



Spes Altera To The Future Manx Poet

by T.E. Brown

O POET, somewhere to be born
'Twixt Calf and Ayre before the century closes,
Cain, Karran, Kewish, or Skillicorn,
Soft-lapt serene 'mid antenatal roses,
Abide until I come, lest chance we miss
Each other as we pass, nor any kiss
Be planted on your brow thrice dear,
Nor any spell of mine be murmured in your ear!

For I will seek you in the bowers
Where Plato marked the virgin souls desiring
The birth-call of the ripening hours,
And Spenser saw old Genius attiring
The naked babes. And I will help to dress
The awful beauty of your nakedness;
And from that moment you shall be
The Poet of the Isle, a Poet glad and free.

Yet haply should the search be vain,
For that I am not worthy- you are coming:
Heaven holds you promised! Karran, Cain,
Kewish, Skillicorn, revealed the absolute summing
Of cherished hopes. So may the Gods enlarge
Your wings to flight immortal as the charge
You keep to sing the perfect song
Pent in your Mother's inmost heart, and pent so long!

Nor lacking you of scholarship
To guide the subtle harmonies soft-flowing
From rugged outward-seeming lip,
By vulgar minds not relished, all unknowing

Of gentle arts. Trench deep within the soil
That bore you fateful: toil, and toil, and toil!
'Tis deep as Death; dig, till the rock
Clangs hard against the spade, and yields the central shock.

No mincing this. Be nervous, soaked
In dialect colloquial, retaining
The native accent pure, unchoked
With cockney balderdash. Old Manx is waning,
She's dying in the tholtan. Lift the latch,
Enter, and kneel beside the bed, and catch
The sweet long sighs, to which the clew
Trembles, and asks their one interpreter in you.

Then shut the tholtan. Strike the lyre,
Toward that proud shore your face reluctant turning;
With Keltic force, with Keltic fire,
With Keltic tears, let every string be burning.
And use the instrument that we have wrought,
Hammered on Saxon stithies, to our thought
Alien, unapt, but capable of modes
Wherein the soul its treasured wealth unloads.

And, for the wayward thing is lax,
Capricious, guard against the insidious changing
Of pitch, that makes more tense, or slacks
Our diatonics. See there be no ranging
Ad libitum; but moor the wand'rer fast,
And fix him where two sev'ring ages cast
Their secular anchors. Matters not,
If arbitrary, when or where one single jot.

But come, come soon, or else we slide
To lawlessness, or deep-sea English soundings,
Absorbent, final, in the tide
Of Empire lost, from homely old surroundings,
Familiar, swept. O excellent babe, arise,
And, ere a decade fail from forth the skies,
Unto our longing hearts be born,
Cain, Karran, Kewish supreme, supremest Skillicorn!