

Harold Monro

Strange Meetings



Strange Meetings

By Harold Monroe
The Poetry Bookshop 1/- net

COND THOUSAND.

Published, April, 1917.

Second Thousand, December, 1917.

E
M.75255

STRANGE MEETINGS

By

HAROLD MONRO



156229.
4.10.20.

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP
35 DEVONSHIRE STREET
THEOBALDS ROAD
LONDON, W.C.

1917

By the same Author

JUDAS : A Poem (Sampson Low, 1/- net) 1908

BEFORE DAWN : Poems and Impressions (Constable,
5/- net) 1911

CHILDREN OF LOVE (The Poetry Bookshop, 6d. net) 1914

THE CHRONICLE OF A PILGRIMAGE : Paris to Milan
on Foot (Sampson Low, 2/6 net)

TREES, after its first appearance in the "English Review," was reprinted in a limited Edition on hand-made paper with decorations by James Guthrie. It is now, (with a few minor alterations,) again reprinted only because it forms an integral part of the series of poems here published.

CONTENTS

<i>Strange Meetings</i>	.	.	.	5
<i>Journey</i>	.	.	.	20
<i>Every Thing.</i>	.	.	.	24
<i>Coronilla</i>	.	.	.	28
<i>Week-End</i>	.	.	.	32
<i>Aspidistra Street</i>	.	.	.	42
<i>The Foundered Tram.</i>	.	.	.	43
<i>Cat's Meat</i>	.	.	.	44
<i>Blackberry</i>	.	.	.	45
<i>Change of Mind</i>	.	.	.	46
<i>Winter Milk</i>	.	.	.	48
<i>Trees</i>	.	.	.	50
<i>Lament in 1915 (B.H.W.)</i>	.	.	.	59
<i>The Bird at Dawn</i>	.	.	.	62
<i>Solitude</i>	.	.	.	63

*Child of the Earth, shall we walk ?
Your hands have been busy so long to-day.
Are you tired? Let us go to the meadow-pool.
Out on the grass it is cool ;
Cool in the song of the nightingale ;
Cool in the meadow. The moon is cool.*

STRANGE MEETINGS

I.

If suddenly a clod of earth should rise,
And walk about, and breathe, and speak, and love,
How one would tremble, and in what surprise
Gasp: "Can *you* move"?

I see men walking, and I always feel:
"Earth! How have you done this? What can you be?"
I can't learn how to know men, or conceal
How strange they are to me.

II.

The dark space underneath is full of bones,
The surface filled with bodies—roving men,
And floating above the surface a foam of eyes :
Over that is Heaven. All the Gods
Walk with cool feet, paddle among the eyes ;
Scatter them like foam-flakes on the wind
Over the human world.

III.

Rising toward the surface, we are men
A moment, till we dive again, and then
We take our ease of breathing : we are sent
Unconscious to our former element,
There being perfect, living without pain
Till we emerge like men, and meet again.

IV.

You live there ; I live here :
Other people everywhere
Haunt their houses, and endure
Days and deeds and furniture,
Circumstances, families,
And the stare of foreign eyes.

V.

Often we must entertain,
Tolerantly if we can,
Ancestors returned again
Trying to be modern man.
Gates of Memory are wide ;
All of them can shuffle in,
Join the family, and, once inside,
Alas, what a disturbance they begin !
Creatures of another time and mood,
They wrangle ; they dictate ;
Bawl their experience into brain and blood,
Call themselves *Fate*.

VI.

Eyes float above the surface, trailing
Obedient bodies, lagging feet.
Where the wind of words is wailing
Eyes and voices part and meet.

VII.

Oh, how reluctantly some people learn
To hold their bones together, with what toil
Breathe and are moved, as though they would return,
How gladly, and be crumbled into soil!

They knock their groping bodies on the stones,
Blink at the light, and startle at all sound,
With their white lips learn only a few moans,
Then go back underground.

VIII.

BIRTH.

One night when I was in the House of Death,
A shrill voice penetrated root and stone,
And the whole earth was shaken under ground :
I woke and there was light above my head.

Before I heard that shriek I had not known
The region of Above from Underneath,
Alternate light and dark, silence and sound,
Difference between the living and the dead.

IX.

It is difficult to tell,
(Though we feel it well,)
How the surface of the land
Budded into head and hand :
But it is a great surprise
How it blossomed into eyes.

X.

A flower is looking through the ground,
Blinking at the April weather ;
Now a child has seen the flower :
Now they go and play together.

Now it seems the flower will speak,
And will call the child its brother—
But, oh strange forgetfulness !—
They don't recognise each other.

II

XI.

Yesterday I heard a thrush ;
He held me with his eyes :
I waited on my yard of earth,
He watched me from his skies.

My whole day was penetrated
By his wild and windy cries,
And the glitter of his eyes.

XII.

The stars must make an awful noise
In whirling round the sky ;
Yet somehow I can't even hear
Their loudest song or sigh.

So it is wonderful to think
One blackbird can outsing
The voice of all the swarming stars
On any day in spring.

XIII.

The ploughboy, he could never understand—
While he was carried dozing in the cart,
Or strolling with the plough across the land,
He never knew he had a separate heart.

Had someone told him, had he understood,
It would have been like tearing up the ground.
He slowly moves and slowly grows like wood,
And does not turn his head for any sound.

So they mistook him for a clod of land,
And round him, while he dreamed, they built a town.
He rubs his eyes; he cannot understand,
But like a captive wanders up and down.

XIV.

You may not ever go to heaven ;
You had better love the earth :
You'll achieve, for all your pain,
(What you cannot understand)
Privilege to drive a flower
Through an inch of land.
All the world is in your brain :
Worship it, in human power,
With your body and your hand.

XV.

I often stood at my open gate,
Watching the passing crowd with no surprise :
I don't think I had used my eyes for hate
Till they met your eyes.

I don't believe this road is meant for you,
Or, if it be,
Will no one say what I am meant to do
Now while you stare at me ?

XVI.

How did you enter that body? Why are you here?
At once, when I had seen your eyes appear
Over the brim of earth, they were looking for me.
How suddenly, how silently
We rose into this long-appointed place.
From what sleep have you arrived,
That your beauty has survived?
You, the everlasting—you
Known before a word was

XVII.

To-day, when you were sitting in the house,
And I was walking to you from the town,
At the far corner of the alder-wood,
I'm certain you were strolling up and down.

I thought : "She's come to meet me, and meanwhile
Is talking to the cowslips in the dew."
Just as you saw me, and began to smile—
It was not you.

Now I'm not certain—for how shall I say?
I cannot tell, however I may stare,
If it be you here in the house all day,
Or whether you are wandering still out there.

XVIII.

Wipe away, please,
That film from your eyes.
I can't see you plainly. Are you
The friend that I seem to remember? Are we
The people I think we must be?
We have talked for an hour: it seems you are he.
I know you, I'm sure, though your eyes are so altered.
Oh, in what life of our lives did we meet?—
But you smile, then you sigh, then you frown:
Now you stare at me angrily. How can it be?
I know you—you do not know me.

XIX.

A man who has clung to a branch and he hangs—
Wondering when it will break.

A woman who sits by the bed of a child,
Watching for him to wake.

People who gaze at the town-hall clock,
Waiting to hear the hour.

Somebody walking along a path,
Stooping to pick a flower.

Dawn ; and the reaper comes out of his home,
Moving along to mow.

A frightened crowd in a little room,
Waiting all day to go.

A tall man rubbing his eyes in the dusk,
Muttering "Yes" ; murmuring "No."

XX.

It is not difficult to die :
You hold your breath and go to sleep ;
Your skin turns white or grey or blue,
And some of your relations weep.

The cheerful clock without a pause
Will finish your suspended day.
That body you were building up
Will suddenly be thrown away.

You turn your fingers to the ground,
Drop all the things you had to do :
It is the first time in your life
You'll cease completely to be you.

XXI.

Memory opens ; memory closes :
Memory taught me to be a man.

It remembers everything :
It helps the little birds to sing.

It finds the honey for the bee :
It opens and closes, opens and closes. . . .

*—Proverbs for the humble wise ;
Flashes out of human eyes ;
Oracles of paradise.*

JOURNEY

I.

How many times I nearly miss the train
By running up the staircase once again
For some dear trifle almost left behind.
At that last moment the unwary mind
Forgets the solemn tick of station-time ;
That muddy lane the feet must climb—
The bridge—the ticket—signal down—
Train just emerging beyond the town :
The great blue engine panting as it takes
The final curve, and grinding on its brakes
Up to the platform-edge. . . . The little doors
Swing open, while the burly porter roars.
The tight compartment fills : our careful eyes
Go to explore each others' destinies.
A lull. The station-master waves. The train
Gathers, and grips, and takes the rails again,
Moves to the shining open land, and soon
Begins to tittle-tattle a tame tattoo.

II.

They ramble through the country-side,
 Dear gentle monsters, and we ride
 Pleasantly seated—so we sink
 Into a torpor on the brink
 Of thought, or read our books, and understand
 Half them and half the backward-gliding land :
 (Trees in a dance all twirling round ;
 Large rivers flowing with no sound ;
 The scattered images of town and field,
 Shining flowers half concealed.)
 And, having settled to an equal rate,
 They swing the curve and straighten to the straight,
 Curtail their stride and gather up their joints,
 Snort, dwindle their steam for the noisy points,
 Leap them in safety, and, the other side,
 Loop again to an even stride.

The long train moves : we move in it along.
 Like an old ballad, or an endless song,
 It drones and wimbles its unwearied croon—
 Croons, drones, and mumbles all the afternoon.

Towns with their fifty chimneys close and high,
 Wreathed in great smoke between the earth and sky,
 It hurtles through them, and you think it must
 Halt—but it shrieks and sputters them with dust,
 Cracks like a bullet through their big affairs,

Rushes the station-bridge, and disappears
 Out to the suburb, laying bare
 Each garden trimmed with pitiful care ;
 Children are caught at idle play,
 Held a moment, and thrown away.
 Nearly everyone looks round.
 Some dignified inhabitant is found
 Right in the middle of the commonplace—
 Buttoning his trousers, or washing his face.

III.

Oh the wild engine ! Every time I sit
 In any train I must remember it.
 The way it smashes through the air ; its great
 Petulant majesty and terrible rate :
 Driving the ground before it, with those round
 Feet pounding, eating, covering the ground ;
 The piston using up the white steam so
 You cannot watch it when it come or go ;
 The cutting, the embankment ; how it takes
 The tunnels, and the clatter that it makes ;
 So careful of the train and of the track,
 Guiding us out, or helping us go back ;
 Breasting its destination : at the close
 Yawning, and slowly dropping to a doze.

IV.

We who have looked each other in the eyes
This journey long, and trundled with the train,
Now to our separate purposes must rise,
Becoming decent strangers once again.
The little chamber we have made our home
In which we so conveniently abode,
The complicated journey we have come,
Must be an unremembered episode.
Our common purpose made us all like friends.
How suddenly it ends!
A nod, a murmur, or a little smile,
Or often nothing, and away we file.
I hate to leave you, comrades. I will stay
To watch you drift apart and pass away.
It seems impossible to go and meet
All those strange eyes of people in the street.
But, like some proud unconscious god, the train
Gathers us up and scatters us again.

EVERY THING

Since man has been articulate,
 Mechanical, improvidently wise,
 (Servant of Fate,)

He has not understood the little cries
 And foreign conversations of the small
 Delightful creatures that have followed him
 Not far behind ;
 Has failed to hear the sympathetic call
 Of Crockery and Cutlery, those kind
 Reposeful Teraphim.

Of his domestic happiness ; the Stool
 He sat on, or the Door he entered through :
 He has not thanked them, overbearing fool !
 What is he coming to ?

But you should listen to the talk of these.
 Honest they are, and patient they have kept,
 Served him without his *Thank-you* or his *Please* . . .

I often heard
 The gentle Bed, a sigh between each word,
 Murmuring, before I slept

The Candle, as I blew it, cried aloud,
Then bowed,
And in a smoky argument
Into the darkness went.

The Kettle puffed a tentacle of breath:—
“Pooh! I have boiled his water, I don't know
Why; and he always says I boil too slow.
He never calls me ‘Sukie dear,’ and oh,
I wonder why I squander my desire
Sitting submissive on his kitchen fire.”

Now the old Copper Basin suddenly
Rattled and tumbled from the shelf,
Bumping and crying: “I can fall by myself;
Without a woman's hand
To patronize and coax and flatter me,
I understand
The lean and poise of gravitable land.”
It gave a raucous and tumultuous shout,
Twisted itself convulsively about,
Rested upon the floor, and, while I stare,
It stares and grins at me.

The old impetuous Gas above my head
Begins irascibly to flare and fret,

Wheezing into its epileptic jet,
Reminding me I ought to go to bed.

The Rafters creak ; an Empty-Cupboard door
Swings open ; now a wild Plank of the floor
Breaks from its joist, and leaps behind my foot.
Down from the chimney half a pound of Soot
Tumbles, and lies, and shakes itself again.
The Putty cracks against the window-pane.
A piece of Paper in the basket shoves
Another piece, and toward the bottom moves.
My independent Pencil, while I write,
Breaks at the point : the ruminating Clock
Stirs all its body and begins to rock,
Warning the waiting presence of the Night,
Strikes the dead hour, and tumbles to the plain
Ticking of ordinary work again.

You do well to remind me, and I praise
Your strangely individual foreign ways.
You call me from myself to recognise
Companionship in your unselfish eyes.
I want your dear acquaintances, although
I pass you arrogantly over, throw
Your lovely sounds, and squander them along
My busy days. I'll do you no more wrong.

Purr for me, Sukie, like a faithful cat.
You, my well trampled Boots, and you, my Hat,
Remain my friends: I feel, though I don't speak,
Your touch grow kindlier from week to week.
It well becomes our mutual happiness
To go toward the same end more or less.
There is not much dissimilarity,
Not much to choose, I know it well, in fine,
Between the purposes of you and me,
And your eventual Rubbish Heap, and mine.

CORONILLA

I.

Coronilla! Coronilla!
 Heavy yellow tepid bloom :
 (Midnight in a scented room)—
 Coronilla.

Southern road ; muffled house
 Later on to-night
 I'll come again so quietly
 By moonlight.

• • • • •

Oh, what is that I think I see
 So pale beyond the yellow dusk,
 Beyond the trailing bitter flower
 And reek of marrow-bone and musk ?

Is it a face ?—My frozen hands
 Are hiding in their bone :
 The stare above the little mouth ;
 And she and I alone.

She calls me. Oh, I wonder why.
 She wants me. Shall I go?
 Now is your time, my brain, to cry
 The often-practised *No*.

* * * * *

Coronilla, I have passed you
 Seven times a day.
 Why do I always take my walk
 The southern way?

Although I hate your bitter reek,
 I still return, and still
 Long that your hidden voice may speak
 Against my wavering will.

Wait for me. I will come to-morrow.
 Must you have your way?
 Wait, then; I will come to-morrow.
 I am going home to-day.

* * * * *

Coronilla! Coronilla!
 Are you here to-night?
 Seven times I've come to you
 By moonlight.

Now I must feel your tepid bloom.
 I'll twist your tendrils through my skin ;
 So, if you have a shuttered room,
 Coronilla, let me in.

II.

He cooled the hollow of his cheek,
 And filled it with the drowsy flower.
 He has become so gentle, weak,
 And feverish in her power.

Now all the sappy little leaves
 Are clinging to his frozen lips ;
 And she has drawn the shutter back,
 And drawn him with her finger-tips.

The candles flicker in the room.
 He trembles by the wall.
 She gave him all and all again,
 But still he asks for all.

So one by one the candles droop
 And close their eyes and faint away.
 The yellow flowers begin to stoop :
 He has not noticed it is day.

III.

Now he has laid his body down,
And all his skin is silver pale ;
He'll never, never rise again :
His muscles have begun to fail.

He's covered with a winding sheet.
There's yet a little time to rave,
Then he will hear the grains of earth
Drip-dropping on his grave.

Yellow, yellow is the flower ;
Fatal is the bloom ;
And no one any time returned
Who slept inside the shuttered room.

WEEK-END

I.

The train! The twelve o'clock for paradise.
Hurry, or it will try to creep away.
Out in the country everyone is wise:
We can be only wise on Saturday.
There you are waiting, little friendly house:
Those are your chimney-stacks with you between,
Surrounded by old trees and strolling cows,
Staring through all your windows at the green.
Your homely floor is creaking for our tread;
The smiling tea-pot with contented spout
Thinks of the boiling water, and the bread
Longs for the butter. All their hands are out
To greet us, and the gentle blankets seem
Purring and crooning: "Lie in us, and dream."

II.

The key will stammer, and the door reply,
The hall wake, yawn, and smile ; the torpid stair
Will grumble at our feet, the table cry :
“ Fetch my belongings for me ; I am bare.”
A clatter ! Something in the attic falls.
A ghost has lifted up his robes and fled.
The loitering shadows move along the walls ;
Then silence very slowly lifts his head.
The starling with impatient screech has flown
The chimney, and is watching from the tree.
They thought us gone for ever : mouse alone
Stops in the middle of the floor to see.
Now all you idle things, resume your toil.
Hearth, put your flames on. Sulky kettle, boil.

III.

Contented evening ; comfortable joys ;
The snoozing fire, and all the fields are still :
Tranquil delight, no purpose, and no noise—
Unless the slow wind flowing round the hill.
“ Murry ” (the kettle) dozes ; little mouse
Is rambling prudently about the floor.
There’s lovely conversation in this house :
Words become princes that were slaves before.
What a sweet atmosphere for you and me
The people that have been here left behind. . . .
Oh, but I fear it may turn out to be
Built of a dream, erected in the mind :
So if we speak too loud, we may awaken
To find it vanished, and ourselves mistaken.

IV.

Lift up the curtain carefully. All the trees
Stand in the dark like drowsy sentinels.
The oak is talkative to-night ; he tells
The little bushes crowding at his knees
That formidable, hard, voluminous
History of growth from acorn into age.
They titter like school-children ; they arouse
Their comrades, who exclaim : " He is very sage."
Look how the moon is staring through that cloud,
Laying and lifting idle streaks of light.
O hark ! was that the monstrous wind, so loud
And sudden, prowling always through the night ?
Let down the shaking curtain. They are queer,
Those foreigners. They and we live so near.

V.

Come, come to bed. The shadows move about,
And someone seems to overhear our talk.
The fire is low; the candles flicker out;
The ghosts of former tenants want to walk.
Already they are shuffling through the gloom.
I felt an old man touch my shoulder-blade;
Once he was married here: they love this room,
He and his woman and the child they made.
Dead, dead, they are, yet some familiar sound,
Creeping along the brink of happy life,
Revives their memory from under ground—
The farmer and his troublesome old wife.
Let us be going: as we climb the stairs,
They'll sit down in our warm half-empty chairs.

VI.

Morning! Wake up! Awaken! All the boughs
Are rippling on the air across the green.
The youngest birds are singing to the house.
Blood of the world!—and is the country clean?
Disturb the precinct. Cool it with a shout.
Sing as you trundle down to light the fire.
Turn the encumbering shadows tumbling out,
And fill the chambers with a new desire.
Life is no good, unless the morning brings
White happiness and quick delight of day.
These half-inanimate domestic things
Must all be useful, or must go away.
Coffee, be fragrant. Porridge in my plate,
Increase the vigour to fulfil my fate.

VII.

The fresh air moves like water round a boat.

The white clouds wander. Let us wander too.
The whining, wavering plover flap and float.

That crow is flying after that cuckoo.

Look! Look! . . . They're gone. What are
the great trees calling?

Just come a little farther, by that edge
Of green, to where the stormy ploughland, falling
Wave upon wave, is lapping to the hedge.

Oh, what a lovely bank! Give me your hand.

Lie down and press your heart against the ground.
Let us both listen till we understand,
Each through the other, every natural sound. . . .

I can't hear anything to-day, can you,
But, far and near: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Cuckoo!"?

VIII.

The everlasting grass—how bright, how cool!
 The day has gone too suddenly, too soon.
 There's something white and shiny in that pool—
 Throw in a stone, and you will hit the moon.
 Listen, the church-bell ringing! Do not say
 We must go back to-morrow to our work.
 We'll tell them we are dead: we died to-day.
 We're lazy. We're too happy. We will shirk.
 We're cows. We're kettles. We'll be anything
 Except the manikins of time and fear.
 We'll start away to-morrow wandering,
 And nobody will notice in a year.
 Now the great sun is slipping under ground.
 Grip firmly!—How the earth is whirling round.

IX.

Be staid ; be careful ; and be not too free.
Temptation to enjoy your liberty
May rise against you, break into a crime,
And smash the habit of employing Time.
It serves no purpose that the careful clock
Mark the appointment, the officious train
Hurry to keep it, if the minutes mock
Loud in your ear : " Late. Late. Late. Late again."
Week-end is very well on Saturday :
On Monday it's a different affair—
A little episode, a trivial stay
In some oblivious spot somehow, somewhere.
On Sunday night we hardly laugh or speak :
Week-end begins to merge itself in Week.

X.

Pack up the house, and close the creaking door.
 The fields are dull this morning in the rain.
 It's difficult to leave that homely floor.
 Wave a light hand ; we will return again.
 (What was that bird ?) Good-bye, ecstatic tree,
 Floating, bursting, and breathing on the air.
 The lonely farm is wondering that we
 Can leave. How every window seems to stare !
 That bag is heavy. Share it for a bit.
 You like that gentle swashing of the ground
 As we tread ?
It is over. Now we sit
 Reading the morning paper in the sound
 Of the debilitating heavy train.
 London again, again. London again.

ASPIDISTRA STREET

Go along that road, and look at sorrow.
 Every window grumbles.
 All day long the drizzle fills the puddles,
 Trickles in the runnels and the gutters,
 Drips and drops and dripples, drops and dribbles,
 While the melancholy aspidistra
 Frowns between the parlour curtains.

Uniformity, dull Master!—
 Birth and marriage, middle-age and death ;
 Rain and gossip : Sunday, Monday, Tuesday . . .

Sure, the lovely fools who made Utopia
 Planned it without any aspidistra.
 There will be a heaven on earth, but first
 We must banish from the parlour
 Plush and poker-work and paper flowers,
 Brackets, staring photographs and what-nots,
 Serviettes, frills and etageres,
 Anti-macassars, vases, chiffonniers ;

And the gloomy aspidistra
 Glowering through the window-pane,
 Meditating heavy maxims,
 Moralising to the rain.

THE FOUNDERED TRAM

There it lies :—
 An injured toad,
 Tumbled away to the side of the road,
 Dashed from the track of its shiny slime ;
 Silly sight for pausing eyes :
 Skeptic of the rules of Time . . .
 Where has it thrown its respectable load ?

Passive inhabitants—how they were hurled
 Into a sudden other world ;

Jagged fragments of glass lie down
 Each like a frozen cry or frown.

Oh what a change ! And what a strange
 Upheaval of hands must have gone to that,
 Or following plunge at a falling hat,
 Or lurching into a broken thigh,
 All to the spurt of one question : *Why?*

That heavy load of metal found
 An easy lean, and sharply went
 Over to attractive ground,
 Better to lie down content
 (Better than the captive glide)
 Lazily upon its side—
 Element to element.

CAT'S MEAT

Ho, all you cats in all the street ;
Look out, it is the hour of meat :

The little barrow is crawling along,
And the meat-boy growling his fleshy song.

Hurry, Ginger! Hurry, White!
Don't delay to court or fight.

Wandering Tabby, vagrant Black,
Yamble from adventure back!

Slip across the shining street,
Meat! Meat! Meat! Meat!

Lift your tail and dip your feet ;
Find your penny—Meat! Meat!

Where's your mistress ; learn to purr :
Pennies emanate from her.

Be to her, for she is Fate,
Perfectly affectionate.

(You, domestic Pinkie-Nose,
Keep inside and warm your toes.)

Flurry, flurry in the street—
Meat! Meat! Meat! Meat!

BLACKBERRY

Hedge is like a breaking wave ;
Thorns are stinging like the sea.—
Lean tiptoe, or plunge, to pick
Sparkling clustered blackberry.

Savage little eyes they keep
Blinking through their juicy spray.
Every-hidden-where they peep,
Tantalizing us all day.

Oh, a wild and dusky store,
Plentiful and free to all :
We will keep a Blackberry Feast—
Bramble-jelly-festival.

Boys with baskets empty-full,
Girls, with happy laughter, singing,
Wander everywhere to pull.
Small sweet children call and run
And prick their little fingers ; autumn sun
Glitters over everyone.

Everybody will be bringing
Fragrant loads by field and hill
Homeward into Blackberry Mill.

CHANGE OF MIND

How the rain tumbles. Lord!—
 Only last week I would have gone all night
 Dripping and scurrying, of my own accord,
 For just one sight
 Of you. How can I be so bored
 Now at your short imploring note?
 I curse the ugly rain and you.
 I know exactly how you wrote,
 Smiling—and sobbing too . . .
 I will stay here. I will not go to you.

I know precisely how you'll look ;
 I can imagine every word you'll say ;
 I want to close you like a finished book :
 Please let me have my way.

Why must I tell you that our love is done ?
 It lasted well, but now you have begun
 To sorrow me. Be wise and understand.
 Whatever purpose can be served indeed
 By going two enormous rainy miles
 To hold your hand ?
 Or is there any need
 To trudge the lane, and climb the slippery stiles,
 When, by this fire, and snugly in my brain,
 I, without effort, may

Press your dry lips and hold your hands again,
And answer every word you'll have to say?

But I'm forgetting something . . . Who was that
Loafing about your cottage all last week?
How cool he was, and always sat
Watching you, and would not speak.
Why was he there; and is he still?
It's raining less, I think. Who can he be?
Shall I put on my coat? I think I will.
He may—may not, be gone. I'll go and see.
I'll go and find out why you sent for me.

WINTER MILK

The cows are in the long byre, low, half-dark.
 Now that it is twilight, let us roam
 Past the white farm where the dog must bark,
 Over mud to fetch milk home.

The byre is like a church, dim, melancholy,
 With low windows gleaming like painted glass.
 Over uneven brickways slowly,
 Watched by the solemn black cow, we pass.

Her horns gleam ; her tall haunches slope and fall
 Curving to her neck ; her lazy limbs
 Droop, and she chews, while her halter swings.
 That large man far away by the end wall
 Is milking the white cow : all the time he sings,
 Esoteric canticles and farmyard hymns.

Half-a-dozen boys and girls, laughing together,
 Lean on the barn-wall waiting for milk.
 The hawthorn-bearded ploughman is grumbling at the
 weather.
 The milk is softly falling with a sound like moving silk.

Gloomy philosophers ; great grim cows,
Chewing and ruminating all in a row :
Wise stupid creatures with haughty brows,
What kind of thing are they pretending to know ?

* * * * *

Now the sound of pouring droops, fails.
There's a clatter of pails,
A movement of haunches, a rolling of eyes.
Some of the cows doze ; some of them rise.

A joke is cracked : everybody smiles.
We pay for our milk ; we take our little can ;
We murmur good-night to the pink-faced man :
We wander through evening home quiet two miles.

TREES

I.

One summer afternoon, you find
Some lonely trees. Persuade your mind
To drowse. Then, as your eyelids close,
And you still hover into those
Three stages of a darkening doze,
This side the barrier of sleep,
Pause. In that last clear moment open quick
Your sight toward where the green is bright and thick.
Be sure that everything you keep
To dream with is made out of trees.
Grip hard, become a root, so drive
Your muscles through the ground alive
That you'll be breaking from above your knees
Out into branches. Let your manhood be
Forgotten, your whole purpose seem
The purpose of a simple tree
Rooted in a quiet dream.

I did that. It is difficult to cease
Thinking. A thought will rise and trip
Your spirit on the brink of peace,
So your tough muscles lose their grip.

It will be hard to find
 A way to lead you out of Mind,
 And after that to keep
 The passage of a natural sleep.

(Any silly man can swim
 Down the channel of a dream,
 Dawdling under banks of green.
 That's an easy drift for him,
 Snoozing like a little stream,
 And a comfortable whim
 Any shallow man can dream.
 Water is a lazy thing,
 Lipping at an edge of ground,
 Elbowing and muttering.
 I have heard a little stream
 Imitate a human dream.)

The trees throw up their singing leaves, and climb
 Spray over spray. They break through Time.
 Their roots lash through the clay. They lave
 The earth, and wash along the ground ;
 They burst in green wave over wave,
 Fly in a blossom of light foam ;
 Rank following windy rank they come :

They flood the plain,
 Swill through the valley, top the mound,
 Flow over the low hill,
 Curl round
 The bases of the mountains, fill
 Their crevices, and stain
 Their ridges green. . . . Be sure you keep
 Some memory of this for sleep.
 Then hold your blood, contrive to fill
 Your veins with sap. Now dive ; now sink
 Below the spray. Relax your will. . . .
 The earth still has you by the heel?
 (Do not remember what you feel!) . . .
 Lift up your head above the spray.
 Pull, (so trees live). Thrust! Drive your way!
 The agony of One Idea will twist
 Your branches. (Can you feel the dew?)
 The wind will cuff you with his fist.
 The birds will build their nests in you.
 Your circulating blood will go
 Flowing five hundred times more slow.
 A thousand veins will darkly press
 About your muffled consciousness :
 So you will grow ;
 You will not know,
 Not wonder, why you grow. . . .

II.

I was cast up from that still tide of sleep,
I suddenly awakened—could not keep
A tranquil growth.
I heard the swinging clocks of man:
And I was conscious of unworthy sloth.
Oh, silly tree-adept!—
Out of arboreal delight I crept;
Crept, was afraid, and ran—
Too much mortality I kept.

They drove me forth. The angry trees
Roared till I tumbled lean and lewd
Out of that Paradise. The forest rose
To scourge my wavering conscience, and pursued.
A thousand doors clapped roughly and were close.
Low growling voices on that other side
Cursed in a tone of old offended wood. . . .

III.

It is a dangerous journey. If you go
Think carefully of this, which now I know.—
Tree-life is like a corridor between
The Seen and the Unseen.
Trees are like sentinels that keep
The passage of a gate
From this sleep to that other sleep :
Between two worlds they wait.
If they discover you, you cannot hide.
Run backward. They are stern.
You may be driven out that other side,
And not return.

Better perhaps you love them distantly—
So if they tempt you, as a woman might,
Make of their love an Immorality ;
And if they haunt you, regulate your sight
That tree-love may seem like Adultery ;
And never visit them at all by night.
Lock door, draw curtains, close yourself within
When the cool flow of sunset shall begin :
Leave them to float alone about their gold.

But when the moon comes to them and they fold
 Dark branches round her, you'll be jealous then—
 Focus your vision and contract it near :
 Read some new book, talk leisurely with men.
 Banish their nightingales, and yet I fear
 How they may call and echo through your sleep. . . .
 There will be many sounds you must not hear
 If you would keep
 The ways of manly wisdom, and not be
 Distracted by the love of any tree.

There are some men, of course, some men, I know,
 Who, when they pass,
 Seem like trees walking, and to grow
 From earth, and, native in the grass,
 (So taut their muscles) move on gliding roots.
 They blossom every day : their fruits
 Are always new and cover the happy ground.
 Wherever they may stand
 You hear inevitable sound
 Of birds and branches, harvest and all delights
 Of pastured and wooded land.
 For them it is not dangerous to go
 Each side that barrier moving to and fro :
 They without trepidation undertake
 Excursions into sleep, and safely come awake.

But it is different, different for me,
(Also for you I fear)
To whom a tree seems something more than tree,
And when we see,
Clustered together, two or three,
We almost are afraid to pass them near.
How beautifully they grow,
Above their stiles and lanes and watery places,
Crowding the brink of silence everywhere,
With branches dipping low
To smile toward us or to stroke our faces.
They drown us in their summer, and swirl round,
Leaving us faint : so nobody is free,
But always some surrounding ground
Is swamped and washed and covered in by tree.

They follow us and haunt us. We must build
Houses of wood. Our evening rooms are filled
With fragments of the forest : chairs and tables.
We swing our wooden doors ;
Pile up, divide our sheds, bryes, stables
With logs, make wooden stairs, lay wooden floors,
Sit, move, and sleep among the limbs of trees,
Rejoicing to be near them. How men saw,
Chisel and hammer, carve and tease
All timber to their purpose, modelling
The forest in their chambers. And the raw
Wild stuff, built like a cupboard or a shelf,

Will crack and shiver in the night, and sing,
 Reminding everybody of itself;
 Out of decayed old centuries will bring
 A sudden memory
 Of growing tree.

IV.

And they are felled. The hatchet swings :
 They pass their way. . . . Some learn to sail
 Seaward on white enormous wings,
 Scattering blossom along their trail ;
 Or be a little ship that ploughs
 And glides across the rippled land,
 Great frothing steeds high mounted at the bows,
 Calm at the helm the ploughboy's guiding hand,
 Crowded with sailing birds that flap and float,
 Hang stiff against the air and hold the breeze,
 Landworthy, and as trim a boat
 As ever ploughed the seas.

So they are felled. . . . They change, they come,
 Lingered their period of decay

In transitory forms ; and some
Lie Sleeping all that shining Way
The lanky greyhound engines loop,
With open nostrils flashing by,
Lugging their drowsy noisy troupe—
They clank and clatter, crouch and cry,
Pass, vanish, fill the distance with a sigh.

And some, some trees, before they die,
Carved and moulded small,
Suddenly begin,
Oh, what a wild and windy woodland call
Out of the lips of the violin !

So trees are felled. . . . But Tree
Lingers immovably where it has stood,
Living its tranquil immortality
Impassive to the death of wood.

And you—be certain that you keep
Some memory of trees for sleep.

LAMENT IN 1915 (B.H.W.)

I call you, and I call you. Oh come home,
 You lonely creature. Curse the foreign clown
 Who plugged you with that lead, and knocked you down.
 Stand up again and laugh, you wandering friend ;
 Say, as you would : " It's just a little hole ;
 It will soon mend."
 Walk now into the room. Come! Come! Come! Come!

Come ! we will laugh together all the night.
 (We shall have poured ourselves a glass or two.)
 Sit down. Our mutual mirth will reach its height
 When we remember how they called you dead,
 And I shall ask you how it felt, and you—
 " Oh nothing. Just a tumble. Rather hot,
 The feeling in my side ; and then my head
 A trifle dizzy, but I'm back again.
 I lay out there too long, and I've still got,
 When I think of it, just a little pain."

I know the way you tumbled . . . Once you slid
 And landed on your side. I noticed then
 A trick of falling ; some peculiar glide—
 A curious movement, not like other men.

But did your mouth drop open? Did your breath
Hurt you? What sort of feeling quickly came,
When you discovered that it might be death?

And what will happen if I shout your name?
Perhaps you may be there behind the door,
And if I raise my voice a little more,
You'll swing it open. I don't know how thick
The black partition is between us two.
Answer, if you can hear me; friend, be quick . . .
Listen, the door-bell rang! Perhaps it's you.

You're in the room. You're sitting in that chair.
You are! . . . I will go down. It *was* the bell.
You *may* be waiting at the door as well.

Am I not certain I shall find you there? . . .

You're rigged in your best uniform to-day;
You take a momentary martial stand,
Then step inside and hold me out your hand,
And laugh in that old solitary way.

You don't know why you did it. All this while
You've slaved and sweated. Now you're very strong,
And so you tell me with a knowing smile:
"We're going out to Flanders before long."

I thought you'd come back with an ugly hole
 Below your thigh,
 And ask for sympathy and wander lame ;
 I thought you'd be that same
 Grumbling companion without self-control—
 I never thought you'd die.

* * * * *

Now let us both forget this brief affair :
 Let us begin our friendship all again.
 I'm going down to meet you on the stair.
 Walk to me! Come! for I can see you plain.
 How strange! A moment I did think you dead.
 How foolish of me!
 Friend! friend! Are you dumb?
 Why are you pale? Why do you hang your head?
 You see me? Here's my hand. Why don't you come?
 Don't make me angry. You are there, I know.
 Is not my house your house? There is a bed
 Upstairs. You're tired. Lie down; you must come home.
 Some men are killed . . . not you. Be as you were.
 And yet—Somehow it's dark down all the stair.
 I'm standing at the door. You are not there.

THE BIRD AT DAWN

What I saw was just one eye
In the dawn as I was going :
A bird can carry all the sky
In that little button glowing.

Never in my life I went
So deep into the firmament.

He was standing on a tree,
All in blossom overflowing ;
And he purposely looked hard at me,
At first, as if to question merrily :
“ Where are you going ? ”
But next some far more serious thing to say :
I could not answer, could not look away.

Oh, that hard, round, and so distracting eye :
Little mirror of all sky !—
And then the after-song another tree
Held, and sent radiating back on me.

If no man had invented human word,
And a bird-song had been
The only way to utter what we mean,
What would we men have heard,
What understood, what seen,
Between the trills and pauses, in between
The singing and the silence of a bird ?

SOLITUDE

When you have tidied all things for the night,
And while your thoughts are fading to their sleep,
You'll pause a moment in the late firelight,
Too sorrowful to weep.

The large and gentle furniture has stood
In sympathetic silence all the day
With that old kindness of domestic wood ;
Nevertheless the haunted room will say :
"Someone must be away."

The little dog rolls over half awake,
Stretches his paws, yawns, looking up at you,
Wags his tail very slightly for your sake,
That you may feel he is unhappy too.

A distant engine whistles, or the floor
Creaks, or the wandering night-wind bangs a door.

Silence is scattered like a broken glass.
The minutes prick their ears and run about,
Then one by one subside again and pass
Sedately in, monotonously out.

You bend your head and wipe away a tear.
Solitude walks one heavy step more near.

CHAPBOOKS.

- SINGSONGS OF THE WAR. By MAURICE HEWLETT. *Second Thousand.* 6d. net (postage id.).
- CHILDREN OF LOVE. By HAROLD MONRO. *Second Thousand.* 6d. net (postage id.).
- ANTWERP. By FORD MADOX HUEFFER. (Decorated by Wyndham Lewis.) 3d. net (postage id.).
- THE OLD SHIPS. By JAMES ELROY FLECKER. *Second Thousand.* 1/- net (postage id.).
- SPRING MORNING. By FRANCES CORNFORD. (Woodcuts by G. Raverat.) 1/- net (postage id.).
- SONGS. By EDWARD SHANKS. 6d. net (postage id.).
- THE CONTEMPLATIVE QUARRY. By ANNA WICKHAM. 6d. net (postage id.).
- CADENCES. By F. S. FLINT. 8d. net (postage id.).
- IMAGES. By RICHARD ALDINGTON. 8d. net (postage id.).
- THE FARMER'S BRIDE. By CHARLOTTE MEW. 1/- net (postage id.).
- OVER THE BRAZIER. By ROBERT GRAVES. *Second Impression* (postage id.).

BALLADS AND SONGS.

- A BALLAD OF "THE GLOSTER" AND "THE GOEBEN." *Fifth Thousand.* By MAURICE HEWLETT. Coloured. Price 2d. (postage $\frac{1}{2}$ d.).
- THE KING'S HIGHWAY. By HENRY NEWBOLT. Music by Francis Newbolt. Coloured. Price 3d. net (postage $\frac{1}{2}$ d.).
- SEVEN POEMS from BLAKE'S SONGS OF INNOCENCE. Decorated in colours by G. Spencer Watson. Set to music by Geoffrey Gwyther. Price 9d. net, each. The set complete in decorated Portfolio, 6/- net.

BROADSIDES.

Price 4d. coloured, 2d. plain (postage id. up to any four items).

- A SONG. By RALPH HODGSON.
- FEBRUARY. By RALPH HODGSON.
- THE ROBIN'S SONG. By RICHARD HONEYWOOD.
- THE OLD MEN. By WALTER DE LA MARE.
- SUMMER. By C. LOVAT FRASER.
- THE GIPSY GIRL. By RALPH HODGSON.
- STAFFORDSHIRE. By OLIVER DAVIES.
- THE BEGGAR. By RALPH HODGSON.
- THE WIND. By C. LOVAT FRASER.

London : THE POETRY BOOKSHOP (Proprietor : Harold Monro), 35 Devonshire St., Theobalds Road, W.C.1.

BROADSIDES—continued.

PLAYMATES. By RALPH HODGSON.

THE LATE LAST ROOK. By RALPH HODGSON.

THE BIRDCATCHER. By RALPH HODGSON.

THE BLIND FIDDLER'S DOG (Prose).

RHYME SHEETS.

Rhyme Sheet 1.

" "

" "

" "

" "

" "

" "

" "

GEORGIA

Eig

GEORGIA

Eig

ANTHOL

POEMS.

A COLLE

Dec

Pap

GOD SAY

FL

POETRY

Boa

Vol

Nun

"Poet

separately, 1/3, post free.

Out of print.)

Price 1d.

(HAROLD

Price 2d.

) Coloured.

decorations

d. coloured.

RANK SIDGWICK.

n.

INKWATER. (Decor-

Fraser.) Coloured.

t, 3d.)

5.

by E.M., pp. 197.

age 4d.)

by E.M., pp. 244.

e 5d.)

6 net (postage 4d.).

e 3d.)

With one hundred

nd. 1/- net.

JAMES ELROY

Brown Paper

Page. Two

t. Separate

Title-Page to

ree. Cover,

University of Toronto
Library

DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET

Acme Library Card Pocket
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File"
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU

156229 LE.
M7525S

Author Monre, Harold

Title Strange meetings.

**University of Toronto
Library**

**DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET**

Acme Library Card Pocket
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File"
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU

