

VII - BALLADES

BALLADE D'UNE GRANDE DAME

Heaven shall forgive you Bridge at dawn, The clothes you wear--or do not
wear-- And Ladies' Leap-frog on the lawn And dyes and drugs, and petits
verres. Your vicious things shall melt in air But for the Virtuous
Things you do, The Righteous Work, the Public Care, It shall not be
forgiven you.

Because you could not even yawn When your Committees would prepare
To have the teeth of paupers drawn, Or strip the slums of Human Hair;
Because a Doctor Otto Maehr Spoke of "a segregated few"-- And you sat
smiling in your chair-- It shall not be forgiven you.

Though your sins cried to---Father Vaughan, These desperate you could
not spare Who steal, with nothing left to pawn; You caged a man up like a
bear For ever in a jailor's care Because his sins were more than two ...
... I know a house in Hoxton where It shall not be forgiven you.

ENVOI

Princess, you trapped a guileless Mayor To meet some people that you
knew ... When the Last Trumpet rends the air It shall not be forgiven you.

A BALLADE OF AN ANTI-PURITAN

They spoke of Progress spiring round, Of Light and Mrs. Humphry Ward--
It is not true to say I frowned, Or ran about the room and roared; I might
have simply sat and snored-- I rose politely in the club And said, "I feel a
little bored; Will someone take me to a pub?"

The new world's wisest did surround Me; and it pains me to record I did
not think their views profound, Or their conclusions well assured; The
simple life I can't afford, Besides, I do not like the grub-- I wait a mash and
sausage, "scored"-- Will someone take me to a pub?

I know where Men can still be found, Anger and clamorous accord, And
virtues growing from the ground, And fellowship of beer and board, And
song, that is a sturdy cord. And hope, that is a hardy shrub, And
godness, that is God's last word-- Will someone take me to a pub?

ENVOI

Prince, Bayard would have smashed his sword To see the sort of knights
you dub--Is that the last of them--O Lord! Will someone take me to a pub?

A BALLADE OF A BOOK-REVIEWER

I have not read a rotten page Of "Sex-Hate" or "The Social Test," And
here comes "Husks" and "Heritage".... O Moses, give us all a rest! "Ethics of
Empire"!... I protest I will not even cut the strings, I'll read "Jack Redskin
on the Quest" And feed my brain with better things.

Somebody wants a Wiser Age (He also wants me to invest); Somebody
likes the Finnish Stage Because the Jesters do not jest; And grey with dust
is Dante's crest, The bell of Rabelais soundless swings; And the winds
come out of the west And feed my brain with better things.

Lord of our laughter and our rage. Look on us with our sins oppressed!
I, too, have trodden mine heritage, Wickedly wearying of the best. Burn
from my brain and from my breast Sloth, and the cowardice that clings,
And stiffness and the soul's arrest: And feed my brain with better things.

ENVOI

Prince, you are host and I am guest, Therefore I shrink from cavillings....
But I should have that fizz suppressed And feed my brain with better things.

A BALLADE OF SUICIDE

The gallows in my garden, people say, Is new and neat and adequately tall.
I tie the noose on in a knowing way As one that knots his necktie for a ball;
But just as all the neighbours--on the wall-- Are drawing a long breath to
shout "Hurray!" The strangest whim has seized me.... After all I think I will
not hang myself to-day.

To-morrow is the time I get my pay--My uncle's sword is hanging in the
hall-- I see a little cloud all pink and grey-- Perhaps the rector's mother will
not call-- I fancy that I heard from Mr. Gall That mushrooms could be
cooked another way-- I never read the works of Juvenal-- I think I will not
hang myself to-day.

The world will have another washing day; The decadents decay; the
pedants pall; And H.G. Wells has found that children play. And Bernard
Shaw discovered that they squall; Rationalists are growing rational-- And
through thick woods one finds a stream astray, So secret that the very sky
seems small-- I think I will not hang myself to-day.

ENVOI

Prince, I can hear the trumpet of Germinal, The tumbrils toiling up the
terrible way; Even to-day your royal head may fall-- I think I will not hang
myself to-day.

A BALLADE OF THE FIRST RAIN

The sky is blue with summer and the sun, The woods are brown as
autumn with the tan, It might as well be Tropics and be done, I might as
well be born a copper Khan; I fashion me an oriental fan Made of the
wholly unreceipted bills Brought by the ice-man, sleeping in his van (A
storm is coming on the Chiltern Hills).

I read the Young Philosophers for fun --Fresh as our sorrow for the late
Queen Anne-- The Dionysians whom a pint would stun, The Pantheists
who never heard of Pan. --But through my hair electric needles ran, And
on my book a gout of water spills, And on the skirts of heaven the guns began
(A storm is coming on the Chiltern Hills).

O fields of England, cracked and dry and dun, O soul of England, sick of
words, and wan!-- The clouds grow dark;--the down-rush has begun. --It
comes, it comes, as holy darkness can, Black as with banners, ban and
arriere-ban; A falling laughter all the valley fills, Deep as God's thunder
and the thirst of man: (A storm is coming on the Chiltern Hills).

ENVOI

Prince, Prince-Elective on the modern plan Fulfilling such a lot of People's
Wills, You take the Chiltern Hundreds while you can-- A storm is coming
on the Chiltern Hills.

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