

DEDICATION

Of great limbs gone to chaos, A great face turned to night--
Why bend above a shapeless shroud Seeking in such archaic cloud
Sight of strong lords and light?

Where seven sunken Englands Lie buried one by one,
Why should one idle spade, I wonder, Shake up the dust of thanes
like thunder To smoke and choke the sun?

In cloud of clay so cast to heaven What shape shall man
discern? These lords may light the mystery Of mastery or
victory, And these ride high in history, But these shall not
return.

Gored on the Norman gonfalon The Golden Dragon died:
We shall not wake with ballad strings The good time of the smaller
things, We shall not see the holy kings Ride down by Severn
side.

Stiff, strange, and quaintly coloured As the broidery of Bayeux
The England of that dawn remains, And this of Alfred and the Danes
Seems like the tales a whole tribe feigns Too English to be true.

Of a good king on an island That ruled once on a time;
And as he walked by an apple tree There came green devils out of the
sea With sea-plants trailing heavily And tracks of opal slime.

Yet Alfred is no fairy tale; His days as our days ran, He
also looked forth for an hour On peopled plains and skies that lower,
From those few windows in the tower That is the head of a man.

But who shall look from Alfred's hood Or breathe his breath
alive? His century like a small dark cloud Drifts far; it is an
eyeless crowd, Where the tortured trumpets scream aloud And
the dense arrows drive.

Lady, by one light only We look from Alfred's eyes, We
know he saw athwart the wreck The sign that hangs about your neck,
Where One more than Melchizedek Is dead and never dies.

Therefore I bring these rhymes to you Who brought the cross to
me, Since on you flaming without flaw I saw the sign that
Guthrum saw When he let break his ships of awe, And laid
peace on the sea.

Do you remember when we went Under a dragon moon,
And 'mid volcanic tints of night Walked where they fought the
unknown fight And saw black trees on the battle-height, Black
thorn on Ethandune?

And I thought, "I will go with you, As man with God has gone,
And wander with a wandering star, The wandering heart of things
that are, The fiery cross of love and war That like yourself, goes
on."

O go you onward; where you are Shall honour and laughter be,
Past purpled forest and pearled foam, God's winged pavilion free to
roam, Your face, that is a wandering home, A flying home for
me.

Ride through the silent earthquake lands, Wide as a waste is
wide, Across these days like deserts, when Pride and a little
scratching pen Have dried and split the hearts of men, Heart of
the heroes, ride.

Up through an empty house of stars, Being what heart you are,
Up the inhuman steeps of space As on a staircase go in grace,
Carrying the firelight on your face Beyond the loneliest star.

Take these; in memory of the hour We strayed a space from
home And saw the smoke-hued hamlets, quaint With Westland
king and Westland saint, And watched the western glory faint
Along the road to Frome.