

VERSE

Pittsburghers

[NOTE: The following verses are from an unpublished poem entitled "Pittsburgh," in which Lucretius, Dante and Goethe spend a day in Pittsburgh talking with the inhabitants and arriving at their own opinions of the city.]

A PITTSBURGH YOUTH

I am no butcher of cattle like Chicago;
Nor, like Chicago, London and New York, am I stevedore
and broker;
Nor do I turn out, like Paris, new fashions and philosophies;
Nor waltz music, like Vienna;
Nor religions, like Boston—nor for that matter, O city of
the Cod, school-teachers, either;
Nor beer, like St. Louis.

The effete flinch at my name,
And those who wear white shirts are disturbed.
For I speak in the wheeling cranes, in the hissing steam, the
blast of furnaces.
Passive in my yards a thousand locomotives puff
And wait the heavy alternation of great rolls.
All about me, up and down five rivers, is grime, smoke,
flame,
A workshop.

I mock at those who say
It's no use for me to go making iron and steel,
For steel rails and steel ships to marry races and make distant
continents bride and groom;
For bridges to span rivers, and sky-scrapers to infringe
upon infinity;
Because nothing is any use anyway,—not even my steel;
Because the age of steel has led to no more joy
Than the age of bronze.

It takes more brains to make steel
Than to doubt life;
And the deepest skepticism is no deeper than my assurance.
It's a fact, I'm burnt to the core by joy,
Fierce joy of the steel on which our age is built.

I gather my children about my knees: Homestead, Brad-
dock, Swissvale, Rankin, Turtle Creek, McKees
Rocks, Charleroi, Duquesne, Aliquippa, Woodlawn,
Monessen.
And my blessing is upon my young men afar: Gary,
Pueblo, Birmingham, Duluth, Bethlehem, Midvale.
I am without equal, and without superior.
I have heard the muttering of Leeds and Essen, of Bir-
mingham, Newcastle, Sheffield, and Brussels; I have
dared these cities to fight me.
But the mighty of the earth are timid, and forty years
has my gage lain untouched.

Belching smoke, blot out the sun of day!
Liquid metal, light the clouds of night!
And at ten thousand forges let my multitudes
Work with a great gladness.

THE BIG BOSS

Every moment of every day, down at the works,
I'm talking, telephoning, telegraphing,
Bending over blue prints, noting reports,
Comparing my mills with others,
Swearing at department heads not on the job,
Keeping an eye on good men,
Scheming for more efficiency in man and machine
(Everything subordinate to that:
Waste must go—even the wasted gesture of a workman);
Resisting, persuading, complying, demanding,
Tempting, refusing, cajoling, finessing,
Resorting to threats, gifts, praise, buncombe;
Getting my way, or accepting some way that's more profit-
able,
Using every ounce of me and of my men
For constant, consistent, organized victory.

When the day is done,
Needing relaxation, dreading to let down a second,
I go at top speed to my club,
Have my Friday Fifty-Two,
Dine with Bill and Tom,
Loop it down-town,
Cross a river, hit a country road,
Let the big car out to the last notch.
Then I don't give a damn what breaks:
All I see before me while I rest at the wheel
Is white light on a dancing road,
Zigzagging trees and reeling fences.

HERO WORSHIPPER

Everything I do, I do to please one person.
When my boss puts his hand on my shoulder,
I feel as though he were knighting me—
It's romance, if you like, and that sort of junk,
But it's perfectly straight.
If he asked me to cut off my right hand,
I'd do it.

THE MASTER-MECHANIC

Pittsburgh is like the republic, Dick,
And the republic is like a blast furnace.
Into the hopper we're all thrown, native-born, stranger,
With political equality as the fluxing limestone to remove
all foreign substance.
And down below fusion level
Roaring white-hot, comes by the tuyeres
Brotherly love as the reducing gas;
And as the centuries go
The most obstinate will yield to that all-conjuring heat,
And flow pure and molten out through the iron notch;
While the slag will be blown through the cinder-runner
And be carted away.

A YOUNG WOMAN

We talk of heaven and hell.
Both are here, here at this corner:
These street-cars, limousines, motor-buses, furniture vans,
delivery trucks, Fords, refuse-wagons,
Are visible parts of heaven and hell.
So are all the signs along the street:
Zotter's Bakery, the Vienna Restaurant, Goodlow's Good
Clothes,

Red Raven Splits, Jap Rose Soap, the Gaiety Burlesquers,
Canter's Kosher Restaurant:
All, all are to me visible testimony of heaven and hell.

Do you see yonder hotel?
I looked down on all these signs,
Heaven'd with a boy on the nineteenth story.

These signs are in hell, too.
I spelled them out, not knowing what I did,
Day after day, as I walked to and from work
Remorseful and tormented.

A YOUNG MAN'S SONG

Streak of crimson through the gray,
Thread of flame from night to day,
Girl's face with the eyes of Christ,
I am sufficed, I am sufficed!

I care not how the mourning feel,—
The Unbelievable is real.
For holiness has come to me
That I might see, that I might see.

City spread out like a smear,
What can I now but hold you dear,
I'll make you better for her sake,
Although I break, although I break.

For now I know Whose secrets lurk
Within the hours of love and work;
I learned it from her eyes of Christ
And am sufficed, and am sufficed.

AN OLD INHABITANT

Pittsburgh has made a good many things—
It began by making lumber—
Then it made iron—
Then it dug coal and drilled oil—

At present it makes coke and steel—
But one thing it has always made—men—
Men of endurance, of courage,
Who see the thing to do and do it
Without wasting the days of life
In fruitless speculation, aimless drifting.

City of steel, this Pittsburgh?
Call it rather, maker of men.

We give work to hundreds of thousands,
And work is life's supreme benefit.
For a man wins to salvation by the sweat of his brow.
A city, a nation, that gives work,
Is sound, and cannot be destroyed.

THE CHIEF ENGINEER

One day the President of the road called me to his office.
He got up and locked the doors,
Then sat down at his desk and wrote me a check for
millions.

"What's that for, Bill?" I asked.
"Jack," said he, "there's a town called Pittsburgh
That ships seventy-five million tons of freight a year;
There's likewise a road thinks it owns that town.
This is a free country,
And we're going into that town,
By God we are,
And get our share of freight.
That road will fight us to the finish.
I'll pile million on million, all I've got, to back you.
Bribe, steal, lie—I don't care what you do;
I don't care how far you go.
At any cost, in any way,
Smash this thing through."

Well? I went out and did the business.
Have a stogie?

HANIEL LONG.

CORRESPONDENCE

Why Rob Peter?

SIR: I have been from the beginning an admiring reader of *THE NEW REPUBLIC*, whether I disagreed or agreed, for whether you shot the way I believed you ought to or not, you always seemed to me to be on the firing line. But your latest position that because we have inevitably made a foe of Germany therefore we must as inevitably seek to make friends with England fills me with amazement. What we ought of course to do is through a just and firm insistence on our rights as neutrals to gain the respect if not the love and friendship of both belligerents, as long as we profess to be neutrals. When the time has come for us to throw in our lot with one side or the other, it ought to be done openly and courageously. A man and a nation makes more enemies by injustice than by justice. It is also possible to make friends by injustice; robbing Peter to pay Paul is a familiar way. You make an enemy of Peter forever, and a friend of Paul so long as you can help him by robbing Peter, and you have earned hatred and contempt on one side and complacent condescension and contempt on the other. The only constant is contempt.

Friendship, personal and national, entered into from fear, can be maintained only by truckling. Though I am bound by ties of blood to both Germany and England, I would rather fight against both as an American, than truckle to either. Even from the point of view of national self-interest and the most cynical *realpolitik* I should be disposed to challenge your policy of an alliance on the part of America with the Powers who would crush Germany if they could, but who can't unless America helps them do it. I agree with you that a far-seeing foreign policy for America makes future isolation of the old-fashioned kind impossible. But a policy of alliance that if successful will force Germany into alliance with Russia and Japan is the most short-sighted possible, and fails to appear so at first sight only because our foreign vision has been hitherto myopic.

I should be the last to deny or minimize the debt we owe to England and the reality of the ties political, institutional, literary, racial, spiritual that bind us to her. The sentimental appeal of these ties has been transmuted by the realists of finance into quite other values. But tremendous as are the financial and commercial interests involved, it is still true, and it is to the credit of America, that the