

THE LONE TREK

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To my friend Ned
With my love
Waller

June 1911.

in Substantia de
Maddo & Co. W.



THE LONE TREK

By the same Author

THE LAND OF WAVERING

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The Bijwani.

THE LONE TREK

BY

DENYS LEFEBVRE

(SYNED)

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY G. S. SMITHARD

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

MCMXI



PR
4879
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To M. M. de C.

*I cannot quite forget the olden days,
The time—how long it seems!
When I, unversed in niggard Fortune's ways,
To you revealed my dreams.*

*And wove across the frame of things to be
A web as light as air,
Whose threads were gold—if not to you—to me,
And frail as they were fair.*

*But now, though fruitless years have come and gone
I feel no sense of shame,
For, while I may not lay my hands upon
The giant looms of Fame,*

*Nor hope to weave the spell of quiet Night
The play of light and shade,
A lover's kiss, a little child's delight,
In hues that will not fade,*

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*Nor link a rainbow with a mother's tear—
Yet, if one spark divine
Should fall on me, or, falling, come so near,
That I could call it mine,*

*I'd know once more the sunshine on your face,
Reflected from your soul,
Had knit my fancies, for a moment's space,
Into a living whole.*

It is my pleasant duty to express my acknowledgments to the editors of "The State," "African Monthly," "Observer," "Cape Times," "Transvaal Leader," "Rand Daily Mail" and "Sunday Times" for permission to publish the great majority of these verses, and more especially to thank my friend, Mr. G. S. Smithard, for his beautiful interpretation of one of my fancies.

D. L.



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THE LONE TREK

A Memory

GREY-EYED, and, for a woman, tall, a shade
Big-boned. Round-shouldered with the constant strain
Of others' troubles. People called her plain—
But still beside her children laughed and played.
Shabby and dowdy, just a prim old maid,
Reserved, a little proud—the village said—
Not seeing when she soothed the aching head,
Not hearing when on bended knees she prayed,
Not for herself, but for the chosen few
On whom she lavished all that heart of gold—
For whom she suffered, while they never knew—
Till she grew worn before her time, and old—
And died. Yet looking on the path she trod
In all humility, I think of God.

THE LONE TREK

Dream Children

I SEE them in my dreams. Their tiny hands
Clutch feebly at the air ; upon my face
Blows their sweet breath ; a little voice demands
My eager kisses. In that soft embrace
A sense of aching, though I know not why,
A sense of some forgotten, longed-for joy,
A joy that thrills me through, yet makes me sigh,
That time could never change, nor death destroy :
Still in my dreams I clasp them to my breast,
Their soft, warm presence folded close to mine ;
And o'er me steals the balm of perfect rest,
And through my veins a gladness like to wine.
I murmur, shiver—then, as cold as stone
Awake—and oh ! dear God ! awake alone !

THE LONE TREK

A Sonnet

(To G. S. S.)

THE noontide heat has waned and passed away,
And in the crimson west the setting sun
Sinks ever lower. Slowly, one by one,
Dim shadows hover round the gasping day ;
Between two peaks peeps forth a golden ray,
That for a moment makes, on hill and stone,
A path where God might walk, and God alone ;
The purple shadows clasping kloof and vlei
Grow darker, save where, in some favoured place,
Light lingers, like a flag that, still unfurled,
Mourns a lost cause. The red sun hides his face.
One pallid star illumines the fading world.
The day is dead. A sudden vapour chills,
And silent night enfolds the waiting hills.

THE LONE TREK

The Storm

No breath of air. The fingers of the sun
Have touched a panting world with lambent fire,
And now the earth and heavens wrapped in one
Deep gloom, with dread await what both desire.
The eager wind comes sweeping through the street,
And atoms, gathered here and scattered there,
Are drawn again together till they meet,
And twisting strangely in the yellow glare
Assume unhallowed shapes. A hush, a thrill
Foretell great happenings. And by and by
A sudden blinding light—and all is still :
A crash—so might a Titan roar and die !
Then, sweet as sleep that lulls persistent pain,
In ever-swelling cadence falls the rain.

THE LONE TREK

Moonlight

THE storm is spent, the wind has died away ;
Cool raindrops cling to trembling leaf and tree,
As one departing lingers—loath to stay—
And yet departing more unwillingly.
The clouds have vanished from the purpled sky
Before the footsteps of the rising moon
(The queen whose jewelled courtiers prostrate lie
Dazed by the splendour of her silvered shoon).
The earth beneath, half hidden, half revealed,
Breathes mellowed beauty where each faery beam
Bathes kloof and vlei and kraal and mealie-field,
And willows swaying sadly o'er a stream—
In light—wherein a mining shaft may seem
The angels' ladder of a poet's dream.

THE LONE TREK

To Pain

OH ! mystic woman, born of life and death,
Whose jewelled crown is set with burning tears,
Whose presence chills and saddens like a breath
From some dark cavern of unspoken fears !
Heedless of love, or hate, the flight of years,
Thou sparest nought. To man and helpless child,
To maid and mother, thy dark shape appears—
To rich and poor. And in the desert wild,
The quiet vale, the busy, crowded street,
Unmoved, unchecked, unbidden glides along ;
Behind thee—crippled limbs and leaden feet,
Where all was straight, and beautiful, and strong.
We dread thy step—yet they who know and dare
Have seen thy face, and found it strangely fair.

THE LONE TREK

Paardekraal

A HOMESTEAD nestling down beside a hill—
Across the road, the quiet waters run
Into the dam where oxen drink their fill,
Ere toiling onwards in the blazing sun.
And further still a garden quaintly fair,
Wherein old-fashioned flowers bloom and fade
And in a nook, the hanging branches shade
A little rustic seat whereon are traced
Initials half-forgotten, half-effaced,
Of those whose eyes have lingered on the scene—
Beyond the trees, o'er lands of waving green,
Unto the distant mountains as they lie
With purpled crests upraised to meet the sky.

THE LONE TREK

Dawn at Paardekraal

THE dim grey light comes stealing, and the stars
Melt swiftly, till at last the only one
Is left a watcher. Rosy, radiant bars
Of cloud foretell a day, not yet begun.
The purple sky pales in the waking East
From blue to faintest green. The mountains stand
On the horizon's edge. Each bird and beast
Stirs in its sleep. A hush is o'er the land.
The light grows brighter. Trees and shrubs appear
Like wraiths that beckon dumbly in the gloom,
Mysterious shapes that slowly grow more clear.
Then—chirping birds and flowers all abloom.
And lo! the Sun—wielding a molten spear,
Leaps like a god, new risen from his tomb.

THE LONE TREK

Oom Paul

CAST in a rugged shape, an iron mould,
Untaught, unlettered, and yet strangely wise
In reading men—their lust for power or gold
Standing revealed before those shrewd old eyes.
Knowing the weakness of a stubborn race,
And with the curb of a long-practised hand
Guiding his burghers—and in fitting place
Using the pregnant phrase they understand.
Strong with the strength of an unflinching will,
Stern as a man whose gifts with one accord
Are concentrated on one end. Yet still,
Whether with practised tongue or naked sword,
Whether his purpose served to save or kill,
Trusting through good and evil in his Lord.

THE LONE TREK

New Year's Day, 1909

THE year is dead. Behold another year !
And formless echoes thrilling, some with fear,
And some with gladness, on the rustling breeze
Disturb the midnight calm. The restless seas
Unite with one accord and strident call
Unto the earth, then grinding, scraping fall
Backwards upon the shore. And from the land
Of brooding silences and burning sand,
Of beetling krantz and naked flaunting hills,
Of pleasant pastures where the trickling rills
Join rushing rivers, and the very face
Of nature smiles ; and from the desert place
Where quaggas roam, but man has seldom trod,
And the aasvogel feeds—in sight of God—
From all of these, the mighty anthem swells
Mingling in harmony with New Year bells.
And lo ! a voice cries out in passionate tones ;
“ Oh ! children mine ! What though the scattered bones
Of men and women lie in nameless dust,
Who died—for love of me, or hate, or lust—

THE LONE TREK

I care not, knowing that my lightest breath
Impelled them on ; the very fear of death
Losing its terror, so they could fulfil
Within their lives the promptings of my will.
I loved them all—and watched their devious ways
Through bush and veld and fever-stricken vleis ;
Their hunger, thirst, their cruelty and greed
For gold, red gold. Have I not trained the breed ?
Instilling knowledge, till a spark divine
Lighted the rugged souls that sprang from mine ? ”
It ceased. I saw the night had passed away,
And in the east the blush of coming day.
And there revealed, untouched by stress or storm,
She stood, my Africa, a godlike form,
New-risen from her couch of magic sleep,
With eyes like stars reflected in the deep.
For, as a babe awakes and understands
And stretching out his fumbling eager hands
Touches his mother's face, and touching knows
That it is hers, and from that moment grows
Apart, until he takes his place with other men—
So to a nation comes the moment when
It wakes to consciousness. I heard her cry
(With hands upraised in blessing to the sky)—
“ Lords of your souls, discerning right from wrong,

THE LONE TREK

Proud of the race to which you both belong,
Proud of the mighty land that gave you birth,
Proud as befits the strong ones of the earth
(Yet mindful of your trust, not vainly proud)
Heirs to a realm built—not upon a cloud,
But upon rock, no passing phantasy—
But one great nation loyal, strong and free,
God keep you, and in that you have begun,
Direct your paths till they converge in one !”

Chant Africanus

GREAT land of Union, stretching far and wide,
Wherein the old voortrekkers loved to roam ;
Wherein the early settlers lived and died—
South Africa, our home.

We hear her call—for in our blood is set
The glamour born of kloof and krantz and vlei ;
The haunting vastness of the veld—and yet,
South Africa always.

THE LONE TREK

A love of freedom never growing old,
The subtle magic of the dimly known,
The spell of space, the silences enfold
 South Africa our own.

Casting aside the old-time doubts and fears,
Out of the shade into the noontide sun ;
Strong in the promise of the coming years—
 South Africa is one.

Over our heads one flag alone unfurled ;
Owning allegiance to one king, we stand ;
Voicing a cry that leaps across the world—
 South Africa our land !

THE LONE TREK

The Union of South Africa

FROM silent spaces. From the naked hills
That stand unchanged in matchless solitude ;
From dorp to town ; from all the haunts of men ;
From forests whose unravelled, tortured glooms
Remain unconquered whilst the atoms writhe
And quiver round them in the noontide sun ;
From rushing rivers where the waters swirl
And thunder over jutting crags to fall
Crashing and broken in a limpid pool ;
From north to south, from troubled sea to sea ;
There comes a voice, so soft it seems a sigh,
The faint beginnings of a mighty wind
That slowly rising strikes Æolian strings,
Till one by one the harsh discordant sounds,
The halting echoes gather form and shape
In muffled chords that swiftly grow and blend
Into one strident peal of melody :
“ Take up your burden, Children of the Land !

THE LONE TREK

Behind you lie the bitter memories
Of blood and tears commingled in the dust
Where men have striven, suffered, fought, and died.
Now from the past, the ashes of the slain,
Have come the makings of a common cause.
The future lies before you, babes unborn
Await their destiny, with outstretched hands
Two nations call to you in mute appeal—
Take up your burden, Children of the Land
That begs for, urges, nay, demands your all ;
A land that colours, mars, distorts your dreams ;
Yet lures you on—and ever on and on,
Filling your souls with longings none can tell ;
Great aspirations—though you know not why ;
Cravings for giant spaces, buoyant air,
Sunlight and starshine—all the mystic lore
Wherein are writ the purposes of God.
Oh ! cast away your false, ill-omened fears,
The whited garments of deep-seated hate ;
The hoarded garnerings of ancient wrongs ;
The hidden canker that destroys your peace.
Lay the foundations—and if ceaseless toil
Seem wasted—courage, you prepared the place
Whereon your sons shall raise up stone by stone
A pillar worthy of that mighty Fane

THE LONE TREK

Of sister nations whereof men shall say :
' Behold ! its spires reach the topmost stars
Yet in its shadows little children play.'
Not built for lust of strength, or race, or fame,
But as a sign to peoples yet to be ;
No mere reflection of a passing phase
Crumbling beneath the iron grip of Time,
But to endure through long decades of years,
A beacon in the darkest days to come—
An ark of refuge for a tired world."

To Elaine

("The sea to-day was roaring and coming in at a great pace in huge foam-flecked breakers. Something told me to stand on the shore and send a kiss across the Atlantic.")

FROM far-off rock-bound coasts, where billows roll,
With swelling crests upraised to meet the shore,
Until, in sullen pride they spurn control,
And clasping stable sands or shifting shoal,
Break with a muffled roar.

THE LONE TREK

Your spirit leaped to mine. The wind and rain,
The baffled tempest, dark with fury, hurled
Olympian bolts. Its thunders crashed in vain,
That thought, the child of mingled joy and pain,
Whispered across a world :

The self-same notes wherewith the minstrel brings
The clinging softness of a baby hand
To withered cheeks, and stirs the hidden springs—
Of love and tears. But in the whirl of things
I did not understand.

Then Cupid from his quiver drew a shaft,
And tipped it with a kiss, and bent his bow :
Knitted his brows, and in his boyish craft,
Smiling, half-shyly pulled and strained and laughed,
And sighed—and let it go—

Swift through the ether, with unerring aim,
Unto my heart, and yet I felt no fear !
And being true, no lurking sense of shame,
But rather sweet content in that it came
Straight from your lips, my Dear !

THE LONE TREK

A Mother's Lullaby

LITTLE babe, whose wide grey eyes
Look to mine in mild surprise,
Or beyond me to the skies—
 Whence you came.

On your lips a tiny smile
Wise with baby lore, the while
Innocent alike of guile
 Or of shame.

Little clinging, crinkled hands,
Helpless, no one understands
How their helplessness commands,
 That a chord

Throbs with each half-uttered cry,
Tightens at my heart, just why
No one knows, but you and I—
 And—the Lord.

THE LONE TREK

The Ghost Child

EYES of deepest, purest blue,
Veiled by silken lashes ; lips
Rosy, fresh as summer dew ;
Hair of golden-brown that dips
Into mingling shades—a hue
Such as ancient painters knew—
Stir my heart. So summer rays
Glancing crosswise through the trees,
Gleam on dark, untrodden ways
Where the lotus-laden breeze
Whispers through the sheltered glade ;
Where, 'mid shadows green and cool,
Mirrored in a silent pool,
Pan sits piping in the shade.

And a slender, dainty form,
Beautiful, yet wholly child,
Innocent of stress or storm,
Trouble, pain, or passions wild,

THE LONE TREK

Comes towards me. In her eyes—
From their depths—a little smile,
Grave, but merry, strangely wise,
Beckons—silvery tones beguile :
“ Oh ! my daddy ! ” And her arms
Open wide, her eager face
Lifts to mine. Unconscious charms
Lure me to a fond embrace.
Till I feel her cheeks, her hair—
Clasp—dear Christ !—the empty air !

THE LONE TREK

The Cancer Patient

CHIN unshaven, grizzled, grey
(Pipe unheeded on his knee) ;
Looking far across the bay
 Out to sea.

When he speaks, his dragging tones
Have a grating note. Despair
Holds him (poor old bag of bones)
 In his chair.

And behind the dumb appeal
In his dull eyes, brother Death
Stands so close, he has to steal
 Room for breath.

There he sits, still, strangely still,
Like a satyr carved in stone :
In the shadow grim and chill—
 All alone.

THE LONE TREK

The Land of Make-Believe

(FOR CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS TOY FUND)

MIGHTY pillars, lofty domes,
Endless vistas, knights and dames,
Elves and fairies, wizards, gnomes
In its vastness make their homes,
Join in all the romps and games
Of the land of Make-Believe.

Pleasant glooms and leafy shades,
Mossy banks and sparkling streams
Where the soul of childhood dreams ;
Where no blossom droops or fades ;
Birds sing sweetly in the glades
In that land of Make-Believe.

Happy laughter, tuneful song—
In its sheltered nooks and bowers
Children dance, bedecked with flowers
Free from thought of sin or wrong !
Time glides tenderly along—
In that land of Make-Believe.

THE LONE TREK

You who left it long ago
(Some of you are turning grey)
Will you help a child to play
For a little hour or so,
Learn the lore you used to know
Of the land of Make-Believe?

Fancies

OUT from the scrub and the veld,
 Ironstone kopje and vlei ;
Out from the deserts that melt
 On the horizon away,
Out from the dried river bed,
 Out from the torrent and foam,
Straight from the blue overhead—
 Half-suppressed longings for home.

THE LONE TREK

Longings to tread in the street,
Narrow and steep though it be,
Where, long ago, little feet
Toddled on down to the sea,
To the waves lapping the shore
With a half-savage caress—
Waves follow waves as of yore—
Only—one youngster the less.

Longings to see the old church,
Circled by walls, and a rail
Whereby the fishermen lurch
Past in the teeth of a gale,
Whilst the dead slumber inside
Under the shade of the trees,
Rocked by the roar of the tide,
Lulled by the swaying of seas.

Longings to rove in the cool
Glamour of valley and shade,
Bathe in a moss-girdled pool
Such as great Pan might have made.
Longings to take by the hand
Someone—look long in a face.
Once again silently stand—
Gripped by the spell of the place.

THE LONE TREK

Longings for things that have been—
All that has happened and gone,
All that the ages have seen,
Beckon and point ever on—
Cry : “These are fancies.” And yet—
When, and wherever you roam,
Somehow, you cannot forget
All the old longings for home !



TYPES



THE LONE TREK

The Bijwoner

IN a suit of khaki faded,
Patched and shiny in the breeches ;
In a coat with many stitches ;
With his wizened features shaded

By a greasy "sloucher." Yellow,
Gaunt is he, and full of angles,
Sleeps, and eats, and works, and wrangles—
People say : "The stupid fellow !"

Yet at times a dim obsession
Lights his dull, grey eye ; a neighbour
Bending o'er his hated labour
With some coarse, profane expression,

Brings the time back, when, together,
He and most of his relations,
Found their highest aspirations
In the mealie-crop, the weather,

THE LONE TREK

And tobacco. In a hovel
Made of mud, with naught to lie on
But the straw to sleep and die on,
Where the fowls and babies grovel.

Boys and girls, and father, mother
Herded there. Without one pleasure
Save that life was mainly leisure—
Each more selfish than the other.

Till there came the hideous rumour :
“ Locusts strip the mealie patches.
We must work, at least in snatches :
Put the Fates in better humour.”

.

Someone whispers as he lingers,
“ Kom de Baas.” “ Ach ! Gott ! ” he wheezes,
Spits upon his palms, and seizes
Pick or spade with shaking fingers.

THE LONE TREK

The Voortrekker

THERE in an ancient, weather-beaten chair,
He sits and ponders, drawing at the stem
Of his long cherished pipe. His shrunken limbs
Clad loosely in a suit of yellow-grey.
His flowing beard, like flakes of falling snow,
Softens the contour of his shrewd old face,
Seamed with the touch of sun, and wind, and time,
And yet impassive. But his shrunken eyes,
Roving and restless, seem to leap beyond,
Pregnant with all that filled forgotten years ;
And for a moment he is young again.
Gripping his stick, he sits erect, the while
He doffs the clinging mask of honoured age.
As scene succeeds to scene—now gay, now grave—
The laager where he stood a puny child,
And standing, trembling watched his father die ;
And late, too late, the Zulu legions hurled,

THE LONE TREK

Reeling and broken—or the gladsome days
Of headlong, breathless rides across the veld ;
The ardour of the hunter and the chase ;
The spell of mighty spaces, clean, pure air,
And all the subtle, nameless joy of life,
The joy of youth when pulse to pulse beats high,
The crowning joy of love that conquers all.
And then—the semblance of his first loved vrow
(Still dearest of the three) that softly calls :
“ Man is toch laat. Kom, myn Jacobus, kom.”
At sunset even so she used to cry
Whene'er he lingered, loath to leave his toil.

.
Slowly he knocks the ashes from the bowl,
And knocking notes—perforce—his shrivelled hand.

THE LONE TREK

Ou-Ma

BOLT upright upon the wooden, hard armchair, the
only one
In the hut that rain and duststorm stained a rusty-
coloured dun ;
Seated in the doorway, knitting, turned towards the
setting sun.

Underneath the kappie sombre, frayed a little at the
brim,
Peep out pale, impassive features, and the spare old
figure, prim,
Clad in black, grease-spotted garments, looks a little
sad and grim.

All around her, ragged children laugh, and cry, and
fight and play ;
Babes and puppies take upon them all one hue of
reddish gray ;
Here and there a startled " kippie " clucking loudly,
runs away.

THE LONE TREK

Far beyond across the valley stretch the rugged
purpling hills,
And the hush, the mellow sunlight bring a wave of
thought that fills
Pools and shallows long deserted — and her soul
awakened, thrills.

Knitting there she sees a childhood, marriage, mother-
hood, and pain ;
Death and loneliness and sordid, troubled, married
life again :
In the iron hut behind her few illusions can remain.

Then she rises : “ Man,” you hear her shaking,
sharpened tones begin,
“ Kom, drink nou jou koffie (shadows deepen round
her wrinkled chin)
Piet, die kos is klaar.” A clumsy figure slouches
slowly in.

THE LONE TREK

Piet

CONSCIOUS of his lack of grace,
Strongly, not too neatly dressed ;
Blue-eyed : on his full, round face
Something dull and half expressed.
Brusque and not too quick of speech,
But amongst the other boys
Chattering with all and each,
Full of trivial childish joys :
“ Man ! I tell you it is sport !
You are skrik already, eh ?
Come by us, we'll hold the fort.
Ach ! You fool, it's only play ! ”
So, whilst he can find support,
Shouting, idling all the day.

Katrina

FROM beneath her cotton “ kappie ”
Bright grey eyes demurely shining,
Even-tempered, plump and happy,
Never groaning or repining—
Ach, Katrina !

THE LONE TREK

Just one flaxen curl escaping,
From the primly fastened setting,
One of nature's make and shaping,
Yet a curl there's no forgetting—

Ach, Katrina !

And such merry joyous laughter,
Rippling on with lilt and catches,
Charming once, and ever after ;
And a voice that—well, it matches !

Ach, Katrina !

When I offer her a posy,
She regards me, half-beguiling,
With a cheek becoming rosy,
Looks provoking, coyly smiling—

Ach, Katrina !

“ Dat is mooi ; ja dat is prachtig !
Foei ! your heart is torn with sorrow ?
Sis toch ! malkop ! (allemachtig !)
Dag, mynheer—until to-morrow.”

Ach, Katrina.

THE LONE TREK

A Young Transvaaler

SITTING lolling in a café,
Latest tie and stand up collar :
In his pocket scarcely hath he—
Very likely half a dollar.

Ogling all the café ladies
With persistent, killing glances,
With the smartest thing in cadies,
Up in all the newest dances.

“ Man ! you should have seen her walking !
Hot stuff, yes ! a hefty figure !
But to hear her way of talking !
Eh, what ! well, it makes me snigger.

“ Such an air ! ‘ I’m sick of ices,
Thank you.’ Do you know her sister ?
Sweets ! and never mind the prices !
Swears no man has ever kissed her !

“ Were you at the hop ? The Van der
Walts’ ? I know the brother slightly ;
No, not in the service, but er—
Still I always bow politely.

THE LONE TREK

"Cakes? These take a lot of beating.
'Morning Simpkins,' (Name's Maloney—
Met him at the summer meeting—
Place I laid and lost a pony).

"Ticket, please, miss! Yours? you rotter!
One I owe you, such a pity.
Tennis off, I have to trot a
Piece of fluff around the city!

"Be good? Well, I'll do my level
Best; but still, there is no knowing
There she goes with—what the devil?
'Scuse, I really must be going!"

Mary

SALLOW, small and full of angles,
Sharpened by the jars and jangles
Of the day (the boarder's wrangles
Seldom vary)

With a tongue unhesitating,
Now and then she gives a rating—
But of downright, sober slating
Always chary.

THE LONE TREK

Hears an oath—without suggesting
It is wrong, or manifesting
Signs of shame—the broadest jesting
Does not lend her
Cheeks the faintest trace of blushes ;
No, she merely laughs and brushes
Taunts aside, or deftly crushes
The offender.

Scarcely ever in a flurry,
Cool, despite the constant hurry,
Calm amid the ceaseless worry
All around her.
Never outwardly revealing
Any sentimental feeling—
Yet averse to double-dealing—
So I found her.

With a life of scanty leisure,
Rest, or any real pleasure ;
Only work, in ample measure :
Very wary
Of new friends ; but, having started,
Staunch and never to be parted—
Hard—and yet a tender-hearted
Girl is Mary.

THE LONE TREK

The Café Girl

Entre nous, I think she guesses
She is fair ; she always dresses
Well, and wears her auburn tresses
 Grecian style, not in a bun ;
Here and there demurely flitting
To and fro amid the twitting
Youths to where she sees you sitting—
 In her eyes a spark of fun.

“ Not served yet ? What can I get you ?
Kisses ? Maybe—if I let you !
When ? A good while still, I bet you—
 Did you say two cups of tea ? ”
Gone, but swiftly reappearing :
“ This a pretty dress I’m wearing ?
Let me go, my sleeve is tearing !
 There—I’ll have you play with me !

“ Stay here ? You are growing bolder !
When (she shrugs a careless shoulder)
You are just a trifle older !
 Well—for quite a little while,

THE LONE TREK

As we are not very busy—
Yes, my name is really Lizzie . . .
Silly boy! You make me dizzy!
(On her lips a lurking smile).

“For a stroll with you on Sunday?
Can't. I'm off at six on Monday.
Theatre? I might go one day—
Not with you, you are too rude.
Well—if there is nothing better!
Stop it! I shall send a letter
Saying my mamma won't let—er—
Going are you? Well, be good!”

The Sport

CLAD in flannels, shaven neat,
Puffing at a cigarette;
At the corner of the street,
Pausing just to make a bet
For a “fiver” with a pal—
“Hallo, Cockey, there you are.
Odds with you on Saucy Gal,
Ten to one on Shooting Star.”

THE LONE TREK

Still a little further down :

“ That you, Tommy ? Say, old chap,
Hear that Diggers beat the town ?
Pirates lost. A nasty rap !

“ Only by a measly goal—
Duggy nearly broke his leg !
Yes, old man, I'm in a hole.
Come along and have a peg ?

“ Black and White ? Plain ? Right—for two.
Bought a hundred Waters Deeps.
Now they've fallen down to—Phew !
I'm a broken man for keeps.

“ Bye-bye ! See you after six.
That you, Charlie ? Thank you, no.
Well, just one small tot to fix
Things. I'm feeling deuced low.

“ Bridge the other night with Dick,
Sov. a hundred. Tell you, kid,
What with poker—fairly thick !
Still I collared thirty quid !

THE LONE TREK

“Went on Monday to the stalls—
Gad! the pick of all the show!
Starred at home in music-halls—
Fizz for supper! Eh! What oh!

“Meet you later at the club—
Wanderers at five to three,
Hundred yards. The usual pub,
Heavy weights—a rare old spree!

“Seen Jack’s pointer? Not much cop!
Nose too short for pedigree!
Ha, Ha! No, I must not stop—
Give the girl a kiss from me.”

De Ongelukkige

Low she crouches, partly shaded
By a doorway. On her sleeping
Face a street lamp shows the faded
Cheeks, the scanty grey hairs peeping
Underneath her hat, a feather
Straggling from it, dragged, drooping—

THE LONE TREK

Thin hands tightly clasped together,
And the figure bent and stooping.
Once she smiles, her features seeming
Young again, and all her tainted
Life forgotten. She is dreaming—
“Mother darling,” say the painted
Lips. She stirs and wakens breathing
Oaths obscene beyond believing.

The Outsider

THERE upon the step he stands,
And his hairy, sunburnt hands
Smooth his chin
In a furtive, feeble way—
And his shaking fingers stray
To the pin—
That unites his ragged tie
To a collar that is “shy”
And unclean,
All in creases round his throat,
And his greasy morning coat
May have been

THE LONE TREK

Long ago a navy blue ;
Now it's sodden through and through,
 And a crust,
Mingled sand and dirt and grit,
Lies upon and colours it
 Red as dust.

There he stands outside the door,
Through the doorway, half ajar,
 Tries to peep
At the drinkers and the drink,
Till his puffy eyelids blink,
 Half-asleep !

Full of longing are his lips,
And they tremble, as he sips
 (In his dreams)
Wines no mortal could replace,
His unshaven, bloated face
 Almost beams.

Then from out the brawling crowd
Someone, cursing him aloud,
 Elbows by ;
And he hears the sound of feet
Echo dully up the street—
 With a sigh.

THE LONE TREK

He awakes. A pungent wind
In his nostrils, of the kind
That he craves,
Ten times stronger than before,
And a sickness shudders o'er
Him in waves.

And he staggers to the glare,
'Mid the titters and the stare
Makes his way—
“May you have a glass of beer?”
Thus the barman with a leer.
“Can you pay?”

And he fumbles once again
In his pockets. All in vain!
Then he pleads
Humbly with them, not to stop
This, the one and only drop
That he needs.

But they scoff at him and smile,
And he mutters for a while—
Maudlin tears
Trickle slowly down his cheek—
He is strangely grey and weak
For his years.

THE LONE TREK

Then he reels—pathetic still,
Tragic, comic—as you will—
 Out of sight :
Like some draggled Kaffir crow,
Wanders, shuffles to and fro—
 In the night.

The Remittance Man

HE steps, half-furtively, across the street—
 His morning coat, just needing some repair ;
Trousers, good stuff, but shiny in the seat—
 A greasy hat upon his scanty hair.

A slender figure, cheeks a little thin ;
 Eyes that gleam at you from beneath the brows ;
A mouth that twitches, eager to begin :
 “ Sir, just a moment, if your time allows.

“ A letter waits me ”—here his fingers clutch
 Your sleeve (he coughs)—“ but it is overweight ;
I have no cash and—twopence is not much,
 And half an hour hence will be too late.

THE LONE TREK

“ Ah! thank you.” And you see him disappear
Towards the letter counter. In a while
He comes again, his forehead smooth and clear,
Upon his lips a condescending smile.

And drawing close, he thrusts a careless hand
Into his pockets with a ringing sound
Of money. Just to let you understand
He would not haggle with you o'er a pound!

“ What's yours?” he mutters, giving back the loan,
“ Whiskey, vermouth, absinthe, perhaps Three Star?
No? Then I must have one upon my own.”
He shuffles off towards the nearest bar.



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