

MAY 2016

SOUTHEAST PA CHESTERTON SOCIETY
READING PACKET

The Poetry
of *G.K. Chesterton?*



*The Spanish people think Cervantes
Equal to half a dozen Dantes;
An opinion resented most bitterly
By the people of Italy.*

FOR PRIVATE USE ONLY

FROM "WINE, WATER & SONG" (1915)

I. THE ENGLISHMAN.

ST. GEORGE he was for England,
And before he killed the dragon
He drank a pint of English ale
Out of an English flagon.
For though he fast right readily
In hair-shirt or in mail,
It isn't safe to give him cakes
Unless you give him ale.

St. George he was for England,
And right gallantly set free
The lady left for dragon's meat
And tied up to a tree;
But since he stood for England
And knew what England means,
Unless you give him bacon
You mustn't give him beans.

St. George he is for England,
And shall wear the shield he wore
When we go out in armour
With the battle-cross before.
But though he is jolly company
And very pleased to dine,
It isn't safe to give him nuts
Unless you give him wine.

II. WINE AND WATER.

OLD Noah he had an ostrich farm and fowls on the largest scale,
He ate his egg with a ladle in an egg-cup big as a pail,
And the soup he took was Elephant Soup and the fish he took was Whale,
But they all were small to the cellar he took when he set out to sail,
And Noah he often said to his wife when he sat down to dine,
"I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine."

The cataract of the cliff of heaven fell blinding off the brink
As if it would wash the stars away as suds go down a sink,
The seven heavens came roaring down for the throats of hell to drink,
And Noah he cocked his eye and said, "It looks like rain, I think,
The water has drowned the Matterhorn as deep as a Mendip mine,
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine."

But Noah he sinned, and we have sinned; on tipsy feet we trod,
Till a great big black teetotaller was sent to us for a rod,
And you can't get wine at a P.S.A., or chapel, or Eisteddfod,
For the Curse of Water has come again because of the wrath of God,
And water is on the Bishop's board and the Higher Thinker's shrine,
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine.

III. THE SONG AGAINST GROCERS.

GOD made the wicked Grocer
For a mystery and a sign,
That men might shun the awful shops
And go to inns to dine;
Where the bacon's on the rafter
And the wine is in the wood,
And God that made good laughter
Has seen that they are good.

The evil-hearted Grocer
Would call his mother "Ma'am,"
And bow at her and bob at her,
Her aged soul to damn,
And rub his horrid hands and ask
What article was next,
Though *mortis in articulo*
Should be her proper text.

His props are not his children,
But pert lads underpaid,
Who call out "Cash!" and bang about
To work his wicked trade;
He keeps a lady in a cage
Most cruelly all day,
And makes her count and calls her "Miss"
Until she fades away.

The righteous minds of innkeepers
Induce them now and then
To crack a bottle with a friend
Or treat unmoneyed men,
But who hath seen the Grocer
Treat housemaids to his teas
Or crack a bottle of fish-sauce
Or stand a man a cheese?

He sells us sands of Araby
As sugar for cash down;
He sweeps his shop and sells the dust
The purest salt in town,
He crams with cans of poisoned meat
Poor subjects of the King,
And when they die by thousands
Why, he laughs like anything.

The wicked Grocer groces
In spirits and in wine,
Not frankly and in fellowship
As men in inns do dine;
But packed with soap and sardines
And carried off by grooms,
For to be snatched by Duchesses
And drunk in dressing-rooms.

The hell-instructed Grocer
Has a temple made of tin,
And the ruin of good innkeepers
Is loudly urged therein;
But now the sands are running out
From sugar of a sort,
The Grocer trembles; for his time,
Just like his weight, is short.

IV. THE ROLLING ENGLISH ROAD.

BEFORE the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode,
The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.
A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,
And after him the parson ran, the sexton and the squire;
A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did tread
The night we went to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head.

I knew no harm of Bonaparte and plenty of the Squire,
And for to fight the Frenchman I did not much desire;
But I did bash their baggonets because they came arrayed
To straighten out the crooked road an English drunkard made,
Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands,
The night we went to Glastonbury by way of Goodwin Sands.

His sins they were forgiven him; or why do flowers run
Behind him; and the hedges all strengthening in the sun?
The wild thing went from left to right and knew not which was which,
But the wild rose was above him when they found him in the ditch.
God pardon us, nor harden us; we did not see so clear
The night we went to Bannockburn by way of Brighton Pier.

My friends, we will not go again or ape an ancient rage,
Or stretch the folly of our youth to be the shame of age,
But walk with clearer eyes and ears this path that wandereth,
And see undrugged in evening light the decent inn of death;
For there is good news yet to hear and fine things to be seen,
Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.

V. THE SONG OF THE STRANGE ASCETIC.

IF I had been a Heathen,
I'd have praised the purple vine,
My slaves should dig the vineyards,
And I would drink the wine;
But Higgins is a Heathen,
And his slaves grow lean and grey,
That he may drink some tepid milk
Exactly twice a day.

If I had been a Heathen,
I'd have crowned Neœra's curls,
And filled my life with love affairs,
My house with dancing girls;
But Higgins is a Heathen,
And to lecture rooms is forced,
Where his aunts, who are not married,
Demand to be divorced.

If I had been a Heathen,
I'd have sent my armies forth,
And dragged behind my chariots
The Chieftains of the North.
But Higgins is a Heathen,
And he drives the dreary quill,
To lend the poor that funny cash
That makes them poorer still.

If I had been a Heathen,
I'd have piled my pyre on high,
And in a great red whirlwind
Gone roaring to the sky;
But Higgins is a Heathen,
And a richer man than I;
And they put him in an oven,
Just as if he were a pie.

Now who that runs can read it,
The riddle that I write,
Of why this poor old sinner,
Should sin without delight—?
But I, I cannot read it
(Although I run and run),
Of them that do not have the faith,
And will not have the fun.

VI. THE SONG OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

FEAST on wine or fast on water,
And your honour shall stand sure,
God Almighty's son and daughter
He the valiant, she the pure;
If an angel out of heaven
Brings you other things to drink,
Thank him for his kind attentions,
Go and pour them down the sink.

Tea is like the East he grows in,
A great yellow Mandarin
With urbanity of manner
And unconsciousness of sin;
All the women, like a harem,
At his pig-tail troop along;
And, like all the East he grows in,
He is Poison when he's strong.

Tea, although an Oriental,
Is a gentleman at least;
Cocoa is a cad and coward,
Cocoa is a vulgar beast,
Cocoa is a dull, disloyal,
Lying, crawling cad and clown,
And may very well be grateful
To the fool that takes him down.

As for all the windy waters,
They were rained like tempests down
When good drink had been dishonoured
By the tipplers of the town;
When red wine had brought red ruin
And the death-dance of our times,
Heaven sent us Soda Water
As a torment for our crimes.

FROM "BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE" (1911)

I. DEDICATION.

Of great limbs gone to chaos,
A great face turned to night--
Why bend above a shapeless shroud
Seeking in such archaic cloud
Sight of strong lords and light?

Where seven sunken Englands
Lie buried one by one,
Why should one idle spade, I wonder,
Shake up the dust of thanes like thunder
To smoke and choke the sun?

In cloud of clay so cast to heaven
What shape shall man discern?
These lords may light the mystery
Of mastery or victory,
And these ride high in history,
But these shall not return.

Gored on the Norman gonfalon
The Golden Dragon died:
We shall not wake with ballad strings
The good time of the smaller things,
We shall not see the holy kings
Ride down by Severn side.

Stiff, strange, and quaintly coloured
As the broidery of Bayeux
The England of that dawn remains,
And this of Alfred and the Danes
Seems like the tales a whole tribe feigns
Too English to be true.

Of a good king on an island
That ruled once on a time;
And as he walked by an apple tree
There came green devils out of the sea
With sea-plants trailing heavily
And tracks of opal slime.

Yet Alfred is no fairy tale;
His days as our days ran,
He also looked forth for an hour
On peopled plains and skies that lower,
From those few windows in the tower
That is the head of a man.

But who shall look from Alfred's hood
Or breathe his breath alive?
His century like a small dark cloud
Drifts far; it is an eyeless crowd,
Where the tortured trumpets scream aloud
And the dense arrows drive.

Lady, by one light only
We look from Alfred's eyes,
We know he saw athwart the wreck
The sign that hangs about your neck,
Where One more than Melchizedek
Is dead and never dies.

Therefore I bring these rhymes to you
Who brought the cross to me,
Since on you flaming without flaw
I saw the sign that Guthrum saw
When he let break his ships of awe,
And laid peace on the sea.

Do you remember when we went
Under a dragon moon,
And 'mid volcanic tints of night
Walked where they fought the unknown fight
And saw black trees on the battle-height,
Black thorn on Ethandune?
And I thought, "I will go with you,
As man with God has gone,
And wander with a wandering star,
The wandering heart of things that are,
The fiery cross of love and war
That like yourself, goes on."

O go you onward; where you are
Shall honour and laughter be,
Past purpled forest and pearled foam,
God's winged pavilion free to roam,
Your face, that is a wandering home,
A flying home for me.

Ride through the silent earthquake lands,
Wide as a waste is wide,
Across these days like deserts, when
Pride and a little scratching pen
Have dried and split the hearts of men,
Heart of the heroes, ride.

Up through an empty house of stars,
Being what heart you are,
Up the inhuman steps of space
As on a staircase go in grace,
Carrying the firelight on your face
Beyond the loneliest star.

Take these; in memory of the hour
We strayed a space from home
And saw the smoke-hued hamlets, quaint
With Westland king and Westland saint,
And watched the western glory faint
Along the road to Frome.

II. FROM BOOK I: "THE VISION OF THE KING".

There was not English armour left,
Nor any English thing,
When Alfred came to Athelney
To be an English king.

For earthquake swallowing earthquake
Uprent the Wessex tree;
The whirlpool of the pagan sway
Had swirled his sires as sticks away
When a flood smites the sea.

And the great kings of Wessex
Wearied and sank in gore,
And even their ghosts in that great stress
Grew greyer and greyer, less and less,
With the lords that died in Lyonesse
And the king that comes no more.

And the God of the Golden Dragon
Was dumb upon his throne,
And the lord of the Golden Dragon
Ran in the woods alone.

And if ever he climbed the crest of luck
And set the flag before,
Returning as a wheel returns,
Came ruin and the rain that burns,
And all began once more.

And naught was left King Alfred
But shameful tears of rage,
In the island in the river
In the end of all his age.

In the island in the river
He was broken to his knee:
And he read, writ with an iron pen,
That God had wearied of Wessex men
And given their country, field and fen,
To the devils of the sea.

And he saw in a little picture,
Tiny and far away,
His mother sitting in Egbert's hall,
And a book she showed him, very small,
Where a sapphire Mary sat in stall
With a golden Christ at play.

It was wrought in the monk's slow manner,
From silver and sanguine shell,
Where the scenes are little and terrible,
Keyholes of heaven and hell.

In the river island of Athelney,
With the river running past,
In colours of such simple creed
All things sprang at him, sun and weed,
Till the grass grew to be grass indeed
And the tree was a tree at last.

Fearfully plain the flowers grew,
Like the child's book to read,
Or like a friend's face seen in a glass;
He looked; and there Our Lady was,
She stood and stroked the tall live grass
As a man strokes his steed.

Her face was like an open word
When brave men speak and choose,
The very colours of her coat
Were better than good news.

She spoke not, nor turned not,
Nor any sign she cast,
Only she stood up straight and free,
Between the flowers in Athelney,
And the river running past.

One dim ancestral jewel hung
On his ruined armour grey,
He rent and cast it at her feet:
Where, after centuries, with slow feet,
Men came from hall and school and street
And found it where it lay.

"Mother of God," the wanderer said,
"I am but a common king,
Nor will I ask what saints may ask,
To see a secret thing.

"The gates of heaven are fearful gates
Worse than the gates of hell;
Not I would break the splendours barred
Or seek to know the thing they guard,
Which is too good to tell.

"But for this earth most pitiful,
This little land I know,
If that which is for ever is,
Or if our hearts shall break with bliss,
Seeing the stranger go?

"When our last bow is broken, Queen,
And our last javelin cast,
Under some sad, green evening sky,
Holding a ruined cross on high,
Under warm westland grass to lie,
Shall we come home at last?"

And a voice came human but high up,
Like a cottage climbed among
The clouds; or a serf of hut and croft
That sits by his hovel fire as oft,
But hears on his old bare roof aloft
A belfry burst in song.

"The gates of heaven are lightly locked,
We do not guard our gain,
The heaviest hind may easily
Come silently and suddenly
Upon me in a lane.

"And any little maid that walks
In good thoughts apart,
May break the guard of the Three Kings
And see the dear and dreadful things
I hid within my heart.

"The meanest man in grey fields gone
Behind the set of sun,
Heareth between star and other star,
Through the door of the darkness fallen ajar,
The council, eldest of things that are,
The talk of the Three in One.

"The gates of heaven are lightly locked,
We do not guard our gold,
Men may uproot where worlds begin,
Or read the name of the nameless sin;
But if he fail or if he win
To no good man is told.

"The men of the East may spell the stars,
And times and triumphs mark,
But the men signed of the cross of Christ
Go gaily in the dark.

"The men of the East may search the scrolls
For sure fates and fame,
But the men that drink the blood of God
Go singing to their shame.

"I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.

"The wise men know what wicked things
Are written on the sky,
They trim sad lamps, they touch sad strings,
Hearing the heavy purple wings,
Where the forgotten seraph kings
Still plot how God shall die.

"Night shall be thrice night over you,
And heaven an iron cope.
Do you have joy without a cause,
Yea, faith without a hope?"

"The wise men know all evil things
Under the twisted trees,
Where the perverse in pleasure pine
And men are weary of green wine
And sick of crimson seas.

Even as she spoke she was not,
Nor any word said he,
He only heard, still as he stood
Under the old night's nodding hood,
The sea-folk breaking down the wood
Like a high tide from sea.

"But you and all the kind of Christ
Are ignorant and brave,
And you have wars you hardly win
And souls you hardly save.

He only heard the heathen men,
Whose eyes are blue and bleak,
Singing about some cruel thing
Done by a great and smiling king
In daylight on a deck.

He only heard the heathen men,
Whose eyes are blue and blind,
Singing what shameful things are done
Between the sunlit sea and the sun
When the land is left behind.

III. FROM BOOK VII: "ETHANDUNE: THE LAST CHARGE".

Then bursting all and blasting
Came Christendom like death,
Kicked of such catapults of will,
The staves shiver, the barrels spill,
The waggons waver and crash and kill
The waggoners beneath.

Barriers go backwards, banners rend,
Great shields groan like a gong--
Horses like horns of nightmare
Neigh horribly and long.

Horses ramp high and rock and boil
And break their golden reins,
And slide on carnage clamorously,
Down where the bitter blood doth lie,
Where Ogier went on foot to die,
In the old way of the Danes.

"The high tide!" King Alfred cried.
"The high tide and the turn!
As a tide turns on the tall grey seas,
See how they waver in the trees,
How stray their spears,
 how knock their knees,
How wild their watchfires burn!

"The Mother of God goes over them,
Walking on wind and flame,
And the storm-cloud drifts
 from city and dale,
And the White Horse stamps in
 the White Horse Vale,
And we all shall yet drink Christian ale
In the village of our name.

"The Mother of God goes over them,
On dreadful cherubs borne;
And the psalm is roaring above the rune,
And the Cross goes over the sun and moon,
Endeth the battle of Ethandune
With the blowing of a horn."

For back indeed disorderly
The Danes went clamouring,
Too worn to take anew the tale,
Or dazed with insolence and ale,
Or stunned of heaven, or stricken pale
Before the face of the King.

For dire was Alfred in his hour
The pale scribe witnesseth,
More mighty in defeat was he
Than all men else in victory,
And behind, his men came murderously,
Dry-throated, drinking death.

And Edgar of the Golden Ship
He slew with his own hand,
Took Ludwig from his lady's bower,
And smote down Harmar in his hour,
And vain and lonely stood the tower--
The tower in Guelderland.

And Torr out of his tiny boat,
Whose eyes beheld the Nile,
Wulf with his war-cry on his lips,
And Harco born in the eclipse,
Who blocked the Seine with battleships
Round Paris on the Isle.

And Hacon of the Harvest-Song,
And Dirck from the Elbe he slew,
And Cnut that melted Durham bell
And Fulk and fiery Oscar fell,
And Goderic and Sigael,
And Uriel of the Yew.

And highest sang the slaughter,
And fastest fell the slain,
When from the wood-road's
 blackening throat
A crowning and crashing wonder smote
The rear-guard of the Dane.

For the dregs of Colan's company--
Lost down the other road--
Had gathered and grown and heard the din,
And with wild yells came pouring in,
Naked as their old British kin,
And bright with blood for woad.

And bare and bloody and aloft
They bore before their band
The body of the mighty lord,
Colan of Caerleon and its horde,
That bore King Alfred's battle-sword
Broken in his left hand.

And a strange music went with him,
Loud and yet strangely far;
The wild pipes of the western land,
Too keen for the ear to understand,
Sang high and deathly on each hand
When the dead man went to war.

Blocked between ghost and buccaneer,
Brave men have dropped and died;
And the wild sea-lords well might quail
As the ghastly war-pipes of the Gael
Called to the horns of White Horse Vale,
And all the horns replied.

And Hildred the poor hedger
Cut down four captains dead,
And Halmar laid three others low,
And the great earls wavered to and fro
For the living and the dead.

And Gorlias grasped the great flag,
The Raven of Odin, torn;
And the eyes of Guthrum altered,
For the first time since morn.

As a turn of the wheel of tempest
Tilts up the whole sky tall,
And cliffs of wan cloud luminous
Lean out like great walls over us,
As if the heavens might fall.

As such a tall and tilted sky
Sends certain snow or light,
So did the eyes of Guthrum change,
And the turn was more
 certain and more strange
Than a thousand men in flight.

For not till the floor of the skies is split,
And hell-fire shines through the sea,
Or the stars look up through
 the rent earth's knees,
Cometh such rending of certainties,
As when one wise man truly sees
What is more wise than he.

He set his horse in the battle-breech
Even Guthrum of the Dane,
And as ever had fallen fell his brand,
A falling tower o'er many a land,
But Gurth the fowler laid one hand
Upon this bridle rein.

King Guthrum was a great lord,
And higher than his gods--
He put the popes to laughter,
He chid the saints with rods,

He took this hollow world of ours
For a cup to hold his wine;
In the parting of the woodways
There came to him a sign.

In Wessex in the forest,
In the breaking of the spears,
We set a sign on Guthrum
To blaze a thousand years.

Where the high saddles jostle
And the horse-tails toss,
There rose to the birds flying
A roar of dead and dying;
In deafness and strong crying
We signed him with the cross.

Far out to the winding river
The blood ran down for days,
When we put the cross on Guthrum
In the parting of the ways.



THE ARENA (1930)

CAUSA NOSTRAE LAETITIAE

(DEDICATED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, INDIANA)

There uprose a golden giant
 On the gilded house of Nero
Even his far-flung flaming shadow and his image swollen large
 Looking down on the dry whirlpool
 Of the round Arena spinning
As a chariot-wheel goes spinning; and the chariots at the charge.

 And the molten monstrous visage
 Saw the pageants, saw the torments,
Down the golden dust undazzled saw the gladiators go,
 Heard the cry in the closed desert
 Te salutant morituri,
As the slaves of doom went stumbling, shuddering, to the shades below.

 “Lord of Life, of lyres and laughter,
 Those about to die salute thee,
At thy godlike fancy feeding men with bread and beasts with men,
 But for us the Fates point deathward
 In a thousand thumbs thrust downward,
And the Dog of Hell is roaring through the lions in their den.”

 I have seen, where a strange country
 Opened its secret plains about me,
One great golden dome stand lonely with its golden image, one
 Seen afar, in strange fulfillment,
 Through the sunlit Indian summer
That Apocalyptic portent that has clothed her with the Sun.

She too looks on the Arena
 Sees the gladiators grapple,
She whose names are Seven Sorrows and the Cause of All Our Joy,
 Sees the pit that stank with slaughter
 Scoured to make the courts of morning
For the cheers of jesting kindred and the scampering of a boy.

 “Queen of Death and deadly weeping
 Those about to live salute thee,
Youth untroubled; youth untutored; hateless war and harmless mirth
 And the New Lord's larger largesse
 Holier bread and happier circus,
Since the Queen of Sevenfold Sorrow has brought joy upon the earth.”

 Burns above the broad arena
 Where the whirling centuries circle,
Burns the Sun-clothed on the summit, golden-sheeted, golden shod,
 Like a sun-burst on the mountains,
 Like the flames upon the forest
Of the sunbeams of the sword-blades of the Gladiators of God.

 And I saw them shock the whirlwind
 Of the World of dust and dazzle:
And thrice they stamped, a thunderclap; and thrice the sand-wheel swirled;
 And thrice they cried like thunder
 On Our Lady of the Victories,
The Mother of the Master of the Masters of the World.

 “Queen of Death and Life undying
 Those about to live salute thee;
Not the crawlers with the cattle; looking deathward with the swine,
 But the shout upon the mountains
 Of the men that live for ever
Who are free of all things living but a Child; and He was thine.”

FROM "THE WILD KNIGHT" (1900)

I. BY THE BABE UNBORN.

If trees were tall and grasses short,
As in some crazy tale,
If here and there a sea were blue
Beyond the breaking pale,

If a fixed fire hung in the air
To warm me one day through,
If deep green hair grew on great hills,
I know what I should do.

In dark I lie: dreaming that there
Are great eyes cold or kind,
And twisted streets and silent doors,
And living men behind.

Let storm-clouds come: better an hour,
And leave to weep and fight,
Than all the ages I have ruled
The empires of the night.

I think that if they gave me leave
Within that world to stand,
I would be good through all the day
I spent in fairyland.

They should not hear a word from me
Of selfishness or scorn,
If only I could find the door,
If only I were born.

II. THE DONKEY.

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born;

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

FROM "THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS" (1926)

I. A LITTLE LITANY.

When God turned back eternity and was young,
Ancient of Days, grown little for your mirth
(As under the low arch the land is bright)
Peered through you, gate of heaven--and saw the earth.

Or shutting out his shining skies awhile
Built you about him for a house of gold
To see in pictured walls his storied world
Return upon him as a tale is told.

Or found his mirror there; the only glass
That would not break with that unbearable light
Till in a corner of the high dark house
God looked on God, as ghosts meet in the night.

Star of his morning; that unfallen star
In that strange starry overturn of space
When earth and sky changed places for an hour
And heaven looked upwards in a human face.

Or young on your strong knees and lifted up
Wisdom cried out, whose voice is in the street,
And more than twilight of twiformed cherubim
Made of his throne indeed a mercy-seat.

Or risen from play at your pale raiment's hem
God, grown adventurous from all time's repose,
Or your tall body climbed the ivory tower
And kissed upon your mouth the mystic rose.

II. THE TOWERS OF TIME.

Under what withering leprous light
The very grass as hair is grey,
Grass in the cracks of the paven courts
Of gods we graved but yesterday.
Senate, republic, empire, all
We leaned our backs on like a wall
And blessed as stron as strong and blamed as stolid--
Can it be these that waver and fall?
 And what is this like a ghost returning,
 A dream grown strong in the strong daylight?
 The all-forsaken, the unforgotten,
 The ever-behind and out of sight.
 We turned our backs and our blind flesh felt it
 Growing and growing, a tower in height.

Ah, not alone the evil splendour
And not the insolent arms alone
Break with the ramrod, stiff and brittle,
The sceptre of the nordic throne;
But things of manlier renown
Reel in the wreck of throne and crown,
With tyrannous tyranny, tyrannous loyalty
Tyrannous liberty, all gone down.

(There is never a crack in the ivory tower
Or a hinge to groan in the house of gold
Or a leaf of the rose in the wind to wither
And she grows young as the world grows old.
A Woman clothed with the sun returning
to clothe the sun when the sun is cold.)

Ah, who had guessed that in a moment
Great Liberty that loosed the tribes,
the Republic of the young men's battles
Grew stale and stank of old men's bribes;
And where we watched her smile in power
A statue like a starry tower
the stone face sneers as in a nightmare
Down on a world that worms devour.
(Archaic incredible dead dawns breaking
Deep in the deserts and waste and wealds,
Where the dead cry aloud on Our Lady of Victories,
Queen of the Eagles, aloft on the shields,
And the sun is gone up on the Thundering Legion
On the roads of Rome to the Battlefields.)

Ah, who had known who had not seen
How soft and sudden on the fame
Of my most noble English ships
The sunset light of Carthage came
And the thing I never had dreamed could be
In the house of my fathers came to me
Through the sea-wall cloven, the cloud and dark,
A voice divided, a doubtful sea.
(The light is bright on the Tower of David,
The evening glows with the morning star
In the skies turned back and the days returning
She walks so near who had wandered far
And in the heart of the swords, the seven times wounded,
Was never wearied as our hearts are.)

How swift as with a fall of snow
New things grow hoary with the light.
We watch the wrinkles crawl like snakes
On the new image in our sight.
The lines that sprang up taut and bold
Sag like primordial monsters old,
Sink in the bas-reliefs of fossil
And the slow earth swallows them, fold on fold,
But light are the feet on the hills of the morning
Of the lambs that leap up to the Bride of the Sun,
And swift are the birds as the butterflies flashing

And sudden as laughter the rivulets run
And sudden for ever as summer lightning
the light is bright on the world begun.

Thou wilt not break as we have broken
The towers we reared to rival Thee.
More true to England than the English
More just to freedom than the free.
O trumpet of the intolerant truth
Thou art more full of grace and ruth
For the hopes of th world than the world that made them,
The world that murdered the loves of our youth.
 Thou art more kind to our dreams, Our Mother,
 Than the wise that wove us the dreams for shade.
 God if more good to the gods that mocked Him
 Than men are good to the gods they made.
 Tenderer with toys than a boy grown brutal,
 Breaking the puppets with which he played.

What are the flowers the garden guards not
And how but here should dreams return?
And how on hearths made cold with ruin
the wide wind-scattered ashes burn--
What is the home of the heart set free,
And where is the nesting of liberty,
And where from the world shall the world take shelter
And man be matter, and not with Thee?
 Wisdom is set in her throne of thunder,
 The Mirror of Justice blinds the day--
 Where are the towers that are not of the City,
 Trophies and trumpetings, where are they?
 Where over the maze of the world returning
 The bye-ways bend to the King's highway.