

"In the Beginning"

One Hundred years ago today,
while the Midsummer Sunshine lay
Fervid and still, upon the land
Within a darkened chamber stood
A grave and earnest band
Who counseled of the common good
And quailed not, — though they only read
The future, by the lamp of Hope

And over each one's head
His fellow's saw, the knotted rope,
Or in his breast the quenched sword
Or on his brow the pallor of the cell

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As War might cheat the hangman's cord
Or Power might chance to feel
A twinge of so-called mercy and decree
The living tomb or headman's steel -
To those who would be free!

Without the crowding burghers wait
Dreading almost alike to know
It to be written on the scroll of fate
That Britain should be Mother still, or foe.
- The village-fringed forest-band
Into a state transformed,
On that which seemed so brave and grand
Left unperformed!
Blanched cheek and flashing eye
Were side by side!
Boumingled there the bough and sigh
And fear and pride!
Hoh soon ^{by} cautious father stood anigh
Pale matron and flushed bride!

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They waited still - within - without!

The summer ^{sun} ~~noon~~ was high -

Before each heart had vanquished doubt

Before each voice ^(had answered) responded "Aye!"

The lurid rays shot through the gloom

Which filled the portent - shadowed room -

Like those which light the sulphurous cloud

When Bute ^{- spreads -} wreaths the hero's shroud!

^{-twine-}
^{-folds-}
The (summer) noon
^{breath of}
blew fierce and hot
Droning a mystic croon
With faithful horror fraught!

^{Over}
~~(Across the bosoms of those stern men)~~

Came up from the

Into the mystic gloom

Of the portent - shadowed room

Came the breath of summer noon

Up from the southward fierce and hot

Droning a faithful croon

With butle's mephitic fraught

As one by one

With baneful stroke

On ghastly ~~fl~~-joke

Which had been done

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~~Each hand confirmed -~~

Each made his own
By feeble manual sign
(No) ^{man} asking whether it should be
A passport to Eternity
On some divine -
That grand "Round Robin" of the free!

Without.

A boyish shout
and the muffled air
Bears the primal prayer
Of a nation born
Since that July morn
While the swift strokes fell
On the verberant bell
Till the organ throug
Gave a ceaseless note
That floated away o'er the sunlit sea
That danced o'er the water far over the sea
The joy-bell of freedom! The shout of the free!

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Yet an echo came back from southward
Soft
Low and sad as the minor tone
Which wails in the dirges metric mourn.
Was it for the past — a sad farewell?
The past which it put so far away?
Or was it the present parent's sigh,
The wretched mother's anguish-cry
For ills impending or far away?
That first Fourth of July?
Ah, who can say?