

# William Vaughn Moody

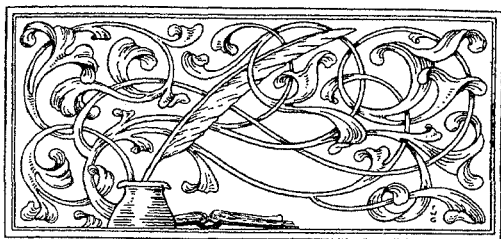
By  
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## WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY



**T** may seem that the issues of to-morrow (election day, November 5, 1912) spring from the part which machinery is playing in the industrial order; and machinery is ultimately due to the discovery of fire. But in speaking of the author of *The Fire Bringer*, one is reminded of certain words of Mr. Watts-Dunton: "Assuredly no philosophy of history can be adequate if it ignores the fact that poetry has had as much effect on human destiny as that other great human energy by the aid of which, from the discovery of the use of fire to that of the electric light, the useful arts have been developed." Perhaps the issues of to-morrow, which seem so prosaic, but which nevertheless rest on passions and loyalties, are at bottom issues of poetry.

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To-night I have no time to speak of Moody's prose plays, and time for only a word about his short poems. Moody wrote a number of lyrics which, as Mr. Payne long since remarked in *The Dial*, "will hereafter be found in every golden treasury of English verse." Placed there beside the tributes of other poets to their mothers, "The Daguerreotype" will seem the loveliest and the profoundest of all. The poem called "The Brute" is the first adequate lyrical expression of the glory and terror of machinery. That called "Gloucester Moors" is an impassioned outlook upon the social destiny of the race. And the "Ode Written in a Time of Hesitation" is a permanent warning to republics. Stuart Mill used to say that prose is meant to be heard, poetry to be overheard. But these last three poems are meant to be heard, precisely as the lyrical prophecies of Amos were meant to be heard.

It is to the unfinished trilogy of poetic dramas that I invite your attention. Next week Moody's publishers will issue a complete edition of his works, in two volumes, of which the first will include *The Fire Bringer*, *The Masque of Judgment*, and a part of *The Death of Eve*. These are all on the Promethean theme—if the phrase be taken in the largest possible meaning.

Moody had the lyrical gift, the historical sense, the scientific information, the human

sympathy, and the cosmic vision which fitted him to treat this theme, not in the grandiose manner, but in the grand manner. Nothing like this can be said of any other American poet. We have had in this country no great poets, in the sense that Dante is great. Nor is Moody great in this sense. He is too personal. He lacks the supreme objectivity which, a very few times in the world's history, has made an individual the voice of a nation or a century. There are streaks of a difficult mysticism in our poet, and there is some preciousness. But what is true of Moody is that he is the most important American poet to study to-day.

For he deals with a theme which is modern. In its simplest form the Promethean theme is the myth that fire was stolen from the gods for the benefit of man. So thought the Greeks, the Australians, the South Sea Islanders, and the Maoris. They felt that the gods might have given men fire, but would not, and that some hero had to steal it. They felt that the greatest instrument of progress had to be wrested by man himself from a nature which he had mistakenly supposed to be benevolent. In every Promethean myth there is the seed of an indignant atheism.

Now the captured energy of fire has taken visible form as machinery, and with machinery has come democracy. Fire, har-

nessed, has always been associated with revolt against the powers that be, for it has furnished the instruments of revolt. The Marxists do not hesitate to align the machine and atheism against the triple alliance of priest, king, and army. Is there then something in democracy which is irreconcilable with religion? Is the phrase "democratic religion" self-contradictory? And will the progress of the mechanistic mode of thinking strip the round earth of all its temples? Such is the Promethean problem to-day.

And it takes protean forms. On the eve of a general election in a democracy, where there is no formal alignment of machinery against the church, it is nevertheless traceable everywhere. There are six parties in the field, all demanding justice. But what is justice? And is it found with Zeus or with Prometheus? Three parties declare that they wish to make not merely justice but the will of God prevail; one of them sang hymns at its convention. The other three are silent about God, but it is an open secret that one of them regards God as a marplot—at least the leaders of it regard him as a hindrance to justice. But every one of these parties sees some power as Zeus the tyrant, and itself as Prometheus.

And back of the social problems lie their counterparts in psychology and metaphysics. Is man a mere moment in nature, or

has he power so to control nature as to increase his happiness? Practical men answer that question jauntily enough, but the determinist hesitates. Are human ideals forces, or mere by-products? Does God make men, or do men make God? Is man strong enough to get along without ideals, and especially without a God? Such are the confused but real questions which arise in the serious beholder of the spectacle before him.

In approaching this general problem, which was never acute till now, should a poet strive to forge out a vision of the future? We are confronted by Joubert's words: "There can be no good time in the future which is unlike the good times of the past." Shall he offer a new religion? The defeated Thiers answers: "There are no altars which are not ridiculous save the old altars." And we hear, too, another voice from the dead, that of a man who was once the guest of this club. "What elements of the spectacle before us," says Matthew Arnold, "will be most interesting to a highly developed age like our own, an age making a demand for an intellectual deliverance? Evidently the other ages similarly developed and making the same demand."

It is therefore the task of a poet to seek his materials in the past, and to reinterpret them. And this will mean, for the Promethean theme, a new effort of the religious

imagination in an age peculiarly apathetic to such efforts. But what ages should be chosen as most resembling ours in its demand for an intellectual deliverance? Should they not be the fifth century before Christ and the first three centuries after his birth? If so, in seeking materials the poet cannot be content with the publicists of those ages, men like Thucydides and Polybius. He must know the Prometheus Bound of Æschylus. He must know the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel, and he should know Plotinus.

We may trace in these writers three world-stages of the Promethean theme: that of Hellenic revolt against superstition, reached in the concept of the new divinity Apollo; that of Apocalyptic Christianity, with its despairing deliverance of a few from sin, condemnation of the majority, and renunciation of the earth; that finally of what we may call Greek Christianity, which revolts against eternal punishment, finds eternal life here and now, and asserts the inseparableness of God and man. To this inward Christianity Neoplatonism was first a rival, than an ally.

All these writers and the movements they represent Moody seems to me to have pondered thoroughly, though he was a diviner of history rather than a historian. He chose to reinterpret the Greek myth of Prometheus, the Apocalyptic drama of the last



judgment, and the Johannine conception of God and man. But by the very conditions of the New Testament narrative he was excluded from two New Testament dramas, and by a deep instinct he reverted to the story of Eve for his third theme. Eve in the light of the Fourth Gospel—so a theologian might name it.

Burning with indignation against the doctrine of eternal punishment, he wrote first the second number of the trilogy. But we may properly consider first *The Fire Bringer*. Here he brushed aside the revolutionary phantasies of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and went to Apollodorus for his material.

And when Zeus determined to destroy the men of the brazen age, Deukalion, being forewarned by Prometheus, built a boat, and putting into it food and drink embarked with Pyrrha. Zeus sent a great rain from heaven, so that all men were overwhelmed, except a few who fled to the high places. Deukalion was driven upon the darkness of the waters until he came to Parnassus; and there, when the rains had abated, he landed and made sacrifice, praying for men to re-people the earth. Then Deukalion and Pyrrha took stones, and threw them over their heads; those which Deukalion threw became men, and those which Pyrrha threw became women. . . . Also Prometheus gave to them fire, bringing it secretly in a fennel stalk. When Zeus learned of this, he commanded Hephaestus to bind the body of Prometheus upon Mount Caucasus; and for the theft of fire Prometheus suffered this punishment.

In handling this myth Æschylus had used the characters of Prometheus, Okeanos, He-

phæstus, Hermes, Strength, Force, and a chorus of Ocean Nymphs. Moody takes none of these except the hero. But he recreates Pandora, Deukalion, and Pyrrha. He gives speech to the Stone Men and Earth Women, born autochthonously of the stones cast behind them by Deukalion and Pyrrha. And he invents Aeolus, Lykophon, Alcyone, Rhodope, and a Priest of Zeus.

To the Greeks, Pandora was a grim figure. Prometheus refused her as a gift from Zeus, and to Epimetheus she brought only sorrow. From her casket escaped all the woes of earth. And it is this fierce satire upon womanhood that Hawthorne unwisely attempted to explain to children! But Moody reverses all this. His Pandora is hope incarnate. Her spiritual leadership is more remarkable than that granted by Goethe to Helena. She nerves the great protagonist in his endeavor, rescues him when he faints and fails, reaches him in his darkest hour with her song. The youth Æolus, son of Deukalion, is to be the progenitor of the Greeks; and Alcyone, daughter of Lykophon, is to be their mother.

Moody's scenario may be said to run as follows: King Deukalion is left in deadly darkness after the flood, and is in terror of the gods, and gives Prometheus no encouragement to scale the walls of heaven for forbidden fire. His friend Lykophon is in

equal terror, but retains his primitive faith in sacrifice, and demands that young Æolus be offered up to Zeus. Meantime, under the persuasion of Pandora, Prometheus has made a first attempt, and is now making a second. Æolus is brought to the altar, and his death is stayed only by the fierce demand of his mother that there be respite till Prometheus returns. Prometheus does return, successful, and gives the fire to Æolus and Alcyone as their marriage gift. Deukalion passes, worn with grief yet glad in this salvation, and Pyrrha and her hand-maid Rhodope keep watch by his tomb. They see the new sky darkened by the wings of Jove's avenging vulture, and the eternal punishment of Prometheus is at hand. But his sacrifice has not been in vain. He has given to Æolus and Alcyone, he has given to the stone men and the earth women, the means of civilization. He has brought them love and wine and light. He has brought them Apollo.

Such is Moody's bold recasting of the myth, in the light of modern knowledge of myth. It foreshortens the whole of Greek culture-history from the days of human sacrifice to that of the cult of light. "Up to the time," says Renan, "when men found God in the invisible and the ideal, only one cult was logical for paganism, and that was the cult of the sun." Nor should we be

deceived by the baser sun-worship of Pontus or Bithynia. Socrates was a worshiper of Apollo, and so was Marcus Aurelius. To see things as they are by daylight, to see them achromatically, to be open to ideas and enlightenment—such was the intellectual deliverance which came to the Greeks through Apollo.

They created this new divinity, and in him triumphed over Zeus. This does not mean that the Greek regarded Apollo as a part of himself, a little projected. The Greek did not turn and worship himself. He knew very well that Apollo would vanish if called the handiwork of Prometheus. And in considering the source of ideals, Plato as truly sang *non nobis* as did the Jews. The defeat of Zeus, the tyrant, is the work of co-operation between man and some better god, to be discovered but not invented.

And now for a few passages of the poetry itself, which will lift us above my prosing. Deukalion is glooming in the darkness, despairing of Prometheus and his impious adventure:

He would catch  
The hurlèd thunder-bolt, and forge from it  
A reaper's hook; the vials of white wrath  
He spills to make a wine-cup for a feast;  
Curses he knows not from the gifts of love;  
And in the shadow of this death, even here,  
As low as from her pitch of pride earth's fallen,  
He will be plotting that whereby to climb  
And lift us high above the peaks of God

One dizzy instant, ere we fall indeed  
And he with us forever!

As Deukalion speaks the words of superstition and despair, Pandora is heard singing:

Along the earth and up the sky  
The Fowler spreads his net:  
O soul, what pinions wild and shy  
Are on thy shoulders set?  
What wings of longing undeterred  
Are native to thee, spirit bird?  
What sky is thine behind the sky,  
For refuge and for ecstasy?  
Of all thy heavens of clear delight  
Why is each heaven twain?  
O soul! that when the lure is cast  
Before thy heedless flight,  
And thou art snared and taken fast  
Within one sky of light,  
Behold, the net is empty, the cast is vain,  
And from thy circling in the other sky the lyric  
          laughters rain!

Prometheus returns with ill tidings. He has searched the earth in vain, striving to find some sparks of fire. But the Darkener has darkened all.

By Indian Nysa and the Edonian fount  
Of Hæmus long I lurked, in hope to find  
Young Dionysus as he raced along  
And wrest his pine-torch from him, or to snare  
Some god-distracted dancing ægipan,  
And from his garland crush a wine of fire  
To light the passion of the world again  
And fill man's veins with music; but there went  
A voice of sighing through the ghostly woods,  
And up the mountain pastures in the mist  
Desolate creatures sorrowed for the god.

Having sought in vain, he mounted higher,  
and passed the crags of day that bastion and  
shore-fast Jove's pearl of power,

His white acropolis. Soft as light I passed  
The perilous gates that are acquainted forth,  
The walls of starry safety and alarm,  
The pillars and the awful roofs of song,  
The stairs and colonnades whose marble work  
Is spirit, and the joinings spirit also,—  
And from the well-brink of his central court  
Dipped vital fire of fire, flooding my vase,  
Glutting it arm-deep in the keen element.  
Then backward swifter than the osprey dips  
Down the green slide of the sea, till — Fool, O fool!  
'T was in my hands! 'T was next my bosom! Fierce  
Sang the bright essence past my scorching cheek,  
Blown up and backward as I dropped and skimmed  
The glacier-drifts, cataracts, wild moraines,  
And walls of frightful plunge. Upon the shore  
Of this our night-bound wretched earth I paused,  
Lifted on high the triumph of my hands,  
And flung back words and laughter. As I dropped,  
The dogs of thunder chased me at the heels,  
A white tongue shook against me in the dark,  
And lo, my vase was rended in my hands,  
And all the precious substance that it held  
Spread, faded, and was gone,—was quenched, was  
gone!

While Deukalion and his wife are grop-  
ing in the darkness for food to keep young  
Æolus alive, Prometheus gives way to de-  
spair:

One deep, deep hour!  
To drop ten thousand fathoms softly down  
Below the lowest heaving of life's sea,  
Till memory, sentience, will, are all annulled,  
And the wild eyes of the must-be-answered Sphinx,  
Couchant at dusk upon the spirit's moor,

Blocking at noon the highway of the soul,  
At morn and night a spectre in her gates,—  
For once, for one deep hour—

Then from among the Stone Men and the  
Earth Women the voice of Pandora springs  
like a flame:

Of wounds and sore defeat  
I made my battle stay;  
Winged sandals for my feet  
I wove of my delay;  
Of weariness and fear,  
I made my shouting spear;  
Of loss, and doubt, and dread,  
And swift oncoming doom  
I made a helmet for my head  
And a floating plume.  
From the shutting mist of death,  
From the failure of the breath,  
I made a battle horn to blow  
Across the vales of overthrow.  
O hearken, love, the battle-horn!  
The triumph clear, the silver scorn!  
O hearken where the echoes bring,  
Down the grey disastrous morn,  
Laughter and rallying!

She comes to him in his despair, and in  
sweet practical fashion gives him a gift. It  
is only a fennel stalk, such as women carried  
coals in, in primitive days, but she sees  
that this homely receptacle may pass the  
vigilance of Jove's guards better than any  
heavenly vase. There is a century of religious  
progress in the parable.

It now needs only the appeal of the Stone  
Men and Earth Woman, the submerged  
tenth of that yore time, to fix again the

resolution of Prometheus. And the stone men ask, as they ask in every age, Give us either more or less. Either make us machines that neither feel nor know, or lift us into manhood.

When earth did heave as the sea, at the lifting up of  
the hills,  
One said, "Ye shall wake and be; fear not, ye shall  
have your wills."  
We waited patient and dumb; and ere we thought to  
have heard,  
One said to us "Stay!" and "Come!"—a dim and  
a mumbled word.  
Mortise us into the wall again, or lift us up that we  
look therefrom!

Prometheus listens and suddenly determines—

Of these stones  
To build my rumoring city, based deep  
On elemental silence; in this earth  
To plant my cool vine and my shady tree  
Whose roots shall feed upon the central fire!—  
Yea, I come,  
I come; to find somewhere through the piled gloom  
A mountain path to unimagined day.

I pass quickly the strong scenes in which  
the people determine to appease Zeus with  
the blood of Æolus. Deukalion shares their  
creed, but he is no Abraham, to let a creed  
crush his paternal love.

I am king, hear ye, am I not the king?  
Higher than I is none. Take me! Why him,  
Little of strength and wisdom? I am wise,  
My cunning brain is stronger than a host.  
Though this my spear-arm be a little fallen  
From when it led you out against the north,



I am more terrible and mighty now,  
An old, much-seeing spirit. In my death  
The gods will taste a pleasure and be soothed.  
But from this child, this playmate—look ye here—  
This piece of summer's carelessness, this tuft  
Of hyssop planted by the wells of glee,—  
What honor should the dread gods have on him?

But Lykophon knows better. He knows  
the value of Æolus. He is willing to slay  
all posterity, willing to give Alcyone to the  
same knife:

The gods despise enforced offerings.  
When the heart brings its dearest and its last  
Then only will they hear—if then, if then!

Deukalion at last yields, falling in a swoon.  
But Pyrrha flings herself before the altar:

Hold off your hands, hold off! The king is fallen,  
And falling spake somewhat. But I, who drank  
Of his deep will, who ever was and am  
His heart's high furtherer, cry over him  
Ye shall not touch them yet! Not yet ye shall!  
Not till Prometheus comes or makes a sign!

Even Lykophon is forced to halt, and then  
in the darkness comes a long period of al-  
ternate hope and despair, as the assembly  
watches for the fire-bringer. At last the  
childish eyes of Æolus and Alcyone catch  
a pencil of light. The clouds have yielded  
to their prophetic gaze, and, like Dante  
emerging from the Inferno, they exclaim  
"The Stars!" Pyrrha gazes, and sees the  
mountainous gloom uncover.

It is the stars! It is the ancient stars!  
It is the young and everlasting stars!

Instantly Pandora's voice is heard singing  
a mystic song of triumph:

Because one creature of His breath  
Sang loud into the face of death,  
Because one child of His despair  
Could strangely hope and wildly dare,  
The Spirit comes to the Bride again,  
And breathes at her door the name of the child;  
"This is the son that ye bore me! When  
Shall we kiss, and be reconciled?"  
Furtive, dumb, in the tardy stone,  
With gropings sweet in the patient sod,  
In the roots of the pine, in the crumbled cone,  
With cries of haste in the willow-rod,—  
By pools where the hyla swells his throat  
And the partridge drums to his crouching mate,  
Where the moorland stag and the mountain goat  
Strictly seek to the ones that wait,—  
In seas aswing on the coral bar,  
In feasting depths of the evening star,  
In the dust where the mourner bows his head,  
In the blood of the living, the bones of the dead,—  
Wounded with love in breast and side  
The Spirit goes in to the Bride.

In Prometheus the universe has produced  
one heroic and beautiful being, who for love  
of his fellow-men can rush to meet death  
lightly and laughingly. For them he has  
wrested fire from nature and from ignorant  
authority. He has controlled law in the  
interest of love. And if one such man, why  
not many? Is it not toward the creation of  
such a type that all creation yearns? Why  
else is there love throughout nature? Why  
else does matter strive to become *mater*, the  
mother? We must not hold Moody to any  
formal panpsychism, but we see him trying

to pierce to an imminent God by means of the pagan nature-worship. Nor is this hidden Spirit passive. He works forever to render the brute forces of nature beneficent, precisely as in Moody's poem of "The Brute" they are to be rendered beneficent.

Prometheus returns victorious, the mists fade, and sunlight floods the earth. There is a brief respite from the anger of Zeus before Prometheus goes to his age-long punishment—

A thousand æons, nailed in pain  
On the blown world's plunging prow.

He seizes upon this hour to strengthen the faith of Aeolus and Alcyone in the divine process of things. There is a life which is deeper than Zeus, a reality more real than the tyranny of all passing religions. And this Life is never at war with man, but cheers him on to independence and initiative. Without fearlessness and vigor of will, man will never understand the creative soul of things.

Be comforted; it is established sure.  
Light shall arise from light, day follow day,  
Season meet season, with all lovely signs  
And portents of the year. These shall not fail;  
From their appointed dance no star shall swerve,  
Nor mar one accent of one whirling strophe  
Of that unfathomed chorus that they sing  
Within the porch and laughing house of Life,  
Which Time and Space and Change, bright caryatids,  
Do meanwhile pillar up. These shall not fail;

But O, these were the least I brought you home!  
The sun whose rising and whose going down  
Are joy and grief and wonder in the heart;  
The moon whose tides are passion, thought, and will;  
The signs and portents of the spirit year,—  
For these, if you would keep them, you must strive  
Morning and night against the jealous gods  
With anger, and with laughter, and with love;  
And no man hath them till he brings them down  
With love, and rage, and laughter from the heavens,—  
Himself the heavens, himself the scornful gods,  
The sun, the sun-thief, and the flaming reed  
That kindles new the beauty of the world.

When thus the free and self-reliant conquer, there is rejoicing as far as being goes out past the stars, and as far as being inward goes unthinkably, traveling the atom to its fleeting core, and He who is the Life of all this life "calleth us blessed in his heart of hearts."

To this deeper religion Pandora now gives the personal touch which in all ages makes it vital. For after all, what is religion but man's demand that the universe shall be a Beth-el or house of God, a home for him and his in the midst of an alien void? Religion shrinks the celestial mechanism to the compass of a tent. And so we have this great hymn of Pandora:

I stood within the heart of God ;  
It seemed a place that I had known:  
(I was blood-sister to the clod,  
Blood-brother to the stone.)

I found my love and labor there,  
My house, my raiment, meat and wine,

My ancient rage, my old despair,—  
Yea, all things that were mine.

I saw the spring and summer pass,  
The trees grow bare, and winter come;  
All was the same as once it was  
Upon my hills at home.

Then suddenly in my own heart  
I felt God walk and gaze about.  
He spoke; His words seemed held apart  
With gladness and with doubt.

“Here is my meat and wine,” He said,  
“My love, my toil, my ancient care;  
Here is my cloak, my book, my bed,  
And here my old despair.

“Here are my seasons: winter, spring,  
Summer the same, and autumn spills  
The fruits I look for; everything  
As on my heavenly hills.”

But this deeper prophetic note is not for  
the Stone Men and Earth Maidens. For  
them Pandora sings a simpler song:

Ye who from the stone and clay  
Unto godhood grope your way,  
Hastening up the morning see  
Yonder One in trinity!

Dionysus hath the wine,  
Eros hath the rose divine,  
Lord Apollo hath the lyre:  
Three and one is the soul's desire.

And the play ends with the song of the  
young Greek heart, flushed with the ecstasy  
of intellectual deliverance:

Apollo! Apollo! To-day  
We say we will follow thee and put all others away.

For thou alone, O thou alone art he  
Who settest the prisoned spirit free,  
And sometimes leadest the rapt soul on  
Where never mortal thought has gone;  
Till by the ultimate stream  
Of vision and of dream  
She stands  
With startled eyes and outstretched hands,  
Looking where other suns rise over other lands,  
And rends the lonely skies with her prophetic scream.

In the Masque of Judgment a wholly different apparatus is used, that of the Apocalypse, the Talmud, and Milton, handled with a certain pre-Raphaelite touch. But there is a Greek prelude. In this we see the Greek religion degenerate. It is not Apollo who has prevailed at last, but Dionysus. The bacchantes have captured a grave and beautiful youth who sings to his lute of purer gods than Dionysus, and they tear him limb from limb. All this is partly pointed out and partly reported by a shepherd lad. Reported to whom?

To Raphael, the angel to whom earth is dearest. He has been musing thus:

Another night like this would change my blood  
To human: the soft tumult of the sea  
Under the moon, the panting of the stars,  
The notes of querulous love from pool and clod,  
In earth and air the dreamy under-hum  
Of hived hearts swarming,— such another night  
Would quite unsphere me from my angelhood!  
Thrice have I touched my lute's least human strings  
And hushed their throbbing, hearing how they spake  
Sheer earthly, they that once so heavenly sang  
Above the pure unclouded psalmody.

If the play has a hero in the common sense, it is this Raphael. He is a rebel angel, but does not know it. In every deed he is loyal to God, but in his heart he takes the part of man against the stern judge. It is this disloyalty of the loyal which makes him so powerful a figure. Milton's Lucifer criticizes God out of hatred, Moody's Raphael out of love. Here is a Prometheus who loves Zeus, and the fact points the way toward Moody's solution of the problem.

Saddened though he is by the death of the youth, Raphael begins the play with a song:

On earth all is well, all is well on the sea;  
Though the day breaks dull  
All is well.  
Ere the thunder had ceased to yell  
I flew through the wash of the sea  
Wing and wing with my brother the gull.  
On the crumbling comb of the swell,  
With the spindrift slashing to lee,  
Poised we.

He is even interested in the little affairs of wood and meadow. The lark is up and singing, though the morning is gray and belated,

His nest was snug in the tufted grass,  
And shine sun may or stay away,  
Nests must be celebrated.

As Raphael flies up the valley he comes to a grim chasm rent in the earth, and wonders why so hideous a thing should mar a

beautiful world. As he gazes he sees a wounded lion dragging itself upward from the chasm. Then a drop of blood falls on his hand, and looking upward he perceives a wounded eagle. Now these are the lion and the eagle of God's throne. Presently he meets the Angels of the Horses, and his friend Uriel, angel of the sun, and learns what he should have known before. There is a rumor in heaven that God has wearied of the sins of men; that he will bring them to judgment; that first he will descend in likeness of a man and strive to save them; but that they who prove rebellious in this event shall be thrown to the Serpent, God's enemy. Everhateful to the servants of God, the Serpent has just now been attacked in vain by the lion and the eagle.

#### URIEL

Thou knowest what whispers are abroad in Heaven;  
How God pines ever for his broken dream,  
Broken by vague division, whence who knows!  
And pangs of restless love too strong to quench  
Save by the putting of creation forth,—  
Quenched then but for a moment, since the worlds  
He made to soothe Him only vex Him more,  
Being compact of passion, violent,  
Exceeding quarrelsome, and in their midst  
Man the arch-troubler. Fainter whispers say  
He ponders how to win his prodigal  
By some extremity to render back  
The heritage abused. . . .

#### RAPHAEL

A nine days' tale.

I hold him no such weakling! Yet... and yet...  
—We linger. Let me hear.



## URIEL

Some things He made

Out of his wistfulness, his ecstasy,  
And made them lovely fair; yet other some  
Out of his loathing, out of his remorse,  
Out of chagrin at the antinomy  
Cleaving his nature; these are monstrous shapes,  
Whereof the most abhorred one dwells below  
Within the caves and aged wells of dark  
Toward which this Valley plunges. There it waits  
Hoarding its ugly strength till time be full.

## RAPHAEL

How nam'st thou him?

## URIEL

The spirits meditative

Darkly name him: The Worm that Dieth not,—  
Perhaps the scourge reserved for those who prove  
Rebellious in the event, perhaps himself  
Scourge of the Scourger, biding but his hour  
To 'venge his miscreation. So he lies,  
A thing most opposite to spirit-kind,  
Most hated by the Four who guard the Throne,  
Within the viewless panoply of light  
Immediately ministrant. To them,  
But to the Lion and the Eagle most,  
Is given to gaze in the Eternal eyes  
Like hounds about a hunter's knee, that watch  
Each passion written on their master's brow,  
And having read his trouble, steal away  
To taste the troubler's flesh beneath their fangs.  
So stole away the Lion of the Throne,  
The Eagle for his aid. Beneath the moon  
Last night I came upon them stealing down,  
Too eager on the scent to mark my flight.  
Even to the splintered curb of the last profound  
I followed, and thence heard the battle rage  
Bellowed above by the loath elements.

In the next scene Raphael learns from  
the Angel of the Tree of Knowledge that  
the rumor is true:

Long and too long hath his compassion shrunk  
 From laying of the axe unto the trunk;  
 Nor, though the blade is ground, and kindled white  
 The furnace, will He quite  
 Even now,  
 Even now, though day is late,  
 Utterly burn and cast into the slough  
 The thing He made to love and still is loath to hate.  
 But first He will put off eternity  
 And put on body of their flowering clay,  
 That thus brought near He may familiarly  
 Close in each ear the word of pleading say.  
 Each blinding heart that stubbornly all astray  
 Shall hear Him calling closer than the blood  
 That both its ruby gates with tumult fills;  
 And to the wild procession of their wills  
 Raving idolatrous in the sacred wood,  
 His voice of poignant love  
 Though quiet as the voice of dust to dust  
 Shall clearly sound above  
 The beaten cymbal and the shrewd-blown shell,  
 Saying as soft as rain,  
 "The gift I gave I fain would have again,  
 Ye have not used it well!  
 Break ye the thyrsus and the phallic sign,  
 Put off the ivy and the violet,  
 A dearer standard shall before you shine  
 And for your lustral foreheads ye shall twine  
 A fairer garland yet,  
 When the processions mild  
 Shall greet you and behold you reconciled  
 And sing you home across the deathless asphodel.  
 But ye who will not so,  
 Take up the phallus and the wreathed snake,  
 Let the wine flow,  
 And let the mountains echo to your yell.  
 Your ways lie by the burning of the lake  
 Long kindled for your sake.

The second act comes at the time of the  
 crucifixion. There has been no word from  
 the mouth of God, much less any Miltonic

bargaining between Father and Son. Our poet takes the Trinity as One. God is God, and if he gives, he gives himself. It has sometimes been the misfortune of liberal religion so to pare down the Godhead as to dehumanize it, and the fault of orthodoxy so to split and parcel it as to suffer the same result. In either case the fault is to be impotently logical at the moment when spiritual passion is demanded. Over the nature of the Trinity more fires have been lighted than that by which Peter denied his Master, and more blood spilt than flowed on Calvary. But the Trinity is a human ideal, red with the longings of the human heart.

So is the Incarnation. And these ideals, to be understood, must be taken with a rush. To taste the potency of them, one may well strive to imagine God Almighty come down out of heaven. At all events this man Moody is a poet, not a rationalizing theologian, and it is as poetry that the following lines must be read.

#### RAPHAEL

But now the air was thick with panic shades  
Who made no answer when I cried to them  
Across the vortices of spiritual dark.  
Upon what stricken plain have I been flung,  
Whose miscreations blot with leaves like hands  
The far horizon light? Some glow-worm ghost  
Flees yonder, pauses, turns, and flees again:  
A woman spirit, by the anguish sweet  
Wakes in me at her anguish. Sister, hear!

## THE SPIRIT OF THE THRONE-LAMP

O Light undimmed, if thou art powerful,  
Speak to the wind! For see, my wings are torn  
And shelter not my lamp: 'tis almost spent.

### RAPHAEL

Me too the wind afflicts. Together thus  
Our wings will shield the flame. Already, see,  
It climbs and steadies in the crystal bowl,  
And purges half the terror from thine eyes,  
Thou love-lamp of the Lord! Are these his  
storms?

By his allowance are we thus distraught?

## THE SPIRIT OF THE LAMP

His throne is empty and Himself is gone.

### RAPHAEL

Child, fright hath crazed thee. Lean thy shaking  
breast

On mine: shut out the terrifying dark.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE LAMP

He died with grieving o'er the world He made.

But not for God is Raphael grieving when  
the third act reveals him just before dawn  
on the day of judgment. As he looks down  
upon the sleeping world, his heart breaking  
with the thought of what is at hand for the  
weak men and women, boys and girls, whom  
he has loved, he seems to see against the  
sky God hanging once more dead, an of-  
fered sacrifice, and he hopes that the mer-  
ciful is still merciful.

Alas, on this lone height my pinions fail,  
And half my dreaming world unvisited!  
As a sick woman, who, when morning glooms

Must leave for aye the house where she was wed,  
 Yearns to behold the thrice-familiar rooms,  
 And rises trembling, and with watch-lamp goes  
 From chamber unto chamber, stopping now  
 To muse upon her dead child's pictured brow,  
 And now to dream of little merriments  
 Enacted, and of trivial dear events,  
 Until her weakness grows  
 Upon her, and she sinks and cannot rise,—  
 So, since upon the sad and prescient skies  
 The darkness of this ultimate night was shed,  
 My feet from haunted place to haunted place  
 Of my familiar earth have kept their pace. . . .  
 O heart of man, how I have loved thee! . . .  
 O Dreamer! O Desirer! Goer down  
 Unto untraveled seas in untried ships!  
 O crusher of the unimagined grape  
 On unconceived lips!  
 O player upon a lordly instrument,  
 No man or god hath had in mind to invent;  
 O cunning how to shape  
 Effulgent Heaven and scoop out bitter Hell  
 From the little shine and saltness of a tear;  
 Sieger and harrier,  
 Beyond the moon, of thine own builded town,  
 Each morning won, each eve impregnable,  
 Each noon vanished sheer!

Michael brings him word that God's ven-  
 geance is full wrought. Those who yielded  
 up their passion and their wills are saved.  
 And we hear the song of Redeemed Spirits  
 flying past below.

In the wilds of life astray,  
 Held far from our delight,  
 Following the cloud by day  
 And the fire by night,  
 Came we a desert way.  
 O Lord, with apples feed us,  
 With flagons stay!  
 By Thy still waters lead us!

Those who refused lie thunderstruck in the valley of judgment, where presently the Serpent will overtake and destroy them quite. Michael summons Raphael to return to heaven.

Raphael refuses. Never again shall the flower-like souls of heaven grow brighter at his coming. Uriel joins them and tries to mediate, but he cannot help siding with Raphael.

#### URIEL

Who shall dispute finalties with Him?  
Not Uriel. But as far as Uriel sees,  
Salvation lies annulled in yonder Vale  
And prone are God's true helpers.

#### MICHAEL

Clay of clay!

Wassailers, fleshlings, quarrel-mongers, thieves  
Of pleasure, plighters of unholy troth,  
Mimes, gypsies, idol-breakers, idol-smiths,  
Dervishing fantasists—most likely help!

#### URIEL

Unlikely: yet the marrow of his bones;  
Heat of the breath of his mouth; corpuscles red  
Energic in his veins, loud gainsayers  
Of death's insinuating whisper, "Peace!" . . .  
Before the heavens were spread, or He himself  
Rose from his changeless and unpictured dream,  
These stirred in Him, demanding to be dowered  
With individual shape and destiny,—  
Each one a soul, yet each incorporate  
With his great soul, which to far happy ends  
Should henceforth in a million shapes of will  
Immensely groan and travail . . .

#### RAPHAEL

Why did He quench their passion? I have walked  
The rings of planets where strange-coloured moons

Hung thick as dew, in ocean orchards feared  
The glaucous tremble of the living boughs  
Whose fruit hath eyes and purpose; but nowhere  
Found any law but this: Passion is power,  
And, kindly tempered, saves. All things declare  
Struggle hath deeper peace than sleep can bring.

### URIEL

This day declares He deemeth otherwise.  
The Shining Wrestler, tired of strife, hath slain  
The dark antagonist whose enmity  
Gave Him rejoicing sinews; but of Him  
His foe was flesh of flesh and bone of bone;  
With suicidal hand He smote him down:  
Soon we shall feel His lethal pangs begin.

The fourth act gives us the evening of  
the judgment day. The whole trough of the  
valley is filled with the bodies of the lost.  
Raphael refuses to leave them.

My lot is cast with these: I watch to-night  
Here islanded in death.

But not all are dead. One by one many  
a youth and girl, many a man and woman,  
find strength to speak to each other in self-  
defence. Various are the reasons why they  
could not pay the price exacted. One youth  
could not give up the eagle freedom of his  
thought to launch his soul "as a tame hawk  
haggard down the wind." One could not  
pluck from out his blood the old companion-  
ships. A girl had heard the warning—  
heard how God had died to give the sinner  
grace, had seen it in the very sangrael of the  
sun, brimmed with redeeming blood—but

it meant giving up her lover. A woman fiercely declares that already she had slain her heart's desire on God's altars, but in vain.

The scene recalls neither Dante's hell nor Milton's. Moody shows us human nature as it is, each personality a gordian knot of good and ill which no judgment accessible to human imagination can safely cut. Dante too acknowledged that good and ill spring from the same stock, but he fell back upon Aristotle and arrogated to himself the power of measuring each deficiency or excess of quality that makes all the difference. Moody lives after Darwin, who once for all showed species shading imperceptibly into species. Moody does not call black white, but he shows in this scene a moral discrimination and a moral sympathy that put him among the noblest friends of humanity.

When I read this scene in 1900, just after the book left the press, I wrote to the author that no such effort of the creative imagination as this Masque had yet been made in America. And after twelve years this seems to me still true. Great as must be the admiration of every lover of literature for Dante, we have sorely needed poetry of distinction to set over against him — for the Purgatorio is not an adequate offset to the Inferno. You remember those lines which celebrate the damnation of the peacemaker,



Anastasius: "Here, because of the stench of the abyss, we sheltered ourselves behind a [burning] tomb, whereon was writ, 'I guard Pope Anastasius, whom Photinus led astray:'"

Et quivi per l'orribile soperchio  
Del puzzo, che il profondo abisso gitta,  
Ci raccostamo dietro ad un coperchio  
D'un grande avello, ov' io vidi una scritta  
Che diceva: *Anastasio papa guardo,*  
*Lo qual trasse Fotin della via dritta!*

Over against that set these brave words  
of Moody's last rebel:

Oh, how should Man into the dust be trod,  
Who is himself a god?  
How should the lord of each enchanted isle  
For gazing on a brother-god's high sacrificial sorrow  
Say himself low and vile,  
Or for that Sufferer's sake  
Teen to his own undarkened being borrow,  
And in a gloom of abnegation break  
The wand wherewith he summoned from their sleep  
The whirlwinds of the everlasting deep.

Man is dependent enough, God knows;  
dependent for every breath and heart-  
beat. But only mercy shown can make him  
humble.

Even as the last rebel speaks, the Ser-  
pent appears. To save the life of Raphael,  
Michael seizes the all too human angel  
and bears him aloft to the mountain side.  
Awaking from a swoon, Raphael perceives  
that the Serpent has destroyed the lost  
and instead of retreating to his den is ad-

vancing on heaven itself. The judgment, essentially unjust, has fed the Serpent's courage. Raphael is loyal to his God even now, and struggles to rise and make his way into the angelic host, where a minstrel's hand shall bear a sword for once.

But a mortal weariness seizes him; his mind wanders; he fancies himself once more picking little flowers of earth for gifts to the spirits of the lamps. Suddenly these themselves appear, flying in terror from heaven. The Serpent has met God and triumphed!

Look, where the red volcano of the fight  
Hath burst, and down the violated hills  
Pours ruin and repulse, a thousand streams  
Choked with the pomp and furniture of Heaven. . . .

The spirits fugitive from Heaven's brink  
Put off their substance of ethereal fire  
And mourn phantasmal on the phantom Alps. . . .

The moon smoulders; and naked from their seats  
The stars arise with lifted hands, and wait.

So ends a drama which is as important in the history of literature as it is wonderful in phraseology. Expressed in historical terms, Greek religion has failed because the Olympian reform did not bring sufficient self-control along with its intellectual illumination. Expressed in historical terms, Apocalyptic Christianity has failed, because it despaired of human nature. Expressed in theological terms, man has failed to sep-

arate himself from God ; and in turn God has failed to separate himself from man. What then remains ? The third member of the trilogy must embody in affirmative form what has negatively been foreshadowed — the absolute mystical unity of God and man.

Is it a possible subject for a drama ? A critic cannot avoid skepticism. It is a subject for parable, but even that of the Vine and the Branches is drawn from subhuman sources. The Fourth Gospel has its own sweet and inalienable greatness, and presents the eternal in the midst of time as no other book ever written has done. But which is the more dramatic — the Gethsemane of John eighteen, or the Gethsemane of Mark fourteen ? Goethe, who touched upon our general theme so nobly in his Prometheus, with its "Hast du nicht alles selbst vollendet, Heilig Glühend Herz," failed when he strove to dramatize Spinoza's doctrine of the inseparableness of God and Man. The second part of Faust tries to show a vigorous human life under the aspect of eternity, but it never gets beyond the dome of many-colored glass which stains eternity. Faust finds no eternal bliss save in the rapture of temporal endeavor and temporal strife.

And yet how deep lies the instinct of noble souls to see in strife only an illusion. By millions men have felt that they erred

when they strove—"Es irrt der Mensch so lang er strebt." Error! It is a watchword of a certain type of contemporary Christianity which is deeply imbued with Neoplatonism, and is weary of needless strife. And even common-sense tells us that our Promethean freedom lies in our knowledge. Tyrannical religion was born of fear, quite as Lucretius says, and all the struggle against Zeus was struggle with an imaginary creature. Professor Dewey has recently written: "If we take any of the great works in which the past endeavored to document the infinite mystery—for instance the Divine Comedy of Dante—we see that its harshness, its violence, its narrowness are all its own, and that its beauty, its power to pacify passion and nourish sentiment, are borrowed from our own more just perspective."

Some such thought as this of Professor Dewey must have been in Moody's mind when he determined to write his third drama. It was not an impossible task if the world was ready for it. A new type of drama—in which the pomp of struggle should seem like a mere battle fancied in the clouds; a drama in which soul is drawn to soul as flame to flame, and the plot unfolds as light unfolds in the dawn.

For his chief character he reverted to Eve, our first mother and God's first rebel. Eve is a Semitic conception, and in the Se-

mitic soul there has been a very remarkable union of energy and acquiescence, pride and humility. Revolting against every nation in turn, the ancient Hebrews never revolted against God. But in the myth of Eve, the Semite had failed to speak nobly of womanhood, and Moody determined to recast her story in the light of our best appreciation of the eternal womanly. He would do this even though he had to deny the doctrine of the Fall, or show it as a needless misunderstanding between God and man. He would reveal forgotten values, and retrieve from its present status of cheap jest a character sufficiently tragic, sufficiently majestic by any standard.

He made preliminary studies, two of which, magnificent poetry though they are, he rejected as of too coarse a fibre for the play. These are the poems called "I am the Woman," and "The Death of Eve," the latter of which gives its name to the drama itself. In these he felt the presence of too much scorn. His own impassioned nature must be bridled and bitted before he could write of a perfect womanhood, mighty in its gentleness. Imagine Byron subjecting himself to such self-discipline before writing "Cain"! Those who know Moody only as the author of "The Great Divide" are far from guessing the full spiritual nobility of the man.

Never did poet make ready to tread so difficult a path. His Eve must be heroic in calmness, sweet in her disgrace. She must so deeply feel—after the lapse of ages of years—the presence of God in her life, that she will return to Eden and face God, and yet she must meet every discouragement that can confront a fallen woman. What matters it to her who is “back-returned through life’s deep changes to her changeless self”? None save young Jubal, with his poet soul, would have the courage to accompany her. Yet this pilgrimage is for love of all her children, and most of all for Cain, her first born—“a herald star in the wilderness appearing.” Hasty and hot he was, but never cruel. To the strong city he has built against his enemies she will make her way, and win him back. He shall call his wild heart in even as she has done. Will she fear the mark upon his brow? Nay, she will kiss him on the brow.

For on your bloods and bodies ere the birth  
Myself have made on you a mightier sign.

Cain must learn to know that he has never in reality been sundered from the heart of Eve or the heart of God, and he must join the pilgrimage. Then, too, they must be joined by some maiden, some girlish figure now under a curse, but embodying the redeemed future of the race; some Abdera, a

greater Alcyone. Nor would Eve's task be accomplished till in some way Eve's influence should draw the aged Adam himself back to the scene of his defeat. In all this she would still be breaking the command of exile, and yet at the last the act must be sanctioned by God. In a concluding scene and lyric there would come not her death, but her impalpable transfiguration and disappearance, while Jubal and Abdera would draw together with broken words of tenderness. To them would be left the promise of a renewed earth-life not less joyous than that of the Greek, not less responsible than that of the Hebrew. Such was the plan of the play, as I paraphrase it from the words of Mrs. Moody.

And the first act of it was written, showing no diminution of grasp upon the theme. Moody lived to write the verses of reconciliation between the mighty Eve and the accursed Cain, yes, and to make Byron's drama of Cain seem tawdry. For Moody had no thought of solving the Promethean problem by weakly abandoning our noblest ideals of either God or man. Yet it is possible that he was fortunate in his death, for as Thoreau was wont to say, it takes two to make a book in any age—an author and a reader.

Steadily men have been freeing themselves from the grip of the supernatural. The

leaders of thought are more and more certain that they can get along without God. But it is a question whether the merely natural is worth while. Just when man is boasting most loudly of his conquest of nature, science raises the quiet inquiry as to how he knows there is such a thing as man. May it not be that we and all our trivial affairs are but bubbles on the flood so glibly called "nature"? Rather than be lost in nature, man may yet prefer to be lost in God. Rather may he find energy to renew his Promethean efforts by faith in a justice more central than human justice—a justice working in the very core of the cosmic process.

To some such conclusion as this I see but one alternative. Stripped of all faith in the supernatural, man can still play the part of Prometheus in the face of crushing cosmic forces—can if he thinks it worth while. He can perhaps feel with Mr. Bertrand Russell, the Cambridge mathematician, "that it only remains to cherish the lofty thoughts which ennoble his little day, proudly defiant of the irresistible forces which tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation."

As for Moody—the rest is silence.

Good night, sweet prince;  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.



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