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OXFORD POETRY, 1919 \*\*\*

OXFORD POETRY  
1919

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OXFORD POETRY

1919

EDITED BY

T. W. E., D. L. S., AND S. S.

OXFORD

B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD STREET

1920

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**SONG**

I MET a sage at the break of day,  
And he welcomed me with a smile;  
He spoke his words of encouragement  
And we parted after a while.

I met a fair lady when all was bright,  
And the sun was burning on high;  
She turned to me with her deep, dark eyes  
And sold herself for a lie.

I met a child when the world was dark  
And I was drear and alone;  
The child spoke naught,  
But the dark became light;  
The day of glory had come.

The barren ground shone with splendour high,  
Bare branches dripped with gold,  
And the earth was transformed to heaven,  
Just as the sage foretold.

---

## HERITAGE

HERE in my glass is blood of kings,  
The life-blood of a race that lies  
Long dead. The jewels burning in your rings  
Are an Egyptian woman's eyes.

Your beads are dead bones; even my breath  
Breathes hot words that were others' pain.  
Now these fair things are ours awhile, till death  
Brings us to quiet sleep again.

Then we shall put our love aside  
For lovers of a later birth,  
And leave to them this body's fragrant pride,  
For jewels, in the heart of earth.

## WATCHING

MIDNIGHT at last! And you, I know,  
Are sleeping there  
Peaceful. Stars keep  
Great guard upon you. Calm, and still, and white  
You are. One moment all your pale swift hair  
Is quiet as the night.

Here in this mud, this beastliness  
Of war, the thought  
Of your soft sleep  
Soothes a tired mind as a rare ointment may  
Comfort a wound, sweet-scented ointment brought  
From strange lands, far away.

## LONELINESS

I WATCHED the moon behind the trees  
Float in a sea of sky.  
The aspen whispers in the breeze,  
The rest is silence now. And I  
Can feel my loneliness around  
Me fall. No human face  
There is. None speaks. Never a sound  
Save whispering leaves in this still place.

I have two friends, and they are dead,  
Perhaps about their graves  
Are trees that whisper overhead,  
While in the grass the nettle waves.

---

*P. BLOOMFIELD*  
(*BALLIOL*)

## **TWILIGHT**

THE day grows fainter, moonlit evening fills  
With calm and cool the lilac-scented land,  
And I feel—were I on the western hills,  
At last, at last, now might I understand  
These mysteries of Life; how things began,  
And why I love my darling as I do,  
And how came longing to the soul of Man,  
And whether Death must sever me from you.  
Ah, hush! A spirit moves abroad, whose veil  
The poets would give all the world to raise,  
But, failing, tell some wistful fairy-tale,  
And laugh, and weep, and go their several ways.  
The birds are sleeping: nay, I do not know  
What's in the twilight, makes my heart beat so!

---



**TO A V.C.**

**B**ECAUSE your feet were stayed upon that road  
Whereon the others swiftly came and passed,  
Because the harvest you and they had sowed  
You only reaped at last.

Tis not your valour's meed alone you bear  
Who stand the object of a nation's pride,  
For on that humble Cross you live to wear  
Your friends were crucified.

They shared with you the conquest over fear,  
Sublime self-disregard, decision's power,  
But Death, relentless, left you lonely here  
In recognition's hour.

Their sign is yours to carry to the end;  
The lost reward of gallant hearts as true  
As yours they called their leader and their friend  
Is worn for them by you.

---

## FROM THEIR DUST

NOT in their immortality alone  
Live those bright spirits who for honour spent  
Their rich inheritance of years, and went  
Gay-heartedly to meet the wide unknown.

Not though the fields where their young limbs were  
strown  
Once more be chartered by the foeman's tent,  
And all the achieving of their tournament  
Be scattered to the winds or overthrown.

For from their memory and quickening dust  
Shall spring the flashing squadrons of the dawn;  
And they shall set their spears and ride afar  
To seek and battle, thrust and counterthrust,  
For grails from our beclouded eyes withdrawn,  
The champion warriors of a holier war.

### ERRATUM.

*For H. I. Burt read H. T. Burt, to whom also should be  
attributed "Pilot and Clouds" ([page 9](#)).*

---

## THE TRAMP-SHIP

SAILING over summer seas,  
Seeking ports of rest,  
Dancing with the dancing breeze,  
Host and guest.

Calmed beside the setting sun,  
Lifeless on the deep,  
Waiting till the halt be done  
And the sleep.

Driving 'gainst the sullen storm,  
Striking hard the foe,  
Gallant heart and gallant form  
Breast the snow.

Homeward, homeward in the years,  
All thy pennons fly;  
Bravely onward, smiles and tears,  
Home to die.

*July, 1911.*

## PILOT AND CLOUDS

CLOUDS, little clouds, tell me whither are you going to,  
Spun by the sun of the shearing of the sea?  
"Thither we are bound, where the West Wind is blowing  
to,  
Off on a holiday, merrymakers we."

Clouds, merry clouds, will you wait till I may fly to you,  
Share in the frolic of your gay company?  
"Nay, for the West Wind bids us say good-bye to you,  
Save if your chariot be speedier than he."

Swift are my steeds: at the thunderous career of them  
The high, lone silences that cradle you will flee.  
"Think you our hilarity will tremble at the fear of them,  
We who laugh in thunder and lighten in our glee?"

Then will I fly to you, dance with you, play with you,  
Hover on your breast where the shadow cannot be.  
"Hurry, brother, hurry, for we may not delay with you,  
Off on a holiday, merrymakers we."

---

## SEVEN MISTS

THE beauty of the High is not in brilliance  
Nor in a florid sculpturing of stone,  
Nor radiant colours, brave design, smooth stones,  
But the wide curve and placid flow,—and that  
St. Mary's spire and seven twilight mists  
Are hanging over Oxford towers to-night.

I AM clothed with furtive light  
Reflected from that pallid sun  
When it sets, hardly bright,  
Behind Merton tower, daylight done.

When the moon, silver-hued,  
Through Cowley generated mist  
Tears its way and glimmers nude  
Above Magdalen tower, it keeps tryst

With that spirit of my soul  
Which would glide through Oxford streets,  
Still, unseen, without control,  
With wide eyes scanning whom it meets.

---

## LES HALLUCINÉS

THIS is the singing of the sons of Hâli,  
As they stand at their booth-doors when brazen eve  
Covers the city of Chrysopolis  
Like the vast cup of an inverted flower,  
And into the pale blue cope of marble twilight  
Steal up men's souls like incense strange and pure.

"This is the singing of the sons of Hâli,  
To you, O seraphs, where you lean your breasts  
Upon the perfumed clouds of sunseting,  
And your huge wings, enormous, like a swan's,  
Alone cover with silver plumes of fire  
Your long sides, strange as pictures in Toledo—

"O seraphs, with your melting eyes like girls',  
And rosy breasts embosomed in the eve,  
Vouchsafe to us a little rain of coins,  
Of golden sequins tumbling through our sleep;  
Give us of heavenly gold, we have none earthly,  
And stab our souls with seeds of sworded fire."—  
*This* is the singing of the sons of Hâli.

---

## **FLOWERS**

**S**HINING, never-thirsty flowers,  
That by the water-side  
Do never plaintive cry for showers  
To damp their local pride.

Lazy they wag their lovely heads,  
Nodding that way and this,  
Lithe bodies upon mossy beds  
With lips bedewed that kiss.

The kindly and generous stream  
That gently ripples by,  
An idle, silvery dream,  
Where sleeping fishes lie.

These delicate flowers of Mary  
Lie long and overgrown,  
While Martha's parched and weary  
Stand in the sun and groan

---

*L. M. COOPER*  
(*LADY MARGARET HALL*)

### **LINES FOR A FLYLEAF OF HERODOTUS**

NO lover and no kinsmen pass  
To honour the deep-buried dead.  
The roads are covered up with grass  
That burned beneath th' Immortals' tread.  
No tramp of armed foe is heard,  
Nor bowstrings' twang, nor arrows' hiss,  
Nor sound to scare the nesting bird  
On rocky Salamis.

Yet runs the Royal Road to-day,  
From Sardis up to Suza town,  
And still above the Rhamnian Way  
The heights of Marathon look down:  
Still from the blue, Ægean wave  
The sea-wind sweeps with keen salt breath  
The hills that saw the Spartan brave  
Comb their long hair for death.

### **CRUSOE WAS A VAGABOND**

WISE men pray for hearth and home, a comely wife to  
tend them,  
And dread to feed the little folks that clamber on their  
knee;  
Their fathers' fields to plough and sow—their old friends  
to befriend them,  
But Crusoe was a vagabond, and ran away to sea.

He strayed upon the docks of Hull, and smelt the tar and  
cordage,  
He saw the bales of foreign ware piled high upon the  
quay,  
He heard the seamen singing, and the outbound ship-bells  
ringing  
Across the fog and darkness;—and he ran away to sea.

He might have dwelt by barn and dyke our fathers made  
before us,  
And dipped his fat sheep yearly in the burn that turns the  
mill;  
He might have heard the harvest home go up in lusty  
chorus,  
When the last wain comes lumbering across the moonlit  
hill.

But he heard the loud surf thundering against the harbour  
wall,  
The brown be-earringed sailor-men all swearing on the  
quay;  
The salt was in his nostrils, and he cared no more at all  
For barn or byre or cattle; but he ran away to sea.

The boys he knew are grey, old men, and soon their sons  
shall lay them  
To rest beside the little church upon the spur of hill:  
The distant hum of chant and prayers, the feet of them  
that pray them,  
The sunlight and the blackbirds' song shall be about them  
still.

But he's a homeless wanderer from Rio Grande to  
Malabar,  
And God knows who shall stand by him, or what his end  
shall be.  
The wheeling gulls shall cry his dirge, the great waves  
drum his burial,  
When his poor old battered body slips into the greedy sea.

---



## THE GARDEN

BLESSED with the green of rains, charged sweet with  
scent of May,  
The garden paths caressed her as she walked with slow  
foot-fall;  
Slight was her frame, but took no pressure of decay,  
And age had found age beautiful as when youth gave  
youth all.  
Far over dreamy meadows bells toll the dying sun,  
And a quiet is on her spirit for the tender drooping balm  
Of the evening filled with perfume the spring has swiftly  
won,  
And the rising moon that greets her in the garden of her  
calm.

The ebony stick has brought her by the phlox and  
marigold,  
And a dream of one is with her who loved this place the  
best of all,  
Who was straight and clean of stature as Bayard was of  
old—  
Who when the drummers beat the fields obeyed the  
drummers' call.  
His letters breathed a brighter hope than any she had  
heard,  
Nor any hint he gave to her that for his fairest youth  
Death leapt and chattered daily, and daily was deterred  
From staying all the transient joys that chased across  
his mouth.

The mother thrilled with sense of beauty infinite:  
For here it was the lithe, strong arms had pressed her to  
his breast,  
And his proud mouth had sealed on hers the proudest  
right  
That lovely tenderness may plan in gardens of the West.  
And so the moon grew white to silver all the lawns,  
While the garden wicket grows more white because a  
shadow near  
Has come to steal the wakened joy of any further dawns.  
The hand upon the wicket trembles, the vision is not  
clear

Of the one woman in the garden who is so quiet and still.  
At last the shadow enters and knows a form has sudden  
fled,  
And now is lonely weeping upon a haunted hill—  
For with it entered a company of France's hidden dead.  
At the sound of feet she turns, while her heart has made  
such stir  
That makes her grip her stick more close and head grow  
more erect:  
She sees a priest's worn cassock, and priests are sore to  
her,  
For as a child she knew they moved where life's best  
ships were wrecked.

"Madame, your son is dead," said he, with lowered glance:  
"But he bade them say the lilies yet are strong within  
the gale,  
He died a hero's death for honour and for France!"  
Then the mother faced and fixed his eyes, but the  
cheeks were drawn and pale.  
"I thank you for these words, for I see God spared him  
speech  
Before he died, and there are mothers for whom no  
words atone  
For speech of those they love, and whom no tidings reach.  
I thank you. And now leave me, for I would be alone."

And there she sits so quiet in the light of the young moon

And there she sits so quiet in the light of the young moon,  
While the flowers are dead, and the fruits are dead  
along with the young life  
That someone sped to the depth of the last dim lagoon.  
But only the priest in the fields of youth hears the  
requiem guns of strife.  
And he knows that strife goes on and on, for ever on and  
on,  
While the harps of the world shall play no more, nor any  
more shall bring  
The maids and youths to laughter until that the end be  
won,  
And the eyes of men grow young again, and the heart of  
the world can sing.

---

## **THE MAN WHO HAS FORGOTTEN TIME**

THE ancient man who has forgotten time  
Walks seldom in the hurried city street,  
Where is the man who has forgotten time?  
For we so seldom meet—

Only sometimes on mornings after rain,  
When feathers from the passing wings of night  
Linger in wide sky spaces after rain,  
I see the strangest sight—

The houses by the river melt away,  
And there are paths between the silent trees,  
And all the city's uproar melts away  
Into the hum of bees.

And by the water walks an ancient man,  
Who watches how the swift-tailed squirrels climb,  
And him I know to be the ancient man  
Who has forgotten time.

I often meet him pacing on the hills,  
Or near flat marshy wastes where no one goes,  
But very seldom will he leave the hills  
Or sea-cliffs that he knows.

And so I meet him rarely in the town,  
But I can always tell his face again,  
And sometimes I have seen him in the town  
At daybreak after rain.

## **IN A CANOE (OXFORD)**

SO many things you thought you knew  
Are different seen from a canoe:  
On either bank the grass is far  
Higher than other grasses are,  
And all the willows make a roof  
Fretted with branches—not aloof  
Like trees in gardens and in squares  
Which never hit you unawares.

---

## LOVE WEEPING AMONG THE CROSSES

CUPID has broken his bow,  
His arrows are shattered and lost.  
Oh, look at him, look at him now,  
His pinions trailing the dust!

The beautiful boy is sad,  
The glory has left his glance,  
You would say he had never been glad,  
That his limbs did not know how to dance.  
Oh, look at him, look at him now,  
Hugging his broken bow,  
Forlornly he wanders about  
Dreaming forgotten things ...  
Nobody heeds him now,  
Nobody hears if he sings.

Once at his wanton play  
Everyone railed and laughed,  
But nobody laughs to-day  
For love is so far away.

Beautiful sorrowing child,  
Hugging your broken bow,  
Your eyes grow suddenly wild,  
Anguish is twisting your face ...  
So changed from the Cupid's we know,  
The Cupid of dimples and grace.  
Cupid is down on his knees,  
Down in the midst of the crosses;  
His glorious, childish head  
Is bowed on his lovely arms ...  
But the young of the world are dead  
And heedless of Cupid's charms.  
Oh, look at him, look at him now,  
The delicate shoulders shake.  
Hugging his broken bow  
Cupid is weeping now.  
Cupid is weeping as though  
His wonderful heart would break.

## ON HEARING THAT THE NAMES CARVED UPON AN OLD SCHOOL TABLE ARE TO BE REMOVED

GAZE long upon this length of lifeless deal,  
Carved with rude cipher or with ill-cut name.  
Here youthful hands have wrought to set their seal  
Of immortality. No idle fame  
For those too-soon-forgotten names they sought,  
Only that others, seeing them, might say,  
These too were young and here have something brought  
Of youth's high heart, ere going each his way.

These names, that thus have sung the joyous song  
Of youth's endeavour, now must fade and die  
'Neath the cold malice that doth e'er belong  
To small minds wielding blind authority.  
So youth by age is ever vanquishèd  
And beauty smirched and soiled when youth is dead.

## THE ENVIOUS POETS

YOU say we are happy, being poets,  
In our poor songs and tawdry tales.  
I tell you it is not true.  
There are those we envy above the gods,  
And they are the painters and carvers.  
With bright colour and cunning line  
They have the power to conjure up before them  
Great visions of all the loveliness they have known.  
A tree, the sea at night,  
A friend,  
The dear face of their beloved,  
All these they can make live before them  
In colour, in marble.  
But what satisfaction do you think there is  
In a black printed word?  
I tell you we envy the painters and carvers.

---

**COMPLAINT OF THE BLASPHEMOUS  
BOMBERS AT BEIT AIESSA**

IT was not our hand or our fathers' hand,  
Nor mortal malice and the hate of men,  
That drew us to this far disastrous land  
Where the old primal night comes on again.  
Thy hand, O God of battles, and Thy voice  
Drew friend and foe into one net of hell,  
Wherefore Thine angels glory and rejoice,  
Thine enemies shall perish. It is well.

We who had hoped in vain that for a season  
We might hold back Thy darkness from mankind,  
We who had trusted and obeyed our reason,  
We now are helpless and amazed and blind.  
Thou hast grudged the rich his little hours of pleasure,  
The little things of life that he held dear,  
The worker his fireside and evening leisure:  
Thou hast Thy will. One doom has drawn us here.

Therefore from this unhallowed desolation,  
Where these, the victims of Thy monstrous lust,  
Half-buried in the mud of their damnation,  
Crumble—how slowly!—into loathsome dust,  
We curse Thee, God, nor shall our sons and daughters  
Fall at Thy footstool as their fathers fell,  
But, tired of tears and loyalties and slaughters,  
Lie down in peace and laugh at heaven and hell.

---

**SONNET**

"Cum tacet omnis ager."—VIRGIL.

OH for the stillness of the midnight hours,  
When all the earth is silent, and the breeze  
Rustles no more the branches of the trees,  
And makes no music in the leafy bowers,  
When Nature sleeps, and all earth's myriad flowers  
Folded in slumber take their dewy ease,  
And hushed is all the moaning of the seas,  
Lulled by the magic of enchanting powers.  
For then the green earth sleeps, and for a while  
Forgets her sorrow, and her heaving breast  
Is sunk in a deep calm and liquid rest.  
And the still waters of the silver sea,  
Bathed in the glory of the moon's cold smile,  
Reflect the splendour of eternity.

---

### **GALLIPOLI: AN EPITAPH**

THE moan of centuries breaks around these shores,  
Whispers of sultry ages, and of woes  
Low-trumpeted against the arch of Heaven....

A land that bows beneath the crescent moon  
And shrinks within its glinting gaze—is this  
The mausoleum of our nation's dead?  
Yea, for their glory gathers on this strand!  
Mourn not the brave with tears. These pagan hills  
Are touched with sanctity: the Voice of God  
Thrills thro' the barrenness of shrivell'd fields  
And lingers where these warriors lie entombed—  
'Neath the vast solitudes of Asian skies,  
Where sleep they in a hush of eventide,  
The sea their dirge, the stars their monuments!

MELBOURNE, 1917.

### **EVENTIDE**

A THRUSH throbs out his mournful melody,  
And shadowy fingers of approaching Dusk  
Clutch vaguely at the trees  
And shroud the purple hills:

And softly sobbing noon-winds float astir,  
Bedewing tearful kisses on the buds  
That freeze in filmy fold:  
The waters, icy-chill,

Are gurgling from their depths, and nestling birds  
Stand sunset-splashed, with plumage all dismay'd,  
To join the woeful chant,  
The dirge of waning day.

GIPPSLAND HILLS, 1917.

---



### THE PATROL

ALL night we prowled the stricken No Man's Land,  
And the high stars looked down dispassionate.  
I wondered if they could but understand  
That we poor grovelling things were fighters yet.  
Fighters, O God! Begrimed, intent to kill,  
But starting at all the secret noises near.  
We'd sent our hearts to sleep; but mind and will  
Fought the cold duel with children's night-born fear.  
The haunted silence quenched the stir of fight,  
The tainted wind no word of courage spoke.  
We turned at last: sudden the grass dew-white  
Smelt as it does at home: my heart awoke.  
God sent one bird to sing: the old sun came  
And lit the Eastern skies with orange flame.

### THE MONK'S FANCY

THE old monk down by the sea-beach listening,  
Thought that the waves were singing a song,  
And the wheeling gulls in the sea-spray glistening  
Wheeled with the music that bore them along.

Day after day by the sea-beach dreaming,  
The old monk heard what the sea-song told,  
And he set the tale in the great book gleaming  
With beautiful colours and letters of gold.

But one word only he set to flame there,  
And naught of the tale but that golden word,  
And sadly said all the men that came there  
That none could know what the old monk heard.

### AN ALPINE PICTURE

THE earth beneath this awful snow  
No feet have ever trod,  
These icy peaks could never know  
The smile of any God.  
And as I watch I know again  
Cruel tales I dare not tell,  
Of legions of forsaken men  
Who freeze in Dante's hell.

---

*G. H. JOHNSTONE*  
(*MERTON*)

## **OXFORD IN MAY**

**W**HEN we have snapped the chain of tranquil youth,  
And run to revel in the loud World's Fair,  
And straddled on the painted roundabouts,  
Clapping our hands at clowns, and horns that blare;

O heart of mine, when it grows late, and all  
The noisy tents flap dully on the grey  
Shivers of evening, and the Showman locks  
The clamorous booths, and sends the crowd away;

When we have found how terrible is age,  
And how men piped for us to dance, and we  
Danced, till we caught them laughing through the tune,  
And turned away, sick at their mockery:

Then in the silent room, with the lamp lit,  
We shall remember the still summer nights,  
The gold moon rising over Magdalen Bridge,  
And how the curving High was gemmed with lights.

---

## SOMME FILM, 1916

FOR you at least, sweet wanderers in the dark,  
There is no cause to cry from cypress-trees  
To a forgetful world; since you are seen  
Of all twice nightly at the cinema,  
While the munition-makers clap their hands.

## ESCHATOLOGICAL SONNET

BEFORE the final darkness, side by side  
We watched the huge red sun glow in the sky  
Malevolently dim, longing to die,  
As though his dull and sullen face would chide  
Slow-footed time that forced him to abide  
Unnumbered ages in death-agony,  
While at our feet the sea bore sluggishly  
The burden of a salt-encumbered tide.  
No word we spoke, but gazed with solemn eyes  
Where the last sunset slowly passed away  
And left the sky a sheet of endless grey,  
Seeing the world, God's careful sacrifice,  
The victim of an infinite decay,  
And thinking of the worm that never dies.

## EPILOGUE

WE are the silk which other limbs have worn,  
Those passive folds admired and kept with care,  
Till fashion changes, and, no longer rare,  
The garment is dishonoured, swept with scorn  
Into the massive wardrobe of the night,  
Where neither hands shall fondle preciously  
Nor eyes shall gaze on us in charity—  
The wasted fabric of an old delight.

---

The night is huge and rich with hidden song  
Of its eternal victims grandly singing  
A threnody, whose fragrance ever clinging  
To night's embroidery still hands along  
The endless chain of unrepentant years,  
Rejoicing in the gift of human tears.

RULER of infinite austerity  
From whom, long listening through ecstatic hours,  
Men seek a spiritual mutilation  
And guidance to the unperturbed serene,  
Yours was the voice at which our grasping hands  
Refrained from clutching at iniquity  
Still warm with flame that licks the roof of hell,  
But having will of us you are transfigured  
With an attractive aureole whose glare  
Is colder than a mist around the moon;  
Wherefore in wisdom meditate on this  
That when outworn incessantly with kneeling  
On penitential stone, the flesh of man,  
Delirious with fasting and sweet wounds  
Self-loved and self-inflicted, cries for peace,  
It is for you the spirit sings with joy  
The chant ineffable of hidden spheres;  
For you it finds delight voluptuous  
In weakness through the curtains of the night,  
—Not for the abstract law which you devise.

---

**QUITS!**

**B**EYOND the last hill stands a row  
Of poplars sighing,  
Amid the dwellings where dreams go.  
When they are dying.

One side the stream, a pleasure ground  
Where they carouse;  
On the far side, with yew-trees bound,  
The lazar-house.

And when the night has riven with stars  
The veil of day,  
I see their drunken half-shapes pass  
By the stream way.

"O dreams, O guests, who poisoned night  
With leprosy;  
Amid the stream and the moonlight  
Oh, think on me!"

---

## THE SECRET PLAYROOM

(*Graudenz, 1918.*)

TO-DAY has been a holiday;  
From our high room, with dumb desire,  
I have been watching through the wire  
The German boys and girls at play.

As music, knitting tongues in one,  
To each in his own language sings,  
So echo in their laughter rings  
Of happy voices I have known.

O children I have loved so well,  
In Hampshire wood or Cornish moor,  
On many a littered schoolroom floor,  
In Surrey garden, Yorkshire dell,

The friends of long sea holidays,  
Or playmates of an afternoon,  
All you whose memories are strewn  
Like flowers about my ordered ways,

Here in my lone heart I have made  
A playroom worthy of your love,  
With yellow walls, a frieze above,  
A tall lamp with a golden shade,

And old prints hung on picture-hooks,  
Red window-curtains, chairs straight-backed,  
An acting chest, a cupboard stacked  
With ragged treasures, story-books

Jostling the grammars on the shelves,  
A chipped white service set for three,  
A brodered cosy for the tea,  
All, all is there, save you yourselves.

But should your hearts recall me yet  
By any trick of word or thought,  
Some book I read, some game I taught,  
Then—in that instant of regret—

Your spirit flies across the sea  
On starry pinions through the night,  
Into my chamber of delight  
Your spirit flies to play with me.

## THE SONG OF STRENGTH

WE have washed our hands of the blood, we have turned  
at length

From the strait blind alleys of death to the way of peace;  
Gladly we labour, singing the song of our strength,  
The strength of man long-fettered that finds release:

The splendid body of man; O hand and eye  
Working in trained accord! O flying feet!  
The play of muscle in leg and shoulder and thigh,  
Strong to endure or to strive, sublime, complete:

Man, who has bound the waters, enslaved the wind,  
Tamed the desolate places, set his span  
O'er the abyss, unconquered and unconfined,  
Spending his strength in toil for the glory of man:

The climber setting his foot on the perilous slope,  
The hunter driving the wild thing from its lair,  
The traveller steering his course by the star of his hope,  
Never too faint to believe, too weak to dare:

The fisherman facing the storm while landsmen sleep,  
The swimmer—poised for an instant against the sky,  
Filling the eye with beauty, plunging deep,  
With wet white shoulders thrusting the billows by:

The airman hovering, sweeping above the hill,  
The engine driving a furrow of flame through the night,  
The long ships breasting the waves,—they are with us still,  
The strong clean things we have made for our heart's  
delight.

Strength of the mind and will despising sloth,  
Seeking the task unfinished, the goal unguessed,  
Sowing the seed in faith, entrusting the growth  
To the strength of their children, after their hands have  
rest:

Strength of the maker, serving a distant age,  
The poet shaping his dream to a deathless rhyme,  
The doctor fighting disease, the chemist, the sage,  
Grappling with nature, challenging space and time!

So shall we sing as we labour, till faint hearts hear  
And turn from their sorrow to listen, to cry at length,  
"Lo, we have put away doubt, and cast off fear;  
Come, let us fashion the world to the song of our  
strength!"

## THE DESERTED GARDEN

NOW these are gone, these beautiful playfellows,  
Gone from the green lawns under my balcony,  
Gone, and the house no more, the orchard  
Echoes no more to their happy laughter.

How oft I watched them playing, the innocent  
Boy friend and girl friend under the cedar-tree,  
Till through the soft dusk rose the twinkling  
Stars, and the lamps in the lane were shining.

Fair head to dark head leaning and whispering,  
Old games and new games, pirates and Indians,  
Short skirts and bare knees madly racing,  
Climbing aloft on the cedar branches.

Day comes and night comes, summer and holiday,  
Swift, ah! the bright hours, merry adventurers!  
Tears now, a first shy kiss at parting,  
Tears—and a hand at the corner waving....

White through the dawn-mist, careless of yesterday,  
Life stretches onward, life the attainable  
White road along dim hills of dreamland;  
Childhood is dead, and the leaves drift over.

Yet here in bleak house slumbers the memory,  
Here, here in green lawn, orchard and cedar-tree,  
Fair head and dark head, laughter, laughter,  
Evening, and voices across the starlight.

---



## LES MISÉRABLES

LIPS burning lips in passionate caress,  
Clasped, slightly swaying, pallid as the moon,  
Two wretches, cleaving to each other, press  
Their aching bodies into semi-swoon.

All the night through, till the stars droop and fail,  
The girdle of their arms is not undone,  
And when the night is finished, flaccid, pale,  
Two ghosts rise up, and gaze upon the sun,

And turning from each other go their ways  
Drunken with horror, reeling with sick shame,  
Calling a curse on God for all their days  
Of ravening, all their fierce nights of flame.

And lo! before the coming of the night  
They meet and greet again in shame's despite.

*September, 1919.*

---

**UMBRA**

I LOVE the shadows of things;  
Pale, grey, patternings  
In the aqueous wonder of dawn:  
Elm branches distort,  
Outrageously wrought  
On a woven texture of lawn.  
Cloud shadows that go  
In stateliest pacing  
Of nebulous gracing  
Down valleys of tumbled loam:  
Faint shapes in the snow  
Intricately interlacing,  
Of moonlight tracing:  
The shifting shadow of foam on foam.

---

*K. MOUNSEY*  
*(HOME STUDENT)*

### **TO A LITTLE HOUSE IN OXFORD**

THROUGH the half-opened door the light streams out  
    Across the street,  
And lays a path of gold on stones worn grey  
    By passing feet.  
I catch a glimpse of flowers in quaint old bowls  
    Standing in gloom,  
And many books on intimate low shelves  
    Go round the room.

---

## **THE DIVER**

I SAW a figure standing in the mist  
Dim and alone upon a column's height  
Which fell in marble precipice of white  
Down to the sea. Sudden the clean sun kissed  
His arms wide-stretching to the finger-tips,  
And showed his supple body glistening  
Clear in the naked heaven, and the ring  
Of a gay laugh broke eager from his lips;

So would I stand upon the dizzy ledge  
When I have lived, shake back my tumbled hair,  
Deliberately toe the empty edge,  
Laugh out my last defiance to the air,  
Then raise my arms, and, drinking one deep breath,  
Eye-open plunge into the sea of Death.

---

## STATION

LATE at night in the station  
It is cold: the gas lamps shine,  
Down-pointing pyramids of yellow light  
In a long, solemn line.

People are waiting on the platform,  
Pacing to the end and back,  
Or sitting huddled, drowsy, on the seats,  
All dressed in black.

Their faces look pale and delicate like ivory;  
Far off in the night,  
Like the sinister eye of a wild beast,  
Winks a green light.

So still, so still: a faint scream in the distance,  
Then silence and the train  
Crashes in, a golden horse, fiercely triumphant,  
Tossing his fiery mane.

## SWANS

YOU too have seen the great white swans, who glide  
Upon the lonely waters of the world,  
Curving their delicate necks with queenly pride  
Above the shining mirror, wherein is whirled  
All the wild seething mob of human things,  
The riot of men and those strange gods and kings,  
They set up on great golden thrones and crown  
With garlands of bright stars, then drag them down  
Into the mud with fierce tumultuous cries.  
Yes, all these wild reflections soon will pass,  
The drunken laughter and the vast distress,  
And the waters will be clear as polished glass,  
Imaging only calm unruffled skies,  
And the swans will still sail on in their proud loveliness.

---

*H. S. REID*  
(*SOMERVILLE*)

## **A DREAM**

I SAILED among the Orcades  
In the green encircling seas.  
So near the isles our nest did glide  
I picked a flower at the waterside;  
And just so quickly were we sped  
That I bruised the stalk and plucked the head.

There was no foam upon the waves,  
They swelled to glassy hills and caves;  
But foam white were the thorns that grew  
Among the meadow flowers blue.

    Laus tibi Domine,  
That gavest such a dream to me.

---

**EPITAPH**

(FOR JULIA)

HERE lies a Costermonger,  
Tall was she,  
Just the very size you'd wish a  
Christmas tree to be.  
All life long she stood a-hawking  
Small delights,  
Merry scornings, gay good-mornings,  
Kind good-nights.  
Bright balloons of mirth she'd cry you,  
Apples of jest,  
Laces—but you found them heartstrings—  
Of the best,  
Quips and kisses, April laughter,  
Had you a mind  
There were posies—all she sold you  
Paid for in kind.  
Scraps of fun and fluffs of fancy,  
Trayfuls of toys  
For stock-in-trade: for customers  
Grown-up girls and boys.  
Here lies a Costermonger,  
Dark the world to me  
As when they've put the candles out  
On a Christmas tree.

---

## FOR PHAON

WITH "THAT ETERNITIE PROMISED BY OUR EVER-LIVING POET."

WHY do you come to the poet, to the heart of iron and  
fire,  
Seeking soft raiment and the small things of desire,  
Looking for light kisses from lips bowed to sing?  
Less than myself I give not, and am *I* a little thing?  
I walk in scarlet and sendal through the dry plains of hell,  
And fine gold and rubies are all I have to sell,  
For I am the royal goldsmith whose goods are all of gold,  
And you shall live for ever like a little tale that is told;  
When kings pass and perish and the dust covers their  
name,  
And the high, impregnable cities are only wind and flame,  
The insolent new nations shall rise and read, and know  
What a little, little lord you were, because I loved you so.

## SYMPATHY

I SAT and talked with you  
In the shifting fire and gloom,  
Making you answer due  
In delicate speech and smooth—  
Nor did I fail to note  
The black curve of your head  
And the golden skin of your throat  
On the cushion's golden-red.  
But all the while, behind,  
In the workshop of my mind,  
The weird weaver of doom  
Was walking to and fro,  
Drawing thread upon thread  
With resolute fingers slow  
Of the things you did not say  
And thought I did not know,  
Of the things you said to-day  
And had said long ago,  
To weave on a wondrous loom,  
In dim colours enough,  
A curious, stubborn stuff—  
The web that we call truth.

## VIALS FULL OF ODOURS

THE hawthorn brave upon the green  
She hath a drooping smell and sad,  
But God put scent into the bean  
To drive each lass unto her lad.

And woe betide the weary hour,  
For my love is in Normandy,  
And oh! the scent of the bean-flower  
Is like a burning fire in me.

Fair fall the lusty thorn,  
She hath no curses at my hand,  
But would the man were never born  
That sowed the bean along his land!

---



## **THE VOICE IN THE NIGHT**

(SONGS FROM A LYRICAL DRAMA, "THE BURDEN OF BABYLON")

**B**ABYLON, the glory of the Kingdoms,  
And the Chaldees' excellency,  
Is become as Sodom and Gomorrah,  
Whom God overthrew by the sea.

Never again inhabited,  
Babylon, O Babylon!  
Even the wandering Arabian  
From thy weary waste is gone.  
Neither shall the shepherd tend his fold there,  
Nor any green herb be grown:  
It cometh in the night-time suddenly,  
And Babylon is overthrown.

Woeful are thy desolate palaces,  
Where doleful creatures cry,  
And wild beasts out of the islands  
In thy fallen chambers cry.  
Where now are the viol and the tabret?  
But owls hoot in moonlight:  
And over the ruins of Babylon  
The satyr leaps by night.

Babylon is fallen, is fallen!  
And never shall be known again:  
Drunken with the blood of my Beloved,  
And trampling on the sons of men.  
But God is awake and aware of thee,  
And sharply shines His sword,  
Where over the earth spring suddenly  
The hidden hosts of the Lord:  
Armies of right and of righteousness,  
Huge hosts, unseen, unknown:  
And thy pomp, and thy revellings, and glory,  
Where the wind goes, they are gone.

---

### AT PUNNET'S TOWN

A SWELL within her billowed skirts,  
Like a great ship with sails unfurled,  
The madwoman goes gallantly  
Upon the ridges of her world.

With eagle nose and wisps of grey  
She strides upon the Westward Hills,  
Swings her umbrella joyously,  
And waves it to the waving mills,

Talking and chuckling as she goes,  
Indifferent to sun or rain,  
With all that merry company  
The singing children of her brain.

### DALLINGTON

CLOUDS all tumbled and white,  
Frowning clouds and grey;  
Dallington high on the hilltop,  
Dallington hears what they say.

"Oh, I have come from the Channel."  
"And I from the Westward Hill  
Where Punnet's Town blinks at the sunset  
Between a mill and a mill."

"I have showered on field and fallow  
Till I'm empty and dry," says one.  
"I scowled at the people in Cross-in-Hands,  
And was driven away by the sun."

"Oh, I am primed for a fight,  
And if I can find one more  
To challenge my path in the heavens  
There'll be rumblings and flashes galore."

"Oh, I have a hatful of hail."  
"And I have a share of sleet."  
"So shall we go cruising to battle  
And rattle it down on their street?"

Clouds all tumbled and white,  
Frowning clouds and grey;  
Dallington high on the hilltop,  
Dallington hears what they say.

### EENA-MENA-MINA-MO

EENA-mena-mina-mo,  
Catch a nigger by ees toe,  
If 'e olleys, let'n go.  
O-U-T spells out  
And out you must go.  
You'm of it O!

Children playing on the green:  
Joe Treguddick, deathly ill,  
Hears them very clearly still.

Silently, with blinking eyes,  
Two great sons have dragged his bed  
To the window, till he dies.

Now his mind is in his fields  
Where all things lose their certain shape.

The cows in munching quiet lie,  
And on the orange of the sky  
The trees stand out like scissored crape.

With deep cool breaths he drinks the night:  
Then, in a sudden sweat of pain,  
He twists upon his bed again.

The children's voices die away,  
And seldom now the footsteps pass.  
A hobnailed tread upon the road  
Falls sudden silent on the grass.

Still with throb and throb of pain  
He hears the children at their play  
Chanting insistent in his brain.

Coughs: and with a whistling breath,  
Though he knows how the count will fall,  
Turns to play a game with Death,

Turns to the last game of all.

Eena-mena-mina-mo,  
Catch a nigger by ees toe.  
If 'e olleys, let'n go.  
O-U-T spells out  
And out you must go.  
You'm of it, Joe!

---

### IMPROMPTU IN MARCH

I WILL cut you wands of willow,  
I will fetch you catkins yellow  
    For a sign of March....  
I've a snowy silken pillow  
For my head, you foolish fellow—  
    I've no love for March!

Get me buckles, bring me laces,  
Amber beads and chrysoprases,  
    Fans and castanets!...  
Lady, in the sunny places  
I can find you early daisies  
    And sweet violets.

### IN NEW COLLEGE CLOISTERS

TIME sleeps—  
Hush ye: go light—  
    Time sleeps  
By day and by night.  
    Be your tread  
Softer than feet of the dead,  
    Lest he wake  
And his heart break.

Stern bells,  
Muffle your chime;  
    He dreams—  
Suffer the dreams of Time!  
To the patter of ilex leaves,  
To the sound of birds in the eaves,  
To the sibilant wings of a dove  
    Time dreams—of his love.

### THE BEGGAR-MAIDEN

THERE has come to me a lover,  
    O ye winds and waters,  
With a house for my abiding  
    Full of looking-glass and silk,  
And a palfrey for my riding  
    White as milk,  
And the tresses of kings' daughters  
Spun with pearls, my head to cover!  
There has come to me a lover,  
    O ye winds and waters!

And I kissed him for his kindness  
    To a beggar-maiden....  
I, with strong white feet for going  
    At my fancy everywhere;  
With the wind of heaven blowing  
    Through my hair:  
With my dwelling star-beladen—  
Verily I mocked his blindness!  
But I kissed him for his kindness  
    To a beggar-maiden.

---

## LOUIS ONZE

WHO is this I see? A King!  
Leaden saints all in a ring  
Round his hat! His gait is slow!  
And his back is bending low!  
This a King? His quivering frame  
Shakes! Pray tell me now his name.  
Louis Onze, it is you say,  
Greatest King of all his day!

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### Transcriber's Notes

Obvious typographical errors have been silently corrected, other variations in spelling, accents and punctuation are as in the original.

Several poems do not have titles, but are referenced by first line. These have been left as printed.

The erratum on page 7 has not been corrected to avoid changing the structure of the book.

In the original, the poems each started with a dropped capital initial letter. This has been replaced with a raised capital for consistency of rendering.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK  
OXFORD POETRY, 1919 \*\*\*

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