

**THE ' CALL OF  
INDIA**

(In Verse)

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IN VERSE.



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## *The Call of India.*

I stand upon a hill in Maymyo—  
Pisgah, the name inscribed upon a post :  
Who named it so I know not, but I know  
There is no fairer prospect, and the mind  
Alights on other mount whence Israel's seer  
Beheld the lands unto the utmost sea,  
The valley, city of psalm trees, which the Lord  
Had given him to see but not to tread,  
The promised land—and all around is still  
Save for the breeze that whispers silently  
Love to the young leaves and the flowers ; the  
    birds  
That flit among the branches seeking rest,  
Spent with the various pursuits of the day.

'Tis even : soon the sunset's golden glow  
Will soften and the shades of night will spread  
Upon the hills around and o'er the lake  
Where peace abides ; and only man may still,  
Aided by fruits of scientific thought,  
Wander in quest of pleasure that the dance  
Or pictures give. I stand upon the hill,  
And there the spire of church bears witness to  
The hope of time when Evil shall have spent  
His strength against the sway of charity.  
And there the masts that catch etheric words

Telling of warsome passion or defence,  
Of actions born of hate or deeds of love,  
Changing of bases on whose dubious strength  
Rests faith that all may find surcease of strife ;  
The want of consentaneousness in men  
Clamorous to lead the millions whose demand  
Is but for peace to fashion their own ends ;  
The hint of tocsin and of tumbrel such  
As marred the march of order in the race  
Whence Chivalry before sent forth her call  
To lead the world in art and purity  
Of purpose. There the flag that marks where  
lives

He upon whom reposes England's trust  
That all her sons who toil remotely here  
May do their duty this and every day—  
Some in the jungle, marking ways that may  
Lead to a larger light where darkness now  
Reigns in the heart of man, that love may grow  
And stay the dah lifted in ruthless rage  
Some in the lonely watches that on them  
May fall the honour to repel the first  
Rush of an impulse seeking to retard  
Extension of our gift of liberty  
To those that need yet spurn it as a thing  
Draping self-interest only—some in mines  
Silver and rubies that by use of these  
Mankind may find an urge to loftier ends.

Britain, what time your sons and daughters, too,  
Strove sternly to sustain the liberty  
You framed through centuries of bloody toil  
And furious onslaughts by your enemies :

And striving thus, salesmen from other lands  
Came lightly whispering of another form  
Of freedom, recking not of blood you poured,  
And bones that bleach, on India's frontier lines,  
That they, too, might be free to come and go,  
Trusting they would not bear false witness or  
Uplift malignant flag beside your own.

And one there came with tale of Christ upon  
The Indian road, as though he were the first  
To teach His mission, yielding meagre due  
To Heber, Carey and Macaulay, too,  
And many followers who had carried on  
Their noble intents under stress and pain  
And sickness and the loneliness and gibes,  
Patient to be but doing and to leave  
Ostent of what they did to die with them.

And one there came with purpose to traduce  
The freedom that he lived and laboured with  
Naming it bondage : so the serpent that,  
Revived by kindly aid, its venom spent  
Into the breast that gave it sheltering care.

And one who from the Sermon on the Mount  
Would feed his flock and yet at once withhold  
Caesar's from Caesar, pours pollutive oil  
Into the wells of gratitude that else  
Would render due for all the good they hold—  
Bird that accompanies Spring with unctuous  
throat

And pilfers use of nest another built !  
And she who after years of arduous search  
Into the occult has at length brought forth  
A new messiah who may yet achieve  
A hole in one as other golfers have.

And the grim spectre of a Frankenstein  
Looms in Lahore—a city grown from when  
Speech with suspicion, seeming sinister,  
Was snapped by scimitar and none dare ask  
A question—Britain, these the recompense  
For the great gift of freedom that you brought?

I stand upon a hill in Maymyo—  
Fair women and brave men go riding by,  
Careless, in pleasing play of speech the while,  
Tort and retort in India's capital  
And elsewhere grow in rancour day by day.  
The beetles borne upon their open shards  
Dart here and there as they have ever done  
Since time began. And here I lift my hand  
Towards the setting sun and clasp in spirit  
The hands of friends in distant Sheikh Budin  
On India's western front where Quetta stands  
Sentinel: friends who there uphold the flag  
Of faith and hope and love amid the bleak  
Gaunt hills and arid plains where still as yore  
The wild Baluch with turbaned locks and beard  
Takes forth his flocks to pasture or with knife  
Settles some blood feud left for him to close  
Caring not how or when the cause arose.  
My other hand I stretch towards the East  
By south to clasp, in Queensland's sunny Bush,  
The hands of friends who likewise hold aloft  
The banner of faith and hope and charity—  
Maryborough, city of happy homes  
And pleasing gardens where even yet abide  
Grand parents nursing memory of days  
When they as boys and girls lent lusty limbs

Clearing the forest to enrich the soil—  
 Or bore their strenuous part in drawing gold  
 From mines in Gympie's undulating ground—  
 Prescient of peace and rest they now enjoy  
 In humble wise amid the sturdy stock  
 Of high resolve they gave their best to raise—  
 And Mi Mi resting on your river's bank  
 Weaving fair pictures of your passing show ;  
 Maymyo and Maryborough twin in name  
 And proud parade of fragrant flower and fern,  
 Poinsettia, bouganville, bignonia, rose,  
 Aster and daisy, heart's-ease, violet ;  
 Emblems of love and peace and modesty.  
 Urangan, where the blue Pacific waves  
 Come with a gentle murmur, howso'er  
 The storm may rage without, as if to find  
 Rest from their turmoil ; and where happy  
 bands

Of swain and maiden plunge in joy of life,  
 Or walk sedate along your infant pier  
 That soon we hope may grow in use and bear  
 A manly part in plans developing  
 The district so where now is paucity  
 Plenty and Peace and Profit, sisters three,  
 May hand in hand go dancing down the years—  
 And thus is linked in me from West to East,  
 Standing upon a hill in Maymyo,  
 A purpose that it may be mine to wield  
 When time and place and privilege concur.

And now come fluttering with the beetles words  
 Of that sweet singer in an Austral home  
 Whose simple wisdom I would thus repeat ;—

" I've studied books with yearnings to improve,  
 To lift myself out of my lowly groove,  
 And here is all the change I ever got  
 Hark to your heart and you can learn the lot.

" And ever it has taught me, day by day,  
 The one same lesson in the same old way,  
 Look for your profits in the hearts of friends,  
 For hate has never yielded dividends.

" Life's what you make it, and the man who  
 tries  
 To take the shining stars from out the skies,  
 Goes crook on life and calls the world a cheat  
 And tramples on the daisies at his feet."

His lesson of the heart I now repeat  
 That haply some poor wandering spirit may  
 Take heart and having learnt the lesson go  
 The lighter in the burden that he bears.

Soon from the lips of churches in the land  
 Will rise in momentary unison  
 " Christians, awake, salute the happy morn  
 Whereon the Saviour of the world was born—  
 Peace upon earth and unto men good will."  
 May all move resolute to accomplishment  
 Of that great end renewed in faith and hope  
 And heeding less the form, and argument—  
 Whether the seventh or the first day be  
 The one selected to be sanctified ;  
 Whether salvation be by sprinkling babes



Or come but by immersion when full-grown ;  
 Whether from primal protoplasm or  
 By a creative power mankind arose ;  
 Or whether heaven or hell the end of all  
 Apportioned at the sound of final trump  
 According to the motives that have held  
 Through the brief period of our earthly life—  
 But heeding *more* the call to charity  
 Taking to widow and the fatherless  
 Succour our Master would that we should give,  
 That pharisaic pursuit of the law  
 May foist no bar against the flow of love  
 To the fallen by the wayside, sick and poor.

. . . . .  
 The darkness deepens, but the stars shine down  
 Witness of infinite power and plenteous grace.

. . . . .  
 Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom !

## II.

Last night on our verandah, facing East,  
 We sat in thought, watching the moon arise  
 Above the hills that girdle Maymyo,  
 Outpouring opalescent radiance  
 Through convolutions of transparent clouds  
 Assembled there to greet her majesty.  
 My heart was spread before me as it were  
 A garden, and the beams of tender light  
 Played on the weeds and flowers that grew  
 therein—

The weeds, alas ! how many more than flowers  
And one among the flowers with head bowed  
down  
In sorrow that the weeds so many were !

But even as I gazed a spirit came  
Forth from that flower, vested in sombre robe  
Sighing sweet incense and as she emerged  
Her dark eyes holding tears irradiant  
With hope ; and seeing me she lightly moved  
Toward me with a slow and patient step.  
As anxious mother moves to slumbering babe  
Intent to gain assurance that its sleep  
Is free from fear and that no sound disturb  
Its fulness—

From her calm presence flowed an influence  
Sweeter than chastened sorrow as she smiled  
At the mute question of the mystery  
That grew within me on her near approach  
And from her lips words that were audible  
Not to the human sense softly suspired  
Into my waiting soul that understood  
Her calling me to meet her advent here.

And when she called me thus I marvelled for  
The sigh contained a wondrous harmony  
Of love and pardon, with reproof and grief  
Subdued, like unto that which filled the heart  
Of father when his son returned and sought  
Forgiveness for that he had wandered far  
And spent his substance riotously. Then,

Lifted by power mysterious as thought,  
 We rose at once into the rarest air—  
 A region veiled from human vision dense,  
 Above the clouds and higher than the moon  
 That now shone with effulgence mystical.

Conscious of what her purpose was diffused  
 Within me as we rose to heights unknown  
 Before her visitation and her name—  
 Contrition ! Here she gave me too to know  
 The flower whence she emerged bore name alike,  
 Drooping more rare in human mind where still  
 Thank God, her sisters grow abundantly—  
 Poppies for pious remembrance of the dead  
 Who gave their lives in eager sacrifice  
 That others might fulfil the good they strove  
 To spread in plenty through a stricken world ;  
 Pansies for yielding solace to the blind ;  
 Roses to rouse compassion for the sick.

Soon came we to a realm whose imagery  
 No art of tongue or brush may reproduce  
 And on the sky in golden lettering—  
 Place of good deeds that languish for a soul.

Between my spirit guide and me was now  
 Knowledge of what each felt without recourse  
 To verbal converse, moved by will alone.  
 Light of soft amber hue around us spread  
 So by its aid mine eyes could faintly mark  
 Groups of fair beings resting here and there

With semblance of an impulse incomplete.

Then to my question was vouchsafed response—  
Here wander, restless, spirits of deeds undone  
On earth where unison of time and place  
Gave leave for their performance ; multitudes  
Fill this wide space with sorrow that their end  
Was brought abrupt by wanton use of power.

We paused awhile, then dimly I perceived  
A figure seated on a balcony  
Of fairest marble ; from her pallid brow  
Dark locks fell flowing in soft wooing waves  
Upon her shoulders, caught about her head  
With golden band in which were precious gems  
Of various hue and scintillating light—  
Her lustrous features perfect in their form.  
And as she raised her eyes a glow subdued  
Shone through a veil of finest texture wrought  
By wistful apprehension and regret.  
Around her bosom silken *sari* thrown  
Displaying ears of corn and spreading palms  
In fair embroidery ; but her hands were clasped  
In seeming anguish when she murmured thus :—

“ I am the vision of good that might have been  
Through length and breadth of Ind's unhappy  
land—

For years since Britain's gift of freedom came,  
Wandering in search of soul where to abide  
And mould my purpose in—alas, in vain !

But now returned—methought I had at last  
 Found place in one who some had spread report  
 Was most like Christ to-day in all the earth  
 But when I lighted, there was lust of power  
 With snarl that would be thought a piteous  
 bleat

Already set, employed in scattering seed  
 Of discontent among the villages  
 Where erst were peaceful age and happy youth  
 Who after toil of day spent twilight hour  
 In quiet thought or play beneath the boughs  
 Of spreading peepul, and occurred no wish  
 For other pastime : till there came the clash\*  
 Of argument that this and that were wrongs—  
 Oh, travesty of truth and purity !—  
 That Britain's vaunted freedom was a name  
 For avarice and tyranny ! And there grew  
 Parties propense to malign any act  
 However well conceived. And now my fear  
 Is lest an impulse brought from other lands  
 May swell the surge of falsity and hate.  
 When law and order aid the willing hand  
 To spread prosperity around, alas !  
 Envy exerts her treachery to subvert  
 The good that else would render happiness  
 In ever widening circle ; then with Hate  
 Conjoined, they wander midst the ignorant  
 And idle, calling them to cease from toil  
 And breed a general temper to oppose

\* We commend to the notice of our friends a small pamphlet entitled "India before the English," by R. Sewell, M.C.S., published by the Christian Literature Society for India, London, Madras and Colombo, 1910.

Religion—even deeming *her* kind laws  
 Fashioned by interests to oppress the poor !  
 If energy now guided to obstruct  
 By malice, were but yoked to steadfast will  
 So measures manifest for common weal  
 Should by mistelling not be overborne !  
 That to the tolerant which is fair, by those  
 Of contrary persuasion, thrust aside  
 Without respect of reason, but because  
 Of stark perversity ! It sometimes seems  
 Self-praise their object now, what'e'er the end  
 Whether a panting peace, or holocaust  
 That those who raise may slink in safety from.  
 The salt tax, least oppressive of them all !  
 Could wisdom in her stupor further fall ?  
 Go, tell my country that the only cure  
 For fancied ills lies in a unity  
 Of high endeavour to dispense content  
 With social order based on patient love,  
 Rather than on a raving lust for power  
 Distorting motives that are but to serve  
 Fulfilment of her peaceful destiny !  
 Tell them that every coin of kindness spent  
 Bears interest in the heart at cent per cent ;  
 Wisdom is measured by the peace it brings  
 To simple minds that Value simple things.\*  
 There is among them One they know not now  
 Whom sought with faith the land may yet be  
 well—  
 Yes, Love is the fulfilling of the law ! ”  
 Even as her message ended a soft sound

\* These four lines are reproduced with slight variation from  
 "The Sentimental Bloke," by C. J. Dennis.

Of heavenly music floated through the air—  
 “ If peradventure ten shall be found there  
 Of righteous intent, I will not destroy.”

The vision passed and as I stood amazed  
 My spirit guide : “ The anthem that was given  
 To thee to hear is sung by angel choir  
 Eternal round the throne where Mercy sits  
 In sorrow with good deeds that are undone.”

Following my guide we came unto a hall  
 Where stood a balance on whose scales were  
 laid,

At right extreme the good that had been done  
 And at the other, good deeds that remain  
 Short of fulfillment and alas ! these were  
 More ponderous far than those of other sort.  
 While yet our vision rested on the scales,  
 That on the left sank suddenly for then  
 Came bruit of him now marching to the sea  
 Who might have lent his power in aid of peace.

Then from the hall we glided instantly  
 Into a beauteous forest where bright forms  
 Moved lightly in a rhythm of mutual love,  
 Drawn from all nations and assembled here ;  
 Their only torment when report is brought  
 Of things performed from motive in discord  
 With sentiment awakened by the speech  
 Of statesmen who induced their sacrifice—  
 For greater love hath no man than that he  
 Should for his brother yield his cherished all  
 In full surrender : these we reverence

With poppies and two minutes silent prayer !

Anon across our vision slowly passed  
 A form the same as that he bore on earth,  
 Hair white with age and from his beaming eyes  
 A light of human kindness overspread.  
 They cast him from his place against his will  
 And if their guidance was the Will of God,  
 Amen ! but if the cry " Away with him "   
 Was born of malice may his latest sigh  
 Have been———" Father,  
 Forgive them for they knew not what they did."  
 They cast him from his place when he was weak  
 Upon a bed of sickness, stricken down  
 By the great burden he had borne so long—  
 Even the full furlough that a younger man  
 With one-tenth of his service, and how much  
 Less of his greatness, claims to him denied.  
 His name lives honoured by the multitude  
 Who felt his healing touch of sympathy  
 And heard his sweet evangel from the mouth  
 Of Him who brought salvation to the World  
 And who in likewise for His latest days  
 Was crowned with thorns and bruised in spirit  
 thus.

Great Father, may thy mercy still hold sway  
 And may the name of this thy servant live  
 In the heart of all who suffer and need grace  
 That Thy high purpose in the world be done  
 More fitly for that he is now with Thee !

I trembled ; and, as now he moved to us,  
 I fled unto a deep recess, utmost



From his intense regard that it might pass  
 The notice of my shame of what in me  
 Was left undone and evil that was done.  
 Even from my earliest youth ; but as I fled  
 Contrition, following, held and lifted me  
 The while a harmony soft as petal's fall  
 When flowers in summer close their perfumed  
 life :

“ For sake of prayer, breathed in ages past  
 That humble heart filled with repentance may  
 Not be despised, I will entreat for thee  
 That respite may be given thee : sin no more ;  
 What profiteth a man if all the world  
 He gain and in perdition lose his soul ! ”

The spirit that was guiding me then turned  
 Her dark eyes, still irradiant with hope,  
 Upon me : this the substance of her sigh—  
 When earthly cares oppress thee and thy heart  
 Is void, steal to that realm where golden deeds  
 Yearn for expression in thine earthly life  
 And thou shalt find full measure of content  
 When, having done in concord with their urge  
 But little as thy weakness will allow,  
 They shall have felt their calling not in vain.

She vanished, and I sat upon the chair  
 On our verandah still as ere she came,  
 But with a mind uplifted in a prayer,  
 That her blest visitation might imbue  
 Me with a purpose that shall not recede  
 So pilfer even contrition of her meed.