

A Song for a Free Spirit

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Not all the wise of Attica,
Not all the bards that sang in Rome,
May ever lead thy Spirit far
Along the path that leads it home;
Stand thou beneath a wider dome
Than ever knew a centre-star,
Be thou baptised in purer foam
Than ever a priest's hand may mar.

Search not in books if thou would'st know
Whither have gone the summer trees.
Nor seek in maps if thou would'st go
A voyage on the unknown seas;
Not any book the Spirit frees,
Not any map the path may show
That leads across the upland leas,
That ends in summer through the snow.

Dive deep within thy being; rise
In wisdom from the heart of things;
Within the gloom train thou thine eyes,
Within thyself test thine own wings:
The baptism of the Spirit stings,
The Spirit flutters ere it flies,
But at the end triumphant rings
A pæan; never Spirit dies.

Fear not thyself: be wise—an hour,
A single hour, ere Nature calls,
Hast thou within thy being's power
To rise above thy prison walls;
An hour, and then the darkness falls,
And then a shadow casts thy tower;—
When gloom shall fall upon thy halls,
Arise! nor let thy Spirit cower,

Arise, and gaze thou on the light,
Bathe thou thy Spirit in the blaze;
Is it a little thing, or slight,
To fare along the sunlit ways?
But only thou thyself can'st raise
Thyself; no man for thee may fight
The battle that shall make thy days
Free, and unawed at coming night.

Let no man lead thee? Who can tell
But thou the way thy Spirit leads?
Seek no man's heaven, shun no man's hell,
Save within thee thy Spirit pleads
A space in which to scatter seeds,
A place wherein to sink a well,
A desert place to free from weeds,
A spot where it may ring its knell.

Not all the men who ever wrote
Philosophy or poesy
For thee may ever steer thy boat,
Nor clear the sea of rocks for thee;
Keep thou thy Spirit ever free,
Nor strive to check the warning note
That tells of *was* or *is to be*,
Or bids thee sink, or swim, or float.

So shall in sight thy haven rise,
Maybe before thou know'st, when thou
Hast had all things before thine eyes,
And all thy thoughts behind thy brow.
Ah! thou hast found a resting now,
And over thee the starlit skies
Shall shine upon thy worn-out prow,
The track that far behind thee lies.