

We behold our wives and mothers struggling for the means of life
Till they grow unsex'd, unwoman'd, in the fierce and sordid strife.

And we see the haughty spoiler, dwelling in voluptuous ease,
While our babes, within his sweat-shop, drag the burden on their knees.
O the blank, unvaried serfdom ! O the needs unsatisfied ;
O the dreary, dreary homes where want doth evermore abide.

Not for us is nature's beauty ; not for us the joy it yields,
When the first sweet bird of Maytime carols in the sunlight fields.
O the blessed light of day is dimm'd by spectres grim and gaunt,
Grisly shapes of cold and hunger, phantoms of impending want.

And we toil in shops and fact'ries, till we scarce can hold it true
That in distant lanes the daisies blossom under skies of blue.
O the spoiler owns vast acres ; we are granted by his grace,
At the end of life's long torture, just a narrow burial-place.

It is truth the toiler speaks. Nay, more, the sting of all his pain
Is, that they for whom he labors view him with profound disdain.
"Toil is noble," sings the poet, and the world takes up the cry ;
But the conduct of the social gives the apothegm the lie.

O the world's accepted code deny it, dreamer, tho' ye may,
Long ago declared the toiler fashioned of a coarser clay,
By the preacher in the pulpit, by the proud and silken dame,
By the lily-fingered idler, labor is accounted shame.

Rank is worshipp'd, wealth respected, ay, the swindler if his plan
Fills with yellow gold his coffer, suffers not the social ban.
But the toiler, plain, unletter'd - he from scorn is not exempt ;
Merchant, banker, nabob, lawyer, treat him with a bland contempt.

"For he lacks the finer graces, therefore he should bear the yoke ;
Fit to delve and spin, but never fit to mix with cultured folk."
O these false, unequal standards ! O these crooked ways of life !
O the base, ignoble dealings, of this petty human strife.

Shame to hold that work is shameful. When the toiler gains his due,
Men shall deem the gilded idler hardly fit to latch his shoe.
And the time is coming, coming ; soon the right shall reign supreme,
Even now reforms draw near the vast fulfilment of our dream.

From the serried ranks of labor springs a leader here and there.
Now at last they rouse to action ; they have wakened from despair ;
Far along life's endless turmoil, thro' the voices of the world,
Lo the challenge of the toilers like a thunderbolt is hurled.

O their sight, no longer darkened by the mist of hopeless tears,
Dwells upon the star of hope, that shines above the unborn years.
"By what right," they ask, O spoiler, hast thou dared to claim as thine
Earth's divinest myrrh and manna, life's most precious oil and wine ?