A Moment for Morris. & More

Norman Talbot

Thames skids by. bearing some scullers.
Its tide & time. take the traffic.

Yet square-rigged Morris. moors in his moment
among those diaphanous. days & folk,
more in his own time. tumultuous & tender
than most, & more. now, moving for us.

But there are full many. Socialist martyrs.
Millions that marched. were murdered, maimed --
& maybe, too, murdered. in the mire of their anger.
Many have thought. & thrilled to their thinking,
have humbly led. or heroically followed,
worked, & worked out. the worry & wonder
of stern brotherhood . of breaks & reverses
ironstained tears . & tempting white papers.

& millions more. have murmured in dreaming
of Increase Unsought . on ingenious islands
of rest from dreaming. under Dry Trees
of the arcane throb . of a throat like Janey's --
oh, plenty have longed . for what led to nowhere,
plenty were plangent . for the Glittering Plain.

So why mark this man . his mind & making?
Why do we see . his sail, long furled,
yet fill & fling back . the full sunlight,
not thunderous dawns . only darting one ray
or vaguespread dyes . of declining sunsets?

Because his making . marches with our minds.
The fellowship hope . is held in his worlds
high so we know . what our nerving is for.
Not just how it is . or who is the enemy
hardens our mood . as our might lessens
or warms the blood . as we blend with our work
but the sureness & stir . of his stories & shapings
of good days that men . may match & are made for.
Earth's dirt is clean. the clouds are sweet water, 
earth's colours are proud. primary things 
& love is clear. & its claspings glad 
as the shape of a tree. is true to its season 
the country full. of what's fair to its season – 
the good days that men. match & are made for.

What William Wordsworth. piously wanted 
"the mind of man". married to moorland 
mere, main. & mountainshoulders 
or dizzied with dwimmercrag. dark over Simplon 
or firm & ripe. with rounded filberts 
or wild & reckless. with a running hare – 
pious Willie's. wish is answered 
by island & mainland. of Morris' worlds 
& days that his men. match & are made for

& Keats had caught. the kind & calling 
of human love. & high discontent, 
the toil of living. the loss & swift dying, 
the fair attitudes. of arts mistranslated 
as gloom or as gush. Gallant he gave them 
as unfrenzied freedoms. of "friends to man", 
as his time ebbed. urged us to floodtide, 
said genius alone. was an oak amid heather, 
voted firmly. for forest trees. 
Where is he answered. & amplified stoutly 
more than in Morris'. maidens & men, 
abundance hardhanded. & heedless of shame? 
Just as Madeline's mate. was a match for her dreams 
so bedecked Birdalone. her bed of desire 
for the good days & nights. we know & are made for. 
Near to the source. but near to the seasalt 
Morris remains. the maker of stories 
that time cannot take. . Thames keeps only the shadow 
of the good days that man. can make & was made for.