

TITANS

E. J. Pratt

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TITANS

By

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Author of
"Newfoundland Verse"
"The Witches' Brew"

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(A Dream of a Pleiocene Armageddon)

THE CACHALOT

I

A thousand years now had his breed
Established the mammalian lead;
The founder (in cetacean lore)
Had followed Leif to Labrador;
The eldest-born tracked all the way
Marco Polo to Cathay;

A third had hounded one whole week
The great Columbus to Bahama;
A fourth outstripped to Mozambique
The flying squadron of de Gama;
A fifth had often crossed the wake
Of Cortez, Cavendish and Drake;
The great grandsire—a veteran rover—
Had entered once the strait of Dover,
In a naval fight, and with his hump
Had stove a bottom of Van Tromp;
The grandsire at Trafalgar swam
At the *Redoubtable* and caught her,
With all the tonnage of his ram,
Deadly between the wind and water;
And his granddam herself was known
As fighter and as navigator,
The mightiest mammal in the zone
From Baffin Bay to the Equator.
From such a line of conjugate sires
Issued his blood, his lumbar fires,
And from such dams imperial-loined
His Taurian timbers had been joined,
And when his time had come to hasten
Forth from his deep sub-mammary basin,
Out on the ocean tracts, his mamma
Had, in a North Saghalien gale,
Launched him, a five-ton healthy male,
Between Hong Kong and Yokohama.
Now after ninety moons of days,
Sheltered by the mammoth fin,
He took on adolescent ways
And learned the habits of his kin;

Ransacked the seas and found his mate,
Established his dynastic name,
Reared up his youngsters, and became
The most dynamic vertebrate
(According to his Royal Dame)
From Tonga to the Hudson Strait.
And from the start, by fast degrees,
He won in all hostilities;
Sighted a hammerhead and followed him,
Ripped him from jaw to ventral, swallowed him;
Pursued a shovelnose and mangled him;
Twisted a broadbill's neck and strangled him;
Conquered a rorqual in full sight
Of a score of youthful bulls who spurred
Him to the contest, and the fight
Won him the mastery of the herd.

Another ninety moons and Time
Had cast a marvel from his hand,
Unmatched on either sea or land—
A sperm whale in the pitch of prime.
A hundred feet or thereabout
He measured from the tail to snout,
And every foot of that would run
From fifteen hundred to a ton.
But huge as was his tail or fin,
His bulk of forehead, or his hoists
And slow subsidences of jaw,
He was more wonderful within.
His iron ribs and spinal joists
Enclosed the sepulchre of a maw.
The bellows of his lungs might sail

A herring skiff—such was the gale
Along the wind-pipe; and so large
The lymph-flow of his active liver,
One might believe a fair-sized barge
Could navigate along the river;
And the islands of his pancreas
Were so tremendous that between 'em
A punt would sink; while a cart might pass
His bile-duct to the duodenum
Without a peristaltic quiver.
And cataracts of red blood stormed
His heart, while lower down was formed
That fearful labyrinthine coil
Filled with the musk of ambergris;
And there were reservoirs of oil
And spermaceti; and renal juices
That poured in torrents without cease
Throughout his grand canals and sluices.
And hid in his arterial flow
Were flames and currents set aglow
By the wild pulses of the chase
With fighters of the Saxon race.
A tincture of an iron grain
Had dyed his blood a darker stain;
Upon his coat of toughest rubber
A dozen cicatrices showed
The place as many barbs were stowed,
Twisted and buried in his blubber,
The mute reminders of the hours
Of combat when the irate whale
Unlimbered all his massive powers
Of head-ram and of caudal flail,

Littering the waters with the chips
Of whale-boats and vainglorious ships.

II

Where Cape Delgado strikes the sea,
A cliff ran outward slantingly
A mile along a tossing edge
Of water towards a coral ledge,
Making a sheer and downward climb
Of twenty fathoms where it ended,
Forming a jutting scaur suspended
Over a cave of murk and slime.
A dull reptilian silence hung
About the walls, and fungus clung
To knots of rock, and over boles
Of lime and basalt poisonous weed
Grew rampant, covering the holes
Where crayfish and sea-urchins breed.
The upper movement of the seas
Across the reefs could not be heard;
The nether tides but faintly stirred
Sea-nettles and anemones.
A thick festoon of lichens crawled
From crag to crag, and under it
Half-hidden in a noisome pit
Of bones and shells a kraken sprawled.
Moveless, he seemed, as a boulder set
In pitch, and dead within his lair,
Except for a transfixing stare

From lidless eyes of burnished jet,
And a hard spasm now and then
Within his viscous centre, when
His scabrous feelers intertwined
Would stir, vibrate, and then unwind
Their ligatures with easy strength
To tap the gloom, a cable length;
And finding no life that might touch
The mortal radius of their clutch,
Slowly relax, and shorten up
Each tensile tip, each suction cup,
And coil again around the head
Of the mollusc on its miry bed,
Like a litter of pythons settling there
To shutter the Gorgonian stare.

But soon the squid's antennæ caught
A murmur that the waters brought—
No febrile stirring as might spring
From a puny barracuda lunging
At a tuna's leap, some minor thing,
A tarpon or a dolphin plunging—
But a deep consonant that rides
Below the measured beat of tides
With that vast, undulating rhythm
A sounding sperm whale carries with him.
The kraken felt that as the flow
Beat on his lair with plangent power,
It was the challenge of his foe,
The prelude to a fatal hour;
Nor was there given him more than time,
From that first instinct of alarm,

To ground himself in deeper slime,
And raise up each enormous arm
Above him, when, unmeasured, full
On the revolving ramparts, broke
The hideous rupture of a stroke
From the forehead of the bull.
And when they interlocked, that night—
Cetacean and cephalopod
No Titan with Olympian god
Had ever waged a fiercer fight;
Tail and skull and teeth and maw
Met sinew, cartilage, and claw,
Within those self-engendered tides,
Where the Acherontic flood
Of sepia, mingling with the blood
Of whale, befouled Delgado's sides.
And when the cachalot out-wore
The squid's tenacious clasp, he tore
From frame and socket, shred by shred,
Each gristled, writhing tentacle,
And with serrated mandible
Sawed cleanly through the bulbous head;
Then gorged upon the fibrous jelly
Until, finding that six tons lay
Like Vulcan's anvil in his belly,
He left a thousand sharks his prey,
And with his flukes, slow-labouring, rose
To a calm surface where he shot
A roaring geyser, steaming hot,
From the blast-pipe of his nose.
One hour he rested, in the gloom
Of the after-midnight; his great back

Prone with the tide and, in the loom
Of the Afric coast, merged with the black
Of the water; till a rose shaft, sent
From Madagascar far away,
Etched a ripple, eloquent
Of a freshening wind and a fair day.

Flushed with the triumph of the fight,
He felt his now unchallenged right
To take by demonstrated merit
What he by birth-line did inherit—
The lordship of each bull and dam
That in mammalian waters swam,
As Maharajah of the seas
From Rio to the Celebes.
And nobly did the splendid brute
Leap to his laurels, execute
His lineal functions as he sped
Towards the Equator northwards, dead
Against the current and the breeze;
Over his back the running seas
Cascaded, while the morning sun,
Rising in gold and beryl, spun
Over the cachalot's streaming gloss,
And from the foam, a fiery floss
Of multitudinous fashionings,
And dipping downward from the blue,
The sea-gulls from Comoro flew,
And brushed him with their silver wings;
Then at the tropic hour of noon
He slackened down; a drowsy spell
Was creeping over him, and soon

He fell asleep upon the swell.

III

The cruising ships had never claimed
So bold a captain, so far-famed
Throughout the fleets a master-whaler—
New England's pride was Martin Taylor.
'Twas in this fall of eighty-eight,
As skipper of the *Albatross*,
He bore South from the Behring Strait,
Down by the China Coast, to cross
The Line, and with the fishing done
To head her for the homeward run
Around the Cape of Storms, and bring
Her to Nantucket by the Spring.
She had three thousand barrels stowed
Under the hatches, though she could,
Below and on her deck, have stood
Four thousand as her bumper load.
And so to try his final luck,
He entered Sunda Strait and struck
Into the Indian Ocean where,
According to reports that year,
A fleet had had grand fishing spells
Between the Cocos and Seychelles.
Thither he sailed; but many a day
Passed by in its unending way,
The weather fair, the weather rough,
With watch and sleep, with tack and reef,

With swab and holystone, salt beef
And its eternal partner, duff;
Now driving on with press of sail,
Now sweaty calms that drugged the men,
Everything but sight of whale,
Until one startling midday, when
A gesture in the rigging drew
The flagging tension of the crew.

In the cross-trees at the royal mast,
Shank, the third mate, was breathing fast,
His eyes stared at the horizon clouds,
His heels were kicking at the shrouds,
His cheeks were puffed, his throat was dry,
He seemed to be bawling at the sky.

"Hoy, you windjammer, what's the matter?
What's this infernal devil's clatter?"

"She blows, sir, there she blows, by thunder,
A sperm, a mighty big one, yonder."

"Where-a-way?" was Taylor's scream.

"Ten miles, sir, on the looard beam!"

"Hard up and let her go like hell!"

With heeling side and heady toss,
Smothered in spray, the *Albatross*
Came free in answer to his yell,
And corked off seven with a rout
Of roaring canvas crowding her,

Her jibs and royals bellying out,
With studsail, staysail, spinnaker.
The barque came to; the first mate roared
His orders, and the davits swung,
The block-sheaves creaked, and the men sprung
Into the boats as they were lowered.
With oars unshipped, and every sail,
Tub and harpoon and lance in trim,
The boats payed off before the gale,
Taylor leading; after him,
Old Wart, Gamaliel, and Shank—
Three mates in order of their rank.
The day was fine; 'twas two o'clock,
And in the north, three miles away,
Asleep since noon, and like a rock,
The towering bulk of the cachalot lay.

"Two hundred barrels to a quart,"
Gamaliel whispered to Old Wart.

"A bull, by gad, the biggest one
I've ever seen," said Wart, "I'll bet 'ee,
He'll measure up a hundred ton,
And a thousand gallons of spermaceti."

"Clew up your gab!"

"Let go that mast!
There'll be row enough when you get him fast."

"Don't ship the oars!"

"Now, easy, steady,
You'll gally him with your bloody noise."

The four harpooners standing ready
Within the bows, their blades in poise,
Two abaft and two broadside,
Arched and struck; the irons cut
Their razor edges through the hide
And penetrated to the gut.
"Stern all! and let the box-lines slip.
Stern! Sheer!" The boats backed up.

"Unship
That mast. Bend to and stow that sail,
And jam the pole under the thwart."

With head uplifted the sperm whale
Made for the starboard boat of Wart,
Who managed with a desperate swing
To save his skiff the forehead blow,
But to be crushed with the backward swing
Of the flukes as the giant plunged below;
On this dead instant Taylor cleft
His line; the third mate's iron drew,
Which, for the sounding trial, left
But one boat with an iron true,—
The one that had Gamaliel in it.
The tubs ran out, Gamaliel reckoned
Two hundred fathoms to the minute;
Before the line had cleared the second,
He tied the drugg and quickly passed
The splice to Shank who made it fast,
And, with ten blistering minutes gone,
Had but a moment left to toss
It to the fifth boat rushing on

With Hall fresh from the Albatross,
Who when his skiff, capsizing, lay
So low he could no longer bail her,
Caught up the end for its last relay,
And flung it to the hands of Taylor.
With dipping bow and creaking thwart,
The skipper's whaleboat tore through tunnels
Of drifting foam, with listing gunwales,
Now to starboard, now to port.
The hemp ran through the leaden chock,
Making the casing searing hot;
The second oarsman snatched and shot
The piggin like a shuttlecock.
Baling the swamping torrent out,
Or throwing sidelong spurts to dout
The flame when with the treble turn
The loggerhead began to burn.

A thousand fathoms down the lug
Of rope, harpoon, of boat and drugg,
Began, in half a breathless hour,
To get his wind and drain his power;
His throbbing valves demanded air,
The open sky, the sunlight there;
The downward plunging ceased, and now,
Taylor feeling the tarred hemp strand
Slackening that moment at the bow,
Began to haul hand over hand,
And pass it aft where it was stowed
Loose in the stern sheets, while the crew
After the sounding respite threw
Their bodies on the oars and rowed

In the direction of the pull.

"He blows!" The four whaleboats converged
On a point to southward where the bull
In a white cloud of mist emerged—
Terror of head and hump and brawn,
Silent and sinister and gray,
As in a lifting fog at dawn
Gibraltar rises from its bay.
With lateral crunchings of his jaw,
And thunderous booming as his tail
Collided with a wave, the whale
Steamed up immediately he saw
The boats, lowered his cranial drum
And charged, his slaughterous eye on Shank;
The mate—his hour had not yet come—
Parried the head and caught the flank
With a straight iron running keen
Into the reaches of his spleen.
The other boats rushed in; when Taylor backed,
Gamaliel leaped in and lodged
A thrust into his ribs, then dodged
The wallowing flukes when Hall attacked.
As killers bite and swordfish pierce
Their foes, a score of lances sank
Through blubber to the bone and drank
His blood with energy more fierce
Than theirs; nor could he shake them off
With that same large and sovereign scoff,
That high redundancy of ease
With which he smote his enemies.
He somersaulted, leaped, and sounded;

When he arose the whaleboats hounded
Him still; he tried gigantic breaches,
The irons stuck to him like leeches;
He made for open sea but found
The anchors faithful to their ground,
For, every surface run, he towed
The boat crews faster than they rowed.
Five hectic hours had now passed by,
Closing a tropic afternoon,
Now twilight with a mackerel sky,
And now a full and climbing moon.
'Twas time to end this vanity—
Hauling a puny batch of men,
With boat and cross-boards out to sea,
Tethered to his vitals, when
The line would neither break nor draw.
Where was his pride too, that his race
Should claim one fugitive in a chase?
His teeth were sound within his jaw,
His thirty feet of forehead still
Had all their pristine power to kill.
He swung his bulk round to pursue
This arrogant and impious crew.
He took his own good time, not caring
With such persistent foes to crush
Them by a self-destroying rush,
But blending cunning with his daring,
He sought to mesh them in the toil
Of a rapid moving spiral coil,
Baffling the steersmen as they plied
Their oars now on the windward side,
Now hard-a-lee, forcing them dead

Upon the foam line of his head.
And when the narrowing orbit shrank
In width to twice his spinal length,
He put on all his speed and strength
And turned diagonally on Shank.
The third mate's twenty years of luck
Were ended as the cachalot struck
The boat amidships, carrying it
With open sliding jaws that bit
The keel and sawed the gunwales through,
Leaving behind him as he ploughed
His way along a rising cloud,
Fragments of oars and planks and crew.
Another charge and the death knell
Was rung upon Gamaliel;
At the same instant Hall ran foul
Of the tail sweep, but not before
A well directed iron tore
Three feet into the lower bowel.

Two foes were now left on the sea—
The *Albatross* with shortened sail
Was slatting up against the gale;
Taylor manoeuvring warily
Between the rushes and the rough
Wave hazards of the crest and trough,
Now closed and sent a whizzing dart
Underneath the pectoral fin
That pierced the muscle of the heart.
The odds had up to this been equal—
Whale and wind and sea with whaler—
But, for the sperm, the fighting sequel

Grew darker with that thrust of Taylor.
From all his lesser wounds the blood
That ran from him had scarcely spent
A conscious tithe of power; the flood
That issued from this fiery rent,
Broaching the arterial tide,
Had left a ragged worm of pain
Which crawled like treason to his brain,—
The worm of a Titan's broken pride!
Was he—with a toothless Bowhead's fate,
Slain by a thing called a second mate—
To come in tow to the whaler's side?
Be lashed like a Helot to the bitts
While, from the cutting stage, the spade
Of a harpooner cut deep slits
Into his head and neck, and flayed
Him to the bone; while jesters spat
Upon his carcass, jeered and wrangled
About his weight, the price his fat
Would bring, as with the heavy haul
Of the blocks his strips of blubber dangled
At every click of the windlass pawl?
An acrid torture in his soul
Growing with the tragic hurry
Of the blood stream through that widening hole
Presaged a sperm whale's dying flurry—
That orgy of convulsive breath,
Abhorred thing before the death,
In which the maniac threads of life
Are gathered from some wild abyss,
Stranded for a final strife
Then broken in a paroxysm.

Darkness and wind began to pour
A tidal whirlpool round the spot,
Where the clotted nostrils' roar
Sounded from the cachalot
A deep bay to his human foes.
He settled down to hide his track,
Sighted the keels, then swiftly rose,
And with the upheaval of his back,
Caught with annihilating rip
The boat, then with the swelling throes
Of death levied for the attack,
Made for the port bow of the ship.
All the tonnage, all the speed,
All the courage of his breed,
The pride and anger of his breath,
The battling legions of his blood
Met in that unresisted thud,
Smote in that double stroke of death.
Ten feet above and ten below
The water-line his forehead caught her,
The hatches opening to the blow
His hundred driving tons had wrought her;
The capstan and the anchor fled,
When bolts and stanchions swept asunder,
For what was iron to that head,
And oak—in that hydraulic thunder?
Then, like a royal retinue,
The slow processional of crew,
Of inundated hull, of mast,
Halliard and shroud and trestle-cheek,
Of yard and topsail to the last
Dank flutter of the ensign as a wave

Closed in upon the skysail peak,
Followed the Monarch to his grave.

THE GREAT FEUD

(A Dream of a Pleiocene Armageddon)

Like a quarter moon the shoreline curled
Upon the neck of the ancient world,
Where, as the modern Magians say,
In one cool morning of the Earth,
Australasia had its birth,
And vertebrated with Malay.
Monsoons from Arafura Seas
Had played their native energies
Full upon the western tip,
Until the vast recessional
Of scourging wash and tidal rip
Had made a stubborn littoral
Take on a deep indented shape,—
A hundred leagues, to the eastern Cape,
Of broken bays with narrow reaches,
Deltas and gulfs bulwarked by steep
Eroded headlands, with a sweep
Of fifty miles of central beaches,
And rich alluvial flats where luscious
Grasses, ferns and milk bulrushes
Made up the original nursery

For fauna of the land and sea.
Stretching from the water line
By gentle slope and sharp incline,
Past many an undulating plain,
The land ran southward to a chain
Of heavy-wooded hills and rose
Beyond them to the black Sierras,
Soaring aloft to where the snows
That capped the ranging Guadeleras
Were blackened by the brooding dread
Outline of a volcano's head,—
Jurania, with her crater jaw,
Her slanting forehead ancient-scarred,
And breathing through her smoky maw,
Lay like a dragon left to guard
The Isthmian Scarps against the climb
Of life that left the ocean slime,
In far adventurous design,
On footholds past the timber line.
In such a place, at such a time,
Long before the birth of man,
This great Tellurian feud began.

For ages which cannot be told
The fish along the Isthmian border
Had felt the invasion of their cold
Blood by an unexplained disorder.
It looked as if the destination,
Of all life of the stock marine,
Was doomed to be, through paths unseen,
The most profound obliteration.
Millions of youthful fins were led

Far from their safe and watery bed,
To sport along the tidal edge,
Nosing for grubs and water-lice,
For pickerel weed and shoots of rice
That grew luxuriant within the sedge,
And many feasting unawares
Were drawn into relentless snares;
Strange rasp-and-saw bills harried them,
And swooping talons carried them
Into the air, and many more
Were stranded high and dry on shore,
Where poisonous lizards, asps and adders
Bit them, or where the solar fire
Caught them at noon-tide in the mire,
Curdled their blood and starched their bladders.
And thousands that survived the heat
Turned their backs upon their breed,
Shed their fins and took on feet,
And clambered far inland to feed
On windy things like grass and roots,
Bark and leaves and bitter sloes,
Or, like those horrid jungle brutes
With hairy pelts and horny toes,
To quaff the warm blood of their foes;
While many more that did return,
After one æonian night,
Came back contemptuous to spurn
Their parents, like the trilobite,
With stony back and stonier heart;
Rolled up in balls and dwelt apart
In sulky isolation; while others,—
The mongrel water scorpions sprung

From crabs and spiders,—came and stung
Their little sisters and their brothers.

And thus it was throughout the whole
Sea-range of the Australian zone,
The fear of racial doom was thrown
Heavily upon the piscine soul.
A futile anger like a curse
Only made confusion worse.
Their mad desire to strike back
At their destroying coward-foe
Turned all their fury of attack
Into consuming vertigo.
It broke their hearts and crushed their wills,
It thinned the juices of their maws,
Left them with gnashing of the jaws
And deep prolapsis of the gills.
And hitherto unsuffered pains,
A ghastly brood, came in by legions,
Rheumatic tremors in the veins,
And palsy in the ventral regions.
Now, not a single evening passed
But an aquatic breathed its last
Beneath the terrifying roar
Of some dread plantigrade on shore;
And so this strange insidious spark
Of wild adventure carried sorrow
To many a yearning matriarch
With the drab dawning of the morrow.
But worst of all the horrors which
Enmeshed them was the galling sense
That never would the recompense

Of battle come; that primal itch
For vengeance would expend its force,
According to an adverse Fate,
Running a self-destroying course
Down the blind alley of their hate.
But by some quirk that Nature flings
Into the settled scheme of things,—
That old beldame, she gets so grumpy,
No mortal vision may foretell
Her antics, when her nerves are jumpy—
It happened that she broke the spell
By a freak shifting of the odds
Within the sea-lap of the gods.

Vibrant calms unknown before
Lay on the Australasian shore,
And Silences, a hooded band,
Like portents of catastrophe,
Tip-toed expectant on the land,
And mummied about the open sea.
Neptune had resigned the trident,
For months Aeolus had not spoken,
Nor had the sea-waves heard the strident
Trumpeter,—his conch was broken.
From igneous fissures in the ground
Blue wisps of smoke with eerie sound
Curled on the air to indicate
That some elaborate escapade
Was on the point of being played
By the royal clowns of Fate.
Here and there through asphalt holes
Was heard a most uncanny racket,—

Charon, before the birth of souls
Called for his modern Stygian packet,
Was busy at enormous scows,
Caulking them with walrus skin,
Hammering, sawing to the din
Of Cerberus with his gruff bow-wows,
Together with the gird and clatter
Of wheels and whiffletrees, the croak
Of scranny throats, and the fast patter
Of feet and flap of wings, that spoke
Of straining, jostling ambulances;
Of Hecate with a frightful brood
Of harpies in a phantom wood,
Rehearsing new macabre dances.
Now all this strange activity
Was radiating everywhere;
It rapped the calms upon the sea,
It shot through flumes of stagnant air,
It tingled in the blood of brutes
Of land and water; in the roots
Of trees; and even stuff like rocks
Felt the strong etheric shocks,
Until all natural things that dwelt
In the marine Australian belt
Had come to feel, in a dumb way,
That their protracted evil spell
Might, with the birth of any day,
Dissolve before a miracle.

One vital morning when the tide
Was out and the Scala flats were dried,
The largest-livered, heaviest-brained,

Most thoroughbred pedestrian
Of all the tribes that had attained
The rank of the amphibian,
A green-back turtle left the sea.
Her blood was changing and a scent,
Unknown to her rude ancestry,
Had charged her with presentiment
Of some unfathomed destiny.
She had her eyes upon a spot
She long aspired to, but had not
For lack of muscle, wind and time,
Been able to effect the climb,
To-day, with fast evolving legs,
Urged by the lure of distant land,
She struggled for this cone of sand,
Proudly there to lay her eggs,
And from this vantage point, some day,
To take her young and wend her way,
Far up into the hills, to view
What kind of giant there might dwell
Stretched asleep against the blue,—
A turtle with a snow-white shell,
Or inland whale, for aught she knew,
Sending through a spiracle,
Intermittent puffs of gray
Cloud resembling ocean spray.
But when after four dusty hours
She reached the top of the sandy cone,
A thrill her blood had never known
Paralysed her laying powers,
And concentrated all her thought
Upon the scene the morning brought.

An amphitheatre that held
Valleys and cliffs and waterfalls,
Gorges hewn like royal halls,
Forests flanked by hills that swelled
To mountains, these again to clouds
From peaks of ice; and everywhere
On ground, in trees and in the air,
All forms of living things; dense crowds
Of kites and gulls; vultures that hung
Within the blue; and mangabees;
Pig-tailed baboons that peered and swung
From the liana of the trees;
Wombats beneath acacias;
Tasmanian tigers in the grass;
Civets and sloths and bandicoots;
High-standing elks in hollowed stumps
Of redwood; tapirs in the clumps
Of banyan, grubbing at the roots;
And under eucalyptus trees,
Flocks of emus and kiwis,
With herds of skipping kangaroos,
Antelopes and brindled gnoos;—
All Earth's delegates were sent,
Blood relations, tribal foes,
Bound by cordial entente,
To this prodigious Parliament;—
Lions and water-buffaloes,
Clouded leopards, chamois droves,
Side by side and cheek by nose,
Rested in the myrtle groves;
While pumas, rams and grizzly bears
Stroked each other in their lairs.

And central to this wild tableau,
A white giraffe began to scale
A scraggy monolith of shale,
Standing on a high plateau.
And when his neck had arched the summit,
A female anthropoidal ape
Climbed up, and settling on the nape,
Surveyed the crowded congress from it.
The comeliest of the Primate race,
No one of all the Southern lands
Could match her for arboreal grace,
For hairy contour of her hands,
For contemplation in her face,
Or wisdom in her thyroid glands.
To hide her young, to fight or climb,
She was the cleverest of her time.
She taught the family tribes to make
A brier or a bamboo stake,
Fashion an eolith and throw
It deadly at a distant foe,
To charge in serried ranks, or beat
A hurried or prepared retreat,
Showed them new uses for their paws
In battle for the monkey cause.
And faintly she had sniffed the raw
Material of the moral law;
She had observed, one windy night,
The skull of an alligator cut
Open by a cocoanut
Falling from a lofty height,—
An alligator that had torn
And eaten up her youngest born.

Then to a corner she had crept,
And had not eaten, had not slept,
But scratched her head and drummed her breast,
And Reason entered as she wondered,
Brooded in the trees and pondered
On how the reptile was struck dead.
And now on wide and just behalf
Of all the land brutes of the world,
She took the leadership and curled
Around the neck of the giraffe;
And all at once confusion ceased,
As every hard raptorial beak
And slanted eye of bird and beast
Were strained upon the central peak,—
And every lobe of every ear
Was cocked that none might fail to hear
The message when the ape unfurled
Her simian marvel to the world.

*All ye that dwell afar or nigh
Upon the plains or on the hills,
In valley caves or in the sky,
Feathers and bristles, talons, quills,
Flesh-eating ones and herbivores
That roam inland or ramp the shores;
All ye with snouts that turn the furrow
For colonies of ants or burrow
For savory roots and fattened worms;
And ye that carry on your sides
Impenetrable armour hides,
Slow-moving, ponderous pachyderms;
All ye that lie in wait and crouch*

*And gnashing leap upon your prey;
And those that at the breast or pouch
Suckle the young; all ye that lay,
And scratch the ant-hills with your claws;
And all that brotherhood that climb,
Cracking great nuts between the jaws;
Give ear and know ye that the time
Has come when he that slumbereth
Shall pay the penalty of death.
Turn ye your gaze, a moment, far
Beyond the plain over the height
Of the palm trees where the white
Foam-line breaks upon the bar.
There under the blue stretch of sea,
Living in darkness out of sight
Skulks our ancient enemy,
Devouring everything that passes
Along the great lagoons to feed
On clams and shrimps and rich swamp grasses
Growing beside the tidal weed.
By right of conquest and of birth
We claim all footholds on this Earth;—
Those flats there steaming in the sun,
The coast-line to the salted edge
Where the coral foam is spun,
That long three-cornered, rocky wedge
On which the walrus warms his hide,
Where the dugong sleeps,—which the manatee
Claims as his dwelling when the sea
Sucks it from us at high tide.
All ye that hail from foreign parts
Whose warm blood knocking at your hearts*

*Has led you to this southern place,
Attend upon my words! and know
What great disaster to our race
Befel us thirty years ago.
You noticed as you cleared the height
Of the Aral range that, to the south,
Three juts of land came into sight,
Extending far out of the mouth
Of the Ravenna river;—these
Have ever been the nurseries
For the monkey tribe and kangaroo,
For gentle bears and wallabies,
For marmosette and wanderoo,
And for the crinkly-tail baboon.
On one dread summer day—at noon—
A terror broke upon our eyes;
We saw the blazing sun go out,
And the level sea begin to rise
Under the breath of a typhoon,
And break with tidal water-spout,
Carrying with the general ruin
Of the palms, the aged and the young,
The mother bear and little bruin;
And wailing mandrill babes that clung
To the parental neck were flung
Into the watery abyss
To satisfy the avarice
And lust of every carrion foe
And devil-fish that dwelt therein.
To-day that slaughter at the Delta
Remains the nightmare of the years;
Those death-cries of the apes could melt a*

*Stony crocodile to tears.
Since then, their blood-thirst unappeased,
The've ventured up our quiet streams;
Gannets and herons have been seized,
Baboons have died with horrid screams,
And elephantine calves for miles
All along the water-courses,
Together with young water-horses,
Have been dragged down by crocodiles.
For years reports have been received
From distant countries occupied
By furs, feathers and hairs allied
By blood, how they have been bereaved
And plunged in blackest misery
By that insane, consuming hate
Of ignorant, inarticulate
Cold-blood barbarians of the sea.
All we observant ones have seen
That at high tides in clouded moons
The habits of the fish have been
To pass into the great lagoons,
To lie in wait throughout the course
Of night and morning to midday,
Then chase our swimming breeds and slay
Them with no feeling of remorse;
And then with foul-distended maw,
The cowards that they are withdraw
To their unlighted haunts, to shun
An open struggle in the sun.
Therefore, let it now be known,
By tokens that can never err,—
By the marrow in the fox's bone,*

*By the light growth of the ermine's fur,
And by the camel's drinking bout,
That the season's blasting drought,
With lowering of the tides, will last
Till three up-tilted moons have passed.
Then will the inland shallows be,
At all their gateways unexposed
To the waters of the open sea.
When the barrier reefs have closed.
So if our hearts are resolute,
At the appointed hour we'll match them
With our brave hosts in massed pursuit;
No quarter shall there be: we'll catch them,—
From the smallest to the largest brute—
Throw them into consternation,
Hem them in the muddy places
And on the shoals, leaving no traces
Save of their damned annihilation.
Before I close—just one word more.
Oft have we seen a jealous raid
Grow into a great crusade;
Or end by internecine war,
When the blood of kindred drenched
The higher mountain snows and quenched
The jungle grass and arid moors.
Therefore ye thirsty carnivores
Be ye adjured that till the hour
Of trial ye shall not devour
The flesh of either animal
Or bird upon the Earth; nor shall
Ye taste of blood; your daily food
Shall be the Earth's fair yield of fruits,*

*Her store of plants and sappy roots,
The fresh rind of the sandalwood,
And willow bark, berries and beans,
Tussac grass and mangosteens,
Papaws and guavas and the sweet
Milk of the cocoanut, the meat
Of durian with celery,
The ripe fruit of the mango-tree;
Yea—all the natural plenitude
Of Earth shall henceforth be your food.
Likewise ye herbivores, be ye
Adjured against all enmity.
Ye shall not trample; shall not gore,
With hoof or horn, the carnivore;
But as their allies, ye shall spend,
In one grand consummating blow
Of death against the common foe,
Your strength to a triumphant end.
Now hie ye to your lairs; sleep not;
Gather your hosts; abate no jot
Of this day's wrath, and when the year
Is big with three up-tilted moons,
We'll charge on the aquatics here,
And trap them in the great Lagoons.*

She spoke: and every throat and lung
Of herbivore and carnivore,
In volleying symphonic roar,
Rang with persuasion of her tongue.
With vengeance firing up the breast,
And with the speed of a monsoon blast,
The keen dispersing hordes soon passed

Beyond the skyline of the West.
And the sultriness of peace again
Brooded on valley, hill and plain,
Shaken only when a cloud
Of thick Juranian vapour, thrown
In a dark spiral, burst with loud
Echoes, like laughter from the cone.

Scrambling from her hill of sand,
The disillusioned, now unfertile,
Amphibious and bilingual turtle
Fled the spectre of the land;
Crossed the muddy flats and sought her
Endangered kindred of the water,
Apprised them of their bloody fate;
The congress vote; the rage and hate
Of the ape; her story of the feud,
And the news was borne at ether rate
Throughout the ocean's amplitude,
And hailed with fierce, exultant mood,
With wave of pectorals and high leap
Into the air and foamy sweep
Of tail and clutch of tentacle;
Broken was the hoary spell!
The hour for revenge, for daring,
Had come for fin and scale and shell!
For shark! swordfish! mackerel!
Lobster! octopus! and herring!

WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE MOONS

THE MUSTER

Black bucks whose distant ancestry
Sprang from the (now) Westphalian hills;
Wild boars with hair as stiff as quills,
Of Brandenburgian pedigree;
Wallachian elks, whose antlers spread
A full five feet above the head,
Trekking around the Caucasus,
Sounding with defiant stare
Their gutturals blent with blasphemous
Umlauts upon the stricken air;
And they were joined near Teheran
By camels down from Turkestan,
And elands from Trans-Caspian snows,
Persian gazelles with hearts and roes,
Arabian antelopes and masses
Of quaggas, zebras and wild asses;
And on the eastern move, they met
Horses following in the tracks
Of ibexes and snaggy yaks
From South Bokhara and Thibet
And countries far-distributed;
The thunderous Indian quadruped,—
Rhinoceros and elephant,
And every kind of ruminant,
And non-cud chewing animal,
Mammal and marsupial;
From hill and valley, steppe and prairie,
Peccary and dromedary,

Bashan bull and Cashmir ram,
The male spring-bok, chamois, gnoo,
The reid-buck and the kangaroo
Heading downwards through Siam.
Likewise, with earth-shattering roars,
Accompanied by the screams of birds,
From the wide compass came the herds
Of storming, hungry carnivores.
On them the patriotic call
Fell with the greatest sacrifice.
A troop of tigers from Bengal,
Full of carraway and rice,
(In keeping with the simian pledge)
Discovering early that their edge
Of appetite was dulled enough
By such ill-regulated stuff
Upon a base of hops and oats,
Attacked (although they did not slay)
A flock of Himalayan goats
Resting on a wooded height
In their mid-journey to Malay;
They drained their udders, bleached them white,
And leaving them in awful plight,
Prostrate and helpless for the fray,
Passed on with energy renewed
Into the Australasian feud.
Through scorching plains and bleak defiles
Of Northern India's spacious miles,
Spread a vast host of tawny, mad
Lions from Allahabad.
Oleanders, roots of taro
With ginseng and dried kauri cones

Had changed the substance of their marrow,
And alternated growls with groans.
Hyænas forced-fed on salt-bush
With sago palms and tapioca
Wailed so loudly that they woke a
Pack of wolves from Hindu Rush,
Whose tocsin cry antiphonal
Was caught by every caracal
Sleeping with his stomach full
Of rhododendrons near Cabul;
And this was followed by the blab
Of jackals cursed with elderberry
All the way from the Punjab
As far South-East as Pandicherry.
Over the stretch from Turkestan,
From Shamo Desert to Hunan,
From Shantung down to Singapore,
Along the central isthmus, fell
The mighty, myrmidonian roar,
That ululant and choric yell
Of leopards full of okra pods
And lentils; cheetahs gagging hard
At cascarilla spiced with nard;
Polecats charged with cotton wads,
And bears and civets overcome
With stringent eucalyptus gum.
All these in thousands numberless
Had, with the triple lunar round,
Arrived, in hot blood-thirstiness,
Upon the Isthmian battle ground,
Where, when the welter of their roars
Had ceased along the littoral border,

The hordes were disciplined to order,
Divided into army corps,
Brigades, battalions and platoons,
Some were ambushed by the coast
In heavy scrub and bush, but most
Were stationed near the great lagoons
Connected with the hostile beaches,
And regimented into shape
By the anthropoidal ape
Who, by her rousing martial speeches,
Kept up to fever heat their zeal
For the imperilled commonweal.
At last when the appointed week
Had come; and when the final night
Was over with the first faint streak
Of orange in the Eastern light,—
Just at the hour when every pad
And hoof were tingling with the mad
Moment of impending slaughter,
A reeking, ghastly, unknown flair
Compounded of the earth and water,
Of subterranean clay and air,
And like no other scent, arose
And fell upon each roving nose.

Over the top of the nearest alp
A cliff-like head began to rise;
A lizard's skull with horny scalp,
Dragon's teeth and boa's eyes;
Covered with scales of greenish blue
The lower jaw swung into view,
And from the open mouth there came

A lolling tongue of scarlet flame;
A column of a neck whose reach
Topped the high branches of a beech;
Prehensile arms and girthy paunch
Upheld by massive spine and haunch
Are followed by unmeasured thighs;
With hock and joint the inches rise,
Until the monster in dread sight
Of all, to the last claw, collects
His stature on the Aral height,
And lo,—TYRANNOSAURUS REX!

Now let the sceptic disbelieve
The truth I am about to state,
And urge, with curling lip, I weave
A legend that is out of date.
Let him disgorge his lie; I claim
That by a wanton twist of Fate,
(To which I am by Hera sworn)
A creature of this sounding name,
Although three millions years too late,
Stood on that peak this awful morn.
It came to pass, one day, before
Mammals appeared upon the Earth,
A dinosaurian mother bore
Tyrannus in a tragic birth.
Chasing a mighty stegosaur
Into a bed of pitch, she tried,
With huge success, before she died,
To lay an egg that chanced to live
Throughout its long bituminous night,
Enveloped by this soft, air-tight

Most excellent preservative;
Until just fifty years ago,
When the volcano underwent
Her seismic periodic throes,
The egg came bouncing through a rent.
A moa passing by espied
The object; sidled up, cock-eyed,
And watched it with a mother's pride.
Like a beach-stone pumiced by the sea,
It glowed with the full sunlight on it.
She sniffed the thing excitedly,
Walked around it, pecked and scratched
The shell, then feathered down upon it.
And in due course of time she hatched
Her prodigy. At first she fed him
On cotton tails and unweaned lambs,
On calves and badgers; then she led him
To the higher ridges where she filled
His stomach with the coarser hams
Of pigs and short-horn mountain rams,
Until he took on strength and killed
All comers with their sires and dams.

Now after fifty years, the bird
Had, from a cassowary, heard
About the Pan-cyclonic rally
Of beasts in the Juranian Valley,
And how at their great gastric session
They swore to stand by the Food Concession.
And so the moa felt she'd serve her
Race the best, fanning the wild
Instinct of her foster child

With her strong patriotic fervour.
She found *this* lesson easy for
A huge blood-quaffing dinosaur;
The next one that she strove to teach,—
To feed on rushes, roots and grass,—
Seemed to this hungry ward, alas,
Beyond his intellectual reach.
Still, after days of bleats and pants,
Of clucking at the balsam cones,
Of digging graves for flesh and bones,
And building pyramids of plants;—
And after days of petulant scolding,
She managed to convey, by holding
Within her talons, cocoanuts
And bread-fruit rather than the cuts
From the sirloin of putrid cattle,—
That fasting from all flesh and blood,
And chewing, self-imposed, of cud,
Was the condition of the battle.
And so the fatal morning found
Him bloated, angry and unsound
Of wind and reeling down the height
For flesh, his object of the fight.
His skyward neck took on the form
Of a pliant topmast in a storm.
His headlong and unsteady gait
Had been the more provoked, of late,
By a yeasty alimentary state.
For, on the day before, twitch grass
With coarse buck wheat and sassafras
Had formed the staple of his diet.
A vinery of red grape then lay

Before him; he resolved to try it;
Which done, his head began to sway,
The hot, fermenting liquor rose,
And just before the charge was made,
Had sluiced up through his neck, and played
A geyser through his throat and nose,
Until his body seemed to seethe
With dragon foam on scale and claw,
The scarlet dripping from his teeth,
And fire issuing from his jaw.
The ape had feared the monster's coming
Would cause a panic as the sound
Of thunder from the infernal drumming
Of Tyrannus' feet upon the ground,
Breaking like waves along the coast,
Fell upon the affrighted host.
And for a moment as he neared
The rostral monolith and tossed
His head for carnage it appeared
As if the national cause was lost.
So strong the impact as he hit
A line of tigers near the centre
It paralysed the simian's wit
And for a fearful second rent her
Courage as the jungle mass
Went floundering in a deep morass.
But instant as a thunderclap
The prescience of her soul awoke,
For by that self-same tiger stroke
Tyrannosaurus filled the gap,
And as the stress upon the line
Was centrally towards the sea,

She caught the panic's energy
Of flight in time, and flashed the sign
Of battle from her lofty tower,
Then launched the seething frenzied power
Of tusk and claw. Blood red the Dawn!
The die was cast! The fight was on!

Now was seen the strategy
Hidden in the stern decree
Of the wise old anthropoid.
The long-continued carnal void,
With all its gastric irritation,
Had raised their lust to slay and eat
Raw flesh to the internal heat
Of a universal conflagration.
Just in from dry Allahabad,
Farinaceous lions had
Spied, upon an oozy bank,
Five hundred head of walruses,
Their hides of rubber steaming rank
With odours oleaginous.
Such was their fury when they smelled them,
It seemed as if the nether air
Were raining tails and brindled hair,—
The way those brutes of India felled them;
They had them stripped before the sun
Arose to bleach each skeleton.
Fifteen miles further down the Coast,
An angry and conglomerate host,—
Inflammatory Bengalese,
Starved with cherry bark and peas;
With salicaceous jaguars,

Leguminous leopards full of beans
That murmured in their jugulars,—
Swooped, with the speed of peregrines,
Upon the red substantial meals
Of dolphins hot and blubberous,
And a large school of porpoises,
Manatees and ursine seals,
Until the sand-spit where they were
Surrendered back unto the sea
Not one shred of fat or fur
But polished skulls and vertebrae.
Down a sharp declivity
Where the eastern skyline touched a plain,
Wild cats of Burmese demonry
Fell like a cloud of typhoon rain.
Raisins had so alkalized them
That the fur upon their necks had moulted,
Soyas and poppies which they bolted
Stuck in their throats and agonized them.
So swift and vital was their spring
When circling round a "Sulphur Bottom,"
They drove him on the rocks and got 'im
Like turkey buzzards on the wing,
Pouncing on a carrion,
Until beneath the morning sky
His ribs were arching high and dry
Like the frame of a stranded galleon.

With the first hours of the day
It seemed the battle fortunes lay
In ample margins with the land.
No courage of the sea could stand

Against the all-consuming, savage
Hunger springing from such a fast,
Nor millions numberless outlast
That crash of pyramidal ravage.
But with the pangs of thirst abated,
A temporary slackening of the drive
Gave to the fish infuriated
With loss a moment to revive
Their ranks, when soon upon the air
New cries of terror and despair
Announced destruction for the land.
Rounding the Roc peninsula,
Sperm whales from Carpentaria
Had reached the Dura bank of sand,
And bellying round, began to blow
Their challenge in contemptuous spout
At any brute the earth could show
Possessing horn or tusk or snout.
Undaunted, a battalion
Of bulling elephants from Canton,
Directed by a jackass, tore
Their ponderous course down to the shore,
In answer to the loud defiance
Of those humpbacked mammalian giants.
Lured by the low ebb of the tide,
And a hundred yards of bar, sun-dried,
They plunged into the quicksands where,
With roar of suction and the blare
Of strained uplifted trunks, they died,
Or slipping into weedy ground
Off the silting edge, were drowned
At leisure by the sweeping tails

And jaw-tug of victorious whales.

Down at the delta of Ravenna,
The hardest struggle of the day
For three long hours was under way,
Wild as the tumult of Gehenna.
A thousand tigers of the land
Were fighting, under the command
Of a Sumatran chimpanzee,
Ten thousand tigers of the sea.
The thirstier cats that formed the van
Took the water swimming far
Beyond the shallows of the bar,
Heedless of the risk they ran;
Others of more tempered daring,
Striking the water margin, kept
Well within their depth but swept
Along the muddy regions, tearing
The placid surface into spray,
Like a gale's lash upon a bay.
For those three hours the waters ran
With every hue of the rainbow span,—
Saffron lines and serpentine,
Lurid darts of iris green,
Mottled browns with dusky stripe,
Eyeballs flashing streaks of red,
Leaped and zigzagged to the gripe
Of lamia and of hammerhead,
Locking with inveterate teeth
The tigers' bellies underneath.
Phantoms blue and ashen pale
Followed white ones in the race

Where blade of dorsal, scythe of tail
Cut and ripped the water's face,
Curved and sank while in their place
The vitreous glare of stomachs rose
With napping pectorals, as the claws
Of tigers tore a bottle-nose
Or bullet-head; or as their jaws,
Just at the moment they were drowned,
With paralysing seizure found
Their last authentic tiger mark
In the marble throat of a slate blue shark.
And when the fierce dispute was over,
And the tides were crimson in the sun,
The splash of a ground shark or the dun,
Lithe shadow of an ocean rover,
Cutting across the backward spins
Of settling eddies showed how vast
Was the jungle ruin when at last
The furs were conquered by the fins.

Beyond the edge of the chalk canal,
In the deeper part of the Skibo Run
The tiger slaughter was outdone
By a longer, bloodier carnival.
There, neutral hippopotami,
Spotted deer, mild-mannered sows,
Milk-white mules and buffalo cows
Had wandered with their young to lie
And bathe beneath a peaceful sky,
With antelopes and quagga mares,
Soft gazelles and brown she-bears,
Frightened by the roars that rent

The rafters of the firmament;
When suddenly as by design
It seemed as if the whole Pacific
Had yielded up her most terrific
Monsters of the fighting line.
Their long blades flashing in the sun,
Sword-fish were swimming up the Run,
Accompanied by flagitious things,—
Saw-bills with their deadly pikes,
Thornbacks with their poisoned spikes,
Torpedo rays with scorpion stings;
Most feared by everything that lives
Above the ocean floor, they broke
With full mortality of stroke
On neutrals and on fugitives,
Hemmed them backwards from the beaches
Into the water's deeper reaches,
Where with rapiers lightning sped,
They took the measure of their sides,
Till all the antelopes were dead,
And all the hippos' leathery hides
Transfixed and all the bears were drilled
With holes and all the calves were killed.

Now late within the afternoon
Again the tide of battle changed.
Fish from the Seven Seas were ranged
Along the stretch of the Blue Lagoon
That had beneath the withering spell
Of three hot rainless moons been closed.
There, lash-rays—the marines of hell—
Had come with sharks,—the shovel-nosed,

And sickle-finned; dog-fish, big jacks
Gifted with prophetic smell,—
All following in the conquering tracks
Of threshers from the Hebrides,
Of Greenland killers and those mailed,
Tremendous rhinodons that hailed
From the typhoons of the Indian seas.
Against that swarming, heaving pack
Was launched the raving, massed attack
Of full-grown argali, and rams
From South Afghanistan that mourned
The swordfish slaughter of their dams;
And fighting boars that would have scorned
Brigades of tigers, with koodoos,
Flanked by battalions of gnoos,
And bull-head rhinos double-horned.
Into that reeling, shapeless ruck,
Scarce covered by the water poured
This furious and avenging horde....
Surviving rhinodons that struck
For ocean spaces through the ford
Were caught fast in the mire, and gored
To death by stag and water-buck.

And as the dubious hours went by,
Cormorants, in carrion mood,
Ospreys and kestrels thronged the sky,
Impatient, as the fiery feud
Swung through such vicissitude
As never, after or before,
Was known within the files of War.
Such acts of valour as were done

Outshone the white flame of the sun;—
Such hopeless sacrificial deeds
And feats of strength as might belong
To men or gods, when weaker breeds
Wrecked their bodies on the strong.
Reversals with the strangest luck,
Unknown to contests in the sea,
Took place where bulk and energy
Matched themselves with skill and pluck.
Mackerel and electric eels
Drowned zebras, weighting down their thighs;
Leonine and ursine seals
Were killed by lemurs and aye-ayes.
To rescue otters with their young
From saw-fish and an instant slaughter,
A scouting beaver party flung
Themselves into the salted water,
Were caught, outnumbered and were beaten,
Run through by bayonet-bills, and eaten.
But their assailants blown with greed
Were seized, after the hottest chase,
By hounds of an Eo-Irish race,
And terriers of a Gallic breed.
And the sun went down upon the sight
Of bison worsted by becnas,
Of foxes putting sharks to flight
And weasels at the throat of tunas.
Along the shore from tip to tip,
This interlocking battle grip
Relaxed only as either side
Gave ground with flow and ebb of tide;
For all were pledged, with teeth and claws,

To racial blood and comradeship,
Devoted to the national cause
And loyal to the boundary strip.

In one swift hour when the night
Was far advanced, the Saurian,
By some half-blinded route, began
To scent the issue of the fight,
Throughout the day he did not know
Which was his ally or his foe;
Beyond the blue lagoon he waded
Where sluggish alligators hid
Behind a sand-spit, and invaded
The rocky strongholds of the squid.
With his steep claws he rent apart
Amphibia along the shore,
And wandering further out, he tore
Pelagic mammals to the heart.
He followed up a narwhal, wedged
Him dry upon the Gumra shoals,
Left him with twenty streaming holes
From twelve inch canines double-edged.
Then back upon his tracks he wheeled,
Floundered through the littoral mud,
Entered the battle zone and reeled
Through mounting sloughs of flesh and blood,
Scattering a full hyaena pack
That hung all day upon his track
Along the freshly swollen moors,
Wondering how their nostrils missed
The secret of those bloody spoors
Left by the alien Atavist.

Fish and land animals alike
Were objects for his fangs to strike;
Elephants and jungle cats
Met the same fate as hares and rats;
Beneath his horned, gigantic toes
Camels went down and buffaloes;
And wild cats were so many fleas
That tickled him below the knees.
But when the evening wore to night
Gorillas under cover hit him
With flying stones, and cave bears bit him;
A flock of eagles bleared his sight
With beak and claw; a downy pack
Of monkeys in a sycamore
Swung downward by their tails and tore
The scaly armour from his back.
The bravest lions in the ranks
Buried their teeth into his hocks;
From hemlock crotches and from rocks,
Tigers leaping on his shanks
Gouged deeply with insistent claws
And dropped with fitches in their jaws.
Then from this unremitting stress
Came the sure touch of weariness;
A pulse of apprehension dim
Of what this struggle double-faced
Might in the outcome mean to him.
Perhaps some inland desert taste
During the slaughter of the camels,
Taught him his kinship with the lizard,
His blood-removal from the mammals,
And gave him nausea at the gizzard.

Perhaps in some sharp way it sprang
From the reminiscent tang
Of salt sea water on his muzzle,
The moment that he stooped and took
The narwhal's blood as from a brook
With one inebriating guzzle.
Something in his racial birth,
At variance with the things of Earth,—
A tidal call that beat like pain
From spinal ganglion to brain—
Now made him shake his foes aside,
And leave the battle's desperate zone,
And wander off to climb alone
A promontory where the tide
Sounded its nocturnal flow
A sheer three hundred feet below.
He cleared the base, his body fagged,
And clambered on from shard to shard,
Pausing, jibbing, breathing hard.
Under his weight his knee-caps sagged;
Bleeding fast from fissures torn
By tiger fang and rhino horn,
He groped and stumbled up until
He reached a level granite sill;
Raw fillets hanging from his thighs,
He sank a moment faint with pain;
Chaos was closing on his eyes,
When the voice of the sea-god called again,
Far across the water,—"Ex—
Saurian of the Pleiocene,
Blind wanderer from the race marine,
TYRANNOSAURUS REX!"

Starting sharply from his swoon,
He stood upright, his figure set
Black like a poplar's silhouette
Against the orb of an inflamed moon.
And once again from a crystal bell,
Oceanus wove his spell;
Sounding like a three-fold ring,
Steepled in the crimson surge,
It tolled...

"TYRANNOSAUROS!

TYRANNOSAUROS!

TYRANNOSAUROS KING!"

The lizard staggered to the verge,
Looked into the water's face,
The rolling cradle of his race,
Brooded a moment as he hung
Over the crag-holds wearily,
And with the final echo, flung
His body to the Austral Sea.

Wilder than the maddest rout,
Madder than the wildest roar,
A storm of rage unknown before
Followed Tyrannus' passing out.
The dark unreason of his mind,
Read in promiscuous assault
Upon the land and ocean kind,
Had placed the agreement in default.
But through the day, the immediate sight
Of a teeming and aggressive sea
Enforced the covenantal right
Against a mutual enemy;

Kept in abeyance blood desires
As veteran as Jurassic fires.
Now under cover of the night
When many of their ranks had died
Of virus from the saurian's bite,
The leash of discipline was untied,
And soon the full abyssmal sound
Broke out in internecine notes
From all the brutes on fighting ground
Feeling for each other's throats.
So piercing was the central cry
It carried to the southward high
Over the foothills to the crests
Of the snowy Guadeleras, waking
The series of the eagles; shaking
The condors from their craggy nests.
Then by a fierce contagion carried
East and west to either tip
Of the Isthmian sea-board, it was harried
Into ten thousand shards;—the rip
Of lion's claws on buffalo hides;
Of ivory through the lions' sides;
The grunt of a bush hog or the squeal
Of a babyroussa with the pounce
Of an infuriated ounce;
Of leopards crushed beneath the kneel
Of battle-wearied elephants;
The growls of bears; the dissonance
Of fleeing, howling allouattes
Pursued by cheetahs; of wild cats
Nine-lived and strung in endless knots
Upon the backs of Cashmir ewes,

Or arguing with ocelots
The fallen bodies of kangaroos.
And now and then the storm would rise
To unimaginable cries,
As though a stubborn racial note,
Goaded to the bitter-full,
Had baulked within the cosmic throat.
And now and then the storm would lull
To admit the sharp reverberant crack
From the last strain on a camel's back,
Or the break in the horn of an eland bull;
Or now, within a deadlier pause,
The ricochet of a jackal's laugh,
Or the rap of the hoof from a giraffe
Staving in a panther's jaws.
And then the rage would sweep again
Throughout the battle curve of pain;—
A scuffling run with gride and clash
As of a thousand scimitars—
Wild boars attacking jaguars;
The click of teeth with heavy splash
In the mangrove swamp of the Blue Lagoon,
And alligators' necks were wrung
By gorillas in the reeds who flung
Them at the red disk of the moon,
In vengeance for a slain baboon;
And this was followed by the scud
Of Barbary apes and orang outangs
Scarified by lions' fangs,
Till all was swallowed in the thud
Of many antlered herds, aurochs,
Zebus, and hartlebeests, spring-boks,

Marsh buffaloes and elks and yaks,
Taking with concerted brunt,
Of savage hoof and lowered front,
The charge of congregated packs
Of wolves whose shadow-doubled forms
Swept down as if they had been hurled,
By the vexed hands of winter storms,
From all the tundras of the world...
And yet the scale, for all this woe,
Had still a higher note to go.

All through the day,—in throaty rasp,
And sulphuretted bronchial gasp,
In intermittent cough with pant
Of steam and pulmonary groan,—
Being full of slag, the stridulant
Jurania, like a surly crone
Retching with abdominal strain,
Began to spit and tell how sore
She felt down to the inmost core
With pressure of Silurian pain.
By dusk, her fetid breath had grown
Into a thick revolving cone
Which swelled and burst into a wrack
Of vapour which, re-forming later
Into a cloud with heart of black,
Filtered down and slowly spread
Heavily over the yawning crater
With faint periphery of red.
And as the minutes passed, a flash,—
An incandescent fork of blue,
And now of green would struggle through

The smothering pall of smoke and ash,
Until with undulating sheet
Of multi-coloured flame that beat
The blank face of the sky apart,—
Just as the last convulsive stroke
Unthrottled all the tidal drains
That branched from the volcano's heart,
The storm flood of the lava broke.
Through all her slag-corroded veins
And thousands of arterial cracks,
Through vertical and lateral rips
And gullies in the visceral tracks,
Through open gullet and through lips
Scored with unhealing fissures came
This deluge of Tartarean flame.
It shot a fifteen thousand feet
Straight to the sky, then billowing higher,
And outward, made as if to meet
Its own maternal stellar fire
With tenuous play of finger streaks;
But failing in its vaunted leap,
Returned with frenzied haste to sweep
Across the Guadelera peaks;
Inundate the valleys; glut
The plains and canyons; rise and shut
The higher gorges, rifts and caves
Of the mountains; overflow and roll
Seaward with tumbling lava waves
Over the great Juranian bowl.
It blazed the forest pines and passed
The northern stretch of cliffs until,
Clearing the summit and the last

Excoriated ridge and hill,
It poured its fury on the dead;
Then the inexorable blast,
Capping the horrors of the night,
Pursued the living remnants, bled
To the final pulses with the fight,
And caught them as they tried to flee
To the drowning mercies of the sea.

Far to the East,—from all this dire
Titanic strife of claw and fire,
The only fighter to escape,—
The female anthropoidal ape!
By subtle powers that placed her head
Of land belligerents, she, alone,
Had often turned to watch with dread
The beat of catastrophic power,
In cloud and thunder, as the cone
Ticked off her last Aeonian hour.
She sniffed the warning just in time,
Before the extinction throe, to reach
The forest heights that flanked the beach.
She took the eastern headland climb,
And then turned southwards from the sea,
Shambling upward wearily,
Ever on the chasing fringe
Of the lava that, with hideous twist
Of myriad anacondas, hissed
And spat out fiery tongues to singe
Her hair. Gaining the summit where
Water breezes cooled the air,
She paused a moment to endure

The scene survived, her eyes aglow
Held first by the mesmeric lure
Of globes of vivid indigo
That danced and burst as they were thrown
From the deep labour of the cone,
And then by that which choked her breath
And dazed her brain,—the molten red
Of plain and ridge on which were spread
The incredulities of death,
Riding on tumultuously
In a gulf of fire to the sea.
Under the shelter of the height,
She gathered up her residue
Of will to blot out from her view
The awful fiction of the night,
And take upon herself the strain
Of the descent. By swinging, crawling,
Running in little spurts and falling,
Splay-footed, shoulders crooked with pain,
She reached a shallow river-bed
Winding through a moor which led
Her to a grove of sandalwood.
There, at the hollow of a tree,
She found her lair, and brokenly
She entered in, cuddling her brood
To withered paps; and in the hush
Of the laggard hours as the flush
Of dawn burnt out the coppery tones
That smeared the unfamiliar West,
The heralds of the day were moans,
And croons, and drummings of the breast.

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[The end of *Titans* by E. J. (Edwin John Dove) Pratt]