

THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS
AND
OTHER POEMS

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*Free*editorial 

The House of Christmas

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay on their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam;
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost - how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,

To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

The Human Tree

Many have Earth's lovers been,
Tried in seas and wars, I ween;
Yet the mightiest have I seen:
Yea, the best saw I.
One that in a field alone
Stood up stiller than a stone
Lest a moth should fly.

Birds had nested in his hair,
On his shoon were mosses rare,
Insect empires flourished there,
Worms in ancient wars;
But his eyes burn like a glass,
Hearing a great sea of grass
Roar towards the stars.

From them to the human tree
Rose a cry continually:
'Thou art still, our Father, we
Fain would have thee nod.
Make the skies as blood below thee,
Though thou slay us, we shall know thee.
Answer us, O God!

'Show thine ancient fame and thunder,
Split the stillness once asunder,
Lest we whisper, lest we wonder
Art thou there at all?'
But I saw him there alone,
Standing stiller than a stone
Lest a moth should fall.

The Judgement of England

'Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey
Where Wealth accumulates and Men decay.'
So rang of old the noble voice in vain
O'er the Last Peasants wandering on the plain,
Doom has reversed the riddle and the rhyme,
While sinks the commerce reared upon that crime,
The thriftless towns litter with lives undone,
To whom our madness left no joy but one;
And irony that glares like Judgment Day
Sees Men accumulate and Wealth decay.

The Last Hero

The wind blew out from Bergen from the dawning to the day,
There was a wreck of trees and fall of towers a score of miles
away,
And drifted like a livid leaf I go before its tide,
Spewed out of house and stable, beggared of flag and bride.
The heavens are bowed about my head, shouting like seraph wars,
With rains that might put out the sun and clean the sky of
stars,
Rains like the fall of ruined seas from secret worlds above,
The roaring of the rains of God none but the lonely love.
Feast in my hall, O foemen, and eat and drink and drain,
You never loved the sun in heaven as I have loved the rain.
The chance of battle changes -- so may all battle be;
I stole my lady bride from them, they stole her back from me.
I rent her from her red-roofed hall, I rode and saw arise,
More lovely than the living flowers the hatred in her eyes.
She never loved me, never bent, never was less divine;
The sunset never loved me, the wind was never mine.
Was it all nothing that she stood imperial in duress?
Silence itself made softer with the sweeping of her dress.
O you who drain the cup of life, O you who wear the crown,
You never loved a woman's smile as I have loved her frown.

The wind blew out from Bergen to the dawning of the day,
They ride and run with fifty spears to break and bar my way,
I shall not die alone, alone, but kin to all the powers,
As merry as the ancient sun and fighting like the flowers.
How white their steel, how bright their eyes! I love each
laughing knave,
Cry high and bid him welcome to the banquet of the brave.

Yea, I will bless them as they bend and love them where they
lie,
When on their skulls the sword I swing falls shattering from the
sky.
The hour when death is like a light and blood is like a rose, --
You never loved your friends, my friends, as I shall love my
foes.

Know you what earth shall lose to-night, what rich uncounted
loans,
What heavy gold of tales untold you bury with my bones?
My loves in deep dim meadows, my ships that rode at ease,
Ruffling the purple plumage of strange and secret seas.
To see this fair earth as it is to me alone was given,
The blow that breaks my brow to-night shall break the dome of
heaven.
The skies I saw, the trees I saw after no eyes shall see,
To-night I die the death of God; the stars shall die with me;
One sound shall sunder all the spears and break the trumpet's
breath:
You never laughed in all your life as I shall laugh in death.

The Latest School

See the flying French depart
Like the bees of Bonaparte,
Swarming up with a most venomous vitality.
Over Baden and Bavaria,
And Brighton and Bulgaria,
Thus violating Belgian neutrality.

And the injured Prussian may
Not unreasonably say
"Why, it cannot be so small a nationality
Since Brixton and Batavia,
Bolivia and Belgravia,
Are bursting with the Belgian neutrality."

By pure Alliteration
You may trace this curious nation,
And respect this somewhat scattered Principality;
When you see a B in Both

You may take your Bible oath
You are violating Belgian neutrality.

The Logical Vegetarian

"Why shouldn't I have a purely vegetarian drink? Why shouldn't I take vegetables in their highest form, so to speak? The modest vegetarians ought to stick to wine or beer, plain vegetable drinks, instead of filling their goblets with the blood of bulls and elephants, as all conventional meat-eaters do, I suppose"--Dalroy.

You will find me drinking rum,
Like a sailor in a slum,
You will find me drinking beer like a Bavarian
You will find me drinking gin
In the lowest kind of inn
Because I am a rigid Vegetarian.

So I cleared the inn of wine,
And I tried to climb the sign,
And I tried to hail the constable as "Marion."
But he said I couldn't speak,
And he bowled me to the Beak
Because I was a Happy Vegetarian.

Oh, I know a Doctor Gluck,
And his nose it had a hook,
And his attitudes were anything but Aryan;
So I gave him all the pork
That I had, upon a fork
Because I am myself a Vegetarian.

I am silent in the Club,
I am silent in the pub.,
I am silent on a bally peak in Darien;
For I stuff away for life
Shoving peas in with a knife,
Because I am a rigid Vegetarian.

No more the milk of cows
Shall pollute my private house
Than the milk of the wild mares of the Barbarian

I will stick to port and sherry,
For they are so very, very,
So very, very, very, Vegetarian.

The Modern Manichee

He sayeth there is no sin, and all his sin
Swells round him into a world made merciless;
The midnight of his universe of shame
Is the vast shadow of his shamelessness.
He blames all that begat him, gods or brutes,
And sires not sons he chides as with a rod.
The sins of the children visited on the fathers
Through all generations, back to a jealous God.

The fields that heal the humble, the happy forests
That sing to men confessed and men consoled,
To him are jungles only, greedy and groping,
Heartlessly new, unvenerably old.
Beyond the pride of his own cold compassion
Is only cruelty and imputed pain:
Matched with that mood, a boy's sport in the forest
Makes comrades of the slayer and the slain.

The innocent lust of the unfallen creatures
Moves him to hidden horror but no mirth;
Misplaced morality rots in the roots unconscious,
His stifled conscience stinks through the green earth.
The green things thrust like horrible huge snails,
Horns green and gross, each lifting a leering eye
He scarce can call a flower; it lolls obscene,
Its organs gaping to the sneering sky.

Dark with that dusk the old red god of gardens
Still pagan but not merry any more,
Stirs up the dull adulteries of the dust,
Blind, frustrate, hopeless, hollow at the core;
The plants are brutes tied with green rope and roaring
Their terrible dark loves from tree to tree:
He shrinks as from a shaft, if by him singing,
A gilded pimp and pandar, goes the bee.

He sayeth, 'I have no sin; I cast the stone',

And throws his little pebble at the shrine,
Casts sin and stone away against the house
Whose health has turned earth's waters into wine.
The venom of that repudiated guilt
Poisons the sea and every natural flood
As once a wavering tyrant washed his hands,
And touching, turned the water black with blood.

The Mystery

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

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

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

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

The Myth of Arthur

O learned man who never learned to learn,
Save to deduce, by timid steps and small,
From towering smoke that fire can never burn
And from tall tales that men were never tall.
Say, have you thought what manner of man it is

Of who men say "He could strike giants down" ?
Or what strong memories over time's abyss
Bore up the pomp of Camelot and the crown.
And why one banner all the background fills,
Beyond the pageants of so many spears,
And by what witchery in the western hills
A throne stands empty for a thousand years.
Who hold, unheeding this immense impact,
Immortal story for a mortal sin;
Lest human fable touch historic fact,
Chase myths like moths, and fight them with a pin.
Take comfort; rest--there needs not this ado.
You shall not be a myth, I promise you.

The New Fiction

('Leave them alone', we seem to hear Mr. Galsworthy say of his
Young People.

--From a Review by Mr. Bettany)

Little Blue-Fits has lost his wits,
And doesn't know where to find them;
Leave them alone and they'll come home,
And leave their tales behind them.

The remarkable tales, with remarkable sales,
And Bonnets and Bees in disorder;
For the Bonnets we view are exceedingly Blue,
And decidedly over the Border.

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