

To a New-born Child

*Originally published in the October 1922
edition of The English Review under the
pseudonym of Michael Fairfax.*

ON that intolerable planet
Whose nature and whose name is Hell,
There slants a path of polished granite
Straight to a scaffold from a cell.

With lids cut off and fettered hands.
Each shoots the inexorable slope
To where the hooded hangman stands
His fingers ready on the rope.

Didst thou not know by what black art
Malice fees Love for his attorney,
Whose sly words wheedle souls to start
That unintelligible journey?

Whence wast thou? Was that place unknown
Airless and abject, an abyss
Of agony, as this our own
Perdition of paralysis?

No more! Truth's withered in her well;
The dry pump Reason mocks our thirst.
All that we know is horror of hell,
And are we sure we know the worst?

With leaping lungs you got your grip
On air—"I will to live" your cry.
The white bark of the phrase may strip
To the black pith "I will to die."

On this intolerable planet,
Earth's evil that exceedeth hell,
There slants a path of polished granite
Straight to a scaffold from a cell.

With eyelids clipt and fettered hands,
Thou also slidest on the slope
To where the hooded hangman stands,
His fingers ready on the rope.