

The Statesmen

By Ambrose Bierce

How blest the land that counts among
Her sons so many good and wise,
To execute great feats of tongue
When troubles rise.

Behold them mounting every stump,
By speech our liberty to guard.
Observe their courage—see them jump,
And come down hard!

"Walk up, walk up!" each cries aloud,
"And learn from me what you must do
To turn aside the thunder cloud,
The earthquake too.

"Beware the wiles of yonder quack
Who stuffs the ears of all that pass.
I—I alone can show that black
Is white as grass."

They shout through all the day and break
The silence of the night as well.
They'd make—I wish they'd *go* and make—
Of Heaven a Hell.

A advocates free silver, B
Free trade and C free banking laws.
Free board, clothes, lodging would from me
Win warm applause.

Lo, D lifts up his voice: "You see
The single tax on land would fall
On all alike." More evenly
No tax at all.

"With paper money," bellows E,
 "We'll all be rich as lords." No doubt—
And richest of the lot will be
 The chap without.

As many "cures" as addle-wits
 Who know not what the ailment is!
Meanwhile the patient foams and spits
 Like a gin fizz.

Alas, poor Body Politic,
 Your fate is all too clearly read:
To be not altogether quick,
 Nor very dead.

You take your exercise in squirms,
 Your rest in fainting fits between.
'Tis plain that your disorder's worms—
 Worms fat and lean.

Worm Capital, Worm Labor dwell
 Within your maw and muscle's scope.
Their quarrels make your life a Hell,
 Your death a hope.

God send you find not such an end
 To ills however sharp and huge!
God send you convalesce! God send
 You vermifuge.

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