

CARMEN SAECULARE

BY

ST. E. A. OF M. AND S.



LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO. LTD.

PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1901

CARMEN SAECULARE

I DEDICATE
ON EARTH MY POEM
TO THE
COUNTESS OF GLENSTRAE:
IN HEAVEN MY VISION
TO THE
HIGH PRIESTESS OF OUR LADY
ISIS

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PROLOGUE.

THE EXILE.

“The Sun, surmounted by a red rose, shining on a mossy bank.”

OVER the western water lies a solar fire,
Rapt lives and drunken ecstasies of sad desire ;
Poppies and lonely flag-flowers haunt the desolate
Marsh-strand : the herons gaunt still contemplate
What was delight, is ruin, may breed love again,
Even as darkness breeds the day : when life is slain.

* * * * *

O who will hear my chant, my cry ; my voice who hear,
Even in this weary misery, this danker mere,
Me, in mine exile, who am driven from yonder mountains
Blue-gray, and highland airs of heaven, and moving fountains ?
Me, who shall hear me ? Am I lost, a broken vessel,
Caught in the storm of lies and tossed, forbid to wrestle ?
Shall not the sun rise lively yet, the rose yet bloom,
The crown yet lift me, life beget flowers on the tomb ?
I was born fighter. Think you then my task is done,

My work, my Father's work for men, the rising sun ?
Who calls me coward ? Let them wait awhile ! Shall I
Bow down a loyal head to fate : despair and die ?
I hear the sea roll strong and pure that bore me far
From Meallfavournie's scalp, gray moor and lonely scaur ;
I hear the waves together mutter in counsel deep ;
I hear the thunder the winds utter in broken sleep ;
I hear the voices of four rivers crying aloud ;
Four Angels trumpet, and earth shivers : the heavens shroud
Their faces in blank terror for the sound of them :
The mountains are disturbed and roar : the azure hem
That laps all lands is broken, lashed in fiery foam,
And all God's thunderbolts are crashed—against my home.
Written in heaven, written on earth, written in the deep,
Written by God's own finger-birth ; the stars may weep,
The sun rejoice, that see at last His vengeance strike ;
The fury of destruction's blast ; the fiery spike
As of an arrow of adamant, comet or meteor :
“ The dog returneth to his vomit : the ancient whore
That sitteth upon many waters, even she
That called together all her daughters upon the sea ;
That clad herself in crimson silk and robes of black
And gave men blood instead of milk ; and made a track
Of lives and gold and dust and death on land and sea,
She is fallen, is fallen ! Her breath I take to me.
That which I gave I take, and that she thought to build,
I, even I, will break it flat : my curse fulfilled.

No stone of London soon shall stand upon another,
No son of her throughout the land shall know his brother.
I will destroy her who is rotten : from the face
Of earth shall fail the misbegotten, root and race ;
And the fair country unto them again I give,
Whom in long exile men contemn : for they shall live.”
Yea, they shall live ! The Celtic race ! Amen ! And I
Give Praise, and close mine eyes, cover my face, and laugh—
and die.

“ CARMEN SAECULARE. ”

“ I prophesy, with feet upon a grave,
Of death cast out, and life devouring death.

* * * * *

Of freedom, though all manhood were one slave ;
Of truth, though all the world were liar ; of love
That time nor hate can raze the witness of.”

SWINBURNE, *Tiresias*.

NINE voices that raise high the eternal hymn !
Nine faces that ring round the rainbow sky !
Hear me ! The century's lamp is growing dim ;
Saturnian gloom descends and it must die.
Fill, fill my spirit to the utter brim
With fire and melody !

O nine sweet sisters ! I have heard your song
In blue soft waters and in stern gray seas ;
I listen for your voices in the throng ;
I languish for your deadly melodies !
Yet, when I hear the sound for which I long,
My soul is not at ease.

There rings an iron music in my ears ;
A Martial cadence, chorus of the Hours :
The years of plenty, the abundant years
Flee, as the halcyon from the dying flowers.
The chariot of Miseries and Fears
Marshals its sombre powers.

Take up thy pen and write ! I must obey.
No shrinking at that terrible command !
Their voices mingle in the feeble lay,
Their fire impulses the reluctant hand.
My words must prophesy the avenging day
And curse my native land.

How have I loved thee in thy faithlessness
Beneath the rule of those unspeakable !
How would I shield thee from this sorceress
That holds my words imprisoned in her spell !
I would be silent. And the words obsess
My spirit. It is well.

O England ! England, mighty England, falls !
None shall lament her lamentable end !
The Voice of Justice thunders at her walls.
She would not hear. She shall not comprehend !
The nations keep their mocking carnivals :
She hath not left a friend !

The harlot that men called great Babylon,
In crimson raiment and in sooth attire,
The scarlet leprosy that shamed the sun,
The gilded goat that plied the world for hire ;—
Her days of wealth and majesty are done :
Men trample her for mire !

The temple of their God is broken down ;
Yea, Mammon's shrine is cleansed ! The house of her
That cowed the world with her malignant frown,
And drove the Celt to exile and despair,
Is battered now—God's fire destroys the town ;
London admits God's air.

They scorned the god that made them ; yea, they said :
“ Lords of this globe, the Saxon race, are we.
“ Europe before us lies, as men lie dead ;
“ Britannia—ho ! Britannia rules the sea ! ”
This night thy kingdom shall be finishèd,
Thy soul required of thee.

Hail ! France ! Because thy freedom hath rebelled
Against the alien, and the golden yoke ;
Because thy justice lives and reigns, unquelled,
Unbribed ; because thy head above the smoke
Soars, eagle ! Tribulation hath not felled
Thy freedom's ancient oak !

Therefore, this message of the Gods to thee !
What banner floats above thy bastions ?
The oriflamme, the golden fleur-de-lys ?
The eagle, or the tricolour ? Thy sons
Choose their own flag, contented to be free,
With freemen's orisons.

The mist is gathering on the seer's sight—
I cannot see the future of thy state.
Or, am I dazzled by resounding light ?
I know this thing—thy future shall be great !
Come war, come revolution ! In their spite
Thou mayst compel thy Fate.

O German Empire ! Let thy sons beware,
Not crowding sordid towns for lust of gold,
Not all forgetful of the herdsman's care,
Not arming all men in an iron mould.
Peaceful be thou : with watching and with prayer.
But be not overbold.

Fall, Austria ! In the very day and hour
That reverend head that holds thee in its awe
Shall sink in peace, I see thy rotten power
Break as the crumbling ice-floe in the thaw.
Destruction shatters thy blood-built tower.
Death has thee in his maw.

Stand, Russia ! Let thy freedom grow in peace,
 Beneath the constant rule, the changing Czar.
Thy many, thine inhospitable seas
 Shall ring thee round, a zodiac to thy star,
And Frost, the rampart of thine iron ease,
 Laugh at the shock of war.

Turn, Italy ! The Voice is unto Thee !
 Return, poor wounded maiden, to thy home !
Thou hast well tried a spurious liberty :
 Thou art made captive ; let thy fancy roam
To the great Mother, deeper than the sea,
 And fairer than the foam.

O Gateway of the admirable East !
 Hold fast thy Faith ! Let no man take thy Crown !
The Birds of Evil, that were keen to feast,
 (Fools cried) but herald thy renewed renown.
Mad Christians see in thee the Second Beast,
 But shall not shake thee down.

Therefore reign thou, saith God, august, alone,
 White-winged to East and West, an albatross,
“ Abdul the Damned, on thy infernal throne ! ”
 Allah can wed the Crescent and the Cross !
According to the wisdom thou hast shown
 Meté thou thy gain and loss !

O melancholy ruin, that wert Greece !
What little comfort canst thou take from time ?
Years pass, in shameful war or sordid peace—
What god can recreate thee, the sublime ?
Alas ! let Lethe roll her sleepy seas
Over thy ruined clime.

O piteous fallen tyranny of Spain !
What dogs are tearing at thy bowels yet ?
Let thine own King, saith God, resume his reign !
Loyal and happy seasons may forget
The ancient scars. Thy moon is on the wane ?
Thy sun may never set !

And thou, foul oligarchy of the West,
Thou, soiled with bribes and stained with treason's stain,
Thou, heart of coin beneath a brazen breast,
Rotten republic, prostitute of gain !
Thou, murderer of the bravest and the best
That fringed thy southern main !

The doom is spoken. Thine own children tear
Thy cruel heart and thy corrupted tongue ;
Thy toilers snare thee in thine own foul snare,
And sting thee where thy gilded worms had stung.
The politician and the millionaire
Regain maternal dung.

Then only shall thy liberty arise,
Then only shall thine eagle shake his wings,
And sunward soar through the unsullied skies,
And careless watch the destiny of kings.
Then only shall truth's angel in thine eyes
Perceive eternal things.

The oracle is suddenly grown still.
Only, mine eyes, unweary of the sight,
Pierce through the dawn-mist of the sacred hill
And yearn toward the rose of love and light.
My lips, that drank the Heliconian rill,
Murmur with slow delight.

I see the faces of the lyric Nine !
The Rose of God its petals will unfold !
I madden with the ecstasy divine !
My soul leaps sunwards, shrieking—and behold !
Out of the ocean and the kindling brine
Apollo's face of gold !

What music, what delirium, what delight !
What dancing madness catches at my feet !
A tongue of fresh, impossible, keen light
Burns on my brow—a silver stream of heat.
I am constrained : The Awful Word I write
From the one Paraclete.

The Reign of Darkness hath an end. Behold !
Eight stars are gathered in one fiery sign.
This is the birth-hour of the Age of Gold ;
The false gold pales before the Gold divine.
The Christ is calling to the starry fold
Of Souls—Arise and shine !

The Isis of the World hath raised her veil
One moment, that fresh glory of the stars
May glow through winter, where the sun is pale ;
Melt snow-bound lilies ; bid the prison bars,
Wherein men bow their heads and women wail,
Blossom to nenuphars.

The sacred lotus of the universe
Blossoms this century—a million tears
Melted the ice of Eve's accursèd curse :
A million more have watered it—it peers,
A resurrection fragrance, to disperse
Men's folly and their fears.

The contemplation of those awful eyes,
The flaming void, the godhead of the light,
The abyss of these unfathomable skies,
Exhaust my being ; I desire the night.
Lo ! I have written all the destinies
Thy spirit bade me write.

The noise of rushing water ! And the sound
Of tenfold thunder ! Mighty a flame of fire
Roars downward : as a maiden from a swoond
My spirit answers to its own desire.
My feet are firm again upon the ground—
Yea ! but my head is higher.

My face is shining with the fire of heaven.
I move among my fellows as a ghost.
With thought for bread and memory for leaven
My life is nourished, yet my life is lost.
I live and move among the starry seven,
Nor count the deadly cost.

Only I see the century as a child
Call Truth and Justice, Light and Peace, to guide ;
Wisdom and Joy, and Love the undefiled,
Lead up true worship, its eternal bride.
Stormy its birth ; its youth, now fierce and wild !
Its end, how glorified !

O Spirit of Illimitable Light !
O Thou with style and tablet ! Answer me
In that dread pomp of Triumph and of Right,
The awful day : my witnesses are Ye
That I have said in all men's sound and sight
The things that are to be.

IN THE HOUR BEFORE REVOLT.

“ . . . the green paradise which western waves
Embosom in their ever-wailing sweep,
Talking of freedom to their tongueless caves,
Or to the spirits which within them keep
A record of the wrongs which, though they sleep,
Die not, but dream of retribution.”

Adonais [cancelled passage].

WILD pennons of sunrise the splendid,
And scarlet of clustering flowers
Cry aloud that the Winter is ended,
Claim pace for the re-risen hours.
The Ram in the Heavens exalted
Calls War to uncover her wing ;
Through skies that be hollow and vaulted
Exulting the shouts of him ring :
The Sign of the Spring.

How hollows the heart of the heaven !
How light swells his voice for a cry !
The winter is shaken and riven,
And death and the fruits of him die.

The billow roars back to its tyrant,
The wind ; the red thunderbolts roar ;
The flame and the earthquake aspirant
Leap forth as an herald before
The trumpet of war.

In crimson he robes him for raiment,
In armour all rusted and red :
Spear shakes and sword flashes, exclaimant
To share in the spoil of the dead.
A helmet flames forth on his forehead,
Gold sparks from the forge of the stars,
His shield with the Gorgon made horrid
Hath blood on its bull-battled bars—
Thou God of me, Mars !

He strides through the vibrating aether ;
Spurns earth from His warrior feet ;
Shakes fire from the forges beneath her ;
His glances are fervid and fleet.
With a cry that makes tremble the thunder,
Light-speared, with a sword that is flame,
He bursts the vast spaces asunder.
His angels arise and proclaim :
The Lord is His Name !

O Lord ! Thou didst march out of Edom !
Thou leapedst from the Mountains of Seir !

The breath of Thy voice was as Freedom !
The nations did tremble with fear.
The heathen, their fury forsook them ;
The Moabites trembled and fled.
O Lord, when Thy countenance shook them.
Thy voice in the House of the Dead.
O Lord ! Thou has said !

The lightnings were kindled and lightened,
Thy thunder was heard on the deep ;
The stars with Thy Fear shook and whitened,
The sun and the moon in the steep.
The sea rose in tumult and clamour,
The Earth also shook with Thee then,
As Thor had uplifted his hammer,
And smitten the mutinous men.
O ! rise Thou again !

The voice of the Lord is uplifted ;
The wilderness also obeys ;
The flames of the fire they are rifted ;
The waves of the sea know His ways.
The cedars of Lebanon hear Thee,
The desert of Kadesh hath known ;
The Sons of Men know Thee and fear Thee,
Flee far from the Light of Thy Throne.
For Thou art alone.

O Lord ! Is Thy path in the Water,
The marvellous ways of the Deep ?
Not there, O not there ! Wilt Thou slaughter
Oblivion's sons in their sleep ?
Hath the deep disobeyed Thee or risen
In wrath and revolt to Thy sky,
Broken loose from the bands of her prison ?
Held counsel against the Most High ?
Yea, even as I !

But I, O Most Mighty, invoke Thee,
Whose footsteps are in the Unknown.
My cries were the cries that awoke Thee,
Upstarting in arms from Thy Throne !
I call Thee, I pray Thee, I chide Thee,
Whose glory my foes have abhorred.
My spirit is fixed, may abide Thee,
Awake the Invisible Sword.
For Thou art the Lord !

Look down upon earth and behold us
Few folk who have sworn to be free.
Past days, when the traitors had sold us,
We trample ; we call upon Thee !
Look Thou on the armed ones, the furious,
The Saxons ! they brandish the steel ;
Heaven rings with their insults injurious ;

Earth moans for their harrow and wheel.
To Thee we appeal.

They boast, though their triumph Hell's gift is,
On Africa's desperate sons :
" Our thousands have conquered their fifties ;
Our twenties have murdered their ones."
That glory—that shame—let them trumpet
To Europe's unquickening ear.
List Thou to the boast of the strumpet !
Lend Thou, Thou indignant, an ear !
Then—shall they not fear ?

O Lord, to Thy strength in the thunder,
Thy chariot-wheels in the war,
We, Ireland, look upward and wonder,
The Sword of Thee smiting before.
In the hour of Revolt that burns nigher
Each hour as it leaps to the sky,
We look to Thee, Lord for Thy Fire ;
We look—shall Thy Justice deny ?
Well, can we not die ?

But Thou, Thou shalt fall from the heaven
As hail on the furious host.
I see them : their legions are driven ;
Their cohorts are broken and lost.

Thy fire hath dispersed them and shattered !
They hesitate, waver, and flee !
Thy tyrant is shaken and scattered,
And Ireland is clear to the Sea !
Green Erin is free !

Hail ! Hail to Thee, Lord of us, Horus !
All hail to the warrior name !
Thy chariots shall drive them before us,
Thy sword sweep them forth as a flame.
Rise ! Move ! and descend ! I behold Thee,
Heaven cloven of fieriest bars,
Armed Light ; and they follow and fold Thee,
Thine armies of terrible stars.
The Powers of Mars !

At the brightness that leapeth before Thee
The heavens bow down at Thine ire ;
Thick clouds pass to death and adore Thee,
Wild hailstones and flashings of fire.
The mountains of Ages are shattered ;
Perpetual hills are bowed down ;
The Winds of the Heaven are scattered,
Borne back from Thy furious frown,
O Lord of Renown !

In terror and tumult and battle
Thy breath smiteth forth as a sword ;

The Saxons are driven as cattle ;
We know Thee, that Thou art the Lord !
Forth Freedom flings skyward, a maiden
Rejoicing, upsprung from the sea,
And the wild lyre of Erin is laden
At last with the songs of the free !
Hail ! Hail unto Thee !

EPILOGUE.
TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR
INDEPENDENCE.

THE ship to the breezes is bended ;
The wind whistles off to the lee ;
The sun is arisen, the splendid !
The sun on the marvellous sea !
And the feast of your freedom is ended,
O sons of the free !

Your shouts have gone up to remember
The day of your oath to the world.
Is its flame dwindled down to an ember ?
The flag of your liberty furled ?
Your limbs are too strong to dismember—
In sloth are they curled ?

The price of your freedom—I claim it !
Your aid to make other men free !
Your strength—I defy you to shame it !
Your peace—I defy it to be
Dishonoured ! Arise and proclaim it
From sea unto sea !

From Ireland the voice of the dying,
The murdered, the starved, the exiled,
In hope to your freedom is crying
A dolorous note and a wild :
“ Your star-bestrewn banner is flying,
And ours—is defiled.”

From Ind—shall her summons awaken ?
Her voices are those of the dead !
By famine and cholera shaken,
By taxes and usury bled,
In the hour of her torture forsaken,
Stones given for bread !

In Africa women are fighting
Their homes and their freedom to hold.
Young children and graybeards, delighting
To die for their country of old !
For the ravenous lion is smiting
A stroke for their gold.

They fall in the shelterless hollow ;
They sleep in the cold and the sun ;
They fight, and the Englishmen follow—
The odds are as twenty to one !
Hide, hide thy bright eyes, O Apollo !
The murder is done.*

The stones should arise to declare it,
Their terror and tyrannous reign !
The earth be unable to bear it,
Gape wide, for her motherly pain !
Shalt thou, O Columbia, share it,
The shame and the stain ?

Your stripes are the stripes of dishonour ;
Your stars are cast down from the sky ;
While earth has this burden upon her,
Your eagle unwilling to fly !
Loose, loose the wide wings ! For your honour !
Let tyranny die !

Remember, this day of your glory,
Your fight for the freedom you own.
Those years—is their memory hoary ?
Your chains—is their memory flown ?

* At the hour of passing the proof-sheets, however, the Boers are not yet conquered—nor likely to be !

Your triumph is famous in story,
But yours is alone.

In the name of your Freedom I claim it,
Your power in the cause of the free !
In the name of our God as I name it,
AMEN ! I demand it of ye,
Man's freedom ! Arise and proclaim it,
The song of the sea !

S.S. PENNSYLVANIA,
July 4, 1900.