

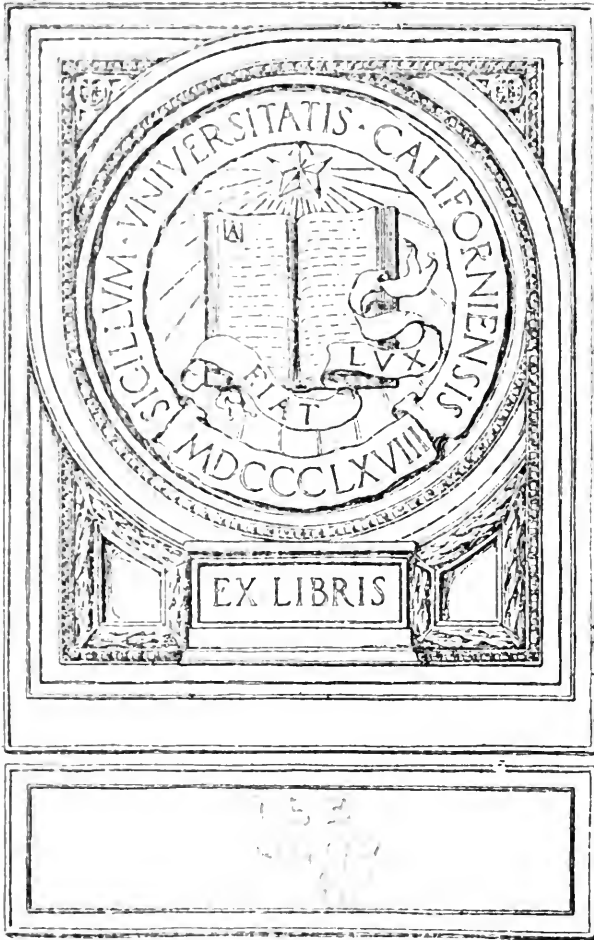
The
LEAF BURNERS

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THE LEAF BURNERS
& OTHER POEMS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A LONDON ROSE, & OTHER RHYMES

WELSH BALLADS

GWENEVERE: A LYRIC PLAY

LAYS OF THE ROUND TABLE

THE MASQUE OF THE GRAIL

ENID: A LYRIC PLAY

THE
LEAF BURNERS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ERNEST RHYS



1918

LONDON & TORONTO

J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

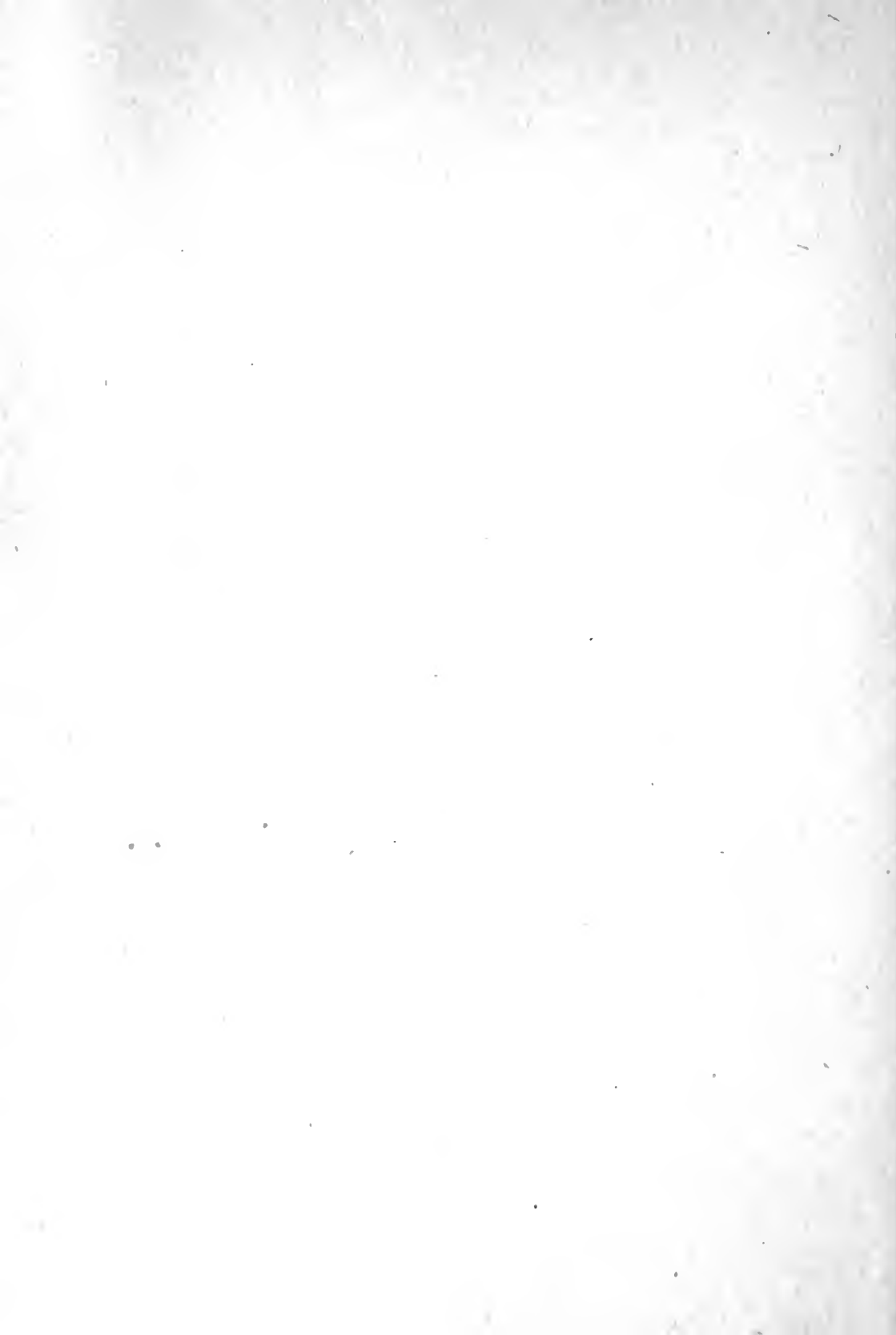
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TO
ALYS L. BIRD



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*** Sundry poems in the above list have already won a hearing in various periodicals, including "Harper's Magazine," "To-Day," "Poetry," "Poetry and Drama," "Red Triangle," "Welsh Outlook," "Nation," "Observer," "Daily Chronicle," "Daily News," "Manchester Guardian," and "Westminster Gazette"; to whose editors' courtesy a word of acknowledgment is due.*

WORDS

WORDS, like fine flowers, have their colours too :
What do you say to crimson words and yellow ?
And what to opal, emerald, pale blue ?
And elvish gules ?—he is a glorious fellow.
Think of the purple hung in Elsinore,
Or call it black, and close your eyes to see ;
Go look for amber then on Lochlyn shore
And drag a sunbeam out of Arcady :
And who of Rosamund or Rosalind
Can part the rosy-petall'd syllables ?
For women's names keep murmuring like the wind
The hidden things that none for ever tells.
Last, to forego soft beauty, take the sword,
And see the blue steel redden at a word.

THE RADIANT BOOK

THE morning brought the promised book of song :
Wherein the poet in one golden phrase
Entrapt the sun and sent its gleam along
The open page, which, mirroring its rays,
Made tall trees dance and set the small leaves shining
As for some festal morn, some day of days.
Their song was like young Corin's—late repining,
Who now that dark was gone, and winter over,
Met the long-obdurate girl, in her divining
At last the answering ecstasy of the lover.
And there was grass so green, it made you laugh,
And apple-bloom whose like you may discover
Only in Emain where the Immortals quaff
Eternal æther, or in Avalon
That half on earth is, and in heaven half :
And there ran water, clear as brooks that run
Down far Eryri in the April weather,
Hanging white hands to dazzle in the sun :
And there were children, dancing all together,
Singing " A-daisy-diss," or in their gladness
Forgetting school, and blowing off the feather
From dandelions in pretended sadness

That time grew late, though yet 'twas barely noon :
And there sang blackbirds in a happy madness
Timing their triple matins to a tune

That only birds and boys, and this young poet,
Could hope to sing, and only then in June,

When summer is new-come, and small fowl know it.
To all this joyous life, the Radiant Book

Was made the crystal page, or cup, to show it,
Liquid and limpid ; where clear eyes might look

And find a mirror, and a window too
From which on summer dawns this waker took
His vision of the green earth wet with dew,
And sent his song into the heavenly blue.

PHYLLISTELLA

THE old souls love to see her come
With tawny tresses—sunlit hair
That calls their youth back from the shadow,
As pennons call the sailor home :
And so they say, those agèd men,—
“ We are not old, as once we were :
Ha ! we are young again.”

And they—old wives grown garrulous
With age—are silent at her look,
Like sunlight basking in the meadow :
They say—“ Can she be one of us ?
My heart, when she went down the stair
You could not hear a step she took—
Can she be what we were ? ”

Young men, outrageous in their mood,
That think to drain the open sky
And drag the blossom out of nature—
They stand bewitched there, where she stood.
They cannot tell, now she is gone,
What hour it was when she went by—
What mirror caught the sun.

PHYLLISTELLA

5

The child within the cradle cries,
If she forgets to stoop, and breathe
A rosy kiss upon the creature.

What gave the love-look to her eyes ?
What is that crescent light they have ?
I doubt they never looked on death,
Or dipt into a grave.

IN THE RUE DE PROVENCE

IN the Rue de Provence—

In the Sunday morning heat,
When like tall trees the housetops
Kept cool the cleft of street—

I saw a countrywoman
With a basket standing by,
Selling small ripe strawberries,
Like fragrant jewelry.

Small as are the wild ones
At Carreg Cennen found,
And sweet as they for savour—
At seven sous a pound !

She made me think of Barbizon
With her sunburnt, serious brow ;
And I thought how Millet painted
And wished that I knew how.

I wished I were a painter
In the Rue de Provence,
That I might paint her comely head
As a picture of France.

THE SONG OF THE SEVEN ARCHANGELS¹

1

Now *Gabriel* be with my heart
On this first day of seven,
He, first of the Archangels,
And Thou, High King of Heaven.

2

Michael be mine, if Monday dawn ;
Michael I call upon :
There is none like thee, Michael,
None but Jesu, Mary's Son.

3

And oh, if Tuesday sorrow bring,
Let *Raphael* help it forth,
One of the seven that hears us weep,
Sad women of this earth.

4

And *Uriel* hear, if Wednesday wake,
In his nobility,
And heal our wounds and care for us,
And calm this wind-torn sea.

¹ From the Irish.

5

And *Sariel*—should Thursday come
With wilder wind and seas,
On *Sariel* I cry aloud
For that solace which is his.

6

For sorrow's fast on Friday,
Out of my need I cry
On *Runiel*, my heart's near friend,
Though Heaven I know is nigh.

7

And Saturday, on *Panchel*,
While this yellow world is mine ;
I call on him while shake the leaves
And the yellow sun doth shine.

8

The Trinity protect me still—
Oh blessèd Trinity!—
And be my stay in danger's hour ;
Protect and prosper me.

SAINT BRENDAN

ST. BRENDAN, he sailed the salt sea to the Island of
Birds ;

And when he sailed back by this coast, he spake
holy words,

And they built a brown cell on the hill, where he
tarried a day.

How long hath the thought of him lived, since he
went the saints' way ?

*“ Hundreds of years,” said the Bell. “ Hundreds of
years.”*

The church still stands on the hill ; the brown cell
is gone,

Like the leaf from the desolate tree, like the sun from
the stone.

How long shall the worshippers take the grey path
to the door,

And the quick step past their own dead, on the grave-
covered floor ?

*“ Hundreds of years,” said the Bell. “ Hundreds of
years.”*

The travail comes back to the earth, like the wave to
the sand,
And the wars return in long waves, that break on the
land ;
How long shall the sorrow be borne, in the eye of
the sun ?
How long shall man labour and pray till his dooms-
day be done ?
“ *Hundreds of years,*” said the Bell. “ *Hundreds of
years.*”

THE LEAF BURNERS

UNDER two oak trees
 on top of the fell,
With an old hawthorn hedge
 to hold off the wind,
I saw the leaf burners
 brushing the leaves
With their long brooms
 into the blaze.
Above them, the sky
 scurried along
Pale as a plate,
 and peered thro' the oaks,
While the hurrying wind
 harried the hedge.
But fast as they swept
 feeding the leaves
Into the flame
 that flickered, and fumed,
The wind, the tree-shaker,
 shaking the boughs,
Whirled others down
 withered and wan—

THE LEAF BURNERS

Summer's small folk,
 faded, and fain
To give up their life ;
 earth unto earth,
Ashes to ashes,
 life unto death.

Far on the fell,
 where the road ran,
I heard the men march,
 in the mouth of the wind :
And the leaf burners heard
 and leaned down their heads,
Brow upon broom,
 and let the leaves lie,
And counted their kin
 that crossed over sea,
And left wife and wean,
 to fight in the war.

Forth over fell,
 I fared on my way ;
Yet often looked back,
 when the wind blew,
To see the flames coil
 like a curl of bright hair

Round the face of a child—
 a flower of fire,
Beneath the long boughs
 where, lush and alive,
The leaves flourished long,
 loving the sun.

Much I thought then
 of men that went forth,
Or dropt like the leaves,
 to die and to live ;
While the leaf burners
 with their long brooms
Drew them together
 on the day of their death.
I wondered at that,
 walking the fell—
Feeling the wind
 that wafted the leaves
And set their souls
 free of the smoke,
Free of the dead,
 speeding the flame
To spire on the air—
 a spark that should spring
In me, man of men ;
 last of the leaves.

THE THREE WOMEN OF ENDELL STREET

AFTER the days of the northern rain,
The sun stepped yellow and merry again,
Between Endell Street and Drury Lane.

His feet were warm on the pavement there,
He drew bright hands through the children's hair,
And the windows gleamed like gossamer.

He lit on Queen Charlotte's Hospital,
And the children's eyrie behind its wall :
There Endell Street ends, but that is not all.

Hard by are two churches ; a workhouse then ;
Some baths not intended for gentlemen ;
And public houses—some nine or ten.

From one of the houses—I change the name
And call it the “ Lion ”—three women came ;
And I laughed aloud as I looked at them.

With untold graces, they sidled and smiled ;
One arm, bacchantic, the air beguiled ;
On the other, black-shawled, each bore a child.

At first I laughed, and then changed blood ;
For there are three graces that men hold good,
But the fourth and the fairest is motherhood.

With eyes ensanguined, with feet of lead,
And a song from which the heavens had fled,
They danced the dance of the Quick-in-the-Dead.

They becked to each other, and bowed like mimes ;
And joined their voices—three tunes, three times,
With terrible gestures and horrible rhymes.

They reeled till I thought the babes would drop,
Whose mammet faces looked drearily up,
Accusing High Heaven above the town-top.

* * * * *

What things are they that a babe should see ?—
Green grass, I think, and a growing tree,
And the sea-sand washed continually.

And a bright-eyed mother, so wondrous kind,
She would win the air and woo the wind,
To bring her babe one joy to its mind.

But these—oh, mournful mother of men !
What joy had their eyes of the dancers who then
Within the dread doorways went dancing again ?

16 THREE WOMEN OF ENDELL STREET

The three women went ;—their three babes stay ;
They rise up like ghosts on the sunlit day,
And the sun on the windows is clouded away.

Oh, Trojan women of our new Troy,
That builds its walls for glory and joy—
What doom for the cities that babes destroy ?

Make now a song of a broken charm,
To keep the soul of the babe from harm,
That hangs, unloved, on its mother's arm.

TO A LADY WHO LOST HER SON
IN THE WAR

Two things are left now that, a little while
Before the war came, looked like happiness :
And one was nothing but a hawthorn tree
Shining like crystal in its Exmoor glen ;
The other was your boy's intrepid smile,
As I last saw it among streets and men—
Boyish, perhaps, but wise, and whimsical :
As if he knew how soon, how suddenly,
Men's troubles come—yet, none the less,
Made much of life, dull moods, grey days and all.

And now that care has come which we can not
Put off, by any humour, night or day—
Since, if we did, care's cause would be forgot—
What can we do, we lingerers, that stay
In crowded streets, or in deserted rooms
Whose windows multiply their glooms,
But make much of those things that seemed, and were,
So natural when we were happier ?

You know how late upon the moors the thorn
Comes into blossom in the wilder glens ?—
This thorn tree, when we found it, could have worn
Its garlands but a day—so crystal-white

The creature stood, delighting in the sun ;
 Drinking the air, holding the morning light
 Like so much water in its glittering lens—
 And bidding the blue sky—" Come down to earth ! "
 And the brown glen—" Exhale in my white mirth ! "
 It drew us—while we stood there in the mood
 Of them who think of towns in solitude—
 Out of ourselves, till even our shadows shone,
 And in one moorland moment, yesterday
 And what we feared to-morrow died away
 In the tree's fragrant constellation.

Think, then, how every day we watched the skies
 As with a moorman's or haymaker's eyes,
 Afraid of sea-winds with their cold caress
 To strip the maiden of her loveliness ;
 Until one night we saw the wind-dogs brood
 And the moor change its mood ;
 The next saw all the creature's flowery mirth
 Beaten, like mould and sheepcast, to the earth—
 And we forgot it—and its timeless powers,
 As is the way with flowers.

* * * * *

But when the war came, and the wintry dark
 And death behind it made us hark
 For every knock upon the door—

And when we turned to look for happiness
Where we had found its creatures long before ;
Asking if heaven for ever lay behind ?
Oh, then it was—it might be centuries
Away and in the shadow of the mind—
We saw again the shining of the Tree ;
And now its crystal petals, fair and frail
And perishable, only born to go
Again into the wastage of the glen,
Seemed like the smiling faces of young men,
Who march out to the trenches that they know
Mean death ; yet—yet they are not afraid,
And give their spirit of youth up fearlessly.

Now, when their requiem is played,
What dare we say, since there is none can cure
Death ? Only this : if we take what they have given—
And given for us with all their might—
Who had upon their grimy brows the bright
Gleam of the warless days of liberty—
Then we are part with them, and they endure,
And what they were is part now of that heaven
Which can with love—the mother's for the son,
The son's for his dear region upon earth—
And with the smile that sorrow stole from mirth,
Turn memory to imagination,
And give a moment immortality.

SONG OF THE BLACK SPOT ¹

“ *Can y Blotyn Du.*”

*Call up the Ballad singer if you can :
Rare mouth, red eyes, rack'd fiddle—there's the man
That fed us with no sweets, but made us stare
While we stood fast, at Conway Honey Fair.*

I

HARK now the cruel story
That I shall fiddle for ye :
Far in Caer Bwrla that befel,
Which many a soul made sorry.

John Bwrla was not able
To keep his barn and stable,
So many young children, like young birds,
Gaped at him round the table.

Said old John to young John then,
His heartiest, hungriest son then—
“ Thou John, th'art better go to sea.”
Next day the lad was gone then.

¹ From the Welsh.

II

The *Black Prince* was the boat :
Thrice seven years afloat.
John spoil'd the Spaniard, sack'd the Turk,
Till the guineas lined his coat.

Then home again, grown older,
His sea-kit on his shoulder,
John found his sister Marie's door,
And a wild sea-tale he told her.

" Man, with thy sea-cap on then—
Th'art not my brother John then :
He had a Black Spot on his arm ! "
" See, Marie ! 'tis not gone then."

" The Black Spot ? Mercy me !
Grown rich and home from sea,
Oh John, thou wilt thy father's debt
On Bwrla fields set free."

" Marie, I have the gold
Shall free it field and fold :
To-night, I'll play the stranger there,
Next morn, the money's told."

III

Now, at his mother's gate there,
 The sailor's knocking late there :
 He begs a bed there, and bids her keep
 O'ernight his bag full-freight there.

But when he's laid asleep—
 'Tis whispering—whispering keep
 The old souls. Deep his bag of gold :
 Their weary debt as deep.

There, when the candle shone,
 How should they know their son ?
 One blow, and Bwrla's debt is paid ;
 One stab, and all is done.

IV

At the sweet prime of day,
 Comes Marie on her way
 With new-made dainties : “ Where's thy son
 From sea ? ” “ What son ? ” they say :

“ No son of ours on earth,
 To bring back Bwrla's mirth,
 Has come this many a long day now
 To the old house and hearth.”

“ Dear hearts ! your boy is come,
Come, tanned and bearded, home
Last night—the Black Spot on his arm ! ”
“ The Black Spot ”—they are dumb.

V

Up to the loft they go there ;
And they had light enow there,
I doubt, the Black Spot on his arm,
Beneath the sleeve, to show there.

“ Don't cry now, for his sake,
Or all our hearts will break ! ”
The old man said, and turned the blade
His own life-blood to take.

* * * *

Can sorrow kill or not ?
Four in one grave forgot
The weary debt on Bwrla fields,
The doom of the Black Spot.

THE NEWS-BOY

I

IN his hand behold the sheet
Of that music, none too sweet,
With the regions on its leaves,
Writ in dots and semibreves :
Music ? Nay, it is the world
In his smudgy fingers furled.

2

He can sell you at a price
Life and death in one device :
If an emperor make mirth,
Or an earthquake eat the earth,
Or a flying man should fall,—
All alike is lyrical.

3

In that rustled page of his,
Hear the Atlantic greet Cadiz :
In that song, made for the town,
Ships return, and some go down :
And the rumours of old wars
Meet and fight beneath the stars.

4

When the winter afternoon
Lit the evening lamp, too soon,—
Open-mouth'd, with breath like smoke
How his cry the purlieus woke ;
And the beggared bookmaker
Turned away, afraid to hear.

5

Or if summer step the street,
With dry lips and dusty feet,
And you think how green and cool
The grass grows by the mountain-pool,
He comes thro' the town and sings,
Fluttering his sweaty wings.

6

Lyrical, unreticent,
Lean and keen, and appetent,
Now I think, as loud he calls
For his custom'd coin that falls
Hot and hot within his palm,—
He is London's evening psalm !

THE TOMMIAD

I

THE SEND-OFF

By MARTIN SCOTT

GOODBYE ! . . .

But leave a bit of you behind ;
And if anything goes wrong with you,—
A Boche—a chancy bullet,
Or a billet in a trench—
I'll keep you in my heart,
And hold you in my mind.

Goodbye ! . . .

No use sheddin' tears—
They weigh heavy in a kit ;
Better shed a merry smile ;
It will help ye, when you're hit,
And the bandage that your mate
Binds about you makes you sick—
The tighter he do bind.

Goodbye ! . . .

You was none too good a boy,—
Cruel to me, more 'n once,
So you was, but often kind.
You never said your prayers,
You never saved a cent.
Cigarettes, and swears—
That's how the fancy went ;
And you whistled every girl,
Like a starling on a tree.

Goodbye ! . . .

When you're fightin' out in France,
And the trench is deep in mud—
One side, the old road home
That was miry in the rain ;
On t'other, 'tarnity—
Tom, Tom, you mother's son,
Think o' me !

II

THE RECRUITS OF '14

UP Whitehall in the morning, from the Mall to
Marble Arch,

Not a gun among them, they whistle as they march,
With France in their fancy, and music in their heels,—

March ! Marchons !

The beat of their feet holds up the London wheels.

From Southwark to the Temple, from the Tow'r to
Waterloo,

You can hardly tell from Adam what tune they
whistle to,

With France in their fancy, and battle in their blood,—

March ! Marchons !

They march in the sun, or squelch by in the mud.

From Holborn to St. Martin, from the town to the
Heath,

They are out on a road that never cared for death :
While London looks on, they're spoiling for the
fight,—

March ! Marchons !

They're men, born again, that went home boys last
night.

From London Stone to Croydon, from the Bank to
Islington,

They are marching to the Front, ay, every mother's
son :

Take heart, little woman, don't fret for the line,—

March ! Marchons !

The trench enfiladed, the grave dug on the Rhine.

Up Whitehall in the morning, they hum the Mar-
seillaise,

And in every lad that hears, a little drummer plays—
March Britain ! March France ! Till Belgium is free,

March ! Marchons !

We go to war, to end the war that murders Liberty.

R.

III

OCTOBER PASSOVER

RICH man, poor man, beggarman, thief—

They have gone to the war at the fall of the leaf.

They are not your tall warriors, that wear royal red ;
The colour of earth is their armour instead.

They are going without drums, but they go with a
 grace

To a gloryless death and an unassoiled place.

Craftsman and wastrel, Christian and Jew,—
The man without God—he has gone with them too.

This night they are going, to-morrow they're gone,
Like a stream that went by, and a river going on,

And some will return, and some fall away,
In a field without leaf, and a name hard to say.

The scum of the world and the best of their kind,
They are leaving their bairns and their housefolk
 behind.

They pass in the night ; like sand they are gone ;
But the grey wave they meet is aware of each one.

And the stream may not know why it makes for the
 sea,

Yet it keeps the fields green in the old countrie.

A. A.

IV

ANNABEL

By PRIVATE ROYCE, R.F.A.

No matter what the time may be,
Full day, or dark as doom,—
Hold on, Annabel, and say Goodbye to me!
Three men are going to the War,
And one is coming home.

You'd wonder if I were to tell
My trouble—going away,—
Hold on, Annabel, and say Goodbye to me!
My heart's not khaki coloured,
But beating night and day.

This old star may be rotten
With the sorrow of war,—
Hold on, Annabel, and say Goodbye to me!
But put you on your old hat,
And I'll know then who you are.

And put you on your old frock,
And let the new one go,—
Hold on, Annabel, and say Goodbye to me!
And if ever I come home again,
That is the way I'll know.

THE TOMMIAD

V

KITTY

By CORPORAL T. KAY

WE'RE bound for Lee Halver,
 And the black billows swell,
 Like to bowl a man over,
 And send between-decks
 A salt smell.

The hayfields were sweeter
 Beyond Cocket Moor,
 When I strolled out to meet her,
 And she stood—like a light
 At her door.

Now, the shore-lanterns shake
 Like stars ill at ease.
 Have they sweethearts, awake
 Or asleep, on Lee Halver's
 Long quays ?

O Kitty, my creature—
 Will you laugh, will you cry,
 Will you change name and nature,
 With some other boy
 If I die ?

VI

THE PRISONER

LIKE a white gate he saw the summer sky,
Barred with big clouds, and thoughts that kept him
fretting.

On its far side, how far from Germany,
The folk at home their boy must be forgetting.

“ There lies the way of many a heartache :
Hard is the road,” he said, “ you cannot take.”

“ What would I give for one slice of white bread
From the big loaf ? What for a willing draught
From the blue cup ? What for a word ? ” he said ;

“ Or even of northern smoke, one gusty waft !
O bitter is the bread and cold the cheer
Of him that in far lands is prisoner.

“ If I forget you—as the great book says—
Old town, may I be dust, mouth, lips and eyes :
If you forget me ? . . . But you will find ways
To reach him in his need, that says there lies—
There lies the way of many a heartache :
Hard, hard, the road,” he said, “ you cannot take.”

VII

THE BOMB SERGEANT

By PADRE F. ROBINSHAW

*Enter the Sergeant ; sunburnt, humorous ;
His voice rough bass ; a bit monotonous ;
But what he said, he made you listen to,
And when, with deadly vim, his bomb he threw
Into the void, you felt the master-hand
That dealt the one stroke it could understand.*

I

BOMBS are gentle, like angels' wings,
To them as know
How over-arm a bowler flings.
Count out three, and away he swings :
Come to three, an' you let him go !

2

Treat him kind—he 'as a heart ;
He 'as a heye ;
When he sees Fritz, he gives a start ;
Take out the pin then and look smart :
Come to three, an' you let him fly !

3

Bombs are not what they used to be,—
The Forshaw fling ;
Jam-tin bombs in Gallipoli,
Filled with Turkish trumpery,—
But Forshaw,—he could make 'em sing !

4

There was another, Captain Shout :
As I've heard tell
As 'eld the Turks up, turn about ;
One bomb in, and three bombs out :
These Mills Grenades 'as a cur'ous smell.

5

If a bomb should squid too close,
Don't get scared :
Off wi' your coat, muffle his nose ;
And cover him up, the way I does !
Don't you mind if your coat gets teared.

6

Did you ever hear of Mulga Bill :
What sand-bagg'd seven,
As burst, and top o' the seventh sat still
Till it sent him flying overhill ?
One way, says he, of goin' to heaven !

7

But Bill came down ; and so will you
 If you keep cool ;
 For every bomb Fritz throws, fling two !
 And fling as straight as man can do :
 A man with a bomb can't play the fool.
Aries.

VIII

OLE JOE'S LAMENT FOR HIS LOST LEG

SEE Jarge !—'ee *wos* a gentlemun :
 Upon the stairs he stept that light,
 For fear of waking any one ;
 An' fetched me stiddy 'ome at night.
'Ee wos a gen'lemun, 'ee wos.

But by the fire, 'a miss him most ;
 'Ee liked to feel me rub his knee :
 These timber limbs yer cannot toast,
 Nor warm a wooden deppity.
'Ee wos a gen'lemun, 'ee wos.

This way it wos. The henemy—
 'Ee shells yer on yer fav'rit leg :
 Done it a purpose ?—Certinly :
 Kaiser's orders : “ Smash 'is peg ! ”
'Ee wos a gen'lemun, 'ee wos.

'A can't tell where 'ee laid 'is 'ed,
 Across the Somme. 'A wep' a tear,
 When no one looked. But 'ee aint dead ;
 'A still can feel 'is big toe 'ere.
'Ee wos a gen'lemun, 'ee wos.

See Jarge ! 'Ee aint done yet, ole limb :
 One day 'ee'll join up, from the Somme ;
 An' 'im an' me, an' me an' 'im,—
 We'll do a stunt and step it 'ome.
'Ee wos a gen'lemun, 'ee wos.

Aries.

IX

“ TWELVE DAYS' LEAVE ”

CROWDED up, tired too,—
 In the Tube from Waterloo,
 I kicked against a soldier-man's
 Fighting-kit—come home from France.

Knapsack, ration-tins ;—
 One strap ends, and one begins ;
 Tin hat, bag and can,—
 Home he goes—the soldier-man.

THE TOMMIAD

Bound north—I knew his road
By the hard front he showed ;
By his stiff pitman's chin,
And the blue speck in the skin.

I asked about the Tyne,—
“ Ay, ay ! ” he gave the sign.
I asked about the Somme,
Not a word ; he was dumb.

Between the Seine and Somme,
What line was he from ?
One eye shot with blood :
Big boots shog'd with mud.

“ Newcassel to Lee Halver,—
Ten mates, and him, went over.”
Take ten away ;—that's one
Left, going north alone.

Still as his gun he sat :
What was he looking at ?
At his gun, or staring down-
Street, in the canny town ?

Close-lipt,—not a word
From his mouth to be heard :

Haig's line ;—he the last
Man left, to hold it fast.

Not a word, as he went,
Under his traps unbent,
Left me to my mood :
La Bassée, Bourlon Wood.

“ He is great,” I said ; “ his arm
Keeps the old chimneys warm ;
And the Tyne, going free
By the coal-staithes to the sea.”

A. A.

X

THE OLD SIGN ¹

(*To the tune of “ Sandy Up and Down.”*)

By SERGEANT W. GRAY, R.F.A.

I

IF you was down in Malta,
And me come 'ome again ;
Or you was up, and over the top,
The wrong side of the Aisne ;
And I was breaking Micky Dodd
To bombs on Salisbury Plain :

¹ The Red Triangle.

THE TOMMIAD

CHORUS :

Up and down the line (*repeat*)

You'll strike good-luck and a half-way hut
At the same Old Sign.

2

Inside mebbe they're making tea

In a twenty-gallon pot ;

And the padre totting up the cakes,

Not carin' if he's shot ;

And if you stay you'll hear him pray

(In shirt-sleeves, if 'tis hot). (CHORUS.)

3

If it was shells, he'd bring you in

As slick as amb'lances ;

An' have you into Kingdom-come,

I don't care who you is—

(Though the sins a-settin' round yer bed

Was big as ostriches !). (CHORUS.)

4

An' if you'd bin a waster,

And a black-mark on your card,

He'd write your letters 'ome for you,

And then he'd say, " O Lord,

'Ere is a 'ero comin' thro' ;

Fer 'is sins don't treat him hard !" (CHORUS.)

5

There's some men born contrary,
 Say when you're dead, you're dead ;
 And some, the old triangle
 Is standing on its head ;
 You try the 'alf-way hut to heaven,
 An' you'll sing as I have said.

CHORUS :

Up and down the line (*repeat*)
 You'll strike good-luck and a half-way hut
 At the same Old Sign.

XI

PADRE JOHN

Now, what has befallen Padre John ?
Ton, ton, Mironton,
 He has packed his kit and to France he's gone.

Is it lazy days, or lawful wife,
Ton, ton, Mironton,
 Have sent him across to the land of strife ?

THE TOMMIAD

For Padre John, he has fared so well,

Ton, ton, Mironton,

He has never come near to Heaven or Hell.

And a ruddy smooth face, and a little grey eye,

Ton, ton, Mironton,

These are the grace-marks men know him by.

But soldier's blood—'tis a sorry thing,

Ton, ton, Mironton,

On parson's stole, or archangel's wing.

A month was not gone, of the running blood,

Ton, ton, Mironton,

Till John thought long upon Holy Rood.

He had not soldiered a month or so,

Ton, ton, Mironton,

Till his heart grew heavy with battle-woe ;

Till the young men's blood he held as dear,

Ton, ton, Mironton,

As any shed on Golgotha.

Their sins are mine, he said, and bound—

Ton, ton, Mironton—

Pity like linen about each wound.

The lad that lay there in mortal case,
 Ton, ton, Mironton,
Saw the mothering-look in John's red face.

He had no tongue like burning coals,
 Ton, ton, Mironton,
But he had words to sain their souls.

And no such mourner man could have,
 Ton, ton, Mironton,
As Padre John by a scrambled grave.

Somewhere it was, near Vimy Ridge,
 Ton, ton, Mironton,
He gained the same swift privilege.

No priest he had ; the gunner said—
 Ton, ton, Mironton—
“ Padre, good-night ! ” o'er the scraping spade.

So sleep you, wake you, Padre John ;
 Ton, ton, Mironton,
In the name of Father, Spirit and Son.

XII

IN HOSPITAL

No. 59, A 2 WARD : SECOND FLOOR

(May 10th, 1918.)

By SISTER M. L. L.

I

Fast asleep :

His face looks small,
 His chin tuck'd up in the cotton quilt.
 (Would she know him if he woke ?)
 When he asks for anything
 His voice sounds thin and far away,
 Like some hawker's down the town—
 He that could turn a farmer's team
 Going full tilt across a field
 With a word ! . . .

Woman, don't you know your son ?

2

Tired out :

Soon they tire, lying still
 When the fever-fit has run :
 He is tired of wondering

How that little flick of light
 From the blind creeps up and down,
 Like a gold mouse on the wall : . . .

Woman, don't you know your son ?

3

“ O me dear,” his mother said ;
 “ Is it him—my oldest one ?
 I don't know half, as I do say :
 I dreamt his back was broke in two
 With the weight they put on him :
 But I doubt it can be he,
 Laid out straight within the bed—
 Straight as any walkin'-stick.
 I mou't bring my old dog, Toss ;
 I mou't bring my old man to see ” . . .

Woman, don't you know your son ?

XIII

IN THE STREET

By JULIUS ROY

WALKING in the street,
 I saw a strange creature,—
 boy's face, old man's head,
 with silvery hair

THE TOMMIAD

under his cap,
save one brown patch,
big as a penny.
A girl, as he passed,
told how he'd grown grey :—
One hour in his bed ;
the next a mile high,
fighting the fire-drakes,
and outspanning space
up in the sky.

He made me afraid
as he fared in the street.
He might have been one,
newly lit from some Star,
with his wings folded up
under his coat ;
and I felt, going on,
the earth, like a floor,
give under my feet,
and the noise of the town
grow silent as night ;
while the wheels of the sun
dropped gold in the street.

XIV

THE HOME-RETURNED SOLDIER

I SAW a young soldier sitting alone,
Home from the wars ; wounded, unhappy,
His face pale as paper above his red necktie,
Khaki coat, and blue breeches ;—
Yawning and stretching at the gate of the gardens.

Should I halt at his seat, and ask him his news ?
Should I sit down beside him upon the wet bench ?
The mud made me doubt, and the edge of the wind ;
And I nodded my head, with a nod non-committal,
Quickened my paces and hurried away.

Behind me, some footsteps and wheels told of nurse-
maids—

Three of them, wheeling so primly their nurslings,
Talking so mim, as one might to a mistress ;
Maids automatic, each one an appendage
Of her square p'rambulator ;
Stiff as pins, you might think—till they saw the
young soldier.

Oh Ares ! Great Scott ! and Pythian Apollo !
What a change there was then in the scene, and the
soldier !

For the handmaids, all three, had halted their chariots;
And one laughed such a laugh, so joyous and noisy,
So jolly and rowdy and mistress-defying,
So rude and rebellious and baby-alarming,
That the cold dripping laurels thought it must be the
 herons
Were shrilling and clapping their wings by the pond.

Once again I looked back, at the shout of that
 laughter—
So unfitting the scene, the dark and sad landscape,
Chill trees and wet wind—and what did I see ?
Two nursemaids were sitting, one each side the
 soldier,
And one stood before him, his cap on her head,
And his face had grown red, and his khaki was shaking
With amorous mirth as he rallied the nursemaids.

I wished, as I went, that their music was sweeter ;
But Apollo on high forthright from the cloud
Shot shafts of delight, and shone, and reproach'd me,
“ You did nothing for him, your home-returned
 soldier ;
But went slinking off. They have warmed him with
 laughter,
They like his rum face, red tie and blue breeches,

And out-of their heart's love have taken the strings,
 And hung it about him—the joyousest garland
 Ever made for a man in his sulking and moping ;
 And the heavens are pleased, for the gift that goes
 hot
 And hot from the heart is good for a soldier ;
 And when you have had months of Krupp in the
 trenches,
 You do not ask lutes in the hands of the Graces.”

XV

AN OLD SAYING

From a Soldier's Letter

“ My love to all your care ! ”
 Your four leaves on the bough,
 Left hanging there, to take the wind
 With summer bravery :
 Your hand be on them now.

The bough where they suspend
 Was watered with your tears ;—
 Budded in April time it was,
 And tended by your hands,
 And strengthened by your fears.

THE TOMMIAD

What winds there are to blow ?
 What cold, yet bitterer ?
 I do not know, I cannot say :
 (A mother saved the world)
 " My love to all your care ! "

XVI

THE TOMMIE TOUCH

TOMMIE or Thomas—Tom, or Twm, or Tam—
 Whatever your nickname or sobriquet—
 Serving your turn, and caring not a d—
 What other folk of you may think, or say :

I have tried hard to get your master-touch,
 Among the mortal creatures of this earth—
 Your courage, phlegm and humour—just so much,
 Your queer, coarse lingo, and unholy mirth.

But what you are, human and humorous,
 Is something universal, yet alone !
 Six million of you sounds monotonous,
 But to the Shepherd every sheep is known.

And from you, Tommie, going by Khaki-guised,
 Something looks out Aquinas would have prized.

A. A.

XVII

HIGH GERMANY

MUSIC'S REMONSTRANCE

“ Musician ? ” he asked, divining by certain words in the pocket-book that the Bavarian was a musician in civil life. A sad look crept into the prisoner’s eyes. He raised his hands and held them a little distance from his lips, and moved his fingers rapidly ; then he curved his left arm and drew his right slowly backwards and forwards across in front of his body. We understood ; he played the flute and violin. . . . I dressed his wound in silence. . . . The bullet had blown away part of the man’s jaw, and he could not speak.”

Patrick MacGill.

HAVE you turned your music down,
 That you waste the living blood
 Heaven gave High Germany
 To quicken Mozart’s mood
 And hearten Bach’s renown ?

For the music in a man,
 That war thinks nothing worth,
 Can bring High Germany
 More majesty and mirth
 Than many warships can.

THE TOMMIAD

And the craft in one right hand,
 That can with flute or strings
 Make lovely melody,
 And the voice that hymns and sings,
 Can save the fatherland.

But what of them, made old
 With war—condemned to death,—
 Those sons of harmony
 That you have laid beneath
 The suffocating mould ?

And what will you reply
 When the song-lovers turn
 Hating High Germany,
 That made the cities burn,
 And broke with minstrelsy ?

XVIII

REVEILLÉ

By LT. LLOYD, ROYAL WELSH FUSILIERS

THE bugle blew reveillé
 Behind the railway arch ;
 And long before the sun was up
 The lads were on the march.

“ Left, left now ! ” said the sergeant,
“ For all your heels are worth,
To keep the old road open
To the ends of the earth.”

“ What ails them ? ” said Black Peter,
“ To wake up sleeping men ?
What’s glory but a rotten rag ? ”
And he fell asleep again.

Old Marty at the window
Said, “ Tom, why go to war
And lie out in the trench all night,
With none to close the door ? ”

“ I cannot tell, unless it is
For one thing, Marty dear—
That little song of liberty
You once sang in my ear ! ”

“ Left, left now ! ” said the sergeant,
“ For all your souls are worth,
To keep the old road open
To the ends of the earth.”

XIX

GOD'S CUSTOMER

[THE WAR PENNY]

PENNY, you were the price we gave
Of old, our mortal souls to save ;
This night of war, what will you buy ?
Great news from France, a little bread,
Before the old soul, Destiny,
Has put another day to bed ?

Until to-night I never knew
How much we meant to one another :
Who was it said (in Welsh, 'tis true)
“ A penny's better than a brother ? ”
Now, as I hold you in my hand,
Coin, royal and republican,
You are the seal by which I stand
Compatriot with every man :
The counter of the commonwealth,
You keep us warm with marketry—
With clothes, good things to eat, good health,
Newspapers, pipes, and currency.

Worn smoother than a window-pane,
With forty years of peace, and gain,—
Hard looks at times you must have seen—
Pockets not nice and hands not clean ;
Spent often on unholy joys
And spat upon for luck by boys.
By your worn date and fumbled face,
And “ Dei Gratia ” for a grace,
You are the creature of this queer
Round, rolling and reverberate orb
On which we hunger, and absorb
What good we can !—God’s customer,
As I foresee, you will be spent
On other things than those I meant,
For as I pause, across the street
Comes rumour with his tricky feet.

Now, ere you go to swell the loan
And stem the Great Destruction,
Is there no way, no word or rune,
No copper charm or penny tune,
To whistle down the morning stars
And break the cruel barriers
With wire barb’d, and fury hurl’d,
Across the highway of the world ?
Penny, if you were Emperor

This night, with marketry and mirth,
You would sing "Ave,"—peace on earth!
But, smooth and civil heretofore,
Because of old Britannia
You too, like us, must go to war.

XX

JO'S REQUIEM

HE had the plowman's strength
in the grasp of his hand :
He could see a crow
three miles away,
and the trout beneath the stone.
He could hear the green oats growing,
and the south-west wind making rain.
He could hear the wheel upon the hill
when it left the level road.
He could make a gate, and dig a pit,
and plow as straight as stone can fall.
And he is dead.

Aries.

IN THE TRAIN

PORTRAIT OF A NAVVY

His cap, his pipe ; his corduroy,—
The little gold ring in his ear,
His cave-man's jaw, to make you fear
The reeking feast that should employ
Those teeth of iron and ivory,—
Crunching a bone like biscuit there ;
And that strong hand, to harry the bear,
Look strange in our pale company.

His smile is great ; his road lies home
Across a thousand quarts of beer ;
For him the Cæsars were in vain,
Cnut never lived, unbuilt is Rome,
The river-marsh blinds Westminster ;
And Lincoln's Inn is fields again.

SHAKESPEARE IN LONDON

May 19, 1908

HE took this mortal world, and caught it home,
And set its mirror in the Tudor town ;
And from an Eastcheap window looked on Rome,
And in a Cheapside shop spied Pompey's crown.

Whitefriars he knew—the double ditch of Fleet,
And from the Strand saw sails Venetian
Out-top the Thames ; or cross'd Plantagenet,
Wearing his flower within the Barbican.

He crowded all, the world that was and is,
Within the “ wooden O ” that closed the stage.
What would he say now, if the word were his,
To what we ask of his last harbourage ?—

“ Build me, for House of Fame, a Theatre :
And say to them that doubt, ‘ His heart lies here.’ ”

SHAKESPEARE'S RUNE

“Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme.”

SOME think the sonnet—not a flask of wine
Warm in the firelight, but a fancy-cup
Set on a shelf with other cups as fine
And cold and empty when you take them up.
And some will say it is but frozen wit
With nothing of the sun-god in the rhymes
That find a thought, and make a theme of it,
And turn it over—just so many times.
And few will deem it like that dish of gold,
Which once held blood and tasted ecstasy,
And helped romance to count in winter's cold
The long midsummer of man's memory :
Yet this I know—the scripture on its rim
Was Shakespeare's rune, the very breath of him.

THE OLD ADMIRAL SPEAKS

I SAY this land of ours is like a ship
Built hard and trim to weather out the seas
That wait upon her with the Vikings' whip
As she puts forth on her long voyages :
Sometimes her crew may not seem of one mind,
And there be men aboard who mutineer,
Or like the leveret turn, and look behind,—
Yet even they must sell their sea-way dear :
And she has sailors on her quarter-deck
That never quailed or stooped a flag to death ;
For she is greatest in the cry of wreck,
Being a leaguer with the sea beneath.
Ay, ay ! her orders are the open sea,—
Led by her sailor-lover, Liberty.

THE SONG OF THE SHIP-AT-SEA

Ad Matrem

WHEN we were small, just table-tall,
And foolish as could be,
You used to sing us an old sea-rhyme
Of a sailing-ship at sea ;
And white, and bright with morning light,
It sailed on pleasantly.

But a storm-wind blew on ship and crew,
And broke the summer-day ;
And the tune grew wild of the old sea-rhyme,
Till we heard the riven spray
Like hail fall fast by the reef'd-up mast,
And the sun—he died away.

We drew more close as the wind arose ;
For asleep he lay aboard—
The Master of that mortal ship,
And their immortal Lord ;
Yo—ho, yo—ho ! how the cold winds blow !
He only knows the word.

Yo—ho ! He woke, and there he spoke
 The seaman's word of peace !
And the wind died down like a drooping hound
 Upon the following seas ;
His voice is soft, but the sun aloft,
 It knows the word is his.

The years grow long ; what brought the song
 Of the ship to your elder son ?
The song came back for the singer's sake ;
 The first of many a one ;
And he steals a rhyme from his childish time,
 Though it be for ever gone.

There is a ship still sails the deep,
 And the crew is sad aboard ;
The Captain, is he fast asleep ?
 Ah, could he speak the word,
To allay the pain, and make well again—
 How kind were that accord !

If he would wake, for an old-boy's sake,
 And a mother's, that would be
A word, I think, that would heal her now,
 As often she healed me ;
And bring the song, though time be long,
 Safe back across the sea.

THE CORNER HOUSE

THERE stands a red-brick corner-house,
Not beautiful, in a northern street,
Wherethrough the pilgrims were used to go
To Jesmond, with pious feet.

There I would go—not for my sins,
But backward, in a boyish taking,
Full forty years into the past,
My older self forsaking.

There I should think, within the wall,
The rooms cannot be so much changed—
The room that had the painted panes,—
The stairs, the floors we ranged ?

There laughter lived ; and children hived ;
And you, the mother of their mirth,
Like sparrows saw them fledge, and fly
Far out across the earth.

There let me steer across the dark,
Northward, and find the fire's alight,

THE CORNER HOUSE

The table spread—the feast of souls,
This black September night.

There memory, with woman's hands,
Shall hold the door into the past,—
Wherein you knew what we could not,
What I well know at last.

THE OLD LOVER

I

THE MISSAL

DEAR Heart, take this old book, long coveted—
A missal with small pictures of the saints
Cloistered in gold, a halo on each head,
And faces such as Fra Filippo paints,
As pale as ivory, with no cast of sorrow
Or cruel wrinkle left by discontents
That hurt to-day, and break the heart to-morrow :
No, in these pages, not a sign of care ;
Save in one saint, watching Death drive a furrow
In umber earth, and he, without a fear,
Holds up the lilies of eternity :
Another, from the body on the bier,
Lifts up the sundered soul, how tenderly,
Breathing the “ Nunc Dimittis ” in its ear,
And saying how the Lord Christ set it free ;
See—there it sits, up-looking, sleepy thing,
Toward a shaft of light—a ladder raised,
For it to climb, and there rejoicing, sing,

Where the Archangels Seven sang and praised
The Lord of All. There too, we marvelling,
Page after page may hope to climb, amazed,
And find within a book our paradise,
Who were not half-awake and in our brain
Felt the old fumes confusedly arise ;—
Death, youth cut off, and the inveterate pain
Of age o'ertaking our felicities.
For see here, our old Heav'n, come true again
In miniatures, and painted by a soul
That had known sensual sleep, yet woke to cast
About its creature-self the aureole :
So let it be, Dear Heart, with us at last,
Seeing the umber shade we feared, unroll,
Painted with gold, and joyously surpassed
By Dantë's ladder. For its feet on earth
Still feel the tremor of the hearts of men,—
Its summit listens to the angelic mirth
Whose chords were human first, and heavenly then,
Making from Death the music of rebirth.

II

THE STAR

Now set the dreamer hand upon his soul—
That fearful thing—and bade it be his stay,
Facing the dark, and waiting all the day,
For her to come who wears the aureole,
And shines on soul and body equally,
Loving them both unto eternity.

*

*

*

She came to me, she had a woman's eyes ;
If she had wings, she put them both away,
And knelt to light the fire, and drive away
The cold and gloom ; and then, with lullabies,
She set a cradle in the corner there,
And shook a star down from her falling hair.

*

*

*

This is a fable, but it is most true :
A winter dream, but real as the bread
Upon the board, the sleep within the bed :
I saw that star drop, and its grace I knew.
Since when all dreamers like old friends do seem,
But you, Star-finder, 'twas, revealed the dream.

III

THE ROSE

It must have been the flower—the rose you brought
me :

With the flush of crimson life-blood in its bosom,
And a fragrance like the meadow's breath escaping :

I believe it was the rose.

In its beauty was the passion of that summer
Isoud felt, before she knew of sorrow.
And its petals ?—Like a ring of rosy cherubs :

I believe it was the rose.

Yes ! in the rays around its wide-eyed wonder,
I saw its rose-leaves glow like firelit children
That listen to the wrinkled fairy-mother :

I believe it was the rose.

When you gave it, did you know that, hid within it,
Lay the undeciphered rune, like written music
Not yet played, that waits the player ?

I believe it was the rose.

There are intervals of song—you cannot play them ;
With their silences they sing. And if you listen
You are lost. (One hour went ; then another.)

I believe it was the rose.

There are words dropt unawares—past all explaining :
Where they light, none knows. If you surprise them,
Happy you ! For they are dropt from heaven :

I believe it was the rose.

It must have been the rose you brought that made me,
In the paradise of fools and old romances,
Lose my way.—Who loses it, shall find it :

I believe it was the rose.

With the hands of Ivor Hael, the generous giver,
It gave itself away ;—the air around it
Breathed of honied hives and sun-warm cornfields :

I believe it was the rose.

Flower-haunted, like a bee, I turned a lover ;
And this old earth drew the sky, and it descended
In the leaves. You ask me how it happened ?—

I believe it was the rose.

THE OLD LOVER

IV

THE LOVE SONG FOR BIDDY

When She was gone away

HERE be roses,
 Red as any,
 Sweet as honey ;—
 Where are you gone to, Midsummer, dear ?

Here be others,
 Pretty fellows,
 Whites and yellows ;—
 Where are you gone to, Biddy, my dear ?

Here be lupins,
 Looking for you
 To adore you,
 Where are you, blue-eyed Biddy, my dear ?

V

THE RAIN CLOAK

WHEN the rain came,
 he made her a cloak
 of fine water-drops,
 hemmed with a hem
 of crystals of silver of snow.

When the night came,
 he took from the dark
the shadows that were
 like shreds of the peel
pared from the apple of life.

He stript them all off,—
 and the fragrance rushed out
of the apple-bloom hues,
 and the sunshine within ;
they gave him the light
 to lead his Beloved
to the gates of the dawn
of the east.

VI

THE QUESTION

Two flowers, whose like I had not seen before,
 So aerial, so snowdrop-pale,
 So delicate, they were,—
Like blossoms new-distilled from light ;
Whose name I had not heard, until the war,—
 Were given me one day by her
 Who is my solacer
And flower-finder, day and night.

At times one gazes, and then soon forgets :
So fair they look'd, I was afraid
That they would droop and fade
Like a late sunbeam, in a dusty room,
Shot from the day's last minarets :
And so I asked her what their history,
And lovely forms, might be ?

Then down she bent her face, toward their innocent bloom,
Turning her eyes away from me :
" They are for pity," said she, " of our hopes
and fears ;
I think because their name is Angels' Tears."

EARANDEL

A SONG OF HAPPINESS

AH, Happiness—
Who called you “ Earandel ” ?
(Winter-star, I think, that is) ;
And who can tell the lovely curve
By which you seem to come, then swerve
Before you reach the middle-earth ?
And who is there can hold your wing,
Or bind you in your mirth,
Or win you with a least caress,
Or tear, or kiss, or anything—
Insensate happiness ?

Once I thought to have you
Fast there in a child :
All her heart she gave you,
Yet you would not stay.
Cruel, and careless,
Not half reconciled,
Pain you cannot bear ;

EARANDEL

When her yellow hair
Lay matted, every tress ;
When those looks of hers
Were no longer hers,
You went : in a day
She wept you all away.

Once I thought to give
You, plighted, holily—
No more fugitive,
Returning like the sea :
But they that share so well
Heaven must portion Hell
In their copartnery :
Care, ill fate, ill health,
Came we know not how
And broke our commonwealth.
Neither has you now.

Some wait you on the road,
Some in an open door
Look for the face you show'd
Once there—no more.
You never wear the dress
You danced in yesterday ;
Yet, seeming gone, you stay,

And come at no man's call :
Yet, laid for burial,
You lift up from the dead
Your laughing, spangled head.

Yes, once I did pursue
You, unpursuable ;
Loved, longed for, hoped for you—
Blue-eyed and morning-brow'd.
Ah, lovely happiness !
Now that I know you well,
I dare not speak aloud
Your fond name in a crowd ;
Nor conjure you by night,
Nor pray at morning-light,
Nor count at all on you :

But, at a stroke, a breath,
After the fear of death,
Or bent beneath a load ;
Yes, ragged in the dress,
And houseless on the road,
I might surprise you there.
Yes : who of us shall say
When you will come, or where ?
Ask children at their play,

EARANDEL

The leaves upon the tree,
The ships upon the sea,
Or old men who survived,
And lived, and loved, and wived.
Ask sorrow to confess
Your sweet improvidence,
And prodigal expense
And cold economy,
Ah, lovely happiness !

WINTER BALLAD

I

THE winter day, the bitter winter day,
I saw him like a seaman holding guard
On Walmer beach ; the salt scud was his cloak ;
His stranded schooner was a grey sea-bird.

2

The sea-bird set her wings, but could not fly :
One wing was hurt—what sea-way should she have,
Against the salt froth, and the watery helms
Borne on the sea-wind, and the trampling wave ?

3

We watched the seas come on ; the winter day
Counted an hour ; the sea-bird felt the foam,
Took to the ebb-wave and was driven down
In the recoil, and rose to take her doom.

4

She did not quail before the water-break,
And every sea she rode, yet was not gone,
Was death's deliverance, and I gave my soul
And hope of heav'n to freight her, sailing on.

5

She rear'd her crest against the fatal signs—
The leopard foam, that round her seeth'd with fate,
The sea-lift rising, and the lowering sky,
That scowled together at the horizon's gate.

6

North-east she sailed, as her stern instinct told,
To meet the storm. I knew well, as she went,
That she who took her life-blood from the sea
Must home at last on that same element.

7

The winter day, the bitter winter day,—
He drew between his teeth a sharper breath,
And with the sea-bird's soul he made the tune
That heroes make, despising time, and death.

THE BALLAD OF THE HOMING MAN

I

HE saw the sun, the Light-giver, step down behind
the oak,
And send a tawny arrow-shaft along the engine-
smoke.

2

He saw the last brown harvester lift up from mother-
earth
The sheaf that holds a mystery—the seed of death
and birth ;

3

And like a place in Paradise, the empty stubble-field
Waited, to watch the hock-cart go, with the last load
she did yield.

4

He saw far off the homing crows sail into mottled
sky—
Saw horse and horseman flag and tire ; tall trees like
men go by.

5

He saw a woman close a door upon the warm fire-
light,—
That open is the brow of day, and closed the shade of
night.

6

He saw above the shallows the first lamps, lemon-
hued,
Lead out the painted suburb into the hazel wood.

7

He saw the bob-tailed rabbits above the stoneman's
pit,
Where the years went as the trains go, all unawares
of it.

8

Another mile, the roofs begin ; the rigid wilderness,
The smoke, the murky omens, upon his heartbeat
press.

9

The trouble of the townsfolk, the ferment of the place
Work like sharp ichor in his blood, and smite him in
the face.

10

But where the fields are fragrant, and where the
town is pass'd,
There is a house, an open door ; a face, a fire, at last.

11

“ Three voices in a doorway,” he says, “ a woman’s
form,
And a lighted hearth behind her, can make a desert
warm.

12

“ And what is Heaven but a house, like any other
one,
Where the homing man finds harbour, and the
hundred roads are done ? ”

D. 143¹

THE BOOKWORM'S DREAM

IF you should think me tied,
A bookworm to his book,
Dull-brained and heavy-eyed,
As if afraid to look
Away from desk and shelf,—
You little know how I,
Freeing my other self,—
Bookworm grown butterfly,
Transcend this lower sky.

For while I read, my hairs
Dishevelled in the gloom,
I really fly upstairs
To a delightful room :
There on her plinth she stands
Controlling destiny
With her consummate hands ;
Her only name is " D.
One hundred and forty-three."

¹ D. 143 is the only name of the Portrait of a Lady—a terra-cotta statue, some four inches high, in the terra-cotta room at the British Museum, whose reading-room and bookworms' haunt is downstairs.

No more the blue and red
 Upon her chiton glow :
The gold has left her head,
 Yet is she sweeter so :
I should have been afraid
 Of her in all her hues ;—
And this huge folio rear'd
 To hide all but her shoes,
From my abasèd views.

Now I can bear to look
 Upon her paler face,
Nor blush behind my book,
 Recalling with what grace
Her hand (for which once yearn'd
 Some palm imperial),
Most womanly upturn'd,
 Draws on her faded shawl—
Himation, some it call.

She seems about to go
 To her Calabrian land,
And I would, too, I know,
 At one beck of her hand :
There blooms the hyacinth
 Undying,—but alas,

She cannot leave her plinth,—
And I, half-bound in brass
And calf—I cannot pass.

Yet, they may doubt who will,
With their librarious eyes :
I that do read am still
Upstairs in Paradise :
There on her plinth she stands
Compelling Time and me
With her eternal hands,—
Whose only name is “ D.
One hundred and forty-three.”

THE CLOUD

THE lane fares and climbs
 from the old farm,
High-hedged, rough-shod,
 with ribs of red rock ;
But the hedges wear thin
 as it wins to the moor,
And turns when it comes
 to the clouds ;—
Like a crooked ladder
 leaning on heaven.

White on the wind
 went the clouds,—
Their woven cloaks
 unclosed to the sun.
As from the moor-gate
 I gazed at the sky,
They called me to come.
 Clothed with air,
My feet, feather-light,
 lifted me up.

THE CLOUD

I went with the eyes
 and the wings of a hawk ;
And the farm far below
 was like the brown bird
The hawk sees beneath
 hid in the hedge ;
While the world, like a wheel,
 or a wisp of brown sand,
In the swirl of salt-water
 was swept away :
It was we who held fast
 in our eyrie of air ;
While the rim of the earth
 eastwards ran, and was not.
We stood on the wind,
 still as Stonehenge,
That watches the stars
 and waits, stone by stone,
As the Lord of Light
 with the live fire descends,
And Earth becomes Heav'n,
 and Heaven becomes Earth,
And the passions of men,
 and the places they hold,
And the tenure they keep
 of houses and lands,

Are like thistledown blown
between its long stones. . . .

With the cloud, high in heav'n,
I hung, ages long—
So it seemed—looking down.

But at last in a mist
I was called back to earth
out of caverns, so cold,
So far in the height,
that my soul was like ice.

Then I put on the mien
again of a man,
And the house where I lived
was laid at my feet ;
On the hearth, as I looked,
the light of the fire
Was red with the sun
and remembered the stars ;
And over its door
was the double-drawn arch
Of the marvel of heaven
and mystery of earth.

THE HEATH BY THE TOWN

- “ My gorse still grows in ancient earth ;
My heath is wild as when
The covert gave the wild deer birth,—
The wolf a den.
- “ There is a cloud that mirrors me,
High-anchored in the air :
On autumn days, it lets me see
That I am fair.
- “ And fair with me, is wild with me,
And wild with me is strange
As when there came, with fear and shame,
The wild-man’s change.
- “ The town has tamed him, and the smoke
Has sulked upon my heights,
And joined the frost-fog round the oak
On winter nights.
- “ And summer brings me from the street
His pale inheritors ;
They find cool velvet for their feet
On my green floors.

- “ They watch the sand-bee in his haunt,—
A single while they know
Green grass, long boughs ; the blackbirds’ vaunt,—
And then they go.
- “ Their blood is tamed, but I at heart
Am free, that lie so close
Their chimney-tops, yet keep apart
My wild repose.
- “ I am not changed, old earth, and still
I wait for that sure day,
When every house beneath my hill
Shall fade away.
- “ Then, let the falcon bring me mirth,
When I shall see again
The covert give the wild deer birth,
The wolf a den.”

TO LALLAH

WE might have been your lovers ; and we are,
Dear Lallah, man and woman, lad and maid,
Loving the youth in you, that coming stayed
Because it found its gaiety and star
Gleam in your eyes, beyond the calendar :
Loving the wit,—the wisdom not afraid
To laugh,—and that one word in which you said
The very thing,—swift as a scimeter.
Yours is the spirit that is out with time,
And holds the hand of winter from the tree ;
Yours is the rose that made the briar do
Its business and turned its thorns to rhyme :
You may have doubts of immortality,
But immortality has none of you.

THE SONG OF THE BLESSED
CHANTICLEER

I

THERE is a cock in Paradise
Whose wattles are of gold,
His crest is proud, his nether-wing
Hath never droopt for cold.
(Sing Kik-erik-eroo)
He never felt the cold.

2

He never heard the whistling snipe
That keep the marish chill,
And pipe and fly and fly and pipe,
But never top the hill,
(Sing Kik-erik-eroo)
They never top the hill.

3

He never stumbled thro' the trees
To find a beggar's-bed,
Nor watched beside their palaces,
With no roof to his head.
(Sing Kik-erik-eroo)
With no roof to his head.

THE DOOR

“ If I should open,” said the door,
“ You would see framed within the space

A lovely face

Set round with little locks and curls
That hardly know what colour they are,
Tawny, full golden, or pale ambèr,—
And a swaying form of flower-like grace,
Part a woman’s, and part a girl’s. . . .

“ Where now my painted panels close,
You would see curves of beauty meet

And find her feet

And send a ripple around the floor,
Like dancing water, or sun’s delight,
Or the moon in the poplar leaf by night :
You would hear music in the street,—
If I should open,” said the door.

A POET UNKNOWN

THERE'S a nameless grave, in a rough graveyard,
Far from here, in French country,
That lies, unkempt, in the rusty sward,
Where few folk go, or care to see :
But a willow leans over it pleasantly.

Soldier and song-maker—he lies there,
Who made great songs before he died,
And greater in his blood there were,—
He that looked out, so open-eyed,
On man and woman, on street and tide.

Yes, mother-wit and gaiety,
Much music, and swift enterprise,
And the joyousest smile a man can see—
They sleep with him ; and there he lies,
And to paint his spirit in vain one tries.

He said, half-sad, before he went,
That this aged earth, it did not care
A bit his boyish discontent,
And rhymes of rebel life, to hear :
Now, will they be listened to,—far and near.

A POET UNKNOWN

Once, going up the high sheepwalk,
I saw—with spur and pennon gone—
A ragged, wind-stript thistle-stalk,—
But laughed when I saw its thistle-down
Across the wide fallows go sailing on.

* * * *

Oh song,—a little flame, but bright,
Your lonely candle bears abroad
Out of blown doors into the night.
One gust then on the windy road,—
And darkness ends you, light and laud.

It is so,—yet, it is not so :
Song lives, and the all-kindling Sun ;
A thousand fires revive and flow
When candle-light and dark are done ;—
A thousand birds go singing on.

SINGING TO THE HARP¹

If those old days had heart's delight,
And grace to man was given,—
They drank it from the melody
The harp had out of heaven ;
And every evil thought and care
Were from the soul far-driven.

Merry and dear the maids to hear
Upon the small-harp singing,
And brave to hear the lyric lads
The bass and tenor bringing :
Each voice did with the other vie,
Like bird on bird up-springing.

The old Welsh tongue, the small Welsh harp—
How well they went together :
They lifted up the wintry heart
From sorrow and bad weather :
They woke a sound to win a soul—
So well they went together.

¹From the Welsh of Ceiriog.

A LITTLE BALLAD OF BILIBALDUS

BILIBALDUS Pirkimérus,—

When I sicken, be my stay !
When my heart in me is stricken,
And I doubt the God of Day.

Bilibaldus Pirkimérus

Every groan turned into gold,
When the blight fell on the region
God had given him to hold.

Bilibaldus Pirkimérus !

Fast he lay there with the gout,
But the fire-flash in the ashes
Of the furnace was not out.

There he lay ; but with a whisper
He controll'd his empery,
And the fire in his old fingers
Made the drum beat gloriously.

When my heart grows cold—when, wounded,
I lie cursing at my fate,—
Bilibaldus Pirkimérus,—
Set the music at the gate !

THE CHILD BY THE TREE

I WALKED with her, the wise, the wonderful,
The fairy-faced, the star-invested creature,
Whose blue-eyed looks, like boys let out of school,
Sprang on before, and dipt into the pool,
And climbed the sky, and drank the dew of nature.
Her feet were in the grass where they should be,
Her locks waved to the sun, and wove it in—
Yes, took the rays, and found each one a fellow,
Made music of them—red-gold, pale-gold, yellow,
For where one changed, another would begin.
But when we came there to the linking tree,
She turned and looked at me,
With all her azure—she who had never seen
Death, save a small, brown bird, where he had been :
“ And what do you do ? ” she said,
“ What do you do, I wonder, when you are dead ? ”

She stood there by the tree, the sky between
The tree-top and the cloud blue as her eyes,
While one small north wind, stirring in the green
Like clear, cold water, blew and made the scene
Dream of dropt leaves there under the blue skies.

That was the moment, as we left the wood,

And saw the sky above the linking tree

That link'd the white road to the leafy place,

When Stella turned on me her starry face—

Her sun-tipt tresses shining full on me ;

And, moved by thoughts that laugh in solitude,

But stop to change their mood,

When they come back to moving roads and men,—

She asked me, what I could not answer then :

“ Oh, what do you do ? ” she said,

“ What do you do—do you sleep there—when you
are dead ? ”

APRIL ROMANCE

I

I SAW the sunlight in a leafy place,
 Bathing itself in liquid green and amber,—
 Where every flower had tears hid in its petals,
And every leaf was lovely with the rain.

2

With wondering eyes, I saw how leaf and flower
 Held up their hands, and trembled with delight :
 While, on the gleaming bough, the alighting bird
Shook its wet wings like something fresh from heaven.

3

And when it sang, it told how earth to heaven
 Was turned ; and how the miracle of morning
 Had made of leaf and flower a deathless maiden
To be my mate, and teach eternity.

4

She took my hand : I understood each thing
 The leaf says to the flower when both adoring
 See, like themselves, leaf-shaped and flower-
 painted,
The sun descend, to bathe in the green shade.

5

She led me out,—we left the leafy croft,
And its wet fragrance, for the treeless town ;
But she picked up a dead leaf in the mud,
And she found flowers in the children's hair.

6

Then she was gone,—and I am seeking her :
And every time at evening when it rains,
And every time at morning, when the sun
Bathes in the beauty of that leafy place,

7

Or when he looks into an urchin's eyes
To see if April tears or smiles are there,
And the wet dust scents summer, leagues away,
I hold my breath ; the Eternal Maid returns.

HATHOR

“ This malady, this heavy malady,
This mortal malady, of Time.”

THERE are some names that make a song of Time,—
Drawn out of ruined walls and fallen towns,
To be a fragrance in forgetfulness,—
Like the box-border on the lover’s path,
Or like the hay-cart in a dusty street,
Or like the attar in an Indian phial :
And one there is that breaks antiquity,
And sets a fragrance breathing. It is hers,
That I have learnt, and make it heard—the name
Of Hathor, Queen of Heaven.

The night had come, not as I thought it would,
With feet of fire ; but with an arctic wind
Out of the north. I went downstairs and stood
Within the door, afraid, half-stunned with cold,
And felt the snow blown in like little flies,
And saw the street without, a thing bewitch’d,
Stretch like a mountain-glen between two cliffs.
Why should I tear from sheltering warmth and sleep
This drowsy creature-self ? I could not say :

Save that a bell was heard, that might be Paul's,
Tolling as if for doom, far in the town,
Filling the upper air with brazen men.
It shook my heart, and told me I must go
Upon a mortal road ; it spoke of things
Outtrimming destiny, if that could be—
Things unaccountable, things I had slept away :
Things hardly to be told—great nations dead,
And Time grown older by a thousand years.
If I hung back for fear, another stroke
Of that tremendous rhythm set me free ;
And once the street was left, where I had lived
Three decades out, my feet went light as leaves
On the fine snow ; the townward league went by
Along the muffled pavements like a mile.
Then came a doubtful halt ; along a street
That led off east, I heard an ominous noise
Like that of the wood-sledges roadmen use
To beat the blocks home ; or, like some horn'd bull
Pounding the wall and stall-posts of his den.

There stands within a double colonnade,
The huge Valhalla that has robb'd the world :
And there I turned. Within, the hammers rose
And fell three times, and then a crash of stone
Came, and a reek of dust and broken lime,

Like gun-smoke in the dark ; and as it fumed,
Out of the breach that gaped within the wall
Two mighty heads, the Hammerers', appeared :
I knew them well, those huge, man-headed bulls,
That trod tremendously with feet of stone
The pillar'd causeway to the perron's edge,
And so descended—bellowing as they went,
Snuffing their freedom in the night of time.

And other hoofs, and other beasts, six-legg'd,
Trampled behind ; and trestles borne by slaves,
On which were rear'd up Sekhet, Amen-Ra,
Mut, Ashur-Nazir ; Bel and Ptolemy,
And many gods and kings known to the Nile.
But who was he that towered at their heels ?
Was this the head of Thothmes borne aloft
Upon a trembling body of grey smoke ?
His eyes were stone, but they looked far away
Back to the region of the stony kings,
And palace-doors of Sargon in the waste,
Beyond the Sphinx. And next him, Nebo rode—
The horrible, his fingers in his beard ;
Counting the plaits, and grinning vacantly
At every jolt. Then, three with eagle-heads,
That threw them back as if to find a sun
That did not shine, went in the train ; and once

I heard a shout within, and then two beasts—
That might be lions or Assyrian bulls,
Giants in stature, lurching through the breach,
One with a broken capstone on his head—
Came forth ; and trampling hard and fast, went down
Into the court, and bellowed out aloud
And pawed the snow up in their marble mirth.

They heralded, for sure, monsters more dire,
Creatures more rare to come ; and now the cold
Bleak twilight quickened to a light as clear
As winter-dawn seen in a mountain place ;
And out ten eunuchs marched in ebony—
Led on by one whose eyes were made of brass.
At each ten steps, the eunuchs turned and bowed
To one who followed, on a milk-white bull,
With gleaming garments. But her face was hid
Under a moony veil.

Her radiance went out like golden fire
Into the dark, and turned each crystal flake
Of snow that watched her to a star ;—so bright,
So goldenly, she shone, as if she shook
Sun, moon and stars out of her robe ; and gave,
As gods do, beauty. Yet her face, alas,
Could not be seen, and, shall not ever now.
For then the eunuch with the eyes of brass

Cried out aloud, in his unearthly tongue,
“ Make way, make way, for Hathor, Queen of
Heaven.”

I gazed upon her, hearing what he said,
Sharing the god-like aura of her form,
That yet was woman's in the mystery
Of lovely light with which she clothed herself ;—
I felt the fragrance of the attar-phial,
But not a glimpse could get, as she went by,
Of her white brows or unrevealed hair,—
While, timed like tympan-strokes, “ Make way, make
way ! ”

The eunuchs echoed ; and again they cried,
“ Make way for her—for Hathor, Queen of Heaven ! ”

While I still hoped, she and her train were gone :
Nothing but vacant airs, wrapt in the dark,
Moved, where the sun and moon had walked with her
Then came a dust, like death's, like Pompeii's,
That fell instead of snow ; and one last form,
A marble hawk, that tried to unstiff his wings
And with his beak blaspheme the place he left,
Showed me the end was come. I questioned him :—
This was that night of doom foretold,—he said,—
When the world's city that had drained the world
Of beauty, and yet kept her ugliness ;

Slaying the seed of beauty in the babe
Unborn ; robbing the maidens and young men
Of grace and youth ;—should find the gods go forth,
The gods of Egypt and the light of Greece,—
Hathor, Apollo and Athenë, go
Out of her gates for ever, and return
To the south lands that gave them birth, and make,
Like those Assyrian bulls, a breach in time.
What the night dreamed, the full-come day should do :
Because this city was not like those built
Bright, in the early lustre of the world,
That sinned in innocence ; but this had sinned
Against the wisdom of a thousand years,
Going to that extreme that ev'n her stones
Revolted. . . . There the hawk ended his tale.

And as I went the rending of the walls
Of the tall houses rang across the gaps
Of streets, and still the cry led on the file,—
“ Make way for her, for Hathor, Queen of Heaven.”

FROST

DREAMING of colder lawns than these,
The drowsy, white-furred creature's come,—
Watching his breath unfurl, and freeze
Along the thorn, or with his thumb
Flicking the wan leaf from the trees.

Now he is kneeling on the grass,
To try how brittle every blade
Is grown, that feels his fingers pass ;
Now by the clear-pool'd water stayed,
He turns its trembling into glass.

Soon, looking round him moodily,
He finds a gap into the wood
And snaps a branch from the alder-tree :
But when the warm oaks cross his mood,
He seeks for colder company.

A trailing hand he draws around
St. David's rood, and enters there ;
And stoops, amazed, above each mound,—
Listening, considering what they were,
More cold than he, who sleep so sound.

Now, as the cock-crow from the farm
Comes light and thin, he turns again
To gaze upon the young ones warm
Wrapt up in bed ; and on their pane
He paints their dream, he breathes the charm.

Before they see him, he is gone ;
That was the utmost of his mirth ;
He cannot bear to see the sun
Sit on the hill. Now, Air and Earth
Receive him quick. His time is run.

DAGONET'S LOVE-SONG

A QUEEN lived in the South ;
And music was her mouth,
And sunshine was her hair
By day, and all the night
The drowsy embers there
Remember'd still the light :

My soul, was she not fair !

But for her eyes—they made
An iron man afraid ;
Like sky-blue pools they were,
Watching the sky that knew
Itself transmuted there
Light blue, or deeper blue :

My soul, was she not fair !

The lifting of her hands
Made laughter in the lands
Where the sun is, in the South :
But my soul learnt sorrow there
In the secrets of her mouth,
Her eyes, her hands, her hair :

Oh soul, was she not fair !

LA MORT SANS PITIÉ

Dagonet

WHO is the Black Knight there
That enters at the door ?

Morgause

There is no Black Knight there—
The sun throws on the floor
A shadow : nothing more.

Dagonet

Who is the tall Black Knight
That stands within the door ?

Morgause

Give me thy fevered hand,
While now I breathe a prayer
To send the shade away.

Salve nos, Domine.

(Enter La Mort Sans Pitié.)

Dagonet

Black crow, art thou come
For Dagonet's wit ?

It is quick as the light
Or the dragon-fly's dart :
It is born in a smile,
It is bred in the heart,
It is light, it is laughter :
It took life when Eve laughed
At the lion-cub's play,
It slept then awhile
When her sorrow came after
With the son of the snake :
Eve's joy was my mother,
Not Eve's sorrow,
And the bird is my brother
That sings as he may.
In the close of my day
Lies curl'd-up the morrow,
Like the fox in his bed.
And my wit, if I die,
Yet shall wake and shall fly,
Take music and live
When Dagonet's dead.

Morgause (rising)

What cold shape have you seen,
Dagonet, that your eyes
Are so wild and so strange ?

Dagonet

I have seen the cold face,
I have seen the black wing
Of the King of the crows,
Even Death !

THE CASTLE OF CARBONEK

I

THE wind and the dark,
The wind and we,
We parleyed together
And put to sea,—
To sea !

2

The waves they followed
Like hounds let go ;
The salt froth spotted
The deck like snow.

3

The fireball sate
On our tall mast-head,
And lit the pit
Of the long-drown'd dead.

4

We stood like sheep
On the after-deck,
When we sighted the Castle
Of Carbonek,—
Carbonek.

5

Not once, but thrice
We gave the hail!
For the Fisher King
And the Holy Grail.

6

But the wind went round
On the winter sea
And blew us back
Over Collibë.

7

And twice it shifted,
And twice about
The steersman steer'd us
Within a shout.

* * *

8

'Tis ten years gone
Since we stood on deck
And sighted the Castle
Of Carbonek,—
Carbonek.

THE HOUSE-RUNE

WHEN you leave the old house,
the house-rites begin ;
Steps go up the stair,
and steal thro' the rooms.
They look at the bed
where the last tenant lay
Still as the clothes ;
cold, without stir.
Some rooms they love ;
and some rooms they hate
Where they bore aches and pains,
and blows, babe and child,
Which none can forget—
not even the dead.

THE RUNE

*What is now, that was ;
What was, that still is ;
What is, that shall be !*

All they had, that they have :
the bread they saw baked ;

THE HOUSE-RUNE

The brides they saw wed ;
 the babes they saw born ;
 The grey gowns and white ;—
 the things we forget.

When the house-folk return,
 the house-rites begin.
 Do you think their old walls
 have no wisdom or wit,
 No life of their own,
 no memory at all ?
 These are the things
 the old houses say.

THE RUNE

*What is now, that was ;
 What was, that still is ;
 What is, that shall be !*

Every sound they once heard,
 every song they once sang,
 Every voice, every face,
 they knew, now is theirs.
 They shone with delight ;
 they shook in the dance ;

Yes, the walls are alive,
like yourself, as you were ;
Yet older than men,
and younger than time.
The rooms are given up
to their rites when they come,
And the revels begin
by the hearth with the Rune :

THE RUNE

*What was, that still is ;
What is now, that was ;
What is, that shall be !*

THE CLERK OF KENFIG

THE Clerk of Kenfig is drinking hard—
Drinking night and day ;
He cannot bear the driving sand,
Salt with the sea, wild with the wind,
That blows from Kenfig bay.

This night, I think, the sou'west wind
Is worse than ever it was :
The Clerk—he had better pray than drink,
For the sand might be blown from Pharaoh's land
By a blast of the Simoom's jaws.

It is in the church and over the graves :
It is in at the Clerk's own door :
He has swept it up, but what is this
Doth spin and twine in spirals fine
Its thin thread on the floor ?

The Clerk is afraid to go to his bed ;
He has piled the hearth up higher ;
But the sand comes down the chimney-louvre ;
The grit is in his drinking-cup,
The silt puts out the fire.

And still he sat and still he drank
Until the night grew old ;
And then there came a triple knock
Upon the door, upon his heart ;
It made his heart turn cold.

And “ Come, good Clerk,” and “ Come with me ! ”
A voice said at the door :
“ This night, thou know’st, is All Saints’ night :
The church is full, the dead-folk wait ;
They have waited this hour and more.”

Thereat the Clerk arose ; but when
His hand undid the door,
The sand fell in like a heavy man,
And like a man-tall drift of snow
Lay huddled on the floor.

It lay there like a drunken man
That could not rise again :
And what might be an angry hand
Was at his sleeve, to lead him out
Into the rigid rain.

* * * * *

“ Stand up, good Clerk, in Kenfig church :
Unsay the word you said,—

The dead who lay beneath the sand
Should never rise at the Lord's right hand
At the rising of the dead ! . . .

“ And Christ thee keep, thou cruel Clerk,
And Mary in her might.
Around thee kneel the blessèd dead :
And thou shalt say the Creed, and pray,
And preach Christ risen this night ! ”

He saw them kneel, as he fear'd to see
The folk of Kenfig there,—
Yes, Roger Dunn, and Mary John,
And the Spanish captain that was stabb'd
By the old squire of Sker.

He fear'd to see them stare on him—
A death's-head every one :
But their faces gleam as they gaze on him,
And their eyes beseech like marigolds
That do beseech the sun.

They stare on him, not stained with death,
But cloth'd and white and clean ;
Yes, white as sea-mews by the sea,
He sees them kneel there blessèdly,—
And not a death's-head seen.

“ Stand up, good Clerk ; stand up and preach
The Resurrection ! ”

But the sand hath parched his nether lip :
He cannot say a word, nor pray :
His grace hath from him gone.

But now the Holy Rood hath found
A voice to call them home :
It speaks them kindly, one by one,
And one by one, the dead are gone,
Like sea-mews from the foam.

The rood was bright with candle-light
Until the last was flown ;
The darker then the mortal dark
That settled on the soulless Clerk
Like the night of Babylon.

* * * * *

Christ keep thy feet in Kenfig street,
And save them in the sand,
Where the cruel Clerk of Kenfig lies
That did deny the dead to rise
And sit at Christ's right hand.

THE SONG OF THE DERELICT

WHEN the hour is gone, and the leaf grown brown,
Its green delight over,—far better be down !
Well if the wind come then, and deliver
The leaf to the earth or the sea-going river :
What should it do there, outliving its day ?
Well if the wind come, and blow it away.

For a leaf I have seen, still left, withering on,
Between the wind and the wintry sun,
Wrinkled and wizened,—shaming the hour
When the beech-tree was proud and the birch in
flower :

What, said I, avails it, outliving its day ?
Well if the wind come, and blow it away.

Well if the wind stoop down in its force,
When the life is lived out, for better or worse.
Good Lord, I pray now, take thought and deliver
The tree in its time, and the leaf to the river :
What should it do there, outliving its day ?
Well if the wind come, and blow it away.

VINGT-SEPT

(To an old tune)

I

No man can reckon up the dead,—yet mourn these
twenty-seven
Alsations their sergeant took the narrow road to
heaven.

*(Old tune :) Alsations, Alsations,
Your sins shall be forgiven.*

2

Now, if your border-village, like Anspach, spanned
the river,
You would not care to see the Boches hold the left
bank for ever.

3

“ I know the fields that they have trench'd,” said
Sergeant Oberreiner ;
“ If you will chance the dark, I'll lead. Those
meadows yours and mine are.”

4

They waited till two hours from day, and then across
the meadows

They went,—except for their heart-beat, they might
have all been shadows.

5

But when they reach'd the spider-net,—the bells
rang, and the wire

Seem'd barbed with men ; the Boches sprang up ;
the frosty fog took fire.

6

Three volleys, and a crippling fourth ; and when the
“ cease-fire ” sounded,

The sergeant only had three men, and deadly they
were wounded.

7

He turned back to young Jean Marie,—his bandages
unrolling

To bind him up,—and so he fell ; the Boches saw to
his falling.

8

But if you knew the street of heaven, you'd see the
sergeant walking

A place that's very like Anspach, and hear what
French they're talking.

9

You would see the sergeant walking beside his twenty-
seven
Alsations, so sure as there is peace in soldiers' heaven ;

10

And you would hear the old song too, and not a sad
one either,
With the same note the old thrush had, that saw his
last year's feather.

*(Old tune :) Alsations, Alsations,
Your sins are all forgiven.*

VERDUN

“ Tri pheth'rydd amser drwg i gâl.”

THREE things the Kaiser could not see,—
A soldier's shadow that could shine ;
The Breton host that Carnac built ;
A Cæsar of the Latin line.

Nor could he tell what night it was
When Verdun drew Sedan's old sword ;
But he could talk of Verdun's doom,
And “ blood-and-iron ”—Bismarck's word !

The dead called to the quick, that night,
Between Seine water and the Somme ;
The soldiers of Napoleon
Joined in the march below Mort Homme.

Three things the Kaiser could not see :—
A fallen France, he saw instead ;
And torn, he said, with wantonness,
The Tricolour on her light head.

He could not tell how she desired
The dawn ; or when, with sullen roll
Of drum, Heaven said, " Thy soul's required,"
How that same night she saved her soul.

Seed of her resurrection !
Her soldiery that heard the beat,
And stood like stone. Now make, old sun,
Their shadows shine in Verdun's street.

ITALY

“ O isplendor di viva luce eterna.”—DANTE : *Purgatorio*.

LOOK south, you soldiers, in whatever land
You live, toward that star of Italy
That Dante saw, and with a lifted hand
Swear to be arm'd, in her necessity.
Think how with art she made your old earth new,
And built up Venice—now in jeopardy ;
How with a brush she made the heaven more blue ;
While every street you walk grew statelier
And every tongue there is more gracious grew ;
And every tower more tall—because of her.
Now, if she calls from Grappa's mountain gate,
While past Piave strides the Murderer,
His Austrian hound at heel—be not too late.
And, fearless women, you that in your eyes
Bear Beatrice witness to the star's estate—
Bend with a healing hand to the reprise,
And tend the lantern till the star shall be
In Rome relighted, and the day arise
Of her New Life—eternal Italy.

November, 1917.

VIGIL

WITH eyes that could not see she lay awake,
Till every London street her soldier knew
Was on the dark engrafted, and so grew
One with her love of him and her heart-ache.
She heard with ears of doom the engine shake
Upon the bridge, where once he journeyed too,
Where others, travelling home, sat looking through
Train windows at the town loved for old sake.

One hour she wore out to eternity ;
The next, made each black shade a living shape
That held her hands, and tortured her with sleep
That would not come, yet came continually ;
One moment more—one moment of escape ;
And then, the day-dawn saying, “ Do not weep ! ”

A. R. P. (KILLED IN ACTION, JULY 21, 1917)

BRIGHT-EYED I knew him, great with youth ;
Intrepid, sanguine, going on
To days when mine should all be done.

This day, I'm told the bitter truth,
Yet cannot think it, first or last,
That he has fallen while we march
Toward the morning's open arch.

Rather let us believe he passed
Into that deathless firmament
Beyond our day and cloudy skies,
Where youth and age are well content,
And morning-light, and young men's eyes
Resume the thoughts we read in his—
High hopes—mysterious happiness.

SACRILEGE

I

Look well upon this wounded son
Of earth ;—this soldier put away :
His limbs were broken on the wheel
Of War ; his wounds, that will not heal,
Have laid him low—unmann'd, undone.

2

His hand, the carver of the House
Of Beauty, waiting to be built ;
His brain the little architect ;
His eye, the master to erect
The coming City of Green Boughs.

3

Not very long in this round world,
Not very long on this old earth
Of ours, we have to live, to wield
The hefty tool—to sing and build
And give our fellow-men their mirth.

4

But look and see how he doth lie ;
The ruined craftsman, with the quilt,
Too like a shroud, around his face,—
That tells of youth and boyish grace
Gone, and the blessed life-blood spilt.

5

If he be not the world's saviour,—
If he is not the sword of peace
To give young men, his unborn heirs,
Freedom,—what mock the hope he bears—
What sacrilege those wounds of his !

THE CRAFTSMAN

By the strength of your right hand,
Craftsman, the old houses stand,
And the new endow the land.

By your craft and what you make,
With subtle tools and arms that ache,—
The seven cities are awake.

For now, the leases being run
Of war's ordained destruction,—
The Golden Bough should feel the sun.

The mystic Carpenter,—that drew
The line that ran the zenith through,—
He is content,—and lives in you.

And Lucifer's lost energy,
That falls from heav'n eternally,
Is reborn in your carpentry.

And Adam's delving, Eve's delight,—
The moonward rapture of the bright
Rebellious wave,—the fall of night,—

The winter-dawn that hears a noise
Like Cheops' hammer sound and rise,—
They lend a measure to your eyes.

But for that paradise or isle
Of youth you dream of all the while,—
What if it lay within a mile ?

And pipe should play and tabor beat,—
And you should find it at your feet
At your own door, in your own street ?

For old roads end where new began,
And the new road turns where the old one ran ;—
These are the words of Everyman.

THE LAY OF THE BLACK COUNTRY

I

ENGLAND, merry England, your green is getting
brown

With the exile of the Ploughman who journeys to the
town :

For a blight is on the wheatfield, and the villages go
down.

2

I fared along the highway across the Black Country ;
I went to look for April, but what was there to see ?
On every road a beggar that a craftsman used to be.

3

Once the land had green fields,—smothered now with
smoke,

Between the stealthy ditches—where once clear water
broke,

And engines shouting vengeance—where once the
cock-thrush spoke.

4

I met a five-years' child there, that had no cherub face,
But like a waxen image stared at me from the place
Where grew no leaf or flower, no green or April grace.

5

I met an English maiden, like a daisy torn away :
Her song was like the Carmagnol : " I go," it seemed
to say,
" For gold there to the city, where night is turned to
day ! "

6

I met a country carpenter—he look'd like Christ the
Lord :
His tools were sold for silver, to get him safe aboard
The vessel for that country where the craftsman hath
reward.

7

I met the Virgin Mary, who once wore heavenly
blue :
She hid her Babe there from me ; her sad eye looked
me through,
As she walked upon the cinders, where once the clover
grew.

8

England, merry England, your fields are trodden
down,

And a blight is on the meadow, and the grass is getting
brown

With the waning of the village, and the waxing of the
town.

THE WHITE EARWIG

I FOUND a white earwig—
Like a ghost of himself—
Hiding in my papers,
Pale elf.

He seemed fond of living,—
Attenuate and pale,—
Black eyes and white antennæ
And forked, revertive tail.

I thought—shall I kill him
For a curiosity ?
But he seemed looking forward,
Much like me.

I spared him for his pallor :—
“ He may find a wife,
If he lives out the umber
Of his life ? ”

L'Envoi

*And perhaps the Lord will spare me,
When he sees how pale I look,
And he knows Her Grace has let me
Write for solace in her book ?*

THE HUNTING-SONG OF THEM THAT DID
NOT HUNT

GOOD-DAY, said the damsel,
Good-morrow to you,
For if you mean hunting
I would hunt with you too ;

I am weary of making
And baking the bread ;
If you stay in my parlour
I will hunt in your stead.

You shall sup in my parlour
My white wine and broth,
I am weary of weaving
The sendal and cloth.

Good-day, said the damsel,
Good-even to you :
What is good for the huntsman
Is good for me too.

THE WOMAN OF SORROWS

I

To bed I went for rest, no rest there to find :
Day might sleep ; not I. Midnight sealed my mind.
A heavy wall has sorrow, and a black hedge has sin,
They kept me close and held me fast ; held and kept
me in.

2

And first the wind it whimpered ; then cried bitterly ;
But still it had a sound, like my crying baby :
I'm not ashamed to weep ; but I'm too proud to pray
To that hard Lord of Heaven who seems so far
away.

3

That was a babeless woman—Helen of Troy ;
She never knew my sorrow, and never half my joy ;
Though I wish, as I do, the day would never dawn—
I would not give up heaven, for the nursling I have
known.

4

Would you take from my breast the touches of my
child?—

As soon take the curlew, crying in the wild ;

Oh, my sorrow for my babe, is become my babe to
me :

Never babe now, or sorrow, can ever taken be.

5

When you see the dog cast for the sheep in the snow,

When you see the small wren—her nest bare below :

When you look in the eyes of the blind that cannot
look

You may think of my babe, and the breast it forsook.

THE TWO PATHS

THEY climb the long coomb,
And the mountain ravine
Like the fissure of doom
Lies between :

And each as it turns
On the brink, and looks over,
For the other one yearns
Like a lover.

One says, " Sure the air
Blows marvellous sweet
On the fern growing there
At his feet ? "

And the other, " Her grace
Where she swerves on her way
To the mountainous place,
None can say."

THE TWO PATHS

Where the heather gives out,
And the rocks close like fate,
And the mountain-winds shout
At the gate,—

There the paths as they climb—
That travelled alone,
By the mountain and time
Are made one.

CAMBRAI

Breakfast-time, 3 October, 1914

CAMBRAI,—those great Canadians, . . .
While we sit still, and eat, and talk,
And watch the sun come in, and fleck
The flowers, and cups, and table-cloth,—
They are fighting there, some boys I know. . . .

Sweetheart ! another piece of bread ?
Yes, little one,—and blackberries
Grown by the wood at Walberswick.
(How red the stain upon the plate !)

The summer's done. Would that the war, . . .
But we must work on, all the same ;
What time must you be off to school ?
Many will not come back this day.
(Let me not think of that red stain ;))
Cambrai, alack, Cambrai !

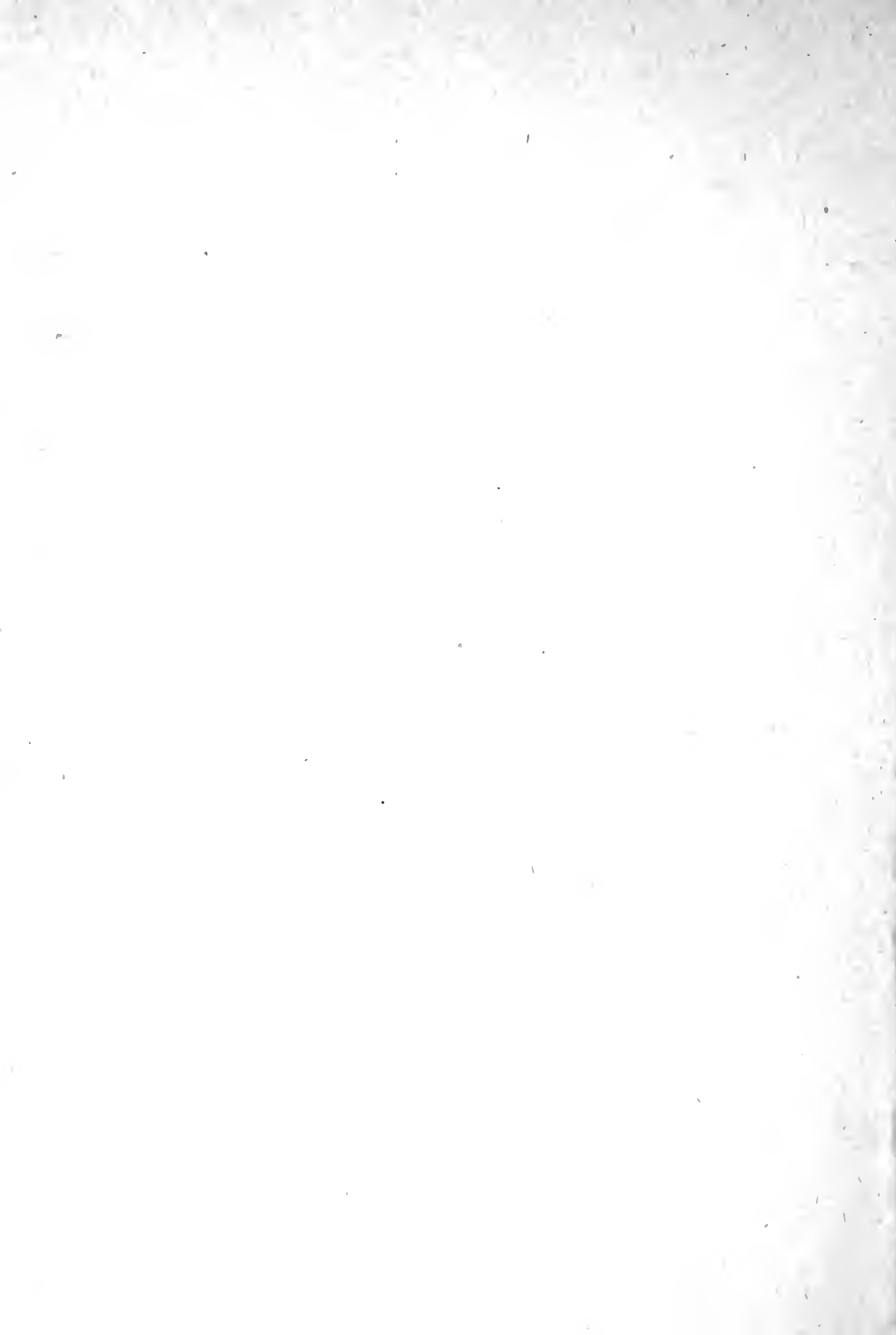
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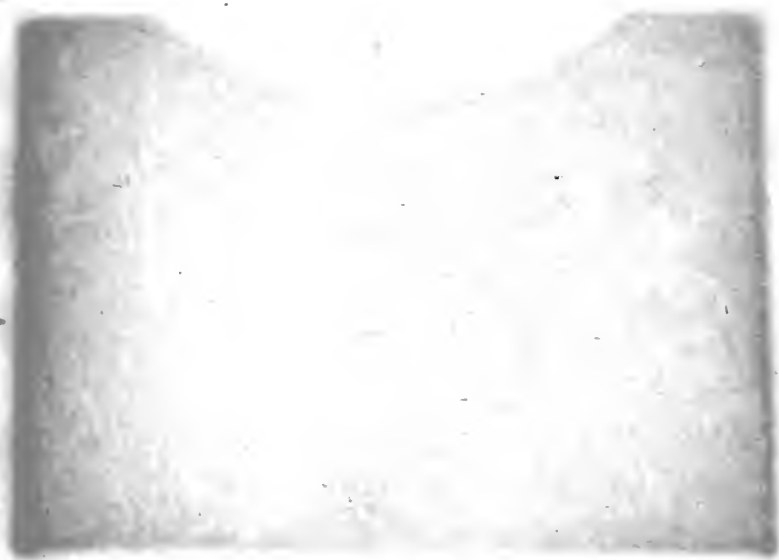
I DREAMT the war was over, and the sun
Of the new dayspring cloudless in the land,
And the keen trowel in the builder's hand
Its morning chime was ringing on the stone ;
And from a neighbouring tree—the nearest one
Those warblers use—a thrush led off his band
Of flutes full-pipe, to make us understand
That war, like winter-dark, was dead and gone.

He called the leaves, and buried fragrances
Out of the grass, and freshest new-born flow'rs,
And cool, bright airs, to keep the holiday :
And if two low notes stayed his happiness,
Like something murmured by lost sons of ours,—
“ It was for this we died,” they seemed to say.

THE
TEMPLE PRESS
LETCWORTH
ENGLAND







the leaf burners

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1



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