

## A Few Poems for Your Pleasure and Enlightenment

*Mark Twain*

### **Battle Hymn Of The Republic (Brought Down To Date) 1901**

Mine eyes have seen the orgy of the launching of the Sword;  
He is searching out the hoardings where the stranger's wealth is stored;  
He hath loosed his fateful lightnings, and with woe and death has scored;  
His lust is marching on.

I have seen him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;  
They have builded him an altar in the Eastern dews and damp;  
I have read his doomful mission by the dim and flaring lamps—  
His night is marching on.

I have read his bandit gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:  
"As ye deal with my pretensions, so with you my wrath shall deal;  
Let the faithless son of Freedom crush the patriot with his heel;  
Lo, Greed is marching on!"

We have legalized the strumpet and are guarding her retreat;\*  
Greed is seeking out commercial souls before his judgement seat;  
O, be swift, ye clods, to answer him! be jubilant my feet!  
Our god is marching on!

In a sordid slime harmonious Greed was born in yonder ditch,  
With a longing in his bosom— and for others' goods an itch.  
As Christ died to make men holy, let men die to make us rich—  
Our god is marching on.

NOTE: In Manila the Government has placed a certain industry under the protection of our flag. (M.T.)

*Stephen Crane*

**1895**

III

In the desert  
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,  
Who, squatting upon the ground,  
Held his heart in his hands,  
And ate of it.  
I said, "Is it good, friend?"  
"It is bitter - bitter", he answered,  
"But I like it  
Because it is bitter,  
And because it is my heart."

*Stephen Crane*

**1899**

The wayfarer,  
 Perceiving the pathway to truth,  
 Was struck with astonishment.  
 It was thickly grown with weeds.  
 "Ha," he said,  
 "I see that none has passed here  
 In a long time."  
 Later he saw that each weed  
 Was a singular knife.  
 "Well," he mumbled at last,  
 "Doubtless there are other roads."

*E. A. Robinson*

**The Clerks**

**1896**

I did not think that I should find them there  
 When I came back again; but there they stood,  
 As in the days they dreamed of when young blood  
 Was in their cheeks and women called them fair.  
 Be sure, they met me with an ancient air,  
 And, yes, there was a shop-worn brotherhood  
 About them; but the men were just as good,  
 And just as human as they ever were.  
 And you that ache so much to be sublime,  
 And you that feed yourselves with your descent,  
 What comes of all your visions and your fears?  
 Poets and kings are but the clerks of Time,  
 Tying the same dull webs of discontent,  
 Clipping the same sad alnage of the years.

*E. A. Robinson*

**Cassandra**

**1916**

I heard one who said: "Verily,  
 What word have I for children here?  
 Your Dollar is your only Word,  
 The wrath of it your only fear.

"You build it altars tall enough                    5  
 To make you see, but you are blind;  
 You cannot leave it long enough  
 To look before you or behind.

"When Reason beckons you to pause,  
 You laugh and say that you know best;        10  
 But what it is you know, you keep  
 As dark as ingots in a chest.

You laugh and answer, 'We are young;

Oh, leave us now, and let us grow:  
Not asking how much more of this      15  
Will Time endure or Fate bestow.

“Because a few complacent years  
Have made your peril of your pride,  
Think you that you are to go on  
Forever pampered and untried?      20

“What lost eclipse of history,  
What bivouac of the marching stars,  
Has given the sign for you to see  
Millenniums and last great wars?

“What unrecorded overthrow      25  
Of all the world has ever known,  
Or ever been, has made itself  
So plain to you, and you alone?

“Your Dollar, Dove and Eagle make  
A Trinity that even you      30  
Rate higher than you rate yourselves;  
It pays, it flatters, and it’s new.

“And though your very flesh and blood  
Be what your Eagle eats and drinks,  
You’ll praise him for the best of birds,      35  
Not knowing what the Eagle thinks.

“The power is yours, but not the sight;  
You see not upon what you tread;  
You have the ages for your guide,  
But not the wisdom to be led.      40

“Think you to tread forever down  
The merciless old verities?  
And are you never to have eyes  
To see the world for what it is?

“Are you to pay for what you have      45  
With all you are?” – No other word  
We caught, but with a laughing crowd  
Moved on. None heeded, and few heard.

*E. A. Robinson*

**Eros Turannos**

**1916**

She fears him, and will always ask  
What fated her to choose him;  
She meets in his engaging mask  
All reason to refuse him.

But what she meets and what she fears  
 Are less than are the downward years,  
 Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs  
 Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity  
 That once had power to sound him,  
 And Love, that will not let him be  
 The Judas that she found him,  
 Her pride assuages her almost  
 As if it were alone the cost--  
 He sees that he will not be lost,  
 And waits, and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees  
 Envelops and allures him;  
 Tradition, touching all he sees,  
 Beguiles and reassures him.  
 And all her doubts of what he says  
 Are dimmed by what she knows of days,  
 Till even Prejudice delays  
 And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates  
 The reign of her confusion;  
 The pounding wave reverberates  
 The dirge of her illusion.  
 And Home, where passion lived and died,  
 Becomes a place where she can hide,  
 While all the town and harbor side  
 Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,  
 The story as it should be,  
 As if the story of a house  
 Were told, or ever could be.  
 We'll have no kindly veil between  
 Her visions and those we have seen--  
 As if we guessed what hers have been,  
 Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm, for they  
 That with a god have striven,  
 Not hearing much of what we say,  
 Take what the god has given.  
 Though like waves breaking it may be,  
 Or like a changed familiar tree,  
 Or like a stairway to the sea,  
 Where down the blind are driven.

Langston Hughes

**Democracy**

1949

Democracy will not come  
 Today, this year  
 Nor ever  
 Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right  
 As the other fellow has  
 To stand  
 On my two feet  
 And own the land.

I tire so of hearing people say,  
*Let things take their course.*  
*Tomorrow is another day.*  
 I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.  
 I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.

Freedom  
 Is a strong seed  
 Planted  
 In a great need.

I live here, too.  
 I want freedom  
 Just as you.

Countee Cullen (1903–1946)

**For A Lady I Know**

1925

She even thinks that up in heaven  
 Her class lies late and snores,  
 While poor black cherubs rise at seven  
 To do celestial chores.