COLLECTED POEMS OF FORD MADOX HUEFFER

Collected Poems

of Ford Madox (Hueffer)

London
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Number Five John Street Adelphi.
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PREFACE

I DO not wish to apologize for this publication, but I wish to propitiate beforehand those who may object that I am putting out Collected Poems rather than a Selection, and I wish to make some speculations as to the differences between prose and verse as they are written nowadays. I do the latter here because there is no periodical in this town that would print my musings—and quite rightly, because few living souls would wish to read them. Let me then become frankly biographic, a thing which may be permitted to the verse-writing mood.

The collection here presented is made up of reprints of five volumes of verse which have appeared at odd times during the last fifteen years. The last poem in the book was written when I was fifteen, the first, a year ago, so that, roughly speaking, this volume represents the work of twenty-five years.

But the writing of verse hardly appears to me to be a matter of work: it is a process, as far as I am concerned, too uncontrollable. From time to time words in verse form have come into my head and I have written them down, quite powerlessly and without much interest, under the stress of certain emotions. And, as for knowing whether one or the other is good, bad or indifferent, I simply cannot begin to trust myself to make a selection. And, as for trusting any friend to make a selection, one cannot bring oneself to do it either. They have—one's friends—too many mental axes to grind. One will admire certain verses about a place because in that place they were once happy; one will find fault with a certain other paper of verses because it does not seem likely to form a piece of prentice work in a school that he is desirous of founding. I should say that

most of the verses here printed are rather derivative, and too much governed by the passing emotions of the moment. But I simply cannot tell; is it not the function of verse to register passing emotions? Besides, one cherishes vague, pathetic hopes of having written masterpieces unaware, as if one's hackney mare should by accident be got with a winner of the Two Thousand.

With prose, that conscious and workable medium, it is a perfectly different matter. One finds a subject somewhere—in the course of gossip or in the Letters and State Papers of some sovereign deceased, published by the Record Office. Immediately the mind gets to work upon the "form," blocks out patches of matter, of dialogue, of description. If the subject is to grow into a short short-story, one knows that one will start with a short, sharp, definite sentence, so as to set the pace:

"Mr Lamotte," one will write, "returned from fishing. His eyes were red; the ends of his collar, pressed open because he had hung down his head in the depths of his reflection...."

Or, if it is to be a long short-story, we shall qualify the sharpness of the opening sentence and damp it down as thus:

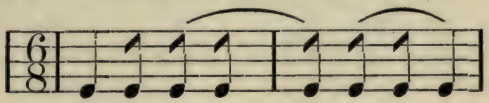
"When, on a late afternoon of July, Mr Lamotte walked up from the river with his rod in his hand..."

Or again, if the subject seems one for a novel, we begin:

"Mr Lamotte had resided at the White House for sixteen years. The property consisted of 627 acres, of which one hundred and forty were park-land intersected by the river Torridge, of forty acres of hop-land..." and so on. We shall proceed to "get in" Mr Lamotte and his property and his ancestry and his landscape and his society. We shall think about these things for a long time and with an ab-

solute certainty of aim; we shall know what we want to do, and—to the measure of the light vouchsafed —we shall do it.

But with verse I just do not know: I do not know anything at all. As far as I am concerned, it just comes. I hear in my head a vague rhythm:



and presently a line will present itself:

"Up here, where the air's very clear,"

Or else one will come from nowhere at all:

"When all the little hills are hid in snow,"

and the rest flows out.

And I confess myself to being as unable to judge the result as I am to influence the production.

And, as I have said, I have no outside "pointers" at all. Whence should I get it? From the public? From the Press? From writers whom I revere? From my publisher?

As for the Press and the Public. My first book of verse was received with extraordinary enthusiasm by the former. The *Times* praised it for a column; the *Daily News* for a column and a half; the *Academy* gave it a page. The Public bought fourteen copies. With the publication of my second volume the publisher failed. The Press devoted to it less space, but stated that I had not belied my earlier promise; the public bought no copies at all. That may have been because the publisher had disappeared. My third volume received nine notices from the Press; I never had any accounts from the publishers, and, since they are quite honest folk, I presume that, had there been any sales, they would have paid me the

few shillings that would have been upon their books. I paid for the publication of the fourth volume and purchased one hundred copies for use as Christmas cards. It received five notices in the Press. (There were no advertisements.) My fifth venture I also subsidized and used for a similar festive purpose. ONE provincial newspaper devoted four lines to it; I believe that two people purchased copies.

It will thus be manifest that, from the Press and the Public I have received no sort of pointer at all, except to suppress these faggots of irregular lines —which are all they are to me.

Is that a test? Or is anything any test? I do not know. I know that I would very willingly cut off my right hand to have written the "Wahlfart nach Kevelaar" of Heine, or "Im Moos," by Annette von Droste. I would give almost anything to have written almost any modern German lyric or some of the ballads of my friend Levin Schücking. These fellows you know. They sit at their high windows in German lodgings; they lean out; it is raining steadily. Opposite them is a shop where herring salad, onions and oranges are sold. A woman with a red petticoat and a black and grey check shawl goes into the shop and buys three onions, four oranges and half a kilo of herring salad. And there is a poem! Hang it all! There is a poem.

But this is England—this is Campden Hill, and we have a literary jargon in which we must write. We *must* write in it or every word will "swear."

> Denn nach Köln am Rheine
> Geht die Procession.

"For the procession is going to Cologne on the Rhine." You could not use the word procession in an English poem. It would not be literary. Yet

when those lines are recited in Germany people weep over them. I have seen fat Frankfort bankers —and Jews at that—weeping when the "Wahlfart" was recited in a red plush theatre with gilt cherubs all over the place.

That I think is why I know nothing about and take very little interest in English poetry. As to my own—that here presented I can say this—there is no single poem in the whole number that I have not been heartily advised by one person or another not to republish. Then comes the publisher —a real publisher, though I imagine a mad one, who offers me money—yes, real money—for the right to publish a Collected Edition! A Collected Edition with nothing left out this publisher commands. What then am I to do? Suppress all or publish all?

To suppress all would be too painful. I have worked at these things; some people will be pleased to read some of them; others will be flattered. They represent emotions, fears, aspirations! And, for the life of me, I cannot tell which, if any, is good and which is the merest trifling.

II

With regard to more speculative matters. I may really say that for a quarter of a century I have kept before me one unflinching aim—to register my own times in terms of my own time, and still more to urge those who are better poets and better prose-writers than myself to have the same aim. I suppose I have been pretty well ignored; I find no signs of my being taken seriously. It is certain that my conviction would gain immensely as soon as another soul could be found to share it. But for a man mad about writing this is a solitary world, and writing

—you cannot write about writing without using foreign words—is a *métier de chien.*

It is something a matter of diction. In France, upon the whole, a poet—and even a quite literary poet—can write in a language that, roughly speaking, any hatter can use. In Germany, the poet writes exactly as he speaks. And these facts do so much towards influencing the poet's mind. If we cannot use the word "procession" we are apt to be precluded from thinking about processions. Now processions (to use no other example) are very interesting and suggestive things, and things that are very much part of the gnat-dance that modern life is. Because, if a people has sufficient interest in public matters to join in huge processions it has reached a certain stage of folk-consciousness. If it will not or cannot do these things it is in yet other stages. Heine's "Procession" was, for instance, not what we should call a procession at all. With us there are definite types—there is the King's Procession at Ascot. There are processions in support of Women's Suffrage and against it; those in support of Welsh Disestablishment or against it. But the procession at Köln was a pilgrimage.

Organized state functions, popular expressions of desire are one symptom; pilgrimages another. But the poet who ignores them all three is to my thinking lost, since in one way or another they embrace the whole of humanity and are mysterious, hazy and tangible. A poet of a sardonic turn of mind will find sport in describing how, in a low pot-house, an emissary of a skilful Government will bribe thirty ruffians at five shillings a head to break up and so discredit a procession in favour of votes for women; yet another poet may describe how a lady in an omnibus, with a certain turn for rhetoric, will persuade the greater number of the other pas-

sengers to promise to join the procession for the saving of a church; another will become emotionalized at the sight of the Sword of Mercy borne by a peer after the Cap of Maintenance borne by yet another. And believe me, to be perfectly sincere, when I say that a poetry whose day cannot find poets for all these things is a poetry that is lacking in some of its members.

So, at least, I see it. Modern life is so extraordinary, so hazy, so tenuous with, still, such definite and concrete spots in it that I am for ever on the look out for some poet who shall render it with all its values. I do not think that there was ever, as the saying is, such a chance for a poet; I am breathless, I am agitated at the thought of having it to begin upon. And yet I am aware that I can do nothing, since with me the writing of verse is not a conscious Art. It is the expression of an emotion, and I can so often not put my emotions into any verse.

I should say, to put a personal confession on record, that the very strongest emotion—at any rate of this class—that I have ever had was when I first went to the Shepherd's Bush Exhibition and came out on a great square of white buildings all outlined with lights. There was such a lot of light—and I think that what I hope for in Heaven is an infinite clear radiance of pure light! There were crowds and crowds of people—or no, there was, spread out beneath the lights, an infinite moving mass of black, with white faces turned up to the light, moving slowly, quickly, not moving at all, being obscured, reappearing.

I know that the immediate reflection will come to almost any reader that this is nonsense or an affectation. "How," he will say, "is any emotion to be roused by the mere first night of a Shepherd's Bush exhibition? Poetry is written about love,

about country lanes, about the singing of birds." I think it is not—not nowadays. We are too far from these things. What we are in, that which is all around us, is the Crowd—the Crowd blindly looking for joy or for that most pathetic of all things, the good time. I think that that is why I felt so profound an emotion on that occasion. It must have been the feeling—not the thought—of all these good, kind, nice people, this immense Crowd suddenly let loose upon a sort of Tom Tiddler's ground to pick up the glittering splinters of glass that are Romance, hesitant but certain of vistas of adventure, if no more than the adventures of their own souls—like cattle in a herd suddenly let into a very rich field and hesitant before the enamel of daisies, the long herbage, the rushes fringing the stream at the end.

I think pathos and poetry are to be found beneath those lights and in those sounds—in the larking of the anæmic girls, in the shoulders of the women in evening dress, in the idealism of a pickpocket slanting through a shadow and imagining himself a hero whose end will be wealth and permanent apartments in the Savoy Hotel. For such dreamers of dreams there are.

That indeed appears to me—and I am writing as seriously as I can—the real stuff of the poetry of our day. Love in country lanes, the song of birds, moonlight—these the poet, playing for safety, and the critic trying to find something safe to praise, will deem the sure cards of the poetic pack. They seem the safe things to sentimentalize over, and it is taken for granted that sentimentalizing is the business of poetry. It is not, of course. Upon the face of it the comfrey under the hedge may seem a safer card to play, for the purpose of poetry, than the portable zinc dustbin left at dawn for the dustman to take.

But it is not really; for the business of poetry is not sentimentalism so much as the putting of certain realities in certain aspects. The comfrey under the hedge, judged by these standards, is just a plant —but the ash-bucket at dawn is a symbol of poor humanity, of its aspirations, its romance, its ageing and its death. The ashes represent the sociable fires, the god of the hearth, of the slumbering, dawn populations; the orange peels with their bright colours represent all that is left of a little party of the night before, when an alliance between families may have failed to be cemented, or being accomplished may have proved a disillusionment or a temporary paradise. The empty tin of infant's food stands for birth; the torn up scrap of a doctor's prescription for death. Yes, even if you wish to sentimentalize, the dustbin is a much safer card to play than the comfrey plant. And, similarly, the anæmic shop-girl at the Exhibition, with her bad teeth and her cheap black frock, is safer than Isolde. She is more down to the ground and much more touching.

Or again, there are the symbols of the great fine things that remain to us. Many of us might confess to being unable to pass Buckingham Palace when the Royal Standard is flying on the flagstaff without a very recognizable emotion that is equivalent to the journalist's phrase, a catching at the throat. For there are symbols of aspiration everywhere. The preposterous white papier mâché fountain is a symbol, so are the preposterous gilded gates, so are the geraniums and the purplish-grey pencil of Westminster Cathedral tower that overhangs the palace. There are, upon the standard, three leopards passant which are ancient and suggestive things; there is the lion rampant which is pretentious, and a harp which is a silly sort of thing to have upon a flag.

But it is a rich spot; a patch of colour that is left to us. As the ugly marquess said of the handsome footman:

"Mon dieu, comme nous les faisons—et comme ils nous font!"

For papier mâché and passant leopards and all, these symbols are what the crowd desires and what they stand for made the crowd what it is. And the absurd, beloved traditions continue. The excellent father of a family in jack-boots, white breeches, sword, helmet strap, gauntlets, views the preparation of his accoutrements and the flag that he carries before his regiment as something as part of his sacred profession as, to a good butler, is the family plate. That is an odd, mysterious human thing, the stuff for poetry.

We might confess again to having had emotions at the time of the beginning of the South African War—we were, say, in the gallery at Drury Lane and the audience were all on fire; we might confess to having had emotions in the Tivoli Music Hall when, just after a low comedian had "taken off" Henry VIII, it was announced that Edward VII was dying, and the whole audience stood up and sang "God Save the King"—as a genuine hymn that time. We may have had similar emotions at seeing the little Prince of Wales standing unsteadily on a blue foot-stool at the coronation, a young boy in his garter robes—or at a Secret Consistory at the Vatican, when the Holy Father ceremonially whispered to one Cardinal or another.

War-like emotions, tears at the passing of a sovereign, being touched at the sight of a young prince or a sovereignly pontifical prisoner of the Vatican—this is perhaps the merest digging out of fossils from a bed of soft clay that the crowd is. God knows we may "just despise" democracy or

the writing of laureate's odes, but the putting of the one thing in juxtaposition with the other—that seems to me to be much more the business of the poet of to-day than setting down on paper what he thinks about the fate of Brangäne, not because any particular "lesson" may be learned, but because such juxtapositions suggest emotions.

For myself, I have been unable to do it; I am too old, perhaps, or was born too late—anything you like. But there it is—I would rather read a picture in verse of the emotions and environment of a Goodge Street anarchist than recapture what songs the sirens sang. That after all was what François Villon was doing for the life of his day, and I should feel that our day was doing its duty by posterity much more surely if it were doing something of the sort.

Can it then be done? In prose of course it can. But, in poetry? Is there something about the mere framing of verse, the mere sound of it in the ear, that it must at once throw its practitioner or its devotee into an artificial frame of mind? Verse presumably quickens the perceptions of its writer as do hashish or ether. But must it necessarily quicken them to the perception only of the sentimental, the false, the hackneyed aspects of life? Must it make us, because we live in cities, babble incessantly of green fields; or because we live in the twentieth century must we deem nothing poetically good that did not take place before the year 1603?

This is not saying that one should not soak oneself with the Greek traditions: study every fragment of Sappho; delve ages long in the works of Bertran de Born; translate for years the minnelieder of Walther von der Vogelweide or that we should forget the bardic chants of Patric of the Seven Kingdoms. Let us do anything in the world that will widen our

perceptions. We are the heirs of all the ages. But, in the end, I feel fairly assured that the purpose of all these pleasant travails is the right appreciation of such facets of our own day as God will let us perceive.

I remember seeing in a house in Hertford an American cartoon representing a dog pursuing a cat out of the door of a particularly hideous tenement house, and beneath this picture was inscribed the words: "This is life—one damn thing after another." Now I think it would be better to be able to put that sentiment into lyric verse than to remake a ballad of the sorrows of Cuchullain or to paraphrase the Book of Job. I do not mean to say that Job is not picturesque; I do not mean to say that it is not a good thing to have the Book of the Seven Sorrows of whom you will in the background of your mind or even colouring your outlook. But it is better to see life in the terms of one damn thing after another, vulgar as is the phraseology or even the attitude, than to render it in terms of withering gourds and other poetic paraphernalia. It is, in fact, better to be vulgar than affected, at any rate if you practise poetry.

III

One of my friends, a really serious critic, has assured me that my poem called "To All the Dead" was not worth publishing, because it is just Browning. Let me, to further this speculation, just confess that I have never read Browning, and that, roughly speaking, I cannot read poetry at all. I never really have been able to. And then let me analyse this case, because it is the plight of many decent, serious people, friends of mine.

As boys we—I and my friends—read Shakespeare

with avidity, Virgil to the extent of getting at least two Books of the Æneid by heart, Horace with pleasure and Ovid's Persephone Rapta with delight. We liked very much the Bacchae of Euripides—I mean that we used to sit down and take a read in these things sometimes apart from the mere exigencies of the school curriculum. A little later Herrick moved us to ecstasy and some of Donne; we liked passages of Fletcher, of Marlowe, of Webster and of Kyd. At that time we really loved the Minnesingers, and fell flat in admiration before anything of Heine. The Troubadors and even the Northern French Epics we could not read—French poetry did not exist for us at all. If we read a French poem at all, we had always to read it twice, once to master the artificial rhythm, once for the sense.

Between seventeen and eighteen we read Rossetti, Catullus, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus and still Shakespeare, Herrick, Heine, Elizabethan and Jacobean lyrics, Crashaw, Herbert and Donne. Towards eighteen we tried Swinburne, Tennyson, Browning and Pope. We could not read any of them—we simply and physically couldn't sit down with them in the hand for long enough to master more than a few lines. We never read any Tennyson at all except for the fragment about the Eagle; never read any Swinburne at all except for the poem that contains the words "I thank with faint thanksgiving whatever Gods there be," and the one beginning "Ask nothing more of me, Sweet"; we also read a German translation of the ballad whose stanzas end: "This is the end of every man's desire." Of Browning we read sufficient to "get the hang of" *Fifine at the Fair*, the *Blot on the Scutcheon* for the lyric *There's a woman like a dewdrop* and *Meeting at Night* and *Parting in the Morning* and *Oh to be in*

England. I have a faint idea that we may have read *The Bishop Orders his Tomb* and parts of *Asolando.* So that, as things go, we may be said never to have read any Browning at all. (I do not mean to say that what I did read did not influence me, so that even at this late date that influence may be found on such a poem as "To all the Dead," or "The Starling." I am not, I mean, trying to dodge the implication that I may derive from Browning. Influences are queer things, and there is no knowing when or where they may take you. But, until the other day, I should have said that Browning was the last of the poets that I should have taken consciously as a model. The other day, however—about a month ago—some one insisted, sorely against my wishes, on reading to me the beginning of the *Flight of the Duchess*, as far as "And the whole is our Duke's country," that most triumphant expression of feudal loyalty. And my enthusiasm knew no bounds, so that, if ever the Muse should visit me again, it may well be Browningese that I shall write, for there is no passage in literature that I should more desire to have written.)

But at any rate, the attempt to read Tennyson, Swinburne and Browning and Pope—in our teens —gave me and the friends I have mentioned, a settled dislike for poetry that we have never since quite got over. We seemed to get from them the idea that all poets must of necessity write affectedly, at great length, with many superfluous words—that poetry, of necessity, was something boring and pretentious. And I fancy that it is because the greater part of humanity get that impression from those poets that few modern men or women read verse at all.

To such an extent did that feeling overmaster us that, although we subsequently discovered for our-

selves Christina Rossetti—who strikes us still as far and away the greatest master of words and moods that any art has produced—I am conscious that we regarded her as being far more a prose writer than a poet at all. Poetry being something pretentious, "tol-lol" as the phrase then was, portentous, brow-beating, affected—this still, small, private voice gave the impression of not being verse at all. Such a phrase describing lizards amongst heath as: "like darted lightnings here and there perceived yet no-where dwelt upon," or such a sentence as: "Quoth one to-morrow shall be like to-day but much more sweet"—these things gave an exquisite pleasure, but it was a pleasure comparable rather to that to be had from reading Flaubert. It was comparable rather to that which came from reading the last sentences of Herodias. "Et tous trois ayant pris la tête de Jokanaan s'en allait vers Galillée. Comme elle était très lourde ils la portaient alternativement." I do not presume to say exactly whence the pleasure comes except in so far as that I believe that such exact, formal and austere phrases can to certain men give a pleasure beyond any other. And it was this emotion that we received from Christina Rossetti.

But still, sub-consciously, I am aware that we did not regard her as a poet.

And, from that day onwards I may say that we have read no poetry at all—at any rate we have read none unprofessionally until just the other day. The poets of the nineties—Dowson, Johnson, Davidson and the rest—struck us as just nuisances, writing in derivative language uninteresting matters that might have been interesting had they been expressed in the much more exquisite medium of prose. We got, perhaps, some pleasure from reading the poems—not the novels—of George Meredith,

and a great deal from those of Mr Hardy, whom we do regard as a great, queer, gloomy and splendid poet. We read also—by some odd impulse—the whole of Mr Doughty's *Dawn in Britain*, that atrocious and wonderful epic in twelve volumes which is, I think, the longest and most queerly impressive poem in modern English. We read it with avidity; we could not tear ourselves away from it, and we wrote six reviews of it because no professional reviewers could be found to give the time for reading it. It was a queer adventure.

That then is the history of twenty years of reading verse, and I think I may say that, for men whose life-business is reading, we have read practically no poetry at all. And, during those twenty years we should have said with assurance that poetry was an artificial, a boring, an unnecessary thing.

IV

But, about five years ago, we—I and that group of friends—began to think of founding a periodical—one is always thinking of founding periodicals! We had then to think of what place verse must take in the scheme of things. With our foreign ideas in which academic palms and precedence figure more strongly than they do in the minds of most freeborn islanders, it did not take us long to arrive at the conclusion that poetry must have the very first place in that journal—not because it was a living force, but just because it was dead and must be treated with deference. Moreover, if I may make a further confession, our express aim in founding the periodical in question, was to print a poem by Mr Hardy, a poem that other periodicals had found too—let us say—outspoken for them to print. Now it

would have been ridiculous to found an immense paper for the express purpose of printing one particular poem and not to give that poem the utmost pride of place.

So we printed *A Sunday Morning Tragedy* first and the rest in a string after it. It seemed proper, French and traditional to do so.

And then we began to worry our poor heads about poetry. We had, perforce, to read a great deal of it, and much of what we read seemed to be better stuff than we had expected. We came, for instance, upon the poems of Mr Yeats. Now for ten or twenty years we had been making light of Mr Yeats; we used to sniff irritably at *I will arise and go now*, and to be worried by *The Countess Kathleen*. Mr Yeats appeared to be a merely "literary" poet; an annoying dilettante. I do not now know whether Mr Yeats has changed or whether we have, but I am about in a moment to try to make an *amende honorable*.

At any rate we came upon the work of Mr Yeats, of Mr De la Mare, of Mr Flint, of Mr D. H. Lawrence, and upon suggestions of power in Mr Pound's derivations from the Romance writers. And gradually it has forced itself upon us that there is a new quality, a new power of impressionism that is open to poetry, and that is not so much open to prose. It it is a quality that attracted us years ago to the poems of Mr Hardy and of Mr George Meredith. (I know that my younger friends will start ominously at this announcement, that they will come round to my house and remonstrate seriously for many weary hours. But I must make the best of that.)

For the fact is that, in Mr Yeats as in Mr Hardy, there are certain qualities that very singularly unite them—qualities not so much of diction or of mind but qualities that can only be expressed in pictorial

terms. For when I think of Mr Hardy's work I seem to see a cavernous darkness, a darkness filled with wood-smoke, touched here and there with the distant and brooding glow of smothered flame. When I think of Mr Yeats' work I seem to see a grey, thin mist over a green landscape, the mist here and there being pierced by a sparkle of dew, by the light shot from a gem in a green cap. (I have tried to write this as carefully as I can, so as to express very precisely what is in the end a debt of sheer gratitude. I mean that really and truly that is the sort of feeling that I have—as if I had discovered two new countries—the country of the hardly illumined and cavernous darkness, the country of the thin grey mist over the green fields, and as if those countries still remained for me to travel in.)

It will at first sight appear that here is a contradicting of the words with which we set out—the statement that it is the duty of the poet to reflect his own day. But there is no contradiction. It is the duty of the poet to reflect his own day as it appears to him, as it has impressed itself upon him. Because I and my friends have, as the saying is, rolled our humps mostly in a landscape that is picked out with the red patches of motor-bus sides, it would be the merest provincialism to say that the author of *Innisfree* should not have sat in the cabins of county Galway or of Connemara, or wherever it is, or that the author of the *Dynasts* should not have wandered about a country called Wessex reading works connected with Napoleon. We should not wish to limit Mr Yeats' reading to the daily papers, nor indeed do we so limit our own, any more than we should wish to limit the author of that most beautiful impression, the *Listeners*, to the purlieus of Bedford Street where the publishers' offices are.

What worried and exasperated us in the poems of the late Lord Tennyson, the late Lewis Morris, the late William Morris, the late—well, whom you like—is not their choice of subject, it is their imitative handling of matter, of words, it is their derivative attitude. . . .

Reading is an excellent thing; it is also experience, and both Mr Yeats and Mr De la Mare have read a great deal. But it is an experience that one should go through not in order to acquire imitative faculties, but in order to find—oneself. Roughly speaking, the late Victorian writers imitated Malory or the Laxdaela Saga and commented upon them; roughly speaking, again, the poets of to-day record their emotions at receiving the experience of the emotions of former writers. It is an attitude critical rather than imitative, and to the measure of its truth it is the truer poetical attitude.

The measure of the truth has to be found. It would be an obvious hypocrisy in men whose first unashamed action of the day is to open the daily paper for the cricket scores and whose poetic bag and baggage is as small as I have related—it would be an obvious hypocrisy in us to pretend to have passed the greater part of our existences in romantic woods. But it would be a similar hypocrisy in Mr De la Mare, Mr Yeats, or Mr Hardy to attempt to render Life in the terms of the sort of Futurist picture that life is to me and my likes.

To get a sort of truth, a sort of genuineness into your attitude towards the life that God makes you lead, to follow up your real preferences, to like as some of us like the hard, bitter, ironical German poets, the life of restaurants, of Crowds, of flashed impressions, to love, as we may love, in our own way, the Blessed Virgin, Saint Katharine or the sardonic figure of Christina of Milan—and to

render it—that is one good thing. Or again, to be genuinely Irish, with all the historic background of death, swords, flames, mists, sorrows, wakes, and again mists—to love those things and the Irish sanctities and Paganisms—that is another good thing if it is truly rendered; the main thing is the genuine love and the faithful rendering of the received impression.

The actual language—the vernacular employed—is a secondary matter. I prefer personally the language of my own day, a language clear enough for certain matters, employing slang where slang is felicitous and vulgarity where it seems to me that vulgarity is the only weapon against dullness. Mr Doughty, on the other hand—and Mr Doughty is a great poet—uses a barbarous idiom as if he were chucking pieces of shale at you from the top of a rock. Mr Yeats makes literal translations from the Irish; Mr Hardy does not appear to bother his head much about words, he drags them in as he likes. Mr De la Mare and Mr Flint are rather literary; Mr Pound as often as not is so unacquainted with English idioms as to be nearly unintelligible.

(God forbid, by the by, that I should seem to arrogate to myself a position as a poet side by side with Mr De la Mare, or, for the matter of that, with Mr Pound. But in stating my preferences I am merely, quite humbly, trying to voice what I imagine will be the views or the aspirations, the preferences or the prejudices, of the poet of my day and circumstances when he shall at last appear and voice the life of dust, toil, discouragement, excitement, and enervation that I and many millions lead to-day.)

When that poet does come it seems to me that his species will be much that of the gentlemen I

have several times mentioned. His attitude towards life will be theirs; his circumstances only will be different. An elephant is an elephant whether he pours, at an African water-hole, mud and water over his free and scorched flanks, or whether, in the Zoological Gardens, he carries children about upon his back.

I
"HIGH GERMANY"

The following poems were printed in the volume called "High Germany," published by Messrs Duckworth in 1911. "The Starling" also appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*.

THE STARLING

IT'S an odd thing how one changes . . .
Walking along the upper ranges
Of this land of plains,
In this month of rains,
On a drying road where the poplars march along,
Suddenly,
With a rush of wings flew down a company,
A multitude, throng upon throng,
Of starlings,
Successive orchestras of song,
Flung, like the babble of surf,
On to the roadside turf—

And so, for a mile, for a mile and a half—a long way,
Flight follows flight
Thro' the still grey light
Of the steel-grey day,
Whirling beside the road in clamorous crowds,
Never near, never far, in the shade of the poplars and
clouds.

It's an odd thing how one changes . . .
And what strikes me now as most strange is:
After the starlings had flown
Over the plain and were gone,
There was one of them stayed on alone
In the trees; it chattered on high,
Lifting its bill to the sky,
Distending its throat,
Crooning harsh note after note,
In soliloquy,
Sitting alone.

And after a hush
It gurgled as gurgled a well,
Warbled as warbles a thrush,
Had a try at the sound of a bell
And mimicked a jay....
But I,
Whilst the starling mimicked on high
Pulsing its throat and its wings,
I went on my way
Thinking of things,
Onwards and over the range
And that's what is strange.

I went down 'twixt tobacco and grain,
Descending the chequer board plain
Where the apples and maize are;
Under the loopholed gate
In the village wall
Where the goats clatter over the cobbles
And the intricate, straw-littered ways are...
The ancient watchman hobbles
Cloaked, with his glasses of horn at the end of his nose,
Wearing velvet short hose
And a three-cornered hat on his pate,
And his pike-staff and all.
And he carries a proclamation,
An invitation,
To great and small,
Man and beast
To a wedding feast,
And he carries a bell and rings...
From the steeple looks down a saint,
From a doorway a queenly peasant
Looks out, in her bride-gown of lace
And her sister, a quaint little darling
Who twitters and chirps like a starling.

And this little old place,
It's so quaint,
It's so pleasant;
And the watch bell rings, and the church bell rings
And the wedding procession draws nigh,
Bullock carts, fiddlers and goods.
But I
Pass on my way to the woods
Thinking of things.

Years ago I'd have stayed by the starling,
Marking the iridescence of his throat,
Marvelling at the change of his note;
I'd have said to the peasant child: "Darling
Here's a groschen and give me a kiss" ... I'd have
stayed
To sit with the bridesmaids at table,
And have taken my chance
Of a dance
With the bride in her laces
Or the maids with the blonde, placid faces
And ribbons and crants in the stable ...

But the church bell still rings
And I'm far away out on the plain,
In the grey weather amongst the tobacco and grain,
And village and gate and wall
Are a long grey line with the church over all
And miles and miles away in the sky
The starlings go wheeling round on high
Over the distant ranges.
The violin strings
Thrill away and the day grows more grey.
And I ... I stand thinking of things.
Yes, it's strange how one changes.

IN THE LITTLE OLD MARKET-PLACE

(To the Memory of A.V.)

It rains, it rains,
From gutters and drains
And gargoyles and gables:
It drips from the tables
That tell us the tolls upon grains,
Oxen, asses, sheep, turkeys and fowls
Set into the rain-soaked wall
Of the old Town Hall.

The mountains being so tall
And forcing the town on the river,
The market's so small
That, with the wet cobbles, dark arches and all,
The owls
(For in dark rainy weather the owls fly out
Well before four), so the owls
In the gloom
Have too little room
And brush by the saint on the fountain
In veering about.

The poor saint on the fountain!
Supported by plaques of the giver
To whom we're beholden;
His name was de Sales
And his wife's name von Mangel.
(Now is he a saint or archangel?)
He stands on a dragon
On a ball, on a column
Gazing up at the vines on the mountain:
And his falchion is golden.

And his wings are all golden.
He bears golden scales
And in spite of the coils of his dragon, without hint
of alarm or invective
Looks up at the mists on the mountain.

(Now what saint or archangel
Stands winged on a dragon,
Bearing golden scales and a broad bladed sword all
golden?
Alas, my knowledge
Of all the saints of the college,
Of all these glimmering, olden
Sacred and misty stories
Of angels and saints and old glories...
Is sadly defective.)
The poor saint on the fountain...

On top of his column
Gazes up sad and solemn.
But is it towards the top of the mountain
Where the spindrifty haze is
That he gazes?
Or is it into the casement
Where the girl sits sewing?
There's no knowing.

Hear it rain!
And from eight leaden pipes in the ball he stands on,
That has eight leaden and copper bands on,
There gurgle and drain
Eight driblets of water down into the basin.
And he stands on his dragon
And the girl sits sewing
High, very high in her casement
And before her are many geraniums in a parket
All growing and blowing

In box upon box
From the gables right down to the basement
With the frescoes and carvings and paint . . .

The poor saint!
It rains and it rains,
In the market there isn't an ox,
And in all the emplacement
For wagons there isn't a wagon,
Not a stall for a grape or a raisin,
Not a soul in the market
Save the saint on his dragon
With the rain dribbling down in the basin,
And the maiden that sews in the casement.

They are still and alone,
Mutterseelens alone,
And the rain dribbles down from his heels and his crown,
From wet stone to wet stone.
It's as grey as at dawn,
And the owls, grey and fawn,
Call from the little town hall
With its arch in the wall,
Where the fire-hooks are stored.

From behind the flowers of her casement
That's all gay with the carvings and paint,
The maiden gives a great yawn,
But the poor saint—
No doubt he's as bored!
Stands still on his column
Uplifting his sword
With never the ease of a yawn
From wet dawn to wet dawn . . .

TO ALL THE DEAD

I

A CHINESE Queen on a lacquered throne
With a dragon as big as the side of a house,
All golden, and silent and sitting alone
In an empty house.

With the shadows above and the shadows behind,
And the Queen with a paper white, rice white face,
As still as a partridge, as still as a mouse,
With slanting eyes you would say were blind—
In a dead white face.

And what does she think, and what does she see,
With her face as still as a frozen pool is,
And her air as old as the oldest sea,
Where the oldest ice of the frozen Pole is?

She should have been dead nine thousand year...
But there come in three score and sixty coolies
With a veil of lawn as large as a lake,
And the veil blows here and shimmers there
In the unseen winds of the shadowy house.
And dragons flew in the shadowy air,
And there were chrysanthemums everywhere,
And butterflies and a coral snake
All round the margin of the lake.

For the Prince has come to court the Queen
Still sitting on high on her lacquered throne
With the golden dragon: and all the sheen
And shimmer and shine of a thousand wantons
In silken stuffs, with ivory lutes
And slanting eyes and furred blue boots
That moved in the light of a thousand lanthorns...

It all dies down, and the Queen sits there,
She should have been dead nine thousand year.

II

Now it happened that in the course of to-day
(The Queen was last night) in the rue de la Paix
In a room that was old and darkish and musty,
For most of the rooms are quaintly cranky
In the rue de la Paix,
For when it was new the Grande Armée
Tramped all its legions down this way.

But I sat there, and a friendly Yankee
Was lecturing me on the nature of things
(It's a way Americans have!) He was cranky,
Just as much as his rooms and his chairs and his tables.
But the window stood open and over the way
I saw that the house with the modernest facings
Had an old tiled roof with mansards and gables.
It housed a jeweller, two modistes,
A vendor of fans; and the topmost sign
Announced in a golden double line
A salon of Chinese chiropodists.

And that is Paris from heel to crown
Plate-glass in the street and jewels and lacings
And cranky rooms on the upper floors
With rusty locks and creaking doors

But of what my American friend was saying
I haven't a thought—there was too much noise
Through the open windows—the motors braying,
The clatter of hoofs in a steady stream,
And a scream
Unceasing from twenty paper boys,
With twenty versions to take your choice,
In styles courageous or gay or rococco,
Of clamorous news about Morocco...

III

And suddenly he said: "Sandusky!"
Now what was he talking of there in his musky,
Worm-eaten rooms of the rue de la Paix?
—Of his youth of jack rabbits and peanuts and snakes
When all was silent about the Lakes.
Now what is the name of them? Lake Ladoga?
No, no, that's in Russia. It's Ticonderoga,
Ontario, Champlin, each with their woods,
And never a house for miles and miles
And the boys in their boats floated on by the piles
Of old wigwams where shreds of blankets dangled.
And they caught their jack rabbits, lit bonfires and angled
In shallows for catfish. That's it, in Sandusky!
The Bay of Sandusky.

And then I remembered with grey, clear precision,
And I saw—yes I saw—looking over the way
Two Chinese chiropodists, villainous fellows,
With faces of sulphur—and lemon—yellows,
Gaze with that gaze that's half fanatic,
Part atrocious and partly sweet,
Each from a window of his own attic
At a mannequin on my side of the street,
And each grinned and girned in his Manchester blue,
And smirked with his eyes and his pig-tail too.
And somehow they made me feel sick; but I lost them
At the word "Sandusky." A landscape crossed them;
A scene no more nor less than a vision,
All clear and grey in the rue de la Paix.

It must have been seven years ago,
I was out on a river whose name I've forgotten;
The Hudson perhaps or the Kotohotten.
It doesn't much matter. Do you know the Hudson?

A sort of a Moselle with New York duds on,
There are crags and castles, a distance all grey,
Rocks, forests and elbows. But castles of Jay
And William H. Post and Mrs Poughkeepsie—
Imagine a Moselle that's thoroughly tipsy,
A nightmare of ninety American castles
With English servants trained up like vassals,
Of Hiram P. Ouese who's a fortune from pills for the liver.

Anyhow, I've forgotten the name of the river.

And the steamer steamed upwards between the hills
And passed through the rapids they called the Narrows
'Twixt the high grey banks where the firs grow jagged,
And the castles ceased and the forest grew ragged,
And the steamer belched forth sparks and stayed
At a wooden village, then grunted and swayed
Out to midstream and round a reach
Where the river widened and swirled about,
And we slowed in the current where black snags stuck out,
And suddenly we saw a beach—

A grey old beach and some old grey mounds
That seemed to silence the steamer's sounds;
So still and old and grey and ragged.
For there they lay, the tumuli, barrows,
The Indian graves....

IV

And it wasn't so much the wampumed Braves,
Eagle feathers, jade axes and totems and arrows
That I thought about, for ten minutes later
I was up and away from the Rue de la Paix

In a train for Trêves.
But the word "Sandusky" still hung in my brain
As we went through greeny grey Lorraine
In a jolting train,
And then bargained for rooms with a German waiter.
Or it wasn't even in great concern
For the fate of "Sandusky Bay."—My friend
Pictured it thronged with American villas,
Dutch Porticos and Ionic pillars.
So that no boy's boat can land on the shores,
For the high-bred owners of dry goods stores
Forbid the practice. The villa lawns,
Pitch-pine canoes with America's daughters
In a sort of a daily Henley regatta
And the bright parasols of Japanese paper
Keep up a ceaseless, endless chatter,
In the endless, ceaseless girl graduate story
Where once there were silence, jack-rabbits and snakes,
And o'er all the gay clatter there floats old Glory—
The flag of the States, from a calico shop.

But stop!
I am not lamenting about the Lakes.

For, as grey dawns roll on to grey dawns,
Some things must surely come to an end,
Even old silences over old waters
Even here in Trêves the Porta Nigra
That isn't so much a gaunt black ruin,
As a great black whole—a Roman gate-way,
As high as a mountain, as black as a jail—
Even here, even here, America's daughters,
Long toothed old maids with a camera
(For even they must know decay,
And the passage of time, hasting, hasting away!)
And the charm of the past grows meagre and meagrer.
Though through it all the Porta Nigra

Keeps its black, hard and grim completeness,
As if no fleet minutes with all their fleetness
Could rub down its surface.
But we've walled it in in a manner of speaking
With electric trams that go sparking and streaking
And filling the night with squeals and jangles
As iron wheels grind on iron angles....

And nobody cares and nobody grieves
And all the spires and towers of Trêves
Shade upwards into the sooty skies,
And you dig up here a sword or a chalice,
Some bones, some teeth and some golden bangles
And several bricks from the Cæsar's Palace.

V

And so I come back to this funny old town
Where professors argue each other down
And every one is in seven movements
For every kind of Modern Improvements;
And there isn't a moment of real ease,
But students come from the seven seas
And we boast a professor of Neo-Chinese—
A thing to astonish the upland heather—
And more than the universities
Of all High Germany put together
Can show the like of.
The upland heather
It stretches for miles and miles and miles
Wine-purple and brooding and ancient and blasted,
An endless trackless, heather forest,
And so, between whiles,
When my mind's all reeling with Modern Movements
And my eyes are weary, my head at its sorest
And the best of beer has lost its zest,
I go up there to get a rest
And think of the dead....

For it's nothing but dead and dead and dying
Dead faiths, dead loves, lost friends and the flying,
Fleet minutes that change and ruin our shows,
And the dead leaves flitter and autumn goes,
And the dead leaves flitter down thick to the ground,
And pomps go down and queens go down
And time flows on, and flows and flows.

But don't mistake me, the leaves are wet
And most of their copper splendour is rotten
Like most of the dead—and still and forgotten,
And I don't feel a spark of regret
Not a spark....

I am sitting up here on a sort of a mound
And the dull red sun has just done sinking
And it's grown by this woodside fully dark
And I'm just thinking....
And the valley lands and the forests and tillage
Are wrapped in mist. There's the lights of a village,
Of one—of three—of four!—
Four I can count from this high old mound...
In Tilly's time you could count eighteen...
You know of Tilly? A general
Who ravaged this land. There was Prince Eugene,
And Marshal Saxe and Wallenstein,
And God knows who... They are dead men all
With tombs in cathedrals here and there,
Just food for tourists. It's rather funny,
They ravaged these cornfields and burned the hamlets,
They drove off the cattle and took the honey,
And clocks and coin and chests and camlets:
Reduced the numbers to four from eighteen;
You can see four glimmers of light thro' the gloom.
But as for Marshal Wallenstein,
No doubt he's somewhere in some old tomb

With a marble pillow beneath his head.
He was shot. Or he wasn't. Anyhow he's dead!
And I'm sitting here on an old, smashed mound.
And the wood-leaves are flittering down to the ground.
And I'm sitting here and just thinking and wondering,
Clear thoughts and pictures, dull thoughts and blundering.
It's all one. But I wonder . . . I wonder . . .

And under
The earth of the barrow there's something moving
Or no—not moving. Yes, shoving, shoving,
Through the thick, dark earth—a fox or a mole.
Phui! But it's dark! I can't grasp the whole
Of my argument—No. I'm not dropping to sleep!
(I can hear the leaves in the dark, cold wood!
That's a boar by his rustling!) "*From good to good,*
And good to better you say we go."
(There's an owl overhead.) "*You say that's so?*"
My American friend of the rue de la Paix?
"*Grow better and better from day to day.*"
Well, well I had a friend that's not a friend to-day;
Well, well, I had a love who's resting in the clay
Of a suburban cemetery. "*Friend,*
My Yankee friend." (He's mighty heavy and tusky,
Judged by his rustlings, that old boar in the wood)
"*From good to good!*
Have you found a better bay than old Sandusky?
Or I a better friend than the one that's left me?"
"*No Argument?—Well I'm not arguing*
I came out here to think"—
Now what's that thing
That's coursing o'er dead leaves. It's not a boar!
Some sort of woman! A Geheimrath's cook
Come out to meet her lover of the Ninth—

An Uhlan Regiment! You know the Uhlans,
Who charged at Mars La Tour; that's on their colours.

But that little wretch.
Whoever heard such kissing! Sighs now! Groans!
In the copper darkness of these wet, high forests.
Well, well, that's no affair of mine to-night.
I came out here though, yes, I'd an engagement
With Major Hahn to give him his revenge—
What was it? At roulette? But I'd a headache!
I came out here to think about that Queen!
The Chinese one—the one I saw in Paris.
To-night's the thirtieth... the thirty-first.
Why, yes, it's All Souls' Eve. That's why I'm morbid
With thoughts of All the Dead... That Chinese Queen
She never kissed her lover. But a queer,
A queer, queer look came out on her rice white face!
I never knew such longing was in the world,
Though not a feature stirred in her! No kisses!
But there she wavered just behind his back
With her slanting eyes. No moth about a flame,
No seabird in the storm round a lighthouse glare
Was e'er so lured to the ruin and wreck of love.
And he knelt there with such a queer, queer face
A queer, queer smile, and his uplifted hands
He prayed as we pray to a Queen in dragon silk;
His hands rubbed palm on palm. And so she swayed
And swayed just like a purple butterfly
Above the open jaws of a coral snake.

But she
Should have been dead nine thousand years and more,
Says our Chinese professor. For such acting
Was proper to the days and time of TSüang:

It's hopelessly demoded, dead and gone!
To-day we have—Chinese chiropodists
Who smile like toads at Paris mannequins
In the sacred name of Progress. Well, well, well!
I'm not regretting it—No vain regrets!
What's that....

Out of the loom of the Philosopher's wood
Two figures brushing on the frozen grass.
The Uhlan and the cook. So I cried out:
"So late at night and not yet in the barracks!
Aren't you afraid of ghosts?" . . . "Oh ghosts! oh
ghosts,"
I got my answer: "Friend,
In our old home the air's so thick with ghosts
You couldn't breathe if they were an objection!"
And so I said: "Well, well!" to make them pass....

Just a glimmer of light there was across the grass
And on my barrow mound. Upon his head
The gleam of a helmet, and some sort of pelt
About his shoulders and the loom of a spear.
You never know these German regiments,
The oddest uniforms they have; and as for her
Her hair was all across her shoulders and her face,
Woodland embraces bring the hairpins out...
"My friend," I said, "you'd better hurry home
Or else you'll lose your situation!" They
Bickered in laughter and the man just said:
"You're sitting on it!"
So I moved a little,
Apologetically, just as it
It was his table in a restaurant.
So he said calmly, looking down at me:
"They call these mounds the Hunnen Gräber—
Graves
Of Huns—a modern, trifling folk!

We've slept in them well on nine thousand years
My wife and I. The dynasty TSüang
Then reigned in China—well, you know their ways
Of courting. But your specialty just now
I understand's not human life but death.
I died with a wolf at my throat, this woman here
With a sword in her stomach. Yes she fell on it
To keep me company in that tumulus.
Millions and millions of dead there lie round here
In the manœuvre grounds of the Seventeenth.
Oh, yes, I'm up to date, why not, why not?
When they've the Sappers here in garrison
The silly chaps come digging in these mounds
For practice; but they've not got down to us.
The Seventeenth just scutter up and down
At scaling practice and that's rather fun.
There was a sergeant took a chap by the ear
Last year and threw him bodily down the mound;
Then the recruit up with his bayonet
And stuck him through the neck—no end of things
We find for gossip in nine thousand years!
A Mongol people? Yes of course we were
I knew her very well that Queen who loved,
With the rice white face—"Ta-why's" her proper name
And that adultery bred heaps of trouble!
You've heard of Troy? "Tra-hai's" the real name
As Ta-why's Helen. Well, you know all that?
That trouble sent us here, being burnt out
By the King called Ko-ha! And we wandered on
In just ten years of burning towns. This slave
My wife came from Irkutsk way to the east
Where the tundra is—You know the nightingales
Come there in spring, and so they buried us
Finger to finger as the ritual is.
Not know the ritual? Well, a mighty chief
Is buried in a chamber like a room

Walled round with slabs of stone. But mighty lovers
Lie on their backs at both arms' length, so far
That just each little finger touches. Well
That's how they buried us. A hundred years
It took to get accustomed to the change.
We lay just looking up—just as you might
Upwards through quiet water at the stars,
The roots of the grass, and other buryings,
Lying remembering and touching fingers.
Just still and quiet. Then I heard a whisper
Lasting a hundred years or so; "Your lips,"
It said, "Your lips! your lips! your lips!" And then
It might have been five more score years. I felt
Her fingers crawling, crawling, up my wrist.
And always the voice, call, calling; "Give your lips!"

It must have taken me a thousand years
—The Dead are patient—just to know that she
Was calling for my lips. What an embrace!
My God what an embrace was ours through the Earth!
My friend, if you should chance to meet Old Death
That unprogressive tyrant, tell him this,
He execrates my name—but tell him this—
He calls me Radical! Red Socialist,
That sort of thing. But you just tell him this,
The revolutionary leader of his realms
Got his ambition from his dead girl's lips.
Tell him in future he should spare hot lovers,
Though that's too late! We're working through the earth,
By the score, by the million. Half his empire's lost.
How can he fight us? He has but one dart
For every lover of the sons of Ahva!
You call her Eve. This is a vulgar age"...
And so beside the woodland in the sheen
And shimmer of the dewlight, crescent moon

And dew wet leaves I heard the cry "Your lips!
Your lips! Your lips." It shook me where I sat,
It shook me like a trembling, fearful reed,
The call of the dead. A multitudinous
And shadowy host glimmered and gleamed,
Face to face, eye to eye, heads thrown back, and lips
Drinking, drinking from lips, drinking from bosoms
The coldness of the dew—and all a gleam
Translucent, moonstruck as of moving glasses,
Gleams on dead hair, gleams on the white dead shoulders
Upon the backgrounds of black purple woods...

There came great rustlings from the copper leaves
And pushing outwards, shouldering, a boar
With seven wives—a monstrous tusky brute.
I rose and rubbed my eyes and all eight fled
Tore down the mountain through the thick of the leaves
Like a mighty wave of the sea that poured itself
Farther and farther down the listening night.
All round me was the clearing, and white mist
Shrouded the frosty tussocks of old grass.
And in the moonlight a wan fingerpost
(I could not read the lower row of words.)
Proclaimed: "*Forbidden!*" That's High Germany.
Take up your glasses. "Prosit!" to the past,
To all the Dead!

RHYMING

THE bells go chiming
O'er Germany
I sit here rhyming...

If fun were funny,
And love lived long,
And always honey
Were sweet on the tongue,
Would life be better
Or freedom free?

If each love-letter
Spelt loyalty,
If we didn't go timing
The dance with a fetter?

If gold were true gold
For alchemists
—I sit here rhyming—
And all were new gold
In morning mists?
Would laughter measure
The step of life
If each took pleasure
In each's wife?
If much were undone
In what we see
And we built up London
In High Germany;
Without much pity
For crushed out grain
We'd fling the city
Across this plain—
A phantom city

Like old Cokayne—
Where old dead passions,
Come true again
And old time fashions
Be new again,
Where jests once witty
Would start again,
And long lost pity
Take heart again.

So I sit rhyming
Of fun to be,
And the bells all go chiming
O'er High Germany.

AUTUMN EVENING

THE cold light dies, the candles glow,
The wind whirls down the bare allée
Outside my gleaming window-panes
The phantom populations go,
Blown, amid leaves, above, below.

Yet these are solid German folk
Outside, beneath the thinning planes
And the reflections that awoke
At candle time upon my panes
Are misty, unsubstantial gleams.

Only outside, obscurity,
The waning light, the cold blue beams
And rafts of shadow trick the eye;
So that the frozen passers-by
Look ghosts—and only real seems
My candle lighted, lonely place,
The gleaming windows and your face
Looking in likeness from the wall
Where the fantastic shadows fall....

Now the ghosts pass, the cold wind cries,
The leaves sift downwards, the world dies,
But in the shadows, lo! your eyes.

IN THE TRAIN

OUT of the window I see a dozen great stars,
burning bright,
Flying in silence, engrossed in the uttermost
depths of the night,
Star beyond star, growing clear, flying on as I pass
through the night.
It's many days since last I saw the stars
Look through the night sky's bars,
Like mists and veils of shimmer and shining gauze—
So little time we have and so much cause
To stay beneath the roof; so much to do!
The life we lead!... Well, you
Get to your bed at ten, and you, away
I like my glass of wine to end the day.

Now as the train ambles on, slowly and I watch alone
Stars and black woods and the stream, dim in the
light of the stars
Winding away to the past beneath Castor and Pollux
and Mars;
It seems as long since last I held your hand
As since I saw the stars.
And ah! if we meet in this land,
And ah! if we meet oversea
In the dark where the traffic of London races
Or in these castled, woodland places—
And then—wherever it be
Shall not our thoughts go away into deeps
Where the mind sleeps and the brain too sleeps,
As when we take thought and we gaze
Past all the bee swarms of stars
Spread o'er the night and its bars,
Past mists and veils and shimmer and shine and haze
Into the deep and silent places,

The still, unfathomable spaces
Where the brain sleeps and the mind too sleeps
And all the deeps stretch out beyond the deeps
And thought dies down before infinity? . . .
So, in an utter satisfaction
Beyond all thought and beyond all action
In a blindness more blind than the starless places
I shall stretch my face to where your face is.
And over head, over land and sea
Shall the white stars wheel in their reverie.

THE EXILE

MY father had many oxen
Yet all are gone;
My father had many servants;
I sit alone.
He followed the Southern women,
He drank of the Southern wines,
He fought in the Southern quarrels—
My star declines.

I will go to the Southern houses, I will sit 'mid the maids at hire;
I will bear their meat to the tables and carry wood to their fire;
Where the cheep of the rat and mouse is all night long will I lie,
Awake in the byres and the stables. When the white moon looks from the sky,
And over the Southern waters, and the wind blows warm from the South,
With the bitter tears in my eyelids and the heavy sighs in my mouth,
I shall hear through the gaping gables how the Southern night bird sings
Of hirelings once Queen's daughters and slaves the seed of Kings.

MOODS ON THE MOSELLE

"SWEET! Sweet! Sweet!" sings the bird upon the bough.
But though he may call for sweetness
We have other things to witness,
Not all cherry-pie and neatness,
Now.

"Mourn! Mourn! Mourn!" cry the owls among the vines.
But it's neither death nor fleetness
That have any utter fitness,
Not a final joy or sorrow,
As we press out wines.

"Change! Slow change!" ticks the church clock through the snow.
And somehow 'twixt winter's dying
And spring apple-blossoms flying
And the summer hops a-tying...
It's now haughty and now humble
Change! Slow change! And rough-and-tumble.
Down to-day and up to-morrow
That our songs sing now.

CANZONE A LA SONATA

(To E. P.)

WHAT do you find to boast of in our age,
To boast of now, my friendly sonneteer,
And not to blush for, later? By what line
Do you entrain from Mainz to Regions saner?
Count our achievements and uplift my heart;
Blazon our fineness, Optimist, I toil
Whilst you crow cocklike. But I cannot see

What's left behind us for a heritage
For our young children? What but nameless fear?
What creeds have we to teach, legends to twine
Saner than spun our dams? Or what's there saner
That we've devised to comfort those who part,
One for some years to walk the stone-clad soil,
One to his fathom-deep bed? What coin have we

For ransom when He grimly lays his siege
Whose dart is sharpened for our final hurt?
I think we do not think; we deem more fair
Earth with unthought on death; we deem him gainer
Whose brow unshadowed shows no wrinkled trail
Of the remembrance of the countless slain;
Who sets the world to fitful melody—

To fitful minstrelsy that's summer's liege
When all the summer's sun-kissed fountains spurt
Kisses of bubbling sound about our hair.
I think we think that singing soul the gainer
Who disremembers that spent youth must fail,
That after autumn comes, few leaves remain
And all the well-heads freeze, and melody

O'er frozen waters grows too hoarse with age
To keep us from extremity of fear.
When agèd poets pen another line
And agèd maidens coif their locks in saner
And staider snoods; when winter of the heart
Comes on and beds beneath the frozen soil
Gape open—where's your grinning melody?

SÜSSMUND'S[1] ADDRESS TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

(ADAPTED FROM THE HIGH GERMAN)

MY God, they say I have no bitterness!
Dear Unknown God, I gasp, I fade, I pine!
No bitterness! Have firs no turpentine?
If so, it's true.

Because I do not go wandering round Piccadilly
Like an emasculated lily
In a low-necked flannel shirt beneath the rain.
(Is that what you'd do,
Oh God Unknown,
If you came down
To Piccadilly
And worried over London town?)
Wailing round Covent Garden's what I should do
Declaiming to the beefy market porters
Dramatic propaganda about social wrongs
Denouncing Edward Morters
Or saying that Mr William Pornett
Is eleven kinds of literary hornet,
Or that the death of Mr Arthur Mosse
Would be no sort of loss
But a distinct gain
—That sort of silly literary songs
About no one *you* know,
And no one else could ever want to know.

You owe
(You've heard a thousand thousand *dat qui cito's*)
Some sort of poisonous dew

[1] Carl Eugen Freiherr von Süssmund, b. 1872, d. 1910. This is, of course, a quite free adaptation.

Shed on the flowers where these high-horned mosquitoes
Dance in a busy crew.
But they will go on setting up their schools,
Making their little rules,
Finding selected ana,
Collected in Montana:
Connected with Commedié Diviné
Or maidens with names like Deiridriné . . .
Dear Lord, you know the stuff
You must have heard enough.

Find me a barrel into which to creep
Dear Unknown God, and get dead drunk and sleep.
But listen, this is for your ear alone
(God: where are you? Let me come close and whisper
What no one knows—I'm really deadly tired,
I cannot write a line, my hands are stiff,
Writing's a rotten job, my head goes round:
You have afflicted me with whip-cord nerves.
That hammering fool drives me distracted . . . God!
Strike him with colic, send him screaming home.
Strike, Dash and Dash and Dash with eye complaints;
That beast who choked his dog with a tight collar
(He gave his child the lead to hold) last night;
It made me sick; God strike him with the pip.
And send down one dark night and no one near
And one white throat within my fingers' grip!)

Dear God, you bade me be a gentleman,
And well you know I've been it. But their rot . . .
Sometimes it makes me angry. This last season
I've listened smiling to new Celtic bards,
To Anti-Vivisectionists and Friends of Peace,
To Neo-Psychics, Platonists and Poets
Who saved the Universe by chopping logs
In your own image. . . .

I've smiled at Whigs intoning Whiggery
To keep the Labour Market down; at Tories
Sickening for office. I have surely been
Plumb centre in the Movement. O my God
Is this a man's work. God I've backed up ——'s
With proper letters in the Daily Press:
I've smiled at Dowagers and Nonconformists;
At wriggling dancers; forty pianists;
Jew politicians; Front Rank Statesmen's ——'s
Yankee conductors of chaste magazines ...
God, fill my purse and let me go away.

But God, dear God! I'll never get away
I know the .... you are!
That's off my chest. You'll never let me go.
I know I'll never drink myself dead drunk
Because to-morrow I shall have appointments
—You'll make them for me—with a Jail Reform
And Pure Milk Rotter—such a pleasant man!
One garden city builder, seven peers
Concerned with army remounts, and a girl
Mad to take dancing lessons! Such my morrow!

It's not so much I ask Great God of mine
(Fill up my little purse and let me go!)
These earnest, cold-in-the-heart and practised
preachers
Have worked their will on me for long enough,
Some boring me to tears while I sat patient;
Some picked my purse and bit me in the back
The while I smiled as you have taught me to,
(Fill up my little purse and let me go!)
It's not my job to go denouncing jobs
You did not build me for it. Not my job!
Whilst they are on the make, snatching their bits
Beneath the wheels of ninety-nine reforms.

(*Note.*—I have been unable to follow the Freiherr at any interval at all on this page without leaving several words blank. F.M.H.)

But this is truth;
There's not one trick they've not brought off
on me,
I guess they think I haven't noticed it
For I've no bitterness...
They've lied about me to my mistresses,
Stolen my brandy, plagiarized my books,
Lived on me month by month, broken agreements,
Perjured themselves in courts, and sworn false
oaths
With all the skill of Protestant British tradesmen
Plundering a Papist and a foreigner
With God on their lips....
But all that's private...
Oh, you sleeping God,
I hope you sit amongst the coloured tents
Of any other rotten age than this—
With great pavilions tinctured all with silks,
Where emerald lawns go stretching into space,
With mailèd horses, simple drunken knights,
Punctilious heralds and high-breasted ladies
Beauteous beyond belief and not one better
Than you would have her be—in such a heaven
Where there's no feeling of the moral pulse,
I think I'd find some peace—with treachery
Of the sword and dagger kind to keep it sweet
—Adultery, foul murder, pleasant things,
A touch of incest, theft, but no Reformers.

Dear God of mine
Who've tortured me in many pleasant ways
I hope you've had some fun. And thank you, God!
No doubt you'll keep your bargain in the end,
No doubt I'll get my twopenny-halfpenny pay
At the back door of some bright hued pavilion
From a whore of Heaven....

But when it comes to "have no bitterness" ...
(For bitter we read "earnest") I've no stomach
For such impertinence; its subtlety
(You know it, God, but let me get it down)
Is too ingenious. It implies just this:

"Here is a man when times are out of joint
Who will not be enraged at Edward Morter,
Pornett or Mosse; who will not to the woes
Of a grey underworld lend passionate ears
Nor tear his hair to tatters in the cause
Of garden suburbs or of guinea pigs
Injected with bacilli ... Such a man
(So say the friends that I have listened to
Whole wasted, aching desolate afternoons!)
Is morally castrated; pass him by;
Give him no management in this great world,
No share in fruity Progress or the wrongs
Of market porters, tram conductors, pimps,
Marriage-reforming divorcees, Whig statesmen
Or serious Drama."

Did I, dear God, ever attempt to shine
As such a friend of Progress? God, did I
Ever ambitiously raise up my voice
To outshout these eminent preachers?
Suck up importance from a pauper's wrongs
I never did!
But these mosquitoes must make precious sure
I do not take a hand in their achievements
Therefore they say, I have no bitterness
Being a eunuch amongst these proper men,
Who stand foursquare 'gainst evil (that's their
phrase!)

God, you've been hard on me; I'm plagued with
boils,
Little mosquito-stings, warts, poverty!
Yes, very hard. But when all's catalogued
You've been a gentleman in all your fun.
No doubt you'll keep your bargain, Unknown God.
This surely you will never do to me—
Say I'm not bitter. That you'll never do.
'Twould be to outpass the bounds of the Divine
And turn Reformer.

THE FEATHER

I WONDER dost thou sleep at night,
False friend and falser enemy!
I wonder if thy hours are long and drag out wearily!
We've passed days and nights together
In our time... But that white feather
That the wind's blown past the roof ridge
It is gone.... So I from thee!

Aye, chase it o'er the courtyard stones.
Past friend of mine, my enemy!
Chase on beneath the chestnut boughs and out toward the sea,
If the fitful wind should fail it,
Thou may'st catch it, and may'st trail it
In midden's mud and garbage...
As thou hast my thoughts of thee.

So I wonder dost thou sleep at night?
Once friend of mine, my enemy?
Or whether dost thou toss and turn to plan new treachery?
As the feather thou hast trodden
So my thoughts of thee are sodden
When I think.... Yes, half forgotten,
A faint taste of something rotten
Comes at times, like worm-struck wood ash
Comes at times, the thought of thee.

But I would not have thy night thoughts
As the slow clock beats to dayward!
I'll be sleeping with my eyes shut,
Dreaming deep, or dreaming wayward.
And I hear thee turn and mutter
As thy dawn-ward candles gutter—
For thou fear'st the dark... Hark! "Judas!"
Says the dawn wind from the sea.
Round the house it whispers "Judas!"
Friend of mine, my enemy.

II

SONGS FROM LONDON

The following poems appeared in the volume of the above name published by Mr Elkin Mathews in 1910.

VIEWS

I

BEING in Rome I wonder will you go
Up to the Hill. But I forget the name....
Aventine? Pincio? No: I do not know.
I was there yesterday and watched. You came.

The seven Pillars of the Forum stand
High, stained and pale 'neath the Italian heavens,
Their capitals linked up form half a square;
A grove of silver poplars spears the sky.
You came. Do you remember? Yes, you came,
But yesterday. Your dress just brushed the herbs
That nearly hide the broken marble lion....
And I was watching you against the sky.
Such light! Such air! Such prism hues! and Rome
So far below; I hardly knew the place.
The domed St Peter's; mass of the Capitol;
The arch of Trajan and St Angelo....
Tiny and grey and level; tremulous
Beneath a haze amidst a sea of plains....
But I forget the name, who never looked
On any Rome but this of unnamed hills.

II

Tho' you're in Rome you will not go, my You,
Up to that Hill.... but I forget the name,
Aventine? Pincio? No, I never knew....
I was there yesterday. You never came.

I have that Rome; and you, you have a Me,
You have a Rome and I, I have my You;
My Rome is not your Rome: my you, not you
... For, if man knew woman

I should have plumbed your heart; if woman, man
Your me should be true I.... If in your day—
You who have mingled with my soul in dreams,
You who have given my life an aim and purpose,
A heart, an imaged form—if in your dreams
You have imagined unfamiliar cities
And me among them, I shall never stand
Beneath your pillars or your poplar groves,...
Images, simulacra, towns of dreams
That never march upon each other's borders
And bring no comfort to each other's hearts!

III

Nobly accompanied am I—Since you,
You—simulacrum, image, dream of dreams,
Amidst these images and simulacra
Of shadowy house fronts and these dim, thronged
streets
Are my companion!

Where the pavements gleam
I have you alway with me: and grey dawns
In the far skies bring you more near—more near
Than City sounds can interpenetrate.
All vapours form a background for your face
In this unreal town of real things,
And my you stands beside me and makes glad
All my imagined cities and thence walks
Beside me towards yet unimagined hills....

Being we two, full surely we shall go
Up to that Hill.... some synonym for Home.
Avalon? Grave? or Heaven? I do not know....
But one day or to-day, the day may come,
When I may be your I, your Rome my Rome.

FINCHLEY ROAD

AS we come up at Baker Street
Where tubes and trains and 'buses meet
There's a touch of fog and a touch of sleet;
And we go on up Hampstead way
Towards the closing in of day...

You should be a queen or a duchess rather,
Reigning in place of a warlike father
In peaceful times o'er a tiny town
Where all the roads wind up and down
From your little palace—a small, old place
Where every soul should know your face
And bless your coming. That's what I mean,
A small grand-duchess, no distant queen,
Lost in a great land, sitting alone
In a marble palace upon a throne.

And you'd say to your shipmen: "Now take your ease,
To-morrow is time enough for the seas."
And you'd set your bondmen a milder rule
And let the children loose from the school.
No wrongs to right and no sores to fester,
In your small, great hall 'neath a firelit dais,
You'd sit, with me at your feet, your jester,
Stroking your shoes where the seed pearls glisten
And talking my fancies. And you as your way is,
Would sometimes heed and at times not listen,
But sit at your sewing and look at the brands
And sometimes reach me one of your hands,
Or bid me write you a little ode,
Part quaint, part sad, part serious...

But here we are in the Finchley Road
With a drizzling rain and a skidding 'bus
And the twilight settling down on us.

THE THREE-TEN

WHEN in the prime and May Day time dead lovers went a-walking,
How bright the grass in lads' eyes was, how easy poet's talking!
Here were green hills and daffodils, and copses to contain them:
Daisies for floors did front their doors agog for maids to chain them.
So when the ray of rising day did pierce the eastern heaven
Maids did arise to make the skies seem brighter far by seven.
Now here's a street where 'bus routes meet, and 'twixt the wheels and paving
Standeth a lout that doth hold out flowers not worth the having.
But see, but see! The clock marks three above the Kilburn Station,
Those maids, thank God! are 'neath the sod and all their generation.

What she shall wear who'll soon appear, it is not hood nor wimple,
But by the powers there are no flowers so stately or so simple,
And paper shops and full 'bus tops confront the sun so brightly,
That, come three-ten, no lovers then had hearts that beat so lightly
As ours, or loved more truly,
Or found green shades or flowered glades to fit their loves more duly.
And see, and see! 'Tis ten past three above the Kilburn Station,
Those maids, thank God! are 'neath the sod and all their generation.

FOUR IN THE MORNING COURAGE

THE birds this morning wakened me so early it was hardly day:
Ten sparrows in the lilac tree, a blackbird in the may,
A starling somewhere in the mews, a songthrush on a broken hat
Down in the yard the grocers use, all cried: "Beware; Beware! The Cat!"
I've never had the heart to rhyme, this year: I've always wakened sad
And late, if might be, so the time would be more short —but I was glad
With a mad gladness in to-day that is the longest day in June.
(*That blackbird's nesting in the may.*) For only yesterday at noon
In the long grass of Holland Park, I think—I think —I heard a lark...
I heard your voice: I saw your face once more...
(*Upon that packing case*
The starling waked me ere the day aping the thrush's sober tune).

MODERN LOVE

I

KNEE-DEEP among the buttercups, the sun
Gilding the scutcheons and the gilded mail,
Gilding the crowned helm and leopard crest,
Dear, see they pant and strike at your desire.

And one goes down among the emerald grass,
And one stands over him his dagger poised,
His visor raised, his blood-shot eyes a-travel
Over the steel that lies between his feet,
Crushing the buttercups . . . and so the point goes in
Between the gorget and the habergeon . . .
And blood floods out upon the buttercups,
Gules, *or* and *vert* beneath an azure sky.

And now the victor strides knee-deep in grass,
His surcoat brushing down the flower-heads
To where above the hedge a hennin peeps
Wide, white and waving like a wild swan's wings,
And a green dress, a mantlet all of vair
And such dear eyes. . . . Dear, you've the dearest eyes
In all the world—the most compassionate eyes.

II

... In your garden, here
The light streams down between the silvered leaves,
And we sit still and whisper ... But our fight!
The gross Black Prince among the buttercups
Could grin and girn and pant and sweive and smite
And, in ten minutes it was win or lose:
A coffin board or ale, a coarse caress
Or just an end of it for Life or Death ...
Is that a footfall on the gravel path?
Are your stretched nerves on edge? And do you see?
There, white and black, the other couple go.
And if some others knew! Oh, buttercups,
And blood upon the grass beneath the sun ...
Give me your garden where the street lamp shines
Between the leaves: your garden seat, your hand,
Just touching mine—and all the long, long fight
That lies before us, you of the dear eyes.

SPRING ON THE WOODLAND PATH

SO long a winter such an Arctic night!
I had forgot that ever spring was bright:
But hark! The blackbird's voice like a clear flame!

So long a winter, such an age of chill,
Made me forget this silver birch clad hill.
But see, the newborn sunbeams put to shame
Our long dead winter: bracken fronds like flame,
Pierce the new morning's saffron-watered light.

So long, so long the winter in our hearts,
We had forgotten that old grief departs
And had forgotten that our hands could meet.

So long, so long: Remember our last May
When there was sunshine still and every day
New swallows skimmed low down along the street.
Ay, spring shall come, but shall we ever meet
With the old hearts in this forgotten way?

CONSIDER

NOW green comes springing o'er the heath,
And each small bird with lifted breath
Cries, "Brother, consider the joy there is in living!"
"Consider! consider!" the jolly throstle saith.

The golden gorse, the wild thyme, frail
And sweet, the butter cowslip pale,
Cry "Sisters, consider the peace that comes with giving!
And render, and render your sweet and scented breath!"

Now men, come walking o'er the heath
To mark this pretty world beneath,
Bethink them: "Consider what joy might lie in living,
None striving, constraining none, and thinking not on Death."

CLUB NIGHT

THERE was an old man had a broken hat,
He had a crooked leg, an old tame cat,
An old lame horse that cropped along the hedge,
And an old song that set your teeth on edge,
With words like:

"Club night's come; it's time the dance begins.
Up go the lamps, we've all got nimble shins.
One night a year man and wife may dance at ease
And we'll dance all the village to its knees."

This silly old man had a broken heart;
He went a-peddling onions from his cart.
Once years ago, when Club night fell in June,
His new-wed wife went off with a dragoon,
Whilst he sang:

"Club night's come; it's time the dance begins.
Up go the lamps, we've all got nimble shins.
One night a year man and wife may dance at ease
And we'll dance all the village to its knees."

TO CHRISTINA AND KATHARINE AT CHRISTMAS

NOW *Christmas is a porter's-rest whereon to set his load;*
And Christmas was a blessed bed for One who loved her God.
And Christmas is a chiming bell to ships upon the sea
That decks the shrouds and lights the ports and tolls for Memory—
But Christmas is a meeting-place
For you and me.

God send your hearts may never grow so old
As to forget that this day Mary's lips
First touched Her young Child's brow: and may your eyes
Not ever grow too cold to recognize
How to poor men and women these days bear
A gift of rest. Pray that the gentle air
Give relaxation to a myriad ships....
And, oh my little ones, may no December
See Christmas come and me no longer dear
To your dear hearts and voices. This remember:

How Christmas is the pardon day when Justice drops its load;
And is the lily-blossomed field where Jesus walks with God.
Now Saints set foot upon the waves to still the yeasty sea,
And other Saints to hurdled sheep give comfort patiently.
Now all good men beside their hearths call upon Memory:
Now, now comes in the meeting-time
For you and me!

THE DREAM HUNT

MY Lady rides a-hunting
Upon a dapple grey:
Six trumpeters they ride behind,
Six prickers clear the way.

And when she climbs the hillsides
The Hunt cries: "Ho! la! Lo!"
And when she trails along the dales
The merry horns do blow.

And so in summer weather,
Before the heat of day,
My darling takes all eyes and breaks
My heart and makes away.

THE OLD LAMENT

WHAT *maketh lads so cruel be?*
Amid the spume and wrack.
They pass the door and put to sea,
And never more come back.

The grey, salt wind winds down the wave,
The galleon flouts the bay,
And cobles and coggers are raising their sails:
God keep 'ee down on the quay!
With a hoist at thy tackles, a haul at thy blocks,
And a hail to a hastening crew.
He'll take 'ee Who gave 'ee thy goldilocks
Ere I pardon thine eyes o' blue.

Not once to ha' lookèd within my hood!
Nor guessed I quailed on the strand
Wi' thee in the boats! Thro' my pent-up door
I ha' kissed to 'ee my hand.
They'll rive thy keel wi' their cannon shocks,
And sink 'ee and all thy crew;
And they'll leave to the raven and cliff-homed fox
Thy kindly eyes o' blue.

Why need 'ee pass my open door
Each breaking o' the day?
What made 'ee take that selfsame path
And never another way?
I'll find 'ee stretched on the grinding rocks
With a Frenchman's shot shot through,
And the mermaid's weed from thy goldilocks
Across thine eyes o' blue.

What made 'ee lad, so cruel be?
Amid the spume and wrack,
To pass the door and put to sea
And never once look back!

MAURESQUE

(To V. M.)

TO horse! To horse! the veil of night sinks softly down.
The hills are violet, the desert brown,
And thou asleep upon the silken pillows
Within the small white town.

We ride! We ride! and o'er the sand in billows
The crescent moon looks softly down.

IN THE STONE JUG

(Tom of Hounslow Heath sings on the night before his execution)

OLD days are gone:
Lo! I go to find better;
Bright suns once shone.
Shall they never shine again?
Here's a queer inn for to-night, but the next one
I will contrive shall be freed from what's vext one
In this, and to-morrow, for all that's perplext one,
I shall arise with a head free of pain.

Here's luck, old friends,
Though to-night's proved the finish
And this tap now ends.
Shall we never brew again?
Aye, by my faith and the faith I have in you,
You who have kist and have laughed at the sin. You
Witch that I gambled and squandered to win, you
Too shall come in with me out of the rain.

HOW STRANGE A THING

HOW strange a thing to think upon:
Whilst we sit here with pipes and wine
This world of ours goes roving on
Where stars and planets shine.
And round and round and round and round
This brave old ball, still out and in—
Whilst we sit still on solid ground—
Doth spin and spin and spin.

And, whilst we're glad with pipes and wine,
We travel leagues and leagues of space:
Our arbour's trellised with the vine,
Our host's a jocund face.
Yet on and on and on
This brave old ball spins in and out:
Why, here's a thing to think upon
And make a song about.

Ho, landlord, bring new wine along
And fill us each another cup.
We're minded to give out a song.
My journey, mates; stand up.
For round and round and round and round
This noble ball doth spin and spin,
And 'twixt the firmament and ground
Doth bear us and our sin.

III

FROM INLAND

The following poems appeared in the volume of the above name published by Mr Alston Rivers in 1907.

FROM INLAND

I DREAMED that you and I were young
Once more, and by our old grey sea
Raced in the wind; but matins, sung
High on these vineyards, wakened me:
I lay half-roused and seemed to hold
Once more, beside our old grey sea,
Your hand. I saw the primrose gold
Your hair had then, and seemed to see
Your eyes, so childlike and so wise,
Look down on me.

By the last fire we ever lit
You knelt, and bending down your head,
—If you could compass it, you said,
Not ever would you live again
Your vanished life; never again
Pass through those shadowy vales of pain.
"And now I'm old and here I sit!"
You said, and held your hands apart
To those old flames we've left behind
As far—as far as some dead wind....
No doubt I fetched from near my heart
Brave platitudes—for you were there;
The firelight lit your brooding face,
Shadowed your golden, glowing hair:
I could be brave for the short space
I had you by my chair....
As thus: "Since with the ebb of Youth
Rises the flood of passionless
And calm enjoyment, rises Truth
And fades the painful earnestness
Of all young thought, We two," I said,
"Have still the best to come." But you
Bowed down your brooding, silent head,

Patient and sad and still....
This view,
Steep vineyards rising parched and brown,
This weary stream, this cobbled town,
White convents on each hill-top—Dear!
What would I give to climb our down,
Where the wind hisses in each stalk
And, from the high brown crest to see,
Beyond the ancient, sea-grey town,
The sky-line of our foam-flecked sea;
And, looking out to sea, to hear,
Ah! Dear, once more your pleasant talk;
And to go home as twilight falls
Along the old sea-walls!
The best to come! The best! The best!
One says the wildest things at times,
Merely for comfort. But—*The best!*
Ah! well, at night, when the moon climbs
High o'er these misty inland capes,
And hears the river lisping rhymes,
And sees the roe-deer nibbling grapes
Beneath the evanescent gleams
Of shaken dewdrops, shall come dreams,
Gliding amid the mists beneath:
A dream, maybe, of you and me,
Young once again by our old sea.
But, ah! we two must travel wide
And far and far ere we shall find
That recollected, ancient tide
By which we walked, or that old wind
That fled so bravely to its death.

THE PORTRAIT

SHE sits upon a tombstone in the shade;
One flake of sunlight, falling thro' the veils
Of quivering poplars, lights upon her hair,
Shot golden, and across her candid brow.
Thus in the pleasant gloom she holds the eye,
Being life amid piled up remembrances
Of the tranquil dead.
One hand, dropped lightly down,
Rests on the words of a forgotten name:
Therefore the past makes glad to stay her up.
Closed in, walled off: here's an oblivious place,
Deep, planted in with trees, unvisited:
A still backwater in the tide of life.
Life flows all round: sounds from surrounding streets,
Laughter of unseen children, roll of wheels,
Cries of all vendors.—So she sits and waits.
And she rejoices us who pass her by,
And she rejoices those who here lie still,
And she makes glad the little wandering airs,
And doth make glad the shaken beams of light
That fall upon her forehead: all the world
Moves round her, sitting on forgotten tombs
And lighting in to-morrow. She is Life:
That makes us keep on moving, taking roads,
Hauling great burdens up the unending hills,
Pondering senseless problems, setting sail
For undiscovered anchorages. Here
She waits, she waits, sequestered among tombs,
The sunlight on her hair. She waits, she waits:
The secret music, the resolving note
That sets in tune all this discordant world
And solves the riddles of the Universe.

SONG

OH! purer than the day new-born,
More candid than the pearlèd morn,
Come soon and set the day in tune
All through the sun-bathed afternoon;
Come soon!

Oh! sweeter than the roses be,
Subtler than balm or rosemary,
Come now, and 'neath this orchard bough
Hark to the tranquil sea-wind's sough:
Come now!

More rhythmic when you step than tunes
Wafted o'er waves in summer moons,
Bide here, and in my longing ear
Murmur the words I crave to hear;
Bide here!

Here, in the shadowy sacred place,
Close up your eyes, hide, hide your face,
And, in the windless silence, rest.
Now the cool night falls; dear and blest,
Now sleep, a dim and dreamless sleep,
Whilst I watch over you and keep
Your soul from fears. Now sleep!

Oh! purer than the morning light,
And more beloved than dead of night,
Come soon to set the world in tune
From midnight till the dial marks noon:
From dawn till the world's end. Come soon!
Come soon!

THE UNWRITTEN SONG

NOW where's a song for our small dear,
With her quaint voice and her quick ear,
To sing—for gnats and bats to hear—
At twilight in her bed?
A song of tiny elfin things
With shiny, silky, silvery wings,
Footing it in fairy rings,
And kissing overhead.

A song of starry glow-worms' lights
In the long grass of shadowy nights,
And flitting showers of firefly flights,
Where summer woods hang deep;
Of hovering, noiseless owls that find
Their way at dark; and of a kind
And drowsy, drowsy ocean wind
That puts the sea to sleep.

But where's the song for our small dear,
With her quaint voice and her quick ear,
To sing—for dreamland things to hear—
And hush herself to sleep?

A SUABIAN LEGEND

GOD made all things,
And, seeing they were good,
He set a limit to the springs,
And circumscribed the flood,
Stayed the aspiring mountain ranges,
And said: "Henceforth shall be no changes";
On all the beasts he set that ban,
And drew his line 'twixt woman and 'twixt man.

God, leaning down
Over the world beneath,
Surveyed his changeless work:
No creature drew its breath,
No cloud approached with rain unto the hills,
No waves white on the ocean, and no breeze;
Still lay the cattle in the meads; the rills
Hung in the tufts of moss; the trees
Seemed carven out of metal; manhood stood
Drooping his silent head by womanhood.
Nor voice of beasts nor any song of bird
Nor sound of wind were from the woodlands heard.

God, leaning down
Over the world beneath,
Knitted his brows to a frown
And fashioned Death:

The clouds faded around the mountain heads,
The rills and streams sank in their stony beds,
The ocean shivered and lay still and dead,
And man fled and the beasts fled
Into the crevices of mountains round;
The grass withered on the sod;
Beetles and lizards faded into the ground:
And God [frowned.
Looked on his last-made creature, Death, and

He paced in thought awhile
His darkened and resounding courts above:
They brightened at his smile:
He had imagined Love
(*Oh! help us ere we die: we die too soon;*
We, who are born at dawn, have but one noon,
And fade e'er nightfall)....
Then the Lord made Love.
And, looking down to Earth, he saw
The green flame out across each shaw,
The worms came creeping o'er the lawns,
Sweet showers in the pleasant dawns,
The lapwings crying in the fens,
The young lambs leaping from their pens,
The waves run tracing lines of white
On the cerulean ocean. But at night
Man slept with woman in his arms.
Then thunder shook
At the awful frown of God. His way he took
Over the trembling hills to their embowered nook.

But standing there above those sleeping things
God was aware of one whose insubstantial wings
A-quiver formed a penthouse o'er the place:
Therefore God stayed his hand, and sighed
To see how lip matched lip, side mated side,
And the remembered joy on each sealed face:
Therefore God stayed his hand and smiled,
Shook his tremendous head and went his way;
Love being his best begotten child,
And having over Death and Sin God's sway.

(*Oh! help us ere we die: we die too soon;*
We, who are born at dawn, have but one noon,
And fade e'er nightfall. Oh! Eternal One,
Help us to know short joy whose course is run
So soon: so soon.)

SEA JEALOUSY

CAST not your looks upon the wan grey sea,
Waste not your voice upon the wind;
Let not your footsteps sink upon the sand,
Hold no sea-treasure in your hand,
And let no sea-shell in your ear
Nor any sea-thought in your mind
Murmur a mystery.

Turn your soft eyes upon mine eyes that long;
Let your sweet lips on mine be sealed;
Fold soft sweet hands between your sweet soft
breasts,
And, as a weary sea-mew rests
Upon the sea
Utterly—utterly yield
Your being up to me,
And all around, grey seascape and the sound
Of droned sea song.

ENOUGH

"Enough for you," said he, "that ye from afar have viewed this goodly thing that all that many may never espy."—*How They Quested, etc.*

LONG we'd sought for Avalon,
Avalon the rest place;
Long, long we'd laboured
The oars—yea, for years.

Late, late one eventide
Saw we o'er still waters
Turrets rise and roof-frets
Golden in a glory,
Heard for a heart-beat
Women choirs and harpings
Waft down the wave-ways.

Saw we long-sought Avalon
Sink thro' still waters:
Long, long we'd laboured
The oars—yea, and yearned.

TANDARADEI

(WALTER VON DER VOGELWEIDE)

UNDER the lindens on the heather,
There was our double resting-place,
Side by side and close together
Garnered blossoms, crushed, and grass
Nigh a shaw in such a vale:
Tandaradei,
Sweetly sang the nightingale.

I came a-walking through the grasses;
Lo! my dear was come before.
Ah! what befell then—listen, listen, lasses—
Makes me glad for evermore.
Kisses?—thousands in good sooth:
Tandaradei,
See how red they've left my mouth.

There had he made ready—featly, fairly—
All of flow'ring herbs a yielding bed,
And that place in secret still smiles rarely.
If by chance your foot that path should tread,
You might see the roses pressed,
Tandaradei,
Where e'enow my head did rest.

How he lay beside me, did a soul discover
(Now may God forfend such shame from me):
Not a soul shall know it save my lover;
Not a soul could see save I and he,
And a certain small brown bird:
Tandaradei,
Trust him not to breathe a word.

LULLABY

WE'VE wandered all about the upland fallows,
We've watched the rabbits at their play;
But now, good-night, good-bye to soaring swallows,
Now good-night, good-bye, dear day.

Poppy heads are closing fast, pigeons circle home at last;
Sleep, Liebchen, sleep, the bats are calling.
Pansies never miss the light, but sweet babes must sleep at night;
Sleep, Liebchen, sleep, the dew is falling.

Even the wind among the quiet willows
Rests, and the sea is silent too.
See soft white linen, cool, such cool white pillows,
Wait in the darkling room for you.

All the little lambs are still now the moon peeps down the hill;
Sleep, Liebchen, sleep, the owls are hooting.
Ships have hung their lanthorns out, little mice dare creep about;
Sleep, Liebchen, sleep, the stars are shooting.

IV

THE FACE OF THE NIGHT

The following poems appeared in the volume called as above and published by Mr Macqueen in 1904.

A SEQUENCE

I

YOU make me think of lavender,
And that is why I love you so:
Your sloping shoulders, heavy hair,
And long swan's neck like snow,
Befit those gracious girls of long ago,
Who in closed gardens took the quiet air;
Who lived the ordered life gently to pass
From earth as from rose petals perfumes go,
Or shadows from that dial in the grass;
Whose fingers from the painted spinet keys
Drew small heart-clutching melodies.

II

I DO not ask so much,
—O, bright-hued; oh, tender-eyed—
As you should sometimes shimmer at my side,
Oh, Fair.

I do not crave a touch,
Nor, at your comings hither,
Sound of soft laughter, savour of your hair,
Sight of your face; oh fair, oh full of grace,
I ask not, I.

But that you do not die,
Nor fade, oh bright, nor wither,
That somewhere in the world your sweet, dim face
Be unattainable, unpaled by fears,
Unvisited by years,
Stained by no tears.

III

COME in the delicate stillness of dawn,
Your eyelids heavy with sleep;
When the faint moon slips to its line—dim-drawn,
Grey and a shadow, the sea. And deep, very deep,
The tremulous stillness ere day in the dawn.

Come, scarce stirring the dew on the lawn,
Your face still shadowed by dreams;
When the world's all shadow, and rabbit and fawn—
Those timorous creatures of shadows and gleams;
And twilight and dewlight, still people the lawn.

Come, more real than life is real,
Your form half seen in the dawn;
A warmth half felt, like the rays that steal
Hardly revealed from the East; oh warmth of my breast,
O life of my heart, oh intimate solace of me...
So, when the landward breeze winds up from the quickening sea,
And the leaves quiver of a sudden and life is here and the day,
You shall fade away and pass
As—when we breathed upon your mirror's glass—
Our faces died away.

IV

IF we could have remembrance now
And see, as in the winter's snow
We shall, what's golden in these hours,
The flitting, swift, intangible desires of sea and strand!

Who sees what's golden where we stand?
The sky's too bright, the sapphire sea too green;
I, I am fevered, you cold-sweet, serene,
And . . . and . . .

Yet looking back in days of snow
Unto this olden day that's now,
We'll see all golden in these hours
This memory of ours.

V

IT was the Autumn season of the year
When ev'ry little bird doth ask his mate:
"I wonder if the Spring will find us here,
It groweth late."

I saw two Lovers walking through the grass,
And the sad He unto his weeping Dear
Did say. "Alas!
When Spring comes round I shall no more be here,
For I must sail across the weary sea
And leave the waves a-churn 'twixt you and me.

"Oh, blessed Autumn! blest late Autumn-tide!
For ever with thy mists us Lovers hide.
Ignore Time's laws
And leave thy scarlet haws
For ever on the dewy-dripping shaws
Of this hillside.
Until the last, despite of Time and Tide,
Give leave that we may wander in thy mist,
With the last, dread
Word left for aye unsaid
And the last kiss unkisst."

It was the Autumn season of the year,
When ev'ry little bird doth ask his mate:
"I wonder if the Spring will find us here,
It groweth late."

VI

WHEN all the little hills are hid in snow,
And all the small brown birds by frost are slain,
And sad and slow the silly sheep do go
All seeking shelter to and fro;
Come once again
To these familiar, silent, misty lands;
Unlatch the lockless door
And cross the drifted floor;
Ignite the waiting, ever-willing brands,
And warm thy frozen hands
By the old flame once more.
Ah, heart's desire, once more by the old fire stretch out thy hands.

ON THE HILLS

KEEP your brooding sorrows for dewy-misty hollows.
Here's blue sky and lark song, drink the air. The joy that follows
Drafts of wine o' west wind, o' north wind, o' summer breeze,
Never grape's hath equalled from the wine hills by the summer seas.
Whilst the breezes live, joy shall contrive,
Still to tear asunder, and to scatter near and far
Those nets small and thin
That spider sorrows spin
In the brooding hollows where no breezes are.

SIDERA CADENTIA

(ON THE DEATH OF QUEEN VICTORIA)

WHEN one of the old, little stars doth fall
from its place,
The eye,
Glimpsing aloft must sadden to see that its space
In the sky
Is darker, lacking a spot of its ancient, shimmering
grace,
And sadder, a little, for loss of the glimmer on high.

Very remote, a glitter, a mote far away, is your star,
But its glint being gone from the place where it shone
The night's somewhat grimmer and something is
gone
Out of the comforting quiet of things as they are.

A shock,
A change in the beat of the clock;
And the ultimate change that we fear feels a little
less far.

NIGHT PIECE

AH, of those better tides of dark and melancholy—
When one's abroad, in a field—the night very deep, very holy;
The turf very sodden a-foot, walking heavy—the small ring of light,
O' the lanthorn one carries, a-swinging to left and to right,
Revealing a flicker of hedgerow, a flicker of rushes —and Night
Ev'rywhere; ev'rywhere sleep and a hushing to sleep—
I know that I never shall utter the uttermost secrets aright,
They lie so deep.

THANKS WHILST UNHARNESSING

I

(*He gets down from the cart.*)

WEST'RING the last silver light doth gleam,
Whilst in the welling shimmer of the lamp
From the tired horse the blanketing of steam
Flickers and whirls aloft into the damp
Sharp winter darkness. In the deadened air
The long, still night doth settle everywhere.
And hark! there comes the rapt, sweet, crooning snatches
Of song from where the little robin watches
Close in the thorn, beyond the ring of light.

II

(*He speaks towards the bushes.*)

Softest of all the birds that sing at night,
For the most mellowest sound,
That the long year brings round,
Sweet robin. I give thanks and love you best
Of birds that nest.

(*He follows the horse in, humming.*)

Sing! it is well, though the rest of life be bitter,
Sing! (*I swill the oats in the trough and loose the girth.*)
Warble! It is well. (*There's a rustle in the litter:*
That's the old grey rat.) It is well upon the earth.

III

Clotht-up and snug and warm, a-munching oats
Old Tom doth make a comfortable sound,
A rhythmic symphony for your sweet notes.

(*He speaks from the stable door.*)

Small brother, flit in here, since all around
The frost hath gripped the ground;
And oh! I would not like to have you die.
We's help each other,
Little Brother Beady-eye.

(*The Robin flits in.*)

There—*Sing!* Warm and mellow the lanthorn lights
the stable.
Little brother, sing! In-a-doors beside the hearth.
Slippers are a-toast, and the tea's upon the table.
Robin when you sing it is well upon the earth.
(*He closes the stable door and enters the cottage.*)

GREY MATTER

THEY leave us nothing.
He. Still, a little's left.
She. A crabbèd, ancient, dried biologist,
Somewhere very far from the sea, closed up from the sky,
Shut in from the leaves, destroys our hopes and us.
He. Why, no, our hopes and . . .
She. In his "Erster Heft."
Page something, I forget the line, he says
That, hidden as deep in the brain as he himself from hope,
There's this grey matter.
He. Why, 'tis there, dear heart.
She. That, if that hidden matter cools, decays,
Dies—what you will—our souls die out as well;
Since, hidden in the millionth of a cell,
Is all we have to give us consciousness.
He. Suppose it true.
She. Ah, never; better die,
Better have never lived than face this mist,
Better have never toiled to such distress.
He. It matters little.
She. Little!—Where shall I,
The woman, where shall you take part,
My poet? Where has either of us scope
In this dead-dawning century that lacks all faith,
All hope, all aim, and all the mystery
That comforteth. Since he victorious
With his cold vapours chill out you and me,
The woman and the poet?
He. Never, dear.
For you and I remain,
The woman and the poet. And soft rain
Still falls and still the crocus flames,

The blackbird calls.
She. But half the sweet is gone.
The voices of our children at their games
Lack half their ring.
He. Why, never, dear. Out there,
The sea's a cord of silver, still to south
Beyond the marsh.
She. Ah, but beyond it all,
And all beneath and all above, half of the glory's done.
And I and you....
He. Why, no. The ancient sun
Shines as it ever shone, and still your mouth
Is sweet as of old it was.
She. But what remains?
He. All the old pains,
And all the old sweet pleasures and the mystery
Of time, slow travel and unfathomed deep.
She. And then this cold extinction?...
He. Dreamless sleep.
She. And nothing matters?
He. All the old, old things.
Whether to Church or College rings
The clamorous bell of creeds,
We, in the lush, far meads,
Poet and woman, past the city walls,
Hear turn by turn the burden of their calls,
Believe what we believe, feel what we feel,
Like what we list of what they cry within
Cathedral or laborat'ry,
Since, by the revolution of the wheel,
The one swings under, let us wait content.
She. Yet it is hard.
He. Ah no. A sure intent,
For me and you.
The right, true, joyful word, the sweet, true phrase,
The calling of our children from the woods these garden days

Remain.—These drops of rain have laid the dust
And in our soft brown seed-beds formed the crust
We needed for our sowings. Bring your seed,
And you shall prick it in, I close the row.
Be sure the little grains your hands have pressed
Tenderly, lovingly, home, shall flourish best.
She. Aye you are still my poet.
He. Even so
Betwixt the rain and shine. Half true's still true
More truly than the thing that's proved and dead.
The sun lends flame to every crocus head
Once more, and we once more must sow and weed
Since in the earth the newly stirring seed
Begins the ancient mystery anew.

OLD MAN'S EVENSONG

'TIS but a teeny mite
Hard, road side edge,
Ol' missus' candle light
Shines through thet broken hedge.

Reach me my coät, lads,
Give me a lift into it,
Rowin' they tater-clads
Tasks me to do it
Terribly;
Time was when I weer mad
Diggin' by star's light,
Now I am mortial glad
T' reach my dure-ajar's light,
'N' eat my tea.

Reach me my toöls, boys,
Ah mun quit this talk 'n' lurry;
Theer's my ol' missus' voice
Calls: "Ol' meastur, hurry,
Y'r tea-time's come."
Smells from the chimney side
Sniff down this plaguy mist,
Wanst I'd wander far an' wide,
Now I'm terr'ble stiff an' whist
'N' stay at home.

'Tis but a yeard or two
Hard road, thank God.
Then off the hard an' goo
Home on the sod.

CHILDREN'S SONG

SOMETIMES wind and sometimes rain,
Then the sun comes back again;
Sometimes rain and sometimes snow,
Goodness, how we'd like to know
Why the weather alters so.

When the weather's really good
We go nutting in the wood;
When it rains we stay at home,
And then sometimes other some
Of the neighbours' children come.

Sometimes we have jam and meat,
All the things we like to eat;
Sometimes we make do with bread
And potatoes boiled instead.
Once when we were put to bed
We had nowt and mother cried,
But that was after father died.

So, sometimes wind and sometimes rain,
Then the sun comes back again;
Sometimes rain and sometimes snow,
Goodness, how we'd like to know
If things will *always* alter so.

FROM THE SOIL

(TWO MONOLOGUES)

I

The Field Labourer speaks.

AH am a mighty simple man and only
Good wi' my baggin' hook and sichlike and 'tis lonely
Wheer Ah do hedge on Farmer Finn his farm.
Often Ah gits to thinking
When it grows dark and the ol' sun's done sinking,
And Ah hev had my sheere
Of fear
And wanted to feel sure that God were near
And goodly warm—
As near as th'eldritch shave I were at wark about...

Plenty o' time for thinking
We hes between the getting up and sinking
Of that ol' sun—about the God we tark about...

. . . . . .

In the beginning God made Heaven and
The 'Arth, 'n Sea we sometimes hear a-calling
When wind she bloweth from the rainy land
An' says ther'll soon be wet an' rain a-falling.

Ah'll give you, parson, God he made the sea,
An' made this 'Arth, ner yit Ah wo-an't scrimmage
But what He made the sky; what passes *me*
Is that what follows: "Then the Lord made we
In his own image."

For, let alone the difference in us creatures,
Some short o' words like me, and others preachers
With stores of them, like you; some fair, some middlin',

Some black-avis'd like you and good at fiddlin',
Some crabb'd, some mad, some mighty gay and pleasant,
No two that's more alike than jackdaw is to pheasant,
We're poorish stuff at best.

We doesn't last no time before we die,
Nor leave more truck behind than they poor thrushes.
You find, stiff feathers, laid aside the bushes
After a hard ol' frost in Janu-ry.
Ol' crow he lives much longer,
Ol' mare's a de-al stronger
'N the hare's faster . . .
If so be God's like we and we like He
The man's as good's his Master.

You are a civil, decent-spoken man, Muss Parson.
'N' *I* don't think ye'll say this kind o' tark is worse'n arson—
That's burning stacks, I think—sure*ly* it isn' meant so,
I tell you, Parson, no;
'N' us poor folk we doesn't want to blame
You parsons fer the things that's said and sung
Up there in church. My apple tree is crook'd because 'twere bent so
When it were young.
'N' them as had you preacher-folk to tame,
Taught you the tales that you are bound to tell
Us folk below
About three Gods that's one an' Heav'n an' Hell,
An' things us folk ain't *meant* to understand.
I tell you, sir, we men that's on the land
Needs summut we can chew when trouble's brewing,
When our ol' 'ooman's bad an' rent is due
'N' we no farden,
'N' when it's late to sow 'n' still too wet to dig the garden,

Something as we can chew like that ol' cow be chewing.
Something told plain and something we gits holt on,
—You need a simple sort o' feed to raise a colt on—
We needs it, parson, life's a bitter scrimmage,
Livin' and stuggin' in the mud and things we do
Enow confound us;
We hain't no need for fear
Of God, to make the living hardly worth....

You tell us, sir, that "God He made this Earth
In His own image,"
An' make the Lord seem near.
So's we could think that when we come to die
We'll lie
In this same goodly 'Arth, an' things goo on around us
Much as they used to goo.

II

The Small Farmer soliloquizes.

I wonder why we toiled upon the earth
From sunrise until sunset, dug and delved,
Crook-backed, cramp-fingered, making little marks
On the unmoving bosoms of the hills,
And nothing came of it. And other men
In the same places dug and delved and ended
As we have done; and other men just there
Shall do the self-same things until the end.
I wonder why we did it.... Underneath
The grass that fed my sheep, I often thought
Something lay hidden, some sinister thing
Lay looking up at us as if it looked
Upwards thro' quiet waters; that it saw
Us futile toilers scratching little lines
And doing nothing. And maybe it smiled
Because it knew that we must come to this....

I lay and heard the rain upon the roof
All night when rain spelt ruin, lay and heard
The east wind shake the windows when that wind
Meant parched up land, dried herbage, blighted wheat,
And ruin, always ruin creeping near
In the long droughts and bitter frosts and floods.
And when at dawning I went out-a-doors
I used to see the top of the tall shaft
O' the workhouse here, peep just above the downs,
It was as if the thing were spying, waiting,
Watching my movements, saying, "You will come,
Will come at last to me." And I am here . . .
And down below that Thing lay there and smiled;
Or no, it did not smile; it was as if
One might have caught it smiling, but one saw
The earth immovable, the unmoved sheep
And senseless hedges run like little strings
All over hill and dale. . . .

WISDOM

THE young girl questions: "Whether were it
better
To lie for ever, a warm slug-a-bed
Or to rise up and bide by Fate and Chance,
The rawness of the morning,
The gibing and the scorning
Of the stern Teacher of my ignorance?"
"I know not," Wisdom said.

The young girl questions: "Friend, shall I die calmer,
If I've lain for ever, sheets above the head,
Warm in a dream, or rise to take the worst
Of peril in the highways
Of straying in the by-ways.
Of hunger for the truth, of drought and thirst?"
"We do not know," he said,
"Nor may till we be dead."

THE POSY-RING

(AFTER CLEMENT MAROT)

THIS on thy posy-ring I've writ:
"True Love and Faith"
For, failing Love, Faith droops her head,
And lacking faith, why love is dead
And's but a wraith.
But Death is stingless where they've lit
And stayed, whose names hereon I've writ.

THE GREAT VIEW

UP here, where the air's very clear
And the hills slope away nigh down to the bay,
It is very like Heaven ...

For the sea's wine-purple and lies half asleep
In the sickle of the shore and, serene in the west,
Lion-like purple and brooding in the even,
Low hills lure the sun to rest.

Very like Heaven.... For the vast marsh dozes,
And waving plough-lands and willowy closes
Creep and creep up the soft south steep;
In the pallid North the grey and ghostly downs do fold away.
And, spinning spider-threadlets down the sea, the sea-lights dance
And shake out a wavering radiance.

Very like Heaven.... For a shimmering of pink.
East, far east, past the sea-lights' distant blink,
Like a cloud shell-pink, like the ear of a girl,
Like Venice-glass mirroring mother-o'-pearl,
Like the small pink nails of my lovely lady's fingers,
Where the skies drink the sea and the last light lies and lingers,
There is France.

WIFE TO HUSBAND

IF I went past you down this hill
And you had never seen my face before,
Would all your being feel the sudden thrill
You said it felt, once more?

If I went past you through this shaw,
Would be all a-quiver at the brush
Of my trailed garments; would the sudden hush
You said the black-birds' voices had in awe
Of my first coming, fall upon the place
Once more, if you had never seen my face
Nor ever heard my passing by before,
And nought had passed of all that was of yore?

A NIGHT PIECE

AS I lay awake by my good wife's side,
And heard the clock tick through a night in June,
I thought of a song with a haunting tune;
But the songs that betide,
And the tunes that we hear in the ear when the June moon rides in the sky,
Fade and die away with the coming of the day.
And my haloed angels with golden wings,
And the small sweet bells that rang in tune,
And the strings that quivered above the quills,
And all my mellow imaginings
Faded and died away at the coming of the day
With the gradual growth and spread of grey
Above the hills.

TO CHRISTINA AT NIGHTFALL

LITTLE thing, ah, little mouse,
Creeping through the twilit house,
To watch within the shadow of my chair
With large blue eyes; the firelight on your hair
Doth glimmer gold and faint,
And on your woollen gown
That folds a-down
From steadfast little face to square-set feet.

Ah, sweet! ah, little one! so like a carven saint,
With your unflinching eyes, unflinching face,
Like a small angel, carved in a high place,
Watching unmoved across a gabled town;
When I am weak and old,
And lose my grip, and crave my small reward
Of tolerance and tenderness and ruth,
The children of your dawning day shall hold
The reins we drop and wield the judge's sword
And your swift feet shall tread upon my heels,
And I be Ancient Error, you New Truth,
And I be crushed by your advancing wheels . . .

Good-night! The fire is burning low,
Put out the lamp;
Lay down the weary little head
Upon the small white bed.
Up from the sea the night winds blow
Across the hill across the marsh;
Chill and harsh, harsh and damp,
The night winds blow.

But, while the slow hours go,
I, who must fall before you, late shall wait and keep
Watch and ward,
Vigil and guard,
Where you sleep.
Ah, sweet! do you the like where I lie dead.

TWO FRESCOES

It occurred to me that a series of frescoes might arise dealing with the fortunes of Roderick the Goth. Having neither wall nor brushes I have tried to put two of them upon paper.

I

THE TOWER

DOWN there where Europe's arms
Stretch out to Africa,
Throughout the storms, throughout the calms
Of centuries it took the alms
Of sun and rain; the loud alarms
Of war left it unmoved; and grey
And brooding there it watched the strip of foam
And fret of ruffled waters, was the home
Of the blue rock-dove and the birds o' the main.

Coming from Africa
The swallows rested on it flying north
In spring-time; rested there again,
When the days shorten, speeding on the way
Homewards to Africa.
Back and forth
The tiny ships below sped; east and west
It was called blest
By mariners it guided. Mystery
Hung round it like a veil. The ancient Ones,
They said, had seen it rise
Upwards to the old suns,
Upwards to the old skies,
When Hercules
Did bid it guard those seas.

It was a thing of the Past;
Stood there untroubled, like a virgin, dreamed;
And not a man of all that land but deemed
The tower sacred.

It was a symbol of an ancient faith,
Some half-forgotten righteousness, some Truth,
Some virtue in the land whose tillers said:
"Whilst that stands unenforced, it is well."
Be sure the thing is even so to-day,
Our tower doth somewhere unenforced rise
Upwards to our old skies.
And if we suffer sacrilegious hands
To force its innocence, our knell shall ring
As it rang out for them on that old day
Knolling from Africa.
You say it was the King who did this thing,
Who sinned against this righteousness. But say:
If we stand by and with averted eyes,
Or, shrugging shoulders, let our rulers sin
Against the very virtue of the race,
Who is it then but us must bear the pains
Of Nemesis? Ah, yes, it was the King....

II

GOTHS

"Let the stars flame by as the flaming earth falls
down,
Ruined fall the earth as the clanging heavens fall.
Clasp me, love of mine; be the jewels in my crown
But the firelit tears of Gods, of the Ancient Ones of
all."

The swart King paced his palace wall
And down below the maids at ball
Sang in choir at evenfall
As they played:

"Make our couch of Greece and the footstool for our throne
Of Rome, throw scented Spain for the incense of our fire,
Bring me all the East for the jewels in my zone,
Cast them all together for our leaping wedding pyre."

And he looked down
Into their cloistral shade
And saw, without the tongues of shadow thrown
By wall and tree of that sequestered place
One girl who had the sunlight on her face,
Who swayed and clapped her hands and sang alone.

"My father can but die," she sang,
"My mother can but weep,
This weary town fall blazing down
And be a smouldering heap
Beneath the flame
Where I was wont to keep
My weary vigil till my lover came."

Chanting in her pauses all the girls within the close
Sang to her singing, and their hidden chorus rose
Like a wave, fell like falling asleep.
And for the King, her voice like fiery wine
Set all his pulses throbbing and her face
Did dazzle more than did the blood-red sun.

"He who would win me, let him woo like this,
Flames on his face and the blood upon his hands,
Ravish me away when the blackening embers hiss
As the red flesh weeps to the brands."

That King was one who reignèd there alone
Upon those very confines of the world,
Where conquering races ebb to sloth and sink
As still great rivers sink into the sands.
And—for his fathers had been rav'ning wolves
Who coursed through ruin, pestilence and death
When all the world flamed red from end to end—
That ancient song of his destroying race
The girl sang stirred the fibres of his frame
Till all the earth was red before his face.
It had been so the women sang of old
To his forgotten sires, and still they sang
Within the shadow of his palace wall,
The cloister of his grimmest liege of all.
And as she sang the ferment worked in her
And shook her virgin's voice to jarring notes.
Stirring in her the ancient cry of throats
Torn with the passions of the ancient days.

"Pour me blood o' gods; bring me broken oaths for toys
Countless of the cost, of their ruin, of thine own;
Drunk with wine and passion, drink thy moment's fill of joys,
Godlike, beastlike, manlike, drink and cast thy cup a-down;
Lose thy life; give thy crown,
Lose thy soul, give thine all,
As we sink to death and ruin with the smoke o' worlds for pall."

And so she raised her eyes and saw the King
Stand frowning down, his face inspired with flame
Fro' the west'ring sun. And then the Angelus
Chimed out across the silent land of Spain.
Beyond the strip of foam the imaums called,
And Africa and Europe fell to prayer.

But those two gazing in each other's eyes
Looked back into the hollows of the years.
And as he stood above his brooding land
It was as if she saw her sires again.
Flames shone upon his face and on his hands
Incarnadined; whenas the sun sank down
He raised his eyes and seemed to see that Spain
Was all on fire with blood upon the roofs.
And down to South the inviolate, pallid tower
Rose silent, pointing to the crescent moon
And that great peering planet called Sohéil,
That heralds, as Mahomet's doctors say,
His domination and his children's sway,
Rose over Africa.

VOLKSWEISE

A POOR girl sat by a tower of the sea
All a-wringing of her hands; "Will he never show," says she,
"Just as a token, just a glimmer of his ship's lant... horn?"

"Oh, all ye little grains of sand
Twist into a rope shall draw his keel
Hither. Oh, ye little gulls and terns,
Join wings and bear me from this strand
To where I'll feel
His arms, and find where on the foam his ship is borne."

A poor girl sat, etc.

"Oh, all ye little stars o' the night
Come down and cluster in my hair;
Oh, bright night-flashes o' the waves
Shine round me till I'm all one flame of light.
So, far at sea,
He'll deem a beacon beckons him to me...."

A poor girl sat nigh a tower of the sea
All a-wringing of her hands; "Will he never show," said she,
"Just a token, just a glimmer of his ship's lant... horn?"

AND AFTERWARDS

(A SAVAGE SORT OF SONG ON THE ROAD)

"ONCE *I was a gallant and bold I*
And you so tender and true,
But I'll never again be the old I
Nor you the old you.

I shall go lounging along on the edge
Of the grass.... You'll loiter along by the hedge.
I shall go dogged through dust and the dirt
Like an ass in my moods.
You with a new sweetheart at your skirt
Ev'ry few roods....

"Once I was a gallant," etc.

We'll maybe jog along together
A long way;
Maybe put up with the weather together,
Better or worse
As it chances day by day,
Or maybe part with a kick and a curse
I and you,
After a turning or two....

"But I'll never again," etc.

ON A MARSH ROAD

(WINTER NIGHTFALL)

A BLUFF of cliff, purple against the south,
And nigh one shoulder-top an orange pane.
This wet, clean road; clear twilight held in the pools,
And ragged thorns, ghost reeds and dim, dead willows.

Past all the windings of these grey, forgotten valleys,
To west, past clouds that close on one dim rift—
The golden plains; the infinite, glimpsing distances,
The eternal silences; dim lands of peace.

Infinite plains to know no wanderer's foot; infinite distances where alone is rest;
All-virgin downs where none shall pasture sheep; inviolable peaks that none shall climb,
From whose summit nor you nor I shall gaze on ocean's infinite beyond,
Nor none look back upon this world folding to-night, to rain and to sleep.

AN END PIECE

CLOSE the book and say good-bye to everything;
Pass up from the shore and pass by byre and stall,
—For the smacks shall sail home on the tail of the tides,
And the kine shall stand deep in the sweet water sides,
And they still shall go burying, still wedding brides,
But I must be gone in the morning.

One more look, and so farewell, sweet summering,
One moment more and then no more at all,
For the skipper shall summon his hands to the sea,
And the shepherd still shepherd his sheep on the lea,
But it's over and done with the man that was me,
As over the hill comes the morning.

V

"POEMS FOR PICTURES"

Note.—The following poems were printed in the volume of the same title published by Mr Macqueen in 1897.

LOVE IN WATCHFULNESS

UPON THE SHEEPDOWNS

SAIL, oh sail away,
Oh sail, ye clouds, above my face,
Here where I lie;
Trail, oh trail away
Ye ling'ring minutes and give place
To hours that fly.

But when I hear an echo mutter,
Soft up the slope of golden gorse,
Oh, when I see a distant horse,
When I shall see, afar, a kerchief flutter
Among the shrouds
And driving veils of mist, you'll sail away you
hours and clouds,
You'll sail away.

AFTER ALL

YES, what's the use of striving on?
And what's to show when all is done?
The bells will toll as now they toil,
Here's an old lilt will summarize the whole:

"This fell about in summertide,
About the midmost of the year,
Our master did to covert ride
To drive the fallow deer.
Chanced we upon the Douglas men ere ever one of us was ware.

"Then sped a shaft from covert side
And pierced in behind his ear;
This fell about in summertide
At midmost of the year."

So down he fell and rested there
Among the sedge hard by the brook,
About the midmost of the year
His last and lasting rest he took.

And so, "This fell in winter late,
Or ever Candlemas drew near,
His bride had found another mate
Before the ending of the year.

"His goshawks decked another's wrists,
His hounds another's voice did fear.
His men another's errands ride
His steed another burden bear,
Him they forgot by Christmastide.
Ere Candlemas drew near."

Our hounds shall know another leash,
Our men another master know,
And we reck little of it all, so we but find good
rest below.

So what's the use of striving on?
And what's to show when all is done?
The ring of bells will chime and chime,
And all the rest's just waste—just waste of time.

THE OLD FAITH TO THE CONVERTS

"WHEN the world is growing older,
And the road leads down and down and down,
And the wind is in the bare tree-tops
And the meadows sodden with much rain,
Seek me here in the old places,
And here, where I dwell, you shall find me,"
Says the old Faith we are leaving.

"When the muscles stiffen,
Eyes glaze, ears lose their keenness,
When the mind loses its familiar nimbleness,
And the tongue no longer voices it, speeds before it, follows it,
Seek me here in the old places, [find me,"
And here, where I have always dwelt, you shall
Says the old Faith we are leaving.

"I shall not watch your going down the road,
Not even to the turning at the hill,
Not for me to hear you greet the strange women,
Not for me to see them greet you.
They shall be many and many the houses you shall enter, but never shall house be like to mine,"
Says the old Faith we are leaving.

"You shall hear strange new songs,
But never song like the one I sing by your pillow;
You shall breathe strange new scents, [the linen.
But never scent like that of the herbs I strew 'mid
Go! I give you time to make holiday,
Travel, travel, fare into far countries,
But you shall come back again to the old places,
And here, where I have always dwelt, you shall find me,"
Says the old Faith we are leaving.

But we—we shall never return.

ST AETHELBURGA

FOR A PICTURE

St Aethelburga, daughter of Athelbert, King of Kent, wedded Aedwin, King of Northumbria. Him and thereafter his whole folk she won for the worship of Christianity. But in the end he was slain by Penda, a heathen, who took the land. Then did St Aethelburga return into Kent and found the convent and church at Lyminge, where she died.

To purge our minds of haste, pass from an age outworn
And travel to the depths of tranquil times long past;
Sinking as sinks a stone through waters of a tarn,
Be fitting things and meet:
And, look you, on our walls hang treasures from such depths.

QUEEN, saint, evangelist; sweet, patient, fain to wait
With crucifix in hand, broad brow and haloed crown
Half-hidden by the coif, she enters through that gate.
She enters through that door, where tapestry drawn back
Left seen, a moment since, an apple lawn; but moors
Spread far away beyond. That span of shorn green turf,
Won from the heather's grasp, will whisper of regret
For far-off swarded downs—
For far-off Kentish downs, soft sky and glint of sea,
Sweet chime of convent bells and flower scents of home.

Here, in a Northern land, where skies are grey and hearts
Are slow to gather warmth: where Truth is slow to spread.
And gibes spring swift to lips; home thoughts are bitter sweet.
Saint in a pagan court, Queen of a wav'ring King,
She murmurs inly, "Wait," clasps tight the crucifix,
Enters the narrow door and passes up the hall.

In those old homespun days, the voices of a court,
The whispers that are passed behind the dais-seats
By fearers of a frown, came to the war-lord's ear
In some shrewd jester's jape: [her.
And some such licensed fool now voiced the folk for
These lovers of their mead, strong beef and rolling song,
Liked little her soft ways, her Friday fasts and chants
That rose and fell unmarked, unrhythmic and unrhymed—
Her sweet and silent ways and distant-gazing eyes.

"Mead and strong meats on earth and arrow flights on earth,
What boots the rest?" they said,
Questions their jester her:

"Oh, Queen, of fasting fain,
King's wife that scourge your flesh,
King's daughter sadly clad,
Sad shall be your estate, after sad faring here,
If you be laid i' the grave and find no future state."
To him the Queen: "True, son, but what shall be your fate,
If future state there be?" and crossed the rush-strewn floor,
Thanking the Lord that found shrewd answers for shrewd jests.
So fared she for awhile. In time her King was won,
Knelt in the font and sloughed, beneath Paulinus' hands
His scales of pagan sin. But when his time was come
Ill fared he 'fore his foes that sent his soul to God.

So turned the sad Queen back and sought her brother's land,
Just over those high downs, in a grey hollowed vale,
She built her nunnery and rested there awhile.

(Maybe her feet once trod this yielding sheep-cropped
sward—
'Tis like her eyes once filled at sight of just that glint
Of distant sun-kissed sea, out where the hill drops
down.)

So fared she for awhile, and when her time was come,
Down there in Lyminge Church, she laid her weary
limbs.

And yet we see her stand: sad Queen, sweet, silent
saint,
With crucifix clasped close, low brow and distant
gaze
She enters through that gate.

GRAY

FOR A PICTURE

THE firelight gilds the patterns on the walls,
The yellow flames fly upwards from the brands,
On fold and farm the sad grey twilight falls,
And shrouds the downs and hides the hollow lands.

And pensive is the hour and bids the brain
Weave morals from the peeping things of dusk,
Dwelling a moment on the darkling pane,
The tapping roses and the pot of musk.

That picture there—the one the firelight shows:
The poet by a grave, beneath the may,
With ready notebook and unruffled brows
And elegiac pose—you guess it's Gray.

Below, beneath his rounded, withied grave,
A ploughman sleeps, the tablet at his head
Tells the short tale of life that such men have—
The scarcely cold and half-forgotten dead

Who "five and fifty years the furrows trod,"
Such were the time and toil of William Mead
Who passed: "And now, he's resting 'neath this sod,"
"And there's an end," you say. 'Twere so indeed.

But William was a ploughman of the best,
Who ploughed his furrow straight from hedge to shaws
From sun in east to sun low down in west,
With following of rooks and gulls and daws.

He taught some score the honest trick of plough—
Crop-headed yokels, youths of clay and loam—
Who learnt his ways and gathered from him how
To drive good team and draw straight furrow home.

Thus when his work was done and done his days
He left a school of workers—to this day
We recognize their touch—and owe due praise
For bread and thought to such as he and Gray.

Who ploughed such furrows each in his own field,
Who sowed such seed and gathered in such grain,
That we still batten on their well-sown yield,
And wonder who shall do the like again.

THE GIPSY AND THE CUCKOO

"Brother, what's that bird tolling yonder?"
"Why, Jasper, that's a cuckoo."
"He's a roguish chaffing sort of bird, isn't he, brother?"
"He is, Jasper."
"But you rather like him, brother? . . . well, brother, and what's a gipsy?"—*The Romany Rye.*

TELL me, brother, what's a cuckoo, but a roguish chaffing bird?
Not a nest's his own, no bough-rest's his own, and he's never man's good word,
But his call is musical and rings pleasant on the ear.
And the spring would scarce be spring
If the cuckoo did not sing
In the leafy months o' the year.

Tell me, brother, what's a gipsy, but a roguish chaffing chap?
Not a cot's his own, not a man would groan
For a gipsy's worst mishap,
But his tent looks quaint when bent
On the sidesward of a lane,
And you'd deem the rain more dreary
And the long white road more weary
If we never came again.

Would your May days seem more fair
Were we chals deep read in books,
Were we cuckoos cawing rooks,
All the world cathedral closes,
Where the very sunlight dozes
Were the sounds all organ pealing, psalm and song and prayer?

THE GIPSY AND THE TOWNSMAN

THE TOWNSMAN

PLEASANT enough in the seed time,
Pleasant enough in the hay time,
Pleasant enough in the grain time,
When oaks don golden gowns,
But the need time,
The grey time,
How bear ye them,
How fare ye then
When the rain clouds whip over the gorse on the downs,
How bear ye, them, how fare ye then?

GIPSY

We lie round the fire and we hark to the wind
As it wails in the gorse and it whips on the down,
And the wet-wood smoke drives us winking blind,
But there's smoke and wind and woe in the town
Harder to bear
There than here in the saddest month of the weariest year.

THE SONG OF THE WOMEN

A WEALDEN TRIO

1st Voice

WHEN ye've got a child 'ats whist for want of food,
And a grate as grey's y'r 'air for want of wood,
And y'r man and you ain't nowise not much good;

Together

Oh—
It's hard work a-Christmassing,
Carolling,
Singin' songs about the "Babe what's born."

2nd Voice

When ye've 'eered the bailiff's 'and upon the latch,
And ye've feeled the rain a-trickling through the thatch,
An' y'r man can't git no stones to break ner yit no sheep to watch—

Together

Oh—
We've got to come a-Christmassing,
Carolling,
Singin' of the "Shepherds on that morn."

3rd Voice, more cheerfully

'E was a man's poor as us, very near,
An' 'E 'ad 'is trials and danger,
An' I think 'E'll think of us when 'E sees us singin' 'ere;
For 'is mother was poor, like us, poor dear,
An' she bore Him in a manger.

Oh—
It's warm in the heavens, but it's cold upon the earth;
An' we ain't no food at table nor no fire upon the hearth;
And it's bitter hard a-Christmassing,
Carolling,
Singin' songs about our Saviour's birth;
Singin' songs about the Babe what's born;
Singin' of the shepherds on that morn.

THE PEASANT'S APOLOGY

DOWN near the earth
On the steaming furrows
Things are harsh and black enough
Dearth there is and lack enough,
And immemorial sorrows
Stultify sweet mirth
Till she borrows
Bitterness and blackness from the earth.

AUCTIONEER'S SONG

COME up from the field,
Come up from the fold,
For the farmer has broken,
His things must be sold.

Drive the flock from the fold,
And the stock from the field,
And the team from the furrow,
And see what they yield.
Coom up!

Come up from the marsh,
Come down from the hops,
Come down thro' the ventways,
Come cater the copse.

Come down from the hops,
Come up from the marsh,
Tho' selling be bitter
And creditors harsh,
Coom up!

Bring all you can find,
Take the clock from the wall,
The crocks from the dairy,
The arm-chair and all.

Tear the prints from the wall,
Bring all you can find,
Now turn up your collars,
To keep out the wind.
Bid up!

So come up from the field, come up from the fold,
For the poor old farmer his things must be sold;
Come up from the fold, come up from the field,
Now stand all together, let's see what they yield.
Bid up!

ALDINGTON KNOLL

THE OLD SMUGGLER SPEAKS

AL'INGTON Knoll it stands up high,
Guidin' the sailors sailin' by,
Stands up high fer all to see
Cater the marsh and crost the sea.

Al'ington Knoll's a mound a top,
With a dick all round and it's bound to stop,
For them as made it in them old days
Sees to it well that theer it stays,

For that ol' Knoll is watched so well
By drownded men let outen Hell;
They watches well and keeps it whole
For a sailor's mark—the goodly Knoll.

Farmer Finn as farms the ground
Tried to level that goodly mound,
But not a chap from Lydd to Lym'
Thought that job were meant for him.

Finn 'e fetched a chap fro' th' Sheeres,
One o' yer spunky devil-may-keeres,
Giv him a shovel and pick and spade,
Promised him double what we was paid.

He digged till ten, and he muddled on
Till he'd digged up a sword and a skillington—
A grit old sword as long as me,
An' grit ol' bones as you could see.

He digged and digged the livelong day,
Till the sun went down in Fairlight Bay;
He digged and digged, and behind his back
The lamps shone out and the marsh went black,

And the sky in the west went black from red,
An' the wood went black—an' the man was dead.
But wheer he'd digged the chark shone white
Out to sea like Calais light.

Al'ington Knoll it stands up high,
Guidin' the sailors sailin' by,
Stands up high for all to see
Cater the marsh and crost the sea.

A PAGAN

BRIGHT white clouds and April skies
May make your heart feel bonny,
But summer's sun and flower's growth
Will fill my hives with honey,
And mead is sweet to a pugging tooth
When it's dark at four and snow clouds rise.

Owl light's sweet if the moon be bright,
And trysting's no bad folly,
But give me mead and a warm hearthstone,
And a cosy pipe and Dolly
—And Dolly to devil a mutton bone
When it's dark at four of a winter's night.

OLD WINTER

OLD Winter's hobbling down the road,
Dame Autumn's cloak looks frosty grey
With a furry edge.
We deemed it berry red in the ray
The sun vouchsafed the dying day
E'en now through the gap in the hedge.

Chorus

Spring's gone, Summer's past,
Autumn will never, never catch them,
But Winter hobbles along so fast
You'd almost think he'd match them.

Old Winter carries a heavy load,
Sticks and stakes to your heart's desire,
But as for me,
I'll not tramp in the Autumn mire,
But sit and blink at the merry fire
And hark to the kettle's minstrelsy.

Chorus

Spring's gone, Summer's past,
Autumn was mellow, mellow yellow,
But for all old Winter's hollow blast
He's not such a bad old fellow.

THE PEDLAR LEAVES THE BAR PARLOUR AT DYMCHURCH

GOOD NIGHT, we'd best be jogging on,
The moon's been up a while,
We've got to get to Bonnington,
Nigh seven mile.

But the marsh ain'd so lone if you've heered a good song,
And you hum it aloud as you cater along,
Nor the stiles half so high, nor the pack so like lead,
If you've heered a good tale an' it runs in your head.

So, come, we'd best be jogging on,
The moon will give us light,
We've got to get to Bonnington,
To sleep to-night.

AN ANNIVERSARY

TWO decades and a minute,
And half a moon in the sky,
Like a broken willow pattern plate
And a jangling bell to din it,
Dingle—dong—twelve strokes—
Two decades and a minute.

BEGINNINGS

FOR ROSSETTI'S FIRST PAINTING

WHETHER the beginnings of things notable
Have in them anything worth noting.
Whether an acorn's worth the thinking of
Or eagle's egg suggests the sweep of wings in the clear blue,
Is just an idle question.

There's this:
If you should hold the acorn 'twixt your fingers,
You'll conjure up an oak maybe,
A great gnarled trunk, criss-crossed and twisting branches
And quivering of leaves.
Or if the egg lies in the hollow of your hand,
And the possessor says, "It is an eagle's."
You'll deem you're looking up into high heaven,
And see, far, far above you,
Leisurely circling, now amongst the clouds, now against the sun,
A careless span of pinions;
You'll see, maybe, in short, such oaks and eagle-flights
As never were, save in an idler's dream.
But then again:
An acorn's just an acorn, food for swine, and never
(The chances are so great, so very great against it),
Never will become a tempest-breasting oak.

And then this eagle's egg,
It's blown and empty of its contents,
And just reposes on its cotton wool
In a collector's box.

So with these sketches:
Maybe you'll let them trick you into dreaming
A hundred masterpieces:
Halls full of never-to-be-equalled brushwork:
Or let the music of a witching name beguile you
To the remembrance of a master's sonnets.
Or you may say, with just a tilting of the nose towards heaven:

"The thing's amiss—it's worthless,
We've seen a daub as good
Hang flapping unobserved in such a High Street,
Decked with the faded, weather-beaten effigy
Of so-and-so of noble memory—
The thing's amiss, it's worthless."

And yet—it's just a question.

AT THE BAL MASQUE

COLUMBINE TO PIERROT

(*She hums her words.*)

AH—Ah—Ah—if you ask for a love like that,
Qu'est c'-Qu'est c'-Qu'est c'que tu fais dans cette galère?
Hark—Hark—Hark—Hear the twittering, rustling feet:
Alors, qu'est ce-e, qu'est ce-e qu'on peut faire.

She speaks.

Tender and trusting and true
That they may be otherwhere:
Here one is just what one is—
And—as for pledges to you—
There—drink the scent of my hair:
There—snatch your moment of bliss.

She sings again.

Tender—Tender—Tender, trusting and true
That, That, That they may be, they may be otherwhere:
Si tu veux autre chose, je n'ai rien de plus,
Qu'est c'-Qu'est c'-Qu'est c' que tu fais dans cette galère?

IN TENEBRIS

ALL within is warm,
Here without it's very cold,
Now the year is grown so old
And the dead leaves swarm.

In your heart is light,
Here without it's very dark,
When shall I hear the lark?
When see aright?

Oh, for a moment's space!
Draw the clinging curtains wide
Whilst I wait and yearn outside
Let the light fall on my face.

SONG OF THE HEBREW SEER

OH would that the darkness would cover the face of the land,
Oh would that a cloud would shroud the face of high heaven,
Would blot out the stars, and hush, hush, hush the winds of the west,
That the sons of men might sink into utter rest,
Forgetting the God in whose name their fathers had striven
Might strive no longer and slumber as slumbers the desert sand.

That then, oh, my God, should Thy lightnings flash forth,
That Thy voice, oh, Jehovah, should burst on mine ear
In the thunder that rolls from the east and the north
And thy laugh on the rushing of winds that bear
The myriad, myriad sounds of the sea.

AN IMITATION

(TO M. M.)

COME, my Sylvia, let us rove
To that secret silent grove,
Where the painted birds agree
To tune their throats for you and me.

We will foot it in the shade
Of ev'ry dappled, dancing glade,
Till Ob'ron and his fairy train
Shall shout for joy and swear amain:
Such form as thine was never seen
Sporting o'er the velvet green.

SONNET

(SUGGESTED BY THE "PHŒBUS WITH ADMETUS" BY GEORGE MEREDITH)

AFTER Apollo left Admetus' gate,
Did his late fellows feel a numb despair,
Did they cry "Comrade, comrade" everywhere
Thro' the abandoned byres, and curse the fate
That let them for awhile know him for mate
To mourn his going? Did his vacant chair
Before the fire, when winter drove them there
Make the sad silence more disconsolate?

Did yearning ears all vainly, vainly strain
To half recall the voice that now was mute?
Did yearning eyes strive all in vain, in vain,
To half recall the glory of his face,
To half recall the God that for a space
Had quickened their dead world? and, ah, his lute . . .

SONG DIALOGUE

"IS it so, my dear?"
"Even so!"
"Too much woe to bear?"
"Too much woe!"
"Wait a little while,
We must bear the whole,
Do not weep, but smile,
We are near the goal."

"Is it dark—the night?"
"Very dark!"
"Not a spark of light?"
"Not a spark!"
"Yet a little way
We must journey on;
Night will turn to day
And the goal be won."

"Will the dawn come soon?"
"In an hour;
See! the sinking moon
Loses power.
Saffron grey the west
Wakes before the sun.
Very soon we'll rest
Now that day's begun."

VI

LITTLE PLAYS

The following pieces in dramatic form were published, viz., "Perseverance d'Amour" and "The Face of the Night," in the volume bearing the latter name; the "Mother" appeared also in the *Fortnightly Review*. "King Cophetua" and the "Masque" were published in "Poems for Pictures." I have grouped them here together for the convenience of the reader who does not like poems in dialogue.

PERSEVERANCE D'AMOUR

A LITTLE PLAY

Time.—Thirteenth Century.
Place.—In and near the City of Paris.
Persons—

ANSEAU DIT LE TOURANGEAU, Jeweller to the King.
TIENNETTE, Daughter of a bondman of the Abbey of Saint Germain.
THE ABBOT OF ST GERMAIN, HUGON DE SENNECTERRE.
THE KING OF FRANCE.
THE QUEEN OF FRANCE.
THE KING'S CHAMBERLAIN.
A FAT BURGESS OF PARIS.
A THIN ONE.
A STRANGER.
Monks of the Abbey; a Crowd, etc., etc.,

SCENE I

ANSEAU DIT LE TOURANGEAU *and* TIENNETTE, *meeting on a road in the Clerk's Meadow. The road has a grassy border, vines in the background and the roofs of the Abbey of Saint Germain. It is a Sunday at sunset, the Angelus ringing.*

ANSEAU, *a man of middle age, large, squarely built, richly dressed, black bearded, with a gold chain round his neck. Hanging from it the badge of the "Subjects of the King." He is a free man, and a burgess of the City of Paris.*

TIENNETTE, *a young girl, fair; dressed in sack-cloth with a rope girdle. She is leading a cow which browses in the ditch. They stand while the Angelus rings; then she passes* ANSEAU *without looking up;* ANSEAU *turns and looks after her.*

Ans. A pretty pass,
That I, a ten years' master jeweller,
A burgess and a man of forty years
Spent soberly in service of my craft
Have not the courage for a mere "God-den"
To such a petticoat....

[*He calls: "Ho-la" and beckons to* TIENNETTE. *She comes back slowly, leading the cow after her.*

Ans. Ah, sweetheart, is your state so poor a one
That, on a Sabbath, in despite of law
You come abroad to work. Have you no fear?
Tien. My lord, I have no fear; I am below
The notice of the laws and the Lord Abbot
Doth give us licence thus to graze our cow
After the hour of vespers.
Ans. Well, my dear,
You set the welfare of your soulless beast
Above the welfare of your little soul?
Tien. Our little souls, my lord? Our soulless beast
Is more than half our lives and more than all
The little souls that we have never seen.
Ans. Why, then, you're passing poor. And yet you have
Your jewels and the gold you carry with you.
Your eyes and hair; I would I had such gold.
Where are your lovers? You are near a city
Where what you have...
Tien. Nenny, my lord. I have...

[*She holds out her left arm and shows him, on it, a silver band such as is worn by grazing cattle, but without the bell.* ANSEAU *raises his hands in horror.*

Ans. A chattel of the Abbey's...
Tien. Ah, my lord,
I'm daughter to the Abbey's serf Etienne.

Who marries me becomes—it makes no boot
Though he be even burgess or more great—
Becomes a bonded serf with me and falls
Body and goods to the Abbey. If he love
Withouten wedlock, then the children fall
Again to the Abbey.... Were I ten times less
Ill-favoured than I am, the most in love
Would flee me like the plague.

Ans. And do you say
That not a one, for love of your blue eyes
And of your mouth and of your little hands,
Did ever try to buy your liberty,
As I bought mine o' the King?

Tien. It costs too dear.
It costs too dear, my lord. All those I please
At meeting go away as they did come.
It costs too dear.

Ans. And have you never thought
Of seeking other lands on a good horse
Behind a rider....

Tien. Oh, one thinks ... one thinks ...
But, sir, the Abbey's arms are very long.
They'd hang me if they caught me, and the man,
If he were noble, he must lose his lands;
If simple, life and all. I am not worth
Such stakes. Besides, I live in fear of God
Who set me where I am.

[*She begins to drag the cow further along the road.* ANSEAU *stands silent. At last he says absent-mindedly:*

Ans. But then—your age?

Tien. I do not know, my lord, but the Lord Abbot,
They say, doth keep account....

Ans. And what's your name?

Tien. I have no name, my lord, my father was
Baptiz'd Etienne, and so my mother was

"The woman called Etienne," and as for me
They call me Tiennette, but I've no name.
Ans. (*in the same tone*). Your cow, now, is a noble beast.
Tien. My lord,
Her milk's the best of all the country side.
If you do thirst...
Ans. Why, no, I have no thirst
That that could satisfy. Now listen you....
I am that Anseau called le Tourangeau,
My fame is what it is, my work no worse.
After my light I've lived and done my best,
And I am wealthy past the middle wealth.
I never followed women; ev'ry night
Your gallants passed my windows they have seen
My steadfast lamp behind the iron grilles,
Have seen me bent above the shining gold
Or black against my forge. I once was poor,
Now I am wealthy past the middle wealth.
I am a man like other men, not worse
And little better, not I think unkind
Nor too much given to mirth. And so I've lived
Since I could wield a chisel of mine own.
But now—I cannot tell you when or how,
What set me thinking, how the thought increased—
I could not sleep at night, nor brace to work.
It may have been a month; I do not know.
Till, of a sudden, as small bubbles run
To merge into one whole, the thought was there;
I must be married. I must have some soul
To share my joys with and to share my griefs,
And bear me little children.... Ever since
That thought has been all me. I was to-day
Before the altar of Saint Eloy's church
(The seven small gold saints and the large cross
Set with carbuncles are my proper work),
And prayed that he would set within my path

A woman fitted for my prime of life.
You see me: this is I. The air's so hot
Within the narrow streets I came out here
Where I have never walked this seven years.
The little birds were singing down the sun
The bell rang out and in the sacred minutes
I saw you stand against me; was it not
An answer from the Saint?
Tien. Alas, if but
The price were not so great.
Ans. I've little skill
In women, but there is a certain sound
Comes from true metal; I've a skill in that,
And when I look at you and when you speak
I seem to hear that sound.
Tien. If but the price
Were not so great. I am not worth the tenth.
You do not know.... I've little skill in men.
You frighten me a little; what know I?
If there is any truth for such as I
You seem to have that truth. If any goodness
Is in the world for me, it seems in you.
You should be strong and gentle, I am weak.
I do not know; I say I do not know.
Alas, alas...

[*She begins to weep softly.* ANSEAU *crosses himself, joins his hands and says:*

Ans. I make a vow to my Lord Saint Eloy, under whose invocation are all master jewellers, to invent two shrines of gilded silver of the finest work it shall be granted to me to achieve. I make a vow to fill them, the one with a likeness of the Holy Virgin, to the end that if I achieve the liberty of my wife, she be glorified; the other for my patron Saint Eloy if only I have success in this my emprise. And I swear by my eternal salvation to persevere with courage in this

affair, to spend in it all that I possess and to quit of it only with my life. So God help me, Anseau dit le Tourangeau.

[TIENNETTE *has sunk upon her knees;* ANSEAU *bends and raises her. The cow has moved slowly up the side of the ditch and is browsing on the vines.*

Tien. Alas, alas ...
You do not know. You must take back your vow.
I could love you all my life. Alas, alas ...

Ans. The vow is said; there is no taking back.

Tien. You do not know, alas, you do not know....

[*She runs to the cow as the scene closes.*

END OF SCENE I

SCENE II

[*Paris. A place in front of the Church of St Luke. A great crowd of burgesses, their wives, children, pedlars, friars and pages is round the house of* Maître ANSEAU.

A STRANGER; *a* FAT BURGESS; *his* WIFE; *a* THIN BURGESS; *his* MOTHER.

The STRANGER, *a man in parti-coloured hose, with one long sleeve torn and hanging by a thread, a peaked red beard, two peacock's feathers held by a brooch to a hat that has a long flap in front. He struggles out of the crowd and salutes the* FAT BURGESS, *who has his wife upon his arm.*

The Stranger. Sir, I beseech you, sir, I am but very newly come to this town. Sir, I beseech you, tell me how I may come to the house of one (*he reads from a paper*) Maître Anseau, dit le Tourangeau.

The Fat Burgess. That, sir, is the house, of stone, beside the Church. But if you would come to it you must even fly like the birds of heaven.

The Crowd. Maître Anseau ... Maître Anseau.

The Stranger. Sir, I am newly come to this town. The Lord Percy is to wed, sir, and having a mind to —the Lord Percy of Northumberland—present his transcendent bride with a jewelled stomacher, and hearing of the surpassing skill of this Maître Anseau, sent me, sir, his gentleman, sir. ...

The Crowd. Maître Anseau, Maître An ... seau! Cracked be all shaven skulls ... we will tear down the Abbey ... we will ...

The Stranger. And so, sir, if your master be so well be-customed, it beseems me, sir, to think that my worshipful Lord will scarce be suited, nor his transcendent bride be stomachered, this many days.

The Crowd. Hurrah, hurrah! Be of good cheer. For the glory of Paris be skulls cracked!

The Stranger. I have been torn as if by wild beasts. Behold me...

The Fat Burgess. Sir, it would seem that you know not the lamentable story. It is in this way, sir...

[*His voice is lost in the noise of the crowd. He can be seen gesticulating. The* THIN BURGESS *interrupts him. They discuss in dumb show; the wives join the discussion. Then a lull.*

The Fat Burgess. And so, sir, the King's Chamberlain, owing to our Master great sums for a pouncet-box set in onion stones...

The Thin Burgess. Neighbour, you mislead. I have it from Maître Anseau himself. The pouncet-box was paid for. It was out of the great love the Chamberlain bore our master....

The Fat Burgess. Well, be it as you will, neighbour. For love or debt the King's Chamberlain hies him with Maître Anseau to the Abbot. And the crafty Abbot...

The Crowd. Pestilence carry off Abbot Hugon... May the plague take him off ere he take one of our free burgesses for a serf.

The Fat Burgess. This crafty Abbot will not abate one jot; but sitteth as mum as a fox in a drain. The Master offereth great fortunes for this wench. But the Abbot will have him for a serf if he marry her, thinking to gain for the Abbey the incomparable skill of...

The Thin Burgess. Neighbour, you mistake. It is a matter of principle.

(*To the Stranger*). Sir, the thing is thus. This Abbot would enslave all us free burgesses and he makes with our Master a beginning. He hath other wenches for all us burgesses....

The Wife of the Thin Burgess. Oh, the guile, the guile....

The Fat Burgess. Principle or no principle, the matter stands thus. Maître Anseau going again to the Clerk's Meadow finds there no Tiennette. For, sir, our 'prentices having planned to carry her off in their despite, these wicked priests did have her clapped up close. Since which time our Master hath been suffered to see her only through a little grille....

The Thin Burgess. See the craft of it. This is to whet his appetite.

The Fat Burgess's Wife. Oh, sir, they say it be pitiful to see them there. They do buss the bars of each side and the tears do run, do run like juice from a roasting capon. A did use to be a lusty man, and now A's grown so pale, so pale....

The Fat Burgess. He eats not...

The Thin Burgess. Sleeps not.

The Fat Burgess. Does no work...

The Thin Burgess. Sighs and groans.

The Fat Burgess. Raves and swears...

The Thin Burgess. And the crux of the matter is: to-day he shall make his final choice, whether to have the Tiennette and a serf's life, or leave her and take to...

A Loud Voice. The King has gone to the Abbey....

The Crowd. Maître Anseau. Maî...tre An...seau....

The Thin Burgess. The King, sir, doth owe our Master great sums and shall intercede for him....

The Fat Burgess. I do wager ten yards of white velvet to a bodkin he do leave her to go her way and he his.

The Wife of the Thin Burgess. I do wager fourscore and two of my fatting capons he do have her....

The Voice again. The King has gone to the Abbey....

The Crowd. Maître Anseau... Maître Anseau....

The Fat Burgess. Be it a wager...

The Wife of the Thin Burgess. Be it a wager and shake hands upon it....

[*A great uproar behind; the crowd sways backwards and forwards, then opens.* Maître ANSEAU *is seen to be mounting a white jennet from the steps of his house.*

The Crowd. To the Abbey, to the Abbey... (*They run off.*)

The Stranger. I shall be killed; I shall be killed.... My hat is gone.

END OF SCENE II

SCENE III

[*The Great Hall in the Abbey of Saint Germain. To L. very large doors, opened and showing through their arches an apple close, red apples lying in heaps on the turf below whitened tree trunks. Facing the doors the Abbot's chair. Swallows fly in and out among the gilded beams of the tall roof.*

The ABBOT HUGON, Monks, Cross-bearer. *Behind*—The Crowd, Soldiers of the Abbey, King's Soldiers; *Afterwards*—Bondsmen of the Abbey.

The ABBOT HUGON, *a very old man. His shaven face, very brown, small and dried, hangs forward on his breast, a richly-jewelled mitre pressing it down. He is seated in his chair facing the open doors. The* Monks *are round his chair which stands high on stone steps.*

The Crowd *is being pressed in place at the back of the Hall by the* Soldiers of the Abbey, *who set their halberd staves across the faces. The* King's Soldiers *look on laughing. A great uproar. A flourish of trumpets sounds without; the* ABBOT *is assisted to his feet and gives the benediction towards the doors.*

Enter the KING OF FRANCE. *He rides a black stallion into the hall; the* QUEEN *in a white litter borne by two white mules. The curtains of the litter and the clothes of the mules are sewn with golden fleur-de-lis, the mules are shod with gold. A train of lords and ladies follow them. The* KING'S CHAMBERLAIN *comes to stand by the head of the King's horse.*

The Crowd. The King . . . the King. Do you see the King? . . . Now the Queen. Ah . . . h . . . h . . .

[*The* KING *salutes the* ABBOT *who blesses him again. Their lips can be seen to move, but what they say is lost in the exclamations of the* Crowd. . . . *The* KING *bends to speak to his* CHAMBERLAIN, *who exit. The* QUEEN *puts her head out of the litter.*

The Crowd. The Queen ... Do you see the Queen? ... Ah ... h ... h ...

[*The* CHAMBERLAIN *returns with* ANSEAU DIT LE TOURANGEAU, *who kneels in the space between the* KING *and the* ABBOT.

The Crowd (*a great cry*). Ha, Maître Anseau, Maître Anseau. A free man. No serf ... no serf. ...

[*It grows silent. The voice of the* KING *is heard as if continuing a speech.*

The King. Be of good courage, man.
My lord the Abbot will have need of us
Upon a day.

The Crowd. Huzza ... hear the King ... the King. ...

The King. For in the end, we are the King of France.
If what men say be true we are more poor
Than you are. Therefore courage, man, look up.
Set a high price and with a smiling face
Cast down that price. Lord Abbot name it him,
He's stores of gold, they say. Now, Master, rise.
Stand up, man, and unpouch. Lord Abbot, name
The lowest ransom.

The Abbot. Sire, the price is fixt.

The Crowd. Strangle that Abbot. Cast him down to us.

The Abbot. The price is fixt. There is one only price.
I am the servant of the Abbey's fame,
Glory, renown and ancient heritages.
Our statutes fix the price, I can no more.
We live in troublous times; the breakers roar
Against the ship o' the Church; the times are evil;
And I a feeble, poor old man who stand
By the grace of God at the helm. What would you have?
To bate one jot of our enforced rights

Were to cast down into that raging sea
One of the sails we trust to for our voyage
And final harbouring. The price is fixt.
The Crowd. Let us unfix it. Cast him down to us.
The King. You hear him, Master?
Ans. Oh, I hear him, sire.
The King (*to his Chamberlain*). You should be famous to defeat the laws,
To find out quibbles; cheat the statutes' due,
What say you?
The Chamberlain. Sire, I can but what I can.
The Abbot is too strong; 'tis manifest
That he who's certain of the whole would be
Ill skilled at bargaining to take a part.
The Abbot's case is that. And for the rest:
I've argued with our Master; I have said:
"Good Master, think, the world is very large,
And full t'o'erflowing of dames passing fair."
I've told him that the tenth part of his goods
Would purchase him the name of nobleman,
Another tenth a lady to his bed,
The noblest and the fairest in the land.
What would you have? The man is made of iron
And will not bend; the Abbot will not break,
And I have wasted breath.
The King. Good madam Queen,
Entreat my lord the Abbot for these lovers.
The Queen. My lord, I've done a many things for you,
Have broidered copes, have made my ladies sew.
Your altar cloths with pearls. Beseech you now
Have pity on these lovers.
The Abbot. Oh, fair Queen,
In that I am a man I pity them.
In that I am God's servant I must shut
My eyes, my ears, my heart. Since there have been
An abbey in this place, and monks and bondsmen—

As who should say: Through all the mists of
time.
It hath not been decreed that there should fall
A burgess of the city to the Abbey.
If now this precedent should be despised
There would not...
The Queen. Oh, a truce to precedent.
What is this wench? A girl who leads a cow;
In sackcloth. Doth the honour of the Abbey
Depend on girls in sackcloth?
The Abbot. Oh, fair Queen,
The precedent...
The Queen. Depends on girls in sackcloth!
Good, my lord Abbot, I had thought you wise,
Old learned Churchmen had had better wits.
What you? a man of three-and-ninety years
Who by the very nature of your vows
Are closured out from love... to say a wench
That leads a cow is necessary to
The honour of your Abbey....
The Abbot. Lady Queen,
I am an old man; doting I do say:
This wench that leads a cow is necessary
To the honour of our Abbey....
The King. Gentle wife,
You have the Abbot on the hip, but sweet,
A-meanwhiles our good Master kneels on thorns.
Lord Abbot, make an end; produce this wench,
This Helen that doth rive our world in twain,
And let our Master make his utter choice.

[*At a sign from* ABBOT HUGON, *four-and-twenty acolytes issue out from behind the chair. They strew white rose petals upon the steps until it is like a hill of snow. Enter* TIENNETTE.

The Crowd. Ah...h...h...

[TIENNETTE *is dressed like a maiden-queen in white, with a white coif sewn with gold, with a girdle of silver filigree, with white gloves embroidered with pearls. The* ABBOT HUGON *beckons to her to mount the steps to him. She does so.*

The King (*to Maître Anseau*). Nay, man, hadst well be wealthier than we
To set a price on her that led your cow.
[*To the Abbot.*] If you will do us favour in this thing.
We shall requite you. We are France and Paris....
The Crowd. Paris and France!...
The King. And France and Paris have been touchèd home
By fortunes of these lovers.... Hear us roar!...
The Crowd. Paris and France!
The Abbot. Ah, sire, what would you do?
You touch yourself by melling in this thing.
If we should blench to this unquiet mob
They would gain strength from broken precedent
Which is a dyke against this hungry sea
Wherein a breach being made, the sea sweeps in
And overwhelms us... overwhelms all France,
The Abbey and the Court....
The Crowd. Paris and France.
The King (*to them*). Nenny, ye lend the Abbot similes
That are not pleasant savoured. Master speak....

[Maître ANSEAU *has risen to his feet and advances towards the* ABBOT *holding out his arms.*

The Queen (*to her ladies*). She's fair; why, yes, I think she's fair to see.
She halts a little. But she's fair, she's fair.
Ans. Oh, Father Abbot, oh, you man of God,
If you have any pity in your heart,
If you have any hope of rest to come,

Bethink you, oh, bethink you. It grows late,
You stand upon the very verge of the shade
Death casts upon us. I do know the law
And I have made a vow. But, man of God,
The thing is in your hands. For me remains
No choice. The verdict lies with you. For me . . .
I have been poor, and I have been a bondsman,
And I am patient, oh! and I can bear.
But oh, you man of God, take heed, take heed.
If you have ever seen a little child,
And if your frozen eyes have thawed to see
The sunlight on the little children's faces,
Bethink you of the curse you cast upon
The children that that maid shall bear to me.
I have no choice, I have made the vow to God
And I fulfil it. But the little children . . .
Have you the heart to let them live that life,
Un-named, unknown, to live and die as beasts
That perish; all those tender little things
That God doth mean should burgeon in the light
And with their little laughter sing his praise.

The Abbot. I am a very ancient man, and stand
Within the shadow, and I stand and say:
The price is fixt.

Ans. Accursed rat o' the Church,
The price is fixt . . . is fixt. Oh, horrible,
Insensate thirst for gold. Then, oh, thou man,
Thou spider gorging on the brink of hell,
Suck up my gold, my life. But oh, I keep
The better part of me, you cannot touch
The subtle engine God hath pleased to fix
Within my brain, you cannot use the skill
That made me what I am. And that I swear
Not torture, not the rack, not death itself
Shall set in motion. All your Abbey's rents
For twice a hundred years could never pay
What it shall lose thereby. I am more strong

Than iron's hard, and the more long-suffering
Than grief is great. For you I might have been
A fashioner of things divine; for you
I shall be but a pack-horse.

[TIENNETTE, *who had covered her face with her arms, stretches out her arms to* ANSEAU.

Tien. Oh, my love,
My lord, my more than life, thou noble man,
Forsake me, oh, forsake me, I did say
"You did not know," and, oh you did not know.
When you did make your vow. Forsake me, then,
And go your ways....
Ans. I cannot go my way;
I have no way but only this with you.
Tien. There is a way that God hath shown to me—
These last few weeks they have been schooling me
Within their cloisters—and there is a way,
By which, if you do love me more than all,
You shall enjoy me and go free in the end.
For this the law is—they have told me so—
If I should die before a child is born,
You should go free though losing house and store,
The occasion of your serfdom being dead.
And oh, my lord and life,
You shall. But for my sin of laying hands
Upon myself, full surely the Lord God
Shall pardon me, full surely the Lord God
Shall pardon who doth know and weigh all hearts.

[*The* ABBOT *lays his hand upon her arm.*

The Crowd. You shall not hurt her; we will have you down.
Old Spider... Rat o' the Church.
The King. Ah, make an end,
Lord Abbot, for our dames have eyes all wet.
The Abbot. The price is fixt.

Ans. And I must pay the price.

The Crowd. You shall not; no, you shall not. We are the free burgesses of Paris.

[*The* ABBOT HUGON *beckons* Maître ANSEAU *to come up to him. He slowly ascends the steps. The thurifers draw round and a cloud of incense goes up. The* Monks *chant and the* KING *removes his beaver. The* QUEEN *and her ladies cross themselves.*

A great uproar in the hall; the Soldiers of the Abbey *are thrown down and the* Crowd *breaks through; the* King's Soldiers *force it back. The sound of bells comes in from without. Enter the* Bondsmen of the Abbey *bearing a canopy. The* ABBOT *is seen blessing* ANSEAU *and* TIENNETTE. *Afterwards they go down the steps together. A* Monk *beckons them to stand beneath the canopy, which has gold staves with little silver bells. During this wedding there has been a constant clamour. Now it falls silent.*

The Abbot. Anseau, thou serf and bondsman of our Abbey,
Acknowledge that thy goods and life are ours.

Ans. I do acknowledge it.

The Abbot (*to the Bondsmen*). Bare ye his arm,
Up to the elbow. Armourer, set thou on
This bondsman's wrist the shackle of his state.

[*The* Armourer *rivets a silver collar upon the arm of* ANSEAU. *Whilst he is doing it the* ABBOT *descends the steps and comes to them.*

The Abbot. My hands are very feeble, I am old.
(*To Tiennette.*) Give me some help, thou wife of the new bondsman.

[*The* ABBOT HUGON *undoes the collar from the arm of* ANSEAU.

The Crowd. Ah . . . h . . . h . . . What is this? What is this?

The Abbot (*to Maître Anseau*). Thou art a master jeweller. Hast skill
To break the collar from thy new wife's arm
And not to hurt her?

[ANSEAU *stands as if amazed. The* ABBOT *frees* TIENNETTE.

Lo, thou burgess's wife,
How is it, to be free?

The Crowd. What? . . . what . . . What is this? . . . Are they free?

[*As the curtain falls* ANSEAU *and* TIENNETTE *stand as if amazed. The monks raise their hands in horror.*

END OF SCENE III

THE AFTER SCENE

[*The Chamber of the* ABBOT. *A bare, small, white-washed room. On the floor, in a broad ray of sunlight that falls from the barred windows, stand two great gilt shrines. The door of the one is closed; through the half-opened doors of the other one sees an image of the Virgin in the likeness of* TIENNETTE *having a little child upon her arm and a cow kneeling at her feet.*

The ABBOT; Two Religious.

The ABBOT *lies with his eyes closed upon a narrow pallet, a black rosary falling from his clasped hands. The* Two Religious *stand motionless, their heads covered by their cowls, at his feet.*

A long silence in which is heard the cooing of a blue pigeon on the window-sill. The ABBOT *opens his eyes.*

The Abbot. So ye are there; I sent for you. The end
Is very near me now.

[*He makes a weak gesture with one hand as if pointing to the shrines.*

You see those things?
What say you, brothers, did I dote? I know,
I say I know, have known this many months
What you have whispered in the refectory.
"The Abbot dotes," you said, "The Abbot dotes" . . .
You said I doted; that my heart was touched
By whimperings of lovers. One of you
Shall step into my shoes a short day hence.
Oh, let your dotage work as well as mine
For honour of the Abbey; do but once
One-half of what I did in this one thing!
You said I doted, that my heart was touched.
Nenny, I have a heart, but I am old
And very cunning. I have seen more things
Than most. And I do know my world, I say.

You would have kept him, you. My heart was
touched,
In happy hour, I say, my heart was touched,
Mine that has nursed the Abbey's honour here
As mothers nurse their babes. You would have held
The letter of the law and raised a storm.
That had cast down our house.... The burgesses
Do love us now; this twelvemonth they have brought
More offerings than in a lustre past.
You would have kept the law and raised a storm
That must have shorn us of one-half the rights
We have upon the city. I did know
That, in the acclamations of my mercy
The collar I have set upon their necks
Would gall no withers, yet the precedent
Be riveted. And there is more than this
I gained whose heart was touched by lovers' tears.
It brought us these two shrines. I tell you, men,
I prophesy who lie at the point of death,
That when all precedents are swept away,
And you and I and all of us become
A little dust that would not fill a cup,
These shrines shall be the glory of the Abbey,
Its chiefest profit and most high renown.
For men shall marvel at the handiwork,
And women tell the story at their work,
And crossed lovers come from all the lands
To make their offerings and shed salt tears
Unto the saints that let their hearts be moved
By these two lovers of the time before.
I prophesy,
Upon the point of death, I know my world,
I have been in it for a mort of years....
And one of you shall step into my shoes.
You stand there thinking it; I know my world.
[*He closes his eyes, then opens them and looks at the image of the Virgin.*

Oh, blessed child upon thy mother's arm,
Remember when our Brotherhood is tried....
(*To the Religious.*) Go, get ye to your whisperings
again
And say I doted....
Brothers, go with God.
Send me a little wine and let me sleep.

[*He closes his eyes again. Exeunt the* Religious. *The blue pigeon flies from the window-sill. Its wings clatter in the stillness.*

KING COPHETUA'S WOOING

A SONG DRAMA IN ONE ACT

Dramatis Personæ

COPHETUA, King.
CHRISTINE, A Beggar Maid.

(*Scene discovers* COPHETUA, *dressed as a beggar, seated beneath a thorn on a hillside. In the distance, a road running down to the sea; at its verge a small chapel. An early morning in May.*)

COPHETUA.

COULD I but keep my beggar's staff,
And change my cares for my beggar's laugh,
And keep my gown with its sleeve and a half,
And just lay down my orb and crown,
I think my heart would weigh more light,
And I should sleep more sound at night.
But the day's come round, and sweet Christine
Must doff her robe of faded green
And know herself for a burdened Queen.

(*To him enters the* BEGGAR MAID.)

BEGGAR MAID.

Here am I in my bridal attire;
I sat all night by the fire
And stitched in the sheltered byre,
And the sun is so bright
And my heart is so light
It hasn't a care, and it's all your own.
It's yours, just yours, and yours alone.

COPHETUA.

Last night I dreamt a weary thing,
That you were you and I the King,
With a heart so sad I could not sing,
And I came pricking along the way
And you sat here beneath the may.

CHRISTINE.

Lay off your dreams, the church bell rings,
And were you ten times king of kings,
And ten times Kaiser, you could be
No more a king than you're king of me.

COPHETUA.

If I were King and made you Queen?

CHRISTINE.

And were I that, would the green-wood sheen
Be a whit less glad or the gay green sward
Less dear were you King and Over-lord?
Would you love me less? I trow not so.

I saw the King a while ago
Go pricking by with his haughty crew
While I sat here in the morning dew
Before I ever thought of you.

He cast me this rose noble. See!
And I thought, "This shall be my wedding fee
To the man I love and the man I wed."

(I've thought when I looked at the good King's head
That the noble bears, that he favours you
In the nose and the mouth and the forehead too.)

COPHETUA.

But if I made you Queen ...

CHRISTINE.

What yet
I' the track o' dreams, see! I will set
My hawthorn crown upon your brow;
The dew hangs on it even now.
And where is there a fairer gem
Set in a fair queen's diadem
Than this one lustrous drop?

COPHETUA.

Christine,
What if I made you such a Queen?
There is a cloud doth dimn my mind
But if....

CHRISTINE.

Oh, love...
The bell sounds down the wind,
The priest will soon pass down the hill,
And we're to wed, and you are dreaming still.

COPHETUA (*speaking after a long pause*).

I love your face, I love your hands, your eyes
Are pools of rest for mine. I love your feet,
Your little shoes, the patches in your gown ...

CHRISTINE.

I know your tongue now ...

COPHETUA.

If I make you Queen ...

CHRISTINE.

I would all "ifs" were sunk beneath the sea—
There is a proverb ties them to us beggars—
And make, why make, not made?

COPHETUA.

It was a thought,
A passing cloud—the shadow of a dream.

CHRISTINE.

Ah, love, no more of dreams, they frighten me.
The sun is up, look at the streak of sea
Between the hills. And love—no more of dreams,
The larks thrill all above the downs with songs
To shatter dreams. And there's a song about it:

(*singing*)

"If you and I were King and Queen,"
I'll sing it if you'll join me in the lilt;
I'd rather sing than dream the time away.

(*she sings*)

If you and I were King and Queen

(*a silence*)

Now join me if you love me, dream if not.

(*she sings again*)

She. If you and I were King and Queen—
He. Sweet Christine—
She. Would you come courting me?
He. You should see.
She. Would a crown spoil my face,
Or a throne mar my grace?
Would you keep me the same high place in your heart?

Must we still part to meet, should we still meet to
part,
If we were King and Queen?
Together. Ah then! ah then!
How should we fare with our cates rich and rare,
We beggars, we lovers of roadsides, we rovers
Of woodlands and townlands and dalelands and
downlands?
We lovers...

(COPHETUA *is silent and the song ceases.*)

CHRISTINE.

I think you do not love me any more,
Now you forget my songs.

COPHETUA.

I cannot think of songs, nor hear the lark,
Nor feel the glad spring weather. In my ears
Is nothing but the tramping of the hoofs,
And in my eyes the flash of swords and silks
Of a proud cavalcade that comes anow
To bear us hence.

CHRISTINE.

Oh, God, your mind is sprung,
Your thoughts, gone wand'ring into other fields,
Have left poor me in mine.

COPHETUA.

Not so, not so;
My mind's come back from long sweet sojournings
In a free land of hill and down and sea,
To a sad world of walled towns and courts
And carks and cares.

CHRISTINE.

No, no, the sun's there yet.

COPHETUA.

He shines no more on me—no more on me,
I am a King again—a King—and you
Must either leave the life you love, to lead
With me the life I loathe, or let me live
Alone, unaided, all alone and sad,
The life that leads a King.

CHRISTINE.

There is a weary horror in your eyes,
And I must needs believe you. I'm a beggar,
So were my sire before me and his sires,
For generations and for ages past
We've lived free lives and breathed the good free air
You came among us in a free man's guise
And wooed me—wooed me—and I gave my heart
To you a freeman.

COPHETUA.

Oh—a weary King...
For a short breathing space I doffed my crown,
Laid down my cares and walked without a load.
The task remains myself did set myself
Duly to reign, to shape a people's ends.
As I deem just. Here have I neither end
Of travel, nor an aim for life to hit,
Or miss i' the shooting.

CHRISTINE.

Could we not live free?

COPHETUA.

Not free, not free, my task would call me back.
It calls me now. It calls me, calls me now.

CHRISTINE.

Is this all true, no summer morning's dream?
Oh, here is then that parting of the ways
I dreamt of yesternight.

COPHETUA.

There lie the roads,
Here travel I.

CHRISTINE.

And I must choose, must choose
Between my love and life, the old free life.

Then choose I this, in good or evil weather,
Up hill or down, on moorland and in fen,
On white sea sand or 'mid the purple heather,
To travel on with you, and where or when
The mists o'erwhelm us, meet them, and together
Uphold with you the burden and the pain.

Oh, all the love I bore you and still bear you
Make light our feet, and temper time and tide,
And each day's setting out shall find me near you,
And each day's close shall find me at your side.

(*A long pause. At last*)

CHRISTINE.

And it was you rode by upon the horse?

COPHETUA.

And you it was sat there upon a stone—
But hark, ah hark, there wind the distant horns,
They come, they come, the old free life is passing.

CHRISTINE.

Oh, hide me from their eyes, such cruel eyes
They had that rode with you that day of days.

COPHETUA.

Those are the eyes must look upon us now
For ever and for ever till the end.

CHRISTINE.

The horns, the horns, the old free life is passing.

COPHETUA.

Oh, yonder, there's the glimpse of sun on steel,
And there's my oriflamme. And there,
Beyond the chapel, is another band
Comes trooping from the ships.

CHRISTINE.

They come, they come,
The old free life is passing.

COPHETUA.

It is past,
The bell has ceased to toll.

CHRISTINE.

Oh, let us wait,
I could not bear their eyes. Oh, clasp me round,
And let me die to-day.

COPHETUA.

You must be bold,
And there, before the altar, shame them all.

CHRISTINE.

Ah, there, before the altar, I'll be proud,
And show them all a brow serene and clear
For love of you. But now I'm what I am,
And needs must tremble for the time to come.

COPHETUA.

The horns have played their last and we must go.

CHRISTINE.

You know the old lament they sing at sea
When the last rope's cast off. My dear dead father
Would have us sing it just before he died.
We'll never sing again, for brooding hearts
Cry, "Silent, voices, hush," and now we sail,
And sing to drown our thoughts and singing, die.
So now set sail, set sail. Loose the last rope
That binds us to the past.

(*As they go, she sings "The Farewell of those that go away in ships."*)

(CHRISTINE *sings*)

Fare thee well, land o' home
(Oh, the sea, the sea's a foam)
Fare thee well, land o' home,
Blue and low.
Fare thee well, house o' home, where the mellow wall-fruits grow,
Old fields, fields o' home, where the yellow paigles glow.
Fare thee well, land o' home,
Blue and low.

Fare thee well, pleasant land
(Ah the foam beats on the strand)
Fare thee well, my forbear's land
Blue and low.
Fare thee well, mother mine, with the pure pale brow,
Fare ye well, quiet graves, fare ye well who rest below.
Fare thee well, land o' home,
Over miles and miles of foam,
Fare thee well, land o' home,
Blue and low.

"THE MOTHER"

A SONG DRAMA

Characters

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.
THE MOTHER.
THE LITTLE BLADES OF GRASS.
THE LITTLE GRAINS OF SAND AND OF DUST.

SCENE.—*Just outside a great city. Battalions of staring, dun-coloured, brick houses, newly finished, with vacant windows, bluish slate roofs and yellow chimney pots, march on the fields which are blackened and shrouded with fog. Innumerable lines of railway disappear among them, gleaming in parallel curves. Fog signals sound and three trains pass on different levels; the lights in their windows an orange blur. A continuous hooting of railway engines.* THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE, *leaning on the brick parapet of the upper embankment, speaks towards* THE MOTHER, *who is unseen in the fog above the fields.*

The Spirit of the Age.

IT'S I have conquered you.
It is over and done with your green and over and done with your blue.
Conquered you. Where is your sky?
Where is the green that your gown had of late?

The Mother.

Wait.

The Spirit of the Age.

I have trampled you down, you must die.
It is only begun
Yet it's over and done
With the green of your grass and the blue of your sky.
Even your great constellations
Blaze vainly, are hid by the dun
Of the smoke of my fires....

The Mother.

I wait; I have patience.

The Spirit of the Age.

The smoke of my fires,
The dun of the lives and desires
Of the millions and millions who live
And who strive.
Only to trample you down, blot you out, foul your face and forget.

The Mother.

Ah, and yet.

[*The fog to the north lifts a little and discloses clouds of smoke like a pall above a forest of chimney stacks; a square Board School playground where children are running through puddles on the wet asphalt.*

The Spirit of the Age.

And behold, they are toiling and moiling
And soiling
Your winds and your rains; yea, and hark to the noise
Of the girls and the boys
Of untold generations.

The Mother.

I wait. I have patience.

The Spirit of the Age.

They play in the waters
I grant them, the daughters
Of fog-dripped smut-showers.
Would they thank you for flowers
Or know how to play by your Ocean's blown billows?
Who never met you,
Whose sires forget you,
These nations and nations
Who never saw sea nor the riverside willows.

The Mother.

I wait; I have patience.

The Spirit of the Age.

Old Silence, wait; old Sleeper, use your patience.
You are dead and forgotten
As a corpse that was rotten
A twelvemonth and more;
As dead as the Empires of yore,
As dead and forgotten.

The Little Blades of Grass (*whispering*).

Listen, listen.

The Little Grains of Sand (*whispering*).

Ah, we hear; you'll see us glisten
When the Wind shall set us whirling.

The Spirit of the Age.

I am here and I shall stay
To the utter, utter day;
Tell me, you who've lived for ever,
Saw you ever such a fever,
Such a madness of gold-getting,
Such forgetting
Of the Thing that you called Truth—
Such contempt, such lack of ruth,
For your leisure and your dalliance,
As since Time and I joined alliance?
I shall rule and falter never,
You are dead and gone for ever.

(*He pauses.* THE MOTHER *says nothing.*)

The Little Blades of Grass (*whispering*).

Are you there, O all ye others?

The Little Grains of Sand.

We are here, O little brothers.

The Spirit of the Age.

Old Silence, speak!
I had not thought to find you half so weak
In argument. Acknowledge I am he
That ever more shall be.
Be just; confess that I have won
And that your race is run.

[*She still keeps silence. He goes on, excitedly.*

D'you think that I am frightened by your fools
Who with their rules
And rusty saws from musty stools
In dusty schools,
Squeak. "In the very nature of the case,
Unless the sequence of the immobile earth
Shall change, the sun and tides stand still and all
The vast phenomena of peoples, kings,
And mighty Empires be for you reversed,
That day must come when your world-sway declines"?

The Little Blades of Grass.

Hearken, hearken:
Brothers, are ye there?

The Little Grains of Sand.

Brothers, when that wind blows we shall darken
All the air.

The Spirit of the Age.

I heard another fool with: "Time shall come
When the tired human brain,
That now already reels,

Shall utterly refuse to face again
The turmoil and the hum
Of all these wheels and wheels and wheels and wheels and wheels,
This clattering of feet
And hurrying no-whither; deem it sweet
To lie among the grasses,
Where no more shadow is than of the cloud that passes
Beneath the sun." Another squeaked of strife;
Of cataclysms, plagues; and slackening grip on life,
And pictured for us street on street on street
Re-echoing to the feet
Of one sole, panic-stricken passenger;
Pictured my houses roofless to the air,
The windows glassless, doors with ruined locks,
The owlet and the fox
Sole harbourers there;
The only sounds hawks' screaming, plover's shriek
Above the misted swamps; the rivers burst
Their banks and sweep, athirst,
My rotting city.... Horrid!... Mother, speak;
Speak, mother, speak, who are so old and wise.

The Little Blades of Grass (*tittering*).

Ho, ho! ho, ho!
The braggart groweth tremulous.

The Little Grains of Sand and of Dust.

Hallo! hallo—o—o!
He is afraid of us.

The Spirit of the Age.

D'you think that I am frighted by these lies?
Old Dotard, I...
I rule; am come to stay
For ever and a day.
Behold,
Where all my million lieges toil for grime and gold.

[*The fog lifts suddenly. Against a shaft of pale, golden sky, one sees the immense City like a watery-edged silhouette. A great central dome, the outlines wet and gilded by the rays of light; warehouses like black iron cliffs, square along a river; black barges, with pale lights at the bows, creeping down the glassy yellow water; forests of chimney stacks and of masts of shipping.*

Answer, old witch; old silent envier of my joy,
I challenge you, old Hecate.

The Mother (*very softly*).

Where is Troy?

The Spirit of the Age.

What's Troy compared to me?

The Mother.

Where Carthage, Nineve,
Where Greece, where Egypt, where are all that host
Whose very names are lost?

The Little Blades of Grass (*whispering*).

When we crave them,
Then we have them.

The Little Grains of Sand and of Dust.

When the winds blow we o'er-ride them,
And we hide them
Silently.

The Spirit of the Age.

What were they all—all of them measured by me?
For never among the Nations
And never between the Oceans,
Were known such emanations
Of tense, strung-nerved emotions,
Such strivings,
Never such hivings
Of humans...

The Mother.

Son, those cities of the plain and of the shore!
My winds blew and their fleets were shattered,
My waves raged their harbours a-choke;
A very little their strivings mattered,
Little their tenseness; their hivings broke
For evermore.

Little one, I who am young, furnished them graves and I sung
Dirges above them. You have your millions,
Men of all nations, I have my billions and billions and billions,
Of those who are stronger than men; whose persistence,
Whose creeping on sods, and flight down the winds evades the last watch, overpowers the hopeless resistance.

The Little Blades of Grass.

Hearken, hearken:
Brothers, are ye there?

The Little Grains of Sand and of Dust.

Brothers, when that wind blows we shall darken
All the air.

The Mother.

Son: when I turn in my slumber,
Your cities withouten number
Shall fall.... There shall remain upon the ground
Rubble and rubbish; a rising and settling of dust all round,
Here and there a mound....

And the grass will come a-creeping,
And the sands come sifting, sweeping,
Down the winds and up the current.
Dry and dead and curst, abhorrent.
Grass for the cities of the plains and of the hills; sand and bitter dust for the cities of the shore.

Little one, I who am old, hid all those strivings of yore,
Little one, I old and grey,
Bid you play,
Wrestle and worry and play in the folds of my dress,
Till you tire, and the fire of your passions fails in your earth-weariness.
Little one, I who am kind, give you time till you tire of your play,
Time till you weary and say:
"Hold; enough of our making-believe.
Ah, children, leave striving and leave
The little small things that we deemed
Above price; all the playthings that seemed
Worth a world of contriving and strife."
When the glimmer of gold loses life
And its weight groweth deader and deader,
And no one shall crave to be leader,
O'ermasterer, lord of the knife.

Little one, I who am wise, bid you go back to your play,
Play the swift game thro' the day.
When even comes you shall kneel down and pray,
And, well-content, at last lay down your head
Upon my ultimate bed
And lose the tenseness of your futile quest
In me who offer rest.

(*The fog sweeps down: the city disappears. The Spirit of the Age says in a low voice.*)

Poor wand'ring proser,
Poor worn-out, mutt'ring dozer,
With your old saws
Of sempiternal laws,
The day's to me not you ...
Strike down the old; cry onwards to the new.

[*A train rumbles slowly past, going cautiously through the yellow fog.*

The Little Blades of Grass (*whispering*).

Hearken, hearken:
Brothers, are ye there?

The Little Grains of Sand and of Dust (*whispering back*).

Brothers, when that wind blows we shall darken
All the air.

CURTAIN.

THE FACE OF THE NIGHT

A PASTORAL

The men of Gnossos have a legend that a man lying all night in the marshes near that town may see a face looking down upon him out of the sky. Such a man shall ever after be consumed with a longing to see again that face. In pursuit of it he shall abandon his home, his flocks and his duty to the State. And such men are accounted blasphemers because they infect others with this fever and are harmful to the republic.

[*A wide, stony plain, the bed of a river, but dry and brown because it is the heart of summer. Towards sunset. In the distance against the sky there rise the columns of a deserted temple and of poplar trees with, at their bases, a tangle of rosebushes and of underwood among fallen stones. To the right, far off, is a rocky bluff, purple against the evening: at its foot, very clear and small, are large fallen rocks round a green pool and spreading and shadowy trees. Small fires glimmer here. To the left the plain opens out towards the horizon, wide, suave and level; at the verge is a shimmer of the broad curve of the river.*

In the foreground a young man lies upon two fleeces. A fillet has fallen from his hair, his limbs are a golden brown, he has a leopard skin about his loins. His hands are clasped behind his head, he looks up into the western sky, his eye searching for the first planet to shine. Over the plain from the sunset and from the sheepfolds in the shadow of the bluff, young girls and shepherds come towards him in knots. Some play upon pipes, others cry out from band to band, a horn sounds faintly with a guttural intonation. A dog's bark winds sharply from a distance, and there is a continual drone of gnats in the still air.

THE YOUNG MAN (*listlessly*).

I HAVE seen the Night with her hair gemm'd with stars,
With her smile the Milky Way, and her locks the darker bars
Of the heavens....

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE YOUNG GIRLS.

Oh, come away,
For Lalagé is thine.

HE.

With her pale face of stars
I have seen her.

THEY.

Rise! The shine
Of the owl-light's on the pools,
And the hinds bring skins of wine,
And the hot day cools
To its close.

[*The drone of the pipes and the quivering of strings still sound as others come across the plain. They come closer, and, standing round, obscure the sky from him.*

HE (*rising on one elbow*).

Ah! still your pipes, still the cyther string that jars,
For I have seen the Night with her face of stars.

THE MEN.

Rise up and quit these places, for in shadows Lalagé
Awaits thee.

THE GIRLS.

Quit your fleeces, for in the shadows we
In the light of nuptial torches where the poplars bar the sky,
Thro' the rocks around the pool, thro' the hyacinths shall...

HE.

I,

I have seen, have seen....

AN OLD MAN (*hastening upon them*).

Why never,
Quit these places full of fever.

HE.

I saw a face look downwards
Thro' the stars.

OLD MAN.

No, never, never.

HE.

I did see...

OLD MAN (*seeking to drown his voice*).

Mists from the river.

A YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (*she sings as she comes along*).

When he comes from seawards,
When he comes from townwards,
My love sings to me words
That my heart likes well.

THE MEN (*to him*).

We will bear thee on our shoulders
Through the covert-sides and boulders
With thy fleeces for a litter.

THE GIRLS.

Unto where the watch-fires glitter
On our shoulders we will bear thee
To where Lalagé shall rear thee
'Twixt her breasts.

HE.

A face looked downwards,
And I thirst, I thirst, am thirsting.

THE OLD MAN (*in a threatening whisper*).

Close thy lips on this for ever.
This is blasphemy. 'Twould sever
Life and love and earth from gladness.
Close thy lips. I know this madness.
I am ancient.

HE.

I am thirsting.

A YOUNG MAN.

Thy Lalagé's eyes are pools of rest,
Thy Lalagé's lips are sweet warm grapes
I would it were mine to taste and taste.

A YOUNG GIRL.

And thy Lalagé's heart is bursting.

THE YOUNG MAN.

I would it were mine to sink and sink
Between her breasts like hills of wine.
I would it were mine
To taste her lips,
And to clasp her hips and to clasp her waist,
And to drink her breath and to be the first
To...

HE.

Thirst. I thirst.

TWO GIRLS (*with horns slung from their shoulders*).

Here is milk. Here wine.

HE.

Begone and send me that wind to drink
That cools its flood on the glacier's brink,
Send me that wind.

THE OLD MAN (*persuasively*).

Thy Lalagé is grown kind:
Sighs fill the air near her, and from her eyes,
Where low she lies upon the filmy fleeces,
Bright tears down fall into the milk-white creases,
And warm, dark valleys of her snowy kirtle.
And loosely tied her girdle....

A HIND (*running in on them*).

Thy white ewe hath burst her hurdle,
Thy grey bitch hath tree'd a leopard,
Shepherd, shepherd,
Thy black heifer's milk doth curdle.

HE (*with a weary and passionate gesture of disgust*).

I am sick of sheep and shepherds.

THE MEN.

Thou hast led us in the wars!

THE GIRLS.

And the fairest of us maidens opens out to you her arms.
Round her feet the grasses whisper, round her head the firefly swarms
Form a beacon, you shall harbour in her soft, warm arms.

HE.

I did see a face with for hair the darker bars
Of the heavens....

THE GIRLS (*seeking to drown his voice*).

We'll go dancing where the torchlights meet
With the lances of the starlight and the grove is shadowiest,
Showing here a foam-white shoulder, white-waved arm and red lit breast,
As the harebells brush our ankles till our loves caress our feet,
Burnt-out torches, rustling silence, and the night wind's faint and fleet.

HE (*turning upon his elbow towards the men*).

I shall lead you with your lances when you face the men of Hather?
I must voice you in the counsels of the aged king, my father?
I shall lead the ships to seawards, I must guard the flocks from townwards?

(*To the girls.*)

I must bed your fairest maidens that the rest may dance in cadence?
So that wine may flow in plenty, so your loves and you content ye,
Whilst with chitons loose on shoulders in the twilight of the boulders.
And in secret dells....
Ye wantons! I have seen a face look downwards,
Pure and passionless and distant where with stars the pure sky teemeth.

THE OLD MAN.

He blasphemeth, he blasphemeth.

HE.

I am sick of vine-wreathed barrels,
Sick of lances, arrows, quarrels,
Sick of tracking in the dew,
Of their limbs, and breasts, and you....
I have seen that face of faces,
I have thought the utter thought.
[*He rises to his feet.*
I go to seek in desert places.

[*Whilst he speaks the men heave up stones to throw at him. The girls shake their hands and cry out. He silences them, shaking his fist. The* OLD MAN *runs about behind whispering to one and another.*

(*To the Girls.*)

All your sun-tanned arms are nought,
All their lances and your dances,
Nought and nought.... And I must wander
Past the mountains of Iskander,
Past the salt-glazed lakes of Meinë,
Past Pahán mist-veiled and rainy,
Whither? Whither? Ah, my Fortune?
Seeking her, I must importune
All the icy ghosts of souls
That died of frost, and all the ghouls
That feed in battle-clouds,
The fiery spirits in the shrouds
Above volcanoes and the spirits of the dawn
That sing in choirs. And where the caverns yawn
Which let out sleep, and death, and shame, and leprosy
Upon this earth, you may find trace of me
But here no more.

THE OLD MAN.

Blasphemy! Blasphemy!
He doth contemn this godlike life of ours.

THE GIRLS.

Blasphemy! Blasphemy!
He doth condemn our warm, sweet midnight hours.

HE (*moving away from the plain*).

I must go seek her on the icy rocks,
Frost in my blood or flame about my head,
Calling and calling where the echo mocks,
Crying in the midnights where the ocean moans
White in the darkness....

[*A man casts a great stone that strikes him on the shoulder. He falls on to one knee.*

Fool, though I be dead
All here is nothing, but in her fair places
My shade shall find her wisdom.

THE GIRLS.

Stones! Cast stones!

[*A shower of stones strikes him down. He cries from the ground.*

All here is nothing. Whilst each mountain traces
Shadows half-circling from every worthless dawn,
My shade shall trace her to her twilit portal,
Then, on a hill-top, on a shadowy lawn,
Plain in the dew her footsteps!

THE OLD MAN (*striking a lance through his side*),

Dead!

HE (*gasping*).

Immortal
Goddess! Wisdom! Face o' Night! Beyond the twilight bars.... [*He dies.*

THE OLD MAN (*striking the spear through him again*).

Cast stones!

THE GIRLS (*to the men*).

Cast stones!

[*They gather stones in their skirts and drop them in great number on to the body, until it has the resemblance of a cairn. Whilst they hurry about the* OLD MAN *speaks to any that will listen to him.*

For that this was a Prince raise him a tomb,
Casting your stones on it. In sun nor gloom
Come never here again.... Here shall be moans
And whisperings of blasphemy to hear were doom....
Cast there, stones there, above his lips that lied.
So be his name forgotten.... Never a word
From henceforth of his dying. This true lance
That slew him shall be burnt.... Never a word,
Never a word of him again.... But dance,
Choose a new mate for Lalagé's soft side
This night. Yes there, above his lips that lied.

[*They begin to disperse.*

A YOUNG GIRL.

I would he had kissed me ere he died.

THE OLD MAN (*shaking his head misgivingly, to another old man*).

You heard?

[*They all go away over the plain in groups of two and three; the poplars and the ruined temple have disappeared into the last light: the white garments have blue and purple shadows and the evening star shakes out brilliant rays in the dusky sky.*

THE VOICE OF A YOUNG GIRL (*singing in the distance*).

When he comes from seawards,
When he comes from townwards,
My love sings to me words
That my heart likes well.

[*The night wind sweeps down; the watch-fires at the foot of the hills spring up as if they had been replenished and waver along the wind. It reaches the cairn of stones and runs with a sifting sound among the dry grasses around. It continues through the night.*

A MASQUE OF THE TIMES O' DAY

(A FRAGMENT)

The Persons of the Masque:

The DAWN *that shall wear a saffron gown, and in her hair daffodils.*

HIGH NOON *that shall wear a golden dress and necklets of amber.*

EVENTIDE *that shall be habited in grey and have glow-worms on her brow.*

NIGHT *that shall be dressed in black with a coronal of stars and the crescent moon.*

The Scene shall be a hilltop, high in air, with the blue sky painted fair on the backcloths. There shall be a great gilt framework Sphere of the Universe, set with jewels for the stars, and with the Signs of the Zodiac. It shall revolve slowly, and within shall sit the DAWN, HIGH NOON *and others. In its centre there shall be a great Globe of the Earth with the lands and the seas fairly marked. Round about it shall go one score and four men bearing the four-and-twenty torches of the Hours. Without, shall stand a* Man *and a* Woman.

A Chorus *habited like a reverend old man shall enter and shall tell how that the Times of Day, being weary of long contentions for the Dominion of the earth, have set this* Man *and this* Woman *to choose which of these four shall have sole Empire.*

The Music shall sound, and when it shall have ceased, the DAWN *shall step forth from the Sphere as it revolves and shall say:*

I AM the Dawn, beloved by those that watch.

Then HIGH NOON:

I am the Noon, beloved by those that toil.

Then EVENTIDE:

I am the Eve, beloved by those that tire.

Then THE NIGHT:

I am the Night beloved by them that love.

Then shall those four dance together until the DAWN *stands forth from among them and sings:*

I am the Dawn, beloved by those that watch,
I come a-creeping, I come a-stealing
Over eastern mountains, over dewy lawns,
Pale, golden, slender, pale and very tender,
Unto you who've watched the night through hoping for the dawn's
Rise to usher Hope back.

A dance again, and then HIGH NOON *shall sing:*

I am High Noon, beloved by those that toil.
I bring your resting times, ring your midday feasting chimes,
Pan's hour that brings you panting to the hedgerows,
Dalliance in the river rushes,
In the shadows and deep hushes,
Over bee-filled beds of potherbs, over bird-filled, quivering woodlands,
Blessed rest in summer days, surcease 'neath the Summer haze.

A dance again, and in her turn the EVENTIDE *shall sing:*

I am the Eve, beloved by those that tire.

All along the sunken lanes
And across the parching plains
I set dewy winds a-blowing,
Bring the cattle byrewards, lowing;

Bring the bats out, lure the owls out, lure the twilight
beasts and fowls out;
Bid a broadening path of moonbeams hunt the
homing smacks from seaward,
Flitting past the harbour lanthorns, trailing in a
flight to leeward;
Set the harbour tumult rounding up the misty wind-
ings of the mountains;
Set my tiny horns a-sounding by the rillets, by the
woodland fountains...
Tiny, tiny gnat-horns sounding in an intermitting
cadence,
Cry, "Stroll homewards men and maidens,
Done is done and over's over,
Leave the wheatfields, quit the clover,
Masters, hired ones, all you tired ones,
Troop along the dog-rose lanes, troop across the
misty plains,
Done is done... is done, and over's over."

The NIGHT *shall step forward and shall catch at the arm of the Eve. Then shall* NIGHT *say:*

(*To the Eve*) Enough, enough,
You steal too many of my silent hours...
(*To the Man and the Woman*) I am the Night beloved
by them that love
As you do love.

I am that Night
That was in the beginning, I am she
That shall be the end... You come from me
And hasten back to me, and all the rest
Is shadow.

What's the Dawn?
The shadow of a dream . . . And what High Noon?
A vague unrest, a shadow on your slumbers . . .
And ling'ring Eve has shadows in her hair,
The shadows of a shadow. . . . She's a thief
That steals my attributes, and is beloved
Because she is my shadow.

I am Truth,
A darkness, a soft darkness. And in that
Is all that's worth the seeing. In my arms
Is all that's worth the having. I'm august
But tender . . . tender . . . Oh, you mortal things,
That pass from Night to Night, from womb to womb
I am the best.

She sings.

Over my grasses go, for a little while
I'll bid my flowers breathe their faint night scents.
For a little while
Go close together, straining lip to lip,
Go close together, straining heart to heart,
For a little while . . . for all the time you have.

She speaks again.

The soft warm darkness shall hang overhead,
The great white planets wheel from the horizon,
You shall not know the nakedness of shame,
Nor know at all of sorrow on the earth,
The while I hang above you with the face
Of a wan mother, white with light of stars.

She sings again.

Over my grasses go for a little while,
Hearing no sound, seeing no sight of earth,
For a little while
Cling close together, straining lip to lip,
Cling close together, straining breast to breast,
For a little while . . . for all the time you have . . .

(*She speaks very low, as if to herself.*)

And at the last
A wind shall sigh among my whispering grasses,
The planets fail behind a brooding cloud,
Your eyelids shall fall down upon your eyes
And it shall be the end...

She sings as if triumphantly.

Under my grasses lie for the rest of time,
Hearing no sound, thinking no thought of earth,
For the rest of time.
Lie close together, silent, ear to ear,
Lie close together, slumb'ring hand in hand,
For the rest of time, for all the time you have.

Then shall men unseen in the roof of the hall hoist out of sight the gilt Sphere of the Zodiac, and there shall be disclosed a great globe of the Earth which had been hid within the other. Then shall the four Times of Day Dance a solemn measure round the globe to the sound of music. There shall be sundry devices. As that, there shall come a Woman called the Autumn habited in russet and garlanded with streamers of berries of the hawthorn. And this Autumn would have the Times of Day observe a nice distance, equal one from the other, and a flight of the birds called starlings shall be set free. Then shall a reverend man dressed in furs, and bearing a heavy burden of thorns cut faggot wise, enter. He shall be the Winter, and shall dispute with the Autumn as to the manner of the dance. He shall wish the DAWN *and the* EVE *to stand nearer* HIGH NOON. *And he shall prevail, and a flight of great wood doves shall cross the hall. And in like manner shall come the Spring and the Summer each with their due attributes. These last four shall join hands and dance round about the Times of Day. Then shall come men to the number of the cycles*

that have passed since the year of our Lord's birth, and shall dance a solemn measure round them all. And a salvo of musquetoons shall be shot off without, beneath the windows of the hall. And when the dance is ended

. . . . .

The End Piece shall be sung—

What if we say:
"These too shall pass away."
Whether we say it
Now, or delay it
  How we may,
These too shall pass away.

THE WIND'S QUEST

"OH, where shall I find rest?"
Sighed the Wind from the west;
"I've sought in vain o'er dale and down,
Through tangled woodland, tarn and town,
But found no rest."

"Rest thou ne'er shalt find . . ."
Answered Love to the Wind;
"For thou and I, and the great grey sea
May never rest till Eternity
Its end shall find."

Note.—These lines, the first I ever wrote, were printed in the Anarchist journal, *The Torch,* in 1891.

LETCHWORTH : AT THE ARDEN PRESS