

“THE CRISIS”

BY

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A man of low degree was sore oppressed,
Fate held him under iron-handed sway,
And ever, those who saw him thus distressed
Would bid him bend his stubborn will and pray.
But he, strong in himself and obdurate,
Waged, prayerless, on his losing fight with Fate.

Friends gave his proffered hand their coldest clasp,
Or took it not at all; and Poverty,
That bruised his body with relentless grasp,
Grinned, taunting, when he struggled to be free.
But though with helpless hands he beat the air,
His need extreme yet found no voice in prayer.

Then he prevailed; and forthwith snobbish Fate,
Like some whipped cur, came fawning at his feet;
Those who had scorned forgave and called him great—
His friends found out that friendship still was sweet.

But he, once obdurate, now bowed his head
In prayer, and trembling with its import, said:

“Mere human strength may stand ill–fortune’s frown;
So I prevailed, for human strength was mine;
But from the killing pow’r of great renown,
Naught may protect me save a strength divine.
Help me, O Lord, in this my trembling cause;
I scorn men’s curses, but I dread applause!”