



Ode

By Arthur O'Shaughnessy

We are the music makers,
 And we are the dreamers of dreams,
 Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
 And sitting by desolate streams; —
 World-losers and world-forsakers,
 On whom the pale moon gleams:
 Yet we are the movers and shakers
 Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
 We build up the world's great cities,
 And out of a fabulous story
 We fashion an empire's glory:
 One man with a dream, at pleasure,
 Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
 And three with a new song's measure
 Can trample a kingdom down.

We, in the ages lying,
 In the buried past of the earth,
 Built Nineveh with our sighing,
 And Babel itself in our mirth;
 And o'erthrew them with prophesying
 To the old of the new world's worth;
 For each age is a dream that is dying,
 Or one that is coming to birth.

A breath of our inspiration
 Is the life of each generation;
 A wondrous thing of our dreaming
 Unearthly, impossible seeming —
 The soldier, the king, and the peasant
 Are working together in one,
 Till our dream shall become their present,
 And their work in the world be done.

They had no vision amazing
 Of the goodly house they are raising;

They had no divine foreshowing
Of the land to which they are going:
But on one man's soul it hath broken,
A light that doth not depart;
And his look, or a word he hath spoken,
Wrought flame in another man's heart.

And therefore to-day is thrilling
With a past day's late fulfilling;
And the multitudes are enlisted
In the faith that their fathers resisted,
And, scorning the dream of to-morrow,
Are bringing to pass, as they may,
In the world, for its joy or its sorrow,
The dream that was scorned yesterday.

But we, with our dreaming and singing,
Ceaseless and sorrowless we!
The glory about us clinging
Of the glorious futures we see,
Our souls with high music ringing:
O men! it must ever be
That we dwell, in our dreaming and singing,
A little apart from ye.

For we are afar with the dawning
And the suns that are not yet high,
And out of the infinite morning
Intrepid you hear us cry —
How, spite of your human scorning,
Once more God's future draws nigh,
And already goes forth the warning
That ye of the past must die.

Great hail! we cry to the comers
From the dazzling unknown shore;
Bring us hither your sun and your summers;
And renew our world as of yore;
You shall teach us your song's new numbers,
And things that we dreamed not before:
Yea, in spite of a dreamer who slumbers,
And a singer who sings no more.

Poet Bio



Born in London, Arthur O'Shaughnessy worked in the Zoology Department of the British Museum, where he became an expert in herpetology, the study of amphibians and reptiles. By age 30, he had published three collections of poetry, including *Music and Moonlight*, which contained his inspiring poem "Ode." He and his wife, Eleanor, wrote the children's storybook *Toyland*. The couple's two children both died as infants, and Eleanor died a few years later. Arthur's cause of death was listed as a "chill" after he walked home from the theater one rainy night.

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