

**THE SOVEREIGN IN  
THE STREET, AND  
OTHER POEMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649166237

The sovereign in the street, and other poems by Lionel Josaphare

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# The Sovereign in the Street

And Other Poems

By

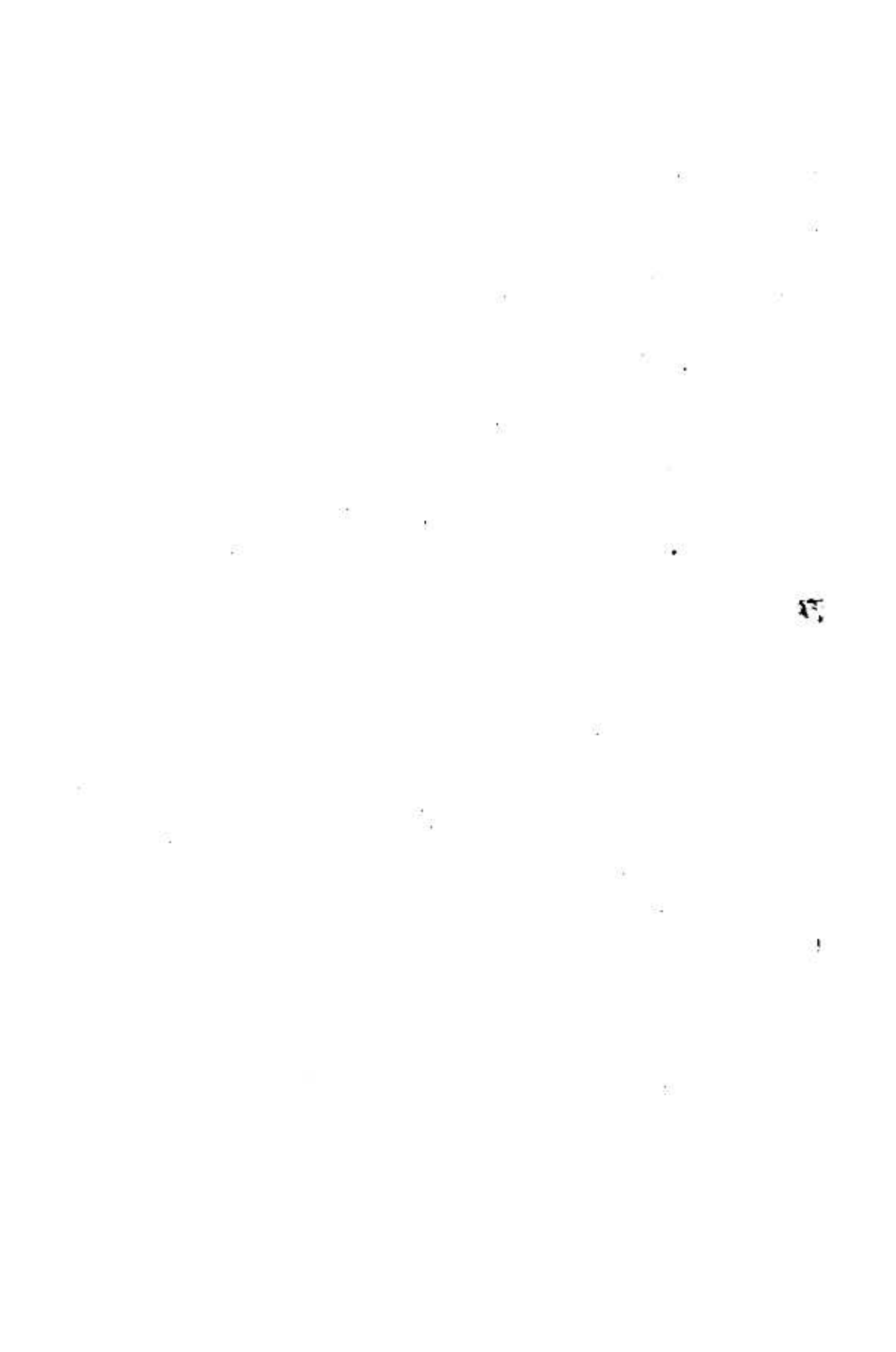
LIONEL JOSAPHARE

San Francisco  
A. M. ROBERTSON  
1907

*Containing*

The Sovereign in the Street  
The Humpback, the Cripple  
and the One-Eyed Man  
The Past  
A Death

H101631



## The Sovereign in the Street

From a castle of thoughts that my conscience was  
building

I studied a man who was cutting a street,  
While the round-rolling sun was demeaning and  
gilding

Him thinking and ripping the ditch at his feet.

Of this native of grief, as he shoveled the furrow,  
I write, be the subject a poem or not;

For as deep did he burrow, my love traveled  
thorough

And writes, be the truth of it rubies or rot.

Oh, 'tis weird that the truth, like a corpse on the  
floor,

Should bleed on our carpets and stare at the  
light;

And that Art should ignore what she taught us be-  
fore,

And tear up the lessons we prattled last night.



Not with your eyes, my poet, rose-haunted and  
grave—

Thou poet with wondering beauty-mad eyes—  
Did I look on the slave digging low in the cave,  
Corroded with dust, sweat, itch, sunbeams and  
flies.

O dim-blushing poet with Grecian-strung lyre,  
Declare not my earth-man in melody wrong,  
Nor that Beauty's attire and effulgence inspire:  
'Tis the voice of the singer makes noble the  
song.

Like a grave-digger digging a terrible grave—  
Like a sun spirit heaving the hot day with coal,  
His dredger he drave and he hove to the pave  
The clods that he tore from the earth and flung  
whole.

The freight of his spade, coming dun from the bung  
Of the foul-smelling sand, seemed the filth of his  
fate.

And fast while he flung the material dung  
Of the earth he built sidelong the mound of his  
hate.

The wealth-wasting givers of feasts grew in riches;  
Wide, wide grew the hands at the hilt of the  
task;  
And there came a dream which is a curse on all  
ditches  
And pain guised the laborer's face like a mask.

The point of the shovel grew inward and blunt  
And the love in the eye of the trencher grew  
dim;  
As he dug with a grunt, became shorter in front,  
And his fingers grew crooked, knock-knuckled  
and grim.

Still at underground honor his scepter he points,  
With negligence digging a tragical story;  
While some dunce who anoints with wealth his vile  
joints,  
Stands proud on the swift-rolling chariots of  
glory.

O for a lithe shovel of trueulent aim  
To gouge at the greed that keeps need in the  
sands!  
For the spade of good fame is of wood and steel  
frame,  
But to masters of men it is wood, steel and  
hands.

Then dig, ye bones, dig; ye have many more years;  
Your sorrows will shine to the eyelids of God;  
And Destiny hears your soft-falling tears:  
O'er the task of the spade let your man's noddle  
nod.

What matters it, marrow and gristle and brain  
Or tendon and belly and tooth are intent?  
Or that eyeball and vein in a perishing strain  
To the rim of the earth-riving shovel are bent?

Empowered of shoulder and elbow and groin,  
In struggle malefic he wearies at length,  
While innard and loin to the hot shovel join,  
Converting his pride to the need of new strength.

What long-contained smiles have been stopped at  
those lips?  
What thoughts dead and useless are oozing in  
sweat?

What majesty drips on those foul-flanneled hips?  
How laboring low makes nobility wet!

What tears that his eyelids a passage denied  
Took a brinier course through the fast-weeping  
pores?

What thoughts were untied—what escapings of  
pride  
When first he dug sands for their silverless ores?