

The Freeman

Ellen Glasgow

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"Hope is a slave; Despair is a freeman."

A VAGABOND between the East and West,
Careless I greet the scourging and the rod;
I fear no terror any man may bring,
Nor any god.

The clankless chains that bound me I have rent,
No more a slave to Hope I cringe or cry;
Captives to Fate men rear their prison walls,
But free am I.

I tread where arrows press upon my path,
I smile to see the danger and the dart;
My breast is bared to meet the slings of Hate,
But not my heart.

I face the thunder and I face the rain,
I lift my head, defiance far I fling, —
My feet are set, I face the autumn as
I face the spring.

Around me on the battlefields of life,
I see men fight and fail and crouch in prayer;
Aloft I stand unfettered, for I know
The freedom of despair.

Ellen Glasgow