

The Flowers Devoured What They Were Meant For

Die
Blumen
fraßen,
wofür sie
bestimmt
waren.

Aria Farajnezhad

This booklet privileges German-language administrative sources because the work examines how the Baghdad Railway and Deutsche Bank documentation framed deportation as logistics. It is not a comprehensive account of Armenian experiences.

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Introduction

The newly produced ceramic panels mimic the tile grid of Hanomag's *Kanonenwerkstatt*, or cannon workshop, in Hannover-Linden, begun in 1916 and completed in 1917.¹ On the building, ornamental flora frames product images—locomotives, steam engines, cannons—forming a decorative skin for industrial and military production (fig. 1). In the present work, those product tiles are replaced by telegram excerpts from the same year. As the texts accumulate, the flora begins to deform into creatures with tongues: ornament turns into speech.

The excerpts are taken from a sequence of telegrams dated from Pera, Therapia, and Constantinople and sent by representatives of the Imperial German Embassy to the Foreign Office in Berlin. Copies were circulated bearing the designation “For Deutsche Bank.”² They pertain to the Baghdad Railway project, a German–Ottoman infrastructure enterprise financed and coordinated through a consortium in which Deutsche Bank played a central role.³ Read in chronological order, the telegrams describe wartime railway logistics—rolling stock, tonnage limits, tunnel works, materials, deadlines—within the historical context of the Armenian Genocide.⁴ The deportation and administratively ordered return of Armenian skilled workers enter bureaucratic language as operational conditions.

Hanomag's relationship to the Baghdad Railway was not merely symbolic. In a wartime supplement to the company magazine, an article titled “Die Bagdad-Bahn” reproduces a Baghdad



(fig. 2) Cropped details of original glazed ceramic tiles from the north facade of the former Hanomag works at Deisterplatz, Hannover. From left to right: locomotive, floral ornament, steam engine, floral ornament, and cannon. Photographs by the artist, 2026.



(fig. 3) Victor Ottmann, "Die Bagdad-Bahn," Kriegs-Beilage der Hanomag-Nachrichten, issue 3 supplement, likely 1916, p. 43. Photograph by the artist at Stadtarchiv Hannover, June 2026.

Railway locomotive at Haydarpaşa together with Hanomag fitter August Zietz (fig. 3). It also states that Hanomag had supplied more than eighty locomotives to the Ottoman Empire, including to the Baghdad, Anatolian, Oriental, and Hejaz railways.⁵ The locomotive motif on the Deisterplatz facade therefore belonged to an actual German-Ottoman network of railway manufacture and export, even if it cannot be identified as a depiction of a specific Baghdad Railway engine.

The building's later reception further detached the facade from its wartime history. A 1976 newspaper report on its restoration appeared under the headline "The factory's face brightened cheerfully," presenting the decorative skin as a friendly image of

Hanomag facing the city.⁶ The present installation reopens that surface, returning the product motifs and ornament to the histories of war, infrastructure, labour, and imperial ambition that their later treatment as architectural heritage obscured.

This booklet is structured as a score that follows the installation's sequence. Each page is divided into three panels. Telegram panels present the date, one selected sentence in German, its English translation, and the full English text in a quieter register. The three product motifs—locomotive, steam engine, and cannon—remain as reference points to the original facade's celebratory grammar.

The floral panels introduce a second voice through an act of assignment. Lines from Shushanik Kurghinian's poem *The Workers* (1907), translated by Shushan Avagyan, are distributed across the floral motifs in the booklet, so that each motif carries a line as its counter-text.⁷ Kurghinian (1876–1927) was an Armenian poet associated with socialist, feminist, and proletarian writing at the beginning of the twentieth century. In *The Workers*, bodies marked by soot, hunger, exhaustion, and rage step forward with a promise: a revolutionary future in which the conditions of exploitation are abolished.

This assignment proposes another register for the ornament's new tongues: not the language of administration, but the language of refusal, demand, and collective coming-into-presence. On the Hanomag facade, ornament decorates domination; it frames the products of an industrial-military landscape. In the reworked tiles, that same ornament mutates—first by receiving administrative fragments, then by becoming more figurative, embodied, and speech-like. The poem's revolutionary insistence echoes this transformation from passive decoration to active relief in a voice that interrupts bureaucratic reduction and insists on agency.

This body of work was initiated through joint research with Larissa Araz during the residency programme at Kulturakademie Tarabya in Istanbul, from February to May 2025, and expanded through the study of files at the Deutsche Bank Historical Archive in Frankfurt, photographed in June 2025. Produced and first presented in Hannover, the installation returns these documents to a city whose industrial surfaces still stage power while silencing the histories that made them possible.

1. Denkmaltatlas Niedersachsen, "Hanomag – ehem. Kanonenwerkstatt." The entry identifies the building as a factory hall planned as a cannon workshop in 1916 according to designs by the Linden architect Alfred Sasse. URL: <https://denkmaltatlas.niedersachsen.de/viewer/metadata/a840fbac-2bcd-41bd-8edb-b0974c51cdbc/>. Accessed 27 May 2026. See also "18. Räder- und Schraubenwerkstatt. Baujahr 1917," *Hanomag-Nachrichten*, issue 89, March 1921, p. 78. The article states that the building was erected in 1917, served during the war as a cannon-construction workshop, and that Alfred Sasse designed the facade. Stadtarchiv Hannover, Zs 32.
2. Deutsche Bank Historical Archive, Frankfurt am Main. Baghdad Railway / Anatolian Railway correspondence, telegram copies marked "für Deutsche Bank," 1916. Photographed by the artist, June 2025. Specific telegrams cited in this booklet include correspondence dated 7 January, 14/15 January, 28/29 February, 18/19 May, 19/20 June, 21/22 June, 22 June, 24 June, 29/30 June, 17 July, 11/12 September, 22 September, and 31 October / 1 November 1916.
3. Deutsche Bank, "Milestones." The webpage summarises Deutsche Bank's role in the Baghdad Railway, including the 1903 concession and the continuation of construction from Konya across the Taurus and Amanus mountains. URL: <https://www.bankgeschichte.de/topics/milestones>. Accessed 24 June 2026.
4. Hilmar Kaiser, "The Baghdad Railway and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1916," in Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 67–112.
5. Victor Ottmann, "Die Bagdad-Bahn," *Kriegs-Beilage der Hanomag-Nachrichten*, supplement to issue 3, 1916, pp. 43–46. Stadtarchiv Hannover, Zs 32.
6. "Das Fabrikgesicht hellte sich heiter auf: Die Hanomag präsentiert sich am Deisterplatz wieder mit dekorativer Fassade," *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 October 1976, p. 17. Copy consulted at Stadtarchiv Hannover; photographed by the artist during a research visit, June 2026.
7. Shushanik Kurghinian, "The Workers," translated by Shushan Avagyan, in "Exclusive: Shushanik Kurghinian's The Workers," *Ianyan Magazine*, 18 March 2012. URL: <https://www.ianyanmag.com/exclusive-shushanik-kurghinians-the-workers/>. Accessed 27 May 2026.



Flora I 1/10 — Flora 01/22

WE ARE THE ONES COMING—

Այդ մե՛նք ենք գալիս՝

Telegram 01 — 7 Jan 1916¹

For the purposes of the Amanus service railway.
für Zwecke Amanus Dienstbahn

Anatolian Railway for Riese to Deutsche Bank:

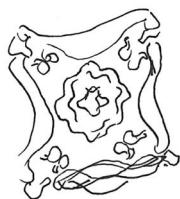
There is an opportunity to employ immediately an experienced traction engineer of the Oriental Railway, suitable for the purposes of the Amanus service railway. We would also be prepared to entrust Kemnitzer with his supervision and advisory oversight. Telegraph whether we should engage him.

Procuring sugar for officials here is impossible for the workers' personnel of the construction departments; therefore please load four of our wagons that will soon be rolling there with sugar. The Ministry of War here agrees. Jung.

signed: Neurath

Flora II 1/12 — Flora 11/22

In our worn out jackets, oil-stained and sooty,
Մաշուած բանկոններ, իւղոտ ու մրոտ,



1. Telegram, 7 January 1916.
Deutsche Bank AG,
Historisches Institut,
HADB/OR0305.



2. Telegram, 14 January
1916, received 15 January
1916. Deutsche Bank AG,
Historisches Institut,
HADB/OR0305.

3. Ibid.

Telegram 02a — 15 Jan 1916²

Our four locomotives completed in Hanover ...
unsere 4 in Hannover fertigen Lokomotiven

Astaler to Deutsche Bank for Riese.

The 3rd Bureau of Headquarters requests that we telegraph the following to you:

Please come to an understanding with the Ministry of War and the field railway command at headquarters, so that, as far as possible, all of our 240 new wagons, loaded, may be sent here; for this purpose our 4 locomotives completed in Hanover should be used within the limits of their carrying capacity, similar to the [16?] locomotives placed at our disposal by the German military authorities,

Flora I 2/10 — Flora 02/22

Trampled caps and dirty hair,
Տրորուած գտակ, աղտոտ մազերով,

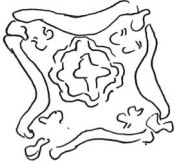
Telegram 02b — 15 Jan 1916³

locomotives placed at our disposal by the German military authorities
die von deutschen Militärbehörden nach Anatolien geschickten Wagen

which are also already underway under steam and likewise haul the wagons sent by the German military authorities to Anatolia, whether full or empty, making use of every possible capacity. Huguenin.

Anatolian Railway to Deutsche Bank for Riese.

The 3rd Bureau, Headquarters Constantinople, demands, apart from work envisaged in you ... [Text continues in source.]



Flora II 2/12 — Flora 12/22

Jaundiced, poor, barefoot,

Մեծ մասամբ դեղնած, գծուծ եւ բոկոտ,

Product — Locomotive



Flora I 3/10 — Flora 03/22

Sometimes pale, sometimes docile,

Երբեմն տժգոյն, երբեմն անխոռվ.



4. Telegram, 28 February 1916, received 29 February 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0463.

5. Telegram, 18 May 1916, received 19 May 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0463.

Telegram 03 — 28 Feb 1916⁴

Speaks enthusiastically about the progress ...

spricht sich enthusiastisch über Fortschritt aus

Anatolian Railway to Mr. von Gwinner Stauß.

Mukhtar Bey, Undersecretary of State and Director General of the Turkish Railways, who has just returned from an inspection of the construction sections, speaks enthusiastically about the progress of the works and states that they have not suffered the slightest delay, but on the contrary have advanced far beyond agreements and expectations.

The Amanus service railway has been completed and is operational. Mukhtar foresees that in June the standard- ... [Text continues in source.]

Flora II 3/12 — Flora 13/22

Sometimes marked with the black stamp

Մեւ կնճիռների անցինք կնիքով,

Telegram 04a — 18 May 1916⁵

Considered entirely unnecessary and harmful ...

für vollkommen entbehrlich und schädlich

For Deutsche Bank.

Grages to Riese: Your dispatch of the sixteenth. I consider the sending of a railway construction company for the operation of the Amanus service railway entirely unnecessary and harmful, since friction is bound to arise. We are fully in a position to run operations independently and in accordance with the contract, as soon as the 12 locomotives, 50 wagon bodies, and 40 wagons located on the Haidar Pasha-Bosanti line are put into service. This will, however, still require ...



Flora I 4/10 — Flora 04/22

Of hunger and quiet suffering,
Երբեմն քաղցի, լուռ տառապանքի

Telegram 04b — 18 May 1916⁶

The service railway is now transporting about 50 tons of military goods daily with old and 8 new locomotives
Dienstbahn befördert jetzt mit alten und 8 neuen Lokomotiven täglich etwa 50 Tonnen Militärgüter

2 to 3 months, since 6 motor convoys can transport at most 80 tons daily, and the assembly of one locomotive takes 3 to 4 days. The service railway is now transporting about 50 tons of military goods daily with old and 8 new locomotives, although the passing siding and the station at Airan have not been completed because of a lack of track superstructure. The remaining 20 to 30 tons are transported by two motor convoys operating in the Amanus. I urgently request that the sending of the construction company not take place. Please try to postpone the discussion to the 27th, since I will presumably not be able to travel before the 23rd. Grages.

signed, Metternich

Flora II 4/12 — Flora 14/22

Sometimes filled with riotous disdain,
Երբեմն ըմբոստ արհամարհանքի,



7. Telegram, 19 June 1916, received 20 June 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0463.

8. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

Telegram 05a — 19 Jun 1916⁷

As a result of the expulsion ... only 2,900 workers remain ...
infolge der Austreibung ... nur 2900 Arbeiter verblieben

To the Foreign Office.

Anatolian Railway to Mr. von Gwinner Stauß, Berlin.

Riese reports: Winkler and Morf telegraph from Airan that, as a result of the expulsion of Armenians and the flight of Turkish workers caused thereby, out of a total of five thousand three hundred men only 2900 workers remain in the Amanus. A further decrease in the number of workers as a result of the continuing expulsions will certainly occur. Because of the absence of all skilled workers, with the remaining workers any progress in the construction works and the service of station operations is impossible.

Flora I 5/10 — Flora 05/22

Unruly rage and vengeance!
Անգուստ գայրոյթի վրժիթ թոյնով.

Telegram 05b — 19 Jun 1916⁸

because of the inexperience of the new workers, would mean a further extension of the construction period by at least three mo-
wegen Ungeübtheit neuer Arbeiter weitere Verlängerung Bauzeit von mindestens drei Mo-

A counter-order issued a few days ago by the local War Ministry in response to our representations has apparently remained unsuccessful. Recruitment of new workers is at present impossible. The provision of a corresponding number of worker-soldiers would require a longer time and, because of the inexperience of the new workers, would mean a further extension of the construction period by at least three mo- [Text cuts off here.]



Flora II 5/12 — Flora 15/22

Longing for the light and fresh air,
 Լոյսի, թարմ օդի տենչանք դիմքերիս

Telegram 06 — 21 Jun 1916⁹

Are to be returned to the work site ...
 zur Arbeitsstätte zurückgeführt werden

For Deutsche Bank, Gwinner, Stauß.

Riese reports: The Minister of War today telegraphically gave an order to the commander of the Fourth Army and to the governor of Adana that the expelled Armenians are to be returned to the work site.

Grages.

Metternich

Flora I 6/10 — Flora 06/22

With the wearisome pain of aging too soon,
 Դեռ վաղ ծերացած հոգեմաշ ցաւից,



9. Telegram, 21 June 1916, received 22 June 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0463.

Telegram 07 — 21 Jun 1916¹⁰

The Armenian labor question is far from being settled ...
 Armenische Arbeiterfrage ... geregelt

Huguenin, Günther for Gwinner, Stauß.

We must advise not assigning to yesterday's telegram of Grages, reproducing the order of the Generalissimo, the degree of importance that its wording appears to convey. The Armenian labor question is far from being settled.

Neurath

Flora II 6/12 — Flora 16/22

With deep wounds still raw in our hearts—
 Դեռ խո՛ր վերքերի կսկիծ սրտերիս՝

Telegram 08 — 24 Jun 1916¹¹

Lack of personnel ... impossibility of passing through the tunnel ...
 manque de personnels ... impossibilité traverser tunnel

Anatolian Railway to Mr. von Gwinner, Stauß:

In response to our inquiry as to whether and for how long the Amanus narrow-gauge railway had been interrupted, we received the following reply:

“The operation of the service railway could not be resumed because: first, lack of personnel; second, lack of wood; third, impossibility of passing through the tunnel by train until the consolidation works in the tunnel have been completed. For the works, workers are lacking. It is impossible to say when operation of the service railway can be resumed. The expulsion continues.” Winkler.

signed, Neurath



10. Ibid.

11. Telegram, 24 June 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0463.



Flora I 7/10 — Flora 07/22

Hopeful for a dignified life,
 Ու մարդավայել ապրելու յոյսից,

Telegram 09a — 29 Jun 1916¹²

**None of the Armenian workers has returned ... the
 expulsion continues ...**
 Aucun des ouvriers Arméniens n'est pas rentré par contre
 ...expulsion continue

Anatolian Railway to Mr. von Gwinner, Stauß.

Winkler telegraphed:

"None of the Armenian workers has returned; on the
 contrary, the expulsion continues. Yesterday there arrived
 one thousand six hundred British and Indian prisoners of
 war, completely weakened, covered in rags, almost naked,
 without shoes. These people, among whom many are sick,
 are hardly fit to work. They must be fed and allowed to rest
 for 8 days, or at least placed under medical observation be-
 fore beginning work. To put the tunnel, which is at present
 impassable ...

Flora II 7/12 — Flora 17/22

WE ARE THE ONES COMING . . !
 Այդ մե՛նք ենք գալիս...



12. Telegram, 29 June 1916,
 received 30 June 1916.
 Deutsche Bank AG,
 Historisches Institut,
 HADB/OR0463.

Telegram 09b — 29 Jun 1916¹³

At least 800 must be skilled workmen ...
 au moins 800 artisans

... back into working order, as well as the service railway,
 we immediately need 4000 workers, of whom at least 800
 must be skilled workmen or miners. Then, in order to
 continue the other works, within one month at the latest
 a further 3200 men are needed. Supplies of firewood
 and construction timber are entirely irregular; transport
 carriers are lacking. Continuation of the works along the
 entire line is indispensable, because otherwise the service
 railway would certainly suffer long interruptions in winter
 as a result of heavy rains."

signed: Neurath

Product — Steam engine



Flora I 8/10 — Flora 08/22

We, the workers—
 Մենք, բանուորներս՝



13. Ibid.

Telegram 10b — 17 Jul 1916¹⁴**Otherwise we cannot proceed further ...**

sonst können nicht weiter kommen

... of the guarantees contained in the contract, for which only the German government is acceptable to us, we asked by dispatch of the tenth for clarification, but have received no reply. This point above all must be clarified before the contract of 14 January can be finalized; please arrange this, otherwise we cannot proceed further.

signed, Neurath

Flora II 8/12 — Flora 18/22

Out of persecution, out of slavery,

Հալածանքների, գաղտնաբերության,

Telegram 11b — 11 Sep 1916¹⁵**Not on the service railway but by horses ...**

nicht auf Dienstbahn sondern mit Pferden

... nel works continue. The cause is presumably spontaneous ignition of the black powder supplied by the Turkish state workshops. Immediate examination of the powder has been requested; transport of powder will in future take place not on the service railway but by horses. A more detailed report from Winkler has not yet been received.

Radovitz

14. Telegram, 17 July 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0464.

15. Telegram, 11 September 1916, received 12 September 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0464.



16. Telegram, 22 September 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0464.

Flora I 9/10 — Flora 09/22

We, the neglected class—

Մոռացուած խաւից՝

Telegram 12a — 22 Sep 1916¹⁶**Must be transported away by the end of December ...**

müssen bis Ende Dezember abbefördert werden...

Deutsariat for Riese, Berlin.

For the opening of the Taurus Railway in mid-January, and for the uninterrupted continuation of construction operations on the other sections, the following must be transported away by the end of December:

1. the entire track superstructure for one [section / line],
2. all switches for one [section / line],
3. four fireless [locomotives],
4. twenty tank locomotives,
5. two hundred wagons,
6. twenty-five transporters,
7. two gantry cranes,
8. and 11. all corrugated sheet metal,
9. the ordered screws ...

Flora II 9/12 — Flora 19/22

To break the throne of violence—the slave's chains—

Գահը բռնութեան, ստրուկի շղթան,

16. Telegram, 22 September 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0464.

Telegram 12b — 22 Sep 1916¹⁷

Opening the Taurus Railway in mid-January ... is impossible ...

Eröffnung Taurusbahn ... unmöglich

10. seventy-five tons of oil,
11. and 13. all trackmaster's wagons,
12. one hundred and fifty tons of tip wagons, furthermore fifty tons of explosives and the ordered general cargo. For Asiafer four hundred tons. Thus, opening the Taurus Railway in mid-January, with a train interval of fourteen days, is impossible. Send with the next trains: 1. ...

Flora I 10/10 — Flora 10/22

To smash the rulers' glory with our chests—

Կրծքով փշրելու փառքը տիրոջին,

Product — Cannon



17. Ibid.

Telegram 13a — 31 Oct 1916¹⁸

According to the present state, the works can be provisionally opened ...

Nach heutigem Stand ... vorläufig eröffnet

Asiafer to Gwinner Stauß.

Pass on to Riese: Your letter and telegram of October 16 received.

According to the present state, the works can provisionally be opened as follows:

1. Islahiye at the end of November,
2. Entilli–Atran at the end of December,
3. Atran–Bagtsche at the end of March,
4. Bagtsche–Mamoure at the latest in the fourth quarter of 1917.

A substantial shortening of this deadline is not achievable because of difficult earthworks on the Atran–Bag ...

Flora II 10/12 — Flora 20/22

To build a new path for ourselves and others

Նոր ուղի հարթել մեր նմաններին,

Telegram 13b — 31 Oct 1916¹⁹

A report...will follow

Bericht... folgt

... tsche section and bridge constructions on the Mamoure–Bagtsche section. A report on the discussion taking place this week with Joachim will follow. Grages.

Radovitz

18. Telegram, 31 October 1916, received 1 November 1916. Deutsche Bank AG, Historisches Institut, HADB/OR0464.

19. Ibid.



Flora II 11/12 — Flora 21/22

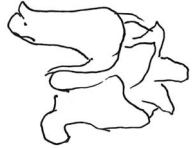
Deserving of freedom—

Արժանի կոչման, հաւասարութեան՝

Flora II 12/12 — Flora 22/22

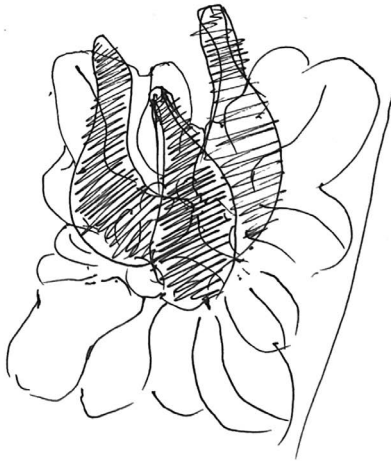
THAT'S HOW WE ARE COMING . . !

Այդպէ՛ս ենք գալիս...:



Shushanik Kurghinian, *The Workers* (1907), translated by Shushan Avagyan. Excerpt from “Exclusive: Shushanik Kurghinian’s *The Workers*,” *Ianyan Magazine*, 18 March 2012. <http://www.ianyanmag.com/exclusive-shushanik-kurghinians-the-workers/>.

The Workers
Shushanik Kurghinian



WE ARE THE ONES COMING—
In our worn out jackets, oil-stained and sooty,
Trampled caps and dirty hair,
Jaundiced, poor, barefoot,
Sometimes pale, sometimes docile,
Sometimes marked with the black stamp
Of hunger and quiet suffering,
Sometimes filled with riotous disdain,
Unruly rage and vengeance!
With the wearisome pain of aging too soon,
Longing for the light and fresh air,
Hopeful for a dignified life,
With deep wounds still raw in our hearts—
WE ARE THE ONES COMING ..!

We, the workers—
Unpaid hands toiling for the bloated stomachs,
Layers of fat, mounds of gold ..!

We, the workers—
Comrades in sorrow and tears,
Half-starved life, prison, and exile ..!

We, the workers—
Twisted in the drive to live and cheaply sold
In the base marketplace of existence ..!
O monstrous leeches,
Vile stranglers of invention, of human life,
You, insensible moles
With your corrupt lust for opulence,
You, shameful gravediggers and
Hangmen of sacred freedom,
You, soul-snatching demons of new hopes,
You, sated bodies!

Impoverished souls!

Perhaps our afflicted faces
Aren't moving enough for your gentle senses?
For isn't it true that

 You feed yourselves,
 You prosper and grow

From every drop of our blood,
Our salty, bitter sweat,
Our endless flood of tears,
Our strong, laboring arms,
Our bent backs, restless souls,
Our terror of unimagined death
Always lurking above our heads . . ?
And disgruntled you throw a few petty crumbs
As payment for our labors,
As if we were humanity's stepchildren
And you—the fittest wrestlers of enjoyment
 And unjust life . . !

YES! WE ARE COMING—
Out of the age-old furnace of privation
Out of persecution, out of slavery,
 We, the neglected class—
To smash the rulers' glory with our chests—
To break the throne of violence—the slave's chains—
To build a new path for ourselves and others
Deserving of freedom—

 THAT'S HOW WE ARE COMING . . !