

FRANCIS ADAMS

SONGS OF THE
ARMY OF THE
NIGHT

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Francis William Lauderdale Adams

Songs of the Army of the Night

TO EDITH

“My sweet, my child, through all this night
Of dark and wind and rain,
Where thunder crashes, and the light
Sears the bewildered brain,

“It is your face, your lips, your eyes
I see rise up; I hear
Your voice that sobs and calls and cries,
Or shrills and mocks at fear.

“O this that’s mine is yours as well,
For side by side our feet
Trod through these bitter brakes of hell.
Take it, my child, my sweet!”

PREFACE

A few words of preface seem necessary in sending out this little book. It is to be looked on as the product of the life of a social worker in England, in his travels, and in Australia. The key-note of the First Part – “England” – is desperation, or, if any hope, then “desperate hope.” A friend once reported to me a saying of Matthew Arnold’s, that he did not believe in any man of intelligence taking a desperate view of the social problem in England. I am afraid that saying relegates me to the ranks of the fools, but I am content to remain there. I believe that never since 1381, which is the date of the Peasants’ Revolt, has England presented such a spectacle of the happiness of the tens, of the misery of the millions. It is not by any means the artisan, or the general or the agricultural labourer, who is the only sufferer. All society groans under the slavery of stupendous toil and a pittance wage. The negro slavery of the Southern States of America was better than the white slavery of to-day all over the earth, but more particularly in Europe and in America. Capitalism is built on the dreadful wrong of recompensing Labour, not according to the worth of its work, but according to the worth of its members in the market of unlimited competition, and that soon comes to mean the payment of what will hold body and soul together when in the enjoyment of health and strength. Landlordism is built on the dreadful wrong of sharing with Capitalism the plunder of Labour. Why are rents high in Australia? Because here Labour is scarcer, its wages correspondingly higher, and therefore Landlordism steps in to filch from Labour its hard-won comforts, and once more reduce it to the necessities of existence. The American slavers had to spend more in housing and keeping any fixed number of their slaves in serviceable condition than Capitalism spends in wages. Capitalism and Landlordism, like good Christian Institutions, leave the living to keep alive their living, and the dead to bury their dead. This cannot continue for ever. At least all the intelligent portion of the community will grow to see the injustice and attempt to abolish it. But when will the great mass of unintelligent people who have won a large enough share of the plunder of their fellows to minister to their own comforts – when will these, also, awake and see? England will realize the desperation of her social problem when its desperation is shown her by fire and blood – then, and not till then! What shall teach her her sins to herself is what is even now teaching her her sins to Ireland.

I make no apology for several poems in the First Part which are fierce, which are even blood-thirsty. As I felt I wrote, and I will not lessen the truth of what inspired those feelings by eliminating or suppressing the record of them. Rather, let me ask you, whoever you be, to imagine what the cause was, from the effect in one who was (unhappily) born and bred into the dominant class, and whose chief care and joy in life was in the pursuit of a culture which draws back instinctively from the violent and the terrible. I will go further. I will arraign my country and my day, because their iniquity would not let me follow out the laws of my nature, which were for luminosity and quiet, for the wide and genial view, but made me “take arms against a sea of troubles,” hoping only too often “by opposing to end them.” No, we make no apology for bloody sweat and for tears of fire wrung out of us in the Gethsemane and on the Calvary of our country: we make no apology to those whom we have the right to curse.

In the Second Part – “Here and There,” the record of a short trip in the East – the sight of the sin which England has committed not only against herself, against Ireland, against Scotland, but against India, against China, against the sweetest and gentlest people in the earth, the Japanese – the sight of this, and of the signs of England’s doom, the punishment for the abuse of the greatest trust any modern nation has had given to her, inspires a hatred which only that punishment can appease. In the Third Part – “Australia” – there is neither ferocity nor blood-thirstiness. Its key-note is hope, hope that dreads but does not despair.

I may add that in this edition I have sacrificed all merely personal aspects of the poems to attempt to give the book a more complete totality. We know well enough that allowance will rarely

be made for any of these things: that our plea for comprehension will too often be an idle one. None the less we make it, for the sake of those who are willing to attempt to realize the social problem and to seek within themselves what they can do for its solution. We have no care whatever as to what view they take of it. Let them be with us or against us, it matters not, if only they will make this effort, if only they will ponder it in their hearts. Ninety-nine out of a hundred of us are concerned in this problem. We are all of us true sons of Labour who have suffered the robbery of the wages of Competition. One word more. The Australian is apt to deprecate the socialism of the European or the American. The darker aspects of the European or American civilization are not striking here. They are here; they are more than incipient, very much more; but they are not striking. Let such an one pause. "We speak of that which we do know," and, for the rest, not only do we bid "him that has ears, to hear," but "him that has eyes, to see."

Brothers all over the earth, brothers and sisters, you of that silent company whose speech is only in the unknown deeds of love, the unknown devotions, the unknown heroisms, it is to you we speak! Our heart is against your heart; you can feel it beat. Soul speaks to soul through lips whose utterance is a need. In your room alone, in your lonely walks, in the still hours of day and night, we will be with you. We will speak with you, we will plead with you, for these piteous ones. In the evening trees you shall hear the sound of our weeping. Our sobs shall shake in the wind of wintry nights. We are the spirit of those piteous ones, the wronged, the oppressed, the robbed, the murdered, and we bid you open your warm heart, your light-lit soul to us! We will thrill you with the clarion of hate and defiance and despair in the tempest of land and sea. You shall listen to us there also. We will touch your eyes and lips with fire. No, we will never let you go, till you are ours and theirs! And you too, O sufferers, you too shall stay with us, and shall have comfort. Look, we have suffered, we have agonized, we have longed to hasten the hour of rest. But beyond the darkness there is light, beyond the turbulence peace. "Courage, and be true to one another." "*We bid you hope!*"

THIS BOOK

I give this Book

to you, —

Man or woman, girl or boy, labourer, mechanic, clerk, house-servant, whoever you may be, whose wages are not the worth of your work, —no, nor a fraction of it – whose wages are the minimum which you and those like you, pressed by the desire for life in the dreadful struggle of “Competition,” will consent to take from your Employers who, thanks to it, are able thus to rob you: —

I give it to you,

in the hope that you may see how you are being robbed,— how Capital that is won by paying you your competition wages is plunder,— how Rent that is won by the increased value of land that is owing to the industry of us all, is plunder,— how the Capitalist and Landowner who over-ride you, how the Master or Mistress who work you from morning to night, who domineer over you as servants and despise you (or what is worse, pity you) as beggars, are the men and women whose sole title to this is, that they have the audacity and skill to plunder you, and you the simplicity and folly not to see it and to submit to it: —

I give this Book to you,

in the hope that you may at last realize this, and in your own fashion never cease the effort to make your fellow-sufferers realize it: —

I give it to you,

in the hope that you may formally enrol yourself in the ranks of the Army of the Night, and that you will offer up the best that has been granted you of heart and soul and mind towards the working out of that better time when, in victorious peace, we silence our drums and trumpets, furl our banners, drag our cannons to their place of rest, and solemnly disarming ourselves, become citizens once more or, if soldiers, then soldiers of the Army of the Day!

SONGS OF THE ARMY OF THE NIGHT

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.. blessed are the mourners.. *Ye are the salt of the earth.*” —

The Good tidings as given by Matthew.

PROEM

“OUTSIDE LONDON.”

In the black night, along the mud-deep roads,
Amid the threatening boughs and ghastly streams,
Hark! sounds that gird the darkneses like goads,
Murmurs and rumours and reverberant dreams,
Tramplings, breaths, movements, and a little light. —

The marching of the Army of the Night!

The stricken men, the mad brute-beasts are keeping
No more their places in the ditches or holes,
But rise and join us, and the women, weeping
Beside the roadways, rise like demon-souls.
Fill up the ranks! What shimmers there so bright?

The bayonets of the Army of the Night!

Fill up the ranks! We march in steadfast column,
In wavering lines yet forming more and more;
Men, women, children, sombre, silent, solemn,
Rank follows rank like billows to the shore.
Dawnwards we tramp, towards the day and light.
On, on and up, the Army of the Night!

I “ENGLAND.”

IN THE CAMP

This is a leader’s tent. “Who gathers here?”
Enter and see and listen. On the ground
Men sit or stand, enter or disappear,
Dark faces and deep voices all around.

One answers you. “You ask who gathers here?”
Companions! Generals we have none, nor chief.
What need is there? The plan is all so clear —
The future’s hope, the present’s grim relief!

“Food for us all, and clothes, and roofs come first.
The means to gain them? This, our leaguered band!
The hatred of the robber rich accursed
Keeps foes together, makes fools understand.

“Beyond the present’s faith, the future’s hope
Points to the dawning hour when all shall be
But one. The man condemned shall fit the rope

Around the hangman’s neck, and both be free!
“The sun then rises on a happier land
Where Wealth and Labour sound but as one word.
We drill, we train, we arm our leaguered band.

What is there more to tell you have not heard?”
Resolute, stern, menacing. On the ground
They sit or stand, enter or disappear,
Dark faces and deep voices all around.

“AXIOM.”

Let him who toils, enjoy
Fruit of his toiling.
Let him whom sweats annoy,
No more be spoiling.

For we would have it be
That, weak or stronger,

Not he who works, but he
Who works *not*, hunger!

DRILL

When day's hard task's done,
Eve's scant meal partaken,
Out we steal each one,
Weariless, unshaken.

In small reeking squares,
Garbaged plots, we gather,
Little knots and pairs,
Brother, sister, father.

Then the word is given.
In their silent places
Under lowering heaven,
Range our stern-set faces.

Now we march and wheel
In our clumsy line,
Shouldering sticks for steel,
Thoughts like bitter brine!

Drill, drill, drill, and drill!
It is only thus
Conquer yet we will
Those who've conquered us.

Patience, sisters, mothers!
We must not forget
Dear dead fathers, brothers;
They must teach us yet.

In that hour we see,
The hour of our desire,
What shall their slayers be?
As the stubble to the fire!

EVENING HYMN IN THE HOVELS

“We sow the fertile seed and then we reap it;
We thresh the golden grain; we knead the bread.
Others that eat are glad. In store they keep it,

While we hunger outside with hearts like lead.
Hallelujah!

“We hew the stone and saw it, rear the city.
Others inhabit there in pleasant ease.
We have no thing to ask of them save pity,
No answer they to give but what they please.
Hallelujah!”

“Is it for ever, fathers, say, and mothers,
That we must toil and never know the light?
Is it for ever, sisters, say, and brothers,
That they must grind us dead here in the night?
Hallelujah!”

Have strength and pleasure of the food we make?
O we who hew, build, deck, shall we not also
The happiness that we have given partake?
Hallelujah!”

IN THE STREET

LORD –

You have done well, we say it. You are dead,
And, of the man that with the right hand takes
Less than the left hand gives, let it be said
He has done something for our wretched sakes.
For those to whom you gave their daily bread
Rancid with God-loathed “charity,” their drink
Putrid with man-loathed “sin,” we bow our head
Grateful, as the great hearse goes by, and think.
Yes, you have fed the flesh and starved the soul
Of thousands of us; you have taught too well
The rich are little gods beyond control,
Save of your big God of the heaven and hell.
We thank you. This was pretty once, and right.
Now it wears rather thin. My lord, good night!

“LIBERTY!”

“Liberty!” Is that the cry, then?
We have heard it oft of yore.

Once it had, we think, a meaning;
Let us hear it now no more.

We have read what history tells us
Of its heroes, martyrs too.
Doubtless they were very splendid,
But they're not for me and you.

There were Greeks who fought and perished,
Won from Persians deathless graves.
Had *we* lived then, we're aware that
We'd have been those same Greeks' slaves!

Then a Roman came who loved us;
Cæsar gave men tongues and swords.
Crying "Liberty," they fought him,
Cato and his cut-throat lords.

When he'd give a broader franchise,
Lift the mangled nations bowed,
Crying "Liberty!" they killed him,
Brutus and his pandar crowd.

We have read what history tells us,
O the truthful memory clings!
Tacitus, the chartered liar,
Gloating over poisoned kings!

"Liberty!" The stale cry echoes
Past snug homesteads, tinsel thrones,
Over smoking fields and hovels,
Murdered peasants' bleaching bones.

That's the cry that mocked us madly,
Toiling in our living graves,
When hell-mines sent up the chorus:
"Britons never shall be slaves!"

"Liberty!" We care not for it!
What we care for's food, clothes, homes,
For our dear ones toiling, waiting
For the time that never comes!

IN THE EDGWARE ROAD

(To LORD L-.)

Will you not buy? She asks you, my lord, you
Who know the points desirable in such.
She does not say that she is perfect. True,
She's not too pleasant to the sight or touch.
But then – neither are you!

Her cheeks are rather fallen in; a mist
Glazes her eyes, for all their hungry glare.
Her lips do not breathe balmy when they're kissed.
And yet she's not more loathsome than, I swear,
Your grandmother at whist.

My lord, she will admit, and need not frame
Excuses for herself, that she's not chaste.
First a young lover had her; then she came
From one man's to another's arms, with haste.
Your mother did the same.

Moreover, since she's married, once or twice
She's sold herself for certain things at night,
To sell one's body for the highest price
Of social ease and power, all girls think right.
Your sister did it thrice.

What, you'll not buy? You'll curse at her instead? —
Her children are alone, at home, quite near.
These winter streets, so gay at nights, 'tis said,
Have 'ticed the wanton out. *She could not hear
Her children cry for bread!*

TO THE GIRLS OF THE UNIONS

Girls, we love you, and love
Asks you to give again
That which draws it above,
Beautiful, without stain.

Give us weariless faith
In our Cause pure, passionate,

Dearer than life and death,
Dear as the love that's it!

Give to the man who turns
Traitorous hands or forlorn
Back from the plough that burns,
Give him pitiless scorn!

Let him know that no wife
Would bear him a fearless child
To hate and loathe the life
Of a leprous father defiled.

*Girls, we love you, and love
Asks you to give again
That which draws it above,
Beautiful, without stain!*

HAGAR

She went along the road,
Her baby in her arms.
The night and its alarms
Made deadlier her load.

Her shrunken breasts were dry;
She felt the hunger bite.
She lay down in the night,
She and the child, to die.

But it would wail, and wail,
And wail. She crept away.
She had no word to say,
Yet still she heard the wail.

She took a jagged stone;
She wished it to be dead.
She beat it on the head;
It only gave one moan.

She has no word to say;
She sits there in the night.
The east sky glints with light,
And it is Christmas Day!

“WHY!”

*“Why is it we toil so?
Where go all the gains?
What do we produce for it,
All our pangs and pains?”*

Why it is we toil so,
Is it because, like sheep,
Since our fathers sought the shears,
We the same course keep.

Where go all the gains? Well,
It must be confessed,
First the landlords take the rent,
And the masters take the rest.

What do we produce for it?
Gentlemen! – and then
Imitation snobs who’d be
Like the gentlemen!

*“What, is it for such as these
That we suffer thus?
Fuddle-brained and vicious fools,
Vermin venomous?”*

*“What, is that why on the top
Creeps that Royal Louse,
The prince of pheasants and cigars,
Of ballet-girls and grouse?”*

Yes, that’s why, my Christian friends,
They slave and slaughter us.
England is made a dunghill that
Some bugs may breed and buzz.

A VISITOR IN THE CAMP

To Mary Robinson. ¹

*“What, are you lost, my pretty little lady?
This is no place for such sweet things as you.
Our bodies, rank with sweat, will make you sicken,
And, you’ll observe, our lives are rank lives too.”*

*“Oh no, I am not lost! Oh no, I’ve come here
(And I have brought my lute, see, in my hand),
To see you, and to sing of all you suffer
To the great world, and make it understand!”*

*“Well, say! If one of those who’d robbed you thousands,
Dropped you a sixpence in the gutter where
You lay and rotted, would you call her angel,
For all her charming smile and dainty air?”*

*“Oh no, I come not thus! Oh no, I’ve come here
With heart indignant, pity like a flame,
To try and help you!” – “Pretty little lady,
It will be best you go back whence you came.”*

*“‘Enthusiasms’ we have such little time for!
In our rude camp we drill the whole day long.
When we return from out the serried battle,
Come, and we’ll listen to your pretty song!”*

“LORD LEITRIM.”

My Lord, at last you have it! Now we know
Truth’s not a phrase, justice an idle show.
Your life ran red with murder, green with lust.
Blood has washed blood clean, and, in the final dust
Your carrion will be purified. Yet, see,
Though your body perish, for your soul shall be
An immortality of infamy!

¹ In *The New Arcadia* Miss Robinson devoted to the Cause of Labour a dilettante little book that had not even one note of the true, the sweet and lovely poetry of her deeper impulses. There is the amateur, and the female amateur, no less in perception and emotion than in the technical aspects of our art, and we want no more flimsy “sympathetic” rigmaroles, like “The Cry of the Children,” or “A Song for the Ragged Schools of London,” from those who, in the portraiture of the divine simple woman’s soul within them, can give us poetry complete, genuine, everlasting.

“ANARCHISM.”

'Tis not when I am here,
In these homeless homes,
Where sin and shame and disease
And foul death comes;

'Tis not when heart and brain
Would be still and forget
Men and women and children
Dragged down to the pit:

But when I hear them declaiming
Of “liberty,” “order,” and “law,”
The husk-hearted gentleman
And the mud-hearted bourgeois,

That a sombre hateful desire
Burns up slow in my breast
To wreck the great guilty temple,
And give us rest!

BELGRAVIA BY NIGHT

“Move On!”

“The foxes have holes,
And the birds of the air have nests,
But where shall the heads of the sons of men
Be laid, be laid?”

*“Where the cold corpse rests,
Where the sightless moles
Burrow and yet cannot make it afraid,
Rout but cannot wake it again,
There shall the heads of the sons of men
Be laid, laid!”*

JESUS

Where is poor Jesus gone?
He sits with Dives now,
And not even the crumbs are flung
To Lazarus below.

Where is poor Jesus gone?
Is he with Magdalen?
He doles her one by one
Her wages of shame!

Where is poor Jesus gone?
The good Samaritan,
What does he there alone?
He stabs the wounded man!

Where is poor Jesus gone,
The lamb they sacrificed?
They've made God of his carrion
And labelled it "Christ!"

PARALLELS FOR THE PIOUS

"He holds a pistol to my head,
Swearing that he will shoot me dead,
If he have not my purse instead,
The robber!"

*"He, with the lash of wealth and power,
Flogs out my heart and flings the dower,
The plundered pittance of his hour,
The robber!"*

"He shakes his serpent tongue that lies,
Wins trust for poisoned sophistries
And stabs me in the dark, and flies,
The assassin!"

*"He pits me in the dreadful fight
Against my fellow. Then he quite
Strips both his victims in the night,
The assassin!"*

"PRAYER."

This is what I pray

In this horrible day,
In this terrible night,
God will give me light.
Such as I have had,
That I go not mad.

This is what I seek,
God will keep me meek
Till mine eyes behold,
Till my lips have told
All this hellish crime. —
Then it's sleeping time!

TO THE CHRISTIANS

Take, then, your paltry Christ,
Your gentleman God.
We want the carpenter's son,
With his saw and hod.

We want the man who loved
The poor and oppressed,
Who hated the rich man and king
And the scribe and the priest.

We want the Galilean
Who knew cross and rod.
It's your "good taste" that prefers
A bastard God!

“DEFEAT?”

Who is it speaks of defeat? —
I tell you a Cause like ours
Is greater than defeat can know;
It is the power of powers!

As surely as the earth rolls round,
As surely as the glorious sun
Brings the great world sea-wave,
Must our Cause be won!

What is defeat to us? —
Learn what a skirmish tells,
While the great Army marches on

To storm earth's hells!

TO JOHN RUSKIN

(After reading his "Modern Painters.")

Yes, you do well to mock us, you
Who knew our bitter woe —
To jeer the false, deny the true
In us blind struggling low,

While, on your pleasant place aloft
With flowers and clouds and streams,
At our black sweat and toil you scoffed
That marred your idle dreams.

"Oh, freedom, what was that to us,"
(You'd shout down to us there),
"Except the freedom foul, vicious,
From all of good and fair?"

"Obedience, faith, humility,
To us were empty names." —
The like to you (might we reply)
Whose noisy life proclaims

Presumption, want of human love,
Impatience, filthy breath, ²
The snob in soul who looks above,
Trampling on what's beneath.

When did you strive, in nobler part,
With love and gentleness,
To help one soul, to win one heart
To joy and hope and peace?

Go to, vain prophet, without faith
In God who maketh new,
With hankerings for this putrid death,
This Flesh-feast of the Few,

This Social Structure of red mud,
This Edifice of slime,

² His attack on George Eliot in "Fiction, Fair and Foul," in the *Nineteenth Century*, for instance.

Whose bricks are bones, whose mortar's blood,
Whose pinnacle is Crime! —

Go to, for we who strain our power
For light and warmth and scope,
For wives', for children's happier hour,
Can teach you faith and hope.

Hark to the shout of those who cleared
The Missionary Ridge!
Look on those dead who never feared
The battle's bloody bridge!

Watch the stern swarm at that last breach
March up that came not thence —
And learn Democracy can teach
Divine obedience.³

Pass through that South at last brought low
Where loyal freemen live,
And learn Democracy knows how
To utterly forgive.

Come then, and take this free-given bread
Of us who've scarce enough;
Hush your proud lips, bow down your head
And worship human love!

TO THE EMPEROR WILLIAM

You are at least a man, of men a king.
You have a heart, and with that heart you love.
The race you come from is not gendered of
The filthy sty whose latest litter cling
Round England's flesh-pots, gorged and gluttoning.
No, but on flaming battle-fields, in courts
Of honour and of danger old resorts,
The name of Hohen-Zollern clear doth ring.
O Father William, you, not falsely weak,
Who never spared the rod to spoil the child,
Our mighty Germany, we only speak
To bless you with a blessing sweet and mild,
Ere that near heaven your weary footsteps seek

³ The attack on Missionary Ridge is an example of the brilliant initiative, as the holding of the Bloody Angle in the Wilderness is of the dauntless resolution, of the army of the Democracy of the United States, while the last attacks on Richmond were the final exploit of the conqueror of two combatants, of whom it is enough to say that they were worthy of one another.

Where love with liberty is reconciled.

SONG OF THE DISPOSSESSED

“to jesus.”

“Be with us by day, by night,
O lover, O friend;
Hold before us thy light
Unto the end!

“See, all these children of ours
Starved and ill-clad.
Speak to thy heart’s lily-flowers,
And make them glad!

“Our wives and daughters are here,
Knowing wrong and shame’s touch
Bid them be of good cheer
Who have lovèd much.

“And we, we are robbed and oppressed,
Even as thine were.
Tell us of comfort and rest,
Banish despair!

*“Be with us by day, by night,
O lover, O friend;
Hold before us thy light
Unto the end!”*

ART

Yes, let Art go, if it must be
That with it men must starve —
If Music, Painting, Poetry
Spring from the wasted hearth.

Pluck out the flower, however fair,
Whose beauty cannot bloom,
(However sweet it be, or rare)
Save from a noisome tomb.

These social manners, charm and ease,
Are hideous to who knows
The degradation, the disease
From which their beauty flows.

So, Poet, must thy singing be;
O Painter, so thy scene;
Musician, so thy melody,
While misery is queen.

*Nay, brothers, sing us battle-songs
With clear and ringing rhyme;
Nay, show the world its hateful wrongs,
And bring the better time!*

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT. ⁴

Thro' the mists of years,
Thro' the lies of men,
Your bloody sweat and tears,
Your desperate hopes and fears
Reach us once again.

Brothers, who long ago,
For life's bitter sake
Toiled and suffered so,
Robbery, insult, blow,
Rope and sword and stake:

Toiled and suffered, till
It burst, the brightening hope,
"Might and right" and "will and skill,"
That scorned, and does, and will,
Sword and stake and rope!

Wat and Jack and John,
Tyler, Straw, and Ball,
Souls that faltered not,
Hearts like white iron hot,
Still we hear your call!

Yes, your "bell is rung,"

⁴ Something like an adequate account of this great *révolution manquée*, which in England and 1381 went near to anticipating France and 1793, has at last found its place in the historian's pages, and Longland the poet, Ball the preacher, and Tyler the man of action, who first raised for us the democratic demand, can be seen somewhat as they were. This, and more, we owe to John Richard Green. An account of the Revolt will be found in section 4 of chapter 5 of his "Short History of the English People." The phrases in verses 3 and 5 were catchwords among the revoltors.

Yes, for “now is time!”
Come hither, every one,
Brave ghosts whose day’s not done,
Avengers of old rime, —

Come and lead the way,
Hushed, implacable,
Suffering no delay,
Forgetting not that day
Dreadful, hateful, fell,

When the liar king,
The liar gentlemen,
Wrought that foulest thing,
Robbing, murdering
Men who’d trusted them! ⁵

Come and lead the way,
Hushed, implacable.
What shall stop us, say,
On that day, *our* day? —
Not unloosened hell!

“ANALOGY.”

(To D- L-.)

Had you lived when a tyrant king
Strove to make all the slaves of one,
With nobles and with churchmen you
Had stood unflinching, pure and true,
To annihilate that hateful thing
Green Runnymede beat out of John?

Had you lived when a wanton crew,
Flash scoundrels of a day outdone,
Trode down the toilers birth derides,
With Cromwell and his Ironsides
The brave days had discovered you,
Where Naseby saw the gallants run?

And yet you, – this same knight in list
For freedom in her narrow dawn

⁵ After dismissing the peasants with the formally written acknowledgment of their freedom and rights, Richard II. with an army of 40,000 followers avenged himself and his lords by ruthless and prolonged massacres over the whole country.

Against that one, against those few,
Vile king, vile nobles – you, yet you
Stand by the bloody Capitalist,
Fight with the pandar Gentleman!

IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

The stars shone faint through the smoky blue;
The church-bells were ringing;
Three girls, arms laced, were passing through,
Tramping and singing.

Their heads were bare; their short skirts swung
As they went along;
Their scarf-covered breasts heaved up, as they sung
Their defiant song.

It was not too clean, their feminine lay,
But it thrilled me quite
With its challenge to task-master villainous day
And infamous night,

With its threat to the robber rich, the proud,
The respectable free.
And I laughed and shouted to them aloud,
And they shouted to me!

*“Girls, that’s the shout, the shout we shall utter
When with rifles and spades,
We stand, with the old Red Flag aflutter,
On the barricades!”*

A STREET FIGHT

(To Mr F-.) ⁶

Sir, we approve your curling lip and nose
At this vile sight.
These men, these women are brute beasts? – Who knows,
Sir, but that you are right?

⁶ Who owns, and rack-rents, some of the vilest slums in London, and is beautifully æsthetic in private life.

Panders and harlots, rogues and thieves and worse,
We are a crew
Whose pitiful plunder's honoured in the purse
Of gentlemen like you.

Whom holy Competition's taught (like us)
"What's thine is mine!" —
*How we must love you who have made us thus,
You may perhaps divine!*

IN AN EAST END HOVEL

TO A WORKMAN, A WOULD-BE SUICIDE

Man of despair and death,
Bought and slaved in the gangs,
Starved and stripped and left
To the pitiful pitiless night,
Away with your selfish thoughts!
Touch not your ignorant life!
Are there no masters of slaves,
Jeering, cynical, strong —
Are there no brigands (say),
With the words of Christ on their lips
And the daggers under their cloaks —
Is there not one of these
That you can steal on and kill?
O as the Swiss mountaineer
Dogged on the perilous heights
His disciplined conqueror foes: ⁷
Caught up one in his arms
And, laughing exultantly,
Plunged with him to the abyss:
So let it be with you!
An eye for an eye, and a tooth
For a tooth, and a life for a life!
Tell it, this hateful strong
Contemptuous hypocrite world,
Tell it that, if we must live
As dogs and as worse than dogs,
At least we can die like men!
Tell it there is a woe

⁷ The French.

Not for the conquered alone! ⁸
An eye for an eye, and a tooth
For a tooth, and a life for a life!

DUBLIN AT DAWN

In the chill grey summer dawn-light
We pass through the empty streets;
The rattling wheels are all silent;
No friend his fellow greets.

Here and there, at the corners,
A man in a great-coat stands;
A bayonet hangs by his side, and
A rifle is in his hands.

This is a conquered city;
It speaks of war not peace;
And that's one of the English soldiers
The English call "police."

You see, at the present moment
That noble country of mine
Is boiling with indignation
At the memory of a "crime."

In a path in the Phoenix Park where
The children romped and ran,
An Irish ruffian met his doom,
And an English gentleman.

For a hundred and over a hundred
Years on the country side
Men and women and children
Have slaved and starved and died,

That those who slaved and starved them
Might spend their earnings then,
And the Irish ruffians have a "good time,"
And the English gentlemen.

And that's why at the present moment
That noble country of mine
Is boiling with indignation
At the memory of a "crime."

⁸ "Vœ victis!" woe to the conquered – the motto of the Gauls in Rome as of the modern Civilization of Land and Capital.

For the Irish ruffians (they tell me),
And it looks as if 'twere true,
And the English gentlemen are so scarce,
We could not spare those two!

In the chill grey summer dawn-light
We pass through the empty streets;
The rattling wheels are all silent;
No friend his fellow greets.

Here and there, at the corners,
A man in a great-coat stands;
A bayonet hangs by his side, and
A rifle is in his hands.

This is a conquered city;
It speaks of war not peace;
And that's one of the English soldiers
The English call "police."

THE CAGED EAGLE

.. I went the other day
To see the birds and beasts they keep enmewed

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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