

TO THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

AND

OTHER POEMS

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Freeeditorial 

To the Unknown Warrior

You whom the kings saluted; who refused not
The one great pleasure of ignoble days,
Fame without name and glory without gossip,
Whom no biographer befouls with praise.

Who said of you "Defeated"? In the darkness
The dug-out where the limelight never comes,
Nor the big drum of Barnum's show can shatter
That vibrant stillness after all the drums.

Though the time comes when every Yankee circus
Can use our soldiers for its sandwich-men,
When those that pay the piper call the tune,
You will not dance. You will not move again.

You will not march for Fatty Arbuckle,
Though he have yet a favourable press,
Tender as San Francisco to St. Francis
Or all the angels of Los Angeles.

They shall not storm the last unfallen fortress,
The lonely castle where uncowed and free,
Dwells the unknown and undefeated warrior
That did alone defeat Publicity.

To Belloc

For every tiny town or place
God made the stars especially;
Babies look up with owlish face
And see them tangled in a tree;
You saw a moon from Sussex Downs,
A Sussex moon, untravelled still,
I saw a moon that was the town's,
The largest lamp on Campden Hill.

Yea; Heaven is everywhere at home
The big blue cap that always fits,
And so it is (be calm; they come
To goal at last, my wandering wits),

So is it with the heroic thing;
This shall not end for the world's end
And though the sullen engines swing,
Be you not much afraid, my friend.

This did not end by Nelson's urn
Where an immortal England sits--
Nor where your tall young men in turn
Drank death like wine at Austerlitz.
And when the pedants bade us mark
What cold mechanic happenings
Must come; our souls said in the dark,
'Belike; but there are likelier things.'

Likelier across these flats afar
These sulky levels smooth and free
The drums shall crash a waltz of war
And Death shall dance with Liberty;
Likelier the barricades shall blare
Slaughter below and smoke above,
And death and hate and hell declare
That men have found a thing to love.

Far from your sunny uplands set
I saw the dream; the streets I trod
The lit straight streets shot out and met
The starry streets that point to God.
This legend of an epic hour
A child I dreamed, and dream it still,
Under the great grey water-tower
That strikes the stars on Campden Hill.

To St. Micheal in Time of Peace

Michael, Michael: Michael of the Morning,
Michael of the Army of the Lord,
Stiffen thou the hand upon the still sword, Michael,
Folded and shut upon the sheathed sword, Michael,
Under the fullness of the white robes falling,
Gird us with the secret of the sword.

When the world cracked because of a sneer in heaven,
Leaving out for all time a scar upon the sky,
Thou didst rise up against the Horror in the highest,
Dragging down the highest that looked down on the Most High:
Rending from the seventh heaven the hell of exaltation
Down the seven heavens till the dark seas burn:
Thou that in thunder threwest down the Dragon
Knowest in what silence the Serpent can return.

Down through the universe the vast night falling
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the Morning!)
Far down the universe the deep calms calling
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the Sword!)
Bid us not forget in the baths of all forgetfulness,
In the sigh long drawn from the frenzy and the fretfulness
In the huge holy sempiternal silence
In the beginning was the Word.

When from the deeps of dying God astounded
Angels and devils who do all but die
Seeing Him fallen where thou couldst not follow,
Seeing Him mounted where thou couldst not fly,
Hand on the hilt, thou hast halted all thy legions
Waiting the Tetelestai and the acclaim,
Swords that salute Him dead and everlasting
God beyond God and greater than His Name.

Round us and over us the cold thoughts creeping
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the battle-cry!)
Round us and under us the thronged world sleeping
(Michael, Michael: Michael of the Charge!)
Guard us the Word; the trysting and the trusting
Edge upon the honour and the blade unrusting
Fine as the hair and tauter than the harpstring
Ready as when it rang upon the targe.

He that giveth peace unto us; not as the world giveth:
He that giveth law unto us; not as the scribes:
Shall he be softened for the softening of the cities
Patient in usury; delicate in bribes?
They that come to quiet us, saying the sword is broken,
Break man with famine, fetter them with gold,
Sell them as sheep; and He shall know the selling

For He was more than murdered. He was sold.

Michael, Michael: Michael of the Mustering,
Michael of the marching on the mountains of the Lord,
Marshal the world and purge of rot and riot
Rule through the world till all the world be quiet:
Only establish when the world is broken
What is unbroken is the word.

Tribute to Gladstone

Lift up your heads; in life, in death,
God knoweth his head was high;
Quit we the coward's broken breath,
Who watched a strong man die.

If ye must say 'No more his peer
Cometh: the flag is furled,'
Stand not too near him; lest we hear
That slander on the world

The good green earth he loved and trod
Is still, with many a scar,
Writ in the chronicles of God
A giant-bearing star.

He fell: but Britain's banner swings
Above his sunken crown;
Black Death shall have his toil of kings
Before the cross goes down.

O young ones of a darker day,
In Art's wan colours clad,
Whose very love and hate are grey,
Whose very sin is sad,

Pass on: one agony long-drawn
Was merrier than your mirth;
When hand in hand came death and dawn
And spring was on the earth.

Variations of an Air

Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe
and he called for his bowl
and he called for his fiddlers three

after Lord Tennyson

Cole, that unwearied prince of Colchester,
Growing more gay with age and with long days
Deeper in laughter and desire of life
As that Virginian climber on our walls
Flames scarlet with the fading of the year;
Called for his wassail and that other weed
Virginian also, from the western woods
Where English Raleigh checked the boast of Spain,
And lighting joy with joy, and piling up
Pleasure as crown for pleasure, bade me bring
Those three, the minstrels whose emblazoned coats
Shone with the oyster-shells of Colchester;
And these three played, and playing grew more fain
Of mirth and music; till the heathen came
And the King slept beside the northern sea.

after W.B. Yeats

Of an old King in a story
From the grey sea-folk I have heard
Whose heart was no more broken
Than the wings of a bird.

As soon as the moon was silver
And the thin stars began,
He took his pipe and his tankard,
Like an old peasant man.

And three tall shadows were with him
And came at his command;

And played before him for ever
The fiddles of fairyland.

And he died in the young summer
Of the world's desire;
Before our hearts were broken
Like sticks in a fire.

after Walt Whitman

Me clairvoyant,
Me conscious of you, old camarado,
Needing no telescope, lorgnette, field-glass, opera-glass,
myopic pince-nez,
Me piercing two thousand years with eye naked and not ashamed;
The crown cannot hide you from me,
Musty old feudal-heraldic trappings cannot hide you from me,
I perceive that you drink.
(I am drinking with you. I am as drunk as you are.)
I see you are inhaling tobacco, puffing, smoking, spitting
(I do not object to your spitting),
You prophetic of American largeness,
You anticipating the broad masculine manners of these States;
I see in you also there are movements, tremors, tears, desire
for the melodious,
I salute your three violinists, endlessly making vibrations,
Rigid, relentless, capable of going on for ever;
They play my accompaniment; but I shall take no notice of any
accompaniment;
I myself am a complete orchestra.
So long.

Who Goes Home?

In the city set upon slime and loam
They cry in their parliament 'Who goes home?'
And there comes no answer in arch or dome,
For none in the city of graves goes home.
Yet these shall perish and understand,
For God has pity on this great land.

Men that are men again; who goes home?
Tocsin and trumpeter! Who goes home?
For there's blood on the field and blood on the foam
And blood on the body when Man goes home.
And a voice valedictory . . . Who is for Victory?
Who is for Liberty? Who goes home?

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