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THE BIRD OF PARADISE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

- The Soul's Destroyer and other Poems (1906)
New Poems (1907)
Nature Poems and Others (1908)
Farewell to Poesy (1910)
Songs of Joy (1911)
Foliage (1913)

PROSE

- The Autobiography of a Supertramp (1907)
Beggars (1909)
A Weak Woman (1911)
The True Traveller (1912)
Nature (1914)

THE
BIRD OF PARADISE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
W. H. DAVIES

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The Bird of Paradise

When I am Old

WHEN I am old, and it is spring,
And joy leaps dancing, wild and free,
Clear out of every living thing,
While I command no ecstasy ;
And to translate the songs of birds
Will be beyond my power in words :

When Time serves notice on my Muse
To leave at last her lyric home,
With no extension of her lease—
Then to the blackest pits I come,
To see by day the stars' cold light,
And in my coffin sleep at night.

When I am Old

For when these little songs shall fail,
 These happy notes that to the world
Are puny mole-hills, nothing more,
 That unto me are Alps of gold—
That toad's dark life must be my own,
Buried alive inside a stone.

Two Spring Songs

From France

WHAT little bird is this that sings?
I wonder if he comes from France:
Lord, how he sings, and makes our leaves
In happy England dance!
What's in his song; is it sweet laughter,
Or anger that he crossed the water?

A song of roses, apples, corn,
Seen here in England—not his home;
Or lilies, olives, and the grapes
In France, across the foam?
No matter, little friend from France—
Sing till our leaves in England dance.

Starers

The small birds peck at apples ripe,
And twice as big as them in size;

Two Spring Songs

The wind doth make the hedge's leaves
Shiver with joy, until it dies.

Young Gossamer is in the field ;

He holds the flowers with silver line—
They nod their heads as horses should.

And there are forty dappled kine
As fat as snails in deep, dark wells,

And just as shiny too—as they
Lie in a green field, motionless,

And every one now stares my way.

I must become a starrer too :

I stare at them as urchins can
When seamen talk, or any child

That sees by chance its first black man.

I stare at drops of rain that shine

Like glow-worms, when the time is noon ;

I stare at little stars in Heaven,

That try to stare like the big Moon.

The Best Friend

NOW shall I walk,
Or shall I ride?
“Ride,” Pleasure said;
“Walk,” Joy replied.

Now what shall I—
Stay home or roam?
“Roam,” Pleasure said;
And Joy—“Stay home.”

Now shall I dance,
Or sit for dreams?
“Sit,” answers Joy;
“Dance,” Pleasure screams.

The Best Friend

Which of ye two
Will kindest be?
Pleasure laughed sweet,
But Joy kissed me.

Heaven

THAT paradise the Arab dreams,
Is far less sand and more fresh streams.
The only heaven an Indian knows,
Is hunting deer and buffaloes.
The Yankee heaven—to bring Fame forth
By some freak show of what he's worth.
The heaven that fills an English heart,
Is Union Jacks in every part.
The Irish heaven is heaven of old,
When Satan cracked skulls manifold.
The Scotsman has his heaven to come—
To argue his Creator dumb.
The Welshman's heaven is singing airs—
No matter who feels sick and swears.

Sweet Night

SWEET Night, that like an angel comes
To take this bright and happy Day,
A lover gives his grateful heart,
For starlight on his way.

Lord, how my heart goes forth in joy,
How my brave spirits soar and rise!
To think how Love's advancing lips
Will shut Love's joyful eyes.

What loving looks of serious care,
What tender sweetness she will give!
Such love a mother gives that child
She fears she will outlive.

Early Spring

HOW sweet this morning air in spring,
When tender is the grass, and wet !
I see some little leaves have not
 Outgrown their curly childhood yet ;
And cows no longer hurry home,
However sweet a voice cries " Come."

Here, with green Nature all around,
 While that fine bird the skylark sings ;
Who now in such a passion is,
 He flies by it, and not his wings ;
And many a blackbird, thrush and sparrow
Sing sweeter songs than I may borrow.

Early Spring

These watery swamps and thickets wild—
 Called Nature's slums—to me are more
Than any courts where fountains play,
 And men-at-arms guard every door;
For I could sit down here alone,
And count the oak trees one by one.

The Mind's Liberty

THE mind, with its own eyes and ears,
May for these others have no care ;
No matter where this body is,

The mind is free to go elsewhere.

My mind can be a sailor, when

This body's still confined to land ;

And turn these mortals into trees,

That walk in Fleet Street or the Strand.

So, when I'm passing Charing Cross,

Where porters work both night and day,

I ofttimes hear sweet Malpas Brook,

That flows thrice fifty miles away.

And when I'm passing near St. Paul's,

I see, beyond the dome and crowd,

Twm Barlum, that green pap in Gwent,

With its dark nipple in a cloud.

The Two Spirits

MY friend, mad drunk, struck at his foe,
When I received the cruel blow ;
No sooner saw my broken tooth,
He wept, and wiped my bloody mouth.

Then came a message from his wife—
“Come now, and see his last of life.”
But when I reached his room and bed,
The man was lying cold and dead.

Now when I stood beside his bier,
I felt two spirits standing near ;
The one said—“Look : his knuckles show
The toothmark where he struck a blow.”

“ Think not of that,” the other said—
“ Have pity on him cold and dead.”
“ You took no vengeance for that blow,”
The first one said—“ it’s too late now ! ”

Shame on my soul for vengeance nursed,
That, laughing in my heart, I cursed
The hand, now dead, that broke my tooth—
Although it wiped my bloody mouth.

When on a Summer's Morn

WHEN on a summer's morn I wake,
 And open my two eyes,
Out to the clear, born-singing rills
 My bird-like spirit flies.

To hear the Blackbird, Cuckoo, Thrush,
 Or any bird in song ;
And common leaves that hum all day,
 Without a throat or tongue. .

And when Time strikes the hour for sleep,
 Back in my room alone,
My heart has many a sweet bird's song—
 And one that's all my own.

Again I Sing

A GAIN I sing of thee, sweet youth :
Thy hours are minutes, they can hear
No challenge from stern sentinels,
To wake their fear ;
You love the flowers, but feel no grief
Because their pretty lives are brief.

Nature sets no conspirators
Of withered things to lie in wait
And show thee with their faded charms
Thy coming state ;
No dread example she sets thee
In dead things falling off a tree.

Again I Sing

Thou seest no bones inside the earth,
Thy sweat comes not of toil, but play ;
On thy red blossom no pale worm
Can work decay ;
No toad can muddy thy clear spring—
Time is thy subject, thou his king !

The Dumb World

SHALL I collect for this world's eyes
My sins in birds or butterflies ;
Shall I keep useless things around,
For ornament, and sell my hound ?
When I give poor dumb things my cares,
Let all men know I've said my prayers.
That man who sells for gain his hound
May he be robbed and beaten found ;
May men that shoot sweet singing-birds
Be robbed of power to utter words ;
May men that torture things alive
Live for a hundred years, and have
Their wretched bodies stabbed with pains,
Until their toe-nails pierce their brains.
My love for dumb things is intense :
I cannot walk beside a fence

And see the horses in a row,
Staring, but I must say Hallo!
And when I see two horses lean
Across a gate that stands between
Them as they kiss each other there—
For no man's company I care.
I hate to leave the calf when he,
Licking his tongue, still follows me,
To lick again at my old clothes.
A lamb that lets me stroke his nose
Can make me feel a battle won
That had ten soldiers to my one.
I'd rather see the sheep and kine
Than any troops that march in-line,
With all their colours in the light,
Helmets and scabbards shining bright.
When I give robins cheerful words,
I'm pleased to see those grateful birds
Try on their little feet to dance,
And eyeing me with consequence.

Had I at home a talking bird
That would repeat a wicked word,
I would not care a fig or apple
For my own hymns in church or chapel.
Had I a monkey that would drink
My ale and, when I sit to think,
Would mock me with his scornful cries—
I, thinking less, would grow more wise ;
With him I'd sit and drink and play,
And save the world this worthless lay.

The Weeping Child

WHAT makes thee weep so, little child,
What cause hast thou for all this grief?
When thou art old much cause may be,
And tears will bring thee no relief.

Thou dost not know thy mother yet,
Thou'dst sleep on any bosom near;
Thou dost not see a daughter dying,
No son is coughing in thy ear.

Thy father is a bearded man,
Yet any bearded man could take
Thee in his arms, and thou not know
Which man would die for thy sweet sake.

The Weeping Child

33

What makes thee weep then, little child,
What cause hast thou for all this bother ;
Whose father could be any man,
And any woman be thy mother ?

The Den

THEY sleep together in one den,
Ten in a row—ten beds, ten men ;
Three dying men are in that room,
Whose coughs at night will soon become
Death's rattle : drunkards in bed
Sound as they worried things half dead.

Jim Lasker dreamt, when in that den,
He saw ten beds that had ten men ;
One sleeper in a sack was sewn,
With nothing of his features shown :
Jim felt that face he could not see—
“ This face is mine, I'm dead,” said he.

.

“James Lasker, you’re the last to rise ;

Wake up, wake up !” the master cries.

“You’ve not paid me for daylight’s sleep—

Suppose you had some kids to keep ?

Ah, now I see : this man of mine

Came here to die, not sleep—the swine !”

This World

WHO dreams a sweeter life than this,
To stand and stare, when at this fence
Back into those dumb creatures' eyes,
And think we have their innocence—
Our looks as open as the skies.

Lambs with their legs and noses black,
Whose woolly necks, so soft and white,
Can take away the children's breath ;
Who'd strangle them in their delight—
And calves they'd worry half to death.

This world's too full of those dull men
Who ne'er advance from that first state
Which opens mouth before the eye ;
Who, when they think of dumb things, rate
Them by the body's gluttony.

A Fleeting Passion

THOU shalt not laugh, thou shalt not romp,
Let's grimly kiss with bated breath;
As quietly and solemnly
As Life when it is kissing Death.
Now in the silence of the grave,
My hand is squeezing that soft breast;
While thou dost in such passion lie,
It mocks me with its look of rest.
But when the morning comes at last,
And we must part, our passions cold,
You'll think of some new feather, scarf
To buy with my small piece of gold;
And I'll be dreaming of green lanes,
Where little things with beating hearts
Hold shining eyes between the leaves,
Till men with horses pass, and carts.

Plants and Men

YOU berries once,
In early hours,
Were pretty buds,
And then fair flowers.

Drop, drop at once,
Your life is done ;
You cannot feel
The dew or sun.

We are the same,
First buds, then flowers ;
Hard berries then,
In our last hours.

* Sweet buds, fair flowers,
Hard berries then—
Such is the life
Of plants and men.

A Midsummer Night's Storm

NIGHT, Lightning, Thunder, Rain.
I see black Night
Open her lips ;
Her teeth gleam bright,
A moment seen ;
Then comes rich laughter ;
And happy tears,
That follow after,
Fall on the bosoms
Of birds and blossoms.

The Dreaming Boy

SWEET are thy dreams, thou happy, careless boy;
Thou know'st the taste of immortality ;
No weary limbs can rest upon thy heart ;
Sleep has no care to ease thee of at night ;
The same move shuts together eye and mind,
And in the morning one move opens both.
Life lies before thee, hardly stepped on yet,
Like a green prairie, fresh, and full of flowers.
Life lies before thee for experiment,
Until old age comes, whose sad eyes can trace
A better path he missed, with fairer flowers,
Which other men have walked in misery.
Thou hast no knowledge of a life of toil,
How hard Necessity destroys our dreams,

And castles-in-the-air must pay him tithes
So heavy that no tenants keep them long.
To thee the world is still unknown and strange ;
Still full of wild romance, as in those days
Ere England launched her forests on the sea.
Thou wilt discover in far mountains caves
Deserted, lamps left burning for thy feet,
And comfort in them more than kings are worth.
Aye, many a gate will open at thy call,
And wise men will come forth to welcome thee,
And bells will ring for pleasure in thy ear.
Great monsters in dark woods, with mighty mouths
That swallow their own faces when they yawn,
And mountain bears that carry on their backs
Rough, shaggy coats whose price compares with
silk—
Will fall by thy strong, right, all-conquering arm.
And who can stop thee ; who can turn thee back ?
Not giants, though they stand full twenty feet,
And sit too tall for common men to stand.

Oh, that sweet magic in thee, happy boy!
It makes a golden world for all things young.
Thou with an iron ring, a piece of bone,
A rusty blade, or half a yard of rope,
Art richer than a man with mines and ships.
The child's fresh mind makes honey out of soot,
Sweeter than age can make on banks of flowers;
He needs but cross a bridge, that happy boy,
And he can breathe the air of a new world.
Sweet children, with your trust in this hard life—
Like little birds that ope their mouths for food
From hands that come to cage them till they die.

The Hawk

THOU dost not fly, thou art not perched,
The air is all around :

What is it that can keep thee set,

From falling to the ground ?

The concentration of thy mind

Supports thee in the air ;

As thou dost watch the small young birds,

With such a deadly care.

My mind has such a hawk as thou,

It is an evil mood ;

It comes when there's no cause for grief,

And on my joys doth brood.

Then do I see my life in parts ;

The earth receives my bones,

The common air absorbs my mind—

It knows not flowers from stones.

The Signs

FLOWERS white and red my garden has ;
So, when I miss her from my place,
I see a colour through the leaves,
And think it is her frock or face.

Here, while I sit and read old tales,
She comes to knit with needles bright ;
She shows, by how she stabs with them,
How she would punish a false knight.

And though she speaks not any word,
I see, by how she smooths the cloth—
That's stretched across from knee to knee—
She binds his wounds who bleeds for truth.

The Long Sleep

THEY press the pillow on their mother's face
and head ;

They take her by the arm to pull her out of
bed—

And still that mother sleeps and will not wake and
play.

They laugh and pull, and still their mother will
not heed ;

The pillow pressed, and yet no breath she seems to
need—

For still their mother sleeps and will not wake and
play.

In pity for those babes a neighbour's head is bowed ;
In pity for her grief those children sob aloud—
And more than ever wish their mother'd wake and
 play.

/

The Moon

THY beauty haunts me heart and soul,
Oh thou fair Moon, so close and bright ;
Thy beauty makes me like the child,
That cries aloud to own thy light :
The little child that lifts each arm,
To press thee to her bosom warm.

Though there are birds that sing this night
With thy white beams across their throats,
Let my deep silence speak for me
More than for them their sweetest notes :
Who worships thee till music fails,
Is greater than thy nightingales.

A Great Time

SWEET Chance, that led my steps abroad,
Beyond the town, where wild flowers grow—
A rainbow and a cuckoo, Lord,
How rich and great the times are now!
 Know, all ye sheep
 And cows, that keep
On staring that I stand so long
 In grass that's wet from heavy rain—
A rainbow and a cuckoo's song
May never come together again;
 May never come
 This side the tomb.

Her Absence

HOW rich hath Time become through her,
His sands are turned to purest gold!
And yet it grieves my heart full sore
To see them slipping from my hold.
How precious now each moment is,
Which I must cast like dirt away!
My only hope and comfort this—
Each moment will return that day,
On that sweet day, that joyful hour
When she lies willing in my power.

Nay, these rich moments are not lost,
But, like the morning's dewdrops, which
Into the sun their sweet lives cast,
To make his body far more rich—

So do these precious moments glide
 Into her being, where they store ;
Until I clasp her as my bride,
 And get them back with thousands more ;
Where they have banked in her sweet breast,
And saved themselves with interest.

The Wanderer

NO morning breaks but he would pack,
With knapsack flung across his back,
And farther than the cuckoo roam,
Who makes no nest, and he no home.
And who he is, or where shall go,
No woman and no man shall know ;
And where he sleeps a secret is,
Only the harvest moon's and his.
And long before his meal is done,
A wandering dog shall have his bone ;
Beneath the trees, what birds are there
Shall have without a song their share.
And those that ride in coach or car,
While he's afoot, where towns are far,
Will point and say—" A beggar, he !"
But where he shows his money free,

For ale the best—not begs for water—
He'll hear the landlord's smiling daughter
Go whispering to her room, surprised—
“He's some big man come here disguised!”
And everywhere he goes he'll be,
To young and old, a mystery;
And laughing in his heart, will sow
His wonder-seeds where he shall go.
For, free, he lives his simple life,
And has not risked it with a wife.
Prefers tobacco's quiet blisses
To Love's breath-mixture sealed by kisses.
Can drink his ale, for days and days,
With no one to upbraid his ways.
Has studied his own self, to find
His best friends fancies of the mind;
More faithful friends by far than he
Shall find in human company.
Has forced his presence in no place,
To meet at last declining grace;

Has always waited others' greeting,
Before he ventured on their meeting.
Since all his life has been like this,
Retiring into dreams of bliss,
Write these true words above his dust :
“ He died because Age said he must ;
He gave no man or woman power
To change him from sweet looks to sour ;
Society never gave him pain,
No woman broke his heart in twain ;
His body perished when his heart
Had no foul blight in any part ;
From day to day, from birth to death,
He took in joy at every breath.”

The Child and the Man

DREAMING I was a child,
And met a man,
My fears of him were wild—
Away I ran.

The man ran after me :

“ Why run away,
My little boy,” said he—
“ From me this day ? ”

I looked with my eyes sad,
When I was caught;
His face seemed not so bad
As I first thought.

The Child and the Man

“I am yourself,” said he :

“It gives me pain
To see you run from me—
Don’t run again.”

“Poor man,” said I, “what made
You look so strange?
No wonder I’m afraid,
At such a change.”

He sobbed too much to speak,
He could not tell ;
And then my heart did break
With sobs as well.

The Black Cloud

LITTLE flocks of peaceful clouds,
Lying in your fields so blue,
While my eyes look up they see
A black Ram coming close to you.

He will scatter you poor flocks,
He will tear up north and south ;
Lightning will come from his eye,
And fierce thunder from his mouth.

Little flocks of peaceful clouds,
Soon there'll be a dreadful rout ;
That Ram's horns can toss big ships,
Tear an oak tree's bowels out.

When I in Praise

WHEN I in praise of babies speak,
She coldly smiles like winter's snow,
And looks on me with no soft eye :
Yet I have seen her kiss them so,
Her wealth of rapture made them cry.

Sometimes it seems her blood's too cold
For Love to even wet his toes,
Much less to paddle all about ;
But when she's kissed till her eyes close,
That god is warmer in than out.

I laugh, when she for other men
Confesses love ; but when she says
She hated one man she could kill,
My heart is all one jealous blaze,
For, pity me, she hates him still !

Sweet Child

SWEET child, that wast my bird by day,
My bird that never failed in song ;
That on my bosom wast a bee,
And layst there all night long :

No more I'll hear thy voice at noon,
For Death has pierced thee with a thorn ;
No more thou'lt sleep upon my breast,
And trample it at morn.

Then break, oh break, poor empty cage,
The bird is dead, thy use is done ;
And die, poor plant, for your sweet bee
Is gone, forever gone.

In a Garden

FAR from the sound of commerce, where the
bees
Make hollow hum that bears it half in mind,
I live; and when those flowers of early spring—
The Daffodils of March, that own unshared
All Nature's world, nor live to see their peers,
Primroses, Violets, and Anemones—
Are overwhelmed in June's green riot, I
Sit more in my small garden, where the flowers
Are large and strong. Blue Irises are there,
Dahlias, and heavy lidded Tulips, too;
Snapdragons, Roses, Stocks, and Marigolds,
Solomon's Seals and Canterbury Bells;
Tall Columbines that never raise their heads,
Sweet Peas and Asters, Mignonette and Pinks,

And cat-eyed Pansies with their velvet skin ;
And Poppies, too, that with their richer hues
Make butterflies take wing or lie unseen ;
Lilies so fair they challenge all the world,
And hold in silver tumblers their gold dice,
Ready to throw and win ; and many a flower
Is there whose large, soft breast is strong enough
To suckle three or four bees at one time.
Those flowers I love, and take more pride in them
Than sailors take in wearing scarves of silk.
I watch with joy the little new-born buds,
How they just peep from half-closed eyes at morn,
And wake to find their dreams of dewdrops true.
There do I sit all through a summer's day—
Days turn without my knowledge into nights.
I sit so motionless at times that birds
Perch on the boughs that almost touch my head,
Before they see I am a thing of flesh.
So, with the poet's double sight and hearing,
I see another face behind the flower's,

I hear another voice inside the wind's—
A face and voice much sweeter than their own.
Helped by Thought's quiet midwife Solitude,
My mind brings forth a family of young dreams.

The Life Divine

GIVE me the poet's life divine,
Forever fresh and young ;
The only hours that vex his soul
Are hours that give no song ;
If he but can,
A homeless man,
Turn suffering into songs divine—
That poet's life is still divine,
His life is still divine.

If but the Muse will help his soul
To sing a grief that's wild,
No faithless spouse can pull him down,
Nor disobedient child ;
Let her but prove
His faithful love,

To sing his cares in songs divine—
That poet's life is still divine,
His life is still divine.

Love's Youth

NOT only is my love a flower
That blooms in broad daylight,
But, like the Evening Primrose, it
Can bloom again at night.

My heart, though I have reached my prime,
It still beats fresh and young ;
I tremble at sweet Beauty's glance,
And Love is still my song.

At thy bright smile I burn and shake,
Though treated as thy brother :
Canst thou not see my eyes have twins
That laugh and call thee mother?

Rich Days

WELCOME to you rich Autumn days,
Ere comes the cold, leaf-picking wind
When golden stooks are seen in fields,
All standing arm-in-arm entwined ;
And gallons of sweet cider seen
On trees in apples red and green.

With mellow pears that cheat our teeth,
Which melt that tongues may suck them in ;
With cherries red, and blue-black plums,
Now sweet and soft from stone to skin ;
And woodnuts rich, to make us go
Into the loveliest lanes we know.

Near a Quiet Stream

WHEN musing near a quiet stream,
Of how true, happy minds are rare ;
How some men mourn their fleeting days,
And still unhappy thoughts they bear ;
How others fear the loss of wealth,
Though much they have above their share ;
While some men strive in vain for fame,
Till pale and lean, and white their hair :
“ Poor fools,” thought I, amazed at this—
“ Why should true happy minds be rare ?
If on these things we set no price,
Where is their power to *make* us care ?
Such cares, invented by ourselves,
Have no wise substance anywhere.”

The Child Chatters

GOOD morning to my dolly first,
Good morning to my cherry tree ;
Good morning to my little chicks,
For them I love to see.

Good morning to my bow-wow-wow ;
Good morning to my bonnet new ;
Good morning to my little self,
To Dad and Mammie too.

Good morning, God which art in Heaven,
I hope you slept last night quite well ;
And please don't vex your head so much
About the devil in hell.

And if he bothers you too much,
And you're afraid, and you sleep bad,
Then, God which art in Heaven, you must
Have whisky, like my Dad.

The Hermit

WHAT moves that lonely man is not the boom
Of waves that break against the cliff so
strong ;

Nor roar of thunder, when that travelling voice
Is caught by rocks that carry far along.

'Tis not the groan of oak tree in its prime,
When lightning strikes its solid heart to dust ;
Nor frozen pond when, melted by the sun,
It suddenly doth break its sparkling crust.

What moves that man is when the blind bat taps
His window when he sits alone at night ;
Or when the small bird sounds like some great beast
Among the dead, dry leaves so frail and light ;

when the moths on his night-pillow beat
Such heavy blows he fears they'll break his bones;
when a mouse inside the papered walls,
Comes like a tiger crunching through the stones

In the End

WITH all thy gold, thou canst not make
Time sell his sand ;
With all thy cloth, a thin white shroud
Is Death's command ;
Death gives thee but a poor man's space,
With all thy land.

The beggar in his grave and thou
Must be the same ;
For neither thou nor he shall hear
Men's praise or blame ;
Though thunder and a thousand rocks
Should call thy name.

The Emigrant

YOUTH has no ties,
So let him roam ;
Where'er he goes,
Young blood's at home.

But you, with wife
And children three,
Must leave England,
And cross the sea.

Leave her to men
That love her less ;
Thy love too great
For bitterness.

The Emigrant

When such fine souls

I see depart,

A patriot's love

Must leave my heart.

The Collier's Wife

THE collier's wife had four tall sons
Brought from the pit's mouth dead,
And crushed from foot to head ;
When others brought her husband home,
Had five dead bodies in her room.

Had five dead bodies in her house—
All in a row they lay—
To bury in one day :
Such sorrow in the valley has
Made kindness grow like grass.

Oh, collier, collier, underground,
In fear of fire and gas,
What life more danger has ?
Who fears more danger in this life ?
There is but one—thy wife !

Stars

ONE night I saw ten stars take wing—
Like flowers to butterflies—and fly;
Then I lay down to sleep, a child,
Though when I woke a man was I.

But when I saw the stars again,
So steadfast in their heavenly home;
The same ten thousand years ago;
The same ten thousand years to come—

Methought, what are they laughing at—
How close our cradles are to graves?
Do they, in their eternal pride,
Make merry at our little lives?

And sure, the Moon was laughing too ;

 The great, white Moon, that I could see
Shaking her sides, low in the west,

Like a big rattle in a tree.

Come, Let Me Close

COME, let me close thine eyes with kisses—
And those two lips that day and night
Are opened to a cherry's size,
And cry for Love to kiss them tight.
Let me enjoy thy bosom now,
Sweet Lady, let my head rock there ;
When it is wedged between thy breasts,
Throw over it thy silken hair.

Let me lie close before He comes .
To clasp thy bosom like a leech :
I mean that babe, who'll lie between,
Over whose body I must reach ;
That tyrant babe, whom thou wilt love
Above all earthly things the best :
Though laughing he will trample, kick
And knuckle into each soft breast.

On the Mountain

WHEN from this mighty mountain's top
My wandering eyes go forth,
Trees look like bonnets, fields like flags,
In all those miles of earth.
I see afar big towns look now
Like flocks of sheep washed white ;
And villages—their straggling lambs—
May never meet my sight.

Windows—no more than drops of dew—
Are sparkling in the green ;
The sun in heaven seems small indeed,
To light so vast a scene.
A mighty stretch of land like this,
Doth make me shut my eyes ;
For when I look I fear to see
Its sudden fall or rise.

Infancy

BORN to the world with my hands clenched,
I wept and shut my eyes ;
Into my mouth a breast was forced,
To stop my bitter cries.
I did not know—nor cared to know—
A woman from a man ;
Until I saw a sudden light,
And all my joys began.

From that great hour my hands went forth,
And I began to prove
That many a thing my two eyes saw
My hands had power to move :
My fingers now began to work,
And all my toes likewise ;
And reaching out with fingers stretched,
I laughed, with open eyes.

In Silent Groves

MY walk is now in silent groves,
With grass and moss beneath my feet ;
Which no true poet minds can leave
Until inspired with fancies sweet.
So quiet there that you can hear
Grasshoppers in the grass so green ;
The insect-cuckoos that will call,
And still remain unseen.

In silent groves, where lovers go
To tell those dreams when they confess
That love that's jealous of the air,
And whispers in a wilderness.
There's no black scandal in these groves—
The foul disease that still breaks forth
In other parts, as fast as one
Weak part is healed by Truth.

The Rev. Ebenezer Paul

HE begs from rich men for the poor,
And robs the poor of Christmas dinners.

Ah, cruel Time, to keep alive

For all these years such hoary sinners!

This hard, old man with silvery locks,

With false, white teeth—see how he fawns!

Feel in that hair, and I'll be damned

If thou'lt not find the Devil's horns!

This stack of infamy, that keeps

Dark, greedy thoughts like rats within;

This stack that harbours gentle looks,

Like snakes with their cold, smiling skin;

This gospel-monger, old and bland,

Who prays aloud for other sinners—

He begs from rich men for the poor,

And robs the poor of Christmas dinners.

Nell Barnes

THEY lived apart for three long years,
Bill Barnes and Nell his wife ;
He took his joy from other girls,
She led a wicked life.

Yet ofttimes she would pass his shop,
With some strange man awhile ;
And, looking, meet her husband's frown
With her malicious smile.

Until one day, when passing there,
She saw her man had gone ;
And when she saw the empty shop,
She fell down with a moan.

And when she heard that he had gone
Five thousand miles away ;
And that she'd see his face no more,
She sickened from that day.

To see his face was health and life,
And when it was denied,
She could not eat, and broke her heart—
It was for love she died.

The Bird of Paradise

HERE comes Kate Summers who, for gold,
Takes any man to bed :

“ You knew my friend, Nell Barnes,” said she ;

“ You knew Nell Barnes—she’s dead.

“ Nell Barnes was bad on all you men,

Unclean, a thief as well ;

Yet all my life I have not found

A better friend than Nell.

“ So I sat at her side at last,

For hours, till she was dead ;

And yet she had no sense at all

Of any word I said.

“ For all her cry but came to this—
‘ Not for the world ! Take care :
Don’t touch that bird of paradise,
Perched on the bed-post there ! ’

“ I asked her would she like some grapes,
Some damsons ripe and sweet ;
A custard made with new-laid eggs,
Or tender fowl to eat.

“ I promised I would follow her,
To see her in her grave ;
And buy a wreath with borrowed pence,
If nothing I could save.

“ Yet still her cry but came to this—
‘ Not for the world ! Take care :
Don’t touch that bird of paradise,
Perched on the bedpost there ! ’ ”



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