

A good man and a minister of God,
 Who, when afflicted, bore his trouble meekly,
 Without complaint, until he saw his illness
 A burden to his wife and to his children.
 Against the code that said it was a sin
 To take a single life, however useless,
 Yet in the name of any nation's greed
 Could slaughter men by millions, he rebelled,
 And took his life, while all the town cried, "Shame!"
 John Markham knew that Arthur Peterson
 Had loved his family as he loved his God;
 His dying aided where his life could not.
 The note he left said simply: "Do not grieve.
 The sin—if sin it be—is mine, not yours,
 And I will settle it alone with God."

And there was timid little Jennie Carter
 Who all her life had tended an old mother,
 Crippled and crabbed, giving up Jim, the man
 She might have married; and when that mother died,
 "Went mad with grieving," so the neighbors said,
 And drank a cup of poison. Markham came.
 "Mother is gone," she whispered, "and Jim is gone.
 There's nothing any longer for me here."
 Markham agreed. He smiled and took her hand.
 He would not have kept her if he could.

And now the choice was his. Long months of pain
 Lay just ahead. For him death would be easy.
 He was not old; but useful life was through;
 And none would suffer greatly at his going
 But yet he was not sure. Not to face pain
 Seemed somehow cowardly still. It was not fear
 That stayed his hand. Indeed, there was in him
 An eagerness to be gone—to see and know.
 "Put out the light now, son, and go to sleep.
 I am just here beyond the door"

"May or annihilation—
 The phrase was dark, yet to his sleeping mind
 Had borne a breathless meaning, implied choice.—
"Choose May—or choose annihilation"—
 His conscious mind supplied, striving for sense.
 May had been a symbol to him always
 Of youth and beauty, happiness and love—