



JACK GREENBERG

Hear Ye the Court

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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Hear Ye the Court

Jack Greenberg

A Critical Reading Edition

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record

HEAR YE THE COURT

(A Dramatic Poem)

by

JACK GREENBERG
Member of the Bar of California

Author of

"September Leaves"
"Off the Emery Wheel"
"Lights Along the Road"
"Highlights on Psychology"
"Confessions of an Industrial Insurance Agent"
Etc.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles
PARKER & BAIRD COMPANY
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Title page or opening source witness for Hear Ye the Court.

Editorial Note

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. The text was transcribed from the source pages in the local archive and collated against available embedded text. Physical page wraps were rejoined only when the source showed that they were typographic continuations; stanza breaks, meaningful indentation, epigraphs, subtitles, speakers, and section headings were retained. Obvious scanning debris was removed without silently modernizing diction, spelling, or punctuation. Each poem or complete sequence ends with a source note in the established Green-volume form.

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Introduction

Jack Greenberg's *Hear Ye the Court* is not a miscellaneous collection but a single dramatic poem that puts law itself on trial. Its voices move through infanticide, execution, press power, political corruption, class justice, religion, youth, and the Dust Bowl before reaching a deliberately provisional dawn. Published in Los Angeles by Parker & Baird in 1939, the book belongs to the city's radical legal and social writing, though Greenberg's own life remains hard to separate from namesakes. This edition resets the complete poem, keeps its numbered cases and internal speakers clear, and restores the argument as a continuous performance.

Biography

Jack Greenberg is securely identified as the author of *Hear Ye the Court: A Dramatic Poem*, published by Parker & Baird Company in Los Angeles in 1939. No birth date, death date, obituary, or archival collection has yet been conclusively tied to this author.

The book is a sustained dramatic indictment of legal and social institutions. Its sections address infanticide, capital punishment, religious hypocrisy, political power, press sensationalism, the Dust Bowl, class inequality, youth, statute law, and the relationship between courts and churches.

A bookseller description of a signed copy reports an inscription from "Jack Greenhill," which may indicate a surname variant or private identity, but that evidence requires examination of the copy before it can control the record. The author is therefore retained under the published name Jack Greenberg.

The Online Books Page and HathiTrust preserve catalog access to the volume under the subject Law—Poetry. Copyright renewal and author-date research are still necessary because the 1939 publication falls within the renewal-dependent period.

Hear Ye the Court

Stage 1 | 1939

The complete reset text of the 1939 work.

Hear Ye the Court

By

JACK GREENBERG

“III fares the land to hastening ills a prey
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.”

—From *The Deserted Village* by Oliver Goldsmith.

PROEM

The pictures presented here are so patent they
prove their own evidence and are offered as a
cumulative portrayal of things as they are. It is
hoped that this poem will intensify the growing
urge to battle relentlessly for the coming era, the
dawn for the children of toil.

The Court is the clearing house for present
society, before whom passes, in continuous
march, practically every form of human contact.
A thousand pages could not embrace it all.
There is no intent to slur or slam anyone or
anything. I have dipped up from the pool what
ever is there.

Let us all put our shoulders to the wheel in a
united effort to roll misery out of existence,
bearing in mind that the system alone is in the
wrong. All is but the product of environment—
the system included. We must improve, we must
change the environment.

JACK GREENBERG.

I.

THE COURT MIGHT SAY

But this in Justice to the men who sit
Upon the legal bench—they well might say:
”

’Tis you, society, who lack the grit:
The citizens alone can save the day.
The system must be changed, and not the men,
Each is the product of environment,
Is true to form; and whether king or hen,
Must after all accede and follow bent.
“The mass it is who must decide the choice.

They have the might, if they but had the will.
Who dares to disobey the system's voice
Invites a pauper's home across the hill.
Our power may be greater in a sense
But who of us can stand the game's expense?"
Everyone rise and stand at attention,
His Honor, the Court, approaches the bench.
This is the place—we scarcely need mention—
Where Justice is dealt to rich man or wench,
This is the place where injured ones gather
To that wrongdoers get their deserts;
see
Where only the facts, freed of all blather,
Are measured and weighed by legal experts.
This is the spot where equity lodges
And righteousness walks the true narrow lane,
Where honor averts all crafty dodges
And none can acquire unmerited gain.
Off with your hats to virtue and power
For this is the house all men must respect,
The pride of all men none can make cower
And none can usurp and no one reject.
This is the law, the pulse of the nation,
This is the food and the drink of all truth;
Here is forgot condition or station,
Ideal alike for aged and youth.
Come and behold the purest example,
The fountain of right no knave can defile,
Society's hope none dare to trample,
Unmoved by compassion, favor or guile.
Hear Ye all! The Court is now in session,
The legal minds are ready for the fray
And soon we'll hear eminent expression,
Decrees of wisdom time can't wear away.
The facts must groove with the perished ages
And follow custom in its every bent,
In line with the long departed sages,
The skeleton of haloed precedent.
The Judge will hear the pros and cons galore
And deeply ponder every statement made,

And such as gibe with what was law before
Will swing the case and live for future aid.
His Honor passes by and takes the throne,
His well-worn smile discloses hardened use,
He mumbles something in dull undertone;
The people gape with reverence obtuse.
The Bench becomes a counter, Law its wares
That lawyers handle and the victims take;
'Tis not for him to mediate the snares,
He but dispenses what law-jugglers make.
He sets his chair—looks across his glasses—
'Tis plain he's carved of most celestial stuff—
Yet he contends that we have no classes
And any such averment is but bluff.
He lives at the Club, owns a speedy yacht
And hobnobs with the worthiest in town,
Indulge the poor?—that's gibberish and rot
As will admit all those of fair renown.
He calls his cases, then takes up the first
As much as to say: Bring on the routine,
I am the judge of what is best and worst;
I am kingpin and chieftain of the scene.
"Your Honor," thus the plaintiff starts the case,
"We mean to prove all this, and that, and so,
Our claim and allegations have their base
Upon decisions which we'll clearly show."
The defendant, too, has his legal list
And feels he has a true and winning cinch;
Both lawyers argue, wrangle and insist
The other's charges weaken inch by inch.
Throughout herein we let the factors speak,
Pronounce each case as it comes up for proof
And let you cry or laugh with those who seek
Diverging interests beneath one roof.
The guilty here will plot to crush their blame,
The innocent depend upon their faith
To learn, too late, perhaps, that grace and fame
Are seldom met, except in dreamy wraith.
Here one by one they tarry but to find
That theory seldom is the twin to fact,

That Justice seems as deaf as she is blind,
And plainly shown to be devoid of tact;
For soon we learn that Justice is the fruit
Of time and place, conditions, if you please.
For markets men will trade their God, and shoot
Their sisters, brothers, drain the very seas.
For useless pelf they sink below the beast
And tear the entrails from a trusting friend,
Betray their own and crown the Devil priest;
Seduce and rape for paltry dividend.

FIRST CASE

But hush, a wife has come before the Bar,
She would untie what Heaven has combined,
She must unhitch her wagon from the star,
The wheels are flat, her life become a grind;
Her husband, once the dearest man on earth,
Became a fiend and made her life a Hell,
Destroyed their love, took everything of worth,
And skipped—but why, she could not guess or tell!
His cruelty has made her nervous, ill.
She wants her child and wants her maiden name,
She'll earn support in store, in shop or mill,
And through her babe forget her grief and shame.
The Judge is grave and grants her the decree;
The crowd is vexed and some would hang the brute,
While others grin—she has a pretty knee—
She knew her modish garb made her look cute.
She looked upon the Judge and wiped a tear,
The tremble of her lip was artful, trained,
And showed her shyness could not hide her fear;
“Your Honor cannot know how I am pained.”
In fact, her story was not true at all.
She nagged the boy until his nights were pain,
Until his life became a stream of gall,
The marriage tie a heavy, clanking chain;
The honeymoon had faded from their sky.
He snored, she nagged and they agreed to part;
Her newer love would see that she got by
And each could make a fresh, unhampered start.
But law is law and marriage is from God

And dogmas are the soul of all taboo,
They cut the path on which the faithful plod,
And so what else could this young couple do?
They had to lie and make a shame of fact,
With truth alone they could not break the gyves;
Who will succeed must do the clever act,
It's that, or let the "godly" run their lives,
They must stay bound for months in senseless suit.
The devil laughs until his sides are sore,
Their holy deeds produce unholy fruit
But hypocrites cling to the heretofore.
And next, another woman in despair,
Whose husband left her some ten years ago,
Concludes that she has paid her nuptial share
And wants to break the bonds that held her low;
The fact in truth is that her husband met
Another whom he could not do without,
She spent no time as modest violet,
And trod the way convention weeps about.
But now she found a lovely man with cash,
A deacon whose beloved wife had died,
He knew just how to wield the business lash
And she will spend his wealth, a worthy bride.
He was not what Adonis would implore,
His leaning was to business and to prayer,
He loved his coin and God, and little more,
And felt that he deserved his goodly share;
And she gave all the praise that made him feel
She was a blessing, God Himself had sent:
So pretty and reserved and so genteel,
She understood his every mood and bent.
She needed cash for she could spend it fast
To save the aging of her doll-like face
And youthful shape; and all that he amassed
Would sweeten much her humor and her grace.
He puffed a bit with everything he did;
She made him think it worried her a lot.
He liked to have her call him "honey-kid";
He thought her flip, she thought he was a sot.
The scheme of things where Mammon rules is great.

In mystery, Time's countless ways proceed
And deftly cover every human fate
And paint with pretense every human deed.
Behind the Bench in every court is spread
The Stars and Stripes, the emblem of the free,
The symbol of the brave; yet truth be said
Most victims face that flag with trembling knee;
The few who need not cringe are those of wealth,
The pompous men who frame and dictate law,
The thieves of more than merely petty stealth.
They filch the grain, the poor but get the straw
And yet the dunce who takes a paltry sum
Is made to bear the hardest punishment;
The law is jealous of the mite or crumb
But shields the cunning, the really competent.

INFANTICIDE

And now is brought young Mary in her teens,
To absolve a debt that's vicious at the core—
Infanticide—she wonders what it means;
How will this day replenish her dead store?
Till now, no one cared if she lived or why
Or tried to ease her misery and pain,
Yet something urged and would not let her die
Despite her feeling living was in vain.
She was so frail, an orphan and alone,
Her eyes absorbed the beauties of the time,
So many things—but not for her to own—
Her weekly savings normally—a dime.
She craved to taste the fruits of life, to live
To sense and share a thousand different things,
But all she knew, was what the basements give;
And dreams that came and left with empty wings;
She craved a home, a fireside and a chair
For one who loved her as she meant to prize,
With book and song to banish dull despair
And feel the thrill that wakes in sensing eyes.
The novels told in honey-combed romance
How young folks met and loved, and lived in peace.
And so she worked and waited for her chance
To meet her choice and through him toil's release.

And then they met, and for a little while
She felt relieved; they planned such cheery things,
She did not know convention brewed a bile
To drown her joy and fill her hope with stings.
Her lover died a victim of his task
And then it was she wakened to her wrong,
But where she went, whomever so she asked
Disclosed just this; that human blame was strong.
The doctors dared not help and Grundy sneered
And Nature would not change Her wonted course;
And when the dreaded hour and moment neared,
The very stones about her pleaded force,
She would not have it bear the want and ache
That dogged her days, she'd end that haunting dread,
She'd fix it so her child would never wake.
She beat herself in hope it would come dead;
And now, when human hell had done its worst,
They brought her here to advertise her deed,
To wound, to add disgrace, increase her thirst
And see how much her heart could really bleed.
They always told her Motherhood was great,
That woman's mission was to foster young,
(That spinsters were a nuisance to the State)
And to that thought how lovingly she clung!
But now she knows they prattled only lies
And held their fingers crossed while preaching home
And love; their good was merely a disguise,
Their graciousness was worthless dreg and foam,
The love they knew must bear a ball and chain
For fear of straying from the sanctioned path,
Hold custom's hand or take the stamp of Cain,
With all its myrrh and thorny aftermath.
A special breed with solemn face and voice,
No other may or dare officiate;
If one won't have the law confirm the choice,
The other course is punishment and hate.
And so again the Court fulfilled the cry
Of ignorance and followed out the bid
Of Church and State to ever multiply,
To make of womankind a soldier squid.

PHARISEES

The pharisees will ever beat the shrub
To force to danger those who doubt their taste,
They use their energy to goad and club
The straying sinners into being chaste.
To them kind providence entrusted all
The righteousness, and theirs it is to see
That virtue wears its leaf, that evil fall
Into the pit of vile iniquity.
The world must toe their mark, they know what's right,
Theirs is the task of saving every soul.
They shape Heaven's will, part of which to fight
And vilify the aim of birth control.
To love the dead and yet to stay alive
Is trying work, and still our honored heads
Of government must do just that. They strive
To bind us to the past with rotten threads.
One cannot have the right to choose her child,
Must breed regardless of her health or plan,
Just bring them forth though stunted, sick, defiled,
In want and woe, just any way she can,
For has it not been said; "Thou shalt produce
And multiply to match the stars, the sand?"
No book has stressed the quality or use;
The duty but to follow the command.
The sick can go to God, the healthy ones
Pursue some trade until a war breaks out,
And then the State will throw them to the guns
While patriots grow rich and statesmen spout.
The Bible has its threats, the law its jails,
They lay the snares and train their loyal spies
To prey on the unfortunate who fails,
They pounce like wolves and revel in his cries.
An endless fund for catching those who err
But scarce a word to keep the gopers straight,
No creed or Court frets till the wrongs occur
And then they spit their venom and their hate,
Yet these guardians of the proper route
Proclaim their mercy, sing their kind intent
In that at times they do not execute

The possible extreme of punishment.
And Mary learned that she deserved to hang
But Mercy won, they'd only give her life;
They could have pierced her with law's sharpest fang
For having spoiled the post of a good wife.
The ministers who know all things so well,
Who took the job of keeping all souls pure,
Who know the all of Heaven and of Hell
Declare the fate of man is to endure.
They have all human goodness by the tail,
They've got the slimy Devil by the horns,
The world must plod their narrow saintly trail
Or feed and sleep on misery and thorns.
To prove to common mortals that they're right,
To show the sinners how to mend their way
They'll snoop and bribe and lobby day and night
For laws to torture those who disobey.
They hold the congregations by the ear
And hypnotize the gullible with prayer,
They bulldoze and they snap the whip of fear
And scatter innuendos everywhere.
They tap the public pulse and grip its throat,
They know just when to threaten, when to fawn,
They boss the politicians through the vote
And as they breed so must their victims spawn.
They tell the legislature what to do,
Enforce their viewpoint on the home and school
And dull the people's mind with their taboo,
Denounce the honest thinker, praise the fool,
For they are shrewd and know that to maintain
The upper hand, the governmental sphere,
They must control and stupify the brain;
They must befog, if they would persevere.
Because the base on which our logic rests
Is warped, its doctrines twist and gyre about;
In trying to maintain senile behests
It ends by proving Truth a stupid lout.
The ghost of the disciples of the past
Is analysis; they cannot endure
The light, for it unfolds the facts amassed;

To truly solve gives them the calenture.
And by the very core all faiths are bound
And cling to blind belief and precedent,
They dread reality and hate the sound
Of science and its vast accomplishment.

HE KILLED

And now the sentence of a man who killed
A social light, a suave, philanthropist,
Whose gentle words and charity fulfilled
The highest wish of noble altruist.
The pulpit and the press bemoaned his fate,
And lauded him unto the seventh sky;
The killer was denounced degenerate,
One death was not enough for him to die.
The inner circles knew the pillar's life
And that he worked his people to the bone,
Was brutal, false, unfaithful to his wife,
The world his hive and he its gilded drone,
He schemed and plotted, nothing was too low
To serve his end; he bribed and double-crossed
At every chance; the needy felt his blow,
They were his meat and he their blight and frost.
He took his pound of flesh at any price
And never let his left hand sense or learn
The dealings of his right, which like a vice
Would crush and tear without the least concern.
He always took enough so that he could
Afford a little here and there to close
All mouths except those boasting of his good,
His cash bought friends and also bought his foes.
The killer had a child, his pride and all,
The image of his dear departed wife;
The pillar met her, brought about her fall,
For which the rake got the assassin's knife;
But now how would the father tell, explain
His side, he would not bring his daughter in,
With savage form he sought to cleanse the stain,
By savage code he settled sin with sin.
He'd rather see his bowed and weary form
That spent its days for more than forty years

Upon the narrow path, that faced the storm
Of time's advance without the shade of fears,
Approach the grave denounced by tongue and press
Than have his daughter maimed by satire-stealth.
He learned a certain code of righteousness
And would not crawl or abdicate to wealth.
He rubbed his knotted fists and set his jaw
And listened to the legal millstones grind;
The thought of death held out a lesser awe
To him, than anything a Court could find.
GOD'S DEFENDERS

And now before the Court there conies to pass
A peddler of the Gospel, the right hand
Of God, whose voice and conscience ring like brass,
Whose itchy palm is stretched throughout the land;
He gathers gold and silver day and night
And sweeps the entire country with soft prayer.
He points out to the Lord what's wrong and right
And scares away temptation through the air,
He's always needing earthly, carnal things
And what he takes is of the very best;
Someday his faithful will get angel wings
And soar to Heaven by divine request.
So busy driving devils to the hills
And keeping virtue in the narrow path,
He cannot find the time to settle bills
And meets his creditors with unctious wrath.
He mounts the pulpit with a fiddle-face,
His hair is parted, kept as slick as grease,
His carriage vaunts that he's in God's embrace
And that through him the world must pick its peace.
With purposed mien and cough that orders heed
He brings his text unto his worthy flock,
With thought and care he plants each holy seed,
His loftiness is imaged in his frock,
His eyes roll up to where his finger points.
His accents fall as cold and soft as snow
And drive rheumatic chills into the joints
Of those whose offerings come scant and slow.
His voice intones like wind across the ice,

His smile is trained, and like the good dies young,
For joy is but the sugarcoat of vice,
The Devil rules behind the happy tongue.
The papers boom his glory and his fame
And keep him in the headlines, for the mass
Enjoys the nearness of a holy name
And loves to read about the blessed class,
About the love affairs of godly souls
And how the agents of the Lord proceed,
How they prepare the sinners' burning coals,
And all about their dress, their drink and feed.
This gospel monger is by no means rare,
His name is legion and at every turn
His ilk is reaping harvest rich and fair
By selling interests in God's concern.
From circus tent, the bat, the canvas-ring,
When age puts in its call or profits fail,
These has-beens turn to the more paying thing—
Collecting shekels through the Holy Grail.
The politicians, business and the Courts
Extol these fakirs of the world to come
Who bogusly harangue of sacred ports
And bribe the poor with the millenium.
The states remain within the churches' clutch
Like puppets of a deft ventriloquist
That bow and mumble at his clever touch.
The court repeats what's on the holy list
For creeds are dope that puts the brain to sleep,
The strongest drug the rulers ever owned,
Through it they put the earthly wants in keep,
Through it their sins and guilt become condoned;
The legal force sustains without a wince
Their weirdest whim, regardless of its end,
And like a buffer takes the consequence
That bigotry and superstition lend.
No thought so dull, no myth so weak, obscure
But what God's stamp will make it sound and keen;
Lot's escapade is held a hundred-pure
And Love's true worth is branded lewd, obscene.
The Christ, upon the tau with dripping heart,

With thorny crown on tortured brow, they frame
And spread among the young and old as art,
But healthy bodies in the nude are shame;
The swastika, triangle, yodh and cross,
The emblems of the sex since time began,
They love, revere, but ridicule the joss,
The yoni, lingam draw the holy ban.
There's not a law to bar the ignorant
From mutilating any truth and fact.
The Court will guard the moron's ill intent
And jail the wise for some blasphemous act;
Who dare defy ecclesiastic wish
Too soon perceive who wields the nation's whip.
The law supinely strives to accomplish
The sword-established, cold religious grip.
Without their help Jehovah would be lost
And every place would be a den of sin,
And virtue die the devil's holocaust,
The lakes, the streams and rivers fill with gin.
Their nose is big enough to poke around
In every private nook and public zone
And where they have no license, they are found,
For everybody's action is their own.
Since God depends on them to keep things so,
To crush the things that do not come straight-laced,
Be it a dance, a card game, drink or show—
It must be stopped unless it meets their taste.
The preachers suffer from repressed desire
And inhibitions clamp their peace and aim,
They long for some fierce everlasting fire
That will devour the happy in its flame.
For superstition holds that what gives joy
Is devil-born and therefore must be bad,
Holds those things which discourage and annoy
Are Heaven-sent and make Jehovah glad,
That earthly life is but a cleansing torch
To purify for all eternity,
When God and master agonize and scorch,
It's for the best, for immortality.
They somehow fail to learn or understand

That life is happiness since life began,
That joy springs from the work of brain and hand
And only ignorance begrudges man.
It is the work of man created all
And gold is but the hardened blood of toil,
And labor roused will answer to the call
Of right; reclaim the tyrant's greedy spoil.
The scheme of things is rotten to the core;
A better era waits outside the gate.
All things will change as they have changed before
And man no longer be marauder's bait.

AGE IS NO EXCUSE

Engraved by age and breathing in a trance
A white-haired victim gazes at the judge.
"Evicted," homeless, what a circumstance!
He tried to move, his feet refused to budge,
He heard some talk he could not understand;
He seemed to see his wife beside him there,
His knotted fingers reached to touch her hand.
Compelled to go, but how and when and where?
He tried to speak, his lips in silence moved,
His fingers failed to find the hand they sought.
What was the point the banker's lawyer proved?
Their house was his, the house that they had bought.
For many years they pinched their every cent
To buy a shack, attain a sense of ease
Where they might spend their final years content,
And have a flower bed, a few green trees.
He was a steady man and knew his work,
For thirty years he worked in the same place,
No task too hard, or that would make him shirk,
No problem that he did not dare to face;
Yet here he was evicted from his house
Because he was two payments in arrear.
How quick the banker clutched the chance to chouse
Him of the one material thing, so dear!
He told the Judge that sickness was to blame,
His wife was yet too weak to leave her bed,
He would make good the banker's every claim
If he must go in tatters and unfed.

All that he asked for was a month or so;
The Court referred him to a certain clause,
It was too bad, but they would have to go,
For he must realize that laws are laws.
His Honor knew the point that held such stress
Was lobbied into law by sharpeners who
Had worked the Legislature with largesse
And that it was vile graft that put it through;
The term 'lease contract', what a slick design,
What magic lurks within that pithy phrase;
Thereby one drinks and yet preserves his wine,
The thing stays yours and yet the other pays.
Old age and diligence no guarantee
To keep one from the dump-heap in the end,
For only death can set the worker free,
To him life means to struggle, to contend.
The man who preaches violence is jailed
But governors may lynch with unconcern,
The thing depends upon the cause entailed,
Upon design whose scope will switch and turn,
It makes a difference whose ox it is that's gored—
And who the one that gored the ox—for Courts
Are human made, if properly implored
May even heed decrees from foreign ports.
All men are tried by juries of their peers
And law must deal with every one alike;
But can a boss with profits in arrears
Give justice to poor, hungry men on strike?
How can the one who never missed a meal
Perceive the view held by the "jungle stiff"?
They have no common goal, no mean appeal,
To each the other is a hieroglyph.
SUPPRESS THE "REDS"
Before the Court now stands a "Communist".
The charge is that he plots to undermine
Our liberty, the rights that now exist;
The Nation's intercourse, the holy shrine.
The charge is brought by business through a "dick",
The witness is a pillar of the church,
One wields the club, the other's tongue is slick,

How can the victim hope to clean the smirch?
The Court himself is member of a creed
And never doubts a jot the preacher claims,
The thing to do with every sort of weed
Is kill the roots, consign it to the flames,
And once some savant from a well known school—
A college backed by masters of finance—
Declared the “Red” to be a cunning tool
Of foreign make in want of vigilance,
And here one stands brought in before the bar.
His demeanor, his very clothes, the grime,
His missing thumb, his cheek’s ungainly scar
Will fix on him the guilt of any crime.
He glances all about with doubtful mien;
He is at home in hills and lumber-camps,
He feels entrapped, the dull and sombre scene
Puts glamour on the jungle-grounds and tramps.
His fingers twitch unconsciously, his feet,
Uncertain on the polished hardwood floor,
Perplex him, make him seem so incomplete,
He looks with longing at the open door.
The bailiff thinks the victim plans escape
And whispers in the prosecutor’s ear—
They sit prepared to grab him by the nape,
Not knowing his kind never dreams of fear.
The people’s side put up an ardent plea,
Such dreams as his are not American,
They’re foreign born—might work across the sea
But here we have our own belief and plan,
We must prohibit men of rash design
From poisoning the concepts of our land,
It is our bounden duty to confine
These foreign hoodlums, make them understand
The freedom of our forbears is the kind
Our people want and that we mean to save
Forevermore, the clear untrammelled mind
That made this land home of the free and brave.
Of course, they found the prisoner was wrong,
His every plea and motion was denied;
The jury knew where “radicals” belong

And from the start knew how they should decide.
The jury was agreed, all felt the same,
They hardly needed time to cast a vote;
What if the verdict proved a trifle lame?
The eye of Justice purged another mote,
The prosecution peddled nothing new,
The whole affair was dished upon a tray.
Now, let us sift the poor defendant's view,
Who, if a mongrel pup, would have his day.
His claim is that the ones who do the work
Should have the fruit and likewise have the say
And not divide with racketeers who lurk
At every source to take the most away.
That education should be undefiled
And should not knuckle to the kings that are;
That truth and myth cannot be reconciled,
That bribes and threats can only dull and mar.
Our habits feed upon environment,
The root of evil is the bud of gain,
Who lives on profit, interest and rent
By that alone, secures the masses' chain.
In truth the only changeless thing is change,
Our deeds and aims must alter, on and on,
The old will rot, the new come in with strange
And pungent taste; its aims and purpose gone,
Depart, decay and give its finished place
To newer force; so shall it ever be,
And yet proud man will struggle to erase
This law, and alter only some degree.
But pride, the wise assure, must take its fall
And like all evil die in grim defeat,
With every cycle comes the clearer call
Of truth to make life's happiness complete.
As long as Courts refuse to welcome change,
Refuse the right to those who think and dare
But heed the will of blunt myopic range,
They shall be held the poor man's trap and snare.
Experience proves that they who have achieved
Will stay content, will want the old to reign,
And through their pomp demand to be believed,

And through their greed be dead to others' pain.
The senses prove that greediness must die,
That hoggishness must join the senile past,
That future days must bring a fairer sky
And justice mold itself in finer cast.

THE POISON PRESS

Like skulky pools that curse the desert waste,
That lure the parched with false and limpid drops,
To only furnish death to those who taste
The poison strains, the pale dissembling slops,
Such is the "Press" that peddles out the "news"
Debasing all who taste its vile discharge;
It makes, it sells, it garbles public views,
And spoils whatever comes within its marge.
The creeds and politicians buy its space,
Like deathly plague it spawns and broadcasts lies,
And smears the best, the purest with disgrace,
And throws cayenne into the peoples' eyes,
Its money-madness none can ever stress,
For even Church and State bow to the Press.

KINGS DO NO WRONG

In slick attire and manners just as slick,
With attitude of arrogance supreme,
With lackey close, all primed for any trick,
A master financier defends his scheme;
The deal he made contained a doubtful twist
That netted him a million cool and tried,
The plucked will now discover, to resist
A money king can mean but suicide.
Not only is his legal staff the best
And he the head of almost every club,
School, the Church, the Red Cross and the Chest,
But he's the top frog in the city tub;
He buys the finest paintings in the land
And backs the opera with open purse.
His foreign trade is somewhat contraband
But business cannot act the tender nurse;
He spends a lot to help establish peace,
The cash comes in from ammunition sold
To neighbor states and likewise helps increase

The bloody, greedy hatreds that they hold;
Each fighter killed in China, Spain, Japan
Or anywhere his guns and bullets go
Means just that much per wound or murdered man
And some of that he spends on pomp or show.
He hates the snooper in commercial fields,
The workers should be made to feel their place,
It's their disgruntled leaders spoil the yields
That make a people "great", a "noble race".
And since the end will justify the means
He leaves no stone unturned to crush a foe;
And through his shrewd, political machines
He fights to keep all things in status quo,
And in the case that's now before the Bar
The blocks are laid and every move designed,
The enemy will not get very far
Before he's caught and mangled in the grind.

PETTY POLITICIAN

Who was he whom the Court has just dismissed?
Despite the proof that he began the fight.
He's post Commander, watches every list
In his precinct, and knows which votes are right.
A member of the Nazi, Ku Klux Klan,
He hides behind dead phrases and the flag,
He blazes up before the Fascist fan
And burns the truth as though it were a rag.
The war to end all war and save the world
For none knows what, among its twisted turns
Produced strange incidents, one of these hurled
Into our midst a blot the Devil spurns,
A horde of loving hate and blood,
that brags
Whose highest sense knows only fife and drum,
Who dotes on chewing patriotic cud,
But hopes to get the politicians' plum,
Obtains the front page on the monied sheets
To spout its ignorance, black vulgar lies,
Denounces fact, upholds the frauds and cheats
And uses fists for giving out replies.
This horde is praised, exalted by the Press

For which it cleans the filthy stalls of greed
And slaps the mouth that dares to hint distress,
And, ostrich-like, disowns the cry of need.
Because a few had fought across the seas
The clique, as one, strut on in mad array,
And jump around like dog-discarded fleas
And try to hold the rising sun at bay;
Because they went like sheep when masters called,
They now desire to be the host and guest,
And that the public kneel to them enthralled
And sport them as examples to the rest.
These harnessed puppets, goose parading braves,
Maintained like sheep and horses for their use
To cower, and to daunt the toiling slaves
Who dumbly must endure, yield and produce—
These soldiers to power, hoggishly guard
The temples of gold, they browbeat and kill,
Conceitedly strut the master's back yard
And follow his bid, to live on his swill.
The rot we charge to Denmark may be so
But truth reveals she does not stand alone.
There is a stench in all the winds that blow
That comes from out this system's flesh and bone;
Our school of thought is false and double-faced,
It teaches what it knows is foul deceit.
It lives on glory guilefully misplaced
By such as deem corruption doubly sweet.
Of each collected coin the Nations spend
The most is spent on war to further greed,
And peace receives the least and withered end,
And goes a-begging for the scraps of need;
The colleges that should be teaching love
Insist on training youth with gun and sword,
And work to feed the army hand in glove,
And fawn to junkers, ghouls who rob and hoard.
No end of gold for poison gas, for guns,
A mill or two for knowledge, or for health,
And not a thing to help the struggling sons—
The sceptre sways at curt commands of wealth.
That money talks is no mere idle quip,

For those who furnish this great Nation's need
Receive for their reward cheap bluffs and scrip,
It's gold gives aristocracy the lead.
Why rags, from which such useful things are made,
Should bow and fawn to pomp and worthless show;
Why merits hide and tinsled wastes parade,
Remains untold. Yet custom keeps it so.
The rule of force can only reign by force,
And furthers all its efforts by such means,
By sword and shield it conquers every course
And holds its place with guns and guillotines.
By blood and death it gains, with death it pays,
And when it talks of good, it speaks a lie.
Its nights are fraud; intrigue pervades the days,
And every nook and crevice veils a spy;
At every turn one meets a savage breath,
Its fairy tales, its hymns and hero songs
Are steeped in ravishment, revenge and death,
And business worth is sounded out with gongs.
Its every hope is bolstered by some scheme,
Its pretense praised by smoothest diplomats
Whose promises are run by gas and steam,
Who garb in frock-tail coats and high silk hats.
The statesmen buy their honor on the mart
And sell their trust for bids at so much per;
To graft and chisel has become an art
That would bewilder ancient Lucifer.
They sport and gamble with the People's right,
They trade and barter with the state demands,
Their supreme trait an endless appetite.
Their greedy bellies have no belts or bands.
The light of reason is their direst foe.
Like Judas and like Esau they will sell,
Or steal their master's birthright; but they know
What values are—there ends the parallel.
MRS. GRUNDY WINS AGAIN
A doctor told a needy mother how
To love in bliss yet save her fading strength;
Was tried by peers and has been sentenced now
With chance to ponder justice at great length.

He'll realize that kindness does not pay,
That custom is a base and doltish snake.
If powered cliques decide the other way,
The decent heart must either yield or break.
He knew his aid was wanted and deserved;
Already having three to mind and rear
In bearing more, what purpose could be served
Except to add to gnawing care and fear?
Three helpless mouths with hunger holding sway,
With income less than what just one would need
To prosper on, a fourth, now on the way
Would be a crime, a tragedy indeed.
He listened as she begged for quick relief,
He scanned the fleshless hands and sallow skin;
Impassioned by her helplessness and grief
He felt that to refuse her would be sin.
The house was bare, the husband out of work,
The clothes she wore just rags with patches patched,
Prepared to crumble at the slightest jerk
And dared a guess on how the bits were matched.
Her sunken chest betrayed her awful dread,
Her narrow hips but covered half the chair,
The child beside her whimpering for bread.
And so he erred by listening to her plea,
And did what superstition rails against,
Defied the smug, to taste the gallow tree—
Who wield the rod are easily incensed.
There is no ignorance before the law,
You cannot wrong and claim you did not know;
Then why not use this much accomplished saw
Against the courts themselves with equal show?
How often do they wink or turn the face
In assumed innocence and purity,
While privilege pulls some callow disgrace
With impudence and obtuse surety?
Examples rise before the mind in scores,
So much, it is the gossip of the street,
That while decisions brew the justice snores,
And insolence goes by with shuffling feet.
The banker and the thief, the prostitute,

The doctor, lawyer, statesman, rabbi, priest,
The good, the bad, the rich and destitute
Are held by snares enjoined by the deceased,
And so we'll be until we learn to look
With fearless eye, until we lose respect
For empty phrases, mummied code or book,
And let science govern the intellect.
What's this that's hauled up slinking to be tried?
She's charged with having sought to take a life,
Her own, she is a would-be suicide,
A mother faint with futile aim and strife.
For weary months she tramped the friendless street
In vain attempt to earn a decent mite
Till every shadow flaunted grim defeat;
The dawn became a curse to shame the night.
She begged for work, for anything at all,
If but to prove she had some nook to fill,
Yet every turn held out a dogged wall,
And every sound insisted that she kill.
She could not feed the children whom she bore,
Their fading eyes were cinders in her heart
That flickered up when she came through the door,
And sank the deeper in her bleeding smart.
The Court: "You, madam, have no legal right
To undo that which is a gift from high,
Your duty is to struggle on and fight
And trust that somehow God will get you by;
For suicide is crime, a sin, shows fear,
And since you failed, the law must take its course."
Her pale face twitched, her mouth put on a sneer,
Her silence spoke with undenying force.
Her life belonged to God and to the State,
And they alone could take it at their will,
Her duty was to work, to serve and wait
And come what may be brave and loyal still.
Her shabby skirt entreated for her cause,
Her tattered shawl in ravel reached her hips
And added pallor to her famished jaws
That seemed to pull with frenzy at her lips;
Her shoulders, stooped from want and not from age,

Were ready to surrender to the grave.
She was prepared to take transgressor's wage
That Charity might feed the lives she gave.
The world was her's to slave in and to hope,
To furnish wealth that others should enjoy,
To be content regardless of her scope,
The masters only have right to destroy.
All life about is busy with itself,
No thought or time for any of the rest,
The days and nights sustain the rush for pelf,
The bulging of the purse the primal test.
It's dog eat dog and let the weak beware,
The ones who fall are used for stepping stones,
The highest aim hangs dangling by a hair;
We build our ladders out of neighbor groans.
The greedy urge to rule, the golden helm
Has no regard for children still too young
To change their strength to pennies of the realm,
So they may die unhonored and unsung.
The evils of the profit system are
As dreaded locusts on a field of grain,
But one that cuts like sharpened scimitar
Is the treacherous, hard, pretending train
Of spies and fakers, mental thieves who ply
Among the masses to mislead, betray
The workers' hope and chance, who crucify
Their own for thirty pieces bloody pay.
In slaughter yards they keep a bull or ram
That lives by leading kindred to their doom,
Whose friendship to his kind is but a sham,
Who favors by destroying life in bloom;
And so among the human shambles, too,
Where craftsmen turn their vigor into wealth,
The owners train black-hearted creatures who
Survive by practicing deceit and stealth.
These traitors live in luxury and state,
Are fed and trained by the controlling class
To spoil, confuse and craftily frustrate
The workers' aim, enlarge the vile morass
Of doubt; these fakers with the granite heart

Would stab their mothers to please a boss;
They worm to leadership, take active part
In turning every right to gander-sauce
In labor's rank, in every function where
The workers need decision and clear thought
They lead the followers to grim despair,
Then revel in the havoc which they wrought.

DUST-BOWL SCENE

The guardians of custom and the means
By which the county keeps its precincts pure
And good, had sifted through their moral screens
A batch of "jungle stiffs"; and to secure
The business men's demands brought them to jail.
A dust-bowl victim tried in vain to show
'Twas not by choice he took the vagrant's trail,
He told how just a little while ago
He had his farm and stock, yes, even dreams,
But fate decreed another lot for him.
It's but a step between the two extremes,
From hope and gain to all that's dead and grim.
One officer, "smart Alec" of the pack,
Broke in with: "Listen, Bo, enough of that,
You'll serve a stretch and then we'll ship you back
To your home state, to play aristocrat."
The farmer's eyes betrayed his deep disdain,
His tightened lips bespoke his discontent,
He felt to reason further would be vain
Since Law's one mania is punishment.
He asked: "From what man's code your judgment here?
Your justice sure has a peculiar twist,
Because I'm helpless you sit there and sneer,
'Tis such as you that breed the anarchist.
Someday, someday, we'll change this rotten scheme
And men who think will use the ruling powers.
This is my hope, my earnest lifelong dream,
To see true freedom in this land of ours.
The Constitution which the fathers drew
Has never been defined alike for all;
Has been construed in favor of the few,
Compelled the mass to tremble and to crawl.

Some day all this will be a thing erased,
And each enjoy his right to happiness;
Today's cupidity shall be replaced,
The Stars and Stripes be symbol of success.
Now take this, copper, take it if you can—
All things are measured, have their worth and price,
Conditions made me cosmopolitan,
I therefore know that boundaries are vice.
Before you scoff just study up the facts
And you will find all peoples are alike.
The patriot but narrows and detracts,
And props a useless interfering dike.
I can't return to misery and pain,
There's nothing there a decent man can do.
It's worse than Hell, permit me to remain,
I'll find a job, I promise I'll get through.
Some day, when decency controls, and we
Awake to all the glory and the good
That lies in wait from mountain to the sea,
We'll take and live as human creatures should.
The earth is ours, we'll share in all the plans,
The stars, the hills, the fields and ocean sands,
The dreams and joys and every good be man's;
And humans be no longer counted "hands".
No worker ever need to seek a boss
And life be rich, no more a yearning void;
The workers' flesh no longer be as dross
And every drudgery wiped out, destroyed.
There'll be no profit in the human needs,
No grasping sweatshops with their clocks to punch,
No panderers with all their slimy breeds,
No mad rush with two minutes for a lunch.
A myriad schools, every thought and kind,
For scientific progress, undented,
To lift and not to stultify the mind,
Eternal light to every growing child.
Then the machine be made to ease the load,
To shorten hours and not to shorten pay;
Then happiness will prompt the human code,
And parasites and swindlers have no say.

A profiteer draw down the firing squad,
To cheat a worker be to wrong the whole,
No crook will hide behind the skirts of God,
Nor live by promising a pearly goal.
The theatres will function every hour
And aim to teach and build a better view,
To give the useful group increasing power,
And how to choose the courses that are true.
The joys of life will be no idle dream,
Nor lay arusting somewhere in the sky;
By work and not by prayer will men redeem,
They'll have their heaven here, not when they die.
The only evil, Sir, is ignorance,
No code should ever profit by a breach,
Its scope to give the people confidence,
Be made for use and not the grafter's leech.
Some day, you'll see, your leaders shall be picked
To serve the people, where the range of all
Will not be fear of being framed and tricked
But to stay within the touch, the beck and call
Of the unfortunate, of young and old,
Or of some stranger, as the case may be,
Who'll need a lift from stronger in the fold;
And none will dare to try the third degree.
Why don't you laugh and say that I'm insane?
Go tell the judge how dangerous I am,
You must not let a vagabond complain—
The jail or jungle, I don't give a dam."
The dust-bowl farmer leaned against the wall,
Indifferent to what the "Law" might do;
The answer came: "Well, be it brass or gall,
You've got me, friend, I'm all in all for you—
I've listened well to everything you said,
And here is how I prove I understand;
Here is a half, to buy you grub and bed.
Before you go I want to shake your hand."

III.

SHODDY JUSTICE

A worm is housed within the very core
Of our modern justice, and soon will come

The final bite, the settling of the score
In taking loaves and handing out a crumb.
The count is made, the nearing hour must tell
In figures that shall test the fire of time,
That courts in their crass ignorance to quell,
Produce the more the greater of all crime.
Like shoddy firms that deal in cheap misfits,
And look upon their patron as their prey,
The premiums of the Court are based on wits
For values do not count, convictions pay.
The law is blind and as an aftermath,
Poor equity must follow that same path.

YOUTH TALKS BACK

Then came a youth for speaking on the street
Without permission of the great police,
Was given "time" to save his erring feet,
And work a change of heart before release,
The Judge, a man of humor in his class,
And seeing that the boy displayed no fear,
Declared: "Stand up, I am about to pass
Your sentence; County Jail for just a year.
Perhaps you can tell us why sentence should
Be withheld, you're smart, tell us if you can.
Will this discipline do you any good
And be a lesson to you, when a man?"
The lad arose and glanced about the place,
(In looks the court was somewhat like the schools)
A smile of scorn lit up his handsome face
As he recalled his oratory rules,
His fingers shook, a lump rose in his throat
But soon assurance found his lip and eye:
"Tis such as we of whom you make the goat,
You dare not touch the ones who stand on high.
Too well we know the reason for your whip,
We know the promptings that your type pursue,
We also know who helms your galley ship,
We know the master of your servile crew.
A few who come to stand before your court
Distinctly see the writing on the wall,
Yet must keep dumb, while prosecutors snort

And fume, and roll the patriotic ball,
But I, 'Great Chief, will read that writing now,
Not that I think I can disturb your dream,
The rooted weed must crush before the plow
And you will pay to those whom you blaspheme.
Send out your doggers with their paper nets
To grab unlicensed victims where you may,
Your ruthless fangs can never tear the debt
You owe—The writing says that you must pay.
The laws you praise are welded gyves and chains,
Have bound the truth and shackled every right,
But now we rise to heal our bleeding veins
And turn your sun into a satellite.
Could you but shake your superstitious awe,
And use your own, and not your henchman's eyes,
You'd know that you, your court, and all your law
Are hollow sills that prop a house of lies.
The wrongs you dread and claim you strive to end
Are nursed and fed throughout your sacred courts,
And we, your Honor, say you but pretend,
That we can prove who build and run these forts.
For every one that's brought here to his doom,
For every crime on which you jot your thumb,
A dozen more spring up to smell and bloom,
And add their seed to your delirium.
This is a shop in which the crimes are made,
A nest in which offenses incubate,
And you, your Honor, are the worthy aid,
In spite of all the platitudes you prate.
Your officers of law are chosen from
The dumbest, vilest riff-raff of the race,
What can one hope for, then, of dreg and scum
But to reap the sour vintage of disgrace?
When clothed with force, the puny stunted mind
Will strut, abuse and bully anyone
Who will not crawl, and yet this very kind
Dictates your rights and totes the club and gun;
With these the owners of the court and shop
Convene and shape the courses of the rest.
It's these that keep the swindler at the top,

And make of truth and toil a farce and jest.
There's not a law that could outlive a day
Without the courts that guard its every move,
They nurse and pamper, glibly pave the way
As outlined by the legislated groove.
Your thoughts are sour, your tongues are boneless rags
Which work in vain to stop the downward sun,
In vain you wave your preachments and your flags,
The truth is mightier than gas and gun.
All history cries out against your kind,
Who always serve the tyrants holding might,
But pits await the blind who lead the blind,
Your sextons will be those whom you indict.
There are no crimes as base as your decrees
That suck and fat upon the breast of greed,
That drive the propertyless to their knees,
That help the few destroy what millions need.
Go on, send me, and thousands more, to jail,
Your prison bars will never gag our voice,
You and your pals will ultimately fail,
The truth will win, the masses then rejoice.
The toiler knows the thieves you shield take all,
And as for him, the mouldy crust is his,
I rise to say your house of lies must fall,
To hell with greed, I know what justice is."
He paused as one who wakes from out a dream,
And looked about, the silence was intense,
The shuttered window passed a scanty beam,
That touched his brow as if for recompense.
The bailiff rose and took a step or two,
The judge sat up, his face was drawn and pale,
"We'll see," he muttered, "what a year can do
And how you'll think when you come out of jail."
A man who sat among the motley crowd
And listened to the boy till he was done,
Stepped out and muttered: "It would do me proud
To be the father of so wise a son.
Had I the nerve, and was I in his stead,
A lot of things I could have told them there;
He could have added much to what he said

And then not reach the half of what we bear.”

STATUTE LAW

By weight of the law, the land and the mine,
The tools that we use, the water and food,
Out hopes, our aims and love’s treasured shrine
Are taken and kept from the multitude;
From cradle to grave we’re hampered by rules,
Wherever we turn we’re faced by a law,
The foisting of henchmen, knaves and fools
Who empty their heads to fatten their maw.
The law is power that bolsters the throne,
That entrenches the rich more and still more,
That answers the call for bread with a stone,
That names one a wife, the other a whore;
The law is a mask for raiders to wear,
To cover the face that laughs at despair.

COURTS AND CHURCH

The courts are offshoots of fossilized creeds
And down to this hour, bullied by the church,
And weigh on pious scales their hopes and deeds
For fear some god will undermine their perch;
Their judgment always bears the mien and stamp
Of holy thought, views that the churches want.
They both accept the non-exploring camp,
Prefer their superstition dark and gaunt,
Hypocrisy sits in the teacher’s chair,
Deceit is the guise of the builder’s aim,
Commercialism breeds and trains despair,
Its every branch and root a bunco game.
Because they’re charged with deep devotedness,
By crafty masters versed in stratagem
Some judges don the robe of notedness
And think the sun comes up to look at them;
They try the cause and take the jury’s place
Browbeat the witness, act the lawyer, too,
And preach their spleen to victims brought to face
A law concocted by hate’s lobbied crew.
Confusion is the schemer’s main desire,
The marrow of grim powers that control;
It is the breath, the Maccabean fire

That animates the bleak exploiters' goal,
It blames the black man for the white man's loss
And sets the Nazi 'gainst the Slav and Jew,
It sets the Crescent hawking at the Cross;
Their safety lies in hatred's endless brew.
As long as creeds and races nurture spite
And each believes the other poorer stuff,
As long as faith with faith will broil and fight
The present system need not fear rebuff.
Law, as per Blackstone, represents the will
Of the superior, which the rest must heed;
It franchises the upper class to kill,
Abets the ruthless, aids the vile to breed.
The law's big hand is heavier than lead
And falls as blight on those who will not scheme,
Takes from the artless the last crumb of bread
And gives to those whose cunning is supreme.
Law thunders out where poverty abides,
And bleats like orphan lambs where wealth obtain,
Will drive in the spurs where misery rides
And leave the usurpers unhampered rein.
It bids the speaker bite his lip and tongue,
It makes the teacher fear to spread the truth,
It glares, the bugaboo of groping young,
Remains a riddle to the vast uncouth,
It holds the shield for predatory rich,
Protects the swindler from his waking prey,
Its fingers daubed with foul and slimy pitch
It sides with those concerns who best can pay.
The one who steals a dime or quart of milk
May spend his days in prison, death his end,
But experts in the game of fraud and bilk
Are freed and given every "chance" to mend.
There seems good bases for the sullen claim
That bloated greed is building its own tomb,
That gold and law are equally to blame
For doctrines that declare this system's doom.
Nor will it help to close our eyes and ears,
Nor will it help to slug, to rant or pray,
We must be up and function with the years—

We better heed; for this is what they say:
The leopard young must be the leopard kind,
The hawk does not bring forth a dove or wren,
The order that bears crime must ever grind
Beneath its bloody heel the lives of men.
This fact is borne out by the octopus
Whose tentacles have prospered with the years
With slimy doings still more numerous
Than all its millions flooding in on tears;
Each nickel represents a drop of blood,
A greedy bribe or stabbing in the dark,
A poor man's morsel strangled in the bud,
A hope or dream extinguished in the spark;
Its iron grip is bane, its breath is fire,
To maim, to crush the foremost of its plan,
Its progress is the people's dismal pyre.
Its God, to sack and plunder all it can,
It builds the rack, the dungeon and the noose,
Its thumbs decide the victims that shall hang.
A labor friend must never be turned loose,
The pardons are for blackguards of its gang;
The prisons are vile breeding swamps of crime
And smell to heaven with the rot they bear,
They blindly gulp, to vomit filth and slime
And spread their poison imprint everywhere.
They prove the error of the ancient plan
To hasten progress with an eye for eye,
The claim that cruelty or torment can
Perfect a songbird of a gnat or fly.
Within those walls are hatched the vilest schemes;
Their guardians foster plots to shame the mad
And tortures that outstrip Gehenna dreams.
They lack no ghoulish thing that hell could add.
These prisons make the savage seem a saint,
Eclipse the plan for legislatures' draft
With horrors that no decent tongue could paint,
They are the culmination of all graft.
Some day we'll learn that dungeons do not cure,
That mankind cannot change by serving whims,
That only truth and reason shall endure,

That economic wrongs won't heal with hymns;
The criminals are made of the same gist
That forms the pure and good, but circumstance
Will build a sage and next a pugilist,
And force the most to grope in ignorance.
Who takes a worker's life steals trash, but who
Will singe a hair of royal stock shall pay
With years and blood; the common plodding crew
Are merely grist and must be kept that way.
A dungeon for the tramp; but if he's rich
A special suite, a ticker in the cell,
A private bath to guard him from the itch,
A doctor and a nurse to keep him well,
For when his time is up—the minimum—
He must complete the new crinks of his game.
The full terms are for breachers in the slum
Enured to hardship, misery and blame,
And every day works havoc undismayed.
Greed saps the heart flow from the public veins,
It taunts the law and mocks it unafraid,
It keeps the court to guard its swelling gains.
NO CLASSES!

If lords of wealth are brought before the dock
To face the law their dollars helped to make,
It burns up months, even the market stock
Agitates and statesmen beg for their "dear sake";
But if a pauper turns up as the fry,
Some worker who has breached the sacred plan,
The taxes groan, the judge and jury pry,
The church and press sweat to condemn the man;
In half a day or less his fate is done,
And he sits waiting to go "down the line";
Example to the world that justice won,
And that it's oily wheels run superfine.
The mills of the gods (by epigram said)
Grind awfully slow, exceedingly well,
But often the force of those who seem dead
Will suddenly blast tormentors to hell.
The people's part to learn this rule complete—
This system must in time destroy itself.

The wolves do not restock the lambs they eat;
The grafters only know their vice and pelf.
His Honor's nose should smell the faker breed,
His eye should pierce the schemer's false display,
His seasoned mind should sense when sharpers plead
And guard the innocent from falling prey
To any such, and if he can't do that,
Let him confess his failure and withdraw
Or join the ranks who know where they are at
And not make villain-scourges of the law.
V.

HUMAN AFTER ALL

As many know, most judges will confess
When off the bench, and faced by stolid facts
That they who rule depend on luck and guess,
And seek their stimulous in gospel tracts.
While judges contemplate their harsh decrees,
And ponder ways and means to scourge the wrong,
They often think of their own bygone sprees
Their social stags with risqué dance and song.
They do not sentence for the breaches wrought,
For if they did we all would rot in jail,
We only punish men for getting caught,
We use the lash against the ones who fail.
Inscribe this deep with pyrographic pen,
"The judges are no more than other men".

CRIME IS WHAT?

That things are foul, few judges will deny,
And thoughtful ones know where to place the blame.
The system growls and judges must comply,
Like we, ourselves, they're puppets in the game.
The courts are but interpreters of code,
They serve as cogs within the state machine,
The masses think the judges stack the load
Yet justice functions only by routine.
The method used in picking out a judge
Is such as gives the politician's choice
And true, the chosen often proves the drudge,
The feeble echo of the master's voice.
Society is the father of all crime,

The citizen is but a helpless cog,
It paves the road with ignorance and grime
Then hands the reins to fool and demagogue.
For right and wrong are offshoots of the brain
We are mere tools of the environment
And must go wrong with leaders blind with gain,
You can't rule straight with gauges that are bent.
And once again it might be well to state
That apples cannot grow on berry vines;
You can't raise justice in a sump of hate
Or get classic songs from a throat that whines.
The slogan of the hour, "Crime does not pay",
Is merely pepper for the public eye,
For crime is what? Just what some statutes say;
The screen through which the swindling herd gets
If church and press, the school and court be made
To bare the archives, guarded all too well
By purchased brain, if these should unafraid
Declare the facts, if they would dare to tell
The truth and kill the lies, the world would see
A change so vast no prophet yet has sung
The like, and man observe a jubilee
Supreme, beyond the power of modern tongue;
For nature waits in readiness to spend,
To serve its bounties, everywhere accede
Its wealth and pay the highest dividend,
But she will not and cannot bow to greed.
They lie who claim that crime comes from within,
That God or devil brings it with intent
To show the wrong, the awfulness of sin.
It is the system's blunt acknowledgment
Of blind pursuit to plunder and to keep
Another's means, it is the heart and goal
Of private competition, it must sweep
Its parents to their doom, out of control,
As long as men will be compelled to take
What selfishness prefers to give, while snobs
Command, there needs must follow in the wake
A reign of crime, a trafficking in jobs,
In life and death, reaction to the wrong

Begun at the top; they can only mend
By suicide, and they shall plunge along
Till labor learns the truth and makes the end.
A thousand prisons cannot cure or stop
The ever closing avenues to jobs;
You cannot open up a mill or shop
By merely calling hungry millions "mobs."

DARKEST BEFORE DAWN

The darkened skies are blind with fog and chill,
The winds of discontent are growing loud;
From valley, plain, from every knoll and hill
Is seen and heard the stirring of the crowd.
Like autumn leaves the hopes are falling fast,
Like frosted branches reach the empty hands,
The hour of futile promises is past
And hunger comes with bullet-proof commands.
The faith once had in Gospel, God and Law
Has been defiled and battered in the muck,
The coming gale will tear the men of straw
And futilely they'll call upon their luck.
The step of spring is sounding in the east
The planted fields are pregnant with a feast.

MORNING BREAKS

Though circumstances change, yet this is so,
That evolution forges on and on,
It looks ahead, its one command is go,
And progress is its only orison.
Some day the means by which the vulture reign
Erects a jail where justice craves a school
And strangles truth that greed and lies obtain,
Will break along with its false reticule,
And in its place will rise a better age,
The day of equity for one and all.
We need but will to turn the blotted page
And close forever dictates that enthrall,
A richer age will come with love and cheer,
And prove that life is on the upward climb,
That science voids the potency of fear,
That human rights will master fraud and crime.
Then hail the bliss when man shall strive for man

And realize the brotherhood of all,
Each one a part and parcel of the plan,
That nature treats alike the great and small,
That no one has the right to sway, curtail
The opportunity of anyone.
Each owes the next to see he does not fail,
That justice should not rule by aid of gun,
That what we deemed Utopia can now
Be had to serve as sane and going fact,
At last the sword can melt into a plow,
And no one dwell in dread of being sacked.
The tongues that prattle platitudes and claim
That human nature was not made to change,
That humans must forever be the same,
Will find that truth is mother of the strange,
Will find that when the economic ills
Are cured and men no longer forced to fight
For bread, or run the pace that stunts and kills,
The world will hold as wrong what now seems right.
There is no need of changing human hearts,
The normal never joy in others' woe,
And when the present savage rule departs,
The taste for grab and pomp will likewise go.
The ways that some declare as permanent
As part and parcel of our earthly span,
Will fade like darkness from the firmament
And usher in the love of man to man.
And when the morning breaks, as break it must,
And those who will not see are shoved aside,
And economic wrongs lie in the dust,
And justice sits where now we fawn to pride,
The false will die and Truth will take its place.
The stony mills grind on without fatigue,
Conditions change as endlessly we chase
The rainbow colors that inspire intrigue.
Like patterns formed in a kaleidoscope,
The human scenes arrange before the court
To air their wrongs, their rights, their loss or hope;
Some fail, some win, some yield and some extort.
A fruit is measured by the type of tree,

And law's the fruit of legislative mind;
When thought improves, the judgment then will be
Reformed, amended (kind begets its kind).
Each day will bring its added bit of gain
Until at last each gets what he has earned,
And Justice rule, and labor break its chain.
This day is done—this Court now stands adjourned.
—FINIS—

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