

Maud

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Maud: A Monodrama - Part 2, Section 5

by [Alfred Tennyson](#), 1st Baron Tennyson

V

I

Dead, long dead,

Long dead!

And my heart is a handful of dust,

And the wheels go over my head,

And my bones are shaken with pain,

For into a shallow grave they are thrust,

Only a yard beneath the street,

And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,

The hoofs of the horses beat,

Beat into my scalp and my brain,

With never an end to the stream of passing feet,

Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,

Clamour and rumble, and ringing and clatter,

And here beneath it is all as bad,

For I thought the dead had peace, but it is not so;

To have no peace in the grave, is that not sad?

But up and down and to and fro,

Ever about me the dead men go;

And then to hear a dead man chatter

Is enough to drive one mad.

II

Wretchedest age, since Time began,

They cannot even bury a man;

And though we paid our tithes in the days that are gone,

Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was read;

It is that which makes us loud in the world of the dead;

There is none that does his work, not one;

A touch of their office might have sufficed,

But the churchmen fain would kill their church,

As the churches have killed their Christ.

III

See, there is one of us sobbing,

No limit to his distress;

And another, a lord of all things, praying
To his own great self, as I guess;
And another, a statesman there, betraying
His party-secret, fool, to the press;
And yonder a vile physician, blabbing
The case of his patient — all for what?
To tickle the maggot born in an empty head,
And wheedle a world that loves him not,
For it is but a world of the dead.

IV

Nothing but idiot gabble!
For the prophecy given of old
And then not understood,
Has come to pass as foretold;
Not let any man think for the public good,
But babble, merely for babble.
For I never whispered a private affair
Within the hearing of cat or mouse,
No, not to myself in the closet alone,
But I heard it shouted at once from the top of the house;
Everything came to be known.

Who told him we were there?

V

Not that gray old wolf, for he came not back

From the wilderness, full of wolves, where he used to lie;

He has gathered the bones for his o'ergrown whelp to crack;

Crack them now for yourself, and howl, and die.

VI

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,

And curse me the British vermin, the rat;

I know not whether he came in the Hanover ship,

But I know that he lies and listens mute

In an ancient mansion's crannies and holes:

Arsenic, arsenic, sure, would do it,

Except that now we poison our babes, poor souls!

It is all used up for that.

VII

Tell him now: she is standing here at my head;

Not beautiful now, not even kind;
He may take her now; for she never speaks her mind,
But is ever the one thing silent here.
She is not of us, as I divine;
She comes from another stiller world of the dead,
Stiller, not fairer than mine.

VIII

But I know where a garden grows,
Fairer than aught in the world beside,
All made up of the lily and rose
That blow by night, when the season is good,
To the sound of dancing music and flutes:
It is only flowers, they had no fruits,
And I almost fear they are not roses, but blood;
For the keeper was one, so full of pride,
He linkt a dead man there to a spectral bride;
For he, if he had not been a Sultan of brutes,
Would he have that hole in his side?

IX

But what will the old man say?

He laid a cruel snare in a pit

To catch a friend of mine one stormy day;

Yet now I could even weep to think of it;

For what will the old man say

When he comes to the second corpse in the pit?

X

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,

Then to strike him and lay him low,

That were a public merit, far,

Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin;

But the red life spilt for a private blow —

I swear to you, lawful and lawless war

Are scarcely even akin.

XI

O me, why have they not buried me deep enough?

Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough,

Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?

Maybe still I am but half-dead;

Then I cannot be wholly dumb;

I will cry to the steps above my head

And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come

To bury me, bury me

Deeper, ever so little deeper.

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