

And snacks went 'round for taste and tout:
The Home-cook swore the stuff was fine:
"Why should such plums be ladled out
To grunting clod and boorish swine?"

"Not swell our own and proved Menu?"

not swen our own and proved menur:
This crowd at board keeps coming still:
Suppose we shift, à son insu,
To nab his joint, and eke the bill?

“Or what’s the same—we fix his stew,
Put such a sauce in broth and dish—
Such plausive snap and tang o’ True—
That none shall dream we came to fish;

“But love of man was all we meant;
Till, less in doubt each lode-star gaze,
At Heaven’s clear, tho’ mute intent,
By as we head, to hold her pace.

“And this fellow, certes, has sore behoof
To take a word from wiser mouths,
Who has stretched his crib and smoky roof
Whence North-from, down, the zone-line south;

“Almost a split—a crying jag;
A scare at top, a threat, below;
An ugly tuck that scrimps the bag
We meant to fill as harvests grow.

“In our big sail a plaguy reef,
Were it not that craft o’ his pert make
With too much head have come to grief,
Strew bottom up our rushing wake.

“Against the owl what counts the mouse?
But no. That strains a bit the proper zest:
He shall have due of grounds and house,
We’ll dish for him as for the rest.

“‘Twill daze him, sure, our big provide,
Till, on a breath, he vent his stare:
‘Such doors as these had best be tried,
Ere back to thatch and homely fare.’

“And say he sulks, we’ll coax him in:
What does he care who carves the meat?
So fill of fodder strew the bin,
Who rules the loft, or heads the treat?

“He will never quibble on a word,
Give simple ‘rob’ a double sense;
But loyal strain shall well accord
With leave of thrift and competence.

“And ‘tis trite as dirt, where’er we go,
The sleek slut, Trade, trots close at heel,
‘Gainst whose hard sense how fares the saw,
The musty fib—‘Thou shalt not steal!’

“Yes—we’ll be his staff and hedge him fine,
Till lust of Have like gospel read,
And his backbone in the general spine
Does merge its hump and dogged breed.

“The idiot pluck with which he strove
To shield his hearth with freehold fence,
And rather wear the homely wove
Than rig to suit our lofty sense.

“His rooted stand and settled haze
The foot he plants ‘gainst sudden New,
Whose golden tilth and reap of grace
Holds furrowed snug the only True.

“His crafty shield; those mealy snares
For simple lambs. His wolfish doubt,
When, stung and wrung with sore his cares,
They flocked to help friend Hodges out—

“And forced from faith his better word,
And warped his truth with keen despair,
That the large rights for which he chored
Should never greet a lineal heir.

“But all his throb and bitter sweat,
His blood paid down for desert lands,
Should snap its lease, be lightly set
A hawker’s trust in stranger hands—

“And how for this he bled and drove,
Cribbed-in this band of saintly Peace;

Played wary host to all their trove,
Made yare go 'round the golden fleece—

"And worst—those sons of loot, his bossy crew!
Who, fearing thieves, would chance no charm,
But gag the spoiler 'fore he grew
To oust their rights with legal arm.

"All this: shocks! 'Twere worth a bloody nose:
To size him up, then pare him down,
Till, as to cure the treatment grows,
We snug him hale within the Crown.

"A gem whose shine and proper place
And dapper fit to lofty plan
He'll soon see clear thro' his amaze,
With contrite heart—the leal man.

"And Square-toes' gait at last be set;
With social wash to status brought
His lowly breed and rustic sweat:
O, God of Thrift! What happy thought!"

When hard upon this longish muse,
Which, if it fail of absolute mold,
Is yet what, at a close peruse,
A muddled act does broadly hold—

When pat, to suit Godfather's cue,
That pious child, the hungry League
Was christened snug and gospelled through,
Anoint with salve of high intrigue;

Nay, preached and bore the brainless gang,
Who gripped at throat the better hope
While Right, with due, past caution rang
How every neck was worth a rope.

And 'woke this cry with warning rouse—
"Since Neighbor Near seem Neighbor Pike,
'Twere time small fry made fast the house,
Girt fence and gate with double spike."

Since when, what other brood of kindred grace,
Which, true to stock, the devil yeans,
Joined trick and tooth and darksome ways
To work the bolts by subtler means!

While last—O, John, will ne'er thy friends be wise?
What balm, tho' gross with clumsy tape,
What quacks' set-up in surgeon's guise
Came foisting, fuddling from the Cape!

What hangman's cure and mad appeal,
What blind invoke past doubt of suit,
What sowings thrust with iron heel,
Whose yet no half has bore its fruit!

Oh, yes, thro' stress and truce, and right along,
It still repeats the old-time game,
How brother Weak met brother Strong,
Who saw, and took, and felt no shame.

Whom so self-dread, that final awe,
Could graft on soul this chastening sense—
That endless widening circles Law,
Rules nations' hopes as single mens'.

But strangled fierce his safer light,
Let smiling Nears hide frowning Fars,
Whose then approach twice ruthless write,
To hastening pace, fulfilling Stars.

Who pinned on back of brazen years
This shrift o' theirs to coming times:
"He minded not the silent leers,
The steady sooth the Sybil rhymes."

Whose burdened wreath may never bear
'Mong graven gems this baser stone,
Which, from low seat tho' crude it flare,
Twice sorry dims the blazoned throne—

While doubly thence its legend reads:
"I tithe no blench to higher Wills,
But hold it cardinal 'mong creeds

'Tis love of self that all fulfills."

Since, certes, good John, the wide Fates kiss:
Their sum-up Clerks need not be told
By one grim page to set this quizz—
"So little wise and yet so old."

So heady still, spite curb of years,
Such toper there where hard heads brew
Against some Guest that sobering nears,
From draff o' old the cleaner New.

From cross of Days some bear-up Creed—
To sum of Why the sweet Reply,
Than cyphered Fate of clearer breed,
And purge to text she teacheth by—

The "yea" to "nay" of self-sick man,
What crowns his raw and groan-fed Stars;
With olived light the vulture's span
That gores as yet all warding bars;

Who, tho' still she strew her trophied trail
O'er sanguine sore, but fading seas,
Marks lift, and girt with nobler mail,
As sturdy rise, white-bucklered Peace.

But I have had my little say:—
The Muse is such a taunting lass;
She grips your hand, and will or nay,
'Tis bear her tongue ere brooked to pass—

In sooth, she says she's really done:
O'erhead a prim and foolish Moon,
In trappings borrowed from the Sun,
Flaunts gay her frock and silver shoon.

E'en so will human Wit fling wide
Its took-on crest and glittering gear,
What are but glancings as they glide
From off the Truth's all-spanning sphere.

So will the Muse stand hard at gaze
Beneath this mystic, myriad Arch,
Hear faint thro' rush of whirling days
Time's silent roundsmen file and march—

Their never ending, ordered beat,
Those footsteps yare that warning fall
And charge each hand to bide the meet,
Account his watch, or void the Roll.

Nay, nothing daunted, pause to catch
Perhaps their song, perhaps the jars;
Through sting and throb, at strain to match
Their measures to some boundless Star's.

But yet at Wrong she cannot bide
Must have her jog at slug-slow Time:
How far it rouse his hard-bound hide—
Ah! there's the test of quickening rhyme!

THE GIBBET-SONG.^[1]

[1] The onus of the South African War seems, in the main, to have rested on three pairs of shoulders—those of Rhodes (who has now excused himself), Chamberlain and Milner.

The Gallows is a composite something—a sort of trio-also—known to assume burdens, likewise, to-wit: the Beam, the Trap, and the Rope.

I dozed—had dipped in gray of dreams—
While at gate of mind no sentry sat,
But such blithe watch and ward whereat
The Fancy laughs, more tricky sports her airy gleams—
Had dipped—unrobed, immersed, for all she fought,
In the bath, each leaden limb of weary Thought.

Such truce!—while shoal of dreams slid restful by;
When, hark! Came phantomed not upon the misty air,
At hum and buzz, some quaint palavering there—
Some spell—which, ere the tranced ear could sort and try,
Took vision, too, put up, made free,
Where Reverie's haunts and workings be.

The eeriest shapes—tho' of yon fierce breed
That crows sweet Song, harsh-tunes her chime,
Thick-mists the heights she fain would climb,
Yet, e'en so, their sad defence and privilege plead:
Rude differences, of mark and poise,
That, 'gainst all manners, prompt her voice:

The weirdest set,—tho' jovial, too, if looks describe,
And hardy Mirth—yon gamy stuff that seeks no bush,
Which Muse will start when, at a push,
She sports the string of hoot and jibe;
Tho' God help! as many a licensed rascal knows,
A proper chord, for all its ring of lashing prose.

But who were they? By way of count, the eye
Had made them three—some treble pink, or clover there—
Tho', sooth to say, I never saw the threefoil wear
The weird wild grace they conjured by.
But then, what can't Illusion shadow forth,
That shames the needle, souths the north?

The First—in faith, all had a cunning trick
Of linking arms, a hang-together sort of look,
Which how to severalize and separate book
Comes hard, save unto whom, among Life's pick
Of strange acquaintance, she makes free
Shall have close dealings with these Corporate Three.

This First—a lanky chap he was, of way-up size,
Clean-timbered, straight as pine-grain flows,
Or frank heart feels, yet now, for, certes, some heinous cause,
His way was curt, his speech came grim—some hanged surmise
His gaunt frame feels, which, as it shouldering brings
To view his level top, spoke curious things

While the Second, tho' less staunch of thew,
Say, to the others beam as boards of clap,
Showed yet his ilk—a jaw alive as any trap;
Tho' one, who backed his sense with feeling, too;
For the way he would warm up, take on, and lead,
When as some new light broke, was sight indeed.

And last, that sprawling Third—so meek, so mincing slim,
You'd never ha' dreamt how's his gag was bound,
In the end, to clinch a subject, coil it round,
As he let out that twisting trick of him;
Which, till erring Man and Time debate no more,
Shall still leave points for Master Rope to score.

Well—here was Company, if all was square?
A doubt stood out, heard Heart say, "Brother Brain,
Good Sir, have you been chumming with the Wine again?"
When, "No," flung back the Head, "I wasn't there
This many a day; since when my kindling deities are
But a cup of Oolong and a mild cigar."

Yet, drat the thing! 'Twould take no nay;
The stuff came fierce. Some blaze seemed on,
And, tho' with no clear ground to go upon,
I thought I said, "Let come what may,
I'll hear it out," tho' 'ts trick for strange now topped the score,
For by Grab and Stab! they spoke of War.

Yon feud that stains South Afric's land,

The foul use to which a giant's sword
Had long been put, 'gainst some young ward
Of freedom's there. How the gallant tho' forlorn band,
Compeers of Fame, made ring her page
With wonder of the strife they singly wage.

Nay, what took me most,—but then,
What good to ponder how these Councillors three
Came to speak so tactic-deep, so judgingly
'Bout how that bully's brawl might not have been,
Had they, on strength of prospect, in their wholesome way,
From forth the tingling cheek of modern Day,

With timely hand, rebuking, wiped this burning shame,
Made knavery uncloak, ere treason flew
Her couriers flaunting of their liveried True,
And with craft of covert mired a goodly name;
No good to ponder this, now the vile flood has broke,
Yet fact, or no—it was the way these worthies spoke.

And queer'st of all,—by some strange spell
They becked me on, and, edging 'round,
As in some magic circle held me bound,
When, "now," cried they, "it fits us tell,
'Less thou be one of those, too apt by far,
Who, shuffling, try to shape their star,
By tale, lined smug with pleasing sooth,
And, like world-wise husbands, till and farm
No lease that tinge with thought of harm—
We doubt you sore—than sweat at back of rugged Truth;
Who expound all fact by textman Strong,
Glibbed ne'er so smooth with fine-spun Wrong."

"Yes, 'swords! said they, it fits us tell,'—
When, as with sense of proper cue,
The Beam—the fellow of the sturdy thew—
Spoke singly out: like tongue of rousing bell
That on still deeps of vasty midnight falls,
To doom of raging flood, or fire calls,

Reverberate rang his ghostly strain:
"Had I been there, on Afric's shore,
Where homes mid toil the hardy Boer;
Or, there where erst was laid the train
And cunning fuse, whose rowdy charge
Set War's deep-mouthed hounds at large—

Been there—good now and well-a-day!
Proud Cecil's hunger for more Earth,
To swell a tottering empire in the girth,
No thought for 'ts feet, those props of clay,
Should for its fill, or nearways bound,
Have had a six foot some of Christian ground.

Or, grant, this stories not, by far,
Quite twists, the way his craving came;
That a wider mark went roves with Fame:
E'en so—the fatuous head he gave his star
Balked still true rise, yon warier climb,
Which must match foot with patient Time.

But, take in both; let honor owe
Some voice to each; yet some base touch no merit downs,
Sinks born kings to range with clowns,
Wreaked here its curse thro' human law,
And, deriving whence no issue sleep,
Would have had yon stern verdict keep.

Since, so had no lure that Mammon piles
Blazed wide to men, "I know ye all;
Lo, here my truck, lo, there your soul!
And, what devil doubts, but damned files
For lasting count, scores twice this creed:
"Fair ends must bear what foul means breed."

So had ne'er cried out 'gainst fearsome spilth
No brave mens' blood, no blasted home
Made sick the times, sensed fierce the stars, past where they dome
Shrilled wildly forth "this is the husbandry whose tilth,
When gathered full its ghastly sheaf,
Shall blight with shame each laureled leaf,

"That England wears, where ranker grow,"—
Well—this topped, I thought, all patient sense,
And it seemed I said "Now pray you whence
This dire bode? What glass be yours that it should show

What veils all view,"—here, while my lip still quivering hung,
Their wizard spell had tied my tongue;

As from out my Dream there rose once more,
This time that other's grim, now boding voice
I thought so sleek, yet full of poise,
And, tho' still you traced the snap it bore,
'T had now an eager, vast, nay, solemn sound,
As if chiming with the sky-paths 'round.

Withal, it was mine ancient friend's, the Trap,
As lo, he dire spoke, "and had I been there,
Where southward down the Capelands bear,
Had I not quenched with my good cap,
O'er-topped his crest, that Milner man,
Whose swell of head to the Imperial plan

"Such havoc worked, that toiling Day
Nor patient Night, tho' joining chore,
Retrieves the base that rose before;
But as sad Fates their grim plots lay,
Nor scorn no aid from scheming Breath,
Shall, waning, sink t'ward leveling Death."

At this—as from its curb had once more broke
The Will—my safer self—tho' cowed and pent
Within their witching grip, I roused and bent
The tongue to hot retort, and spoke:
"Who're you, that spurs so fierce the instant Right,
Who'd wage conclusions with the patient Light?"

Then more calm—for within his look
There sate a gleam, that still, clear gaze,
By which dim Destiny all opposite weighs,
Nay, her least owing brings to book—
I faltered forth: "What? him they've frilled a lord?
You'd from your great good heart have spared a cord?"

"Knit closer up this raveled night?
Or bee'st thou then?"—Here fell again, past pen to tell,
On tongue and will that gruesome spell,
Tho' heart and brain seemed steeped in light;
As in voice, whose vast no star-deep girds,
'Rose grim, I thought, that eerie Thirds;

Now halting, meek, no more. O, futile trope!
To suit to trick of verbal range
What boundless garbs past millioned change,
Yet here, in humble guise of him, the Rope,
Spoke valiant out, tho' slept each sense-watch there,
Unvoicing very thunder by compare:

"And had I been where across the sea,
Confederate, girt, with bulwark tides,
Fair Albion, on proud leave, divides,
With Ocean's state, his empery;
On his white bastion fearless stands,
While lift with light the beacons hands;

But out of mark, unstatured, sinks,
All tribute once, now scarce a heed,
Some trick, at best, sad memories breed,
When the large well, whence Honor drinks,
He fierce pollutes, the loath cup drains,
Inglorious pledged to siren gains;

When the large glow, which constant shone,
Now winnows Night no never more,
Blasphemes its trust, the spacious charge it missioned bore,
And all his anchored pride be overthrown,
While up from heaving seas comes brooding cast,
To moan of threnody, his vanished past.

Ah! had I been there, ere hawks could trail,
Could, hounding, snatch at brooding Peace;
Ere her wild brother's bugle shook the seas:
Had I not ta'en a reef in Joseph's sail—
The Crest and Swell, which false at source,
Pluck whelm and blast to path their course;

Ere broke the storm, yon blood-red tide,
Man's will, 'gainst very Fate is bound
To probe and check, but which he, callous, failed to sound:
Had I not made his tacks go wide,
Charmed lasting 'round with my good noose
The broken throat that neared the true

the brazen throat that pooned the truce,
Yet from her deep lip that answereth not,
Save where with pupil's grace you tend her school,
Sought shuffling plea, acclaimed for Rule,
Yon vaunted policy, whose flattering rot
Outwits itself, aborts all plan
Thro' fierce array of brawling man;
Whose passing equity, the worldly Sure,
Might never yet a neutral stand, did witness bear—
Yon hosting skies no plainer there—
Than that Nations' lives may not endure,
But shall buoy up dark things of Night,
That, at issue, watch the orient Light;
Be as brief posts twixt here and hence,
Time, the user-of-them-for his haste,
Their barred entail what feeds his waste,
Slaves his command, confounds all whence;
When Aggression evermore fierce yokeman go,—
Cries 's rage no halt,—with Nature's grim and blood-red law.

A-well,—so set, to some such words,
So substantced to their dour pith,
Tho' the pen, at push for its wherewith,
May, chance, interpreting the rousing chords,
And, as becomes an instrument of Breath,
Be scanting what their phrenzy saith,—

Yet thus, from past all conscious source,
Mark, manner, privilege of Thought,
Trite limit of the time-bound brought,
Rang his appeal, whose fierce discourse,
Lest Truth, sore tossed, succumb despair,
Exhort no more, inspiring tongued the womby air.

Whereon, as if to merge each single act,
Fuse straying motive, pledge them one,
Have, whence 'mid blaze of myriad sun,
The Theme enacts, or, where trite performs the meanest fact,
Some prompting Light declare, "this scene spake true,
Broad-based on Just to climax grew."

Nay, as to have once more this Sponsor say:
"Tho' wrath with ruth perplex my theme,
And thro' pall of cloud my pathways gleam,
And truckling augurs bode them nay;
Yet came ne'er so lost my omened sooth,
But some light broke dim with warning truth."

Even so, as some such charge they bore,
Now blent, as they were one, those Voices three:
Their mingled strains, consonantly,
Took jointly up this general score,
Whose burden—scale and pace to utmost star—
Did, rounding, swell their awful bar:

"Had we had leave, as we have will,
Laid on the rod, nor spared the hand,
But that dim Fates did baffling stand,
Called out: "Leave off, forbear, till we fulfill,
While etern Purpose, evermore at large,
Abeyant files your bitter charge!"

"Might we have shook us in our strength,
Hadn't we laid low, by his ruffian heel,
This ogred Wrong—his mealy trick his bloat appeal—
Cramped hell to hold his felon's length?
Her warders been, saved England's shame,
Ere Execration he her other name?

"Ere as fiends, below, join in the flout,
Match their sad spirits, hopelessly compare
Who takes the crown for vileness there,
Hang shameful heads, as Infamy points out,
This imp, cross of Greed and lewd Complot,
His human sires monstrously begot,

Whose unclean hand foul-featured Fame,
Young, timid traits of Peace that grew,
And as from some struggling dawn, glad-messaged, flew
With this—that God to man, howso He came,
Mote ne'er fulfill His sacred call,
Ere wisdomed lift, while sink each thrall,

That passioned slaves, lets taskman Time

Exact to a jot what brags his lease,
And Breath blind-pays for his appease:—
Ere lift, willed forth this dauntless rhyme—
“Spite bonds that cling, nor seem to bate,
Some Free may war gainst him and Fate.”

Wage hard from lips of thirsting Truth
To dash this rank-venomed Cup,
Adulterous Policy holdeth up,
Pledged cunning deep with serpent sooth—
“That the lie which in the Weak be breach of trust,
In the Strong, may hollow drape and play the Just.”

Usurp and steal in that fair shape,
For fellowship with him the roysterer, Sword,
Shut out her cheer, the gentle Word,
Profane her wreath, its laurel ape;
Steel twice the heart, glass dark this law:
“There be no Truth: one bitter blank the Heavens go.”

At this—much like some sudden storm, that for 's ease,
At his mad pleasure, whelmed the skies,
Whose purpose carried, all his wild mood dies,
His course accounted, and his wake the peace:
So happy sank—fast curtained now, each ghost-film laid—
From sight and sound, that threefold Shade.

And thus my Dream, past link or bound
Of yon close web which nets all Thought,
To final plat its loomwork wrought;
Its crowning braid—the instant tint, the fervent ground—
What deep worked in some veiled hand,
And bade both woof and pattern stand.

And, safe-keep it so, thou justest God!
Deny it not its lease of wear,
Spite what coarse thread of Earth it bear,
All warp that fames the needy sod!
But, suffered, let its touch unfold
Some seed of Truth's anumb with cold.

Th' impeach, the taunt—account them not,
But as they still prevail with tardy man,
And, differing, derogate Thy vast of plan,
Would bettering eke its bountied. What—
All strange which holds, past Thought, that waits,
The shrouded edicts of unmeasured Fates!

Profess it Thine its core o' grace—
What strove to bare the covered fault,
The tort, whose gross, to top assault,
Would brazen mask its borrowed face,
Derive intent, refer its course
To Thine clear will and prompting source.

At which thought, again, alas, will fall
That bitter cry; at rude division pierce the ear,
As Sight thickens, to eclipse of Fear,
My ghostly Speakers cast their pall,
Break bounds twixt this and some yet Hence,
Perturb, once more, the sequences of Sense;
While eerie lifts, at fresh loom there—
When unnatural trespass stalks the mind,
Invokes the equity it fails to find—
Those juried Three; as the empaneled air
Repeats, that wanton power hallows Wrong,
Those awful measures of the Gallows' Song.

THE SCAR.

Heart heavy, her mantle torn, and with bleeding feet;
As from out some Dream b'yond wide-visions Night,
Unverged, unfollowed where her infinites meet,
On brow, withal, an unextinguishable Light,

Came crownless Glory, seeking of the haunts of man,
To find him from her faith same swerver still,
Who, tho' suffered factor in this fabled Plan,
Its wonder jars with shock of passion and the worldly will.

From out those self-same Deeps, against whose Sight
Yon white suns veil them, that o' Times they are,
Came also he, the Greed—his lust of Have and love of Might,
To fame his flush, tho' shrouded, nay, how brazen, Star.

Full-orbed, if ever, thro' yet feud of Days,
Whose strides would bridge it, but contrive no span,
Where, beneath, tides on forever, yea, in shrewder maze
Time's scruteless burden, since his own began;

Whose Strange withal to lighten, 'less all hope were dumb,
And, ere the Riddle wearied that no answer grew,
What still some sad twinge told him must abide its sum,
Yet, on some wild prospect that chance Glory knew,

In this crude fashion sought to draw the Seraph out:
"Why dost thou moan? Will Man ne'er know thee as thou really art?
Mark how I am followed, how his bawdy rout,
His brutish hordes, have throve and fatted at my feeling heart!

"How I have led him from 'way down the Scale,
While something better,—yes, I've dreamt 'twas you,—
Devised those touches, made his red hand quail,
Reproved the bully when most fierce he slew."

"Yet, look you, even when his best is told,
Some bias granted where awards divide;
Under the glass now—is he other than the beast of old,
Have your pricks struck deeper than his spotty hide?"

Is your varnish more than the rogue's, whose saint
For a fast or vigil wipes him, then gross-daubs him new?
Ah! that I chance fouled him, helped flush the paint?
Tut, tut, that still outfathoms, yea, or me, or you.

Come, be wise! Subscribe me proper! Sleek my Spoiler's hand,
So its foul grip hallow, thought a blight before,—
Avouch it mine that grace that haunts me while the Heavens stand,
Since first my gray dawn dimmed it 'mong white lights of yore.

Why should'st thou sorrow? Why those bleeding feet?
Thy humble garment? Yon rapt, far-off gaze?
The voice that falters thro' its dim entreat?
Thy brow, sore pondering of this thankless maze,—

Thy brow, where lo!—ah, 'tis the riddle which I blind pursue—
Yon fond star frets it and divides thy gloom:
Hark! Wilt thou not lend it me? In guise of True,
Let its rose be grafted on my baser bloom?

Since, how then still goodlier might my outward show;
My pose, my policy, each brood of shame,
Which my wily statists at their game of draw—
My foxy henchmen—give a smoother name;

How still more potent were my toils than now,—
When "Nay" spoke gently Glory, "that out-goes my leave:
How might I stand me where the high Fates bow
Before the Will, that crowns no issue not thine own achieve."

"What! Thou wilt not?" Came the fierce respond,
As on deep Night there rose a mocking and a damned wail,
"Mark how I justify my bitter bond,
How where fools refuse me there I grim assail!"

When, forth, on its fell errand, went a grisly hand,
As the dread skies shook them and the winds spoke hoarse,
To grasp the star no wheedling parley, nor no harsh command,
May impious sever from its bounden course.

Nay, for one foul moment gripped it, made the Jewel press
Those hairy temples where the gross thoughts strive
To vie the light no false faith borrows, so its sheen may bless
And cloak the trickster while his juqqlings thrive;

But like a shadow shall its wonder chill:
So even here: it left more pinched the low brow there,
Yet, as if sorry even for unrighteous will,
Made still, for ruth, the base ridge wear,
At upward blazon 'tward yon veiled Deeps,
Where the lights ensky them past the zenith star,
A blot—a bruise, whose fiery throb no opiate sleeps,
A branding, brazen, yet a piteous scar;

Which, in his better hour, he, the ogre, Greed,
Applying to its sorry wound the comfort of the salve,
Which 'gainst Time's woe, for even him, the high Hopes breed,
Allays that brutal sting—his love of Rule and lust of Have.

But out, alas! When sad companion of the fated Night,
Whence, struggling tho' her bitter spur, his dark will came,
He aims to conjure with yon gentler Light,
To screen his knavish Cant, filch Glory's name;
When cloaked in practise, till the Heavens doubt,
False hopes estrange him with his franker star;
How vengeful then, how giant grim, stands fiery out
Yon thievish, brazen, branding Scar!

TO ENGLAND: A FORECAST.

(With a side-light on Kipling's verse "The Islanders.")

“Those flanneled fools at the wicket,
Those muddied Oafs at the goal.”

Oh yes, make no doubt,—you shall need them;
If not now, at some near-upon time,
P'rhaps fast as your mothers dare breed them,
Those fools of his militant rhyme.

For, tho' it be not a day that covers
What stern Reckoners, withal, must try,
And, ere Retribution that hovers
Shall swoop down on the Greed and the lie;

Yet, sure as red War do thin them,
Your brave ranks dished cold on his tray,
Shall your wits study hard how to win them—
Adding craft to his ravenous play—

Those flanneled fools where they dally,
With yet good trick o' the human left,
Who trace, thro' the bounce and the rally,
The gross hand of the clumsiest theft;

If still at his feet, the sad demon of Glory,
Whose yet Star screens the Nemesis there,
You trail foul the white mantle which Story,
Long proud, deemed you worthy to wear.

Have him drink, each Oaf, till he drains it,
The sad rue of your rank abuse,
Till he purge, where your grim lip stains it,
The white, passioned font of the Truce.

And you spill 'gainst some Day that darkens,
The sweet blood which more blood must cleanse,
To appease her, who evermore hearkens,
With an ear 'bove all mortal mens'—

Whose hand, tho' thy now scarce regards it,
Nay, with brute challenge her great bond bails,
'Gainst some audit, how so she retards it,
Holds still those immutable scales,
Whose tallies, past mortal doubting,
Shall yet flame their etern script,
Set forth b'yond what small gods flouting,
Their word in your heart's-blood dipp'd.

For out of the sad soil reeking,
Unstilled while the blood-rain falls,
Even there, goes a great Wrong seeking,
From Camp and from pesthouse calls.

Seeking—wondering, though waiting,
Why so patient the ordering Stars;
All-wisdomed Wills why so lating
The Just which no time-let bars.

Seeking—nay, all but finds it,
In the path you must now pursue,
The scourge, where some grim Fate winds it
With her law of the outraged True;

In the course now blind-blazed before you,
Where, still warning her augurs stand,
Invoking the love she bore you,
For stay of your ruthless hand.

Oh yes, you shall ill do without them,
Those fools his rash fancy drew;
But then, shall your conscience not doubt them,
Shall they not lack faith in *you*?

Shall then not the dead Days taunt you,
Break their graves, and, with wild surmise,
Fierce-ghosting the Coming haunt you,
Ensanguine the placid skies?

Oh, yes; Come Heaven or Hell, you shall need them,
Where Unjust has so monst' red the score,
Her purgers-in-fee, ere you breed them,
Till Shame be your harlot no more!

WAR.

By his blood-red furrow, as of yore—
The fierce acre he tends, since, her theme in chief,
Story stained with him her leaf,
Nay, since when, come not-yet of age,
She but babbled her page—
Chance, long by-gones before—
Heeled and flush, in his bruiser's trim,
Howe'er wistful at core,
Walketh the War.
Never a laugh dares sport with him,
Only anon the luridest smile
Rallies his gloom awhile,
Ere it hang as before.

By the reek of his furrow—
Those dank pastures, whose soil,
Moistened by ages, augur his toil;
Which his scourge-hands have fed,
Whose come-up and store
Have quickened and bred
On his innings of yore,
On the blood-sweat and broil—
Still walketh the War;
Broad-cast flings his dripping grain,
Lest, unpurged of tare and weed,
God's dear harvest come in vain,
While the Devil nurse his breed.

Lest, Earth's Mighties, sick for more
Lack of grist to heap their store,
Sigh that Luck should be so out;
Why the slut so meanly heed
The sore measure of their need;
What blind Fates may be about?

While, perchance, the grim sower there,
Fierce and blood-strewing Mars,
Uneasy his honors wear,
Inglorious, the ancient scars,
And his weed-hands, the plain and dim,
Be not thought the husbands of Him,
He, who gathereth the stars.

Lest his tithe and offering, the War,
From a heart, thought inconstant and meek,
Appease not The Evermore;
And, in their hallowed and upward seek,
Less pious now than before,
The rue and the languishing grue,
The fall-away reek of the blood-laden stew,
Hit not His nostril, while gentler strife,
Cravens the breed of the eager life,
And, unearned, unworthy, her sober ease,
She yeaneeth the Peace.

And still, by his furrow, lusting and grim,
While his seed-hand drips,
Sowing and reaping, tending his chore,
As he waileth his hymn—
That fierce dirge evermore
Blown hoarse from his lips—
Towers the War.
But who be the council and senate of him?
Who be his teamsmen, where be the whips?
There in the ghost-light, taunting and strange?
There where all visions pale them and range?
There where all time-light, tho' vaunting its star,
The hushes come numbing, so voiceless and far?

Yet there, even there, evermore,
Since first streameth a dawn,
Hardy and wild, tho' ungrown,
Tolling his death-song, muffling their lore,
The brave lyrics of life,
Speeds not the strife,
Stalks not the War?
As he moody fulfills those inscrutable Wills—
At one hand, the Spirit's, on the other, the Sod's,
That anointed of Gods;
Here, that fierce purger, the Truth's,
There, the healing, the infinite Ruth's,
Divinely at odds—

I nose miracled I wain,
Deep-twinning, past name,
From whose life-streaming well,
Whose concept and womb,
Floweth birth-song and knell,
Issue cradle and tomb.

Here and there, evermore,
Since first lifted a prime,
And mortal with him,
Father Hazy, old Time,
Untokened and dim,
From the brood-mists of yore,
His chief breather was bore;
Craving and unsated still,
Feedeth the War.
On one hand, the God-will,
On the other, the Man's,
Bounden a chooser, or liege to the chance?
Who shall assign it? Each where it fall?
Prove the parts from the Whole?
How may they plead—Doer, and deed?
Response, 'gainst the Call?
Is there a name for the appeal and the claim,
From the shaping to Shaper,
The Judger that scans,
While dim Fates yet fulfill,
Exalting ordain,
Thro' the stress and the pain,
That high something, the Will,
Bid it rise to the answer,
Tho' one with the Plan's?

Ay,—shall the soul not be held to the vast reply?
Or, shall its dower of light,
Widowed of wonder, sad mate with the Night,
Like what fierce-flaunting Sun's,
When its pomp is done,
Fail him and die?
Be the soul, its selfhood a dream,
But some phantom-fed gleam?
Past yon torches that burn,
Unbarred may no high suit go?
But beggared, unmorrowed, never to know,
Unvisioned etern,
Behold not, with humbled, tho' how larger eyes,
The Fountains that rise?

CLIO.

From out my tossed and wayward page,
Where yet to prompt it, broad and clear,
God and demon struggling wage—
Thoughts of hope gainst things of Fear—
Something lifts: How should I know
Why or whence, save that in light,
Above my monitors of boding Night—
Tally-hands that warning draw,
With my good Augurs, joint indite,
Checked, but sure, the founded law—
It gently calls in thy behoof,
Rounding my unfinished verse,
Clinching, as from pith of proof,
What the lines but faint rehearse,
While, to deep tho' far-off chords,
It voiceth low these simple words:

“Trust no foul, to frame best end,
Lest some taint the high Stars rue,
Dark infect all fresher True,
Subtly foil its yet portend;
And, twice blind with brute unheed,
Life's close cypher harder read:
Lest unto all after time,
With the burden of my rhyme,
The unholy jar do foully blend,
Grudge and mar its noblest chime:
Burden, with whose nameless Deep,
Tho' sad paths dim courses keep,
Yet repeats, invoking still,
Anthemed, the responsive will,
Suffered federate with the Prime.”

“Have thy ways confess me just,
Lest the Fate, whose hand unfolds
Devious what the world-lust holds,
Shut out all bound twixt thee and dust:
Lest large things, that she did write,
Tricked of faith and worthy scope—
Hence, unmusicked of the Hope—
Juggling blot my tablet's white;
Nay, in her despair to shape the Soul,
She report ye foul, and tear my Scroll.”

AVE PAX.

From forth the hidden, brooding heart of Nature lifts a sigh,
A wordless, dim beseech, as if of tremulous Life,
A heave that groaning speaks, withal: "And what am I,
And all my stars, and myriad thing, and Breath arife
As with some doom that hears not, some blind call to be?
Shall my mute yearning ever rend the pall of Night?
This bond be lifted, and those wills be free?
My heart swell holy t'ward some only Light?"

"And shall my pains unburden, some glad voice be mine?
The feuds surcease them—the brutal onset and the bitter stress?
This chalice sweeten, flow with heavenly wine?
My brood uncurse me, who how fain would bless,
Till, O, some angeled Pity from these bowels leap,
A sweeter wisdom of all ills make ease,
And those dreams fulfil them that fond-haunt my sleep:
Shall ever on my sore, o'erwatched brow sit promised Peace?"

And out of stillier Deeps—unfathomed, shrouded than the tomb-hush came—
A Vision rose upon her stony, sad, beblinded eyes:—
A passionate Shrine, where smiling lay, in chastening flame,
The white child, Truth—a seraph winging, 'gainst its mighty Rise,

Past Pain and Evil, all fierce brood they bore;
While Justice in the holy fire saints her purging rod
For infinite Ruth: But 'bove them all, in state no other heaven wore,
Abounding Patience sat, in likeness of unutterable God!

ALPHA.

Primer than all the Ages,
One with the Evermore,
Key to Life's sybil pages,
Prophet whose only lore,

Time, tho' he muse the Writing—
Why so crabbed the cypher run,
Shall yet word to the heart's inviting
Clear-copied than myriad Sun.

Vaster than all relation,
Divine, tho' mid Dark he grew,
Lest, paltering the fierce negation,
Unblest come the only True!

OMEGA.

The goal is ever; all things tend;
Faiths must waver; Love shall mend;
Never issue come to rest—
Earthen course, or starry span,
Will of God, or heart of man—
Pillowed not upon His breast.

GREATNESS.

O, thou, the fierce englamored,
Hence, at never cease, invoked of man,
Who, in the vast procession of the sybil days,
Holds up the light he fain would follow, but may not conceive;
Whose boundless charter and whose nameless goal outpasseth Time:—
Hast thou, on sufferance of thy liege, the Truth
The Same, unwearied on whose fiat waits the mutinous Dark,
Whose breath, withal, fans bright the spheres,
Concords the music of their millioned primes;
Whose utter Essence, tho' in substance clad,
Yon skies contain not, tho' the heart may hold:—
Hast thou, the warrant winked-at, yet the trust, supreme,
On behalf of privilege that might all beseech—
Some love past limit, save its ever self—
Hast thou, thus, wandered from those shores afar,
Thy starry synods and the hosting lights,
To meet thine image in these mortal ways,
So fangled, paltried, and so bitter small—
Thine mighty image, which no shadow frets—
Such slave to glozing aspect and rude things of Here,
So pent in durance to the marble law, whose
nurse are grim coercion and the bloody hand?
But, shalt thou not change it, till its lines enlarge,
False take-offs dwindle, and their craft stand out,
Nor mate vain-glory for vile thrift of both,
And fierce engendering of their dwarfish breed?
Shalt thou not change it, let Fame's note come true;
For her brazen trumpet the small silvery flute,
Which draws its heart-strains from the pith of Just,
And winds accordant with the patient soul?
Shall its gloried flame not whiter burn,
The snuff and dross attract no more,
Set lurid off thy streaming torch,
Whose glow and essence than the sun-paths fed,
Outpeers the lustre of their myriad fount,
The solemn, fiery-bearing, the uncompassed Night?

Yea, shalt thou not change it, bid thine features grow,
The lines more matching, scope and plan more true,
Dispel refraction and all hemming False,
Which, girt with mortal tribulation, hang
Their warping shadows twixt the Light and thee?
Shall Great be greater not, tho' it lowly comes,
The reward o'ertook not ere the Right say well?
Shalt thou sink hellward not the sorry law,
Which bids rude Strength—be it brain, or brawn's—
Sit, lofty scorning, by the counseling heart,
So unaccompanied place its monstrous tribute at vain
Feet of pride, and brutish idols of the adoring sense,
On specious plea of covetous ambition—all its rage to have and wield—
Give wage to sorrow than be frankly served
By lasting wisdom and the patient hope,
While Policy and Smug Expedience wink Fresh Cues at all?

Shall thy fair likeness not refigured speak,
Each trait come moulded t'ward this crowning True—
That, Mind, the mightiest, shall outsee itself,
No gift, not servant, round more full the Soul,
Nor in the bounteous equipment find
The meanest haughty crest, nay tricksiest spur upon that crest,
Whereon to hang the damned assurance of a law
Exempting answer to the gauging Just;
But from the grace and undeserved oblation draw,
Bring heavenly down—whether in man or men,
In gathered Nations, or the singler few—
Fresh-purposed to the will, fresh trusting
And sustaining there, the guardian angel of humility,
The lifting spirit of the thankful heart?

Shalt thou not make it goodly clear,
'Tis not Endeavor which alone achieves,
Save as it aim averts not, but for grace upholds,
Crowns true some spirit, would set struggling forth,
At vast contention and in emulous pride,
Yon speechless comment which the Hopes give out,
For fresh construction of the rigid text,
The nice enactment, tho' dispiteous code,
Whose leased expression and whose outward sum
Are Nature's equities and ways about?

Ay, shall thus, fresh copied not, thine image shine;
Shalt thou not thus acquit thyself, re-message Faith,

The act affirm her, and the daily thought,
 Full-knowing that her life lies there, and only hostage unto groping man?
 Shalt thou not thus draw gracious near,
 Till all hearts enfold thee, and, in their rude despite,
 The scoring Fates cry wondering out,
 "Our worst is done; there is now no more;
 Our record writes itself, to justice dedicate
 And happy Good."
 If not—alas, misprision and the futile trust!
 If not—if Destiny still a boggler stand,
 Knows Hence from Hither, nor which way were best,
 If yet the rude purveyor, Time,
 Finds in the vast commission and despatch of him,
 In his prospects and his comings-on,
 The near or far, unfeatured still that dream of thee,
 No Perfect ever, scarce thy better there,
 But that blots shall lasting stain it, give it
 Fresh relief, traduce the glory he had meant
 Hold forth; if yet the Vain come worshipped,
 And the Brute must thrive, more subtly nourished,
 But its breed the same, while the Free,
 Tho' of outward credit, wear a golden clog,
 Pollutes his title, and defaults the heart:
 In few, if Fact be consecrate, the Brain its God,
 No Faith to hallow, save what Reason hold,
 Rank-rooting never in no soil but Self,
 Till Hope, an exile—say she breathe at all—
 Strangered and out of rights, eats her own heart,
 In weary banishment and quail of man:—
 If this be so, if that could be—were it better not,
 Thus tricked and thwarted of thy clearer self,
 This Present, pathless, with worse maze before—
 Were it better not, white days should cease them,
 And the Stars to roll, invite disruption, and, thro' wrack
 Of things, with leveling Chaos plead afresh some chance
 For nobler being and the worthier life?
 Or, say, that doubting vastly his at all retrieve,
 Since still petitioned on crude lines of This,
 Grudged, narrowed, and beset with voidless happenings of the mortal hour:
 Say that:
 Hence, judging nothing blessed that he might contrive,
 And, lest things that had been from their graves stand forth,
 Teem their once imperfections, all infirm they bore,
 Yea, on mere vision of the dread event,
 Cry wildly out against the Call,
 That, taunting, drew them from Death's perfect shade,
 To stalk once more, at dull repeat,
 Or fevered rush—one goal for both—
 Their weary paces in some time-bound Here,
 Its hope unpremised, and no Hence made out:
 Say that—all that—and, were it better not, were it not wise,
 If yet so judging from what lay at hand,
 Such guess to go by and provide a cue—
 Were it better not, were it not well,
 Might faith not do it, and the sense subscribe,
 Let it come to this, if words may broach it,
 May bear out the thought: to this—that man call down,
 Call clamorous down, as only umpire twixt
 All What and Not; twixt blind Reliance—
 Her yet remnant there—her fond contention,
 And the crucial Fact; as sole unraveler
 Of thick webs of False; for lasting clearance
 Of the perjured Fates, that usurp thin image
 To the trick of True—Call wildly down,
 All hearts clean emptied of their bane, the pride—
 If Miracle knew how; might holily, not grossly, do it—
 No breather left not, whom the riddance bore
 Not in its sorry and unhallowed stead—
 Crude absence presenced, and new light let in—
 Some sacred, lofty, and prophetic strain,
 Which so should dare it, and,
 Which, curb to Fear, did dread no Judgment,
 Not appealed with this—that each cause that
 Drew him, and each star that led,
 Must find him shelter, nay, close-challenged, stand
 His clear accessory before the fact,
 Like found, in common, with indicted man:—
 Which so should dare—
 All this premise yielded, and its case at rest—
 Call fondly down,
 While the infinite Mercies, sitting wide 'bove All,
 Did, scruteless Justicers, take up the claim,
 Which Pain and Sorrow for the world-heart draws,
 And, which, past all precedent, would thus call down—

Ere Grace pronounce it, ere its fiat fall,
Against some boundless Issue, some yet Pure toward,
Unstained, surely, by gross touch of him,
Man's wayward intimate, sore licensed Time,
For his purgation and clear suit of all—
Would dare call down—yea, righteous down—
All breathers joining, of a mind for once,
Accord achieved, and a truce at last,
No thought so common, nor no wish so near
As that this scene be halted, and the long act done,
Its show a burden, and its flaunt a woe,—
Call fondly, wildly, tho' how vainly, down,
The long remitted, yet etern withheld,
While boundless Loving by great Patience sits—
Twin-seed and concept of the boweled Ruth,
That, sainting, quickens to immaculate God—
Would yet call down, call monstrous down,
The infinite respited, his aye unusher'd
And unthundered Doom?

PETER CRONJE.

Paardeberg, Feb., 1900.

Unto the templed haunts of her that sits,
And to acclaim of echoes writes the stirring deeds of men—
Each noisy plaudit that reverberate flits
Across the tablet's white, to never lift its breath again.

Each solemn impress, too, the burin graves,
And clear and fast, to living strokes, the stone-page holds
'Gainst his rude blot whose gulf enwaves
With sweeping crest all flash and strain of baser moulds.

To her who wreathes the Days, their laurel twines,
Or, decks no brow Fame's love to tell,
Came wisest Clio, Story's far-recording Muse,
A page in hand, whose bitter brief but glowing lines
Each trophied shaft, that rose, made prouder swell,
Blaze fresh its graphic lore with nobler hues.

To her,—this word on lip: "Build Sister now past shock of Days my latest shrine;
Based build it past their dim beseech,
Who up thro' Time wan ghost-hands reach,
To slur with doubt his fair'st design:
Be yare! The Heavens lo, for tribute pine!"

And mark, they pact! 'Fore Chancel-bar the high vows plight:
Ordained the Altar, while uprose through flame,
Clear-set 'gainst unspent yet and brooding night
The sweet, wild star—the beacon flash of Cronje's name.

Fame long took wary note of him,
So did proud England, too, who, from his hand,
In the blood-red, flowery vintage of her land,
Has drained his pledges to their bitter brim,
Till, within the fiery cups, well-nigh an Empire swim,
Staggers for sure foot, wonders at that dizzy head,
What craze infatuate demons in yon soft spot bred,
Whence this vile feeling in each once firm limb?

What worked such odious rouse in one so free?
Made this man loathe her, so defy all fate,
That in his eye the price has fallen of all things but Hate,
Wide Earth, unregioned, where her realms not be?
Cries here not, summoning, out, like from some Fury's song,
For 'ts dreadful due, some fierce, intolerable Wrong?

[2] For a final estimate of De Wet see pages [101-102](#).

OOM PAUL.

This is he: the same, who on the warrant of a man
Stood up, gave Fortune battle; to her bitterest face
Cried out, "I'll front your minions ere their slave-hand trace
On free men's backs, in sorry writing as no other can,
The crooked cypher which smug worldlings plan,
Expound, to key and color of their lust-fed wills,
As the all-in-all a tardy Destiny fulfills,
By its star, ports safe, 'gainst stress of man,
Her, hereto, drifting and unruddered van.

The same, who had his breeding at their rude expense,
Whose hardy training, to the pithy core,
So took, each fated tutor wonders evermore
Who wed such aptness to mere mortal sense.
In the gross, a bear; broad streak of fox; unsaintly, grim;
Withal, what Titan's mettle gave its heat to him,
What Spark re-tempered, that may ne'er grow cold,
This hero's substance from a peasant's mold?

CECIL RHODES.

Equipped, who doubts, above Life's common leave,
Where, privy to her council, mind and will
Bar lesser men, past plea of question, do fulfill
The searchless Fates—What did this man achieve
That Hope should stand deject, should at his parting grieve?
What bated sum of human ill
Files now, along with Wrong, its lessened bill?
What brutish yokes less hardened cleave?
How did he ease them—with what large conceive?
What forces muster 'gainst the Dark, but their array
Broke from the leadership of trusting Day,
Gave faction life, grew to command,
And, cozening, won him from the straighter way—
The same, in whose plain view yon heavens stand,
Rear wide this word, tho' blurred with Dust,
"That truly great must first be just."

CHAMBERLAIN.

Stalk Right, from crafty cover of the Might;
Commend your passes with the opportune;
Expound this lesson, never learnt too soon—
To rate all vision by the outward sight;
Hold all truth misty, save yon tricky light,
Which fatuous dazzles from the specious star,
Where worldly holdings, hedged with mortgage, are,
Each brazen title which still suffered write
Such scribes, rude-figured, on the scroll of Fate:
All this—and yet, who doubts but they fulfill,
Tho' at sorry single, some more general Will,
Hold dumb intelligence with Wisdom's state;
That, tho' locked in cypher yet the issue read,
Their blatant faction, 'gainst some halcyon date,
Works out, affirming, whence they silent speed,
His Council perfect, with no voice at odds,
The boundless findings of all-patient God's?

SALISBURY.

Removed from his sires by long stretch of years,
Yet so closely virtued, to their wisdom bred,
Their bloods long wasted, but which then ran red,
Their dogged valors, which had now been fears,
Are still his coaches and untimely peers,
Sit at his board, carve at the ghostly spread,
Flout tame the sweeter wine, for which the ages bled,
And cups paid bitter down in price of tears,
As, rising to his call, they quench their eerie fast,
And toast, in heady measures of a wormy Old,
'Gainst newer truths that mock their pledgesold,
This, their own grim shadow from a weary past.
And yet, if were their eyes awake, should they not grow
To keener vision, should a cuter ear
Not catch Time's footfall, nor so dare the Law,
Which, how so trespass do impugn it here—
As if its charter on mere probate ran—
Stars yet Time's reaches since his maze began,
Illumes the pathway of the utmost sphere:
Yon law of Free, within whose widening groove,
For franker answer 'tward the Life, 'tward all—
Some response more worthy of the conscious soul—
God, man, and thing, and Nations move?
Ay; should they not wonder at that slow-to-learn will,
Heir to large occasions, but to spurn them still?

PEACE PENDING.

Vae Victis! Nay, what Triumph rings
Exultant with that haughty word?
To grace its clarion, tempering brings
No music of a nobler chord?

Twice trophied, not what gentler strain?
Which, wiped no blot its honor caught,
Would, rank at heart, with flustered brain,
Still foul the cheer kind victory brought?

In the bugle's drown the choral song,
What strange, deep notes 'twould auguring breathe?
Deck fresh the brow of fated Strong
With teemy bud of baser wreath?

For, lo, it was a gallant fight!
And, tho' ravening Nature still stood up,
Pledged fierce, in her own drops, the bleeding Right,
Nay, bade her drain the chaliced Cup.

Tho' unlineal stripped the lineal True,
Set low the faith, acclaimed the doubt,
What witness here but purging threw
Its passionate gage, to bear it out,

That worse than steel or murd'rous flare
Of gaping mouth, whose sudden gust
Flicks out the flame of little life, it were to bear
The yoke that galls with rude Unjust;

That they slay not half, who merely kill,
Nor holds within the execution of the sword
Yon cunning stab which numbs the will,
In its drowse lays on the bondsman's cord;

That sweet blood spilt in noble cause,
Somehow, sustaining blends with Heaven's dew,
So partner'd, for fresh come-up grows,
Past choke of False, the larger True;

No harvest else come worth its seed,
Which holds not fast, gives o'er to taunt
This word—not what is bred, but what we breed
Foregathered hoard, but what we plant,
Alone shall lift mid prides that sink,
To foison come, 'mid thorny steeps of mazy ways,
Where ruthless heats far-fated drink,
Make nought the sap of lustful days;

So pledged alone endure, enlarge,
Make good, withal, some vicared trust,
Undue to hope yon scruteless charge
Whose brief is Time and riddling Dust;

So nurtured, rear, while Right unfolds,
Athwart rude stretch of the perplexing Plan's,
Some keep, some faith, that sheltering holds,
Sets God twice forth, thro' will of Man's.

Oh, yes, it was a gallant fight,
In free men's gashes writ on Story's page,
Nor, till her sad tome close in utter night,
And Destiny muse Time's vanished stage.

Shall hours blank its annaled score,
But bear it down t'ward yet to-comes,
At echoed gleam, set forth yon lore,
Which word, nor thought, nor heart-heave sums—

Yon love of Free, whose far-off fount,
Which, say it flow through beast and slave,
Withal, bids man stand up, assert, account
Exalt the gift—some Self, some Soul it gracious gave;

Yon voice of Just, whose auguring sooth
Wide-visioned bounds these Nears and Fars,
While infinite Patience, she, the Truth,
Revealed, fulfills her myriad Stars.

PEACE.

The gentle word has gone abroad, and on mens' lips
A tremor hangs, a gladness flutters at the kindly sound,
As, at fond repeat, with gathered tone, the quaver slips
On swelling heart-heaves 'bout the world's round,

Charms to its strain the aliens 't tongue,
In yon same music which the high Hopes know,
Since, true to wisdom, their brave cheer was sung,
Confounding Darkness where the dim Doubts go.

And shall heart not heed it, nor its welcome plight;
This cup, not feast it, match its deep propose?
Unpledging riot, shall the brutal Might
Not own the Fountain whence all fathom draws?

Bathe sweet those gashes and the bitter bruise,
Shall Strength, not holding of her heavyhand,
Unleague all compact, which, to spite the Truce,
Made Hell confederate with her blind command;

Let new days deck her in a nobler wreath,
A serener vision lift that groveling brow,
Duress and rancor, while they bated breathe,
Against some Presence where the deep Fates bow,

And, veiled speakers, with mute lay-on hands
Ordain, atoning, while the sky-paths chime,
In anthems swelling past their starren strands,
That ever postulant, sore-vicared Time.

Why then—shall Hope not speak it, find no moan was lost,
She, whose heave of sorrow bade the Destinies shrive,
Say why her ventures came so sorely tossed,
So hard at sea, till Faith did question their at-all arrive?

Shall Hope not find it—how Mistrust was out,
Yon fierce old reckoner, whose too absolute course
And wary checkings by his peer, the Doubt,
Still foul the bearings of the archer Source?

For, has Peace not spoken? on men's lips
Hangs not a quaver, like some Gladness there,
Some soothing spirit, from whose balm-wing slips,
Fanned wide, this message, it would brothering bear?

Has Peace not spoken, has the gentle word,
Invoking, blessed not the ear again?
Has Earth not witnessed, not the Heavens heard,
Its joy fall healing on the hearts of men?

AFTER.

On reading Louis Botha's article in the Contemporary
Review for the month of
November, 1902.

How came his right that he should dare,
He, and his two mates-at-noble-arms,
To stand erect, and not with bowed heads and bare,
Beg mites for build-up of their homestead-farms,
Their hearths which Ravage blacked with sorry flame,
Their children stricken within pesthouse gates,
And all rank glories wherein Empire came,
To foist her mission on these latter dates;
Not be lions of the hour, garb their pride
In neat devisings at the conqueror's hands;
But let their prayer on yon throb go wide
Which fellows justice with the far-offs't strands?
O, hearts, whose fires whet the valiant sword;
Pushed how to heave the suppliant word!
O, guilty act! and worthy Fortune's frown,
That ye should speak, let yet accord
This worthy latter with your erst renown!
Still trust, stand nobly up, tho' all seem down!

One year later—on appearance of his “Three Years’ War.”

No book alone is this, but very life;
A throbbing volume with warm blood-beats writ,
To vouch whose pages did the brave deed sit,
His traits tho’ lurid with angry strife;
To blaze whose image did not Freedom first,
To her wide symbol, past best trick of art,
In quivering flame-strokes, as no imprint durst
Trace plain each feature on her mighty heart?
Nay, in her fierce love, so drew them, that to mortal sight
They took on the lineaments of horrid hate,
What were but flashes of her beacons light,
The fervent visions of large things that wait;
For this man did love her for no worldly store,
Might never derogate with venal breath
The divine injunction which her message bore
To voice her biddings, yea, ’gainst grappling Death.

And, when such manhood cries you, “peace,” “no more,”
Shall not his foeman reach a brother’s hand,
Such day not with a double lustre pour
Its countenance o’er the darkened land?
Shall Love not smile and understand?

[3] A sequel to lines on page 84.

SINE DIE.

Full zodiacs three the fiery sun,
Thro' maze of stars, his web has spun,
Since War's late grimy page begun
To blaze its line—the bloody hand
Whose lurid strokes bade Peace to stand.

And, World-heart, O, what hast thou won?
And, is the sad act past and done?
Or, does its score, sunk wide and deep,
In some blind hell fierce-copied keep,
For Days, which, tho' their loath pace creep,
Oft span with strides each reckoned Far;
For such—for Broil's rude, loud, and noted star
To trace once more upon the Light
Yon awful cypher of the Night?

A CONCORDANCE.

The Dawn that 'woke this train of songs—each simple lay—
The lowering, then, and stirring hours,
Have 'cross those dim fields passed away,
Where History, gathering ghostly flowers,
Erst flush with life, now chill and gray,
Would bind them fair, their story tell,
The silent bloom Death loves so well;
Nay, haply show, how from their seed,
What large effects may leveling breed.

That Dawn has sped—trite Day knows all;
The roistering winds that ravening blew
Have ceased their brawl,
Mad sport that drew
War's winged hounds, and harpies flew,
Fanned foul the airs and thicked their breath,
Each heave at bouts with throttling Death.
While from the din there rose, I thought,
Brave strains of man no fear might toss:
If, echoing these, a few I wrought
Into rude posies, strove to cross
Their wildness with the rose of art,—
Ah! they were such slips as throws the heart,

Grafts tongue on thought; here grew to breathe
Those clear-felt notes not theirs to choose.
Which, humbly, while their love did wreath
A passionate chaplet for the Muse;
Did they, to match her large faith there,
To vie the crown she auguring bear,
Not weave as well, to extol her sooth,
A sister garland for the Truth?



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