

To My Friend, Dun Karm

To him that builds the Rhyming of our song
With interwoven music of rich sounds,
Which are the herald triumphs of our Race,
I wish that I could fashion a great hymn
Pindaric in its flight. The hard-trod globe
That feeds not grass nor wheat, unploughed, unsown,
Is not more stubborn than our ancient Tongue
In its unsoftened power still rude, untamed
By Art's refining breath. But lo! our singer
Hath hammered out from this time-sacred Tongue
The full-toned harmony of abiding joy.
For once God said, great God, the friend of singers,
Whilst Dawn was laughing, glorious of his light
And sea-borne hymns, "To My loved Isles I send
An altar-serving bard whose quiet voice
Shall gather unto faith the hope of man
In visions encompassing time and space
Linked in one whole as rhymes of the same song".
And he, the Bard, amongst us lived as they
Whose heart God fashions like a lily flower,
Unhailed, unloved. O, bitter times indeed

That have unleashed the snarling hounds of Crime
Here in our midst. For have we not denounced
As not of us the Ministrel that God gave
To our small Isle? Alas, have we not said,
“What care we for the beauty of his rhyme,
For his complaints, his dreams and high disdain,
His pictures of God’s sunsets and His vine?”
And so his hair grew white and his heart sick;
While, steeped in alien spite, like brainless sheep
We clapped our hands to hail as saviours those
Whose only merit is their act to trim
A shallow phrase and to make poison taste
Like honey, though they be but stinging wasps.
So should I now, to flatter foreign pride,
Disgrace your Native Muse with mocking grin
And draw upon my head the curse of Time?
Or should I bless you with belated thanks
Or hollow praise? Stop my thanksgiving ode
Till you along the tragic steps of life
Fall flat upon your face with wounded heart
Why not allune the harp to hail you now
Before the sexton the grey slab has placed
Upon your honoured grave? O song of mine,
Upon an eagle’s wing fly soon to him
To hail him thus from me: “I come from one
Who like you has loved truth for its own sake
And for the sake of Him, the Primal Source
Of all things beautiful!” Tell him too that I,
Out of a filial pity for his age,
Have asked the thyme of Malta and our skies
To blossom at his feet when he, too weary
And footsore on Life’s path, will miss the light
That was for ever his, that steeped his soul
Whilst he beheld the Painter with great skill
Fix on the canvas ruby-coloured fire
That makes the glory of the setting sun
Till his soul cried: “So wonderful, indeed,
Your art, O painter, yet the hand of Time
Shall cancel the rich colours of your brush.
But God not so! He makes a hundred sunsets

Which every night He cancels from the skies
To flash them back again at His own will."
Bid him good cheer, my song. He understands
The feelings of a young heart such as mine.