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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE WAR

WILL the readers of THE UNPOPULAR be generous enough to accept the disavowal of arrogance in the title of this essay? They may be assured that, if the writer makes any pretensions to philosophy, it is only on the very modest basis of the Horatian command to wonder at nothing — *nil admirari*. Sitting in his study and conning the daily reports of the war and some of the innumerable opinions it has called into type, going about among his friends and listening with stopped mouth to their clamorous comments, such a man might well be impressed by the wide-spread surprise and consternation over the grim reality thrust upon us, and might be saddened by his inability to share in those feelings. He would be humiliated at times by the reproach of pessimism, in answer to his occasional apologetic protests; and so would try to flatter himself with the hope that his lack of wonder was philosophical, as if that perhaps others were not so much amazed as, in their desire to appear humane, their words seemed to imply.

For, after all, what are the facts? Just one hundred years ago Europe was coming out of the desolating madness of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, exhausted and apparently chastened. But a century is a long time to those who believe in the acceleration of Progress. Well, just fifty years ago our Civil War was dragging to its end, and since then we have seen this succession of conflicts: the German-Austrian, the Franco-Prussian, the Servo-Bulgarian, the Turco-Russian, the Spanish-American, the Anglo-Boer, the Greco-Turkish,

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the Russo-Japanese, the Italo-Tripolitan, the Balkan, and now the European. That is a war at an average interval of about four and one-half years, with rather increasing frequency towards the close of the period; and still the list takes no account of campaigns and conquests which might with some propriety be called wars, of internal dissension which threatened or actually effected revolution, and of the ceaseless fighting in which no European country was involved. Five years was the period which Frederick the Great, calculating from history in his day, gave for the recurrence of war. It can scarcely be said that within the memory of men now growing old we know an era of peace whatever may be the fortune of the coming generation.

What, then, is the cause of the sudden dismay at this latest apparition of war? Why are thoughtful men like ex-President Taft, men who have kept a wary eye on the doings of mankind, "stunned," as they say, by the taking of what is happening? No doubt the sheer extent of the action, the millions of soldiers engaged, has something to do with their feeling, for we are all of us more or less subject to the glamour of magnitude, and think because a thing is larger, its quality must be different. No doubt, too, the imagination is excited by the devilishness of the new machinery of death, by the power of the long-range guns, the insidious terror of craft that smite inhumanly under cover of the water, and drop destruction from the clouds. We have never known these things before, and it is almost as if we were in the position of a too cunning Frankenstein, shuddering at the demon he had created for his own ruin. Or it is as if we were finding something more than fiction in the fable of the Erewhonians, who feared lest the machines they had invented might, in the process of evolution, develop into self-conscious automata, and become the masters of man instead of his slave:

There is no security against the ultimate development of mechanical consciousness, in the machines possessing little consciousness now. A mollusc has not much consciousness. Re-

fect upon the extraordinary advance which machines have made during the last few hundred years, and note how slowly the animal and vegetable kingdoms are advancing. The more highly organized machines are creatures not so much of yesterday, as of the last five minutes, so to speak, in comparison with past time. . . .

. . . The servant glides by imperceptible approaches into the master; and we have come to such a pass that, even now, man must suffer terribly on ceasing to benefit the machines. . . . Man's very soul is due to machines; it is a machine-made thing: he thinks as he thinks, and feels as he feels, through the work that machines have wrought upon him. . . .

They have preyed upon man's groveling preference for his material over his spiritual interests, and have betrayed him into supplying that element of struggle and warfare without which no race can advance. The lower animals progress because they struggle with one another; the weaker die, the stronger breed and transmit their strength. The machines, being of themselves unable to struggle, have got man to do their struggling for them: as long as he fulfils this function duly, all goes well with him — at least he thinks so.

But beyond the mere effect of numbers and of machinery on the imagination, there is a deeper dismay at what appears for the moment to be the moral *débâcle* of civilization and the reversal of all our hopes. The other wars we could somehow explain away. They were already covered with the mist of the past, or they were fought out in some remote island or continent, or were between nations of Europe that have lingered behind in the march of Progress. But now the issue is thrust upon us. Has all our increase of knowledge come to this, and shall one of the literary harlequins of London cry out with impunity that the age of science is preëminently the age of war? Must all the talk of peace and the brotherhood of man for these fifty or these hundred years end in the human shambles? Have our wisest prophets, our contrivers of hope, been leading us astray all this time with false lights? And is he the only philosopher who can comfort himself with the words of a poet now more than two thousand years old?

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Not now I learn that life is but a shadow;
 Nor should I fear to say the seeming wise,
 And those who build high arguments of hope,
 In our dejection bear the larger blame.
 For still of all mankind not one hath peace:
 Fortune may smile, and such a lot I count
 More prosperous indeed — but happy, no man!

Let me be explicit. I am not a Nietzschean advocate of war, gloating over the preachers of peace; I am not a victim of despair; my prayer is always: "Woe, and still woes; yet shall the good prevail." But to one who tries to analyze the present state of mind in America, it must be evident that the contrast between our exaltation of peace, and the actuality of things, has produced a nervous bewilderment not unlike that of Falkland, the troubled statesman of the English Revolution, who, "sitting among his friends, often, after a deep silence and frequent sighs, would, with a shrill and sad accent, ingeminate the word *Peace, Peace*; and would passionately profess that the very agony of the war, and the view of the calamities and desolation the kingdom did and must endure, took his sleep from him, and would shortly break his heart."

Now it used to be the belief of an ancient people, superstitious you may call them, yet one of the great promoters of civilization, that the invisible powers behind the things we see were wont to observe the thoughts and actions of mankind with watchful jealousy, and were particularly sick to avenge those who, from arrogance or folly, forgot, as the saying was, to "think as mortals." Upon the minds of such men they sent a nemesis, in the form of madness or dazed bewilderment. *Atê* it was named. And to one listening today to the language of the press and the street it might almost seem as if the avenging gods were not dead. Certainly our trouble wears a face strangely like that of the daemonic *Atê*, and suggests that we too, instead of facing the truth of human nature, may have been floating for these hundred years in a haze of arrogant unreality.

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The Philosophy of the War 5

I say "we," meaning of course not the sober unregarded minority, but the idealogues who have had the ear of the multitude. To think as a mortal is to compromise, to mediate, to find the golden mean; whereas the world has been fluctuating in suspense between two extreme and utterly opposed philosophies of life.

On the one hand the century, especially in its latter decades, has been filled with the noise of the prophets of war, and of might as in itself the supreme and only right. Germany, no doubt, has been the most active workshop of this propaganda, with its spirit of militarism and its ideal of the Superman. Strange rumors are troubling the brain of the good unreading citizen. He is hearing the name of a certain Nietzsche, who has travestied Darwinism into a philosophy of the Will to Power, and has taught thousands of Germans that "active sympathy for the weak is more dangerous to the human race than any crime," and that "at the bottom of all distinguished races the beast of prey is not to be mistaken." The newspapers are telling him of a certain Treitschke, with a whole school of lesser historians behind him, who has been drilling university students to believe that "a nation's military efficiency is the exact coefficient of a nation's idealism," and that "war is the greatest factor in the furtherance of culture." And then, perhaps, his attention is called to a startling book by a retired cavalry general of the German army, Friedrich von Bernhardi, who not only declared a war of annihilation with Great Britain the one thing necessary for his country, but foresaw with astonishing precision how this war was to be waged.

Words such as these seem now to reverberate with the very sound of the Prussian guns; they terrify us. But are we as innocent as we appear? May it not be that to some extent our innocence is a more flattering name for indolence of brain and aversion to the frowning truth? I suspect that, more than we were aware, we have bowed before the image of the Superman. Our Manchester

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the actual argument
 economics, our business expansion, and our practical politics have not been entirely unsupported by an inarticulate, sometimes a fairly articulate, philosophy of success at any hazard, which has an odd resemblance to Nietzsche's perversion of the evolutionary law of struggle and survival. We have a few handy aphorisms in place of metaphysics; for example, that commerce follows the flag. Recently, too, there has been a concerted attempt to spread the purer gospel of Nietzsche among the English and Americans; and if our lack of intellectualism has made such a direct propaganda futile for the most part, the lesson, under the disguise of patriotism, has been swallowed with considerable avidity. Just now everybody is reading a little book by the late Professor Cramb, of Queen's College, London, introduced in this country with a laudatory preface by the Hon. Joseph H. Choate. It is called *Germany and England*, and consists of a series of lectures delivered last winter in London to applauding audiences. It is an eloquent and, in passages, a really noble appeal to the sentiment of national duty and obligation; but the conclusion of the whole argument is a bold attempt to justify the naked philosophy of Might:

Thus, while preparing to found a world-empire, Germany is also preparing to create a world-religion. . . .

In Europe, I say, this conflict between Christ and Napoleon for the mastery over the minds of men is the most significant spiritual phenomenon of the twentieth century. . . . But it is in Germany alone that as yet Napoleonism has acquired something of the clearness and self-consistency of a formulated creed. . . .

In the writings of Nietzsche and of the followers of Nietzsche they [the Germans] study the same Napoleonism transforming the principles of everyday life, breathing a new spirit into ethics, transfiguring the tedious, half-hypocritical morality of an earlier generation. . . .

Corsica, in a word, has conquered Galilee.

And the future? All there, is as yet obscure. . . . But one mighty issue is secured: Germany at least shall not confront the twentieth century and its thronging vicissitudes as the wor-

shipper of an alien God, thrall of an alien morality. Dazzling as Elpore with the dawnstar above her brow, the New Germany, knit once more to the divine genius within herself, delivered from the loathed burden of the past, the cancer of the centuries, confronts the vast darkness.

So much for what Professor Cramb calls the "legitimate impulses" of Germany, her desires to make a world-religion of Napoleonism. But what of England? There follows in Professor Cramb's lecture a pretty picture of England's willingness to embrace all the world in her empire by peaceful means, having indeed fairly had her fill of war in the past. But, he continues —

There still beyond the North Sea is the stern Watcher, un-sleeping, un-resting, bound to her own fate, . . . waiting for every sign of England's weakness. . . .

Whatever principle may govern individual friendships, alliances between nations and states are governed by self-interest only; they are valid only so long as mutual fears or mutual desires persist in equal force. For the friendship of nations is an empty name; peace is at best a truce on the battlefield of Time; the old myth or the old history of the struggle for existence is behind us, but the struggle for power — who is to assign bounds to its empire, or invent an instrument for measuring its intensity?

Now it is scarcely probable that Mr. Choate, when writing his introduction to these lectures, had at heart to commend so dithyrambic a sermon on the religion of pure force, or to uphold before American citizens Professor Cramb's identification of war with "the power which the spirit of man possesses to pursue the Ideal." His introduction, if it may be said with due respect, is just another symptom of that general distraction into which we have all been thrown by the conflicting voices of the age. We are caught, as it were, in the vortex caused by the meeting of two violent extremes, and the mind is made dizzy. For this is a peculiar mark of the times — that alongside of the preaching of war and self-justifying power, and

above it, and around it, there has flowed an even more luminous stream of talk of a very different sort, opposing to it the glories of peace, the beauty of social righteousness, the brotherhood of man, and the naturalness of universal sympathy — to Napoleonism opposing the gospel of humanitarianism.

There is no need to quote authorities or cite illustrations to show the prevalence of these humanitarian doctrines. They come to us in a thousand forms, and we recognize them under all their disguises. The main current of modern legislation flows from a principle of equalitarianism, which is merely another name for a desire to take away from the strong their advantage in the struggle of life. It would be difficult otherwise to explain the multiplication of laws designed to destroy the privileges of property and to intrench the privileges of labor; or to account for the many-headed movement to eliminate any check upon the immediate will of the majority; or to interpret the swelling reverence for the word "people" as expressing an idea opposed to the authority of character and education. There is no need, I say, to particularize or to prove the existence of these doctrines.

Perhaps, however, we are not so fully aware of the fact that the home of Nietzscheism and Treitschkeism is also the land in which their contrary has been developed to the highest point in theory and practice. It is in German literature today, as represented by Hauptmann and Sudermann and their kind, that you will find the crudest, or, if you please, the most vivid realization of humanitarian sentiment. It was to a German woman that the Nobel prize was awarded for the most effective literary aid to the propaganda of peace. Above all, it is in Germany that Socialism fattened and grew strong, and reared itself as the logical and organized enemy of economic and military competition. In that land of intellectualism, more clearly than anywhere else, you will find the two philosophies, or ways of viewing life, presented as hostile

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[The De Tocqueville]

ideals which draw the thoughts of men in different directions, and exclude any sane compromise. Nor is it much of an exaggeration to say that where, in other countries, a spirit of compromise exists, as it does in the practical minds of England, this is due more to an unintelligent adherence to tradition than to a rationally discovered law of mediation.

No doubt it is a weakness inherent in human nature to follow the impulse of temperament to one extreme or the other, but it is a question whether the history of the past offers anything just like this utter opposition of current beliefs. To ask the causes of this antinomy would be to lose ourselves in a metaphysical search, insoluble perhaps at any time, certainly unprofitable here and now; but the falsehood involved in it is apparent, and some of its effects are easily measured.

Consider the extreme of Nietzscheism as it has been formulated in Germany. Against that sheer justification of the law of the jungle, every healthy instinct in us revolts. War is not a lovely thing: it brings with it suffering and injustice for which there is no direct compensation; it is mainly the work of the demon of ignorance and destruction, and any people, or class of people, that identifies war and culture is living a lie. "A thing that is wholly a sham cannot in this universe of ours endure for ever. It may endure for a day, but its doom is certain; there is no room for it in a world governed by valor, by the Will to Power." The words are Treitschke's, and they are aimed at what he regards as the sin of England. They are, indeed, not without their sting, for sham is the reverse side of that truly British form of opportunism which has built up an empire by obeying the call of the moment and looking for larger purposes after the event. But Treitschke should have remembered that there is another and more deadly form of sham, a cant of ideas, that may not endure over long in a world governed also by the Will

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to Truth. "You say that a good cause will sanctify even war! I tell you that a good war will sanctify any cause!" That is Nietzscheism. It means a fundamental shirking of moral discrimination which no logical straightforwardness can conceal. The result of such thinking is the invasion of Belgium, and the revulsion of a world's sympathy from the invaders.

Another result, or concomitant, of such thinking is the readiness of German scholars to send out justificatory appeals of a sort that are bringing a good many people to say openly what they have long suspected, that the hallmark of Teutonic scholarship is an enormous mental activity with an initial lack of mental integrity. That is one of our lessons.

But, on the other hand, it is equally false to hold that there is never a just cause of war. We do not think England was wrong, however much her interest may have been concerned in her righteousness, in arming for the revenge of Belgium. We do not think that France is wrong in defending her soil. Nor is war in itself wholly bestial. There has grown up amongst us of recent years a literature devoted to the propaganda of peace, both in the form of fiction and of exhortation, which throws into vivid relief all the horrors incidental to the battle field, and slurs over or denies the honor and exaltation that are also a part of the soldier's life. That literature, I say boldly, is as false and mischievous as its Nietzschean antagonist. There is an element of heroism in war which, through all the waste and evil, has not been without its salutary effect. We know this of wars in the past; we shall in time recognize this of the present war. Is it because he has passed his life in a career entirely cruel and vile, that the typical soldier, in his later years of retirement, is a man so true and honorable, often so gentle? Which of us has not known and loved the "happy warrior?"

He who, though thus endued as with a sense
And faculty for storm and turbulence,
Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;
Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
Are at his heart; and such fidelity
It is his darling passion to approve;
More brave for this, that he hath much to love.

Shall we, in our ingeminations of peace, forget all that we have felt in the reading of history, and slander our instincts?

Such, as I see it, is the falsehood that lies at the source of both extremes, whether of Nietzscheism or of humanitarianism. And the result of living in these extremes, as I see it, has been to make men the slaves rather than the masters of circumstances, and to fill them with amazement at the logic of events. Most of us in this country have little need to be warned against the falsehood of Nietzscheism; but there is a wholesome lesson for us if our present state of wonder shall bring us to reflect on the falsehood underlying the kind of humanitarianism that is everywhere poured into our ears, and on its consequences. God forbid that I should be accounted an advocate of war! It is at best a bitter medicine; and I am of the opinion of the ancient Lydian king in his hour of defeat, who thought that no one is so infatuated as to prefer war to peace; for in peace children inter their parents, whereas war inverts the order of nature and causes parents to inter their children. These things had happened, he knew not how, by the pleasure of the gods. And so for ourselves, let us by every fair means endeavor to throw off this fatality that has lain upon mankind; let us grasp any honorable instrument that works for tranquillity without degeneracy. But we shall not reach that end by closing our eyes to the light.

And first let us consider two practical errors of the humanitarians. They have not only wantonly distorted the image of war, but they have also tried to veil the fact —

1 some just war
2 not all war bestial

Handwritten mark resembling a stylized 'A' or 'K' inside a circle, with the word 'SARINNA' written vertically to the right.

the unhappy fact, if you will — that the sheer fighting instinct is still strong in the human heart. At the time of our dispute with Spain I chanced to be in a large western city, and I shall never forget how eager the better young men of that place were to enlist. It is absurd to suppose that they were much moved by pity for the Cubans, or to any considerable extent by the love of justice: they were carried away by the pure lust of fighting and adventure. The gray-haired lovers of peace should remember that there is always at their heels a generation of youth.

It is an equal error to believe that the cause of peace is advanced by flirting with radicalism, and accepting the protestations of the various socialistic parties at their face value. One of the most striking features of the present war, and to some innocent minds one of the most disheartening features, is the quickness with which the radical organizations of Europe forgot their platform of international brotherhood, and rushed into the mêlée, each declaiming loudly, the German as loudly as the French, that it was going to shed blood for the spread of democracy. There has been a curious illusion entertained pretty widely by a certain class of enthusiasts, themselves not radical, that radicalism might be played with as a humanizing instrument, as if an organization which avowedly owes its efficiency to class hatred, and in its class warfare resorts to dynamite or any other form of violence, would not, when its spirit of hatred was diverted to international rivalry, be ready for the same sort of weapons.

That illusion, for a time at least, has been shattered; but a deeper deceit has coiled itself into our hearts. Too many of the seekers after tranquillity and righteousness have been nursing the hope that they could counteract an extreme doctrine of egotism by opposing to it their equally extreme doctrine of sympathy — a vain and fatal hope. Two excesses in morality do not make a balance; two contrary self-indulgences do not result in self-control; two contradictory lies do not create truth. Instead of

counteracting the egotistic tendencies of mankind, the preaching of an exaggerated humanitarianism rather inflames them and renders them more efficient. We may be sure, for instance, that Professor Cramb would not have spoken so audaciously and so acceptably before a London audience, had not he and they been led into extravagance by such talk of the pacifists as could be accused of sapping the vitality of the nation. And Nietzsche himself wrote with the avowed intention of checking the strong current of sympathy for the weak, the unbridled humanitarian schemes of so-called progress, and the pacificism, which he summed up under the loathed name of Christianity.

Just as surely as a man who bases his conduct on sentiment rather than on character and knowledge, will weaken his resistance to prejudice and passion, just so surely a false humanitarianism will not only fail to bring about the brotherhood of mankind, but will make a people more sensitive to the gusts of international hatred. Europe is now testifying to the truth of that statement. There is something peculiarly atrocious in the rancors of the present war and in the bitterness of the countercharges of crime. What Germany is feeling may be known from a recent interview with Privy Councillor Richard Witting, one of the leading financiers of the Empire. "I tell you that it is a fight to the finish," he is reported to have said, his whole body quivering with emotion. "God! how we hate England and the English, that nation of hypocrites and criminals which has brought this misery upon us and upon the world. And for what? For greed, greed and envy, to crush the German nation because England found herself decadent, and felt her dominance and domineering in the world endangered." Or if you wish to know what the best Germans are saying of the allied armies, consider these words in a letter from Herr von Brandt, the former Ambassador to China, now living in Weimar, a gentleman of the finest stamp and the most cosmopolitan experience. He writes:

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radicalism of peace

But against what war-devils we have to fight! From the small districts in Alsatia the French have occupied, they have carried away hundreds and hundreds of women and children and old men as so-called hostages, thrown them into dungeons and ill-treated them in every way. The Russians have acted still worse. They have tortured, mutilated and murdered the population; where they have passed, no house has remained standing, or if one did, it was so filthy that the smell was unbearable, and nobody could venture into it.

That is the German side of it, and our feelings towards her are of the same sort. We may be right in holding Germany responsible for the immediate outbreak of hostilities, and in condemning, even harshly condemning, her conduct of the war; but there is nevertheless a touch of the irrational and the indecent in our frenzy of bitterness towards that country, and in readiness to gloat over every tale of her brutality. That is particularly the case in academic circles. A land to whom a few years ago most of our scholars were looking up as to the leader of scientific thought and education generally, they suddenly cast out of the pale of humanity; they mock its culture and deny its civilization. Alas, he who examines his breast honestly will discover that no small part of that loathing is mixed up with resentment because he himself has been proved the dupe of empty dreams. Not the pleasantest trait of our human nature is its constant need of a scapegoat for its own sins and follies.

That is the discreditable aspect of our amazement; and if Horace is right in saying that the beginning of wisdom is to wonder at nothing, it would be well to cease being "stunned" at what others are doing, and to take thought to set our own house in order. Before the gate of the Paradise from which we have been ejected, are flaming the swords of the two avenging angels, inexorable, whether we call them the nemesis of the gods or the law of nature. But the earth is ours, and the desire of peace still abides. I leave to others to devise practical schemes of procedure;

but one thing is sure, we shall not really profit from the frightful discipline of this experience unless we effect some change in our inner attitude towards life, and so escape from the false dilemma of our philosophy. As I have said, from one of the extremes, in its intellectual form, we may seem to be not so much in peril. Nietzscheism has never been avowed by any considerable number of English-speaking people, however deeply it may have entered into the unconscious motives of their action and into their instinctive worship of success. But we need very much to examine the bases of the absolute humanitarianism that has won our tolerance, if not our allegiance. We need to be less swayed by our sympathies and more guided by the discriminations of reason; to control our equalitarian relaxation, of which recent legislation has been over full, by a stricter idea of the distinctions of value in human achievement; to be less ready to throw upon society the guilt of the individual, and to be firmer in our recognition of personal duty and responsibility; to revise our philosophy of emotional expansion, with its tendency to glorify extremes, for a saner perception of the virtue that lies in limits, and for a keener search after the truth that dwells in mediation.

The whole matter can be summed up in a single word — justice. For justice is nothing but the balance within a man's own soul, self-imposed and self-sustained, the will to know clearly the middle truth between the philosophy of egotism, which declares that it is for the strong and prudent to take whatever they desire, and the contrary philosophy of equalitarian sympathy.

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Soul JUSTICE

I trust it may not appear an inopportune moment to write of philosophy and these inner dispositions of the individual soul, when the better part of the world is in arms for domination or self-preservation. Rather, when civilization itself might seem to be almost at hazard, then is the time to examine the ideas that have been swaying

ideas sweeping great masses of men

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great masses of men, both the educated and the uneducated. For if anything is sure in mortal life, it is that if a man thinks the truth, he will in the end find the peace of self-possession; and that if a man thinks untruth, he shall be a prey to the fluctuations of passion. And as it is with a man, so it is with a nation. We are all the servants of philosophy, for good or for evil.

One of the encouraging symptoms for the future is the fact that a few people, in England at least, have begun to ask whether something may not have been amiss in the current ways of thinking, and within themselves. Such is the theme of a recent poem by Alfred Noyes in the *London Times*, quite the best poem called forth by the war that I have yet read, and a fair answer to those who fling the charge of cant indiscriminately against the British people. It is entitled *The Search Lights*, and I cannot do better than close by quoting the first three stanzas, which contain, indeed, pretty much the whole of my argument:

Shadow by shadow, stripped for fight,
The lean black cruisers search the sea.
Night-long their level shafts of light
Revolve and find no enemy.
Only they know each leaping wave
May hide the lightning and their grave.

And, in the land they guard so well,
Is there no silent watch to keep?
An age is dying; and the bell
Rings midnight on a vaster deep;
But over all its waves once more
The search-lights move from shore to shore.

And captains that we thought were dead,
And dreamers that we thought were dumb,
And voices that we thought were fled
Arise and call us, and we come:
And "search in thine own soul," they cry,
"For there, too, lurks thine enemy."

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