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# *Georgian Poetry*

**1918-19**

**edited by**

**Sir Edward Howard Marsh**

**1919**

Eighth Thousand

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*To Thomas Hardy*

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## Prefatory Note

This is the fourth volume of the present series. I hope it may be thought to show that what for want of a better word is called Peace has not interfered with the writing of good poetry.

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and

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E. M.

September 1919.

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## **Lascelles Abercrombie**

### ***Witchcraft: New Style***

The sun drew off at last his piercing fires.  
Over the stale warm air, dull as a pond  
And moveless in the grey quieted street,  
Blue magic of a summer evening glowed.  
The sky, that had been dazzling stone all day,  
Hollowed in smooth hard brightness, now dissolved  
To infinite soft depth, and smoulder'd down  
Low as the roofs, dark burning blue, and soared  
Clear to that winking drop of liquid silver,  
The first exquisite star. Now the half-light  
Tidied away the dusty litter parching  
Among the cobbles, veiled in the colour of distance  
Shabby slates and brickwork mouldering, turn'd  
The hunchback houses into patient things  
Resting; and golden windows now began.

A little brisk grey slattern of a woman,  
Pattering along in her loose-heel'd clogs,  
Pushed the brass-barr'd door of a public-house;  
The spring went hard against her; hand and knee  
Shoved their weak best. As the door poised ajar,  
Hullabaloo of talking men burst out,  
A pouring babble of inflamed palaver,  
And overriding it and shouted down  
High words, jeering or downright, broken like  
Crests that leap and stumble in rushing water.  
Just as the door went wide and she stepped in,  
'She cannot do it!' one was bawling out:  
A glaring hulk of flesh with a bull's voice.  
He finger'd with his neckerchief, and stretched  
His throat to ease the anger of dispute,  
Then spat to put a full stop to the matter.

The little woman waited, with one hand  
Propping the door, and smiled at the loud man.  
They saw her then; and the sight was enough  
To gag the speech of every drinker there:  
The din fell down like something chopt off short.  
Blank they all wheel'd towards her, with their mouths  
Still gaping as though full of voiceless words.  
She let the door slam to; and all at ease,

Amused, her smile wrinkling about her eyes,  
Went forward: they made room for her quick enough.  
Her chin just topt the counter; she gave in  
Her bottle to the potboy, tuckt it back,  
Full of bright tawny ale, under her arm,  
Rapt down the coppers on the planisht zinc,  
And turned: and no word spoken all the while.

The first voice, in that silent crowd, was hers,  
Her light snickering laugh, as she stood there  
Pausing, scanning the sawdust at her feet.  
Then she switcht round and faced the positive man  
Whose strong 'She cannot do it!' all still felt  
Huskily shouting in their guilty ears.

'She can't, eh? She can't do it?' — Then she'd heard!

The man, inside his ruddy insolent flesh,  
Had hoped she did not hear. His barrel chest  
Gave a slight cringe, as though the glint of her eyes  
Prickt him. But he stood up to her awkwardly bold,  
One elbow on the counter, gripping his mug  
Like a man holding on to a post for safety.

*The Man:*

You can't do what's not nature: nobody can.

*The Woman:*

And louts like you have nature in your pocket?

*The Man:*

I don't say that —

*The Woman:*

If you kept saying naught, No one would guess the fool you are.

*Second Man:*

Almost  
My very words!

*The Woman:*

O you're the knowing man!  
The spark among the cinders!

*First Man:*

You can't fetch  
A free man back, unless he wants to come.

*The Woman:*

Nay, I'll be bound he doesn't want to come!

*Third Man:*

And he won't come: he told me flat he wouldn't.

*The Woman:*

Are you there too?

*Third Man:*

And if he does come back  
It will be devilry brought him.

*The Woman:*

I shall bring him; —  
Tonight.

*First Man:*

How will he come?

*The Woman:*

Running: unless  
He's broke his leg, and then he'll have to come  
Crawling: but he will come.

*First Man:*

How do you know  
What he may choose to do, three counties off?

*The Woman:*

He choose?

*Third Man:*

You haven't got him on a lead.

*The Woman:*

Haven't I though!

*Second Man:*

That's right; it's what I said.

*The Woman:*

Ay, there are brains in your family.

*First Man:*

You have  
Some sort of pull on him, to draw him home?

*The Woman:*

You may say that: I have hold of his mind.  
And I can slack it off or fetch it taut.  
And make him dance a score of miles away  
An answer to the least twangling thrum  
I play on it. He thought he lurkt at last  
Safely; and all the while, what has he been?  
An eel on the end of a night line; and it's time  
I haul'd him in. You'll see, to-night I'll land him.

*Third Man:*

Bragging's a light job.

*The Woman:*

You daren't let me take  
Your eyes in mine! — Haul, did I say? no need:  
I give his mind a twitch, and up he comes  
Tumbling home to me. Whatever work he's at,  
He drops the thing he holds like redhot iron  
And runs — runs till he falls down like a beast  
Pole-axt, and grunts for breath; then up and on,  
No matter does he know the road or not:  
The strain I put on his mind will keep him going  
Right as a homing-pigeon.

*First Man:*

Devilry I call it.

*The Woman:*

And you're welcome.

*Second Man:*

But the law should have a say here.

*The Woman:*

What, isn't he mine,  
My own? There's naught but what I please about it.

*Third Man:*

Why did you let him go?

*The Woman:*

To fetch him back!  
For I enjoy this, mind. There's many a one  
Would think, to see me, There goes misery!  
There's a queer starveling for you! — and I do  
A thing that makes me like a saint in glory,  
The life of me the sound of a great tune  
Your flesh could never hear: I can send power  
Delighting out of me! O, the mere thought  
Has made my blood go smarting in my veins,  
Such a flame glowing along it! — And all the same

I'll pay him out for sidling off from me.  
But I'll have supper first.

When she was gone,  
Their talk could scarcely raise itself again  
Above a grumble. But at last a cry  
Sharp-pitcht came startling in from the street: at once  
Their moody talk exploded into flare  
Of swearing hubbub, like gunpowder dropt  
On embers; mugs were clapt down, out they bolted  
Rowdily jostling, eager for the event.

All down the street the folk throng'd out of doors,  
But left a narrow track clear in the middle;  
And there a man came running, a tall man  
Running desperately and slowly, pounding  
Like a machine, so evenly, so blindly;  
And regularly his trotting body wagg'd.  
Only one foot clatter'd upon the stones;  
The other padded in his dogged stride:  
The boot was gone, the sock hung frayed in shreds  
About his ankle, the foot was blood and earth;  
And never a limp, not the least flinch, to tell  
The wounded pulp hit stone at every step.  
His clothes were tatter'd and his rent skin showed,  
Harrowed with thorns. His face was pale as putty,  
Thrown far back; clots of drooping spittle foamed  
On his moustache, and his hair hung in tails,  
Mired with sweat; and sightless in their sockets  
His eyeballs turned up white, as dull as pebbles.  
Evenly and doggedly he trotted,  
And as he went he moaned. Then out of sight  
Round a corner he swerved, and out of hearing.

— 'The law should have a say to that, by God!'

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## Gordon Bottomley

### Littleholme

(  
*To J. S. and A. W. S.*  
)

In entering the town, where the bright river  
Shrinks in its white stone bed, old thoughts return  
Of how a quiet queen was nurtured here  
In the pale, shadowed ruin on the height;  
Of how, when the hoar town was new and clean  
And had not grown a part of the gaunt fells  
That peered down into it, the burghers wove  
On their small, fireside looms green, famous webs  
To cling on lissome, tower-dwelling ladies  
Who rode the hills swaying like green saplings,  
Or mask tall, hardy outlaws from pursuit



Down beechen caverns and green under-lights,  
(The rude, vain looms are gone, their beams are broken;  
Their webs are now not seen, but memory  
Still tangles in their mesh the dews they swept  
Like ruby sparks, the lights they took, the scents  
They held, the movement of their shapes and shades);  
Of how the Border burners in cold dawns  
Of Summer hurried North up the high vales  
Past smoking farmsteads that had lit the night  
And surf of crowding cattle; and of how  
A laughing prince of cursed, impossible hopes  
Rode through the little streets Northward to battle  
And to defeat, to be a fading thought,  
Belated in dead mountains of romance.

A carver at his bench in a high gable  
Hears the sharp stream close under, far below  
Tinkle and rustle, and no other sound  
Arises there to him to change his thoughts  
Of the changed, silent town and the dead hands  
That made it and maintained it, and the need  
For handiwork and happy work and work  
To use and ease the mind if such sweet towns  
Are to be built again or live again.

The long town ends at Littleholme, where the road  
Creeps up to hills of ancient-looking stone.  
Under the hanging eaves at Littleholme  
A latticed casement peeps above still gardens  
Into a crown of druid-solemn trees  
Upon a knoll as high as a small house,  
A shapely mound made so by nameless men  
Whose smoothing touch yet shows through the green hide.  
When the slow moonlight drips from leaf to leaf  
Of that sharp, plummy gloom, and the hour comes  
When something seems awaited, though unknown,  
There should appear between those leaf-thatched piles  
Fresh, long-limbed women striding easily,  
And men whose hair-plaits swing with their shagged arms;  
Returning in that equal, echoed light  
Which does not measure time to the dear garths  
That were their own when from white Norway coasts  
They landed on a kind, not distant shore,  
And to the place where they have left their clothing,  
Their long-accustomed bones and hair and beds  
That once were pleasant to them, in that barrow  
Their vanished children heaped above them dead:  
For in the soundless stillness of hot noon  
The mind of man, noticeable in that knoll,  
Enhances its dark presence with a life  
More vivid and more actual than the life  
Of self-sown trees and untouched earth. It is seen  
What aspect this land had in those first eyes:  
In that regard the works of later men  
Fall in and sink like lime when it is slaked,  
Staid, youthful queen and weavers are unborn,  
And the new crags the Northmen saw are set  
About an earth that has not been misused.

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**Francis Brett Young**

**Invocation**

Whither, O, my sweet mistress, must I follow thee?  
For when I hear thy distant footfall nearing,  
And wait on thy appearing,  
Lo! my lips are silent: no words come to me.

Once I waylaid thee in green forest covers,  
Hoping that spring might free my lips with gentle fingers;  
Alas! her presence lingers  
No longer than on the plain the shadow of brown kestrel hovers.

Through windless ways of the night my spirit followed after;  
Cold and remote were they, and there, possessed  
By a strange unworldly rest,  
Awaiting thy still voice heard only starry laughter.

The pillared halls of sleep echoed my ghostly tread.  
Yet when their secret chambers I essayed  
My spirit sank, dismayed,  
Waking in fear to find the new-born vision fled.

Once indeed — but then my spirit bloomed in leafy rapture —  
I loved; and once I looked death in the eyes:  
So, suddenly made wise,  
Spoke of such beauty as I may never recapture....

Whither, O, divine mistress, must I then follow thee?  
Is it only in love ... say, is it only in death  
That the spirit blossometh,  
And words that may match my vision shall come to me?

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## Prothalamion

When the evening came my love said to me:  
Let us go into the garden now that the sky is cool;  
The garden of black hellebore and rosemary,  
Where wild woodruff spills in a milky pool.

Low we passed in the twilight, for the wavering heat  
Of day had waned; and round that shaded plot  
Of secret beauty the thickets clustered sweet:  
Here is heaven, our hearts whispered, but our lips spake not.

Between that old garden and seas of lazy foam  
Gloomy and beautiful alleys of trees arise  
With spire of cypress and dreamy beechen dome,  
So dark that our enchanted sight knew nothing but the skies:

Veiled with a soft air, drench'd in the roses' musk  
Or the dusky, dark carnation's breath of clove:  
No stars burned in their deeps, but through the dusk  
I saw my love's eyes, and they were brimmed with love.

No star their secret ravished, no wasting moon  
Mocked the sad transience of those eternal hours:  
Only the soft, unseeing heaven of June,  
The ghosts of great trees, and the sleeping flowers.

For doves that crooned in the leafy noonday now  
Were silent; the night-jar sought his secret covers,  
Nor even a mild sea-whisper moved a creaking bough —  
Was ever a silence deeper made for lovers?

Was ever a moment meeter made for love?  
Beautiful are your closed lips beneath my kiss;  
And all your yielding sweetness beautiful —  
Oh, never in all the world was such a night as this!

## February

The robin on my lawn  
He was the first to tell  
How, in the frozen dawn,  
This miracle befell,  
Waking the meadows white  
With hoar, the iron road  
Agleam with splintered light,  
And ice where water flowed:  
Till, when the low sun drank  
Those milky mists that cloak  
Hanger and hollied bank,  
The winter world awoke  
To hear the feeble bleat  
Of lambs on downland farms:  
A blackbird whistled sweet;  
Old beeches moved their arms  
Into a mellow haze  
Aerial, newly-born:  
And I, alone, agaze,  
Stood waiting for the thorn  
To break in blossom white,  
Or burst in a green flame....  
So, in a single night,  
Fair February came,  
Bidding my lips to sing  
Or whisper their surprise,  
With all the joy of spring  
And morning in her eyes.

## Lochanilaun

This is the image of my last content:  
My soul shall be a little lonely lake,  
So hidden that no shadow of man may break  
The folding of its mountain battlement;  
Only the beautiful and innocent  
Whiteness of sea-born cloud drooping to shake  
Cool rain upon the reed-beds, or the wake  
Of churn'd cloud in a howling wind's descent.  
For there shall be no terror in the night  
When stars that I have loved are born in me,  
And cloudy darkness I will hold most fair;  
But this shall be the end of my delight:  
That you, my lovely one, may stoop and see  
Your image in the mirrored beauty there.

## Lettermore

These winter days on Lettermore  
The brown west wind it sweeps the bay,  
And icy rain beats on the bare  
Unhomely fields that perish there:  
The stony fields of Lettermore  
That drink the white Atlantic spray.

And men who starve on Lettermore,  
Cursing the haggard, hungry surf,  
Will souse the autumn's bruised grains  
To light dark fires within their brains  
And fight with stones on Lettermore  
Or sprawl beside the smoky turf.

When spring blows over Lettermore  
To bloom the ragged furze with gold,  
The lovely south wind's living breath  
Is laden with the smell of death:  
For fever breeds on Lettermore  
To waste the eyes of young and old.

A black van comes to Lettermore;  
The horses stumble on the stones,  
The drivers curse, — for it is hard  
To cross the hills from Oughterard  
And cart the sick from Lettermore:  
A stinking load of rags and bones.

But you will go to Lettermore  
When white sea-trout are on the run,  
When purple glows between the rocks  
About Lord Dudley's fishing box  
Adown the road to Lettermore,  
And wide seas tarnish in the sun.

And so you'll think of Lettermore  
As a lost island of the blest:  
With peasant lovers in a blue  
Dim dusk, with heather drench'd in dew,  
And the sweet peace of Lettermore  
Remote and dreaming in the West.

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## Song

Why have you stolen my delight  
In all the golden shows of Spring  
When every cherry-tree is white  
And in the limes the thrushes sing,

O fickler than the April day,  
O brighter than the golden broom,  
O blither than the thrushes' lay,  
O whiter than the cherry-bloom,

O sweeter than all things that blow ...  
Why have you only left for me  
The broom, the cherry's crown of snow,  
And thrushes in the linden-tree?

## The Leaning Elm

Before my window, in days of winter hoar  
Huddled a mournful wood:  
Smooth pillars of beech, domed chestnut, sycamore,  
In stony sleep they stood:  
But you, unhappy elm, the angry west  
Had chosen from the rest,  
Flung broken on your brothers' branches bare,  
And left you leaning there  
So dead that when the breath of winter cast  
Wild snow upon the blast,  
The other living branches, downward bowed,  
Shook free their crystal shroud  
And shed upon your blackened trunk beneath  
Their livery of death....

On windless nights between the beechen bars  
I watched cold stars  
Throb whitely in the sky, and dreamily  
Wondered if any life lay locked in thee:  
If still the hidden sap secretly moved  
As water in the icy winterbourne  
Floweth unheard:  
And half I pitied you your trance forlorn:  
You could not hear, I thought, the voice of any bird,  
The shadowy cries of bats in dim twilight  
Or cool voices of owls crying by night ...  
Hunting by night under the hornéd moon:  
Yet half I envied you your wintry swoon,  
Till, on this morning mild, the sun, new-risen  
Steals from his misty prison;  
The frozen fallows glow, the black trees shaken  
In a clear flood of sunlight vibrating awaken:  
And lo, your ravaged bole, beyond belief  
Slenderly fledged anew with tender leaf  
As pale as those twin vanes that break at last  
In a tiny fan above the black beech-mast  
Where no blade springeth green  
But pallid bells of the shy helleborine.  
What is this ecstasy that overwhelms  
The dreaming earth? See, the embrownéd elms  
Crowding purple distances warm the depths of the wood:  
A new-born wind tosses their tassels brown,  
His white clouds dapple the down:  
Into a green flame bursting the hedgerows stand.  
Soon, with banners flying, Spring will walk the land....

There is no day for thee, my soul, like this,  
No spring of lovely words. Nay, even the kiss  
Of mortal love that maketh man divine  
This light cannot outshine:  
Nay, even poets, they whose frail hands catch  
The shadow of vanishing beauty, may not match  
This leafy ecstasy. Sweet words may cull  
Such magical beauty as time may not destroy;  
But we, alas, are not more beautiful:  
We cannot flower in beauty as in joy.  
We sing, our muséd words are sped, and then  
Poets are only men  
Who age, and toil, and sicken.... This maim'd tree  
May stand in leaf when I have ceased to be.

## William H. Davies

### Lovely Dames

Few are my books, but my small few have told  
Of many a lovely dame that lived of old;  
And they have made me see those fatal charms  
Of Helen, which brought Troy so many harms;  
And lovely Venus, when she stood so white  
Close to her husband's forge in its red light.  
I have seen Dian's beauty in my dreams,  
When she had trained her looks in all the streams  
She crossed to Latmos and Endymion;  
And Cleopatra's eyes, that hour they shone  
The brighter for a pearl she drank to prove  
How poor it was compared to her rich love:  
But when I look on thee, love, thou dost give  
Substance to those fine ghosts, and make them live.

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### When Yon Full Moon

When yon full moon's with her white fleet of stars,  
And but one bird makes music in the grove;  
When you and I are breathing side by side,  
Where our two bodies make one shadow, love;

Not for her beauty will I praise the moon,  
But that she lights thy purer face and throat;  
The only praise I'll give the nightingale  
Is that she draws from thee a richer note.

For, blinded with thy beauty, I am filled,  
Like Saul of Tarsus, with a greater light;  
When he had heard that warning voice in Heaven,  
And lost his eyes to find a deeper sight.

Come, let us sit in that deep silence then,  
Launched on love's rapids, with our passions proud  
That makes all music hollow — though the lark  
Raves in his windy heights above a cloud.

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### On Hearing Mrs. Woodhouse Play the Harpsichord

We poets pride ourselves on what

We feel, and not what we achieve;  
The world may call our children fools,  
Enough for us that we conceive.  
A little wren that loves the grass  
Can be as proud as any lark  
That tumbles in a cloudless sky,  
Up near the sun, till he becomes  
The apple of that shining eye.

So, lady, I would never dare  
To hear your music ev'ry day;  
With those great bursts that send my nerves  
In waves to pound my heart away;  
And those small notes that run like mice  
Bewitched by light; else on those keys —  
My tombs of song — you should engrave:  
'My music, stronger than his own,  
Has made this poet my dumb slave.'

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## Birds

When our two souls have left this mortal clay  
And, seeking mine, you think that mine is lost —  
Look for me first in that Elysian glade  
Where Lesbia is, for whom the birds sing most.

What happy hearts those feathered mortals have,  
That sing so sweet when they're wet through in spring!  
For in that month of May when leaves are young,  
Birds dream of song, and in their sleep they sing.

And when the spring has gone and they are dumb,  
Is it not fine to watch them at their play:  
Is it not fine to see a bird that tries  
To stand upon the end of every spray?

See how they tilt their pretty heads aside:  
When women make that move they always please.  
What cosy homes birds make in leafy walls  
That Nature's love has ruined — and the trees.

Oft have I seen in fields the little birds  
Go in between a bullock's legs to eat;  
But what gives me most joy is when I see  
Snow on my doorstep, printed by their feet.

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## Oh, Sweet Content!

Oh, sweet content, that turns the labourer's sweat  
To tears of joy, and shines the roughest face;  
How often have I sought you high and low,  
And found you still in some lone quiet place;

Here, in my room, when full of happy dreams,

With no life heard beyond that merry sound  
Of moths that on my lighted ceiling kiss  
Their shadows as they dance and dance around;

Or in a garden, on a summer's night,  
When I have seen the dark and solemn air  
Blink with the blind bats' wings, and heaven's bright face  
Twitch with the stars that shine in thousands there.

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## **A Child's Pet**

When I sailed out of Baltimore  
With twice a thousand head of sheep,  
They would not eat, they would not drink,  
But bleated o'er the deep.

Inside the pens we crawled each day,  
To sort the living from the dead;  
And when we reached the Mersey's mouth  
Had lost five hundred head.

Yet every night and day one sheep,  
That had no fear of man or sea,  
Stuck through the bars its pleading face,  
And it was stroked by me.

And to the sheep-men standing near,  
'You see,' I said, 'this one tame sheep:  
It seems a child has lost her pet,  
And cried herself to sleep.'

So every time we passed it by,  
Sailing to England's slaughter-house,  
Eight ragged sheep-men — tramps and thieves —  
Would stroke that sheep's black nose.

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## **England**

We have no grass locked up in ice so fast  
That cattle cut their faces and at last,  
When it is reached, must lie them down and starve,  
With bleeding mouths that freeze too hard to move.  
We have not that delirious state of cold  
That makes men warm and sing when in Death's hold.  
We have no roaring floods whose angry shocks  
Can kill the fishes dashed against their rocks.  
We have no winds that cut down street by street,  
As easy as our scythes can cut down wheat.  
No mountains here to spew their burning hearts  
Into the valleys, on our human parts.  
No earthquakes here, that ring church bells afar,  
A hundred miles from where those earthquakes are.  
We have no cause to set our dreaming eyes,  
Like Arabs, on fresh streams in Paradise.



We have no wilds to harbour men that tell  
More murders than they can remember well.  
No woman here shall wake from her night's rest,  
To find a snake is sucking at her breast.  
Though I have travelled many and many a mile,  
And had a man to clean my boots and smile  
With teeth that had less bone in them than gold —  
Give me this England now for all my world.

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## The Bell

It is the bell of death I hear,  
Which tells me my own time is near,  
When I must join those quiet souls  
Where nothing lives but worms and moles;  
And not come through the grass again,  
Like worms and moles, for breath or rain;  
Yet let none weep when my life's through,  
For I myself have wept for few.

The only things that knew me well  
Were children, dogs, and girls that fell;  
I bought poor children cakes and sweets,  
Dogs heard my voice and danced the streets;  
And, gentle to a fallen lass,  
I made her weep for what she was.  
Good men and women know not me.  
Nor love nor hate the mystery.

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## Walter de la Mare

### The Sunken Garden

Speak not — whisper not;  
Here bloweth thyme and bergamot;  
Softly on the evening hour,  
Secret herbs their spices shower,  
Dark-spiked rosemary and myrrh,  
Lean-stalked, purple lavender;  
Hides within her bosom, too,  
All her sorrows, bitter rue.

Breathe not — trespass not;  
Of this green and darkling spot,  
Latticed from the moon's beams,  
Perchance a distant dreamer dreams;  
Perchance upon its darkening air,  
The unseen ghosts of children fare,  
Faintly swinging, sway and sweep,  
Like lovely sea-flowers in its deep;  
While, unmoved, to watch and ward,  
'Mid its gloomed and daisied sward,  
Stands with bowed and dewy head

## Moonlight

The far moon maketh lovers wise  
In her pale beauty trembling down,  
Lending curved cheeks, dark lips, dark eyes,  
A strangeness not their own.  
And, though they shut their lids to kiss,  
In starless darkness peace to win,  
Even on that secret world from this  
Her twilight enters in.

## The Tryst

Flee into some forgotten night and be  
Of all dark long my moon-bright company:  
Beyond the rumour even of Paradise come,  
There, out of all remembrance, make our home:  
Seek we some close hid shadow for our lair,  
Hollowed by Noah's mouse beneath the chair  
Wherein the Omnipotent, in slumber bound,  
Nods till the piteous Trump of Judgment sound.  
Perchance Leviathan of the deep sea  
Would lease a lost mermaiden's grot to me,  
There of your beauty we would joyance make —  
A music wistful for the sea-nymph's sake:  
Haply Elijah, o'er his spokes of fire,  
Cresting steep Leo, or the heavenly Lyre,  
Spied, tranced in azure of inanest space,  
Some eyrie hostel, meet for human grace,  
Where two might happy be — just you and I —  
Lost in the uttermost of Eternity.  
Think! in Time's smallest clock's minutest beat  
Might there not rest be found for wandering feet?  
Or, 'twixt the sleep and wake of Helen's dream,  
Silence wherein to sing love's requiem?

No, no. Nor earth, nor air, nor fire, nor deep  
Could lull poor mortal longingness asleep.  
Somewhere there nothing is; and there lost Man  
Shall win what changeless vague of peace he can.

## The Linnet

Upon this leafy bush  
With thorns and roses in it,  
Flutters a thing of light,  
A twittering linnet.  
And all the throbbing world  
Of dew and sun and air  
By this small parcel of life  
Is made more fair;  
As if each bramble-spray  
And mounded gold-wreathed furze,  
Harebell and little thyme,  
Were only hers;  
As if this beauty and grace  
Did to one bird belong,  
And, at a flutter of wing,  
Might vanish in song.

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## The Veil

I think and think: yet still I fail —  
Why must this lady wear a veil?  
Why thus elect to mask her face  
Beneath that dainty web of lace?  
The tip of a small nose I see,  
And two red lips, set curiously  
Like twin-born berries on one stem,  
And yet, she has netted even them.  
Her eyes, 'tis plain, survey with ease  
Whate'er to glance upon they please.  
Yet, whether hazel, gray, or blue,  
Or that even lovelier lilac hue,  
I cannot guess: why — why deny  
Such beauty to the passer-by?  
Out of a bush a nightingale  
May expound his song; from 'neath that veil  
A happy mouth no doubt can make  
English sound sweeter for its sake.  
But then, why muffle in like this  
What every blossomy wind would kiss?  
Why in that little night disguise  
A daybreak face, those starry eyes?

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## The Three Strangers

Far are those tranquil hills,  
Dyed with fair evening's rose;  
On urgent, secret errand bent,  
A traveller goes.

Approach him strangers three,  
Barefooted, cowled; their eyes  
Scan the lone, hastening solitary  
With dumb surmise.

One instant in close speech  
With them he doth confer:  
God-spced, he hasteneth on,  
That anxious traveller....

I was that man — in a dream:  
And each world's night in vain  
I patient wait on sleep to unveil  
Those vivid hills again.

Would that they three could know  
How yet burns on in me  
Love — from one lost in Paradise —  
For their grave courtesy.

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## The Old Men

Old and alone, sit we,  
Caged, riddle-rid men;  
Lost to earth's 'Listen!' and 'See!'  
Thought's 'Wherefore?' and 'When?'

Only far memories stray  
Of a past once lovely, but now  
Wasted and faded away,  
Like green leaves from the bough.

Vast broods the silence of night,  
The ruinous moon  
Lifts on our faces her light,  
Whence all dreaming is gone.

We speak not; trembles each head;  
In their sockets our eyes are still;  
Desire as cold as the dead;  
Without wonder or will.

And One, with a lanthorn, draws near,  
At clash with the moon in our eyes:  
'Where art thou?' he asks: 'I am here,'  
One by one we arise.

And none lifts a hand to withhold  
A friend from the touch of that foe:  
Heart cries unto heart, 'Thou art old!'  
Yet reluctant, we go.

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## Fare Well

When I lie where shades of darkness  
Shall no more assail mine eyes,  
Nor the rain make lamentation  
When the wind sighs;  
How will fare the world whose wonder

Was the very proof of me?  
Memory fades, must the remembered  
Perishing be?

Oh, when this my dust surrenders  
Hand, foot, lip, to dust again,  
May those loved and loving faces  
Please other men!  
May the rusting harvest hedgerow  
Still the Traveller's Joy entwine,  
And as happy children gather  
Posies once mine.

Look thy last on all things lovely,  
Every hour. Let no night  
Seal thy sense in deathly slumber  
Till to delight  
Thou have paid thy utmost blessing;  
Since that all things thou wouldst praise  
Beauty took from those who loved them  
In other days.

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## John Drinkwater

### Deer

Shy in their herding dwell the fallow deer.  
They are spirits of wild sense. Nobody near  
Comes upon their pastures. There a life they live,  
Of sufficient beauty, phantom, fugitive  
Treading as in jungles free leopards do,  
Printless as evelight, instant as dew.  
The great kine are patient, and home-coming sheep  
Know our bidding. The fallow deer keep  
Delicate and far their counsels wild,  
Never to be folded reconciled  
To the spoiling hand as the poor flocks are;  
Lightfoot, and swift, and unfamiliar,  
These you may not hinder, unconfined  
Beautiful flocks of the mind.

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### Moonlit Apples

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows,  
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those  
Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes  
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches, and then  
There is no sound at the top of the house of men  
Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon again

Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy beams;  
On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams  
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,  
And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep.  
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep  
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep  
On moon-washed apples of wonder.

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## Southampton Bells

- I            Long ago some builder thrust  
              Heavenward in Southampton town  
              His spire and beamed his bells,  
              Largely conceiving from the dust  
              That pinnacle for ringing down  
              Orisons and Noël's.
- In his imagination rang,  
              Through generations challenging  
              His peal on simple men,  
              Who, as the heart within him sang,  
              In daily townfaring should sing  
              By year and year again.
- II            Now often to their ringing go  
              The bellmen with lean Time at heel,  
              Intent on daily cares;  
              The bells ring high, the bells ring low,  
              The ringers ring the builder's peal  
              Of tidings unawares.
- And all the bells might well be dumb  
              For any quickening in the street  
              Of customary ears;  
              And so at last proud builders come  
              With dreams and virtues to defeat  
              Among the clouding years.
- III           Now, waiting on Southampton sea  
              For exile, through the silver night  
              I hear Noël! Noël!  
              Through generations down to me  
              Your challenge, builder, comes aright,  
              Bell by obedient bell.
- You wake an hour with me; then wide  
              Though be the lapses of your sleep  
              You yet shall wake again;  
              And thus, old builder, on the tide  
              Of immortality you keep  
              Your way from brain to brain.

## **Chorus from *Lincoln***

You who have gone gathering  
Cornflowers and meadowsweet,  
Heard the hazels glancing down  
On September eves,  
Seen the homeward rooks on wing  
Over fields of golden wheat,  
And the silver cups that crown  
Water-lily leaves;

You who know the tenderness  
Of old men at eve-tide,  
Coming from the hedgerows,  
Coming from the plough,  
And the wandering caress  
Of winds upon the woodside,  
When the crying yaffle goes  
Underneath the bough;

You who mark the flowing  
Of sap upon the May-time,  
And the waters welling  
From the watershed,  
You who count the growing  
Of harvest and hay-time,  
Knowing these the telling  
Of your daily bread;

You who cherish courtesy  
With your fellows at your gate,  
And about your hearthstone sit  
Under love's decrees,  
You who know that death will be  
Speaking with you soon or late,  
Kinsmen, what is mother-wit  
But the light of these?

Knowing these, what is there more  
For learning in your little years?  
Are not these all gospels bright  
Shining on your day?  
How then shall your hearts be sore  
With envy and her brood of fears,  
How forget the words of light  
From the mountain-way ...

Blessed are the merciful ...  
Does not every threshold seek  
Meadows and the flight of birds  
For compassion still?  
Blessed are the merciful ...  
Are we pilgrims yet to speak  
Out of Olivet the words  
Of knowledge and good-will?

## Habitation

High up in the sky there, now, you know,  
In this May twilight, our cottage is asleep,  
Tenantless, and no creature there to go  
Near it but Mrs. Fry's fat cows, and sheep  
Dove-coloured, as is Cotswold. No one hears  
Under that cherry-tree the night-jars yet,  
The windows are uncurtained; on the stairs  
Silence is but by tip-toe silence met.  
All doors are fast there. It is a dwelling put by  
From use for a little, or long, up there in the sky.

Empty; a walled-in silence, in this twilight of May —  
Home for lovers, and friendly withdrawing, and sleep,  
With none to love there, nor laugh, nor climb from the day  
To the candles and linen ... Yet in the silence creep,  
This minute, I know, little ghosts, little virtuous lives,  
Breathing upon that still, insensible place,  
Touching the latches, sorting the napkins and knives,  
And such for the comfort of being, and bowls for the grace,  
That roses will brim; they are creeping from that room to this,  
One room, and two, till the four are visited ... they,  
Little ghosts, little lives, are our thoughts in this twilight of May,  
Signs that even the curious man would miss,  
Of travelling lovers to Cotswold, signs of an hour,  
Very soon, when up from the valley in June will ride  
Lovers by Lynch to Oakridge up in the wide  
Bow of the hill, to a garden of lavender flower ...  
The doors are locked; no foot falls; the hearths are dumb —  
But we are there — we are waiting ourselves who come.

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## Passage

When you deliberate the page  
Of Alexander's pilgrimage,  
Or say — 'It is three years, or ten,  
Since Easter slew Connolly's men,'  
Or prudently to judgment come  
Of Antony or Absalom,  
And think how duly are designed  
Case and instruction for the mind,  
Remember then that also we,  
In a moon's course, are history.

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## John Freeman

### O Muse Divine



O thou, my Muse,  
Beside the Kentish River running  
Through water-meads where dews  
Tossed flashing at thy feet  
And tossing flashed again  
When the timid herd  
By thy swift passing stirred  
Up-leapt and ran;

Thou that didst fleet  
Thy shadow over dark October hills  
By Aston, Weston, Saintbury, Willersey,  
Winchcombe, and all the combes and hills  
Of the green lonely land;

Thou that in May  
Once when I saw thee sunning  
Thyself so lovely there  
Than the flushed flower more fair  
Fallen from the wild apple spray,  
Didst rise and sprinkling sunlight with thy hand  
Shadow-like disappear in the deep-shadowy hedges  
Between forsaken Buckle Street and the sparse sedges  
Of young twin-breasted Honeybourne; —

O thou, my Muse,  
Scarce longer seen than the brief hues  
Of winter cloud that flames  
Over the tarnished silver Thames;  
So often nearing,  
As often disappearing,  
With thy body's shadow brushing  
My brain at midnight, lightly touching;  
O yield thee, Muse, to me,  
No more in dream delights and morn forgettings,  
But in a ferny hollow I know well  
And thou know'st well, warm-proof'd 'gainst the wind's frettings.  
... Bring thou thyself, and there  
In that warm ferny hollow where the sun  
Slants one gold beam and no light else but thine  
And my eyes' happy shine —  
There, O lovely Muse,  
Shall on thy shining body be begot,  
Fruit of delights a many mingling in one,  
Thy child and mine, a lovely shape and thought;  
My child and thine,  
O Muse divine!

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## The Wakers

The joyous morning ran and kissed the grass  
And drew his fingers through her sleeping hair,  
And cried, 'Before thy flowers are well awake  
Rise, and the lingering darkness from thee shake.

'Before the daisy and the sorrel buy  
Their brightness back from that close-folding night,  
Come, and the shadows from thy bosom shake,  
Awake from thy thick sleep, awake, awake!'

Then the grass of that mounded meadow stirred  
Above the Roman bones that may not stir  
Though joyous morning whispered, shouted, sang:  
The grass stirred as that happy music rang.

O, what a wondrous rustling everywhere!  
The steady shadows shook and thinned and died,  
The shining grass flashed brightness back for brightness,  
And sleep was gone, and there was heavenly lightness.

As if she had found wings, light as the wind,  
The grass flew, bent with the wind, from east to west,  
Chased by one wild grey cloud, and flashing all  
Her dews for happiness to hear morning call....

But even as I stepped out the brightness dimmed,  
I saw the fading edge of all delight.  
The sober morning waked the drowsy herds,  
And there was the old scolding of the birds.

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## The Body

When I had dreamed and dreamed what woman's beauty was,  
And how that beauty seen from unseen surely flowed,  
I turned and dreamed again, but sleeping saw no more:  
My eyes shut and my mind with inward vision glowed.

'I did not think!' I cried, seeing that wavering shape  
That steadied and then wavered, as a cherry bough in June  
Lifts and falls in the wind — each fruit a fruit of light;  
And then she stood as clear as an unclouded moon.

As clear and still she stood, moonlike remotely near;  
I saw and heard her breathe, I years and years away.  
Her light streamed through the years, I saw her clear and still,  
Shape and spirit together mingling night with day.

Water falling, falling with the curve of time  
Over green-hued rock, then plunging to its pool  
Far, far below, a falling spear of light;  
Water falling golden from the sun but moonlike cool:

Water has the curve of her shoulder and breast,  
Water falls as straight as her body rose,  
Water her brightness has from neck to still feet,  
Water crystal-cold as her cold body flows.

But not water has the colour I saw when I dreamed,  
Nor water such strength has. I joyed to behold  
How the blood lit her body with lamps of fire  
And made the flesh glow that like water gleamed cold,

A flame in her arms and in each finger flame,  
And flame in her bosom, flame above, below,  
The curve of climbing flame in her waist and her thighs;  
From foot to head did flame into red flame flow.

I knew how beauty seen from unseen must rise,  
How the body's joy for more than body's use was made.  
I knew then how the body is the body of the mind,  
And how the mind's own fire beneath the cool skin played.

O shape that once to have seen is to see evermore,  
Falling stream that falls to the deeps of the mind,  
Fire that once lit burns while aught burns in the world,  
Foot to head a flame moving in the spirit's wind!

If these eyes could see what these eyes have not seen —

The inward vision clear — how should I look, for joy,  
Knowing that beauty's self rose visible in the world  
Over age that darkens, and griefs that destroy?

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## Ten o'Clock No More<sup>1</sup>

The wind has thrown  
The boldest of trees down.  
Now disgraced it lies,  
Naked in spring beneath the drifting skies,  
Naked and still.

It was the wind  
So furious and blind  
That scourged half England through,  
Ruining the fairest where most fair it grew  
By dell and hill,

And springing here,  
The black clouds dragging near,  
Against this lonely elm  
Thrust all his strength to maim and overwhelm  
In one wild shock.

As in the deep  
Satisfaction of dark sleep  
The tree her dream dreamed on,  
And woke to feel the wind's arms round her thrown  
And her head rock.

And the wind raught  
Her ageing boughs and caught  
Her body fast again.  
Then in one agony of age, grief, pain,  
She fell and died.

Her noble height,  
Branches that loved the light,  
Her music and cool shade,  
Her memories and all of her is dead  
On the hill side.

But the wind stooped,  
With madness tired, and drooped  
In the soft valley and slept,  
While morning strangely round the hush'd tree crept  
And called in vain.

The birds fed where  
The roots uptorn and bare  
Thrust shameful at the sky;  
And pewits round the tree would dip and cry  
With the old pain.

'Ten o'clock's gone!'  
Said sadly every one.  
And mothers looking thought  
Of sons and husbands far away that fought: —  
And looked again.

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*Ten o'clock*

is the name of a tall tree that crowned the eastern Cotswolds.

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## The Fugitive

In the hush of early even  
The clouds came flocking over,  
Till the last wind fell from heaven  
And no bird cried.

Darkly the clouds were flocking,  
Shadows moved and deepened,  
Then paused; the poplar's rocking  
Ceased; the light hung still

Like a painted thing, and deadly.  
Then from the cloud's side flickered  
Sharp lightning, thrusting madly  
At the cowering fields.

Thrice the fierce cloud lighten'd,  
Down the hill slow thunder trembled  
Day in her cave grew frightened,  
Crept away, and died.

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## The Alde

How near I walked to Love,  
How long, I cannot tell.  
I was like the Alde that flows  
Quietly through green level lands,  
So quietly, it knows  
Their shape, their greenness and their shadows well;  
And then undreamingly for miles it goes  
And silently, beside the sea.

Seamews circle over,  
The winter wildfowl wings,  
Long and green the grasses wave  
Between the river and the sea.  
The sea's cry, wild or grave,  
From bank to low bank of the river rings;  
But the uncertain river though it crave  
The sea, knows not the sea.

Was that indeed salt wind?  
Came that noise from falling  
Wild waters on a stony shore?  
Oh, what is this new troubling tide  
Of eager waves that pour  
Around and over, leaping, parting, recalling?...  
How near I moved (as day to same day wore)  
And silently, beside the sea!

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## Nearness

Thy hand my hand,  
Thine eyes my eyes,  
All of thee  
Caught and confused with me:  
My hand thy hand,  
My eyes thine eyes,  
All of me  
Sunken and discovered anew in thee....

No: still  
A foreign mind,  
A thought  
By other yet uncaught;  
A secret will  
Strange as the wind:  
The heart of thee  
Bewildering with strange fire the heart in me.

Hand touches hand,  
Eye to eye beckons,  
But who shall guess  
Another's loneliness?  
Though hand grasp hand,  
Though the eye quickens,  
Still lone as night  
Remain thy spirit and mine, past touch and sight.

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## Night and Night

The earth is purple in the evening light,  
The grass is graver green.  
The gold among the meadows darker glows,  
In the quieted air the blackbird sings more loud.  
The sky has lost its rose —  
Nothing more than this candle now shines bright.

Were there but natural night, how easy were  
The putting-by of sense  
At the day's end, and if no heavier air  
Came o'er the mind in a thick-falling cloud.  
But now there is no light  
Within; and to this innocent night how dark my night!

## The Herd

The roaming sheep, forbidden to roam far,  
Were stayed within the shadow of his eye.  
The sheep-dog on that unseen shadow's edge  
Moved, halted, barked, while the tall shepherd stood  
Unmoving, leaned upon a sarsen stone,  
Looking at the rain that curtained the bare hills  
And drew the smoking curtain near and near! —  
Tawny, bush-faced, with cloak and staff, and flask  
And bright brass-ribb'd umbrella, standing stone  
Against the veinless, senseless sarsen stone.  
The Roman Road hard by, the green Ridge Way,  
Not older seemed, nor calmer the long barrows  
Of bones and memories of ancient days  
Than the tall shepherd with his craft of days  
Older than Roman or the oldest caveman,  
When, in the generation of all living,  
Sheep and kine flocked in the Aryan valley and  
The first herd with his voice and skill of water  
Fleetest of foot, led them into green pastures,  
From perished pastures to new green. I saw  
The herdsmen everywhere about the world,  
And herdsmen of all time, fierce, lonely, wise,  
Herds of Arabia and Syria  
And Thessaly, and longer-winter'd climes;  
And this lone herd, ages before England was,  
Pelt-clad, and armed with flint-tipped ashen sap,  
Watching his flocks, and those far flocks of stars  
Slow moving as the heavenly shepherd willed  
And at dawn shut into the sunny fold.

## Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

### Wings

As a blue-necked mallard alighting in a pool  
Among marsh-marigolds and splashing wet  
Green leaves and yellow blooms, like jewels set  
In bright, black mud, with clear drops crystal-cool,  
Bringing keen savours of the sea and stir  
Of windy spaces where wild sunsets flame  
To that dark inland dyke, the thought of her  
Into my brooding stagnant being came.

And all my senses quickened into life,  
Tingling and glittering, and the salt and fire  
Sang through my singing blood in eager strife  
Until through crystal airs we seemed to be  
Soaring together, one fleet-winged desire  
Of windy sunsets and the wandering sea.

## The Parrots

Somewhere, somewhen I've seen,  
But where or when I'll never know,  
Parrots of shrilly green  
With crests of shriller scarlet flying  
Out of black cedars as the sun was dying  
Against cold peaks of snow.

From what forgotten life  
Of other worlds I cannot tell  
Flashes that screeching strife;  
Yet the shrill colour and shrill crying  
Sing through my blood and set my heart replying  
And jangling like a bell.

## The Cakewalk

In smoky lamplight of a Smyrna Café,  
He saw them, seven solemn negroes dancing,  
With faces rapt and out-thrust bellies prancing  
In a slow solemn ceremonial cakewalk,  
Dancing and prancing to the sombre tom-tom  
Thumped by a crookbacked grizzled negro squatting.  
And as he watched ... within the steamy twilight  
Of swampy forest in rank greenness rotting,  
That sombre tom-tom at his heartstrings strumming  
Set all his sinews twitching, and a singing  
Of cold fire through his blood — and he was dancing  
Among his fellows in the dank green twilight  
With naked, oiled, bronze-gleaming bodies swinging  
In a rapt holy everlasting cakewalk  
For evermore in slow procession prancing.

## Driftwood

Black spars of driftwood burn to peacock flames,  
Sea-emeralds and sea-purples and sea-blues,  
And all the innumerable ever-changing hues  
That haunt the changeless deeps but have no names,  
Flicker and spire in our enchanted sight:  
And as we gaze, the unsearchable mystery,  
The unfathomed cold salt magic of the sea,  
Shines clear before us in the quiet night.

We know the secret that Ulysses sought,  
That moonstruck mariners since time began  
Snatched at a drowning hazard — -strangely brought  
To our homekeeping hearts in drifting spars

We chanced to kindle under the cold stars —  
The secret in the ocean-heart of man.

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## Quiet

Only the footprints of the partridge run  
Over the billowy drifts on the mountain-side;  
And now on level wings the brown birds glide  
Following the snowy curves, and in the sun  
Bright birds of gold above the stainless white  
They move, and as the pale blue shadows move,  
With them my heart glides on in golden flight  
Over the hills of quiet to my love.

Storm-shaken, racked with terror through the long  
Tempestuous night, in the quiet blue of morn  
Love drinks the crystal airs, and peace newborn  
Within his troubled heart, on wings aglow  
Soars into rapture, as from the quiet snow  
The golden birds; and out of silence, song.

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## Reveille

Still bathed in its moonlight slumber, the little white house by the cedar  
Stands silent against the red dawn;  
And nothing I know of who sleeps there, to the travail of day yet unwakened,  
Behind the blue curtains undrawn:

But I dream as we march down the roadway, ringing loud and white-rimmed in the  
moonlight,  
Of a little dark house on a hill  
Wherein when the battle is over, to the rapture of day yet unwakened,  
We shall slumber as dreamless and still.

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## Robert Graves

### A Ballad of Nursery Rhyme

Strawberries that in gardens grow  
Are plump and juicy fine,  
But sweeter far as wise men know  
Spring from the woodland vine.



No need for bowl or silver spoon,  
Sugar or spice or cream,  
Has the wild berry plucked in June  
Beside the trickling stream.

One such to melt at the tongue's root,  
Confounding taste with scent,  
Beats a full peck of garden fruit:  
Which points my argument.

May sudden justice overtake  
And snap the froward pen,  
That old and palsied poets shake  
Against the minds of men;

Blasphemers trusting to hold caught  
In far-flung webs of ink  
The utmost ends of human thought,  
Till nothing's left to think.

But may the gift of heavenly peace  
And glory for all time  
Keep the boy Tom who tending geese  
First made the nursery rhyme.

By the brookside one August day,  
Using the sun for clock,  
Tom whiled the languid hours away  
Beside his scattering flock,

Carving with a sharp pointed stone  
On a broad slab of slate  
The famous lives of Jumping Joan,  
Dan Fox and Greedy Kate;

Rhyming of wolves and bears and birds,  
Spain, Scotland, Babylon,  
That sister Kate might learn the words  
To tell to Toddlings John.

But Kate, who could not stay content  
To learn her lesson pat,  
New beauty to the rough lines lent  
By changing this or that;

And she herself set fresh things down  
In corners of her slate,  
Of lambs and lanes and London Town.  
God's blessing fall on Kate!

The baby loved the simple sound,  
With jolly glee he shook,  
And soon the lines grew smooth and round  
Like pebbles in Tom's brook,

From mouth to mouth told and retold  
By children sprawled at ease  
Before the fire in winter's cold,  
In June beneath tall trees;

Till though long lost are stone and slate,  
Though the brook no more runs,  
And dead long time are Tom, John, Kate,  
Their sons and their sons' sons;

Yet, as when Time with stealthy tread  
Lays the rich garden waste,  
The woodland berry ripe and red  
Fails not in scent or taste,

So these same rhymes shall still be told  
To children yet unborn,  
While false philosophy growing old  
Fades and is killed by scorn.

## A Frosty Night

*Mother*

:

Alice, dear, what ails you,  
Dazed and white and shaken?  
Has the chill night numbed you?  
Is it fright you have taken?

*Alice*

:

Mother I am very well,  
I felt never better;  
Mother, do not hold me so,  
Let me write my letter.

*Mother*

:

Sweet, my dear, what ails you?

*Alice*

:

No, but I am well.  
The night was cold and frosty,  
There's no more to tell.

*Mother*

:

Ay, the night was frosty,  
Coldly gaped the moon,  
Yet the birds seemed twittering  
Through green boughs of June.

Soft and thick the snow lay,  
Stars danced in the sky.  
Not all the lambs of May-day  
Skip so bold and high.

Your feet were dancing, Alice,  
Seemed to dance on air,  
You looked a ghost or angel  
In the starlight there.

Your eyes were frosted starlight,  
Your heart, fire, and snow.  
Who was it said 'I love you?'

*Alice*

:  
Mother, let me go!

## True Johnny

*Mary*

:

Johnny, sweetheart, can you be true  
To all those famous vows you've made?  
Will you love me as I love you  
Until we both in earth are laid?  
Or shall the old wives nod and say  
'His love was only for a day,  
The mood goes by,  
His fancies fly,  
And Mary's left to sigh.'

*Johnny*

:

Mary, alas, you've hit the truth,  
And I with grief can but admit  
Hot-blooded haste controls my youth,  
My idle fancies veer and flit  
From flower to flower, from tree to tree,  
And when the moment catches me  
Oh, love goes by,  
Away I fly,  
And leave my girl to sigh.

*Mary*

:

Could you but now foretell the day,  
Johnny, when this sad thing must be,  
When light and gay you'll turn away  
And laugh and break the heart in me?  
For like a nut for true love's sake  
My empty heart shall crack and break,  
When fancies fly  
And love goes by  
And Mary's left to die.

*Johnny*

:

When the sun turns against the clock,  
When Avon waters upward flow,  
When eggs are laid by barn-door cock,  
When dusty hens do strut and crow,  
When up is down, when left is right,  
Oh, then I'll break the troth I plight,  
With careless eye  
Away I'll fly  
And Mary here shall die.

## **The Cupboard**

*Mother:*

What's in that cupboard, Mary?

*Mary:*

Which cupboard, mother dear?

*Mother:*

The cupboard of red mahogany  
With handles shining clear.

*Mary:*

That cupboard, dearest mother,  
With shining crystal handles?  
There's nought inside but rags and jags  
And yellow tallow candles.

*Mother:*

What's in that cupboard, Mary?

*Mary:*

Which cupboard, mother mine?

*Mother:*

That cupboard stands in your sunny chamber,  
The silver corners shine.

*Mary:*

There's nothing there inside, mother,  
But wool and thread and flax,  
And bits of faded silk and velvet  
And candles of white wax.

*Mother:*

What's in that cupboard, Mary?  
And this time tell me true.

*Mary:*

White clothes for an unborn baby, mother..

## The Voice of Beauty Drowned

*Cry from the thicket my heart's bird!*  
The other birds woke all around;  
Rising with toot and howl they stirred  
Their plumage, broke the trembling sound,  
They craned their necks, they fluttered wings,  
'While we are silent no one sings,  
And while we sing you hush your throat,  
Or tune your melody to our note.'

*Cry from the thicket my heart's bird!*  
The screams and hootings rose again:  
They gaped with raucous beaks, they whirred  
Their noisy plumage; small but plain  
The lonely hidden singer made  
A well of grief within the glade.  
'Whist, silly fool, be off,' they shout,  
'Or we'll come pluck your feathers out.'

*Cry from the thicket my heart's bird!*  
Slight and small the lovely cry  
Came trickling down, but no one heard;  
Parrot and cuckoo, crow, magpie,  
Jarred horrid notes, the jangling jay  
Ripped the fine threads of song away;  
For why should peeping chick aspire  
To challenge their loud woodland choir?

Cried it so sweet, that unseen bird?  
Lovelier could no music be,  
Clearer than water, soft as curd,  
Fresh as the blossomed cherry tree.  
How sang the others all around?  
Piercing and harsh, a maddening sound,  
With *Pretty Poll, Tuwit-tuwoo*  
*Peewit, Caw Caw, Cuckoo-Cuckoo.*

How went the song, how looked the bird?  
If I could tell, if I could show  
With one quick phrase, one lightning word,  
I'd learn you more than poets know;  
For poets, could they only catch  
Of that forgotten tune one snatch,  
Would build it up in song or sonnet,  
And found their whole life's fame upon it.

## Rocky Acres

This is a wild land, country of my choice,  
With harsh craggy mountain, moor ample and bare.  
Seldom in these acres is heard any voice

But voice of cold water that runs here and there  
Through rocks and lank heather growing without care.  
No mice in the heath run nor no birds cry  
For fear of the dark speck that floats in the sky.

He soars and he hovers rocking on his wings,  
He scans his wide parish with a sharp eye,  
He catches the trembling of small hidden things,  
He tears them in pieces dropping from the sky:  
Tenderness and pity the land will deny,  
Where life is but nourished from water and rock,  
A hardy adventure, full of fear and shock.

Time has never journeyed to this lost land,  
Crakeberries and heather bloom out of date,  
The rocks jut, the streams flow singing on either hand,  
Careless if the season be early or late.  
The skies wander overhead, now blue now slate:  
Winter would be known by his cold cutting snow  
If June did not borrow his armour also.

Yet this is my country beloved by me best,  
The first land that rose from Chaos and the Flood,  
Nursing no fat valleys for comfort and rest,  
Trampled by no hard hooves, stained with no blood  
Bold immortal country whose hill-tops have stood  
Strongholds for the proud gods when on earth they go,  
Terror for fat burghers in far plains below.

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## D. H. Lawrence

### Seven Seals

Since this is the last night I keep you home,  
Come, I will consecrate you for the journey.

Rather I had you would not go. Nay come,  
I will not again reproach you. Lie back  
And let me love you a long time ere you go.  
For you are sullen-hearted still, and lack  
The will to love me. But even so  
I will set a seal upon you from my lip,  
Will set a guard of honour at each door,  
Seal up each channel out of which might slip  
Your love for me.

I kiss your mouth. Ah, love,  
Could I but seal its ruddy, shining spring  
Of passion, parch it up, destroy, remove  
Its softly-stirring, crimson welling-up  
Of kisses! Oh, help me, God! Here at the source  
I'd lie for ever drinking and drawing in  
Your fountains, as heaven drinks from out their course  
The floods.

I close your ears with kisses  
And seal your nostrils; and round your neck you'll wear —  
Nay, let me work — a delicate chain of kisses.  
Like beads they go around, and not one misses  
To touch its fellow on either side.

And there

Full mid-between the champaign of your breast  
I place a great and burning seal of love  
Like a dark rose, a mystery of rest  
On the slow bubbling of your rhythmic heart.  
Nay, I persist, and very faith shall keep  
You integral to me. Each door, each mystic port  
Of egress from you I will seal and steep  
In perfect chrism.

Now it is done. The mort  
Will sound in heaven before it is undone.

But let me finish what I have begun  
And shirt you now invulnerable in the mail  
Of iron kisses, kisses linked like steel.  
Put greaves upon your thighs and knees, and frail  
Webbing of steel on your feet. So you shall feel  
Ensheathed invulnerable with me, with seven  
Great seals upon your outgoings, and woven  
Chain of my mystic will wrapped perfectly  
Upon you, wrapped in indomitable me.

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## Harold Monro

### Gravity

I       Fit for perpetual worship is the power  
That holds our bodies safely to the earth.

When people talk of their domestic gods,  
Then privately I think of You.

We ride through space upon your shoulders  
Conveniently and lightly set,  
And, so accustomed, we relax our hold,  
Forget the gentle motion of your body —  
But You do not forget.

Sometimes you breathe a little faster,  
Or move a muscle:  
Then we remember you, O Master.

II       When people meet in reverent groups  
And sing to their domestic God,  
You, all the time, dear tyrant, (How I laugh!)  
Could, without effort, place your hand among them,  
And sprinkle them about the desert.

But all your ways are carefully ordered,  
For you have never questioned duty.  
We watch your everlasting combinations;  
We call them Fate; we turn them to our pleasure,  
And when they most delight us, call them beauty.

III      I rest my body on your grass,  
And let my brain repose in you;  
I feel these living moments pass,

And, from within myself to those far places  
To be imagined in your times and spaces,  
Deliberate the various acts you do: —

Sorting and re-arranging worlds of Matter  
Keenly and wisely. Thus you brought our earth  
Through stages, and from purpose back to purpose,  
From fire to fog, to dust, to birth  
Through beast to man, who led himself to brain —  
Then you invoked him back to dust again.

By leave of you he places stone on stone;  
He scatters seed: you are at once the prop  
Among the long roots of his fragile crop.  
You manufacture for him, and insure  
House, harvest, implement and furniture,  
And hold them all secure.

IV      The hill ... The trees ... From underneath  
I feel You pull me with your hand:  
Through my firm feet up to my heart  
You hold me, — You are in the land,  
Reposing underneath the hill.

You keep my balance and my growth.  
I lift a foot, but where I go  
You follow: you, the ever-strong,  
Control the smallest thing I do.

I have some little human power  
To turn your purpose to my end,  
For which I thank you every hour.  
I stand at worship, while you send  
Thrills up my body to my heart,  
And I am all in love to know  
How by your strength you keep me part  
Of earth, which cannot let me go;  
How everything I see around,  
Whether it can or cannot move,  
Is granted liberty of ground,  
And freedom to enjoy your love;

Though you are silent always, and, alone  
To You yourself, your power remains unknown.

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## Goldfish

They are the angels of that watery world,  
With so much knowledge that they just aspire  
To move themselves on golden fins,  
Or fill their paradise with fire  
By darting suddenly from end to end.

Glowing a thousand centuries behind  
In pools half-recollected of the mind,  
Their large eyes stare and stare, but do not see  
Beyond those curtains of Eternity.

When twilight flows into the room  
And air becomes like water, you can feel



Their movements growing larger in the gloom,  
And you are led  
Backward to where they live beyond the dead.

But in the morning, when the seven rays  
Of London sunlight one by one incline,  
They glide to meet them, and their gulping lips  
Suck the light in, so they are caught and played  
Like salmon on a heavenly fishing line.

\* \* \* \*

Ghosts on a twilight floor,  
Moving about behind their watery door,  
Breathing and yet not breathing day and night,  
They give the house some gleam of faint delight.

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## Dog

You little friend, your nose is ready; you sniff,  
Asking for that expected walk,  
(Your nostrils full of the happy rabbit-whiff)  
And almost talk.

And so the moment becomes a moving force;  
Coats glide down from their pegs in the humble dark;  
The sticks grow live to the stride of their vagrant course.  
You scamper the stairs,  
Your body informed with the scent and the track and the mark  
Of stoats and weasels, moles and badgers and hares.

We are going *out*. You know the pitch of the word,  
Probing the tone of thought as it comes through fog  
And reaches by devious means (half-smelt, half-heard)  
The four-legged brain of a walk-ecstatic dog.

Out in the garden your head is already low.  
(Can you smell the rose? Ah, no.)  
But your limbs can draw  
Life from the earth through the touch of your padded paw.

Now, sending a little look to us behind,  
Who follow slowly the track of your lovely play,  
You carry our bodies forward away from mind  
Into the light and fun of your useless day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus, for your walk, we took ourselves, and went  
Out by the hedge and the tree to the open ground.  
You ran, in delightful strata of wafted scent,  
Over the hill without seeing the view;  
Beauty is smell upon primitive smell to you:  
To you, as to us, it is distant and rarely found.

Home ... and further joy will be surely there:  
Supper waiting full of the taste of bone.  
You throw up your nose again, and sniff, and stare  
For the rapture known  
Of the quick wild gorge of food and the still lie-down  
While your people talk above you in the light  
Of candles, and your dreams will merge and drown  
Into the bed-delicious hours of night.

## **The Nightingale Near the House**

Here is the soundless cypress on the lawn:  
It listens, listens. Taller trees beyond  
Listen. The moon at the unruffled pond  
Stares. And you sing, you sing.

That star-enchanted song falls through the air  
From lawn to lawn down terraces of sound,  
Darts in white arrows on the shadowed ground;  
And all the night you sing.

My dreams are flowers to which you are a bee  
As all night long I listen, and my brain  
Receives your song, then loses it again  
In moonlight on the lawn.

Now is your voice a marble high and white,  
Then like a mist on fields of paradise,  
Now is a raging fire, then is like ice,  
Then breaks, and it is dawn.

## **Man Carrying Bale**

The tough hand closes gently on the load;  
Out of the mind, a voice  
Calls 'Lift!' and the arms, remembering well their work,  
Lengthen and pause for help.  
Then a slow ripple flows from head to foot  
While all the muscles call to one another:  
'Lift! 'and the bulging bale  
Floats like a butterfly in June.

So moved the earliest carrier of bales,  
And the same watchful sun  
Glowed through his body feeding it with light.  
So will the last one move,  
And halt, and dip his head, and lay his load  
Down, and the muscles will relax and tremble.  
Earth, you designed your man  
Beautiful both in labour and repose.

## For Bessie, Seated by Me in the Garden

To the heart, to the heart the white petals  
Quietly fall.  
Memory is a little wind, and magical  
The dreaming hours.  
As a breath they fall, as a sigh;  
Green garden hours too langorous to waken,  
White leaves of blossomy tree wind-shaken:  
As a breath, a sigh,  
As the slow white drift  
Of a butterfly.  
Flower-wings falling, wings of branches  
One after one at wind's droop dipping;  
Then with the lift  
Of the air's soft breath, in sudden avalanches  
Slipping.  
Quietly, quietly the June wind flings  
White wings,  
White petals, past the footpath flowers  
Adown my dreaming hours.  
At the heart, at the heart the butterfly settles.  
As a breath, a sigh  
Fall the petals of hours, of the white-leafed flowers,  
Fall the petalled wings of the butterfly.  
To my heart, to my heart the white petals  
Quietly fall.

To the years, other years, old and wistful  
Drifts my dream.  
Petal-patined the dream, white-mistful  
As the dew-sweet haunt of the dim whitebeam  
Because of memory, a little wind ...  
It is the gossamer-float of the butterfly  
This drift of dream  
From the sweet of to-day to the sweet  
Of days long drifted by.  
It is the drift of the butterfly, it is the fleet  
Drift of petals which my noon has thinned,  
It is the ebbing out of my life, of the petals of days.  
To the years, other years, drifts my dream....  
Through the haze  
Of summers long ago  
Love's entrancements flow,  
A blue-green pageant of earth,  
A green-blue pageant of sky,  
As a stream,  
Flooding back with lovely delta to my heart.  
Lo the petalled leafage is finer, under the feet  
The coarse soil with a rainbow's worth  
Of delicate colours lies enamelled,  
Translucently glowing, shining.  
Each balmy breath of the hours  
From eastern gleam to westward gloam  
Is meaning-full as the falling flowers:  
It is a crystal syllable  
For love's defining,  
It is love alone can spell — —  
Yea, Love remains: after this drift of days  
Love is here, Love is not dumb.  
The touch of a silken hand, comradely, untrammelled  
Is in the sunlight, a bright glance  
On every ripple of yonder waterways,  
A whisper in the dance  
Of green shadows;  
Nor shall the sunlight be shut out even from the dark.

Beyond the garden heavy oaks are buoyant on the meadows,  
Their rugged bark  
No longer rough,  
But chastened and refined in the glowing eyes of Love.  
Around us the petals fulfil  
Their measure and fall, precious the petals are still.  
For Love they once were gathered, they are gathered for Love again,

Whose glance is on the water,  
Whose whisper is in the green shadows.  
In the same comrade-hand whose touch is in the sunlight,  
They are lying again.  
Here Love is ... Love only of all things outstays  
The drift of petals, the drift of days,  
Petals of hours,  
Of white-leaved flowers,  
Petalled wings of the butterfly,  
Drifting, quietly drifting by  
As a breath, a sigh....

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### 'Truly he hath a Sweet Bed

Brown earth, sun-soaked,  
Beneath his head  
And over the quiet limbs....  
Through time unreckoned  
Lay this brown earth for him. Now is he come.  
Truly he hath a sweet bed.

The perfume shed  
From invisible gardens is chalice'd by kindly airs  
And carried for welcome to the stranger.  
Long seasons ere he came, this wilderness  
They habited.

They, and the mist of stars  
Down-spread  
About him as a hush of vespering birds.  
They, and the sun, the moon:  
Naught now denies him the moon's coming,  
Nor the morning trail of gold,  
The luminous print of evening, red  
At the sun's tread.

The brown earth holds him.  
The stars and little winds, the friendly moon  
And sun attend in turn his rest.  
They linger above him, softly moving. They are gracious,  
And gently-wise: as though remembering how his hunger,  
His kinship, knew them once but blindly  
In thoughts unsaid,  
As a dream that fled.

So is he theirs assuredly as the seasons.  
So is his sleep by them for ever companioned.  
...And, perchance, by the voices of bright children playing  
And knowing not: by the echo of young laughter  
When their dancing is sped.  
Truly he hath a sweet bed.

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### Lovers' Lane

This cool quiet of trees  
In the grey dusk of the north,

In the green half-dusk of the west,  
Where fires still glow;  
These glimmering fantasies  
Of foliage branching forth  
And drooping into rest;  
Ye lovers, know  
That in your wanderings  
Beneath this arching brake  
Ye must attune your love  
To hushed words.  
For here is the dreaming wisdom of  
The unmovable things...  
And more: — walk softly, lest ye wake  
A thousand sleeping birds.

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## Robert Nichols

### The Sprig of Lime

He lay, and those who watched him were amazed  
To see unheralded beneath the lids  
Twin tears, new-gathered at the price of pain,  
Start and at once run crookedly athwart  
Cheeks channelled long by pain, never by tears.  
So desolate too the sigh next uttered  
They had wept also, but his great lips moved,  
And bending down one heard, '*A sprig of lime;  
Bring me a sprig of lime.*' Whereat she stole  
With dumb signs forth to pluck the thing he craved.

So lay he till a lime-twigg had been snapped  
From some still branch that swept the outer grass  
Far from the silver pillar of the bole  
Which mounting past the house's crusted roof  
Split into massy limbs, crossed boughs, a maze  
Of close-compacted intercontorted staffs  
Bowered in foliage wherethrough the sun  
Shot sudden showers of light or crystal spars  
Or wavered in a green and vitreous flood.  
And all the while in faint and fainter tones  
Scarce audible on deepened evening's hush  
He framed his curious and last request  
For '*lime, a sprig of lime.*' Her trembling hand  
Closed his loose fingers on the awkward stem  
Covered above with gentle heart-shaped leaves  
And under dangling, pale as honey-wax,  
Square clusters of sweet-scented starry flowers.

She laid his bent arm back upon his breast,  
Then watched above white knuckles clenched in prayer.

He never moved. Only at last his eyes  
Opened, then brightened in such avid gaze  
She feared the coma mastered him again ...  
But no; strange sobs rose chuckling in his throat,  
A stranger ecstasy suffused the flesh  
Of that just mask so sun-dried, gouged and old  
Which few — too few! — had loved, too many feared.  
'Father!' she cried; 'Father!'  
He did not hear.

She knelt and kneeling drank the scent of limes,

Blown round the slow blind by a vesperal gust,  
Till the room swam. So the lime-incense blew  
Into her life as once it had in his,  
Though how and when and with what ageless charge  
Of sorrow and deep joy how could she know?

Sweet lime that often at the height of noon  
Diffusing dizzy fragrance from your boughs,  
Tasselled with blossoms more innumerable  
Than the black bees, the uproar of whose toil  
Filled your green vaults, winning such metheglyn  
As clouds their sappy cells, distil, as once  
Ye used, your sunniest emanations  
Toward the window where a woman kneels —  
She who within that room in childish hours  
Lay through the lasting murmur of blanch'd noon  
Behind the sultry blind, now full now flat,  
Drinking anew of every odorous breath,  
Supremely happy in her ignorance  
Of Time that hastens hourly and of Death  
Who need not haste. Scatter your fumes, O lime,  
Loose from each hispid star of citron bloom,  
Tangled beneath the labyrinthine boughs,  
Cloud on such stinging cloud of exhalations  
As reek of youth, fierce life and summer's prime,  
Though hardly now shall he in that dusk room  
Savour your sweetness, since the very sprig,  
Profuse of blossom and of essences,  
He smells not, who in a paltering hand  
Clasps it laid close his peaked and gleaming face  
Propped in the pillow. Breathe silent, lofty lime,  
Your curfew secrets out in fervid scent  
To the attendant shadows! Tinge the air  
Of the midsummer night that now begins,  
At an owl's oaring flight from dusk to dusk  
And downward caper of the giddy bat  
Hawking against the lustre of bare skies,  
With something of th' unfathomable bliss  
He, who lies dying there, knew once of old  
In the serene trance of a summer night  
When with th' abundance of his young bride's hair  
Loosed on his breast he lay and dared not sleep,  
Listening for the scarce motion of your boughs,  
Which sighed with bliss as she with blissful sleep,  
And drinking desperately each honied wave  
Of perfume wafted past the ghostly blind  
Knew first th' implacable and bitter sense  
Of Time that hastes and Death who need not haste.  
Shed your last sweetness, limes!

But now no more.

She, fruit of that night's love, she heeds you not,  
Who bent, compassionate, to the dim floor  
Takes up the sprig of lime and presses it  
In pain against the stumbling of her heart,  
Knowing, untold, he cannot need it now.

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## Seventeen

*For Anne*

All the loud winds were in the garden wood,  
All shadows joyfuller than lissom hounds  
Doubled in chasing, all exultant clouds  
That ever flung fierce mist and eddying fire  
Across heavens deeper than blue polar seas  
Fled over the sceptre-spikes of the chestnuts,  
Over the speckle of the wych-elms' green.  
She shouted; then stood still, hushed and abashed  
To hear her voice so shrill in that gay roar,  
And suddenly her eyelashes were dimmed,  
Caught in tense tears of spiritual joy;  
For there were daffodils which sprightly shook  
Ten thousand ruffling heads throughout the wood,  
And every flower of those delighting flowers  
Laughed, nodding to her, till she clapped her hands  
Crying 'O daffies, could you only speak!'

But there was more. A jay with skyblue shaft  
Set in blunt wing, skimmed screaming on ahead.  
She followed him. A murrey squirrel eyed  
Her warily, cocked upon tail-plumed haunch,  
Then, skipping the whirligig of last-year leaves,  
Whisked himself out of sight and reappeared  
Leering about the hole of a young beech;  
And every time she thought to corner him  
He scrambled round on little scratchy hands  
To peek at her about the other side.  
She lost him, bolting branch to branch, at last —  
The impudent brat! But still high overhead  
Flight on exuberant flight of opal scud,  
Or of dissolving mist, florid as flame.

Scattered in ecstasy over the blue. And she  
Followed, first walking, giving her bright locks  
To the cold fervour of the springtime gale,  
Whose rush bore the cloud shadow past the cloud  
Over the irised wastes of emerald turf.  
And still the huge wind volleyed. Save the gulls,  
Goldenly in the sunny blast careering  
Or on blue-shadowed underwing at plunge,  
None shared with her who now could not but run  
The splendour and tumult of th' onrushing spring.

And now she ran no more: the gale gave plumes.  
One with the shadows whirled along the grass,  
One with the onward smother of veering gulls,  
One with the pursuit of cloud after cloud,  
Swept she. Pure speed coursed in immortal limbs;  
Nostrils drank as from wells of unknown air;  
Ears received the smooth silence of racing floods;  
Light as of glassy suns froze in her eyes;  
Space was given her and she ruled all space.

Spring, author of twifold loveliness,  
Who flittest in the mirth of the wild folk,  
Profferest greeting in the faces of flowers,  
Blowest in the firmamental glory,  
Renewest in the heart of the sad human  
All faiths, guard thou the innocent spirit  
Into whose unknowing hands this noontide  
Thou pourest treasure, yet scarce recognised,  
That unashamed before man's glib wisdom,  
Unabashed beneath the wrath of chance,  
She accept in simplicity of homage  
The hidden holiness, the created emblem  
To be in her, until death shall take her,  
The source and secret of eternal spring.

## The Stranger

Never am I so alone  
As when I walk among the crowd —  
Blurred masks of stern or grinning stone,  
Unmeaning eyes and voices loud.

Gaze dares not encounter gaze, ...  
Humbled, I turn my head aside;  
When suddenly there is a face ...  
Pale, subdued and grievous-eyed.

Ah, I know that visage meek,  
Those trembling lips, the eyes that shine  
But turn from that which they would seek  
With an air piteous, divine!

There is not a line or scar,  
Seal of a sorrow or disgrace,  
But I know like sigils are  
Burned in my heart and on my face.

Speak! O speak! Thou art the one!  
But thou hast passed with sad head bowed;  
And never am I so alone  
As when I walk among the crowd.

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## 'O Nightingale My Heart'

O Nightingale my heart  
How sad thou art!  
How heavy is thy wing,  
Desperately whirrèd that thy throat may fling  
Song to the tingling silences remote!  
Thine eye whose ruddy spark  
Burned fiery of late,  
How dead and dark!  
Why so soon didst thou sing,  
And with such turbulence of love and hate?

Learn that there is no singing yet can bring  
The expected dawn more near;  
And thou art spent already, though the night  
Scarce has begun;  
What voice, what eyes wilt thou have for the light  
When the light shall appear,  
And O what wings to bear thee t'ward the Sun?

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## The Pilgrim



Put by the sun my joyful soul,  
We are for darkness that is whole;

Put by the wine, now for long years  
We must be thirsty with salt tears;

Put by the rose, bind thou instead  
The fiercest thorns about thy head;

Put by the courteous tire, we need  
But the poor pilgrim's blackest weed;

Put by — a'beit with tears — thy lute,  
Sing but to God or else be mute.

Take leave of friends save such as dare  
Thy love with Loneliness to share.

It is full tide. Put by regret.  
Turn, turn away. Forget. Forget.

Put by the sun my lightless soul,  
We are for darkness that is whole.

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## J. D. C. Fellow

### The Temple

Between the erect and solemn trees  
I will go down upon my knees;  
I shall not find this day  
So meet a place to pray.

Haply the beauty of this place  
May work in me an answering grace,  
The stillness of the air  
Be echoed in my prayer.

The worshipping trees arise and run,  
With never a swerve, towards the sun;  
So may my soul's desire  
Turn to its central fire.

With single aim they seek the light,  
And scarce a twig in all their height  
Breaks out until the head  
In glory is outspread.

How strong each pillared trunk; the bark  
That covers them, how smooth; and hark,  
The sweet and gentle voice  
With which the leaves rejoice!

May a like strength and sweetness fill  
Desire, and thought, and steadfast will,  
When I remember these  
Fair sacramental trees!

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## Siegfried Sassoon

### Sick Leave

When I'm asleep, dreaming and lulled and warm, —  
They come, the homeless ones, the noiseless dead.  
While the dim charging breakers of the storm  
Bellow and drone and rumble overhead,  
Out of the gloom they gather about my bed.  
They whisper to my heart; their thoughts are mine.  
'Why are you here with all your watches ended?  
From Ypres to Frise we sought you in the Line.'  
In bitter safety I awake, unfriended;  
And while the dawn begins with slashing rain  
I think of the Battalion in the mud.  
'When are you going out to them again?  
Are they not still your brothers through our blood?'

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### Banishment

I am banished from the patient men who fight.  
They smote my heart to pity, built my pride.  
Shoulder to aching shoulder, side by side,  
They trudged away from life's broad wealds of light.  
Their wrongs were mine; and ever in my sight  
They went arrayed in honour. But they died, —  
Not one by one: and mutinous I cried  
To those who sent them out into the night.

The darkness tells how vainly I have striven  
To free them from the pit where they must dwell  
In outcast gloom convulsed and jagged and riven  
By grappling guns. Love drove me to rebel.  
Love drives me back to grope with them through hell;  
And in their tortured eyes I stand forgiven.

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### Repression of War Experience

Now light the candles; one; two; there's a moth;  
What silly beggars they are to blunder in  
And scorch their wings with glory, liquid flame —  
No, no, not that, — it's bad to think of war,  
When thoughts you've gagged all day come back to scare you;  
And it's been proved that soldiers don't go mad  
Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts

That drive them out to jabber among the trees.

Now light your pipe; look, what a steady hand.  
Draw a deep breath; stop thinking; count fifteen,  
And you're as right as rain....

Why won't it rain?...

I wish there'd be a thunderstorm to-night,  
With bucketsful of water to sluice the dark,  
And make the roses hang their dripping heads.

Books; what a jolly company they are,  
Standing so quiet and patient on their shelves,  
Dressed in dim brown, and black, and white, and green,  
And every kind of colour. Which will you read?  
Come on; O *do* read something; they're so wise.  
I tell you all the wisdom of the world  
Is waiting for you on those shelves; and yet  
You sit and gnaw your nails, and let your pipe out,  
And listen to the silence: on the ceiling  
There's one big, dizzy moth that bumps and flutters;  
And in the breathless air outside the house  
The garden waits for something that delays.  
There must be crowds of ghosts among the trees, —  
Not people killed in battle, — they're in France, —  
But horrible shapes in shrouds — old men who died  
Slow, natural deaths, — old men with ugly souls,  
Who wore their bodies out with nasty sins.

\* \* \* \* \*

You're quiet and peaceful, summering safe at home;  
You'd never think there was a bloody war on!...  
O yes, you would ... why, you can hear the guns.  
Hark! Thud, thud, thud, — quite soft ... they never cease —  
Those whispering guns — O Christ, I want to go out  
And screech at them to stop — I'm going crazy;  
I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns.

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## Does it Matter?

Does it matter? — losing your legs?...  
For people will always be kind,  
And you need not show that you mind  
When the others come in after hunting  
To gobble their muffins and eggs.

Does it matter? — losing your sight?...  
There's such splendid work for the blind;  
And people will always be kind,  
As you sit on the terrace remembering  
And turning your face to the light.

Do they matter? — those dreams from the pit?...  
You can drink and forget and be glad,  
And people won't say that you're mad;  
For they'll know that you've fought for your country,  
And no one will worry a bit.

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## Concert Party

(  
*Egyptian Base Camp*

).

They are gathering round ...  
Out of the twilight; over the grey-blue sand,  
Shoals of low-jargoning men drift inward to the sound —  
The jangle and throb of a piano ... tum-ti-tum ...  
Drawn by a lamp, they come  
Out of the glimmering lines of their tents, over the shuffling sand.

O sing us the songs, the songs of our own land,  
You warbling ladies in white.  
Dimness conceals the hunger in our faces,  
This wall of faces risen out of the night,  
These eyes that keep their memories of the places  
So long beyond their sight.

Jaded and gay, the ladies sing; and the chap in brown  
Tilts his grey hat; jaunty and lean and pale,  
He rattles the keys ... Some actor-bloke from town ...  
*God send you home; and then A long, long trail;*  
*I hear you calling me; and Dixieland...*  
Sing slowly ... now the chorus ... one by one  
We hear them, drink them; till the concert's done.  
Silent, I watch the shadowy mass of soldiers stand.  
Silent, they drift away, over the glimmering sand.

KANTARA,  
*April, 1918*

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## Songbooks of the War

In fifty years, when peace outshines  
Remembrance of the battle lines,  
Adventurous lads will sigh and cast  
Proud looks upon the plundered past.  
On summer morn or winter's night,  
Their hearts will kindle for the fight,  
Reading a snatch of soldier-song,  
Savage and jaunty, fierce and strong;  
And through the angry marching rhymes  
Of blind regret and haggard mirth,  
They'll envy us the dazzling times  
When sacrifice absolved our earth.

Some ancient man with silver locks

Will lift his weary face to say:  
'War was a fiend who stopped our clocks  
Although we met him grim and gay.'  
And then he'll speak of Haig's last drive,  
Marvelling that any came alive  
Out of the shambles that men built  
And smashed, to cleanse the world of guilt.  
But the boys, with grin and sidelong glance,  
Will think, 'Poor grandad's day is done.'  
And dream of those who fought in France  
And lived in time to share the fun.

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## The Portrait

I watch you, gazing at me from the wall,  
And wonder how you'd match your dreams with mine,  
If, mastering time's illusion, I could call  
You back to share this quiet candle-shine.

For you were young, three hundred years ago;  
And by your looks I guess that you were wise ...  
Come, whisper soft, and Death will never know  
You've slipped away from those calm, painted eyes.

Strange is your voice ... Poor ninny, dead so long,  
And all your pride forgotten like your name.  
*'One April morn I heard a blackbird's song.  
And joy was in my heart like leaves aflame.'*

And so you died before your songs took wing;  
While Andrew Marvell followed in your wake.  
*'Love thrilled me into music. I could sing  
But for a moment, — but for beauty's sake.'*

Who passes? There's a star-lit breeze that stirs  
The glimmer of white lilies in the gloom.  
Who speaks? Death has his silent messengers.  
And there was more than silence in this room

While you were gazing at me from the wall  
And wondering how you'd match your dreams with mine,  
If, mastering time's illusion, you could call  
Me back to share your vanished candle-shine.

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## Thrushes

Tossed on the glittering air they soar and skim,  
Whose voices make the emptiness of light  
A windy palace. Quavering from the brim  
Of dawn, and bold with song at edge of night,  
They clutch their leafy pinnacles and sing  
Scornful of man, and from his toils aloof  
Whose heart's a haunted woodland whispering;  
Whose thoughts return on tempest-baffled wing;

Who hears the cry of God in everything,  
And storms the gate of nothingness for proof.

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## Everyone Sang

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;  
And I was filled with such delight  
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,  
Winging wildly across the white  
Orchards and dark-green fields; on — on — and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;  
And beauty came like the setting sun:  
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror  
Drifted away ... O, but Everyone  
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.

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## Edward Shanks

### A Night Piece

Come out and walk. The last few drops of light  
Drain silently out of the cloudy blue;  
The trees are full of the dark-stooping night,  
The fields are wet with dew.

All's quiet in the wood but, far away,  
Down the hillside and out across the plain,  
Moves, with long trail of white that marks its way,  
The softly panting train.

Come through the clearing. Hardly now we see  
The flowers, save dark or light against the grass,  
Or glimmering silver on a scented tree  
That trembles as we pass.

Hark now! So far, so far ... that distant song ...  
Move not the rustling grasses with your feet.  
The dusk is full of sounds, that all along  
The muttering boughs repeat.

So far, so faint, we lift our heads in doubt.  
Wind, or the blood that beats within our ears,  
Has feigned a dubious and delusive note,  
Such as a dreamer hears.

Again ... again! The faint sounds rise and fail.  
So far the enchanted tree, the song so low...  
A drowsy thrush? A waking nightingale?  
Silence. We do not know.

## In Absence

My lovely one, be near to me to-night.  
For now I need you most, since I have gone  
Through the sparse woodland in the fading light,  
Where in time past we two have walked alone,  
Heard the loud nightjar spin his pleasant note,  
And seen the wild rose folded up for sleep,  
And whispered, though the soft word choked my throat,  
Your dear name out across the valley deep.  
Be near to me, for now I need you most.  
To-night I saw an unsubstantial flame  
Flickering along those shadowy paths, a ghost  
That turned to me and answered to your name,  
Mocking me with a wraith of far delight.  
... My lovely one, be near to me to-night.

## The Glow-Worm

The pale road winds faintly upward into the dark skies,  
And beside it on the rough grass that the wind invisibly stirs,  
Sheltered by sharp-speared gorse and the berried junipers,  
Shining steadily with a green light, the glow-worm lies.

We regard it; and this hill and all the other hills  
That fall in folds to the river, very smooth and steep,  
And the hangers and brakes that the darkness thickly fills  
Fade like phantoms round the light, and night is deep, so deep, —

That all the world is emptiness about the still flame,  
And we are small shadows standing lost in the huge night.  
We gather up the glow-worm, stooping with dazzled sight,  
And carry it to the little enclosed garden whence we came,

And place it on the short grass. Then the shadowy flowers fade,  
The walls waver and melt and the houses disappear  
And the solid town trembles into insubstantial shade  
Round the light of the burning glow-worm, steady and clear.

## The Cataclysm

When a great wave disturbs the ocean cold  
And throws the bottom waters to the sky,

Strange apparitions on the surface lie,  
Great battered vessels, stripped of gloss and gold,  
And, writhing in their pain, sea-monsters old,  
Who stain the waters with a bloody dye,  
With unaccustomed mouths bellow and cry  
And vex the waves with struggling fin and fold.

And with these too come little trivial things  
Tossed from the deeps by the same casual hand;  
A faint sea flower, dragged from the lowest sand,  
That will not undulate its luminous wings  
In the slow tides again, lies dead and swings  
Along the muddy ripples to the land.

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## **A Hollow Elm**

What hast thou not withstood,  
Tempest-despising tree,  
Whose bloat and riven wood  
Gapes now so hollowly,  
What rains have beaten thee through many years,  
What snows from off thy branches dripped like tears?

Calmly thou standest now  
Upon thy sunny mound;  
The first spring breezes flow  
Past with sweet dizzy sound;  
Yet on thy pollard top the branches few  
Stand stiffly out, disdain to murmur too.

The children at thy foot  
Open new-lighted eyes,  
Where, on gnarled bark and root,  
The soft warm sunshine lies —  
Dost thou, upon thine ancient sides, resent  
The touch of youth, quick and impermanent?

These at the beck of spring  
Live in the moment still:  
Thy boughs unquivering,  
Remembering winter's chill,  
And many other winters past and gone,  
Are mocked, not cheated, by the transient sun.

Hast thou so much withstood,  
Tempest-despising tree,  
That now thy hollow wood  
Stiffens disdainfully  
Against the soft spring airs and soft spring rain,  
Knowing too well that winter comes again?

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## **Fête Galante; the Triumph of Love**

Aristonoë, the fading shepherdess,



Gathers the young girls round her in a ring,  
Teaching them wisdom of love,  
What to say, how to dress,  
How frown, how smile,  
How suitors to their dancing feet to bring,  
How in mere walking to beguile,  
What words cunningly said in what a way  
Will draw man's busy fancy astray,  
All the alphabet, grammar and syntax of love.

The garden smells are sweet,  
Daisies spring in the turf under the high-heeled feet,  
Dense, dark banks of laurel grow  
Behind the wavering row  
Of golden, flaxen, black, brown, auburn heads,  
Behind the light and shimmering dresses  
Of these unreal, modern shepherdesses;  
And gaudy flowers in formal patterned beds  
Vary the dim long vistas of the park,  
Far as the eye can see,  
Till at the forest's edge the ground grows dark  
And the flowers vanish in the obscurity.

The young girls gather round her,  
Remembering eagerly how their fathers found her  
Fresh as a spring-like wind in February,  
Subtler in her moving heart than sun-motes that vary  
At every waft of an opening and shutting door;  
They gather chattering near,  
Hush, break out in laughter, whisper aside,  
Grow silent more and more,  
Though she will never chide.  
Now through the silence sounds her voice still clear,  
And all give ear.  
Like a silver thread through the golden afternoon,  
Equally the voice discloses  
All that age-old wisdom; like an endless tune  
Aristonoë's voice wavers among the roses,  
Level and unimpassioned,  
Telling them how of nothing love is fashioned,  
How it is but a movement of the mind,  
Bidding Celia mark  
That light skirts fluttering in the wind,  
Or white flowers stuck in dark  
Glistening hair, have fired the dull beholder,  
Or telling Anais  
That faint indifference ere now hath bred a kiss  
Denied to flaunted snowy breast or shoulder.

The girls attend,  
Each thinking on her friend,  
Whether he be real or imaginary,  
Whether he be loving or cold;  
For each ere she grows old  
Means to pursue her joy, and the whole unwary  
Troop of their wishes has this wild quarry in cry,  
That draws them ineluctably,  
More and more as the summer slippeth by.  
And Celia leans aside  
To contemplate her black-silked ankle on the grass;  
In remote dreaming pride,  
Rosalind recalls the image in her glass;  
Phyllis through all her body feels  
How divine energy steals,  
Quiescent power and resting speed,  
Stretches her arms out, feels the warm blood run  
Ready for pursuit, for strife and deed,  
And turns her glowing face up to the sun.  
Phyllida smiles,  
And lazily trusts her lazy wit,  
A slow arrow that hath often hit;  
Chloe, bemused by many subtle wiles,  
Grows not more dangerous for all of it,  
But opens her red lips, yawning drowsily,  
And shows her small white teeth,

Dimpling the round chin beneath,  
And stretches, moving her young body deliciously.

And still the lesson goes on,  
For this is an old story that is never done;  
And now the precept is of ribbon and shoe,  
What with linens and silks love finds to do,  
And how man's heart is tangled in a string  
Or taken in gauze like a weak and helpless thing.  
Chloe falls asleep; and the long summer day  
Drifts slowly past the girls and the warm roses,  
Giving in dreams its hours away.  
Now Stella throws her head back, and Phillis disposes  
Her strong brown hands quietly in her lap,  
And Rose's slender feet grow restless and tap  
The turf to an imaginary tune.  
Now all this grace of youthful bodies and faces  
Is wrought to a glow by the golden weather of June;  
Now, Love, completing grace of all the graces,  
Strong in these hearts thy pure streams rise,  
Transmuting what they learn by heavenly alchemies.  
Swift from the listeners the spell vanishes,  
And through the tinkling, empty words,  
True thoughts of true love press,  
Flying and wheeling nearer;  
As through a sunny sky a flock of birds  
Against the throbbing blue grows clearer and clearer,  
So closer come these thoughts and dearer.

Helen rises with a laugh;  
Chloe wakes;  
All the enchantment scatters off like chaff;  
The cord is loosened and the spell breaks.  
Rosalind  
Resolves that to-night she will be kind to her lover,  
Unreflecting, warm and kind.  
Celia tells the lessons over,  
Counting on her fingers — one and two ...  
Ribbon and shoe,  
Skirts, flowers, song, dancing, laughter, eyes ...  
Through the whole catalogue of formal gallantry  
And studious coquetries,  
Counting to herself maliciously.

But the old, the fading shepherdess, Aristonoë,  
Rises stiffly and walks alone  
Down the broad path where densely the laurels grow,  
And over a little lawn, not closely mown,  
Where wave the flowering grass and the rich meadowsweet.  
She seems to walk painfully now and slow,  
And drags a little on her high-heeled feet.  
She stops at last below  
An old and twisted plum-tree, whose last petal is gone,  
Leans on the comfortable, rugged bole,  
And stares through the green leaves at the drooping sun.  
The tree and the warm light comfort her ageing soul.

On the other lawn behind her, out of sight,  
The girls at play  
Drive out melancholy by lively delight,  
And the wind carries their songs and laughter away.  
Some begin dancing and seriously tread  
A modern measure up and down the grass,  
Turn, slide with bending knees, and pass  
With dipping hand and poising head,  
Float through the sun in pairs, like newly shed  
And golden leaves astray  
Upon the warm wind of an autumn day,  
When the Indian summer rules the air.  
Others, having found,  
Lying idly on the sun-hot ground,  
Shuttlecocks and battledores,  
Play with the buoyant feathers and stare  
Dazzled at the plaything as it soars,  
Vague against the shining sky,

Where light yet throbs and confuses the eye,  
Then see it again, white and clear,  
As slowly, poisedly it falls by  
The dark green foliage and floats near.  
But Celia, apart, is pensive and must sigh,  
And Anais but faintly pursues the game.  
An encroaching, inner flame  
Burns in their hearts with the acrid smoke of unrest;  
But gaiety runs like quicksilver in Rose's breast,  
And Phillis, rising,  
Walks by herself with high and springy tread,  
All her young blood racing from heels to head,  
Breeding new desires and a new surprising  
Strength and determination,  
Whereof are bred  
Confidence and joy and exultation.

The long day closes;  
Rosalind's hour draws near, and Chloe's and Rose's,  
The hour that Celia has prayed,  
The hour for which Anais and Stella have stayed,  
When Helen shall forget her wit,  
And Phillida by a sure arrow at length be hit,  
And Phillis, the fleet runner, be at length overtaken;  
When this bough of young blossoms  
By the rough, eager gatherers shall be shaken.  
Their eyes grow dim,  
Their hearts flutter like taken birds in their bosoms,  
As the light dies out of heaven,  
And a faint, delicious tremor runs through every limb,  
And faster the volatile blood through their veins is driven.

The long day closes;  
The last light fades in the amber sky;  
Warm through the warm dusk glow the roses,  
And a heavier shade drops slowly from the trees,  
While through the garden as all colours die  
The scents come livelier on the quickening breeze.  
The world grows larger, vaguer, dimmer,  
Over the dark laurels a few faint stars glimmer;  
The moon, that was a pallid ghost,  
Hung low on the horizon, faint and lost,  
Comes up, a full and splendid golden round  
By black and sharp-cut foliage overcrossed.  
The girls laugh and whisper now with hardly a sound  
Till all sound vanishes, dispersed in the night,  
Like a wisp of cloud that fades in the moon's light,  
And the garden grows silent and the shadows grow  
Deeper and blacker below  
The mysteriously moving and murmuring trees,  
That stand out darkly against the star-luminous sky;  
Huge stand the trees,  
Shadowy, whispering immensities,  
That rain down quietude and darkness on heart and eye.  
None move, none speak, none sigh  
But from the laurels comes a leaping voice  
Crying in tones that seem not man's nor boy's,  
But only joy's,  
And hard behind a loud tumultuous crying,  
A tangled skein of noise,  
And the girls see their lovers come, each vying  
Against the next in glad and confident poise,  
Or softly moving  
To the side of the chosen with gentle words and loving  
Gifts for her pleasure of sweetmeats and jewelled toys.

Dear Love, whose strength no pedantry can stir,  
Whether in thine iron enemies,  
Or in thine own strayed follower  
Bemused with subtleties and sophistries,  
Now dost thou rule the garden, now  
The gatherers' hands have grasped the scented bough.

Slow the sweet hours resolve, and one by one are sped.  
The garden lieth empty. Overhead

A nightjar rustles by, wing touching wing,  
And passes, uttering  
His hoarse and whirring note.  
The daylight birds long since are fled,  
Nor has the moon yet touched the brown bird's throat.

All's quiet, all is silent, all around  
The day's heat rises gently from the ground,  
And still the broad moon travels up the sky,  
Now glancing through the trees and now so high  
That all the garden through her rays are shed,  
And from the laurels one can just descry  
Where in the distance looms enormously  
The old house, with all its windows black and dead.

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## Song

As I lay in the early sun,  
Stretched in the grass, I thought upon  
My true love, my dear love,  
Who has my heart for ever,  
Who is my happiness when we meet,  
My sorrow when we sever.  
She is all fire when I do burn,  
Gentle when I moody turn,  
Brave when I am sad and heavy  
And all laughter when I am merry.  
And so I lay and dreamed and dreamed,  
And so the day wheeled on,  
While all the birds with thoughts like mine  
Were singing to the sun.

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## Fredegond Shove

### A Dream in Early Spring

Now when I sleep the thrush breaks through my dreams  
With sharp reminders of the coming day:  
After his call, one minute I remain  
Unwaked, and on the darkness which is Me  
There springs the image of a daffodil,  
Growing upon a grassy bank alone,  
And seeming with great joy his bell to fill  
With drops of golden dew, which on the lawn  
He shakes again, where they lie bright and chill.

His head is drooped; the shrouded winds that sing  
Bend him which way they will: never on earth  
Was there before so beautiful a ghost.  
Alas! he had a less than flower-birth,  
And like a ghost indeed must shortly glide

From all but the sad cells of memory,  
Where he will linger, an imprisoned beam,  
Or fallen shadow of the golden world,  
Long after this and many another dream.

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## The World

I wish this world and its green hills were mine,  
But it is not; the wandering shepherd star  
Is not more distant, gazing from afar  
On the unreapect pastures of the sea,  
Than I am from the world, the world from me.  
At night the stars on milky way that shine  
Seem things one might possess, but this round green  
Is for the cows that rest, these and the sheep:  
To them the slopes and pastures offer sleep;  
My sleep I draw from the far fields of blue,  
Whence cold winds come and go among the few  
Bright stars we see and many more unseen.

Birds sing on earth all day among the flowers,  
Taking no thought of any other thing  
But their own hearts, for out of them they sing:  
Their songs are kindred to the blossom heads,  
Faint as the petals which the blackthorn sheds,  
And like the earth — not alien songs as ours.  
To them this greenness and this island peace  
Are life and death and happiness in one;  
Nor are they separate from the white sun,  
Or those warm winds which nightly wash the deep  
Or starlight in the valleys, or new sleep;  
And from these things they ask for no release.

But we can never call this world our own,  
Because we long for it, and yet we know  
That should the great winds call us, we should go;  
Should they come calling out across the cold,  
We should rise up and leave the sheltered fold  
And follow the great road to the unknown,  
We should pass by the barns and haystacks brown,  
Should leave the wild pool and the nightingale;  
Across the ocean we should set a sail  
And, coming to the world's pale brim, should fly  
Out to the very middle of the sky,  
On past the moon; nor should we once look down.

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## The New Ghost

*'And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.'*

And he cast it down, down, on the green grass,  
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was —  
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of death,  
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold sheath.

He went a pace or two, he went to meet his Lord,  
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean sword,  
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering,  
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw  
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one without flaw,  
And they embraced in the churchyard where the robins play,  
And the daffodils hang down their heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see  
That he kissed the unsheathed ghost that was gone free —  
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold ground;  
And the spirit answered, for he knew well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's word —  
As on a wild, April day, springs a small bird —  
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the Lord's cheek,  
And for the greatness of their love neither of them could speak.

But the Lord went then, to show him the way,  
Over the young crocuses, under the green may  
That was not quite in flower yet — to a far-distant land;  
And the ghost followed, like a naked cloud holding the sun's hand.

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## **A Man Dreams that he is the Creator**

I sat in heaven like the sun  
Above a storm when winter was:  
I took the snowflakes one by one  
And turned their fragile shapes to glass:  
I washed the rivers blue with rain  
And made the meadows green again.

I took the birds and touched their springs,  
Until they sang unearthly joys:  
They flew about on golden wings  
And glittered like an angel's toys:  
I filled the fields with flowers' eyes,  
As white as stars in Paradise.

And then I looked on man and knew  
Him still intent on death — still proud;  
Whereat into a rage I flew  
And turned my body to a cloud:  
In the dark shower of my soul  
The star of earth was swallowed whole.

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## Rivers

Rivers I have seen which were beautiful,  
Slow rivers winding in the flat fens,  
With bands of reeds like thronged green swords  
Guarding the mirrored sky;  
And streams down-tumbling from the chalk hills  
To valleys of meadows and watercress-beds,  
And bridges whereunder, dark weed-coloured shadows,  
Trout flit or lie,

I know those rivers that peacefully glide  
Past old towers and shaven gardens,  
Where mottled walls rise from the water  
And mills all streaked with flour;  
And rivers with wharves and rusty shipping,  
That flow with a stately tidal motion  
Towards their destined estuaries  
Full of the pride of power;

Noble great rivers, Thames and Severn,  
Tweed with his gateway of many grey arches,  
Clyde, dying at sunset westward  
In a sea as red as blood;  
Rhine and his hills in close procession,  
Placid Elbe, Seine slaty and swirling,  
And Isar, son of the Alpine snows,  
A furious turquoise flood.

All these I have known, and with slow eyes  
I have walked on their shores and watched them,  
And softened to their beauty and loved them  
Wherever my feet have been;

And a hundred others also  
Whose names long since grew into me,  
That, dreaming in light or darkness,  
I have seen, though I have not seen.

Those rivers of thought: cold Ebro,  
And blue racing Guadiana,  
Passing white houses, high-balconied  
That ache in a sun-baked land,  
Congo, and Nile and Colorado,  
Niger, Indus, Zambesi,  
And the Yellow River, and the Oxus,  
And the river that dies in sand.

What splendours are theirs, what continents,  
What tribes of men, what basking plains,  
Forests and lion-hided deserts,  
Marshes, ravines and falls:  
All hues and shapes and tempers  
Wandering they take as they wander  
From those far springs that endlessly  
The far sea calls.

O in reverie I know the Volga  
That turns his back upon Europe,  
And the two great cities on his banks,  
Novgorod and Astrakhan;  
Where the world is a few soft colours,  
And under the dove-like evening  
The boatmen chant ancient songs,  
The tenderest known to man.

And the holy river Ganges,  
His fretted cities veiled in moonlight,  
Arches and buttresses silver-shadowy  
In the high moon,

And palms grouped in the moonlight  
And fanes girdled with cypresses,  
Their domes of marble softly shining  
To the high silver moon.  
And that aged Brahmopootra  
Who beyond the white Himalayas  
Passes many a lamassery  
On rocks forlorn and frore,  
A block of gaunt grey stone walls  
With rows of little barred windows,  
Where shrivelled young monks in yellow silk  
Are hidden for evermore....

But O that great river, the Amazon,  
I have sailed up its gulf with eyelids closed,  
And the yellow waters tumbled round,  
And all was rimmed with sky,  
Till the banks drew in, and the trees' heads,  
And the lines of green grew higher  
And I breathed deep, and there above me  
The forest wall stood high.

Those forest walls of the Amazon  
Are level under the blazing blue  
And yield no sound but the whistles and shrieks  
Of the swarming bright macaws;  
And under their lowest drooping boughs  
Mud-banks torpidly bubble,  
And the water drifts, and logs in the water  
Drift and twist and pause.

And everywhere, tacitly joining,  
Float noiseless tributaries,  
Tall avenues paved with water:  
And as I silent fly  
The vegetation like a painted scene,  
Spars and spikes and monstrous fans  
And ferns from hairy sheaths up-springing,  
Evenly passes by.

And stealthier stagnant channels  
Under low niches of drooping leaves  
Coil into deep recesses:  
And there have I entered, there  
To heavy, hot, dense, dim places  
Where creepers climb and sweat and climb,  
And the drip and splash of oozing water  
Loads the stifling air.

Rotting scrofulous steaming trunks,  
Great horned emerald beetles crawling,  
Ants and huge slow butterflies  
That had strayed and lost the sun;  
Ah, sick I have swooned as the air thickened  
To a pallid brown ecliptic glow,  
And on the forest, fallen with languor,  
Thunder has begun.

Thunder in the dun dusk, thunder  
Rolling and battering and cracking,  
The caverns shudder with a terrible glare  
Again and again and again,  
Till the land bows in the darkness,  
Utterly lost and defenceless,  
Smitten and blinded and overwhelmed  
By the crashing rods of rain.

And then in the forests of the Amazon,  
When the rain has ended, and silence come,  
What dark luxuriance unfolds  
From behind the night's drawn bars:  
The wreathing odours of a thousand trees  
And the flowers' faint gleaming presences,  
And over the clearings and the still waters  
Soft indigo and hanging stars.



\* \* \* \* \*

O many and many are rivers,  
And beautiful are all rivers,  
And lovely is water everywhere  
That leaps or glides or stays;  
Yet by starlight, moonlight, or sunlight,  
Long, long though they look, these wandering eyes,  
Even on the fairest waters of dream,  
Never untroubled gaze.

For whatever stream I stand by,  
And whatever river I dream of,  
There is something still in the back of my mind  
From very far away;  
There is something I saw and see not,  
A country full of rivers  
That stirs in my heart and speaks to me  
More sure, more dear than they.

And always I ask and wonder  
(Though often I do not know it):  
Why does this water not smell like water?  
Where is the moss that grew  
Wet and dry on the slabs of granite  
And the round stones in clear brown water?  
— And a pale film rises before them  
Of the rivers that first I knew.

Though famous are the rivers of the great world,  
Though my heart from those alien waters drinks  
Delight however pure from their loveliness,  
And awe however deep,  
Would I wish for a moment the miracle,  
That those waters should come to Chagford,  
Or gather and swell in Tavy Cleave  
Where the stones cling to the steep?

No, even were they Ganges and Amazon  
In all their great might and majesty,  
League upon league of wonders,  
I would lose them all, and more,  
For a light chiming of small bells,  
A twisting flash in the granite,  
The tiny thread of a pixie waterfall  
That lives by Vixen Tor.

Those rivers in that lost country,  
They were brown as a clear brown bead is  
Or red with the earth that rain washed down,  
Or white with china-clay;  
And some tossed foaming over boulders,  
And some curved mild and tranquil,  
In wooded vales securely set  
Under the fond warm day.

Okement and Erme and Avon,  
Exe and his ruffled shallows,  
I could cry as I think of those rivers  
That knew my morning dreams;  
The weir by Tavistock at evening  
When the circling woods were purple,  
And the Lowman in spring with the lent-lilies,  
And the little moorland streams.

For many a hillside streamlet  
There falls with a broken tinkle,  
Falling and dying, falling and dying,  
In little cascades and pools,  
Where the world is furze and heather  
And flashing plovers and fixed larks,  
And an empty sky, whitish blue,  
That small world rules.

There, there, where the high waste bog-lands  
And the drooping slopes and the spreading valleys,  
The orchards and the cattle-sprinkled pastures  
Those travelling musics fill,  
There is my lost Abana,  
And there is my nameless Pharphar  
That mixed with my heart when I was a boy,  
And time stood still.

And I say I will go there and die there:  
But I do not go there, and sometimes  
I think that the train could not carry me there,  
And it's possible, maybe,  
That it's farther than Asia or Africa,  
Or any voyager's harbour,  
Farther, farther, beyond recall....  
O even in memory!

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## Epitaph in Old Mode

The leaves fall gently on the grass,  
And all the willow trees and poplar trees and elder trees  
That bend above her where she sleeps,  
O all the willow trees, the willow trees  
Breathe sighs above her tomb.

O pause and pity as you pass.  
She loved so tenderly, so quietly, so hopelessly;  
And sometimes comes one here and weeps —  
She loved so tenderly, so tenderly,  
And never told them whom.

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## Sonnet

There was an Indian, who had known no change,  
Who strayed content along a sunlit beach  
Gathering shells. He heard a sudden strange  
Commingled noise: looked up; and gasped for speech.  
For in the bay, where nothing was before,  
Moved on the sea, by magic, huge canoes,  
With bellying cloths on poles, and not one oar,  
And fluttering coloured signs and clambering crews.

And he, in fear, this naked man alone,  
His fallen hands forgetting all their shells,  
His lips gone pale, knelt low behind a stone,  
And stared, and saw, and did not understand,  
Columbus's doom-burdened caravels  
Slant to the shore, and all their seamen land.

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## The Birds

Within mankind's duration, so they say,  
Khephren and Ninus lived but yesterday.  
Asia had no name till man was old  
And long had learned the use of iron and gold;  
And æons had passed, when the first corn was planted,  
Since first the use of syllables was granted.

Men were on earth while climates slowly swung,  
Fanning wide zones to heat and cold, and long  
Subsidence turned great continents to sea,  
And seas dried up, dried up interminably,  
Age after age; enormous seas were dried  
Amid wastes of land. And the last monsters died.

Earth wore another face. O since that prime  
Man with how many works has sprinkled time!  
Hammering, hewing, digging tunnels, roads;  
Building ships, temples, multiform abodes.  
How, for his body's appetites, his toils  
Have conquered all earth's products, all her soils;  
And in what thousand thousand shapes of art  
He has tried to find a language for his heart!

Never at rest, never content or tired:  
Insatiate wanderer, marvellously fired,  
Most grandly piling and piling into the air  
Stones that will topple or arch he knows not where.

And yet did I, this spring, think it more strange,  
More grand, more full of awe, than all that change,  
And lovely and sweet and touching unto tears,  
That through man's chronicled and unchronicled years,  
And even into that unguessable beyond  
The water-hen has nested by a pond,  
Weaving dry flags, into a beaten floor,  
The one sure product of her only lore.  
Low on a ledge above the shadowed water  
Then, when she heard no men, as nature taught her,  
Plashing around with busy scarlet bill  
She built that nest, her nest, and builds it still.

O let your strong imagination turn  
The great wheel backward, until Troy unburn,  
And then unbuild, and seven Troys below  
Rise out of death, and dwindle, and outflow,  
Till all have passed, and none has yet been there:  
Back, ever back. Our birds still crossed the air;  
Beyond our myriad changing generations  
Still built, unchanged, their known inhabitations.  
A million years before Atlantis was  
Our lark sprang from some hollow in the grass,  
Some old soft hoof-print in a tussock's shade;  
And the wood-pigeon's smooth snow-white eggs were laid,  
High, amid green pines' sunset-coloured shafts,  
And rooks their villages of twiggy rafts  
Set on the tops of elms, where elms grew then,  
And still the thumbling tit and perky wren  
Popped through the tiny doors of cosy balls  
And the blackbird lined with moss his high-built walls;  
A round mud cottage held the thrush's young,  
And straws from the untidy sparrow's hung.  
And, skimming forktailed in the evening air,  
When man first was were not the martens there?  
Did not those birds some human shelter crave,  
And stow beneath the cornice of his cave  
Their dry tight cups of clay? And from each door  
Peeped on a morning wiseheads three or four.

Yes, daw and owl, curlew and crested hern,  
Kingfisher, mallard, water-rail and tern,  
Chaffinch and greenfinch, warbler, stonechat, ruff,  
Pied wagtail, robin, fly-catcher and chough,  
Missel-thrush, magpie, sparrow-hawk, and jay,  
Built, those far ages gone, in this year's way.  
And the first man who walked the cliffs of Rame,  
As I this year, looked down and saw the same  
Blotches of rusty red on ledge and cleft  
With grey-green spots on them, while right and left  
A dizzying tangle of gulls were floating and flying,  
Wheeling and crossing and darting, crying and crying,  
Circling and crying, over and over and over,  
Crying with swoop and hover and fall and recover.  
And below on a rock against the grey sea fretted,  
Pipe-necked and stationary and silhouetted,  
Cormorants stood in a wise, black, equal row  
Above the nests and long blue eggs we know.

O delicate chain over all the ages stretched,  
O dumb tradition from what far darkness fetched:  
Each little architect with its one design  
Perpetual, fixed and right in stuff and line,  
Each little ministrant who knows one thing,  
One learned rite to celebrate the spring.  
Whatever alters else on sea or shore,  
These are unchanging: man must still explore.

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## W. J. Turner

### Silence

It was bright day and all the trees were still  
In the deep valley, and the dim Sun glowed;  
The clay in hard-baked fire along the hill  
Leapt through dark trunks to apples green and gold,  
Smooth, hard and cold, they shone like lamps of stone:

They were bright bubbles bursting from the trees,  
Swollen and still among the dark green boughs;  
On their bright skins the shadows of the leaves  
Seemed the faint ghosts of summers long since gone,  
Faint ghosts of ghosts, the dreams of ghostly eyes.

There was no sound between those breathless hills.  
Only the dim Sun hung there, nothing moved;  
The thronged, massed, crowded multitude of leaves  
Hung like dumb tongues that loll and gasp for air:  
The grass was thick and still, between the trees.

There were big apples lying on the ground,  
Shining, quite still, as though they had been stunned  
By some great violent spirit stalking through,  
Leaving a deep and supernatural calm  
Round a dead beetle upturned in a furrow.

A valley filled with dark, quiet, leaf-thick trees,  
Loaded with green, cold, faintly shining suns;  
And in the sky a great dim burning disc! —  
Madness it is to watch these twisted trunks  
And to see nothing move and hear no sound!

## **Kent in War**

The pebbly brook is cold to-night,  
Its water soft as air,  
A clear, cold, crystal-bodied wind  
Shadowless and bare,  
Leaping and running in this world  
Where dark-horned cattle stare:

Where dark-horned cattle stare, hoof-firm  
On the dark pavements of the sky,  
And trees are mummies swathed in sleep  
And small dark hills crowd wearily;  
Soft multitudes of snow-grey clouds  
Without a sound march by.

Down at the bottom of the road  
I smell the woody damp  
Of that cold spirit in the grass,  
And leave my hill-top camp —  
Its long gun pointing in the sky —  
And take the Moon for lamp.

I stop beside the bright cold glint  
Of that thin spirit in the grass,  
So gay it is, so innocent!  
I watch its sparkling footsteps pass  
Lightly from smooth round stone to stone,  
Hid in the dew-hung grass.

My lamp shines in the globes of dew,  
And leaps into that crystal wind  
Running along the shaken grass  
To each dark hole that it can find —  
The crystal wind, the Moon my lamp,  
Have vanished in a wood that's blind.

High lies my small, my shadowy camp,  
Crowded about by small dark hills;  
With sudden small white flowers the sky  
Above the woods' dark greenness fills;  
And hosts of dark-browed, muttering trees  
In trance the white Moon stills.

I move among their tall grey forms,  
A thin moon-glimmering, wandering Ghost,  
Who takes his lantern through the world  
In search of life that he has lost,  
While watching by that long lean gun  
Up on his small hill post.

The mind of the people is like mud,  
From which arise strange and beautiful things,  
But mud is none the less mud,  
Though it bear orchids and prophesying Kings,  
Dreams, trees, and water's bright babblings.

It has found form and colour and light,  
The cold glimmer of the ice-wrapped Poles;  
It has called a far-off glow Arcturus,  
And some pale weeds, lilies of the valley.

It has imagined Virgil, Helen and Cassandra;  
The sack of Troy, and the weeping for Hector —  
Rearing stark up 'mid all this beauty  
In the thick, dull neck of Ajax.

There is a dark Pine in Lapland,  
And the great, figured Horn of the Reindeer,  
Moving soundlessly across the snow,  
Is its twin brother, double-dreamed,  
In the mind of a far-off people.

It is strange that a little mud  
Should echo with sounds, syllables, and letters,  
Should rise up and call a mountain Popocatapetl,  
And a green-leafed wood Oleander.

These are the ghosts of invisible things;  
There is no Lapland, no Helen and no Hector,  
And the Reindeer is a darkening of the brain,  
And Oleander is but Oleander.

Mary Magdalena and the vine Lachryma Christi  
Were like ghosts up the ghost of Vesuvius,  
As I sat and drank wine with the soldiers,  
As I sat in the Inn on the mountain,  
Watching the shadows in my mind.

The mind of the people is like mud,  
Where are the imperishable things,  
The ghosts that flicker in the brain —  
Silent women, orchids, and prophesying Kings,  
Dreams, trees, and water's bright babblings!

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## Song

Gently, sorrowfully sang the maid  
Sowing the ploughed field over,  
And her song was only:  
'Come, O my lover!'

Strangely, strangely shone the light,  
Stilly wound the river:  
'Thy love is a dead man,  
He'll come back never.'

Sadly, sadly passed the maid  
The fading dark hills over;  
Still her song far, far away said:  
'Come, O my lover!'

## The Princess

The stone-grey roses by the desert's rim  
Are soft-edged shadows on the moonlit sand,  
Grey are the broken walls of Khangavar,  
That haunt of nightingales, whose voices are  
Fountains that bubble in the dream-soft Moon.

Shall the Gazelles with moonbeam pale bright feet  
Entering the vanished gardens sniff the air —  
Some scent may linger of that ancient time,  
Musician's song, or poet's passionate rhyme,  
The Princess dead, still wandering love-sick there.

A Princess pale and cold as mountain snow,  
In cool, dark chambers sheltered from the sun,  
With long dark lashes and small delicate hands:  
All Persia sighed to kiss her small red mouth  
Until they buried her in shifting sand.

And the Gazelles shall flit by in the Moon  
And never shake the frail Tree's lightest leaves,  
And moonlight roses perfume the pale Dawn  
Until the scarlet life that left her lips  
Gathers its shattered beauty in the sky.

## Peace

In low chalk hills the great King's body lay,  
And bright streams fell, tinkling like polished tin,  
As though they carried off his armoury,  
And spread it glinting through his wide domain.

Old bearded soldiers sat and gazed dim-eyed  
At the strange brightness flowing under trees,  
And saw his sword flashing in ancient battles,  
And drank, and swore, and trembled helplessly.

And bright-haired maidens dipped their cold white arms,  
And drew them glittering colder, whiter, still;  
The sky sparkled like the dead King's blue eye  
Upon the sentries that were dead as trees.

His shining shield lay in an old grey town,  
And white swans sailed so still and dreamfully,  
They seemed the thoughts of those white, peaceful hills  
Mirrored that day within his glazing eyes.

And in the square the pale cool butter sold,  
Cropped from the daisies sprinkled on the downs,  
And old wives cried their wares, like queer day owls,  
Piercing the old men's sad and foolish dreams.

And Time flowed on till all the realm forgot  
The great King lying in the low chalk hills;  
Only the busy water dripping through

## Death

When I am dead a few poor souls shall grieve  
As I grieved for my brother long ago.  
Scarce did my eyes grow dim,  
I had forgotten him;  
I was far-off hearing the spring winds blow,  
And many summers burned  
When, though still reeling with my eyes aflame,  
I heard that faded name  
Whispered one Spring amid the hurrying world  
From which, years gone, he turned.

I looked up at my windows and I saw  
The trees, thin spectres sucked forth by the moon.  
The air was very still  
Above a distant hill;  
It was the hour of night's full silver moon.  
'O are thou there my brother?' my soul cried;  
And all the pale stars down bright rivers wept,  
As my heart sadly crept  
About the empty hills, bathed in that light  
That lapped him when he died.

Ah! it was cold, so cold; do I not know  
How dead my heart on that remembered day!  
Clear in a far-away place  
I see his delicate face  
Just as he called me from my solitary play,  
Giving into my hands a tiny tree.  
We planted it in the dark, blossomless ground  
Gravely, without a sound;  
Then back I went and left him standing by  
His birthday gift to me.

In that far land perchance it quietly grows  
Drinking the rain, making a pleasant shade;  
Birds in its branches fly  
Out of the fathomless sky  
Where worlds of circling light arise and fade.  
Blindly it quivers in the bright flood of day,  
Or drowned in multitudinous shouts of rain  
Glooms o'er the dark-veiled plain —  
Buried below, the ghost that's in his bones  
Dreams in the sodden clay.

And, while he faded, drunk with beauty's eyes  
I kissed bright girls and laughed deep in dumb trees,  
That stared fixt in the air  
Like madmen in despair  
Gaped up from earth with the escaping breeze.  
I saw earth's exaltation slowly creep  
Out of their myriad sky-embracing veins.  
I laughed along the lanes,  
Meeting Death riding in from the hollow seas  
Through black-wreathed woods asleep.

I laughed, I swaggered on the cold hard ground —  
Through the grey air trembled a falling wave —  
'Thou'rt pale, O Death!' I cried,  
Mocking him in my pride;  
And passing I dreamed not of that lonely grave,



But of leaf-maidens whose pale, moon-like hands  
Above the tree-foam waved in the icy air,  
Sweeping with shining hair  
Through the green-tinted sky, one moment fled  
Out of immortal lands.

One windless Autumn night the Moon came out  
In a white sea of cloud, a field of snow;  
In darkness shaped of trees,  
I sank upon my knees  
And watched her shining, from the small wood below —  
Faintly Death flickered in an owl's far cry — -  
We floated soundless in the great gulf of space,  
Her light upon my face —  
Immortal, shining in that dark wood I knelt  
And knew I could not die.

And knew I could not die — O Death, didst thou  
Heed my vain glory, standing pale by thy dead?  
There is a spirit who grieves  
Amid earth's dying leaves;  
Was't thou that wept beside my brother's bed?  
For I did never mourn nor heed at all  
Him passing on his temporal elm-wood bier;  
I never shed a tear.  
The drooping sky spread grey-winged through my soul,  
While stones and earth did fall.

That sound rings down the years — I hear it yet —  
All earthly life's a winding funeral —  
And though I never wept,  
But into the dark coach stept,  
Dreaming by night to answer the blood's sweet call,  
She who stood there, high-breasted, with small, wise lips,  
And gave me wine to drink and bread to eat,  
Has not more steadfast feet,  
But fades from my arms as fade from mariners' eyes  
The sea's most beauteous ships.

The trees and hills of earth were once as close  
As my own brother, they are becoming dreams  
And shadows in my eyes;  
More dimly lies  
Guaya deep in my soul, the coastline gleams  
Faintly along the darkening crystalline seas.  
Glimmering and lovely still, 'twill one day go;  
The surging dark will flow  
Over my hopes and joys, and blot out all  
Earth's hills and skies and trees.

I shall look up one night and see the Moon  
For the last time shining above the hills,  
And thou, silent, wilt ride  
Over the dark hillside.  
'Twill be, perchance, the time of daffodils —  
*'How come those bright immortals in the woods?  
Their joy being young, didst thou not drag them all  
Into dark graves ere Fall?'*  
Shall life thus haunt me, wondering, as I go  
To thy deep solitudes?

There is a figure with a down-turned torch  
Carved on a pillar in an olden time,  
A calm and lovely boy  
Who comes not to destroy  
But to lead age back to its golden prime.  
Thus did an antique sculptor draw thee, Death,  
With smooth and beauteous brow and faint sweet smile,  
Not haggard, gaunt and vile,  
And thou perhaps art thus to whom men may,  
Unvexed, give up their breath.

But in my soul thou sittest like a dream  
Among earth's mountains, by her dim-coloured seas;  
A wild unearthly Shape

In thy dark-glimmering cape,  
Piping a tune of wavering melodies,  
Thou sittest, ay, thou sittest at the feast  
Of my brief life among earth's bright-wreathed flowers,  
Staining the dancing hours  
With sombre gleams until, abrupt, thou risest  
And all, at once, is ceased.

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