

Heroism

It takes great strength to train
To modern service your ancestral brain;
To lift the weight of the unnumbered years
Of dead men's habits, methods and ideas;
To hold that back with one hand—and support
With the other the weak steps of a new thought.
It takes great strength to bring your life up square
With your accepted thought and hold it there,
Resisting the inertia that drags back
From new attempts to the old habit's track.
It is so easy to drift back—to sink
So hard to live abreast of what you think.
It takes good strength to live where you belong,
When other people think that you are wrong;
People you love and who love you, and whose
Approval is a pleasure you would choose.
To bear this pressure and succeed at length
In living your belief—well—it takes strength.
And courage too—but what does courage mean,
Save strength to help you face a pain foreseen?
Courage to undertake this lifelong strain,
Of setting yours against your grandsire's brain;
Dangerous risk of walking lone and free
Out of the easy paths that used to be,
And the fierce pain of hurting those we love,
When love meets truth, and truth must ride above?
But the best courage man has ever shown
Is daring to cut loose and live alone.
Dark as the unlit chambers of clear space,
Where light shines back from no reflecting face
Our sun's wide glare, our heaven's shining blue,
We owe to fog and dust they fumble through;
And our rich wisdom that we treasure so
Shines from the thousand things that we don't know.
But to think new—it takes a courage grim
As led Columbus over the world's rim.
To think—it costs some courage—and to go
Try it. It takes every power you know.