

THE DEDICATION

IS TO

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I N the blind hour of madness, in its might,  
When the red star of tyranny was highest ;  
When baleful watchfires scared the witless night,  
    And kings mocked Freedom, as she wept : “ Thou  
    diest ! ”  
When priestcraft snarled at Thought : “ I crush thee  
    quite ! ”  
    Then rose the splendid song of thee, “ Thou liest ! ”  
Out of the drakness, in the death of hope,  
Thy white star flamed in Europe’s horoscope.

The coffin-nails were driven home : the curse  
    Of mockery’s blessings flung the dust upon her :  
The horses of Destruction dragged the hearse  
    Over besmirchèd roads of Truth and Honour :  
The obscene God spat on the Universe :  
    The sods of Destiny were spattered on her :—  
The rose thy spirit through the shaken skies :  
“ Child of the Dawn, I say to thee arise ! ”

Through the ancestral shame and feudal gloom,  
    Through mediæval blackness rung they pæan :  
Let there be light !—the desecrated tomb  
    Gaped as thy fury smote the Galilean.

Let there be light ! and there was light : the womb  
Of Earth resounded, and the empyrèan  
Roared : and the thunder of the seas averred  
The presence of the recreating word.

The stone rolls back : the charioted night,  
Stricken, swings backwards on her broken pinions :  
Faith sickens, drunken tyranny reels, the spite  
Of monarchs, ruinous of their chained dominions :  
The splendid forehead, crowned with Love and Light,  
Flames in the starry air : the fallen minions  
Drop like lost souls through horrid emptiness  
To their own black unfathomable abysses !

No Freedom, flower and star and wind and wave  
And spirit of the unimagined fire,  
Begotten on the dishonourable grave  
Of fallen tyranny, may seek her sire  
In the pure waters of Man, her lips may lave  
In the pure waters of her soul's desire,  
Truth : and deep eyes behold thine eyes as deep,  
Fresh lips kiss thine that kissed her soul from sleep.

See Italy, the eagle of all time,  
Triumphant, from her coffin's leaden prison,  
Soar into freedom, seek the heights sublime  
Of self-reliance, from those depths new-risen,  
Stirred by the passion of thy mighty rhyme :  
Eagle and phoenix : shrill, sharp flames bedizen  
The burning citadel, where crested Man  
Leaps sword in hand upon the Vatican.

Those dire words spoken, that thine hammer beat,  
    Of fire and steel and music, wrath god-worsted,  
Consuming with immeasurable heat,  
    The styles and kennels of priest and king, that girded  
The loins of many peoples, till the seat  
    Of Hell was shaken to its deep, and herded  
Hosts of the tyrant trembled, faltered, fled,  
When none pursued but curses of men dead :—

See, from the Calvary of the Son of Man,  
    Where all the hopes of France were trodden under ;  
See from the crucifixion of Sedan,  
    Thy thought the lightning, and thy word the thunder !  
See her supreme, kingly, republican,  
    New France arisen, with her heart in sunder—  
Yet throned in Heaven on ever-burning wheels,  
Freedom resurgent, sealed with seven seals.

The seal of Reason, made impregnable :  
    The seal of Truth, immeasurably splendid :  
The seal of Brotherhood, man's miracle :  
    The seal of Peace, and Wisdom heaven-descended :  
The seal of Bitterness, cast down to Hell :  
    The seal of Love, secure, not-to-be-rended :  
The seventh seal, Equality : that broken,  
God sets his thunder and earthquake for a token.

Now if on France the iron clangours close,  
    Corruption's desperate hand, and lurking treason,  
Or alien craft, or menace of strange blows  
    Wrought of her own sons, in this bitter season :

Lift up thy voice, breathe fury on her foes,  
    Smite bigots yet again, and call on Reason,  
Reason that must awake, and sternly grip  
The unhooded serpent of dictatorship !

Or, if thou have laid aside the starry brand,  
    And scourge, whose knots with their foul blood are  
    rotten  
Whom thou didst smite ; if thine unwearied hand  
    Sicken of slaughter ; if thy soul have gotten  
Its throne in so sublime a fatherland,  
    Above these miscreants and misbegotten ;  
If even already thy spirit have found peace,  
Among the thronged immortal secrecies ;

If with the soul of Æschylus thy soul  
    Talk, and with Sappho's if thy music mingle ;  
If with the spirit infinite and whole  
    Of Shakespeare thou commune ; if thy brows tingle  
With Dante's kiss ; if Milton's thunders roll  
    Amid thy skies ; if thou, supreme and single,  
Be made as Shelley or as Hugo now  
And all their laurels mingle on thy brow—

Then (as Elijah, when the whirling fire  
    Caught him) stoop not thy spiritual splendour,  
And sacred-seeking eyes to our desire,  
    But mould one memory yet, divinely tender,  
Of earth, and leave thy mantle, and thy lyre,  
    A double portion of thy spirit to render,  
That yet the banner may fling out on high,  
And yet the lyre teach freemen how to die !

Master, the night is falling yet again.

I hear dim tramlings of unholy forces :  
I see the assembly of the foully slain :

The scent of murder steams : riderless horses  
Gallop across the earth, and seek the inane :

The sun and moon are shaken in their courses :  
The kings are gathered, and the vultures fall  
Screaming, to hold their ghastly festival.

Master, the sons of Freedom are but few—

Yea, but as strong as the storm-smitten sea,  
Their forehead consecrated with the dew,

Their heart made mighty : let my voice decree,  
My spirit lift their standard : clear and true

Bid my trump sound, “ Let all the earth be free ! ”  
With thine own strength and melody made strong,  
And filled with fire and light of thine own song.

Only a boy's wild songs, a boy's desire,

I bring with reverent hands. The task is ended—  
The twilight draws on me : the sacred fire

Sleeps : I have sheathed my sword, my bow un-  
bended :

So for one hour I lay aside the lyre,

And come, alone, unholpen, unbefriended,  
As streams get water of the sun-smit sea,  
Seeking my ocean and my sun in thee.

Yea, with thy whirling clouds of fiery light

Involve my music, gyring fuller and faster !  
Yea, to my sword lend majesty and might  
To dominate all tumult and disaster,

That even my song may pierce the iron night,  
    Invoking dawn in thy great name, O Master !  
Till to the stainless heaven of the soul  
Even my chariot-wheels on thunder roll.

And so, most sacred soul, most revered head,  
    The silence of deep midnight shall be bound,  
And with the mighty concourse of the dead  
    That live, that contemplate, my place be found,  
Even mine, through all the seasons that are shed  
    Like leaves upon the darkness, where the sound  
Of all high song through calm eternity  
Shall beat and boom, thine own maternal sea.

For in the formless world, so swift a fire  
    Shall burn, that fire shall not be comprehended ;  
So deep a music roll, that our desire  
    Shall hear no sound ; shall beam a light so splendid  
That darkness shall be infinite : the lyre  
    Fashioned of truth strung with men's heart-strings  
    blended,  
Shall sound as silence : and all souls be still  
In wisdom's high communion with will.