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DAY ONE: HIS FRIEND'S STRANGE PREFERENCE

Oscar Wilde's "The Harlot's House" (1885, 1908)

We caught the tread of dancing feet,
We loitered down the moonlit street,
And stopped beneath the harlot's house.

Inside, above the din and fray,
We heard the loud musicians play 5
The 'Treues Liebes Herz' of Strauss.

Like strange mechanical grotesques,
Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin 10
To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled automatons,
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sliding through the slow quadrille, 15

Then took each other by the hand,
And danced a stately saraband;
Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clockwork puppet pressed
A phantom lover to her breast, 20
Sometimes they seemed to try to sing.

Sometimes a horrible marionette
Came out, and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then, turning to my love, I said, 25
'The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust.'

But she—she heard the violin,
And left my side, and entered in:
Love passed into the house of lust. 30

Then suddenly the tune went false,
The dancers wearied of the waltz,
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl.

And down the long and silent street,
The dawn, with silver-sandalled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

35

Points for Reflection

1. does this poem represent one monolithic perspective? Is the narrator's point of view authoritative and trustworthy? Is it representative of society, or just his personal opinion?
2. what draws the narrator's love into this house? Does she see or hear something different than the narrator? Is she compelled against her will? Does she appear to have a Treus Liebes Herz (true, loving heart)?
3. why are those within the brothel described as "shadows" (l.9) and "ghosts" (l.10)? Consider the lighting conditions under which they are viewed by the narrator.
4. are the prostitutes in full control of their own actions? Why might the narrator liken them to "wire-pulled automatons" and "clockwork puppet[s]" (ll.13, 19)?
5. does the narrator's companion transform the events inside, or join them (ll.28-33)?
6. with what tone does the poem conclude, and why is the daylight described as frightened, and girlish?

DAY THREE: RACE MATTERS

Walt Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric" (1855)

1.

I sing the Body electric;
The armies of those I love engirth me, and I engirth them;
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
And discurrup them, and charge them full with the charge of the Soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves; 5
And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?
And if the body does not do as much as the Soul?
And if the body were not the Soul, what is the Soul?

2.

The love of the Body of man or woman balks account—the body itself balks account;
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect. 10
The expression of the face balks account;
But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face;
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists;
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees—dress does not hide
him;
The strong, sweet, supple quality he has, strikes through the cotton and flannel; 15
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps more;
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of women, the folds of their dress,
their style as we pass
 in the street, the contour of their shape downwards,
The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he swims through the transparent green-
shine, or lies with
 his face up, and rolls silently to and fro in the heave of the water,
The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-boats—the horseman in his saddle, 20
Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,
The group of laborers seated at noon-time with their open dinner-kettles, and their wives
waiting,
The female soothing a child—the farmer's daughter in the garden or cow-yard,
The young fellow hoeing corn—the sleigh-driver guiding his six horses through the crowd,
The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown, lusty, good-natured, native-born,
out on the vacant lot at sundown, after work,

25

The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and resistance,
The upper-hold and the under-hold, the hair rumpled over and blinding the eyes;

The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of masculine muscle through clean-setting trowsers and
waist-straps,

The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell strikes suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,

The natural, perfect, varied attitudes—the bent head, the curv'd neck, and the counting; 30
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the mother's breast with the little child,
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in line with the firemen, and pause,
listen, and count.

3.

I know a man, a common farmer—the father of five sons;
And in them were the fathers of sons—and in them were the fathers of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigor, calmness, beauty of person; 35
The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his hair and beard, and the immeasurable
meaning of his

black eyes—the richness and breadth of his manners,
These I used to go and visit him to see—he was wise also;
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old—his sons were massive, clean, bearded,
tan-faced,

handsome;
They and his daughters loved him—all who saw him loved him;
They did not love him by allowance—they loved him with personal love; 40
He drank water only—the blood show'd like scarlet through the clear-brown skin of his
face;

He was a frequent gunner and fisher—he sail'd his boat himself—he had a fine one presented
to him by a ship-
joiner—he had fowling-pieces, presented to him by men that loved him;
When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to hunt or fish, you would pick him
out as the most
beautiful and vigorous of the gang.

You would wish long and long to be with him—you would wish to sit by him in the boat,
that you and he might
touch each other.

4.

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough, 45
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough,
To pass among them, or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so lightly round his or her neck
for a moment—

what is this, then?
I do not ask any more delight—I swim in it, as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women, and looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the soul well;

50

All things please the soul—but these please the soul well.

5.

This is the female form;

A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot;

It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction!

I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapor—all falls aside but myself and it; 55

Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, the atmosphere and the clouds, and what was expected of

heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed;

Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it—the response likewise ungovernable;

Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands, all diffused—mine too diffused;

Ebb stung by the flow, and flow stung by the ebb—love-flesh swelling and deliciously aching;

Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of love, white-blow and delirious juice;60

Bridegroom night of love, working surely and softly into the prostrate dawn;

Undulating into the willing and yielding day,

Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

This is the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, the man is born of woman;

This is the bath of birth—this is the merge of small and large, and the outlet again. 65

Be not ashamed, women—your privilege encloses the rest, and is the exit of the rest;

You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul.

The female contains all qualities, and tempers them—she is in her place, and moves with perfect balance;

She is all things duly veil'd—she is both passive and active;

She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons as well as daughters. 70

As I see my soul reflected in nature;

As I see through a mist, one with inexpressible completeness and beauty,

See the bent head, and arms folded over the breast—the female I see.

6.

The male is not less the soul, nor more—he too is in his place;

He too is all qualities—he is action and power; 75

The flush of the known universe is in him;

Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become him well;

The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow that is utmost, become him well—pride is for him; The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to the soul;

Knowledge becomes him—he likes it always—he brings everything to the test of himself; 80

Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail, he strikes soundings at last only here;
(Where else does he strike soundings, except here?)

The man's body is sacred, and the woman's body is sacred;
No matter who it is, it is sacred;
Is it a slave? Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the wharf? 85
Each belongs here or anywhere, just as much as the well-off—just as much as you;
Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession;
The universe is a procession, with measured and beautiful motion.)

Do you know so much yourself, that you call the slave or the dull-face ignorant? 90
Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or she has no right to a sight?
Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse float—and the soil is on the
surface, and water runs,
and vegetation sprouts,
For you only, and not for him and her?

7.

A man's Body at auction;
I help the auctioneer—the sloven does not half know his business. 95
Gentlemen, look on this wonder!
Whatever the bids of the bidders, they cannot be high enough for it;
For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years, without one animal or plant;
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain; 100
In it and below it, the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white—they are so cunning in tendon and nerve;
They shall be stript, that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant back-bone and neck, flesh not flabby, good-sized arms and
legs, 105
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,
The same old blood!
The same red-running blood!
There swells and jets a heart—there all passions, desires, reachings, aspirations; 110
Do you think they are not there because they are not express'd in parlors and lecture-
rooms?

This is not only one man—this is the father of those who shall be fathers in their turns;
In him the start of populous states and rich republics;
Of him countless immortal lives, with countless embodiments and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his offspring through the centuries?

115

Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you could trace back through the centuries?

8.

A woman's Body at auction!

She too is not only herself—she is the teeming mother of mothers;
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the mothers.

Have you ever loved the Body of a woman?

120

Have you ever loved the Body of a man?

Your father—where is your father?

Your mother—is she living? have you been much with her? and has she been much with you?

—Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all, in all nations and times, all over the earth?

If any thing is sacred, the human body is sacred,

125

And the glory and sweet of a man, is the token of manhood untainted;

And in man or woman, a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is beautiful as the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or the fool that corrupted her own live body?

For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal themselves.

9.

O my Body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men and women, nor the likes of the parts of you; 130

I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of the Soul, (and that they are the Soul;)

I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems—and that they are poems,

Man's, woman's, child's, youth's, wife's, husband's, mother's, father's, young man's, young woman's poems; Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,

Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eye-brows, and the waking or sleeping of the lids, 135

Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws, and the jaw-hinges,

Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,

Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck, neck-slue,

Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and the ample side-round of the chest.

Upper-arm, arm-pit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews, arm-bones,

140

Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb, fore-finger, finger-balls, finger-joints, finger-nails,

Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-bone, breast-side,

Ribs, belly, back-bone, joints of the back-bone,

Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round, man-balls, man-root, 145
 Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,
 Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under leg,
 Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel;
 All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my or your body, or of any one's body,
 male or female,
 The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and clean,
 The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame, 150
 Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-valves, sexuality, maternity,
 Womanhood, and all that is a woman—and the man that comes from woman,
 The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter, weeping, love-looks, love-
 perturbations and risings, The voice, articulation, language, whispering, shouting aloud,
 Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat, sleep, walking, swimming, 155
 Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing, arm-curving and tightening,
 The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and around the eyes,
 The skin, the sun-burnt shade, freckles, hair,
 The curious sympathy one feels, when feeling with the hand the naked meat of the body,
 The circling rivers, the breath, and breathing it in and out, 160
 The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence downward toward the knees,
 The thin red jellies within you, or within me—the bones, and the marrow in the bones,
 The exquisite realization of health;
 O I say, these are not the parts and poems of the Body only, but of the Soul,
 O I say now these are the Soul!

Points for Reflection

1. what value does Whitman accord the body, relative to the soul (ll.1-8)?
2. does Whitman divide his attention equally between male and female bodies?
3. what qualities does Whitman apply to the common farmer of line thirty-three to explain why he is loved by all who know him?
4. how important are vision and touch for Whitman, relative to other forms of interpersonal communication?
5. what might Whitman mean by the claim that "All things please the soul" (l.51, emphasis added)? Does this seem a nonsensical statement?
6. how does Whitman's appreciation of the female body affect his appreciation of the Arts, of religion, and of the intangible (l.56)?
7. do you find Whitman's description of sex beautiful or offensive (ll.58-63)? Does this description, set amidst a celebration of women, focus more on female sexuality than male sexuality?
8. Whitman declares in section #6 that man, like woman, is "all qualities" (l.75). How similar are the qualities he lists here to those he assigns women in section #5?

9. where does Whitman's poem fall on that political battlefield in which the war of sexual rights is being waged across the nineteenth century (ll. 66-84)?
10. what of the related arenas which concern slavery and immigration (ll.85-124). Where does Whitman stand?
11. how does Whitman "help" the slave auctioneer who "does not half know his business" (l.95)?
12. what touchy topic does Whitman obliquely point towards in lines 115-16?
13. why might Whitman include the phrase "the Body" in lines 120 and 121? How does this phrase modify the meaning of these sentences?
14. how might one "corrupt" their own bodies (ll.5, 128), from Whitman's perspective?
15. a couple times, Whitman moves beyond the skin into the recesses of the body's innermost cavities (ll.41, 100-108, 149-50, 162). Does this strike you as a kind of clinical dissection of the body, or something else?
16. does Whitman leave out anything important in his exhaustive listing of the body's various parts?
17. does he include body parts that propriety might prefer unlisted?
18. how many of the human actions listed by Whitman require an able body in order to be performed (ll.153-57, 163)?
19. is sympathy, for Whitman, primarily a cerebral experience (l.159)?
20. does Whitman explicitly (or implicitly) include disabled or extraordinary bodies in his celebration of the human form?

Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Exposition Address" (1895) / essay from 1901

The Atlanta Exposition, at which I had been asked to make an address as a representative of the Negro race, as stated in the last chapter, was opened with a short address from Governor Bullock. After other interesting exercises, including an invocation from Bishop Nelson, of Georgia, a dedicatory ode by Albert Howell, Jr., and addresses by the President of the Exposition and Mrs. Joseph Thompson, the President of the Woman's Board, Governor Bullock introduced me with the words, "We have with us to-day a representative of Negro enterprise and Negro civilization."

When I arose to speak, there was considerable cheering, especially from the coloured people. As I remember it now, the thing that was uppermost in my mind was the desire to say something that would cement the friendship of the races and bring about hearty cooperation between them. So far as my outward surroundings were concerned, the only thing that I recall distinctly now is that when I got up, I saw thousands of eyes looking intently into my face. The following is the address which I delivered: -

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board of Directors and Citizens:

One-third of the population of the South is of the Negro race. No enterprise seeking the material, civil, or moral welfare of this section can disregard this element of our population and reach the highest success. I but convey to you, Mr. President and Directors, the sentiment of the masses of my race when I say that in no way have the value and manhood of the American Negro been more fittingly and generously recognized than by the managers of this magnificent Exposition at every stage of its progress. It is a recognition that will do more to cement the friendship of the two races than any occurrence since the dawn of our freedom.

Not only this, but the opportunity here afforded will awaken among us a new era of industrial progress. Ignorant and inexperienced, it is not strange that in the first years of our new life we began at the top instead of at the bottom; that a seat in Congress or the state legislature was more sought than real estate or industrial skill; that the political convention or stump speaking had more attractions than starting a dairy farm or truck garden.

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water; send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River. To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: "Cast down your bucket where you are"—cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world, and in nothing is this Exposition more eloquent than in emphasizing this chance. Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life; shall prosper in proportion as we learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamental gewgaws of life and the useful. No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, "Cast down your bucket where you are." Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labour wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South. Casting down your bucket among my people, helping and encouraging them as you are doing on these grounds, and to education of head, hand, and heart, you will find that they will buy your surplus land, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories. While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one. In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

There is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all. If anywhere there are efforts tending to curtail the fullest growth of the Negro, let these efforts be turned into stimulating, encouraging, and making him the most useful and intelligent citizen. Effort or means so invested will pay a thousand per cent interest. These efforts will be twice blessed—blessing him that gives and him that takes. There is no escape through law of man or God from the inevitable:

The laws of changeless justice bind Oppressor with oppressed;

And close as sin and suffering joined We march to fate abreast...

Nearly sixteen millions of hands will aid you in pulling the load upward, or they will pull against you the load downward. We shall constitute one-third and more of the ignorance and crime of the South, or one-third [of] its intelligence and progress; we shall contribute one-

third to the business and industrial prosperity of the South, or we shall prove a veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic.

Gentlemen of the Exposition, as we present to you our humble effort at an exhibition of our progress, you must not expect overmuch. Starting thirty years ago with ownership here and there in a few quilts and pumpkins and chickens (gathered from miscellaneous sources), remember the path that has led from these to the inventions and production of agricultural implements, buggies, steam-engines, newspapers, books, statuary, carving, paintings, the management of drug stores and banks, has not been trodden without contact with thorns and thistles. While we take pride in what we exhibit as a result of our independent efforts, we do not for a moment forget that our part in this exhibition would fall far short of your expectations but for the constant help that has come to our educational life, not only from the Southern states, but especially from Northern philanthropists, who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement.

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

In conclusion, may I repeat that nothing in thirty years has given us more hope and encouragement, and drawn us so near to you of the white race, as this opportunity offered by the Exposition; and here bending, as it were, over the altar that represents the results of the struggles of your race and mine, both starting practically empty-handed three decades ago, I pledge that in your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which God has laid at the doors of the South, you shall have at all times the patient, sympathetic help of my race; only let this be constantly in mind, that, while from representations in these buildings of the product of field, of forest, of mine, of factory, letters, and art, much good will come, yet far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that, let us pray God, will come, in a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and suspicions, in a determination to administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of law. This, coupled with our material prosperity, will bring into our beloved South a new heaven and a new earth.

The first thing that I remember, after I had finished speaking, was that Governor Bullock rushed across the platform and took me by the hand, and that others did the same. I received so many and such hearty congratulations that I found it difficult to get out of the building. I did not appreciate to any degree, however, the impression which my address seemed to have made, until the next morning, when I went into the business part of the city. As soon as I was recognized, I was surprised to find myself pointed out and surrounded by a crowd of men who wished to shake hands with me. This was kept up on every street on to which I went, to an extent which embarrassed me so much that I went back to my boarding-place. The next morning I returned to Tuskegee. At the station in Atlanta, and at almost all of the stations at

which the train stopped between that city and Tuskegee, I found a crowd of people anxious to shake hands with me.

The papers in all parts of the United States published the address in full, and for months afterward there were complimentary editorial references to it. Mr. Clark Howell, the editor of the Atlanta Constitution, telegraphed to a New York paper, among other words, the following, "I do not exaggerate when I say that Professor Booker T. Washington's address yesterday was one of the most notable speeches, both as to character and as to the warmth of its reception, ever delivered to a Southern audience. The address was a revelation. The whole speech is a platform upon which blacks and whites can stand with full justice to each other."

The Boston Transcript said editorially: "The speech of Booker T. Washington at the Atlanta Exposition, this week, seems to have dwarfed all the other proceedings and the Exposition itself. The sensation that it has caused in the press has never been equalled."

I very soon began receiving all kinds of propositions from lecture bureaus, and editors of magazines and papers, to take the lecture platform, and to write articles. One lecture bureau offered me fifty thousand dollars, or two hundred dollars a night and expenses, if I would place my services at its disposal for a given period. To all these communications I replied that my life-work was at Tuskegee; and that whenever I spoke it must be in the interests of the Tuskegee school and my race, and that I would enter into no arrangements that seemed to place a mere commercial value upon my services.

Some days after its delivery I sent a copy of my address to the President of the United States, the Hon. Grover Cleveland. I received from him the following autograph reply: -

GRAY GABLES, BUZZARD'S BAY, MASS.,
October 6, 1895

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, ESQ.:

MY DEAR SIR: I thank you for sending me a copy of your address delivered at the Atlanta Exposition.

I thank you with much enthusiasm for making the address. I have read it with intense interest, and I think the Exposition would be fully justified if it did not do more than furnish the opportunity for its delivery. Your words cannot fail to delight and encourage all who wish well for your race; and if our coloured fellow-citizens do not from your utterances gather new hope and form new determinations to gain every valuable advantage offered them by their citizenship, it will be strange indeed.

Yours very truly,
GROVER CLEVELAND.

Later I met Mr. Cleveland, for the first time, when, as President, he visited the Atlanta Exposition. At the request of myself and others he consented to spend an hour in the Negro Building, for the purpose of inspecting the Negro exhibit and of giving the coloured people in attendance an opportunity to shake hands with him. As soon as I met Mr. Cleveland I became

impressed with his simplicity, greatness, and rugged honesty. I have met him many times since then, both at public functions and at his private residence in Princeton, and the more I see of him the more I admire him. When he visited the Negro Building in Atlanta he seemed to give himself up wholly, for that hour, to the coloured people. He seemed to be as careful to shake hands with some old coloured "auntie" clad partially in rags, and to take as much pleasure in doing so, as if he were greeting some millionaire. Many of the coloured people took advantage of the occasion to get him to write his name in a book or on a slip of paper. He was as careful and patient in doing this as if he were putting his signature to some great state document.

Mr. Cleveland has not only shown his friendship for me in many personal ways, but has always consented to do anything I have asked of him for our school. This he has done, whether it was to make a personal donation or to use his influence in securing the donations of others. Judging from my personal acquaintance with Mr. Cleveland, I do not believe that he is conscious of possessing any colour prejudice. He is too great for that. In my contact with people I find that, as a rule, it is only the little, narrow people who live for themselves, who never read good books, who do not travel, who never open up their souls in a way to permit them to come into contact with other souls - with the great outside world. No man whose vision is bounded by colour can come into contact with what is highest and best in the world. In meeting men, in many places, I have found that the happiest people are those who do the most for others; the most miserable are those who do the least. I have also found that few things, if any, are capable of making one so blind and narrow as race prejudice. I often say to our students, in the course of my talks to them on Sunday evenings in the chapel, that the longer I live and the more experience I have of the world, the more I am convinced that, after all, the one thing that is most worth living for - and dying for, if need be - is the opportunity of making some one else more happy and more useful.

The coloured people and the coloured newspapers at first seemed to be greatly pleased with the character of my Atlanta address, as well as with its reception. But after the first burst of enthusiasm began to die away, and the coloured people began reading the speech in cold type, some of them seemed to feel that they had been hypnotized. They seemed to feel that I had been too liberal in my remarks toward the Southern whites, and that I had not spoken out strongly enough for what they termed the "rights" of the race. For a while there was a reaction, so far as a certain element of my own race was concerned, but later these reactionary ones seemed to have been won over to my way of believing and acting.

While speaking of changes in public sentiment, I recall that about ten years after the school at Tuskegee was established, I had an experience that I shall never forget. Dr. Lyman Abbott, then the pastor of Plymouth Church, and also editor of the Outlook (then the Christian Union), asked me to write a letter for his paper giving my opinion of the exact condition, mental and moral, of the coloured ministers in the South, as based upon my observations. I wrote the letter, giving the exact facts as I conceived them to be. The picture painted was a rather black one - or, since I am black, shall I say "white"? It could not be otherwise with a race but a few years out of slavery, a race which had not had time or opportunity to produce a competent ministry.

What I said soon reached every Negro minister in the country, I think, and the letters of condemnation which I received from them were not few. I think that for a year after the publication of this article every association and every conference or religious body of any

kind, of my race, that met, did not fail before adjourning to pass a resolution condemning me, or calling upon me to retract or modify what I had said. Many of these organizations went so far in their resolutions as to advise parents to cease sending their children to Tuskegee. One association even appointed a "missionary" whose duty it was to warn the people against sending their children to Tuskegee. This missionary had a son in the school, and I noticed that, whatever the "missionary" might have said or done with regard to others, he was careful not to take his son away from the institution. Many of the coloured papers, especially those that were the organs of religious bodies, joined in the general chorus of condemnation or demands for retraction.

During the whole time of the excitement, and through all the criticism, I did not utter a word of explanation or retraction. I knew that I was right, and that time and the sober second thought of the people would vindicate me. It was not long before the bishops and other church leaders began to make a careful investigation of the conditions of the ministry, and they found out that I was right. In fact, the oldest and most influential bishop in one branch of the Methodist Church said that my words were far too mild. Very soon public sentiment began making itself felt, in demanding a purifying of the ministry. While this is not yet complete by any means, I think I may say, without egotism, and I have been told by many of our most influential ministers, that my words had much to do with starting a demand for the placing of a higher type of men in the pulpit. I have had the satisfaction of having many who once condemned me thank me heartily for my frank words.

The change of the attitude of the Negro ministry, so far as regards myself, is so complete that at the present time I have no warmer friends among any class than I have among the clergymen. The improvement in the character and life of the Negro ministers is one of the most gratifying evidences of the progress of the race. My experience with them as well as other events in my life, convince me that the thing to do, when one feels sure that he has said or done the right thing, and is condemned, is to stand still and keep quiet. If he is right, time will show it.

In the midst of the discussion which was going on concerning my Atlanta speech, I received the letter which I give below, from Dr. Gilman, the President of Johns Hopkins University, who had been made chairman of the judges of award in connection with the Atlanta Exposition: -

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, BALTIMORE,
President's Office, September 30, 1895.

DEAR MR. WASHINGTON: Would it be agreeable to you to be one of the Judges of Award in the Department of Education at Atlanta? If so, I shall be glad to place your name upon the list. A line by telegraph will be welcomed.

Yours very truly,
D. C. GILMAN.

I think I was even more surprised to receive this invitation than I had been to receive the invitation to speak at the opening of the Exposition. It was to be a part of my duty, as one of the jurors, to pass not only upon the exhibits of the coloured schools, but also upon those of the white schools. I accepted the position, and spent a month in Atlanta in performance of the

duties which it entailed. The board of jurors was a large one, consisting in all of sixty members. It was about equally divided between Southern white people and Northern white people. Among them were college presidents, leading scientists and men of letters, and specialists in many subjects. When the group of jurors to which I was assigned met for organization, Mr. Thomas Nelson Page, who was one of the number, moved that I be made secretary of that division, and the motion was unanimously adopted. Nearly half of our division were Southern people. In performing my duties in the inspection of the exhibits of white schools I was in every case treated with respect, and at the close of our labours I parted from my associates with regret.

I am often asked to express myself more freely than I do upon the political condition and the political future of my race. These recollections of my experience in Atlanta give me the opportunity to do so briefly. My own belief is, although I have never before said so in so many words, that the time will come when the Negro in the South will be accorded all the political rights which his ability, character, and material possessions entitle him to. I think, though, that the opportunity to freely exercise such political rights will not come in any large degree through outside or artificial forcing, but will be accorded to the Negro by the Southern white people themselves, and that they will protect him in the exercise of those rights. Just as soon as the South gets over the old feeling that it is being forced by "foreigners," or "aliens," to do something which it does not want to do, I believe that the change in the direction that I have indicated is going to begin. In fact, there are indications that it is already beginning in a slight degree.

Let me illustrate my meaning. Suppose that some months before the opening of the Atlanta Exposition there had been a general demand from the press and public platform outside the South that a Negro be given a place on the opening programme, and that a Negro be placed upon the board of jurors of award. Would any such recognition of the race have taken place? I do not think so. The Atlanta officials went as far as they did because they felt it to be a pleasure, as well as a duty, to reward what they considered merit in the Negro race. Say what we will, there is something in human nature which we cannot blot out, which makes one man, in the end, recognize and reward merit in another, regardless of colour or race.

I believe it is the duty of the Negro - as the greater part of the race is already doing - to deport himself modestly in regard to political claims, depending upon the slow but sure influences that proceed from the possession of property, intelligence, and high character for the full recognition of his political rights. I think that the according of the full exercise of political rights is going to be a matter of natural, slow growth, not an over-night, gourd-vine affair. I do not believe that the Negro should cease voting, for a man cannot learn the exercise of self-government by ceasing to vote any more than a boy can learn to swim by keeping out of the water, but I do believe that in his voting he should more and more be influenced by those of intelligence and character who are his next-door neighbours.

I know coloured men who, through the encouragement, help, and advice of Southern white people, have accumulated thousands of dollars' worth of property, but who, at the same time, would never think of going to those same persons for advice concerning the casting of their ballots. This, it seems to me, is unwise and unreasonable, and should cease. In saying this I do not mean that the Negro should buckle, or not vote from principle, for the instant he ceases to vote from principle he loses the confidence and respect of the Southern white man even.

I do not believe that any state should make a law that permits an ignorant and poverty-stricken white man to vote, and prevents a black man in the same condition from voting. Such a law is not only unjust, but it will react, as all unjust laws do, in time; for the effect of such a law is to encourage the Negro to secure education and property, and at the same time it encourages the white man to remain in ignorance and poverty. I believe that in time, through the operation of intelligence and friendly race relations, all cheating at the ballot-box in the South will cease. It will become apparent that the white man who begins by cheating a Negro out of his ballot soon learns to cheat a white man out of his, and that the man who does this ends his career of dishonesty by the theft of property or by some equally serious crime. In my opinion, the time will come when the South will encourage all of its citizens to vote. It will see that it pays better, from every standpoint, to have healthy, vigorous life than to have that political stagnation which always results when one-half of the population has no share and no interest in the Government.

As a rule, I believe in universal, free suffrage, but I believe that in the South we are confronted with peculiar conditions that justify the protection of the ballot in many of the states, for a while at least, either by an educational test, a property test, or by both combined; but whatever tests are required, they should be made to apply with equal and exact justice to both races.

1901

Points for Reflection

1. Du Bois criticizes Booker T. Washington's conciliatory posture towards the South, his habit of "indiscriminate flattery" that appears to compromise the truth. Does Washington's "Atlanta Exposition Address" contain evidence of such deference towards white people? Does Washington seem more preoccupied with appeasing a belligerent South than with improving the position of African Americans?
2. Exactly what does Washington mean when he calls black men to "Cast down your bucket where [they] are" (OER 11)? What about when he directs these words at white folk?
3. How would twentieth-century America interpret Washington's call for Americans of both races to be "[i]n all things that are purely social . . . as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress" (OER 12)?
4. Do the following statements strike you as ironic, given his position on Negro education?
 - a. "only the little, narrow people [. . .] never read good books" (OER 15).
 - b. "No man whose vision is bounded by colour can come into contact with what is highest and best in the world" (OER 15).
5. Examine closely the following passage from Washington's address. On whom is Washington putting the onus for Negro improvement? "My own belief is, although I have never before said so in so many words, that the time will come when the Negro in the South will be accorded all the political rights which his ability, character, and material possessions entitle him to. I think, though, that the opportunity to freely exercise such political rights will not come in any large degree through outside or artificial forcing, but will be accorded to the Negro by the Southern white people themselves, and that they will protect him in the exercise of those rights" (OER 17).

Chp. 1

Of Our Spiritual Strivings

O water, voice of my heart, crying in the sand,
All night long crying with a mournful cry,
As I lie and listen, and cannot understand
The voice of my heart in my side or the voice of the sea,
O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?
All night long the water is crying to me.

Unresting water, there shall never be rest
Till the last moon droop and the last tide fail,
And the fire of the end begin to burn in the west;
And the heart shall be weary and wonder and cry like the sea,
All life long crying without avail,
As the water all night long is crying to me.

ARTHUR SYMONS.



Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. That sky

was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination-time, or beat them at a foot-race, or even beat their stringy heads. Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head,—some way. With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above.

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx. Through history, the powers of single black men flash here and there like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged their brightness. Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness,—it is the contradiction of double aims. The double-aimed struggle of the black artisan—on the one hand to escape white contempt for a nation of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and on the other hand to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde—could only result in making him a poor craftsman, for he had but half a heart in either cause. By the poverty and ignorance of his people, the Negro minister or doctor was tempted toward quackery and demagoguery; and by the criticism of the other world, toward ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks. The would-be black savant was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood. The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-

singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul-beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the message of another people. This waste of double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people,—has sent them often wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves.

Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain—Liberty; in his tears and curses the God he implored had Freedom in his right hand. At last it came,—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. With one wild carnival of blood and passion came the message in his own plaintive cadences:—

“Shout,	O	children!
Shout,	you’re	free!
For God has bought your liberty!”		

Years have passed away since then,—ten, twenty, forty; forty years of national life, forty years of renewal and development, and yet the swarthy spectre sits in its accustomed seat at the Nation’s feast. In vain do we cry to this our vastest social problem:—

“Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble!”

The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people,—a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people.

The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom, the boon that seemed ever barely to elude their grasp,—like a tantalizing will-o’-the-wisp, maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku-Klux Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watchword beyond the old cry for freedom. As the time flew, however, he began to grasp a new idea. The ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the Fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting the liberty with which war had partially endowed him. And why not? Had not votes made war and emancipated millions? Had not votes enfranchised the freedmen? Was anything impossible to a power that had done all this? A million black men started with renewed zeal to vote themselves into the kingdom. So the decade flew away, the revolution of 1876 came, and left the half-free serf weary, wondering, but still inspired. Slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power,—a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day. It was the ideal of “book-learning”; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seemed to have been

discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life.

Up the new path the advance guard toiled, slowly, heavily, doggedly; only those who have watched and guided the faltering feet, the misty minds, the dull understandings, of the dark pupils of these schools know how faithfully, how piteously, this people strove to learn. It was weary work. The cold statistician wrote down the inches of progress here and there, noted also where here and there a foot had slipped or some one had fallen. To the tired climbers, the horizon was ever dark, the mists were often cold, the Canaan was always dim and far away. If, however, the vistas disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those sombre forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself,—darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint revelation of his power, of his mission. He began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another. For the first time he sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead-weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem. He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance,—not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the humanities; the accumulated sloth and shirking and awkwardness of decades and centuries shackled his hands and feet. Nor was his burden all poverty and ignorance. The red stain of bastardy, which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the Negro home.

A people thus handicapped ought not to be asked to race with the world, but rather allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems. But alas! while sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice, and learnedly explain it as the natural defence of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the “higher” against the “lower” races. To which the Negro cries Amen! and swears that to so much of this strange prejudice as is founded on just homage to civilization, culture, righteousness, and progress, he humbly bows and meekly does obeisance. But before that nameless prejudice that leaps beyond all this he stands helpless, dismayed, and well-nigh speechless; before that personal disrespect and mockery, the ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and the boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black, from Toussaint to the devil,—before this there rises a sickening despair that would disarm and discourage any nation save that black host to whom “discouragement” is an unwritten word.

But the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate. Whisperings and portents came home upon the four winds: Lo! we are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man’s ballot, by force or fraud,—and behold the suicide of a race! Nevertheless, out of the evil came something of good,—the

more careful adjustment of education to real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes' social responsibilities, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress.

So dawned the time of *Sturm und Drang*: storm and stress to-day rocks our little boat on the mad waters of the world-sea; there is within and without the sound of conflict, the burning of body and rending of soul; inspiration strives with doubt, and faith with vain questionings. The bright ideals of the past,—physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands,—all these in turn have waxed and waned, until even the last grows dim and overcast. Are they all wrong,—all false? No, not that, but each alone was over-simple and incomplete,—the dreams of a credulous race-childhood, or the fond imaginings of the other world which does not know and does not want to know our power. To be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one. The training of the schools we need to-day more than ever,—the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts. The power of the ballot we need in sheer self-defence,—else what shall save us from a second slavery? Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek,—the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, the freedom to love and aspire. Work, culture, liberty,—all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack. We the darker ones come even now not altogether empty-handed: there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folklore are Indian and African; and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness. Will America be poorer if she replace her brutal dyspeptic blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? or her coarse and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?

Merely a concrete test of the underlying principles of the great republic is the Negro Problem, and the spiritual striving of the freedmen's sons is the travail of souls whose burden is almost beyond the measure of their strength, but who bear it in the name of an historic race, in the name of this the land of their fathers' fathers, and in the name of human opportunity.

And now what I have briefly sketched in large outline let me on coming pages tell again in many ways, with loving emphasis and deeper detail, that men may listen to the striving in the souls of black folk.

--see next page [we're skipping chp. 2]--

Chp. 3

Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others

From birth till death enslaved; in word, in deed, unmanned!

Hereditary bondsmen! Know ye not

Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?

BYRON.



Easily the most striking thing in the history of the American Negro since 1876 is the ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington. It began at the time when war memories and ideals were rapidly passing; a day of astonishing commercial development was dawning; a sense of doubt and hesitation overtook the freedmen's sons,—then it was that his leading began. Mr. Washington came, with a simple definite programme, at the psychological moment when the nation was a little ashamed of having bestowed so much sentiment on Negroes, and was concentrating its energies on Dollars. His programme of industrial education, conciliation of the South, and submission and silence as to civil and political rights, was not wholly original; the Free Negroes from 1830 up to war-time had striven to build industrial schools, and the American Missionary Association had from the first taught various trades; and Price and others had sought a way of honorable alliance with the best of the Southerners. But Mr. Washington first indissolubly linked these things; he put enthusiasm, unlimited energy, and perfect faith into his programme, and changed it from a by-path into a veritable Way of Life. And the tale of the methods by which he did this is a fascinating study of human life.

It startled the nation to hear a Negro advocating such a programme after many decades of bitter complaint; it startled and won the applause of the South, it interested and won the admiration of the North; and after a confused murmur of protest, it silenced if it did not convert the Negroes themselves.

To gain the sympathy and cooperation of the various elements comprising the white South was Mr. Washington's first task; and this, at the time Tuskegee was founded, seemed, for a black man, well-nigh impossible. And yet ten years later it was done in the word spoken at

Atlanta: "In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." This "Atlanta Compromise" is by all odds the most notable thing in Mr. Washington's career. The South interpreted it in different ways: the radicals received it as a complete surrender of the demand for civil and political equality; the conservatives, as a generously conceived working basis for mutual understanding. So both approved it, and to-day its author is certainly the most distinguished Southerner since Jefferson Davis, and the one with the largest personal following.

Next to this achievement comes Mr. Washington's work in gaining place and consideration in the North. Others less shrewd and tactful had formerly essayed to sit on these two stools and had fallen between them; but as Mr. Washington knew the heart of the South from birth and training, so by singular insight he intuitively grasped the spirit of the age which was dominating the North. And so thoroughly did he learn the speech and thought of triumphant commercialism, and the ideals of material prosperity, that the picture of a lone black boy poring over a French grammar amid the weeds and dirt of a neglected home soon seemed to him the acme of absurdities. One wonders what Socrates and St. Francis of Assisi would say to this.

And yet this very singleness of vision and thorough oneness with his age is a mark of the successful man. It is as though Nature must needs make men narrow in order to give them force. So Mr. Washington's cult has gained unquestioning followers, his work has wonderfully prospered, his friends are legion, and his enemies are confounded. To-day he stands as the one recognized spokesman of his ten million fellows, and one of the most notable figures in a nation of seventy millions. One hesitates, therefore, to criticise a life which, beginning with so little, has done so much. And yet the time is come when one may speak in all sincerity and utter courtesy of the mistakes and shortcomings of Mr. Washington's career, as well as of his triumphs, without being thought captious or envious, and without forgetting that it is easier to do ill than well in the world.

The criticism that has hitherto met Mr. Washington has not always been of this broad character. In the South especially has he had to walk warily to avoid the harshest judgments,—and naturally so, for he is dealing with the one subject of deepest sensitiveness to that section. Twice—once when at the Chicago celebration of the Spanish-American War he alluded to the color-prejudice that is "eating away the vitals of the South," and once when he dined with President Roosevelt—has the resulting Southern criticism been violent enough to threaten seriously his popularity. In the North the feeling has several times forced itself into words, that Mr. Washington's counsels of submission overlooked certain elements of true manhood, and that his educational programme was unnecessarily narrow. Usually, however, such criticism has not found open expression, although, too, the spiritual sons of the Abolitionists have not been prepared to acknowledge that the schools founded before Tuskegee, by men of broad ideals and self-sacrificing spirit, were wholly failures or worthy of ridicule. While, then, criticism has not failed to follow Mr. Washington, yet the prevailing public opinion of the land has been but too willing to deliver the solution of a wearisome problem into his hands, and say, "If that is all you and your race ask, take it."

Among his own people, however, Mr. Washington has encountered the strongest and most lasting opposition, amounting at times to bitterness, and even today continuing strong and insistent even though largely silenced in outward expression by the public opinion of the nation. Some of this opposition is, of course, mere envy; the disappointment of displaced demagogues and the spite of narrow minds. But aside from this, there is among educated and thoughtful colored men in all parts of the land a feeling of deep regret, sorrow, and apprehension at the wide currency and ascendancy which some of Mr. Washington's theories have gained. These same men admire his sincerity of purpose, and are willing to forgive

much to honest endeavor which is doing something worth the doing. They cooperate with Mr. Washington as far as they conscientiously can; and, indeed, it is no ordinary tribute to this man's tact and power that, steering as he must between so many diverse interests and opinions, he so largely retains the respect of all.

But the hushing of the criticism of honest opponents is a dangerous thing. It leads some of the best of the critics to unfortunate silence and paralysis of effort, and others to burst into speech so passionately and intemperately as to lose listeners. Honest and earnest criticism from those whose interests are most nearly touched,—criticism of writers by readers,—this is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society. If the best of the American Negroes receive by outer pressure a leader whom they had not recognized before, manifestly there is here a certain palpable gain. Yet there is also irreparable loss,—a loss of that peculiarly valuable education which a group receives when by search and criticism it finds and commissions its own leaders. The way in which this is done is at once the most elementary and the nicest problem of social growth. History is but the record of such group-leadership; and yet how infinitely changeable is its type and character! And of all types and kinds, what can be more instructive than the leadership of a group within a group?—that curious double movement where real progress may be negative and actual advance be relative retrogression. All this is the social student's inspiration and despair.

Now in the past the American Negro has had instructive experience in the choosing of group leaders, founding thus a peculiar dynasty which in the light of present conditions is worth while studying. When sticks and stones and beasts form the sole environment of a people, their attitude is largely one of determined opposition to and conquest of natural forces. But when to earth and brute is added an environment of men and ideas, then the attitude of the imprisoned group may take three main forms,—a feeling of revolt and revenge; an attempt to adjust all thought and action to the will of the greater group; or, finally, a determined effort at self-realization and self-development despite environing opinion. The influence of all of these attitudes at various times can be traced in the history of the American Negro, and in the evolution of his successive leaders.

Before 1750, while the fire of African freedom still burned in the veins of the slaves, there was in all leadership or attempted leadership but the one motive of revolt and revenge,—typified in the terrible Maroons, the Danish blacks, and Cato of Stono, and veiling all the Americas in fear of insurrection. The liberalizing tendencies of the latter half of the eighteenth century brought, along with kindlier relations between black and white, thoughts of ultimate adjustment and assimilation. Such aspiration was especially voiced in the earnest songs of Phyllis, in the martyrdom of Attucks, the fighting of Salem and Poor, the intellectual accomplishments of Banneker and Derham, and the political demands of the Cuffes.

Stern financial and social stress after the war cooled much of the previous humanitarian ardor. The disappointment and impatience of the Negroes at the persistence of slavery and serfdom voiced itself in two movements. The slaves in the South, aroused undoubtedly by vague rumors of the Haytian revolt, made three fierce attempts at insurrection,—in 1800 under Gabriel in Virginia, in 1822 under Vesey in Carolina, and in 1831 again in Virginia under the terrible Nat Turner. In the Free States, on the other hand, a new and curious attempt at self-development was made. In Philadelphia and New York color-prescription led to a withdrawal of Negro communicants from white churches and the formation of a peculiar socio-religious institution among the Negroes known as the African Church,—an organization still living and controlling in its various branches over a million of men.

Walker's wild appeal against the trend of the times showed how the world was changing after the coming of the cotton-gin. By 1830 slavery seemed hopelessly fastened on the South,

and the slaves thoroughly cowed into submission. The free Negroes of the North, inspired by the mulatto immigrants from the West Indies, began to change the basis of their demands; they recognized the slavery of slaves, but insisted that they themselves were freemen, and sought assimilation and amalgamation with the nation on the same terms with other men. Thus, Forten and Purvis of Philadelphia, Shad of Wilmington, Du Bois of New Haven, Barbadoes of Boston, and others, strove singly and together as men, they said, not as slaves; as "people of color," not as "Negroes." The trend of the times, however, refused them recognition save in individual and exceptional cases, considered them as one with all the despised blacks, and they soon found themselves striving to keep even the rights they formerly had of voting and working and moving as freemen. Schemes of migration and colonization arose among them; but these they refused to entertain, and they eventually turned to the Abolition movement as a final refuge.

Here, led by Remond, Nell, Wells-Brown, and Douglass, a new period of self-assertion and self-development dawned. To be sure, ultimate freedom and assimilation was the ideal before the leaders, but the assertion of the manhood rights of the Negro by himself was the main reliance, and John Brown's raid was the extreme of its logic. After the war and emancipation, the great form of Frederick Douglass, the greatest of American Negro leaders, still led the host. Self-assertion, especially in political lines, was the main programme, and behind Douglass came Elliot, Bruce, and Langston, and the Reconstruction politicians, and, less conspicuous but of greater social significance, Alexander Crummell and Bishop Daniel Payne.

Then came the Revolution of 1876, the suppression of the Negro votes, the changing and shifting of ideals, and the seeking of new lights in the great night. Douglass, in his old age, still bravely stood for the ideals of his early manhood,—ultimate assimilation *through* self-assertion, and on no other terms. For a time Price arose as a new leader, destined, it seemed, not to give up, but to re-state the old ideals in a form less repugnant to the white South. But he passed away in his prime. Then came the new leader. Nearly all the former ones had become leaders by the silent suffrage of their fellows, had sought to lead their own people alone, and were usually, save Douglass, little known outside their race. But Booker T. Washington arose as essentially the leader not of one race but of two,—a compromiser between the South, the North, and the Negro. Naturally the Negroes resented, at first bitterly, signs of compromise which surrendered their civil and political rights, even though this was to be exchanged for larger chances of economic development. The rich and dominating North, however, was not only weary of the race problem, but was investing largely in Southern enterprises, and welcomed any method of peaceful cooperation. Thus, by national opinion, the Negroes began to recognize Mr. Washington's leadership; and the voice of criticism was hushed.

Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission; but adjustment at such a peculiar time as to make his programme unique. This is an age of unusual economic development, and Mr. Washington's programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life. Moreover, this is an age when the more advanced races are coming in closer contact with the less developed races, and the race-feeling is therefore intensified; and Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races. Again, in our own land, the reaction from the sentiment of war time has given impetus to race-prejudice against Negroes, and Mr. Washington withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens. In other periods of intensified prejudice all the Negro's tendency to self-assertion has been called forth; at this period a policy of submission is advocated. In the history of nearly all

other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing.

In answer to this, it has been claimed that the Negro can survive only through submission. Mr. Washington distinctly asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things,—

First, political power,

Second, insistence on civil rights,

Third, higher education of Negro youth,—and concentrate all their energies on industrial education, and accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South. This policy has been courageously and insistently advocated for over fifteen years, and has been triumphant for perhaps ten years. As a result of this tender of the palm-branch, what has been the return? In these years there have occurred:

1. The disfranchisement of the Negro.
2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro.
3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro.

These movements are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr. Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has, without a shadow of doubt, helped their speedier accomplishment. The question then comes: Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meagre chance for developing their exceptional men? If history and reason give any distinct answer to these questions, it is an emphatic *No*. And Mr. Washington thus faces the triple paradox of his career:

1. He is striving nobly to make Negro artisans business men and property-owners; but it is utterly impossible, under modern competitive methods, for workingmen and property-owners to defend their rights and exist without the right of suffrage.

2. He insists on thrift and self-respect, but at the same time counsels a silent submission to civic inferiority such as is bound to sap the manhood of any race in the long run.

3. He advocates common-school and industrial training, and depreciates institutions of higher learning; but neither the Negro common-schools, nor Tuskegee itself, could remain open a day were it not for teachers trained in Negro colleges, or trained by their graduates.

This triple paradox in Mr. Washington's position is the object of criticism by two classes of colored Americans. One class is spiritually descended from Toussaint the Savior, through Gabriel, Vesey, and Turner, and they represent the attitude of revolt and revenge; they hate the white South blindly and distrust the white race generally, and so far as they agree on definite action, think that the Negro's only hope lies in emigration beyond the borders of the United States. And yet, by the irony of fate, nothing has more effectually made this programme seem hopeless than the recent course of the United States toward weaker and darker peoples in the West Indies, Hawaii, and the Philippines,—for where in the world may we go and be safe from lying and brute force?

The other class of Negroes who cannot agree with Mr. Washington has hitherto said little aloud. They deprecate the sight of scattered counsels, of internal disagreement; and especially they dislike making their just criticism of a useful and earnest man an excuse for a general discharge of venom from small-minded opponents. Nevertheless, the questions involved are so fundamental and serious that it is difficult to see how men like the Grimkes, Kelly Miller, J. W. E. Bowen, and other representatives of this group, can much longer be silent. Such men feel in conscience bound to ask of this nation three things:

1. The right to vote.

2. Civic equality.

3. The education of youth according to ability. They acknowledge Mr. Washington's invaluable service in counselling patience and courtesy in such demands; they do not ask that ignorant black men vote when ignorant whites are debarred, or that any reasonable restrictions in the suffrage should not be applied; they know that the low social level of the mass of the race is responsible for much discrimination against it, but they also know, and the nation knows, that relentless color-prejudice is more often a cause than a result of the Negro's degradation; they seek the abatement of this relic of barbarism, and not its systematic encouragement and pampering by all agencies of social power from the Associated Press to the Church of Christ. They advocate, with Mr. Washington, a broad system of Negro common schools supplemented by thorough industrial training; but they are surprised that a man of Mr. Washington's insight cannot see that no such educational system ever has rested or can rest on any other basis than that of the well-equipped college and university, and they insist that there is a demand for a few such institutions throughout the South to train the best of the Negro youth as teachers, professional men, and leaders.

This group of men honor Mr. Washington for his attitude of conciliation toward the white South; they accept the "Atlanta Compromise" in its broadest interpretation; they recognize, with him, many signs of promise, many men of high purpose and fair judgment, in this section; they know that no easy task has been laid upon a region already tottering under heavy burdens. But, nevertheless, they insist that the way to truth and right lies in straightforward honesty, not in indiscriminate flattery; in praising those of the South who do well and criticising uncompromisingly those who do ill; in taking advantage of the opportunities at hand and urging their fellows to do the same, but at the same time in remembering that only a firm adherence to their higher ideals and aspirations will ever keep those ideals within the realm of possibility. They do not expect that the free right to vote, to enjoy civic rights, and to be educated, will come in a moment; they do not expect to see the bias and prejudices of years disappear at the blast of a trumpet; but they are absolutely certain that the way for a people to gain their reasonable rights is not by voluntarily throwing them away and insisting that they do not want them; that the way for a people to gain respect is not by continually belittling and ridiculing themselves; that, on the contrary, Negroes must insist continually, in season and out of season, that voting is necessary to modern manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism, and that black boys need education as well as white boys.

In failing thus to state plainly and unequivocally the legitimate demands of their people, even at the cost of opposing an honored leader, the thinking classes of American Negroes would shirk a heavy responsibility,—a responsibility to themselves, a responsibility to the struggling masses, a responsibility to the darker races of men whose future depends so largely on this American experiment, but especially a responsibility to this nation,—this common Fatherland. It is wrong to encourage a man or a people in evil-doing; it is wrong to aid and abet a national crime simply because it is unpopular not to do so. The growing spirit of kindness and reconciliation between the North and South after the frightful difference of a generation ago ought to be a source of deep congratulation to all, and especially to those whose mistreatment caused the war; but if that reconciliation is to be marked by the industrial slavery and civic death of those same black men, with permanent legislation into a position of inferiority, then those black men, if they are really men, are called upon by every consideration of patriotism and loyalty to oppose such a course by all civilized methods, even though such opposition involves disagreement with Mr. Booker T. Washington. We have no right to sit silently by while the inevitable seeds are sown for a harvest of disaster to our children, black and white.

First, it is the duty of black men to judge the South discriminatingly. The present generation of Southerners are not responsible for the past, and they should not be blindly hated or blamed for it. Furthermore, to no class is the indiscriminate endorsement of the recent course of the South toward Negroes more nauseating than to the best thought of the South. The South is not “solid”; it is a land in the ferment of social change, wherein forces of all kinds are fighting for supremacy; and to praise the ill the South is today perpetrating is just as wrong as to condemn the good. Discriminating and broad-minded criticism is what the South needs,—needs it for the sake of her own white sons and daughters, and for the insurance of robust, healthy mental and moral development.

Today even the attitude of the Southern whites toward the blacks is not, as so many assume, in all cases the same; the ignorant Southerner hates the Negro, the workingmen fear his competition, the money-makers wish to use him as a laborer, some of the educated see a menace in his upward development, while others—usually the sons of the masters—wish to help him to rise. National opinion has enabled this last class to maintain the Negro common schools, and to protect the Negro partially in property, life, and limb. Through the pressure of the money-makers, the Negro is in danger of being reduced to semi-slavery, especially in the country districts; the workingmen, and those of the educated who fear the Negro, have united to disfranchise him, and some have urged his deportation; while the passions of the ignorant are easily aroused to lynch and abuse any black man. To praise this intricate whirl of thought and prejudice is nonsense; to inveigh indiscriminately against “the South” is unjust; but to use the same breath in praising Governor Aycock, exposing Senator Morgan, arguing with Mr. Thomas Nelson Page, and denouncing Senator Ben Tillman, is not only sane, but the imperative duty of thinking black men.

It would be unjust to Mr. Washington not to acknowledge that in several instances he has opposed movements in the South which were unjust to the Negro; he sent memorials to the Louisiana and Alabama constitutional conventions, he has spoken against lynching, and in other ways has openly or silently set his influence against sinister schemes and unfortunate happenings. Notwithstanding this, it is equally true to assert that on the whole the distinct impression left by Mr. Washington’s propaganda is, first, that the South is justified in its present attitude toward the Negro because of the Negro’s degradation; secondly, that the prime cause of the Negro’s failure to rise more quickly is his wrong education in the past; and, thirdly, that his future rise depends primarily on his own efforts. Each of these propositions is a dangerous half-truth. The supplementary truths must never be lost sight of: first, slavery and race-prejudice are potent if not sufficient causes of the Negro’s position; second, industrial and common-school training were necessarily slow in planting because they had to await the black teachers trained by higher institutions,—it being extremely doubtful if any essentially different development was possible, and certainly a Tuskegee was unthinkable before 1880; and, third, while it is a great truth to say that the Negro must strive and strive mightily to help himself, it is equally true that unless his striving be not simply seconded, but rather aroused and encouraged, by the initiative of the richer and wiser environing group, he cannot hope for great success.

In his failure to realize and impress this last point, Mr. Washington is especially to be criticised. His doctrine has tended to make the whites, North and South, shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro’s shoulders and stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation, and the hands of none of us are clean if we bend not our energies to righting these great wrongs.

The South ought to be led, by candid and honest criticism, to assert her better self and do her full duty to the race she has cruelly wronged and is still wronging. The North—her co-partner in guilt—cannot salve her conscience by plastering it with gold. We cannot settle this

problem by diplomacy and suaveness, by “policy” alone. If worse come to worst, can the moral fibre of this country survive the slow throttling and murder of nine millions of men?

The black men of America have a duty to perform, a duty stern and delicate,—a forward movement to oppose a part of the work of their greatest leader. So far as Mr. Washington preaches Thrift, Patience, and Industrial Training for the masses, we must hold up his hands and strive with him, rejoicing in his honors and glorying in the strength of this Joshua called of God and of man to lead the headless host. But so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustice, North or South, does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds,—so far as he, the South, or the Nation, does this,—we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them. By every civilized and peaceful method we must strive for the rights which the world accords to men, clinging unwaveringly to those great words which the sons of the Fathers would fain forget: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Points for Reflection

1. what does Du Bois mean by his claim that society allows him "no true self-consciousness" and only permits him to see himself "through the revelation of the other world," that he is always made to feel his "two-ness" (Norton 896)?
2. why did post-Emancipation "Negro" ministers and doctors end up practicing "quackery and demagogy," according to W. E. B. Du Bois (Norton 897)?
3. does it make intuitive sense for Du Bois to claim that "the ideal of human brotherhood" among all races can be better obtained by embracing the "unifying ideal of Race" (Norton 900)?
4. what is the "triple paradox" of which Du Bois accuses Booker T. Washington (Norton 906-907)?
5. Du Bois encourages what types of opposition to the "industrial slavery" and "civic death" of the Negro race brought about by Booker T. Washington's overly submissive posture towards the South (Norton 908)?
6. Du Bois concludes that the efforts of his race to improve themselves must be "not simply seconded, but rather aroused and encouraged, by the initiative of the richer and wiser enviroing group" (Norton 909-10). Into what types of assistance might this claim be translated?
7. does Du Bois advocate blanket hatred of white Southerners?
8. to what ends do Du Bois and Washington each employ Biblical ideas and images?

DAY FOUR: A DELICIOUS, GROTESQUE, IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" (1848, 1870)

Lazy laughing languid Jenny,
Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea,
Whose head upon my knee to-night
Rests for a while, as if grown light
With all our dances and the sound 5
To which the wild tunes spun you round:
Fair Jenny mine, the thoughtless queen
Of kisses which the blush between
Could hardly make much daintier;
Whose eyes are as blue skies, whose hair 10
Is countless gold incomparable:
Fresh flower, scarce touched with signs that tell
Of Love's exuberant hotbed:—Nay,
Poor flower left torn since yesterday
Until to-morrow leave you bare; 15
Poor handful of bright spring-water
Flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face;
Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace
Thus with your head upon my knee;—
Whose person or whose purse may be 20
The lodestar of your reverie?

This room of yours, my Jenny, looks
A change from mine so full of books,
Whose serried ranks hold fast, forsooth,
So many captive hours of youth,— 25
The hours they thief from day and night
To make one's cherished work come right,
And leave it wrong for all their theft,
Even as to-night my work has left:
Until I vowed that since my brain 30
And eyes of dancing seemed so fain,
My feet should have some dancing too:—
And thus it was I met with you.
Well, I suppose 'twas hard to part,
For here I am. And now, sweetheart, 35
You seem too tired to get to bed.

It was a careless life I led
When rooms like this were scarce so strange
Not long ago. What breeds the change,—
The many aims or the few years? 40

Because to-night it all appears
Something I do not know again.

The cloud's not danced out of my brain,—
The cloud that made it turn and swim
While hour by hour the books grew dim. 45
Why, Jenny, as I watch you there,—
For all your wealth of loosened hair,
Your silk ungirdled and unlac'd
And warm sweets open to the waist,
All golden in the lamplight's gleam,— 50
You know not what a book you seem,
Half-read by lightning in a dream!
How should you know, my Jenny? Nay,
And I should be ashamed to say:—
Poor beauty, so well worth a kiss! 55
But while my thought runs on like this
With wasteful whims more than enough,
I wonder what you're thinking of.

If of myself you think at all,
What is the thought?—conjectural 60
On sorry matters best unsolved?—
Or inly is each grace revolved
To fit me with a lure?—or (sad
To think!) perhaps you're merely glad
That I'm not drunk or ruffianly 65
And let you rest upon my knee.

For sometimes, were the truth confess'd,
You're thankful for a little rest,—
Glad from the crush to rest within,
From the heart-sickness and the din 70
Where envy's voice at virtue's pitch
Mocks you because your gown is rich;
And from the pale girl's dumb rebuke,
Whose ill-clad grace and toil-worn look
Proclaim the strength that keeps her weak, 75
And other nights than yours bespeak;
And from the wise unchildish elf,
To schoolmate lesser than himself
Pointing you out, what thing you are:—
Yes, from the daily jeer and jar, 80
From shame and shame's outbraving too,
Is rest not sometimes sweet to you?—
But most from the hatefulness of man
Who spares not to end what he began,
Whose acts are ill and his speech ill, 85
Who, having used you at his will,

Thrusts you aside, as when I dine
I serve the dishes and the wine.

Well, handsome Jenny mine, sit up:
I've filled our glasses, let us sup, 90
And do not let me think of you,
Lest shame of yours suffice for two.
What, still so tired? Well, well then, keep
Your head there, so you do not sleep;
But that the weariness may pass 95
And leave you merry, take this glass.
Ah! lazy lily hand, more bless'd
If ne'er in rings it had been dress'd
Nor ever by a glove conceal'd!

Behold the lilies of the field, 100
They toil not neither do they spin;
(So doth the ancient text begin,—
Not of such rest as one of these
Can share.) Another rest and ease
Along each summer-sated path 105
From its new lord the garden hath,
Than that whose spring in blessings ran
Which praised the bounteous husbandman,
Ere yet, in days of hankering breath,
The lilies sickened unto death. 110

What, Jenny, are your lilies dead?
Aye, and the snow-white leaves are spread
Like winter on the garden-bed.
But you had roses left in May,—
They were not gone too. Jenny, nay, 115
But must your roses die, and those
Their purpled buds that should uncloset?
Even so; the leaves are curled apart,
Still red as from the broken heart,
And here's the naked stem of thorns. 120

Nay, nay, mere words. Here nothing warns
As yet of winter. Sickness here
Or want alone could waken fear,—
Nothing but passion wrings a tear.
Except when there may rise unsought 125
Haply at times a passing thought
Of the old days which seem to be
Much older than any history
That is written in any book;
When she would lie in fields and look 130
Along the ground through the blown grass,

And wonder where the city was,
Far out of sight, whose broil and bale
They told her then for a child's tale.

Jenny, you know the city now, 135

A child can tell the tale there, how
Some things which are not yet enroll'd
In market-lists are bought and sold
Even till the early Sunday light,
When Saturday night is market-night 140

Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
And market-night in the Haymarket.
Our learned London children know,
Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe;
Have seen your lifted silken skirt 145

Advertise dainties through the dirt;
Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
On virtue; and have learned your look
When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
Along the streets alone, and there, 150

Round the long park, across the bridge,
The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
Wind on together and apart,
A fiery serpent for your heart.

Let the thoughts pass, an empty cloud! 155

Suppose I were to think aloud,—
What if to her all this were said?
Why, as a volume seldom read
Being opened halfway shuts again,
So might the pages of her brain 160

Be parted at such words, and thence
Close back upon the dusty sense.
For is there hue or shape defin'd
In Jenny's desecrated mind,
Where all contagious currents meet, 165

A Lethe of the middle street?
Nay, it reflects not any face,
Nor sound is in its sluggish pace,
But as they coil those eddies clot,
And night and day remembers not. 170

Why, Jenny, you're asleep at last!—
Asleep, poor Jenny, hard and fast,—
So young and soft and tired; so fair,
With chin thus nestled in your hair,
Mouth quiet, eyelids almost blue 175
As if some sky of dreams shone through!

Just as another woman sleeps!

Enough to throw one's thoughts in heaps
Of doubt and horror,—what to say
Or think,—this awful secret sway, 180
The potter's power over the clay!
Of the same lump (it has been said)
For honour and dishonour made,
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

My cousin Nell is fond of fun, 185
And fond of dress, and change, and praise,
So mere a woman in her ways:
And if her sweet eyes rich in youth
Are like her lips that tell the truth,
My cousin Nell is fond of love. 190
And she's the girl I'm proudest of.
Who does not prize her, guard her well?
The love of change, in cousin Nell,
Shall find the best and hold it dear:
The unconquered mirth turn quieter 195
Not through her own, through others' woe:
The conscious pride of beauty glow
Beside another's pride in her,
One little part of all they share.
For Love himself shall ripen these 200
In a kind of soil to just increase
Through years of fertilizing peace.

Of the same lump (as it is said)
For honour and dishonour made,
Two sister vessels. Here is one. 205

It makes a goblin of the sun.

So pure,—so fall'n! How dare to think
Of the first common kindred link?
Yet, Jenny, till the world shall burn
It seems that all things take their turn; 210
And who shall say but this fair tree
May need, in changes that may be,
Your children's children's charity?
Scorned then, no doubt, as you are scorn'd!
Shall no man hold his pride forewarn'd 215
Till in the end, the Day of Days,
At Judgement, one of his own race,
As frail and lost as you, shall rise,—
His daughter, with his mother's eyes?

How Jenny's clock ticks on the shelf! 220
Might not the dial scorn itself
That has such hours to register?

Yet as to me, even so to her
Are golden sun and silver moon,
In daily largesse of earth's boon, 225
Counted for life-coins to one tune.
And if, as blindfold fates are toss'd,
Through some one man this life be lost,
Shall soul not somehow pray for soul?

Fair shines the gilded aureole 230
In which our highest painters place
Some living woman's simple face.
And the stilled features thus descried
As Jenny's long throat droops aside,—
The shadows where the cheeks are thin, 235
And pure wide curve from ear to chin,—
With Raffael's, Leonardo's hand
To show them to men's souls, might stand,
Whole ages long, the whole world through,
For preachings of what God can do. 240
What has man done here? How atone,
Great God, for this which man has done?
And for the body and soul which by
Man's pitiless doom must now comply
With lifelong hell, what lullaby 245
Of sweet forgetful second birth
Remains? All dark. No sign on earth
What measure of God's rest endows
The many mansions of his house.

If but a woman's heart might see 250
Such erring heart unerringly
For once! But that can never be.

Like a rose shut in a book
In which pure women may not look,
For its base pages claim control 255
To crush the flower within the soul;
Where through each dead rose-leaf that clings,
Pale as transparent psyche-wings,
To the vile text, are traced such things
As might make lady's cheek indeed 260
More than a living rose to read;
So nought save foolish foulness may
Watch with hard eyes the sure decay;
And so the life-blood of this rose,
Puddled with shameful knowledge, flows 265
Through leaves no chaste hand may unclose:
Yet still it keeps such faded show
Of when 'twas gathered long ago,
That the crushed petals' lovely grain,

The sweetness of the sanguine stain, 270
Seen of a woman's eyes, must make
Her pitiful heart, so prone to ache,
Love roses better for its sake:—
Only that this can never be:—
Even so unto her sex is she. 275

Yet, Jenny, looking long at you,
The woman almost fades from view.
A cipher of man's changeless sum
Of lust, past, present, and to come,
Is left. A riddle that one shrinks 280
To challenge from the scornful sphinx.

Like a toad within a stone
Seated while Time crumbles on;
Which sits there since the earth was curs'd
For Man's transgression at the first; 285
Which, living through all centuries,
Not once has seen the sun arise;
Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,
The earth's whole summers have not warmed;
Which always—whitherso the stone 290
Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind, alone;—
Aye, and shall not be driven out
Till that which shuts him round about
Break at the very Master's stroke,
And the dust thereof vanish as smoke, 295
And the seed of Man vanish as dust:—
Even so within this world is Lust.

Come, come, what use in thoughts like this?
Poor little Jenny, good to kiss,—
You'd not believe by what strange roads 300
Thought travels, when your beauty goads
A man to-night to think of toads!
Jenny, wake up. . . . Why, there's the dawn!

And there's an early waggon drawn
To market, and some sheep that jog 305
Bleating before a barking dog;
And the old streets come peering through
Another night that London knew;
And all as ghostlike as the lamps.

So on the wings of day decamps 310
My last night's frolic. Glooms begin
To shiver off as lights creep in
Past the gauze curtains half drawn-to,
And the lamp's doubled shade grows blue,—

Your lamp, my Jenny, kept alight, 315
Like a wise virgin's, all one night!
And in the alcove coolly spread
Glimmers with dawn your empty bed;
And yonder your fair face I see
Reflected lying on my knee, 320
Where teems with first foreshadowings
Your pier-glass scrawled with diamond rings:
And on your bosom all night worn
Yesterday's rose now droops forlorn,
But dies not yet this summer morn. 325

And now without, as if some word
Had called upon them that they heard,
The London sparrows far and nigh
Clamour together suddenly;
And Jenny's cage-bird grown awake 330
Here in their song his part must take,
Because here too the day doth break.

And somehow in myself the dawn
Among stirred clouds and veils withdrawn
Strikes greyly on her. Let her sleep. 335
But will it wake her if I heap

These cushions thus beneath her head
Where my knee was? No,—there's your bed,
My Jenny, while you dream. And there
I lay among your golden hair 340
Perhaps the subject of your dreams,
These golden coins.

For still one deems
That Jenny's flattering sleep confers
New magic on the magic purse,— 345
Grim web, how clogged with shrivelled flies!

Between the threads fine fumes arise
And shape their pictures in the brain.
There roll no streets in glare and rain,
Nor flagrant man-swine whets his tusk; 350
But delicately sighs in musk

The homage of the dim boudoir;
Or like a palpitating star
Thrilled into song, the opera-night
Breathes faint in the quick pulse of light; 355
Or at the carriage-window shine

Rich wares for choice; or, free to dine,
Whirls through its hour of health (divine
For her) the concourse of the Park.
And though in the discounted dark 360
Her functions there and here are one,
Beneath the lamps and in the sun

There reigns at least the acknowledged belle
Apparelled beyond parallel.
Ah Jenny, yes, we know your dreams. 365

For even the Paphian Venus seems,
A goddess o'er the realms of love,
When silver-shrined in shadowy grove:
Aye, or let offerings nicely placed
But hide Priapus to the waist, 370
And whoso looks on him shall see
An eligible deity.

Why, Jenny, waking here alone
May help you to remember one,
Though all the memory's long outworn 375
Of many a double-pillowed morn.
I think I see you when you wake,
And rub your eyes for me, and shake
My gold, in rising, from your hair,
A Danaë for a moment there. 380

Jenny, my love rang true! for still
Love at first sight is vague, until
That tinkling makes him audible.

And must I mock you to the last,
Ashamed of my own shame,—aghast 385
Because some thoughts not born amiss
Rose at a poor fair face like this?
Well, of such thoughts so much I know:
In my life, as in hers, they show,
By a far gleam which I may near, 390
A dark path I can strive to clear.

Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear.

Points for Reflection

1. what tone does the narrator's opening alliteration establish, and what do Jenny's two fondnesses signal about her (ll.1-2)?
2. in what pastime did the narrator and Jenny occupy themselves prior to sitting down?
3. what about Jenny makes her appear innocent?
4. what type of "grace" does the narrator discover in "Poor shameful Jenny" (l.18)?
5. the narrator assumes Jenny's mind is revolving around what?
6. what can we determine about the narrator's own character and situation?
7. the narrator observes that, until recently, his current environment seemed familiar and comfortable (ll.37-42). What has altered his perspective?
8. what does the narrator imagine Jenny has temporarily escaped as she rests in his lap?
9. does the narrator let Jenny continue resting--instead of sitting up to drink with him--out of kindness?
10. why might the narrator invoke Matthew 6:25-29 in lines ll.100-110?
11. is the narrator considering Jenny's body when he ponders the state of her lilies, roses, leaves, and "naked stem of thorns," or something more intangible (ll.111-20)?
12. the narrator presumes that--excepting the occasional memory of an innocent, rural past--nothing wrings a tear out of Jenny except "passion" (ll.121-34). Why would "passion" cause her to cry?
13. what does "bale" (l.133) mean in this context?
14. how many times does the narrator attempt to interrupt his morbid musings about Jenny's life trajectory?
15. according to the narrator, how would Jenny respond if he spoke aloud what he's thinking?
16. why is the narrator appalled by the thought that Jenny sleeps like any other woman (ll.177-84)?
17. what possible fate does the narrator envision befalling Jenny (l.228)?
18. does this narrator agree with Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi" who, in RB's poem, declares that a painter who captures beauty in art can "take the Prior's pulpit-place, / Interpret God to all of you!" (ll.310-11)?
19. does the narrator find it easy to envision a restful heaven that compensates for the "lifelong hell" experienced by Jenny?

20. to whose erring heart does the narrator refer in line 251?
21. does the narrator think it likely that proper women and women like Jenny can understand and show compassion for one another?
22. why compare lust to an insolvable riddle, akin to a toad trapped within a stone (ll.276-97)?
23. why allude to Jesus's Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) in ll.315-16?
24. is the fact that the rose pinned to Jenny's dress has not yet entirely wilted provide us with a hopeful symbol of renewal (ll.323-25)?
25. how is it that the narrator can see Jenny's face when her head lies sideways on his knee, facing away from him?
26. what kind of pet does Jenny have in her room?
27. to what does "grim web" refer?
28. what does the narrator imagine filling Jenny's dreams?
29. why would it be important to "hide Priapus to the waist" in order for this fertility god, one of Aphrodite's sons, to be considered "an eligible deity" (ll.370-72)?
30. is the description of Jenny later awaking on her own to shake gold out of her hair a beautiful, poignant image with which to close the poem?
31. the narrator seems caught between mocking Jenny for counterfeiting love and censuring himself for his own shameful, lustful thoughts and actions (ll.381-87). Does he see a way forward and out of his predicament?

DAY SEVEN: A Pair of Pariahs

Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1897; 1898)

Part I

- 1.1 He did not wear his scarlet coat,
1.2 For blood and wine are red,
1.3 And blood and wine were on his hands
1.4 When they found him with the dead,
1.5 The poor dead woman whom he loved,
1.6 And murdered in her bed.
- 1.7 He walked amongst the Trial Men
1.8 In a suit of shabby gray;
1.9 A cricket cap was on his head,
1.10 And his step seemed light and gay;
1.11 But I never saw a man who looked
1.12 So wistfully at the day.
- 1.13 I never saw a man who looked
1.14 With such a wistful eye
1.15 Upon that little tent of blue
1.16 Which prisoners call the sky,
1.17 And at every drifting cloud that went
1.18 With sails of silver by.
- 1.19 I walked, with other souls in pain,
1.20 Within another ring,
1.21 And was wondering if the man had done
1.22 A great or little thing,
1.23 When a voice behind me whispered low,
1.24 "*That fellow's got to swing.*"
1.25 Dear Christ! the very prison walls
1.26 Suddenly seemed to reel,
1.27 And the sky above my head became
1.28 Like a casque of scorching steel;
1.29 And, though I was a soul in pain,
1.30 My pain I could not feel.
- 1.31 I only knew what hunted thought
1.32 Quickened his step, and why
1.33 He looked upon the garish day
1.34 With such a wistful eye;
1.35 The man had killed the thing he loved,
1.36 And so he had to die.

1.37 Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
1.38 By each let this be heard,
1.39 Some do it with a bitter look,
1.40 Some with a flattering word,
1.41 The coward does it with a kiss,
1.42 The brave man with a sword!

1.43 Some kill their love when they are young,
1.44 And some when they are old;
1.45 Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
1.46 Some with the hands of Gold:
1.47 The kindest use a knife, because
1.48 The dead so soon grow cold.

1.49 Some love too little, some too long,
1.50 Some sell, and others buy;
1.51 Some do the deed with many tears,
1.52 And some without a sigh:
1.53 For each man kills the thing he loves,
1.54 Yet each man does not die.

1.55 He does not die a death of shame
1.56 On a day of dark disgrace,
1.57 Nor have a noose about his neck,
1.58 Nor a cloth upon his face,
1.59 Nor drop feet foremost through the floor
1.60 Into an empty space.

1.61 He does not sit with silent men
1.62 Who watch him night and day;
1.63 Who watch him when he tries to weep,
1.64 And when he tries to pray;
1.65 Who watch him lest himself should rob
1.66 The prison of its prey.

1.67 He does not wake at dawn to see
1.68 Dread figures throng his room,
1.69 The shivering Chaplain robed in white,
1.70 The Sheriff stern with gloom,
1.71 And the Governor all in shiny black,
1.72 With the yellow face of Doom.

1.73 He does not rise in piteous haste
1.74 To put on convict-clothes,
1.75 While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes
1.76 Each new and nerve-twitched pose,
1.77 Fingering a watch whose little ticks
1.78 Are like horrible hammer-blows.

1.79 He does not know that sickening thirst
1.80 That sands one's throat, before
1.81 The hangman with his gardener's gloves
1.82 Slips through the padded door,
1.83 And binds one with three leathern thongs,
1.84 That the throat may thirst no more.

1.85 He does not bend his head to hear
1.86 The Burial Office read,
1.87 Nor while the terror of his soul
1.88 Tells him he is not dead,
1.89 Cross his own coffin, as he moves
1.90 Into the hideous shed.

1.91 He does not stare upon the air
1.92 Through a little roof of glass:
1.93 He does not pray with lips of clay
1.94 For his agony to pass;
1.95 Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek
1.96 The kiss of Caiaphas.

Part II

2.1 Six weeks the guardsman walked the yard,
2.2 In the suit of shabby gray:
2.3 His cricket cap was on his head,
2.4 And his step seemed light and gay,
2.5 But I never saw a man who looked
2.6 So wistfully at the day.

2.7 I never saw a man who looked
2.8 With such a wistful eye
2.9 Upon that little tent of blue
2.10 Which prisoners call the sky,
2.11 And at every wandering cloud that trailed
2.12 Its ravelled fleeces by.

2.13 He did not wring his hands, as do
2.14 Those witless men who dare
2.15 To try to rear the changeling Hope
2.16 In the cave of black Despair:
2.17 He only looked upon the sun,
2.18 And drank the morning air.

2.19 He did not wring his hands nor weep,
2.20 Nor did he peek or pine,
2.21 But he drank the air as though it held
2.22 Some healthful anodyne;

2.23 With open mouth he drank the sun
 2.24 As though it had been wine!

2.25 And I and all the souls in pain,
 2.26 Who tramped the other ring,
 2.27 Forgot if we ourselves had done
 2.28 A great or little thing,
 2.29 And watched with gaze of dull amaze
 2.30 The man who had to swing.

2.31 For strange it was to see him pass
 2.32 With a step so light and gay,
 2.33 And strange it was to see him look
 2.34 So wistfully at the day,
 2.35 And strange it was to think that he
 2.36 Had such a debt to pay.

2.37 For oak and elm have pleasant leaves
 2.38 That in the spring-time shoot:
 2.39 But grim to see is the gallows-tree,
 2.40 With its alder-bitten root,
 2.41 And, green or dry, a man must die
 2.42 Before it bears its fruit!

2.43 The loftiest place is that seat of grace
 2.44 For which all worldlings try:
 2.45 But who would stand in hempen band
 2.46 Upon a scaffold high,
 2.47 And through a murderer's collar take
 2.48 His last look at the sky?

2.49 It is sweet to dance to violins
 2.50 When Love and Life are fair:
 2.51 To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
 2.52 Is delicate and rare:
 2.53 But it is not sweet with nimble feet
 2.54 To dance upon the air!

2.55 So with curious eyes and sick surmise
 2.56 We watched him day by day,
 2.57 And wondered if each one of us
 2.58 Would end the self-same way,
 2.59 For none can tell to what red Hell
 2.60 His sightless soul may stray.

2.61 At last the dead man walked no more
 2.62 Amongst the Trial Men,
 2.63 And I knew that he was standing up
 2.64 In the black dock's dreadful pen,
 2.65 And that never would I see his face

2.66 In God's sweet world again.
2.67 Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
2.68 We had crossed each other's way:
2.69 But we made no sign, we said no word,
2.70 We had no word to say;
2.71 For we did not meet in the holy night,
2.72 But in the shameful day.

2.73 A prison wall was round us both,
2.74 Two outcast men we were:
2.75 The world had thrust us from its heart,
2.76 And God from out His care:
2.77 And the iron gin that waits for Sin
2.78 Had caught us in its snare.

III

3.1 In Debtors' Yard the stones are hard,
3.2 And the dripping wall is high,
3.3 So it was there he took the air
3.4 Beneath the leaden sky,
3.5 And by each side a Warder walked,
3.6 For fear the man might die.

3.7 Or else he sat with those who watched
3.8 His anguish night and day;
3.9 Who watched him when he rose to weep,
3.10 And when he crouched to pray;
3.11 Who watched him lest himself should rob
3.12 Their scaffold of its prey.

3.13 The Governor was strong upon
3.14 The Regulations Act:
3.15 The Doctor said that Death was but
3.16 A scientific fact:
3.17 And twice a day the Chaplain called,
3.18 And left a little tract.

3.19 And twice a day he smoked his pipe,
3.20 And drank his quart of beer:
3.21 His soul was resolute, and held
3.22 No hiding-place for fear;
3.23 He often said that he was glad
3.24 The hangman's hands were near.

3.25 But why he said so strange a thing
3.26 No Warder dared to ask:
3.27 For he to whom a watcher's doom
3.28 Is given as his task,

3.29 Must set a lock upon his lips,
3.30 And make his face a mask.
3.31 Or else he might be moved, and try
3.32 To comfort or console:
3.33 And what should Human Pity do
3.34 Pent up in Murderer's Hole?
3.35 What word of grace in such a place
3.36 Could help a brother's soul?

3.37 With slouch and swing around the ring
3.38 We trod the Fools' Parade!
3.39 We did not care: we knew we were
3.40 The Devil's Own Brigade:
3.41 And shaven head and feet of lead
3.42 Make a merry masquerade.

3.43 We tore the tarry rope to shreds
3.44 With blunt and bleeding nails;
3.45 We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,
3.46 And cleaned the shining rails:
3.47 And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,
3.48 And clattered with the pails.

3.49 We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
3.50 We turned the dusty drill:
3.51 We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
3.52 And sweated on the mill:
3.53 But in the heart of every man
3.54 Terror was lying still.

3.55 So still it lay that every day
3.56 Crawled like a weed-clogged wave:
3.57 And we forgot the bitter lot
3.58 That waits for fool and knave,
3.59 Till once, as we tramped in from work,
3.60 We passed an open grave.

3.61 With yawning mouth the yellow hole
3.62 Gaped for a living thing;
3.63 The very mud cried out for blood
3.64 To the thirsty asphalt ring:
3.65 And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair
3.66 Some prisoner had to swing.

3.67 Right in we went, with soul intent
3.68 On Death and Dread and Doom:
3.69 The hangman, with his little bag,
3.70 Went shuffling through the gloom:
3.71 And each man trembled as he crept
3.72 Into his numbered tomb.

3.73 That night the empty corridors
3.74 Were full of forms of Fear,
3.75 And up and down the iron town
3.76 Stole feet we could not hear,
3.77 And through the bars that hide the stars
3.78 White faces seemed to peer.

3.79 He lay as one who lies and dreams
3.80 In a pleasant meadow-land,
3.81 The watchers watched him as he slept,
3.82 And could not understand
3.83 How one could sleep so sweet a sleep
3.84 With a hangman close at hand.

3.85 But there is no sleep when men must weep
3.86 Who never yet have wept:
3.87 So we--the fool, the fraud, the knave--
3.88 That endless vigil kept,
3.89 And through each brain on hands of pain
3.90 Another's terror crept.

3.91 Alas! it is a fearful thing
3.92 To feel another's guilt!
3.93 For, right within, the sword of Sin
3.94 Pierced to its poisoned hilt,
3.95 And as molten lead were the tears we shed
3.96 For the blood we had not spilt.

3.97 The Warders with their shoes of felt
3.98 Crept by each padlocked door,
3.99 And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,
3.100 Gray figures on the floor,
3.101 And wondered why men knelt to pray
3.102 Who never prayed before.

3.103 All through the night we knelt and prayed,
3.104 Mad mourners of a corse!
3.105 The troubled plumes of midnight were
3.106 The plumes upon a hearse:
3.107 And bitter wine upon a sponge
3.108 Was the savour of Remorse.

3.109 The gray cock crew, the red cock crew,
3.110 But never came the day:
3.111 And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,
3.112 In the corners where we lay:
3.113 And each evil sprite that walks by night
3.114 Before us seemed to play.

3.115 They glided past, they glided fast,
 3.116 Like travellers through a mist:
 3.117 They mocked the moon in a rigadon
 3.118 Of delicate turn and twist,
 3.119 And with formal pace and loathsome grace
 3.120 The phantoms kept their tryst.

3.121 With mop and mow, we saw them go,
 3.122 Slim shadows hand in hand:
 3.123 About, about, in ghostly rout
 3.124 They trod a saraband:
 3.125 And damned grotesques made arabesques,
 3.126 Like the wind upon the sand!

3.127 With the pirouettes of marionettes,
 3.128 They tripped on pointed tread:
 3.129 But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,
 3.130 As their grisly masque they led,
 3.131 And loud they sang, and long they sang,
 3.132 For they sang to wake the dead.

3.133 *"Oho!" they cried, "the world is wide,*
 3.134 *But fettered limbs go lame!*
 3.135 *And once, or twice, to throw the dice*
 3.136 *Is a gentlemanly game,*
 3.137 *But he does not win who plays with Sin*
 3.138 *In the Secret House of Shame."*

3.139 No things of air these antics were,
 3.140 That frolicked with such glee:
 3.141 To men whose lives were held in gyves,
 3.142 And whose feet might not go free,
 3.143 Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,
 3.144 Most terrible to see.

3.145 Around, around, they waltzed and wound;
 3.146 Some wheeled in smirking pairs;
 3.147 With the mincing step of a demirep
 3.148 Some sidled up the stairs:
 3.149 And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,
 3.150 Each helped us at our prayers.

3.151 The morning wind began to moan,
 3.152 But still the night went on:
 3.153 Through its giant loom the web of gloom
 3.154 Crept till each thread was spun:
 3.155 And, as we prayed, we grew afraid
 3.156 Of the Justice of the Sun.

3.157 The moaning wind went wandering round
3.158 The weeping prison-wall:
3.159 Till like a wheel of turning steel
3.160 We felt the minutes crawl:
3.161 O moaning wind! what had we done
3.162 To have such a seneschal?

3.163 At last I saw the shadowed bars,
3.164 Like a lattice wrought in lead,
3.165 Move right across the whitewashed wall
3.166 That faced my three-plank bed,
3.167 And I knew that somewhere in the world
3.168 God's dreadful dawn was red.

3.169 At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,
3.170 At seven all was still,
3.171 But the sough and swing of a mighty wing
3.172 The prison seemed to fill,
3.173 For the Lord of Death with icy breath
3.174 Had entered in to kill.

3.175 He did not pass in purple pomp,
3.176 Nor ride a moon-white steed.
3.177 Three yards of cord and a sliding board
3.178 Are all the gallows' need:
3.179 So with rope of shame the Herald came
3.180 To do the secret deed.

3.181 We were as men who through a fen
3.182 Of filthy darkness grope:
3.183 We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
3.184 Or to give our anguish scope:
3.185 Something was dead in each of us,
3.186 And what was dead was Hope.

3.187 For Man's grim Justice goes its way
3.188 And will not swerve aside:
3.189 It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
3.190 It has a deadly stride:
3.191 With iron heel it slays the strong,
3.192 The monstrous parricide!

3.193 We waited for the stroke of eight:
3.194 Each tongue was thick with thirst:
3.195 For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate
3.196 That makes a man accursed,
3.197 And Fate will use a running noose
3.198 For the best man and the worst.

3.199 We had no other thing to do,
3.200 Save to wait for the sign to come:
3.201 So, like things of stone in a valley lone,
3.202 Quiet we sat and dumb:
3.203 But each man's heart beat thick and quick,
3.204 Like a madman on a drum!

3.205 With sudden shock the prison-clock
3.206 Smote on the shivering air,
3.207 And from all the gaol rose up a wail
3.208 Of impotent despair,
3.209 Like the sound the frightened marshes hear
3.210 From some leper in his lair.

3.211 And as one sees most fearful things
3.212 In the crystal of a dream,
3.213 We saw the greasy hempen rope
3.214 Hooked to the blackened beam,
3.215 And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
3.216 Strangled into a scream.

3.217 And all the woe that moved him so
3.218 That he gave that bitter cry,
3.219 And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
3.220 None knew so well as I:
3.221 For he who lives more lives than one
3.222 More deaths than one must die.

IV

4.1 There is no chapel on the day
4.2 On which they hang a man:
4.3 The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,
4.4 Or his face is far too wan,
4.5 Or there is that written in his eyes
4.6 Which none should look upon.

4.7 So they kept us close till nigh on noon,
4.8 And then they rang the bell,
4.9 And the Warders with their jingling keys
4.10 Opened each listening cell,
4.11 And down the iron stair we tramped,
4.12 Each from his separate Hell.

4.13 Out into God's sweet air we went,
4.14 But not in wonted way,
4.15 For this man's face was white with fear,
4.16 And that man's face was gray,

4.17 And I never saw sad men who looked
4.18 So wistfully at the day.

4.19 I never saw sad men who looked
4.20 With such a wistful eye
4.21 Upon that little tent of blue
4.22 We prisoners called the sky,
4.23 And at every careless cloud that passed
4.24 In happy freedom by.

4.25 But there were those amongst us all
4.26 Who walked with downcast head,
4.27 And knew that, had each got his due,
4.28 They should have died instead:
4.29 He had but killed a thing that lived,
4.30 Whilst they had killed the dead.

4.31 For he who sins a second time
4.32 Wakes a dead soul to pain,
4.33 And draws it from its spotted shroud,
4.34 And makes it bleed again,
4.35 And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,
4.36 And makes it bleed in vain!

4.37 Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb
4.38 With crooked arrows starred,
4.39 Silently we went round and round
4.40 The slippery asphalt yard;
4.41 Silently we went round and round,
4.42 And no man spoke a word.

4.43 Silently we went round and round,
4.44 And through each hollow mind
4.45 The Memory of dreadful things
4.46 Rushed like a dreadful wind,
4.47 And Horror stalked before each man,
4.48 And Terror crept behind.

4.49 The Warders strutted up and down,
4.50 And kept their herd of brutes,
4.51 Their uniforms were spick and span,
4.52 And they wore their Sunday suits,
4.53 But we knew the work they had been at,
4.54 By the quicklime on their boots.

4.55 For where a grave had opened wide,
4.56 There was no grave at all:
4.57 Only a stretch of mud and sand
4.58 By the hideous prison-wall,
4.59 And a little heap of burning lime,

4.60 That the man should have his pall.
 4.61 For he has a pall, this wretched man,
 4.62 Such as few men can claim:
 4.63 Deep down below a prison-yard,
 4.64 Naked for greater shame,
 4.65 He lies, with fetters on each foot,
 4.66 Wrapt in a sheet of flame!

 4.67 And all the while the burning lime
 4.68 Eats flesh and bone away,
 4.69 It eats the brittle bone by night,
 4.70 And the soft flesh by day,
 4.71 It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
 4.72 But it eats the heart away.

 4.73 For three long years they will not sow
 4.74 Or root or seedling there:
 4.75 For three long years the unblessed spot
 4.76 Will sterile be and bare,
 4.77 And look upon the wondering sky
 4.78 With unreproachful stare.

 4.79 They think a murderer's heart would taint
 4.80 Each simple seed they sow.
 4.81 It is not true! God's kindly earth
 4.82 Is kindlier than men know,
 4.83 And the red rose would but glow more red,
 4.84 The white rose whiter blow.

 4.85 Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
 4.86 Out of his heart a white!
 4.87 For who can say by what strange way,
 4.88 Christ brings His will to light,
 4.89 Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore
 4.90 Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?

 4.91 But neither milk-white rose nor red
 4.92 May bloom in prison air;
 4.93 The shard, the pebble, and the flint,
 4.94 Are what they give us there:
 4.95 For flowers have been known to heal
 4.96 A common man's despair.

 4.97 So never will wine-red rose or white,
 4.98 Petal by petal, fall
 4.99 On that stretch of mud and sand that lies
 4.100 By the hideous prison-wall,
 4.101 To tell the men who tramp the yard
 4.102 That God's Son died for all.

4.103 Yet though the hideous prison-wall
4.104 Still hems him round and round,
4.105 And a spirit may not walk by night
4.106 That is with fetters bound,
4.107 And a spirit may but weep that lies
4.108 In such unholy ground,

4.109 He is at peace--this wretched man--
4.110 At peace, or will be soon:
4.111 There is no thing to make him mad,
4.112 Nor does Terror walk at noon,
4.113 For the lampless Earth in which he lies
4.114 Has neither Sun nor Moon.

4.115 They hanged him as a beast is hanged:
4.116 They did not even toll
4.117 A requiem that might have brought
4.118 Rest to his startled soul,
4.119 But hurriedly they took him out,
4.120 And hid him in a hole.

4.121 They stripped him of his canvas clothes,
4.122 And gave him to the flies:
4.123 They mocked the swollen purple throat,
4.124 And the stark and staring eyes:
4.125 And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
4.126 In which their convict lies.

4.127 The Chaplain would not kneel to pray
4.128 By his dishonoured grave:
4.129 Nor mark it with that blessed Cross
4.130 That Christ for sinners gave,
4.131 Because the man was one of those
4.132 Whom Christ came down to save.

4.133 Yet all is well; he has but passed
4.134 To Life's appointed bourne:
4.135 And alien tears will fill for him
4.136 Pity's long-broken urn,
4.137 For his mourners will be outcast men,
4.138 And outcasts always mourn.

V

5.1 I know not whether Laws be right,
5.2 Or whether Laws be wrong;
5.3 All that we know who lie in gaol
5.4 Is that the wall is strong;

5.5 And that each day is like a year,
5.6 A year whose days are long.

5.7 But this I know, that every Law
5.8 That men have made for Man,
5.9 Since first Man took his brother's life,
5.10 And the sad world began,
5.11 But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
5.12 With a most evil fan.

5.13 This too I know--and wise it were
5.14 If each could know the same--
5.15 That every prison that men build
5.16 Is built with bricks of shame,
5.17 And bound with bars lest Christ should see
5.18 How men their brothers maim.

5.19 With bars they blur the gracious moon,
5.20 And blind the goodly sun:
5.21 And they do well to hide their Hell,
5.22 For in it things are done
5.23 That Son of God nor son of Man
5.24 Ever should look upon!

5.25 The vilest deeds like poison weeds
5.26 Bloom well in prison-air:
5.27 It is only what is good in Man
5.28 That wastes and withers there:
5.29 Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
5.30 And the Warder is Despair.

5.31 For they starve the little frightened child
5.32 Till it weeps both night and day:
5.33 And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
5.34 And gibe the old and gray,
5.35 And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
5.36 And none a word may say.

5.37 Each narrow cell in which we dwell
5.38 Is a foul and dark latrine,
5.39 And the fetid breath of living Death
5.40 Chokes up each grated screen,
5.41 And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
5.42 In Humanity's machine.

5.43 The brackish water that we drink
5.44 Creeps with a loathsome slime,
5.45 And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
5.46 Is full of chalk and lime,
5.47 And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
5.48 Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

5.49 But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
5.50 Like asp with adder fight,
5.51 We have little care of prison fare,
5.52 For what chills and kills outright
5.53 Is that every stone one lifts by day
5.54 Becomes one's heart by night.

5.55 With midnight always in one's heart,
5.56 And twilight in one's cell,
5.57 We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
5.58 Each in his separate Hell,
5.59 And the silence is more awful far
5.60 Than the sound of a brazen bell.

5.61 And never a human voice comes near
5.62 To speak a gentle word:
5.63 And the eye that watches through the door
5.64 Is pitiless and hard:
5.65 And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
5.66 With soul and body marred.

5.67 And thus we rust Life's iron chain
5.68 Degraded and alone:
5.69 And some men curse, and some men weep,
5.70 And some men make no moan:
5.71 But God's eternal Laws are kind
5.72 And break the heart of stone.

5.73 And every human heart that breaks,
5.74 In prison-cell or yard,
5.75 Is as that broken box that gave
5.76 Its treasure to the Lord,
5.77 And filled the unclean leper's house
5.78 With the scent of costliest nard.

5.79 Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
5.80 And peace of pardon win!
5.81 How else may man make straight his plan
5.82 And cleanse his soul from Sin?
5.83 How else but through a broken heart
5.84 May Lord Christ enter in?

5.85 And he of the swollen purple throat,
5.86 And the stark and staring eyes,
5.87 Waits for the holy hands that took
5.88 The Thief to Paradise;
5.89 And a broken and a contrite heart
5.90 The Lord will not despise.

5.91 The man in red who reads the Law
5.92 Gave him three weeks of life,
5.93 Three little weeks in which to heal
5.94 His soul of his soul's strife,
5.95 And cleanse from every blot of blood
5.96 The hand that held the knife.

5.97 And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,
5.98 The hand that held the steel:
5.99 For only blood can wipe out blood,
5.100 And only tears can heal:
5.101 And the crimson stain that was of Cain
5.102 Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI

6.1 In Reading gaol by Reading town
6.2 There is a pit of shame,
6.3 And in it lies a wretched man
6.4 Eaten by teeth of flame,
6.5 In a burning winding-sheet he lies,
6.6 And his grave has got no name.

6.7 And there, till Christ call forth the dead,
6.8 In silence let him lie:
6.9 No need to waste the foolish tear,
6.10 Or heave the windy sigh:
6.11 The man had killed the thing he loved,
6.12 And so he had to die.

6.13 And all men kill the thing they love,
6.14 By all let this be heard,
6.15 Some do it with a bitter look,
6.16 Some with a flattering word,
6.17 The coward does it with a kiss,
6.18 The brave man with a sword.

Points for Reflection

1. how does the doomed Charles Thomas Woolridge, the unnamed victim of the poem, face his approaching death?
2. how many different ways do humans kill those that they love, according to the narrator?
3. why might killing someone with a knife be the “kindest” way to kill someone (1.43-78)?
4. what does the narrator mean by the claim that “each man does not die” (1.54)?
5. can you identify any of the Biblical allusions made by Wilde? To what end does he employ these? Is he seeking to uphold or ratify the principles on which he touches?
6. why might Wilde so blatantly repeat the substance of lines 1.7-18 in lines 97-108; 2.1-12? Why employ such repetition? (He does elsewhere too.)
7. does the narrator claim it is easier, or harder, to embrace Divine hope when faced with capital punishment (ll.139-44; 2.43-48)?
8. is the narrator’s feeling of being thrust outside God’s grace (1.172; 2.76) ever countered?
9. do the prison governor, doctor, and chaplain provide either compassion or hope?
10. do any of the jobs demanded of the prisoners (ll.217-26; 3.43-54) allow them that creative expression so valued by John Ruskin?
11. which prisoners successfully sleep the night before the hanging, and why?
12. what precipitates the appearance of those evil sprites who walk and dance about?
13. do any images in this poem echo those found in Wilde’s “The Harlot’s House”?
14. do the evil sprites described by the narrator have a clear agenda?
15. how do the evil sprites “help” the prisoners at their prayer (1.324; 3.150)?
16. how might the narrator have lived “more lives than one (1.395; 3.221)?
17. following the hanging, how do the Warders move about compared with the prisoners?
18. what is the sheet of flame which encompasses the dead prisoner?
19. does the narrator believe a prisoner’s corpse makes good fertilizer?
20. does the narrator imagine the criminal suffering in Hell?
21. does the prison Chaplain bless the corpse

22. does the narrator recognize human law as just and sound?
23. why do governments build prisoners with brick and bars, according to the narrator?
24. does prison have an ameliorating and/or corrective influence on those it houses?
25. which emotion is not effectively squelched by prison?
26. are the prisoners encouraged to speak?
27. what might Wilde mean by the repeated notion that men "kill the thing they love" (ll.35, 53, 649; 1.35, 1.53, 6.13)?

T. Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" (publshd 29. Dec. 1900 in *The Graphic*, and again in the *London Times* on 1 Jan. 1901. Perhaps written in 1899.)

I leant upon a coppice gate
 When Frost was spectre-gray,
 And Winter's dregs made desolate
 The weakening eye of day.
 The tangled bine-stems scored the sky 5
 Like strings of broken lyres,
 And all mankind that haunted nigh
 Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
 The Century's corpse outleant, 10
 His crypt the cloudy canopy,
 The wind his death-lament.
 The ancient pulse of germ and birth
 Was shrunken hard and dry,
 And every spirit upon earth 15
 Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
 The bleak twigs overhead
 In a full-hearted evensong
 Of joy illimited; 20
 An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
 In blast-beruffled plume,
 Had chosen thus to fling his soul
 Upon the growing gloom.

