

T h e

T o i l e r

T h i n k i n g

West New Brighton,

Staten Island, N. Y.

March 17, 1921.

My Dear Mr. Wood :

I should have written you some days ago that Mr. Markham is away in Mid-West, New England, etc., on a lecture tour. I have been expecting him almost every day of late—but more work keeps coming to him. He will write as soon as he comes and I know it will be to say that your work is beautiful and your motive fine and to go ahead and thank you.

Very truly,

A. C. MARKHAM.

Mrs. E. M.

EDWIN MARKHAM

92 Waters Avenue
West New Brighton, N. Y.
March 25, 1921.

My Dear O. G. Wood :

You have sent me a highly interesting letter, which has been awaiting my return from New England, where I have been on a lecture-reading circuit. I hope some day to drop in upon you all in Butte, Montana. Meanwhile, you have my permission to reprint my poem, "The Toiler Thinks," from Hearst's Magazine for March. I shall be happy indeed to have the dear boys in the Washington Junior High School embody my poem in the glory of type. I request you to change the title to read, "The Toiler Thinking."

I am greatly pleased to know that you and your group of young printers place so high an estimate upon my poem. It was written as an appeal for the neglected rights of the toiling millions.

Cordially yours and theirs !

EDWIN MARKHAM

Copies of your high school work show that you are directing a highly useful line of education.

E. M.

92 Waters Avenue.

Mr. O. G. Wood:

I am adding a word to say that I am inclosing a few of Mr. Edwin Markham's poems, any one of which you have his permission on any time in the future to reprint for use in the High School should you find them in the line of your need.

These poems include the revised version of the "Man With The Hoe," a revision that contains about nine new words. Comparing it with the earlier version, you will find the idea increased in energy — so many of us think. You are at liberty to use this new form if you should ever wish to reproduce the poem which is frequently called "The battle-cry of the next thousand years."

When using an Edwin Markham poem, please mark it as copyright and state that it is used by the permission of Edwin Markham. Perhaps you could also send us a goodly number of the poem for distribution among friends.

Respectfully yours,

L. MORGAN, Secretary.



THE TOILER THINKING

Photo by O. G. Wood

Behold, O world, the Toiling Man,
Breaking at last the ancient ban ;
For more than Eden's curse was his—
Mind-darkened down the centuries.

The Toiler Thinks

BY EDWIN MARKHAM

*Written after seeing Rodin's statue,
"The Thinker," a crouched but slowly
awakening figure—the stunned, stolid Man
with the Hoe beginning at last to think.*

BEHOLD, this time-scarred Titan is
The man come down from centuries—
Forever beaten as the ox,
Forever silent as the rocks.

Behold, for Thought begins to stir
This brain that was a sepulcher,
Behold, this void abyss of night
Struck by a timid beam of light—
This terror-shape, all brute and brawn,
This deep of darkness touched with dawn.
A star breaks on the chaos—lo,
The Shapes of Night begin to go!

BEHOLD, O world, the Toiling Man,
 Breaking at last the ancient ban ;
For more than Eden's curse was his—
Mind-darkened down the centuries.
But after ages of blind toil,
Ages that made his soul the spoil
Of tyrants and of traitors—see,
He ponders . . . and the world is free !
Hark, for his awful questions throng
To thunder against the ancient wrong :
“ Why am I bent with brutal loads ?
Why am I driven on all roads ?
Where is the laughter and the light
To cheer the workman in his might ?
Why should my Godlike toil destroy
My world of beauty and of joy ?
Why, since I feed the mouths of all,
Have I the careless crumbs that fall ?
Why with these labor-blasted hands
Am I left homeless in all lands ?
Why is the one that builds the world
Left as a dog in kennel curled ?
Why is the one that beautifies
The kingdoms, robbed of seeing eyes ?
Why am I hurled into hells of war,
I who have nothing to battle for ?

Why should I fight for lords, indeed,
I who have only mouths to feed —
I who am only the earth's old slave,
Whose only gain would be a grave!"

BEHOLD, O world, the Toiler thinks!

Now these old questions of the Sphinx
Will have their answers. In this pause
Are epochs, institutions, laws—
The fall of Anarchy and Chance;
The crumble of Brute circumstance;
The building of the Comrade State,
To be a new benignant Fate;
The raise of Beauty to her throne
When she shall make all hearts her own.

Chained to the earth his body seems,
And yet his soul rides forth on dreams!
Tyrants, beware, for there is might
In dreams to shake the pillared night,
A power more potent to compel
Than all the dark decree of Hell.
He ponders, and the moment awes;
For the world's fate is in that pause.
All destinies are in that hush;
For in it is the power to crush

All the old battlements of wrong
And build the world in comrade song.
Ages the Night was round him furled :
Behold the Morning of the World !

Tyrants, the morning is your doom :
Day yawns about you as a tomb ;
Day is your cavern of the night.
Flee, then, before the coming light !
Flee, flee ! This is the Toiler's hour :
Behold God coming down in power !

TYRANTS, the Tools begin to think :
Now all your lawless thrones will sink,
And a new world will softly rise
With laughter and with lyric cries.
Thought is God's thunder at the gate,
The Rhadamantine voice of Fate.
Today is judgement day: awake,
Upstart, O toiling millions, break
The shackles, lift the flag unfurled,
Rise, outcast monarchs of the world !

Reprinted from Hearst's Magazine, March, 1921

Set by Class 1 8-A March 4, 1921

Washington Junior High School Press
Butte, Montana.

The Man With The Hoe

NEW VERSION

*Written after seeing Millet's World-Famous
Painting.*

God made man in His own image, in the
image of God made He him.—*Genesis.*

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this
brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this
brain?

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land ;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for
power ;
To feel the passion of Eternity ?
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped
the suns
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep ?
Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this —
More tongued with censure of the world's blind
greed —
More filled with signs and portents for the
soul —
More packt with danger to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim !
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades ?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose ?
Through this dread shape the suffering ages
look ;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop ;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned, and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the World,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-
quenched ?

How will you ever straighten up this shape ;
Touch it again with immortality ;
Give back the upward looking and the light ;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream ;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes ?

O masters, lords and rulers of the lands,
How will the Future reckon with this man ?
How answer his brute questions in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world ?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings —
With those who shaped him to the thing he is —
When this dumb Terror shall rise to judge the
world,
After the silence of the centuries ?

EDWIN MARKHAM.

*For the Washington Junior High School,
Butte, Montana: March, 1921
Edwin Markham.*

