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Awake young men of England

Oh! give me the strength of the Lion
The wisdom of Reynard the Fox
And then I'll hurl troops at the Germans
And give them the hardest of knocks.
Oh! think of the War lord's mailed fist,
That is striking at England today:
And think of the lives that our soldiers
Are fearlessly throwing away.
Awake! Oh you young men of England,
For if when your country's in need,
You do not enlist by the thousand,
You truly are cowards indeed.

The Italian soldier shook my hand

The Italian soldier shook my hand
Beside the guard-room table;
The strong hand and the subtle hand
Whose palms are only able
To meet within the sound of guns,
But oh! what peace I knew then
In gazing on his battered face
Purer than any woman's!
For the flyblown words that make me spew
Still in his ears were holy,
And he was born knowing what I had learned
Out of books and slowly.
The treacherous guns had told their tale
And we both had bought it,
But my gold brick was made of gold —
Oh! who ever would have thought it?
Good luck go with you, Italian soldier!
But luck is not for the brave;
What would the world give back to you?
Always less than you gave.
Between the shadow and the ghost,
Between the white and the red,
Between the bullet and the lie,
Where would you hide your head?
For where is Manuel Gonzalez,
And where is Pedro Aguilar,
And where is Ramon Fenellosa?
The earthworms know where they are.
Your name and your deeds were forgotten
Before your bones were dry,
And the lie that slew you is buried
Under a deeper lie;
But the thing that I saw in your face
No power can disinherit:
No bomb that ever burst
Shatters the crystal spirit.

Kitchener

No stone is set to mark his nation's loss
No stately tomb enshrines his noble breast;
Not e'en the tribute of a wooden cross
Can mark his hero's rest.
He needs them not, his name untarnished stands,
Remindful of the mighty deeds he worked,
Footprints of one, upon time's changeful sands,
Who ne'er his duty shirked.
Who follows in his steps no danger shuns,
Nor stoops to conquer by shameful deed,
An honest and and unselfish race he runs,
From fear and malice freed.

Romance

When I was young and had no sense
In far-off Mandalay
I lost my heart to a Burmese girl
As lovely as the day.
Her skin was gold, her hair was jet,
Her teeth were ivory;
I said 'For twenty silver pieces,
Maiden, sleep with me.'
She looked at me, so pure, so sad,
The loveliest thing alive,
And in her lisping, virgin voice,
Stood out for twenty-five.

Sometimes in the middle autumn days

Sometimes in the middle autumn days,
The windless days when the swallows have flown,
And the sere elms brood in the mist,
Each tree a being, rapt, alone,
I know, not as in barren thought,
But wordlessly, as the bones know,
What quenching of my brain, what numbness,
Wait in the dark grave where I go.
And I see the people thronging the street,
The death-marked people, they and I
Goalless, rootless, like leaves drifting,
Blind to the earth and to the sky;
Nothing believing, nothing loving,
Not in joy nor in pain, not heeding the stream
Of precious life that flows within us,
But fighting, toiling as in a dream.
So shall we in the rout of life
Some thought, some faith, some meaning save,
And speak it once before we go
In silence to the silent grave...

A Dressed Man

A dressed man and a naked man
Stood by the kip-house fire,
Watching the sooty cooking-pots
That bubble on the wire;
And bidding tanners up and down,
Bargaining for a deal,
Naked skin for empty skin,
Clothes against a meal.
'Ten bob it is,' the dressed man said,
'These boots cost near a pound,
This coat's a blanket of itself.
When you kip on the frosty ground.'
'One dollar,' said the naked man,
'And that's a hog too dear;
I've seen a man strip off his shirt
For a fag and a pot of beer.'
'Eight and a tanner,' the dressed man said,
'And my life-work is yours,
All I've earned at the end of a life
Knocking at farmers' doors;
Turnips, apples, hops and peas,
And the spike when times are slack,
Fifty years I've tobyed it
For these clothes upon my back.'
'Take seven,' said the naked man,
'It's cold and the spikes are shut;
Better be naked here in kip
Than dressed in Lambeth Cut.'
'One tanner more,' the dressed man said,
'One tanner says the word,
Off comes my coat of ratcatcher
And my breeches of velvet cord;
Now pull my shirt over my head,
I'm naked sole to crown,
And that's the end of fifty years
Tobying up and down.'
A minute and they had changed about,
And each had his desire;
A dressed man and a naked man
Stood by the kip-house fire.

A Little Poem

A happy vicar I might have been
Two hundred years ago
To preach upon eternal doom
And watch my walnuts grow;
But born, alas, in an evil time,
I missed that pleasant haven,
For the hair has grown on my upper lip
And the clergy are all clean-shaven.
And later still the times were good,
We were so easy to please,
We rocked our troubled thoughts to sleep
On the bosoms of the trees.
All ignorant we dared to own
The joys we now dissemble;
The greenfinch on the apple bough
Could make my enemies tremble.
But girl's bellies and apricots,
Roach in a shaded stream,
Horses, ducks in flight at dawn,
All these are a dream.
It is forbidden to dream again;
We maim our joys or hide them:
Horses are made of chromium steel
And little fat men shall ride them.
I am the worm who never turned,
The eunuch without a harem;
Between the priest and the commissar
I walk like Eugene Aram;
And the commissar is telling my fortune
While the radio plays,
But the priest has promised an Austin Seven,
For Duggie always pays.
I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls,
And woke to find it true;
I wasn't born for an age like this;
Was Smith? Was Jones? Were you?

The Pagan

So here are you, and here am I,
Where we may thank our gods to be;
Above the earth, beneath the sky,
Naked souls alive and free.
The autumn wind goes rustling by
And stirs the stubble at our feet;
Out of the west it whispering blows,
Stops to caress and onward goes,
Bringing its earthy odours sweet.
See with what pride the the setting sun
Kinglike in gold and purple dies,
And like a robe of rainbow spun
Tinges the earth with shades divine.
That mystic light is in your eyes
And ever in your heart will shine.

The Lesser Evil

EMPTY as death and slow as pain
The days went by on leaden feet;
And parson's week had come again
As I walked down the little street.

Without, the weary doves were calling,
The sun burned on the banks of mud;
Within, old maids were caterwauling
A dismal tale of thorns and blood.

I thought of all the church bells ringing
In towns that Christian folks were in;
I heard the godly maidens singing;
I turned into the house of sin.

The house of sin was dark & mean,
With dying flowers round the door;
They spat their betel juice between
The rotten bamboos of the floor.

Why did I come, the woman cried,
So seldom to her beds of ease?
When I was not, her spirit died,
And would I give her ten rupees.

The weeks went by, and many a day
That black-haired woman did implore
Me as I hurried on my way
To come more often than before.

The days went by like dead leaves falling
And parson's week came round again.
Once more devout old maids were bawling
Their ugly rhymes of death and pain.

The woman waited for me there
As down the little street I trod;
And musing upon her oily hair,
I turned into the house of God.

Ironic Poem about Prostitution

WHEN I was young and had no sense
In far-off Mandalay
I lost my heart to a Burmese girl
As lovely as the day.

Her skin was gold, her hair was jet,
Her teeth were ivory;
I said, “for twenty silver pieces,
Maiden, sleep with me”.

She looked at me, so pure, so sad,
The loveliest thing alive,
And in her lisping, virgin voice,
Stood out for twenty-five.

Summer-like for an instant

Summer-like for an instant the autumn sun bursts out,
And the light through the turning elms is green and clear;
It slants down the path and ragged marigolds glow
Fiery again, last flames of the dying year.
A blue-tit darts with a flash of wings, to feed
Where the coconut hangs on the pear tree over the well;
He digs at the meat like a tiny pickaxe tapping
With his needle-sharp beak as he clings to the swinging shell.
Then he runs up the trunk, sure-footed and sleek like a mouse,
And perches to sun himself; all his body and brain
Exult in the sudden sunlight, gladly believing
That the cold is over and summer is here again.
But I see the umber clouds that drive for the sun,
And a sorrow no argument ever can make away
Goes through my heart as I think of the nearing winter,
And the transient light that gleams like the ghost of May;
And the bird unaware, blessing the summer eternal,
Joyfully labouring, proud in his strength, gay-plumed,
Unaware of the hawk and the snow and the frost-bound nights,
And of his death foredoomed.

On a Ruined Farm near the His Master's Voice Gramophone Factory

As I stand at the lichened gate
With warring worlds on either hand —
To left the black and budless trees,
The empty sties, the barns that stand
Like tumbling skeletons — and to right
The factory-towers, white and clear
Like distant, glittering cities seen
From a ship's rail — as I stand here,
I feel, and with a sharper pang,
My mortal sickness; how I give
My heart to weak and stuffless ghosts,
And with the living cannot live.
The acid smoke has soured the fields,
And browned the few and windworn flowers;
But there, where steel and concrete soar
In dizzy, geometric towers —
There, where the tapering cranes sweep round,
And great wheels turn, and trains roar by
Like strong, low-headed brutes of steel —
There is my world, my home; yet why
So alien still? For I can neither
Dwell in that world, nor turn again
To scythe and spade, but only loiter
Among the trees the smoke has slain.
Yet when the trees were young, men still
Could choose their path — the winged soul,
Not cursed with double doubts, could fly,
Arrow-like to a foreseen goal;
And they who planned those soaring towers,
They too have set their spirit free;
To them their glittering world can bring
Faith, and accepted destiny;
But none to me as I stand here
Between two countries, both-ways torn,
And moveless still, like Buridan's donkey
Between the water and the corn.