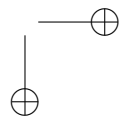
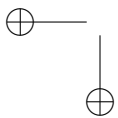
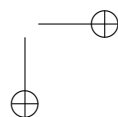
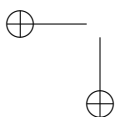
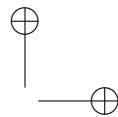
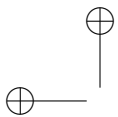
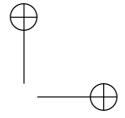
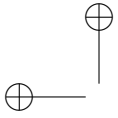




Horace in Modern Dress



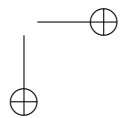
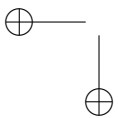


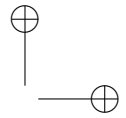


Horace in Modern Dress

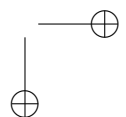
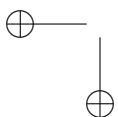
L. E. Gielgud

IWP





2022
First Published in 1951





FOREWORD

No translator can afford to claim that any translation of first-rate poetry into another language can hope to be more than a faint and unsatisfactory reflection.

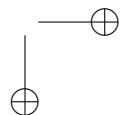
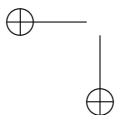
What I have tried to do is to produce readable English verse, faithful to the spirit of Horace, and at least suggestive of his wit, his rather superficial worldly wisdom, and his essential humanity. The music of his lines, and the ingenuity of his style – though not often his economy of words – can be to some extent paralleled where they cannot be reproduced, and historical and contemporary allusions replaced by English equivalents; the names of Horace’s friends (of both sexes) have been treated, for this purpose, as “contemporary allusions.”

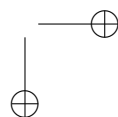
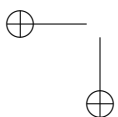
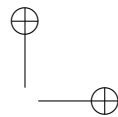
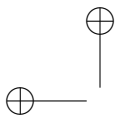
It cost me a pang to sacrifice such lovely names as Barine and Leuconoe; but I cannot help feeling that the realization of these ladies as human beings, and of the poet’s relation to them, is made easier by the change.

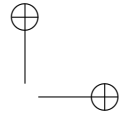
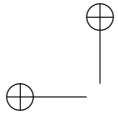
No Classical scholar need, I hope and believe, resent my implicit recognition of the fact that the place occupied in the social life of Augustan Rome by scents and garlands, is held by tobacco in XXth Century London.

In regard to the English metres used, the only criterion employed has been to try to find for each ode a metre that seemed to fit the sense, and carry it without too many distortions or too much padding.

For my adherence to a poetical canon which postulates that English verse should rhyme and scan, I have no excuses to make.







“MAN IS THE MASTER OF THINGS”

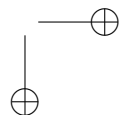
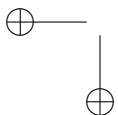
(Sic te Diva potens Cypri – I iii)

The Queen of Lovers’ Isles be yours
For pilot, and for lamps the Twin
Brethren of Helen, on your course.
Be all ill winds imprisoned in
The Cave of Aeolus, and fair
South-westerners only be your share!

But then, good Ship, no deviation
From your strict schedule! You are bound
At his appointed destination
To set the Poet, safe and sound,
Preserving him (best part of me)
From all the perils of the sea.

In seasoned oak and triple steel
His heart was cased, who first of all
Men mortal, launched his tiny keel,
Obeyed the awful Ocean’s call,
And fared presumptuously forth
To face the tempests of the North.

He scorned the tears the Rainers shed;
The Southern Gales, with North Winds clashing,
He heeded not, nor heard with dread
The frantic tempests curbing, lashing,
The frenzied waves. That Pioneer
Held Death at gaze, and felt no fear.



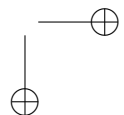
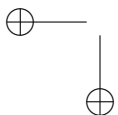


Dry-eyed, the Monsters of the Deep
He looked on, and the foaming seas,
And jagged rocks that tower steep
Off Scotland's coasts. If Heaven decrees
That land from land shall by the Main
Be sundered, Heaven decrees in vain.

For through the impenetrable straits
Defiantly the ships proceed.
No man of courage hesitates
At things prohibited. Indeed,
Prometheus, when he stole the Flame,
The first Adventurer became.

And after, when forbidden fire
With men was lodged, though Earth was stricken
With fearful plagues and famine dire –
Men, once long-lived, now early sicken –
A Daedalus was found, to dare
Attempt the conquest of the Air,

And there was found a Hercules:
To break an entry into Hell.
Adventurous men go where they please.
Will men invade High Heaven as well?
God knows – but knowing men, no wonder
He keeps His fingers on His Thunder.





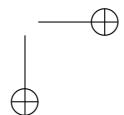
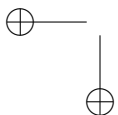
THE PROMISE OF SPRING

(Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni – I iv)

Bitter Winter melts away.
 Spring's delicious breezes blow.
 Little ships on rollers go
Down the beaches to the bay.
Now the ox disdains the stall,
 Now the ploughman leaves the fire,
Now the frosts that whitened all,
 From the meadowlands retire.

Venus now the dances leads,
 While the Moon in Heaven stands.
 Nymphs and Graces, taking hands,
Step their measures on the meads;
And the lame Olympian Smith
 Feeds and fans the awful fires
In the Thunderer's Forges, with
 Giants serving him for squires.

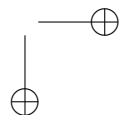
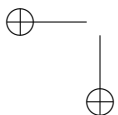
Through the thawing ground appear
 Crocuses and myrtle sprigs,
 Meet to sport with masks and wigs
Now that Carnival is near;
And the Master of the Glade,
 Pan, prescribes a roast of lamb
Now for picnics in the shade,
 Or a kid with marjoram.

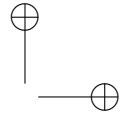
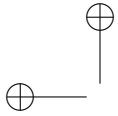




Yes, but pallid Death at your
Palace gates at last will beat
With the same imperious feet
As at any cottage door.
Blest are you – but life is brief.
Plans mature – but planners fade.
Death shall take you like a thief.
You shall join the Shades, a Shade.

Yes, and in the Shadow Land,
Never, never shall the dice
Roll for you, nor waiters ice
Dry Moselle at your demand.
Death will be the end of joy,
End of all that here began –
Will, your little wonder boy,
Soon will be a ladies' man.





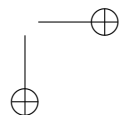
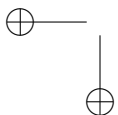
THE CHARMER

(Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa – I v)

What slender wooer in the roses,
 With sleekly parted hair, to Prue
In quiet corners now proposes?
 For whom, delicious child, do you
Prink up today your golden curls?
 Poor innocent – how he will curse
The fickle way of Gods and girls
 When winds and waves his bark reverse.

An unsuspecting novice, he
 Who now with you such welcome finds,
Presumes you always kind and free,
 And never dreams of changing winds.

Alas for suitors yet untried!
 The Law Reports attest that I
Have paid my tribute to the tide –
 And hung my garments up to dry.





THE COBBLER TO HIS LAST

(Scriberis Vario fortis et hostium – I vi)

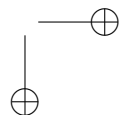
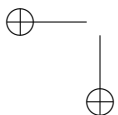
Your prowess shall in epic phrases
Be chronicled by serious writers,
Recounting how you led the fighters
And planned the fight's successive phases.

Slight verse which solemn themes develops
Is uncanonical. 'Twere folly
Were I Achilles' melancholy,
The curse upon the House of Pelops,

And sly Ulysses' tortuous journeys
To celebrate. Not mine the talent
To hymn the deeds of great and gallant
Commanders, and heroic tourneys,

Or venture on the epic story
Of Diomed, with Pallas aiding,
Battling with Gods – or Merion raiding
The Trojan plain in dusty glory.

The wars of maids, and lovers' treason
My themes shall be, and I unblushing
Shall picture faces scratched and flushing –
And not be rude, except in reason.





THE SPOILED BOY

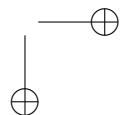
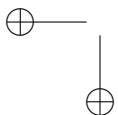
(Lydia, dic, per omnes – I vii)

Why, Vera, why must you so dote,
And with your dotting ruin Bill?
And why should barrack-square and drill
So stick in his reluctant throat?

Why cannot Bill stand riding-school
Like other lads, and learn to use
Controls and curb? Why need he lose
His courage at the swimming-pool?

Why as at sight of adder's blood
Must Bill from boxing-gloves recoil?
Why fear his lily hands to soil
By playing Rugger in the mud?

True, young Achilles had a shy
School-girlish way with him, before
The Trojan Doom impending bore
Him off to Lycian soil, to die.





WINTER COUNSEL

(Vides ut alta stet nive candida – I ix)

Snow on the Grampians glistens deep.
The gallant forests strain and quiver
Beneath their load, and every river
So stiff is frozen, it seems asleep.

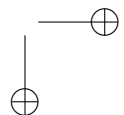
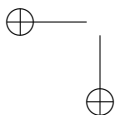
Bring logs, more logs, to feed the fire
And drive away the winter cold!
With Highland whiskey, ten years old,
Fill up! Fill up a little higher –

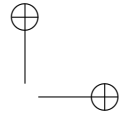
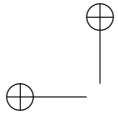
And leave the rest to Heaven, whose Will
Shall stem the gale that galls and lashes
The hissing seas, and mountain ashes
And swaying cedars shall be still.

“What will tomorrow bring?” Forebear
To ask, and count for gain the things,
Whate’er they be, tomorrow brings!
To revelling and love repair

While griefs and greying hairs remain
Undreamed-of ills – to court and field
And whispered words by night concealed,
Betake you, often and again.

Look in the corner, lad, where lingers
The Puss’s tell-tale titter – twist
The forfeit from a wriggling wrist,
Or wrest the ring from yielding fingers!





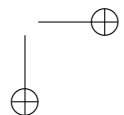
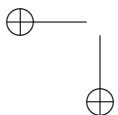
ADVICE TO A LADY

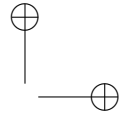
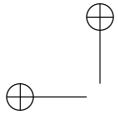
(Tu ne quaesieris – scire nefas – quem mihi, quem tibi – I xi)

The Gods have fixed for you and me
Our day to die, but when 'twill be,
My Lady Blanche, we may not know.
So ask no questions, neither go
To fortune-tellers' horoscopes
In quest of courage, or of hopes.

It may be you are due to get
Your fill of other winters yet:
Maybe this winter, whose chill blast
Now whips the shingle, is your last.

Whate'er awaits you, take the way
Of Wisdom: fill the cup, and say
That life is short, and hope uncertain –
We talk, but Time brings down the curtain.
Since Time is jealous, make your hay,
Not, not to-morrow, but to-day.





THE RIVAL

(*Cum tu, Lydia, Telephi – I xiii*)

Vera, when you murmur thickly:

“Victor’s arms are white as wax –
Lovely, lovely Victor!” – prickly

Gall my envious heart attacks,
Feverish and foul and sickly.

How the blood then ebbs and flows

In my cheeks and in my brain!

On my lashes water shows –

So compelling is my pain,
So much out-of-joint my nose.

Burning Hell it is, to see

Wine on your white bosom running,

And your lover making free

With his teeth, to mark a cunning
Brand on lips denied to me –

Vera, you must not suppose

He will keep for ever giving

Kisses violent as blows,

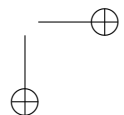
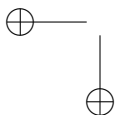
Laced by Venus with the living
Nectar Love alone bestows.

Lovers who their tongues restrain –

Lovers who are quiet-spoken,

Slow to quarrel or complain,

Linked for life with bonds unbroken –
Blest are they, and blest again.

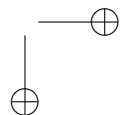
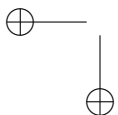




ENTICEMENT

(*Velox amoenum saepe Lucretilem – I xvii*)

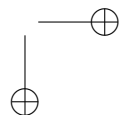
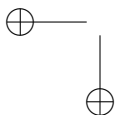
Pan from Arcady to Surrey's
Pleasant commons often hurries
 All my homestead's little ones
 Sheltering from blazing suns,
Chilling rains and winds, and worries.
Sanctuary here He makes.
Unafraid, amid the brakes,
 Hunting tufts of thyme and chives,
 Browse my stinking Billy's wives,
Undeterred by basking snakes,
Undisturbed by beasts that kill,
Safe, because by heath and hill
 Sounds the tune the Pan-pipes play
 From the Valley of the Wey
Out to Farnham, past Cutmill.
All the Powers recognise
Poets (for the Gods are wise) –
 So the Heavens love me, and
 You, my sweet, can here command
All a Surrey farm supplies.
Sheltered here from sultry weather,
Make your music in the heather.
 Sing not of Penelope's
 Web, but tell how, ill at ease,
She and Circe wept together.

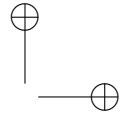
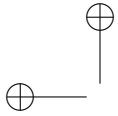




Drink, when you are thirsty, clear
Draughts of honest Guildford beer.
 (Whiskey, I presume to think,
 Should remain the soldier's drink.)
You shall never need to fear

Jealous George. His indiscreet
Fumbling shall not spoil the sweet
 Sprays of bracken in your hair,
 Nor his heavy fingers tear
Skirt from bodice, where they meet.





LOVE IN IDLENESS

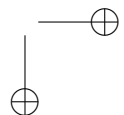
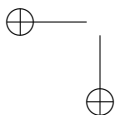
(Mater saeva Cupidinum – I xix)

“Stir up the fires of Passions dead!”
The ruthless Mother of desires
And naughty leisure said.
And tipsy Bacchus wagged his head:
“Stir up their fires!”

The alabaster loveliness
Of Helen’s countenance enchants me.
Helen enchants me – yes,
The wanton mood her eyes express
Delights and haunts me.

On my undoing all intent,
Love leaves her Isle. She lets me speak
No word impertinent,
No word of how the battle went
When Greek met Greek.

So, boys, the folding bar bring out,
With scented cigarettes to please her –
And mix Champagne and Stout.
Black Velvet will, without a doubt,
Help me appease her.





DIRGE

(Quis desiderio sit pudor, aut modus – I xxiv)

How shall sorrow chastened be
Or lamenting limited?
He was dear, and dead is he.
Let the dirge for him be said
Softly, softly, Muse, and mute
Thy accompanying lute.

Sleep eternal Edmund's eyes
Holds – and where shall one be found
Half so modest, half so wise,
In the ways of Honour bound,
True as steel, and perfect in
Honest dealing, Honour's twin?

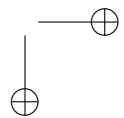
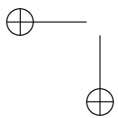
Tears for Edmund's passing flow,
Charles, and yours the most sincere.
How could Heaven misuse you so?
You, the Gods know, held him dear –
But to have him back again
Pray not! Litanies are vain.

Though with more persuasive string
You should plead than Orpheus played,
Drawing trees to hear him sing,
Still should gentle Edmund's shade
Not to flesh and blood return.
Edmund now the Shepherd stern





Has enfolded with the Dead.
Prayers cannot alter Fate.
Yet shall you be comforted –
Only wait a little, wait.
He the sinner is, that kicks
Wilfully against the pricks.





THY LATTER END

(Parcius junctas quatunt fenestras – I xxv)

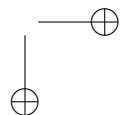
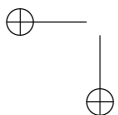
Young rakes at dead of night but rarely
Your shuttered windows now bombard,
And you can yawn in peace. Your yard
Stands empty, your front door shuts squarely –

Those hinges used to work so hard!
But Vera, now the calls are fewer,
You sleep and sleep, whilst I, your poor
Adorer, pine for my reward.

But wait till you in turn endure
At windy corners, late at night,
The scorn of clients you invite –
For you shall be the baffled wooer

When you grow old, and appetite
As hot as horses' dams', devours
Your aching breasts and waning powers!
Then you shall groan that men delight

In greener herbs and fresher flowers,
Preferring buds that burgeon barely,
And leave brown, barren leaves, unfairly,
To moulder in the winter showers.





THE POET'S WISH

(Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinen – I xxxi)

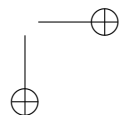
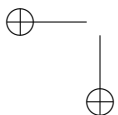
Call, Poet, on Apollo! Blow
The froth that from your pewter rises
And make a wish. But wish for no
Delicious butter from Devizes,

Wish not for Angus cattle, nor
For silver-ware of worth and weight.
Wish not to own, on Avon's shore,
A lordly river-side estate.

Leave priceless peach and nectarine
To men that have a fortune made,
And golden dinner-sets resign
To pundits of successfuul trade

(Since Heaven must somehow favour men
Who fly the Atlantic five times yearly
And come safe home.) Fresh salads – when
I lunch – are all I eat, or nearly.

To me, Apollo, give content
And health, and quiet innocence;
And be my days in honour spent,
And singing songs, till I go hence.





SONG

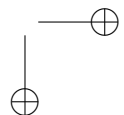
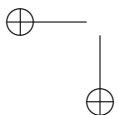
(Poscimus, siquid vacui sub umbra – I xxxii)

Lute, from my idle meditation
If you can mould a measure fit
To live but half a generation,
Speak, lute, and make a song of it.

The lute delighted Troubadours,
In battle bold, between their tourneys,
And Captains wrecked on rocky shores,
Refitting ship for further journeys.

They sang the praise of Song and Wine
And Love, and Love's impatient Boy.
“Black eyes,” they sang, “How bright they shine,”
And “Raven locks engender Joy.”

Apollo loved the lute, and Jove
To grace his feasts ordained the lute
That lightens labour. Lute, reprove
My idle moods, and be not mute.





CONSOLATION

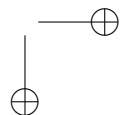
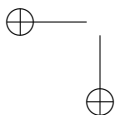
(Albi, ne doleas plus nimio, memor – I xxxiii)

Grieve, my friend, no more than reason
Over cruel Helen's treason.
If she likes a younger lover
Mournful measures will not move her.

Lovely Laura's baby brow
Aches for Tom's embraces now:
Thomas craves for kisses from
Kate – who will not look at Tom.

Kid with wolf would sooner mate.
Love is indiscriminate.
Love's malicious humour bears
Hard on ill-assorted pairs.

Once a match was offered me
When I was not fancy-free.
Raging like the winds at Dover,
Jenny dared me throw her over!





REUNION

(Et thure et fidibus juvat – I xxxvi)

Bring out cigars and blithe guitars
And kill the fatted calf,
And praise the Twin Wayfarers' Stars
On Algernon's behalf.

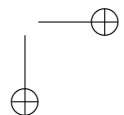
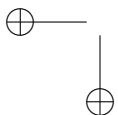
For Algernon is safely here,
Come home from distant lands
He greets his friends and comrades dear
And grips in both his hands

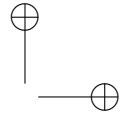
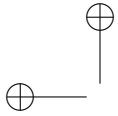
The hands of Tate, who stroked his Eight
And won his Boats when he did.
This blessed day to celebrate
Red letters will be needed.

So let the bottle circulate,
And let the dance wax merry –
And Sally, never mind your date
With Adrian for sherry.

Let roses grace the loaded board,
And lilies of the valley,
And roving eyes be turned toward
The roguish lips of Sally –

But Sally, conquered by the charm
Of Claude – whom all could choke –
Is clasped as close upon his arm
As ivy on the oak.





VICTORY RECORD

(Motum ex Metello consule civicum – II i)

The War that Hitler brought about,
Its causes, and its ups and downs –
The guarantees exchanged with doubt –
The freaks of Fate – the fate of crowns –

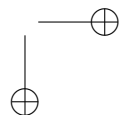
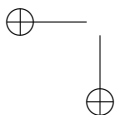
The blood that still for vengeance cries,
The battles fought, the dangers run –
What themes are here! Your enterprise
Will hardly be an easy one.

So let your paints and easels lie.
The pictures you project can wait
To be completed bye and bye:
Write, first, of how you saved the State.

Tell how, in England's finest hour,
You took the wheel, and held the same
Unflinching – broke the Führer's power,
And earned, and won, undying fame.

Your story lives: the sirens' wail
We hear again; the trumpets sound –
Rommel retreats, and Panzers fail,
And planes and armour strew the ground.

The Captains' voices, and the King's
We hear; we see the battle stain
Upon them, and the Eagle's wings
Triumphant – till El Alamein!



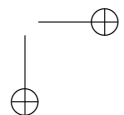
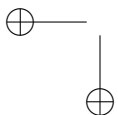


Whilst France's martial reprobates
Lay helpless under Hitler's blows
Her best preserved their loves – and hates! –
And Paris from the dead arose.

But oh, the ground with English blood
Manured, and marked with English graves,
In days when England's name was mud
To spit upon, for Hitler's slaves!

Then every river, every sea,
Its guerdon took of English gore –
And oh, the English dead that we
Have left on every Ocean shore!

But stay, perverse and stubborn Muse,
You stray too far in serious vein.
Take off the disc of Victory Blues –
Let laughter have its rights again.





WAY TO DUSTY DEATH

(Aequam memento rebus in arduis – II iii)

Be sure, when times are out of joint,
 To keep a level head, and try
To keep a cool one, when things point
 To triumph, Tom. You too must die.

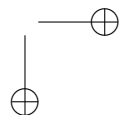
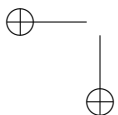
Death waits for all – for men that fret
 Day in, day out, and men that dine
At festal boards in arbours set,
 And drink their toasts in vintage wine.

Here, cedars tall and poplars grey
 Touch branches, mingling shade with shade,
And streams essay to wash away
 The banks their busy currents made,

So let refreshments here be brought
 And lovely, evanescent roses –
For health is nothing, wealth is nought,
 When unrelenting Fate forecloses.

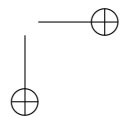
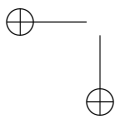
Your towered halls and broad estate
 Will still be there, when you are dead.
The river place you could not wait
 To buy, will be inherited.

The hand of Death no more will spare
 A gentleman of high degree
Than any beggar, poor and bare
 And basely born as base can be.





One end awaits us all. Our fate
Is fixed. The ferry-boat is sent
To carry all men, soon or late,
To their perpetual banishment.





RETREAT

(Septimi, Gades aditure mecum – II vi)

Val, you would go with me, I know,
 To wild Dahomey, or Thibet,
Or nameless soils where Ocean boils
 And sands beneath the Equator sweat –

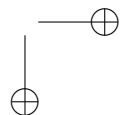
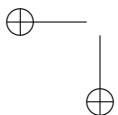
But I would lay beside the Wey
 My ageing bones, and rest me, for
Have I not had my fill, my lad,
 Of seas, and journeyings, and war?

If here I may no longer stay,
 I know a moor beside a burn
Where black-face graze amid the haze,
 Where Stewarts reigned, and dreams return.

The dearest place on all Earth's face
 Is there. Hymettus could not show
Such honey-bees, and rowan trees
 And bracken in the heather grow.

There mists are soft, and Autumn oft
 A second Summer. There a shrewd
And wholesome ale, as fine as pale
 Amontillado wine is brewed.

I pray you, come. They call us home,
 Those gentle hills. And at the end
Drop there a tear upon my bier,
 To mourn a poet and a friend.



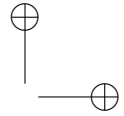
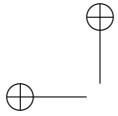


REMONSTRANCE

(Ulla si juristibi pejerati – II viii)

I would believe you, but you swore,
 Babette, so many times before,
And never, when you strained the truth,
 Have cracked a nail, or blacked a tooth.
Your vow, though on your head you swore it,
 You broke – and looked but lovelier for it.
You go your ways, and where you go
 The young men flock to see the show.
Babette, you prosper more and more,
 Though on your Mother's grave you swore
And called the Watchers of the Sky
 And all the Gods to hear you lie.
Queen Venus and her gallant Court
 Are all agog to see such sport,
And Cupid grins, as he anoints
 His ardent shafts, and whets their points.
Each day new suitors swarm about you
 And cannot bear to live without you;
And many an old admirer lingers
 Beside the flame that burned his fingers.
But Mothers, when their sons are near you,
 Are frantic. Prudent Fathers fear you.
And brides protest that faithless grooms
 Retain their taste for your perfumes.





THE MIDDLE PATH

(Rectius vives, Licini, neque altum – II x)

Your ship will steer a straighter course
If not to deepest channels held
And then, before the tempest's force,
To hug unfriendly coasts compelled.

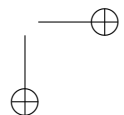
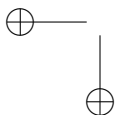
The man that loves the Golden Mean,
Will neither take a tumble-down
Apartment, nor a mansion seen
With envious eyes by half the Town.

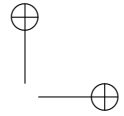
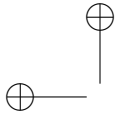
The lightning strikes the highest peaks;
The tallest towers furthest fall;
The wind that flays the forest seeks
The loftiest tree-tops first of all.

Hearts well-conditioned hope in days
Of stress – discount, in plenteous years,
Lean times to come. The scowling face
Of Winter shows, and disappears,

As pleases Heaven. If things today
Go ill, they will amend. Apollo
Unstrings at last his bow, to play
The pleasant tunes the Muses follow.

Be bold of heart, and strong of mind,
When waves run high – but have the wit
When in your wake a following wind
Blows fresh, to trim your sails to it.





“LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY”

(*Quid bellicosus Cantaber aut Scythes – II xi*)

“What plans are hatching in Madrid?
What plots behind the Iron Curtain
Are brewing?” Henry, I forbid
Such dreary questions. This is certain:
Men all must bear their load of care;
Dear youth and beauty soon decay,
Sweet sleep grows rare with greying hair,
And loves are lost, and will not stay.
Moons wax and wane by swift degrees.
Spring-flowers’ fragrance will not last.
Inscrutable are Heaven’s decrees:
Look not too far! Go not too fast!
Better beneath the plane-tree here,
Or in the cedar’s shadow, lie
And cloud with smoke the atmosphere,
And drown your dreads in Extra Dry!
Wine is the stuff to stifle worry.
Old men can drink! The stream hard by
Will cool the magnum. Who will hurry
For glasses? Who will fetch that sly
Slut Alice here, with her banjo –
And see she shall not waste a minute
With curling irons? We, you know,
Preferred the bob with no curls in it.





THE COMMON LOT

(Eheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume – II xiv)

Oh, Peter, Peter, swiftly roll
The years, and crabbéd age is nigh
And will not spare the righteous soul.
The godly like the wicked die.

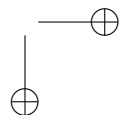
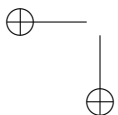
Three hundred candles every day
Will not the Lord of Death placate.
No tears his sentence can allay.
His prison moat, of which the gate

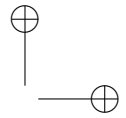
Withstands the strength of Giants, all
That taste the sweets of Earth must cross.
For this the King must leave his Hall,
The labourer his bed of moss.

In vain will prudent men eschew
The fearsome risks of bombs and breakers –
In vain avoid exposure to
The Autumn winds, the ague-makers;

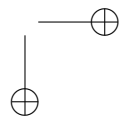
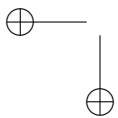
For all at last behold the coil
Of grim Cocytus circling Hell,
And Sisyphus' unending toil,
And Danaus' daughters terrible.

You will be torn from fields and home
And gentle wife, and you will lose
Your darling trees, except for some
Unpleasing clump of Churchyard yews –





And then a better man than you
Will fling your cellar keys away,
And use your vintage port to brew
Punch for a Prelate's Christmas Day.





PROTEST

(Jam pauca aratro jugera regiae – II xv)

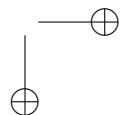
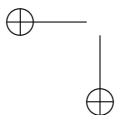
Few acres now stay under plough
As Garden Cities multiply,
And swimming-pools the size of Slough
Are built to catch the public eye.
The elm-tree is supplanted by

The selfish plane, and lawn and lane
Woo passers-by with myrtle's or
Magnolia's scent – but none remain
Of all the herbs that gardens bore
To help the housewife, heretofore.

True, summer's heat sustains defeat
From laurels' cooling leaves, but oh,
In other days it was not meet –
'Twas inadmissible – to throw
The gifts of God away, for show.

No man's estate erstwhile was great,
But all the Realm was rich, for none
Spent millions then to elevate
A Palace or an Odeon
But other times are past and gone.

Once Statutes banned misuse of land,
And public funds were found to bear
The cost of decent buildings and
Embellishments, and Church repair –
But things are not what once they were.





SAGESSE

(Otium divos rogat in patenti – II xvi)

For peace and quiet seamen pray
When in mid-Ocean sable clouds
Obscure the moon, and none can say
Where hide the stars above the shrouds.

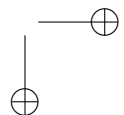
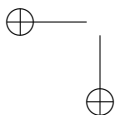
For peace and quiet martial Greeks
And picturesque Albanians cry.
But these, which every mortal seeks,
No gold or precious gems can buy.

No riches, no police, can quell
The riot of a mind distraught.
Though millionaires in castles dwell,
Content of mind cannot be bought.

Yet ease and honour may be his
Whose Father's watch is all his wealth,
Who nurses no anxieties
And no desires, to spoil his health.

We have so little time to live –
Why use it up with many quests?
Why seek what alien suns can give –
For who can 'scape his own arrests?

Up yachts' companionways go chasing
Consuming cares – with cars and planes
Cares hold their own, swift stags out-pacing,
Out-hurricaning hurricanes.



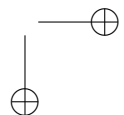
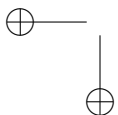


But he that lives for present mirth
And takes no thought beyond, can smile
And make things bitter, sweet. On Earth
Was no perfection, this long while.

Death took Achilles in his prime:
Tithonus lived, his grace to curse.
The hand I hold may prove in time
The better hand and yours the worse,

Though you possess Merino flocks
And Jersey herds, in twenty farms,
Rolls-Royces in your garage, stocks
Of petrol, and a coat-of-arms,

While Fate has only granted me
A cottage home, a facile pen
For scribbling verse, and some degree
Of scorn for really nasty men!





A POEM FOR PRIGS

(Odi profanum vulgus et arceo – III i)

I count no common man my friend.
I serve the Muses, and increase
The volume of my verse, to please
Young men and maidens. Peace! Attend.

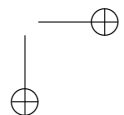
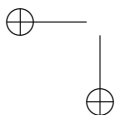
As Kings their Peoples' shepherds are,
So He the Shepherd is of Kings
Who won the Heavenly War. All things
The Lord can make, the Lord can mar.

One squire a richer crop may grow
On acres wider, than another –
One advocate his learned brother
By birth or worth may overthrow,

Or distance in repute or wit:
Fate casts the dice for high and low,
Unweighted; Luck directs the throw
For all, and there's an end of it.

Above the sinner's head, the blade
For ever hangs. His appetite
No dainty dishes may excite.
No song of birds, no music played,

May bring him sleep. But Sleep is kind
To humble countryfolk, and comes
By shady rills to rustic homes
In valleys ruffled by the wind.





The man with soul exempt from greed,
 Tempestuous seas, and stars that presage
 Approaching gales, or bear the message
Of gathering storms, will never heed.

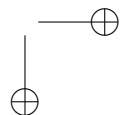
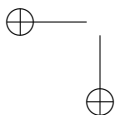
When hops by hail are lashed and lost,
 Or orchards fail, he will not bother,
 But leave the trees to tell each other
Their tales of drought, or floods, or frost.

Vast piers obstruct the watery ways
 Of fishes, where the builders' men
 Have trespassed on the sea – but when
My Lord, who scorned his home to raise

On honest earth, ascends his stair,
 Disquiet with him climbs, and Dread;
 Aboard his yacht, brass-riveted,
And on his horse, sits cruel Care.

No rest he gets, and no relief,
 From marble halls and rich apparel;
 And port and sherry by the barrel
Are helpless to assuage his grief.

Why then should I draw envious eyes
 By building like a millionaire,
 And spend what I would gladly spare
And lose my rural Paradise?





SALUTE TO SOLDIERS

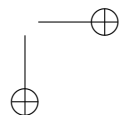
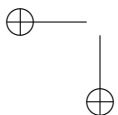
(Angustam, amici, pauperiem pati – III ii)

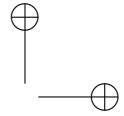
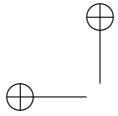
Train up a boy to walk the way
 Of hardship – train him up to fight,
 To ride and fence, and put to flight
The enemy, and win the day,
Defying alien suns, and swords!
 The maids and Mothers of the foe
 Shall watch him from the walls, and go
In terror for their savage Lords,
And call to warn them: “Have a care!
 Yon warrior has a lion’s mood.
 He rages in the ranks for blood,
And lays about him – oh, beware!”
A soldier’s death is death well-met
 And worthy. Cowards also die,
 For though with knocking knees they fly,
Old Death will overtake them yet.
But Valour, master of Dismay,
 Such honour wins as shall not fade –
 Not honours which to-day are made
And voted void another day.
And Valour, opening Heaven’s Gate
 To dauntless men Death dares not spoil,
 Makes haste to fly from sodden soil,
And holds the common crowd in hate.





Discretion, too, deserves reward –
 But he that published or revealed
 Reports for which his lips were sealed
Finds me from home, nor will I board
A boat with him. Though Justice halt,
 No rogue escapes her, in the end,
 And oftentimes a guiltless friend
May suffer for his neighbour's fault.





THIS DECADENT AGE

(*Delicta majorum immeritus lues – III vi*)

The baleful blots our elders' guilt
Has brought on England, shall remain
Till all the Churches are rebuilt
And all the altars served again.

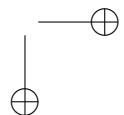
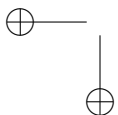
Empires that godly men have founded
Endure but while they fear the Lord,
And pains and penalties unbounded
Are Infidelity's reward.

Already twice the Teuton Power
Our irreligious arms hath smitten,
And in the Führer's Annals our
Defeat was near to being written.

And whilst we fought, we all but lost
Our heritage to younger Powers
That needed not to count the cost
Of mightier armaments than ours.

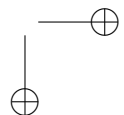
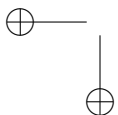
This much-offending generation
Is out of tune with Hearth and Home,
And consequently all the Nation
To sheer disaster's brink is come.

While *débutantes* delight in dancing
The Samba, learn to slap and tickle,
Indulge in "petting" and "romancing"
And end by landing in a pickle –





Wives leave their husbands guzzling whiskey,
And go with *gigolos* to dance,
Or sit and giggle over *risqué*
Movies or novels, made in France –
And unconcern'dly quit such orgies
To meet a Steel Tycoon's demands,
Or gratify a friend of George's
(A travelling man with open hands.)
The men that beat Napoleon's Legions
And fought in Saragossa's streets,
And conquered Asia's farthest regions,
Were nursed at no such mothers' teats.
Those men were Englishmen and brothers –
Men skilled in handling hoe and spade,
Who did the bidding of their Mothers
And fetched and carried as they bade
When Dusk, upon the valley falling,
Unhitched the teams, and parting Day,
On Night, his pleasant partner, calling
To take his service, went his way.
Each Age is feebler than the last one,
And every generation more
Debased and beastly than the past one –
And worse, and weaklier, lie before.





RECONCILIATION

(Donec gratus eram tibi – III ix)

When I was Vera's favoured swain
In her white arms my head would lie,
And rivals courted her in vain –
What King was happy then as I?

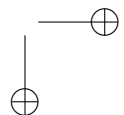
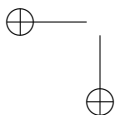
When you no favours sought but mine,
And Vera came not after Joan,
I revelled in a Right Divine
As valid as Victoria's own.

Canadian Joan, my love today,
Can play (by ear) the ukelele.
My life for hers, I beg to say,
I would consent to barter gaily.

I love, and am beloved! My lover
Is Edward Grant, a Lowland Laird,
And I would give my life twice over
That darling Edward should be spared.

But if the old love came again
And clipped us closer than before?
Were Joan expelled, would Vera deign
To grace afresh my open door?

Man ill to cross as Narrow Seas,
Inconstant as a cork! Yet I
Will jilt dear Edward, if you please,
With you to live, with you to die.





WINTER IDYLL

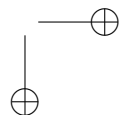
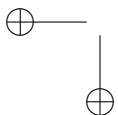
(Extremam Tanain si biberes, Lyce – III x)

If, Lucy, you by Oxus shore,
 To some rude Tartar wed,
Had found me thus before your door,
 A tear you might have shed
To see me, when such tempests roar,
 So much discomfited.

The hinges creak, and you can hear
 The howling of the wind
That whips your trees and bushes – peer
 Abroad, and you shall find
That though the skies above are clear
 Hard frosts the puddles bind.

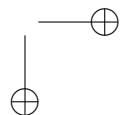
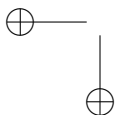
Be not so proud – be not so cold,
 For gentle Venus' sake.
Your wheel of luck will never hold
 If once the pulleys break.
Such cruel ways with wooers, old
 Penelope could take:

A Scottish wife they ill befit.
 Though deaf to pearls and prayers –
Though suitors' sighing may no whit
 Persuade you to be theirs
(Your husband has a yearn for Kit,
 So never claim he cares!)





Come, in your bosom's granite core
One grain of pity find.
I know that rattle-snakes are more
Compassionate and kind –
But days that pass, and rains that pour,
Might change your suitor's mind!





POOR WILLIAM'S WIFE

(*Uxor pauperis Ibyci* – III xv)

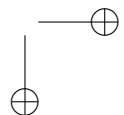
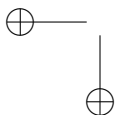
Poor William's wife must learn at last
To end her gay cavorting
And break with her unseemly past.
She haunts the young and sporting

When thoughts of her approaching end
Would better sit upon her.
A cloud that will on stars attend
Can only dim their honour.

What Jenny's youth excuses, is
At Ruth's age unbecoming –
She wrecks men's lodgings, drinks their fizz,
And fills the night with drumming.

(Young Jenny rags a fellow's rooms
In giddy, goatish fashion,
Because their owner, one presumes,
Excites her girlish passion.)

Quit, Ruth, the jazz-and-orchid school,
Forsake the sparkling bumper:
Unroll a skein of Shetland wool
And knit your girl a jumper.





THE CUP THAT CHEERS

(O nate mecum consule Manlio – III xxi)

Good bottle – bottle of the famous year
 When I was born (and Gladstone still alive)
What presage you? A hiccough or a tear?
 A hopeless passion, or a sedative?
A fig for fancy names: you hold *Médoc*,
 A proper drink for this auspicious day,
When Tom demands a bottle from the stock,
 Mellower than any we have put away.
Tom, being steeped in philosophic lore,
 Will never grant that Virtue should decline
What eminent philosophers before
 Have owned could stimulate their wisdom: wine.
Stirred by the gentle pressure wine applies
 Wit sparkles bright; the comfortable grape
Dispels the perturbations of the wise
 And takes from mysteries their awful shape.
Good bottle, you give hope to hearts distressed,
 To beggars, heart and horns to stand before
The Majesty of Monarchs, unimpressed,
 And hold their own with mighty men of war.
And wine – allied with Love, if Venus will –
 Shall keep the festal candles burning bright
(The persevering Graces aiding) till
 The sun returns to put the stars to flight.





RUSTIC RITES

(Caelo supinas si tuleris manus – III xxiii)

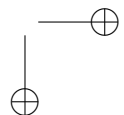
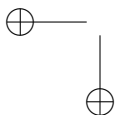
Lift your hands and breathe a prayer,
Molly, when the moon is new.
Snuff before the chimney strew,
Then set ale and bacon there.

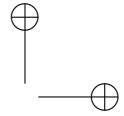
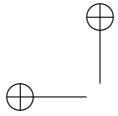
This will keep the hops from squalls
And the rust from sprouting wheat –
And the urchins from the sweet
Apples, when the season falls.

Bishops' cooks will make of beasts
Pedigreed and pasture-bred,
And of mutton mountain-fed,
Christmas dinners, Easter feasts –

But for tithes and offerings
Trouble not your pretty head:
Only for the Fairies spread
Herbs, with water from the springs.

Sacrifices rich and rare,
Molly, have not half the power
Of a pinch of salt and flour
From the innocent and fair.





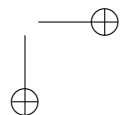
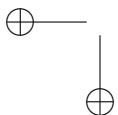
PRAYER TO VENUS

(Vixi puellis nuper idoneus – III xxvi)

I once was match for any maid,
And carried many a strong position,
But now my notched and dented blade,
My pistol, void of ammunition,
Are Thine to keep. Amid Thy treasures
Preserve them, Queen of Tides and Pleasures!

Away with lures, and lights and shades –
Away with candles, caps and screws,
Which served me in my escapades,
That I should no occasion lose
To undermine and overthrow
The strange resistance of the foe.

But, Lady – Thy Commandments rule
Delicious Isles and Deltas. Queen
Of countries ice can never cool:
My Lady Joan so proud hath been
Raise Thou this once my rod, and let
My Lady Joan her lesson get!





OF PEACE OF MIND

(Tyrrhena regum progenies, tibi – III xxix)

Descendent of the Scottish Kings,
I have at home, at your command,
A virgin bin of claret and
Coronas for your evening's

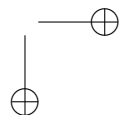
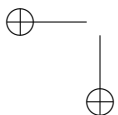
Contentment. Leave the contemplation
Of Windsor Park, and Windsor's rains,
The flooded countryside at Staines,
And pious Henry's great Foundation.

Desert your City Dinners. Quit
Your fog-bound flat in Grosvenor Square.
Forget your taste for London's rare
Displays of wealth – and noise – and grit.

A change is good for millionaires.
A simple meal, a modest board
(No damask napkins here, My Lord!)
Will free your furrowed brow from cares.

The Star of Cepheus now displays
His hidden fires; the Lion's signs
Sit high in Heaven, whose Watch-dog whines
As summer suns begin to blaze.

The tired shepherd now must look
For thickets deep his weary sheep
To shelter. River banks are steep,
And not a breeze will stir the brook.





Yet you are even now engrossed
 With problems politic, and weighing
 What interests, and why, are playing
The mischief on the Persian Coast.

God's Wisdom hides, that none may find it,
 The secret of the future – and
 If mortals fear God's awful Hand
Too patently, He smiles behind it.

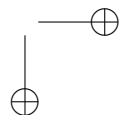
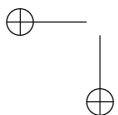
Think only, with a quiet mind
 To meet what comes. The River, Fate,
 Runs on at one unhurried rate
To join the Ocean, till you find

One day a dreadful, angry spate
 Uprooting trees and ancient rocks,
 And moors and forests moan, as flocks
And farms are drowned. But God is great,

And men can call their souls their own
 And smile, if they will only say:
 “Night falls, but I have lived to-day.
To-morrow Heaven – and Heaven alone –

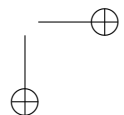
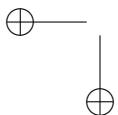
“Brings rain or shine. For yesterday,
 Heaven will not alter that, nor pour
 The waters back, that one swift hour
Has borne on their appointed way.”

Fate loves his cruel commerce – aye,
 Alert and quick to turn the trick,
 He rings the changes on us – Click! –
“He loves me not – He loves me.” Fie,





I bless him while he stays, but when
 For flight his fleeting wings unfold,
 I bless him still, and loose my hold,
And stand my loss. For honest men
Will never, when Atlantic gales
 Their freights imperil, fall to praying
 And bawling promises of paying
If Heaven will not condemn their bales
To join the Treasures of the Sea.
 In my frail dinghy, safe and sound
 Through storm and tempest, I'll be bound,
The Heavenly Twins will convoy me.





THE POET IMMORTAL

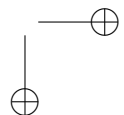
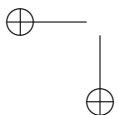
(Exegi monumentum aere perennius – III xxx)

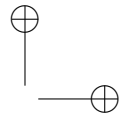
I have designed and I have done
What I would be remembered by,
And bronze shall shrivel in the sun
Before my handiwork shall die.
No Pharaoh's monument as grand
As this, my Pyramid, shall stand.

The weary winds and ravening rain,
The flight of Time, the march of Ages
Succeeding Ages, shall in vain
Assault imperishable pages.
The better part of me, when I
Dissolve, shall not dissolve and die,

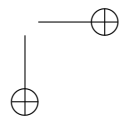
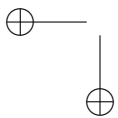
But live, the swelling praise to taste
Of generations yet unborn,
So long as Oxford virgins chaste
Parade in silence up the Corn,
With Curates, whose most fervent prayer is
To mount the pulpit of St. Mary's.

And men shall grant, where Thames is Isis
And where the sluggish Cher recalls
How freshmen in a time of crisis,
Went forth to fight, forgetting Smalls,
That I, transposing Classic treasures,
Have not mishandled English measures.





I have accomplished, I have done,
Melpomene, a worthy task.
Grant me the guerdon I have won,
Refuse me not the thing I ask:
Stretch out Thy hand, and let me wear
Apollo's laurels in my hair.





LE DÉMON DE MIDI

(Intermissa, Venus diu – IV i)

Our truce must end then, Venus? Thou
Wouldst have me mobilise again?
But kind Ludmilla's lusty reign
Is very far behind me now.

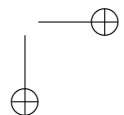
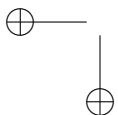
Nay, cruel Mother of Desires,
Lay not Thy blistering yoke upon
My worn half-century! Begone
Where younger lips to younger fires

Invite Thee. Better welcome waits
Thy wingéd car and royal swans
(And better fare) at young Sir John's.
His heart is ripe for Thy dictates.

Of noble breed and bearing, he
Is long of head, and King of Hearts –
A man of sense, a man of parts,
A proper champion for Thee.

No rival may Sir John excel.
Scorning the presents others proffer,
A marble Venus he would offer
To Maidenhead, and house her well,

And roasted meats would there command
To please Thee; fiddle, pipe and bow,
With songs, guitars and cymbalo,
Should make Thee there a gypsy band;



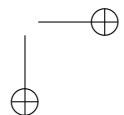
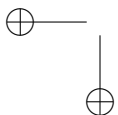


And night and morning youth and maids
For Thy delight should dance and sing,
And twice and thrice the ground should ring
With waltzes, rounds and serenades.

On sweet young things no more I dote.
I neither would be loved, nor love.
Wines, toasts and sconces I reprove.
I wear no flower in my coat.

And yet – my pretty, tell me why
My eyes with sudden tears are filled,
And in mid-speech my tongue is stilled –
As if the years had passed me by!

Oh, heartless child – I dream, and in
My dreams you love me! Though you fly
From Chelsea to the Tower, I
Pursue, my heartless child to win.





THE SPRING ALSO IS VANITY

(*Diffugere nives; redeunt jam gramina campis – IV vii*)

The snows are gone. The meadows find
Their green again, their leaves the trees.
Earth changes rhythm, and rivers wind
In quiet beds, as floods decrease.

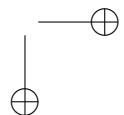
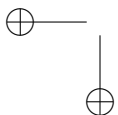
Now Grace with Nymph, and Nymph with Grace,
Dance naked. But let no man cherish
Immortal hopes. The days displace
The days, and hour by hour they perish.

How soon are widowed skies consoled
By swift successive moons! We die
As died the Royal Kings of old –
What are we? Dust and shadows! Why,

None knows if he from Heaven can wrest
The right another day to live.
Your heirs at least will not contest
The presents which today you give,

But once your span is spent, and your
Account is closed, no wit, no worth,
No titles your forefathers bore,
Can ever bring you back to earth.

Diana still the Shades implores
For chaste Hippolytus in vain,
And Theseus beats at Lethe's doors
Pirithous' freedom to obtain.





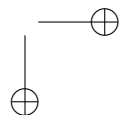
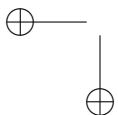
DÉPIT

(*Audivere, Lyce, di mea vota, di – IV xiii*)

Lucy, the Gods have heard me. Indeed they have
heard me, for though
You would fain still pass for a beauty, old age is
upon you. Oh,
You can keep on going to parties, and strain what
is left of your voice
In drinking-songs, and romances of love and the
kisses of boys –

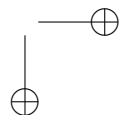
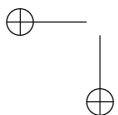
But Love is gone! He has left you for young, sweet-
singing Louise;
For of gnarled oaks Love soon wearies, and Lucy,
from you he flees –
From your yellowing teeth, and your hair snow-
streaked, and the lines on your brow.
Your jewels and Paris models are no more good to
you now.

You have had your day. It is finished. Time flies,
and the page is turned.
Where now are the face and the figure, the graces
for which men yearned?
Where is the Lucy I worshipped? The Lucy that
drove me mad?
Lucy – except for Irene – the loveliest mistress I
had!





What exquisite eyes for mascara were hers – but the
Fates, who gave
Such few, brief years to Irene, have ordered that
Lucy should have
All of the years of the raven, that all who adored
her should mark
How a bright flame flickers to ashes, and laugh at
its last poor spark.

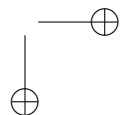
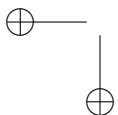




LOYAL ADDRESS

(Phoebus, volentem proclia me loqui – IV xv)

Apollo roundly rated me
 When I set out to make a song
Of fights and sieges: “Does the sea
 To such a skiff as your belong?”
Well – let me thank Your Majesty
For all the Reign has realised:
 The Trade Revival, first of all:
The restoration of the prized
 Prestige of England’s Realm, which shall
No more be slighted or despised;
The end of praying (for a time)
 For Victory; disorders ended,
Restrictions much restricted; crime
 Diminished; industries extended
In all the fields which made sublime
The destiny of England’s name
 And gave her (let us not forget)
An Empire of enduring fame
 On which as yet no sun has set –
Let us be thankful for the same!
While GEORGE is King, there shall no breath
 Of civil strife the Realm distress.
The sword of wrath shall in the sheath
 Remain, and peace and quietness
Succeed calamity and death.

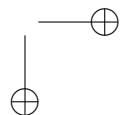
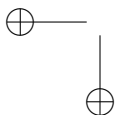


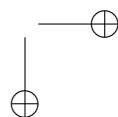
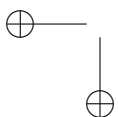
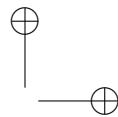
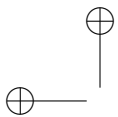


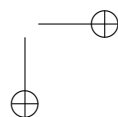
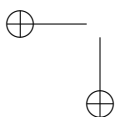
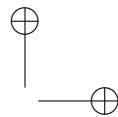
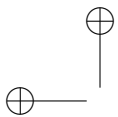
Now men shall know the rule of peace
 In Palestine and Pakistan
And in the cold Antarctic Seas,
 And in the port of Abadan,
And Southward of the Pyrenees.

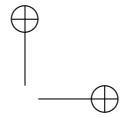
And we, on public holidays,
 And in the working week, shall go
To popular resorts, and raise
 Our glasses in a gleeful row,
And sing the winning Party's praise,

Content, till closing time, to sing
 "Abide with Me" and "Auld Lang Syne",
(Accordions accompanying) –
 And, last and best of all, in fine
And prayerful strain: "GOD SAVE THE KING!"









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