Classic Poetry Series

William Pember Reeves

- poems -

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GOD girt her about with the surges
 And winds of the masterless deep,
Whose tumult uprouses and urges
 Quick billows to sparkle and leap;
He filled from the life of their motion
 Her nostrils with breath of the sea,
And gave her afar in the ocean
 A citadel free.

Her never the fever-mist shrouding,
 Nor drought of the desert may blight,
Nor pall of dun smoke overclouding
 Vast cities of clamorous night,
But the voice of abundance of waters,
 Cold rivers that stay not or sleep,
Greets children, the sons and the daughters
 Of light and the deep.

Lo! here where each league hath its fountains
 In isles of deep fern and tall pine,
And breezes snow-cooled on the mountains,
 Or keen from the limitless brine,
See men to the battlefield pressing
 To conquer one foe—the stern soil,
Their kingship in labour expressing,
 Their lordship in toil.

Though young they are heirs of the ages,
 Though few they are freemen and peers,
Plain workers—yet sure of the wages
 Slow Destiny pays with the years.
Though least they and latest their nation,
 Yet this they have won without sword—
That Woman with Man shall have station,
 And Labour be lord.

The winds of the sea and high heaven
 Speed pure to her kissed by the foam;
The steeds of her ocean undriven,
 Unbitted and riderless roam,
And clear from her lamp newly lighted
 Shall stream o’er the billows upcurled
A light as of wrongs at length righted,
 Of hope to the world.

William Pember Reeves