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CRYSTAL THURBERWALD

IRA ARIEL KELLOGG



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CRYSTAL THURBERWALD

OR

THE EVANGEL OF TAPPANEAU

By

IRA ARIEL KELLOGG

"Veteran Soldier"

Presented by

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To His Royal Majesty
ALBERT, KING OF THE BELGIANS

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PREFATORY NOTE

In the following pages Charles, Count of Tappaneau, represents simply the alert spirit which during the great war ever characterized the Belgians. He is in no sense a real character. All of the situations are pure fiction. Real names are used only as complimentary and with due respect, with the exception of Niels de Rode, which character possibly is too severe.

The fundamental hatreds and passions of the war are avoided as far as possible, as it is now the duty of all to forget. The history of the Belgian campaign is followed very closely.

THE AUTHOR.

CRYSTAL THURBERWALD

OR

THE EVANGEL OF TAPPANEAU

Ira Ariel Kellogg

FOREWORD

Within the province of beloved Brabant,
Near Mont St. Guilbert on the river Nil,
Which in the heart of Belgium gentle twines,
Lieth the country seat of Tappaneau.
Towers gleam afar to St. Gudule upraised,
Where knealt bold Godfrey, fair and Christian knight,
To take the cross. Afar loom palaces
Where William the Silent learned to champion
Free Holland 'gainst the lance of swollen Spain.

Here, Margaret of Austria held court,
Spain swept high zenith of her power, nor less,
From Tappaneau, famed fields of Waterloo,
Haze hung and glorified, at eve recall
Vast dreams of empire 'neath kind blooms o'erblown,
Time's glory, aye, and lost Napoleon.

Most peaceful lieth Tappaneau enclosed
By wooded glens which notch the Arden hills.
By Clovis once 'twas called "The Linnet's Nest."
By him 'twas given to the first bold count
Of Tappaneau.

Four times of eld 'twas razed,
 Four times anew 'twas built more nobly fair.
 It served as fortress to an high-walled town
 That braved the impious Dons. Huge crumbled walls
 Mossed in deep woods are found.

Its first highway
 Was by the mightiest Caesar trod. Cohorts
 And Legions clanged its dim byways, where tide
 Of battle oft had hurled its ruby flood
 To strands beyond man's ken or reasoning.

When from the crumbled empire of fair France
 There fell the boon of peace, then all the powers
 Decreed—the mighty Corsican o'erthrown—
 There'd be no wars in Belgium evermore.

Upon that guaranty with hope newborn
 A nation laid its armor by and hung
 The trenchant blade to rust on castle walls—
 Heirlooms of vast romantic pasts, through-shot
 With bitterest pain—the memory of the heel
 Of ruthless tyranny so long abroad.

Thereby at Tappaneau staunch blades, the best
 In Christiandom, turned unto paths of peace.
 These sons of fair Walloonian, grown mild,
 Pursued the wraith of riches and did well;
 And of their armor strong one sword alone
 And one thick shield was burnished bright.
 And thus the tale of it:—

THE SWORD UNBLESSED.

Long long ago, ere William of Brabant
 Or Guy de Mountfort led their hosts abroad,

Sir Godfrey came to Brussels town to 'scape
 That peasant throng which after Clermont's council rose
 By boundless crimes of Islaam red inflamed.
 A clanging horde, impatient and headlong;
 Urged by the militant Peter madly on;
 Scarce led, unkempt and largely wrong;
 By voice of Urban fired to blinding zeal,
 These swept with clangor to foul death beyond
 The Iron Gate of Hungary.

After

Did Godfrey urge to wiser counsel chiefs
 Of Normandy and his Loraine. Called thus,
 Came Robert Duke of Normandy devout,
 Came Stephen of Blois, Raymond St. Giles,
 E'en Robert Duke of Flanders with an host
 Of knights and squires.

Three hundred thousand strong
 Took vows and buckled armor on.

These knights

Urged many a fete and manly joust the while
 That first Crusade was clearly planned,
 And in the early month of flowers they held
 Full tournament to crown with note the end
 Of preparation for the "Cross Redeemed".

Upon the close of that pro-valiant day,
 When Godfrey's sword had many a trophy won,
 The flower of all the concourse of his knights
 Came with him, reverent and low, to St. Gudule
 To kneel most humble to that holy shrine,
 To take new vows of service to their cause.

Lo, as they knealt came forth the ancient charge,
 With holy monks a train, with new-made robes
 And clothed the chiefs with garments of the Cross,
 Thrice blest by reverent hands.

New arms they gave—
 To Godfrey one great shield, embossed in gold
 The mighty Cross, with sword of like design
 That through the dim aisles gleamed celestial fire.
 They prayed for hearts renewed as by the same
 Eternal flame.

By Godfrey's side knealt down
 One Charles of Tappaneau, devoted squire,
 New joined indeed, but loved for promised might.
 There, gazing on the ruddy boy o'ergraced
 By the ancient chancel's soft and mothering fires,
 The powerful duke upraised the untried blade
 And lightly touched the shoulder of the youth.

“For thy brave strife this day in yonder field,
 And for thy prayers this night before God's throne
 I dub thee knight: to thee bequeath the arms
 I here discard for this heaven-hallowed blade.

“Now, till the day thy house in cause as just
 May honor them, preserve them well.

“Cursed be
 The soul that in unholy strife shall wield
 This trenchant brand, this war-hewn battle shield.”

With tremulous hand, 'tis said, young Charles assayed
 to bear his benefactor's gifts away.
 The sound of buckler on that shield, they tell,
 Swept through the arches like a silver bell.
 Unto that chime both champion and host
 Fared forth to bleed, to love, to die, to boast,
 To quarrel and dissent, until the Cross,
 Behind the hate of man, grew dim, till loss
 Engulfed the gain, hope's fine gold turned to dross:

Till Bohemond and Raymond, yea, St. Giles
 Turned toward voluptuous shores, erotic isles;
 Till Godfrey—plodding soldier—'gainst all odds
 Won from keen foes the city we call God's.

Mighty waxed he in lands of Christian name,
 Mighty for deeds, but most for that pure flame
 Of Chivalry which crowned his age—
 Still burns, despite a pagan sea of rage.

He only of the great spurned royalty
 Where Christ bore reddening thorns in Caesar's day.
 "Ah, 'tis not mete," said he, "to wear a crown
 Where our loved Lord His priceless life laid down."

Thus lived the first crusader, thus his band,
 Thus take their place among the vast array
 Of earth's great names. Of Charles of Tappaneau
 Scant word remains save that he bled, and loved,
 And died, e'en as his duke, in Palestine
 Beside his Savior's tomb—a pilgrim's rest.
 But, in the halls of Tappaneau, foraye
 The sword and shield of Godfrey were revered.
 To burnish them became a household creed,
 And sanctified to daughter, wife and lord.
 No sullied hand might touch them, none draw near
 To meddle nor to play—and, ah, disgrace
 Most foul to each bold son who could not say
 Before the home's pure altars:—"Here I bear
 The shield of Godfrey conscience clear;
 Here lift this sword as Godfrey swayed it up
 Stern for the right God wills! My utmost drop
 Of blood I pour in our defense. I die
 True serviced to my king: grief's tears I dry;
 The burden of the weak I share; I shield

The best in woman; ne'er may yield by thought
 To love ignoble; ne'er shall boast nor swear
 Away the name of foe or friend; forbear
 In all things, yea, be just in all to all,
 E'en as I pray God benizen this hall."

And though at times in that rude Middle age
 The sturdy knights of Tappaneau forgot
 In part that oath of chivalry, one thing
 Beyond all others they held fast—the love
 To wife or daughter at her gracious best;
 Priceless this star of glory to their crest.
 Such nurture ne'er brought forth a bloom so fair
 As flourished 'neath the shield of Tappaneau.
 Full many a crown in royal courts was doffed
 Before these maidens of Brabant; and oft
 Gay bards and minstrels wound a merry tale
 'Bout Mont St. Guilbert's woody hill and dale.
 At times, a burning heart sweet cloister found
 In these maids' love, like seed in sacred ground.

So sweep brave days down through the span of time.
 Through glittering change as well as gentle peace;
 Through all the bitter wars that Belgium lashed;
 Through all the truces made and given,
 Unto a modern time and dawning peace;
 Yea, e'en till now—Ah, listen, friend of man!
 Hear the evangel of Tappaneau
 And learn its cause.

PART I.

THE TRUCE

A countess sat within her garden bower
Upon a summer's eve at Tappaneau,
And at her feet leaned one she loved—a flower
Of Mont St. Guilbert's town—named Crystal.

Quaint

The name and sweet the Flemish maid beyond
The comely measure of that country side.
Quick dawned her smile and innocent her eyes
Displayed the image of her heart and soul
As tempered lightnings trace a distant hill.

Long had she been the countess' protegee,
E'en from the lady's day of widowhood
When her loved lord was slain on Afric soil,
By Congo's treacherous tribes beset and trapped,
To leave his two babes fatherless at home.

There was a lonely dell at Tappaneau,
Pierced by a Roman wall by Adrian built,
Where long ago a chapel stood, a shrine
To some sweet saint of long forgotten name.
And here they let repose the stricken lord.
Oft here in heavy grief the countess came
To sob and tear to shreds her youth's full bloom,
Till on a day the prattle of a child,
Who somehow scaled the tattered Roman wall,
Rent ope the grave wherein her hopes lay tombed,
Restored direction to her buried love.

Quick to the leading old as grizzled earth,
 She ceased to mourn the mouldering sod.
 The child had said:—"I thought on your side must be God;
 And so I climbed along this slaty wall.
 There's nothing left but flowers. They are all!"

God's in the flowers," the lady's quick reply.
 "Come down, my pretty one. I'll tell thee why."

Thence sprang the love for Crystal warm until
 It oped the castle gates at her sweet will.

When crowning years to fuller youth had brought
 Charles and his sister, those two orphaned ones,
 As eagles from their lofty parapets
 Both stepped them forth of life to learn.

More then

The mother unto Crystal turned. Each hour
 Chimed lonely with her presence gone. Right well
 The lady taught her protege, nor spared
 One household treasure that she had not shared.
 While Caroline at Luxemburg, beneath
 The guard of that famed ducal seat, of grace
 And courtly science learned full mede, bold Charles,
 Her twin in all save sex, at Heidelberg
 Won noted praise. Their place within the halls
 Of Tappaneau was filled most gratefully
 By Crystal, nestled in the Countess' heart.

But not so well without those castle walls
 In Mont St. Guilbert's town the buxom maids
 Beheld her. Many secret chidings they
 Indulged, and oft their fretting reached the ear
 Of Thurberwald, her aging Flemish sire.
 Then, mid elation at her fortune, blent
 A vague unrest to mar his mind's repose.

But sires forget, and ne'er a word was breathed
 To mull the joy of Crystal Thurberwald.
 Earth-wide the realm of romance oped to her
 Beside the ancient Roman wall.

“Yes, God,
 Indeed,” thought she in her sweet votive hours,
 “Doth dwell this side the wall among the flowers.”
 So, deep within the garden bower, that eve
 Both sat right happily and watched the sun
 Swing slowly down across the somber fields
 Of Waterloo. From Mont St. Guilbert's tower
 The Angelus pealed sweet and low afar,
 While in the meadows Flemish peasantry
 Bowed reverent amid the scented hay.

“Ah, Crystal, dear,” said she of silvered hair,
 “Hast thou seen aught so glorious anywhere?
 Yon gaunt Swiss Alps, the keen, chill Baltic sea
 Were ne'er so dear as my Brabant to me.
 Home will be home and hearts must linger there
 While all the temporal may fade in air;
 And just of late more tender all hath seemed
 Than hope's effulgent visions we have dreamed.
 Perhaps 'tis motherhood leans eager toward her joy—
 The flying days soon bring me home my blessed boy.
 Firm hath he promised me—he's ever just—
 To curb his spirit's wilful wanderlust.
 Ah, me! My rugged boy! My Charles of Tappaneau,
 He'll lift the lightest burden from his mother's heart, I know.”

Warm in the maiden's check sprang up the flame
 Of eager joy exultant at the name.
 Life sparkled brilliant, all grew wonderful
 Whene'er the children came. Defying rule,
 The gray chateau, awakened as by a wand,

Leaped, moved. The lovelight shown abroad beyond
 It's towers. Bright comings, goings, far or near,
 Lay in the wake of youth's abundant cheer.

Yet ne'er spake Crystal of these tempting things,
 The stir which lent to fancy eager wings.
 Devoutly she essayed to look through eyes
 Serene, wherein no flash of passion lies—
 No easy task! Her young soul oft would spur
 A strong-winged Pegasus in spite of her.

Now quick she rose her telltale cheek to shield
 Against that blush which might not be concealed,
 And softest glamour of the eve enclosed
 About a dream by far too warmly rosed:—
 "The morrow will be fair. Yon cloud burns red.
 Soft winds creep low and westerly," she said.
 "Clear loom the towers of ancient Brussels town,
 The Arden hills wear still the purple crown;
 Ere sunset dye yon irridescent plain
 Eve yields its gold of Ophir back again.
 Tonight speer forth inquiring, cautious stars,
 Blue Jupiter transcendent over Mars
 Let Taurus rage on belted Orion,
 The dog star fiercely eyes Belerephon.
 Our Venus dips soft hands in tideless seas,
 And ours remain the seven-bond Pliades!"

The lady smiled with absent minded sigh,
 Looked toward the morrow with soft glistening eye
 Which saw her treasured absent ones apart,
 Nor marked the flood tide surge a nearer heart,
 Scarce heard the maid nor how inconsequent
 Her words. They pleased. The Countess dreamed content.

The cycle of her thought tripped into tune
 With joys that fruit with summer time and June.
 "Now, that our day is waned sing me a song—
 That quaint tale of the River Scheldt.
 Beneath its cadences my worries melt
 Till 'gainst the day of tasks shall I grow strong:"
 So plead the lady then, and Crystal sang,
 And rare a sweeter thostle-note from rosebower rang.

SONG.

A maiden dwelt by the river Scheldt
 In a castle huge and wide,
 At the edge of the vast and gray morass
 Where the ancient river died.

A fair knight rode through the German wood
 To kneel at the maiden's shrine.
 He swore by the sword to fight for his Lord
 In perished Palestine.

The maiden loved the knight it proved.
 He wore her glove in his crest
 When at length he went to the Orient
 Of a mighty host the best.

But the crest did droop 'neath the fiery swoop
 Of a Mahound scimeter;
 The knight lay slain on Aere's plain
 Where Richard waged his war.

His lady then sought the boundless fen
 At her castle's postern door,
 Where the quags lie deep and the heedless sleep,
 And they tell that she came no more.

Where the maiden died the marshes wide
 Have opened to the sun
 The Scheldt flows free to the norther sea.
 The sad fenland's re-won.

Strong, faithful hands redeemed the lands
 From the cypress and the vine;
 Far in the wold so bleak and cold
 Men found the lorn maid's shrine.

Where, plunged in grief, 'neath the somber leaf
 Those wastes she wandered lone;
 And they found a screed that men may read
 Carved clear on her altar stone.

"Till the stifled Scheldt strike through the belt
 Of wild fens to the sea,
 My soul shall moan in the marshes lone,
 Low gulfed in misery.

"When fair ships ride the Scheldt's free tide,
 And the fields bloom rich and far,
 My grief shall cease and the God of peace
 Shall keep my land from war."

The fresh young voice thrilled through the cadences
 Of the quaint folk-song of old, and filled complete
 The garden and the bower. It overflowed
 The wall along the highway set, where dusk had come
 Where shadows 'neath the ancient lindens lay;
 And there it made arrest of one who strode
 The shadows toward St. Guilbert's town. He paused
 To listen through the well known lines, a gaunt,
 Marred, ill-hung man, though scarcely aged.

At length

He muttered and passed on. A puzzling scorn
 Recurved his lip. His frown hid cruel eyes
 Denying youth or thought of innocence.
 His step swung satyr-like, as one who marked
 Sweet songs for naught except the lust they roused.
 Thus moved he on and to the lindens spake:
 "Your voice was Crystal Thurberwald's. Doubt not

Yon sprouting heir lies better entertained
 Than I. She sees no more the playmate of
 Her babyhood. Ill speak the maids of her
 In Mont St. Guilbert's town. My Christ!
 'Tis strange old Thurbedwald sits so content
 Behind you Roman wall, nor calleth halt!
 The Flemish maid doth to a lord—heyday—
 Strum tunes far better told at tossing hay!
 Swift to an humbler station let me bring
 The flower of yon high lady's culturing.
 Far fitter to wildrose the briared farm,
 'Gainst yonder castle's giddy, hot-house charm.
 Thus let me hint to slow wit Thurberwald;
 Thrust common rumor to him plain and bold.

“Lo, what I lack of blood I seek in guile
 To make my cunning felt for many a mile.
 Yon maid, and all who dwell about, hold me
 Some witless clown, forgetting I may see
 And sell my knowledge dear, yea, far more dear
 Than any dream who pass and snub me here.
 Lord, have I not found gold, and more shall win
 While monarchs court sweet knavery to truckle in!
 I carry messages, and yet I see
 Far more than patron and his paltry fee.
 Accursed my mother, born beyond the Rhine,
 If aught escape without the guilty sign!
 I know where wine lies hid, and gems, and stores,
 State plans more valued still beyond these shores.
 Whatever secrecies my soul hath sinned in
 I'll ply a market fair Unter den Linden!

“Here squats the cot of clumsy Thurberwald.
 I'll twit him till his Flemish passion scald
 And scourge him up to snatch his child away,

And move me one step nearer to my day.
Gads, were she but a message bringer's bride.
Were that a station great to hurt her pride?

“How changed, since on the wall we plucked the rose!
She flaunts me now and gives the wrinkled nose,
The haughty, lifted brow and fix-ed eye,
The cold and chilling stare and sweeps me by.
But roads must turn! Before eternity,
Fate makes mere idols of divinity!”

Far townward ranged the shuffling tread
Through gray of eve that superseded red.
Dropped down the cool of night; within the halls
A low fire gleamed to shadow-fleck the walls.
There, from the damping bower, came the two
To 'scape the chilly finger of the dew.
Hour long they mused, each one on thoughts apart
That nestled close and secret to each heart.
Shadows enlarged and lastly all concealed
Save fitful gleam on Godfrey's burnished shield.

“I've seen so little of my fledglings two
This host of years,” the Countess sighed at last.
“Since Heidelberg, hath Charles on distant flight
Assayed the vast four corners of the world;
And Caroline's a lady of the court
Of Luxemburg; hath special favor with
Marie, I trust. So have they flown, my best,
My little ones, and I must view it as
The best, till Charles shall make the better flight—
Homeward at last direct his petrel wing.

“How did he fright me when to Africa—
Terrific bourne which wrenched from me his sire—

He sped to 'company Prince Albert—now
 The king! They say the prince and he subdued
 A score of savage tribes; made firm the rule
 Of Belgium 'long the Congo's solemn tide;
 Oped wide the gates of commerce and the flux
 Of energizing hope to 'nighted hordes;
 Nay, fought huge wild beasts, fist to claw,
 In wilds primeval by the primal law.
 God grant such fangful danger nevermore
 Lure love of mine beyond his native shore."

"But 'tis his nature," Crystal cried, intense
 In lively interest. "Where deeds are done
 There will thy Charles be found.

"Dost thou recall
 How once he stripped yon huge shield off the wall
 And flashed the sword sharp unto Brialmont's eyes—
 Brialmont, the king's best general?"

"Indeed,
 That I recall," the lady smiled. "Was 't not
 The first day home from Heidelberg?"

"Madame,
 It was. Brialmont, to crown our welcomes well,
 From Brussels, from the king, brought forth to Charles
 His first commission—marked, distinct—that he,
 The general, in person brought it."

"Yea,
 And standing in this hall, now I recall,
 Quoth he to Charles: 'What one most valued thing?
 What epic fact hast learned in Germany?'
 Up straight sprang Charles and on this table's top
 He dashed his hard fist down. 'To be a man;
 To fight when fighting's mete; to trust

No gift that comes from conquerors; to fear
 No foe, save one adroit in promises;
 To build my house on no soft, gliding sand
 Of artificial peace; make positive defence
 Contrar to extraposed neutrality.
 Warrior am I as all my grizzled sires!
 Here then, (Thus clanged the shield of Godfrey down)
 Behold the natural—the man of men!
 Who, sword in hand, fares from his caverned glen,
 His gaunted hill, his tumbled river's tide,
 To lift to heaven some standard of his pride.
 God wills! God wills!—his native battle cry—
 Though his own heart the best of wills supply.

“ ‘Where'er ye turn, stern nature grips at war,
 From lichen gray to occidental bear.
 There is no peace—the best, a span's respite!
 What's perfect peace? Oblivion and night!
 Sweet rest e'en God reserves beyond the grave.
 'Twas never known a threatened land to save.
 Yea, those who say not so shall feel the heel
 And wheel of conquerors, the shagreened steel.
 I speak of peace that bears dishonor's stain,
 The coward's brand and comely heaven's disdain.' ”

“ ‘Long laughed gray Brialmont, but of pride
 Outshone swift light within his eyes. Beside
 Him, in the realm, none other was so keen
 To guard the frontiers and the brimming sea
 Against a day of grim adversity.
 Thus to his honored end the warrior taught.

“ ‘The king hath not commissioned thee in vain,'
 He cried, ‘Old Heidelberg hath sent us home a man!’ ”

“Since then hath rung Sir Brialmont’s solemn knell.
 But well hath Belgium circled Liege in steel
 And set a guard against the very sun
 Of France, bade England ’ware as one who sets
 His boundary to the main. No more
 Erooach to crumble down this friendly shore!
 That sharp disfavor known to Leopold
 Now loseth edge, ’neath dawning safety dulled,
 Till high in grace strides Albert to the throne
 Where Leopold found strife, fought years alone.”

“And Charles,” the maid did add, “since that brave day
 Doth still progress in favor every way.
 Tonight his errant sail may toward the Baltic spring,
 But where his anchor drops be sure ’twill serve his king.”

“Oft ponder I, what were to Charles those years
 ’Neath tutilage of grizzled German peers.
 Since then he’s e’er been spurring keenly on
 In multitude of service to the crown,
 Never at rest and ne’er a night’s repose,
 No gentle love, no fragile bridal rose.
 What vision of unholy enterprise
 Paints purple poison in his restless skies?”

“I tire of praying for his safe return,
 For homey gifts—sweet chicks of his—I yearn,
 Small prattling sent to win a granddame’s smile
 Dewdrop love-pledges, Crystal, all’t’s worth while.

“Lo, are we not secure? Our state pledged free?
 Have we not still a king? A world’s fidelity?
 Oh, would my Charles were home foraye and wed
 These overweening, high ambitions dead.
 Come help me, child, until we coin some way
 To win him from such self-wrought tragedy.”

Once more the flood-tide whealmed in Crystal's cheek,
 But kind the firelight overgraced it well,
 And ne'er a quivered trill of voice betrayed
 The hurried bosom of the humbler maid.
 Nor lacked she power to ply a saving art,
 Conceal a jewel sacred to her heart.
 How keen—pure mischief quivering—she dared:
 "We'll try again, fair Mme. de Belleville's ward."

More than distinct a petulant, vivid fire
 Flamed in the elder's cheek, and yet she smiled
 At the roguish face. Nay, once the countess planned
 By innocent design, by guileless net
 To 'coy her son to pluck a brilliant flower
 That blushed and tempted in de Belleville's bower.
 But of that faded quest, short be it said,
 All fell to naught—the wary Charles had fled.
 Th' affectionate jibe might hardly waken ire,
 Sufficient 'twas to fan the cheek with fire.

"Shame thee, Crystal, to recall the wicked state
 That bars a modern from her children's fate."

Then, mid much laughter, repartee flew fast
 Until the countess towered up at last.
 "For that," she cried, "to bed we sentence thee."
 And Crystal sped to her sweet punishment in glee.

Ah, glee will turn by shortcut o' the thought
 To scenes contrasting bitter quite as not.
 The warrant lies at odds: within the year
 We all have smiled or frowned to hide a tear.
 Thus, long upon her pillow's restless down
 Tossed she who came of Mont St. Guilbert's town;
 Re-lived long, joyous rambles, growing sad
 In retrospect—sweet treasury of lass, of lad.

“Not mine,” she sighed, “to grasp at golden straws
 Against my peace of living and its laws.”
 Yea, though she reasoned well, her heart denied
 The logic o’t, for, in the end, she cried.

Years since had Charles and Crystal learned the creed
 That holds twixt noble born and humbler breed.
 ’Twas after Heidelberg upon a day
 Of sun and flowers, of hope and mystery;
 Far had they wandered o’er the Arden hills
 O’er-rich with summer bloom, the crystal rills
 A-rush with latter rain. Climatis spheres
 Hung fairy-like above the limpid pools.
 The cotton-tree streamed full of sheeny floss
 And gossimer rode every tilting thorn.
 Love’s dreamy indolence surcharged the crown
 O sapphire skies. A soft Hesperian breeze
 Swept far inland the music of the seas.
 Such was the day—a toxine keen as wine
 Brewed in the untrammelled heart.

Nor less divine

In native charm the girl. The nimble feet
 Of her outsped the faun. The laurel’s sweet
 Enticement, and the larches’ feathered shade
 Were nil against the fitting shadow of the maid.
 Far more than nymph, the elfin call
 Of her lured Charles—became the apple of his fall.

He saw no bluebirds nesting ’neath the beech,
 No rainbow trout a-flash from somber pools,
 No eaglets found that garrisoned their crags,
 Nor flushed the partridge from the hazeled hill.
 No red-fox leapt and scuttled from his path.
 No curlew called across the meadows wide.
 He heard nor saw aught else but Crystal—just the girl.

Lilting she'd led him, merry all day long.
 Too tempting near she leaned close toward his heart
 At eve, when, from a height, they spied the towers
 Of home.

He kissed her then quite brotherly,
 Nay, quite heart free, nay, quite audaciously.
 Ah, no! A touch, a torch, a flaming dart
 Ne'er truck so fiery passion through a heart.
 Surprise unto surprise in widened eyes
 Heaved lightnings like mid-summer skies.
 Melt down man's artificial bars and beams;
 Calm universe o'erturned—forgotten dreams!
 What then decorum, policy or pride?
 But prison vaults! New worlds spread free and wide!
 Yet were both sudden seized by quelling fright,
 Fate's caverned precipices a-drop beneath their sight;
 Far down, a dumb tide rolled against their joy.
 She was an honest lass, alas, and he the honest boy.

Alas! when honor severs hearts that cling,
 Though one be beggar-maid, the other king.
 The clanging knight, his lance in roses bound,
 Hides no such hurt, nor leaves so fatal wound.
 Yet Charles rang true, and quick as passion's sting,
 He felt remorse because he'd done a wicked thing.
 All gentle, he her clinging arms unwound
 To stammer o'er convention's chill and dismal ground.
 And Crystal marked with wisdom past her years
 His contriteness and kissed him once again in tears.

“Think not, Charles boy, I know not all thy codes;
 Of thy nobility, the narrow roads.
 The gift that's given—that may we ne'er recall,
 Yet, 'twas not wicked, Charles, 'twas natural.
 Go seek for joy mid new horizons wide.

Forget our fancy. Truly, this could not abide.”
 So Charles grew calm, his rashness quite forgiven,
 And trod the homeward way full-stepped and nearer heaven.

But groping as the blind the homeward path,
 The maiden slew her heart in deadly grasp,
 And kept a white soul by the grace of God,
 Nor dreamed less things the greater gift denied.
 Strange not a shudder warned the glowing boy
 Life might hold less than treasuries of joy.

A hovering silence wrapt the gloaming hill.
 O'er humid meadow mourned the whip-poor-will.
 The bittern from the bog boomed bitter cry,
 But Crystal heard no more the sylvan melody.
 Ah, never, nevermore is quite replaced
 A first-love's kiss, and nevermore erased.
 Nay, since that day, she'd counted o'er like pearls
 The precious moments she had spent with Charles.
 Strong in a common walk, true love doth cling;
 But loving one like Charles, she crowned him king—
 Is't strange those tears would struggle in between
 The starlight and the fragrant Isle-Called-Might-Have-Been?

Sleep, sweet narcotic to her restive grief,
 Scarce oped an honey-suckled phial's relief
 Before the countess joyful to her door
 A new and tumbled wealth of tidings bore:
 “O, Crystal, wake! A message comes from Kiel
 From Charles—kind, thoughtful Charles—to say all's well.
 His little barque hath braved the German sea,
 And skimmed her safe athwart the ripping gales.
 She's whip-sawed through the Scandinavian straits,
 And softly luffing breasteth royal Kiel,
 Where twice an hundred ships at anchor wheel;

Straightway the imperial course, full-rigged, they spring
Where Wilhelm's grand regata takes full swing.

There mighty fleets repose, there England lifts
Her royal standard over princely gifts.
Promise of peace and friendly enterprise
Their festivals promote. Each staunchly tries,
Wrung from an host, to bring a trophy home—
Swede, Russ and Dane, whoever else may come.
May all craft prove 'cods-head and mackerel-tail'
Against our scudding yacht's expanded sail!
Charles' one diversion leans to love of sailing,
As to the foamy cataract the grayling.
What, though as ballast still, a king's work bear some weight,
This restful cruise I pray no mission may abate.—
But hold! That messenger outside our lintel stands;
Declares he bears a word in private to your hands."

"Strange! Doth to me a message bear? More strange!
Surely 'tis not— Bid him one moment wait—
Knowest, countess, who's the messenger?"

"A friend,
He offered, yet I trust not so. Methought
The name was Niels de Rode."
"De Rode! The man's
No friend of mine. I will not see him. Tell him so—
The low shagrag! He leers, he mocketh me.
Gossip and slander be his daily fare,
The wayside brawl, the lorn and guilty maid,
And all that stinketh—these his partial theme.
Of honor or respect hath he scant gleam—
Bid Staugaard out! A butler may receive his tale
Howe'er it may import—as I think, vain, unhale."

"'Tis from thy sire, he said."

“So then the worse!

That hints of influence more and more perverse.
 Unless my sire be ill or in distress,
 Submit I not to vile officiousness.
 Bid Staugaard say: ‘Miss Crystal is retired.’
 If that suffice not, add: ‘Averse and tired!’”

So Niels took heel, but left a cursing smile.
 He strode the road a fuming, hurried mile.
 Spurred up of wantonness, ’gainst her rebuff
 He whined—he cursed her keen and gruff.
 No light dismissal this to Niels de Rode!
 His lecher toward the maid had long abode.

“Hell prompt me, but I’ll read the final line
 On this out—thrust, fair Crystal mine!
 O, art thou high? art fond and noble bred?
 Ye spill such venom on an humble head?
 Thy sire, a truckster, blocks the market place,
 While thou take velvet, gilt and dainty lace?
 Imps o’ the soundless pit, lend withering fire,
 I’ll temper tools to trim thy vengeance dire.”

His curse dropped low beneath the linden trees
 That heeded not his selfborn extacies.
 Unscathed and slumber-logged lay Tappaneau,
 Nor heard the chuckling echo of his vow.
 On guard stooped down the soul of quietude
 Secure, stern sentinel to all things rude.

War-hinting stars no revelations bore
 Of evil gliding toward a lovely shore.
 None less, in savage mood, fierce time and change
 Wove mightier curse, more violently strange.
 Unhale distemper urged her fallacies abroad,
 Till, ’neath the scourge, mankind forgot e’en God.

Far 'crost the huge frontiers at festive Kiel
Slept passions bent to fetterlock the world in steel.

Man, thither haste. Behold the offing packed
With sails, by gales of Schleswig bent and slacked.
Behold you tilting masts that forest high
Weave in their stanchions to the Baltic lullaby.
Behold what outpoured hordes have ardor lent
To blaze the German lord's accomplishment,
Whose Titan labors here have torn earth's barriers wide
That deep through Elbe to bleak North sea may sweep
The Baltic tide.

Harsh mid the craft of peace,

At hand, begrizzled cruisers sullen roll,
As Ursus to his chains, devoid of soul.
Far, wide the north mid-summer darkness gored
By shafted light—a god's tremendous sword!
Fleets of the modern time, in brittle rest,
Of caverned guns, a hundred mast at least,
Play their imposing lamps, leeward, ashore,
Where pigmy Northmen plied forgotten oar.

These flashing southward, west or east
Reveal gray German plains in somber mist.
Where medeless potencies subdormant lie
Quick to the drive of fate's prophetic day;
Where heterogenous myriads, as the sand,
Heap up great lust—the pride of Fatherland.
Thus Holstein's port is decked for festival,
Thus graced by will and presence vast, imperial!
And midmost in the huge flotilla proudly swings
His somber bark Hohenzollern—ruler of Teuton kings.

To raise, as 'twere, a cross to mark the imperial march,
To dedicate, as 'twere, a vast triumphal arch,

To buffet, as benign, all souls with mail-ed hand,
 To show a gaping world pure strength by sea and land,
 So blazed the broad intent, from Tilsit to the Rhine.
 Force rioted in Kiel! Let power shine!
 So swelled the emperor's thought, was 't then unkind?
 Forgotten common justice to mankind?
 At best, too blind he ruled his native sod.
 At worst, forgot he ruled a trustee under God.

Foolish the king, hair-brained the emperor
 Who reads not in his people's will true power.
 Foolish the horde low-bent to name him god—
 Lean backs do tempt the knout; soft courtiers win the rod.
 Think, man, how modern science ruleth every realm,
 Doth all the girdled seas of darkness backward whealm,
 Behold, where cradled science to full might is grown
 A monarch ruled who'd not apply it to the throne!
 The ship of state might yield a king the wheel;
 He'd be her pilot still—real sovereignty, his people's will.
 Nor sultan, president, nor king nor czar
 Advantage hath, once grant his rule be fair.
 The measure of them all strikes like a bell
 When under God they rule their people well.

On high above those squadrons christened to delight,
 Which anchored lay that eve in festive Kiel,
 A score of kings their banners flung to air.
 The mitred czar, beyond Esthonia's plains,
 There shared state honors with the crosses of St. George.
 The Crescent-Star, the brilliant Stars and Bars
 Swung by the royal arms of Italy.
 Eager were all the hospitable fete to share
 And vie content, the fairest with the fair.
 Achievement stood the watchword of the day.
 Had not each king a song, a chant, a roundelay
 To charm the brimming hour?

Listen, my friends,
Dost hear the thrilling marches play? Dost hear
The roll of drums? Dost breathe excitement in the air?
Dost see the proud parades, the gallant shoal
Of worshipers before fair pleasure kneel?
Each to his bent—scribe, diplomat and lord—
Each to his royal whim, to every soul a word?
What there befell—gentles, rest ye content.
Pray we 'twill serve to grace a further argument.

PART II.

THE SHOCK

Not last among that fleet to anchor down,
Swept one fair bark the sapphire hued horizon. Yea,
And royally in crimson, black and gold she flung
The Belgian banner o'er the liting waves.
Succeeding days the brilliant course she tried,
Than plumed swan, more airily she flew.
Tack unto tack and luff to luff she proved
Sea-fit, a worthy king's competitor.

Yet he who captained her wore anxious frown,
When lovingly he hauled her good flag down,
Trimmed for the night, cast anchor 'gainst the swing
Of drifting tide, and noted far, compelling stir
About the great ship of the emperer.

An entering trophy cheaply won disproved
His craft at fault, wherefore he sighed impatiently;
Next moment drooped more lost in worried thought,
And foreign hurled the travail of his mind.
His eye once narrowed to a boat that plied
The ruddy roadstead to his vessel's side,
And, throwing off, thereat, oppression's spell.
His glance swept eager o'er the foamless swell.
"Ho! boat ahoy! Ahoy, Monet! Aboard with thee,"
He hailed.

So came Monet of Hainaut on the ship.

"The final wink of time I've wasted, Tappaneau,
Prevailing on our precious Prussian friends.
There's not one but 's too busy 'bout the emperer

To crack his wine with us. Oh, blame them not,
For 'tis a feat most mighty they accomplish here!"

"Yes, 'tis mighty, and most mightily over done,
Which in the doing misses all the point for which begun!"

"Indeed?"

"Have ye ne'er seen milady of the court
Dress most divinely, to the finger tips in flame,
And by that token lose the prince's eye,
Which to secure her own she'd give free-willed?"

Grant ye 'tis overplayed! Excess is not
The least of Prussian sins. Forgive the slip.
Let not the fault be ours. Lock liesure's arm!
Out! Stroll this night abroad in festive Kiel.
Blot out in loveliness thy tasks meanwhile."

"A fortnight have we scud the monstrous heave
Of green and spumy billow such as twitched
The heavy North sea like a salten purge,
Thither, past the Skaw and gray Syr Odde, swift
As, white the albatross doth split the hollow air.
Anholt was naught, and Samsø Belt a calm delight
'Gainst our impatience to be here and to our tasks.

We've sunk three days! Calmed idleness—sure guilt—
A-rigging tow-lines to the heels of time!
Scant profit thus! I roam an hour or twain ashore—
Urge not of roaming, or ye hear me roar!
Hast seen Herr Weber yet, Monet? Delay
Is like a dragging anchor, shock, suspense,
With hungry shoal a-gnawing at the foot!"

"Charles, were this not a pleasure jaunt—and all
The drums a-rolling, too—I'd say your haste

Had split you like a dart; or, better say,
 Thee'd swallowed fulminate and like to rip
 To half a billion shreds. Take time! Take time!

“Let me report: Herr Weber cometh in at dawn.
 From Heidelberg, by now he's wined and dined
 At Bremen; unless, by chance, some one has warped
 The woof o' my report of him. Woof! Woof!
 Laugh! Pretty pun! Are we not here for sport?”

“We'll laugh when we have caught the drift of things.
 Already have I seen a score of British earls—
 Men gray in statecraft—diplomats—what not—
 Sun-smit as owls, with heads that ever nod
 Toward yon tremendous shipyards by which boasts
 The emperor. I'd sound that drift—”

“My God!

Shall there be drifting here at Kiel—at Kiel!
 Then, by the log, we'll foul. Be diplomats
 Half thick as yachts, we'll wreck the unshriven world!”

“Why, Kiel's a cormorant stuffed full of such small fry.
 Their reeking doth enphosphorize the main,
 Till ship-wreck from such faulty beacon's like to roll
 The fearest statecraft on the accurs-ed shoal.”

“The sunk reef lures to ocean's caverned bed?
 These soft waves edge the Maelstrom's savage maw?
 Impossible! St. Elmo's fire ye saw;
 For where such crisscross surf to crystal sands
 That bound the summer Baltic's borderlands?”

“This is no realm of peace and quietude,
 By all that here outpours! 'Tis warlike, rough, 'tis rude!
 Behold yon gilded cutter weaving in and out,

Ship unto ship. All glittering and gold she speeds.
 She kicks the supine Baltic into foamy beads.
 Read through her manifest—is all delight?
 Unheralded events shall date this night!

“No mere assignment unto place and rank;
 No courtly courtesy, benign and frank,
 Yon light boat bears. She calls to royal court
 The pilots of the Powers. Behind the gentle sport
 Of this imperial contest group the wise,
 Keen councillors to shape a huge world’s enterprise.”

“Despite wise pilots then, each light ship here’s a ram!
 In thy sight, stands at loggerheads to slay and damn!”
 “Yea, vast, unseasoned envy doth enthrall the earth.
 Subvert and swoolen passion yields unholiest birth.”

“A rescue, Ho! ’Tis some green-sickness, mal de mere,
 Hath set thy mental fabric out of gear!
 What salient ills, I may not bid depart,
 Do scourge such bleak forbodings through thy heart?”

“Monet, I’ve seen enough, both near and far,
 To set the wicket of my wits ajar.
 Have I not served the king in Tripoli,
 And stood on Lule Bruges battlefield,
 When Turkey’s flag trailed in the Bosphorus?”

“I’ve seen chafed chaos o’er the Balkans cast;
 Nor storm-heaped snows to Gothard’s crest
 May breed an avalanche so rough and chill
 When it shall fall.

“Who plumbs yon Slavic will?
 Who logs the Austrian rage; the hopes of Italy?
 Who charts the scalding waves that lash the Adriatic sea?”

From Helsingfors to Hellespont all Europe's lyddite-mined
And primed with fulminate to flash at touch of king or hind."

"Woe to thy mission then! A fair diplomacy
Should point a better course than this thou show'dest me.
Diplomacy should smooth the troubled deep,
And rock its midnight passion into sleep."

"Nay, but lewd things lie gripped 'neath smoothest main.
Yon yieldy kelp the ambushed shark doth hide.
An ink-patch doth some squalid squid enfold.
The wing-fish—taketh he the air for sport?
Some dog-fin doth out-rudder him too short.
The dumb clam spreads his hard-crustaceous jaw
To suck the fish-roe and the sand flea in—
What of the mighty kraiken, old leviathan,
The stricture-throated whale, the flippered seal?—
All, all do prey—while smiles the unruffled sea.
The pure white gull sweeps o'er—Yea, that's diplomacy!"

"Thou hast a taste for thy vocation, Charles,
Thus analyzed to precious elements."

So hath the garbage man. There's profit in't.
If I may serve my land—my king, I will not stint.
I dare not quail, halt, pause nor temporize—
Oh land! Oh king! The worthiest under skies!"

"Here's to the Belgian king, Charles Tappaneau:
But yield some key to thy imagined woe.
Things must not lie past hope. Thou dost despond,
The rigors of our voyage thy unused strength beyond.
Have you no faith in this huge enterprise?
Horizons bending clear? Yon rainbow in the skies?
Never the tide or thought so gentle and a-beam,
Leave off—the world is good. Distemper take thy dreams!
What is it, man, that doth oppress thee so?"

“Straight to the bottom o’t ’tis fairly this:
 The emperor doth bid for England’s friendliness.
 Now, for the world’s immediate good, I would
 ’Twere done, nay, open-hearted, too. Too much
 Of rival hates and world-wide policies
 Outstand, where each some pride might sacrifice.

“God! What may England see in this parade?
 Naught but a shuddering growth—mines unto terror laid!
 So pure a feat of arms can ne’er be hid in glee:
 The war-god’s sword plows Baltic to the German sea.
 Ride through this huge canal from Kiel to Helgolandt.
 Thereby a lesson learn and ponder on’t.
 Why, every ratline reeved and strung with triumph here
 Is turned a signal code to bid old England ’ware!

“Not blindly have I trod those Balkan wastes,
 Nor sat the divans of the Golden Horn.
 I’ve heard the sound of death in Trebizond.
 I’ve marked the fan-fire of auroras gleam
 ’Crost dark-limed tundras north of Petrograd.
 Ah, fool that saith the Norther bear doth sleep
 In hibernated sloth. Yea, more than fool,
 If one through Essen passed and heard no gun
 That boomed dull-throated ’neath those furnace blasts.

“What did we learn at Heidelberg, Monet,
 Of Weber, master o’ the drill? Shall we forget?
 O’er Schwartzwald wild yon huge, black eagles take to air,
 Wheeling their bitter cry. Some quarry croucheth—Where?”

“Well, calm thee, Charles, and smooth thy risen hair.
 There be some present interest we’re like to share.
 Call up some smirk; some diplomatic masque;
 Smile in the grave of fear and on thy task!
 The emperor’s cutter comes with proud ‘Ahoy’,
 And, though we have it not, we must abound in joy.”

“Lo, from the anxious midst looms joy, indeed,
 A truce to fretting and to earth’s gaunt greed.
 Behold ’tis Carl of Baden there, Monet!
 Hail him aboard! Yea, and his cousin, too.
 Comrades of Heidelberg, and old days, good and true!

“Aboard, aboard, fat Carl! I’ll smite thy monstrous back
 The softest buffet it has known these years;
 An ye watch me not, old friend, I’ll shed a shoal of tears.

‘A kiss for the Burgundy we’ve drunk,
 A smile for the Rhenish wine.
 And a sigh for the sorrow we have sunk
 In the flowing cup divine!’

Come men, gi’e us thy hands. NACH EIN MAL!
 Sing it again.”

“Hold! Hold! My dignity!
 I had a mission here, can I think on’t:
 His imperial majesty, the emperor,
 To’s grace Le Compte Tappaneau, all hail:
 His majesity doth presently desire
 Thy personal presence and good will
 Aboard the imperial yacht. There, to receive,
 The emperor doth wait the noblemen
 Of his and many royal realms. What cheer
 And comfort majesty may add, he doth extend
 To bear more glory to the present festival.
 The empress, too, doth hold informal court
 To noble ladies all—

“I must confess, by wit alone,
 The latter line I’ve added to the summons of the throne;
 Well knowing how ’twould please the modest ears
 Of Tappaneau, who hath not looked on woman, lo, these years!”

“And were his ears like Balaam’s ass
 They could not tingle more,
 When forced to greet a noble lass
 By Wilhelm’s cabin door.”

“Monet, I’ll smother thee for that! Aft, fool!
 When you find no wine to drown you in,
 I’ll thread you like a needle on my sword.”

“Thou’st found me a good sower, Tappaneau,
 E’en to my compliments. Wine! Cordial!
 Pledge we must have, if I lift the anchor up
 To wring an iron potion from its toe.”

“Ach, lieber Carl, how stout of late you’ve grown,
 Who wert so trim in thy lieutenancy.”

“Trim! Trim! says Tappaneau! He was a swine,
 O’er-stuffed—nay, trussed, with occidental maise—
 Th’ ’mazement, ‘Lo, and Thus far!’ of Old Heidelberg!”

“My cousin was a blind man ever to my form.
 You’re right, Le Compte. I have grown stout.
 My liver needs campaigning dreadfully.
 I have no stomach for the drill. A horse!
 God save the huge-limbed, Belgian stud I strode!
 I’d sway his back for him—while hoots the clown:—
 ‘Behold, our war-steed, Rain-Bow-Up-Side-Down’—
 Enough! Monet is back again; up to the eye
 In Burgundy. We drink and then we fly!
 We have most weighty mission still ashore,
 To meet th’ imperial trains that in from Bremen roar.”

“I haste, thanks thee, imperial majesty to view;
 But, Carl of Baden, take Monet with you.
 Shake every wire and try if Weber may be reached—”

“Three days, and naught but ‘Weber! Weber!’ hath he preached.”

“Just possible he comes by Hamburg, then,
Joining the royal party from Wien.
The ancient Austrian monarch loved him well.
Ere now they should be passing Tremsbuttel.”

“Thanks, Carl. Suggested thus, we try a-new
The quest, and so advance our heavy tasks.

“Monet, a word with thee. Wire mother, home,
To say all’s well. We win an entering trophy here;
We meet the emperor tonight: we share
The bounty of th’ imperial court; we greet
Sweet ladies and brave princes tall— ’Twill please
Dear mother—all those little things—and yet,
I swear I’d change this tumult joyfully;
The pomp, the glory and the might—so called—
For Arden hills—a day with Caroline and Crystal Thurberwald.”

“For thy sweet sister’s sake, I’d pledge me service true.
I guess what lonely third she’d make to ’tother two.”

“Monet, I’ve ne’er spake harsh to thee—but now be warned!
Insinuate no more where least thou art concerned.
Be off with Carl, who grows impatient fast.
Return to find the emperor’s fete full blast.
At lee-bows seek my skiff and lusty crew.
All speed! Be prompt, and so farewell to you.

“Ah, Carl, I’d meet thee soon in Fair Brabant.
If fickle fortune such award may grant.”

So boomed the evening guns far ’crost the limpid strait;
The norward twilight hung the calm west roseate;
While many a light boat plied beneath that gleam
Bearing its noble guests the emperor’s barque a-beam.

Aboard the Hohenzollern sweeps my lay.
 Forgive me, gentles, thus for brevity:—

(Watch)—“A shout! A shout! Methought I heard a shout!”

(Mate)—“With all this jostle come aboard, ye say:
 ‘I hear a shout?’ With all the horns of heaven here
 Side-splitting to the emperor, you said:
 ‘A shout!’ Whereway?”

(Watch)— “To wind’ard, sire.”

(Mate)— “Naught near
 To wind’ard. So belay thee! The emperor,
 In full regalia of th’ imperial navies, stands
 But ready to receive. Still come the nobles up.
 Stand to thy watch.”

(Watch)— “Doubts me I heard a shout.
 ’Twas the round baritone of some far distant horn.
 Methought the wind sighed murder! Something like!
 Some brass-throat newsboy’s shouting on the quays.
 Far hither borne to tail o’ wester breeze!”

(Tirpitz)—The Austrian party’s late, your majesty:
 Shall we presently announce thee, sire?”

(Emperor)—“Without delay. The empire knoweth not ‘delay!’
 If Austria’s late, be sure there’s reason for it,
 Our ally richly pardoned in advance.
 Announce.”

(Tirpitz)—“Hear ye most noble! Hear ye all!
 The emperor stands in presence. Give ye heed.”

(Emperor)—“Most grateful we that with untardy zeal,
With frank acceptance of the full intent
Of our design, the populous world outpours
Her best to do us grace at this our first
Great naval fete. Be welcome.

“Presence here
Of many noble from the British realm,
So noted for her seamen born, her **craft**,
Her navies vast, immeasurable, doth wake
Our special pleasure. To masters then,
Whate’er accomplishment our industry has
wrought,
At worth, full-confidenced, we dare present.

“It pleases us to note in the ensembled throng
A score of embassies—not least, indeed,
That from the states which rule the occidental world,
Whose banner has so many stars and bars.

“Now, not to name ye all, though meaning all,
Let us the empire’s welcome broad extend.
Propitious skies our festivals attend!
Wide, wide the port of ancient Kiel we throw.
Let be accord among the powers below—”

(Voice from
the stream)—“Ahoy! The emperor, ahoy!”

(Emperor)— “Who hails?”

(Watch)—“The port bow, sire. A boat off shore hath leapt
As lightning through the night.”

(Emperor)— “Speak out below.”

(Voice)—“Grand Duke Franz Ferdinand is foully slain!”

(Aboard)—“Who’s Ferdinand? What? Regicide? What? Doom!
Calamity, murder! What? Give room!”

(Emperor)—“The light of Austria thus snuffed out! Who
spreads
This tale to shock our festival? Beware!
Detail, proof, credentials—what hast thou?”

(Voice)—“’Tis Carl of Baden speaks. Here, sorrow bowed,
Stands Weber of thy staff. He’d come aboard.”

(Emperor)—“Assist him ye—
“Now then, unfold. Forbear
Thy kneeling! Straight to the heart of this unheard
Calamity, that paints the gates of hell
From black to crimson, growing white with wrath.”

(Weber)—“O sire, the heir of Austria was shot to death
This day at Serejevo in the Bosnian realm;
And by the selfsame hand his lovely consort lies
Disrupt and torn. Both Ferdinand and Princess
Hoenberg,
In doom unmerited and premature, lie still.”

(Emperor)—“Oh end most pitiful, and to what end?”

(Weber)—“We fear those wide pan-Slavic cults have hurled
A red and clanging gauntlet to the world;
While, after, sullen peoples of the czar
Obliterate sane government by callous war.”

(Emperor)—“And doth the Russ bear thus hatch us a serpent’s
egg!
Ah, none may know as I, who nigh his cave
Have picket kept, lo, these two thousand years!

Friends! Friends! Th' unhallowed thing is done;
 and naught,
 Naught save 'tis done we know. 'Tis grief enough.

"We must to Potsdam straight to set our state
 In solemn mourning for these honored dead;
 And after, in what needs arise, turn us to God—
 The God of crises and decline, or hope and woes,
 Whither our fates repose.

"Here then, at need,
 We delegate Von Tirpitz to our vacant seat
 To hold most grave review to our grand fleet;
 To all contestants here do solemn honor still,
 As by this deed imposed. Adieu. It is our will.

"Ho, Carl of Baden, help me down. Lend me thy
 hand.
 The night can ne'er be dark enough to hide
 The wrath that like a flaming arrow smites our
 fatherland."

(Weber)—"Ah, Charles of Tappaneau, I have they messages.
 Just as this blazing mine was fused they came.
 Thou dost conceive a breach about to rend
 'Twixt Britain and our mighty German lord.
 'Tis old. Long have we ridden neck and neck
 The heated race of armaments. Enough,
 Doomsday is struck! Each to his own. I serve
 The emperor and ye the Belgian king,
 Our duty, each to each, bars loitering.
 We have been lifelong friends. Waste not an hour.
 Home with thee, home! Yon center-blast is blown;
 But whither 't radiates, God knows alone."

(Tappaneau
aside)—“From Helgolandt to Hellespont afar,
From Tilsit to the Seine, nay overmore,
From White sea to the farthest tip of Sicily,
Nor land, nor home, nor hope shall safety know
Forevermore. The couchant fire 's abroad;
Greed's arrogant suspicion, nay distrust,
Cursed babel of the foreign tongue, and racial hate
Will do the rest. This day most ominous
Oppressed me as by weight of centuries—
What huge foreshadowing of ill! Yea, home—
That shall not long be home—will I.
“Monet.”

(Tirpitz)—“Von Weber, how readst thou the emperor's face?”

(Weber)—His face I saw not, yet his altered voice
Gave threat.”

(Tirpitz)— “ 'Twas like some bugle at retreat
That sudden to assembly blares its peal
At midst a mighty cannon shot and crash of steel—
So changed his countenance. Divine ye, now he's
(gone—
Harsh fates have thrown? Gruff war-dogs bay the
(storming Rubicon?”

(Tappaneau)—“ ‘Long side, Monet. I would come down, then
(home,
As lightning leaps the frets of Jura's comb.

“Where liest thou, O country of my heart?
What battleing flood or hurricane 's thy part?
Far east but westward rolls yon savage mill—
There, fated land, thou li'st 'twixt up and nether ill,
There burring passions blend hate's monstrous will.
When adamant thou stand'st not 'gainst that crush,
Oblivion cover thee, dishonor hush.”

PART III.

QUI-VIVE

Ah, gentles kind, most patiently thus far
Ye watch my muse's meteoric star.

Let Charles of Tappaneau take thunder-voiced trains,
Past Bremen sweep the dim Westphalian plains;
Wakeful to plunge the vale of castled Rhine
To hail Cologne ere morning star may shine.

There meets he Caroline from Luxemburg aroused,
Anxious and pale and brave, the girl so gently housed,
Her noble blood afount to breast emergency,
Stirred by the modern's wonderous, fleet-winged Mercury.

She drave her car that heavy midnight hour
Wild Coblenz steeps alone, from Moselle's bluff
To sharp defiles of Rhine that hinter-lock Cologne;
Till, roused to stupid wonder, the drowsy watchmen peered,
On the dash and thrip of her throttle, at the precipice she cleared.
And they groaned for the fools that crash the midnight-sullen
(Rhine,
Or smiled intent as they caught the flash of a lassie's face divine.

She sped to give the travellers her eager, soulful urge,
Ere paths of ruthless empire and more fair renown diverge;
Ere those tolling tides of hatred swept in high and left no trace
Of a sturdy rock called Honor to the wielders of the mace.

So met she Charles at old Cologne, whence in wordless haste
(they sped,
Like a hurried shadow flitting through the city of the dead.

Then they clutched at rolling distance, with flare of lamp and
 (horn.
 They mocked at mountain mists, the limp fog-wraiths out-scorn.
 They skimmed the beaten highway more fleet than fallow deer;
 Ahead Aix-la-Chapelle—gate of the gray frontier.
 They leapt the strong arched Meuse 'twixt fortresses of Liege;
 Unchecked swept through Namur at Arden forest's edge,
 And when the peering dawn set Hisbaye aglow,
 Before them rose the homeward towers of Tappaneau.

But pause thou there, O kindly friends of man;
 A cycle of events one fleeting moment scan:—
 Long ages since, from a region dim with time,
 A land whose foot did lave the broad Euxine,
 Far opposite the Hellespont—the Golden Horn—
 Came forth the Crimri, root and branch, and left
 A name—Crimea—to mark their native cradling.

Thence westward, far along the huge Karpathians,
 Mayhap, the tempting waters of the blue Danube,
 By scores of thousands, conquering, they rolled,
 Forcing the Iron Gate or mountain files of Hungary,
 Retiring swift before devouring Scythians,
 And Huns, warring the western tribes as bitterly,
 Thus to a land that checks the northern ocean's roar,
 To Belgium came its strange forebears—a people strong
 With conquest, alert against oppression and design.

Countless their wars with Rome, with Teuton or with Celt,
 Till not a stream nor fount in all the land
 But had its tide in crimson blood outpoured,
 Marking a thankless battlefield. No strife
 Of Europe but had left its scar, its blight
 On Belgia's sons. So to the end it seems!

In latter days, when France and England raised
 The palsied arm of Islaam 'gainst the Slav,

And on this same Crimea overthrew
 The last great militant Czar, and broke his heart,
 Of war they grew too soon a-weary and left the root
 Of discord thriving still.

The stubborn Slav

Would ever more advance. And nigh at hand
 To curb him lay the Prussian realm and Austria.
 These in that task waxed mighty past all words.
 And, lo, the Slav grew sullen day by day
 Till every act, if fair or firm, was scorned;
 Till even Bosnia, she that blossomed like a flower
 Beneath the Austrian yoke, was none the less
 A wilful wind-flower at the best, a thorn
 And torment to the crown.

Ah, mystery

Of blood, of racial ties, that mocks all law
 Save that primeval bond; That doth persist
 Despite all reason, hope or force—doth call
 The monarch from the pinnacle, the slave
 From pit of mire, the felon from the mine.

Lo, 'tis a brand of hate that striketh out,
 That striketh in, that sacrificeth hearth and kin.
 Despite our light, our law, our Christ of God,
 This primal thing doth rule the destiny of man—
 If to oblivion, still 'twill rule, nor die with death.

So in the Bosnian realm outburst the flame
 That flared its tocsin huge to signal all
 The powers to crimson battle—Slav and Turk,
 Celt, Roman, Teuton, main and islander,
 Harsh interlocked in conflict unto death.
 While in it all, and through it all, indeed,
 And after all, who points in certainty

And saith to anyone, "All blame to thee?"
 Yet of the modes of war, its perfidies,
 The shocked world knoweth where dishonor lies.

Outcrops an infinite philosophy—
 No tyrant's whim, nor angry despot's mace;
 No petty discord, nor ambition's vaunt,
 Doth furnish key to that which seemed a tomb.
 Time coins a greater word to speak of it than doom.
 Trust, friends, e'en from that angry crucible shall burn the dross
 To free at last far purer gold to compensate the loss.

But of that ultimate how far thought Tappaneau
 Before whose vision loomed impending overthrow.
 What but the spur of need impelled him to his gate,
 By naught save love of home his being actaute?"

Thus dust-lain, scarred and grim the great car reeled
 Into the homeland lanes which morningtide revealed.

"Mother, mother! Wake thee," he cried, while slumberous halls
 Reverberated. "Wake thee gentle mother, Home,
 Home am I, as fledgling tired of wing;
 As eagle that too heavy burden bears.
 Haste! I must here provide, then seek the king
 Where duty grave forbids all loitering."
 Struck white with dread, the trembling countess came
 To hide her face upon his breast, while tears
 Both fright and comfort told, but checked her fears
 At sight of Caroline—sweet, tired maid.

Then, like a flash of sunshine, o'er the banisters
 Peered Crystal Thurberwald.

When Charles beheld,
 The world lost half its shade. His heart burst wide

The gloom that 'pressed it, 'neath her glorious smile,
And yet, youth's mischief in him did measure her the while.

“Ho! Ho! Baretoes! Hast guarded mother well?
Come down we'll have thy strict accounting.”

Off

She scampered with a laugh like silver sweet.
Baretoes, indeed!

Then up ran Caroline,
While quick their merriment aroused the halls.

The while, Charles to the countess brief retold
The swift events. “The Duke of Austria's slain,
And woe it breeds to Europe none denies!
Pale dread—lean dragon—drave me home.”

“Was slain?”

By whom?”

“One Princep—student—rumor saith;
Now, if it prove a wild fanatic's deed,
All yet may mend. Suspicion hints afar
Already. None may paint the all-consuming rage
Of Austria, should this deed lodge an ell
Beyond the Danube. Then, God save us all!
A brace of empires wait such battle-call.

“Vast need of wisdom grips the Serbian realms.
Mere innocence one breath doth over-whelm.
While Austria wails, like children o' the market place,
Will Serbia lament? The Slav lament
For Austria? The Balkan lamb bewail
The thorn which smarts the Seythian tiger's whelp?
Not so dreamt I in far Albania,
Nigh which that tawn dam stalks these troubled years.”

“Such storm should burst far, far afield; so, why
 Thy deep concern, thy grave anxiety?
 This Bosnia lieth so remote. Are we
 Not insulate against its woes?”

“But woe

Is swift entailed, if once the turmoil spread,
 And impulse mighty doth abet such clash.
 The ‘Call o’ th’ East’ ’s oft turned a siren call—
 Deceit and hidden doom! Lo, from the rocks
 Yon dulcet, luring cry:—‘Ho! Austria?
 Salonika. Ho, Italy? Thy Trieste.
 Ho, Russia? Thine the Golden Horn, the far
 Caucasus and the Persian Gulf!’
 Shrewd England sweeps o’er half the Orient.
 France jostles on toward Tripoli. Not least
 Of all the scramble waits the Prussian realm
 To swallow up, without a twinge of heart,
 The Sultan and the Islaamitish hordes.

“When roars ’flamed Austria, at lenth: ‘Behold
 We punish thee (Chance be at Belgrade strikes),
 Will Russia say, ‘Forbear!’ and Germany,
 ‘Hands off?’ Says France, ‘My interests I serve.’
 Says England, ‘Lo, those mighty armaments!
 Then, Italy. ‘My ancient provinces
 Lie unredeemed. Honor my faith with these!’

“No threats nor attitudes may check such strife.
 Thus, regicide outweighs mere slaughter! Strike
 The prince of empire and her heart is pierced!
 Nay, utterly beyond all healing, slain.
 How oft, how oft far lesser spark out-rolled
 On war’s Vesuvian crest the shuddering quake’s foretold!”

“My son, ye roll a dreadful portraiture!”

“Nay, ’tis not sharp enough in any line.
 Suspicion hath no vivid lines; distrust,
 No point of vanishment; nor hate a sky.
 Sedition hangs, a bestial tapestry,
 And fear’s a cloister vault. I do not paint!
 I see. I scan horizons I have learned too well,
 Where world-ambitions lead to bitterest hell!”

“Oh, oh! and what of Belgium, then?”

“My dear,
 There lieth it! Yon flaunt of arms at Kiel
 Bars smallest hope of concord ’twixt Berlin
 And mighty Thames.”

“So what is eastern born
 Doth suckle on the west?”

“True were we blind!
 What shutting of the eye bars danger out?
 We’re thrust, the buffer state, ’twixt east and west—
 May take the shock despite all promises.
 This have we sensed for years by our defence.
 Thus, to my own with early speed I fly
 To make some head ’gainst bleak fatality.”

Charles’ burden told, the countess found new poise,
 As one before a great task rises great,
 Who sets her soul to guard her heart’s good cause,
 And calls to instant parley all her love.

“O girls! O Caroline and Crystal mine,
 Come haste and quiet thee. Thy merriment
 But now doth jar, as laughter cuts the heart
 With trouble agonized. Come list to Charles
 Whose time runs short—too short for crowding deeds
 By which we fortify our future’s needs.”

With that, came Caroline and Crystal down
 Subdued of mirth by the anxious faces all,
 Engaged the sober councils in the hall.

“For cause most imminent,” urged Charles, “convert
 All stores and movables of the estates,
 The full explees of meadow and of field,
 To ready gold. The ivories rich that come
 From Congo, sell them all. Of valued woods,
 The camphor and the spice, hold nothing back.
 Put all the woollens on the block that lie
 In Antwerp town; and, over all, export
 The stores of wine, as ye would save your lives—
 Wine to a foe is sharper than a sword
 Whose backward edge cuts deeper than the soul.

And, mother, all these details fall to thee.
 When all is done bar up the castle gates,
 Take Caroline and Crystal over seas.
 Home is not home, nor safe in hours like these.
 There shall ye live secure till sullen war
 Make echo on oblivion afar;
 Till in a new, more honored day of peace,
 To thy content love’s joy shall lend increase.
 Now speed Monet and I to join the king
 Where’er true duty shall find conquering.”

“Not so!” the countess cried. “Shall it be said
 That I, a daughter of Brabant—where bled
 Her thousands brave—that I fled over seas
 Because the war cry echoed through my native trees?
 Here is my home and here, indeed, I die;
 If by the sword, without complaining cry.
 But to the turn of need, set thou our gold
 To Belgium’s call, as did thy sires of old.
 Ask not thy mother, in her silvered age,
 To make such far and bitter pilgrimage.”

“Aye, plenty may we do!” cried Caroline.
 “I have not idled all in Luxemburg.
 Why, I can bind up wounds and bear the cross
 Of mercy on the battlefield. There let
 Me serve. I know a lady sweet in Brussels town.
 She shall perfect me straight in all that needs
 Perfecting.”

“Faith ’tis not o’er much,” engaged
 Monet, the while a laugh went round.

Downcast

And humble mid the rush of high resolves
 Stood Crystal Thurberwald, and stealing tears
 Hung on the lashes of her lovely eyes—
 She plead no noble gifts to sacrifice;
 Whose heart was surging with unwonted fires;
 Whose soul knew well the conqueror’s desires;
 Whose being was to service consecrate;
 Whose condemnation was that she must wait
 While others took the foresweep of events
 And toward fame’s highlands pitched their bannered tents.

Quick to discern and to devine the pain,
 Sprang Charles of Tappaneau to comfort her.

“Too vividly I draw th’ o’ershadowing ill.
 All stands eventual at worst. Mayhap
 Not one of us need dread misfortune’s turn.
 Aye, should the eventual end in stern event,
 Who then may dream what valiant part ’s assigned
 To thee? Great conquerors oft times have prayed
 For half the fame that crowns a lowly maid.

“We love thee, Crystal—all of us the same,
 And you shall share our deeds or sacrifice,
 Or honor, should we gain such worthy prize.”

“Ah, Crystal,” urged the countess, “not in vain
 Are all the naive, sweet comforts you have brought
 To this gray schloss. Dear child, be ours the loss,
 If by one thoughtless word we let thee grieve.”

A gentle word had Caroline, likewise
 Monet, and Crystal felt the genuine
 Of tender hearts and so was comforted.

While yet the dew of tears hung in her eyes,
 Where gaining confidence made gentle dawn,
 Uprose resounding clamour in the court
 And hall; the thunder of determined staff
 Through arch and vestibule; and, bursting past
 The light protest of courteous guard or groom,
 A form gigantic crashed into the room.
 Disheveled, misarrayed, but unappalled,
 Before them strode gaunt Halmar Thurberwald;
 Unbowed by seventy years of mighty toil,
 Stern as the cliffs and stubborn as the soil.

“I seek my daughter. Be she mine, or no?”
 He drummed, defiant, striding to and fro.
 “Ah! Thou! Art thou too vain to heed me more?
 Too lofted with infernal wine of caste
 To hear my call? Must thou wear cap and bells
 To some sleek lord, while all the town’s a-clack
 With thee? Thou? Answer me.”

She could but gasp:—

“Oh, father, father, dear!” and chill hands clasp.
 Pale unto snow or lily o’ the vale.

“Aye, father, father me!” in rage he plied.
 “Forget it not! Forget it not! Thou’rt just
 A burgher’s daughter! A burgher’s daughter, just!

And low—not high. Nay, so I christened thee
 A lowly dewdrop of the lowly ground.
 I've let thee sparkle here too long— Forgive
 Me God! Thou canst not coin a ruby of
 The dew, nor with it grace a diadem.
 Come with me home. Thou are an age when I
 Should plan thy futures for thee, forgetting not
 Thou 'rt born a burgher's daughter."

"Oh, forbear
 Thy chiding," Crystal plead in pale despair.
 "I am not like to so forget. I'll go
 With thee beyond earth's bound—Oh, anywhere—
 So thou remember still thou art my sire;
 Nor blast me with so little cause."

"Hell! Fire!
 No cause? Sent I not for thee yesternight
 By Niels de Rode? And thou—obedient—
 Came quickly home? Gave no rebuff to one
 That I have looked with kindly favor on?"

A surging tide of haunting, bitter shame
 Assailed the maid and strake her cheeks aflame.
 Her strictured heart quick brought her breath agasp,
 A frozen anger locked her finger's clasp.

"With favor on? That spy—" for words she groped—
 "To speak that name is traitor to thy child.
 Oh you—"

She choked and failed.

Quick to her side

The countess came.

"Oh say it not, heed not,
 My child," she said. "He is so old and frail
 Despite his mighty hands, his limbs of steel.
 Behold, we take it not to heart. He's duped

And much o'er-wrought. Yet is he still thy sire,
Still deep within thou art his one desire."

And then discerning Charles spoke sharp command,
Such as the captain speaks in battle-burst:—
"Attention! Thurberwald! About thee. March.
At post, sir. Halt! Now then, report to me."

Right well, indeed, the wily noble knew
He faced a soldier trained and service-true.
The old man raised the burden of his years
To take the pose so apt of grenadiers;
Squared his gaunt shoulders, raised his hand
To touch, invisible, a vanished visor's band.

Grave Charles replied; declared approvingly:—
"So stood a king's true soldier, in his day."

"And well do I remember him these years,"
The countess smiled. "A sergeant of the line!
Ne'er had I seen a man so huge and fine.
Tall as the Hall of Justice's tower to me
He seemed— A wee thing I, at mother's knee.

"Oh, Thurberwald, dost mind, my sire and thou
Out of the cistern lifted up the cow?"

"I mind that thou didst bawl most mightily."

"Ah, that I did. She was my pet, my sweet
Brown Bess.

"O sir, time hurries fleet.
Today am I as gray as thou. Come, sire.
We must not let our old fidelity expire."

"I'm but a poor old man too much alone
Behind yon Roman wall. Ah, Crystal child,

I am thy father still though anger wild.
 Come take me home. I'm tired—too tired today!
 My eyes too full of tears to see the way."
 He turned to totter forth.

"Wait, Thurberwald,"

Said Charles. "Not vainly thus have I recalled
 Thy better days. The soldier's vantage comes;
 The martial shout; the rallying roll of drums.
 Abroad brusque danger stalks to leer;
 To spy the coward heart that lurks in fear.
 With youth, unto the mightiest cause of earth,
 To serve the king, Monet and I speed forth.
 This aged schloss need yet one vigilant guard;
 One fist with ancient service mailed and doubly hard.

"Through threatening days, or through eventual raid,
 To guard our gates take thou thy rugged blade.
 The countess purposeth to here outstand
 What evils e'er be compassing the land.

"Yon sword of Godfrey sweep less sharp than mine,"
 Vowed stern the grizzled soldier of the line.

In ancient form, in quaint solemnity
 Low to the ground he brought a reverent knee.
 "Be up," said Charles. "Be prompt, discrete and wise.
 We have no dear ones here that we may sacrifice.
 Here may thou nearer guard thy Crystal's feet;
 And she thy heart by ministrations sweet.
 Wate'er these tales that languish to and fro,
 Let them be withered in the oath of Tappaneau.

"Monet, we loiter—Staugaard, the castle's car.
 Mother, we quick return. We go not far.
 Now, Caroline, speed thee to Luxemburg.

To keep close touch with us thy duchess urge—
 Home like the dove should danger there emerge.
 Ah, Crystal, dear, I leave no charge to thee,
 Save to thine own sweet heart be true.
 I know time finds thy valiant deeds for you.”

Then, yearning, Crystal longed for his command
 While silently she gave a faltering hand;
 And, yawning wide, gray earth became a shell
 And void, as mute lips spake inaudible farewell.

Swift o'er the dewy downs of Waterloo
 The men sought Brussels town whose gleaming towers
 The early sun outvied. The thoroughfares
 Were live with blithesome throngs, the marts athrob
 With trade: while all the mills of industry
 “Hummed merrily the varied song of peace.”

In all the way there was perhaps but one
 Who prowled and nursed a deadly gloom; and he
 From thorny thickets scowled invisibly.
 But when they reached the mighty esplanade
 That girds the ponderous justice tower they sensed
 A stern and ominous calm, the warm air tensed
 As some say doth the earthquake shock forebode.

In breathless groups along the colonades
 Stood court officials military chiefs,
 Subalterns, guards—what not—in anxious mien,
 While present peered the future's mighty bars between.

Within the vast rotunda stood the king,
 Forbearing all the usual forms of state
 To gain more prompt and definite a grasp
 On Austria's cataclysmic woe; to judge
 How wide the swift concentric heave might sweep

The plains of Europe with its tidal wave
Of ruptured seas.

Crime's nine days' wonder done
Would all subside? Or did this royal blood
Presage the bursting winepress of such wrath
That only chill and isolated crests
Might top the flood—lone Gothards o'er the clouds!

So as in every capital, stood the king
Strong in his youthful fire, while round him grouped
His generals and ministers of state.
Thereto came Tappaneau as one on wings
From Kiel, and not a dignitary there
But moved a nearer step.

“Ah, Charles, so soon?”

Greeted the King. “I've sent prime messages
A score to urge thee home who needed none.
What is the word from Kiel? How stands it there?”

“The emperor to Potsdam's gone; his brow
To thunder clouded o'er. The guests of state
Disperse like chaff before the fan. The vast
Regatta goeth lamely through as though
Heaven's wind were dead. Dread lurketh everywhere
White faced. Bold men have grasped the sword hilt firm;
While curdled nature saith: ‘On Guard! On Guard!’”

“Echo we that” de Moranville declared.

“Well said, on guard!” cried Lehman at his side.

“To Liege,” said Michel. Knightly generals,
They served the king. Michel did add: “O king,
This is the doctrine we have taught for years.
Stern have we fought it through 'gainst jibes and jeers.”

“Thy king assents. Speed ye to our defence
Dream not of cost nor recompense.

De Moranville to Antwerp, thou,
Michel to old Namur, the gate of France.

“Now that thou ’rt here, Count Tappaneau,
Preach that evangel all fair Belgium through,
And bid the youth of Belgium be on guard;
While I, with Lehman, seek Namur and Liege
To stock their mighty ring-forts ’gainst a siege.

“No matter whence the trampling armies come;
If out of the south or crost the gray frontier,
Confronted shall they crash with all our power
Ere they have crushed one starry wayside flower,
As God created good the form of man,
Our manlike deeds His justice must o’ersean.

“De Moranville, thou, Tappaneau, ye two,
In private councils will I bosom thee.
Ye public men unto your tasks apace
Lest on the smallest link may hang disgrace.
Call into session all our councellers
To find us unity and wisdom’s course.”

Oh, not alone in Belgium, from that hour
Men made them ready both in court and field.
Warned as by flash of some far distant gun,
Across a mighty vale at night, that dies
Long ere the whining shell is heard
Nor yet the ground upheaved in rough, red death,
So ’gainst war’s fateful coming kings took breath;
And commons read “Upharsin” crost the sky,
Nor slept the interim of peace away.
Day after day swept by in quietude
And outward calm. But, deep of night, ’tis said,
By muffled car, rolled up huge guns to Leige
Or slumbering Namur beside the Meuse.
Men cast huge new emplacements wrought in stone
And tried the turrets of the fortresses;

Till every soldier ready unto arms
 Did wait the bugle call, steadfast and true.

Meanwhile throughout the realm sped Tappaneau—
 Ostend to Charleroi, Mons, Hasselt and Louvain—
 Bearing the king's evangel far and wide;
 Spurring the youth to honor gloriously,
 And meeting everywhere the proud acclaim
 And confidence of zeal. No tocsin glare
 Through Caledonian highlands grim and bare
 Ere waked the Campbells or the Douglas clan
 As Belgium waked to duty to a man.

At last came days of homey ease and rest
 When far in Hisbaye he lost himself,
 And all the anxious world forgot. Sometimes
 To forest reverie, to stream, to sapphire vault
 Of skies went Crystal Thurberwald as well;
 And may it be the walls of artificial caste,
 Perchance, unto a low, gray ruin fell
 And social myth grew like a wraith ephemeral?

Ah, not far sundered move two guiltless souls
 Beneath gnarled oaks—beneath the starry shoals
 Of twilight and the night—'neath cordial moon,
 Love's deity alike to Flemish maid to proud Walloon.

Still ever back of all a spectre strode,
 The moan of souls through vaults where death abode—
 The 'venging ghost of murdered Ferdinand
 That in the midst of joy laid chilling hand.

For there be potencies beyond the grave,
 Where spirits toil to shape our destinies;
 And throned souls that never dreamed of power,
 Ere portaled death proclaimed their fatal hour.

PART IV.

THE INVADER

Events went ill across the Bosnian realm,
Until the Iron Gate of Hungary,
Where rolls resounding Danube on superb,
Trembled and whipped to mightier surge
Than Danube's three score rivers dared to urge;
Till nature hid her face beneath the ban
Of blind and bellowing passion born of man.

For now 'twas urged those murderous weapons came
From Serbia—from royal arsenals.
'Twas charged those guilty hands took willing aid
From military chiefs of old Belgrade;
That men of state were father to the crime;
The state itself a wet nurse to it—after fact;
While, far from grief, its public did exult;
Rejoiced and danced; cried: "Ho! Deliverance!"
And to the broad light tossed a warlike lance.

So leapt the challenge stern of Austria—
A swift swart steed, defiant, thunder-maned,
As one which in the valley paweth deep,
And clouds the desert with his spurning hoof;
That goeth forth the armed men to meet,
That saith "Aha" against the bayonet.

Yea, 'twas defiance like a gauntlet hurled
Off monstrous battlements upon a world
Of stubborn hate; while, on the flash it made,
Each spear in Serbia rose a-tilt; each hand
Forgot its craft to hilt a tempered brand.

And soon—oh ties of blood how keen ye draw
 From ancient heritage by ancient law—
 The torch that red in Belgrade shone
 Melt down the bergs that lock the frigid zone;
 And what in Serbia flamed with passion mad
 Became white heat, anon, in Petrograd.

Then cossacks of the Don drew taut the rein,
 While after strode grim peasants of Ukraine;
 Adown the Caucasus, e'en Mount Elbruz,
 From Caspian waste and near Euxine,
 From Tundras dim, in reindeer march,
 Swift as the boreal blast from White Sea's breast,
 Uprose the Russian hordes, and o'er them played
 A wilful, growing, red, primeval rage.

And men cried "Peace" and, lo, there was no peace.
 For naught in earth might slack the spur of Austria—
 Unhorse the swarthy Cossacks on the River Don.
 Nor hell might thwart nor heaven overwhelm
 The bold decision of the Prussian realm.
 For all the dogs were lossed, the ware-wolves packed,
 The bison bowled the red horizon's o'er,
 Huge grass-fires leaping close in mocking ease,
 Plumed whirlwind heaping bare the bedded seas—
 Thus eagerness, suspicion, panic, rage
 And indiscretion chaosized the age.

Then what were vast alliances to purchase peace?
 No better than soft wax to flame's increase.
 Alike went threat and supplicant across the board
 To clear for battle—half the cause unheard.

For one said: "Wilt thou stand aside, or no?"
 And 'tother: "Nay, I shall not, if thou strike!"
 And one said, "Whose part, thou?" and 'tother vowed,

“Nay, I shall serve my interests, not thine.”
 And one said, “Ho, ye islanders, reveal
 What shall content thee that ye keep the peace?”
 Then from the isles—“That will we not reveal,”
 Came back cold echo o’er the narrowed main.

How pitifully just was Belgium’s cause
 Twixt warring champions! She yearned for peace.

Urged one who’d not be foe—“Stand thou aside.
 The mighty here must tread.”

Then ’tother warned—
 Yea she who would be friend: “Nay, thou must shed
 The last drop of thy blood to block yon pass;
 And nothing less shall be expect of thee.”

Howe’er it be, proud nations strake their tents,
 And all that smacked of cause fell smothered in events;
 Beneath which plague smoke-fumed, and gassed, and red,
 Each eventide hope carried out her dead.

Where first that bitter carnage fell; and how
 The Belgians bore it gallantly and fought
 The avalanche, let us resmue.

Alert,

Of August morn, upon the parapets
 Of Loncin stood a group of eager men
 Who harked into the early-breathing dawn,
 Or peered up through the vale of Vesdre, pale in mist,
 To list afar the initial tread of German hordes
 At Herbesthal beyond the gray frontier.

Night long, had toiled, and everywhere about
 Delved many thousands heaving up redoubt,

Or framing shelter 'gainst impending shot,
 'Gainst splitting rain of schrapnel, bursting bomb
 And hand-grenade.

Some twined entanglements
 To check the rush of hostile bayonet
 Or trampling horse; laid mine and pitfall secretly.
 'Twas Lehman and his men at Liege, with them
 Monet and Charles of Tappaneau. The last,
 On tap of midnight, from the king brought word
 Of Germany's demand for highway clear—
 The king's denial o't, and purpose firm
 To guard the borderland what e'er betide.

“Here,” said the general to Tappaneau,
 “At last have we our forces fair disposed,
 With outposts set and scouts abroad beyond
 Verviers. Let us take breath—and, Charles,
 Those tidings thou art bursting with, report.
 Tell us the news. What of the cause, the war,
 The times, the outside world? How goes it you?”

“Why, all goes ill, if to the ears in blood
 Be by the soldier counted so. No hope
 Of peace to place reliance on.

“By right
 Thy rush of querries answer I in turn.
 The cause of Belgium bears twin babes,
 Justice and Honor called, and both we guard
 Unto the vale of death with all our power.

“The war doth like a mighty engine twirl
 Huge wheels that soon accelerate to reach
 An unimagined speed—a cargo there
 That breeds both death and plague to look upon,

And hell the port of entry at the last.

“The times be those in which the wrath of God
Outbursts the winepress by the ages trod.
Nay, horse-bit deep the measure of that flow,
The breast of Europe, lo, the channel where
It flows.”

“Hold, Charles, ye speak to soldiers, man.
Too wierd and gloomed thy predilections are—”

“Ten days have changed the bounds of universe,
And torn the tapestry that thinly hides
The charnel vault of mortal fear that grips
All Europe’s sunlit lands.

“Suspicion sprang
A sulphur-sheeted ghost from that pale corpse
Of Ferdinand’s. Blind wrath a second rose,
Ambition third.

“Diplomacy, deceit
And fear a trembling trio stood, that oped
Their gates to every crooked horn that blows.”

“Still dost thou riddle us who ask plain speech!
Why speak in parables? Curt truth’s too long
To suit the impatience of this hour. Speak out!”

“I catalogue it then. Ten days are sped
Since Austria made arrest of Serbia—
Laid to her charge the murder of his grace,
Franz Ferdinand. Straight, threated Serbia
Appealed to the astonished Czar, whose hand
To hilt went home—whose myriads took flame.
Whereon the mittel-Europe’s emperor
Demanded halt.

“Yet all the mobile force
Russia sullen moved in westward trend.

The War Lord brought the parleys sharp to end,
 Believing not the 'truce-talk' of the bear.
 France stands with Russia fervently,
 And peers o'er Alsace keen and vengefully,
 While England will to battle presently.

"Now at each other's throats, past hope they fly;
 And over ours spurs time-lorn Germany;
 Savage the heart of vengeful France to smite,
 Ere he must grip the bear that rules the norther night.

"How brief his time judge ye! Today? By noon?
 Shall Hunnish hordes tread down the bold Walloon?"

"No distant hour they strike. For Luxemburg
 Was yester morn o'errun, which ominous threat
 Doth tilt toward us indeed.

"Before that flood
 My sister Caroline has fled the duchy home."

"Has Caroline, indeed, escaped! Thank God!"

"She has, Monet; but not before she saw
 And verily did aid superb Marie
 Adelaide—divine and royal heart—
 Queen-star of all the shoals of starlight brave
 That course the heaven of time—To bare her breast
 In personal defiance to the knaves—
 The helmeted despoilers of her court.
 Across the bridge of Treves she thrust her car,
 Save her sweet soul her country had no bar
 Against such vile invasion and disfame!"

"And there she stood and made protest to God,
 To 'venging courts of man, how sharp, roughshod,
 Her dignities were trampled on.

“And when

This failed, all sadly she restrained Van Dyck,
The major of her wee gendarmerie,
Who would have fired on them.

“ ‘ ’Twill naught avail
But woe as well as loss,’ she said. ‘Prevail
Upon my people to restrain their rage;
Postpone their retributions to a nobler age,
When pledge of man is made a sacred vow,
And not the hollow thing we see it now!’”

“So came the tide wave; but the shock of arms
Swept by to crash the French frontier with wild alarms.

The same gray myriads would tread us, too—
But ne’er supinely, while there’s deeds to do.”

“Yea, we shall check them come they ne’er so huge
And manifold.”

“Lo, by the sun we shall.
Into that task we’re urged by England’s power,
Whose fleet is in the channel and her men
Afoot. France sendeth, instant at our call,
Five legions on with all her power behind.

“The king already takes the gauntlet up;
Harsh in the teeth of Prussia flings it back;
Denying every inch of Belgian soil,
The smallest twig of Arden’s cladden hills,
The frailest flower that nestles by the Meuse.”

“Ah, now thou speaketh, man, without a fault!
There stands a king and warrior shall not halt
Nor bow to any treacherous design!

And here's a cause without a shadow's taint
 That arms us all—proud knight, or clown, or saint—
 Shall glorify with diadem and ring
 The steadfast soldiers of the Belgian king!
 Our task to tangle in the fleet advance
 Invaders yon, and wait the hosts of France,
 The legions fair of Albion."

"Oh, sire,
 Look yonder! Down the misty dawn rides one
 As though he twinned the very god of speed."

"A messenger? Wears he the uniform?"

"He does."

"He's from the outposts then. He bears
 A burden of import—we'll instant learn."

"The general! Whereway?"

"Here, Thy report?"

"The German horde is moved from Gemmenich,
 And Herbesthal is surging like the sea!
 Quite as a tidal wave doth over-roll
 Ripped dykes of Flanders, so immense they sweep
 On Belgium soil. We are invaded, sir."

"Cut loose the signal guns. Set all the bells
 Of Liege a-clang. Raise all the flags on high.
 Complete the barricades. Each man his post.
 Thou Charles of Tappaneau, forewarn the king.

"Obstruct the highways all. Fell down the trees.
 Iron, wire, wains, vehicles and clumsy vans!
 Trucks, engines, ponderous impediments!

Take all and cast them in the way. Obstruct
And hinder!

“Tear the bridges—tear them all!

“What of the way by rail? Monet, report.”

“We can unseat the bridges, sir. But still
Of more effect to blast the tunnels well
This side of Verviers.”

“No time remains for that.
A score of moguls seize—turned half toward Liege
And half toward Herbesthal—ye set them wild!
Deep in the tunnel’s guts, there let them crash,
Twist, overturn and wheel, fuse to a mass
Of interlocking steel! So shall the vale
Of Vesdre be secure—thanks to the hills
And woods impregnable.

“Boom boom, ye guns!
Roll solemn sound! Wake ye the dead of Belgia’s sons!
Wild dawn, and day of days—The huge archangel’s wing
Doth sweep the sky in times that need no heralding!”

Then many a crowned and noble oak went down,
And many a royal pine of Arden Hills,
Hewn to a sacrifice by savage blades
Of war. In many a tangled, winrowed heap
The shattered lindens lay like hosts of dead
Along the labyrinthine ways.

The smoke

Of devastated farms arose to hang
Jet black against the morning light;
Whence fled white fugitives and hoarse
Sad-lowing kine.

Out of the wildwood sped
 The mourning-dove with half her fledgling brood.
 The eagle shot aloft to flash defiant eye,
 While from the blue and farther crests, Ah, God!
 The shagrag, shuddering vulture took the sky.

Thinly at first and then more dense, more dense,
 Swept on the vast gray sea of human forms;
 Chanting a mighty hymn as rolls the Rhine.
 They tore and tossed the tangled trunks
 And cursed the highways blocked—the slow advance.
 The bitter populace that thronged and jeered
 And joined in every hinderance.

The thing

So easy forced upon frail Luxemburg
 Became a task, a joust, a struggle grim;
 With cruel shot that split and hurtled death;
 With hidden foes 'neath every hedge and wall;
 An ambushade behind the languid smoke
 Of every burning cot; a phalanx walled
 Each bridge with glittering steel, where strove
 A mad, perplexed and outraged peasantry
 With hook and adze and scythe, with fork and tongs.

Lo, here, lo, there a squad of soldiery.
 An officer, a troop, a scouting plane,
 A flying car! So came the toiling mass
 In range of Liege.

Then Loncin spoke,
 And high the whining shell arched up to fall
 Near Vise on the Meuse. A ponderous bridge
 Dropped at the sullen blast. The farther ridge
 Outbroke a thousand glistening brands—
 The foe with conquering bayonet in hands!

Came night and drew her somber curtain o'er
 The vale of Vesda where the grasses hung
 With heavy tears—ah, ghastly, mocking night!
 The slumberous veil of it was sunder torn;
 Its peaceful stars all blotted out.

Far wide

The war-lights swept and played and sought
 The cunning sanguinary foe that prowled
 The hideous inferno blade in hand—
 This way, the clash of restless bivouac;
 Hard by, the muster of the midnight raid.
 While everywhere the hurtling, screaming shells
 Flared out their vivid, agonizing blasts.
 Nor din nor clamor served to drown the groans;
 The stifled death scream and the crunch of bones.
 Thus sane man wars, reason to slaughter led.
 Who hath not rage, low-lieth, trampled, dead.

Oh second morn of rich, of rich and ruby skies,
 How could thy paleness warm upon such agonies!
 Oh, heavens ever calm, unfeeling, lo, they seem;
 Love of the God thereof a medieval dream!
 Yet rail not God! All lieth in the plan
 That binds a deathless universe to man.
 But dawns must rise and mortal man must strive
 A Christ who calmed the waves said not to him,
 "Be still! But once before the mighty said
 The Lord:—"No peaceful token, think ye, but
 I bring a sword, a sword!"

So strife swept high.

Thus far the mighty girdle-forts that lay
 Upon the shaggy, mountain-breasts of Liege
 Served as a tempered armor 'gainst which clanged,

From dawn to eve, the flower of the foe.
 Men proved them pliant clay to take the mold
 Of varied strategy; their founting blood
 As water to the potter's flying wheel;
 Their hearts at need more flinty than the steel,
 Ready to vault, to shock, to tear, to guard,
 To win, to break, as doth the potter's shard.

Von Emmich proved a stubborn general.
 Out of the sullen arsenals that lie
 Across the stern frontier were secret brought
 Huge ordinance of such uncanny might
 That three score well directed shots might doom
 The army good Sir Godfrey led to fame
 At Asealon. Aye, one such shattering blast
 Had put to flight Selieunan and his host,
 As by the godlike Richard struck on Acre's plain.
 And these on Fleron' gan to play.

The while

Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia swift detoured
 A rugged troop of gray uhlans to burst
 A portal to the walls they coveted.
 The scion of the house that won Le Mans
 Retained the craft of his ancestor's hands.
 And many a rugged troop, 'neath noble crest
 Of Lord, from Kiel to Frankfort-on-the-Main,
 The onslaught hurled across the thousands slain.
 The Belgians stern did front them one to four,
 Flanked by the armored forts, with steady roar;
 Which took as fearful toll in aggregate
 As Nilus' bitter plagues insatiate.

Yet ere the third day's solemn glory waned
 La Chartreuse, on the east, was fairly gained;
 And through the heavy night unweary pressed

Full twice ten thousand o'er that rugged crest.
 The foe ere dawn, in Meuse's gentle tide,
 Slaked bitter thirst; while, ah, at morningtide,
 They seized the Bridge of Arches, with the rest,
 To plunge the throttled city lying west.

They fought there mightily.

The o'ermatched band
 Of Belgians slowly backward swept, and saved
 A remnant small to heckel and delay
 The onrush broad that aimed at Sheldt's rich plain.

Upon the tap of that retreat, ere yet
 The bugles rang, Sir Lehman called his staff
 About him. Thus he spake:—

“ 'Twas ne'er the plan
 Of Brialmont, who these fortresses designed,
 That Belgia's sons should here be sacrificed,
 Nor Meuse become Thermopylae, the place
 Of monuments.

“ Charles, order the retreat,
 Ere ye be crushed. Make haste! Slip ye from out
 The anaconda fold that coils us here.
 Westward retire through Hisbaye.

“ Behold,
 The dragon of the Rhine is resurrect,
 With gaunt blood-hunger come, with sulphurous exhale,
 Spouting his venom as, bedeepled, the stricken whale,
 Dragging the course of nations in his wake,
 Till cruel flukes and talons o'er us rake.—
 Time turneth short. Begone! Begone!

"To me

Remains a duty yet in stricken Liege
And at the end a heavenward pilgrimage.

"Save, save thy men to join 'neath Antwerp walls;
But be ye vigilant and bold, as falls
Our long known plan. Strike quick! Strike hard! And then
Sweep off—swift and elusive—this thy boast.
Be vengeful hornets to th' invading host.

"But, in thy flight, forget not those who flee,
And to the civil horde do kindly charity.
To fugitive stand guide and guard. Their hope
Is wrapped in thee. I charge the ne'er to grope
Blind path of duty when they need. Put all
Aside to take the fleeing babe to arms; lead safe
The young and mothers of the young—each waif
That seeks the path of safety. Woe betide
The chief who succors not the sundered bride,
The hallowed grandsire, or the ancient dame.

"Already have sweet innocents been slain
Twixt Liege and Herbesthal, where chubby babes
Lie stark from sabre stroke, from lance's thrust,
Felled by the grim uhlands. And there be maids
In Arden wood who dare not breathe their name,
Since they be counted living after shame.—
Yea, so 'tis told, and, whether true or no
I charge ye guard the weak from chance of woe.

"Now bid me forth to Loncin, to my men;
To sell our blood so dear that every drop
Shall buy an hundred lives.

"Farewell, good friends

And true. Farewell to you!"

“Ah, general,
Cried Charles of Tappaneau, “I stay with you!”

“Nay, Charles, and nay, Monet! With true regret
We bid ye both adieu. No backward step
Is thine. I pass the orders of the king!
Are they gainsayed! How will ye then be loitering?
Off with ye! God! I must save my eyes!
Shall damned tears blind me to a tearless foe’s surprise?”

PART V.

THE TERROR

Then sorrowful the Belgians sped from Liege
And left their general to seek his doom
In Loncin's mighty walls.

So sank the brave—
Like salt and grizzled captain o' the deep,
Lone on the washing bridge, while 'neath him reeled
The good barque of his pride—a derelict.

So came Von Emmich unto goodly Liege—
A prize too rich in booty for the sword—
Close in the city's heart were straightly reared
The huge emplacements for the fatal guns
That, one by one, the mighty girdle-forts
Beat down. Flemalle, Fleron, Boncelles
Swooped into dust, in half as many days.
Pontisse, Berchon, Claudfontaine and Spa
Were doomed the soulless, whipping scourge to draw.
Ten savage days stood Loncin over all
While every shot unbent and let the heavens fall.

So on a red and lurid dawn, surcharged
With heaving shells, mid smoke of villages,
Of shattered farms, the myriad Prussian host
Assumed full sway.

The mighty Skoda guns
Waked no response from Loncin, where alone
The brave flag waved defiance.

Swift advance
Was under way by every road and file
Toward Hasselt, toward Louvain. The stubborn fort

That hitherto had stood a barrier
 Against this flood, was stilled, while yet intense,
 Upon the fortress doomed, the bitter hail
 Of conquest flailed and boomed.

A group

Of battle-worn invaders watched the course
 Of monstrous missiles curiously and grim.
 With 'vancing dawn, they marked the silent fort;
 Which voiceless omen spake a tale that's told.

Said one: "Christ's name to such a shot should be
 The last; for pent concussion shatters here
 The window panes, the quivering walls; splits wide
 The eardrums 'neath the dizzy brain like darts
 Of fire.

"So have we thought, Von Weber, these
 Ten days. Airmen report she's sunk to dust;
 Each blast doth fling a gusty cloud heaven
 Like colicked Etna or Vesuvius.
 And yet she stands. Ye'll hear her guns ere long."

"I tell thee no! There's nothing left! Hear that,
 Von Emmich! Was ever such a monstrous sound?
 The crystal heavens split. The solid ground
 Edgewise doth tilt and quake like aspen wood.
 Yon tall bell-tower did lean from plum a rood."

You're right Von Weber. 'Tis her magazines—
 The knotty heart of Loncin breaks at last!
 Waste no more shot. Drive o'er the intervale.
 Come, speed thy motor, Carl of Baden. Speed!
 Lest we neglect such rescue as might add
 To triumph's wealth, or grace humanity.
 For, such the stern necessity that grips

Our course, the last, already, is too oft,
Too savagely denied us.

Who'd have dreamed
These Belgians would resist to death? Pretense
Of fighting that did we expect; but not
This grinding to the very dust. Men boys,
Wee children, nay, young girls, do gall our flanks
Continually like gadflies of the Nile.
The women like gaunt houri interpose
At every turn, 'neath every wayside cross.

"Here was a link miscalculated in the gross
Of our warlike philosophy. Lawless
Necessity doth breed a state where law
Is vanished; even caution out of bale.
We'll find a stubborn land in Belgium.

"Hold,
Men. Out now, run across these crater fields."

"Oh breath! My wind is flat with dodging holes
And craters here. O for a rest! We've come
Too swift—exceeding limit, where there lies
No thoroughfare."

"Lo," Carl of Baden moans;
"My wind is flat," which, truly, could not be
Within a form so round."

"No breath is in
My form, blockhead. I've e'en been running out
Of form."

"With Carl to run is just to roll."

"Now, on my soul, I'll outroll thee, whose legs
Be spidery as wire."

“Leave jesting men.
The fortress yawns a cavern here, smoked, dim
And full of noxious gas as any hell.
Look sharp! If ye see aught report or call.”

“I see a hand or two lopped off. Three teeth
Hang dented in the timber of this mine.”

“Speak not of that! We seek not for the dead,
Who have good burial as they may get.
Look for the living.”

“Here opes a passageway
That seems to link some subterranean vault,
Now wrecked and choked with smothering flames.”

“One lieth under yonder beam. Try Carl
If it will move.”

“Though it be column to
Philista’s temple set, I’ll Samson it. Ha, there!
We have a prize! I see huge epaulettes.”

“To outer air with him. Lave off the grime.
If he be living, bring him to us straight.
Out of this chartless desert let us reel.
Poison and dank it lies, and should be still
As fits the vaults of death. Waste no more search;
Most strange e’en one survives that final lurch.”

“Some messengers be climbing down this savage file;
The moulted ashpit of this dead compile.”

.

“Could ye not let me die? A moment more,
The flitting, fevered flame had flickered! Fled
As I desired! Whom be ye, there? Speak up.”

“Aide to Von Emmich, sire. Command is mine
To fetch thee straight, if thou be living, sir?”

“May I say dead, who am a living death?—
A prisoner of war—whose will is twist
With every whim of Caesar’s wheel? Lead on.
Before Von Emmich let me go. Unhurt
Am I, save in my strangled soul.”

“Stand by till I return. I do apprise
The general thou art revived. I’ll back
Instant.

“The general. Attention all.”

“Ah, Lehman, thou art still alive, despite
The cudgel of these fratricidal days!”

“Not tame as our maneuvers, sire—not quite!
Friends by the Belgian king stood we before
This ravening war. Here is my sword. ’Tis thine.”

“Nay, keep it, sire. ’Tis honor to cross swords
With such as thou. A wonderful defence!
A godlike blade!”

“Now, bear me witness, ye!
Before the courts of man: Death had me gripped
And langor closed these eyes; or ne’er alive
Had I my good sword thus bestowed.—

“Thank you.

This compliment must comfort me beyond
The Rhine.”

“Farewell, sir, to a better day—
Orderly! Maintain thy strictest duty to
This prisoner—

“Who spoke of messengers?”

“Here be they, sir.”

“Report.”

“From Vise, sir.

A new outburst o' that belligerent town
Hath cost us lives. Shots have been fired—men slain;
Poison in cups, violence by night, poinards,
Knives, pointed tools, blood-letting, violence.
Thy commandant of Landwehr seeks of thee
Authority to deal with rioting.”

“Bid him, at best discretion, firm apply
Sufficient force to counteract these deeds.”

“Whereby, he'll burn the town!”

“So let it burn!

The civil horde must bitter lesson learn
By penalty a hundred-fold more sharp
Than is attempt. Wherefore, in Belgian towns
Seize hostages, and after feudal law
Exact the utmost till this struggle cease.
An Belgium will be crushed, she shall be crushed
Indeed!

“Hear ye of staff! Heed our decree!”

.

Under the wood, and under glowing stars
That change not courses for frail human wars,
In Belgia's camps two sentries, met at post,
Renewed a testy thread of argument.
One made complaint, e'en from the fall of Liege,
'Gainst what he nicknamed “Hinter pilgrimage!”

“Say not we fled, Joalin, comrade. Say
Retired.”

“Render thy sentry call! Ere now
’Tis time.

“THREE O’ THE NIGHT, THREE O’ THE NIGHT!
ALL’S WELL!

(A-near) “Three o’ The Night, Three o’ The Night!
All’s Well!”

(A-far) “Three o’ the night! Three o’ the night!
A-l-l’s W-e-l-l!”

“Why? Fled’s a pointed word, and brief
And blunt, and soldierly.”

“Yes, pointed, brief
And blunt, but not quite soldierly.”

“If not
Quite so, why, then, be twenty thousand troops
So busy at it?”

“Not fleeing, Joalin!”

“Just so—retiring then—More haste, less grace!
To flee denotes an enemy, pursuit,
A looking o’er the shoulder for a prick
Above the shanks. For fine distinctions, Basil, thanks.
Although I have retired my feet are sore
As if I fled. Who thought Hisbaye had
So many wretched roads? No enemy
Could find us in this labyrinth.
The pebbles would defeat him handily
As David’s did the boasting Philistine.

“Upon his head they smote, not on his feet!”

“Why, this is like thy argument! If head,
Or tail ye make it, ’tis the same. O, man!
I’ll cool my feet. Then boot before the first
Assembly call.

“Ho, Basil, do ye know
This ground?”

“It is the field of Ramilles.”

“Did they retire those days? When was it, then?”

“Two hundred years and more, by eight or ten.
There, Marlborough did advance, I ween;
While Villeroi did scurry o’er these hills.”

“Why, I’m for Marlborough, then whoe’er he was.”
“An Englishman—a Dutch and German host
Was on his side.”

“And Velleroi?”

“Frenchman

Was he, and backed by Spain.”

“Now, then, I know
Thou hast it mixed—a German on the side
Of England? That’s not natural. ’Tis off
Thy sights. You’re shooting wild.”

“ ’Twas shot aright.
The Germans then were on the English side.”

“Call, ye, that Marlborough now, and bid him speed
The English on, or on their side again
They’ll find new German hosts—their hinter-side.”

“ ’Twas told us here we’d league with England, days ago.”

“I’ve scotched three Germans since. That do I swear.
But had I slaughtered ten, us each the same,
They’d still outnumber, ten to one, the whole
Of us.

“The uhlands gallop on our flank
Sweeping their clumsy lance and running through
The weary and the wounded ones. There’ll be

More running yet today. To Waterloo?
 To River Dyle? To Malines? Who knows?
 Hisbaye's woodland wakens to the gun
 Long ere the drowsy coot hath dreamed of sun.
 So leaps to flight the sore-pricked fugitive
 Nay, all that horror or despair let live!

“The camp doth wake. Yon tremulous bugle wound
 Rings o'er Ramilles' ancient battle ground.
 Hither the staff, the heavy rank and file
 Drag halting feet to cudgeling defile,
 Toward dust-lorn plain, toward thorny underwood;
 Where e'er the chance for fresh baptismal blood.
 Whether retire—O, God—or whether flee,
 Thy succor cometh like eternity!”

.

“Where be the English? Where the French, Monet?
 A week since, armies mustered at Dinant,
 Thence by the Meuse not far into Brabant.
 Our poet fancy long picked Waterloo
 Where victory should crash her battles through.
 There'll be no 'gagement there, for Von Bulow
 Doth creep upon Namur, as done at Leige—
 Our second fortress raked by bitter siege.
 And France? Still at Dinant? The English, where?
 The channel fleet, be it mirage or air?”

“This day a stroke we hazard toward the south
 To ease the stress that blocketh Sambre mouth.
 Beyond Eghezee or Noville we strike
 By fell surprise to split a plunging lance.
 Thus we renew the spirit of our troops
 Which 'neath the constant flying sadly droops;
 Thus give these piteous fugitives a day
 Of grace; clear highways for our vanishment.

Tomorrow back we speed to river Dyle
To lend new heart's blood free of taint or guile.

“Led by the Death'shead Hussars, from Hasselt,
The Prussian arms make head against Louvain.
Von Kluck doth plunge the northern Belgian plain;
Gaunt death and burning lope along his march.
Lean scourgers leap for blood as Rhenish wine.
They gulp its flow. They slay us uncondine.
Blood-drunkenness doth urge to wolfish hate—
The sane could not be thus deliberate!

“Our maids through virgin breasts lie pinned to ground
To mend the lust-love of some lecher-hound
Our temples fall, our dear cathedrals reel,
And what the future hath the heart may not reveal.
So filter tales that out of horror creep,
Low as the hell that will not let us sleep.
Well stands the soul, made witness to this thing,
A mad-cap, stricken, mute, and muttering!
On into Tirlemont! To Eghezee!
By better blood we wash our curse away.

“Aye, warn the civil populace again
To patience 'gainst the harsh invader's lance.
How little they may do, God knows. Pain, death
Fleet follows on't, lies it but feather weight.—”

“Ah, Charles. Here droops a group most pitiful!!

“Oh, wee exhausted mother with her babes!
Oh tattered little shoes! How many miles,
Think ye, they've faltered hither in the night—
The guttered dark? Poor little curls,
Whiter than carded flax, more soft than wool
Pillow thee on the stones, thou little ones—
Would this not force the lion-heart a groan?”

“Here, thou man o’ the boots! Where is thy troop?”

“I served as sentry, sire. So quick we broke
The camp, I’m straggling.”

“Well, can ye drive
A car?”

“I can, the devil knows.”

“Right, right!

Leave out the devil! Here’s a bit of heaven we
Must save.”

“Poor things! I heard the least one sob;
The mother crying in the night,”

“And went
Not to them, fool?”

“I was on duty, sire.
I e’en was seeking when ye came to halt.”

“Take this script unto the commissariat.
Make speed! Sleep-fettered as she lies, lift up
This treasure with her babes. To Tappaneau make haste,
By Mont St. Guilbert’s town. Bestow
Them to my mother’s charge. Canst find the way?”

“Why any road in Belgium’s mapped complete
Behind my eye.”

“Off with thee, and ’tis well.
Nay, ease the countess’ mind of me and say:
I shall be home, God willing, presently.”

“And I return by noon, if so we fight;
If run, by faith, I’ll lag beyond tonight.”

“Good man! Come back; this day we fight. We’ve found
A lodgement of the enemy at Eghezee.
Now, not a word! We’ll drive them out like rats!”

.

“Behold our sentry o’ the boots, Monet!
’Tis afternoon, and late. We’ll rally him.
Here, sir.

“How comes ye show not till the fight
Is done?

“What sport you’ve missed—what rare degree!
They fled like rabbits to their holes, and thence
With bayonet and pike we pryed them forth,
Yelling like swine in shambles foul. White, white
Before, nor whiter when their veins were dry
And all their blood leapt on the sucking soil.”

“The fighting’s done! Oh, God!”

“Ye heard me! Done!

With half the force, we hurled five heavy troops
From bivouac at Eghezee. The while
At Tirllemont we beat two thousand off,
Like buzzing flies. Ere noon ye promised us—
Why Tappaneau is scarce twelve miles by road!”

“Road or no road, ’twas clean through hell and back!
Let that same hell forbid me such a course
Forevermore!

“The highway’s but a sea
Of fugitives! The fields a littered swamp
Of souls—of pawing, roaring bulls—stray lambs—
Red-eyed children—women who have forgot
The cool relief of tears.

“I saw a bluff

Walloon, his pig tucked 'neath his arm, his shirt
Half off from the kicking boar, fighting amain
A Flemmin who swung aloft his favorite cock
By one tawn leg—his battle-axe!

“The cause?

One would flee west, the other north. The roads
Did cross, and neither, on his life, would yield
An inch to 'tother. Nay, he had no inch
To yield. And so I pressed upon their strife
Till each escaped with only half his life.
And would ye see inferno, come take that ride
With me.”

“Forgive us, boy, we rallied thee,
Who better would have mingled tears with thee.
And did ye then reach Tappaneau and leave
Thy precious burden there?

“Yea, sire. The gate

Of heaven was wide upon them when they waked
And so the raptured lady cried. 'Twas worth
The chance of battle, quite to see the joy
Of that wee family—the mothering
They got—the petting o' the little ones.

“That monstrous gray old grenadier
Who holds thy gate did help them gentle out.
One to a shoulder, he did bear them in,
And she thy mother calls 'Mon Crystal' Oh—
And with what smiles, she sobbed above them! Sworn
Had I, they were her own, from shipwreck borne.

“So I am come, and bring a heavier load
Of love than that I bore to 'Tappaneau.”

“Boy, dost thou see yon thicket toward the east
 That tops the hill sharp to the river’s edge?
 If ye can make reconnoissance as well
 As ye have done since morn, and there reveal
 The meaning of those languid clouds of dust
 That slant the horizon far, then both, indeed,
 Together will we recommend the cross
 Of honor for thee, ’neath the Belgian arms.”

“Oh, sire! Oh sire! The cross is mine. I can.”

“Ha! Look, Monet! The hill—Our boy! He’s down!”

“Nay, but
 He goeth up. Close to the thicket now.
 And yet I think he’s sighted from the sound.”

“There was a Belgian, every inch of him!

The cross sits well on him, and all his kind.”
 The soil breeds legions of them, Charles—

“Boy, boy!
 Not in the open there! Take cover. Oh,
 Again!—

“Oh cursed hail! Now like the wind
 He comes. He’s spent with running quite. Monet,
 Give hand.”

“Swart columns of the German host
 Did stretch beyond my sight. Strong infantry,
 Flanked by enormous guns and all the trap
 Of war and seige, are hither on the march.
 Ah, general, go up and fight—I’m through.
 I have a soft shot ’neath the ribs doth bid

Me home. A wooden cross tomorrow 's all
 I need—but send the gold one—after while
 To little Rita by the river Dyle—
 'Twill comfort her. Vive la Baelgae, Ho!—”

“With bugle and with guns a solemn peal
 Kind requiem and honor here bestow.
 To which end call a troop. Give this dear flesh
 Most reverent burial. Enroll his name
 Upon the scroll of glory for the cross
 He earned, forgetting not who soon must weep
 A flood that doth outweigh the Dyle. We reap
 All benefit of this true sacrifice.

“Yet, to discretion hardy valor flies,
 Under the plan prescribed by Belgia's king,
 And by postponement learns to wield a stroke
 More terrible than lies upon this boy.

“Beside his closing grave retreat must sound,
 But, till he gain that rest, we hold our ground.
 After, we move to join the French at Waterloo
 Where I shall praise our warrior to his due.
 Sound, ye, the horn.”

PART VI.

BETRAYAL

“Mon Crystal, how lies it from Tirlemont?
Might one hear guns so far? Repeatedly,
This hour or more, methinks our windows jar
To far, far thunder. Still, a storm doth brew,
And there be lightenings south by east.”

“Madame,
Ye hear the voiec of guns that open on
Namur. The star-shells of the enemy
Do blind the lightenings out.

“Upon the lawn
My collie moans and howls and points the moon.
The wild call o’ the wilderness upon
Him laid—the faint reek o’ the nascent blood
Sweeps down the gale. They say a soul doth sleep
When dogs do howl. Ah, what a howling were
Tonight, if that sad myth were true.”

“God wills!
God wills! The old crusader’s cry doth stop
On emptiness tonight! My Charles doth fight
A host at Tirlemont—the pity on’t.

“Is all bestowed with safety, Crystal dear?
Moans one poor fugitive unfed?”

“I left those babes
Asleep, safe in my father’s cot, beside
The Roman wall. All seemed so huddled here.
The mother broodeth them, sad, sad of soul.

An hour I spent in twining up their curls
Till laughter found them as they cuddled down;
The guns to them like voice of summer showers,
A sound to slumber by."

"Christ pity them."

"The panic of the people, oh 'tis terrible!
The church is full in Mont St. Guilberts town,
Where women cling and struggle for the rail
About the shrine, as though, bewrecked, they'd thrust
Each other from the Rock of Ages. Oh,
The prayers I heard! I could not linger there."

"Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith the Lord.
Ah, Crystal, we have borne the cross this day.
We bear the cross.

"My Caroline, my pet,
She's searching, searching what raked battlefield;
Under the hail of shell to bind the shattered arm.
'Tis such a task—a task.

"Yea, dim the lights,
And let me find the comfort of thine arms.
We may not sleep—we can not!"

"Hark! I hear,
I hear a sound more sweet than soughing winds
That plow the isles of pearl—a siren sound,
A horn I know. My father, yon, doth creak
The opening castle gate. Oh, Charles is home,
Dear Mother Tappaneau! He's home!"

"My boy,
Out of the wreck of battle have they thus
Delivered thee?"

“Mother, we do sweep back
 To cluster round the king—to lift a wall
 Of safety to his majesty, and to
 His realm. He’ll take command of all the force
 That daily groweth huge. Then will we fight
 As lions all, and know the end of flight.
 Five thousand French be come to Waterloo,
 Vanguard of all to follow.”

“Crystal, dear,
 Goodly report of thee I’ve heard—how thou
 Hast soothed the terror of the fugitive,
 And hearten well the faltering. Come here.
 My mother, may I kiss her for reward?”

“An ye kiss her not, my boy, in such a cause,
 I’ll disinherit thee.”

“O Charles, Charles, Charles!
 Why Charles! Madame Tappaneau, can ye not rescue me!”

“And when I would, thou might receive the greater kissing,
 (dear.”

“Ah, my dear—nay, both my dears, th’ inclosing lines
 Of safety fall behind thee now; and yet
 There’s time to flee, before the huge advance
 O’erflow us here. If at the break of dawn
 Ye leave, ye have our aid; but after, ’tis
 The mercy of the foe and naught, naught else
 Must save. Ye must decide.”

“So much I’ve seen
 Of flying and distress, I dare not trust
 Myself, e’en had I wings, to flight. Beside,
 Dear Charles, here crouch a weak, defenceless flock,

To leave them so were like a coward's trick—
 A fleeing shepherd 'fore the wolf—a base
 Foul captain o' the deep, to lifeboat crept
 The first of all—whose neck should grace his yards,
 Whose name be blotted from the log foraye.

“My boy, unto may people leave me now,
 And if I die, I die. See, I am old
 But unafraid. The cross doth shield me yet!”

“But what of Crystal! Ah, her hair is gold!”

“She doth appeal to all the best in man,
 And ne'er the worst.”

“Think not but clear I see
 My place appointed, Charles. It lieth here.
 There's no regretting it, and no such wish.”

“Then, have ye everything disposed?”

“I have.

Behold the kindly king's acknowledgement
 For quite two million pounds in British gold;
 The half of our estates. The balance, son,
 Is on the deep to seek protection of
 The Stars and Bars across the sea.

“Ah, yes,
 I sold the whole of our possessions with a pang
 For that we loved—stables, kennels, kine,
 Fowl, grains and implements. They're gone.
 Poor Crystal's collie is the lonely last.
 He's spent the night in howls most dismal long.”

“And have ye sold the wine?”

“The first of all;
 And so prevailed that all the countryside
 Has done the same.”

“How wise that council now!
 For sober men are like to heed the law.
 But what a curse is drink to such an hour!
 The fanged beasts must shrink aloof from man,
 Where no appeal to honor may avail.

“My two sweethearts, after my own, how may
 I leave thee? How depart? Save my command
 And all the king doth from it hope, I'd come
 And die with thee, at morn, or eve, or noon,
 Whene'er the summons come.”

“We know it, Charles.
 We both do know it, all these tender years.”

“Yon booming guns spell doom to old Namur,
 And thousand needs do wrench our action forth.
 Monet, impatient, winds the urgent horn;
 Soon o'er the quaking lindens creeps the morn!
 Farewell,

“Farewell,

“Farewell, O ye forlorn!

O ye forsaken souls.”

“Oh God, prepare
 Our tables now! Our bitter cup o'erflows! Dear Christ,
 We droop in presence of our enemies
 Alone!”

.

So in the strong light of the dawn
 The German host came on to Tappaneau

With mighty clang—a regiment of horse—
 And Thurberwald with throttled inward curse,
 Threw wide the gates with harsh, reluctant speed;
 Then stood gigantic, statuesque
 Before the officers.

“Dost thou resist,
 Old hound?” in halting French, cried one. “Beware!”

“Our gate is wide. Ye enter as ye will.
 But if my ancient pike offend, and seem
 The least to bar thee, here I yield it up.
 Deal kindly as ye may within our courts
 Where yonder aged lady waits the will
 Of conquerors. The castle’s thine. One guard
 Alone am I—the rest have fled. But if
 Of harm ye dream, sirs, slay me first. I could
 Ne’er bear to see my mistress die.”

“Advance
 Ye officers of staff. Touch not this man—
 One true retainer to his ancient schloss,
 Whom nothing conquers in the soul of him.
 Would there were more whom reason dominates
 In times like these that try men’s souls.
 The rest of ye take yonder field. Make camp
 Beyond the ruined wall. Avoid thee well
 The thicket and harsh brush that gainst it lean.

Within the walls a strict accounting take.
 Search all that may of service be.

“Madame,
 We trouble thee. Can ye speak aught but French?”

“Thy German lies as fluent on my tongue
 As on thine own. If ye prefer, speak on.”

“Delighted so. ’Twill vastly ease a task
 That oft, too oft, doth take the brutal turn.
 We’re pleased with thy retainer and with these
 Thy attitudes. Would all the world did speak
 The German, or some fairer tongue. Indeed,
 ’Twould matter not. The curse of babel doth
 Enthrall us all too long.

“Enough of that—
 The castle must be searched, so pleasure thee.”

“Staugaard, thy keys—
 “And yet I warn thee, sire,
 So far as possible have I disposed
 My goods—Oh, not to rob ye of a prize
 Warlike and plentiful—but provident
 Unto my own and to our royal king.
 I trust ye understand.”

“Madame, we’re not
 Concerned with that—the thing’s not personal.
 What falleth prize, it we retain; but that
 Which is disposed, well stands thy gain.”

“Staugaard,
 Show every door, and crypt, and vault, and hall
 That in the castle lies; and, showing all,
 If these men ask, respond as unto me,
 Till all be satisfied.”

“Madame, I take
 Thy word.”

“Ah, no! Lead on thy strictest search.
 I must have quittance by thy hand and seal
 To show all searchers subsequent. ’Twill save

Undue and, mayhap, scornful prying at
Our doors.”

“Quite true. What things we take, we take,
And leave thee peace, unless, of course, the schloss
Somehow might serve some military need.”

“To that am I resigned. This courteous mede
Of dignity shall ease my bitter cross.—

“Ah, Crystal, fortunate it fell to us
That we could thus employ the native tongue
Of these invaders. Saved is our home at least,
Which might have fed some fire-fiend’s feast.”

So while that regiment was close encamped,
Was Tappaneau in peace. Another came;
And yet another came, day after day.
A strained and deathlike quietude
Hung breathless in the halls, while evermore
At old Namur did cannon heave and roar.

.

Back, back through Waterloo across the plain
The Belgians battled on to fair Louvain.
From Erschot—where was awful slaughter done,
And vile atrocities, beyond the name—
Thither, full-strengthened, triumphant hussars came.

The king from Brussels town to Antwerp sped,
And took the field and drew his kingly blade;
And there was fighting then, after the days
Of old. Yea, there was rallying of hosts,
And swift forays—stroke here, stroke there,
Along the river Dyle. While ever swelled
The cohorts of the king.

But France came not

And England hung delayed, while out the east,
Tremendous file on file, the armies rolled;
Tremendous rank on rank to slaughter went,
And still pressed on.

So fell Louvain, and fire
And devastation and despair were out
And raging everywhere

Toward Malines

The good king made a stand and threw his best
Against the tide—amid them, valiant Charles
Of Tappaneau. Day long they strove and drave
The hussars back upon Louvain; spilled blood
Enough to quench its withering fires; and slew
Enough to wall it with the dead.

Vain, vain

All sacrifice—the roaring guns, the strife.
The blade of war had turned, the crucifixion knife.

When all their strength was done, and day was spent,
And toward the south the sullen foe took tent,
Monet of Hainaut searched that fatal ground
To find his Charles in blood of mortal wound.

Nor he, nor any else, was left to die,
But from the field, 'tis said, most tenderly,
Half-blind in tears Monet did carry him;
And sent him safe away to Brussels town
To lie for weary months on life's dim verge,
Beyond the sound, or caring for the serge
Of armies near and far; nor shouting hosts,
Nor camps, nor beacon fires; the bitter boasts,

The tumults, and the taunts; the innocents
Who fell a sacrifice to woes immense.

.

And on that fellsame field, but mid the foe,
Another wounded man lay pallid in the mighty arms
Of Carl of Baden—and 'twas Weber.

Strange,

By turn of fate, a later day by one,
When Brussels fell unto the foe, did Carl
Unto the very hospital, unto
The ward of Tappaneau, bring in his friend;
And left him there in charge of one the world
Doth know—whom evermore the English call
Cavell—who now hath sacred monuments
In many lands.

Dumbfounded there and sad

The nobleman, compassionately down,
Did gaze on languid Tappaneau,
On both his friends, so feverish and low.
And took he both their hands, and held them close.
And Charles looked up, as through red mist, and smiled:—
“We did not think to welcome thee so soon
In fair Brabant, Mien Carl; but short as 'twas,
We've gi'en the warmest that we had.”

“My God,”

Said Carl, and could not smile.

“My days be done,

Old friend, and like the grass, so shall I soon
Be withering. Oh, 'tis our little span cut short
The veriest trifle, Carl! Let be!

“How do ye go?”

By and chance, might ye pass Tappaneau?”

“We go, I hear, an instant blow to strike
 At Charleroi or Mons, at least; but true.
 The destinies of armies lie in hands
 More high than mine.”

“But if ye may, O Carl!
 But if ye may—”

“Aye, by the grace of God,
 I will.

“And say to mother how I rest
 Quite gently, here in Brussels town; and wake
 With morning happy every day—all that—
 And look toward Tappaneau. Say Caroline
 Doth guard me till I mend, and all is safe.
 And, when she may, bid her send Crystal down
 With something tempting from St. Guilberts town.
 I know her heart, and well I know she'll bring
 The late blue-bells that bloom in Hisbaye
 Along the uplands. She can lay them down
 Upon my grave—if there be grave-room left.”
 Then Carl of Baden groaned, and wrung his hand
 And fled the hospital, and turned his face
 Toward Tappaneau.

.

And so the tide of conquest, at its flood,
 Rolled high along to dash the French Frontier,
 Nor stopped before the Marne. And all the land
 Of Belgium out the pale of Antwerp town
 Fell to the enemy.

Vast hoards of wealth
 Were gathered in to swell the spoils of war;
 And there were found base spics that crept

Among their fellows, like lewd worms, to drag
 Their secret living forth to waste and loss;
 While, sharp upon the heel of war, spurred loot,
 And terror, and betrayel foul. And to
 That trough of spoils went all the soulless troop
 Of swine and parasites that earth doth breed.

Of many Belgian towns, St. Guilbert fared
 The best; and mid the strife, did Tappaneau
 Escape until a day.

.

“How went the night,
 Mon Thurberwald,” the countess at the dawn
 Asked of her ancient guard. “Methought the guns
 Boomed quieter, the battle gone afar.”

“Men say Namur is razed; but here ’twas calm,
 Save for the monstrous armaments and trains,
 And hideous guns that ever roll the plains
 Of Waterloo.

“Yes, it was calm enough,
 Save at the dusk, when I did bear the food
 Down to those pretty lambs and their sweet dam.
 Who home them in my cot. There countered I
 That Niels de Rode who to the thicket skulked.
 Forth thence I dragged him and did kick him sound
 And heartily for that low scum he is.”

“I’m sorry thou didst kick him Thurberwald.”

“The knave was peering o’er the wall to eye
 My Crystal with her collie on the lawn—
 The hound!”

“Yes, hound is just; but when we have
 So many potent enemies about;

When death hangs on a wink of eye, a curl
Of lip, a lifted thumb, a shrug, why then
’Tis better far to bear than to offend.”

“I fear him not.”

“Nor I. But what he may
In malice do, that stands another tale.
How glad am I to see our peasantry
Return to toil a-field, a trifle soothed
Of terror’s reign.”

“I’m sorry for my rage
Madame.

“Now come still other regiments
To make their camp upon our fields. ’Tis well
The harvest’s past to autumn gray when help
Above or help below doth swing so far
Away.”

.

“Up, Crystal mine, and break thy morning fast.
My own hand serves, most frugal, thy repast.
So ludicrous this pinch of penury
To us who have three fortunes o’er the sea.
Bewry the smile that scorns our scanty board
And dream of plenty from our vanished hoard.
One way or ’tother all must soon be o’er.”

“Why here’s vast plenty, Mother Tappaneau!”

“Yes, for today.”

“Sufficient to the day—
How speaks the holy writ?”

“The evil, dear

The good, ah, what of it!”

“We’ll trust that too:

“Thy Father knoweth ye have need of these!” ”

“Oh, faith! Oh strong who love in Belgium sees!”

“Last night I dreamed that from the bivouac
And battled camps had Charles returned,
And lay most peaceful in his bed, at ease,
In Albert’s halls—methought—in Brussels town.
I bent above him and he looked so tired,
So worn that in my dream I sobbed and waked.”

“That minds me, Crystal, ’tis his birthday, just
Today. To our true custom, as of old,
The rite of Godfrey’s shield will we observe.
In fancy, brighter than the sun, to Charles
Will we present the huge crusader’s arms.
So when thou’rt ready will we burnish them
And deck the halls as for a diadem.”

“I wonder might I find some autumn flowers
Along the Roman wall. The blue-bells bloom,
I know, in Hisbaye. Charles loved them so!”

“Oh go not forth alone. The Prussian camp
Lies close beyond.”

“I have my collie. He’s
The king of all his kind. I go not far—
Now, where is he? I see my father stride
Before the courtyard gate and there he loves
To lie at guard for me.

“Ah well we’ll wait;
And I shall brighten well the sword and shield
And drape the hidden flags before I go.

“The sword’s not heavy like the two-hand blades
The late crusaders bore. I play it—see—
Quite valiantly myself.

“And now the shield.
So tempered ’tis it ringeth like a bell.
It might sound forth alarm. It might sound knell.
Here lies a dent across the ducal arms.
How was it hewn in what untold alarms?—”

“Oh, Crystal, lay it down! Oh! Quiet thee!
Just now I heard a sound—a frightful sound!
There! now again—just in our gates. Foul hell’s
Cut loose and we are lost! It is the foe!
The slaughter of the foe!”

“Look, look! The gate!
Where flies the little mother of the babes—
The pretty babes that Charles sent home! I see
Naught else—naught else! She’s raving mad, and oh,
The clutching of her hair. Her lovely hair!
Out to her. Fly! Where now she staggers in
The court.”

“Poor, poor—”

“Oh murder! God of Christ!
My babes, my pretty babes! Just now my hands
Did hold them. Where are they? Gone, gone, gone, Oh!
Oh vile—they’re gone, gone, gone.”

“My dear, my dear,
There, quiet thee. We’ll search thy babes for thee.”

“Oh, oh! Madame! Oh, oh! Thou pretty one!
Hide thy face. Tear out thine eyes! Gouge thee
With wounds and sores! Oh, little babes! Were they
Not mine? Oh, were they not mine own?”

“Speak, speak,
And tell us.”

“Oh, I saw him by the wall.
His hands were full of goldenrod—my boy,
My little boy—’twas like his hair, the flowers.
I went to fetch him home, and—Oh, my God!
The skulking hound was in the thicket there!”

“Thy babe? Oh, lady, try—try to be calm.”

“Hound, hound! Oh, ’tis too good a name. Oh, Oh!
The leper, Oh, the Bedouin, if man—
How could he be a man?—

“My child, because
My face was not a dismal, base, old hag’s;
And youth was mine—and happy with my babes,
And warm—Good God—he fastened on me! Laid
His lecher hands upon my throat, and dragged me on
Into the thicket. Then, when my two babes ’gan
To wail, he ripped a dead knot from a thorn
And smote them down—one by one—one by one!”

“Oh, wretched, wretched deed. He smote them down?
Make ready, Crystal. Fly to them!”

“No! No!
They’re gone; and, but for Satan, I’d be there,
And with them, dead—dead!”

“Dead! Oh, are they dead?
Both dead? The mite with all the soft white curls?”

“Oh, Christ, Madame, O Mary Mother mine!
Could ye, could ye not forget those curls—
Those pretty curls that had all heaven wrapped

In them? They're dead, Madame, and there they lie
 Beside thy gate, where like colossus huge
 In rage, doth Thurberwald above them tower.
 Oh little curls! O bloody, knotty mass!
 Throw down! Throw down! and blind these starting eyes,
 That I may see them nevermore! They died
 Without a cry; but, oh, my ears do yell
 As from the haunts of death.

“Satan was there!

Just when I might have died—huge yellow beast,
 He did o'erleap the wall and set upon
 The man, and turned the blow of mercy off
 To force me live. Oh fiend! O welcome death!
 There heard I snarls and groans. I saw them roll
 Together on the ground. And up I rose
 And gathered my two dead babes and fled,
 And laid them there—

“Oh there the foul beast comes

Again—back to devour them in my sight.
 Help! Help! Oh rescue them! May I—may I
 Not bury them?”

“Oh poor, poor mother, see,

It is my collie! Now ye see him lie
 And weep before thy little ones. He's crushed
 Because his rescue came o'er late, o'er late.”

.

O War! What blacker crimes than thine do brood
 Beneath thy vulture wings? O gentle faith,
 Can ye the mountains move; but can not hurl
 The legion devils from the soul of man?

.

In wrath more just and terrible than his
 Who swept the legend gates of Troy, afar
 And near did Thurberwald search all the walls
 Of Tappaneau; his ancient pike on edge
 To every copse. But save the dead, torn branch
 Of blackthorn naught he found. He braved the camp
 Of Prussians sturdily; which firm denied
 One man astray. Some mocked the grenadier
 And few did care, but broke their camp and marched.

So Thurberwald was baffled and abased
 And heavy terror fell on Tappaneau
 With sorrow keen, which knew not yet its worst.

Lo, with the eve came others still to pitch
 Their tents. And while great clamor waged
 Came Carl of Baden out from Brussels town
 To seek the way to Tappaneau.

For that his heart

Was sad, he walked beneath the linden trees
 And pondered how to shape his bitter news.
 With eyes upon the ground, the camp did fade
 With all its noise and shouting. Not a sound
 Did bid him look aside where tumbled rose
 The Roman wall. Then on, until the arch
 Which beetled o'er the huge gates loomed, did he
 Approach.

When well the angled wall cut off
 The camp, from out the thicket of the babes
 There rose a form by dusk invisible.
 With devilish glee and rage deliberate,
 Clean through the back, it shot the noble down.

“So good a mark! So sizable! Dear, dear!
 One could not miss. Now let the pious pray!

The miser swallow all his gold. Fire, blood
 And burning, as the dawn upon the night,
 Will heel this deed. Thereby, to many a prize
 And secret store, slips Niels de Rode, immune.
 I've that within my grasp shall ope the camp
 Of vilest Prussian to my need. Ha! Ha!
 Kick now, stuck pig! Farewell, and pleasant dreams."

So Carl of Baden fell and groaned and rose
 To stagger toward the gate, while none at camp
 Had heard the fatal sound. 'Twas well.

"My sun
 Is set. His crimson flood doth bathe me well.
 While dim outlines of night must lose all form
 In my oblivion, anon. Help! Help!
 I faint! I faint! Oh! coward, coward shot!"
 Help, ho!"

And Thurberwald, upon that cry,
 Ran forth to aid and lifted up, indeed,
 That mighty form and bear him through the court,
 The hot blood streaming all the way. So laid him low
 Within the halls of Tappaneau. There straight

The cowering women quit their fright and bound
 His wound to stop as well they might the red
 And purple flow. Swift to the Prussian camp
 Ran Thurberwald to pray for instant aid.

For that a Prussian officer had need,
 Straightway to Tappaneau the surgeons sped
 To save a half of Carl of Baden's blood
 And order quietude as slender chance
 To win his life.

Then questioned sternly they
 The ancient guard how all had come about.
 But Thurberwald knew not and they were wroth.
 And threatened him and all the country side
 With blood and fire.

But Carl of Baden roused
 Against his languished blood and firm declared
 It was but accident, and bade them guard
 It secret from the camp.

“But one did say:—
 “The wound leapt through thy back. How accident?”

“I lead a whole division, sir,” roared Carl.
 “Seldom gainsayed. Aye, never more than once!
 Will ye dispute?”

And so the man was cowed,
 And ere the morning, lo, they marched away;
 But Carl of Baden lay at Tappaneau.

.

Then came a regiment of hussars up
 From Arschot and Louvain, where woes untold
 Had fallen on the innocent. Where men
 By fifties and by hundreds stood against
 The wall and took the death-shot hopelessly.

These troops were drunken with their slaughter still,
 And red-eyed with carouse, while still the smell
 Of burning clung to them.

There, one within
 A thicket heard them sing and shout
 Their Bacchanalian songs. Wierd cunning dawned

Within his eyes and, on the dark, he fared
Him forth to camp in devilish intent
And boldly sought the captain of the guard.

“How mean ye, Flemmin, bursting in like this?”
Said he of temporal authority.

“Oh, Flemmin am I, true enough, and yet,
Immune, I trust, from common Flemish lot,
That is, the chance to lean the wall and get
Me shot.”

“Jest not, ye damned, damned fool! Thy tongue
Will sell thee to the devil soon. Doth hell
Need thee? Not I.”

“Have ye a thing ye call
The Bureau of Intelligence, Herr Captain, please?
Look there, if ye may find one Niels de Rode,
Of Mont St. Guilberts town.”

“What, man!”

Most certainly.”

“Of course,

“You are a spy?”

“No! No!

For I prefer intelligencer quite.
I’ve coined a pretty penny these two years
Of private stipend from thy government.
Do not say spy. It jars my tender ear.
There’s little euphony in spy.”

“Well so,
Kind spy, what’s in the wind—or wind in thee?
By God, I’ve half the mind to prick thee like
A bubble yet.”

“Why some fair quantity
Of ageing wine, a deal of wheat, a stall
Of rapid mounts, and fine fat calves, I might,
If ye’re so minded, point ye to.”

“Whereway?”

Behind the walls of this old schloss. Say just
Beneath thy nose.”

“My nose may be at fault.
I’ve seldom made a scurvey pry of it.
But I’ve good eyes. The open gates and courts
Have I bescanned.”

“There lies the trickery.
Falls it within thy duties thus to scan
Or to examine things adjacent to
Thy sentry posts?”

“With some discretion, yes.
Thy name recorded here hath weight by far
Beyond the measure of thy method there.”

“Then ye come? Hold—Lend me a uniform.”

“What! Ye cursed fool! A uniform! A spy
A uniform?”

“I only sought disguise.
Could ye suggest aught more appropriate?”

“My God ye speak vile German man! Why, if
I felt ye meant it as ye say it there,
I’d split ye from thy navel to thy crown.

“I’ll hang thee with the garb grave-diggers wear—
 A stinking lot, and in a stinking life—
 Beshrew me, that’s like thee; yet how to fit
 A form ill-hung as thine, that buffets me.
 ’Twere better wear thy own attire.”

“I’m known
 There at the schloss.”

“Well, shift thy duds betimes!
 This way! Faugh, were thy name not well assured,
 This visit were not long endured. This way.”

“Oh happy thought. Well suits this somber rig
 The present business at the schloss. ’Twere well
 To add the shovel of the digger. Lo,
 I know to certainty the count hath sold
 Enough to pass twelve million marks in gold.
 The digger’s implement might find a way
 To open wide its secret treasury.”

.

At Tappaneau, from digging of a grave
 Wherein he laid the two unshriven babes,
 Came Thurberwald aweary to the gates,
 To stand his lonely watch in biting pain;
 Heart-wrung for her who lonely raved and moaned
 Within the halls.

The sad, bowed countess watched
 Before the door, where in his fever tossed
 The wounded Prussian lord, while Crystal’s hand
 Did soothe him as she thought of drooping Charles
 And wondered if he lived.

Impotent, o’er
 The grieving countess by the guarded door,

Half-burnished, hung the mighty shield and sword
That Godfrey loved.

Then from the Prussian camp
Came forth that squad aspired by Niels de Rode
To work foul incest on the aged abode.
Under the shuddering lindens silently
They slid along the echoless highway,
And came unto the gates where Thurberwald
Firm challenged them:—

“Who, at unseemly hours like these,
Would lawlessly invade our liberties?
In due decorum toward the laws of war,
And in all honor have we borne ourselves.
Return at dawn. This stricken hall tonight
Must rest.”

“Aye, aye, return to find at dawn
Fair treasure gone, the prize bird thither flown.”

“Ha! Thou! I know thee, Niels de Rode!
Thou murderer! Now art thou placed among
Thy kind. The dog sees thee! He knows and I
The horror of the thicket and the wall.
Stand off!”

“Ye know me, Thurberwald? Well, meet
My friend, the spade! 'Tis he shalt bury thee.—
And thee, thou yellow beast! There! There!”

“Hold! Now,
What do ye, striking down the guard?”

“Do, sire!
I save thee some explaining to superiors.
Just say the spy smote down the guard and all
Is said.”

“Now for cold wit, thou hast it, thou
De Rode. What is a Flemin more or less!
Clear opposition spells some likelihood
Of stealth or strategy about. Lead on.”

“Straight to you lighted hall. I know the way
Short cut from thence unto the cellarer,
And all the wine—save me the Burgundy.”

“Red port for sport and pale champagne for pain,
How goeth that groggy bard’s refrain?”

“Staunch that,
Shall I command or no? Ye talk like swine!”

“What would ye, sirs, at such untimely hour?
We have such need of quiet here—Oh! Take
That bloody thing away!”

“My shovel? Oh!
Why true ’tis bloody more or less. Know ye—
Know ye that half my business is, Madame,
To shovel blood, and brains, and guts—”

“O, man,
Speak ye the Belgian and speak thus? Where, where
Have I heard this voice?”

“Nowhere, madame. So hush!
But I will set my shovel by to please
Thy taste. These men would taste thy wine, madame.”

“There is no wine.”

“Ye do not say there was
No wine?”

Oh, sire, are you the officer?
May I show thee my quittance, sir,

And sworn relinquishment of every store
 The castle held? Will not that be enough?
 A clamor here will work great harm to thee.
 As well as mock our true fidelity
 To laws of war."

"Oh, she is lying there!"

"Hold peace, De Rode. This lady doth speak fair."

"De Rode!"

"Well, just one test and we admit
 She's fair and leave. March ye adown that hall.
 Swing to the left, then to the right, then left
 And down the corredor—so to the vault
 Where ye shall find enough of wine to set
 Thy regiment on end."

"That much we do,
 But quietly. I warn ye Niels de Rode,
 If naught be found we'll tap a spigot on
 Thy nose shall draw the claret out."

"Staugaard,
 Show these good soldiers to the empty vaults.
 Come bear the light for them."

Thought Niels de Rode:—
 "I'll follow on by fair pretense until
 They lose me in the corredor, then back
 Will I, and do my bit, and they I fly.
 I heard a sound anow behind yon door.
 I'd hazard there lies Crystal Thurberwald
 And there will be a helping kept for her
 Shalt pay her sire who kicked me for a cur."

So filed the men away, and so de Rode
Prowled like a fiend of hell the still abode,
Till suddenly his mocking leer aroused
The countess unto wild alarm.

“Madame,
I’m come since you remember me. Oh yes!
But memory is short sometimes. Who hides
Behind that door—or shall I see?”

“Oh, brute,
Oh, savage cur! It is an officer in wounds,
Shot foully in the back.”

“Damn me, madame,
Did I not finish him? He is thy foe
And mine, I’ll do it now.”

“Ye shall not pass
The door.”

“Shall not’s a great word come from thee.
With my good spade I’ll dig it daintily.”

“Ho, Thurberwald! Ho, Thruberwald! Help, ho!”

“So, foul hag! Ye squealing swine. Spare that.
Be still! Now then the door.”

Wide swung the door,
Wide on that awful scream and pallid there
Came Crystal Thurberwald.

But while she paused
With horror stabbed and swift the man advanced,
Distract the lady of the murdered babes
Leapt o’er the banisters above upon the head
Of Niels de Rode. And there were awful shrieks

And clamor in the hall, till Niels rose up
 And smote her into death. He turned him round
 On Crystal Thurberwald who stood there still;
 But not the weak thing of his thought. In hand,
 All gleaming like the armored knights of old,
 She held Sir Godfrey's sword of hilted gold;
 And round the glorious halo of her hair
 She swung it free and confident and fair.

Before her breast she swept the tempered shield,
 While Niels de Rode one mighty blow assayed
 To strike it down. 'Twas heavy forged. Her arm
 Was strong and matchless willed and well upheld
 The murderous stroke.

He thought to fright her by
 Gruff threats and oaths. He sought to tire her down.
 But her defence of old served well to save
 Against the brand intended for the grave;
 While from her anger never to be foiled
 At last the cringing Flemin swift recoiled.
 Then by the stair she cut him off and sent
 The good steel home.

At once with horrid cough
 And groan he fell to lie a tumbled heap
 Along the floor, fainting and hopeless wan.
 Then came the angry captain and his troop
 Seeking de Rode and found him o'er half dead
 And Crystal standing there with gleaming sword
 And blood spilled everywhere.

Then straight upboiled
 The reeling rage of slaughter in his soul.

“Now, God in Heaven, what is this? Revolt!”

“Aye, call it what ye will. There in her blood
 My mistress lies, and here the mother robbed
 Of babes, and life, and heaven by this foul fiend.
 If him I’ve slain, by grace of our slain Lord,
 I do fulfil the legend of this sword.
 Far better than the brave crusader’s cause
 Stands us to guard to death our home’s dear laws.”

But up the roused invader swung his sword
 And would have slain her; but a great voice rang,
 Rang through the ancient halls of Tappaneau
 E’en as it rang along the river Dyle,
 Echoing and huge with energy the while,
 Until the whole division heard it roll
 Above the cannon’s unrelenting toll;
 Harsh as the bolt on Schwarzwald crags
 To him who quailed and to him who lags—
 So Carl of Baden—his wound out-streaming new—
 Leapt from his bed to knightly rescue due;
 And there was calm—a deadly calm within the hall.

“Well, yank that carrion hence,” did Carl command.

And one took Niels by heel and dragged him forth,
 Spouting his blood the while.

“Now ye,” said Carl,
 Explain.”

“This man took cover ’neath our guard
 To get him in and do these murders foul.
 He seemed a German spy, was so set down,
 Had passports through our lines due formed and all
 Well credited.

“He threw us off the scent,
 Who dreamed not of his murderous intent,

The hound! So, while we looked for wine, did he
 Slip back to work this havoc out; but met
 His match and more in this pale girl to whom
 I offer true apology and say
 If she would prick him once again, I'll turn
 My eyes, nor see."

"Far better, sir, to speed
 Us help. Send surgeons up to bind these wounds.
 Can ye not see this soldier reel and bleed
 Low into death—

"Oh, father, are ye come
 At last?"

"Child, I was struck for dead and would
 'Twere so, if life might come to these poor forms
 Again."

.

Again the needful binding of his wound
 Did Carl endure, and almost did his breath
 Suspire; but to the end did he command
 So all went to his will.

Then was the hurt
 Of Thurberwald amended. At the last,
 Perforce the surgeons sewed up Niels de Rode
 And on a cart to Mont St. Guilbert's town
 They laid him to haphazard shift.

At dawn

Did Carl convene an ordered company
 For solemn service to the dead. They laid
 The countess low beside her lord, and pealed
 A volley there and wound the solemn bugle in
 The dell of Tappaneau.

And Thurberwald

Pried off a great stone from the wall and hewed
A rugged cross to mark her rest.

A guard

Was set ensuing days and Landwehr troops took charge.
And while a battle raged at Charleroi
Upon the fields that knew Napoleon
And Wellington and Blucher (names encarved
Upon the centuries) were maimed and mangled hosts
Brought in to whom the schloss became at once
Asylum fair and place of rest.

Until

The great corps of relief arrived at length,
Did Crystal serve the wounded ones so well
That many strong youth owed to her their lives.
Right gratefully and tender did she watch
O'er Carl of Baden whom she'd saved and whose
Command saved her. But when at length she might,
She said farewell to Tappaneau and turned
Toward Brussels town. She gathered hosts of flowers
In Hisbaye and took them unto Charles
And found him better; e'en despite the times,
And tidings evil, yea, and bitter wounds.

PART VII.

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

Now while terrific strove at Charleroi,
At Mons, both French and English resolute
To block the southward sweep of German arms,
And ere Von Hausen, sweeping through Dinant,
Had turned their wing and left black woe
Throughout Lorraine, the good King Albert struck
A mighty blow from Antwerp on the rear
Of those receding hosts which with Von Kluck
Had havoced all the land above the Nethe
From Hasselt to the sea.

And such advance
Freed Malines and Termond from the foe.
Two hundred thousand strong the Belgian youth
Swept round their king. Then England sent
Ten thousand troops to complement the king's.
Such army lay behind the huge advance
Which hurled the French and English to the Marne,
While every hour the king his banners set
Leagues on against the harried foe.

Indeed
So bold they swarmed at length the Prussian hordes,
Led by Von Boehm, three hundred thousand strong,
All sorely needed at the Marne, returned
From Charleroi to beat them back. And so,
The mighty tide began at last to turn.

Afar, afar along the mighty vales
That skirt the ridged Carpathians swept scores

Of armies out the Russian realms and fell
 In fury on the Austrian frontier.
 Th' impetuous rush ne'er paused till prostrate lay
 The whole plain of Galicia. Each pass
 That oped to Hungary was so beset
 That broad-armed terror cast his shadow far
 Beyond the proud south-sweeping Danube's tide
 Into Wien.

Then manifold the force
 Of proud invaders rolling down on France
 Rushed back across the gray frontier in haste
 To yield up conquest for a stern defence
 Again the angered bear.

Thereby the Marne
 Became the Gordian barrier on which
 The fury of the foe was lashed in vain.
 The marshes of St. Gond in fatal net
 Did trap the Prussians in a wilderness
 Of woe and blood; gave time to marshal all
 The power of France.

Lo then, how bitter raged
 The thwarted foe against the Belgian king
 Whose valiant sword and sacrifice had been
 The mighty shield of France.

From Ghent to Nethe,
 Von Boehm spread out his host along the plain
 Of gleaming Scheldt and battered down Termond
 And filled the land with shattered fugitives.
 Then Malines was ground to dust so fine
 That to this day no living soul returns.
 Its goodly fame is dead.

Huge battle planes
 And monstrous vehicles of air uprose
 To hurl a shattering death on Antwerp town.

Along the Nethe for red unnumbered hours
 The Belgian king his stubborn sword did play
 And left its ancient waters crimson dyed.
 Across this carmine flood at length was rolled
 Such mighty hordes and armaments that hope
 Took wing to give the vulture feeding room.

And what a feast of carnage there outspread!
 Down crashed huge fortresses redoubts
 And cunning fortins 'neath the lyddite shells.
 Then came the rushing infantry and swart
 Uhlands in tides that swept the Netherland
 Of Belgium like a flood, angry and wierd,
 Sweeping the sea walls, ripping up the dunes.

Then toward the east along the river Nethe
 Were many men cut off and thousands slain
 And other thousands forced beyond the realm
 To Holland, where was peace, to lie interned
 And lost unto their king.

The rest swift fled
 Into the west to cut their way in blood
 To reach the sea, and with them went the king.

Forby the dreadful travail of that flight
 Were many lost, and by the dashing enemy
 Were many were seized and thrust beyond the Rhine,
 To languish to this day.

For all a host
 Did gain Ostend; and, lo, a friendly fleet

From England came and succored them so well
 That Albert and his men kept stout their hearts
 And swinging into France with their allies
 Did seize the Yser from the very clutch
 Of that proud force which backward rolled
 On Belgium from the Marne.

And thus

A third time did the valiant king upraise
 A strong, effectual shield to save the land
 Of France from hideous destruction and assault.

Then were the Belgian arms secure and strong
 And flying from all lands came loving youth
 To join the king. So, in the end, far more
 Than in the sharp campaign defended him.

But all the land of Belgium fell beneath
 The rule of stubborn foes so that of those,
 The happy myriads, not one in four
 Were left upon its soil. To every land
 They fled and scattered wide.

So was the land

Behind the German wall disarmed and trod
 With iron heel. Sad women, sadder men—
 Because their strength was bound—The old, the maimed
 Roamed in a wilderness of languished homes,
 Searching from town to town the phantoms of
 Their dead.

The strong and young cast longing eyes
 Across the serried forces of the foe
 To where the king his glorious emblem raised.
 Then many strove to run that gauntlet through,
 And many failed and died against the wall.

But some escaped to glorious release
 To tell the bondage of their brethren
 Till every word was like a spur to urge
 Their vengeance on.

No deed was e'er too great
 To be attempt and when the mighty foe
 Had massed huge forces up to drive them to
 The sea, and made resort to savage modes
 Of war, the Belgians dammed the Yser full
 And burst the dykes and turned a roaring flood
 Upon them.

There on varied craft, on rafts,
 And logs, and clumsy scows did they engage
 In furious assault and wierd foray.
 Dim in the marshes by the ghastly moon
 Gripped monstrous forms whose bitter end was death
 Beneath an oozy tide that ever swelled,
 Which waves the chill of coming winter took.

Lo, there where slender moles and headlands cropped,
 Close hand to hand with fist and heel was waged
 Primeval war, beneath the trackless dark
 Of misty stars, where none did mercy ask
 And seldom give, there in the very deep
 Men locked and grappled, thrust and sank to rise
 No more.

PART VIII.

QUO VADIS

So came the deadly winter on
And famine served with hunger all the land,
Till babes were cheated at the willing breast
And grand dames went into their graves to give
The children food.

Men looked with savage hate
Upon the comfort of the foe, but no
Appeal they urged, nor thanked cold charity
In some degree enforced.

Hid here and there
Throughout the realm were fugitives who dwelt
In caves and rocks, in woody deeps, in holes,
In crypts of monasteries or amid
The ash and ruin of deserted towns.
And these, whom friendly midnight cloaked, were they
Whom wounds or swift catastrophe cut off
From service with the king.

Ne'er durst they yield
Themselves to light of day lest violence,
Or death, or exile buffet them.

But these
All loyal Belgians loved and shielded well.
They covered their identity till time
Gave vantage o'er the watchful foe.

And high
Mid noble families was secret formed

An oath bound clan whose end was naught
Save aid to these unfortunate forlorn.

To this cause turned Prince Reginald de Croix
Princess Marie, Jeanne de Belleville, she,
Of Montignes, Mildred of Hainaut, John,
A count of Belgian Luxemburg. These brave
With many souls of worth in every town
Failed not to lend sweet mercy's hand to all
Whose need was great. But first among them all
In spirit and resource was Mme. Cavell
Who of Belgian nurses stood the chief
At Brussels town—and she was British born.

And so it fell when Crystal Thurberwald,
From Tappaneau, sought Charles, she found him safe
'Neath this kind woman's care. So Crystal stayed,
And Charles laid firmer hold on life that hour.

Their spirits hailed each other as two souls,
Shipwrecked in southern seas, might joyous meet
And sit beneath the palms and dream of home
Beyond the pearly strand.

And Weber there,
He of the dominant foe, above his wounds
Looked kindly on them from his bed of pain.

So, when Charles urged for Caroline, did he
Secure safe conduct that she might rejoin
The army of the king. For that her deeds
Were mercy, not of strife, this end indeed
Was with slight trouble gained.

So Caroline
Took kindly greetings to the king, in fact,

The heart of loyal Charles. Thereby the king
 Was pleased so well he called his staff to tell
 The sacrifices of Tappaneau to hearten them.

E'en Halmar Thurberwald forsook the halls
 Of Tappaneau and left them to the foe.
 The armor of Sir Godfrey desolate
 And in neglect no more recalled the vows
 Of chivalry. The gilded arms displayed
 No more the palmy pride of former days.

Then came mild spring and guards of Landwehr proud
 Drove out the peasantry to till and sow;
 But could not shape the old sweet joy of life,
 So common yet so rare. The Angelus
 Was seldom rung. Once rung, 'twas heard in tears.
 The flowers went weeping under heels that noted not.
 The ivy died amid the ash and reek
 Of ruins cold. E'en lindens and plumed cypress had
 The bent look of the maimed, the halt, the blind.

Yet when the wester breeze was crooning low,
 And eve was calm, far far away they heard
 The thunder of the king, and some forgot
 To ring their hands and smiled and said:—
 "Christ, double every cannon-shot for him."

And in the midst of summer, when the burr
 And cockle smothered all the roses down,
 And grief had sway, then from his languid couch
 Gazed Charles of Tappaneau more wistfully
 Into the west where soft the blowing sea
 Fanned well the white tents of the Belgian arms.
 And he was sad. Naught soothed his mid-night pain.
 Naught brightened with the bonny blaze of dawn.

Came Crystal, and he said, as every morn:—
 “What hear ye, Crystal, of the king?”

“He leaps,
 The maned and rampant lion of the west,
 Against the wilderness of German steel.
 Soon shall our cause be won that he may come
 And soothe our several hurts and heal the land,
 Like great Augustus in the golden days
 Of Rome. Yea from our hearts shall he erase
 Invasion’s mounting curse that touches heaven
 Like plague-lined cloud to hollow thunder given.”

“I die in waiting, Crystal, ere I go
 To him. He was both brother, sire and king
 To me. My heart must break when I may see
 Him nevermore. My weary, bitter days
 Here wear to end. Then come the manacles,
 My rough detention as an enemy,
 And exile o’er the cold, unfeeling Rhine.

“The military staff did eye me sharp
 But yesterday morn. My days be numbered here.”

“Keep up thy heart for yet a little while.
 Thy grieving so doth hinder all thy wounds.”

“Yea, it doth poison them! But could I see
 My good king at the journey’s end, ah, strong
 Were I within the hour.”

“I whisper, Charles,
 And list. There may be ways to glean thy wish
 Though it may lie at rain-bow’s end. Hope on.
 Mysterious things abroad make league with hope
 And preparations people all the silences.

Hands stretch out through the night to snatch the brands
 From burning and to help the fugitive
 Where'er he lies. More speak I not, nor dare."

"What ages have I grappled with my fears,
 Naught seeing but the noisome vault where lies
 Brave Lehman after all his sacrifice!
 How many thousand tread that path or worse?
 How can ye bid me hope?"

"Ah, gentle girl,
 Hold not the vanishing mirrage before
 Mine eyes! Lo, in this desert wearily
 I die, the water just beyond my burning grasp.
 No one has loved the king as I, nor had
 Such cause. Ye bid me go to him, I go!
 Though I drag death behind me all the way!"

"I bid thee not. But yet I say, O love,
 Be ready for the call. Thou shalt not die
 In Belgium under chains! Thou shalt not die!"

"Already is my resurrected will
 Come forth from out the grave! I'll hear
 Thy call though death itself should intervene.
 'Tis mystery save for the trust I have
 In thee, which strikes it through with light from heaven."

"What pilgrimage of night and narrowed hours
 Doth send thee to St. Bavon friend? True need
 And charity alone will ope these doors."

"A spirit absent in the flesh that here
 Prevails by space-defying love, whom men
 Call Albert sendeth me."

“Ah! So? The king?”

“The king of Belgium, whom Christ save.”

“Come, friend,
 Inside with thee and cease thy mystery,
 For I perceive thou’rt one of our company,
 And hast the key to our most secret crypt,
 Which for a thousand years in Ghent hath borne
 St. Bavon’s changing fortunes well.

“O friend,
 Here was the refuge of lost souls bowed ’neath
 The yoke of Spain, the inquisition’s toll,
 When shuddering Alva eighteen thousand slew,
 With wanton sword and slavish cruelty.

“Behold a heavier heel than Alva’s now
 Strides booted o’er the land, and still we seal
 The wary fugitive upon his way
 To light. ’Tis right! God help the right we pray!
 But whence art thou?”

“I come from Brussels, sire.”

“Whose name?”

“I seek kind audience at once
 With Reginald de Croix, whom I am told
 Is here. He’s called a prince of charity
 Who lendeth secret comfort in our need.”

“Whom shall I say, O friend, petitioneth?”

“Say Thurberwald, one time retainer to
 Count Charles of Tappaneau.”

“I dare assure
 A speedy audience in such a name.
 ’Tis known thy master’s still by wounds laid low,
 But of his service manifold not one
 Shall be forgot. Upon his call our doors
 Sweep open of themselves.

“This way. Behold
 Prince Reginald in conference, girt round
 By night and secrecy. This humble door
 Bars none that’s needy, none that loves the king.”

Then Thurberwald bowed humble to the prince,
 Who bade him rise; encouraged him to speak:—
 “Oh, sirs, Count Charles is scarcely healed of wounds,
 Though weakly sutured now they promise ease.
 The diligent foe doth eye this prize and plans
 To pluck him hence to finish by the manacle
 What cannon failed to do. If ye would save,
 Devise ye here at once or he shall lie
 With Lehman o’er the rumbling Rhine.”

“If I, a prince in Belgium, may prevail,
 Who’ve had this noble’s rescue long at heart,
 Let me advise. ’Tis new and dangerous enterprise
 To help the unknown fugitive, to guard
 The safety of the straggled soldier. This
 We have essayed. But thus to snatch from death
 From triumph’s wheel bold Charles of Tappaneau
 Requires keen strategy.

“Nor dare we place
 More burden on our ally, Mme. Cavell,
 Than those she bears. Nor lack we cautious signs
 Outcropping here of late to hint of spies
 Upon our closest secrecy. The troop
 Last convoyed ’countered many vicious snares
 ’Twixt Ghent and Bergen-op-Zoom. We must not doom

The lady of the hospital. God knows
 She'd make the sacrifice and willing lie
 With it upon the altars of our hope;
 But 'tis too much.

“How think ye, Philip Bancq?
 Art thou an architect to plan a course
 To shield our chiefest and to save this count
 Whose life is worth a dukedom to the king?”

“Ah, sire, the way to Holland's more and more
 Beset. What with the pack cut loose when Charles
 Should fly, I fear disaster, wreck and end
 To our devoted charity. Some stroke
 More bold, more nimbly cunning must avail
 That his and all our succors shall not fail.”

“Thou, Louis Severin, skilled to compound
 Thy subtle drugs, thy healing antidotes,
 Devise with us.

“Albert Libriez, may ye
 Lead soldiers' minds afield, as in the courts
 Ye play psychology 'gainst justice in
 The scale? Help us devise against these laws
 Of war, beneath which jurisdiction now
 We groan unwilling and defiled.

“Tell us,
 O Thurberwald, may Charles endure the crush
 And travail of a journey full of stress?”

“He could not stand an hour, much less might walk.
 I fear when he but stands 'twill be to take
 A fitting for his manacles! God help!”

“All things we plan we must do speedily,
 Thou, Thurberwald, lie close at call. Forewarn
 Thy daughter so thy master fail us not.

This we resolve: we must save him or we die.
What is thy trade, my man?"

"A truckster, sire,

At Schaerbeek nigh the great canal am I
Since leaving service with the count."

"Deal ye
With the soldiers or the commisariat
Of Germany?"

"With both perforce."

"Return
Thee home. Redouble intercourse and wait
Thy word from us."

"My boat lies in the Scheldt."

"Have ye a boat? 'Tis good. What else?"

"I boast
A trusty temper and a pike."

"You're armed!"

"The head is in my bosom. Of the shaft
Make I a staff. I lean me on the staff
And lo, I'm armed!"

"Thou'rt shrew, old man.
Full to the measure thou'rt discreet. I would
All princes had such followers. Watch well.
We'll summon presently. Adieu.

"Thus friends,
Our duties multiply amid the crush

Of these oppressions dire that strike our land
To barrenness and woe.

“Now, Severin,
To thee, the shrewd apothecary, I
Impose the task to bring Count Tappaneau.
Devise it as ye will. And you, Madame
Countess de Bellville, thine the task to find
Safe shelter for him here, for I foresee
We must provide for the exhausted count.
Let mystery enlock the walls of Ghent
And shroud the purpose of our firm intent.
This enterprise, though far from coupe de mort,
Remains keen whetted on desire to thwart
The foe. We set a helpless noble free
To knightly deeds. Grim death to all doth hang
Upon our bungling. This nobleman,
Beholden to our hands, is dear unto
The king. The honor we would render then
To his majesty must govern us in all.

“We brave a power in Von der Lancken keen
As wine that plies his subtle influence
Sharp ere we dream.

“Come, swear ye all anew:
We shall outwit the hated governor
Who rules us 'neath the bloody mace of war.
St. Bavon, from thy shrewd and ancient tomb
Vouchsafe to eager spirits working room.”

PART IX.

LE COUPE DE MORT

In Ghent the city of delightful flowers
In the calm eve moved St. Bavon's sacred charge
And told his Christian rosary. His eyes
Were dim with tears impelled by tidings sad,
Till meeting one within the nave he said:—

“Sexton, toll a knell for Tappaneau
And bid St. Bavon's chancel solemn sound
A requiem for his soul.

“We trusted he
Might conquer o'er his wounds; but God
It turns, dealt otherwise. So be His will!
Yea, but for death's deep call, we hoped to aid
And send Charles to his king once more. O life!
O mortal span, so short, so full of strife!

“Ope ye the crypt of Bavon sad of heart,
To share our mutual grieving with the prince
Of charity, his worthy grace de Croix.

“Ah, Reginald, the count is dead, and we
Most sad.”

“Father, our mortal plans avail
Naught 'gainst the vale of death, and of our life
The whole is frail when all is told. Come ye,
O friends, to council in our solemn grief.
We trust to Severin for report of this.”

So while the bell was tolling out God's rest
To Charles of Tappaneau, came Severin.

"What do ye tolling of the bell?" he said.

"Is some soul of our company called hence?"

"Ah, Severin, we hoped for better news
From thee."

"I bring the best, the count is safe."

"Safe from the fevers of our mortal frame.
So teacheth faith that mourns life's flickered flame."

"Mistake me not. He's yet alive, the which
I verify by word of one most dear
To him who waits within yon vestibule.
I vouch for Crystal Thurberwald, indeed,
As for the life of Charles, O friends."

"Alive!

All our dispatches say he died!"

"Quite true.

The greatest pains took I they should. But first
Admit the maid, then hear my news. A tale
It is to tell that's worth a night of mirth."

Thereby came Crystal 'neath St. Bavon's dome
And helped to tell the tale.

"Now is the knell
Of woe transformed to chimes of harvest time
And dirges fade in far, soft thundering.
Let us invite the joyful course of this
Reversal. Welcome, Crystal Thurberwald.
Thy care preserved a soul against great odds—
Made Belgium richer." Thus the prince declared.

“Now, Severin.”

“When ye commissioned me,
I locked my council with a double bolt
Within my single heart, that, if I failed,
No other soul soe'er might be assailed
With charge of guilt.

“A surgeon, I as well
As skilled apothecary. When this charge
Was given me came I to minister,
As oft before, at Ecole Diplomees where
He lay.

“In councils grave did I advise
I should amend him with the knife. To which
By argument more firm than logical
I won my way. Beneath the anaesthesia
Prepared did Charles take on similitude
Of death, the which did I announce.

“Then in
The basket was he carried to the morgue,
But ere we coffined him, I'd made of wax
A figure we committed to the grave,
While in the undertaker's cart we bore
The count away to Scharebeek by the Scheldt.”

“He doth not tell,” cried Crystal, “all the risks
He took, nor of the times his wit alone
Deceived the watching Prussians of their spoil.
He tells not how he speeded back to Brussels town
To whisper his deception in my ear
And keep my heart from breaking. That he did
While I must ever tell it in his praise.—”

Then roundly cheered the company in mirth
More joyful than St. Bavon's crypt had known

In many years, and Severin resumed:—

“Right skillfully had Thurberwald devised

A recess 'neath the bottom of his skiff.

There we concealed the count and brought him here.”

“Oh what romance! What breath from olden days!

Fund for a thousand legends to amaze!”

So cried Prince Reginald, and long they laughed

And told the tale anew to each that came.

Came Mme. de Belleville. Eagerly they plied:—

“Where lies he, Mme. de Belleville? May ye tell?”

“He's refuged at Grand Bequinage, where

The ancient walls and silence of the nunnery

Enclose his sanctuary. There, thank God,

As yet the clanging Prussian has not trod.”

.

A fortnight rested Charles behind the moat

And slumberous walls of Bequinage. There

Each eve came Crystal Thurberwald, in joy

As holy as those sacred nuns, to tell

How went the plans for his escape. Each day

She plied her boat along the Scheldt, indeed

As many maidens did those days, the more

That Prussian soldiers might not think her strange

Nor question her. And naught dissuaded her

From sharing in the final enterprise

To go with Charles where'er his fortune lay,

While toward the west still boomed the king's artillery.

The Prussian governor at Brussels town

Looked from his study with complacent frown

To greet his friend and talk of German rule.

“Right well, O Falkenhausen, since our call
 To Belgium as governor political
 Hath been applied the rule of blood and iron.
 The fretful populace has stubborn bowed
 Inevitably down in pliancy,
 Swedged into line by sledge of driving zeal
 And flaming will that knoweth no appeal.

“No outbreak of great magnitude has torn
 The public order, lo, these many months.
 The early summer shows all fields abloom
 To harvests plentiful. Though warfare huge
 Has turned the land into an armed camp
 'Tis well provided by foresightedness.
 The conquest went most thorough and the rule
 Imposed, at least, may be accounted firm.
 Well have we peened, as unto shapely form,
 Wills monstrous bent 'neath that initial storm.”

“Yes, order is restored; but confidence
 Regard or any warmer word there's none,
 This, Von der Lancken's quite as evident.”

“Love do we not expect. Too recent gored
 Too harsh our German conquest here. We'll have,
 Nay do command, respect.”

“The quality
 Of such respect is force. Is it effectual?”

“Yes, in the main. But still, our system hath
 Some fault. It still appears too oft that men
 Who'd find escape to join the enemy
 Do so despite our careful guard. What aid
 They get, or whence, is rapt in mystery
 We must unearth.

"Some into Holland flee
 A few take bolder course by far and brave
 The gauntlet of our lines. Thus baffled, checked,
 We've no proportionate espionage.
 Trustworthy natives for such task be few.
 None else may serve, for none so weak
 In service as the half-suspected spy.

"Here comes our chieftain of provost. To him
 I'll broach this matter instantly.

"This land
 Shall serve our interests though o'er the Rhine
 We transport root and branch, incipient seed
 And nascent bud of these revolts. Lads, boys
 And girls of tender years by harsh constraint
 And bonds shall expiate these opposite
 Activities. The limbs that serve not, lop
 Them instant off. Give them to slavery—
 To manacles until they learn indeed
 The will of masters calleth loud for heed.
 Shall we be patient when our patience rears
 A bulwark, secrecy and cunning peers?

"Von Bovardt, list to our most just complaint.
 Thy office stinks of this most formidable taint.
 Well art thou come upon our present mood.
 Solve ye our sphynx-like riddle to thy good.
 How may we curb this secret band of lords
 And notables? It monstrous ill accords
 With our firm rule to find a portal loose,
 Flipflapping to each madcap fugitive
 Who'd gallop to his king. By God, good sir,
 It must be stopped!

"Why even death
 Slipped in betimes and robbed us of a prize.

Count Charles of Tappaneau, due shortly to
 The prison camps of Rhine, whips up and doffs
 His mortal clods and volplanes up the skies,
 Assist by some foul surgeon's practices.
 No finer chance to ploy our attributes
 Was lost in this untimely taking off."

"Ah, Von der Lancken, give me word. Of death
 I'm not quite master though I make him serve
 Me oft. Death we administer but scarce may death
 Control. Hell thus defeats the most o'er-cunning soul
 At times! But I report fair head against
 This secret clan and hope to ambush them.

"I've found a man to weave within their web
 His cunning lines, as the keen spider watch,
 And drag them in their own amazing coil.
 He's lain all summer 'bout the camps and tents
 At Waterloo sick of a venomed wound,
 Which secret ripping he doth guard like death,
 Though cursing oft its author out of breath.

"Him will I send Ecole Diplomees
 To pry into that den of rank iniquities.
 For, Von der Lancken, there's the center nest
 Of this vile hatchery. Thus well attest
 Our secret agencies, our censorship,
 Our spies."

"Why, thought I so, I'd pry the grave
 Of Tappaneau to prove if he were he
 And dead, nor slipt some port o' Sharon's raft,
 Cheating the muggy Styx while satan laughed.
 Not so! Our own physicians tested him,
 And saw him dropped into the grave. Alas,
 What joy of curbing him our fates let pass!"

“Begrudge not man his tomb, nor scanty gain
 The grim, keen reaper ’wards to vanished pain!
 Tombs be the freest gifts we have, good friends.
 Fret not one wins his ere our bounty sends!”

“Well, stake thy soul on this unravelling,
 And drive thy spy abroad. So let him bring
 The net about these flying shoals. Send him
 To mend this fault, guard well where he be sent;
 By begging aid to spot this hissing vent.—
 Von Bovardt, pray define this Mme. Cavell.
 Be she of England born, she’s kin to hell!”
 “Suspicion aids us not, howe’er intense,
 O Von der Lancken. Nay, we must have evidence.”

“Beget thy evidence, and hell’s a groove
 Too narrow for the pangs we shall approve.
 To English blood doth such suspicion cling,
 It little needs to set her festering.”

So from St. Guilbert’s town came Niels de Rode,
 Two-faced and spy, to prey upon his kind.
 So slid he into wary confidence
 At Brussels town, and made his way to Ghent.
 There many clues he traced by crafty souls
 Who played with him the subtle double roles
 Of seeming innocence and venomed guile.

So on a day upon the broad canals
 Observed he Crystal Thurberwald, who rowed
 Toward Bequinage in the evening rose.

“Oh woman’s grief, that says a prayer and goes
 To nunnery, and, lo, grief rolls into
 The moat of her despond! Why then she smiles

High up to heaven and seeks another love!
 No resignation sits by yonder girl,
 Folding her nerveless hands and setting seal
 On pale lips quivering. She's full of joy!

"She sings! But 'tis no requiem nor dirge
 Nor bitter plaint against th' unfeeling earth,
 Nor roaring at God's throne! 'Tis barcarolle
 To all the stars of love!

"Now let me watch,
 For here's a mine of treasure to o'ermatch
 The promise of these rooting German swine!"

So Niels forsook his quest, and by neglect
 Came nearer to a prize than by his toil
 In German hire, but guessed it not. Base oil
 Of ancient passion in him flamed anew
 To beacon-light him to a field of lewd
 Design.

PART X.

THE FLIGHT

Grand Bequinage's nuns their Vespers told
'Neath Belgium's arching skies of ruddy gold,
Each in her tiny cottage hidden safe
Behind the medieval walls.

Two souls
Were there whom but the need of war gave right—
A girl and lover—might they be so called
Who spake no word endeared—whose hearts conversed
In elfin languages by dreamy shores?

With what suppress of interest, nay, keen
Delight the little nuns observed and watched
The ivy tendrils of romance unfold.
Then many a wish unto their beads they told
For Crystal Thurberwald. They held in leash,
As by their rosaries, the study of
Her joys.

A quaint, sweet jealousy arose
To take its form in eager questioning
Of Sister Editha, who'd given her cot
To shelter of the fugitives, and who
By that kind gift had nearer glimpse, 'twas thought,
To paths which led beyond the nunnery,
Nor short of heaven ceased.

“O Editha,”
They plied her. “Do they love? What words speak they?”

How do they stand to say goodbye? Do they—
Do they kiss each other?"

“My dears! My dears!

We must not see such things. But this I know,
They do not speak of loving, though their words
Seem often kind enough to be thereof.

I hear them speak of Arden hills, of flowers
In Hisbaye, of that poor mother slain,
Of months she nursed him well in Brussels town,
And many, many things. But most of all
The soldier asks about the king he loved—
Whom all of us have loved so well and need
So much.”

“Speak not of poor, poor Belgium,
O Editha, turn not to our distress,
Or all of us must weep! We'll vote to see
In what regard our charges stand.”

And so
’Twas gently voted they were lovers—Charles
And Crystal Thurberwald. And that, indeed,
Sheer words and kisses might add mere excess
To holy passion born to tender souls.

Before the dawn came Thurberwald afar
From Schaerbeek with a groaning load of wares
To stock the boat that Crystal rowed so blythe
Upon the Scheldt.

Then from a portal hid
Beside the moat of Bequinage came
Still languid Charles of Tappaneau and took
His covert in the double bottomed boat.
And Crystal sped away beyond the walls
Of Ghent, on toward the battled camps, toward sound

Of mighty guns that told the king still fought
 And held him true against invasion foul
 And vile misuse.

And e'er she watched the shore
 And called her wares, as she had done each day.

This day, each landing, ever hovering near
 She met an unaccustomed form and marked
 A bowed, old man who leaned a staff, who watched
 But said no word. Nor spake she word to him.
 And now and then she spread a tiny sail
 And scudded with the breeze until at eve
 She took the straight canal toward Dixmude
 Toward Ypres mouth. But even there not far
 Ahead strode on with speed incredible
 That grizzled form. With ne'er a backward look
 He set his staff on toward St. Georges town.
 There thick the smoke of battle lay, where boomed
 The jarring ordinance of death.

At length

The summer fog came streaming in from off
 The Straits of Dover toward the west, and soon
 The cypress swamps forewarned of lowlands nigh
 The mighty sea.

And ne'er had Crystal rowed
 As far as this. All things grew strange, and cowed,
 And warped by man's infernal, battling rage.
 The gloom and thunder spake of savage night
 And savage men.

But 'twixt the gruff reports
 Of frequent guns did Crystal improvise
 And sing a quaint love song:

SONG.

My love lies 'neath the wave,
 My warrior true,
 But the gray sea's not his grave,
 Nor ocean blue.

When salt winds lift and bind
 Along my sail,
 They woo my lover kind
 Beneath my rail.

Down in the starry deep
 Gaze I with joy,
 Where Mars doth sentry keep
 Above my boy.

Out of the thundering main
 My love shall spring
 To be a man again,
 To meet the king.

Her merry peal

Of laughter swept the broad canal, and, lo,
 The faintest echo seemed to rise from depths below.
 The spirit waves clapped hands and said:—"My love,
 When from my lowly grave I rise to thee,
 We'll sail in paradise." Then Crystal laughed
 So clear, despite the grumbling guns, the peal
 Did reach the ancient traveler and sharp
 He turned.

Then from the thicket's edge arose
 Another form to hail the fleeting boat.
 "Halt there! What do ye in the zone of war?"

And Crystal, startled, hushed her mirth, but called:—
 "Methought the lines still further on, good sire.
 Be they not so? Will ye not buy my wares
 And let me go?"

Then quite as artful he:—

“Oh, yes, I’ll buy thy wares. Come thou ashore,
I’d bargain thee.”

“Be ye a soldier, sire?

The dusk falls fast. I sell to soldiers, sire.
To no one else.”

“Come in, come in at once,
Where you may see more plain my uniform.”

“A little further on the bank is low,
Good sire, the landing more secure.”

“No then!

Just here, or I shall shoot. I shall not bait
With thee.”

“Why, sir, be not so rough. No fault
Intent, I’ve overstepped the safety line.
I would not sell to thee. I shall return
The way I came.”

“Ye’ll land where I’ll probe well
To know just why thou’re here, thou Crystal, dear,
Thou minx of Thurberwald. I know thee now.
I have advantaged thee. Thy sire I slew
With clumsy spade, but here have I sure arms.
Nay, I shall sink thy boat and drag thee out
To better use.”

“No, no, I come ashore!

Sink not my boat. I must return to Ghent;
But, Niels de Rode, I know thee too. Deceive
Thyself no more.”

“And is thy boat a prize

So great, ye’d sooner brave me than its loss?
Ye have a cargo there that’s valuable.”

“Nay, I but shudder at the cold canal.”

“There’s some one in thy boat.”

“See, I am near.

I row alone.”

“Where have I heard it, now,
Of double bottomed boats that ride the Scheldt?
Girl, do the waters of the Yser laugh
And clap their hands to thee to recompense
Thy songs?—Aha! ’Twas Reginald de Croix
Who told me of the boats. Poor fool! Poor fool!
St. Bavon’s crypt was open as sieve
To me. To me of Mont St. Guilbert’s town!
I’ll dig some one a grave he may not cheat,
And then I’ll treat with thee who cheated me.”

So Niels de Rode imposed his deadly aim
And Crystal threw herself a willing shield
Down in the boat to die.

But something flashed
Behind the gloating man and up there loomed
Gigantic in its straightened height, the form
Of Halmar Thurberwald. Around his head
His pike shaft whistled, wheeled as like a beam
It dropped on Niels de Rode, and prone he fell:—

“Ah, dog for mercy, quiet thee and yelp
No more on me or mine,” said Thurberwald.
And then to Crystal chided he: “Ah, child,
My child, might ye for life restrain one song?
All I have planned turns dearly hazardous
By this.

“Here take we life on finger tips!

To beard the very camp of death or die.
 Come, mirky night o' fog and cloud-veiled sky!
 Give me the thwarts to sweep the soundless oar.
 Roar guns afield and lead the foe afar.
 Star-shell and rocket spare us, overmore!"

"O father, father let us rest once more.
 Charles faints. His sutured wound doth ooze of blood.
 'Tis long to dawn, is't not? Where be we now?"

"In forest nigh to Bearst. But stir thy heart!
 We must be on betimes, betimes! The lines
 Of Prussia skirt the swamps of Yser here.
 One rood ahead they lie along that slow
 And sluggish lake the king cut loose to gulf
 Them in and save Calais.

"Receding floods

Leave slender tongues of soil to lead us through
 To No Man's Land. Up, child. Up Charles. Bestir,
 Bestir. Though long to dawn, eternity
 Shall break with it for us, if here we lie.
 We slip through yon haphazard line. Come! Come!

"Charles' hands are poisoned in the nettle's sting,
 Rased raw with cypress brush, rank weeds and vines!
 O Charles, may you endure another mile?"

"Endure we must. Wounds, nettles, weeds, oh what
 Are thy? Each briar pulleth toward the king
 And liberty. On, Thurberwald, strong heart,
 By fen and quagmire never over-palled!
 Fog-wreathe and midnight cloak the slender mole
 Whose finger tip doth point so fair a goal.
 We shall creep on, if on our knees we must,
 While heaven helps the right and God the just."

“Then silent from this copse to yon thick grove
Of cypress steal thy way. Whate’er betide,
Speak not nor utter sound.”

For hours it seemed

O’er many a quag and shattered bough slid on
The breathless fugitives alert to pass
The scattered sentry posts and slumbering camps,
Till pitifully worn became the strength of Charles
And pitifully torn the hands of Crystal Thurberwald,
Whose strength would help him on.

Exhausted oft,

And oft in desperate fear they lay the ground
Along while clanging guard wheeled by or while
The powerful star-shells cast an opal glow
Down through the swirling mist.

When thus the grove

Of cypress, to its heart, they crept to hide
In gloom impenetrably dense, enwrapped
And silence-logged, they listened for the step
Of sentinel, and heard it not and so
Took heart and crept along a space to list
Again and heard a groan—a hopeless groan.

’Twas near at hand but ’twas suppressed. They heard
The Belgian tongue that filled them with amaze.
“Oh thread of chance, Oh elemental fate,
Oh destiny how light ye turn. Behold
One random shot—but one—and all is lost.
Oh for one word to reach the king—a voice
Of volume huge enough to overspan
Both swamp and lake to bid him strike. But here
I die by cursed Prussian bayonet
When rising fever wakes my frenzied tongue!

I who escaped the fiery blast of Liege
 And went unharmed at Malines where fell
 Ten thousand brave with Tappaneau, at last
 The stray shot shatters me and topples down
 Upon my senseless limbs this cypress trunk
 To pin me fast. O fatal cannon shot
 Ye sprang from Belgia's guns but little knew
 The havoc ye have done. Yet had I strength
 By but a pound I might break free. A twig
 Doth baffle me!"

With what amazement Charles
 Heard through the gloom, sheer in the midst of foes,
 His name, and recognized that voice despite
 Its agonies. He sought and grasped the arm
 Of Thurberwald.

"May we not rescue him?
 We may not pass a pinoned Belgian by.
 I know him Thurberwald."

"Ye do, and well.

Yea, both of you! Since Turmond fell have I
 Concealed Monet a fugitive. His aid
 Alone has shaped this flight. If he has failed
 We're lost. Like Belgians let us steel our hearts
 Till sanguinary death deluge the altars of
 Our vanished liberties. Brief time shall serve
 Until I find some course to his relief."

So slipped old Thurberwald away and soon
 Returned and hardly did all three upraise
 The green and heavy trunk that sank Monet.

Once free, with his unshattered hand Monet
 Rang glad the hand of Charles. The broken arm

Refused his tempered will and limply swung
 But called no groan from out his clenched lips.
 "I lay since eve beneath yon cypress prone.
 The shot which cracked it off had crushed me down
 Friends, hence apace! This tall tree where I clomb
 Served well my lookout toward the land of home.
 For home lies where all liberty doth cling
 Beneath the warlike shield of Belgia's king.
 We skirt this marsh and slow receding lake.
 Who first shall reach the king this message take—
 The Prussian draws toward Arras all his power
 Until in Flanders dawns our vengeful hour.
 Bid Albert strike Dixmude e'en to Bearst,
 Till, haply, this thin line be rudely pierced.
 A sham defence, these swamps of Yser yond
 Invite again the tactics of St. Gond.
 Heave, poison guns, and spew thy fumes of hell!
 We struggle home who bid our land farewell!"

Three hours ere dawn that summer night in June
 Rose Niels de Rode from out the copse where prone
 He dropped beneath the blow of Thurberwald.
 His stubborn life revived in spite of all
 Deserts.

Anon he stumbled back to Ghent
 To Brussels town to weave unmerciful
 That coil which wrought the death of Mme. Cavell
 Despite the protests of two weeping worlds.
 The same foul net enclosed on Philip Bancq
 On Louis Severin, Marie de Croix
 And Mme. de Belleville. These were all condemned.
 A score and ten of Belgium's fairest names
 Were blighted.

Edith Cavell was shot by night
In the lonely prison of St. Gilles, and there
Against the wall died Philip Bancq.
But late and tardily the German emperor
Saved Mme. de Belleville and Marie de Croix.
Prince Reginald escaped the realm 'tis said.

And foremost in the horde of witnesses
Stood Niels de Rode the Belgian slave.

PART XI.

THE CRATER FIELDS

“Yon breached chateau of Dixmude looms too near.
Turn more to right hand, Thurberwald. Avoid
These battered walls where Prussia lies in force.
The right hand skirts the swamp. There must we lurk
Till, far beyond the reach of swooping raid
We’re safe. How lies the wind?

“It bloweth north

By east Monet.”

“’Tis near the dawn. The fog
Must lift. Atlantic’s billow calls her babe
The land breeze home, all sweet and whispering
From the Flanders plains. The mists of midnight change
To starry dawn. Toward safety haste, for now
Afar the droning battle planes tune up
To early flight, to scout the shattered fells
Of No Man’s Land. The earliest lark of morn
May ne’er precede the Prussian bugle peal
Sounding the swift foray the sullen raids
That grind to dust all souls that crouch these shades.
We must be gone though every step become
Us, like the step of Atlas, heavy strode,
O’erburdened with the round weight of the world.
Each rod halts Charles apart and oft he falls.”

“Alas ’tis true, Monet. His old wound bleeds
And fever rouseth up within his veins.
Exhaustion hath a heavy, heavy hand
And cruel weight in such a frightful land.

Shell holes and craters, bogs and watery pools,
 Dank ditches, trees, entanglements and tools
 Of recent strife make indiscriminate
 Conglomerate of death and slaughtering.
 Each yard I fear we step into a grave
 Or dread infernal pit whence naught may save."

"Ah, Crystal, child, ye must not weaken now.
 We must go on if only on our knees."

"Best, Crystal, and thou, Thurberwald, to leave
 Us battered comrades here in No Man's Land.
 Monet is grown too weak from savage pain
 To totter on. My old wound opes. My brain
 Wheels feverish and bows me down to earth."

"Thus far, dear Charles, we've kept our trust, and so
 Unto the end. Yet, Charles, a better speed
 We still must make. Lean on my father's arm.
 I'll aid Monet who's not so great a weight."

"If we may gain you shattered knolls, straightway
 The dread of capture fades and boldly on
 We'll seek the Belgian lines. Spur up your souls,
 Ye children! Ha, will you let old Thurberwald
 Outdistance you, and take his white crown o'er
 The ramparts of the king ahead of you?"

"Beat off the langors of this deadly wilderness
 And cheat the heartless foe by positive address.
 The fog is up beyond the woods of Bearst,
 Huge battle planes, now taking air, thou hearest.
 When star-shells split this fog our flight's revealed
 Where grows no twig of covert for our shield.
 A dread and droning drumfire drives the dawn
 A red hour ere 'tis due the hills upon."

Thus did the aged campaigner spur the flight
 And flog the sinking vigor of their strength
 'Crost bogs and yawning craters and deep mire,
 And braved the swift increase of cannon fire;
 Crouching against the frequent star-shell's flare
 Or over-sweeping planes that thronged the upper air.

Ha, 'twas a savage need, a savage hour,
 Burst with the hate of savage foe and friend,
 Of plowing steel and plunging cannonades.
 And in the midst thereof fell Tappaneau
 Deep in a hidden trench and still he lay,
 The low pulse of his slight strength gone.

At length

Did Crystal find a settled pool and bathe
 The heavy mire from off his battered wounds.
 She wept and kissed him till he oped his eyes
 Upon the clangors of the world once more.

Then, when he could not rise, did Thurberwald
 Stoop down and lift him up within his arms,
 And took to open flight, while Crystal turned
 To give her final strength to aid Monet,
 With woman's sweet abandonment.

No more,

Despite the sudden lifted fog, they crouched
 'Neath wierd and lurid glare of coming dawn,
 But took the open for a swift and final dash.

With all his load the grenadier with ease
 Outdistanced Crystal and Monet whose strength
 Was drooping low, and 'gan to mount the knolls.

High from the Prussian lines swept up a plane
 And rent the vapory atmosphere apart

With shrill exhaust, and marked the fugitives.
 The pilot dropped a flaming red fusee
 To target them and wheeled and hurtled o'er
 Their breathless flight like angry lammergeyer.

Upon that broad alarm the outpost camps
 Awoke and belched fleet bands of raiders forth
 In No Man's Land.

Soon, sweeping low, the plane
 Attacked Monet and Crystal Thurberwald
 And rained a dreadful shower from above
 Upon their faces pale and pitiful.
 Hither and yon, beaten, confused and wan
 They turned for scanty shelter while afar
 The fog wreaths trailed away to opal haze.

Up came the raiders—fresh and sturdy men—
 And seized poor Crystal where she knelt beside
 Monet outstretched upon the naked ground.
 His true and quiet life snuffed out entire.

“Who is that man!” they cried. And Crystal said:
 “It matters not. He has this moment died,
 So let his poor heart rest in peace.”

But they
 Were rough and wounded him, e'en as the Christ,
 Nailed to the fatal cross quite dead, was thrust
 By Roman spear.

A half the ruffian band
 Took Crystal then and savage dragged her back
 Into the Prussian camp; and half caught sight
 Of Thurberwald upon the knoll with Charles.

The old man laid his burden down and from
 His breast drew out the ancient pike and fixed
 It on its shaft and keyed it there and found
 Him shelter nigh a sturdy rock to take
 The mighty rush.

Lo, then a whooping shell
 Dropped by the Prussian guns fell mid the band,
 Through some far gunner's careless aim. It burst.
 Up heaved its fragments huge and shattered them
 Till three were left unscathed.

The dauntless guard
 Of wounded Tappaneau assailed them all
 And two he slew and put the last to flight.
 He lifted up his Charles and bore him still
 Beyond the knolls and damned infernal fens
 Until he heard long Belgian cheers outrolling ring
 And laid him down upon the tent floor of the king.

But up sprang Charles and cried: "O Albert King!
 Fly! Rescue Crystal Thurberwald! She lies
 Out there in No Man's Land. She dies! She dies
 A thousand deaths! And thy Monet is there!
 The Prussians mass at Arras for a thrust.
 No better time nor any need so just.
 The swamps are thinly manned. Sound on the charge
 To storm Dixmude schloss and old St. George!"

And Albert rose and manned that mighty surge
 That won St. Georges' town and Ypres verge,
 Dixmude and the huge chateau thereof.
 And ever after fought the Belgian king
 On equal terms against the Prussian hordes.

But Crystal Thurberwald was gone nor any trace
 They found save that torn corpse of brave Monet,

While only Caroline stood twixt the grave
And Charles in his regret.

Then by a space
Of days one morn uprose a mighty plane
High o'er the Belgian lines—but no one fired.
The Maltest crosses of those monster wings
Were covered o'er with white—the truce sign of
The air.

A letter fell which bore a ducal seal.
'Twas Carl of Baden to the Belgian king.
It read:

“O worthy king, may't comfort thee
To learn the fate of Crystal Thurberwald.
Condemned is she for her attempt to aid
A fugitive across our lines to thee.
That she succeeded not, and your Monet
Was slain, has saved her bosom from the shot
Of execution. Yet, for all the period
Of present war it is decreed shall she
Be held a prisoner.

“I have prevailed,
I trust, since she preserved my life so well
At Tappaneau, she be paroled to me
To ancient Karlsruhe to my ducal halls
In Baden.

“There, if I succeed, I'll forge
Her chains in gold of calibre so light
They shall not chafe nor gall her tender hands.
If I succeed not, Christ forgive us all
For our hard hearts. Amen.”

King Albert wept.
For that indeed was all, and not one word
Until this day has come from Crystal Thurberwald.

But after months, when Niels de Rode had sprung
 His fatal coil on Mme. Cavell, and worked
 Disgrace and death on half a hundred names,
 To Belgium once again, alone and stern,
 Went Halmar Thurberwald and sought him out
 At Schaerbeek town and slew him like a dog.

Then Albert, king of the Belgians, called for Charles,
 And said:—

“Well hast thou fought and many are
 Thy wounds. I bid thee rest. A ducal name
 I promise thee when our dear kingdom’s won.

“By rare prerogative of royalty
 I raise to sit among the peers the maid
 Ye knew and loved as Crystal Thurberwald,
 Wher’er she dwells. For in the new peace of the world
 I’d have thee wed and crowned with noble sons.

“Now Charles,
 Speed thee at once across the mighty sea.
 Tell there the tale of Belgium. Tell it well.
 And in thy sad evangels far and wide
 Weave in this query to the kindly friends of man,
 And ask them straight: SHALL THESE THINGS BE?

“Where’er our valor’s deeds shall wake no cheers
 Whisper the tale of Crystal Thurberwald,
 And win them through their sympathy and tears.”

The End.



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