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HAUNTS AND BY-PATHS



HAUNTS AND BY-PATHS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

J. THORNE SMITH, JR.



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TO
THE COMMODORE

—GOD BLESS HIM!

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Acknowledgment is due to *The Smart Set* for permission to print "Autumn in the Subway" and also to the *Broadside*, in which certain of these poems first appeared.



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SONGS OF THE SEABOARD



SEA SONG

THERE are those who love the reaching
plains

And those who love the crags,

And those who love the twilit woods where mel-
ancholy Autumn lags

On sad reluctant feet.

And there are those who love the street

Where arc lights sputter in the rain

And traffic lifts a shrill refrain

Where counter-currents surge and meet.

But I am not of these,

Such haunts my fancy flees

Out to the sea, the open sea,

The pouring, roaring, soaring sea,

The wind-whipped, tearing, flaring sea,

The sea that never rests.

I love its lonely smoke-hung trails,

Its battered hulks and singing sails,

Its lifting, surging hills and dales

With fleecy, foam-plumed crests.

SEA SONG

I love the quiet, moon-swept sea,
The softly breathing, star-plunged sea,
The wistful, pleading, darkling sea
Whose brawny spray-tipped breasts
Roll ever onward endlessly
Into a dim infinity,
A misty, gray obscurity
Beneath the trailing stars.
I love the thrashing, smashing sea,
The leaping, crouching, waiting sea,
Its bitterness and ecstasy,
Its bull-necked charges blind and rude,
Its silence and its solitude,
Its drifting masts and spars.

* * *

For there are those who love to feel
A horse beneath them as they ride
Bespurred and decked from head to heel,
Across the pleasant countryside;
And there are those who roam
Away from hearth and home
In search of romance, wealth and fame
To distant cities where men game

SEA SONG

With human souls as pawns to win
A gilded ease which soon wears thin
When rubbed with life's rough hand.
And there are those who till the land
And those who blast the rock and stone
And those who seek for buried spoil
In some fast wilderness alone.
And there are those who toil
Their lives away in man-made caves,
Poor harried, economic slaves,
They fill untimely, unmourned graves
Too weary to regret
A world that never had been kind,
A life not hard to leave behind,
To finish and forget.

* * *

But those who ever sailed the sea
And felt its rugged grip
Will always turn back wistfully
To seek another ship.
Another ship to bear them out, the old song on
their lips
Across the long, green, endless waves,

SEA SONG

The rolling, curling, mounting waves,
To where the sunset dips
And cools its flaming face in spray,
Its ebbing colors, gold and gay
Still lingering in the clouds,
As one by one the windy stars
Prick through the velvet sky
And fire-tip the swaying spars
And dance among the shrouds,
While through the swift descending night the sea-
gulls wheel and fly.

* * *

Thus men return unto the sea,
Their great, gray mother on whose breast
They labor long and valiantly
And often find their final rest
Beneath her foam encrusted waves
In coral-fluted, deep sea graves,
While calm, impassive, stern and grim
She lifts her massive, wind-lashed head
And chants a mighty deep-toned hymn
In honor of her honored dead,
A hymn that echoes through the waves,

SEA SONG

The ponderous, long, green, endless waves,
The waves that writhe and twist
Like great, green snakes across the sea
Into a dim infinity
Of surging, spray-torn mist.

FLOOD TIDE

IT'S a long time to flood tide, the tide when
we pull out.

It's twilight in the harbor now and wind is in the
trees

That drowse along the cobbled streets where
couples stroll about,

And there is the scent of tar and the hum of bees.

It's a long time to flood tide, the tide when we
embark.

It's quiet in the harbor now and pleasant to the
eye.

There's whispering in the hidden lanes and run-
ning through the dark,

And there is a broken laugh and a swift good-bye.

It's a long time to flood tide, the tide that clears
the port,

The night is in the harbor now and lights among
the spars;

FLOOD TIDE

But those who wait upon the tide will find it all
too short

For there is an end to love in a night of stars.

It's a long time to flood tide, the tide when we
return.

All silent is the harbor now, the shrouds intone a
hymn.

Along our lean foam-smothered sides the flame-
touched rollers churn,

And there is a hint of dawn and the stars are dim.

SAILOR — SAILOR

SWINGING solid on his feet,
Gaunt beneath his coat of tan,
Children hail him in the street —
“ Hello, Mr. Sailor Man! ”
Tom or Larry, Dick or Dan,
Ladies think him just too sweet,
Sailor, sailor from the fleet,
Get your pettings while you can.
Primed for laughter, love or loot,
Money jingling in his jeans,
Gamins give a stiff salute
As he pipes the dizzy queens.
Hero of the submarines,
“ Honest, Mamie, ain’t he cute? ”
Call that great big devil cute,
Why the beggar scrubbed latrines!
Golly, what a burly brute,
Friendly as the summer sea,
Sand Street made his nifty suit,
Forty-eight ashore has he.

SAILOR — SAILOR

Shy at times, a trifle mute,
Always with a yarn to spin —
“ Naw, I ain’t no raw recruit,
“ Talk o’ women, talk o’ gin —
“ Now, when I was in Marseilles
“ I could open up your eyes — ”
Anything from subs to whales
Sets him off on salty lies.
Folks can hear them every day,
Take the tale for what it’s worth,
In his honest sailor way
He’s the salt of all the earth.
Booming gaily down the street,
Hat aslant upon his head,
Looking for a place to eat,
Earnest searcher for a bed,
Comes a sailor from the fleet,
Shaved and shorn and shiny red,
He’s a merry sight to meet
When he’s paid and when he’s fed.
*Sailor, sailor from the sea,
Proud beneath your Navy blue,
Bound upon a modest spree,
Buddy, Admirals envy you.*

DAWN

LAST night I stood and saw a sentry pace,
A shadow moving through the shades of
 night,
And as the fleeting moonbeams touched his face
 And blocked it out inscrutable and white
Against the lifting curtain of the sky,
 He challenged Dawn; as clear toned as a bell
Upon the waning night his lonely cry
 Reechoed through the silence, rose and fell.
And then as if in answer to his call,
 The Eastern sky shook off her robe of stars
And bared her coral breast, a faint, pink wall
 Behind the leafless trees that swayed like spars
And shrouded masts of some old spectral fleet
 Along whose decks Dawn stole on silver feet.

SUNSET FROM THE HOSPITAL

A CROSS the darkling bay the fresh green
glades

Were soft with shadows. Like a scarlet frieze
The sunset flared, a scarf of many shades,

Its burning fringes tangled in the trees.

Along the sky's vast cloudless vault of blue

A single seagull winged in graceful flight,
And as it sailed it seemed as if it drew

Across the earth the shadow of the night.

How cool and quiet over there it seemed,

The dark trees banked against the fiery wall.

The glory of it filled my eyes. I dreamed

My soul took wings — a haunting bugle call
Came drifting down the wind and died away
As I fled on and outward with the day.

THE STATION

LIGHTS out! ”
— and row on yellow
row fades out;

Upon the low lined barracks night shuts down
And sudden silence falls upon the camp,
Which by the bugle calls alone is pierced
With quivering notes which sob and break and
flow

Into the mist-hung silence of the night.

“ Pipe down! ”

— a horde of men in canvas cased
Turn on their sides and whisper through the dark
To some chance comrade of the day before,
Some pal, who like themselves, the hand of fate
Has plucked from distant parts and peaceful ways
And tossed into his small allotted space
Beneath the sloping gables of the roof
Now dipped in gloom through which strange
visions float,

THE STATION

Called from the past by man's remembering eyes
To lull them in a deep, dream laden sleep.

“ Say, Buddy,” breathes a lad, a baker's son,
“ I got a letter from my girl who says
She's sending up a box of cakes and stuff.
It ought to get here by to-morrow's mail,
So you and Jim and Mike just stick around;
We'll divvy up and have a reg'alar feed,
Us four, just you and Mike and me and Jim.”
And “ buddy,” who had owned his car and been
The toast at many gay, resplendent boards,
In fact a sort of “ tosh ” who knew New York's
Best dining places and their brilliant throng
And yet who never had possessed a friend
Who freely gave and asked naught in return,
Stretched out his hand across the lines and said,
“ You're on, old man, and when you're out of
smokes
I have a pile that's drying up for lack
Of some one else to help me smoke them up.”

“ Pipe down! ” the P. O. cries; the men grow still
And gaze into the dark with staring eyes,

THE STATION

Their brains still busy with the mighty change
The war has wrought in their once placid lives.
They muse upon the happenings of the day
And speculate about the days to come.
And in their speculations memories stir
The dust of other days — old friends appear,
Loved faces of the past, a voice, a laugh,
And fleeting vistas — well remembered haunts,
Until dread loneliness weighs down the soul
In this still battle with the Then and Now.
Then like a strengthening draught of some rare
wine

A warm and friendly bit of comfort creeps
To thrill them with a knowledge that they share
Alike with other men their trials and hopes,
The grip and glory of a common cause,
A life devoted to a single end,
In which forgetfulness of self comes first
Along with kindness to one's fellow men.
And thus as sleep comes on, the visions fade.
They touch perhaps the first time in their lives,
The spirit in the word — Democracy.

THE STATION

Now all is still. The sentries walk their posts,
Occasionally their calls drift through the night.
Upon the road without the world hums by;
A honking horn is heard, a woman's laugh
Floats like a strain of some forgotten air,
While in their creaking hammocks dream the
men,
Their weary bodies yielded up to sleep.

“ Rise and shine! ”

The bugles blast the night
Into a million agonizing bits,
Its shattered pieces fall around the ears
Of men too dazed by slumber save to swear
A hardly audible yet heartfelt oath
Against the kaiser, all his horrid works
And every institution save sweet sleep.

“ Up hammocks, all! ”

Six thousand pairs of feet
Resound upon the decks, confusion reigns,
The lashings whir and hands are thrust about
In search of this and that much needed bit,
Remarks are passed and some one dares to laugh.

THE STATION

In desperation one man seeks a shoe,
Another finds it looking for his sock.
The bugle blows again and all is dropped
As in a swearing, tearing, laughing throng
The men pour out into the early dawn,
To fill their lungs with sharp, frost-kindled air.

* * *

Wild eyed and careless, fearless, meek and proud,
The millionaire, the farmer, poet, clerk,
The East Side, West Side, Williamsburg and
Bronx,
The Southerner, the Favorite Son, the Yank,
A crude, mad polyglot democracy
Flows out, disgruntled, cursing-cold and glum
To gaze in deep dejection at the stars
Still shivering wanly in the brooding sky.
Men need an Irishman at such a time
To warm their flagging spirits with a jest,
And always at such times one finds him there.

The Station stands, a youth of mingled strains,
Stripped to the loins, prepared, alertly poised,

THE STATION

Whose wondering eyes turned towards the wait-
ing sea,
Are lit with laughter, eagerness and hope —
Whose lips are parted in a joyous song.

LIBERTY SONG

I 'VE washed me neck
An' I've cashed me check
An' I've got me Forty-three.
An' I'm light and gay
As a mule in May
For I'm bound on liberty.
An' I've got a date with Mamie an' I got a date
with Sue
An' I've got a date with Nancy an' wi' Kate
An' I'm going to be so busy that I won't know
what to do,
An' I'm that confounded anxious I can't wait.
So, roll, roll, roll along, roll on, sailor, roll.
Roll, roll, roll along, shove off, blast yer soul!
Good-by Buddy, an' good-by Bo,
Me dogs are itching an' I got to go
So, roll, roll, roll along, roll on, sailor, roll.

Me tapes are white
An' me boots are bright
An' me hat is stiff and straight.

LIBERTY SONG

An' I've brushed me bean

An' I've shaved blue clean

An' the list is at the gate.

Oh, I'm going to spend me money an' I'm going
to spend it right

Buying sweeties for me wild Canarsie pigs,

An' sometime in the morning or very late at night

I'm going to a pub and dance some jigs.

So, roll, roll, roll along, roll on, sailor, roll.

Roll on, roll along, shove off, blast yer soul!

So long, Buddy, and good-by Bo.

Am I happy? Well, I'll tell yer so.

So roll, roll, roll along, roll on, sailor, roll.

I SAW A SHIP TO-DAY

I saw a ship to-day,
An old ship with sails
That sang and seemed to say:
 “ We have fought with gales,
 And our lee-side rails
Have been white with spray
As we beat at bay
Down the storm-swept trails,
Where the North wind wails
And the great seas flay.”
And I sighed and turned away —
I saw a ship to-day.

I saw a ship to-day,
An old ship with sails
That sang and seemed to say:
 “ We could tell you tales
 Of a school of whales
Where the icebergs play,

I SAW A SHIP TO-DAY

If you've time to stay
We have songs of nails
And of sweet spiced bales
That would make you gay."
But I sighed and turned away —
I saw a ship to-day.

THE ROCKS OF LOAM

I'VE heard the cry of crag born things
Around the rocks of Loam
And heard the hurried beat of wings
And seen the tides drive home
Like buffalo along the beach,
In swift stampeding herds,
But there is neither song nor speech,
Nor melody of words
To sing of those great roaring rocks
When far from sound of voice,
One felt the earth made drunk with shocks
Tumultuously rejoice.
And where the sea comes tumbling in,
And where the white-caps play
The rocks of Loam
Beneath the foam
Gave battle through the day.

I dream about the rocks of Loam,
But visit them no more.

THE ROCKS OF LOAM

In dreams my face is wet with foam,
I hear the breakers roar,
And, waking, ring within my ears
Dim echoes of the past,
So faint that foam is turned to tears
For dreams that did not last.
The sky was very fair and blue,
No sky has been so fair,
Nor has life's truth been half so true
As dreams that hovered there
Around those gaunt, embattled rocks
That roared a wild refrain —
The dreaming ends
Old battered friends,
But always you remain.

And always where the sea sets in
Will your deep voice impart
Above the wild barbaric din
A message to the heart
Of battle and of ceaseless strife,
Of faith and fortitude,
The glory and the grip of life
And courage unsubdued.

THE ROCKS OF LOAM

More vital than the words of men
And all the creeds they preach,
And wise beyond all mortal ken
The wisdom of your speech.
So sing, ye wave-washed warriors,
Beneath the fields of foam,
Your battle song,
Your struggle song,
Old rugged rocks of Loam.

I'LL SING NO MORE OF THE SEA

I'LL sing no more of the sea, but hear it sing
Under the smother and foam
A free-flung song.
Stronger than love of maid or the ties of home
Is the song of the sea, and the sea is where I be-
long.
Loafing around on land isn't good for me,
So, I guess, by gad, I'll ask to be shipped to the
sea.

There's more of a song of the sea in a night of
wind
Harping the chords of the shrouds
To sob and wail;
The moon aloft in the sky in a spume of clouds
As the ocean leaps to attack like a mighty flail,
Than anything I can sing on the quiet shore,
So I'll hark to the song of the sea, but I'll sing no
more.

I'LL SING NO MORE OF THE SEA

Friends of my days farewell, I have stayed
awhile —

Luck to you all and good-by;

I'm bound away

Out where the sun and sea and the tumbling sky
Mingle and merge and dance in a field of spray,
Mingle and merge and dance to a flying song,
As the ship meets true to her course and the wind
is strong.

I'll sing no more of the sea but hear it sing

Ballads that never could flow

From out the brain.

Songs that hover like tears when the south winds
blow

And ease a man of his care and his heart of
pain —

Out where the dawn is frank and the day is crude
And the soul leaps clean like a star in the solitude.

THE STORM



THE STORM

I — THE SHIP

HER joy and pride and duty was to sail
Upon the sea, and play a valiant part
Against the tyranny of wave and gale

With all the courage of her gallant heart.
Her crew sang loudly pæans in her praise
And fought along the docks and bragged and
 lied.

Her skipper's features softened when his gaze
 Ran lovingly along his slim white bride.
The First Mate's wife was there to see her leave,
 The First Mate's Wife remains at home to
 pray,
For where the great green rollers plunge and
 heave,

A spray born thing returns unto the spray
In stricken state, to fill an unmarked grave
 Among the billows that she loved to brave.

THE STORM

II — THE CREW

The crew came swearing on at break of day
And stowed its gear and took each others size,
Turned to and watched the roadstead fade away
Through bleared, indifferent, bright and brood-
ing eyes.
Then followed many days of open skies,
When sailors' hearts were light and songs were
gay
And sailors vied, as every sailor vies,
In planning how to dissipate the pay
That they would never spend. It came at last
Across the sea on swift, foam-cushioned feet,
A raving thing, that struck away the mast
And tore men's bleeding hands from line and
cleat,
As through the night they fought to save, but
failed,
"The fairest ship, by God, that ever sailed."

III — THE BEAST

From ice-lipped caverns looping down to hell
The reeling wind fled clamorous, released,

THE STORM

And sprang among the rigging, screamed and fell
Along the tangled spars, a blinded beast
With wreckage in its claws. A sailor cried
And some one cursed the wind, the wind in-
creased.

The spent ship groaned and turned upon its side,
The sea came crashing down and cursing
ceased.

But yesterday men laughed along the deck,
Talked wistfully of women, grog and home,
And now amid the smother of a wreck,
All peacefully in caskets carved in foam,
Like tired children slumbering safe in hope,
They moved in silence down a dim-lit slope.

IV — THE HAVEN

Beyond the starflecked fringes of the seas,
An island lies where old sea captains sit
And lie most mightily, while through the trees
Great sailors lounge and neat-limbed maidens
flit,

And there are roaring songs and rugged wit,
And wine to quaff, and honey from the bees,

THE STORM

And there, if I aright remember it,

A brave fleet rides at anchor and at ease.

From out of grizzled throats and bearded lips

Astounding tales are told in lavish ways

Of sails and salvage, storms and sinking ships —

One lie alone lasts several thousand days

In this green mantled garden in the West

Where men go after storms, to laugh and rest.

BROKEN DAYS



THE TURNING

AS one who at the closing of the day
In open spaces spent, beneath fair skies,
Looks westward where the sunset's vast array
Casts glowing beauty deep into the eyes;
And gazing thus thinks back across the hours,
The golden hours caressed by sun and wind,
Perfumed by heather bloom and wildwood flow-
ers,
Is loath to turn and leave it all behind,
So now I turn my feet from idle ways
And leave all things that I have loved before.
No more the uneventful, dream-touched days,
The fireside and friendly book no more
And rough the road until I earn the right
To claim the peace for which I dared to fight.

WHAT DO I KNOW OF THE WAR?

WHAT do I know of the battle-field?
Nothing at all but there he lies
Where harvest winds once blew their yield
And moonlight falls on his eyes.

That's what I know of the battle-field
And that I know and nothing more,
His song is hushed, his lips are sealed —
That's all I know of the war.

Nations may fall on the battle-field,
Victor and vanquished come and go,
And flowers bloom where the cannon pealed,
But only this do I know.

A HILL IN FLANDERS

WE rested on the hill, young men grown old
In war, and watched the breath of battle
mass

Against the slate gray sky where thunder rolled
Above the sluggish ribbons of the gas.

Poor battered hulks were we from pain untold,
The yellow husks of war, turned hard, alas,
And in our sunken eyes our youth lay cold —

Then some one idly shrilled a blade of grass.
That one sharp note fled deep into the brain
And stirred the dust memory till it blew
Around our heads like blossoms in the rain
Across the years from orchard lands we knew
Once long ago, and stung with swift surprise,
We turned and gazed through fixed, remembering
eyes.

THAT DOCTOR FELLOW

WE never knew he lived until he died
And left a record that was hailed with
pride

By those who gazed on him with vague surprise
As comprehension slowly dimmed their eyes.

It seems our boys were in a bit of hell
And being badly splattered up by shell,
And that this doctor fellow, lately made,
Was under fire, dishing out first-aid,

When suddenly across the tarnished grass
The Boches sent in wave on wave of gas
That wrapped around the wounded and the dead,
And brought a gas mask whipping to each head.

It seems he kept the thing upon his face
Until he struck a rather nasty case,
When by the way he cocked his head and peered
They saw the darned contraption interfered.

THE DOCTOR FELLOW

He jabbed around at random for a while
Then gave it up, and with a casual smile
He took and tossed the nagging mask aside
And went on saving lives until he died.

Just calmly went on working in that hell
And coughed and wheezed until at last he fell
And lay there clinging to his old tin hat —
Whoever thought he'd do a thing like that?

And then they picked him up from where he lay
And carried him quite tenderly away
Along with those he'd lost his life to save —
A tilting cross marks out another grave.

SOLDIERS NEVER FOUND

LYING on the frozen ground,
Soldiers, soldiers never found,
Staring at the smoky skies,
God stoop down and touch their eyes.

Now so helpless, once so bold,
Soldiers, soldiers in the cold;
Master, from thy mercy seat,
Bend and warm their hands and feet.

Hard and rough and cold their beds —
Savior kneel and ease their heads,
Victims of the last barrage,
God, we leave them in Thy charge.

Short the shrift and swift they fell,
Those who gave their lives so well.
Now at last from warfare free,
God, we give them up to Thee.

SOLDIER'S NEVER FOUND

Make them laugh and love again,
Still their hate and ease their pain,
Touch with joy each ragged breast,
Jesus give them peace and rest.

TO A CERTAIN CONTINGENT

TO a certain contingent from over the seas,
(Tired and weary from over the seas),
That took what it wanted with infinite ease
From the Huns it almightily blighted;
For all of the wrongs that you righted,
And the flame in our hearts that you lighted
This cover of sadly inadequate lines
in honor of you is indited.
For you slaughtered the swine of young
Willy-be-damned,
Along with their murderous arts,
And taking your bayonets you capably
crammed
The fear of a god in their hearts.
So, here's to you fellows from over the seas,
(Tired and weary from over the seas),
You belted the Boches — the world's at your
knees,
You're the people, by gad, you're the people!

TO A CERTAIN CONTINGENT

To a certain contingent from over the seas,
(A tired contingent from over the seas),
They went out and took it and failed to say please
 To the Boches it smote and confounded;
For all of the Huns that you hounded,
And all of their hopes that you grounded,
 And all of the Fritziez you basted and
 slammed,
 till the welkin with "Kamer-
 ad" resounded,
These lines are intended directly for you,
 Ye wielders of bayonets and butts,
Who blasted an opening and hurried on
 through
 With an admirable showing of guts.
So, here's to you fellows from over the seas,
That cuddled the cooties (called commonly fleas),
Though tired and weary from over the seas,
 You're the people, by gad, you're the people!

THE PLANES

THE planes set wing and take the sky,
The planes are out and bound away.
Majestically they wheel and fly,
Bent on the business of the day,
On which upon a balanced breath
Hangs swift oblivion and death.

The planes are out — the army lies —
A giant crouching at their feet —
They are its penetrating eyes.
Like straining hearts their motors beat
As through the dizzy heights they race,
But some shall not return to base.

For he who flies with man made wings,
Where clouds to burning shreds are blown,
Does casually heroic things,
And takes his chances quite alone
To set the crouching giant free
And help the big, blind guns to see.

THE PLANES

Aloft to him men turn their eyes,
And throats grow tight and sight grows dim
As through the gray, shell spatteréd skies
They see him poise his plane and skim
Above the battle's ragged shroud
To meet death darting from a cloud.

Alone a man goes forth to fight
Where man has never fought before,
Alone with death he rides the night
Above the cannons' distant roar,
Alone he comes to grip with fate,
While far below the armies wait.

There's death that swims beneath the seas,
And death that leaps from flashing steel,
And death that slips across the breeze,
But there is none to know or feel
The pang when foe meets foe in air
And one must plunge and perish there.

Upon the man on high depends
The fate of many men below,
And so he calmly serves their ends

THE PLANES

Because to him it must be so.
His is the harder task and grim,
And being such, men honor him.

With careless grace they dip and wheel
Above the battle's drift and surge,
Yet who can feel the things they feel
Or know the wild homeric urge
Of those who fight with cool, clear brains,
The men who man the aeroplanes?

* * *

The planes set wing and take the sky,
The low sun paints their pinions red
As restlessly they mount and fly
Above the campus of the dead.
Like gulls across the ocean spray
The planes set wing and stream away.

TO THREE DODGERS

THEY sat them down secure in their exemp-
tion,

Three wise young men to quaff their wine and
gloat

Above their costly plates. Beyond redemption
Were they for whom contempt made warm my
throat.

They spoke of war, eyes never meeting eyes,
Complained because the Germans still were gain-
ing.

They drank and gazed on me with pained surprise,
Then turned to plays and universal training.

Beyond their well-groomed heads I saw a plain
That ran through lands of murky hell and smoke,
And there the wounded lay and there the slain
Gazed up at hopeless skies where shrapnel broke.

I saw wan women bathing soldiers' feet,
Then, all three cursed — their cocktails were
too sweet.

THE JUNKER

HE shares alone dominion with the brute,
Yet in a subtler way procures his spoil.
The world is his to ravish and to loot
And backward lands to glut him with their toil.

The serpent crushes soft wings in its coil,
The panther kills the lamb with hateful blows,
Yet he alone slays people for their soil
And calls it patriotic — so it goes.

There was a man named Christ who walked the
earth,
A sort of universal poor folks pal,
Who never cared how much a man was worth,
But, like good fellows, quite impractical,
Or so it seems, in these stout junkers' eyes,
Who envy man the earth and God the skies.

THE MOTHERLAND

COME, close your eyes in unremembering
sleep

My weary ones, my breast is wide and deep.
My arms are strong enough to clasp you all,
The ones that falter and the ones that fall.
Unstrap your heavy packs and sink to rest,
Soldiers of France, upon your mother's breast.

I sent you forth to fight; you did not know
The agony it caused to see you go,
My singing sons, so dapper and so slim,
Now worn with war, your faces pale and grim.
I sent you forth to face a rising horde,
Soldiers of France, and kissed your desperate
sword.

You bled for me, but did not bleed alone;
For you I hushed within my heart the groan
And strove to sing those songs when in retreat
That once made merry music for your feet

THE MOTHERLAND

Before you marched from me with martial tread;
Soldiers of France, your mother also bled.

Come back to me my sons and learn to smile
As in the happy past, come, rest awhile,
My pleasure loving children once so bright
Who used to sing and dance away the night.
Come, lose your bitterness, forget your pain,
Soldiers of France, and learn to laugh again.

My tattered children, proud beneath your blue,
My little singing sons, I call to you.
The boulevards you loved are once more gay,
The maidens wait and night is turned to day.
Across the golden dawn return to me,
Soldiers of France, the Motherland is free!

RECOMPENSE

A CROSS the dawn the cannon spoke
And tore the ancient church apart.
Methodically it struck and broke
An age-old heart.

A robin with a rusty breast,
Preoccupied with work was he,
All day with care contrived a nest
Within a tree.

And as the sun fell down the sky
The lovely western windows bled,
The ruin stirred and seemed to sigh
And then lay dead.

At twilight time the fields grew dim,
The murdered church sank in a pall
Of smoke, and from a ragged limb
There came a call.

RECOMPENSE

Another robin homeward flew,
The sky was desolate and wild.
Yet God looked down upon the two
With eyes that smiled.

A POILU SPEAKS

IT'S mine, that stuff that falls upon the field,
Drawn painlessly from some unfeeling part
Of my spent body. Hail the crimson yield,
The final token of a failing heart!
How strange to think it once belonged to me,
This blood, that surged within my singing veins
But yesterday when I was treading free
At home among the meadowlands and lanes.

Death's not the thing, my friend, for death is
swift,
And I shall live when Spring returns again,
For this my willing blood, my vital gift,
Shall glow in cheerful flowers on the plain
Among the hedges where the children dance,
A breath of fragrance and a bit of France.

BY THE OLD CHÂTEAU

WE died last night by the old château
Before the boches fled;
Downed in the barbs in the gulch below,
But the boys swept on ahead
Into the smoke and we saw them go,
And a cheer rose from the dead.

We died last night in the burning woods —
Men, did you hear us cheer?
Caught where the breath of the battle broods
Still are we waiting here;
Waiting behind in the burning woods —
We wait till the woods are clear.

We died last night by the old château
Before the boches fled.
We cannot rest and we cannot go,
Our bayonets were never red.
We watch and wait and we will it so,
We are the waiting dead.

BY THE OLD CHÂTEAU

We fell last night and they sent us West
At the turn of another day.

We have not gone to our final rest
Though ye wished us luck on our way.
The faith still flames in the spirit breast,
We're here, and we're here to stay.

Men who followed us through that night,
Men of the first advance,
We who no longer can share the fight
Wait where the gas wreaths dance,
Never to lift our wings in flight
Till the Boches are clear of France!

THE LIBERATORS — 1918

THEY'VE taken Bruges, they've taken Thielt,
they're marching down the coast;

They're mopping up the Kriemhild line, they've
liberated Lille,

And the mighty Prussian army fades before the
Allied host

That is hewing ground from underneath the
bloody Prussian heel.

And the grim, relentless anguish of the unrequited
years

Like a shadow moves across the stricken land;
Turn ye back ye peasant people and ye women dry
your tears,

For the freedom of your country is at hand.

They've taken Lens and Le Cateau, they're at the
gates of Ghent;

They're marching on Valenciennes, they've
moved across the Scheldt

And the vaunted blood and iron ring is broken and
is bent

THE LIBERATORS — 1918

As the Allies battle forward and the Prussian
legions melt.

There is sorrow in the meadow, there is famine in
the field,

In a pall of ragged smoke the village lies
As before their ruined holdings, once so glorious
with yield,

The peasants stand with wonder in their eyes.

They've crossed the Serre, they've crossed the
Oise, they've breached the Hunding line;

They've taken Thun and Pont a Chin, they're
pushing through the mud

And across the soggy meadow lands the homing
missiles whine

As the Prussian boots are battered till the spurs
are dripping blood.

There is death among the hedges, there is grief
among the lanes

Where the bitterness of war has cast its blight,
But the peasants seek their homesteads as the au-
tumn glory wanes

And the ruins soften in the shades of night.

THE LIBERATORS — 1918

They've taken Pecq and Herpy Mill; they've
cleared the Belgian coast;

They've taken Marle and Wassigny — the
armies still advance —

And they've bent the Prussian circle, and they've
nailed the Prussian boast

To the everlasting glory of the Allied arms in
France.

Now across the furrowed country lie the legions
of the dead,

From the shadow of the mountains to the sea,
And an ancient peasant standing in the twilight
lifts his head,

In the ruins of his dwelling he is free.

THE HAND IN THE SKY.

THE chalice of our days now lies in bits,
And twilight settles down upon the soul,
The scheme by which we lived no longer fits
The sorry facts of life — no longer whole
And undisturbed our happy old beliefs,
But rent by secret fears and secret griefs.
Like children frightened in a dismal wood
We lose our gathered flowers one by one.
We stand no longer now where once we stood
And now we falter where we used to run.
Our visions fade and vanish from our sight
For some great hand is held before the light.

Along the whispering galleries of our fear
The dust of memory stirs and ghosts are blown
From out the Golden Once to plead and peer
Until we dare not trust ourselves alone.
Across the hostile gloom the silence sighs
And trembling curtains shadow watching
eyes.

THE HAND IN THE SKY.

The echoes of the years on padded feet
 Fall stealthily, a swift, pursuing sound,
Like panthers creeping in to block retreat,
 Black panthers leaping valleys at a bound.
 We turn to flee, but still the hand remains
 Across the sky — its fingers sear our brains.

The world is locked in labour. Grief and hate
 And wrath and bitterness unknown before
Brood in the heart, while Death, insatiate,
 Lays hands upon the latchstring of the door
 Of silent homes from which all joy has
 flown,
 Where those within dwell in their souls
 alone.

When laughter left the earth the Dark Host came
 Across the dawn, a gray, relentless horde,
And laid our lovely villages in flame
 And leveled all before its searching sword,
 While high above our murdered maidens'
 screams
 The cannon spoke and tore away our dreams.

THE HAND IN THE SKY

We dream no more. Our star-blown dreams are
done —

Trailed in the dust. With dim, remembering
eyes

We search the lifting gloom to find the sun
Lost in the cloud-locked valleys of the skies.

Not dead our dreams! Not dead! Grim,
unafraid,

Men fight for dreams, blade leaping out to
blade.

Not dead our tattered dreams. Our sacred blood
Shall flow unchecked for them until release

Is won and we can weave from out the flood

Our dreams into an everlasting peace.

Not dead our dreams. The hand shall be
withdrawn

And men shall lift their eyes and see the
dawn.



HAUNTS AND BY-PATHS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE ROAD TO CHALMODIE

THE road that runs to Chalmodie
In Whittleshire that lies among
The hills is very dear to me.

Though little known and seldom sung
The names are proper to the tongue
And there are many things to see
By those whom fate or fame has flung
Along the road to Chalmodie.

Along the road to Chalmodie,
I met a face bespread with smiles,
A rugged sailor man was he
Who spoke of fairy fashioned isles
And maids of hardly righteous wiles;
His talk was very loose and free,
And as we trod the dusty miles
He sang some wicked songs to me.

I met a man of humble rank
Who staggered slightly as he went.

THE ROAD TO CHALMODIE

His wife was pretty when he drank,
He said, and so he often spent
In buying rum his final cent,
And thus became a mighty tank.
She liked, said he, the compliment,
And only had herself to thank.

And there was one whose verbal flow
Was adequate to say the least.
His eyes were wild, his hair was tow,
His dissertation never ceased.
A barrister, perhaps, or priest?
With crushing scorn he answered "No.
A poet I." His scorn increased;
I fawned on him and murmured "Oh!"

When asked for rhymes I saw him wince.
"I never rhyme," replied the bard.
"I do," said I, "the rhyme is quince,"
And left him breathing very hard.
I met a noble, spurred and scarred,
Who swore about a neighboring prince.
He offered me his calling card.
I haven't seen the fellow since.

THE ROAD TO CHALMODIE

Oh, there are many things to see.

And there are many things to do
Along the road to Chalmodie,
But most of them are scarcely true.

A maiden tripped across the dew
At dusk and blew a kiss to me

And there were only just we two
Along the road to Chalmodie.

And no one ever hurries by,
But stops awhile to rest his load,
And ask the which and where and why,
One's state of health and last abode;
And once I met a talking toad
Who failed to wait for my reply —
You know of no such silly road,
You say? Oh, well, no more do I.

GREEN LAWNS

I LOVE green lawns, green rolling lawns,
With trees nearby,
Where one can catch the tread of fawns.
I never try
To see them, but I know they're there,
And maidens, too, with flowing hair,
And goblins and a sleepy bear
That blinks one eye.

I think green lawns, green rolling lawns,
A pleasant sight;
Brushed clean by silver singing dawns
All fresh and bright,
And glad beneath a scarf of dew
Reflecting lofty skies and blue,
Where purple stars come trickling through
The trees at night.

I love green lawns where pine trees are
And water spills,

GREEN LAWNS

A drowsy voice that flows afar
Among the hills.

I love green lawns where blossoms blow,
And shadows come and shadows go,
Where goldenrod and wild things grow
And daffodils.

I think that I shall search some day
For such a place,
Where quite contented I can stay
And press my face
Against the fresh and fragrant grass,
The while the golden hours pass,
As cloud flotillas wheel and mass
And ply through space.

I feel I know of such a spot,
Or so it seems;
Perhaps I saw it from my cot
Last night in dreams —
This land that I am looking for,
Where one can rest and burn no more,
And limbs are never throbbing sore,
And sunshine streams.

GREEN LAWNS

I saw green lawns and slanting skies
That seemed to meet,
Where cool-armed maids with starry eyes
And voices sweet,
Sang songs among the swaying trees,
And danced with neat and nimble knees
To vagrant gipsy melodies
On silver feet.

*St. Vincent's Hospital —
October, 1918.*

NEAR A PINE FOREST

SO that you may enjoy the beauty
Of the light that falls on the mountains,
I give you your freedom now,
And I place in your hand
A reed still wet from the lake
From which I drew it
In the hush of the morning mist
For I knew you would go
Outward to-day on a path that I could not follow
And I feared for you lest you might weary
Along the way.

And because I knew you would want for the sound
of music
I have notched a hole in the reed
And fashioned a flute,
So that you might play as you pass through the
criss-cross shadows
That swarm so heavy and silent among the trees
And that those who await your coming

NEAR A PINE FOREST

Might hear your music
And hasten to meet you
And play with you on the way;
But tarry not long in the woods
For One will be waiting
At the end of the path to welcome you back to
 His fields,
His woods and His lakes and His hills and His
 silent places
For which you have longed
And which you have gone to find.

I place a rose at your breast,
See, little traveler,
For you to bear on your way
As a gift to Him
From one who would fain have kept you a little
 longer,
But being unworthy has let you return again
To that land from which you departed
One singing morning,
One morning all drenched with the singing of
 boughs and of birds.

NEAR A PINE FOREST

So that you may travel unbruised
Through the rugged country,
I cover your feet with sandals
And bind them with thongs,
And, see, I drape on your form
With reverent fingers
A scarf of purple and scarlet and green and gold,
As gay as the heart
That sorrowed awhile at the ending:
Because it was burdened with things
That it could not bear.

And now you are well arrayed
For the glad outgoing,
And He, when He sees you, will know
I have treasured you well,
For you are more fair and more beautiful
Now at the leaving
Than when you came singing your way
Through the spreading dawn,
A song that was laden with faith
And glowing with dreams.

NEAR A PINE FOREST

You will leave me now to the past
In a haunted vista,
Where the pine trees whisper your name
To the stars at night;
So, I shall press on your lips
This kiss at the parting.
Now it is over and ended;
I turn away;
But the sound of your song
Is following, following after
And the tread of your feet falls close
And I see your eyes
And feel the breath of your lips,
And among the shadows
You have hidden yourself from me.
You were fond of hiding.

It is over and ended now,
And the ending is over.
I turn my back,
See, I have turned away.
If you fear the shades in the woods
When the night is falling

NEAR A PINE FOREST

Remember to call, and Love, I shall answer your
call

Though you will not hear,
For you will be far from hearing
The cry that breaks and tears itself from my heart
For the traveler so little and lonely among the
trees.

Be gay as you go
And take care in your flight to remember
The reed, and the rose, and the beautiful scarf,
that you wear,
For He will be happy and pleased
When He sees you are near Him
To know that I treasured you well
And clad you in raiment
As fair as the dawn
Out of which you came to me singing
A song that washes like sobs
In the vaults of my ears.

You are gone! You are no more here,
And the light is ebbing.
Is it dark where you tread, little traveler,

NEAR A PINE FOREST

And strange and cold?
Play loud on your flute, play loud!
Perhaps they will hear you.
Play loud, little one, play loud,
And send back an echo.
Is it dark in the woods?
Play on, I shall not grieve!

ROSE GATHERERS OF THE NIGHT

THEY pluck at night the roses that are left
By those who pluck the roses in the day.
Quite furtively they pluck with fingers deft,
Then steal away;
A little rose hid warmly in each breast
So none would ever know that it was there.
And as they hurry frightened to the West
They loose their hair,
Which is so light and fairy-thistle spun
It floats like mist across the fields and hills,
And if by chance you rise to greet the sun
When nature thrills
With dawning you will see them in their flight,
A silver haze swept on before the wind,
The ones who gather roses in the silence of the
night
As if they'd sinned.

BACK TO THE DAY

DAWN is hiding among the hills, shall we
look for it together

Where the great crags rear and the valley fills
with mist from the distant sea?

Already the wind is running its hand through the
tousled hair of the heather —

Love, will you run to the hills and away with me?

Stars and shadows and balsam boughs, a loon on
the lake is crying

And the pine-steeped wind as it sifts and soughs
through the reeds is alert with dawn;

The heathery hills inveigle the moon, a hawk
from his nest is flying,

Stars quiver out like the dew on a dusky lawn.

See, the wings of the night are spread, the bird in
the bush is waking,

And the dim, gray vault of the east is red-awake;
it is time to run

BACK TO THE DAY .

Together across the rim of the dawn to the shore
 where the waves are breaking;
Up, let us shout to the sea and salute the sun!

IN THE WOODS

WERE they the sounds of fairy feet?
Oh, I hope they were;
The hurried patter, the hush and beat
And the gentle stir
Of the old crisp, crinkled winter leaves
In the fresh green wood.

Were they the sound of fairy feet,
Wee, small and pink,
Dancing a merry swift retreat?
I would love to think
Of the Old Things playing among the leaves
And the solitude.

Were they the sounds of fairy feet?
Oh, it must be so!
The breathless scamper so soft and fleet,
And the heel and toe
Racing among the old brown leaves
In the fresh green wood.

THIS PLACE

HERE I kissed her, here we fought.
Here we parted, here made up.
Here we ate the things we brought,
Drinking from the selfsame cup.
Here she made a wreath for me
Trimmed with fern and roses red.
Here I carved upon the tree,
Here I chased and here she fled.
Here we lay upon the grass,
Here we planned the unborn years,
Here we saw the summer pass,
Here I laughed away her tears.
Here she blossomed, here she grew,
Here she withered, here she died.
Here a world was rent in two,
Here I cursed my God and cried.
Here she lies beneath the mold,
Here at last in lonesome state.
Weary of the world and old
Here I think of her and wait.

THE LITTLE SHOP THAT WAS

FOR CLAIRE

HOW cheery was the little shop and what a
snug retreat

And what a pleasant thing it was to ponder there
and search

Among the friendly rows of books, while, just
across the street,

One saw the sparrows bathing in the fountain of
the church.

The little shop has gone away, and so I go no
more

To dip and delve and lose myself in tales of yes-
terday,

But sometimes, when I'm passing by, I falter at
the door

To think of it as once it was and watch the foun-
tain play.

I knew the niche for every book and took a cer-
tain pride

THE LITTLE SHOP THAT WAS

In joining in the heated search when one had been
misplaced.

Suspiciously we groped about and eagerly we vied
Until at length the missing one triumphantly was
traced.

Neil Lyons, Jacks, Hillaire Belloc — I knew
them every one —

Hugh Clifford, Hudson, Beresford, Wells, Wal-
pole, G. B. S.

And Kenneth Graham's "Golden Age" and G.
K. Chesterton

And, lower down, the Russian row — a sweetly
morbid mess.

The poets shared the other side, among them
Frost and Yeats,

John Masefield, Housman, Oppenheim — then
many shelves of plays.

And here I've fled and locked myself behind these
friendly gates

And in the old gloom of the shop explored en-
chanted ways.

THE LITTLE SHOP THAT WAS

There was a little cubby-hole, secreted in the rear
That breathed a proper mystery of life behind the
scenes

And often of a winter's night would we foregather
here

Unravelling rare philosophies and figuring ways
and means.

In silence lay the outer shop — extinguished were
the lights,

Occasionally the wandering wind sniffed at the
door and whined.

How mellow was the little place on those mid-win-
ter nights

When all the world went rumbling by and left us
far behind.

The little shop has gone away and so I go no
more;

Deserted are the dusty shelves; the walls are
stark and bare,

But sometimes, when I'm passing by, I falter at
the door

And picture it as once it was, when all the books
were there.

THE OLD BOOK WORM

GOD gave his arm a natural crook
To snuggle and contain a book:

His eyes a little dim, yet quick,
A battered hat, a pipe, a stick,

I've often watched him hurry home,
His shoulders hunched above some tome,

To leave the warring world behind
Within the pages of his find.

He loved to read his books in bed
And there one day they found him dead.

A jolly way for him to go.
I'm sure he must have wished it so;

His soul cut loose and winging free
Across some fine romantic sea

THE OLD BOOK WORM

To friends and scenes he loved and knew.
For one, I hope his dreams came true.

And yet our street is not the same —
I think perhaps that he's to blame.

AUTUMN IN THE SUBWAY

I WATCHED her eyes, for they were fixed
afar

Where sky and crag and flaring sunset meet,
And there before me in the fetid car

A river glided and the woods smelled sweet
And wind swam in the trees. The night came on
And through the singing dusk I saw her face
In Autumn foliage framed. Then she was gone
And there came one with dark eyes to her place.

Her heavy perfume drifting up to me

Swept out the night wind through the sobbing
trees,

A shadow crossed the woods and stealthily,

There came the swift caress of silken knees.
Then beauty died. I sought another strap
And thought of one with red leaves in her lap.

TO A TRUE PROPHET

MEN make a mockery, Martin, of your
name,

And why is that and why are many things?
You fanned the flame and others stole the flame
And when you learned to fly they took your wings.
From out our midst the prophets, priests and kings
Have gone away; remains with us the shame,
In spite of which to you some credit clings,
Because of which men hold you much to blame.

But nothing Martin, now is quite the same
The fearless words which made men turn on you
Weak brothers shout, and swear that they are
new;

Continues still the sickening search for fame.
And still we ply the practice of our trade
Of politics with vision stale and dead,
And sometimes, Martin, sometimes I'm afraid
When I recall how solemnly you said —
A party or a people lost to truth,

TO A TRUE PROPHET

With courage gone to rot, bereft of dreams
Are dying things — for Martin so it seems.
We've done dishonor to our dreams of youth.
Men win the game who never play the game
While other men are prisoned in the dark,
And there is none to hear the things they claim
And there is none to bear to them the spark
Of hope as once you bore the spark to me
When mouths were unafraid and tongues were
free.

Those hidden ones that turned on you the knife
Now hew the tree to which you gave your life.
And that's about how things are with us here.
Old friend, our stately ship has drifted far
From off the course and there is much to fear.
You're lucky, Martin, lying where you are.

TO A MODERN WOMAN

SHE lived in books and dreams, yet loved the
earth.

She said a lot of silly things and died
And no one ever really knew her worth
And no one cared and no one ever tried.
She smoked her cigarettes with reckless pride
And talked artistically her Freudian gush,
Yet there were flowers underneath the slush
Still fragrant though perhaps a trifle dried.

One smiled at her, yet one could not deride.
The soul of her, one felt was much too brave
And large with love and, yet, no creature's
slave —

One felt this more, of course, when she had died.
She said a lot of things she did not know,
She knew a lot of things she did not say.
She said that this was thus and that was so
And said another thing another day.

TO A MODERN WOMAN

As true as gold her heart and golden gay.
Her busy brain was very much alive
With dizzy thoughts, with which she loved to play,
Like bees abubble in a lofty hive.
Perhaps that's why her thoughts could not survive,
Perhaps that's why remained no lasting trace
Of all the things for which she used to strive
And yet, as we stood gazing on her face
With all its lovely animation dead
We all remembered something she had said
That we had used as ours. We turned away
And stealthy silence fell upon us all;
Before that frail accusing bit of clay
One felt quite furtive and a trifle small.

TO THE OTHER WOMAN

A CROSS the great confusion of my mind
You came to me like Hebe through the
night,
A pagan thing beyond all wrong or right,
Abundant in your love yet strangely kind;
Who called forgotten things long left behind,
A vagrant song, wild flowers, lost delight —
When was it now that beauty took its flight
And left a soul at war and unresigned?

Perhaps my lips were dumb, my eyes were blind,
Perhaps I killed the thing I sought to find.
The way is short to climb, but far to fall
And this might be the reason for it all.
Perhaps it's wiser after all to ask
No questions here, nor further strive to task
A mind that plugged the saw with all its might —
Why curse a bug because it bears a blight?
The facts are thus and other reasons pall.

TO THE OTHER WOMAN

We shake the hand, yet seldom hear the call.
So let it end.

Because your singing voice
A little while lulled shame within my soul
And made a jaded heart awhile rejoice
And see the glory of a vanished goal;
Because you snatched a thought beyond a dream
And made it live again before my eyes,
A song at dusk beneath fair summer skies
That rendered mute awhile the frightened scream
Of my remorse, I show no great surprise,
Nor ask your name, nor weigh your moral worth,
Nor question what it was that brought rebirth
To things long dead, nor shall I strive to cloak
That when your song was hushed and daylight
broke

Departed from my breast the wings of peace
Across the faint pink gables of the town
And with the dawn the darkness settled down
More fiercely for one fragrant night's release.

It happened so and things are as they are,
And there is room for mockery and mirth.
We see the stars, yet cannot touch a star.

TO THE OTHER WOMAN

We tread the earth, yet cannot prove the earth,
And who can find the spot where beauty dwells?
And who can find the dwelling place of Good? —
In what distorted souls or looping hells,
Or say that this is false or that is true,
The clearest spring lies in the darkest wood,
And there is none to judge or pity you
Or me or any one, for no one knows
From what dark pit a breath of beauty blows,
What withered hands the stars of kindness strew,
Or in what cave a hidden blossom grows.

Within a word of yours, a fleeting thought
I caught, or so it seemed to me, I caught
A breath of love and pity more profound
Than all the words that echo and resound
Through windy domes where men to mortals
 preach
And stultify their souls through human speech.
It is not this. There is some other thing —
A crumpled bird that bears a broken wing
Perhaps has sweeter music in its breast
Than all the world and all the singing rest
Who fly unmaimed.

TO THE OTHER WOMAN

Within the flaming West
I saw a thing that called aloud to me,
And that one thing my eyes shall ever see,
And that one thing my ears shall ever hear.
I shall not give it name, nor name the year,
Nor try to analyze how much it meant.
Since then in devious ways my feet have trod
Across the world through leagues of discontent,
So, after all, perhaps that thing was God.

THE LISTENER

I TOLD him my ambition was to write
And thereupon produced and read some stuff.
With sympathetic patience all that night
He listened; but my verse was not enough.
I thought that he should hear at least my play.
And so he did. "It's very good," he said.
Then rising, for the night was growing gray —
"It must be nice to write. Well, I'm for bed."
Alone, I rummaged through his stuffy files
Of legal papers couched in jargon terse,
And strangely there among those dusty piles
I chanced upon a wistful bit of verse
Of honest poetry worthy of the name
And, as I read, my eyes grew bright with shame.

THE UNEDIFYING FIVE

THE five of us frequented many bars,
And often spent entire evenings so,
Consuming cigarettes and black cigars
And other things, the while a steady flow
Of argument accompanied each drink,
So fiercely that a stander-by would think
We hated one another, which was true
Quite frequently, but most the time we quaffed
Our heady beverages the evening through,
And spent our hard-earned pay and cursed and
laughed
And talked philosophy and dizzy schemes
Of how to make the world a better place,
Or how to renovate the human race,
And as we talked our rosy-tinted dreams
Became quite real to us, and time and space
Fell from our shoulders like a heavy cloak,
As we sat drinking in a haze of smoke;
Our god-like souls released on soaring wings
And though I fear we looked quite dissolute,

THE UNEDIFYING FIVE

We felt that we were poets, priests and kings,
As Bacchus played upon his liquid flute,
Or syphon bottle, which is much the same
In these drab days, in fact, a substitute
For his once mellow reed. At five we came
Hot-footed from our offices and burst
Upon the scene to satisfy a thirst
Made keen by an uninteresting day,
Through which we toiled rebelliously to earn
Our beggarly but sadly needed pay
In order that the candle light might burn
At either end. Good God, the time we spent!
The rum we drank! The speeches wildly
spoken!
The dissertation and the argument,
When future rows were brewed and dates were
broken
And we resorted to the public booth
And phoned wild words, but never phoned the
truth,
Which was unnecessary, for the friend,
Or wife or sweetheart at the other end,
Could gather by a strangely honeyed tone
The blackness of the lies so glibly told,

THE UNEDIFYING FIVE

But yet we did not fear the telephone —

The distance somehow made us all feel bold.

A wretched lot were we if all were known —

“ Good evening, Steve, has Chick or Bud been
in? ”

And Steve would set the Scotch or rye or gin,
And every man would grasp and pour his own.
A wretched lot, in truth, but not the worst.

Desk-ridden fags who toiled and dissipated,
Like other youths whom destiny had cursed
With both imagination and a thirst

That city life had hardly satiated.

When I recall those whiskey-drinking nights,

Those unregenerate, futile, drifting days,
The laughter and the arguments and fights,

The streets and taxicabs and gilded ways,
I see across an alcoholic haze

Familiar once, but long since vanished faces
Encountered here and there in sundry places,
In restaurants and lobbies and cafés —

The faces of young men who, like ourselves,
Paid tribute to the white-clad Irish elves

Who passed the bottles neatly o'er the board,
And gave us checks that we could ill afford

THE UNEDIFYING FIVE

To settle for; young men around the town,
Wild, wayward youths, unedifying fives,
The spendthrift, tippler, sensualist and clown,
Who drank with us in those unsavory dives,
And turned each night into a sordid day.
We knew them all and liked them in a way.
Unedifying fives, where are they now,
Those roisterers that brawled around the bars,
Who loved to sing and dance and drink and row
And flash from pub to pub in creening cars?
Though thirsty still, they are no longer here,
And nothing now is as it was before;
The bars have lost their warmth, the cup its cheer
The fives have broken, some to meet no more,
And older men now toast their absent sons,
And strive to laugh and crack half-hearted puns
And keep a cheerful eye. It's not the same.
There is no zest, the bars seem very tame.
The wicked ones have gone, those wretched boys,
Who raised such howling hell and made such noise,
Have gone, all gone. Their once familiar haunts
Resound no more with their unseemly taunts,
And business is a little more than slack,
Yet many more than bar-keeps wish them back.

THE UNEDIFYING FIVE

Where are they now, those youthful rakes and
gay,

Those wild, marauding, unregenerate fives,
Who took their final drinks and strolled away,
And loving laughter, laughing gave their lives?



IDLERS



I MUST LIVE TO-DAY

I MUST live to-day,
The sun is in the sky,
The world is good, and I
Must hasten on my way.
The roads are cool and gay,
The hawk is flying high,
The wind and branches play,
The precious moments fly,
Too soon, too soon to die.
No longer can I stay,
All life is running by
And life is good I say!
Ahead the mountains lie,
Where little cloudlets stray
The silver birches sway.
The village maidens sigh,
The sun is in the sky,
The roads are cool and gay,
The world is good, and I
Must live my life to-day!

DUSK

OVER the purple hills
The sun has sped away,
Dusk, and a swallow thrills,
So ends the day.

Up from the darkling seas
A swift star wings its flight,
Voice of the wind in trees;
So comes the night.

THE WAYFARERS

THOSE old spent men who moved across the
hill

Among the trees were yesterdays of mine.
Above their heads I heard the branches whine
As sunset burned and all the world grew still.
Along the path I watched them weave until
They passed from view and he who led the line
Turned back on me and made a feeble sigh
Of meek acceptance of some greater Will.

The flowers that they bore had once been sweet,
Their songs that fell like sobs had once been gay,
Their withered, slowly moving fragile feet
Had leaped as light as wine but yesterday
When those old men of whom I am the last,
Like singing gods, set forth into the past.

OLD LAUGHTER

REMEMBER old laughter to keep it alive
To gleam like the sun in the heart of our
tears;

Let echoes of laughter long silent survive
And ring down the years.

Remember old laughter, its floating refrain
Of people and places and years that have fled
Will stroke with kind fingers the chords of our
pain
When laughter is dead.

Remember old laughter and cling to the mirth
Of the past, it is all that we have — withered
flowers
That bloomed in the glory and spring of the earth
When laughter was ours.

OLD LAUGHTER

Remember old laughter, its haunting appeal
Will hover around us and tenderly twine
Like tendrils of ivy when sadly we kneel
In the dust of its shrine.

THE LOST SINGER

I HEARD a song when the day was done
And clouds flamed over the setting sun,
I heard a song in the glowing skies
That brought the tears to my eyes.

I heard a song at the end of day
Lifting and drifting so far away.
I heard a song and I longed to see
Who the singer might be.

I heard a song and I turned to gaze
Back through the vista of vanished days
And the singing soul of a lad passed by
And lo, the singer was I.

THE RHYME OF THE LOST
ROMANCE

IN Avalon they say that witches are.
Odysseus had a witch to bed with him.
Beneath the water cool-armed maidens swim
As fair as swans and happier by far
Than we who cling to earth with mortal fear.
There is no doubt that drifting on a star
A fairy waits, tender to man, and dear.

In Avalon, hushed island realm of green,
There was a garden wet beneath its weeds.
Poppy and lotus, slim pomegranate seeds
Laughed in the earth and later leaped between
The singing grass and brought bright colors there.
And in this place there dwelt a fairy queen
As warm as rose, fairer than pearls are fair.

And there is one who sits beneath the rain
Amid a grove of dripping willow trees.
A golden harp is placed across her knees

THE RHYME OF THE LOST ROMANCE

From which she draws a lilt^{ing} low refrain.
And it is said men seek her for release
From broken hearts made dark with fear and
 pain,
And when she plays melody brings them peace.

In Proserpine realm where mortals fell
A maiden sits clear eyed among the flame
And hears them speak whose souls are sick with
 shame,
Who came from earth to her enthroned in hell.
She hears and smiles and holds to them a bowl
That drips with waters from her sacred well,
And when they drink visions reclaim each soul.

In Chalmodie there moves a living dream,
A maiden whom the hungry heart may seek,
And when you kiss her lips the tree tops speak
And night comes on and all the heavens gleam
With dancing stars that bring the mortal sleep
As o'er his face her golden tresses stream,
And murmur trees, tender in tone and deep.

THE RHYME OF THE LOST ROMANCE

Where Ariadne sits a long green wave
Laughs in the sun and leaps against the rocks.
Red are the maiden's lips and wet her locks,
Her watching eyes with wonderment are grave.
"Alone and lost. Alone and lost are you,"
Intones the wind that moves within her cave
As thus she sits, watching a sea of blue.

A lover lost is somewhere on the sea
With purple sails aslant against the sky.
"Ever away from you," the sea gulls cry.
"Love of mine return once more to me.
"Round are my waiting arms and red my lips,"
The maiden cries, and silence takes her plea
As thus she waits, scanning the sea for ships.

Among the pines a pool looks to the skies
And in this pool a lovely maiden swims.
With flashing arms and smooth foam gathered
limbs
And shakes the laughing jewels from her eyes.
At last the dusk comes on, the woods grow cool
And fair upon the green the maiden lies,
Her golden hair floating upon the pool.

THE RHYME OF THE LOST ROMANCE

The evening sun lies lightly on the leaves
And gives the quiet woods a yellow sheen.
The still white body lying on the green
Moves lazily and dreamily perceives
The lofty trees through which faint shadows fall
As Night her web of drifting starlight weaves,
And then she laughs, hearing a distant call.

A twilight glow falls through the craggy ice
And lights the emerald splendor of a glade
Wherein there stands a stately green clad maid
Who bears a jeweled wand of rare device.
Across the purple sky soft colors stir
As through the deep her summons echoes thrice
And white forms leap out of the foam to her.

The loveliness of merriment is there
Within the still white vistas of the North,
Where maidens dip their hands in ocean froth
In search of gems to cluster in their hair,
Which splash the cave with wildly dancing light
And fall on flashing arms and bosoms bare
As thus they dance, tossing away the night.

THE RHYME OF THE LOST ROMANCE

But why go on? There is none who believes
The things I say were ever really true.
It would be nice, I think, and so do you,
To find the haunts a vagrant fancy weaves.
Alone is man at best, and bound to earth,
And so in solitude his soul conceives
Such idle tales, knowing their fragile worth.

WONDER REFOUND

HER wondering eyes were lit with dreaming
blue

When she was young, that is, before she knew.

And when one day she knew, the wonder fled —
Her blue eyes burned with other things instead

That were not dreams. You would not have sup-
posed

They'd once been sweet to look on. Now they're
closed.

But just before they closed, her dreams of youth
Flamed through the fading blue and found the
truth.

This much I know. For when at last she smiled,
Her eyes held all the wonder of a child.

MY WAYWARD GODDESS

M^Y wayward goddess, banished from on
high,

You must have brushed the sunset in your flight
And drawn its glowing colors from the sky
And all the splendor of the stars at night,
Which clustered in your lips and hair and eyes
And clung to your fair body as you fell,
A scarlet poppy through the saffron skies —
Some god had made and loved you all too well.
Ah, lovely outcast, lawless in your love,
How lightly your white feet caress life's mire,
Your feet that fled star-littered paths above
Before the fury of a god's desire
And came to earth in glorious retreat
Where, Love, I stooped and kissed your wayward
feet.

DAWN IN THE WARD

KINDLY balm to tired eyes,
Heavy hearts and bodies numb,
Peace that floods the eastern skies,
At last you come.

Shafts of gold across the gloom,
Pillows of the weary mind,
Fresh and fragrantly you bloom,
And cool and kind.

Slowly now the long grim drain
Leaves the body weak and still.
Thirsty eyes made bright with pain
See light and thrill.

All along the aching line
Hope returns to hopeless hearts.
Cots emerge and glasses shine
As pain departs.

DAWN IN THE WARD

Carts and drays go rolling past,
Paves awake and sparrows sing,
Traffic clangs — the day at last
Breaks comforting.

Distant domes and spires appear,
Water tanks and mounting roofs,
Hucksters call and one can hear
The clip of hoofs.

Gone the silence of the night,
Brighter now the glowing skies.
Faint and gaunt and ghastly white
The long ward sighs.

One that moaned the deep night through
Wipes the sweat from off his brow,
Whispers, and his lips are blue,
“ I’m better now.”

Whispers as his broken frame
Sinks into a cool repose.
Gone the fever and the flame,
His eye-lids close.

DAWN IN THE WARD

Pallid souls with faces drawn,
Masks that pain has furrowed deep,
Wanly smile and bless the dawn,
Then fall asleep.

Sleep in peace and throb no more,
Children of a tortured night;
See, the sun spills on the floor,
The day is bright.

Through the dawn in golden bands,
All the mothers that have died,
Now return with dew-cooled hands
And stand beside

Cots wherein the sick ones lie,
Bringing them a swift release
From the region of the sky,
And sleep and peace.

Gone the stalking night alarm,
Gone the heavy heart's distress;
Gentle as a rose and calm —
The dawn's caress.

*St. Vincent's Hospital,
October, 1918.*

TO A NEW DAY

THERE is no sound in dreams, but yet I heard
The liquid fluting of a distant bird,

And though I could not see the sky, I knew
That there were clouds in it and it was blue.

A vagrant sunbeam moved across the sheet
And licked my wrist with unaccustomed heat.

And through the window stole a faint perfume
That spoke of peach and apple trees in bloom.

Like petals caught in sweet shrub-scented rain,
Familiar songs long lost, returned again.

The shadows fell away like things of lead
As golden shafts of light caressed my bed

And fluttered gently there until they met.
I smiled and touched my cheek and it was wet.

THE CALL

LOVE, I am ready now
To hear thy call.
All that I am art thou,
And thou my all.

TWILIGHT WATERS

TWILIGHT waters, evening sky,
Deep tranquility,
Shafts of sun that flush and die
On a darkling sea,
Mist scarfs wavering far away
Through the ebbing light,
Shadows drape the dying day,
Swift wings flee the night.

LEAVES

BROWN leaves and gold,
Gold leaves and red,
The woods are cold
And the trees have shed
Brown leaves and gold,
Gold leaves and red.

Bleak skies were bright
When leaves were green,
Swift falls the night,
And the wind is keen;
Sad hearts were light
When leaves were green.

Brown leaves and gold,
Gold leaves and red,
The woods are old
And the joy has fled —
Brown leaves and gold,
Gold leaves and dead.

THREE TREES

THREE little trees
In the brisk summer breeze,
Family of fir were they,
Swayed to and fro
In a gay little row
Locking their arms in their play.
And the crickets that sang
When the vesper bells rang
And the frogs with the queer crooked knees
Sported and played
In the checker board shade
Of the three little, gay little trees.

BENEATH THE RAIN

I STOOD beside a tree beneath the rain
And as I stood I thought how lone and small
Was I and how that tree was great and tall
And bound to earth till I had lived again;
And thinking thus I felt a trill of pain
Which made me gaze across the voiceless night
In search of some faint gleam, some kindly light,
To guide my feet. I searched the night in vain.
There was no light and so I turned away
And moved beneath the rain across the sod
Alone that night and cried aloud to God
To send the day.

DERELICTS

THEY have fallen low,
Tasted the dregs of things,
Honor and shame forgotten,
All that was clean and good.
Like birds in a dismal wood,
Beating with broken wings
In a night that is hell begotten,
In a night that will never go,
They have fallen there and they know
That the woods will always remain,
The woods of terrible night,
The woods of terrible pain,
Where the broken are stayed in their flight,
Never to mount again
The cloud lanes of the sky
To the silver lawns of the sun.
They are broken, they cannot fly,
They know that their flight is done.

BY WAY OF REPROOF

IN God's great, deep, imponderable laws
'Twas writ that thou shouldst have gigantic
paws,

And it was further writ in slabs of stone
That thou shouldst love, above all things, a bone.

Thou art, indeed, a mystery dog to me.
Thy silly face seems honest, frank and free

From subterfuge, but yet with mine own eyes
I've seen thee chew a dog but half thy size

And steal rare dishes from our saintly cook;
In fact, it seems there's naught thou wouldst not
hook

To satisfy thy vulgar appetite.
Thou raisest too much moan, oh, dog, at night.

BY WAY OF REPROOF

Thou canst not sleep with me, I tell thee now,
Thou art too large, thou great, ungainly cow.

Remember, pray, how thou hast been “brought-
up”;
Thou art no longer now a puling pup.

Hast thou but small regard for man’s esteem,
No spark of honor left, no feeble gleam?

Art thou a pirate dog, a Bolshevist?
Roll not thy goggle eyes at me and twist

Thy large, expressive rump — we are not friends
'Till thou hast made to me complete amends.

Why didst thou eat my brave maroon cravat,
I ask thee frankly, dog, why didst thou that?

What hellish impulse made thee choose my bed
For thy repose and splash across the spread

The tell-tale tracks of thy great muddy feet;
Was that quite fair, was that refined or sweet?

BY WAY OF REPROOF

Oh, yes; my slippers, too, I quite forgot.
Thou filched those slippers, dog, come, didst thou
not?

I have not seen my slippers for a week
What lies thy tongue would tell if thou couldst
speak!

I give thee comforts, luxuries, a name
Which thou hast linked with horrid deeds of
shame.

Thou art the scandal of the countryside,
Thou low, carousing dog, bereft of pride.

Go, quit my sight, and try to mend thy ways;
I cannot stand thy moist, adoring gaze.

THE TRUCKSTERS

I LOVE the trucksters' voices
 Outside my humble door.
When Dawn alone rejoices
 I love to hear them roar.
They wake me in the morning
 With a wild Homeric oath,
And I rise, all slumber scorning,
 For I cannot be a sloth
When I hear the voice of trucksters
 Booming forth at break of day.
Oh, I love the voice of trucksters,
 And the violent things they say.

THE OLD BRICK WALK

THEY planted purple violets here before the
bricks were laid,
And later when the spring tide came and all the
world grew fair,
The violets struggled through the chinks the swollen
earth had made
And gave the drowsy fragrance of their petals
to the air.

All this was very long ago, and those who placed
the seed
Have lain these years behind the hedge in shrub
embowered gloom.
Forgotten is the garden now beneath the grass
and weed,
But still upon the blood red bricks the purple
violets bloom.

The garden is a silent place alive with hidden
things,

THE OLD BRICK WALK

And sometimes on the old brick walk there
squats a great green toad.

Occasionally a lazy bird bestirs itself and sings,
While from afar an ancient cart comes creaking
down the road.

This old lost spot I now behold through disillusioned eyes.

The mound that once a mountain was is scarce
a fairy hill,
And all my lovely vista-glades in mystery and
size

Have shrunk, yet on the crumbling bricks the
violets cluster still.

THE OUT ROAD

WHEN I have gone away and left behind
Familiar things well loved, old haunts and
friends,

Let those who think of me in friendship find
Gay colored thoughts as when the sunset sends
Across the quiet dusk its parting rays
And leaves a promise glowing in the sky
Of brighter days to come, far brighter days,
And memories of golden days gone by.

So would I have them think of me and hear
The echoes of my laughter and my song
Across the tranquil twilight ringing clear,
As merrily I take my way along
The winding road, until at last I rest
Beneath green trees where comrades laugh and
jest.

THE QUEST

I'M going out to dig for beauty with my bare,
bare hands.

I'm going to dig the soil and scoop the singing
sands

And scratch among the rocks and roots and wade
through mire and mud.

I'm going out to dig until my hands are quick with
blood.

I'm going out to touch beauty,

See beauty,

Live beauty,

I'm going out to look for beauty and dream of
it no more.

I've made a hunting park of beauty, stocked with
fat, drab birds.

I've sallied forth in search of it and bagged a
brace of words.

I've sought to tame it in a rhyme and snare it in
a phrase

THE QUEST

Of clever unreality that critics damned with praise.

I'm going out to touch beauty,

See beauty,

Live beauty,

I'm going out to look for beauty and dream of it
no more.

I've had my fill of lamp lit salons with their green
jade talk,

Where women bare their burning souls, and poets
slouch and stalk.

The coffee cup and candle light, I've had enough
of these.

I long to tread where silence is and solitude and
trees.

I'm going out to touch beauty,

See beauty,

Live beauty,

I'm going out to look for beauty and dream of it
no more.

I'm going out to look for beauty in the hearts of
men

THE QUEST

Wherever it may chance to be in palace, hedge or
den,

To labor and carouse with them and share the
common weal,

To laugh and love and lose with them and feel the
things they feel.

I'm going out to touch beauty,

See beauty,

Live beauty,

I'm going out to look for beauty and dream of it
no more.





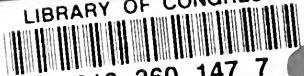








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