

THE TRIUMPH OF MAN

BEFORE the darkness, earlier than being,
When yet thought was not, shapeless and unseeing,
Made misbegotten of deity on death,
There brooded on the waters the strange breath
Of an incarnate hatred. Darkness fell
And chaos, from prodigious gulphs of hell.
Life, that rejoiced to travail with a man,
Looked where the cohorts of destruction ran,
Saw darkness visible, and was afraid,
Seeing. There grew like Death a monster shade,
Blind as the coffin, as the covering sod
Damp, as the corpse obscene, the Christian God.
So to the agony dirges of despair
Man cleft the womb, and shook the icy air
With bitter cries for light and life and love.

But these, begotten of the world above,
Withdrew their glory, and the iron world
Rolled on its cruel way, and passion furled
Its pure wings, and abased itself, and bore
Fetters impure, and stooped, and was no more.
But resurrection's ghastly power grew strong,
And Lust was born, adulterous with Wrong,
The Child of Lies; so man was blinded still,
Garnered the harvest of abortive ill,
For wheat reaped thistles, and for worship wrought
A fouler idol of his meanest thought:
A monster, vengeful, cruel, traitor, slave,
Lord of disease and father of the grave,
A treacherous bully, feeble as malign,
Intolerable, inhuman, undivine,

With spite close girded and with hatred shod,
A snarling cur, the Christian's Christless God.
Out! misbegotten monster! with thy brood,
The obscene offspring of thy pignitude,
Incestuous wedlock with the Pharisees
That hail the Christ a son of thee! Our knees
Bend not before thee, and our earth-bowed brows
Shake off their worship, and reject thy spouse,
The harlot of the world! For, proud and free,
We stand beyond thy hatred, even we:
We broken in spirit beneath bitter years,
Branded with the burnt-offering of tears,
Spit out upon the lie, and in thy face
Cast back the slimy falsehood; to your place,
Ye Gadarean swine, too foul to fling
Into the waters that abound and spring!
Back, to your mother filth! With hope, and youth,
Love, light, and power, and mastery of truth
Armed, we reject you; the bright scourge we ply,
Your howling spirits stumble to your sty:
The worm that was your lie — our heel its head
Bruises, that bruised us once; the snake is dead.
Who of mankind that honours man discerns
That man of all men, whose high spirit burns,
Crowned over life, and conqueror of death,
The godhood that was Christ of Nazareth —
Who of all men, that will not gird his brand
And purge from priestcraft the uxorious land?
Christ, who lived, died, and lived, that man might be

Tameless and tranquil as the summer sea,
That laughs with love of the broad skies of noon,
And dreams of lazy kissings of the moon,
But listens for the summons of the wind,
Shakes its white mane, and hurls its fury blind
Against oppression, gathers its steep side,
Rears as a springing tiger, flings its tide
Tremendous on the barriers, smites the sand,
And gluts its hunger on the breaking land;

Engulphing waters fall and overwhelm: —
Christ, who stood dauntless at the shaken helm
On Galilee, who quelled the wrath of God,
And rose triumphant over faith, and trod
With calm victorious feet the icy way
When springtide burgeoned, and the rosy day
Leapt from beneath the splendours of the snow: —
Christ, ultimate master of man's hateful foe,
And lord of his own soul and fate, strikes still
From man's own heaven, against the lord of ill;
Stage thunders mock the once terrific nod
That spoke the fury of the Christian God,
Whose slaves deny, too cowardly to abjure,
Their desecrated Moloch. The impure
Godhead is powerless, even on the slave,
Who once could scar the forehead of the brave,
Break love's heart pitiful, and reach the strong
Through stricken children, and a mother's wrong.
Day after darkness, life beyond the tomb!
Manhood reluctant from religion's womb
Leaps, and sweet laughters flash for freedom's birth
That thrills the old bosom of maternal earth.
The dawn has broken; yet the impure fierce fire
Kindles the grievous furnace of desire
Still for the harpy brood of king and priest,
Slave, harlot, coward, that make human feast
Before the desecrated god, in hells
Of darkness, where the mitred vampire dwells,
Where still death reigns, and God and priests are fed,
Man's blood for wine, man's flesh for meat and bread,
The lands of murder, of the obscene things
That snarl at freedom, broken by her wings,
That prop the abomination, cringe and smile,
Caressing the dead fetich, that defile
With hideous sacraments the happy land.

Destruction claims its own; the hero's hand
Grips the snake's throat; yea, on its head is set
The heel that crushes it, the serpent wet

With that foul blood, from human vitals drained,
From tears of broken women, and sweat stained
From torturers' cloths; the sickly tide is poured,
And all the earth is blasted; the green sward
Burns where it touches, and the barren sod
Rejects the poison of the blood of God.

Yet, through the foam of waters that enclose
Their sweet salt bosoms, through the summer rose,
Through flowers of fatal fire, through fields of air
That summer squanders, ere the bright moon bare
Her maiden bosom, through the kissing gold
Where lovers' lips are molten, and breasts hold
Their sister bodies, and deep eyes are wed,
And fire of fire enflowers the sacred head
Of mingling passion, through the silent sleep
Where love sobs out its life, and new loves leap
To being, through the dawn of all new things,
There burns an angel whose amazing wings
Wave in the sunbright air, whose lips of flame
Chant the almighty music of One Name
Whose perfume fills the silent atmosphere,
Whose passionate melodies caress the ear;
An angel, strong and eloquent, aloud
Cries to the earth to lift the final shroud,
And, having burst Faith's coffin, to lay by
The winding-sheet of Infidelity,
And rise up naked, as a god, to hear
This message from the reawakened sphere;
Words with love clothed, with life immortal shod: —
“Mankind is made a little part of God.”
Till the response, full chorus of the earth,
Flash through the splendid portals of rebirth,
Completing Truth in its amazing span: —
“Godhead is made the Spirit that is Man.”
To whose white mountains, and their arduous ways,
Turn we our purpose, till the faith that slays
Yield up its place to faith that gives us life,

The faith to conquer in the higher strife;
Our single purpose, and sublime intent,
With their split blood to seal our sacrament,
Who stand among the martyrs of the Light;
Our single purpose, by incarnate might
Begotten after travail unto death,
To live within the light that quickeneth;
To tread base thoughts as our high thoughts have trod,
Deep in the dust, the carrion that was God;
Conquer our hatreds as the dawn of love
Conquered that fiend whose ruinous throne above
Broke lofty spirits once, now falls with fate,
At last through his own violence violate;
To live in life, breathe freedom with each breath,
As God breathed tyranny and died in death;
Secure the sacred fastness of the soul,
Uniting self to the absolute, the whole,
The universal marriage of mankind,
Free, perfect, broken from the chains that bind,
Force infinite, love pure, desire untold,
And mutual raptures of the age of gold,
The child of freedom! So the moulder, man,
Shake his grim shoulders, and the shadows wan
Fall to forgetfulness; so life revives
And new sweet loves beget diviner lives,
And Freedom stands, re-risen from the rod,
A goodlier godhead than the broken God;
Uniting all the universe in this
Music more musical than breezes' kiss,
A song more potent than the sullen sea,
The triumph of the freedom of the free;
One stronger song than thrilled the rapturous birth
Of stars and planets and the mother, earth;
As lovers, calling lovers when they die,
Strangle death's torture in love's agony;
As waters, shaken by the storm, that roar,
Sea unto sea; as stars that burn before
The blackness; as the mighty cry of swords
Raging through battle, for its stronger chords;

And for its low entrancing music, made
As waters lambent in the listening glade;
As Sappho's yearning to to the amorous sea;
As Man's Prometheus, in captivity
Master and freeman; as the holy tune

All birds, all lovers, whisper to the moon.
So, passionate and pure, the strong chant rolls,
Queen of the mystic unity of souls;
So from eternity its glory springs
King of the magical brotherhood of kings;
The absolute crown and kingdom of desire,
Earth's virgin chaplet, molten in the fire,
Sealed in the sea, betokened by the wind:
"There is one God, the Spirit of Mankind!"