

Classic Poetry Series

Elliott Napier

- poems -

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All Men Are Free

'ALL men are free and equal born
Before the Law!' So runs the worn
And specious, lying, parrot-cry.
All men are free—to starve or sigh;
But few to feed on Egypt's corn.

There toils the sweated slave, forlorn;
There weeps the babe with hunger torn;
Dear God! Forgive us for the lie—
'All men are free!'

That man may laugh while this must mourn;
One's heir to honour, one to scorn—
Were they born free? Were you? Was I?
No! Not when born, but when they die
And of their robes—or rags—are shorn,
All men are free!

Elliott Napier

France

OH, golden-lilied Queen—immortal France!
Thou heritress of storied name and deed,
As thou hast pluck'd, so oft, from cumb'ring weed
The fragrant flow'rs of Freedom and Romance,
So shalt thou seize to-day the fateful chance
That comes to thee in this thy hour of need,
When once again thy sacred frontiers bleed
Beneath the thrust of the Invader's lance.

For, with the hour, hath also come again
The pure and splendid spirit of the Maid
To nerve thy sons and wipe away thy tears,
Till, sanctified by Sorrow, purged by pain,
Thou shalt arise, unfettered, unafraid,
And walk in honour down the deathless years.

Elliott Napier

Mater Dolorosa

JUST as of yore the friendly rain
Patters its old and frank refrain;
Just as of yore the world swings by
The little window where I lie
Watching the shadows wax and wane.

I see, beyond the Aegean main,
His cross upon the grave-scarred plain—
Yet still the dawn-flush climbs the sky,
Just as of yore!

His cross—and mine! They try in vain
With careful phrase to stanch the pain;
They say, 'A hero's death!' But I
Long only for his footstep nigh;
Long only for my boy again,
Just as of yore!

Elliott Napier

Russia

IMPLACABLE as are thy arctic floes;
Grim and gigantic as thy mountain height;
Girt with thy pines for spindles and the light
Of pale auroras for thy stars; to those
Who know thee not thou seem'st as one who goes
Unvex'd by Wrong, nor swerves to help the Right,
A grey Lachesis of the Northern night,
Stark as thy steppes and colder than thy snows.

But we—we know thee now, Ally and Friend!
True as thy Baltic Spars and tried by fire,
Thy seeming coldness hides a courage high,
A stern resolve to do, endure and die,
So that the holy cause of thy desire—
Thy cause and ours—shall triumph in the end.

Elliott Napier