

**THE SOUL'S  
DESTROYER &  
OTHER POEMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649014590

The Soul's Destroyer & Other Poems by William H. Davies

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
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AND OTHER POEMS BY  
WILLIAM H. DAVIES

LONDON: ALSTON RIVERS LTD.  
BROOKE ST. HOLBORN BARS  
MCMVII

**BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO, LD., PRINTERS**  
**LONDON AND TORONTO**

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### THE SOUL'S DESTROYER

London! What utterance the mind finds here!  
In its academy of art, richer  
Than that proud temple which made Ophir poor,  
And the resources famed of Sheba's Queen.  
And its museums, hoarding up the past,  
With their rare bones of animals extinct;  
And woven stuffs embroidered by the East  
Ere other hemispheres could know that Peace  
Had trophies pleasanter to win than War;  
The great man, wrought to very life in stone—  
Of genius, that raises spirits that  
It cannot lay until their will is wrought—  
Till in their eyes we seek to wander awed,  
Lost in the mind's immensity, to find  
The passage barred, the spirit gone away.  
And not without sweet sounds to hear: as I  
Have heard the music, like a hiding child,  
Low chuckling its delight behind a wall,  
Which, with a sudden burst and joyous cry,  
Out leapt and on my heart threw its sweet weight—  
When strolling in the palace-bounded parks  
Of our great city on a summer's morn.  
Now, one who lives for long in London town  
Doth feel his love divided 'tween the two—  
A city's noise and Nature's quiet call:

His heart is as a mother's, that can hear  
Voices of absent children o'er the sea  
Calling to her, and children's voices home.  
E'en when old Thames rolls in his fog, and men  
Are lost, and only blind men know their way ;  
When Morning borrows of the Evening's lamps,  
Or when bewildered millions battle home  
With stifled throats, and eyes that burn with pain—  
Still are there lovers faithful to such moods.  
But in thy slums, where I have seen men gaunt,  
In their vile prisons where they wander starved  
Without a jailer for their common needs—  
Heard children whimper to their mother's moan ;  
Where rich ones, had they love, with willing hands,  
Have privilege to win their godhead soon  
By charity that's needless in new realms—  
Oh, who can love thy slums with starving ones !  
Where children live, like flowers in Ocean's dells,  
Unvisited by light or balmy wind :  
As daffodils, that plead with their sweet smiles  
Our charity for their rude father March.  
Thy place is in the slums, O Charity,  
These are thy churches for thy visitings ;  
The charity that seeks is nobler far  
Than charity that must at home be sought.  
This London served my life five years.  
viii.

In sheer disgust to know intemperance  
And poverty, and leaning to the set  
Who lays this precious intellect to sleep,  
As though no beauty was in all the world,  
With heaven and earth scarce worthy of a thought,  
And helpless grown of every future joy—  
Methought return to Nature might restore  
Youth's early peace and faith's simplicity.  
Though Hope be an illusion, yet our life  
Were never so bewildered as without it ;  
An April day of sunny promises  
When we are suffering actual cold and want,  
And child of Discontent—without such hints  
Of coming joy Life's name were Vanity.  
Hopeless had I become, a wreck of men ;  
A derelict that neither sinks nor floats,  
Is drifting out of sight of heaven and earth,  
Not of the ways of men, but *in* their ways.  
And there lived one, now to another wed,  
Whom I had secret wish to look upon,  
With sweet remembrance of our earlier years.  
Her presence then a pool of deep repose  
To break Life's dual run from Innocence  
To Manhood, and from Manhood unto Age,  
And a sweet pause for all my murmuring ;  
Until a way, for which is no account,