

**ON
THE HADES GOLF CLUB
PORTICO**

**BY
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WITH sodden feet I climbed the farther bank
Of Styx's sullen flood, and stood at length
Upon the murky meads of asphodel.

The Ferryman, still muttering a curse,
Was out of sound. The Dog I had subdued
By merely querying : "Good *Dachshund*, pray,
Wilt thou not let me pass ?" Whereat the beast,
Insulted mortally, fell comatose,
And I was free to enter Hell.

Thought I,
"Now for a glorious vision of the great,
The immortal dead, who, having passed for aye
From sun and air, from Hun and care, and all
That's shaken man's foundations through and through
Since Armageddon was, now sing, and muse,
And drive the phosphorescent ball from dim,
Lack-lustre tees, through nebulous fairways
To amaranthine greens, and into black,
Umbrageous cups ; and then, when day, the long,
Unending day, by orb crepuscular

Illumed, to his pale close hath come, their way
Do make through dank and dewy turf to where
A ghostly wassail them awaits, and there
In pseudo-Chian, or Falernian,
Champagne, or Burgundy, or good brown ale,
Descant upon the mighty past, and drink
To Memory, and the Golden Age of old,
Nor are aware that on the living earth
Above lie ghastly ruins far beyond
Their Lethal comprehending."—Thus I thought,
As Hellward on I stumbled.

How I came

To Hades matters not ; *why* matters much.
No golden bough, no incantations dire—
I simply went. We sometimes bid our friends,
More oft our enemies, this journey make,
Forgetting the celerity with which
So careless a command can be obeyed.
All men have noted this, both long before
And since the modest bard of Mantua
Proclaimed it in three simple words.

I sought

This land of shadows for that I was sick
Of blood, of horrors, mourning, tales of woe ;
Of sunken ships and rotting flesh and bones ;
Of frenzy, grief, vindictiveness, and wrath ;
That making earth a safe and pleasant place
Forsooth, for some mysterious thing alleged
To be Democracy ; of all the sad
Events and tasks, anxieties and pain
That cloud and change the current of our lives.
"In Hell," I said, "the poets' Hell, the Hell

Conceived in song and story, home of souls
 And shades undying, dwelling place of those
 Who still think on, and dream the dreams they dreamt
 Before the thin, Plutonian ichor flowed
 Through tenuous veins—in such a Hell shall I
 Find rest and comfort for my tired heart.
 For there the Great their measures chant, or speak
 High thoughts untainted by man's foolishness,
 His cruel selfishness and greed ; the good
 Old days of roseate hue are lived again ;
 The glamour of the past, reglamoured, shines
 With lustre fresh (Ah, men were men in those
 Dear days !) ; philosophy and poetry
 Are ever new, nor 'sicklied o'er' in Hell—
My Hell—with transcendental vaporings
 And mouthy nothings, pointless imagery,
 And 'polyphonic'—*fudge*, which dull the edge
 Of thought and our enjoyment of it ; and
 In Hell all social problems have no place,
 Nor economic—shades do not discuss
 Royal prerogatives, the citizen,
 The State, wealth, poverty, a living wage,
 Nor any kind of tax—amusement, club,
 Or war—unless it be syntax, and then
 Only to construe foreign-speaking poets ;
 And finally," I said, "I shall be rid
 Of all the damnéd memories that cling,
 In spite of victory, to those four years
 Of sacrifice and carnage.—Give me, then,
 O nether gods, a journey safe and quick
 To Acheron, nor bring me back to earth,
 Old, hopeless earth, until I shall have heard

My fill of ancient harmonies divine,
And drunk of Lethe mixed with pagan wine !”

.
Now here I was, and yonder was the Club,
Whose lights like glow-worms shone in foggy mist.
Though passing strange, it yet seemed natural,
As through the shrubby fuliginous
I tapped my way. And when at last I stood
Near to the hueless portico, that loomed
Like Gaza's temple gates before my eyes,
I heard the sound, but hollow as the wind
Moaning in fir trees set upon a hill,
Of voices, some familiar, others strange.
None saw me as I stole beneath the porch,
And tried to sit upon a refuse heap
Of brick and stone, but found I went right through
And struck the unsubstantial ground below.
But there I staid, for I had not disturbed
The friendly group above, whom I could see,
Through smoky floor and shadowy joist, around
A gaseous hearth, whereon the fire was funk,
And fungi, punk, and *ignis fatuus*.
I pricked my ears to hear what these great souls
Might have to say on things apart from man's
Futile inconsequentiality.
A noble galaxy of men they were,
Of many races, nations, costumes, climes.
At last I should hear something other than
The War, the *War*, *ad nauseam* the WAR !

.
Among them there was one with shining dome,
Wall-eyed, pot-bellied, keen, who raised a cup

At times to his thick lips and drank a draught.
'Twas he who seemed the conversation's trend
To guide, when all the noisy nineteenth hole
Discussions ceased, when every play had been
Rehearsed, and played again, and yet again,
When scores had loudly been compared, or read,
When wine-skins, bottles, beakers, glasses, cups
In part were empty, and the atmosphere—
I may not call it air—already dull,
Was charged with cirrus clouds of smoke, that had
No odor to *my* nostrils, though to *theirs*
Unmeasured fragrance, judging from the sweet
Serenity that shone upon their thin,
Thin countenances indistinctly limned.

A pause, and then I heard some shade pipe up :
"Now, intellectual mid-wife, is the hour
For us to be delivered of our thoughts,
Which ripe and mellow are through exercise
Upon this miasmatic sward. Begin,
For great events above do stimulate
Our minds ; ideas are born, though mental wombs
No substance have ; our field—it is the earth,
From anthropoid chimpanzee down to those
Who guide the destinies of men today."

With a wan smile the leader turned and spoke,
His erstwhile earthly voice a reed-like squeak :
"Thou sayest well, my friend ; it is indeed
The hour for serious things, or light mayhap,
On serious subjects. Come, attention, all !
We have with us tonight"—a murmur broke

And rippled through the company ; anon
 It grew into a Lilliputian roar,
 Like that of dwarfs and pygmies cheering on
 A winning runner at the Olympic games,
 Or tender children shrieking at their play,
 So thin and shrill it was. But unperturbed
 The leader waited for the shouts to die,
 And then continued thus : "I said 'tonight'
 Advisedly, for we still cling to forms
 Of speech which we were wont to use above ;
 'Tis useless to deny that day and night
 And night and day are not synonymous
 In Hell, for so they are, as we know well."
 At that another slender howl went up.
 "But to our purpose, friends, let us return.
 Him now I introduce, who played the liar
 So well that 'tis disputed if he sang
 At all the things to him accredited.
 But here ye see the man, a singer blind,
 So blind he playeth not the ancient game
 With us, but caddieth, and doth it well.
 Come hither, seven-citied bard ; for us
 Some rhapsody, I pray thee, improvise.
Menin aeide, geron, echthistou Kaisaros Hunnou !"

And Homer, nodding, gently trod upon
 The light fantastic toe of him he sat
 Beside, his sightless, epic running mate,
 Swept lustily the strings, and thus began
 In wingéd words to sing this lofty lay :

"I sing the hate of bull-necked Hunnia,
 The baleful hate that brought upon the earth

Woes countless as the rustling leaves that fall
In Argonne's bloody vales, and wafted are
By Autumn winds upon the unburied dead.
I sing the hate of well-greaved Kaiseraüs,
Who, in the wide-wayed city of the Huns,
Waved his paternal scepter, brandished high
His silver-studded sword imperishable,
And calling thither with a clarion voice
His minions, them persuasively harangued.
Clad in his tunic, soft, and beautiful,
And gray, he stood erect ; his gott-like mien
Suffused a radiance divine, and from
Olympus, crowned with glory, Aries gazed
With fondest pride upon his favorite puppet,
Whose spikéd helm Hephaestus cunningly
Had wrought upon his forge ; and on it perched
The golden bird of Zeus purloined from heaven
Without divine assent, whereat the King
Of gods and men was wroth at Kaiseraüs ;
And to this helm affixed a royal plume
Waved gently to and fro, as Aeolus,
The king of gales, by Zeus' command passed by.
And as a field of corn, of whitening corn,
In far-away, rich-soiled Ukraine, where gaunt
And weary-eyed Moujiks their tasks pursue
In stolid ignorance and helpless plight,
Doth billow back and forth, like swells upon
Caerulean Euxine's flashing bosom, swayed
Hither and yon by winds that blow from all
The corners of the nourishing earth,— so waved
The crested helm of gott-like Kaiseraüs.
And he, when Silence held the multitudes

Locked in her chains, threw out his thorax proud,
Drew in a mighty breath, and thus declaimed :

‘My brachycephalous underlings, no time
Is there for me at this most glorious hour
To step from this high vantage point down where
Ye grovel there below, and wipe the dust
Divine, that clingeth to my shining feet,
Upon your prostrate backs and recreant limbs.
That will I keep for some occasion less
Acute than now confronteth us. — Hear ye !
Ere rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, and flew
To wide Olympus to announce to Zeus
The cloud-compeller, and the other gods
That blessed day was come, to me in sleep
A Dream came forth out of the ambrosial night,
And very like was he in form and mien
To noble Bismarckemnon, as ye know
The craftiest Odysseus of them all,
Our Machiavellides, rich in wiles.
Him as a dream I saw which me addressed :

“What, sleepest thou, O warrior son of Gott ?
It ill becomes a counsellor and king,
To whom the people are intrusted thus,
And many things a care, to sleep all night.
But quickly now attend me, for I am
A messenger from Gott, who, although far
Away in distant dwelling places, yet
Greatly regardeth thee, and giveth thee
An iron victory and mail-clad peace.
He now doth order thee to put thy hosts
In panoplied array, and march them forth,

For unto thee shall 'He Heméra' come,
Thy *Day*, anon, and thou shalt take the earth,
Its wide-wayed cities, vineyards, watered plains,
And all thereto pertaining for thine own.
It is the will of Gott, thy deity,
Who yet will countenance whate'er thou dost,
Though he of late hath been at variance
With aegis-bearing Zeus and many more
Who dwell above, for his o'erweening love
Of thee. Therefore make haste, O King, make haste."

'Thus having spoken forthwith vanished he,
This ghost of Bismarckemnon, rich in wiles.
Prepare for battle then, my heroes all !
Prepare to make and be rich hecatombs
Of human sacrifice to Gott our god,
Black death to you, but unto Me renown.
To Bethmannténor, privy counsellor,
A messenger I sent at early dawn
And bade him herald to the world that twice
Seven suns shall see our bronze-clad warriors
In that fair, well-built city of Helen's spouse.
King Hindenóclus shall forthwith conduct
Our grim, death-dealing chariots across
The whirling eddies of Rhineander's flood,
Whence myriads shall not return to our
Beloved land. And him I do command,
Breather of strength, brave Tirpitzýanax,
Straightway to fetch a thousand hollow ships
Wherewith to penetrate Poseidon's realm,
Well-beaked, to pierce the freighted galleons
Of them we hate, and send their bones to rot

Upon the slimy ooze of Ocean's floor.
The long-haired Bolshevikians that dwell
In spacious, borealic deserts drear,
We will incite to bloody foolishness,
And we will spread black Discontent through all
The lands, until they know that I am King.
O mighty men of valor, steeped in hate,
Invincible, we shall undo the world,
Its corner stones dislodge ; and Gott himself
Shall turn from horrid slaughter in disgust.'

"Thus Kaiseraüs spake, departed thence,
And left them there to ponder on these things
Which Destiny was not to bring to pass,
For, foolish one, he thought that he should take
The city of Helen's spouse in twice seven days,
Nor knew the things which Zeus in fact devised,
Nor all the sorrow to be visited
Upon the dear, sustaining earth, upon
Himself, upon his sons, and his sons' sons."

At this dramatic juncture Homer ceased ;
But ere the palpable but vacuous
Applause had dwindled into nothingness—
Like notes of insects unmelodious
That rise to high and higher pitch upon
A stifling summer day, and then fade out
In faintly raucous twitterings—some one
Arose. Without addressing him whose fat
Paunch shook with inextinguishable mirth,
He thus broke in, in manner void of guile :

"My friends, I wrote some verses once
About those blooming sons,
And, if you like, I'll say them now—
They are quite simple ones."

Who could it be? — Ah, yes, that moral brow
Unwrinkled by the thought that Fate doth not
Relent in this inexorable world.

It was the egotist and shy recluse

Of Rydal Mount. — Then Socrates to him :

"What is it, William? Let us hear it, pray."

And unabashed the sage proceeded thus :

"My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate that while walking to and fro I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. One evening a friend came to me with a grave face, and said, 'I have seen the volume you are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel, for, if published, it will antagonize the Teuton propagandists.' I answered that I felt much obliged for the interest he took in my good name as a writer, and begged to know what was the unfortunate piece he alluded to. He said, 'It is called "*We are Six*."' 'Nay!' said I; 'that shall take its chance;' and he left me in despair."

With deep emotion then he read the lines :

WE ARE SIX

—A simple prince,
That proudly draws his breath
And feels his life of so great worth,
Why should he venture death?

I met one of these princelings once :
He was five and thirty, he said ;

His hair was thick without a curl
Around his Prussian head.

He had a spoilt and swagger air
As I his age inquired ;
His pertness almost made me swear,
His beauty made me tired.

"How many brothers have you, Fred,
How many may you be ?"
"How many ? Six in all," he said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they ? I pray you tell."
He answered, "Six are we ;
Three of us now in Holland dwell,
And Switzerland holds three."

"You say that three in Holland dwell,
And Switzerland holds three—
Are there then none who've gone to Hell,
Killed fighting valiantly ?"

Then did the little prince reply,
"Six brothers we ; for Dad
Would never let us dare to die,
Nor would we if he had.

Hell would not let us enter, Sir ;
Too good a place and fair
For us to bring our porringer
And eat our supper there."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If none has crossed the Styx ?"
Quick was the royal youth's reply,
"Ach Himmel, we are six !"

Then hellish wraiths of rident gayety
 Did tinkle through the vacant portico ;
 And one, with levity in his "Dead-eye,"
 Who could a ballad do as easily
 As flowers come to bloom in spring, called out
 Unto another, who continually
 Was improvising tunes upon his pipe :
 "Note, Arthur, well that *pome*, for poem it
 Can never be." And Arthur answered him,
 "Well, *hardly* ever !" Whereupon all laughed,
 And Socrates deep gulps of hemlock quaffed.
 Another called to him who had just read :
 "Thou art indeed a 'Phantom of Delight' !"

Whereat Sir John, and Toby Welch, made signs
 To him who served as Pluto's Ganymede
 To bring fresh sack and every tankard fill,
 But coaxed poor Oliver to sign the bill.
 Then Grasmere's bard, unruffled, begged again
 To try his hand, and, none objecting, thus
 Declaimed in feeble, dead-man's-treble tones :

"Emperors and Kings, how oft have temples rung
 With impious thanksgiving, the Almighty's scorn !
 How oft above their altars have been hung
 Trophies that led the good and wise to mourn
 Triumphant wrong, battle of battle born,
 And sorrow that to fruitless sorrow clung !
 Now, from Heaven-sanctioned victory, Peace is sprung ;
 In this firm hour Salvation lifts her horn.
 Glory to arms ! But, conscious that the nerve
 Of popular reason, long mistrusted, freed
 Your peoples,—Powers, from duty fear to swerve !
 Be just, but watch the oppressor well ; his creed
 Suppress, lest he worse punishment deserve
 Than likely seems to fall upon his breed."

This sentiment found favor in the sight
Of all, and heartily the shades approved.
Then Socrates leaned back against the wall,
His meditative eyes half-closed, and spoke
With that convincing charm that is all Greek :

“This thing called *Justice* ever puzzled me ;
’Tis one of those innumerable things
That make of life—and may I not add death ? —
A congeries of contrarieties.
None wisheth her dispensed unto himself,
But doth he weep when others in her scales
Are weighed and wanting found ? Answer yourselves.
When Justice cometh bringing retribution
Richly deserved, that should not softened be,
Oh, ’Tis a rueful thought that willow bands
So often tie her thunder-wielding hands,
And render her endeavors powerless.
These bands may be a sickly sentiment,
A pusillanimous generosity,
Aborted magnanimity, a too
Too tearful fear of giving pain, when pain,
Strong, steady, racking pain, is all that can
Bring home to him who suffers the full sense
That he is ill and needs a bitter dose.
The child, spoilt by its mother, docile is
If firmly dealt with ; so with nations too :
A spoilt and whining people need the scourge
To drive them, if need be, to Duty’s stall,
Where, duly stanchioned, poked, or ringed, they may
Under a healthful discipline acquire
That self-control, that quiet modesty,

Consideration for another's rights,
That do become a man, as fleecy clouds
A mountain peak. — And then again we see
Occasions rise when Justice must adjourn
Her court ; she cannot function, for there's no
Such thing as justice. Crimes may be so great,
So hideous, so far beyond the pale
Of any jurisdiction, Heaven's or Hell's,
As to preclude their arbitration quite.
The guilty here can only be confined
Within such borders as shall be prescribed,
Their lands delimited, and they themselves
Be left to stew, to writhe, to squirm about,
Inhuman smutches on the nourishing earth,
Like maggots weltering in putrid flesh,
Until the incurable poison kills itself
By its own super-virulence, or through
The desiccation of its medium.
Thus Justice functions by *not* functioning.
And so I say I know its nature not ;
It is, and it is not, and is again.
Like Truth and atoms it eludeth me ;
It hath a name, but habitation none.

But, friends, the hours are flitting by — if one
May speak of hours in Hell, where they are all
As like as drops that make the Aegean sea.
Look, yonder chronicler awaits *his* turn
With scroll in hand, and clad in priestly garb.
Pray, let him stand here in our midst and read."

Now as I craned my neck to see this man,
The quaggy earth whereon I sat gave way,

And I sank deep into a filthy pool,
Whence extricating my too solid flesh,
I climbed, ill-smelling, to another seat.
And me bedaubed a startling figure saw,
Who chanced to be outside the portico
Strolling about the ghastly hedge of trees
Alone, to get the evening atmosphere.
I knew him well. 'Twas Dante. Bowing low
With mock civility until his wreath
Almost fell off, he said, "Good Sir, I see
That you are of the living, and have come
To write up Hell. A hoary trick it is,
A petrified device ; but still there be
Those who will stoop to such cheap trickery.
It is my province here to watch for these,
Remembering my own experience,
And warn them of their literary peril."

A puff of mist and he was gone, while I
Wiped off the compost, duly mortified.

Above me then I heard a voice and looked.
An Hebrew prophet or historian,
Long-bearded, serious, and reverend,
Was making his acknowledgments to James
Of English royalty. Said he, "Your style
Is so much better than my own that I
Beg your indulgence if I imitate
In my weak fashion your incomparable
Accomplishment. Your good translators failed,
But through no fault of theirs, to include this bit
Of Jewish history uncanonical

In their 'clear well of English undefiled.'
Now here most modestly I offer it,
And pray you, Sir, be not too much distressed."

And then he read in tones Levitical :

THE LAST CHAPTER OF KINGS

AND it came to pass in the fifth year of Armageddon that Kizar, the son of Stuk-onim-selph, the son of Meengot, King of the Teutites, being in great straits, put on sack-cloth over his shining armour, and went unto the temple of Fongot his god to pray.

2 Now the temple was in Pauts-tam, which is hard by Prush-ar, and none might enter save the King, the King's sons, and the King's chief counsellors.

3 And therein were many golden images of King Kizar, and one of brass of Fongot.

4 And when the King was come into the temple with his sons and counsellors, he fell down and worshiped before himself. But Hin, the son of Bludden-ion, captain of the host, seeing the King's mistake, reproached him, saying, Master, of what avail art thou as a god, since thou art he who hath brought upon us these evil days?

5 Wilt thou not rather bow down to Fongot, the god of thy fathers, who, though he hath ever hitherto failed us, may yet show favour unto thee and thy people?

6 And the King, being thus rebuked, arose, and, bowing before Fongot, cried with a loud voice,

7 O thou mighty god of Hunnia, god of the Teutites, the Austrites, the Bulgrites, and the Turkites, there is none greater than thou save Me.

8 Hast thou not seen, hast thou not heard all that hath befallen Me? Verily mine enemies are banded together to destroy Me, who had thought to destroy them but could not.

9 I am afflicted very much ; I am feeble and broken ; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart ; thine arrows stick fast in Me, and thy hand presseth Me sore ; my soul, if such a thing there be, is consumed within Me.

10 Long have I borne the burden of this too grievous war. I have done what I and thou didst command in accordance with our law and our prophets, which bade us be hard unto our adversaries, and to shew no mercy unto them that are conquered.

11 In sooth have I killed and maimed, despoiled and deflowered, on every hand, but mine enemy but hateth Me the more, fighteth yet more fiercely, and is not terrified.

12 And now I perceive that the hour of vengeance draweth nigh. For lo, are not the countless hosts of the tribe of Amur Ika come against Me full strong, and my warriors cannot withstand them ?

13 My army returneth from Bel-jum and the plains of Shem-pane which I have desolated, yea it returneth and goeth not thither again, for its virtue hath departed from it.

14 But now did I offer to make peace with them who drave my broken hosts from Fland Uz and the coasts thereof, and from San-ken-tah which is in the West, but they would not.

15 I am despised and rejected of all peoples and nations of whatsoever race and clime ; none loveth Me, no, not one.

16 Yet have I not guarded well my own people, the chosen ones of the earth, and this land which my fathers gave Me for an inheritance ? For five and twenty years did I not prepare for war, which at the last mine enemies did force upon Me ?

17 And it came to pass as King Kizar uttered these words how that his enemies had forced him to battle, that one of his counsellors, Lood-en Durph by name, the son of Soop-urman, the son of Skwaer-hed, who was near unto the King, fell down in a fit.

18 And Calown-perins, the eldest of the King's sons, said, He hath a devil. But another said, He choketh with laughter ; shall he be suffered thus to mock the King our father ?

19 And they carried Lood-en Durph forth into the court. And his body shook like unto that of a man overcome of much mirth, but none knew for certain what it was. And when he had called for a drink, they gave him of the water of Beer-sheba, which foameth and is very bitter.

20 And when he was recovered, Lood-en Durph bade the King's sons, who had borne him forth, to carry him again into the temple, saying, Nay, nay, he hath not lied, the King hath not lied ; in very truth is it forced upon us, nor can we do aught that it shall cease.

21 This he said many times, and was like to have choked again but did not. And the King's sons were reassured, and bare him within.

22 And when they were come inside, behold, it was not the same ; for King Kizar lay prostrate, and his sons and his counsellors had bowed their faces to the ground.

23 And all the place was filled as it were with a strange light, and before them stood a great Being clad in majesty, whose face was as the face of the mid-day sun.

24 And Lood-en Durph and the King's sons, which bare him, also fell to the earth.

25 And when all had been silent for a long time, and there was no sound save the groaning of the King, the King lifted up his voice with fear and trembling, and said,

26 Angel or devil, speak ; what doest thou here in mine holy of holies ? Peradventure thou comest as a messenger of evil from them which seek to slay Me, and to defile Fa-tur-lant, where I and my six sons have dwelt in safety until now, albeit many of my people no longer have sons but in lieu thereof a likeness of Me their King, and thereon the King's signature and great seal.

27 And the great Being answering with a loud voice thus spake, Accurséd of all the earth, author of all manner of

wickedness, with whom is no good thing, hear the words of my mouth.

28 Thou hast destroyed the dwelling places of the innocent, defiled their temples, broken their images, ravished their daughters, cut down their groves, and filled their places with the bones of men; wherefore shall I bring thee to judgment.

29 Thy sins and the sins of thy Yunk-ors, that do consort evilly with thee, are without number. I say unto thee that they shall be visited upon thy people unto the fourth and fifth generation.

30 Thou hast called me angel or devil. In truth, O Kizar, am I a devil unto thee, but an angel unto all other nations; for know ye all that I am the spirit of Dim-mok-razy, which, when thou and thy cattle and thy asses shall have descended forever into hell, shall rule thy people, if any there be, even as it ruleth thine enemies.

31 Dost thou ask for a sign? Verily I will give thee a sign. These golden images of thee, and this brazen image of Fongot, thy god, wherewith thou hast so grossly deceived thy people, lo, all these years, shall fall in pieces at my word; for my wrath is kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

32 And it shall come to pass for a second sign that thou shalt find thine enemy forthwith within thy gates. Even now do I behold the dust of warrior hosts advancing hither even unto El-bah and O-dur, rivers of Prush-ar.

33 The armies of Fosh, the son of Nev-er-di, and of Pursh-in, the son of Seet-thru, and of Haigag, the son of Hang-ontel Deth, already encompass thee. They shall put thee in bonds that thou mayest no longer reign; and thou shalt perish utterly from the earth, thou and thy seed, forever.

34 And it was so that when the mighty One had ceased speaking, all the golden images of King Kizar, and the brazen image of Fongot, fell to the ground and brake in pieces.

35 And the King, the King's sons, and all the King's counsellors, were sore afraid, and came forth from the temple in great haste, and ran to the King's palace, and there hid themselves. And no man saw them alive again.

36 And on the sixth day of the week, which is called the day of Rek-oh-nin, in the month Rep-pur-ashan, as the people went unto the market place early in the morning, albeit there was naught to buy, nor aught wherewith to pay, for the King had taken their all, behold, their King, the King's sons, and all the King's chief counsellors were hanging from a gallows fifty cubits high.

37 And with one accord the people shouted, Verily their carcases shall not come unto the sepulchres of their fathers, but shall be cast forth unto the dogs and the fowls of the air.

38 Now these are the generations of them that led the hosts of Dim-mok-razy: Leeb-ur-teh, forsaking aforetime the oppressor Ottok-razy, fared to the westward; and he took Phre-dohm, fairest of the daughters of Revu-lushan, to wife; and she bare him three sons, Reep-ublek, Tel-with-kinks, and Pe-pul-rool.

39 Reep-ublek begat Kollum-biah; and Kollum-biah begat Onk-el-psam; and Onk-el-psam begat Seet-thru; and Seet-thru begat Pursh-in.

40 Telwith-kinks begat Lahbel-phranz; and Lahbel-phranz begat Joffer; and Joffer begat Nev-er-di; and Nev-er-di begat Fosh.

41 And Pe-pul-rool begat Bret-anniah; and Bret-anniah begat Boold-og-rip; and Boold-og-rip begat Hang-ontel Deth; and Hong-ontel Deth begat Haigag.

The aged Rabbi ceased amid confused,
Falsetto shouts and groans, the shouts from them
Approving, who opined that what the priest
Had read should in the Scriptural canon be

Forthwith incorporated, and asked why
It had not been ; the groans from those who thought
That clearly it was "uninspired," though true
And tenable, and that it might perchance
Reposeful, dusty placement find among
Those live and human stories, documents,
Or books called "deutero-canonical."
The arguments waxed warm and warmer ; soon
John Calvin's flinty face phantasmal loomed
Above the rest, and in an ireful voice,
That seemed to me to sound like looking through
A telescope backwards, so far away
It was, and yet so near, John shouted out
In thunderous aphony, that made me smile :

*"That chapter is not 'orthodox' ! There is
No mention made of future punishment
For that vile arch-betrayer and his kind ;
No fire, no torment, no damnation dire,
No anything that smacks of Hell, the Hell
I taught mankind to dread. That murderer,
Romantic ass posé, and self-styled god,
Killer of infants, crucifyer, thief,
Should be compelled to seethe in Hell, to view
A 'dismal situation waste and wild ;
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace, flamed ; and from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible ;
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never come—'"*

Here Milton cast a sweet, resigned look
At him who spoke, and turned his face away—

"But torture without end, an oven fed
'With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed'—
All this was *not* in what the Rabbi read,
And so I say it is not 'orthodox,'
And should not in the Law and Prophets be!"

Pounding his formless fists defiantly,
And frothing slightly, he sat down.

At this
A young theologian, who had late arrived,
Well versed in all the *-ologies*, took it
Upon himself to interject: "I say,
John, aren't you just a bit confused in what
You're pleased to call your mind? *We* hold that in
The older dispensation there is no
Such thing as eschatology"—but John
Threw such a fiery glance of rage at him
That his fresh, burgeoning divinity
Was scorched, and silence sealed his lips at once.

One who had been a noted "infidel"—
Whose "infidelity" most kindly was,
And made the world a saner, better place—
Then sharply questioned Calvin: "I should like
To know, Sir, how in Hell you still can prate
Of 'orthodoxy'—though I must admit
A strangely sympathetic feeling for
Its special application in this case—"

But that was all he said, for Socrates
Begged that from personalities all should

Abstain, and then took up the matter *ab*
Initio, and said with graciousness :

“I’m sure you all will quite agree with me
That this last chapter of the Book of Kings
Has mouldered in obscurity because
Of its unsuitability, as judged
By German scholarship ; quite clear it is
That they, Wisdom’s dictators, cornerers
Of learning, misers of meticulous
Obscurities and facts fantastic, would
Suppress a document reflecting so
Upon the State Divine. So let it pass.”

During this colloquy two men withdrew,
In silent protest, so it seemed to me,
Uninterested in hair-splitting twists
And turns of argument unprofitable.
And soon I heard their whisperings at hand,
Then them I saw in Hell’s half light, outlined
Against a row of trees that rose near by,
Gaunt, scanty saplings, inter-twining lines
Reticulate, like streaks of buttermilk
Upon a freshly emptied glass.—Said one,
Whose words “began, and ceased, and then again
Began, with tremulous cadence slow,” and seemed
To “bring the eternal note of sadness in” :

“Well asked hath been the question, long ago :
‘What doth it profit one to gain the world
And lose his soul ?’ But if a man lose both
His soul and world—as he hath done of late
(And all his servile shadows), who himself

Himself did raise above the common crowd,
Proclaiming origin divine, akin
To that of all his spurious, tribal gods—
I ask, is he in worse plight than the man
Who gaineth all but loseth self? No. No,
I say with feeling, 'for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

To him

Musing in melancholy thus, his friend
Replied, and in his words there was a note
Of cheer: "Quite right, quite right; it seemeth so,
And it *is* so; but let me ask touching
The men who gain no worlds, but save their souls;
If earth hath 'neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,'
As thou hast truly said, whither shall they,
Whose conscience, void of all offence, is clear,
Turn for that satisfaction, which they crave,
In brave deeds done for no material gain?
Will it not be to that Idealism,
Which men, with some incomprehensible
Device endowed, seem able to conceive
But not to realize? 'Tis this alone
That sweeteneth life for men and nations both,
And keepeth them forever pushing stones

Up sweaty slopes, only to see them roll
 Down hill again. It is that luminous bow
 Of Northern nights, intangible, that flaunts
 Its flaming gonfalons among the stars,
 Nor can we tell its whither or its whence.
 Is it not this that causeth them, who struck
 The final liberating blow, to sing
 These words adapted from my threnody?
 'A people's voice! *We* are a people yet,
 Though all men else their nobler dreams forget,
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless powers!
 Americans! Give thanks that we were set
 Where gleams a steady light from Freedom's towers;
 That we have voice with which to pay the debt
 Of boundless love and reverence and regret
 To those brave men who fought, and kept it ours.
 And *keep* it ours, keep it from brute control!
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
 Of our America, and keep her whole;
 For, saving her, ye help to save mankind,
 To crumble gross injustice into dust,
 And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
 Till crowds at length be sane, and leaders just!'"

The twain passed out of hearing, while I sat
 Amazed, bewildered, wiser, comforted.
 Could this be Hell, the Hell I fancied erst?
 Why, even here were life, and strife, ideals,
 And breadth and narrowness of view, and all
 That gives existence that diversity
 Which is its chiefest charm. Here optimism—
 That beautiful, exotic thing, which blooms

Under the glass of temperament, but fades
 Exposed to wintry gusts of fact—found place.
 Grave melancholy too was here, humor,
 Wit, healthy scepticism, faith to move
 A planet from its course.—And Armageddon !
What had I heard in Hell that did not bear
 On that stupendous cataclysm, which I
 Had come so far to flee? Surely, I thought,
 In death we are in life—'tis all the same ;
 There never was a Golden Age, nor could
 There ever be : nothing but grinding on,
 And “seeing things,” and sometimes here or there
 Catching a fleeting glimpse of some Great Thing,
 Which cannot be explained, much less seized on,
 But only lived *for*, or lived *towards* ; as when
 A bubble bursts and nothing is, if touched,
 But none the less its glory haunts the eye.

And so, I said, I will arise and go
 Unto my upper habitation, there
 To face both fact and dream, nor think to escape
 The universal law of flux and change,
 Of comedy and tragedy. There I
 Will play my part, and work, and sing, and help,
 If it within me lies, to add some stone
 To man's *Dream House*, which he, allured, impelled
 By nameless gods invisible but real,
 Is building for himself, nor knows its length,
 Or breadth, or height, and knows he cannot know.

.
 And now, pray, shrive me, friends, and shrive me well,
 For having bored you with my trip to Hell.

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