

**THE MARCH OF  
MAN, AND  
OTHER POEMS**

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The March of Man, and Other Poems by Alfred Hayes

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**ALFRED HAYES**

**THE MARCH OF  
MAN, AND  
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H. Garrison

THE  
MARCH OF MAN

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALFRED HAYES

AUTHOR OF 'THE LAST CRUSADE,' 'DAVID WESTERN,' ETC.

London  
MACMILLAN AND CO.  
AND NEW YORK  
1891

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ANX 111

TO THE MEMORY OF  
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

HE trod the lonely path of truth and light ;  
He saw, beyond the shadow of his land,  
A gallant people hold with single hand  
The world at bay, for liberty and right,  
And bade her speed. For this, while very night  
Blushed to behold, the brainless rabble-band,  
To please our bigot sires, with impious brand  
Devoured his home and drove him from their sight.  
Discloser of the secret of the wind,  
We, who repenting of that dastard flame  
Have learnt with late remorseful bays to bind  
Thy marble brow, our glory and our shame,  
Are twice partakers of our fathers' blame,  
If to strange lights we too are proud and blind.

BIRMINGHAM. 1891.

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## THE MARCH OF MAN

### CANTO I

BLIND—then a little light—and once more blind.  
Blind in birth's living shroud, there blindly reared,  
Thence blindly driven—and lo! a drowsy babe,  
Its red face wrinkled like a fresh-blown poppy,  
Whose silken petals keep awhile the crease  
Of every fold they slept in. Day by day  
The light grows friendlier, till the strange great eyes,  
So vastly vacant, so profoundly grave,  
Stare hopeless, fearless, loveless at the world.  
Then dawn of soul and day of strength, then dusk  
Of fading dreams—a sigh—and once more blind.

From darkness unto darkness ; and this hour  
Of shattered lanterns and of naked lights  
Doth but the more reveal the enfolding gloom.  
What recked our brute forefathers of the cave ?  
They slew and ate, begat and slept ; to them  
Earth seemed not one stale cradle, one stale tomb,  
Floating untended through the boundless void ;  
The weakling's moan, the spoil of lust and rage  
To them brought no misgivings ; and we saints,  
We sinners, curbed and bridled into crime,  
Our tender souls self-tortured with remorse,  
Envy them oft their blameless guiltiness.

Death grins at birth, and birth makes mock of  
death ;

Death, birth, and death—O weary, weary round,  
If self were all !—to think it, is to droop,

To live it, is to die. Away with self!  
Not beasts of prey, but human hearts of love!  
Not claws of greed, but eager hands of help!  
Not civil foes, but comrades in one cause!  
Forward!—we cannot backward, if we would—  
Forward through law to righteous lawlessness!

The generations pass into the dark;  
They fold themselves in silence, and are gone;  
Their loves and hates, ambitions, wrongs and tears,  
Pangs of the body, puzzles of the brain,  
Vex them no more. In vain our men of light  
Dissect the living nerve, in vain our priests  
Plead with the God of old, in vain our seers  
Question the heart of mystery—the deep  
Gives back no answer, and the ghosts that thronged  
Faith's morning-twilight visit not her noon.